

Narrative Methods for Writing Urban Places

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Journal for Architecture and Literature

Writing place

#5

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Edited by:

Lorin Nicolae

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Narrative Methods for Writing Urban Places

Lorin Niculae, Jorge Mejía Hernández, Klaske Havik, Mark Proosten

This fifth issue of the *Writingplace Journal* examines different narrative methods, understood as procedures, techniques or ways of relating or recounting events, and how they can be used to appraise and imagine the city. The editorial process of the issue has been developed within the context of the EU-funded COST Action 'Writing Urban Places',¹ a multidisciplinary network of researchers who are interested in developing new narratives for the European city. By recognizing the value of urban narratives – stories rich in information regarding citizens' sociospatial practices, perceptions, hopes and ambitions – the network seeks to foster and preserve the democratic, and therefore inclusive, nature of the modern European city.

To fulfil those ambitions the Action operates on the basis of working groups, focused on different aspects of the relation between stories and cities. One of these working groups is dedicated to study this relation at a methodological level, by examining and evaluating the different narrative methods that allow urban stories to be shared and developed into urban and architectural strategies for mid-sized European cities.²

The work of this group is both analytical and projective in nature, as it evaluates existing methods that have been used to narrate the city, but also explores new methods that could be used to turn those narratives into possible urban and architectural futures. In the face of migration, the depletion of traditional forms of production, ageing or marginalized populations, and the rise of divisive and dissociative political initiatives, these possible

futures intend to offer citizens meaningful, appropriable and integrated built environments. Moving towards that intention, the group has collectively created a 'Repository of Methods',³ where key terms, novel ideas and useful references are collected, discussed, revised and put to test by cross-country, interdisciplinary teams of researchers. Part of the editorial team of this issue, and part of its content, comes from this working group.

The different methods studied in the following articles relate to urban and architectural narratives, understood as the spoken or written accounts of connected events that take place in and therefore constitute buildings and cities. The importance of these accounts in the fulfilment of the network's objectives lies in their ability to offer a distinct kind of understanding, seemingly unattainable by other means. Stories are not only excellent means with which to register a diversity of viewpoints, most importantly, they are unrivalled in their ability to generate empathy among human beings. In an urban setting, the viewpoints diversity and empathy offered by stories provide citizens, institutions and professionals who are responsible for the development of the built environment with indispensable instruments and methods for the individual exercise of citizenship, and for the collective construction of the city as the basis of that citizenship.

While urban narratives can be approached in many different ways, this issue approaches them from a methodological perspective. In other words, the articles collected here examine the methods that are or can be used to write, tell, read or understand these accounts.

The issue opens with an article by Esteban Restrepo, whose analytical method combines categories of architectural and literary analysis in order to study the aesthetical interactions and effects or architectures related in literary text. Using Franz Kafka's short story *The Bridge* as an example, Restrepo explains how the author's choices regarding the role, nature, tone and position of the narrator in the construction of the story – in terms of its

situation and the sequences it goes through – produce an unconventional, and in many ways illuminating understanding of architecture.

In the following article, Luc Pauwels and Ana Ryan Moloney develop an associative method that strives to interrelate written text and photographic image as means to produce a distinct portrait of the city of Limerick. The distinctness of this portrait is defined by circumstance, and shows how every city in reality consists of a myriad interwoven stories. Pauwels is a visual sociologist and registered parts of the city photographically on his first visit. Ryan Moloney, on the other hand, is a cultural geographer who teaches architecture in Limerick, and chose to revisit the same parts of the city photographed by Pauwels in writing. The conflation of their views, defined by the instruments and techniques each of them utilized to read and write the city, not only builds a bridge between their different understandings of Limerick; it testifies to the potential of proliferative but also syncretic media, as means to capture and communicate the complexity of the built environment.

Like them, architect Kristen Van Haeren brings together information from different sources in order to describe the different layers that constitute the urban context. Her article uses the anthropological method known as ‘thick description’, developed by Clifford Geertz, as a means to analyse a series of Danish residential housing estates, with particular attention to what are referred to as ‘welfare landscapes’. Contrary simplistic or univocal registries of the city, these ‘thick descriptions’ assemble photographic images with stories, demarcations of place, archival data, analytical findings and testimonies of human perception.

The next pair of articles examines the relationship between text and drawing in different ways. Carlos Machado e Moura and Luis Miguel Lus Arana’s contribution investigates the methods utilized to develop fictional architectures in the journal *L’ivre de Pierres*, published by French architect Jean-Paul

Jungmann between 1977 and 1983. According to both authors, the assemblage of a diversity of texts and images by Jungmann and the different authors who published in the journal offers us a rich vision of place, which is able bring together the history of Paris, the symbols contained in its past, present and future architectures, the emotions those architectures generate in their inhabitants and the practices those inhabitants engage in.

Viktorija Bognadova's article, on the other hand, tries to bring together descriptive methods from poetry and drawing as a means to deal with what she refers to as 'unknowing'. Beyond analytical modes of thinking, Bogdanova's article promotes emotional awareness and imaginative empathy, using the literary work of Fyodor Dostoevsky and the etchings of 'paper architects' Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin as examples.

Closing the issue, we have used the quintessential narrative method – talking – to develop a long conversation with architecture historian and theorist Alberto Pérez-Gómez. One of the many valuable insights this conversation offers is a reminder of the importance of the narrative dimension of architecture, as a means to define place and to generate community via communication.

This definition of place, and this sense of community attained through discourse, brings us back to the ambitions we are jointly pursuing within the aforementioned network of researchers. Despite our practical focus on mid-sized European cities, we are fundamentally concerned with the ways in which stories are able to relate and recount our lives in relation to architecture and the city.

By talking to each other to challenge our beliefs, by bringing together poems and etchings to understand the ineffable, by using texts and drawings to project visionary architectures, by producing thick descriptions to capture context, by intertwining pictures and texts to bridge two radically different

cities that coexist within the same city, and by dissecting powerful stories in order to let architecture talk to us; the articles and the interview collected here remind us of the nature of the subjects we're dealing with.

Together, these texts coincide in their understanding of human beings, societies, stories, places, buildings and cities as fundamentally multifarious and complex. Knowing and understanding them will fortunately never be simple, a single method will never suffice. On the contrary, the texts collected here indicate that not only different methods, but interdisciplinary assemblages thereof are required to appraise and imagine our cities as environments that are meaningful, appropriable and integrative for each and every one of the citizens that inhabit them.⁴

1 writingurbanplaces.eu/.

2 writingurbanplaces.eu/about/team/wg-3-methodological-framework/.

3 <https://writingurbanplaces.eu/library/links/>.

4 These three topics – meaningfulness, appropriation and integration – as goals for the built environment, will be developed in the upcoming 6th issue of the *Writingplace Journal*, which will be published in the autumn of 2021.

The Readjusted Arabesque

Narrating Architecture in Literary Text, the Case of Kafka's Bridge

Esteban Restrepo Restrepo

The architect is not the only artist who conceives architecture. As the most common spatial and material framework in which human life takes place, architecture also appears in other arts like painting, cinema, theatre and literature, where it is an unavoidable subject of conception and reflection. Among those arts, it is on the architectures that are present in literary texts that we will focus in this article.

When architecture deterritorializes itself from its domain of origin to be conceived and experienced in literature, its dominant and traditional ontological status is unavoidably altered. The cause of this alteration has to do with the

representative nature of its host art, which, according to Etienne Souriau, presents a formal split into a *primary form*, the one representing (the literary language), and a *secondary form*, that of the represented (in this case the architecture within the space in which the story takes place – this space being the diegesis).¹

Unlike the architect, the writer conceives architecture with the technical conditions and the aesthetic particularities of the literary medium. Thus, the experience we make of literary architectures radically differs from the one we make of built architectures, which can be experienced first-hand and navigated at will. Instead, the reader's experience of literary architectures is mediated by three entities, namely: the *character* who experiences architecture, the *narrator* who relates it, and the *writer* who composes it and chooses the terms in which it is represented.

When dealing with literary architectures we often observe *what* is represented, rather than *how* it is represented. Still we often take literary architectures for built architectures, and we tend to observe exclusively their intrinsic qualities, such as context, spatial system, morphology, scale and materiality. In Souriau's terms, that means that we usually limit our understanding of these architectures to their *secondary form* (their very diegetical characteristics), and leave aside their *primary form* (the literary language in which they are expressed). This restrictive approach is explicitly condemned by Louis Marin, who argues that 'the whole phantasmatic of description and mimesis is built on the transitive dimension of representation (representing something) by forgetting its reflective opacity and its modalities (presenting itself)'. Like Marin, we will dwell on one of the overlooked characteristics of the *primary form* of literary architectures: the narrative level.

In literature, architecture must not only be considered as an object that exists synchronically in the diegesis, but also as a textual construction that appears diachronically during the narration, that is fragmented according to the aesthetical intentions conceived by the writer. This textual construction

is, according to Paul Ricoeur, the fundamental literary operation of a *mise-en-récit*; and he refers to it as *configuration*:

Italians use a very accurate word, intreccio, the braid. This braid, this intrigue, allows the writer to gather not only the events, but also the aspects of the action, and in particular, the ways of producing it, with its causes, reasons, and coincidences.

In other words, the writer cuts out and reconfigures the acts, facts, events and objects (including architecture) present in the diegesis, as Souriau explains:

This need to divide the richness of events into distinct strands, which readjust themselves in relation to each other as new and continuous arabesques . . . is one of the most concrete artistic and aesthetically essential actions in the art of the novel.

It is one such *readjusted arabesque* – a literary architecture, in this case – that we intend to explore here, and whose experience by the reader is based on Roland Barthe's claim that 'the reading of the 'realist' portrait is not realistic, it is rather a cubist reading, the senses are cubes piled up, shifted, juxtaposed and yet biting on each other'.

To appraise a literary architecture in these terms we will use two analytical categories from Gérard Genette's narratology, developed in his work *Discours du récit*, namely: (a) the *Voice* or the **situation** of the narrator in relation to the story he tells, and its implications in the representation of architecture; and (b) the *Order* or the **sequences** in which architecture is represented during the narration. We will use both categories to analyse Kafka's short story *The Bridge* (*Die Brücke*):

The Bridge

I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream. No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map. So I lay and waited; I could only wait. Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge.

It was toward evening one day – was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell – my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle. It was toward evening in summer, the roar of the stream had grown deeper, when I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, rail-less beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you. If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land.

He came, he tapped me with the iron point of his stick, then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me. He plunged the point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a long time, forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around him. But then – I was just following him in thought over mountain and valley – he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body. I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening. Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer? And I turned so as to see him. A bridge to turn around! I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall, I fell and in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water.

Voice, or the Situation of the Narrator

The narrator is the figure created by the author to transmit, among other things, a 'vision' of the architectures supposed to exist within the

diegesis; the reader has no other access to them other than through the words of the narrator. As Genette points out, this is why the narrator's situation, understood as 'the relationships between him and the story he tells' and, more precisely, the 'close relationships between the narration, its protagonists and its spatiotemporal determination', fundamentally shape literary architectures, and determine the way the reader will comprehend them.

Like painted architecture, literary architecture implies one or more predetermined points of view. It appears, though, that the point of view chosen by the painter to represent architecture in a painting differs substantially from the one assigned by the writer to the narrator in order to tell the story he conceives; in the sense that it does not refer to one or more precise geometrical positions in the represented space, defined by a height, an angle of vision and a depth of field within a precise frame. If we consider the first sentences of *The Bridge*: *I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay . . .*, we will notice that we are not given any precise indications regarding the geometrical framework of the represented scene. We cannot ascertain the height from which the narrator describes the scene (even if we know that he speaks from his point of view, he does not represent it geometrically in his description), we ignore the colours of the objects and the spaces involved; we cannot even form an image of the formal characteristics of the bridge, which remain partial and schematic. A painter, whose medium demands that these characteristics are specified, could hardly paint this bridge based on these indications. Nevertheless, that does not prevent us from bringing out some characteristics of the narrator's point of view. First, we can acknowledge his role as a character within the diegesis. Secondly, we can recognize that he relates his own perceptive and affective experience (and not one from another character in the story). Finally, we can identify the temporary situation of the narrator in relation to what is narrated, which is situated in the past.

These characteristics constitute the three fundamental elements that determine literary architecture's situation: *person*, *focalization* and *verb tenses*.

The *person* is defined as the position of the narrator in relation to the diegesis. The narrator can be part of the diegesis (*homodiegetic narrator*) or be outside of it (*heterodiegetic narrator*). Each modality has its specificities. In the case of a story with a *homodiegetic narrator*, like *The Bridge*, he experiences architecture through his own body, which makes up part of the diegetic space. On the other hand, in stories with a *heterodiegetic narrator*, the narrator approaches the architectural object from outside the diegesis, from a *a priori* knowledge, without any physical restriction.

Genette defines *focalization* as 'a restriction of field, a selection of narrative information [and] the instrument of this (possible) selection is a located focus, a sort of information bottleneck, which lets only in what the situation allows'. According to him, there are three types of stories based on the focalization adopted by the narrator. These are: 'The story with an internal focalization (fixed, variable or multiple), the story with an external focalization, and the non-focalized story.' From this perspective, a *heterodiegetic narrator* with an *internal focalization* will give us information about the character's feelings about the architectures they experience. Each form of *internal focalization* (fixed, variable or multiple) has its own particularities. A *heterodiegetic narrator* with *fixed internal focalization* will only reveal the feelings and sensations of one of the characters with regard to architecture, giving the reader an univocal perception of it. On the contrary, a *heterodiegetic narrator* with *variable* or *multiple internal focalization* will communicate the different architectural feelings or sensations of multiple characters, and therefore include tensions between subjectivities; this multiplicity will lead to what we call *architectural intersubjectivity*. Virginia Woolf's novels are good examples of *multiple internal focalization*. For a *heterodiegetic narrator* with an *external focalization*, architectural data are not related to a

character's sensations because the narrator does not have access to their internal universe. Instead, architecture is narrated from the outside, through the actions and uses characters make of it. Samuel Beckett's novella *Le Dépeupleur* (*The Lost Ones*) is a good example of *external focalization*. Finally, a *non-focalized heterodiegetic narrator* (that is, one with zero focalization) enjoys total freedom to narrate the story and the architectures in it; he can focus architecture from multiple points of view without being necessarily attached to the interior or exterior universes of one or more characters – each one with their own autonomy of vision, including even a neutral (objective) point of view.

The *homodiegetic narrator* is, unlike the *heterodiegetic narrator*, present as a character in the story he relates. This is the case in *The Bridge*. The *homodiegetic narrator* is often the protagonist of the story, and his vision of architecture is inextricably linked to his own experience; that is to say, to his physical, intellectual, sensitive and psychological universe. The focalization of this narrator is usually internal, offering the reader an entirely subjective and unambiguous version of the architecture implied in the story.

However, the fact that the character-narrator in Kafka's short story is also an architecture, a bridge in this case, makes of him a very rare literary and architectural phenomenon: a first person architectural narrator (!).

In the first three sentences of the story we become aware of the importance given to *identity*, expressed in the iteration of the pronoun 'I': *I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine*. The character-narrator is aware of his bridge-ness, but realizes that his condition is not fulfilled until someone uses him. Without use his identity remains incomplete. Meanwhile, he remains in limbo, in a pre-use state, in a pre-bridge state, which leads him to an identity crisis. The reiteration of the pronoun 'I' in the narrator's discourse seeks to palliate the effects of this crisis.

Despite the choice of the grammatical first person used by the character-narrator to refer to himself, confusion (another manifestation of his identity crisis) will eventually lead him to use alternative voices, such as the second-person singular (*Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, rail-less beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you*) and the third-person singular (*No tourist strayed to this impassable height, the bridge was not yet traced on any map . . . A bridge to turn around!*).

As we said, the typical *homodiegetic narrator*, which we have also called the character-narrator, can move through the diegetic space at will and therefore has access to a considerable amount of information about the architectures he experiences. But Kafka's bridge is immobile. Its immobility defines and restrains its vision and perception, which in this case is a self-perception, or, to be more precise, a self-architectural-perception. In the tale's first paragraph the bridge ascertains its constituent elements and its topographical position from the point where it is stuck (*I was stiff and cold, I was a bridge, I lay over a ravine. My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other, I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay. The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides. Far below brawled the icy trout stream*).

Nevertheless, other architectural aspects that will be revealed later in the narration seem to refute this physical restriction. When the bridge tells us, in the middle of the first paragraph, that *no tourist strayed to this impassable height* and that *the bridge was not yet traced on any map*, we can presume that its awareness goes beyond its current fixed position. Might it be that it has not always been there, but rather came to this remote place, voluntarily or not?

If the characteristics we have just referred to exclusively concern the external qualities of the bridge, there are others characteristics concern-

ing the internal universe of the character-narrator. Several times during the monologue we are invited to contemplate the bridge's *état d'esprit*. First, it makes explicit its resignation, its state of *waiting-to-be-used*, like every architecture: *So I lay and waited; I could only wait*. Following, it expresses confusion: *It was toward evening one day – was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell – my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle*, and anxiety: *When I heard the sound of a human step! To me, to me. Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, rail-less beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you*. Finally, in the third and last paragraph, it expresses pain (*I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening*); astonishment and disbelief about itself, about its own nature and condition (*And I turned so as to see him. A bridge to turn around!*).

Together with *person* and *focalization*, the third aspect that defines the *situation* of a narrator regards *verb tenses*. This choice will determine the narrator's position in relation to the time of the actions he relates, impacting both the conception and perception of literary architectures. An architecture narrated in the past tense appears as a memory, and unless the narrator tells us otherwise, nothing guarantees its presence in the narration's present. An architecture narrated in the present tense, on the contrary, affirms its current existence. We can also think of other types of architectures linked to other verb tenses. An architecture described in the *conditional tense*, for example, assumes architecture as a mere possibility. Its presence is hypothetical or phantasmal, like that of the architectures described in Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*.

The verb tense used in *The Bridge* is mainly the simple past (or preterit in some languages like Kafka's German). We can distinguish two ways of using this verb tense in the narration. The first is used in the first paragraph, where the bridge emphasizes its fixed position and constant waiting. Both are sustained and prolonged situations, so the narrator makes an *iterative* use of the past tense.

The use of the past tense changes in the second and third paragraphs, where the bridge recounts an event that happens in a specific moment of the chronology of the story: its own destruction by a wayfarer. This is actually the only event presented during the narration and marks a shift from the iterative to the *assertive* use of the past tense.

Furthermore, a very singular verb form is used in the second paragraph of the tale: the *imperative* (*Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, rail-less beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you. If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land*). In this moment of the narration we are confronted with an imperative state of architecture. Rather than waiting, the bridge encourages itself to accomplish its function. The imperative form of the verb seeks to dissipate doubts in the character-narrator's mind regarding its bridge-ness; this could be seen as a strategy to overcome his lack of self-confidence concerning his capabilities of being, but also a desperate manifestation of his desire to be. In both cases this refers to two levels of being: being as such, and being a bridge.

With these choices, the most remarkable feature of Kafka's use of verb tenses in this particular story is the temporal position from which the bridge tells its own story. If we consider that, *grosso modo*, *The Bridge* is the story of a murder narrated by the victim itself, the present of the narration is located after the death of the victim. Thus, Kafka's tale must be considered as a post-mortem report narrated by a voice that no longer exists as a bridge, and who recalls its last moments as well as its failure to become a real and complete bridge. The current material or physical nature of the narrator is then spectral, immaterial . . . a voice from beyond the grave.

Order, or Architectural Sequences

In *Discours du récit*, Gérard Genette argues:

To study the temporal order of a narration means to confront the order of arrangement of the events or temporal segments in the narrative discourse with the order of succession of these same events or temporal segments in the diegesis, as it is explicitly indicated by the narration itself, or that can be inferred from an indirect clue.

An action, fact or event can be situated both in the chronological timeline of the diegesis, and in the narrative timeline of the literary composition. Nevertheless, architecture is not an action, a fact or an event, but an object supposed to exist in its entirety and (in most of cases) permanently within the diegesis. In consequence, it would be senseless to try to situate it in the timeline of the latter. However, as it appears as a possible *act of enunciation*, architecture can be part of the narration, and not only as a described object, but also as an entity affected by actions, facts and events. Every author decides *when* and *how* to include and feature architecture in his composition according to his artistic intentions. Thus, an analysis of the narrative order of literary architectures will not only allow us to apprehend the aesthetic intentions and effects of its own fragmentation, but also the role of architecture in the literary work.

A first step for the study of the narrative order of actions and events in a literary work, according to Genette, 'consists in enumerating its segments according to the changes in the time of history'. We can take this first step and adapt it to our purpose by simply enumerating all the parts of the narration where architecture is stated. To determine these parts we will refer to Genette's distinction between a macro-narrative level, which recognizes major articulations in the story; and a *micro-narrative* level, which deals with the minute details of the story.

At the *macro-narrative* level Kafka's tale is composed of three parts – a paragraph each: the first is a description of the physical characteristics of architecture (the bridge itself), the second suggests a possible user for the bridge (and the expectations generated by his arrival), and the third narrates the destruction of the bridge (by its first user). In simpler terms, the architectural macro-narrative structure of Kafka's short story can be synthesized as: physical description – introduction of the user – event.

As we can clearly see, the narrative strategy developed by Kafka in *The Bridge* is quite simple, and yet extremely effective, as a means to develop the profound tension that exists between being and nonbeing, embodied in the architecture of the bridge. For Jean-Paul Sartre, this tension is the very meaning of (existential) fragility.

While a *macro-narrative* analysis reveals to us the main structure of the plot, a *micro-narrative* analysis allows us to see the details of its construction. A close look at each paragraph allows us to dissect each and every appearance of architecture, and the aspects that characterize it. These aspects are not exclusively formal and dimensional, but also include character's experiences within that architecture, as well as the narrator's thoughts about it. By dismembering each paragraph and classifying the different aspects of the literary architecture, we should be able to grasp the aesthetical intentions in regard to the order of architectural sequences in Kafka's short story.

First paragraph: description of the physical characteristics of the bridge

- 01 • *I was stiff and cold* (material characteristics)
- 02 • *I was a bridge* (typological definition)
- 03 • *I lay over a ravine* (topographic position)
- 04 • *My toes on one side, my fingers clutching the other,* (building components)
- 05 • *I had clamped myself fast into the crumbling clay.* (anchoring device)
- 06 • *The tails of my coat fluttered at my sides* (building component and atmospheric quality)

- 07 • *Far below brawled the icy trout stream* (topographic position)
- 08 • *No tourist strayed to this impassable height*, (geographical reference)
- 09 • *the bridge was not yet traced on any map*. (geographical reference)
- 10 • *So I lay and waited; I could only wait*. (action)
- 11 • *Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge*
(philosophical statement)

As we can see, this first paragraph abounds in architectural statements, and most of them are related to physical characteristics of the architectural object. First of all, we must pay special attention to the incipit of the story. It is not casual that Kafka begins with the sentence *I was stiff and cold*. The pronoun 'I' reveals to us the human aspect of the character-narrator, who, by means of these physical characteristics, seems to be a dead body. This could be seen as an anticipation of the fate of the character. It is only in the second sentence that the character-narrator clarifies that its stiffness and coldness are in fact the properties of his bridge nature. According to Clayton Koelb, with this second sentence Kafka manages to preserve the double nature of the character-narrator as both human and bridge, while ensuring that neither of these two natures becomes the metaphor of the other. Following up on that strategy, between the third and the sixth sentences of this first paragraph the narration alternates between the human and the architectural characteristics ascribed to the character-narrator.

In the seventh and eighth sentences of this paragraph, Kafka operates a significant turn concerning the architectural scale: the narration leaps from the immediate context and the spatial components of the anthropo-morphized bridge to a geographical scale where it reveals itself in total isolation. These different scales reveal different levels of fragility in which the bridge exists, while transmitting a sensation of vertigo to the reader.

The last two sentences of the paragraph effect a change in the cadence of the narration, by shifting from the external characteristics of the bridge

and its context to its internal, psychological reality. The bridge declares that waiting is its only action, restricting it to a condition of reflection that leads it to state: *Without falling, no bridge, once spanned, can cease to be a bridge.* This statement, though, seems to reveal a more secret intention: to become a bridge so that it can immediately stop being one. If becoming a bridge depends on being crossed by someone, ceasing to be one could also result from that crossing. This anticipates the fate of the bridge, but also unravels the core of its *fragility-identity* device.

Aside from shifting our attention from the external to the internal aspects of the bridge, these last two sentences also transition us into the second paragraph, which is mainly composed of psychological *enoncés* and also sets the basis of the tale's plot.

Second paragraph: sound of footsteps from a possible first user of the bridge

- 01 • *It was toward evening one day* (time situation of the event)
- 02 • – *was it the first, was it the thousandth? I cannot tell – my thoughts were always in confusion and perpetually moving in a circle.* (declaration of the character's state of mind)
- 03 • *It was toward evening in summer,* (time and seasonal situation of the event)
- 04 • *the roar of the stream had grown deeper,* (hearing perception)
- 05 • *when I heard the sound of a human step!* (introduction of an eventual user in the form of a noise)
- 06 • *Straighten yourself, bridge, make ready, rail-less beams, to hold up the passenger entrusted to you* (typological auto-encouragement and hypothetical action)
- 07 • *If his steps are uncertain, steady them unobtrusively, but if he stumbles show what you are made of and like a mountain god hurl him across to land.* (hypothetical actions)

In this second paragraph the character-narrator's discourse changes radically: it no longer describes its physical characteristics, but rather its psychological reactions to the arrival of a user.

The first four sentences describe the environment where the event takes place: a summer night, dark and hot. Sight and touch are the senses involved. However, it is hearing that will take centre stage in the scene as the sound of the stream becomes evident, increasing the tension in the reader's mind, and is soon followed by a noise that suggests the arrival of a wayfarer. More important than these perceptions is the bridge's confusion explicitly stated in the second sentence, which becomes evident in this paragraph, and that will have a dramatic effect, not only in what follows, but in the reader's understanding of what has already been told. In fact, the reader's representation of the bridge and its architecture are affected by this part of the story. All subsequent architectural statements are affected by this revelation, which inevitably makes the reader suspicious of the bridge as a narrator. Its veracity and accuracy cannot be trusted, given its state of confusion.

The fifth sentence of this paragraph introduces the bridge's user, as a noise. Kafka generates suspense about the wayfarer's identity by deferring it, while increasing the bridge's uncertainty about its ability to perform like, and therefore actually be, a bridge. The event – the meeting of architecture and user – is delayed, keeping the narration focused on the bridge's inner world, as it waits.

In the following sentences (the sixth and seventh) the character-narrator's discourse shifts from perception to introspection: the bridge encourages itself to not let escape its first and possibly only chance of being used, and therefore of becoming its true and complete self. Never used, it appears to rehearse the lines of an instruction manual for bridges that tells it exactly what to do when crossed. The fundamental stability attributed to

architecture is thus called into question. The bridge's fragility reaches its highest and most critical level.

While this second paragraph is mostly focused on the bridge's psychology, its architectural qualities are still mentioned. In the sixth sentence we can still notice the presence of a physical detail that was not featured in the first paragraph. The bridge tells us that its beams are rail-less, which might render it unfit to perform. It declares itself not to be safe enough to accomplish its purpose and therefore it clearly sabotages its attempt to encourage itself to be a bridge by exposing one of its faults, which could lead to the failure of its own project. Confusion and fragility anticipate and reveal, once again, a secret wish to fail.

Third paragraph: event: the destruction of the bridge

- 01 • *He came*, (user's action)
- 02 • *he tapped me with the iron point of his stick*, (user's action),
- 03 • *then he lifted my coattails with it and put them in order upon me*. (user's action)
- 04 • *He plunged the point of his stick into my bushy hair and let it lie there for a long time*, (user's action)
- 05 • *forgetting me no doubt while he wildly gazed around him*. (user's action)
- 06 • *But then – I was just following him in thought over mountain and valley – he jumped with both feet on the middle of my body*. (user's action)
- 07 • *I shuddered with wild pain, not knowing what was happening*. (main character's sensation)
- 08 • *Who was it? A child? A dream? A wayfarer? A suicide? A tempter? A destroyer?* (main character's speculation about the identity of the user)
- 09 • *And I turned so as to see him*. (physical reaction of the character-architecture)
- 10 • *A bridge to turn around!* (exclamatory reiteration of the character's reaction)
- 11 • *I had not yet turned quite around when I already began to fall, I fell and*

in a moment I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water. (event conclusion: destruction of the bridge)

The third and final paragraph concerns the outcome of the event: the destruction of the bridge, which is also the murder of the main character and narrator of the story. Attention here is no longer on the bridge's physical characteristics and its surroundings, or on its psychology. Instead, this paragraph is devoted to the newcomer's actions on the bridge, and its reactions.

The first six sentences of this paragraph develop a sequence of actions in which the wayfarer interacts with the bridge. Almost immediately these actions shift from predictable to unexpected, which lead to the event itself, which Derrida defines as the 'surprise, [the] exposure, the unanticipable . . . the event is what comes, what happens'. This event in Kafkas short story is actually a misuse of architecture, and reveals the real identity of the newcomer, who is not a regular user, but actually its executioner.

The reactions of the bridge are consigned between the 'seventh and the eleventh sentences of the paragraph. It is here that the character-narrator reveals its astonishment with the way its first and only user proceeds, as it narrates its agony and the way it succumbs. This last scene is also the accomplishment of the event: the destruction of the bridge, which is (apparently) the exact opposite of what it expected: being crossed by a user and therefore becoming a bridge. Nevertheless, the way it expresses its end (*I was torn and transpierced by the sharp rocks which had always gazed up at me so peacefully from the rushing water*) suggests, for the third time in the narration, that this collapse was what it really wanted.

Conclusion

The two *aspects* from Genette's narratology that we developed in this article – *Voice* (situation) and *Order* (sequences) – must be considered as immanent components of every literary architecture. Changes in the situation of the narrator, or in the sequence in which architecture appears during the narration, result in substantial alterations of a literary architecture. Thus, literary architectures will be defined, not only by their physical aspects related to their presence within the diegesis (morphology, dimensions, etcetera), which only correspond to their *secondary form* (cf. Souriau); but also by the specific aspects related to the narrative strategy conceived by the author in which they are implied, and which correspond to their *primary form* (cf. Souriau).

Thus, literary architectures are never static or stable structures; rather, they are in flux, in dynamic transformation. Their complexity increases as the narration evolves. Like we've seen in Kafka's tale, the architecture a story starts in is never the same as that in which the story ends. As it crosses the narration, literary architectures will be unavoidably altered.

We have been able to establish the abundance of narrative instruments utilized by Kafka in his short story and the effects they cause. In *The Bridge*, a vertiginous experience of architecture serves to push the Czech writer's vision of identity and fragility to the limit.

- 1 'Dans les arts représentatifs, ou arts du second degré, la dualité ontologique de l'œuvre . . . entraîne une dualité formelle. Une partie de la forme concerne l'œuvre elle-même, qui, de ce point de vue possède (comme les arts du premier degré) une forme primaire. Mais il s'y trouve tout un autre jeu d'organisations morphologiques qui concernent les êtres suscités et posés par son discours [forme secondaire].' Translation: In the representative arts, or arts of the second degree, the ontological duality of the work . . . involves a formal duality. One part concerns the work itself, which, from this point of view has (like the [presentative arts or] arts of the first degree) a primary form. But there is a whole other set of morphological organizations which concern the beings aroused and posed by its discourse [secondary form]). Etienne Souriau, *La Correspondance des arts* (Paris: Flammarion, 1947), 88-89.
- 2 We must not forget the reader himself, as the forth agent of this *mediation*, who reads and interprets the text according to his sociocultural context, his sensitivity and his personal 'encyclopedia'.
- 3 'Toute la fantasmatique de la description et de la mimesis s'est édifié sur la dimension transitive de la représentation (représenter quelque chose) par oubli de son opacité réflexive et de ses modalités (se présenter).' Louis Marin, 'Mimesis et description', in: Louis Marin, *De la Représentation* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 1994), 255.
- 4 The *narrative* level of analysis of Literary Architectures is part of a larger method whose prototype was elaborated in my PhD dissertation on Comparative Literature, defended in November 2018 at the Université Paris VIII Vincennes Saint-Denis: *L'écrivain en architecte: La conception de l'architecture dans le texte littéraire et ses effets esthétiques et cognitifs* (Le Dépeupleur de Samuel Beckett et Le Terrier de Franz Kafka). This method was the product of combining existing elementary categories of architectural and literary analyses in order to constitute a compound device to study their (aesthetical) interactions and effects. Four *levels of conception* have been defined there: the first two detail the way architecture is organized within the diegesis of the literary work (the *secondary form* according to Souriau), and they are the *level* of conception of the architectural *object*, and the *level* of conception of the *experience* the characters make of it; the two other *levels* detail the way architecture is modulated, amplified, deformed and oriented by the artistic language (the *primary form* according to Souriau), and they are: the *level* of conception of the *narration* of the architectural object and the experience the characters make of it, and the *level* of conception of their *textualization*.

Because of the format of an academic article, the full method cannot be developed here. Nevertheless, each level is considered as an autonomous analysis entity.

- 5 '... en italien, on utilise un mot très juste, intreccio, la tresse. Cette tresse, cette intrigue, ne permet pas seulement de rassembler des événements, mais aussi des aspects de l'action, et, en particulière, des manières de la produire, avec des causes, des raisons d'agir, et aussi des hasards.' Paul Ricœur, 'Architecture et Narrativité', *Urbanisme* 303 (1998), 47.
- 6 'Cette nécessité de découper la richesse des événements en torons distincts, qu'on rajuste par fragments les uns aux autres pour en faire une nouvelle arabesque continue... voici une des actions artistiques les plus concrètes à la fois et les plus essentielles esthétiquement dans l'art du roman.' Souriau, *La Correspondance*, op. cit. (note 1), 124.
- 7 'La lecture du portrait "réaliste" n'est pas réaliste: c'est une lecture cubiste, les sens sont des cubes entassés, décalés, juxtaposés et cependant mordant les uns sur les autres.' Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970/2002), 67-68. Quoted by Luz Aurora Pimentel, *El Espacio en la ficción: Ficciones espaciales* (Mexico City/Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2001), 18-19.
- 8 English translation by Willa and Edwin Muir, 1931.
- 9 '... les relations entre le narrateur et l'histoire qu'il raconte.' Gérard Genette, *Discours du récit et Nouveau discours du récit* (Paris: Seuil, coll. Points, 1972/2007), 219-222.
- 10 '... relations étroites entre le récit, ses protagonistes et ses détermination spatio-temporelles.' Ibid., 219-222.
- 11 'Une restriction de "champ", c'est-à-dire en fait une sélection de l'information narrative [et] l'instrument de cette (éventuelle) sélection est un foyer situé, une sorte de goulot d'informations, qui n'en laisse passer que ce qu'autorise la situation.' Ibid., 348.
- 12 'Le récit à focalisation interne (fixe, variable ou multiple), le récit à focalisation externe et le récit non-focalisé ou à focalisation zéro.' Ibid., 206-207.
- 13 We say *usually* because it is possible to find stories (even if they are very rare) whose narrator is in fact homodiegetic with an external focalization, as is the case of the novel *La Jalousie* by Alain Robbe-Grillet.
- 14 'Etudier l'ordre temporel d'un récit, c'est confronter l'ordre de disposition des événements ou segments temporels dans le discours narratif à l'ordre de succession de ces mêmes événements ou segments temporels dans l'histoire, en tant qu'il est explicitement indiqué par le récit lui-même, ou qu'on peut l'inférer de tel ou tel indice indirect.' Ibid., 23.

- 15 'L'analyse temporelle d'un texte consiste d'abord à en dénombrer les segments selon les changements dans le temps de l'histoire.' Ibid., 26.
- 16 Blake Lee Spahr, defines the parts of *The Bridge* as: 'Expectation, Experience and Failure'. Blake Lee Spahr, 'Franz Kafka: The Bridge and the Abyss', *Modern Fiction Studies* 8/1 (1962), 3-15.
- 17 'Et qu'est-ce que la fragilité sinon une certaine probabilité de non-être pour un être donné dans des circonstances déterminées? Un être est fragile s'il porte en son être une probabilité définie de non-être.' Translation: And what is fragility if not a certain probability of non-being for a given being in specific circumstances? A being is fragile if he carries within his being a definite probability of non-being. Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1943), 42.
- 18 Which are, for Phillippe Boudon, the very essential acts of architectural conception. Philippe Boudon, *Sur l'espace architectural* (Marseilles: Éditions Parenthèses, 2003).
- 19 'Un événement suppose la surprise, l'exposition, l'inanticipable . . . l'événement est ce qui vient, ce qui arrive.' Jacques Derrida in: Jacques Derrida, Gad Soussana and Alexis Nouss, *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible? Séminaire de Montréal: Pour Jacques Derrida* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 81 and 84.

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Thick Photographic Descriptions

Another Way of Telling Danish Welfare Landscapes

Kristen van Haeren

Welfare Landscapes

Following the Second World War, wellbeing became a key dimension of the emerging Scandinavian, or 'universal', welfare state model adopted in Denmark, where social equality was prioritized by an enlarged public sector in which basic services were financed through taxation¹. Such was the post-war vision for Copenhagen, emphasizing the 'creation of a city with as

healthy and altogether good and ideal living conditions as possible². Housing was a cornerstone of this good life vision³, thus it is arguably no coincidence that the ideas about welfare are quite similar to those about social housing. In Danish, 'social housing' (*almene boliger*) means general housing, which can be literally translated as 'housing for all', which describes how the system was designed to provide a residence for anyone, regardless of age, ability, financial status or family composition. Essentially, the concepts of welfare and social housing construction are based on the same fundamental idea of establishing a good life for every citizen. This paper explores how 'nature' – in the form of the landscapes of these housing estates – was a central part of this vision: moving away from being regarded as a peripheral escape or protected scenic area as it was in the past, to being valued as an essential amenity and common ground for the creation of the new welfare vision for all. As such, this paper refers to the green spaces of social housing estates as 'welfare landscapes'⁴.

'Welfare landscapes' is a single expression that tells a big story: living arrangements conceived on the basis of contested and locally negotiated ideas about welfare that attempted to materialize ideals of wellbeing that had never been constructed before. However, the consistent reference to the areas surrounding the architectural constructions over time as 'green open spaces', or 'free' or 'open' areas (*friarealer*),⁵ obscures meaningful differences among what I argue are nuanced and diverse, green and grey, open and enclosed spaces. Furthermore, and likely as a result, these landscapes and their existing spatial qualities – the areas, elements and changing materialities that characterize them – are rarely articulated in the stories commonly told today, and are seldom acknowledged in the contemporary Danish regenerative efforts taking place within these social housing estates. The focus and priority of regenerative efforts given to architectural and densification approaches pays little attention to embedded and unique values of the welfare landscapes, or for site-specific and contextual narratives related to nature.⁶

We need new ways of seeing and communicating the value of these landscaped spaces in light of their central role in the idealized vision, and practical reality, of the 'good life'. While many people may continue to desire to live in these green housing environments, little is known of their unique design history and vision.⁷ Consequently, this paper brings to the foreground these overlooked landscapes of Danish social housing programmes in order to show how nature was moulded by social, cultural and (landscape) architectural currents and aspirations at the time – each site a materialization of local 'good life' visions still present in the landscapes we walk today. Through an analysis of, and engagement with, historical documents – as well as situated photographic modes of inquiry – this investigation into welfare landscapes focuses on the less-acknowledged but vital forces that shape the green outdoor areas of the housing estates, framing details to emphasize the specificity of place and depicting a landscape for living where humans were central. This way of working can offer insights into multifarious spatial grounds, diverse interpretations of green spaces, and the construction of humane living environments designed for access to nature – but also provide civic opportunities and affordances for gathering, play, community, privacy, personal development and the like – all within these welfare landscapes.

Polemic Dialogues – Thick Descriptions

The aim has been to enhance the specificity and contextuality of these green spaces – giving value to the nuances, idiosyncrasies and the local, situated character of the landscapes – and to find ways of addressing nature that can enable an understanding of landscapes as, borrowing from Anne Whiston Spirn, arenas of polemic dialogues, made up of multiple meanings, various interpretations and diverse perspectives.⁸ By articulating the negotiated nature of welfare landscapes as a materialization of an incipient vision of 'the good life', the possible futures for these Danish social housing sites may be imagined in dialogue with detailed and situated landscape readings, acknowledging what I refer to as the *thickness* of the landscape.

Originating in the field of anthropology, thick description was developed by Clifford Geertz in his book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, where he outlined the need for descriptions to go beyond scientific facts and surface appearances. He argued for the insertion of details, context and history into descriptive accounts in order to reveal the vital, intricate and layered quality of cultures – or in this case, the Danish social housing sites.⁹ However, it is not exhaustive coverage that makes a description ‘thick’ – it is not simply amassing details – rather, as a hermeneutical practice, thick description is a creative act of interpretation that becomes thick through bringing together and identifying the multiplicity of relations among aspects, elements and perspectives that manifest themselves in the subject of analysis. Thick description is thus both an act of clarifying and mediating the world – *grasping* the maze of perspectives and *rendering* them anew.¹⁰ It is an act of making in the present that addresses the past and fosters new ideas for the future.

In recent years, a few researchers in the fields of landscape/architecture have adopted ‘thick’ to describe theories and methodologies designed to challenge the linearity, singularity or stability of time and/or space. Jeremy Till argues for the impossibility of placing time into categories, therefore making it ‘thick’, lived and providing space for the unfolding of action.¹¹ In the same anthology, Iain Borden too implements ‘thick’ to explore the space of negotiation that architectural boundaries present, thereby addressing the many sociopolitical entities that are involved in the determination of the edge.¹² The usage of ‘thick’ also extends methodologically to artist and landscape architect Catherine Dee’s ‘thick drawing’ as a poetic critical approach for embodied landscape studies in order to reveal the complexity of ‘what is really going on’.¹³ Urban landscape historian Tharisa Way implements thickness in traditional architectural drafting methods to create ‘thick sections’ in order to visualize the complex layers of history beyond what is seen on the surface of abandoned industrial landscape sites.¹⁴ In line with these researchers, by rendering ‘thick’ photographic

descriptions of the Danish housing estates Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt, built respectively in the 1950s and in the 1970s, I intend to engage with the polemic nature of the landscapes and their layered and unique design history, engaging in a close looking of the material particularities that speak to the welfare visions of these housing landscapes.

In order to understand the polemic nature of the Danish welfare landscapes I have first of all attempted to take a generous view of varied perspectives, histories, details, spaces and ideals to see what they can offer. I did so by consulting archival material and historical sources pertaining to the sites' construction. Secondly, I have engaged in spatial analysis through photography and visual modes of inquiry to consider the physical materiality and spatial qualities of the landscapes.¹⁵ Thirdly, I have placed these two ways of knowing and working together by creating photographic essays, allowing immaterial and material, past and present, histories and on-the-ground discoveries to come together to create descriptions of the welfare landscapes that are *thicker* than any history of forms or figure-ground spatial analysis could depict. I consider this to be a process of *grasping* and *rendering* akin to the practice of creating thick descriptions. A *grasping* of the historical context, intentions, currents and my own on-the-ground perspectives, followed by the *rendering* of these insights into objects of mediation that provoke a rethinking of welfare landscapes. Together these methods of essentially collecting and creating offer the possibility to broaden understandings of often oversimplified green spaces by enabling diverse perspectives, insights and intentions to articulate the vital role of welfare landscapes and their spatial composition in the making of 'the good life'.

For me, creating thick descriptions amounts to 'another way of telling' welfare landscapes – a phrase adopted from photographer and author John Berger, who uses photography as a visual means to reveal and create new connections with the world around us. Adopting a standpoint from landscape studies, this approach presents an alternative perspective on Danish

social housing estates combining spatial and historical analysis through a combined photo-textual inquiry. By 'thickening' modes of telling – or describing – with photography, there is an opportunity to sensitize and ground in the visual and physical landscape that which is hard to grasp: the societal and designerly intentions and aspirations as well as how they played out through the site's conceptualization and construction; revealing how welfare visions materialized as welfare landscapes. I propose this approach as an alternative to other studies of post-war housing estates that focus on architectural forms, prioritize morphological analysis, or remain in the abstract realm of the conceptual structures of welfare.¹⁶ By rendering thicker descriptions, providing diverse perspectives and combining visual and textual ways of telling, this contribution proposes to emphasize the importance of looking and to contribute to new ways of seeing and understanding the multifarious nature of the Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt landscapes as human-centred environments for wellbeing.

Photographic Modes of Landscape Inquiry

Bringing thick description into landscape studies provides an opportunity to facilitate a re-evaluation of the medium in which thick descriptions and cultural and historical investigations are undertaken. On the one hand, psychologist and author Joseph Ponterotto asserts that thick description is an undefined and ambiguous method, which he argues can make it generalized within many of the fields in which it is implemented.¹⁷ On the other hand, however, I propose that this very openness of thick description, which resists a formalizing language, enables it to be a means of both exploration and visual-descriptive ingenuity. This is specifically advantageous in the field of landscape architecture, where many of the qualities and characteristics of the natural environment often elude adequate representation in words, yet remain the most characteristic aspects of landscapes. James Corner describes how some of the most distinguishing features of landscapes – their spatial, material and temporal qualities – often fall to the wayside of textual descriptions, yet remain essential to landscape understandings.¹⁸

Accordingly, my approach to integrating photography into thick descriptions addresses other common critiques of the method and its over-emphasis on the symbolic.¹⁹ Welfare landscapes are more than symbolic spaces into which meanings can be read – they are the real, material, spatial, dynamic and temporal spaces, as I attempt to show through photographic modes of inquiry. Material culture researchers Þóra Pétursdóttir and Bjørnar Olsen have described photography as ‘an engagement with or a way of approaching things, as well as a way to mediate these engagements – a way, moreover, that is able to express aspects of engagement, and of things and spaces themselves, that text cannot accomplish alone’.²⁰ My explorations draw inspiration from their use of photography as an alternative way to grasp and produce knowledge,²¹ specifically in relation to lived experience, which endures and remains continuously accessible in the photograph, forever open to new encounters.²² Through the lens I engage in a spatial analysis of these sites today, using the camera as a means of empirical and critical analysis to see, think about, reflect upon and question what is really going on. In line with T.J. Clark’s call for more attentive practices of looking,²³ photography reminds us to pause and look in the fast-paced visual age of today, allowing value to be placed on the elusiveness of the landscapes and their resistance to being tied down only to definitions, categorizations or singularity. Through photographs composed into an unfolding visual narrative accompanied by archival quotes, I address and articulate essences, elements and stories – discerning patterns and relations, investigating the current situation as it unfolds in the lived space of the welfare landscapes and revealing what lays behind the surface of green and beautiful scenes.

The photographic postproduction process is an in-depth engagement with the gathered material and a central part in formulating thick photographic descriptions. More than ‘the touch of a finger’ as Susan Sontag has rather dismissively referred to photography,²⁴ among other things it involves analysing, selecting, printing, pairing and sequencing, all of which facilitate the remaking and revisioning of landscapes. For this study, postproduction

consisted of printing, cutting and laying out hundreds of images across multiple table surfaces, enabling the multifarious nature of the landscapes to come into sight, eventually leading to the creation of pairs, made into sequences and linked to quotations taken from the archives. Alongside the visual narrative these quotes emphasize the multiplicity of small elements, the dynamics of nature and the varied intentions that yield these welfare landscapes. The quotations are derived from professional journals, planning documents, historical records, housing association booklets, residents' magazines and the like, in which the intentions, idealizations and impressions of the landscapes as they were first conceptualized and constructed are found. The voices cited include architects, landscape architects, historians, engineers, planners and residents – those involved in the conception of the site, the design of its elements and the intentions for the area – and others that looked on from outside at the time. Thereby, within each page of the photo essays, there is a cross-dialogue: between photographs and text, between material encounters and immaterial intentions, between present and past, and between my own insights *in* the site and historical insights *on* the site. The *thickness* that the photo essays depict is thus but part of the result – it is the knowledge they provide of the inherent spatial qualities of these landscapes and the links they create between the materialization of the landscape and the good life that I argue allows them to serve as a resource when rethinking Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt in the future.

Another Way of Telling: Excerpts

The Bellahøj housing estate was built between 1951 and 1956, designed by young architects Morgens Irming and Tage Nielsen, who were winners of the 1944 architecture competition. 28 tower-blocks with a two-tower structure containing more than 1,300 apartment units were connected by an open, 'pastoral' landscape designed by Carl Theodor Sørensen, who incorporated the history of the existing site – including the historical farm house and ancient burial mounds – into his design, balancing a functional modern housing environment on the shoulders of the past.



Fig. 1. The Bellahøj housing estate.

Farum Midtpunkt was constructed 30 years after Bellahøj, between 1970 and 1974. The 24 stacked but low-laying blocks designed by Fællestegnes-tuen architects arranged living units in a stepped structure elevated off the ground, allowing parking to be situated below and green to be placed in between and to reach up onto the upper floors. Through the work of landscape architects Ole Nørgård and Søren Harboe, Farum Midtpunkt became a city by the open landscape, connecting an urban feel with forests and fields.

Picturing Green and The Good Life

The thick descriptions of Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt yield new understandings of the various and embedded meanings and idealizations for the good life, but also reveal how ideals for living in the landscape and establishing a wellbeing society shifted and changed over time. Despite sharing the foundational desire to establish a place to house thousands in better and greener living environments, these two landscapes also manifested meaningful differences in their conceptualization, design, construction and sought-after spatial qualities by pursuing wellbeing in distinct and differing ways.

Different ideals altered these welfare landscapes quite distinctly: from an open park-like setting with undulating hills and winding paths at Bellahøj, to street-like circulation through different, enclosed and nuanced spaces for various uses and users at Farum Midtpunkt. From dispersed towers in the sky that provided more air, sunlight and access to the changing weather to staggered blocks close and low to the ground, integrating green right up to the topmost floors; from preserving the existing history and terrain of the landscape to designing a landscape filled with new life, intended to grow and grow. Both Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt were 'green cities', and both attempted to construct innovative living environments that would provide the best opportunities for their residents' wellbeing, yet both pursued these objectives through different landscape materializations and in response to changing societal desires.



Fig.2-4. Farum Midtpunkt housing estate.



Fig. 5-7. Farum Midtpunkt housing estate.



Fig. 8. Photo-Essay Farum Midtpunkt housing estate.

The Bellahøj photo essay brings the reader into a landscape that was seen as a place where past and present, separate spaces, elements and diverse people met and overlapped. The site as a whole, pastoral and park-like, surrounds one with the promise of everyday healthy living, its emphasis on the provision of sunlight and open spaces, which resulted in a shared, transparent and immersive common ground. Bellahøj, much more than the construction of new homes, was a vision for living where a high-quality residential environment could provide a strong foundation for the wellbeing that was idealized after the precarious societal conditions of the 1950s. The landscape in the form of an undulating green field is open and orienting, providing freedom, equality and transparency, and cultivating a shared sense of responsibility and opportunity for human development. The undulating green scene became a negotiated ground for modern functions and human-centred visions, accommodating parking spaces, roads and new ideas for childcare and community. A balancing of aesthetics and use, the landscape guides one along winding paths, but also offers shelter, niches for gathering and opportunities for play throughout the site.

Alternatively, through shifting views and diverse green scenes, Farum Midtpunkt's photo essay depicts a landscape seen as a resource for manipulation, as a remedy for monotonous forms, and as a new way to combine rural and urban ideals. The 'close-open' ideal depicted in the grid-like housing blocks encompassed by a fractured and differentiated green creates varied spatial opportunities, ostensibly providing space enough to be by yourself and to be among the many. The ideals of growth and cultivation extended to plants and people, encouraging both lushness and community respectively to develop and come into their own. The landscape itself was thus seen as a green happening of sorts that develops over time. Democracy, unable to grow out of thin air, is accommodated in these varied landscape spaces across a shared horizontal plane designed to encourage connections, without losing sight of the possibility for privacy and intimacy within apartment terrace gardens. The landscape provides community

opportunity and accommodates diverse individual initiatives. It links the architectural forms and the surrounding environment as well as delimits spaces for diverse uses; connecting and dividing the site, reflecting desires for difference and alterity in the 1970s vision of the good life.

Together the photographs, associated in sequence and paired with texts, create a layered ground showing the landscapes not only as open fields but also as balconies, amphitheatres, pedestrian streets, etcetera. By addressing this inclusive view of landscape, the camera can bring greater sensitivity and specificity, attentiveness and alertness, to landscape analysis. By introducing photography into these thick descriptions, these present day 'renderings' prove their more than documentary role: transforming objects of encounter into constructed narratives.²⁵ These tellings are given back to readers through perspectives that attend to how welfare ideals have unfolded in these landscapes – an informed view through which future welfare landscapes can be imagined, providing more specific understandings and encouraging more connected design strategies.

Imag(in)ing Green Futures

The photo essays present an investigation of the past and how it looked towards the future from the viewpoint of the present, through descriptions of the richness of these landscapes as they are experienced today. I argue that these insights into Bellahøj's and Farum Midtpunkt's landscapes are not now, nor were they ever, peripheral to the disciplinary discourse about Danish social housing sites: they have simply gone largely unnoticed, and have not been effectively communicated through current, commonly told stories of these estates. In other words, the landscape presence is evident in the reading of the archival material, in the landscape journal articles, the resident-produced magazines and housing association newspapers. The landscape itself additionally has an undeniable presence when one is on site: it forms the spaces for circulation, surrounds the bases and fills the 'betweens' of the buildings – cascading vertically from the terraces at

Farum Midtpunkt, and horizontally gripping the Bellahøj site as a whole. The introduction of landscapes into current discussions of welfare housing sites helps to reveal the inherent qualities and multivalent values of nature as vitally contributing to a wellbeing future envisioned in post-war Denmark, enlarging the limited dialogue surrounding the 'green open spaces'.

In conclusion, the inclusive and transdisciplinary quality of thick photo-textual descriptions affords an opportunity to rethink, represent and retell these welfare landscapes, beyond existing frameworks structured by conventional architectural drawings, urban maps, surveys and quantitative data. The photo essays embrace inclusive perspectives, working across the landscape scale, and speak to the varied qualities of these sites today, and the immaterial ideas and ideals behind their conceptualization and materialization. Bringing this anthropological approach to an investigation of landscapes directs focus to the cultural, social and professional meanings that shaped the landscapes of Bellahøj and Farum Midtpunkt, giving voice to values that, until now, have largely lived on silently. The intention is not to abandon what is familiar, but rather to look further 'into' instead of 'at' our everyday green environments: embarking on a journey into the thickness of these welfare landscapes. While the selected archival materials and photographic modes of inquiry presented here reveal new insights and connections to welfare landscapes and their imaginary, I believe there to be future promise for this project in the integration of additional voices and sources, such as those of the residents and one's own experience moving through the landscape, further articulating the layered and only ever 'thickening' quality of the landscape over time.

As such, this work is intended to serve as a source of information, expanding the dialogue surrounding the welfare landscapes, and is not by any means a conclusion or a final depiction of such. Geertz described the intention of creating thick descriptions as simply to reduce the opacity of

the given: to clarify and mediate the world.²⁶ My hope is that this landscape view can provide a point of reference for further analysis, informing current exchanges and future decisions about Danish social housing projects so as to acknowledge, feature and cultivate these varied qualities of welfare landscapes.

- 1 The model is based on the idea that everyone has a right to welfare and the possibility of the good life, described in Gøsta Esping-Andersen's seminal text. Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).
- 2 Sven Aakjær, Mogens Lebech and Otto Norn, 'Yderkvarterernes Bebyggelse', in: *København før og nu* (Copenhagen: Hassings Forlag, 1950), 165-166; B5.
- 3 Ellen Braae, 'Welfare Landscapes and Communities', in: Katrine Lotz et al. (eds.), *Forming Welfare* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2017), 47.
- 4 This assertion is a shared perspective and point of departure for the development and research of the entire Welfare Landscapes research project that I am a part of, undertaken by: Ellen Braae, Asbjørn Jessen, Lærke Keil, Svava Riesto, Henriette Steiner and Anne Tietjen, entitled 'Reconfiguring Welfare Landscapes' (Welland) at the University of Copenhagen (2017-2019), <https://ign.ku.dk/english/welland/>.
- 5 For examples using this terminology see: Sverre Eske Kristensen, 'Konkurrencen om Bebyggelse paa Bellahøj', *Arkitekten* (1945), 16; Lars Cramer-Petersen, Svend Limkilde and Ole Thomassen, *Grøndalskvarteret: Fra Grøndalsvænge til Bellahøj: Byplanlægning og bebyggelse af et københavnsk forstadsområde 1915-50* (Copenhagen: Brønshøj Museum, 1992), 20; E.V. Jensen and H. Lundgren, 'Byggegrundsundersøgelserne for punkthusene på Bellahøj', in: *Bellahøjhusbyggeri: Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut Studie Nr. 15* (Copenhagen:

- Teknisk Forlag, 1954), 9; Skov- og Naturstyrelsen Miljø- og Energiministeriet, *Bydelsatlas Brønshøj-Husum* (Copenhagen: Københavns Kommune, 1995); Gro Lemberg, 'Dialektik i det fysiske miljø - belyst ved Farum Midtpunkt / Af Kai Lemberg og Gro Lemberg', *Nordisk Psykologi* 28 (1976), 130-139; Tyge Arnfred, 'Farum Midtpunkt', *Fællestegnesteuen et Arkitektværksted* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 1998), 32; Erik Mortensen, *Farum Midtpunkt* (Copenhagen: Farums Arkiver & Museer, 1995).
- 6 Poul Bæk Pedersen, *Arkitektur og plan i den danske velfærdsby 1950-1990 container og urbant raster* (Århus: Arkitektskolens Forlag, 2005); Poul Sverrild, *Velfærdssamfundets bygninger: Bygningskulturens Dag* (Copenhagen: Kulturarvsstyrelsen, 2008).
 - 7 This situation is not unique to Danish social housing sites, but resonates with other and international and historical living environments, including Frederik law Olmsted's and Calvert Vaux's Riverside 'suburban village' project (1869), which was designed to provide a rural atmosphere to ease the stresses of urban life. The nuances of the site's intentions and its significant history are largely unknown, yet its preservation depends on understanding and promoting its unique design. See Sarah Faiks et al., *Revisiting Riverside: A Frederik Law Olmsted Community* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001).
 - 8 Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 244, emphasis added.
 - 9 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973).
 - 10 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 98; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 49.
 - 11 Jeremy Till, 'Thick Time', in: Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds.), *Intersections* (London: Routledge, 2000), 156-183.
 - 12 Ian Borden, 'Thick Edge: Architectural Boundaries in the Postmodern Metropolis', in: Iain Borden and Jane Rendell (eds.), *Intersections* (London: Routledge, 2000), 221-246.
 - 13 Catherine Dee, 'Poetic-Critical Drawing in Landscape Architecture', *Topos: Landscape Architecture and Criticism* 49 (2004), 58-65.
 - 14 Thaïsa Way, 'Landscapes of Industrial Excess: A Thick Sections Approach to Gas Works Park', *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 8/1 (2013), 28-39.
 - 15 This paper's approach to spatial analysis is different than a typically architectural spatial analysis that studies the composition and organization of spatial shapes,

structures and typologies usually approached through an investigation of plan drawings. This can be seen in methods of typo-morphology or spatial syntax analysis. See, respectively: A.V. Moudon, 'Getting to Know the Built Landscape: Typomorphology', in: K.A. Franck and L.H. Schneekloth (eds.), *Ordering Space: Types in Architecture and Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994), 289-311; and B. Hillier and J. Hanson, *The Social Logic of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

- 16 I do not propose to challenge these studies but provide an alternative perspective into the welfare landscapes. Pedersen, *Arkitektur og plan i den danske velfærdsby*, op. cit. (note 6); Asbjørn Jessen and Anne Tietjen, 'Reconfiguring Welfare Landscapes: A Spatial Typology', in: *24th ISUF International Conference- City and Territory in the Globalization Age* (Valencia, 2017); Niels Albertsen and Bülent Diken, 'Welfare and the City', *Nordisk Arkitekturforskning* 2 (2004), 7-22.
- 17 Joseph G. Ponterotto, 'Brief Note on the Origins, Evolution and Meaning of the Qualitative Research Concept Thick Description', *The Qualitative Report* 11/3 (2006), 541.
- 18 Qualities such as the density of spaces, the relation of forms, the dynamic and seasonal growth, the diverse scales. James Corner, 'Drawing and Making in the Landscape Medium', in: Alison Hirsch (ed.), *The Landscape Imagination* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014), 165.
- 19 Sherry B. Ortner, 'Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26/1 (1984), 126-166.
- 20 Þóra Pétursdóttir and Bjørnar Olsen, 'Imaging Modern Decay: The Aesthetics of Ruin Photography', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 1/1 (2014), 16.
- 21 Ibid., 17.
- 22 Ibid., 20.
- 23 T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 24 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 69.
- 25 This understanding of photography's role is in line with Frederik Bohrer's approach to archeological photography, seeing it as providing a 'physiognomic' vision capable of gathering together disparate remains in one place and transporting viewers to distant sites through constructed subjective narratives. See: Frederik Bohrer, *Photography and Archaeology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).
- 26 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 98; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 49.

City of Words

A Multimodal Collaboration in 'Writing Urban Places'

Luc Pauwels and Anna Ryan Moloney

A Meeting of Disciplines, Geographies and Modes of Expression

This contribution is a collaborative effort of two scholars from different disciplinary and geographic backgrounds united by their interest in producing and communicating urban narratives. They met briefly at a one-day meeting – held in Limerick in December 2019 – of the EU COST Action 'Writing Urban Places' and decided to explore the possibility of a collaboration on this issue. Luc Pauwels is a visual sociologist and communication scientist from Belgium specialized in visual research methods and urban photography. Anna Ryan is an architect and cultural geographer from Ireland with a particular interest in modes of writing. Their partnership resulted in an experiment that combines aspects of different research and communication methods into a hybrid end result: a collaborative multimodal essay.

First, the methodological particularities of this collaborative effort will be discussed and situated within a number of established and emerging

visual methods: the blending of methods, the researcher's roles, the distinct modes of expression and the different positions vis-à-vis the site under scrutiny ('visitor' versus 'resident'; 'outsider' versus 'insider'). This section will then be followed by the actual multimodal essay on the city of Limerick as a distinct form of scholarly communication balancing between art and science.

A Methodological Note: Mixing Methods, Roles and Perspectives

Visual social research methods have been used productively to examine the urban context, aspects of its material culture as well as human behaviour and experiences. Cities and city life indeed can be examined in meaningful ways through observing behaviour in public places and by interrogating the visible features of urban spaces as social and cultural expressions of past and present intents of a multitude of agents.¹ Visual methods encompass the careful collection and analysis of existing or 'found' visual data of a variety of sources (such as historical photographs, family pictures, news photographs, street photography, to artistic photos and other art objects, feature films, real estate pictures, magazine illustrations, drawings, architectural plans, maps, land use plans, CCTV footage, Google Earth views, advertisements, 3D renderings and so on), to the production of new visual materials by the researcher. They also include approaches that try to more actively involve the field under study by using visual materials in interview situations in order to trigger partly unanticipated factual information and projective comments ('visual elicitation'), or to prompt the subjects of research to become producers of their own visual data and views ('respondent-generated visuals') for scholarly or activist purposes. Finally, these visual scholarly practices also include innovative ways to 'communicate' insight into culture and society in novel ways (through data visualizations, visual essays, films and multimedia products).²

The purposefully produced photographs in the ensuing visual or multimodal essay fall into the category of 'researcher-produced imagery',³ a dominant



mode within 'visual sociology' that comprises primarily all of the applications in which a visual recording device (often, but not always, a camera) is used by the researcher for documenting or expressing meaningful aspects of visual reality, which then can become a kind of newly created visual 'data'.

The sampling method used to produce these images is clearly 'opportunistic' as the photographer just took images of what caught his attention or interest while meandering for a limited amount of time through an unfamiliar city.⁴ As such an approach is considered a first 'exploratory' phase, so a detailed 'shooting script', which is often recommended in researcher-produced image production and stipulates precisely what will be recorded from what standpoint at what time, was not required nor feasible.⁵ Yet there clearly was a focus – though not an exclusive one – on words and short texts in public space as symptomatic markers issued by a variety of actors and instances over time. These snippets of 'found texts' in relation to their visible environment help to channel particular readings of the image and serve as an important aid to narrate the city, be it in a rather disjunctive way.

The images that have been purposefully produced for this multimodal essay predominantly have a documentary character, though they do try to combine both 'mimetic' aspects (geared towards detailed reproduction, description) and expressive elements (adding a vision to the depicted matter). These images were then handed over to Anna as stimulus material for triggering her verbal reactions and comments. In this respect, as second visual method was initiated known as 'photo-elicitation' or more generally 'visual elicitation' (since drawings, films or 3D-printed materials can also be used as stimuli). The central idea behind photo-elicitation is that visual materials trigger the viewer/respondent to start to share factual information on the depicted as well as offer deeper and personal observations and views. The photographs thus seem to ask the questions

while the knowledgeable respondents do not feel like they are being interrogated, rather they feel challenged in a more positive way to share their knowledge, experiences and viewpoints as 'experts' in the field.

Obviously, Anna was not a mere 'respondent' to the visual stimuli but a collaborator of the combined end product. Nor are the photographs meant as mere stimuli to generate verbalized opinions, views and feelings, to be put aside afterwards, as is customary for this method, but as indispensable parts of the end product.⁶ In this respect one could say that the roles of researcher and researched are blurred and hybrid, a trait that is becoming more and more prominent in contemporary research, but that should not discharge scholars from the effort to develop an analytical and reflexive stance.⁷

The collaborative experiment not only involves an outsider and insider view, but also the use of two very different but highly complementary expressive systems: words and images. In 'photopoetry' and 'photo-text' traditions as described and theorized by Michael Nott, the 'collaborative mode' seems the most dominant, while 'visual essays' in the social sciences are more often 'self-collaborative' or 'cumulative' in nature (the same author being both the image producer and the writer).⁸ Moreover, the collaborative practices of photopoetry and photo-texts are often 'retrospective', which implies that either the texts (frequently poems) or the images existed long before they were picked up and paired with the other mode of expression. The multimodal essay presented here combines elements of both the photopoetry traditions and the social science practises as it is clearly 'collaborative' and its constituting parts – the words and images – were envisioned from the start to work in tandem. Our approach is even more collaborative in the true sense of the word, since both authors were actively involved in the creation of the end product, whereas photopoetry often implies the absence of one of the authors. To some extent the multimodal essay could be seen as ekphrastic poetry or an ekphrastic narrative, in that the words vividly and

expressively elucidate what is presented in the images. But the text goes well beyond what is visually documented and expressed. This is where the power of the image to elicit associations and interpretations becomes apparent. The visuals thus both act as reflections of an inner world (of makers and respondents/viewers) and as partial depictions of a momentary reality.

Photography is known for its strong mimetic and indexical powers, while it also has a whole range of expressive capabilities mainly brought into effect by a thoughtful combination of numerous formal choices. However, it seems that far more attention has been given by scholars to challenging the visual (in particular photographic images) as a source of deception and repression, than to trying to understand its potential for disclosing and communicating aspects of the world. Exemplary in this regard is Susan Sontag's book *On Photography*⁹ of which W.J.T. Mitchell notes that it could more aptly have been called *Against Photography*.¹⁰ Of course visual scholars and citizens alike should be duly aware of the epistemological consequences of distinct technologies and practices, and of the fact that images provide at best a highly reduced and arranged 'version' of reality. But it is also important to emphasize that the 'visual' aspect of our world does not manifest itself uniquely in visual media products: it actively infuses our daily life in most of its facets. Visual culture includes visual objects and 'performances' of a varied nature, for example buildings, statues, fashion and numerous forms of interaction, which are accessible through direct observation with several of our senses.¹¹

Words, in particular as combined in sentences, are powerful means to temporarily 'anchor' or channel the meaning of images that remain otherwise polysemous.¹² But they can also expand beyond the immediate and concrete image content and thus establish a more complementary relationship, able to address issues in a more generalized sense.¹³ Textual



messages can move seamlessly from factual and precise descriptions to very poetic, evocative and engaged accounts.

Narrating Limerick: A Multimodal Essay

The following pages include the result of the above-discussed collaborative effort, presented as a 'multimodal essay', an emerging scholarly format whose main challenge resides in the skilful production and synergetic combination of visual materials with other signifiers – words, layout and design – adding up to an expressive scholarly statement.¹⁴

The photographs of the multimodal essay were taken by Luc, a first-time visitor to the city of Limerick, in Ireland, as a way to come to know and then narrate a view of this new place. Over the course of two dark, wet and windy days, close to the shortest day of the year, he walked, unguided, through various parts of the city, photographing as he went. The focus of Luc's photographs is, as stated before, on found texts in public space, single words or short lines of text and their present context of actuality or as remnants of past intentions.

For Anna, these are not the 'official' kind of city pictures found in tourist brochures: river nor castle nor cathedral is present. This is a walk of edges and centres, of a photographer's search for a particular aspect of life – a viewpoint on the way urban culture is written out on the city's surfaces, as seen through the lens of a camera. That which is left in and out of the frame is careful and precise. The images tell certain stories of the city; the post-scripts of words add and complicate the layers of these stories.

The extended captions to the selected photographs have been written by Anna as direct responses to specific photographs selected from Luc's journey around the city by foot. For Luc, it was fascinating to find out which of the images Anna would select to comment upon, what the nature of

those comments would be, both in form and content, and how they would resonate with the images.

Anna has been working in Limerick for 13 years, living in the city centre for nine of those. By looking at a familiar place through the eyes of another, for Anna the words have become a way to expand beyond the frame of the photograph, adding and contextualizing the stories of the city told, or rather suggested, by the photographs.

After the initial round of sharing photographs and texts, the authors discussed which images and textual parts seemed to work and which did not, how they should be ordered to tell the story, the typography of the texts and the overall layout.

Obviously, any portrait of a city is ever-incomplete. What follows are pieces of Limerick, fragments of the city, vignettes, even, offered in the context of the above described positions.

When arriving in any new city by train, anticipation builds. Fellow passengers familiar with the route start to pack away belongings, reach for coats, squeeze crisp packets into empty coffee cups, readying themselves to exit as the train begins to slow. Once off the train at Limerick's Colbert Station – named after one of the executed leaders of the 1916 Rising in Ireland¹⁵ – the sound of the idling engine remains immense in the shed of two platforms with its accumulated grime on the overhead glazed steel trusses, as many feet navigate the black-and-white-speckled chequerboard of tiles that lead towards the doors to the city.

Limerick declares this moment of arrival by a difference in height. The traveller emerges from one of three cut-stone arches and is presented with a prospect. Eight steps higher than the ground below, a broad piece of city is revealed: a wide forecourt for pedestrians and car drop-offs, recently

redesigned with trees, lampposts, benches and bins, all with the panoramic backdrop of Parnell Street – named after Charles Stewart Parnell, the nineteenth-century politician that led the movements for Home Rule and land reform.¹⁶ The panorama of the street, however, is more like a collage with the buildings on the scale of a small town more so than a city. From The Railway Hotel to a gaming arcade and bingo hall, to a pharmacy and a jumble of to-let signs on the windows and walls of domestic-scale two-storey former shopfronts, this assemblage is not a unitedly conceived welcome to the city, but rather communicates a sense of confusion about the message being portrayed by the city to its arriving visitors.

And so, from the breadth at the top of the steps, the traveller descends into the city.

The stretch of dilapidated buildings reflects changes in ownership and use; the rises and falls of the economic journey of the city are exposed on the façades. Rather than the material unity of brick that unifies the four-storey-over-basement Georgian terraces that lie a block or two 'behind' this street to the north, here materiality is collage-like: the pinkish-brown redness of the pebbledash, the orangish shopfront herringbone tiles – distinctive mid-twentieth-century features of buildings that housed pharmacies and grocers across Irish towns and villages. Now the empty buildings are uncertain of their function, and the particular Irish-ness and visual scale of their pieced-on surface-layer façades reveal the traces of time, the impact of years of rain and moisture. The crumbling earthiness of a lived-in-city: Limerick does not want to be polished, shiny, pristine. Its grittiness is its appeal.

Welcome.

Winter weather holds heavy by the river. The city is shrouded with the softness of fog: edges blur as it sits down on the grid of streets that slope towards the water. As the temperature of the day rises, the fog begins to



disintegrate into the dampness of drizzle, a gentle layer of light wetness is felt on the face when walking. With the later rising of the wind, rain then lashes up the river, surprising the crossings of the streets and laneways. This Limerick winter-ness brings a greyness of light, a bare shadow and little reflection, brick and concrete soaking in the wetness and the light.

Towards the edge of the formal grid of Limerick's Georgian city – Newtown Pery – and sandwiched between a casino and a funeral home on Thomas Street, parking spaces are offered for a small hourly fee. Little puddles are trapped by broken concrete. Dark-green moss climbs the cracked render. Rubble and brick reveal themselves. The condition of the building materials speaks of prolonged vacancy and dereliction. This crumbling nature is typical of the centres of many of the Georgian blocks in the city, thus SPACES – in white and blue – proposes more than a place to park for a shopping trip of a few hours. It proposes the need for us to re-love and reinhabit the cores of the Georgian city, to 'return' *en masse* in a variety of ways, to the city from its suburbs. It proposes that we consider the peculiarly Irish relationship between country and city. The message – in capital letters – demands that we offer ourselves SPACES for imagination – to make speculations for the future of our city, and then, to make them happen.

The medieval cathedral of St Mary's sits prominently in the city. From its hill on King's Island, its west doors look out the River Shannon towards the estuary and ocean far beyond, while to the east, in its figurative shadow, lies a modest shop supplying parts and accessories for cars. Located where the busy Athlunkard Street crosses paths with the once-principal Nicholas Street, the traffic lights here at the summit of the hill cause a line of traffic to regularly pause outside the shop. Its cream walls have been painted with players from the two sports that are lifeblood to the city – rugby and hurling.

In Limerick, rugby has a deep-held foothold across all walks of life; it gathers rural and urban, those from the most deprived parts of the city with those from the least, through the regional team of Munster playing on a national and international stage at its home in Thomond Park.

Hurling – often described as the fastest sport in the world and played with an ash stick and a small hard ball called a *sliotar* – is an amateur sport requiring incredible levels of skill and is played across Ireland on a parish-by-parish and inter-county basis, supported by the strong community-based Gaelic Athletic Association.¹⁷ Deeply parochial, intensely emotional, playing for the county colours is the highest honour.

Hurling in green for the county. Rugby tackles in red for the province. Years of players' names of these sports conjure memories of greatness for the city. In green: Carey, Mackey, McKenna. In red: Clohessy, O'Connell, Earls. Our city is gathered by these sports and their stories, where language breathes and travels, the moments of glory on the pitches told and retold across generations. Even the physical city itself is animated by these sports. On match days – whether for hurling or for rugby – communities unite. Masses of bodies – dressed in red or in green – process from the Georgian brick-grid centre of the city, across the breadth of the River Shannon, along the slowly inclining solidness of Ennis Road, towards whichever pitch is the focus of that day's sport. The city's citizens generate this regular spectacle as they move together in a block of colour through their city. The intersection of people, an allegiance, a coming-together. Singing, roaring, even silence of the thousands, emanate from the stadia of The Gaelic Grounds and Thomond Park. The city resounds to the sound of its voices.

Luimneach Abú!

The limestone spire rises to survey its surroundings. This visual marker from the nineteenth-century city stands alone – a few metres apart from its

church of Mount Saint Alphonsus – as a commanding presence, even from far across the river. On a natural high point where the dense tightness of the South Circular Road turns itself into Henry Street, the network-streets of houses decline gently away from it towards the Georgian brick centre. ‘The Fathers’ it is known as: the colloquial name for The Redemptorists, a religious congregation of brothers, mostly priests, who have located themselves there for 180 years as a presence of Catholic life in the city as they undertook their missionary work. They used to visit different parishes around the county, and beyond, coming for a few days at a time; such visits were called ‘The Mission’. My mother, now 85, remembers being stunned with fear when she was a teenager attending such a visit one evening with her own mother in their town in west County Limerick. The Redemptorist priest, ‘the biggest man she had ever seen’, was screaming from the pulpit. Fires of hell, damnation, and the opening line of every oration from The Fathers is engrained into the memory of Irish Catholics of a certain age: ‘Remember your last end and you shall never sin.’ My grandmother told my mother that she never need go back to The Mission, and that if she was asked by the nuns in school the next day that she was to say she was not allowed to go. Likely ahead of her time in the Ireland of the 1940s, my grandmother tried to protect her children from the instilling of belief systems of fear, guilt and shame, those cultures and ways-of-being that are intrinsically bound up in the Catholic church.

Now, the outward-facing Redemptorists attempt to right the wrongs of the past. The imposing presence of the heavy-grey limestone exterior of Mount Saint Alphonsus once acted for its people as a constant reminder of human wrongdoing, but now aims to work within its Limerick community in a different way: as a place of welcome and openness. Soft candlelight on a Sunday evening. A warmth of anonymity in the semidarkness. The rhythm of a Taizé chant wrapping the congregation. My six-week-old son asleep in my arms at his first Christmas midnight mass. A modernized atmosphere of home and belonging in the glittering gold. The Novena in June – ten masses and ses-



sions of prayer and The Rosary every day for nine days – when thousands from the city and county come to pray together, the church and its spire an almost-two-hundred-year-old witness to both the sameness and the changing nature of practices of togetherness within this community of faith.

Yet it is difficult to shake the legacy of the past. Common to many Catholic institutions internationally, The Fathers will remain a place of comfort to many, a source of painful memories, hurt and betrayal for others and, likely for most, a torn mixture of these feelings. Mount Saint Alphonsus will continue to sit as an active member of the long-established network of city-centre Catholic churches: St Joseph's on O'Connell Avenue, The Jesuits on The Crescent, St Augustine's on O'Connell Street, The Franciscans on Henry Street, St John's Cathedral at Pennywell, all within a one-mile-square piece of city, and all establishments of architecture with severe façades where the scale of the individual is deliberately dwarfed by the experience of crossing its threshold.¹⁸ These once-full churches, built to house a much larger church-going population, are now mostly near-empty for much of the week. And yet their quiet emptiness still marks various rhythms in the city, both physical and invisible: from the passing-by of their monumentality on foot, to the known ritual of different mass times across the network, to the ringing of the bells providing a measure of daily time to its parishioners, to the people of the city as a whole.

Nicholas Street is on an island. King's Island, in fact: the medieval urban core of Limerick from which the original city later expanded westwards. Directly across from the massiveness of King John's Castle, the former shop of an outdoor clothing business leaves its name as a provocation above its locked-up metal railings. WILD IRELAND reminds both the city's dwellers and its visitors of the landscape that surrounds Limerick. Just the words – large – on a cracking-paint façade of the city are a powerful suggestion of the intensity of mountain, of sea; of distance, of exposure; of moisture, of air. And of the wildness of Irish music and dance, of the energy

of people and communities, of our culture and native language that rises and falls in its intonation with different parts of the land.

Urban culture in Ireland is still developing, aided by the increasing mix of nationalities that bring with them to Ireland new-to-us ways of living in the city. Nonetheless, the connection with a rural life is never far away, whether physically or conceptually. Indeed, there are fields of cattle in Limerick city. But in the main, in this century, this city-connection with the rural is of a 'new' type of rural-urban living: not living *from* the land, but living *on* the land so as to be able to look *at* the land, while still working away, *in* the city. Our understanding of and approach to the city continues to develop.

This shop building holds its place in history as the home to a Maoist bookshop in 1970, quite an anomaly in the staunchly conservative Catholic Limerick of that time. With its façade then painted red, the distribution of communist literature – 'insidious propaganda' in the words of the city's then mayor – caused such fear in some sectors of local society that an editorial of the *Limerick Leader* newspaper urged the 'people of Limerick' to 'unite to run all those connected with the movement out of the area'. Not long afterwards, shots were fired through the shop-window.¹⁹

Fifty years later, the building's uses continue to evolve. WILD IRELAND has moved to a solely online presence. A striking new brightly coloured mural of The Cranberries' lead singer – Limerick-woman Dolores O'Riordan – decorates the entire height of the shop's gable end. In the space of less than a month from when this photograph was taken by Luc in December 2019, the landlord painted the building in mustard, and the blue lettering was removed. This photograph of a shop sign, of a former bookshop, is a legacy of the turnover of words on and in and about the city. Some urban memories can be fleeting. Some endure.

Limerick has lost, and continues to lose, much of its Georgian heritage. The hulk of building that is Arthur's Quay Shopping Centre replaced, in 1989, a terraced block of once-elegant Georgian townhouses fronting the river that had, over a century, disintegrated to become tenements housing the city's most deprived slums. Today, directly across the road from this shopping centre, another Georgian block is under threat from the imminent construction of what is being called the Limerick Opera Centre – a proposal for a 14-storey tower, large commercial buildings, a plaza and apartments. Many have fought to retain this section of the city's built fabric, while others welcome the treatment of this block as a tabula rasa for a 'transformational project' for the city. The fighters have lost.

It is over 200 years since Limerick has been a wealthy city. Old buildings need money to survive, and the people of Limerick have not been in a position to maintain their extensive grid-city of Georgian brick architecture. The generous spaces of these special buildings no longer house city-centre homes, but are mostly repurposed in relatively piecemeal ways as offices divided floor-by-floor.

Along Rutland Street, and along Ellen Street that joins it at the perpendicular, leases have not been renewed. The ground floors of these empty buildings that form the Opera Centre site have been boarded up, and play host to the traces of a four-year-old street art project that wrap two sides of this block. As one passes, one can read:

Belonging.

Hybrid.

Culture is where we are from. Culture is where we are going.

Above these words, these statements, the upper floors' rhythm of Georgian windows – from piano nobile to attic – march onwards, unaffected. The special proportion of the Georgian window and its reveals, and the way it



welcomes and modulates natural sunlight, both direct and diffuse, continues unabated, but no-one has the pleasure of experiencing it here anymore, one block back from the river.

The pink and brown tones of the beautiful eighteenth-century master plan for Limerick's Newtown Pery – the extension to the city across the Abbey River from King's Island – was funded by Edmond Sexton Pery and drawn by Christopher Colles.²⁰ The ambition of this plan, its grid laid out on the hill that sloped to the river, and with rules for height and a sense of conformity, allowed the city to rise site by site, piece by piece. Through speculative building, through market demands, individual Georgian houses rose as standalone teeth, until the neighbouring sites were built on, and the teeth aligned in rows, and the city blocks were shaped. The ambition of Colles' plan was never fully completed as drawn. And now, 250 years later, its vision of a totality is eroding, to be disassembled by contemporary market forces, contemporary speculation. And so it is that the buildings in these photographs await their demolition.

On a very low spring tide, when the pull of the moon is at its strongest and the brackish river-sea water of the River Shannon has made its temporary diurnal journey out the estuary, it is possible to walk along the muddy-stony riverbed through the centre of Limerick city. This territory, exposed for a few hours to the sunlight in this cyclical manner, offers a particular way of experiencing the underbelly of the city. Stone quaysides rise heavy from their foundations, a solid edge defining this lower world. Standing beside the north bank, looking southwards across to Shannon Rowing Club, Poor Man's Kilkee, and uphill towards the Georgian grid, the stratified materiality of the city is apparent – the red-brick-ness of city blocks built on top of the layers of cut stone. A boat storage shed, with its regular rhythm of brick pilasters, sits on the peninsula that forms the entrance to the lock gate. In 2016, as part of Limerick's campaign bid to become European Capital of Culture 2020, six words in large white lettering a metre high were applied to

the stone quay below the shed. They read:

It will rise with the moon.

These words formed part of a street art installation, a collaboration between Piquant, a graphic design company in Limerick, and Stanzas, a local poetry group. Eight of the group's members each wrote a poem that was inspired by Limerick; the designers then selected one line from each poem, reproduced those lines in 3D, and attached them to walls around the city.

Four years later, this line of poetry remains on the city's river wall. The evermoving water rises to the base of the letters at high tide, and they are partly submerged when the river floods. The words prompt those who pass them, as they walk across Sarsfield Bridge. They implicitly ask us to recall our relations with the river and its potential, the wateriness of our bodies and of the earth, the power of gravity and of lunar forces, the human scale and the scale of the world.

Around the corner from here, 200 metres from the riverfront, another set of words also remains.

*The old/new
vintage attack*

Black on painted white, and not particularly large, they discreetly rest along the high perimeter wall-building of the former Cleeve's condensed milk factory. Significantly above eye height, on a road of mostly stone walls on either side – walls with their window-and-door openings all now blocked-up – the words subtly animate this stretch of city for the passer-by that notices their quiet presence.

This project of physically inscribing contemporary poetry inspired by a place onto the walls and surfaces of that place, generates another version of poetry of place: a poetry of regular physical encounter between citizens and a living literature: a city of words.

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- 11 Michael Emmison, Philippe Smith and Margery Mayall, *Researching the Visual* (London: Sage, 2012); Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials* (London: Sage, 2016).
- 12 Roland Barthes 'The Rhetoric of the Image: Éléments de sémiologie', *Communications* 4 (1964), 40-51.
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- 17 See: Mike Cronin, Paul Rouse and William Murphy (eds.), *The Gaelic Athletic Association, 1884-2009* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).
- 18 See: Emma Gilleece, *City of Churches: A Skyline of Spires* (Limerick: Limerick Museum and Archives, 2014).
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The Paris of L'Ivre De Pierres, Narrative Architecture between Words and Drawing

Carlos Machado e Moura, Luis Miguel Lus Arana

Published for the first time in 1977 and concluding with its fourth issue in 1983, *L'Ivre de Pierres* (*LIDP*) was an editorial experiment pursued intermittently by Jean-Paul Jungmann (b. 1935), a French architect and theorist, architectural educator and, above all, a magnificent draughtsman.¹ Jungmann was one of the fathers of the magazine *Utopie*, with which *LIDP* somehow plays a game of mirrors.

After contextualizing *Utopie*'s legacy, we will analyse *LIDP*'s editorial, theoretical and architectural production, focusing on three different aspects: a) the iconography, b) the book format, and c) the text. Notwithstanding their different degrees of importance, these are the fundamental components of *LIDP*'s



Fig. 1. : L'Ivre de Pierres 1 (1977), 2 (1978), 3 (1980), 4 (1983) and the unfinished 5th volume (whose documents and writings were published in October 2020).

own method of 'writing urban places'. Indeed, *LIDP* aimed at 'architectural narration . . . paginated to be read in a book' that used 'figurative writing to tell and evoke . . . an architectural invention in the limited atmosphere of a city, Paris'. We argue that, mirroring the architects' work and agenda in *Utopie*, *LIDP* appeared both as a critique of the decisions taken in the urban renewal of Paris, and as a politically committed stance on the role of the architect, which ultimately led to a different field of practice: that of a *narrator-designer* of architecture. In Jungmann's words, 'imagining projects, building the fictitious is a theoretical practice of the city and of architecture', able to provide alternative realities that unveil 'a new knowledge of the city'. While presenting itself as an editorial collage, renouncing the establishment of a theoretical corpus, can '*L'ivre de Pierres* become an explorer, that of architecture as an urban practice?'²

Drawing Utopia, Drawing from *Utopie*

The journal *Utopie* came to life during the 'little magazine' fever of the 1960s and early 1970s and, more specifically, in the intellectual and social turmoil that led to the events of May 1968 in Paris. *Utopie* was politically engaged and textually dense, radically questioning everyday life and the reorganization of society, consumer culture and the urban fabric of post-war modernization. As a consequence, the members of *Utopie* refused to combine their theoretical work with architectural and urban design, vindicating 'an Althusserian notion of a "theoretical practice" whose central material was to be the contemporary discourses and representations of architecture and urbanism circulating both within their disciplines and in the popular press'.³

One of the main reasons for it was that, unlike other radical groups, the group *Utopie* consisted of a varied array of individuals with different backgrounds arranged into two clearly identifiable subgroups: the intellectuals and the architects.⁴ This clear-cut division in the group had an obvious and immediate effect on the magazine. As Jungmann's recalls, the architectural half of the team 'were not used to writing complex articles and texts.

Since these were our first attempts at theoretical texts, we used collage. Collage and the *détournement* made the approach much easier.⁵ Following a *dadaist-situationist* fashion, they drew from many graphic sources, from comic books to adverts and fashion magazines, and composed collages that explored the semiotic potential of the relationship between word and image. Thus, 'drawing upon the expanded concept of "écriture" within the period's semiological discourses, *Utopie*'s blocks of image-text' provided 'a hybrid mode of writing' that reinforced the parallel and colliding narratives already present in the magazine, adding to its discursive polyphony.⁶

Jungmann and his colleagues embraced the spirit of the magazine, criticizing the formalism that pervaded the visionary architecture scene, or the wave of technological and speculative optimism of the time. With the belief that the logic of social classes fully controls urbanism, they enthusiastically called for the need to 'disassemble/dismantle the economic, political, social and cultural manifestations of architecture'.⁷ However, this overwhelming negative critique, later qualified by Lefebvre as a 'Negative Utopia', did not lend much space for action.⁸ It was, in the end, a true *outopia* (from *ou-topos*, 'no place'), an impossible construct suspicious of everything, even of itself, which demands 'a fundamental modification of the existing order' in which it has been conceived.⁹ Increasingly aware of the growing breach between the architects and the discourse of a group that looked suspiciously at their production, the architects discontinued their work on the magazine in 1969, formally leaving the group in 1971.¹⁰ Accordingly, after the third issue, *Utopie* lost its images and reduced its size, approaching the format of literary magazines, which would be kept until the end of its run in 1977.

L'Ivre de Pierres

This departure did not entail a complete abandonment of the kind of writing practices that *Utopie* had introduced. The ex-Utopiens kept producing little magazines together with their students at the pedagogical units for archi-



Fig. 2. Jean-Paul Jungmann, 'Villes de Papier', *Utopie*, 1 (1967), pp. 128-129.

ecture created after the closure of the École des Beaux-Arts in 1968, and, in 1976, Jungmann established a publishing house with the collaboration of Aubert, Tonka and Stinco. Founded a year later, the magazine *L'ivre de Pierres* (*LIDP*) can be seen as a counterpart, an antithesis and also a complement to *Utopie*, a companion series that mirrored it from the other side of the looking glass: that of 'the architects'. Thus, if *Utopie* had evolved into a discretely sized, exclusively textual publication, *LIDP* was conceived as a decidedly *big* 'little magazine': published in tabloid size, in which images had a privileged presence. If *Utopie* had proscribed architectural and urban designs from their pages, *LIDP*, on the contrary, presented a collection of architectural and urban fictions that carried the underlying theoretical discourse. With its title built as a double reference to Victor Hugo's 'This Will Kill That' and his posthumous *Le Tas de Pierres*,¹¹ *L'ivre de Pierres* is also a pun that plays with the homophony of *Livre* – book – and *L'ivre* – drunken (man). Thus, *the book of stones* was also, and above all, an 'intoxication of stones': those fictional stones that can be found in the many buildings and spaces featured in its pages, designed to exist just on the printed page, and in the – just apparently – self-contained ecosystem of the book. As Jungmann emphasized, here the book was not just a medium to provide 'commentary on a work, but [the medium] of the work itself . . . a printed work'.¹²

Jungmann conceived the book/magazine as an environment for the free exercise of *urban creativity* that allowed the draughtsmen in them to enjoy creating images 'by specific architectural means, as others would do through painting or literature, advertising, cinema or comics'.¹³ The designs in the book, however, were not to be taken as mere architectural fantasies, such as Giambattista Piranesi's *vedute*, or Superstudio's collages, which, according to Jungmann, may be 'innovative representations that often influence architectural imagery, but that are . . . not real projects'.¹⁴ *LIDP* and the designs in it were, instead, *theoretical projects* – Jungmann made this distinction clear – which, as those published by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and Étienne-Louis Boullée, were not 'intended for construction but . . . dis-

semination through publication, exhibition or teaching'.¹⁵ The fundamental difference between architectural fantasies and theoretical projects lies in the geometric precision and volumetric coherence of the latter. Indeed, each *LIDP* is a *real* project, not because it is meant for construction, but for 'all its images revolve around the same volume defined upstream. And the way to describe and tell this volume and its intended use, its future inhabit, is the whole issue of narrative.'¹⁶

The designs were therefore conceived as 'real projects with all their constraints', firmly anchored in the city and its history. Combining retromania with futuristic technology, they blossomed in an expressively baroque architecture that celebrates the identity of place and its symbols, and displayed that 'strong utopian capacity', that only the literary genre, where Utopia was born, can achieve. The series visualized, in Tonka's own words, a 'concrete utopia',¹⁷ one made of 'imaginary projects [that] become a reality in their drawn representation'.¹⁸

Like *Utopie*, *LIDP* was the product of many hands, an urban and literary *cadavre exquis* with entries of varying genres, styles and tones, from pages of bombastic prose to more lyrical passages, pieces bordering on science fiction and utopian literature to satire, theoretical essays and manifesto-like texts with guidelines for a better treatment of the urban landscape. The magazine interwove fact and fiction, past and future, with prospective visions of a future Paris and flashbacks to Charles de Wailly (1798) and Jean-Jacques Lequeu's (1815) unrealized projects. Accordingly, it assembled a varied group of authors with a wide range of origins and backgrounds: the driving force was Jungmann, who contributed theoretical projects to all issues, together with ex-Utopiens Jean Aubert, Isabelle Auricoste and Hubert Tonka – sometimes doubling as editor. But also, *LIDP* featured throughout its four issues contributions by other architects, both from a French and an international context, art historians, sociologist, art critics, painters and artists such as Gérard Diaz and Tamás Zanko and,

finally, writer Hélène Bleskine. All of them contributed to the construction of an imaginary but concrete Paris made of spare parts, built with drawings and words, melted together into a single project by means of their publication.

Iconography: Books of Stone, Paper Architectures and Architectural Intoxication

L'Ivre de Pierres sought to show that an architectural imaginary could enrich programs and that through writing and drawing projects made solely for the printed page, projects that are not necessarily meant to be built but simply read and looked at in a book, [could present] a coherent vision of what the author would like to see built in a corner of the city . . . I wanted imaginary projects, invented, readable but architectural, and also very feasible.¹⁹

In a classical graphic style, most of *LIDP*'s drawings follow traditional perspective and use poetic effects and a shadowy nonchalance, reinforcing their expressiveness by incorporative characters, vehicles, accessories, and even animals.²⁰ Away from the conventional drawings of architecture, the illustrations are highly legible, realistic and communicative, varying in points of view, the play of light and shadow, textures and materials. These communicative aspects and graphical features resonate directly with the historical drawings present in *LIDP*, whose traditional perspective sections are rendered to fully convey a story.

Generationally, both Jungmann and *LIDP* belong in the modern tradition of the 'paper architecture' wave that started in the 1960s and extended throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, fuelled by the oil crises and the subsequent economic recessions. The works presented in the series drink from different pools: from that of the visionary architecture of the 1960s, from the post-modernist strand of the 1970s and 1980s – Léon Krier is one of the authors featured – and beyond. Of course, within a French context, *LIDP* was also

part of a lineage of its own, following the trail of the 'utopians' from the Enlightenment, such as Ledoux, Boullée and Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand. Great paper architecture designers of a neoclassical sensibility, they represented the French rationalist counterpart to Piranesi's wild explorations of the classical language of architecture. However, outside this historical genealogy of predominantly graphic architectural imagination, *LIDP* is also inscribed in another old architectural tradition that has historically used written fiction as a means to produce architecture discourses, criticism or even as a way to present and/or conceive architectural designs.

Back in the early Renaissance, Antonio Averlino, *il Filarete*, had used the form of the diary novel in his *Libro Architetonico* (1461-1464) to present the design of two cities: his ideal city of Sforzinda, and the fictional Plusiapolis, an earlier city that had stood in the same location that was described, in Borgesian fashion, in the *Libro de Oro*, a book within the book. Three centuries later, Piranesi's *Parere Sull'Architettura* (1765) used the literary form of the dialogue to elaborate his opinions on the development of the Classical Language of Architecture. Other paradigmatic examples contemporary to *LIDP* include *Delirious New York* (1978), that 'retroactive manifesto for Manhattanism' in which Rem Koolhaas retold New York's history, interweaving reality and fiction, in order to create 'gnomic fantasies' that allowed him to 'communicate poetic perceptions of underlying fundamental realities'.²¹ In 1971, *Civilia: The End Of Suburban Man*, a book describing the eponymous fictional city, had been used by H. de C. Hastings and Kenneth Brown as a vehicle to illustrate their idea of *townscape* planning and to criticize British post-war urban planning. All of these examples were accompanied by their own set of drawn architectural fictions: Piranesi illustrated his points with impressive architectural compositions, the *Libro Architetonico* was richly illustrated with Filarete's own plans and sketches, *Delirious New York* featured Madelon Vriesendorp's surrealist paintings, and in *Civilia*, Hastings's swollen prose was overshadowed by photographic collages designed by his daughter Priscilla, together with Kenneth Browne.

LIDP followed these other 'books' by describing its own imaginary city through the culture of the palimpsest so present at the time in theoretical projects such as *Roma Interrotta* (1978), or Peter Eisenman's *Cannaregio Town Square* (1978), both overlapping the historical collage logic of Colin Rowe's *Collage City* (1975-1978). Only instead of Giambattista Nolli's map of Rome, this time it was Paris that was subjected to an alternative reading and (re)construction by means of the progressive accumulation of entries produced by different authors and extracted from different points in an always alternate history: unrealized projects from the past, unsubmitted entries to current competitions, and purely theoretical projects. All of them were simply juxtaposed in the pages of the magazine, conforming a true and intentional *cogito interruptus* where the different pieces only found articulation in the reader's mind.²² This only comes to underline that which, on the other hand, should perhaps be an obvious issue: *LIDP* is, first and foremost, a story – or, better, an overarching non-linear narrative consisting of a multitude of *petites histoires*. In the *Guide du Paris de L'Ivresse de Pierres* (1982), Jean-Paul Jungmann stated that *LIDP* came from 'the desire to write architecture as if we wrote a story, a novel, with words and images'.²³ The journal was the response of Jungmann to the paradox of 'the impracticable practice of architecture'²⁴ presented to them in *Utopie*, which they overcame by applying what they learnt in *Utopie*. Lefebvre had advocated the need to 'penser la ville future sur les ruines de la ville passé'.²⁵

Consequently, *LIDP* looked at the city as a palimpsest, a historical *persona* made of forms, spaces, events and meanings, both existing and gone. Thus, it depicted an imaginary Paris that recovered traces of its own history and superimposed them on the Paris of today, but also looked at the intra-history of the group, presenting projects that resounded with echoes of *Utopie*, and their other endeavours. Eager to *write* on the multi-layered text offered by the city of Paris, the projects featured in *LIDP*, often grandiose schemes in the tradition of the archaeological prospectivism of Piranesi's *Campo Marzio*, were a different kind of writing. By their narrative nature, they were

also *projets-récits*, made of bits and pieces extracted from different places and points in history, with diverse materials, aesthetics and construction techniques: a postmodern conundrum of historical and geographical displacements that imbued the whole project with a *uchronian* feel, a pleasing aura of timelessness.

LIDP presents itself full of *architectures parlantes* that are such not only in the Ledoux-ian sense – because they communicate their function – but also because they offer commentary and critique on the urban conditions around them. The dialogue happens here between the project and the real city, or between a fictional project and the one that inspires it: that is the case with the designs focused on Les Halles, La Villette and Bastille, which criticize the real architectural competitions (1979, 1982, 1983) that took place on those sites, as well as their results.²⁶ Ultimately, *LIDP* unleashed a dialogue that, again, took shape in the reader's mind. The projects challenged the reader with deciphering and interpreting the metaphors and symbols, the allegorical nuances, sometimes ironic or bordering on surrealism. See, for instance Jean Critton's 'Opera des Halles' and 'Phénomène de parthénogénèse architecturale',²⁷ on a series of designs that housed a pedagogical ambition.

The Book as Organizational System and as Visual-Narrative Device

Despite the relative preponderance of images that typically characterizes architectural products, *LIDP* is not a mere almanac of architectural designs driven by a primarily visual appetite. Besides architecture and the (problems of) the modern city, Jungmann and Tonka were actively interested in books, as *LIDP* underlines from its very title, and it is the *book*, as an organizational system, but also as a visual-narrative device, that provides the substratum for the 'gnostic-cabalistic fables' to breed. The fragmentary Paris construed by the series, that mental space-form generated in the mind of the reader is, therefore, neither Stinco's, Aubert's or even Jungmann's Paris, but *the Paris of L'Ivre de Pierres*, a paper architecture whose natural environment is the book.

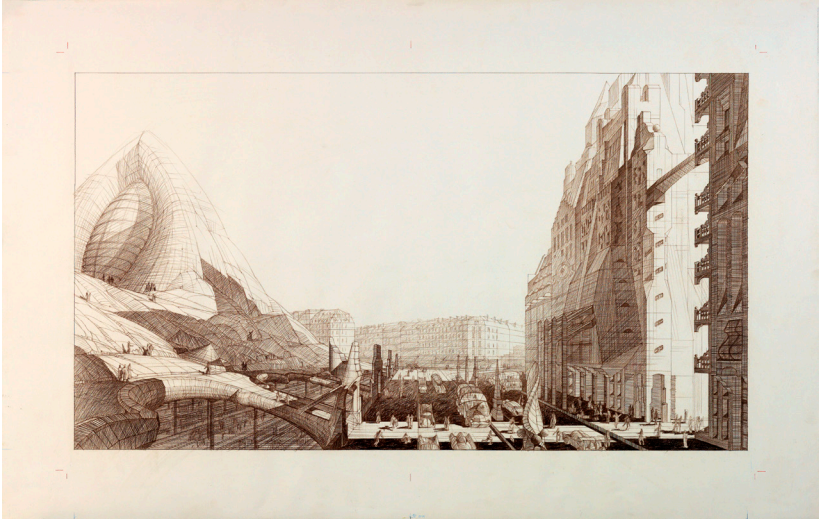


Fig. 6. Jean-Paul Jungmann, *La Gare vers l'Est*, original drawing, published in *L'Ivre de Pierres*, 3 (1980), pp. 76-77.



Fig. 7. Jean-Paul Jungmann, 'les piles de la pyrotechnie et la fête anniversaire de la Fondation' (planche XXIII) for: *La Place de la Concorde, les nouveau tracés d'une place fondatrice*, published in: *L'Ivre de Pierres*, 4 (1983), pp. 36-37.

The book is the crucible where all the different visions merge, as a multifaceted but unitarian ensemble that provides the substrate for the necessary articulation that will take place in the reading process. This is particularly vivid when comparing *LIDP* with other productions associated with it, such as the different conferences and exhibitions featuring its contents that were subsequently produced, or with other publications that featured the projects published in it, isolated from the aesthetic-contextual-articulatory system of the book. Also, the system provided by the book creates rhythms, rhymes, alliterations between pages and projects, double and cross readings that stem from the physical, graphic or aesthetic contiguity between them in the drawn/written page, which add to the already metaphorical abilities of the *parlant* designs it houses. And this is an interplay that also happens in between issues: *LIDP* 1, for instance, recovered Jean-Jacques Lequeu's 1815 non-built project for some mausolea on La Place de la Concorde, recovered and restored by Philippe Duboy.²⁸ In the context of the issue, this project 'rhymed' with the one that closed it: the similarly unbuilt Théâtre des Arts (1789) by Charles de Wailly, introduced by art historian Daniel Rabreau. But it also found an echo in the last volume, whose most extensive and spectacular piece was Jungmann's speculative project La Place de la Concorde, les nouveaux tracés d'une place fondatrice.

Other strategies underline the point that *LIDP* is, in fact, a text, and, quite literally, a book: Jungmann's most extensive contribution to the series, 'Récit autour d'une ruine future sur la colline de Chaillot' (1977-1978), a grand urban ensemble around the Trocadéro area, was published in two parts in issues 1 and 2. This might respond simply to space or time constraints, but to the reader who looks at *LIDP* as a whole, the effect is that of reading two chapters in a book, where, after meandering through other subplots, we return to an earlier storyline. Also, some chapters exploit the narrative qualities of the grouping of images, using tropes of graphic narrative to show the passing of time, such as in Jean Critton's aforementioned 'Phénomène', which depicted the progressive takeover of the new Forum des Halles by

gigantic pieces of meat in a series of consecutive vignettes. This is perhaps even more obvious in Alain Loiselet's equally surreal and very cinematic 'Suite d'images pour l'usage d'un monarque assassiné',²⁹ which followed the evolutions of a destructive megalith through the streets of Paris in a series of plates sometimes turned literally into comic book pages. Jungmann himself used this technique in the sequential arrangement 'Une journée à Chaillot' (1978), whose four panels show 'a day in the life' of the aforementioned project.

Demi-Texte (Les Textes des Images):³⁰ Literary Methods in the Paris of L'ivre de Pierres.

Narrative and textual qualities of images notwithstanding, words and written texts are, of course, a fundamental element of *LIDP*. According to Jungmann, if 'in painting or music the text or the title are accessories, the architectural image is linked to the commentary or at least to the title; there is no architecture without literature.'³¹ If this can be true of any architectural document, it is crucial in *LIDP*. As a book, *LIDP* is made of plans, perspectives, plates and printed pages that are also *written* pages, featuring a variety of texts whose imaginal dimension is also toyed with as part of the reading experience: either typeset, handwritten, in columns, enclosed in frames, integrated with(in) the drawings or in separate pages, words appear in a variety of layouts, proportions, sizes and fonts that help set the mood and qualify the designs. Printed with/in a set of clear, timeless, but also somewhat *classical* typefaces and calligraphies, the written/printed words of *LIDP* contribute to *inscribing* the featured projects within the constellation of the aforementioned references, also endowing them with a somewhat *oneiric* patina that helps place them in a sort of *uchronian* plane.

Just like the images, the texts that compose *LIDP*, usually combining 'a strong intellectual colouring and a slight hint of sixty-eightard logorrhea',³² display a variety of styles, tones and relations with the subject matter they accompany. Often written in first person, as notes or monologues, they

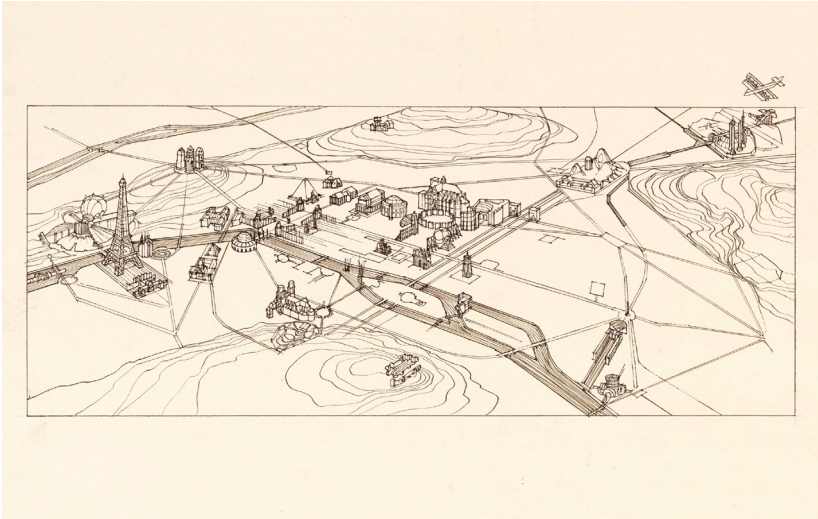


Fig. 9. Jean-Paul Jungmann, *Géométries mentales pour la Ville de Paris*, drawing, 1984.

sometimes evoke memories and construct narrations around the project, while at other times they merely describe it. Their intensity grows throughout the issues, nevertheless, progressively gaining both in autonomy and complementarity, namely in Jungmann's projects, which range from the intensely poetic to the relatively operative. The annotations to 'Chaillot' (*LIDP* 1) display the poetical tone that seems to be the default writing mode of architectural designers and their visual thinking, and unfold intertwined with the drawings.

This interaction is present, for instance, in the parallel publication in *LIDP* 3 of Jean Critton's 'Phénomène' and Élie Delamare-Deboutteville's poem 'L'Invasion de la Viande': Critton's images and Delarme-Bouteville's text basically tell the same story. The ambiguity of the poem is paired with the concreteness of images, and, making the words in the poem literal, results in a surrealist architectural *passage*. 'Place de la Concorde' (*LIDP* 4), on the other hand, shows Jungmann at his most *utopian*. Both critical and inventive, the text delves into an explanation of the social implications and codes behind the project, its political implications and the shape of the ideal society it has been designed for, in a way that, albeit still poetic in tone, is narratively and conceptually denser.

Other texts lean more explicitly towards the novelesque. 'Le Square des égoutiers',³³ for instance, is introduced with the recount of RATP employee Stephen's discovery of Aubert's architecture. It strongly resonates with Émile Zola's *The Belly of Paris*, where former revolutionary Florent is surprised in the market of Les Halles by the extravagant odours, colours and 'uniform buildings . . . bathed in the light of dawn, they seemed like some vast modern machine, a steam engine or a cauldron supplying the digestive needs of a whole people, a huge metal belly'.³⁴ Similarly, Stephen is fascinated with 'the image of the hidden functioning of the Parisian utility network' and moved by 'the incongruous idea of celebrating with stone the world and the functioning of the city's sewers'.³⁵

In *Le Guide du Paris de L'ivre de Pierres*, the experiment is even more intense. Texts often acquire the form of fictional letters and short novels, like the description of Aubert's and Jungmann's imaginary architectures at La Villette by Lönnrot, the famous detective of Jorge Luis Borges's *Death and the Compass*. By using romanced stories, the texts manage to offer a sensitive perception of the imagined architectures, the emotions each author intends to convey. Without the texts, some nuances would be lost, if not the entire meaning, particularly in those projects with a strongly citational basis, of which *LIDP* carries many.³⁶

Together with those, all issues of the magazine featured texts not related to specific projects in the form of prefaces or editorials, which reflected on the strategies at play, such as Tonka's 'L'ivre d'Encres' (*LIDP* 1), and 'Dérails de l'architecture' (*LIDP* 3), or Jungmann's 'Écrire un projet' (*LIDP* 3), all using literary tropes in order to set the tone of each volume and providing a framework for the creative process. Tonka's 'La Malédiction des Halles' (*LIDP* 3) dissects the motivations and limits of the urban operation of Paris's old market, in full *Utopie* fashion, while other texts introduce methods and theories: Isabelle Auricoste's and Alain Vulbeau's 'Le Rouge et le Vert – mais que font-ils donc à la Villette?' (*LIDP* 4),³⁷ for instance, defines the concept of *naturbanisme*, providing a list of 69 norms for its application. Ranging from solemnity to irony and self-mockery, from ideologically charged positions to romantic meanderings – even if often in a poetic vein – the texts in *LIDP* all contribute to tell the/a history of a place through their many stories, deciphering the city's hidden symbols and unveiling new semantic layers hidden by the veil of reality.

Narrative Architecture between Words and Drawing

LIDP's findings may not be directly transposable to other contexts, but its strategies and methods might be universal. Contrary to the usual understanding of what architecture is about, it is a magazine or rather a book series written with architectural and urban designs that are at the same

time architectural essays: projects that do not aim at solving specific problems, but rather work with different sets of questions. They interrogate the city, in its historical dimension, and also pose questions about its true nature and its possible futures, presenting individual approaches and aiming at a collective understanding of the urban environment. Playing an ambiguous game between fiction and reality, past and present, concrete and vague, *LIDP* is a puzzle for each reader, to be solved in his or her own way. Among ruins, inflatables or compact and rigid structures, it relies on fiction and the frictions that occur between its often-dissonant pieces as generators of critical discourse, and ideas that may be translated – not transposed – into the real world. It shows us a Lacanian other of the city, a distorted, polymorphous and incoherent *doppelganger* located on the other side of the membrane of reality who, strangely, may help us find the meaningful beneath the mundane.

LIDP, the book of stones, is also a book of images and words, of varying texts and writing modes, reading levels and cross readings. It is also, if not a book about books, as Eco would argue, a book *in between* books, and a text to be read in conjunction with other texts: a true piece of *écriture* that activates the creation of intertextual relations with other textual artifacts, extending its multi-layered, polylinear narrativity beyond its limits. *LIDP* is not a compendium of designs, but a book, and a text, not only in the literal sense – it can certainly be read – but also in the sense that it appears as an interface through which to read history and, consequently, reality: the history and reality of Paris, and a skewed approach to the history of architecture. As such, it exists in the liminal space between multiple pieces of writing, some from a far past, some from its contemporary context, or that of the authors featured in it, some from its own intra-story.

- 1 The series consisted of four issues, plus a fifth one that was planned but never published.
- 2 Jean-Paul Jungmann and Hubert Tonka, *La Città Policentrica. Paris/Parme. L'Ivre de Pierres – Vaisseau de Pierres*, poster with text for a congress in Nocetto/Parma in April 1984.
- 3 Craig Buckley, 'Introduction: The Echo of Utopia', in: Craig Buckley and Jean-Louis Violeau (eds.), *Utopie: texts and projects 1967-1978* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 13.
- 4 The 'intellectuals', in which group Hubert Tonka – then assistant of Henri Lefebvre at the Institut d'Urbanisme and the 'bridge' between both groups – would place himself, included the likes of Jean Baudrillard, René Lourau – both assistants to Lefebvre in the Department of Sociology at Nanterre – Catherine Cot and Isabelle Auricoste. The other faction, 'the architects', consisted of Jean Aubert, Jean-Paul Jungmann and Antoine Stinco.
- 5 Jean-Paul Jungmann. Interviewed by the authors, 28 May 2015.
- 6 Buckley, 'Introduction', op. cit. (note 3), 12.
- 7 Utopie, 'Des raisons de l'architecture', *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 138 (1968), 124-145.
- 8 Henri Lefebvre, *Le Temps des méprises* (Paris: Stock, 1975).
- 9 Jean Baudrillard, 'Utopie dialectique', *Utopie* 1 (1967), 55.
- 10 'On the steps of the Sorbonne, was scrawled "Cache-toi objet." Which was to say that, in relation to revolutionary thought, objects were despicable things. There was always this fight, and we were in the middle of it, because we had one foot in revolutionary thought and one foot in the realisation of architecture.' Jean Aubert interviewed in: Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley (eds.), *Clip/Stamp/Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196X to 197X* (Barcelona: Actar, 2010), 196.
- 11 Hubert Tonka, 'L'Ivre d'Encres', *L'Ivre de Pierres* 1 (1977), 7.
- 12 Jean-Paul Jungmann, 'Histoires à Editer', in: Hubert Tonka (ed.), *Le Guide du Paris de L'Ivre de Pierres* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC, 1982), 15.
- 13 Jean-Paul Jungmann, 'Écrire un projet est raconter la ville', in: Jean-Paul Jungmann and Hubert Tonka (eds.), *L'Ivre de Pierres chez Cl.-N. Ledoux* (Paris: Aérolande, 1984), 3
- 14 Jean-Paul Jungmann, *L'Image en Architecture – de la représentation et de son empreinte utopique* (Paris: Éditions La Villette, 1996).
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Jungmann, *Les Années L'Ivre de Pierres. À la recherche d'une Architecture possible [1975-1986]* (Paris: Sens&Tonka, 2020), 55.

- 17 Tonka, 'L'Ivre d'Encres', op. cit. (note 11).
- 18 Jungmann, 'Histoires à Editer', op. cit. (note 12), 15.
- 19 Jean-Paul Jungmann, interviewed in: Colomina and Buckley, op. cit. (note 10), 352.
- 20 Some authors, like Peter Wilson in 'Le Pont des Arts' (*LIDP* 4), rejected classic perspectives, opting for different yet highly expressive points of view.
- 21 William S. Saunders, 'Rem Koolhaas's Writing on Cities: Poetic Perception and Gnostic Fantasy', *Journal of Architectural Education* 51/1 (1997), 61.
- 22 An attempt to provide the project's alternate Paris with a cartography was presented by the authors once the project had ended, in their *Géométries mentales pour la Ville de Paris*, a sort of Parisian *Forma Urbis* halfway between fact and fiction where several unrealized projects for the city overlapped, including some from *LIDP*. It was published by Aérolande in *La Città Policentrica. Paris/Parme. L'Ivre de Pierres – Vaisseau de Pierres*, on occasion of a congress in Nocetto/Parma in April 1984.
- 23 Jungmann, 'Histoires à Editer', op. cit. (note 12), 15.
- 24 For some insight on this, see Jean Aubert in: Colomina and Buckley, op. cit. (note 10), 196.
- 25 Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville* (Paris: Anthropos, 1968).
- 26 La Villette was tackled by two projects by Jean Aubert and Léon Krier in *LIDP* 1 (1977), plus Isabelle Auricoste's and Alain Vulbeau's essay 'Le Rouge et le Vert - mais que font-ils donc à la Villette?' in *LIDP* 4 (1983). *LIDP* 3 (1980) was mostly devoted to Les Halles, and Bastille appeared in Jean Charbonnier and Dominique Bugnon's 'Théâtre de l'Arsenal à la Bastille' (*LIDP* 4, 1983). It anticipated the topic of the following, unpublished issue, *LIDP* 5, which would have been devoted to the architectural competition for the Opéra Bastille (1982-1983).
- 27 Jean Critton, 'Opéra des Halles, projet scénographique pour l'aménagement des Halles' and 'Phénomène de parthénogénèse architecturale au Forum des Halles', *L'Ivre de Pierres* 3 (1980), 33-55.
- 28 See: 'De l'espace tropologique: un premier crayon de mausolées pour la place de la Concorde, par Jean-Jacques Lequeu, le 15 janvier 1815, restauré par Philippe Duboy. and Un forum au coeur du Paris révolutionnaire. Le projet de Théâtre des Arts de Charles de Wailly, 1798', introduced by Daniel Rabreau, *L'Ivre de Pierres* 1 (1977).
- 29 *L'Ivre de Pierres* 4 (1983).
- 30 We are appropriating here the title of the fifth chapter in Jungmann, *L'Image en Architecture*, op. cit. (note 14).
- 31 Jean-Paul Jungmann, in: Jean Dethier (ed.), *Images et imaginaires d'architecture*,

dessin, peinture, photographie, arts graphiques, théâtre, cinéma en Europe aux XIXe et XXe siècles, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1984), 140.

- 32 François Herrenschmidt, 'Dialogue sur l'Utopie d'Hier et la Verité d'Aujourd'hui', in: Tonka, *Le Guide du Paris*, op. cit. (note 12), 131.
- 33 Antoine Chauvin, 'Le Pari(s) de Jean-Paul Jungmann: Étude de sept projets théoriques pour la ville de Paris', *Mémoire de Master en Histoire de l'Architecture*, Université Paris I (2014), 43.
- 34 Émile Zola, *The Belly of Paris* (Oxford World's Classics, 2007 [1873]), 25.
- 35 Jean Aubert, 'Le Square des égoutiers', *L'Ivre de Pierres* 2 (1978), 7.
- 36 See, for instance, Jean-Paul Jungmann's monumental 'La gare vers l'Est', *L'Ivre de Pierres* 3 (1980).
- 37 Following the design competition for the Park of La Villette (1982-1983).

Unknowing through Writing-(and)- Drawing

Wearing away the Rational

Viktorija Bogdanova

Unknowing is an act of letting prejudices and stereotypes fall from our shoulders. Past knowledge and experience becomes softened and mouldable – prepared to integrate the newly acquired experience as a quick beam of light through the cloud of unknowing.¹ In this article ², unknowing is the human condition in which a person experiences an intense dissolving into the environment. In the condition of unknowing, inner walls of habitual seeing are weakened, and one's immediate awareness grows in receptivity. The intense opening towards the environment leads to an intense dialogue with the place: one learns to walk in a fog of unlearning what was previously known. We could see this as a ritual of sharpening the presence in spatial observation,

which also enhances one's presence in the dialogue with the inhabitants of that place. The condition of unknowing is highly dependent on one's ability to surrender to the inevitable disjunction in a process of learning – the instant of separation and disconnectedness between our 'biography and the perception of our experience' in the present living moment.³ This disjunction is the step back that we need to take in order to reach forward from cumulative or assimilative learning to accommodative or transcendent learning, where a profound growth and self-altering in the learner unfold.⁴ The following reflections exhibit writing and drawing methods that stimulate a creative disjunction from habitual research in architectural and urban thinking through three forms of unknowing: ascending, denying, deconstructing.

Analytical modes of thinking and rational and deductive modes of coming to conclusions have their own meaning and importance. However, emotional and intuitive awareness and imaginative empathy have their own way of revealing meaning embedded in a specific place. In this article, I will reflect on three examples that illustrate how writing and drawing may bring about a different reading of places, architectural typologies and architectural symbols – when filled with fictional stories and speculative narratives:

- 1 Yuri Nornstein's *Hedgehog in the Fog*, a Russian animated movie from 1975,⁵ will be applied as a metaphor for the foggy labyrinth of the creative process. The hedgehog's courage to navigate unknowingly through the dangerous mist resembles a designer's courageous immersion in depths beyond architecture, such as emotional vigilance, the sensitivity to listen and the vivid responsiveness towards the other, the invisible layers of the place and inhabitants, the forces of life from different periods.
- 2 Dostoyevsky's Crystal Palace in his *Notes from the Underground* can be seen as an ironic commentary about an impossible imaginary building, where 'economic relations will be established . . . with mathematical exactitude'⁶ and where all human needs will be predicted, where his

behaviour would be purely rational and oriented only towards his own logical wellbeing. The Crystal Palace here is 'a symbol of the controlling mechanism of utilitarian rationalism', offering material abundance at the cost of 'spirit, autonomy and authenticity'.⁷

- 3 Brodsky and Utkin's project of the Crystal Palace is presented as a 'mirage at the edge of the visible' at the end of a decaying urban borderline, named 'Dump'. Here, the Palace itself is without a roof or walls, but it has a sequence of parallel glass plates instead. After passing through the Dump, the visitor walks through the Palace and arrives at
a terrace – the edge between the natural landscape and the city.

The Fog: Messenger of Uncertainty

A visual analogy of unknowing is Yuri Nornstein's *Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975). While having his usual walk in the forest, the hedgehog observes each natural entity that appears to him with wonder and appreciation. When entering into the shrubs, his vision becomes blurry and he starts longing for his evening ritual of drinking tea and counting stars with his friend, the bear. He is imagining what they will talk about and how he will offer the bear the raspberry jam he has with him. He emerges from the shrubs and starts to walk uphill. All of a sudden, an immense field of fog appears in front of him, and a beautiful semi-visible white horse appears in the middle of the white cloud. His flow of thoughts is broken by amazement. The beauty of the horse and his concern – 'if the horse lies down to sleep, will it choke in the fog?' – draws him to make his way into the fog. The hedgehog becomes mesmerized by the constantly changing world inside the fog. Separating himself from the visibility of the shrubs, he starts his gentle walk through the fog. Wandering around, he takes a fallen branch and tries to reach something touchable in the middle of that dense air. Finally, he succeeds in encountering a touchable entity, which appears to be a sumptuous tree rising towards the sky. But in this moment of aesthetic epiphany, a leaf falls and he hears the voice of his friend searching

for him. Suddenly, he realizes he has lost his gift for the bear; he starts moving chaotically and in panic. Helpless and lost, the hedgehog closes his eyes, surrendering his will to the fog. All of a sudden, a dog approaches, bringing the gift back to him. A moment later, he falls into the river, speaking the words: 'Let the water carry me along.' Floating calmly on the water, the face of the horse and the stars appear and disappear above his eyes, while a voice of someone below the river's surface offers him a ride back to the shore. In the next scene, he is reunited with his friend, the bear, in a warm familiar atmosphere. But his eyes reflect the burden of what they have seen in that excursion through the fog, and he speaks the closing sentence: 'How is she . . . out there in the fog?'

The fog is the unknown field in the life of each of us. It is there, an uncertain area in a constant change, hiding untouched places of possible immersion. Most of the time, we are too busy to look at it. We approach it only when there is a danger that a dear person may drown inside of it, when we are forced to go. But why not earlier? Why do we always see only the danger that may attack our comfortable state of being, instead of observing the unknown, the richness of being carried along by the river? Here, the horse is a metaphor of beauty, love or truth; it encourages the hedgehog to climb towards something, while actually being immersed into a misty landscape that demands a specific sensitivity of walking its ground. The walk is stimulated by ascending towards the horse, but the richness of the route is exposed through the unexpected encounters of the hedgehog with other beings that dwell inside the mist. The gift – the physical reminder of the familiar world, and the voice of the bear – are meaningful forces that take the hedgehog back to the familiar world. But the return is not the same – it is defamiliarized: the hedgehog is now dwelling in and between the two worlds, on and above the ground.

The cinematic technique in Nornstein's movie-making is the following: 'a two-dimensional flat-art is shot on multiple glass plane', which leads to a

'painstaking frame by frame process' that refuses the speed and the shortcuts offered by digital tools.⁸ The flat characters that are cut from a material dance together while co-creating the narrative. Each piece is handcrafted, bringing a prolongation of the creational experience for the author, an authentic cinematic 'handwriting'. Nornstein's meticulous immersion in each scene earned him the name 'the golden snail'.⁹ However, the silent dialogue between the animated characters (the Hedgehog, the Bear, the Owl, Someone, and the Dog) and the environmental setting (the forest, the yard in front of the house, the fog, the tree, the flying leaves) cannot be read by reading 'what is described in details'; on the contrary, 'one should look to that which is implied, but not explicitly written'.¹⁰ The unknown, which becomes intuitively understandable but never describable for the audience, oddly familiar to his embodied memory and warmly strange to his reflective mind at the same time, is that 'break in the text . . . the most alive place in cinema'.¹¹

Dostoyevsky's *Via Negativa*¹²

Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, written 1864, is a critical response to the utopianism and utilitarianism that prevailed in Russia in the 'revolutionary' modes of thinking of that period.¹³ The main protagonist – a retired civil servant – is a person detached from relations with people. Written in the form of a monologue, his 'letters' are a harsh attack on the formula '2+2=4' and against the belief that the destructive dark sides of man's psyche may simply disappear if a perfect social and economic order built upon a rational system is constructed. He is actually an anti-hero, testing the limits of the human free will by exhibiting the importance of the irrational human nature.

In this work, the Crystal Palace is a symbolic image of the ideal of Chernyshevsky's Utopian society in *What Is to Be Done* (1863), which was built upon enlightened self-interest and rational egoism. Dostoyevsky visited Paxton's Crystal Palace in London in 1862 – his reflections are recorded in his *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. Naming London as Baal, he writes that the

Crystal Palace was a 'terrible force that has united all the people here, who came from all over the world in a single herd',¹⁴ as well as the 'proud and dismal spirit of materialism'.¹⁵ By most, the Palace itself was considered to be a technological miracle because it was the first structure that had such a large surface of glass. Built with products from different countries, it was a symbol of internationalism, but also of the superiority of British manufacturers.

Contrary to the general understanding that Dostoyevsky's *Winter Notes* are a critique of rationalism, I read in these notes a critique on the 'loss of sensibility, systematic, resigned and encouraged'.¹⁶ Dostoyevsky speaks of the Saturday nights in the town, when all the people, 'men and women and their children spread like the ocean over the town', spending everything they had earned through hard work during the week, rushing to drink themselves into 'insensibility', escaping reality.¹⁷ This observation of the citizens is explicated right after his impression of the Crystal Palace, 'the feeling that something has been achieved, triumph and victory that makes him feel "nervous" and "breathless"'.¹⁸ He poses the question that reverberates later in his *Notes from the Underground*: 'Can this, you think, be the final accomplishment of the ideal state of things?'¹⁹ Rather than answering, he continues by describing his encounter with the movement of the crowd on the urban streets and the citizen's drive towards 'insensibility' as a mode of numbing the senses and of avoidance of questioning the 'rightness of the existing order'.²⁰

Dostoyevsky's denying as unknowing is contained in the way his narrators (the underground man and himself on the trip) shift from protagonists to antagonists and vice versa, while rarely explicitly giving a final statement. For example, in *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* the narrator poses a rhetorical question that summarizes his discussions on the contrast between the Crystal Palace and ordinary citizen's life in London, 20 pages later: 'How can there possibly be any brotherhood if it is preceded by a dis-

tribution of shares and by determining how much each person has earned and what each must do?'²¹

The flow of the writing is not progressive and it is difficult for the reader to grasp the true opinion of the writer. However, while stalking the writer's thoughts, one starts to search for one's own voice; the ground seems to be loosened by the narrator's disturbing questions and arrhythmical digressions. The internal dialogue of the writer awakens the internal dialogue of the reader: walking in the unknown. In the novel, Dostoyevsky imagines that once the Crystal Palace is built, 'halcyon days' will arrive, and everything will be 'extraordinarily rational'.²² But he immediately puts forward the fact that people do not always behave as their reason and advantage dictates: 'What has made them conceive that man must want a rationally advantageous choice?'²³ Then, he comes to the statement that all that a human being wants is an independent choice, even if it is a caprice. But that would not be possible in the Crystal Palace, because choice leads to uncertainty, anxiety and suffering: 'Suffering means doubt and negation . . . the sole origin of consciences . . . and what would be the good of the palace of crystal if there could be any doubt about it?'²⁴

Dostoyevsky violates the progress-oriented optimistic narrative of the Crystal Palace by exhibiting its weaknesses to the dystopian extremes. The human tendency towards destruction and chaos is his main argument and point of departure. Although the main protagonist appears as a nihilist without any tendency or aspiration other than harsh criticism, he does break and shatter the knowing utopian ascending towards utilitarian materialism and glorification of the rational power of the human mind.

Finally, Dostoyevsky's use of the image of the Crystal Palace as 'something to do with Babylon',²⁵ generated its counterpart as an architectural metaphor: the underground. The underground holds the unprocessed layers of mud that settle in the soul of the citizen who avoids the questioning of

(fragments of) reality.

Brodsky and Utkin's Spatial Deconstruction of the Crystal Palace as a Strong Monument of Progress

*Seaweed swarms with
Transparent [minnows] Catch them –
They shall thaw without a trace²⁶*

This quotation of a haiku by Matsuo Bashō occupies the central space of Brodsky and Utkin's etching *The Crystal Palace*, an etching that includes plans, sections, elevation, closeups and a written story about the Crystal Palace. The project was a design submitted for the Central Glass Co. Competition in 1982. Both the authors - Ilya Utkin and Alexander Brodsky - were associated with the *paper architects* who interpreted fragments of already written poetry into design solutions containing a poetic narrative – both written and drawn.

The drawings represent the Crystal Palace from different perspectives. The first drawing (upper left) is an elevation of the entrance. Here, one can notice that the floor is elevated from the ground and the roof is a complex vivid curve that cannot be understood without the assistance of the surrounding drawings. The axonometry below Bashō's haiku, on the other hand, shows that the Palace is without a roof and that it consists of vertical plates of glass, set a few metres apart; the finishing line of each plate is a different curve that avoids symmetry. The plan on the left shows the wider location of the Palace: the straight ceremonial road to it departs from fragmented neighbourhoods at the edge of the town, and then it cuts through some quarters marked with the word 'Dump'. The road is elongated over the elevated platform, transforming into a long narrow staircase. The widening of the surface takes place at the elevated square, which is surrounded by a confusing and undefined landscape that appears to be flowing and

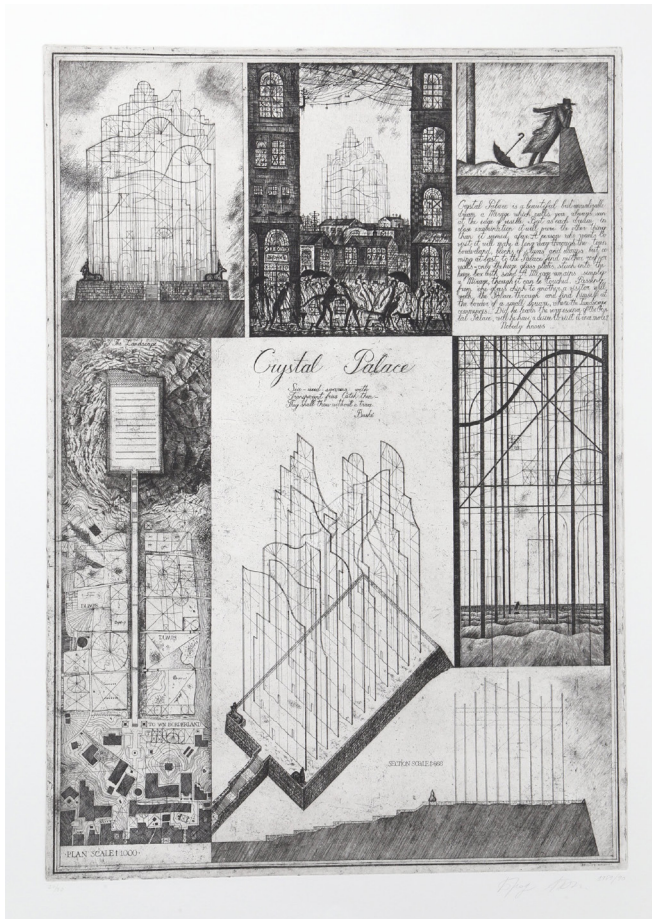


Fig.1. *The Crystal Palace*, Brodsky and Utkin, etching, projects 1981-1990. Available online at: domusweb.it/en/architecture/2012/03/21/paper-tigers.html

trembling. The upper drawing in the middle represents the view of the Palace from a distance – from the town borderland marked with an urban door. Finally, the drawing on the right side represents the human figure in relation to 1) the small terrace with a fence at the end of the road, and 2) the perspective view through the many pieces of glass with a wavy ground.

In between these two drawings, the authors included a short story in which they introduce the Palace as a 'beautiful but unrealizable dream, a Mirage', which when closely examined becomes something different than before. One can also conclude from the written words that the glass plates are inserted into a 'huge box of sand' that, when compared with the elevation with the human figure inside of it, is reminiscent of the scene of Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979), when the Writer enters the abandoned tall basilica without a roof or a clear function. Another thing in the text that cannot be read from the visuals is whether or not the visitor learned the essence of the Crystal Palace and if he will 'have a desire to visit it once more'.

Different Readings of the Crystal Palace

I was not able to discover for sure if this Palace has any direct relation to Dostoyevsky's or Paxton's manifestation of it. However, we can distinguish a few differences between two of the versions – that of Paxton and that of Brodsky and Utkin. First, in terms of the movement of the visitor, a distinction can be made between the different positions in relation to the glass: under/in the glass versus through/around the glass. In Paxton's Crystal Palace, the movement unfolds symmetrically through the naves of a porous basilica, filled with precise function. The glass plates are the shell of the whole. In Brodsky and Utkin's version, the movement is through or around the elements of glass, not via a straight line but through unknown (undrawn) openings in the plates, which (possibly) makes the elevated square a silent labyrinth. The section is not symmetrical because each glass plate has its own curvilinear dialogue with the sky. There is no defined content.

Second, on the level of the dialogue with the exterior, Paxton's Palace seems to be closed, strong, and protective, while Brodsky's Palace is open and vulnerable. For Paxton, the form follows the idea of the object to be a large hall which should be wide enough to house and strong enough to protect the products that arrived from different countries, while for Brodsky and Utkin, the form is opposite to something strong and protective. The roof is absent, while the glass plates are not even considered as walls in the text. What the structure houses and what it protects remains an open question.

Finally, we can see both versions of the Crystal Palace as a spatial metaphor: the one of promise of technological progress versus the mirage of modernization. Paxton's Palace is a realized (and yet deconstructed) symbol of technological progress, a promise for material wellbeing and international connecting, bringing together many people from different parts of the world and from different sociological backgrounds., Brodsky and Utkin's Palace is instead an 'unrealizable dream' from the very beginning, a promise of a strange mode of arrival. The human figure drawn in the visuals seems lonely, confused and lost. The Palace is seen as a mirage; etchings represent a silent bold resistance towards the emerging shiny state-sanctioned architecture in Moscow that did not have any sensitivity towards the cultural heritage, which was falling apart.²⁷ Naming the Palace a mirage, melancholically and sceptically, reflects the authors' own doubt and critical attitude towards what was seen as progress and modernization, because they both grew up in post-war Moscow, where 'mirage is only a mirage remains simply a mirage, though it can be touched'.²⁸

Brodsky waited for 20 years to be able to build things. Similar to Dostoyevsky's protagonist, he was examining his spatial imagination in the 'underground'. But unlike the antihero-ness in the criticism in Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, Brodsky chose to draw what he could not build with a critique that was not so radical that it suffocated the hope that

architecture can make the world a better place, despite the inherent scepticism in the drawings. He speaks about the act of drawing as a mythical and mysterious process of unexpected revelations that makes him 'see something new which I didn't intend to make'.²⁹ As a complaint against computer drawing – something that makes him feel 'depressed' and 'afraid' of being controlled– he refers to hand drawing as something that is 'absolutely free and unpredictable'.³⁰ This spontaneity of the act of hand drawing 'is like making a door which makes it possible to go inside' what you create more deeply.³¹

The ascending as unknowing here happens as a walking of the visitor from the edge of the town border, through the Dump as a remnant from a fallen and forgotten meaning, to the Crystal Palace's platform, which appears to be a territory divided between 11 glass plates that ascend towards the sky with a different curvilinear finishing. The stereotype of the Crystal Palace as something that protects products and brings together people and material goods, is turned into precisely the opposite here – a roofless and wall-less park with transparent panels, protecting only the visitor's freedom to find meaning beyond architecture, at the very edge of the city. This meaning-finding is such a fragile thing, just like the transparent minnows in Bashō's poem, slipping from your palm in the very next moment after you've succeeded to hold them.

The etching technique that created this drawing was a technique very often used in Russia in that period (1978-1993) for illustrating books and literature.³² Just as Nornstein's handcrafts, etching in architecture is a painstaking process similar to an alchemical ritual: metal, acid, bird feather, methylated spirits, ink, paper interact directly with the hands of the two architects. It leads to an immersion and devotion that multiplies the project-related questions that spring up during the creative process; it multiplies the layers of spatial meaning that the authors wish to convey. Most importantly, it multiplies the *interiorization* of one's architectural

imagination in the transformation of the inner world, leaving a room for the unknown and the unspoken, beyond explicit descriptions for external reality: '... a house with an atrium is like a reserved man wholly plunged into the endless space of his inner world.'³³

Unknowning as an Attitude towards the Research of Place

The three forms of unknowing – ascending, denying and deconstructing – place the reader in the same condition as the researcher who approaches an architectural or an urban entity phenomenologically: with a radically enhanced spatial sensitivity and imaginative awareness, the researcher becomes a kind of inhabitant. Never belonging completely to either the researcher role or to the inhabitant role, (s)he stops 'acting' what is expected to be acted out and begins to operate authentically between these two fields of spatial experience.

Denying – the apophatic way of strategic negation – is a modality of spatial thinking that circumscribes what should not be done, rather than pointing out what should be done. Dostoyevsky's description of the dystopian notion of the Crystal Palace works similarly in novels from the science fiction genre: creating an imaginary place that exhibits the faults of the contemporary crisis of the spirit, it is a critique and denial of the then-popular belief in the greatness of material progress. It is perhaps because of this explicit storytelling denial and vivid hypothetical architectural metaphoric grasping of the progress-oriented ideals of that time, that this is Dostoyevsky's most known and elaborated work in the Western world.

Deconstructing the generally accepted definition of a palace as a strong monument of progress is Brodsky's and Utkin's way of operating as architects in a time-place that did not allow their critical thinking to be materialized. Their etching of the Crystal Palace represents the designing of something opposite to the expected image of a palace: the symbolic design principles are inverted. The entwinement of the poetic prose writing and

the cinematic narrative drawing works as a 'method' in the following ways: first, it polemicalizes what a palace, a dump, a gate and a city mean to the contemporary (wo)man, widening the connotations of these words through design as a creative critique of reality. Second, it unfolds the story through the eyes of the visitor. And third, the flow, order and rhythm of (re)reading is completely dependent on the will of the Reader.

The three modes of unknowing contain writing modalities of spatial thinking that transform spatial elements into metaphors beyond the physical, the visible or the useful. These writing modalities offer ways to make architecture aware of the wider processes unfolding in the world, from an existential, anthropological and intersubjective perspective that encourages the 'seeing of the invisible'.

- 1 William Johnston (ed.), *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counseling* (New York: Image | Double Day | Random House, 2012).
- 2 The writing is a processual trace and fragment of the author's PhD in progress, entitled *Emotive Immersion Through Poem-Drawing in Spatial Design* (University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Architecture).
- 3 Peter Jarvis, 'Learning To Be A Person in Society, Learning To Be Me', in: Knud Illeris (ed.), *Contemporary Theories of Learning: Learning Theorists . . . In Their Own Words* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 22.
- 4 Knud Illeris, 'A Comprehensive Understanding of Human Learning', in: *ibid.*, 13.
- 5 Yuri Nornstein (dir.), *Hedgehog in the Fog* (Moscow, 1975).
- 6 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (1984), 33. Available online at: planetebook.com/free-ebooks/notes-from-the-underground.pdf.
- 7 Roger Chapman, 'Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Eastern Orthodoxy and the Crystal Palace', in: Anne R. Richards and Iraj Omidvar (eds.), *Historic Engagements with Occidental Cultures, Religions, Powers: Postcolonialism and Religions* (New York: Palgrave

Macmillan, 2014), 35.

- 8 The Golden Snail: An Evening with Yuri Norstein (invitation). Friday, January 29, 2010 - 7:00pm. Film Studies Center. See: filmstudiescenter.uchicago.edu/events/2010/golden-snail-evening-yuri-norstein#:~:text=Norstein%20uses%20a%20technique%20in,in%20Norstein's%20films%20is%20handcrafted (accessed February 2021).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Elena Skulskaya, Юрий Норштейн. На Тикусая нищего похож, Дело, 23 June 2003. See: idelo.ru/282/26.html (accessed February 2021).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Negative way, or way of denial.
- 13 Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, op. cit. (note 6).
- 14 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 37.
- 15 Ibid., 42.
- 16 Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (London: Alma Books, 2008 [1862]), 52.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., 50.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid., 51.
- 21 Ibid., 71.
- 22 Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, op. cit. (note 6), 33.
- 23 Ibid., 34.
- 24 Ibid., 45.
- 25 Dostoyevsky, *Winter Notes 1862 | 2008*, op. cit. (note 16), 50.
- 26 Cited in Brodsky and Utkin's *The Crystal Palace*, etching, projects 1981-1990. Available online at: domusweb.it/en/architecture/2012/03/21/paper-tigers.html.
- 27 In an interview with Igor Zinatulin, in 2013, Brodsky explained that due to the corruption, only 'those with most troubles' were the ones who were allowed to build in the city; hence, money was 'being poured into erecting shiny office blocks while historic buildings lie neglected'. 'Grand Designs: What's Inside the Mind of Alexander Brodsky, Russia's Greatest Architect? An Interview', *The Calvert Journal* (2013). Available online at: calvertjournal.com/articles/show/1/alexander-brodsky-russia-greatest-living-architect (accessed January 2020).
- 28 A sentence from the story written in the etching.
- 29 Ingerid Almaas and Einar Bjarki Malmquist, 'The Reality of a Drawing: An Interview with Alexander Brodsky', *Arhitektur N magazine* (2008). Available

online at: architecturenorway.no/questions/histories/The_reality_of_a_drawing_an_interview_with_Alexander_Brodsky/ (accessed March 2020).

30 Ibid.

31 bid.

32 Andrzej Bialkiewicz, *Play with Architecture in Technical Transactions*, (Krakow: University of Technology, 2015) 8-A, 20

33 Brian Hatton, 'Alexander Brodski: A Carnival of Long Moments', in: *Alexander Brodsky – Works* (Berlin: Museum for Architectural Drawing, 2015), 28

How to Speak?

A Conversation with Alberto Pérez-Gómez about
the Necessity of Language to Understand and
Practice Architecture

Lorin Niculae, Jorge Mejía Hernández and Klaske Havik (WP):

This issue of Writingplace Journal is linked to an international network in which we're trying to make sense of the current challenges that European cities are facing, with other scholars from across Europe and from various disciplines (such as architecture, literary theory, media studies, sociology). We aim to do so by looking into narratives, both as potential sources of information about urban places and as potential tools for design. As we greatly value your work, which is a key reference for many members of this network, we would love to exchange some thoughts about these topics. In this issue of Writingplace, we're looking for the potential of literary language to understand and design urban places. In your recent book Attunement, you argue that 'as a creative and poetic device, linguistic metaphor is vital for the generation of appropriate atmospheres, claiming a central role in the 'language of the architect'.¹ Could you explain why literary language and especially metaphor could be useful for architects, both to analyse a place and to imagine its possible transformations?

Alberto Pérez-Gómez (APG): In my view, literature that engages place is the best map, the best possible vehicle for a human understanding of cities and sites. This happens precisely through the use of metaphor and its derived tropes. I evoke metaphor in opposition to denotative language, simply because it is the master trope. Metaphor is at the centre of all other

tropes we use when we write and engage in these operations that interest us. The issue is to be clear as to how we name such operations. You mention analysis, but I would argue that analyses are a Cartesian mode of explanation, and therefore we have to be very clear about what we mean. Metaphor is not primarily analytical, it does not break things apart to explain them, it brings them together to understand, as Aristotle says very clearly. And a certain opacity always remains, because a metaphor allows you to understand something by bringing together two things that seem to be apart. That is what we do in order to know: we bring something that is distant close to us to make it familiar, and then we say we understand. The equation, in logic or mathematics, could then be seen as a special case of metaphor, one that is simply flat and reduced: truth as correspondence, such as two plus two equals four. Metaphor is a different thing altogether from analysis. An architect imagining human life in a new situation as a programme for design would do better by precisely doing that, imagining relations, how things work together, how there is a resonance between proposal and habit, perhaps not how actions can be analysed to be functionalized, which is what we normally do. When we are looking at how we learn from narratives, we should be clear about this distinction between analytical and literary modes of understanding.

WP: *In our investigations into European cities, we often come across historical local narratives. What do you think about the current value of historical narratives of place? How might this relate to the relationship between tradition and innovation, which you claimed in Attunement, is 'crucial for the proper social functioning of architecture'?*

APG: It is Hans-Georg Gadamer who best explains that the meaning of artistic works, regardless of their kind or age, hinges on a dialectic between tradition and innovation. Basically, when we are moved by a work in our experience, when we learn both cognitively and emotionally something we perceive to be of value, the work gives us something new and at once

something we can recognize. These two things happen at the same time, they are in dialogue. It opens up something new while we also recognize its familiarity.

Gadamer uses the Greek concept of the *symbolon* – a *tessera* carried by someone to be recognized as a member of a group. It was a kind of token, a clay disk that you would break and give to a friend so that he would be recognized by your group or family. If you went to war and died, the friend could bring it back to the family and be recognized. It's fascinating. The *symbolon* is about making something whole. When something is 'symbolic', the argument is that it makes us whole – even if only momentarily. Gadamer argues that the work of art or architecture offers a profound sense of recognition – not a single meaning, but the possibility of feeling and understanding ourselves as complete in a particular situation, whole and therefore potentially holy.

The merely novel often seems nonsensical – we know this well from our experience of contemporary art. Of course, there is a paradox here, which is well described by Stravinsky when he writes that 'anything which is not tradition, is plagiarism'. You have to connect to something that is recognizable, otherwise you run the risk of merely repeating yourself – which is what Stravinsky is saying. When you relate to tradition properly, as Le Corbusier did when he produced his designs for La Tourette, you relate to tradition in a way that what you produce is actually new and different, but recognizable. Le Corbusier found something at the end of his life that he had not realized in his earlier career, when he was less interested in history. In other words, we turn to history precisely not to repeat it, but in search of semantic innovation. For Paul Ricoeur the possibility for semantic innovation is linguistic. Semantic innovation starts with language. This is a philosophical position that comes from Heidegger: we cannot live outside of language.

WP: *You connect this relationship between tradition and innovation to the linguistic imagination. How do you see this connection? In which ways can linguistic imagination be of any help?*

APG: First, we should understand that the very nature of imagination is not pictorial but linguistic. This is a long conversation that I try to follow in my book *Attunement*. In short, we need to first recognize the phenomenological origin of language. There is a dominant tendency to understand language as an arbitrary code – the well-trodden argument brought to the fore by structuralists. Instead, the argument of phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Gadamer and Steiner is that language is not arbitrary and that it is in continuity with gesture and with the flesh of the world, which is this undifferentiated condition from which our understanding emerges.

One can agree with Heidegger, Gadamer or Steiner that language is not an arbitrary code, that it speaks through us – that despite its remarkable plasticity and plurality, it speaks from the world and about the world of experience. Paradoxically, true poetry is that which is eminently translatable, while it can never be simply transcribed. Poetry can be translated if it really speaks about what matters, because it rises from this original condition of language.

Translation is a fascinating phenomenon. One can argue that we are still speaking the original language. Languages don't really die, they just transform. A fascinating book by Heller-Roazen discusses this idea – that language does not die, but translates. Steiner also says that the condition for us to understand each other is that we are always translating each other. Even in the English that we are speaking here, you are taking my words and you are translating them. There is no transparency, and that is precisely what enables communication.

Being the first mediation between world and consciousness, images are made of language. Even a so-called mental image is never like a picture or photographic imprint. We know this, for it has been corroborated by neuroscientific studies. Instead, an image is a situation in place, set up in words.

Once we understand this, we recognize that language has a fundamental function in semantic innovation – basically to bring that which is far in relation to something that is near: indeed, a metaphor. We usually assume the reverse: that language is first denotative, and this is the first mistake, a pitfall for all subsequent questions. All human language is first poetic and polysemic, and we need to learn to embrace this difficulty, rather than pretend to escape it. Particularly when it comes to communication with others, the celebration of this opacity, and of that which remains unsaid or tacit in the particular languages that we are engaging in, is absolutely crucial.

WP: *In Attunement you give great value to myth as a way in which places were understood and given meaning, stating that ‘the qualities of place were always enacted through myths: oral, ever transforming stories that were deeply shared by the people and intertwined with the landscape.’⁴³ Does it still make sense today to search for local myths in our urban analyses? And what can they tell us about how places are perceived and interpreted today, especially thinking of European cities whose demographics are changing, and where different social groups may have very different understandings of the same place? People’s rootedness to place might be much more complex today.*

APG: It is important to grasp the original nature of myth – it is a particular form of a logos or discourse, a story that articulates human purpose, usually in continuity with a more-than-human world: the natural world. Myths are usually collective beliefs, enacted as rituals, as habitual human actions framed by architecture (which is crucial for their meaning). There is a kind of reciprocity – one that is important when we talk about architecture – between myth, storytelling and rituals. We could say that rituals are myths in action. As architects, we frame human actions. Rituals are not like brushing our teeth every morning. They are human actions in which the agent cannot be sure of the outcome. The real agency

in rituals is usually deemed to be external, like when Aboriginal peoples perform a rain dance. Myths were first understood as profound beliefs grounded in perception and poetic language by Giambattista Vico – they are not simply fairy tales or fantasies, however alien they may seem to us and to scientific rationality. With the demise of a generalized cosmography and religious belief, myths and rituals have transformed. The core of what they represent remains a human need, but not their original embodiments. We cannot argue that we believe in the Greek myths, we may be fascinated by them, like I am, but we cannot believe in them. Equally, participation in rituals is no longer comprehended by most European populations – except for some marginalized groups. All this creates a problem of participation, which goes to the core of possible meanings in modern and contemporary architecture.

Arguably, as claimed by scholars like Octavio Paz and Hans-Georg Gadamer, the great themes that articulate human purpose in narrative form transfer to literature in the nineteenth century. Some European writers like Louis Aragon and Bruno Schulz, among other great writers of the twentieth century, have actually tried to confront this issue head on, when they actually attempted to write narrative fiction as myths. Have they succeeded? Are there equivalent literary narratives that address human purpose in the context of modern European cities?

Philosophers like Gianni Vattimo have recognized that we are kind of in a bind: we know that we cannot go back to myths, but we also know that scientific rationality is no substitute, because it does not provide the answers to real human questions.

Yes, it is possible to find contemporary narratives that function like myths, but these important stories are diversified. They may exist in film, TV, novels; in media as diverse as the new urban populations they address. Against the complex problem of identification derived from the proliferation of media and communication, I still believe that finding the appropriate voices to convey the value of human actions and the qualia of lived places that frame them is possible and necessary. These voices are literary in essence.

WP: *There was another dimension of myth that you touched upon earlier. If local myths are 'ever transforming', could our architectural interventions be understood as transformations of local stories? Could you reflect on the transformative dimension of myths that are told and retold and eventually turn into other forms, like movies or tv shows? And could we understand architectural interventions as transformations of these local stories? Could architecture shape, tell or transform local myths?*

APG: Architecture modulates habitual action that is in itself meaningful, even if not loaded symbolically, like ancient rituals. We know from contemporary neuroscience that this kind of knowledge is at the foundation of other representational kinds of knowledge. Martin Heidegger speaks of 'focal actions' as habitual actions that seem to be particularly important, like sitting around the table and having a meal for those of us with European origins. I was fascinated when I went to Bali, and saw that these people have rituals for everything, but they don't have a table in their house. They do not sit down to eat. I found that remarkable, for Balinese culture is completely invested in rituals but they do not dine, whereas for us it is very important. For us a meal is such a 'focal action'. In the movie *Babette's Feast*, for example, there is this long scene where the meal is transformative. By framing focal actions properly, we could enhance architecture's capacity for attunement.

WP: *In Attunement you see a role for poetic language, 'to reconcile the architect's personal imagination with an understanding of local cultures and pressing political and social concerns: the crucial dilemma we have inherited with our modern condition'.⁴ The question of understanding local cultures comes to the fore when working with communities that are very hard to analyse. Each time you try to make Cartesian analyses, you fail because you cannot even find out the number of family members a family has. As soon a somebody marries, goes away or comes home with a groom, it is very hard to assess the population of such a community. Hard methods fail. Of course,*

we try to collect data and situate ourselves by means of conversations, local narratives and myths. It's very important.

One problem of working within communities is linked with direct data collecting from the locals, via interviews. We would hope that hearing their stories, needs and wishes directly would help us formulate correct architectural answers. But in many cases, the questions are rarely answered directly or usefully; they are biased by our presence, by what the interlocutor wants to transmit or thinks we would expect to hear.

To what extent do you consider that data collected by architects from people first-hand is true or accurate? Could architects base their Ricoeurian prefiguration on inaccurate information? Do they have the means to discern what is true and what is false? Is it the truth of a local narrative a value to be sought, at risk of destroying the poetics of a narrative? What prevails: truth or the poetics? Or is this a false dilemma?

APG: One the one hand, the architect has to cultivate humility, learning to really listen to what others say. I understand the problem in the situation that you are describing, but I still think that we have to learn to listen and enter into genuine dialogue. A reason why one is seen with suspicion is because for the last 200 years social science methodologies have treated the 'other' as a kind of experiment. It has not been about entering a conversation, it has been about gathering data. We are received with suspicion because we don't enter into a dialogue, because we think we have a superior knowledge or methodology, because we are 'analysing'. In that sense, I have a problem with social science methodologies – I don't think that they are very useful to architecture and urban issues. Real dialogue is more important. To acknowledge the other as truly different while trusting a conversion of horizons is possible, and leads to true understanding. This comes from hermeneutics, which are really about understanding, about opening yourself to the other.

The challenge is to truly engage the other, to seek a communion – a fusion of horizons, to use Ricoeur's terminology – while recognizing that actually a distance exists between our own world and that of the potential inhabitant of a project. That is the other misunderstanding: that we can somehow eliminate this space. What people like Gadamer and Ricoeur explain about the hermeneutic method, when they talk about how to understand a historical artefact or understand a different culture that is synchronic, is that a person entering into a dialogue must recognize that there is something to be gained from the distance. Because there is something about the distance that enables you to understand aspects of a community that you wouldn't understand if you were one of them. Distance enables you to understand habit in a way that they don't see it, so that you can valorise it, frame it in a way that makes sense to them.

All this is to say that we have to be very careful with where and how we choose to practice. The issue is to develop a common ground of commonality: language. It's a very patient operation, one that demands real love and compassion. We don't practice to please a client, we practice with the common good as primary ethical aim.

There are other articulations of stories, as you say, that are different from first-hand interviews, and that may in fact in many cases be more valuable or authoritative. Our only hope is to enter the conversation in good faith.

Of course, the living myths and stories of communities that articulate issues of foundation may bring about an understanding of the nature of place and the task at hand. Architects bring in a good cultural, philosophical and historical foundation, which allows them to be discriminating and decide what matters for the project. That is what we are contributing, this is our role. This is why architecture is fundamentally a human discipline, not a fine art or a scientific operation.

WP: *You say that scientific rationality never amounts to the power of myth but that's an assumption of scientific rationality as one that aims for truth. We could also argue that the origin of science is myth, or that science is fundamentally a myth-making activity. You talk about a crisis in modern science. If we reject the more 'arrogant' aspects of scientific rationality that claim universal truth, can't we see a possible attitude in the sciences that allows the questioning of myths? An attitude that does not take myth as it is or for granted, in order to accept or just follow it, but that recognizes myth as something that can be challenged or questioned?*

APG: Although I believe sometimes that technology is magic that fails, I'm not a luddite, and I'm not saying that we have to go back to myth. I'm just saying that there are incredible limitations to the extrapolation of scientific thinking to what we do, to questions that arise from our human condition. I think it's a bit more complicated than the binary that you assume in your question. And I explained this, I hope, in my first book in which I referred to the crisis in modern science, specifically paraphrasing philosopher Edmund Husserl. His insights have particular relevance for architecture.

In his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (a famous little book), Kant basically says that you are not allowed to be a philosopher if you don't follow the same logic of rigorous mathematics. Thus, he ushers in positivism, expecting all discursive thinking – including philosophy – to depend exclusively on mathematical reason for its deployment. What happens with Husserl and his students (what later became known as existentialism and phenomenology) is basically the realization that it's impossible to make sense of the things that matter to humans if all you have are the tools of positivism: syllogism and clarity. For this reason, every science – this is what Husserl says – becomes a self-contained universe in quest of positive answers. The result is that human questions are left open for some future resolution. According to Husserl, this amounts to a humanity in crisis, because we become incapable of articulating, through our present thought

and action, the purpose and place in the universe of what we do and what we are. We are in trouble!

What's even more fascinating about Husserl is that he recognized that the first science that became self-referential, separated from the world of embodied experience, is geometry. He pointed to the functionalization of Euclidean geometry as a first instance of the crisis: geometry, a discipline that always referred 'semantically' to the world as lived. Euclid's axiom of parallel lines, founded on tactility, becomes emancipated from this primary founding intuition and through its mathematical syntax is capable of not only reproducing (visually) the environment, but of creating autonomous (possibly nonsensical) worlds. Husserl is not being negative about the sciences; he's not saying that science doesn't work. On the contrary, science works very well. The problem is the kind of discourse that it is. Both hard and human sciences became self-referential systems, bent on instrumentality and legitimized by their efficiency, yet dissociated from the world of experience, from the real questions that can only be expressed in everyday language, with its opacity, with its polysemy. In other words, in all disciplines syntactic coherence is given priority over semantic relevance, and prosaic, supposedly direct language ultimately modelled on the ideals of mathematical algorithms is given priority over natural and poetic languages, which as I already said are always partially opaque and polysemic.

There is an intrinsic fallacy in this belief of self-referentiality that still drives the sciences today. One instance of this fallacy was demonstrated for mathematics by Kurt Godel in 1931 – it's called Godel's proof. Husserl led the way to discover the fallacy of meaning as something existing exclusively 'inside my head'. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and even today, the Cartesian soul becomes the brain, and is believed to be the exclusive seat of consciousness. Phenomenology and some recent cognitive science and neuroscience now question this belief. Consciousness, they say, is always enacted, is part of life itself, it's embodied (because you

cannot think as a human without your particular human body), and it's in place. Without that, you basically don't have human consciousness. This is an insight of great consequence for architecture, because it means that the environment really matters.

Those are the stakes! If you keep analysing the hell out of the environment you just keep on producing neutral environments and you're screwing yourself. That's why I'm passionate about this. It's a problem that telecommunications have paradoxically made incredibly worse. We thought telecommunications would make communication transparent, but instead it has become more opaque. We need only recall the phenomenon of 'fake news'. But we cannot for this reason say: 'The language we speak is useless, we can only analyse.' On the contrary, we have to be well grounded, well oriented, as best as we can possibly be, to be able to operate. That's the shift I am arguing for.

It is of course not a matter of going back to some religious or magical mentality. Obviously not. But we need to recognize the limits of positive reason, including methodologies built upon Cartesian models. The alternatives are hermeneutic methodologies, built upon the tradition of Aristotelian practical philosophy, seeking not absolute truths but possible local truths, topical truths – from *topos*, place.

It's about *Alētheia*, the Greek word for wisdom or phronesis, which recognizes the possibility of a conflict of interpretations while never granting the relativization of truth. I can recommend a remarkable book by Ernesto Grassi: *Rhetoric as Philosophy*. Grassi was a student of Heidegger's who got upset with his teacher for political reasons, and rightly so. He was a brilliant man who died very young, and wrote this very short book where he argues that the real philosophy is one that was always supposed to be second rate, from Plato all the way to Kant, ever since we became enamoured with the clarity of mathematics. Aristotle explained that aside from theoretical

philosophy we also have recourse to what he called practical philosophy – *phronesis* in Greek, *prudentia* in Latin: Wisdom, prudence, verisimilitude. It's a truth that opens and closes, that is true insofar as it connects to a certain time and place, a locality. The ability of the rhetor, the speaker, would be to make truth clear for others in a certain time and place. That's rhetorical language: It's not to tell lies, it's that which is self-evident to a social group. But it doesn't have the clarity of mathematics, it emerges from common, polysemic and not denotative language. *Aletheia* is not there forever, and that's not wrong. That's what we can know as humans about our own condition, mortals on this earth.

That is the alternative. It's not myth in the traditional sense, it's not religion. Hermeneutical philosophy is the real alternative. Except that we don't consider it because we are obsessed with the supposedly unshakable objectivity of scientists. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century that has been architecture's curse.

WP: *Indeed, we're looking into narrative in relation to places and communities because it makes it possible to give other information, or more local information, and to give the stage to different voices. But how can we deal with diverging or contradictory experiences, or the risk that we're misinterpreting things?*

APG: We talk because we have a body that is vertical, bipedal and oriented with our distinct sense of direction. Merleau-Ponty would grant that, indeed, we have different interpretations. And yet we have in common so much that we are able to talk about it, despite the enormous diversity among human languages. Neuroscience would add today that 80 per cent of what we call consciousness is pre-reflective, and what we disagree about is about 20 per cent, like the tip of an iceberg. We love the part of our consciousness that enables language, art and mathematics because that's what we think makes us human: our intellectual attention. But we really share a whole

understanding of the world, which is very different from an ant's, a spider's or a dog's. We don't understand the world of the dog, no matter how much we think that we do. The world of the dog has to do with its morphology, its biology, its genetics and its intelligence. We may admire it, but we don't truly understand it.

Prior to the nineteenth century, if I may generalize, the world of architecture was not about drawings, but about building in qualitative places, whose meanings were given in the spatiotemporality of human actions. Despite the complexity that has always been attached to the production of buildings since the Renaissance, the architect was responsible from the inception of a design idea to the completion of a building, and even beyond. There is a fascinating fragment by Filarete, where he characterizes the architect as the mother of the building (the client being the father). Both are responsible for bringing it into being and for its care and success. What I would retain from this is that the translation from idea (say, the idea of the client, the 'father') to the drawings, models and actual building that the 'mother architect' nurses, are processes that enrich the outcome; processes that needed to take into consideration the specificity of real conditions for their embodiment.

What made this possible was language. This observation connects to our own interest in narrative. Language was crucial to enable the translation from commission to realization. Architects, clients and society celebrated the importance of spoken language to carry the intentionality through. From the bishop or the abbot to the master builders, in the construction of cathedrals in the Middle Ages, from client to architect, continuing with Filarete's analogy, all have carried the baby for a few months and, once born, have brought it to fruition through language. Language was crucial to make the cities we all adore. All rich cities of the world that have the kind of incredible emotional power that comes from craft were made possible by language, which enabled everyone involved in their construction to believe

that the process of translation was something that enriched rather than impoverished.

WP: *In your book Built upon Love⁵ you make a case for an architecture generated on the basis of, and directed towards, love – understood as the convergence of eros and philia. If – following Huxley – we presume that love cannot be known, but only understood, and that understanding is not entirely communicable, how and what should architects communicate with and to each other?*

APG: What I argue in that book follows an insight from Socrates. Love is taken as an archetypal feeling, a master feeling, because you could also say that hatred is a modality of love. It's a feeling that is granted to us as a condition of existence (Aristotle says that much: 'I feel, therefore I am') and that in fact makes clear thinking possible. It makes the recognition of the self-conscious, thinking person, a possibility. That's why in early Greek thought Eros, articulated in the poetry of Sappho, appears more or less at the same time as the first philosophers.

Socrates says that what is interesting about love is that it makes knowledge possible, even if it remains itself an enigma. It's like a gift that makes us human, connected to our self-consciousness and to our openness to death. Nowadays neuroscientists can claim that emotion is generally the beginning of knowledge. Emotion is crucial, and we're better off if we acknowledge it than if we believe that the only true kind of knowledge, that the only legitimate kind of knowledge is dispassionate knowledge – the claim of positive science.

This intertwining of the emotional and the cognitive is at the root of what I'm saying in *Built upon Love*: that it is important to recognize the centrality of love and empathy, but that doesn't cancel the conversation. On the contrary, it makes it relevant. I'm not sure if this answers your question,

but I do remember coming across Peter Eisenman after I wrote this book and he was very upset with me, because, he confessed, his whole premise about architecture is that it had nothing whatsoever to do with love – either as erotic presence or social contract. The claim for a self-referential, purely formalistic practice is of course totally at odds with what I maintain.

WP: *Bringing together the above questions, talking about love and about science, about the difference between what you called analytical language and natural or poetic language, could we still learn from the advancement of scientific knowledge, for instance through the development of new instruments and methods to confront our problems? Even if we believe that architecture has a fundamentally poetic origin, in what instances (if any) would you consider rationality and the aim for knowledge to be useful or indispensable for architects?*

APG: That is a very interesting question, I would never deny the importance of reason in architecture. I think now you understand what I mean is just that I don't think that reason (*logos*, *ratio*, the words we use to convey knowledge) can be folded into scientific rationality and made to operate on the model of two plus two equals four. Since its inception in classical antiquity, our discipline has been grounded on reason: *scientia* and *prudentia* (or *theoria* and *phronésis*) on the one hand, and also the non-representational motor skills of craft on the other. These three things are crucial, says Vitruvius. Three modalities of knowing that have to collaborate to enable the task of the architect and that are actually not reducible to each other. Even scientific reason, one that is fascinated by regularity in mathematics and proportions, was not originally prescriptive of techniques. It was a mode of contemplative knowing all the way to the end of the seventeenth century. That was its dominant modality. Scientific reason, however, after the nineteenth century (and this has been the argument I've been trying to put forward), has proven incapable of grappling with central questions of meaning, however necessary it may be to deal with issues of production,

efficient construction or sustainability. What we are left with to address our central questions is therefore practical reason, narrative language, as I explained before. Reason, as bare natural language, is not bound by some exclusive mathematical logic or syllogism.

A sound understanding of the history of architectural representation is crucial, I think, to see with clarity why narrative and literary tools are so important today, as means to recover qualitative issues in our experience and cultural values. This is the issue at hand for your work in the journal. I have also written a book about this problem.⁶ In fact, while graphic tools of representation become more kindred to scientific rationality, in their ability to depict with precision, they lead the world through scientific mapping and planning. For example, with the inception of perspective as a tool for representation in the seventeenth century, or eventually descriptive geometry in the late eighteenth century, it became possible for architects to imagine that the work of architecture is actually the drawing, or a coordinated set of orthogonal projections that perfectly describe and predict a building to come. This is hardly the case before the scientific revolution and more specifically before the implementation of descriptive geometry at the École Polytechnique in Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a tradition that continued into the École des Beaux-Arts and beyond.

The new tools introduced at that juncture are evidently the origin of our software; they exhibit an identical intentionality. That's for me the interesting lesson to retain: that the so-called digital revolution is a misunderstanding. In this sense maybe we really do overstate the importance of these instrumental tools. In other words, reductive tools of representation, becoming tools for precise picturing, implicitly deny the importance of language to understand the world, and deny the importance of place. Qualitative places start to hide behind our construction of conceptual space, identified with the space of urban and architectural design *tout court*: the space in the computer screen.

Today we are in a bind because we think that we have to put everything through BIM and make sure that what we draw is what gets built. We cannot possibly understand how any discrepancies could be celebrated as something positive, and we don't articulate our intentions in language. It's the mathematics that do the work, from the computer software to the fabrication. It's really fascinating, how these things actually are connected.

Only at the beginning of the nineteenth century did craft and building trades start to appear as universally problematic – as something to control or prescribe – even implying an idiocy involved in productive hands, implying that the rational architect knows better because we're scientific and we have all these prescriptive tools. This is recent. No architect would have ever thought that way prior to the early nineteenth century, when the architect became the author of the drawings that prescribe the next steps – this being considered the 'work' itself, with a full ontological weight. Unfortunately, as we all know, it would be silly to imagine that we can simply short-circuit our contemporary tools of production and the expectations of a technological world.

This is, I think, the central dilemma, and crucial to understanding both the value of what we do when we talk about literary tools in the design process as well as the limitations of this position – why one finds so much resistance. This polemic is real and foundational. These technological tools really are against language, they are algorithmic, and this is their 'language', the so-called language of algorithms, which is actually anything but a language. Understanding these issues is important to frame the design process differently, to embrace materiality and the challenges of translation in the linguistic world; embracing, for example, local craft practices. That's the challenge architects face. It's a huge challenge.

- 1 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 184.
- 2 Ibid., 187.
- 3 Ibid., 115.
- 4 Ibid., 191.
- 5 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (MIT Press, 2006).
- 6 Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

The Readjusted Arabesque**Narrating Architecture in Literary Text, the Case of Kafka's Bridge**

Esteban Restrepo Restrepo

The architect is not the only artist who conceives architecture. As the most common spatial and material framework in which human life takes place, architecture also appears in other arts like painting, cinema, theatre and literature, where it is an unavoidable subject of conception and reflection. Among those arts, it is on the architectures that are present in literary texts that we will focus in this article. Unlike the architect, the writer conceives architecture with the technical conditions and the aesthetic particularities of the literary medium. Thus, the experience we make of literary architectures radically differs from the one we make of built architectures, which can be experienced first-hand and navigated at will. To appraise a literary architecture this contribution will use two analytical categories from Gérard Genette's narratology, namely: the *Voice* or the *situation* of the narrator in relation to the story he tells, and its implications in the representation of architecture; and the *Order* or the *sequences* in which architecture is represented during the narration. We will use both categories to analyse Kafka's short story *The Bridge* (*Die Brücke*).

Keywords: narrative, situation, sequence, literary architecture, experience.

Esteban Restrepo Restrepo is an architect from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana of Medellín, Colombia. He has a PhD in Comparative Literature (with a co-direction in Architecture) from the Université Vincennes-Saint Denis/Paris VIII. In his thesis, *L'Écrivain en Architecte* (The Writer as an Architect), he explores the aesthetical particularities of the architectural conception in the literary texts, especially in Samuel Beckett's and Franz Kafka's works. Currently he is Maître de Conférences Associé at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-La Villette (FR) in the Departement of Arts and

Representation Techniques, and researcher at the GERPHAU (Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche en Philosophie, Architecture et Urbain). He is also Invited Professor to the master Arquitectura, Crítica y Proyecto at the U.P.B. of Medellín. He has published two books: *(anti)Chambres. Les architectures fragiles dans l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett* (Les Presses du réel, France, 2015) and *Cosmética. Por un espesor de la banalidad* (Ediciones UPB, Colombia, 2008), and several articles about the relationships between architecture and literature.

Thick Photographic Descriptions

Another Way of Telling Danish Welfare Landscapes

Kristen Van Haeren

This paper explores how 'nature' – in the form of the landscapes of two housing estates in Copenhagen – was a central part of the vision of establishing a good life for every citizen: nature was being valued as an essential amenity and common ground for the creation of the new welfare vision for all.

Through an analysis of, and engagement with, historical documents – as well as situated photographic modes of inquiry – this investigation into welfare landscapes focuses on the less-acknowledged but vital forces that shape the green outdoor areas of the housing estates, framing details to emphasize the specificity of place and depicting a landscape for living where humans were central. This way of working can offer insights into multifarious spatial grounds, diverse interpretations of green spaces, and the construction of humane living environments designed for access to nature – but also provide civic opportunities and affordances for gathering, play, community, privacy, personal development and the like – all within these welfare landscapes.

Keywords: welfare landscape, thick description, photography, housing estates.

Kristen Van Haeren has recently completed her PhD at the University of Copenhagen within the Landscape Architecture and Planning department as part of the research project Reconfiguring Welfare Landscapes, which investigated the future of the green open spaces of the post-war Danish social housing estates, funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research. Kristen's research aims to investigate ideas, atmospheres and perceptions of everyday green surroundings through modes of photographic and textual description as a means of discovering alternative ways of reading and imagining our everyday spatial surroundings. Kristen has taught in theory and design studios and contributed to international research publications in areas of architecture, landscape architecture, cultural studies, and visual media. Kristen is originally from Canada and is educated as an architect from Carleton University (BArch) in Canada and Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands (MSc) and has practiced in offices in both Canada and Europe.

City of Words

A Multimodal Collaboration in 'Writing Urban Places'

Luc Pauwels and Anna Ryan Moloney

This contribution is a collaborative effort of two scholars from different disciplinary and geographic backgrounds joined by an interest in producing and communicating urban narratives. Their partnership resulted in an experiment that combines aspects of different research and communication methods into a hybrid end-result: a collaborative multimodal essay. First, the methodological particularities of this collaborative effort will be discussed and situated within number of established and emerging visual methods: the blending of methods, the researcher roles, the distinct modes of expression and the different positions vis-a-vis the site under scrutiny ('visitor' versus 'resident'; 'outsider' versus 'insider'). This section will then be followed by the actual multimodal essay on the city of Limer-

ick as a distinct form of scholarly communication balancing between art and science.

Keywords: researcher-produced photography, photo-elicitation, multimodal urban narrative, writing place, writing architecture.

Luc Pauwels is a Professor of Visual Research Methods at the University of Antwerp (Faculty of Social Sciences), Founder and Director of the Visual & Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi) and Vice-President for Research of the ‘Visual Sociology’ Research Committee of the International Sociological Association (ISA). Books include: *Visual Cultures of Science* (2006, Dartmouth College Press), *Reframing Visual Social Science. Towards a More Visual Sociology and Anthropology* (2015, Cambridge University Press) and *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (Sage, 2020, 2nd ed. with D. Mannay).

Anna Ryan Moloney holds a B.Arch. (1st Class Honours) from University College Dublin and a PhD from the Department of Geography at University College Cork, Ireland. She practised with Grafton Architects in Dublin, and was editor of the journal *Building Material*. Since 2007 is a Lecturer in Architecture at the School of Architecture, University of Limerick where she follows her interests in landscape, writing, drawing and photography through her teaching and research. In 2012, Ashgate (now Routledge) published her book, *Where Land Meets Sea: coastal explorations of landscape, representation and spatial experience*.

The Paris of *L'Ivre De Pierres*, Narrative Architecture between Words and Drawing

Carlos Machado e Moura, Luis Miguel Lus Arana

An editorial experiment pursued by Jean-Paul Jungmann between 1977 and 1983, *L'Ivre de Pierres* provides a series of imaginary visions, mostly of an imaginary Paris, conceived through architectural narrations that were articulated in the pages of a book. This article examines *L'Ivre de Pierres'* unconventional approach to figurative writing, as an example of the possibilities of exploring architecture through narrative means, constructing urban narratives through architectural design, and developing architectural criticism through both. *L'Ivre de Pierres* did not renounce the project in favour of discourse, but employed architectural devices to elaborate a 'concrete utopia' instead: one made of potentially realizable projects which, however, were conceived to exist only as (real) fictions in the pages of a book. Firmly rooted in Jungmann's previous experience with the magazine *Utopie*, with which it somehow plays a game of mirrors, *L'Ivre de Pierres* is also linked to the tradition of paper architecture that historically used fiction to produce architectural discourses, criticism, or to think architectural designs. This article researches on the narrative methods and *modes* – it examines the iconography, the book format, the content and types of texts – used in *L'Ivre de Pierres* as an example of the potential that these both visual and textual alternative realities have for the reading, thinking and writing of urban places.

Keywords: drawing, narrative, architectural reveries, paper architecture, utopia.

Carlos Machado e Moura An editorial experiment pursued by Jean-Paul Jungmann between 1977 and 1983, *L'Ivre de Pierres* provides a series of imaginary visions, mostly of an imaginary Paris, conceived through architectural narrations that were articulated in the pages of a book. This article examines *L'Ivre de Pierres'* unconventional approach to figurative writing, as an example of the possibilities of exploring architecture

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Keywords Drawing, Narrative, Architectural reveries, Paper architecture, Utopia.

Luis Miguel [Koldo] Lus Arana is an architect, PhD (University of Navarra, 2013) and urban planner-designer. He holds a Master’s degree in Design Studies from the Harvard Graduate School of Design (2008), in the area of Theory and History of Architecture, and has been visiting scholar in the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (2008-9), the University of Colorado Denver (2016), and Newcastle University (2019). His research deals with Utopian and Visionary Architecture and Urban Design, and has been invited to lecture about it at the universities of Michigan, Nebraska, Strathclyde, and the Graham Foundation in Chicago among several others. His work has also been published in books, scholarly journals, and architectural media such as the *Architectural Review* or *Architectural Design*. Since 2013, he teaches Theory and History of Architecture in the University of Zaragoza.

Unknowning through Writing-(and)-Drawing

Viktorija Bogdanova

In this article, unknowing is the human condition when a person experiences an intense dissolving into the environment. Analytical modes of thinking and rational and deductive modes of getting to conclusions and have their own meaning and importance. However, emotional and intuitive awareness and the imaginative empathy, have their own way of revealing meaning embedded in a specific place. In this article, I will reflect on three examples that illustrate how writing and drawing may bring about a different reading of places, architectural typologies and architectural symbols – when filled with fictional stories and speculative narratives: Yuri Nornstein's *Hedgehog in the Fog*, Dostoyevsky's Crystal Palace in the *Notes of the Underground*, and Brodsky and Utkin's project of the Crystal Palace. Along these examples, the article discusses writing and drawing methods that stimulate a creative disjunction from habitual research in architectural and urban thinking through three forms of unknowing: ascending, denying, deconstructing.

Keywords: unknowing, ascending, denying, deconstructing, writing-drawing.

Viktorija Bogdanova is a poet, artist and practicing architect who investigates poem-drawing as a processual modality in creative research. She obtained her professional master degree in architecture in Skopje (2014), and remained there as an associate assistant until 2018. In 2016 she started developing her doctoral thesis in Ljubljana: *Emotive immersion through poem-drawing in spatial design*. She exhibited her architectural poem-drawings at international conferences in Ljubljana, Aarhus, Berlin, Lisbon, Ghent and Trondheim. She is a regular contributor to *Writingplace: Laboratory for Literature and Architecture* group.

How to Speak?

A Conversation with Alberto Pérez-Gómez about the Necessity of Language to Understand and Practice Architecture

Alberto Perez Gomez, Lorin Niculae, Jorge Mejía Hernández,
Klaske Havik

Elaborating on a host of historical and theoretical references, in this conversation Alberto Pérez-Gómez suggests a course of action for the development of the architectural discipline; opposing the banality of scientism and rationalism, and recognizing instead the need for a degree of obscurity and ambiguity as essential to the full exercise of our humanity in relation to what we build and inhabit. Metaphors, myths, stories and poems, he notes, are not only useful instruments to represent architecture's aesthetics and purpose, but elemental human practices that define who we are and how we know. Tense between different polarities, the conversation explores architecture as a way to find sense and meaning by relying on timeless wisdom in the face of the many distractions and distortions that characterize our time.

Alberto Pérez-Gómez is Saidye Rosner Bronfman Professor of the History of Architecture at McGill University, in Montreal, Canada, where he directs the History and Theory option. He has lectured extensively worldwide. Among his extensive catalogue of writings are the books *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (1983), *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (2006), and *Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science* (2016).

Lorin Niculae is associate professor at Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, Romania, since 1998. Vice dean since 2020. PhD of the same institution in 2013 with the *Arhipera_The Social participatory Architecture*, doctoral thesis. He began working

in the area of social architecture in 2007, introducing the participatory design method for the communities living in extreme poverty, beneficiaries of housing projects. Currently, he is the president of the Arhipera Association, founded in 2011. Owner of Archos 2002 design studio. Architectural experience since 1994. Founding member of the Romanian Order of Architects (ROA). Currently member of the National Council of ROA. Humanitas Library founding shareholder.

Jorge Mejía Hernández graduated as an architect in Colombia, and received a PhD from TU Delft, where he teaches design studios and researches with the section Methods and Matter as an assistant professor. He is a member of the Delft/Rotterdam-based research group Architecture Culture and Modernity, where he supervises PhD candidates from the program Architecture and Democracy. He also acts as science communications manager for the EU-funded COST action *Writing Urban Places: New Narratives of the European City*. Mejía participated in the design of the Balcony exhibition, part of the 2014 Venice Biennale, and designed the San José de Castilla high school in Bogotá.

Klaske Havik is Professor of *Methods of Analysis and Imagination* at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. She studied architecture in Delft and Helsinki and literary writing in Amsterdam. Her book *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014) proposes a literary approach to architecture and urbanism. Havik initiated the platform *Writingplace* and organised the conference *Writingplace. Literary Methods in Architectural Research and Design* (2013). The resulting book *Writingplace. Investigations in Architecture and Literature* appeared in 2016. Klaske Havik was editor of *de Architect* and *OASE*, and initiated the *Writingplace Journal for Architecture and Literature* in 2017. Her literary work appeared in Dutch poetry

collections and literary magazines. Havik is leading the EU COST Action *Writing Urban Places*.

Mark Proosten graduated as an architect in 2011 at the Technical University Eindhoven. Upon graduation he started working as an independent architect in the region of Maastricht, the Netherlands. Since October 2013 he is working as an Assistant for Prof. ir. Wim van den Bergh, within the chair of Wohnbau at the RWTH in Aachen. Mark is one of the contributors of *Writingplace, laboratory for architecture and literature*. He co-edited the book *Writingplace, Investigations in Architecture and Literature*, (nai010, 2016). Mark's research focusses on mid-century modernism in Scandinavia and North America, in which he is pursuing a PhD upon the topic of the so-called Utzonian houses of the Danish architect Jørn Utzon. His teaching and writing is devoted to narratives in general and the relationship between architecture and literature in particular.

COLOPHON

Writingplace, Journal for Architecture and Literature

#5 Narrative Methods for Writing Urban Places

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