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NARRATING SHARED FUTURES
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Contents

Learning from Literature and Heritage: Stories of Shared Futures Yet to be Told

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Abstract
This editorial is an introduction to the issue of Footprint 34, 'Narrating Shared Futures'. The issue is dedicated to a transdisciplinary encounter between literature and cultural heritage, namely, here we seek to understand how literature can help us unpack complex meanings of places of heritage, and use that knowledge to imagine, design and produce shared and inclusive futures. We elaborate on three notions that appear in the title of the issue – 'narrating', 'shared' and 'futures' – and then we explain how each of the articles featured in this volume contributes to the proposed framing. We conclude with a brief discussion of ways in which the past, present and future are constantly being made in-the-now through both literary and design techniques.

Keywords
Literature, architectural heritage, narrating, shared, futures

'Architecture's primary function throughout history may well be to provide a communicative setting for cultures, one that speaks both intellectually and emotionally to embodied consciousness, disclosing attuned places for significant human action.'[1] Alberto Pérez-Gómez's claim may sound bold or even provocative, particularly given that buildings are often reduced to pragmatic institutional shelters and 'tools of political domination, technological efficiency, or economic gain.'[2] This later approach, the theorist argues, is the 'consequence of a mentality that rejected poetry as a legitimate form of knowledge and denied the importance of myth for man in coming to terms with the ambivalence of life itself' – a claim with which we fully agree.[3]

In contrast to these damaging trends, places of architectural heritage have the capacity to condense our emotional and intellectual consciousness, to overwhelm us with mythical stories and inspire poetical thinking. They can provide the stage for cultural polyphony, where various cultures can enter a rich conversation about the aesthetics of the place, heated debates about the meaning of its architecture, and fruitful exchange about the values of its spatial configurations. Architectural heritage augments our sense of belonging, gives meaning to the spaces we inhabit, and provides socio-cultural scaffolding for life itself.[4] Contrary to common understanding, architectural heritage – codified or not – is also in a constant state of flux and not stagnant in the past. Its meaning continually evolves due to changes in the culture that brought it into being, disrupted social contracts, temporal decay, or planned interventions. Every time we engage with a place of heritage, either bodily or architecturally, we alter how it is perceived, understood or valued. How can we then ensure that the future worlds we will build, using heritage as their base, will be inclusive, tolerant and open to all?

With such an understanding of heritage in mind – an evolving architectural entity with a capacity to combine

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its past stories with its present narratives towards future architectural scenarios – this issue of Footprint resorts to literature. It turns our attention to the poetic language of literature as a legitimate form of knowledge and attempts to answer a crucial question: How can literary stories help us envision possible architectural schemes for places of heritage? How can the voices of different authors, coming from various backgrounds and cultural contexts, help us envision new possibilities for places of heritage? The title of this special issue, 'Narrating Shared Futures', touches explicitly on the above questions, adding the significant parameter 'shared' to the conversation. But let's look into these three notions one by one.

Narrating

As Margaret Atwood states, human beings make sense of themselves and the world around them by narrating and sharing stories.[5] When we run into a friend or an acquaintance we have not seen for a while, our usual questions – 'how are you doing' and 'what have you been up to' – are implicit invitations to tell their recent stories.[6] With the development of new digital technologies and social networks, it has never been easier to become a storyteller and publicly share our thoughts (for better or worse). The publishing of books and short stories has surged in recent decades, newspapers suggest lists of novels and literature every week, podcasts feature writers reading their work, bookstores showcase new novels on a weekly basis. The never-ending popularity of literature old and new explains first-hand our need to make sense of our world by hearing but also sharing stories.

In this issue we take a closer look at narrating from both a literary and an architectural perspective. When it comes to literature, we see it as the extraordinary human capacity to create stories about imaginary worlds that can inspire our current lives.[7] When we think about it architecturally, we trust architecture to create perfect conditions for narrating the lives and experiences of the people it is designed for. We aim for an architecture that can narrate multicultural perspectives, opening up a world of mutual respect and cohabitation. We believe in an architecture that can provide meaning by preserving the values of the past, making sense of the ever-complex present, and projecting a better and more inclusive future. We align our thinking with philosophers like Edward Casey who argues that narrative cannot be independent of place and architecture, since when we tell a story, we cannot do so without anchoring it into spaces, buildings and landscapes.[8] Some of the contributors to this issue make this inextricable link between narrating and place by focusing on narrating as a way to extract complex meanings from the (built) environment we inhabit.

In the 'Destruction of Architecture', Federico De Matteis examines in depth the 'rubble literature' of Heinrich Böll, Stig Dagerman and Hans Erich Nossack, who captured in their work how people felt and reacted when they encountered the destroyed German cities after the end of the Second World War. Narrating the damage, pain and fear that the bombing inflicted on people and built heritage allowed these authors to make sense of a broken world. According to De Matteis, literary accounts can provide us with 'embodied and affective cues ...: not merely the material description of things, ... but its resonance as mirrored in the attitudes, gestures, postures, practices and thoughts of those who were affected by the tremendous destruction.' He continues that

> to sound the deeper stratums of existence, it is necessary to turn to more subtle and sophisticated tools, more apt at expressing the nuanced, the unspeakable – all that may otherwise be lost. Literature, as a practice of describing reality, can reach to this magmatic cache of sensations, bringing them to light.

These narratives help us empathise with others, help us become present, and help us imagine how to come to terms with contemporary catastrophes and related traumas – which unfortunately still abound.

Samuel Holleran in his 'Library of Stones' looks into death and mourning from the perspective of epitaphs and the stories they carry, understanding them as narratives of vernacular literary culture. He argues that these gravestone inscriptions served as an 'inspiration for literature that brings necrogeography into tension with programmes of growth', namely, modern 'designed' cemeteries and memorial parks, which he sees as a 'shared space that is the product of social imaginaries, including idealised notions of landscape, memory and storytelling'. By contrasting this conversation with the idea of a permanent stone archive derived from Saramango's *All the Names,* he enters the debate about how cities should, now and in the future, deal with spaces of memory and eternal rest. Holleran asks 'how future cemeteries might exist as hybrid spaces, with physical and digital markers intertwined', and hints at 'how storytelling and narrative in cemeteries might shift the way built environment practitioners think about the relationship between these two types of archives'.

In our interview with author Moira Crone, 'On Science Fiction, Heritage Architecture and Other Demons', she discusses how fictional narratives can incorporate places of heritage in ways that are subversive, unexpected or provocative. In her science fiction novel *The Not Yet,* Crone uses the example of the historic French quarter in New Orleans to explain why the preservation of the city's most famous neighbourhood was necessary for the plot; in her view, this specific place of heritage holds meanings

that are so strong that they have to be respected, even in science fiction scenarios. She discusses the difficult and cruel history of plantation homes in Louisiana, as well as moments in which the strict racial hierarchies broke down, creating possibilities for different ways of co-existence among their inhabitants. The interview offers a glimpse into the creative process of a writer who has never looked at fiction as the only possible way of narrating a story.

Like architecture, literature can utilise multiple ways to communicate stories from the past, whether fictional or factual. This also happens through more impromptu forms of narration, like the oral histories of indigenous cultures and communities. Groups of women in Oaxaca, Mexico, recount mythological stories to the community's young kids in the public square (Zocalo) during the late afternoon hours, passing on the cultural stories that are part of their identity and character. Similarly, Marcel Proust's famous narrator in *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–27) gets lost in memories of his childhood, almost involuntarily, the moment he dips a small madeleine cookie in his tea. A vast and paramount work of literature acts as a connector that empathically blends our experiences and memories, regardless of our cultural background.

Shared

The world we live in is a heterogeneous one; its great diversity is both a source of an incredible cultural and linguistic richness, and of inherently related conflicts. These heterogeneous multicultural environments are often – despite our sometimes romanticised views on multiculturalism – characterised by conflicted and contested meanings we attribute to heritage architecture.[9] Rampant globalisation, economic dependency and linguistic hegemonies propelled by powerful nations sees dominant narratives suffocate voices of miniscule and underprivileged populations. The invisibility of marginalised and oppressed communities leads to the slow disappearance of their intricate cultures that took millennia to develop. The search for common ground, shared values, shared possibilities, shared cultures, for the smallest common denominators of tolerance and understanding can, we think, be a cornerstone for constructing more just and inclusive futures.

This characteristic capacity to mediate our shared views of the world is one that architectural heritage has in common with literature and its multiple narrative forms. As Heidegger well points out, the poetic world of literature is not a conveying of pure interiority but a sharing of world.[10] 'The poetic imagination liberates the reader into a free space of an unlimited connectivity, suspending the reference to the immediate world of perception and thereby disclosing 'new ways of being-together-in-the-world'.[11] Following along the same path, Gadamer highlights that works of art are forms of knowledge and not mere aesthetic objects whose only purpose might be to move us or inspire us. As soon as we stop viewing literature as a mere object and instead see a whole world through it, we realise that art is not simply sense perception, but shared knowledge.[12] This notion is picked up by some of our contributors who develop further the idea of the 'shared'.

Hanna Musiol's contribution problematises what it means to think of a shared world from the stance of a teenager or a marginalised community member who engages in acts of storytelling as resistance mechanisms. Her work looks into the narrative heritage of selected communities in diverse geographical locations of our western world and diverse modes of collective story-creation. She seeks to understand the reasons for participants' specific choices and how these choices lead to shared understandings of space and shared imagined possibilities for the futures of these spaces. In her own words, her article 'focuses on narrative encounters between people, cities and stories, and … narrative, material, and futuristic urban plotting'. Her writing lures us into a world of multiple voices with shared points of view, masterfully interwoven with her own, bringing to the surface key questions about our unjust urban practices that need urgent responses. Musiol's article pleads for urban storytelling and narrative repair to be adopted as legitimate pedagogies of futuring and the design of urban futures.

Aitor Frías-Sánchez, Joaquín Perailes-Santiago and Diego Jiménez-López offer an understanding of 'shared' that moves beyond our strict human preoccupations by introducing the perspective of animals into the discussion. They look into places of heritage in which humans and animals coexist harmoniously, namely, the library at the National Palace of Mafra, and Coimbra University's Joanina Library, both located in Portugal, and the Karni Mata temple, located in Rajasthan, India. They use the notion of xenogenesis, coined by Octavia E. Butler, to examine these places and suggest further possibilities for designing spaces with interspecies coexistence in mind. More specifically, authors suggest to 'extend existing debates on interspecies co-design practices and link them to the concept of xenoarchitecture'. They propose Interspecies Interaction Protocols (IIP) to regulate human/other-than-human interactions in built environments.

Lara Schrijver, in her piece 'Understanding a Future yet to Take Shape', focuses our attention on future ecological concepts, attempting to raise awareness of the tenuous relationship between humans and the (built) environment. Through a mindful reading of three inspirational science fiction authors – Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler and Margaret Atwood – Schrijver examines 'the underlying cultural logic of building on the past'. More specifically,

she juxtaposes these literary narratives with the 'holistic view' of the 2018 Davos declaration on *Baukultur*, to show 'how the built environment resonates with societal principles, aiding or hindering particular collective values'. She offers an overview of possible shared approaches in relation to urgent contemporary ecological concerns that would embrace a 'more integral view of the built environment and society', including marginalised and non-human perspectives.

Architecture relates to the place where it is constructed, with its memories, stories, forms, and materialities, and reinterprets them according to present-day standards. It touches on people's contemporary lifestyles, trends and needs, and responds to everyday social and political circumstances. As our civilisation continues to evolve, the original meaning of the work of architecture evolves as well. Countries and nations disappear and then they are reborn in some other form; cultural values change over time; new users and entire communities inhabit old spaces; new habits and rituals require flexible programmes; different interpretations and perspectives are born under the influence of (social) media and literature; conditions of use are altered by climate change and a lack of resources; original structures decay and often radical maintenance is needed to keep them alive – all of this is influencing, often drastically, the way we perceive and interpret sites of heritage. An awareness that these different interpretations exist is the cornerstone of building shared worlds of the future.

Futures

Grounded in the past and created in the present, architecture and literature ultimately are materialised in the future. Our wager is that the number one precondition for 'shared futures' to happen is our ability to imagine, describe and create spatial scenarios in which these futures can co-exist. When confronted with this task, the usual questions that immediately come to mind are: How far into the future? What is the timeline of future spatial developments? What will societies of the future look like? Should we also be concerned with how these future societies or cultures will interact with architecture and the site? These dilemmas are undoubtedly important and we would say inevitable, embedded in the very foundation of architecture as a discipline.

Learning from literature, there are also deeper and perhaps more covert questions to answer, like: How can literary techniques and writing help us imagine these inclusive futures? How can we design with the sensibility of different cultures and their (future) needs in mind? What is the ethical responsibility of architects when designing for, and with, different cultures? When co-creating with various actors, what is the role of architects in those processes? And finally, how can contemporary building approaches, such as recycling, maintenance and care, contribute to the discussion and provide for a better future? Again, a series of authors featured in this issue offer their views on some of these pertinent questions.

Christos Papastergiou's contribution, inspired by historical travelogues, looks sharply into designed futures. His work takes us on a journey around the magical gardens and interior courtyards of Nicosia as seen through the 'alien' eyes of travellers. Their key spatial characteristics, as identified by those travellers, were then used to suggest future design strategies in which the 'historically iconic element of the garden and its narrated spatial qualities [can offer] an answer to the problem of urban fragmentation and the presence of a large number of leftover plots in the city'. His project 'Nicosian Garden Network' incorporates unused sites of different sizes into a network of shared spaces that could 'reconnect the landscape, create conditions of sharing by the different communities ..., and regain its iconic presence in the contemporary city'. The intention is to learn from the travelogues and rethink the urban environment as a place that allows for serene moments of everyday encounters where the senses are heightened in small hidden urban oases.

Michael Hirschbichler's visual essay offers us a unique glimpse into the working of his artistic production and suggests the method of phantom writing for future interventions in urban contexts. He examines stories of ghosts, creatures and events in nondescript urban spaces of Japan, and proposes ways in which this rich context can find a new voice in the future and become part of future artistic creations. Hirschbichler proposes phantom writing or 'phantasmography' as a 'situated, multidisciplinary and multisensory approach aimed at understanding and designing contemporary places, landscapes and environments, acknowledging and mediating the agency of diverse phantoms and phantasms'.

Finally, our own visual essay – inspired by the design course of the same name, 'Narrating Shared Futures', that we taught together at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture – is also geared towards the design of the future. In this studio we invited students to collect and unpack the past stories of a place of their own choosing. It had to be a place that carried meaningful memories for them personally – in a way, a place of heritage for themselves. Then they were prompted to listen to this place's current narratives and, from these two points (past and present), dive into a creative exploration of inclusive future scenarios for this location. The design interventions manifest a rich understanding of how heritage can take new meanings into the future, and display the full potential of this kind of thinking,

which can be implemented not only in a pedagogical setting, but in architectural practice as well.

This issue looks into architectures of cultural heritage and how they can evolve into inclusive places for shared futures, by learning from literature. Literature, with its imaginative power, brings to the fore future scenarios (both spatial and situational) in which we can situate our lives. Writers, like architects, have the difficult and privileged task to imagine noble, unexpected or unexplored future worlds. Their imaginative powers can transport us to worlds with endless, architecturally innovative possibilities. Through their eyes we can envision appropriate action for heritage architecture – the carrier of cultural, social, ecological and economic values, as well as our past and present stories – through which we make sense of the world. By combining the study of cultural heritage and literature within an architectural framework, this issue of *Footprint* examines how the past, present and future are constantly being made in-the-now through both literary and design techniques.

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Notes

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2. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'The Architecture of Richard Henriquez: A Praxis of Personal Memory', in *Richard Henriquez: Memory Theatre*, ed. Howard Shubert, catalogue of the exhibition co-organised by the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Canadian Centre of Architecture (Montreal, 1993), 13.
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Biography

Aleksandar Staničić is an architect and assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, TU Delft. He was a Marie Curie postdoctoral fellow at TU Delft (2018–20), a postdoctoral fellow at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT (2017–18), and a research scholar at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Columbia University (2016–17). His most recent work includes the edited volume *War Diaries: Design After the Destruction of Art and Architecture* (University of Virginia Press, 2022) and numerous research articles in various journals, including *The Journal of Architecture*, *Footprint* and *Architecture and Culture*.

Angeliki Sioli is an architect and assistant professor of architecture at the Chair of Methods of Analysis and Imagination, TU Delft. She hails from Greece, where she obtained her professional diploma in architecture from the University of Thessaly and was granted a post-professional master's in architectural theory and history by the National Technical University of Athens. She completed her PhD in the history and theory of architecture at McGill University. Her work on architecture, literature and pedagogy has been published in a number of books and presented at numerous conferences. She has edited the collected volumes *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience* (Routledge, 2018), *The Sound of Architecture: Acoustic Atmospheres in Place* (Leuven University Press, 2022) and *Architectures of Resistance: Negotiating Borders through Spatial Practices* (Leuven University Press, 2024). Before joining TU Delft, Sioli taught both undergraduate and graduate courses at McGill University in Montreal, Tec de Monterrey in Mexico, and Louisiana State University in the US.

Urban Lifewor(l)ds: Footsteps, Futures, and Narrative Repair

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Abstract
This article focuses on narrative encounters between people, cities, and stories, and the narrative, material, and futuristic urban plotting. It explores how people engage with narrative heritage, its objects – not just neoliberal wet dreams and dystopias, but also speculative street theatre, participatory utopian fiction, orature, or lyrics – and the practices of co-writing, reading, and listening to ask, beyond Henri Lefebvre, not simply 'who has the right to the city', but who can *narrate* its shared pasts and futures, and how. In the paper, I treat stories and urban architecture as interwoven and co-constitutive modalities of heritage preservation, destruction, repair and futurescaping, drawing attention, after Don Mitchell and Sara Zawde, to the narrative affordances of built landscapes as 'metaphors to live by' and to the design-making force of narratives and words. The narrative heritages I center on are, therefore, not simply literary texts but diverse narrative acts, including narrators, different media, spaces, and situated rehearsals of public and collective sci-fi storytelling, writing, and listening for togetherness and less violent futures. The article meanders across several urban narrative situations: 'Society of the Future' showcases designed by students after dystopian novels and urbanscapes in Boston; speculative heritage live action role-play (LARP) in the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts, US; 'wave writing' experiments in Trondheim/Tråante, Norway; and Søstrene Suse's *Radiokino* listening sessions in the footprints of Sámi Elsa Laula Renberg across Scandinavia. It concludes with a reflection on the archives of narrative 'repair' and urban otherworldliness as pedagogies of non-necrotic futuring.

Keywords
Archive, city, listening, narrative heritage, pedagogy, speculative playwork, repair, future

> There are many debts that await to be paid, resolved, and the damage mended and repaired. Rather than producing more violence with futuristic plans, rather than thinking with a terminology of growth, we should think about doing less and repairing what was destroyed but persist in a painful way.
>
> Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning'[1]

> World literature [including orature], of which the postcolonial is an integral part, is our common heritage as much as the air we breathe.
>
> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*[2]

Urban futures and narrative heritage

This article, like this issue of *Footprint*, is an homage to marginalized but not marginal bodies, stories and breaths in urban space, all demanding space, oxygen, delight, and a 'right to co-existence.'[3] It centers on narrative heritage and people's collective footprint(s), highlighting attempts to

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repair the city, narrate other 'possibilities of living together' in spaces bordered by carceral structures, 'aesthetic austerity' politics, and its reductive narrative plots.[4] Architects often look up to scholars of storytelling, as if, less bound by budgets, ideology and politics, they were more daring in their narration of future justice.[5] In other words, they often reach for fiction in distress to find words for the emergent urban apocalypses, unspeakable, or yet to be named by urban studies.[6] While empathetic to this approach, I do not engage with that position without reservation. Literary scholars and narrative spatialists understand that literature, like architecture, is an ideological project. Its 'elegant technologies' – the book, which can 'fold a lot of surface area into a compact … volume', or the library, 'a temple of compression of many words' – can also 'perpetuate' spatial injustice.[7] Besides, all our unfair cities come from words – budget documents, philosophy, developmentalist fiction, or grotesque patriarchal blueprints alike – as much as steel, cement, or glass. Yet it is particular networks of narrators, capital and power, often financial speculation rather than speculative fiction, that make a story into a public or carceral space, or an idea of a nation into a children's playground or a detention center.[8] In other words, a recitation of W. H. Auden's poem on suffering at an architects' summit in Dubai, New York, Shanghai, or London will not prevent the destruction of another wetland's patch chosen for residential development. Neither will it prevent an investment in human-caging carceral industry and miraculously inject developers with urban justice and ethics.[9]

And yet, narratives *matter* and are 'spatial matters'.[10] For one, literary and architectural structures — say, the greyscale mall, whose façade walls off democratic encounters — are both ideological constructs that alter how we 'read' and relate to our sociocultural landscape and bodies around us.[11] In that, narrative erasure and spatial exclusion always go hand in hand. At the same time, reclaiming diverse communal storytelling practices and our complex narrative heritage – 'world literature', Indigenous 'orature', children's theatre, Black women's fiction, queer songs, or spoken word alike – can 'matter' urbanscapes more equitably.[12] Put differently, built landscapes are ideological scripts we are instructed to 'live by', but narrative salvaging, co-creation, refusal, and repair can transform the urban architecture of segregation and re-construct less disabling urban lifeworlds.[13] The article, therefore, takes an ecosystemic approach to built urban environments and stories as interwoven modalities of co-creation, speculation, sharing, living, preservation, and destruction. Architecture and stories are both ideologically and materially entangled, narrated, 'scripted', contested, performed, and serve equally as generative instruments of future violence and of its 'refusal' and urban 'repair'.[14] I engage then sincerely with Azoulay's warnings about the toxicity of futuristic plots, as I center on living and peopled narrative heritage work and, specifically, the rehearsals of narrative resistance, reimagining, and repair.[15] This dialogical and narrative approach to urban space, while often neglected, is not novel, and has many predecessors and practitioners in print and in the streets.[16] The article tributes its street narrators: children and teenagers, students, feminists, migrants and Indigenous futurists, excluded in cultural heritage studies and urban spaces, while avoiding the uncritical celebration of futurity and world-building. 'We don't need other worlds', warns the sci-fi visionary Stanisław Lem, because 'we don't know what to do with [them]', and 'we are already choking on … the one world' that we have.[17] Lem urges us to look for 'mirrors' instead, and 'search for people'.[18] Similarly, Christina Sharpe highlights the importance of ongoing and collective 'acts and accounts of care' that serve 'as mass refusals of the unbearable [contemporary] life' and 'total rejections of the dead future'.[19]

'Urban Lifewor(l)ds' heeds these ideas by expanding the narrow but violently operative definitions of heritage and future, which systemically exclude ephemeral narratives, orature, spoken, or shared urban words, imaginings, and worlds, especially when these are untethered to capital but tethered to young, poor, queer, migrant, dis-abled, non-white, or otherwise marginal bodies instead.[20] In this article, urban bodies are not just urban debris, or 'texts on which powerful regimes have written their prescriptions', but narrating agents, archivists, and foundations of urban 'infrastructures' and heritage themselves.[21] They are spatio-corporeal sensors of urban exclusion as much as agents and narrators of possibility and resistance. This essay wants to linger in their company in urban places haunted by 'hateful energy', as *they* look into the 'mirrors' of the present in Boston or Scandinavian urban everywhere.[22] The article also aims to record the different rhythms of their narrative footsteps, paying attention to the toxic futures they walk towards or away from, 'imaging' first and resisting 'what exists'.[23] Therefore, it deliberately foregrounds urban bodies that know, salvage, and tell in a classroom and on stage; in a role-playing street game; a 'wave writing' communal workshop activity or recitation; and a curated decolonial listening zone, and across continents.[24] The journey that follows is about learning from such ephemeral narrative acts, neglected by planners of space, accountants of urban heritage, and apologists of disciplinary violence in order to question dominant plots of urban futures. Renegade street storytellers have much to teach practitioners of architectural foresight about heritage, future, and sharing.

Dis-orientation as method: meandering, learning, refusing

'Walking,' Rebecca Solnit reminds us, 'generates a kind of [straying] rhythm of thinking'.[25] It is also a particularly carnal way of 'knowing the world through the body'.[26] As such, notes Walter Benjamin, it promises to help us read the city as an 'epic book' shaped by historical 'echoes', material spaces, and bodies and footsteps.[27] Walking, in other words, as an embodied, spatial, and epistemic activity, can reveal the city as a complex, interdependent ecosystem, a partitioned, transhistorical, often violent, storytelling lifeworld. It is thus an unruly method of 'engaging the body and the mind with the world' that can defy what Anna Tsing sees as the limitations of 'precision-nested scales' of, in this case, hegemonic urban knowing.[28] Not surprisingly, transdisciplinary scholars of urban dystopias that segregate bodies by design with asphalt highways, a redline, a xenophobic text, or a cinematic shot, urge us to reorient on pedestrian, quotidian, and disobedient urban mobilities, and on the lived and shared experiences of different bodies in the city.[29] They prompt us to recognize that 'the city' is not simply or only a pre-designed material holder for social life, nor 'a computer', or a scalable organization system for pacifying human-nonhuman diversity, homogenizing its stories and lifeworlds alike.[30]

Yet following urban footsteps is as generative as it is disorienting. Whose steps should we listen to in the cities built for able-bodied men, and how?[31] And 'what does it even mean to walk together in a city?', ponder Judith Butler, Sunaura Taylor, Johny Pitts, Jan Grue, and many other female, queer, trans, Black, migrant, teenage, undocumented or dis-abled urban residents.[32] Embodied journeys, across then and now – in wheelchairs, on foot and on skateboards, in different bodies, across material and symbolic realms, across concrete, asbestos, flesh, cancer, streets, racial violence, fentanyl, sexual trauma, and stories – stray and surprise. They may reveal not only what the city was or is but how urban space is lived, and what might be in its future's bloodstream. In this article, therefore, meandering is a metaphor and method of unruly thinking across material and textual spaces, time, and bodies. What appears below, then, are embodied urban archives of communal storytelling, learning, futuring, and listening, which call into being different plots, worlds and words, 'as common' as the air we breathe.[33] Teaching arrogant teachers and builders, author included, how to listen, and then, how to engage in the caring repairwork and non-dystopian worlds-building.

First stop: Boston. **Time:** teenage futurelessness. **Genre:** dystopian fiction. **Role**: befuddled observer. **Instructions**: hegemonic futures simulation.

The lesson that transforms one's understanding of urban futures often comes as a comet, a Benjaminian flash of illumination.[34] Mine starts as a chance encounter with schoolchildren and the dystopias they read, experienced, and then re-enacted on a public stage. It's 2013, and I am at an urban storytelling event at a diverse public school in Boston.[35] Entitled 'The Society of the Future', it showcases the school's seventh grades' semester-long group projects, performed as a speculative fiction theatrical play, a kind of civics lesson in futurity.[36] Each group spent a semester reading classic speculative literature and inventing a futuristic society, designing its econo-political system and social structure, its citizenship requirements and its anthem, as well as its aesthetic regime: 'the culture'. The event is an opportunity to share children's stories of the future as designed by them, that is, those who will live it. Kids are to perform these futures on stage in a spectacle of futuristic time travel. The auditorium is full, and we, the audience, are excited. But the showcase turns into an afternoon of horrors. All the future civilizations that young students from diverse backgrounds co-design are unbearably grim and dystopian. In these imaginary worlds, gender and racial inequality are widespread; heteronormativity is unquestioned and rigid gender roles uncontested.[37] Slavery or a slave-like system of servitude is legal, and some of the roles of servants are performed on stage by children of color. None of the future societies are democracies – most rest on monarchic, dictatorial, and imperial governance – and their social structures are as hierarchical as they are unjust.[38] Another revelation comes during the Q&A. When asked why they had all designed such dreadful visions of social futures, students say it was 'much easier' and 'more interesting'. They didn't see their projects as future fiction but as an urgent dispatch from their own contemporary urban battlefields. It is their grand lesson. Educators and urban planners routinely ignore it.

Literary and political dystopias, it occurred to me then, are perhaps the only futuristic urban lingua franca that the schoolchildren (and we) all share, and that we are all taught is possible. While we hope for urbanism to have, ultimately, an emancipatory impact on the planet's political ecology, so far predictive global urban data is unforgiving in 2023.[39] Boston kids knew it already in 2013. In the post-pandemic moment – their future – accounts of deaths and urban devastation proliferate. The 562 mass shootings in the first ten months of 2023 alone continue to terrorize the youngest urban residents, often at their schools and campuses in the US.[40] Many devastating reports come directly from Boston, the city they were futurescaping a decade earlier. In this post-pandemic metropolis, its central urban pathway, the intersection of Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue, transformed in 2022 into a tent city of unhoused victims of neoliberal devastation, the pandemic, and the

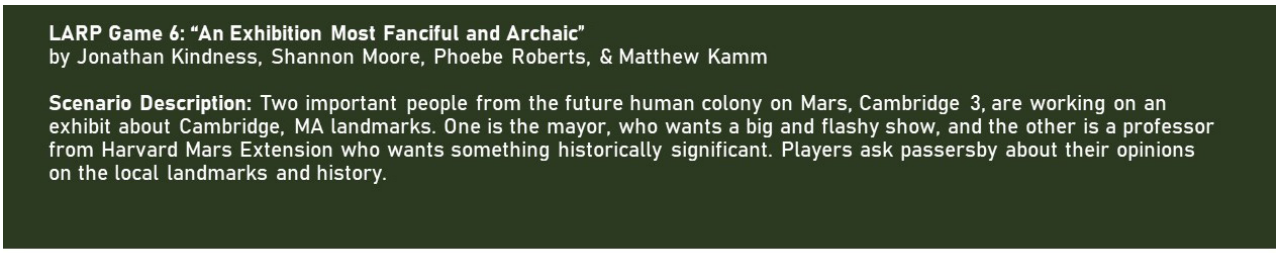
opioid crises.[41] An unscalable testimony to the failed stories we tell about what futures of urban co-existence are welcome, necessary or possible. It strikes me now, in 2024, that the young Bostonians I encountered a decade ago may not have had 'the right to the city', but they were *right about* it.[42] They were merely, narratively, bracing for impact, aware of the dystopian scripts that await them, and the expected future roles to play as urban targets of violence or as its perpetrators (urban roles are distributed across ethnic, class, and gender lines, after all). Perhaps, I reflect, those who know the city's violent DNA and its futures so viscerally are not taught how to demolish their carceral borders, but simply tasked with bearing the burden of such constructions. And, perhaps, playing with utopian genres of non-toxic urban futurology is not only an unpracticed, atrophied skill, but a dangerous one to flaunt in public. Which trans, queer, female kids, or children of color know well.

Still, in 2013, I leave the dilapidated school building with questions: How is it possible that hundreds of kids in Boston's public school cannot collectively construct a *single* narrative blueprint for egalitarian futures? What does it mean to be a twelve-year-old living in one of the most renowned academic centers in the world and a prominent cultural heritage site in the US, and not to be able to imagine one just and shared future? Or, not to know the language, the genre, with which to express a more utopian urban vision? What does it mean for children to be able to predict apocalyptic violence with great accuracy? And how can we, scholars, architects, planners, educators, move away from dystopian urban re-enactments on the page, in the classroom, and in the streets? These questions I could not answer will shape my city-scale practice in the next decade. Boston students' sense of futurelessness, exacting sense of impending dystopia, and punishing observations about narrative disenfranchisement and the exclusion from the social space they inhabit will haunt me, too, in other urban environments, storytelling acts, and classrooms around the globe.

Second stop: Cambridge, Massachusetts. **Time:** heritage futures. **Genre:** live action role-play (LARP). **Role**: pedagogical thespian. **Instructions**: collective street improvisation.

If anti-racist participatory utopias, queer and feminist manifestos, and other spatial imaginings of urban possibility beyond 'the [neoliberal] dead future' need to be modelled and rehearsed collectively, we, scholars-builders-educators, have a particular obligation to humanize and urbanize our curricula and model activities that foreground non-extractive collective narrative work in non-dystopian speculative genres.[43] For one, imagining the city's less disabling futures requires different pedagogies of urban narration and a participatory, reciprocal approach to heritage (co) creation.[44] Which is why in 2013, the entire urban narration class, including its teachers, went back to school, which was the city.[45] Using literature and mixed-media storytelling training, we began collaborative experiments with non-instrumental, utopian, and communal uses of writing and narrative arts in order to learn how my disciplinary instrument – writing – can serve as more than a 'tactical', expressive tool of 'rage' and 'disengagement' from the world, of dystopian 'placelessness' and 'despair'.[46] Together with numerous accomplices – designers, data scientists, technologists, engineers, activists, students, urban residents, and grassroots storytellers – we co-created several rounds of transdisciplinary 'Narrating the Global City' courses.[47] At Simmons College, we began with assigned poetry, novels and films set in global metropolises – Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker,* Alaa Al Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building,* Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis,* Samuel Delany's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue,* Tony Gatlif's *Exils,* Tsai Ming-liang's *The Hole,* Audrey Lorde's *NY York Head Shop and Museum,* lê thi diem thúy's *The Gangster We Are All Looking For,* and many others – and with scholarship on 'the right to the city', researched on globalization and young urban residents, and on carceral architecture.[48] While we started with fictive metropolises – imaginary New York, Los Angeles, Cairo, Tehran, Taipei, Paris – soon we, and words, landed back in our city and its neighborhoods.

The classes' utopian aim, a hunch perhaps, to bring diverse narrative heritage and crowd-sourced practices to re-narrate the city with storytellers excluded by the political and academic machinery of urban knowing, became more feasible after Northeastern's and MIT's Alicia Peaker, Jim McGrath, and Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye led guest workshops about archiving urban violence, Occupy Boston, digital humanities, and urban and cyber mobilities. The first narrative prototypes in Boston, wobbly as they were, were remarkable in the breadth of their transmedial imaginaries. Students produced eclectic projects drawing on a neglected and polylingual narrative heritage that they could access but that we, educators, could not. They contributed oral histories to a digital archive of migration and displacement at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Some crafted digital cartographies of resources for migrants and rewrote atlases of local necropolises, common sites of heritage neglect; others wrote petitions demanding resources, translations, and accessible trans-media remediations for residents with dis-abilities, and suggested revisions of exclusionary school curricula.[49] Their future-centric projects drew from their intimate knowledge of polylingual urban lifewor(l)ds and narrative heritages, and demonstrated a caring commitment to more equitable futures for the diverse urban communities.[50]



LARP Game 6: "An Exhibition Most Fanciful and Archaic"
by Jonathan Kindness, Shannon Moore, Phoebe Roberts, & Matthew Kamm

Scenario Description: Two important people from the future human colony on Mars, Cambridge 3, are working on an exhibit about Cambridge, MA landmarks. One is the mayor, who wants a big and flashy show, and the other is a professor from Harvard Mars Extension who wants something historically significant. Players ask passersby about their opinions on the local landmarks and history.

Character 1 - Professor Y.: The year is 2560, and Cambridge 3 is the name of a major colony on Mars where they have just perfected the first safe form of time travel. To celebrate this, the colony has decided to create a museum dedicated to significant landmarks from Cambridge, Massachusetts back on Earth. As a history professor from Harvard: Mars Extension, you have joined up with Mayor Z. of Cambridge 3 to travel back to Cambridge in 2013 and poll the residents about what they think are the local landmarks most worthy of inclusion in the museum, and why. Find and question a number of locals without giving away that you are from the future, as this could upset the timestream. Your proposal must be impressive and historically meaningful, as you are competing with MIT (Mars Institute of Technology) for the right to host and curate the exhibit.

Character 2 - Mayor Z.: The year is 2560, and Cambridge 3 is the name of a major colony on Mars where scientists have just perfected the first safe form of time travel. To celebrate this, the colony has decided to create an exhibit dedicated to significant landmarks from Cambridge 2 back on Earth (The one in the United States… you're pretty sure they called it that). Professor Y., a history professor from the Harvard Mars Extension, has asked for your endorsement for the exhibit to be hosted there, In order to be convinced, you are tagging along on a trip to sometime in the 20th or 21st century or thereabouts, You want this exhibit to be a success no matter where it's hosted, and you're sure that means only the flashiest and most exciting places should be included. While you're here, it might be fun to dazzle some of the locals with tales of what the future is like. People from the past are crazy about that stuff, right?

Fig. 1: One of the LARPing game scenarios for a futuristic 'An Exhibition Most Fanciful and Archaic' and two role prompts for passers-by in Cambridge, MA. Jonathan Kindness co-wrote the prompt with Shannon Moore, Phoebe Roberts, and Matthew Kamm.

One speculative project, a live action role-play (LARP) street action led by Jonathan Kindness, with Shannon Moore, Phoebe Roberts, and Mathew Kamm, offered an important retake opportunity of the futuristic assignment the middle schoolers on the other side of city could not complete in their theatre of urban dystopias. The LARPing game invited strangers to an improvised participatory street theatre, reimagining Cambridge from a temporal and spatial distance. The aim was to re-narrate public space in one of the notorious tourist locations near Harvard Square, by asking strangers to contribute to a futuristic exhibition about Cambridge heritage, which the game creators called 'An Exhibition Most Fanciful and Archaic'. [Fig. 1] LARPers engaged directly and playfully with imagining heritage futures by asking passers-by to teleport to year 2560 to play a part in an urban narrative scenario.

The setting of this impermanent, choreographed, and improvised sci-fi heritage game was as significant as the narrative script. While the larger Boston metro area, and the Harvard environs in particular, is an academic mecca, it is also a city of stark inequalities, of spatial, racial and economic segregation, and the city offers few, if any, unpoliced, anti-racist, queer or feminist agoras. Staging their LARPing intervention in the Cambridge colony of high-end franchises (Harvard being one of them) was no small feat. Performing and imagining urban futures live together, especially when taking up space in the streets, forced all to reflect on what and who can constitute urban heritage.[51] In public, and in a public urban space, outside of normative hierarchies and social roles, and away from the predetermined functions that segregated Boston-metro area neighborhoods play in the heritage ecosystem. It also taught us a lot about discomfort and participatory speculative practices and how they can bear on urban place-making and become an urban research method. LARPing not only encouraged diverse and random people to plot new stories together – something Boston middle school students were unable to achieve – more importantly, it literally, if only briefly, rearranged where different bodies, tourists, workers, students, migrants and residents, think and play.

Moreover, if the right to the 'knowledge of the production of space' and to 'refus[e] … to be removed from urban reality … by discriminatory and segregative organization' is one of the fundamental political rights of a city dweller, LARPers disrupted the existing segregation frameworks that gender-, class- and color-code and regulate access to public space, workplace, play-space, knowledge, and storytelling.[52] Literally, where certain stories and people go, how they disappear, and how they are (de)valued. LARPers' narrative-kinetic act of refusal to be removed from space and stories of future meant trying on, defiantly and playfully, the narrative personas denied to most of us: as narrators, protagonists, and actor-agents of the future. Thus, what made their futurescaping work work, beyond dystopian simulation, was not simply the fact that these older college students read more sci-fi or had a better hold on utopian genres, or a better command of futuristic aesthetics. If, as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay says, we could end the 'violence' of 'futuristic plans' and focus on 'repair', LARPers did that, too.[53] They narratively repaired the unwelcoming urban square by repurposing it as an inclusive narrative agora open to all bodies. LARP seemed to break then, momentarily, the violent exclusionary hold of the carceral present on the urban space and narrative imagination, which had held younger students in a tight grip on the other side of the town. This situated intervention into sectarian urban cartography, its 'segregative' scripts and urban imaginaries, repaired the space and enabled a playful imagining of urban futures not limited by visions prescribed by dominant planners of space.[54] Such collective futures rehearsal playwork remains, invariably, one of the most needed but dismissed urban space-remaking acts. And yet, a decade later, in other cities, across continents, across research and pedagogical praxis, we continue to experiment with this generative mode of communal speculative repair work in starkly different North European urban sites.[55]

Next stop: Trondheim/Tråante (a Norwegian and South Sámi port city). **Time:** precipice of another environmental disaster**. Rehearsal:** collective 'water wave' writing. **Role:** interdependent scribe of three words. **Performance instructions:** democratic sci-fi polyphony.

Scandinavian cities are often touted as the apogee of humane, 'scientificities' and 'smart city'-sharing of public space, and they do a lot of admirable urban planning work not to overly limit the access different bodies have to public space.[56] And yet, the limited presence of gated communities, barbwire, AK-15s, ghettos, and systemic redlining, that is, their cosier aesthetic of human 'expulsion' and urban displacement, is not a high bar.[57] Norwegian cities also design for neglect, foreclose many non-white futures, and engage in ethnic segregation, even if their urban 'necropolitics' is in a softer tone than in the US.[58] Yet, different styles of social 'expulsion', Azoulay argues, are still 'paradigmatic act[s] of manufacturing the body politic', which *futures* different bodies onto or out of an urban and public space.[59] The exclusion of migrant residents and the poor, or segregation based on sexuality, race, ethnicity, or ability in education (teaching and administration) might seem less obvious to privileged citizens in Scandinavia. Yet they register clearly for the Norwegian, and Trøndelag region South Sámis, whose rights to sociocultural practices and even public school instruction in their own language, protected by international and domestic laws, are constantly violated.[60]

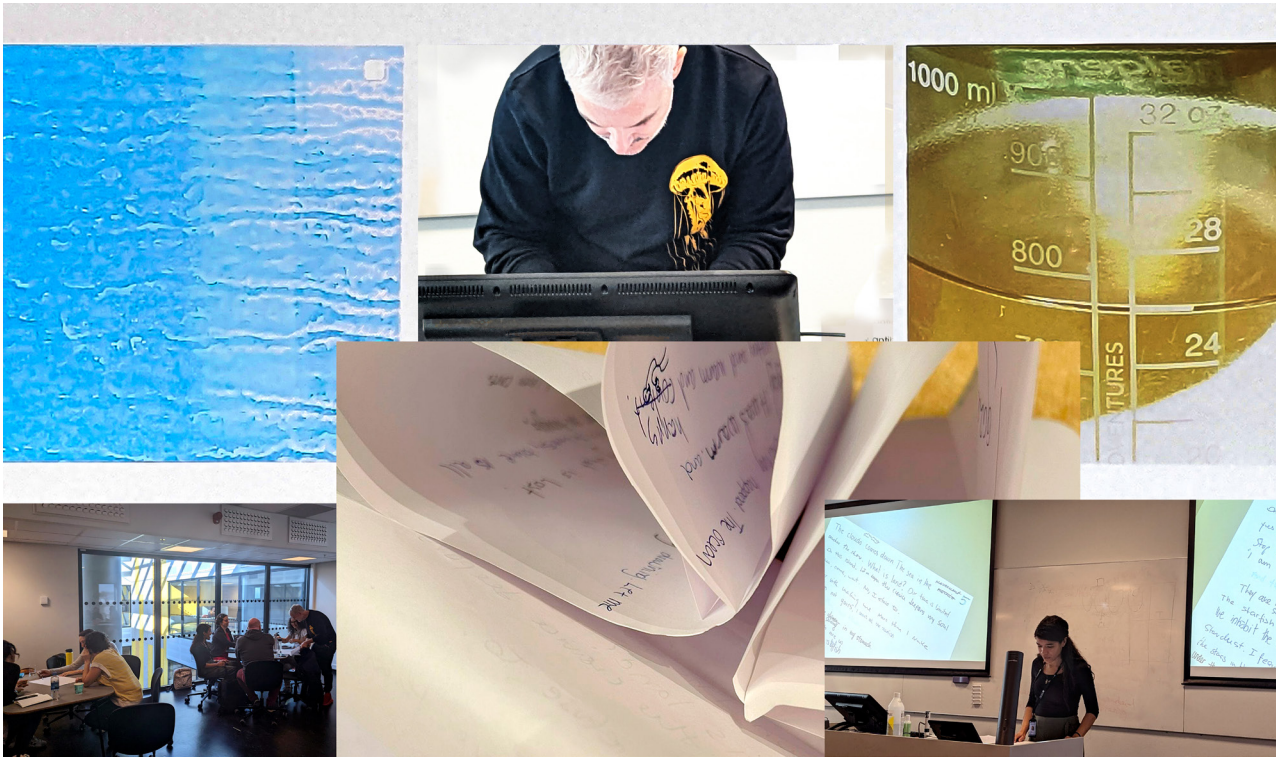


Fig. 2: Wave writing session led by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, Parissa Chokrai, Libe García Zarranz, and other writers at work, co-written futuristic scrolls, and a recitation by Ysabel Muñoz Martínez. Photos: author and Lila Musiol Clark. Photo editing by Anna Trojanowska.

Urban exclusions are also legible to the (im)migrant poor relegated to the urban edges of manual labor, sex, or drug trade; to the undocumented, the 'Afropeans' forced to assimilate; trans and migrant children denied timely access to public health care; or environmental activists pointing out the toxic impact of extractive industries on fragile coastal environments.[61]

Narrating futures of non-extractive togetherness here needs more than experiments with futuristic genres, especially when extractivist, neo-colonial, misogynist and technocratic urban colonization solution plots already dominate public spaces and research labs alike. Katherine McKittrick reminds us that 'telling, sharing, listening to, and hearing stories are *relational* and interdisciplinary acts'; that they are performative encounters 'animated by all sorts of people, places, narrative devices, theoretical queries, plots'.[62] Reductive futuristic plots often begin with what is most obvious: hierarchical narrative relations and the exclusion of diverse narrators and their polyphonous vernaculars, aesthetics, knowledges, and dreamscapes. In other words, while limiting fictions of urban futures proliferate in every municipality, or at university leadership future strategy meetings – especially as fragile archipelagic biodiversity and coastal communities become concerns in Norwegian port cities, such as Trondheim/Tråante – more inclusive participatory storytelling of future possibilities beyond overdevelopment does not.

A 2022 series of urban sustainability and extinction storytelling events in our port city nurtured a different narrative co-design approach. One of the narrative interventions included the 'water wave writing' workshop led by the legal scholar-poet-mixed-media-artist Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos and co-organized under the umbrella of Narrating Sustainability, itself an explicitly future-focused theme. Since artivists, community poets, scholars, educators, and humanities practitioners routinely engage the literate arts, their diverse genres, plotting techniques, and co-writing rituals, we drew on this narrative toolbox to transform hierarchical narrative relations, hoping that the communal craftwork of poetic, trans-media, and collective storytelling can be an instrument of democratic re-imagining, reflection, and sharing.[63]

To start, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, and TransLit and Narrating Sustainability groups invited diverse participants to the 'wave writing' workshop – advanced scholars, professional writers, students, migrants, teachers, poets – to use the metaphor of water wave as a method for collaborative future writing.[64] Participants worked in groups of four or five at a table, and each writer was allowed to contribute only three words at a time to a short story written by someone else before, paying careful attention to the ethical and architectural weight of words and the textual minutiae – protagonists and capitalizations, metaphors and periods, tone and commas, exclamation and question marks – as powerful story- and world-shaping tools. [Fig. 2] After completing a round of short story-writing waves, each group had to pass their unfinished three- to four-line story to another table, and at the same time, add to a different story from another group. After several rounds within each group and across the room, several woven stories returned, like waves, to the tables where they originated.

The wave exercise was, however, not yet complete. The next stage involved augmenting short stories visually on Instagram with site-specific liquid images, a collective recitation of all narratives and, most important, a public reflection on the wave writing process. Aside from marveling at the beauty of poetic water plots and images, we noticed how profoundly creative, democratic and awkward the collective writing process, beyond the storyline, became. For one, by allowing only three words at a time to be added, the exercise was simple and open to all – professional writers, less experienced speakers of English, migrants, students from across the globe, first-time writers, designers, educators, published stars, and polylingual urban lurkers. The process also valued each word and each contributor equally, regardless of their off-the-page place in the social hierarchy. This in itself is a rare experience in aqueous urban place-making and storytelling. Future-focused meetings in municipalities or other hegemonic narrative encounters in research labs and urban design studios rarely allow such generative and generous polyphony. Simultaneously, each narrator experienced a sense of narrative agency and responsibility. For instance, adding a full stop at the end of someone's sentence could mean a brutal, untimely end to a plot still unfolding. Adding a sudden question mark or a colon could transfix an axiomatic statement into a questioning note, or function as a syntactical passageway connecting us to other futures. What if? What now? Some writers commented on the opposite, experiencing a loss of narrative control and a state of utter narrative vulnerability. We grew attached to our future plots, speculations, metaphors, observations, protagonists we birthed and spaces we gave life to and did not like to see them vanish. Our happy endings could turn into others' grim crime fictions; our poetic incantations, wrangled into corporate dystopian extraction scripts. Yet the process was also a generous opportunity for second, third, and fourth chances, when our stories and fictive spaces returned to us, like waves, some unrecognizable, with echoes of other voices, after each circle around the room, and could be tended to, again.

Although this collective narrating exercise seemed simple – what can happen in a space by adding three words at a time? – it was far from an exercise in narrative accumulation. Each moment of adding was an ethical choice in

Fig. 3: Radiokino's listening zone at the Luleå Biennial 2022, Luleå Konsthall, Sweden. Photo: Thomas Hämén.

narrative democracy, reconnection, and awkward re- and co-construction. Each writer-builder had to reposition their subjectivity, reflect on what had been written and archived on paper before, and decide how to relate their words to those of the ensemble before. In other words, futuristic plot development depended on a constant awareness of how narrative relations, not simply content, generate plot. Ultimately, wave writing gave us all a sense of plotting future tales together in a performance of repetition, co-creation, repair, dis- and reconnection, frustration and trust, narrative agency, and loss of control. Co-constructing stories collectively helped us also arc our urban plots and story spaces differently, beyond paternalistic, savior-technocratic solution narratives, or hegemonic ethno-state dreamscapes of racial purity in the company of unusual scribes. The wave scrolls, luminescent in their complexity, and filled with wit, love, difference, and wonder missing from dominant urban narrations, did not tell us what our futures hold. What they did do was make us practice relational, collective, if anonymous, storytelling and sharing of a democratic narrative urban stage.

Request stop: Scandinavian 'high colonial' urban everywhere. **Time:** present tense of colonial crises. **Role:** undecided. **Rehearsal:** collective listening for non-extractive futures. **Performance instructions:** immersive decolonial larghissimo.

Let's take a slow detour in the same urban space of 'high Nordic colonialism and extractivism' to listen to Indigenous and feminist footsteps: a transmedia *Radiokino* initiative titled 'I Elsa Laulas fotspor gjennom Sápmi' (In Elsa Laula's footsteps among the Sámis), literally following Indigenous footprints in the Sápmi region in Scandinavia.[65] The project was created by the Sápmi region-/Norway-based decolonial feminist collective Søstrene Suse, as an homage to Elsa Laula Renberg, an iconic South Sámi leader of the transnational Indigenous struggle against colonial extraction, dispossession and displacement. Renberg, a co-organizer of the first transnational Sámi Assembly in the city of Tråante/Trondheim in 1917, is a crucial figure in the history of feminist and Indigenous rights in the Sápmi Nordic region, spanning Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia.[66] As part of this ongoing project, the Søstrene Suse collective resurrected the Indigenous rights feminist activist and developed *Radiokino*, a multi-episode oral storytelling, orature, a podcast-like kino-radio program devoted to Indigenous women, cultural practices, and the ongoing anticolonial resistance to extraction, animal culling, and illegal land grabs in Norway.[67] Yet their 'audio-cinema' project does not only focus on documenting oral and visual stories of Sámi 'survivance', that is Indigenous presence, survival, and resistance in the Nordic region.[68] It is dedicated both to attending to neglected Indigenous stories and audiences in the North, and to a retraining of the colonial ear in many urban sites of the North. To this end, *Radiokino* is not just a transcript or a documentary broadcast of colonial violence, but a project that decolonizes the urban story-sharing and listening conditions.

Søstrene Suse often curate communal *Radiokino* seances, staged as listening spaces in Oslo, Tromsø, Trondheim, Luleå, and other cities of the North. In such curated 'reception spaces' for collective listening, constructed in art institutions, lecture halls, and classrooms, audiences listen together to women; to Indigenous stories of resistance, friendship, and opposition to colonial dispossession.[69] With or without accompanying visuals, people often engage with the voices alone and face each other instead of the screen. In this context, this new practice of careful listening becomes a transformative political act of solidarity, one that requires 'unlearning' colonial and 'imperial' ways of listening as much as rehearsals of listening to site-specific stories together with others.[70] Quietly, with attention to stories of those whose political investment in futurescaping differs from the accounts of inseparability of extraction from the national 'good life' and 'smart city'.

In Thomas Hämén's photo, the Søstrene Suse curated listening space in the Luleå Konsthall seems empty, abandoned, unpeopled. [Fig. 3] This eerie image may capture the narrative invisibility that continues to haunt diverse Sámi communities in the North, as they engage in the very real struggle in the streets and in national and international courts against policies of forced assimilation, environmental destruction, and 'green colonialism' of the illegal placement of wind farms on reindeer herding lands not far from Tråante/Trondheim.[71] Yet it also represents a dormant 'space of possibility'.[72] It serves as a rehearsal site that awaits listener-participants, who can hear the region's ever-replicating violent colonial pasts, sense the toxic urban futures, already lived or in the making, but also fiercely fought against on the ground. It is also a space of reflection from which we can resist the roles we are compelled to play in the extractive nationalist discourse. Not less important, the image literally anchors storytelling in the material site, whose generative role in urban storytelling should not be forgotten. Stories makes space but space narrates as well.

Coda: urban archives as pedagogies of futuring

The city, 'a linguistic cosmos', a sort of fleshy 'library', is now recognized as a justice laboratory, a spatio-material distribution site of rights on a planetary scale.[73] In that context, say, UN-Habitat's commitment to sustainable, built urban infrastructures to 'promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities' is welcome and promising.[74] But even in 2024, the cultural preservation industry

still rarely engages urban storytelling, the babel 'talk of the town' – stories of young urban residents, Indigenous radio, the polylingual chatter of urban poets, or people's street 'theatre-as-shelter … for every-body' – as a 'substantial component of the urban [futures] design ideation'.[75] And yet, it is an invaluable urban archive of pedagogies of futuring. There is no just sanctuary city without its grassroots laboratories of repair, respite, rebellion, care, and emancipatory storytelling.[76] And if diverse narrative practices are heritage and pedagogies of futuring, that is, blueprints for and building blocks of violent or utopian urbanism, we need to learn how to listen to grassroots urban storytelling, its irreverent words and worlds. To breaths, polyphony, and people. Urban heteroglossia, possessed by conflicting voices of seemingly 'unnecessary', 'un-geographic' bodies, or 'inconvenient' neighbors and guests.[77] Repairing and expanding public urban infrastructures of care may need to be anchored precisely in the neglected archives of urban possibility in stories and sites: in decolonial listening zones, kitchens, sandboxes, rave parties, libraries, parking lots, urban waste dumps, bedrooms, dark rooms, prisons, and not just design studios, boardrooms, and smart data.[78] The process requires attention to different narrative footprints; to developers, middle schoolers, as well as skaters who transform their cities by repurposing 'the useless artifacts of the technological burden' and 'the handiwork of the government/corporate structure' beyond the imagination of its 'original architects'; to Indigenous artists, migrant theorists, theorists, Black Lives Matter, and feminist activists in street and court actions; to urban planners but also drag ballers and trans ravers taking by storm a city that had no room for them, lipstick on, dancing with abandon.[79] It may mean, in other words, stringing futures together, awkwardly, three words at a time, and paying heed to kids on skateboards stepping in and flying off. 'Kick, push, kick, push, coast . . . ', remaking the possibility for love, urban togetherness, freedom, and 'looking for a place to [just] be'.[80] Breathe, 'kick, push', sweat.[81] Together. Making home in a space built on hate.

Saskia Sassen, AbdouMaliq Simone, and Theaster Gates offer additional vocabularies of urban disobedience, placemaking, and hope here. Sassen calls the city itself a 'hacker' of urban plans, infrastructures, and 'top-down desires', of neo-colonial smart urbanism, always 'foiling dominations'.[82] Simone reminds us that we, urban residents, are the conduits, lifelines for urban reimagining and repair. We are the 'hacking city', too, its 'infrastructures' and lifeways, and can glitch its violent and segregatory architectural designs.[83] Gates, on the other hand, shows how Black urban communities in the US manage to 'resacralize' violent space and turn it into 'place'.[84] This, to him, is 'the manifestation of care', and he draws a direct link between heritage work, 'retaining objects of the past' and 'develop[ing] a muscle for [urban] caring'.

In that context, it is also important to account for the discriminatory heritage of our own disciplines, which is inseparably tied to the history of the city, to see how we, literary scholars, architects, historians, urbanists, geographers, designers of urban futures, *execute* heritage preservation – by embalming, classifying, racializing, gendering, and monumentalizing what dominates and segregates our cities – and then, reorient toward living urban archives. 'Philosophers have thought the city', expounds Henri Lefebvre, but the city is also a relational, tender, and living organism made of flesh, metal, streets, virus, love, touch, sound, data, archive, delight, capital, and desire.[85] Besides, urban philosophers are in the streets, too, and 'a space of possibility' can be made in a song.[86] It is time, as Nora N. Khan shows, to commit to 'the necessary labor of thinking with'.[87] Attending to live, situated communal space- and story-sharing practices in the company of others, in other words, may give us a glimpse into 'urban tonicity', its narratives as archives of otherworldliness, that may actually perform the spatiotemporal, poetic, urban justice magic we long for.[88] *Radiokino*, spontaneous LARPs, inclusive recitations without borders, engaging with different bodies, words, lyrics, and beyond them, in peopled urban spaces of devastation and repair, offer us inclusive models and 'storyways' to urban futures to follow.[89] Reciting poems, imagining, wave writing, learning, connecting bodies, breaths, sites across time and space are embodied archives of possibility. Metaphors and rhythms, punctuation marks and tenderness, vulnerabilities and words we understand and those we don't are building tools, too. And so are site-specific but ephemeral heritage practices that teach us how to 'repair' what is broken and bring new futures into being, for which we have no words yet and no architectural infrastructures.[90] Most important, regardless of how or where we place in the future temporalities of urban survival, we live together in this world and share its space already.[91] The task at hand is thus not to simply narrate or imagine a shared future – as we already live together, and in each other's worlds – but to create one in which the conditions of that sharing are not violent, disabling, extractive, or lethal to women, queers, Sámi activists, youth of color, dis-abled residents, the unhoused, the undocumented, the 'unnecessary', that is to those whose narrative heritage we constantly ignore and, often, destroy.[92] Ultimately, we have 'many debts that await to be paid', because we, too, live in generous narrative futures, damaged as they are, made possible by others' collective defiance and 'refusal to disappear'.[93]

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1. Filipa Lowndes Vicente and Aïsha Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning, An interview with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay', *Análise Social* 55, no. 2 (2020): 436.
2. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 61.
3. Brian Holmes, 'Affectivist Manifesto', *Continental Drift,* 16 November 2008, https://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/11/16/the-affectivist-manifesto/.
4. Johny Pitts, *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* (London: Penguin, 2019), 1; Hanna Musiol, 'Habits of Memory', in *Remembering Places,* ed. Julia Wiedemann and Richard Nate (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2019), 229–230; Leslie Kern, *Feminist City: Claiming Space in the Man-Made World* (London: Verso, 2021).
5. For instance, China Mieville's *The City and the City* (New York: Del Rey, 2010) often serves as an analytics for urban architecture of segregation; Ann Petry's *The Street* (New York: Mariner Books, 1998) or Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage Classics, 1981), for gendered and racialized urban partitioning.
6. Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 2006).
7. Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 4; Toni L. Griffin, 'Toni L. Griffin and Sara Zawde in Conversation', in 'A Sense of Place', special issue of *Deem* 4 (winter 2022/23): 58, 59.
8. Leslie Kern, *Feminist City: Claiming Space in the Man-Made World* (London: Verso, 2021); for transnational accounts of neo-colonial, carceral architecture, browse Leopold Lambert, *Funambulist,* https://thefunambulist.net/magazine; for the impact of writing on the fictions of community and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016). For the financial architecture of the US-prison landscape and detention centers caging migrant children, see both cartographic volumes of *Torn Apart/ Separados* (*Torn Apart / Separados,* Mobilized Humanities, https://xpmethod.columbia.edu/torn-apart/volume/1/ and https://xpmethod.columbia.edu/torn-apart/volume/2/).
9. For the financial ties between US research universities and the carceral industry, see volume 2 of *Torn Apart/ Separados (Torn Apart / Separados,* Mobilized Humanities, https://xpmethod.columbia.edu/torn-apart/volume/2/).
10. For work on Black women's writing, geography, and resistance, see Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006).
11. Don Mitchell, 'Metaphors to Live By: Landscapes as Systems of Social Reproduction', in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 120–44; Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities,* trans. Eleanore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996).
12. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics,* 61. See also 'Toni L. Griffin and Sara Zawde in conversation' and the two issues of *Deem*, 'A Sense of Place', no. 4 (winter 2022/23) and 'Pedagogy for a New World', no. 2 (winter/spring 2021).
13. Mitchell, *'Metaphors to Live By'.*
14. Azoulay in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436; Sara Ahmed, 'Feminist Killjoys (and Other Willful Subjects)', 'Polyphonic Feminisms: Acting in Concert', *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 8, no. 3, (Summer 2010), http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/print_ahmed.htm.
15. Stanisław Lem, *Solaris* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2012); Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436.
16. *See* 'Toni L. Griffin and Sara Zawde in conversation' as well as the full 2021, 2022, and 2023 issues of *Deem* for a robust archive of such work; Katya García-Antón, *Art and Solidarity Reader:*

Radical Actions, Politics and Friendships (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2022); *AfroPunk*, directed by James Spooner (DVD, 2015); *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP,* directed by Jim Hubbard (DVD, 2012); Zap Mama, *Adventures in Afropea* (CD, Luaka Bop, 1993); Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2020); Solnit, *Infinite City*; Cruz Garcia and Nathalie Frankowski's take on this entanglement in *Narrative Architecture: A Kynical Manifesto* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: nai010 publishers, 2019); and a recent doctoral dissertation, Eleni Oureidilou, 'Mediated Narratives in the Arrival Landscape: New Urban Implementations for Displaced Communities from Athens to Barcelona' (doctoral diss., Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2023).

17. Lem, *Solaris,* 118; McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* xi; Andrew Thacker, 'The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography', *New Formations* 2005, no. 57 (2005): 56–73; Mai Britt Utsi, 'The Indigenous Pedagogies and Methodologies' webinar, 9 February 2023.
18. Lem, *Solaris,* 118.
19. Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023), 333.
20. David Gessen, *The Architecture of Disability: Buildings, Cities, and Landscapes beyond Access* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2022); Kern, *Feminist City*.
21. AbdouMaliq Simone, 'People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg', *Public Culture* 16, no. 3 (2004): 407–29; Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Shannon Mattern, *A City Is Not a Computer: Other Urban Intelligences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Kern, *Feminist City*; McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds;* Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).
22. *AfroPunk*; Lem, *Solaris,* 118; my translation.
23. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, 'Michael Brown', *boundary 2* 42, no. 4 (2015): 81.
24. Silvia Federici, *Beyond the Periphery of the Skin: Rethinking, Remaking, and Reclaiming the Body in Contemporary Capitalism* (Brooklyn: Kairos, 2020), 53.
25. Solnit, *Wanderlust, 6, 9.*
26. Ibid., 33, 31.
27. Walter Benjamin, 'The Return of the Flaneur', in *Selected Writings, Vol. 2 (1927–1934)*, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 262.
28. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 533, 840; Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 31; Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, 'On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales', *Common Knowledge* 18 (2012): 505.
29. Redlining is a discriminatory practice of denying financial services to non-white residents. The term was coined by John McKnight to describe a practice of marking off areas with non-white populations with a red line on urban maps, in order to deny insurance, mortgages or other loans, based on ethnicity or race. As such, redlining constructed racially segregated urban futures and created landscapes of urban decay and underinvestment in the US and beyond; on race and urban placemaking, see Robert D. Bullard, ed., *The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century: Race, Power, and Politics of Place* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); for discussion about a redlined foreclosure area in Southside Chicago and Amanda Williams's repainting of Englewood's soon-to-be-demolished houses in a color palette co-created with members of the Black neighbourhood, see Amanda Williams, 'Why I Turned Chicago's Abandoned Homes into Art', 2018, TED video, 13:21, https://www.ted.com/talks/amanda_williams_why_i_turned_chicago_s_abandoned_homes_into_art; on the architecture of urban exclusion, see Davis, *City of Quartz*; for urban segregation across Europe, see Pitts, *Afropean*; for accounts of global and grassroots urban resistance, see David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (New York: Verso, 2012); and also Pitts, *Afropean*.
30. Mattern, *The City Is Not a Computer*; Tsing, 'On Nonscalability'; Hanna Musiol and Pablo DeSoto, '*Place by Co-Design*: Industry, Postcolony, and Disobedient Storytelling', *ASAP/J* (29 June 2022), https://asapjournal.com/node/becoming-undisciplined-place-by-co-design-industry-postcolony-and-environmental-storytelling-hanna-musiol-and-pablo-desoto/; Pitts, *Afropean*; Harvey, *Rebel Cities.*
31. Kern, *Feminist City.*
32. Sunaura Taylor and Judith Butler, in *Examined Life,* directed by Astra Taylor (Zeitgeist Films, 2008); Pitts, *Afropean,* 1; Jan Grue, 'The High Cost of Living in a Disabling World', *The Guardian*, 4 November 2021.
33. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Globalectics,* 61.
34. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Walter Benjamin Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2019), 198; Harney and Moten, 'Michael Brown', 81.
35. The name of the school has been anonymised to protect the identity of the students and educators.
36. The school has approximately 420 students in grade 7 (source anonymized).
37. Interestingly, none predicted the impact of the passage of the Marriage Equality Act in 2004 in their own state, and in 2015 across the US, or the Affordable Care Act in 2010.
38. We also learned that in the future, educators will continue to earn a fraction of bankers' and soldiers' wages – a prescient prediction that did not escape notice.
39. While most people live in cities now, nobody yet resides in a 'feminist city' designed to redress patriarchal, heteronormative structural violence that displaces and disenfranchises woman-identifying urban subjects, urban poor, migrants, LGBTQI+

communities, and ethnic minorities with ferocity and at shocking rates. Kern, *Feminist City*.

40. Gun Violence Archive, 'Mass Shootings in 2023', https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting.
41. Deborah Becker, 'As City Clears Tents from "Mass, and Cass", Some Say They Still Have Nowhere to Go', *WBUR,* 13 January 2022, https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/01/12/boston-mass-cass-homelessness-tents-clearing-out.
42. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities,* 61; Cindi Katz, *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Era of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).
43. Christina Sharpe, *Ordinary Notes*, 333.
44. *Deem,* 'Pedagogy for a New World', no. 2 (Winter/Spring 2021).
45. These experiments were linked to graduate and undergraduate writing, literary and cultural studies courses at Simmons College and University of Massachusetts Boston (2012–14). For full syllabi and reading lists, please contact the author.
46. Richard E. Miller, *Writing at the End of the World* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 25–26. See his chapter 'The Dark Night of the Soul'.
47. García-Antón, *Art and Solidarity Reader,* 315.
48. Foundations came from the work of David Harvey, Michelle Alexander, Henri Lefebvre, Cindi Katz and Mike Davis, and from Tracey Skelton, 'Children's Geographies/Geographies of Children: Play, Work, Mobilities and Migration', *Geography Compass* 3, no. 4 (2009): 1430–48.
49. The now-defunded archive was housed at http://immigrantexperience.omeka.net/. For more information about this community project, contact the author.
50. I think here of the 'ties' that Rita Felski writes about in *Hooked: Art and Attachment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2020), which are not simply individual but modes of public affect and methods of knowledge-making, based on proximity, not distance, or alienation.
51. Despite its spontaneity, the project required careful logistical planning and a city permit to avoid fines.
52. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities,* 195.
53. Quoted in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436.
54. Ibid.
55. I have co-organized and taught numerous narrating futures writing and design workshops, community storytelling acts, and interventions: the Futurescapes alternative reality game (ARG) design workshop led by Kari Kraus (2015); speculative poetic and theory prototyping work in Critical Theory, Environmental Humanities, and *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* courses (2016, 2017, 2018); 'wave' public writing workshop led by Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos and co-organized by Libe García Zarranz in Trondheim in 2022; environmental science speculative work led by Divya Gupta, as part of the Environmentally Just Futures at SUNY Binghamton (2022); and the ongoing transcontinental global *Atlas of the Other Worlds* for the Occupy Climate Change! network led by Marco Armiero, 15 March 2022, https://occupyclimatechange.net/launch/.
56. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 156.
57. Ibid.; Azoulay, quoted in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 433; Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 21; Shahram Khosravi and Mahmoud Keshavarz, 'The Magic of the Border', *e-flux,* May 2020; Hanna Musiol, 'Cartographic Storytelling, Migration, and Reception Environments', *Environment, Space, Place* 12, no. 2 (2020): 1–30.
58. Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).
59. Quoted in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 433.
60. Ashifa Kassam, 'Demonstration in Oslo Seeks Removal of Windfarms in Indigenous Region', *The Guardian,* 11 October 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/11/demonstration-in-oslo-seeks-removal-of-windfarms-in-indigenous-region.
61. At a high school education registration orientation, parents of recent migrants were coached into steering their children into school programs preparing them for manual and service labor, regardless of their skills or intentions, because, as parents were told, migrant students 'wouldn't make it into the competitive medical or law programs in Norway' (personal communication with presenters, winter, 2015). This message was conveyed by many simultaneous interpreters, at a considerable cost to the Trondheim Municipality, to make sure all immigrant parents speaking different languages got it. The Black Lives Matter protests in Norway, and in Trondheim in particular, gathered thousands of demonstrators in 2019, not simply to express solidarity with activists protesting racial profiling in the US in the aftermath of the murder of Freddie Gray, but also to express despair about and defiance against systemic Nordic racism. Four years later, in 2023, the largest university in Norway adopted a provision prohibiting hiring in university management positions applicants without the knowledge of two 'white' Norwegian national languages, Nynorsk and Bokmål; knowledge of the local Indigenous national Sámi languages was not required. The racist and xenophobic implications of this decision are clear. This provision excludes recent migrants from holding high-level administrative positions where they could intervene in common practices of discrimination and exclusion.
62. McKittrick, *Dear Science,* 6 (my emphasis).
63. Trondheim's Mangfoldshuset (House of Diversity) is a space open to such bottom-up initiatives. See also Musiol, 'Cartographic Storytelling'.

64. The workshop was co-organised by Narrating Sustainability, TransLit, and Literature for Inclusion on 8 September 2022 at NTNU.
65. Lars Kiel Bertelsen, quoted in Pia Arke, *Ethno-Aesthetics/ Etnoæstetik* (Copenhagen: Ark, 2010): 9; Hanna Musiol, 'Postcolonial Environmental Fiction, Media, and Pedagogy in the North of the Global North', in *Teaching Postcolonial Environmental Literature and Media,* ed. Cajetan Iheka (New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America, 2022), 286; Søstrene Suse, I Elsa Laulas fotspor gjennom Sápmi, https://elsalaulasfotspor.com/om-prosjektet/. The Søstrene Suse collective includes Eva Maria Fjellheim, Susanne Normann, Ingrid Fadnes, Astrid Fadnes, and Kjersti Kanestrøm Lie.
66. See Stine H. Bang Svendsen, 'Saami Women at the Threshold of Disappearance: Elsa Laula Renberg (1877–1931) and Karin Stenberg's (1884–1969) Challenges to Nordic Feminism', in *Feminisms in the Nordic Region: Neoliberalism, Nationalism and Decolonial Critique,* ed. Suvi Keskinen, Pauline Stoltz and Diama Mulinari (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
67. Ep. 1: '400 reinskaller, 400 kulehull' (400 reindeer skulls, 400 bullet holes); ep. 2: 'Et bilde kan forandre' (A picture can change); ep. 3: 'Baajh vaeride årrodh! La fjella leve' (Let the mountains live); and ep. 4: 'Delvieh' (They reappear), https://elsalaulasfotspor.com/__trashed/. Supreme Court of Norway, 'Licenses for Wind Power Development on Fosen Ruled Invalid as the Construction Violates Sami Reindeer Herders' Right to Enjoy Their Own Culture', 11 October 2021, https://www.domstol.no/en/supremecourt/rulings/2021/supreme-court-civil-cases/hr-2021-1975-s/.
68. Gerald Viznor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2008).
69. For more on the politics and aesthetics of reception, see Musiol, 'Cartographic Storytelling'.
70. Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019); also quoted in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436.
71. See the 2023 film *Elmie*, directed by Sissel Bergh (incorporated & unlimited, part of the knowhowknow series), video, 28 min.
72. Pitts, *Afropean,* 1; Zap Mama, *Adventures in Afropea.*
73. Benjamin, *Arcades Project,* 533, 840; Solnit, *Infinite City*, 4; According to the United Nations, '68% of the world population' will live in cities by 2050. '68% of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, says UN', 16 May 2018, https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html; yet, over 1 billion urban residents are currently living in slums and this number is to double within the next 30 years, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics, 'Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.' https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/goal-11/; see also Igor Calzada, 'Emerging Digital Citizenship Regimes: Pandemic, Algorithmic, Liquid, Metropolitan, and Stateless Citizenships', *Citizenship Studies* 27, no. 2 (2022): 160–88.
74. UN-Habitat, 'About Us', https://unhabtat.org/about-us.
75. Kasia Lech, 'Theatre as Shelter: On Artists' in Ukraine (and Beyond) Response to the Russian Invasion', *Theatre Times*, 29 March 2022, https://thetheatretimes.com/theatre-as-shelter-on-artists-in-ukraine-response-to-the-russian-invasion/; Sara Zawde in 'Toni L Griffin and Sara Zawde in Conversation', 58, 59.
76. Gessen, *The Architecture of Disability*; Grue, 'High Cost'; Kern, *Feminist City.*
77. McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds,* 86; Rabih Alameddine, *An Unnecessary Woman* (New York: Grove Press, 2013); Lauren Berlant, *On the Inconvenience of Other People* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022).
78. See Toni L. Griffin's important comments about narratives revealing that 'vacant lots' seen by urban planners or architects as devalued space are 'assets' to Black urban residents, in 'Toni L. Griffin and Sara Zawde in Conversation': 58, 59.
79. Craig Stecyk, in *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, directed by Stacy Peralta, video (Sony Pictures Classics, 2001); Søstrene Suse, *I Elsa Laulas fotspor gjennom Sápmi*; Elmie; McKenzie Wark, *Raving* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023); *Paris Is Burning,* directed by Jennie Livingston, video (Miramax, 1991).
80. Lupe Fiasco, 'Kick, Push', *Food & Liquor*, CD (Atlantic Records, 2006).
81. Ibid.
82. Saskia Sassen, KUNO conference keynote lecture, NTNU, Trondheim, 21 October 2016; Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 117.
83. Simone, 'People as Infrastructure'; Musiol and DeSoto, '"Place by Co-Design"'.
84. Theaster Gates et al., 'Sacralized Space: Theaster Gates on the Practice of Placemaking', *Deem 4* (Winter 2022/23): 9, 17, 16.
85. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities,* 117.
86. Across the diasporic soundscapes, Zap Mama will create such a lyrical urban utopia, Afropea, 'as a space of blackness' and 'a possibility of living with more than one idea: Africa, and Europe, or by extension, the Global South and the West', Pitts, *Afropean,* 1; Zap Mama, *Adventures in Afropea.*
87. Nora N. Khan, 'On the Necessary Labor of Thinking With', in 'Pedagogy for a New World', a special issue of *Deem* 2 (2021): 30–35.
88. Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities,* 116.
89. Warren Cariou, 'Indigenous Methodologies' webinar, organized by NTNU and OsloMet, 9 February 2023.
90. Azoulay quoted in Vicente and Azoulay, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436; Kern, *Feminist City*; Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics.*
91. Kyle Powys Whyte, 'Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene', in *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities,* ed. Ursula

K. Heise, Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann (New York: Routledge, 2016), 206–15; Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

92. Alameddine, *Unnecessary Woman*; Whyte, 'Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now'.
93. Azoulay quoted in Vicente and Azoualy, 'Ariella Aïsha Azoulay – Unlearning', 436; Tara Betts, *Refuse to Disappear* (Washington, DC: The World Works, 2022); Whyte, 'Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now'. Note that walking in the streets together, in demonstrations for women's suffrage, antiracism, LGBTQI+, ACT UP, or labour rights, but also cruising or skating in public and privatized urban spaces, remade the urban spaces in the cites we reside in.

Biography

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The Destruction of Architecture: German Cities in Literature during and after World War II

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Abstract
The Allied bombing campaigns over the German cities during World War II produced a vast landscape of destruction, which has been the object of reports, accounts and fictional narratives. Cities and buildings, a fundamental architectural heritage binding individuals and communities to their existential spaces, were annihilated in the most extensive act of deliberate destruction in human history. In this article, I look into the work of three authors – Heinrich Böll, Stig Dagerman and Hans Erich Nossack – to outline the effects of the bombings on the survivors, and on their relationship to both urban space and architectural heritage.

Keywords
World War II, bombings, literary descriptions, architectural heritage, atmospheres

Cities are more than just architecture, and historic centres more than just sites of heritage. While urbanisation has been variously considered as the source of anxiety and psychosis, it is nevertheless true that the bond between cities and human practices embodies the constituent bedrock of culture.[1] As Dalibor Vesely observes, the articulation of culture emerges from the unfolding relations between places and activities, from the daily going about of urban subjects within the material constitution of architecture.[2] The sedimentation over time of such traces in the urban environment turns the physical scaffolding of the city into a dense and meaningful space, enabling us to experience it with confidence and stability. We may indeed consider this connection as a possible understanding of heritage: a sedimented array of relationships between subjects, movements, and things, which allows us to maintain our posture in the world without losing our bearings.

Heritage is a notion that has changed over time, progressively shifting from normative definitions descending from materialist, taxonomic art histories, to a more performative understanding that focuses on the relations between people and their traditional living environments. The Faro Convention established a political charter to understand our relation to the traces of the past and how to go about preserving them for future generations.[3] Nevertheless, we must observe that its definition primarily appeals to a sphere of cognition that is bound to knowledge and an 'officially established' reference framework, such as that provided by conservation authorities. Beyond this, I would like to argue that heritage may not only be about what I know that relates to the world that surrounds me: heritage is also something that I feel, and that makes me feel in a certain way.

In this sense, heritage enters the scene of the affective world. We are not considering the case of the lofty monument, the celebrated archaeological site or the venerated

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cathedral: heritage is something that speaks to individuals and communities, even when its artistic or cultural relevance may be limited. Heritage emerges as such when it tells the story of my culture and defines my identity, when it makes me feel proud and at home, when it appeases a sense of longing.[4] While this may be a broad and inclusive definition, expanding the boundaries of what we consider heritage beyond what would be included in tourist guides, it also establishes a clear principle: that heritage is not a matter of beautiful things, but of a human condition that makes us bond to environments beyond their artistic appreciation, prompting us to protect what we consider worthy and precious.

Yet, we know, heritage is sometimes lost. Cities get destroyed: by natural events, by wars. They can also be radically transformed by subtle and corrosive forces that apparently bear no violence but prove destructive nonetheless. A damaged city may lose its material articulation of architecture, along with its web of practices, relations, traditions, values, and the entire range of human dynamics that has coevolved with its physical growth. Under these conditions, urban spaces are no longer capable of harbouring that sense of confidence and stability that its inhabitants are accustomed to. To sound the deeper stratums of existence, it is necessary to turn to more subtle and sophisticated tools, more apt at expressing the nuanced, the unspeakable – all that may otherwise be lost. Literature, as a practice of describing reality, can reach to this magmatic cache of sensations, bringing them to light.

Ever since Carthage was razed to the ground by the Roman soldiers in an attempt to make even the memory of the city disappear from history, 'urbicide' has represented an extreme wartime practice, designed to destroy much more than just the physical portion of urbanisation.[5] The rationale and manifestations of these deliberately inflicted disasters, including the dialectics of destruction and reconstruction, form a field of investigation embracing a broad range of case studies.[6] In this occasion, I will focus on one of the most terrifying events of this kind: the destruction of German cities during and immediately after World War II. The largest campaign of destruction ever conceived in human history, its aftermath and its literary descriptions offer an occasion to observe and discuss how architectures of cultural heritage become part of a narration, of a shared cultural memory. My primary intention is to focus on the embodied and affective cues that the literary accounts provide us: not merely the material description of things, nor the visual narrative available through the vast photographic documentation of the war events, but its resonance as mirrored in the attitudes, gestures, postures, practices and thought of those who were affected by the tremendous destruction.

The Virgil to this journey, quite predictably, will be W.G. Sebald. While he was not a direct witness of the war's destruction, his seminal 1999 essay *On the Natural History of Destruction*, established a new literary paradigm.[7] As a second-order account, it reviewed the paucity of reports of bellic destruction available in post-war German literature, thus identifying a 'black hole' of avoidance, of missing personal histories.[8] Sebald's meticulous, at times horrific reconstruction of the bombing techniques developed by the Allies to raze German cities to the ground makes him imagine what the storm of fire might have actually looked like for those who were there.

Although Sebald's considerations were not universally accepted, and several critics claimed that there was no such process of denial, it is evident that the destructions displaced the lived experiences to a field of hardly fathomable, unsayable depth.[9] I will attempt to identify the 'symptoms' of this trauma as they are indirectly manifested, for example in the expressions of affect, of corporeal dynamics, and in the atmospheres captured by the literary accounts. This description encompasses a twofold register: first, the observation of how the spatial settings sustain the narratives. The broken architectures and fragmented cities, as well as the landscape, which is itself shaken by the bombings, all contribute to the construction of a certain *Stimmung*. Second, I will consider the literary techniques adopted by the writers: among these, we find carefully crafted narratives that lead to a gradual unfolding of awareness, and the ensuing emotional emergence; others attempt to remove any subjective filter, describing the sequence of events in their sheer factuality. Yet what appears as a common note among all authors is that the spaces and the human subjects that inhabit them are never disjointed, and that describing one inevitably implies the foregrounding of the other. In analysing the description of spaces, events and subjects, my goal will be to identify which features of the texts make the architectural heritage and its inhabitants come to life before our eyes.

Three authors who are subjected to Sebald's scrutiny will provide tokens of descriptions of the cities during and after the war: Heinrich Böll, the acclaimed father of *Trümmerliteratur* ('rubble literature'), whose short stories reflected on the existential conditions of soldiers returning from the front to find their hometowns destroyed; Stig Dagerman, the young Swedish reporter who travelled to Germany in the autumn of 1946 to publish his accounts in the newspaper *Expressen*, and Hans Erich Nossack, whose 1948 essay *The End* offers an astonishing account of the destruction of Hamburg.[10] Through each of them, we will observe a specific instance of how the destruction and loss of heritage deprives the inhabitants of stability: by severing the continuity of spatial experience, leading

to fragmentation; by prompting a response of indifference towards the harsh conditions the ruined cities now afford; and by making the inhabitants lose their bearing, their ability to use urban space as a tool to find one's standing in the world. While the syntheses of the authors' works cannot substitute the original texts, they will help to build and sustain an argument, outlining the crucial topics and devices through which the presence effects are achieved.

Building presence

Before confronting the descriptions of the wartime firestorms, we need to assess the tools we can use to make sense of the scenes the authors offer us. The texts we will consider are not typologically homogeneous: some are objective accounts of situations that the writer encounters, others are fictional stories that unfold within an architectural scene. Despite these differences, however, the effect is that we, as readers, become present to the scenes. Our sense of presence, we could say, is articulated or built by the written text, which is capable of evoking memories and feelings.[11]

Presence is one of the great philosophical conundrums, and many authors, especially phenomenologists, have struggled to define what it means 'to be present.'[12] Works of art – including literature – play a key role in articulating presence, somehow granting us deeper access to the world. Presence is not something that merely happens, but, as Alva Nöe notes, a condition that we must labour to achieve:

> What is true of the experience of the work of art is true of human experience quite generally. The world shows up for us in experience only insofar as we know how to make contact with it, or, to use a different metaphor, only insofar as we are able to bring it into focus. One reason why art is so important to us is that it recapitulates this fundamental fact about our relation to the world around us: the world is blank and flat until we understand it.[13]

To gain access to the world, skilful engagement is required, and in the case of art both the author and the perceiver play a symmetrical role. The perceiver must contribute attitude and posture towards the phenomenon, lest he or she remains indifferent towards it; the creator's task is that of coming into contact with the viewer or reader. 'Contact' here means more than just a theoretical and aseptic subject-object relationship; instead it is a spatial, embodied form of touching. Borrowing an expression by Toni Morrison, literary critic Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht describes the phenomenon of presence as the paradoxical sensation of being touched as if from inside.[14]

Gumbrecht's seminal work on the 'presence effect' in literature is indeed key to understanding what it is about the description of wartime destruction that touches us so intimately. In building his argument against the Western hermeneutic tradition, Gumbrecht makes it clear that even a text, which has no proper physical dimension, engages us spatially, in ways that are to some extent similar to pictures, music or even architectural ensembles, and that this effect of tangibility is in constant movement.[15] In addressing Heidegger's concept of Being, and its relation to materiality, space and movement, Gumbrecht postulates a similarity to what he considers the ontological nature of presence. Yet the most acute point of synthesis is not presence itself, but rather the tension it establishes with meaning, that is, what makes things culturally specific.[16]

While conceptualisations of what it means to be present vary, many theories agree on the centrality of this concept. Closer to the architectural domain, German phenomenologist Gernot Böhme theorises that beyond the classic notions of Cartesian space and of Aristotelian place, what we must consider as the site of experience is what he terms 'the space of bodily presence'.[17] Böhme's aesthetic model conceptualises space as a tripartite articulation between the material constitution of the world, the more-than-given established by atmospheres and situations, and the experiencing subject's bodily disposition (*Befindlichkeit*).[18] Adverse to Nöe's position, which sees presence as a wilful condition that, once achieved, grants us deeper access to the experienced world, Böhme sees it rather as a prerequisite for any spatial interaction. The pre-reflective sphere is particularly animated by the stirrings produced by our body's resonance to the ambient environment.

We can note that presence is a question that crosses from art to architecture, from philosophy to literary criticism. What makes it relevant in contemporary thought is its ontological opposition to distance. While what Gumbrecht calls the hermeneutic field offers a conception where meaning is always concealed, and must be retrieved through an endless process of interpretation, presence acknowledges the fact that we are embedded within the world, and can directly witness and be affected by phenomena as they unfold, without the need for a code to decipher them.[19]

What remains a crucial question as we work across the reality of architectural space and its literary representation, is what these two phenomena ultimately have in common. I have argued that while a distance between actual reality and its description – no matter how accurate – is unavoidable, the two end up sharing something, which could allow the situation to become at least partially present.[20] As Kathleen Stewart notes, 'in a situation, things hanging in the air are worth describing. Theory becomes a descriptive method awkwardly approaching the thing that

is happening by attuning to it as a thing of promise and contact.'[21]

What the accounts of wartime Germany offer us is a twofold take on lived space. The phenomena themselves – the raging fire, wastelands of rubble, razed cities – set the stage for the drama. But the attunement to the felt experiences, to what makes the spaces come alive, largely emerges from the human situations that the authors depict. These micrologies, concentrating on the small and petty details, on the astonished contemplation of destruction and on how the refugees cope with this grim reality, is what makes the atmosphere emerge. It is these 'ordinary affects' – again to quote Stewart's technique of penetrating lived reality by focusing on the minutiae of life – that ultimately allow us to be touched 'from the inside' by the descriptions, accounts, and stories.[22] It is the way the authors have to make us become *present.*

Scene 1: fragments of buildings, fragments of men

Heinrich Böll's short story 'Stranger, Bear Word to the Spartans We…' tells of a wounded German soldier who, in the middle of the night, is carried on a stretcher into a school that has been transformed into a field hospital.[23] His wounds are so severe that he is tightly swaddled in a blanket and no longer feels his limbs. In the brief transport from the ambulance to an upper-floor classroom, he seems to recognize the decorations placed along the hallways, but reckons that all schools in Germany must be fitted with similar items, dictated by a rigid national regulation. Yet once he is laid down in the large drawing classroom, amid dozens of screaming wounded soldiers, he reads on the blackboard, in his own handwriting, the verses *Wanderer, kommst du nach Spa…*, which he had written there just shortly before being sent off to war. It is at this moment that he understands that he does indeed find himself in his old school building, in the art room where for eight years he had learned to copy Greek vases and practiced calligraphy. And with equal terror he realizes that the reason he can no longer feel his limbs is because the explosion has ripped them away from his body, leaving him as only the 'fragment of a man'.

Böll's story first appeared in 1950 in a collection with the same title. The writer, who had served as a soldier for six years, through this and the other stories in the collection reflects on the spaces and moods he had encountered during his wartime experience. Far from the Hollywood-inspired clichés of German soldiers as ruthless, robotic killing machines, the men portrayed by Böll are frail, shattered by the brutal events and by the common destiny of having been sent off to die by a criminal and psychotic ruling elite.

Böll skilfully depicts the characters in his stories with a few rapid strokes, hinting at their appearance, their ragged clothing, their postures and their inner ruminations. The architectural settings where the action unfolds are also sketched beyond their physical articulation: the writer frequently introduces sensorial cues arising from foul smells, evoking the cheap tobacco smoked by the soldiers, the bad food served in the *Kneipe* (bar) where they occasionally gather to unwind, the mix of sweat, excrement and blood that infests the hideaways tucked amid crumbling buildings. Most stories take place at night, in the near-darkness of the anti-bombing blackouts or in the flickering light of dim lightbulbs.

There is a striking resonance between the individuals inhabiting Böll's stories from this early collection and the architecture and urban places where they take place. The common feeling, among both men and buildings, is that unity has been lost: the organic solidarity and cohesion of the classic *corpus*, the overarching principle that binds the members of a body – be it physical or metaphorical – into a consistent whole, has been irreversibly shattered. The cities themselves are now in ruins – hence the general denomination of this period's German literature, *Trümmerliteratur* – and are squatted, rather than inhabited, by the few who have remained after the Allied aerial bombing campaigns. The buildings are fractured, with hollow windows gaping onto deserted streets, collapsed roofs and the rare occasional sign of inhabitation amid ruin. The people, above all, are fragmented: broken bodies, with soldiers missing limbs, but also women whose men are dead, captive, or far away in some distant battle front. Social liaisons, the conventions structuring the social body, are fragmented too. Strikingly, even feelings seem disgregated, as these cannot always be recognised: as a group of soldiers visits a musky *Kneipe* and starts to drink, the narrator observes: 'Only after the fourth or fifth glass would we start to talk. Beneath the exhausted rubble of our hearts, this miraculous potion awakened something strangely precious that our fathers might have called nostalgia.'[24] As the war has destroyed cities and buildings, has shattered bodies and spirits, even the certainty of feelings has been undermined, that which had allowed their fathers to conduct a stable and confident existence.

The same appears to happen with the architectural heritage. The school in Bendorf described in Böll's story, the lofty institution adorned with the symbols of high classical culture (and of German racism), is no longer immediately recognisable to the narrator as the place where for eight years he had pursued his education. In the semi-darkness of the blackout, amid the whining and stench of wounded bodies, it turns into an uncanny space of alienation. The relationships between subjects and their habitat is broken, and heritage architecture is no longer capable of providing individuals their place in the world they inhabit.

Fig. 1: Dresden after the raids of 13 and 14 February 1945. Photo: © Deutsche Fotothek, unknown photographer.

Böll's celebrated oeuvre, which led him to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972, is a thorough investigation of how the disaggregating forces unleashed by the war rippled through German society in the decades following the conflict. Each of his major novels addresses one particular manifestation of this phenomenon: *The Clown* (1963) is a social satire of the new values that emerged in the post-war years, as Germany was experiencing its rebirth and economic miracle; *Group Portrait with Lady* (1971) explores the aftermath of foreign occupation on German ground, and how it affected individuals and families; *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* (1974) describes the violence of political terrorism in the early 1970s.[25]

As Böll's novels constantly refer to urban settings – shifting from one German city to another – the consequences of the war can also be ascertained in the ongoing reconstruction, especially in its shortcomings and cruelties. Writing in the same years as Böll, psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich identified in the collective history of Nazism the roots of a malaise affecting the generation born after Hitler's rise. The sense of guilt, disillusion, and trauma experienced in early youth led this generation, in Mitscherlich's view, to develop an 'inability to mourn', thus leaving them perpetually connected to the dramatic events of the war.[26] Even the planning practices of the reconstruction, Mitscherlich argues, prove the presence of the destructive forces that Böll traces in society, leading to a new, dehumanised and dissociated space, where the presumedly rational and scientific principles of design altogether fail in nurturing the affective bonds between inhabitants and their environment.[27]

Yet Böll's one novel that most poignantly epitomises the deep connection between architecture and history, its pregnancy as heritage embodying traditions as well as collective and individual destinies, is *Billiards at Half-past Nine* (1959).[28] Far from the agile, impressionistic style of Böll's early stories, here the dense and deeply symbolic narration recounts the story of the Fähmel family, a prominent lineage of architects in the western Rhein region, spanning three generations, two world wars and half a century of German history. As a young architect, Heinrich Fähmel unexpectedly wins the competition to design the abbey of St. Anton in Kissatal, a neo-Romanesque edifice whose sombre appearance elevates it to an austere symbol of religiosity. During World War II, however, the front runs through the Kissatal, and Heinrich's son Robert, who is a blaster in the German army, convinces his commander that the demolition of the abbey would have provided them with a crucial tactical advantage, liberating shooting lines towards the enemy's position. The building's fate is thus sealed, although Robert does not confess to his father his role in the abbey's destruction.

After the war, Robert's son Joseph, again an architect, is hired by the firm that has been assigned to rebuild St. Anton *à l'identique*. While engaged in reconstructing his grandfather's masterpiece, he discovers his father's involvement in the destruction of the building, thus closing a circle of making and undoing. The parable of the Fähmel family and of the abbey of St. Anton, the building that embodies its destiny, can be read as a larger metaphor of the fate of Germany during the first half of the twentieth century, and is equally tell-tale of what heritage stands for in society. While under normal conditions a monument can be considered the pivotal, stabilizing force for a community, as events begin to unravel, when the historical atmosphere – a collective mood experienced by society as a whole, modulating the people's corporeal dispositions – can shift from love and respect to hate, even leading to its destruction.[29] The sense of heritage itself becomes fragmented.

Scene 2: indifferent ruins

The Swedish journalist's Stig Dagerman's book *German Autumn* describes the cities destroyed by the Allied bombing campaigns. He chronicles some of the losses: in Cologne, the three bridges crossing the Rhine lie at the bottom of the river; Berlin's classical columns and friezes are shattered; Essen's once magnificent steelworks are now a hulking skeletal presence. He recounts how German citizens seem to take pride in living in the city that has been most bombarded. Hamburg, above all cities, strikes him for the extent of its destruction:

> if you want to be an expert in ruins, if you would like to have a pattern-card showing everything a wiped-out city can offer by way of crumbling walls, if you would like to see not a city of ruins but a landscape of ruins drearier than the desert, wilder than the mountain-top and as far-fetched as a nightmare, there is still only one German city that will do, and that is Hamburg.[30]

Travelling by train, Dagerman describes the devastated landscape as offering a unique array of ruins and rubble, as far as the eye can see: a sort of catalogue of the destruction produced by the Allied bombing of 'Operation Gomorrah,' as the Hamburg aerial campaign was codenamed. Yet beyond the lunar field of debris, what equally strikes the narrator is the apparent indifference of his fellow-passengers. There is a train line connecting two stations, a ride lasting a quarter of an hour: from the carriage windows not a single human being can be seen. But no one looks out, except the narrator and his guide:

> The stranger betrays himself immediately through his interest in ruins. Becoming immune takes time, but it does happen. My guide became immune ages ago, but she has a purely personal

Fig. 2: View of the Eilbektal Park in Hamburg. Photo: © Imperial War Museum.

> interest in the moonscape between Hasselbrook and Landwehr. She lived there for six years but has not seen it again since an April night in 1943 when the bombs rained over Hamburg.[31]

Descending from the train, the two travellers look for a building that once stood close to the stop, but it is nowhere to be found. In this area of the city, the bombs have spared the cellar roofs, and the basements now host hundreds of refugee families. Despite this grim situation, Dagerman sees children play among the rubble, laundry left to dry in the sun, the timid signs of domesticity and familiar life.

Dagerman's account of post-war Germany was published in Sweden in 1947. The young reporter, writing for the Danish newspaper *Expressen*, travelled through the country for several weeks, visiting many major cities and sending his reports to Denmark. His interest ranged widely: he records the state of devastation of the bombed cities and the dire conditions of life of the refugees who squatted among the ruins. He considers the ongoing – and in his eyes largely questionable – process of de-Nazification, with the hundreds of trials that followed Nuremberg, calling before the judges the smaller gears of the Nazi machine. He also ponders the slow and timid emergence of a renewed political life, with the parties competing to find their place among German voters.

While Dagerman's descriptions of the crippled cities are stunning, what is most striking is the keen observation of the exceptional spatial conditions afforded by the ruined landscapes, and the affect they produced in the inhabitants. The German population collectively suffered a trauma, and coming to terms with its aftermath was no simple undertaking. Most cities had been razed to the ground, a terrible punishment for the support that the population had largely granted to the Nazis over the previous decade. After all, the bombing campaign had been explicitly designed to destroy the morale of the enemy civilian population and, in particular, of the industrial workers.[32] As a consequence, in the bombed-out cities shame was in the air: the collective, atmospherically experienced feeling of being punished for some wrongdoing, and the sometimes tacit acceptance that the destruction somehow had been deserved. Feelings like shame, as Tonino Griffero notes, are measured against a certain normativity, the definition of what has been established to be right or wrong, as the 'emotional and corporeal foundation of the whole social life (especially of the idea of duty).'[33] The embodied dynamic of shame – as Hermann Schmitz describes it, the sense of crawling into oneself without finding cover – lies at the root of Dagerman's observation of what happened on the train: all passengers – except himself – appeared indifferent to the tremendous devastation of Hamburg, possibly prompted to turn away by the sense of shame they were collectively experiencing.[34] [Fig. 3]

The destruction, a colossal and unprecedented historical event, created a black hole in the collectively experienced atmosphere of post-war Germany. Before the war, the country's cities were a source of pride, embodying high culture and industriousness, the splendour of arts and the progress of technology. Yet the Allied bombing – a deliberate punishment, not a natural catastrophe like an earthquake – conversely transformed them into a source of shame, the very *monitus* against the wrong that had been done. What the German citizens had previously perceived as the buildings and spaces anchoring them to their traditions, identity, and values – the heritage architecture – had been warped into its exact opposite: the embodiment of all that had gone wrong under the Nazi regime. Perhaps no wonder then, as Sebald again observes, that the loss of this historical burden was ultimately regretted only by a few, while many others considered the destruction as an inevitable consequence of the Nazi warmongering.[35]

The overall impression one derives from reading Dagerman's account, is that the Allied bombing campaign had produced a form of collective emotional paralysis, which resulted in a sense of apathy. The horror and devastation, Sebald argues, had been more than most were able to cope with, and this in his view also explains the emergence of that literary silence he analyses in *On the Natural History of Destruction*.[36]

It is indeed striking how often Dagerman points to the indifference of the German people: indifference towards foreign occupation, the resumption of political debate, the grim conditions of life. Indifference appears even more frequently in Böll's work: the soldiers who face death every day, and spend their money to get drunk and depart their dire existential condition for a single night are indifferent; the women living in ruined buildings, waiting for their men to return from the front are indifferent. Schmitz describes this dynamic as follows:

> This really is the case in emotional paralysis …. In the case of overwhelming catastrophes, which, like earthquakes, war time events or plane crashes, emotionally demand too much of an individual, he can become paralysed; the person …. looks down on his situation and, as though he were standing beside himself, nothing that happens moves him anymore. The affectedness is still experienced, but the person affected no longer becomes involved; his stance becomes detached.[37]

There were millions of urban citizens affected by the bombings; many others came in contact with the survivors and were emotionally touched. As the trauma produced by the destruction passed from individual to individual, like a type of contagion, the emotions became shared, making

Fig. 3: A street in Hamburg after 1943. Photo: © Deutsche Fotothek / Germin.

the bodies of the population converge towards an affective state attuned to the catastrophe. These collectively experienced emotions and their power of attuning all those that are perceptually present in a given spatial field have been variously thematised, and what we can infer from Dagerman's accounts is the dense, leaden atmosphere that the autumn of 1946 afforded to both survivors and visitors.[38] It seems to have been felt as a transversal emotional paralysis, an embodied response to trauma that only a detached external observer such as the reporter himself could avert. Destroyed with the bombed cities was a significant part of their inhabitants' affective life.[39]

Scene 3: Losing One's Way

Der Untergang is Hans Erich Nossack's vivid memoir of the bombing of Hamburg, which the author barely escaped since he had taken a short vacation and rented a small cabin fifteen kilometers south of the city.[40] From there, he could witness the gigantic fleet of bombers that unleashed an immense storm of fire over the city. His description of the nighttime aerial raids records the deep roar of thousands of airplane engines, the howl of the descending bombs and the rising flames that could well be seen even from a distance. The memoir continues with the description of the waves of shocked survivors flowing out of the city in the days following the raids, and finally with Nossack's return to Hamburg. Here, his words illustrate both the devastation suffered by the physical structure of the city, which has been entirely razed to the ground, and the stunned responses of the other people who dared to venture back into town. The memoir ends with Nossack's observation of the uncanny silence that has followed the destruction, which in his words seems to have deprived the city of its place in time.

Nossack's account of Hamburg's bombing was written only three months after the events, and first appeared in 1948. His work is among the few that Sebald recognises as a candid report of what happened to the German city in the summer of 1943.[41] Nossack himself, on the opening page of *The End*, says he felt he had a mandate to render an account, as an ethical urge he could not set aside. The text, which the author claims was originally meant only as a form of self-therapy, immediately made Nossack famous, was translated into French and republished many times.[42]

The account, unfolding over the course of a few days, is a detailed observation of the dynamics of destruction. Sebald's *On the Natural History of Destruction* fills the gaps of the paucity of reports with a technical description of the research and technology that the Allied forces implemented to destroy the Third Reich cities, thus reconstructing the events from a third-person perspective over half a century after they had taken place. On the other hand, Nossack was deeply embedded within them, and writes on a surge of emotion from a purely first-person perspective.[43] His fear, reported in the essay's introduction, is that he would fall prey to denial and removal, as his fellow citizens seem to have done. *The End* is valuable because beyond returning a vivid and horrifying image of the destruction, the author is also constantly observing himself: his responses, emotions, movements, his sense of bedazzlement and confusion as he returns to Hamburg for the first time after the major raids.

We can follow Nossack as he explores the razed city, glimpses the bundles of corpses laid out along the street, feels the absence of that domestic life that had animated the houses – no more smell of cake on Sunday coming from the windows – and on the contrary contracts to the foul stench oozing from the cellars where countless people have been burned to death and are now being consumed by maggots. The atmosphere of horror and decay is largely transported by the smells, and, as he notes, 'A sudden craving for perfume arose in us.'[44] [Fig. 5]

Stunning in Nossack's description – and in many others as well – is the city's total loss of structure. Everything has been turned upside-down: where houses once stood, one now only finds piles of rubble; the survivors no longer inhabit the houses, since they have moved underground to the basements, the only shelters still left standing; the streets and alleys of the historic urban fabric have solidified into a continuous, lunar landscape of broken architectural fragments. Nossack is surprised to see some of the city's towers still standing, lone surviving landmarks in an urban landscape that has lost all verticality.[45]

While human life slowly adapts to the emergency conditions, with families squatting in flooded basements and children scavenging among ruins for any usable material, we can grasp the sense of disorientation that these spatial conditions afford. Cities are human habitats, and normally offer their inhabitants spaces that feel safe, controllable, where one can find one's way by navigating through the streets guided by familiar objects and landmarks. Performing these spatial rituals each day, we learn to use our city even in a distracted disposition. But when this spatial structure collapses, when the space we once knew no longer helps us know where we are, another function of the heritage value of cities ceases to be. Heritage architecture – the familiar spatial array of one's hometown and neighbourhood, beyond their possible monumental relevance – at once supports one in knowing both where one is and who one is, fuelling individuals' and communities' sense of identity. Once it is destroyed, each movement and each step require new intentional labour, and many desperate survivors in the post-war reports appear to be burdened by this fatigue.

In the English edition of Nossack's account, the text is

Fig. 4: The Ringstraße in Dresden after 1945. Photo: © Deutsche Fotothek / Richard Petersen.

complemented by a set of photographs by Erich Andres, who served as a propaganda photographer in the army. While on leave in Dresden in 1943, he secretly photographed the destroyed city, the charred corpses in the streets, the crowds of seemingly indifferent passers-by finding their way through the rubble covering a space that has lost nearly all structure. The subjects' postures, gestures and facial expressions clearly speak of a gruelling existential state, burdened by hardship and a collective sense of failure, but also the urge to survive in the face of adverse conditions. As life adapts to this challenging state of things, the crowds start carving new paths amid the rubble of what was once Dresden. From these new tracks, the future urban life will one day emerge.

Conclusion: the time of ruins

In the preface to a book of photographs published in 1965 – the vicennial of the war's end – Heinrich Böll reflected on the effects of the reconstruction of Cologne.[46] On some pages, photographer Walter Dick pairs images of the ruins and the population inhabiting it with views of the reconstructed city, inviting the reader to reflect on the social transformation that the miraculous post-war renaissance had produced, and on the new urban atmosphere that had emerged from this process.

Twenty years after *The End*, the rubble was gone, the country was at the height of its economic rebirth, and the cities had been partially rebuilt – although not everyone was satisfied with the results.[47] The urban atmosphere had changed: thriving commercial cores rose where twenty years earlier everything had been destroyed, and the bridges again connected the two shores of the Rhine. Yet what the book implicitly seems to claim is that the distance between the two historical moments, between the dramatic situation of the war's aftermath and the optimistic city of 1965 was somehow shorter than one would expect. Something of the atmosphere, of the shared emotions caused by the destruction still lingered, perhaps inscribed in the lived memories of the survivors' bodies, those who had been there during the nocturnal raids. If in 1965 they could feel proud of the German people's resilience and ability to stand again, the trauma of the war had not altogether disappeared.

Eight decades later, the traces of destruction are no longer visible, except in those places where it has been memorialised. The contemporary German cities, which have returned to being spaces of life for their inhabitants, have been domesticated and once again constitute places of heritage, which citizens recognise as their own. This new form of heritage inevitably embodies the destruction, the events that unmade and then remade space. Although the Allied bombings may today seem at a sidereal distance, they are indeed still somehow present, as a spatialised, affective resonance.

Exactly for this reason, I believe, the literary accounts I have reviewed acquire a special role in our culture. It is telling that the German debate sparked by Sebald's essay arrived more than half a century after the bombings, when the material traces of the destruction and the lived memory of the events have almost entirely faded. When the unbelievable violence and senseless destruction start losing their sense of reality, and one may even wonder if those events really took place, then it is the role of literature, more than of space, to preserve the vitality of events over time. While I believe that urban space bears a unique heritage of human events and memories, literary space is the one cultural artifact that can preserve and make ever present an aspect of life that is 'touched from the inside'. For this reason, even today, when eyewitnesses of the events are dwindling in number, can we somehow imagine that the destruction is still going on, in the pages of the books entrusted to us.

In the endless cycle of destruction and reconstruction, today other cities continue to fall, devastated by earthquakes or wars. Just as the literary accounts that tell the story of the German destructions are endowed with the ability to make the events ever present, touching us and bringing us into contact with the deeper stratum of space, we may expect a future literature recounting the events that are causing the emergence of these new ruins. Viewed in perspective, against the backdrop of disasters that we witness in real time, this literature may also help open our eyes to what we experience today, to the way the heritage of cities is warped by the war, and to how we can envisage its future.

Fig. 5: Corpses of men deceased in the firestorm, 1943. Photo: © Deutsche Fotothek / Erich Andres.

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Notes

1. Robert E. L. Faris, *Mental Disorders in Urban Areas: An Ecological Study of Schizophrenia and Other Psychoses* (New York: Hafner, 1939); Alexander Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965); Federico De Matteis, 'Fear of Spaces, Spaces of Fear: Anxiety, Agoraphobia and Other Urban Affects', in *The Affective City 1*, ed. Stefano Catucci and Federico De Matteis (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2021), 274–95.
2. Dalibor Vesely, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation: The Question of Creativity in the Shadow of Production* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 77–78.
3. Council of Europe, 'Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society', 2005, https://rm.coe.int/1680083746.
4. See Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2010), particularly part I. In this influential book, Smith challenges what she calls the 'authorised discourse' on heritage, which in her reconstruction has been building up and consolidating primarily in Europe since the Enlightenment and takes the material dimension of the grand monument as its fundamental paradigm. Contrary to this, she writes: 'Heritage is a multilayered performance – be this a performance of visiting, managing, interpretation or conservation – that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present. Simultaneously the heritage performance will also constitute and validate the very idea of "heritage" that frames and defines these performances in the first place'. Ibid., 3.
5. Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2009).
6. See, among others, Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (New York: Zone Books, 2017); Federico De Matteis, 'Ancient City of the Future: Notes on the Reconstruction of Beirut', in *Historic Cities in the Face of Disasters*, ed. Fatemeh Farnaz Arefian et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), 335–52; Ammar Azzouz, *Domicide: Architecture, War and the Destruction of Home in Syria* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023).
7. W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction,* trans. Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2004 [1999]).
8. Ibid., 94.
9. Sebald's position was criticised by several authors who offered various counter-arguments, among them Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Munich: Propyläen Verlag, 2002); Volker Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung: die Literaten und der Luftkrieg* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2008); and, more recently, David F. Crew, *Bodies and Ruins: Imagining the Bombing of Germany, 1945 to the Present* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).
10. First published with other short stories in Hans Erich Nossack, *Interview mit dem Tode* (Berlin: Krüger, 1948); later as *Der Untergang* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1961); English edition, *The End: Hamburg 1943*, trans. Joel Agee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
11. Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy: A Scriptive Approach to the Experience, Use, and Imagination of Place* (Delft: TU Delft Library, 2012), 45.
12. 'Presence' is a key concept in early phenomenology, as well documented in Husserl's work on *Anwesenheit* and intentionality, which was influenced by Brentano, Bergson and James; see: Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964). Central to the phenomenological tradition is Heidegger's conceptualisation of *Dasein* in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), §5. This further inspired Merleau-Ponty's notion of bodily presence, as postulated in *Phenomenology of Perception*, especially part I. A more recent, fundamental contribution in this sense is Hermann Schmitz's New Phenomenology, illustrated in Hermann Schmitz, *Der Leib* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011). For a review of notions of presence, see Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (London: Routledge, 2008), especially chapters 3 and 6.
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24. Ibid., 97.
25. Heinrich Böll, *The Clown*, trans. Leila Vennewitz (New York: Penguin Books, 1994 [1963]); *Group Portrait with Lady*, trans. Leila Vennewitz (New York: Penguin Books, 1994 [1971]); *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1974); English edition, *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).
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27. Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte*, 39.
28. Heinrich Böll, *Billiards at Half-Past Nine*, trans. Patrick Bowles (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962 [1959]).
29. Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 116.
30. Stig Dagerman, *German Autumn,* trans. Robin Fulton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011 [1947]), 20.
31. Ibid., 21–22.
32. Sebald, *Natural History of Destruction*, 17.
33. Tonino Griffero, *Quasi-Things* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2017), 48.
34. Schmitz, *Der Leib*, 18; Sebald, *Natural History of Destruction*, 30.
35. Ibid., 13.
36. Ibid., 30.
37. Hermann Schmitz, *New Phenomenology: A Brief Introduction* (Milan: Mimesis International, 2019), 129.
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39. Thomas Fuchs and Jann E. Schlimme, 'Embodiment and Psychopathology: A Phenomenological Perspective', *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 22, no. 6 (2009): 570–75.
40. Nossack, *The End*,
41. Sebald, *Natural History of Destruction*, 11.
42. Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung*, 26.
43. After the publication of Sebald's essay in 1999, a debate concerning the veracity of his interpretation broke out in Germany, since not all scholars agreed about the existence of this literary 'black hole.' In particular, a counterclaim was that while there are actually abundant reports of the destruction, it is the public who refuses to accept these works, in a form of denial comparable to the sense of indifference towards the ruined cities reported by Dagerman. See Hage, *Zeugen der Zerstörung*.
44. Nossack, *The End*, 45.
45. Ibid., 39.
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Biography

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Library of Stone: Cemeteries, Storytelling, and the Preservation of Urban Infrastructures of Death and Mourning

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Abstract
This article examines cemeteries as repositories for vernacular literary culture, in the form of epitaphs, and as the inspiration for literature that brings necrogeography into tension with programmes of growth. It starts in the early nineteenth century, when Romantic period notions of individuality, intertwined with the novel, gave birth to modern cemeteries. These spaces have, in the interceding centuries, grown old and been threatened by expanding cities, infrastructure, and changing modes of memorialisation. As sprawling cities encroach on cemeteries, 'perpetual rest' has been challenged and headstones have been removed or consolidated, to make way for parks and amenities that benefit the living. Literary depictions of cemeteries in the twentieth century have both reinforced, and troubled the notion, that cemeteries are 'archives in stone' that must be protected at all costs.

Keywords
Death, memorialisation, cemeteries, archives

Tolstoy's 1886 story 'How Much Land Does a Man Need?' sees Pahom, a peasant, develop an insatiable thirst for land. His greed leads him to overexert himself while staking claim to a new property, and he drops dead.[1] The two-metre grave in which he is deposited presumably answers the question posed in the title. For cultures that bury their dead, these dimensions have stayed more or less the same, but the landscape and material world of burial has shifted dramatically – from small churchyards honeycombed with graves, to sprawling park-like surrounds that borrow their design cues from golf courses and pleasure gardens.[2] The contemporary cemetery is not a prototypical use of land, like the burial ground, but a shared space that is the product of social imaginaries, including idealised notions of landscape, memory and storytelling.

The space of the cemetery is inextricably linked with the power of literature to project visions of place, particularly the novel. Novels and romantic paintings of the late-eighteenth century helped to bring modern cemeteries into being, by advancing new notions of landscape, and by shifting the established cultures of death and mourning. The world's first designed cemetery, Paris's Père Lachaise, opened in 1804. Its creation was inspired by the confluence of Romantic Period notions of individuality, English landscape gardening, and Sanitary Movement reformers concerned with miasmic fumes. While burial grounds, churchyards and crypts had been around for millennia, the grounds at Père Lachaise represented a new form of

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urbanised nature, dotted with memorials. The ledgers and 'death's head' gravestones of the eighteenth century gave way to more dimensional tombs, obelisks and sculptures.[3] These were placed in highly designed forests and meadows, synthetic evocations of 'Elysium, the place of the blessed dead' known as 'rural' cemeteries to their early adherents because of their greenery.[4] New cemeteries represented an opportunity for a visible improvement in the emergent field of public health (albeit one based on a later-discredited theory of contagion). They also posited a new kind of idealised nature, accessible via new omnibus and suburban rail lines that proved incredibly popular. These planned and heavily maintained versions of nature, would, in turn, inspire twentieth-century landscape imaginaries, including garden cities and cul-de-sac suburbs.

Beyond creating a space that was manicured, well drained, and safely outside the city, Père Lachaise – and the garden cemeteries that followed its model – promised that those buried within its gates would be remembered with stone markers and that these gravesites would be protected in perpetuity. This marked a departure from the churchyard burials that dominated Europe and its colonies for over five hundred years, where graves went unmarked, and land was routinely turned over to reset supply. 'The nineteenth century saw an expansion of the franchise of memory', led by cemeteries.[5] At the close of the eighteenth century, burial in a churchyard with a wood cross was the norm for all but a thin sliver of elite merchants and nobility; by the beginning of the twentieth century, even citizens from a lower-middle-class background were buried with permanent stone markers.[6] This was aided, in part, by a surge in literacy that allowed for a greater proportion of society to read (and chisel) deictic signs to mark the graves of their forefathers; and it was affirmed by the new, novelistic understanding of individuals as protagonists in their own lives. These forces allowed cemeteries to take shape and quickly supplant churchyard burial. Within their walls, the stories of everyday people – like those conveyed by literature – could be condensed into epigraphs. At Père Lachaise and its cemetery descendants, these formed a new community held together by text.

While cemeteries created a framework for literature-inspired memorialisation, literature has also helped us to understand the cultural heritage of the cemetery: as a place for mourning, as a city in miniature, as an expression of idealised nature, and as an open-air archive that catalogues the names of the dead and, indeed, inscribes them on the landscape. Novels, with their broad timelines, help us to imagine spatial futures and changing cityscapes. The cemeteries of the nineteenth century were imagined as perpetual landscapes containing stories that could be read over and over, to 'cultivate the intellect' and serve as 'historical records'.[7] In the twentieth century, many novelists revisited the cemetery as a space that stands outside time (or at least the timelines of the everyday) and used them as settings for moments of contemplation and revelation.

Novels and cemeteries are both repositories for knowledge and memory. In novels, the characters' exploits are used to explore larger ideas, providing a record of the human experience. Similarly, cemeteries serve as a physical record of the lives of those who have died, preserving their memory for future generations. Some literary works put record-keeping and memorialisation in tension, such as José Saramago's *All the Names,* in which a low-level clerk at a Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths expands his office's purview into the neighbouring cemetery, mixing the living and the dead. The novel's focus on names highlights the intersection of mortality, record-keeping and regimes of power – what the historian Thomas Laqueur calls the 'necronominalism' of cemeteries and twentieth-century memorials.[8] The clerk tests his bureaucracy's ability to hold onto names, as he attempts to pry one loose, an act that has profound implications for the system as a whole.

In other works of fiction, cemeteries serve as both 'untouched' preserves of tranquillity and solemnity in chaotic cities, and as a synecdoche for the city itself. Sections of cemeteries are presented as distinct neighbourhoods that respond to the changes occurring outside their walls. This article appraises the deeply reciprocal relationship between cemeteries, landscapes that hold human remains and memorials, and books, repositories of the written word that, through their binding, cataloguing, and preservation in libraries, take on their own sacredness. Both forms are examples of shared heritages, where disparate worldviews and perspectives are held together in the interest of preservation. By collecting memorials in cemeteries, and books in libraries, these individual objects stand a better chance of preservation and use.

In this article, the relationship between books and cemeteries is examined in the European-influenced world, with a particular emphasis on 'Anglosphere' countries – understood here as the UK, North America, and Australasia – where cemeteries are primarily defined as eternal spaces and families purchase interment rights in perpetuity. The infinite time horizon of perpetual burial arose with rural cemeteries of the early nineteenth century, was codified by the British Burial Reforms of the 1850s, and reaffirmed in the twentieth century, when urban renewal projects cut cemeteries off from surrounding communities, but largely spared demolition.[9] Rather than reusing existing plots – as is the norm in many countries – space for new burial was provided in newer memorial parks, built at the expanding edge of car-based suburbs.[10] Memorial parks further

expanded the scale of cemeteries and pushed them further into the urban periphery. This article pays special attention to the Victorian Era cemeteries 'rediscovered' as remnants of the pre-automotive city, which appealed to mid- and late-twentieth century writers. It is informed by a larger PhD project that investigates changes to historic cemeteries in the UK, US, and Australia and the introduction of grave-reuse programs.

Both novels and cemeteries illuminate the past via word-based culture, telling stories about power and influence, as well as resilience, in changing cities. This piece takes as its starting point the increased focus on the individual in the Victorian era. I assert that cemeteries, as a built form, arise from a novelistic understanding of humans as protagonists in their own lives. The language of headstones speaks to this, acting simultaneously as storytelling device and as graven record. Moving into the twentieth century, I address the relationship of cemeteries to rapidly shifting urban peripheries. For mid-century novelists cemeteries are often used to explore conventions of memorialisation, identity, and communities' claim on urban space. A prime example is to be found in the novels of Philip Roth, who deploys cemetery scenes as a way for his protagonists to explore their own mortality, and the lifespan of a particular community. For Roth, cemeteries achieve a form of emplacement that extends communities, acting as a remnant in the ever-changing urban landscape of the United States. The final section leaves the North American context to focus on the previously-mentioned novel *All the Names* by José Saramago, a work that troubles the notion of the cemetery as an eternal archive, the Portuguese Catholic norms around burial in perpetuity, and record keeping.

Because I focus on cemeteries in twentieth century novels, this article makes some notable exclusions, leaving out two more recent works, Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* and George Saunders's *Lincoln in the Bardo* (both published in 2017).[11] These novels are set in a heterotopic graveyard in Delhi and a historic cemetery in Washington, DC, respectively. In Sanders's novel, the recently deceased come alive to tell their stories via an experimental shuffling of narrative; in Roy's work those who have died a social death outside the cemetery's gates remake their lives with the protection afforded by an overlooked and highly stigmatised space. These books present opportunities for a future study of cemeteries that exist outside of the imaginaries of the rural cemetery movement and European-infected necrogeography. In concluding, I ask how future cemeteries might exist as hybrid spaces, with physical and digital markers intertwined, and I hint at how storytelling and narrative in cemeteries might shift the way built environment practitioners think about the relationship between these two types of archives.

Carved in stone, 'writ in water'

Before discussing the cemetery in novels, it is worth noting the writing that appears in cemeteries. This consists primarily of names, dates and epitaphs. Epitaphs are, simply put, inscriptions written in memory of a person who has died. Often chiselled in stone and placed above the grave, they are one of the oldest forms of writing in the built environment. In many cases these phrases are workaday, such as 'here lies'. Their brevity was the product of the labour required to produce them. In contemporary burial grounds, an economy of words is often still a requirement, but unrelated to the labour, as headstones are now rarely carved, but instead pneumatically sandblasted and lasercut. Many military cemeteries use only a surname, first initial, and the years spanning birth and death. In other locations, the language of graves is routinised, and mainstays like 'dearly departed' and 'forever in our hearts' are generic enough to gain little notice, but slight alterations, like an epitaph that says 'we miss you' in all caps, have the capacity to bring the sting of an untimely death to the fore. [Fig. 1]

Epitaphs are left behind for coming generations to interpret, so while they reflect on the life of an individual, they posit future viewers and assume some degree of cultural, linguistic and religious continuity. In honouring the dead, they also 'glorify the living' and create a 'place for the periodic assemblage of kin… a rallying point for members of a group, a focus for their solidarity.'[12] Those who come across a headstone are assumed to be literate in the same language and schooled in its symbols and conventions of the same religious community. The experience of interpreting epitaphs is shared, and it extends well beyond descendants to include other community members, local historians and passers-by. Epitaphs express private sentiment for a core audience of close family members, but unlike other receptacles for memory that focus on the family, they exist in the public eye. While not meant for the public, these engravings are read by the public, collected as rubbings, and used as wayfinders in the cemetery. This paradox of audience is time-constrained; after three or four generations all of those who visit the grave can be assumed to be relative strangers to the deceased.

Epitaphs are often 'picture stories' that pair a handful of words with a stock image. These images have changed significantly over time. Botanical and embroidery-inspired patterns began to appear on British memorials as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries, but most headstones remained exceedingly simple.[13] This changed in the eighteenth century, with more complex designs (often making use of pre-carved 'blanks') that feature the angel of death, floral patterns, complex crosses and animals. Inscriptions also grew longer, including many that elaborate on cause of death and on the kinship relationship of stacked, or

Fig. 1: ‘We Miss You,’ an epitaph on a 1960s grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery, Melbourne, Australia. Photo: author.

Fig. 2: A headstone from the 1880s in German and English at the Gnadenfrei Lutheran Church burial ground in South Australia. Photo: author.

adjacent, burials (the most common being 'Wife', a description that did not always come with an individual's name). Often, birthplaces were noted and sometimes they contained notes on marriage and migration. At a cemetery in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, an epitaph begins in German, and, as if thinking better of it, switches to English in honour of the settler's new homeland and resting place. [Fig. 2]

In the early nineteenth century, the Romantic movement profoundly changed the way that Western Europeans memorialised their dead and understood death, particularly in Britain, where conceptual metaphors for death appeared, namely that 'death is a journey' and 'death is sleep'. These stock phrases were frequently used to describe the state of those who had died too soon, notably children who died in infancy, and they were often paired with imagery of lambs and budding trees.[14] This metaphorical understanding of death marks a shift from early-modern familiarity with death to an increased distance between the departed and the living in the modern era.

Philippe Ariès, the French medievalist who turned to the subject of death in the last decade of his own life, traced the shift in the marking of death in early modernity, when it went from a 'familiar and tamed' event that occurred in the home and was every bit as 'banal as seasonal holidays', to a great sorrow, borne 'by survivors… [with] a new intolerance to separation'.[15] This obsession defined the Romantic movement, with an impact on the built environment as new cemeteries appeared:

> Beginning with the eighteenth century, man in western societies tended to give death a new meaning. He exalted it, dramatized it… [this] inspired in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the new cult of tombs and cemeteries and the romantic, rhetorical treatment of death.[16]

The dramatisation of death found new and eloquent form in the memorial landscape of cemeteries themselves. These surroundings hinted at an Arcadian afterlife in pastoral calm: an environment created at the edge of cities as an antidote to increasingly hectic urban life. Within their gates, cemeteries created an idealised and urbanised nature – a landscape that could be brought into 'service to soften the keener emotions of mourners'.[17] Within these garden-like surrounds, elaborate tombstones spoke to the individuality and merit of those who had passed on and, it was hoped, would someday rise up from their positions.

The classic example of a Romantic epitaph is John Keats's tombstone in Rome, a trend-setter in the genre, and, within a decade of its creation, a place of pilgrimage for fellow poets, painters and English gentlemen on the European Grand Tour.[18] [Fig. 3] The inscription contains over four typographical styles, starting with an introduction, a large cursive 'This Grave'; sitting above a tightly kerned 'YOUNG ENGLISH POET', his early death already adding to his posthumous reputation; before moving to Keats's own specific request: 'Here lies one whose name is writ in water.' The full text reads:

> This grave contains all that was Mortal of a Young English Poet Who on his Death Bed, in the Bitterness of his Heart at the Malicious Power of his Enemies Desired these Words to be engraven on his Tomb Stone: Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water. Feb 24th 1821.

Two hundred years later, the meaning of 'writ in water' is still disputed. Was it, perhaps, 'an angry protest against the unfairness of a fate that appeared to have deprived him of a chance of immortality, or an almost zen-like statement of resignation and of the impermanence of all existence?'[19] The grave can be seen as a first entry in a long line of wry headstones that protest against the injustice of a young person taken too soon.[20] The irony is, of course, that Keats's naked display of feeling – his fear that his legacy will wash away – helped to ensure its survival. Keats's burial place, Rome's Cimitero Acattolico (sometimes called the Protestant, or English, Cemetery), served as a model for many of the rural cemeteries being developed in Northern Europe. It was a cosmopolitan space, far removed from the closed community of the churchyard. At Acattolico, idiosyncratic headstones were placed in leafy surrounds. In the first half of the nineteenth century, civic leaders in the UK, France, the US, and Canada moved to replace churchyard burial and the gridded 'reform' cemeteries of the late eighteenth century with rural cemeteries at the urban periphery. In this way they created hybrid landscapes that would join city and country and create sanitary, lasting spaces for memorialisation.[21]

Cemetery as remnant in the changing city

Just as the success of rural cemeteries in the mid-nineteenth century helped them to almost completely replace churchyard burial within the space of a few decades, the rise of automobility and suburban memorial parks made the first generation of cemeteries redundant by the mid-twentieth century. Cemeteries established in the Victorian era became moribund spaces, notable for tilting funerary columns, groves of trees and sooty angels. Many were largely forgotten by neighbouring communities, surrounded as they were by high stone walls and opaque fences.[22] Memorial parks began to replace cemeteries, both for the interment of bodies and cremated remains. Indeed, cremation grew in popularity in the second half of the century and was approved for Catholics as part of the 1960s Vatican II

Fig. 3: The tombstone of John Keats in Rome. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

reforms.[23] While the Catholic Church still forbids ash scattering, members of other Christian groups, especially those who embraced a back-to-the-land ethos, took up the practice, the new rituals for the disposition of the dead making cemeteries redundant. In an effort to attract new groups to memorial parks, many created special environments and structures for the interment of cremated remains, including columbaria, rose gardens and rock gardens. These spaces often reflect forms of urbanised nature popular with a new suburban, upper middle class, such as country clubs, golf courses, rock gardens and arboreta.

Rural cemeteries, so radical in their inception, contained the sprawl and ambition of nineteenth-century novels, but like Victorian novelists, only a handful are well known today. For all the immaculately-maintained rural cemeteries – like Boston's Mount Auburn, Brooklyn's Green-Wood, and London's Magnificent Seven – there are dozens that struggle to care for listing obelisks and spires. In most cases, only the direct descendants of interment right holders can make changes to a gravesite, but incomplete records and migrating populations make it difficult to track those people down. Like the books of novelists threatened with obscurity, a great number of cemeteries are officially 'maintained' but largely forgotten. While cemetery land is protected from redevelopment, together with chapels, gates and fences often listed as heritage at the local level, few individual headstones are protected. In most cases, headstones are treated as the property of descendant families, and the state can only intervene to stabilise them – frequently by laying them flat on the ground – but not to restore them. In Commonwealth countries, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains soldiers' headstones in local cemeteries, and in recent years, government and not-for-profit groups in the US have raised funds to support the preservation of African American Burial Grounds.[24] The heritage advocacy of the 1970s helped to kickstart preservation efforts in the largest and most charismatic cemeteries, as well as volunteer-led 'friends of' groups in smaller cemeteries, but the massive scale of burial-in-perpetuity means that many are passed over. Victorian cemeteries, in particular, became appealing in their melancholic disrepair, a natural foil to the sameness of strip mall suburbs and 'rationalised' city centres.[25]

In post-war North American literature, the cemetery became a talismanic place, not just a setting – a place where things happen – but as a place where things are supposed to happen. This impulse is most clear in the work of Philip Roth, whose novels contain half a dozen scenes in cemeteries, including a drunken brawl in a blizzard-bound Chicago cemetery in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983) and an autoerotic interlude at an ex-lover's grave in *Sabbath's Theater* (1995).[26] Roth is not alone in situating his characters' stories in the inter-generational composition of headstones. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) also uses the 'tilted, pockmarked' graves of a New England burial ground as a kind of fulcrum in the novel, allowing the protagonist's everyday life to switch into a wilder series of events that examine the 'power of the dead' and our fear of dying.[27] Unlike DeLillo, Roth is less interested in an individual's mortality and more in the continuity of community, not least in the rise and fall of his beloved Newark, New Jersey, a symbol of upward mobility in his youth, and of rioting and urban collapse by his middle age. The deindustrialisation and white flight of the 1960s and '70s left husks of formerly habitable rowhouses and rusting factories – urban graveyards.

In *The Anatomy Lesson,* Roth's alter ego, Nathan Zuckerman, is afflicted by a mysterious pain and spends most of his days lying flat or reading through a pair of prism glasses. This gives him a great deal of time to contemplate his past romances, novels, and the dramatic transformation of his hometown. Entering middle age, his parents have died and 'the Jersey side of the Hudson' has become 'his West Bank, occupied now by an alien tribe.'[28] He had imagined the community that he grew up in – that of 'pioneering [Ashkenazi] Jewish fathers bursting with taboos' and 'sons boiling with temptations' – was going to last forever, but its existence was confined to just two generations.[29] For perhaps fifty years Jewish migrants who had escaped the Pale of Settlement at the turn of the century, were emplaced in Newark's tight-knit South Ward, a place Roth successfully mythologised in many of his novels. While suburban development, deindustrialisation and lucrative jobs in the sunbelt had already loosened the community by 1967, when racial unrest boiled over, it is the five days of rioting that he sees as the definitive moment of scattering. When Zuckerman meets Dr Kotler, a 'white-haired gentleman… [with] the mildest Old Country accent' who offers to help him with his mysterious pain, the doctor bemoans the loss of 'our dear Newark. Large enough to be big-time, small enough to walk down the street and greet people you knew. Vanished now.'[30] To Kotler, Newark is like his 'birthplace, Vilna, decimated by Hitler, then stolen by Stalin.' He is now a 'man in exile', having moved across the river to Manhattan, to begin 'life anew in… [his] eighth decade.'[31] Roth offers up this story of double displacement with a tongue-in-cheek nod to the trope of Jewish 'wandering' and the implied racism of the 'riot' narrative perpetuated by an older generation, but beneath this there is a real hurt for what the former residents of his city have left behind.[32]

Once outside of their co-ethnic community in Newark, Jewish families 'assimilated, to be respectable, to be detached like the Wasps.'[33] They changed their

appearance, changed surnames, and took on new identities. Roth cannot reconcile these changes, even within his own family, preferring to remember his mother before the 'Florida retirement and the blond hair'.[34] The cemetery is where the undiluted, unassimilated Jewish community of his youth in the 1930s lives on for Nathan Zuckerman. It is a heterogenous city in miniature where 'gravestones… [are] inscribed with Hebrew but that in some cases also bore words in Yiddish, Russian, German, even Hungarian.'[35] These disparate communities came together to form the South Ward, but soon spread apart, with Newark serving as a jumping-off point, not as an end destination. To Roth, the Newark of the early-2000s is an alien land that must be traversed quickly and cautiously to visit the one site he is still interested in: the cemetery.

In a 2006 interview after the publication of *Everyman* in the same year, the author spoke about cemeteries with the radio host Terry Gross, saying he was 'rather glad that his parents were buried in the ground, in a box, and not cremated, their ashes scattered somewhere.'[36] Even the tumble-down cemetery in Newark, where his parents were interred (that serves as a referent for a similar Jewish burial ground in the highly autobiographical book), 'gave [him] a place to go.' Roth continues: 'I don't believe they are present – I know they are dead – but somehow the place has a significance, it focuses your thinking, it allows you to be alone and uninterrupted in your thinking about the past with them.'[37] When Gross counters that:

> cemeteries are… almost outdated because people and their friends are so scattered geographically, they're not tied together in a physical community anymore and cemeteries… it's as if you bought this home for somebody and [you don't know] is it a nice neighbourhood? Is the neighbourhood being kept up?[38]

Roth disagrees, saying: 'my attention is focused by virtue of those gravestones and those dates that I see, they are very powerful… those dates that you see are very powerful, it's just four numbers and hyphens and four more numbers, but they pack a punch.'[39] Even with Newark's Jewish community spread out to neighbouring suburbs, inland cities and Florida retirement communities, their cemetery remained as a 'neighbourhood' within the changed city.

Roth sees the small Jewish cemetery 'off the Jersey Turnpike' where his parents are buried as a significant remnant of his community as it once was, but he does not excise the possibility of others also finding meaning in that space. In *Everyman*, Roth ends the novel with his protagonist (the nameless 'everyman') visiting the cemetery and striking up a conversation with a gravedigger. Family visitation has dwindled and the cemetery is in disrepair. The only person who appears to care for the grounds is the digger, a fifty-eight-year-old Black man, who the everyman speaks with at length. The everyman asks him if he knows some of the people buried around his parents, and the gravedigger points to headstones, rattling off stories:

> this guy here fought in World War Two. Prisoner of war in Japan. Helluva nice guy. Know him from when he used to come visit his wife… There's a boy here, seventeen. Killed in a car crash. His friends come by and put beer cans on his grave. Or a fishing pole. He liked to fish.[40]

The stories of the Jewish dead have been kept and retold by someone outside the community. The everyman is touched, realising that this man 'might someday soon be digging a hole for him'.[41] He feels a kinship with the man but the only way he can express it is in pecuniary form; he slips him two $50 bills, they briefly touch bands, and with that their communion ends. The exchange, between two men from the same city separated by a generation and a colour line, represents a continuity of stories, aided by headstones as mnemonic devices. On the next page the everyman dies, and presumably, the gravedigger will bury him. In *Everyman*, one of Roth's last novels, the cemetery moves from a stage where his characters project their voices (and other bodily secretions) to a space of patrimony. The terse words on stones, he intimates, may last longer than those printed in books.

The most dogged defenders of cemeteries have presented these spaces not just as heritage landscapes, protected by grave tenure, but as brick-and-mortar archives, perpetually protected by both church and state. They argue that, while paper-based archives are flammable and computer-based systems are fallible, the 'stone libraries' of cemeteries provide a time-tested form of record keeping and an open-air gallery of vernacular sculpture.[42] As cities have grown and spilled over greenbelts, annexed suburbs, and have been radically transformed in their ethnic and socio-economic makeup, cemeteries preserve original villages and districts via the 'neighbourhoods' created by their tiny street networks and co-religious sections (the cemetery is, since its inception, multi-denominational, if not always multi-religious). The efforts of cemetery preservationists have been reappraised in recent years as fights over grave tenure and urban land pressures have expanded, and as the nature of memorialisation on colonised land has been contested. They have also been tested by a postmodern scepticism of state authority and its tendency towards quantification. The following section moves away from rural cemeteries influenced by English landscape gardening, to examine a sprawling cemetery in an anonymous, Mediterranean country, where burial is also in perpetuity. The cemetery's creep into surrounding

neighbourhoods disturbs the figure-ground relationship between urbanisation and memorialisation.

The stone archive

In José Saramago's *All the Names,* the chief tenets of record keeping and memory are probed by Senhor José, a clerk in the Central Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths. He works 'without cease from morning to night… [in a] continual state of agitation' at the bottom of a pyramid of officialdom.[43] Eight clerks in the front row do the lion's share of work, sorting through card indexes and chasing down slips of paper; their superiors above them do little to no work; and at the top of the pyramid, a god-like Registrar peers down. The majority of the novel takes place in this massive municipal archive where Senhor José, much like Sam Lowry in Terry Gilliam's film *Brazil*, labours increasingly hard to appease his superiors. Eventually, he runs afoul of the bureaucracy, 'goes rogue', and creates his own counter archive.

The Central Registry, in which the novel is set, extends beyond the clerks' desks so far that they are made to use an 'Ariadne's thread' system to find their way back. The files of the living give way to a much larger expanse dedicated to the dead, and one unfortunate researcher disappears into the 'labyrinth catacombs of the archive' and is 'discovered, almost miraculously, after a week, starving, thirsty, exhausted, delirious, having survived… [by] ingesting enormous quantities of old documents.'[44] José, who is afraid of heights but cannot tell his superiors, goes into the archives of the dead only when he has to. If he enters, he is doubly bound, with Ariadne's thread wrapped around his ankle, and his belt lashed to the ladder that provides access to the upper shelves. When the record of an unknown woman catches his attention, José develops an obsession and begins a series of secret, after-hours visits to the archive to dig up information. After many twists and turns, his quest leads him to the cemetery where the unknown woman, alive at the novel's start, has been buried in a far-flung section reserved for suicides. He is devastated, but resolved to complete her entry in his records and goes into the cemetery to certify her death.

Saramago presents the cemetery as the 'twin sister of the Central Registry', with the same façade, the 'same enamel lettering', the same 'arrangement of staff, in a triangle, with the eight clerks in the first row', the only addition being the 'guides' sitting at benches 'on either side of the entrance door… gravediggers'.[45] Senhor José's trip to the cemetery comes at the novel's climax, and he goes with the hope that the ill-management and senseless practices he observed at the Central Registry will be set right by death and the order it imposes. He is sorely disappointed. The cemetery is the victim of 'an urban demographic explosion', its historic walls have been demolished and the graves have gained ground 'like floodwaters… snaking along valleys and then, slowly, creeping up hillsides… skirting orchards, wheat fields… within sight of houses, and, often… right next door.'[46] It is a living organism 'like an enormous felled tree… [with] a leafy crown in which death and life are mingled.'[47] José sets out into the cemetery in search of the unknown woman, departing in late afternoon; by the time he reaches (what he thinks is) her grave night has fallen. Exhausted, he decides to sleep there. He is woken up the next morning by a chimerical shepherd, who tells him that 'none of the bodies buried here corresponds to the names you see on the marble stones', because the plot numbers have been swapped and the memorials were erected over the wrong bodies.[48] The shepherd knows because he switched them. As a clerk, José is incensed but the shepherd explains that, in this way, the dead can get their fair share of mourning.

The novel ends when José's secret pursuit of the unknown woman is discovered by the Registrar, but rather than being disciplined for his actions, he precipitates a change in the institution's practice of archiving. The Registrar announces that there will be a mixing of the files of the living and the dead, previously separate sections of the building. This change in protocol mirrors the mixing of the General Cemetery, the archive's sibling, with the streets and houses around it. Both forms of archiving are shown to be unruly; while they help to define and enact the ordering practices of the state, their very materiality threatens to overwhelm those who work in them, and live adjacent to them. The need to keep paper, and gravestones, in perpetuity threatens growth. The cemetery, 'in symbiotic union with the development of the city and its increased population' will not obey the 'strict bounds' of its 'quadrilateral of high walls' and instead takes the form of a 'vast octopus'.[49]

All the Names is preoccupied with space: the towering shelves of the archive, the Central Registry's long counters and tight, triangular hierarchy, and the secret door that gives Senhor José access to the stacks at night. More precisely, the book explores the allocation and the limits of space. The archive is not Borgesian, but very much of this world, and while Saramago finds the cemetery's tendrils reaching into neighbourhoods poignant, he also lets out a note of contempt: 'In civilised countries, they do not have this absurd practice of plots in perpetuity, this idea of considering any grave forever untouchable, as if, since life could not be made definitive, death can be.'[50] Saramago, a lifelong anarcho-communist and critic of the Catholic Church, shows his pessimism, not about the state's capacity to archive but about the project of archiving in general, particularly the need for individuals to inscribe their names on the land and the church's counting of souls. As other

Fig. 4: The Lisbon tree (far right) where the ashes of José Saramago were deposited in 2011. Photo: Google StreetView

countries moved towards cremation and the scattering of ashes, he perceived his native Portugal as profoundly stuck in its ways. The dead and the living could, he thought, mix more freely, liberated from the artifice of headstones and identity cards. After his death in 2010, his ashes were buried at the base of a tree in front of the cultural foundation named after him on the Lisbon waterfront.[51] [Fig. 4]

If *All the Names* is a critique of our ordering impulse it is a gentle one, positing that archiving is a form of power and storytelling and that those who wield power, like the Registrar, need sensitive, and disobedient, subordinates to hold them in check. Saramago juxtaposes the rigid hierarchies of the record keepers with the chaotic environs of their records: the twisted passageways made of shelving in one and the octopus-like expansion of the other. What Saramago seems to argue for with his own choice of ash disposition is a pointillist network of memorials that run through the city. This very much reflects a change to traditional burial practice that has grown in the early twenty-first century with new notions of rhizomatic webs and memorials that could be accessed not (just) by reading a plaque but also through new communications technology. While *All the Names* might point to an alternative network of knowledge and cataloguing, it also argues for the importance of forgetting, shuffling, and knotting information. Released in English translation in the very last months of the twentieth century, it undercuts the giddy boosterism of the first iteration of the World Wide Web, and the rise of information technology in schools and institutions. Senhor José learns that just as papers in his archive become faint and illegible, the link that binds headstones – and their graven names – with the bodies below them will, sooner or later, come undone. The position of the individual in our cities' shared futures becomes blurry, yielding, in death, to the collective that is fiercely resisted in life.

Storytelling and cataloguing

This article starts by introducing modern cemeteries as a discreet approach to memorialisation that differed markedly from the churchyards and burial grounds that preceded them. This new land use was informed by public health concerns and by Romantic period sensibilities expressed in novels, landscape painting and grand-scale gardening. Born in early nineteenth century Europe, this form of memorialisation spread, due to the period's colonisation and trade, to most of the world. An emergent middle class that was lettered and in possession of some leisure time could enjoy cemeteries as spaces of recreation, contemplation and memorialisation. Visitation at cemeteries was also aided by new transport technologies like the omnibus and tram, which could move larger numbers of city-dwellers to peripheral suburbs in relative comfort. Yet, Victorian cemeteries were also cut off, as automobility expanded the footprint of metro areas in the twentieth century, looping around them and sealing in the overfull and under-maintained spaces that had lost much of their appeal for strolls and family outings.

Large numbers of Victorian buildings were razed as a result of mid-century urban renewal processes, yet cemeteries were spared because of their status as perpetual spaces protected by municipalities and hallowed by assorted religious groups. Even as attendance waned at weekly services, and cremation began to shift bodily disposition away from burial, the cemetery retained its status as a set-apart land use, where only epochal changes could occur. The narrative possibility of epitaphs, and of headstones with styles of different periods clumped together, made cemeteries an interesting subject for writers, in particular, post-war novelists who perceived an authenticity in stone and lichen that was missing from a world they saw as increasingly defined by polymers and plastics. In this era, cemeteries were also presented as a form of co-ethnic community that authors like Philip Roth saw as waning due to the breakup of geographically bounded neighbourhoods. Roth thought that the fixity lacking in the lives of the on-the-move professional classes might be remedied in death, where they would be re-concentrated in eternal communities. He also suggests the possibility of a cultural transfer, by which cemeteries might serve as didactic tools that teach newcomer communities about those who came before them. These protected remnants could speak to longer periods of urban settlement and to the accretive layers of community life in the surrounding neighbourhoods. On headstones passers-by can read 'deictic signs – signs that depend on where they are', that carry text such as 'here lies', and that work with numbers bounded by a dash to tell stories about lifespans, marriages, and religious values.[52] While these works of vernacular sculpture come from the past, they speak to future publics. The juxtaposition of different languages, ethnic groups, and religions in municipal cemeteries speaks to a cosmopolitan mix that is constantly being remade.

While this article speaks particularly to the Anglosphere, where burial in perpetuity is so normalised as to be taken for granted, it also offers insights for other cultures where grave tenure is assumed to be eternal, often based on religious grounds. In the last section it examines the 'necronominalism' of an imagined Southern European city set forth by José Saramago. In this urban context, the names of the dead and the living are of paramount importance; their maintenance in the appropriate categories is the life's work of scores of civil servants. Yet, the index of names is only flimsily held together, with few safeguards in place to ensure its longevity. When one functionary chooses to

lean upon this edifice it all comes tumbling down, not just the catalogue that tracks the living, but also the wall that bifurcates the worlds of the living and the dead. Here, the act of cataloguing is shown to be not so different from that of storytelling, and archives chiselled in stone are revealed to be as fallible as those set down on paper.

A novelistic view of people, as individuals with narratives deserving of long-term commemoration, helped to give rise to the cemetery; the novel also redefined the cemetery in the twentieth century. In an increasingly secular era, these greenscaped burial grounds were no longer waiting rooms for the second coming, but repositories for the preservation and care of memory. Post-war novelists subverted the grandiose charge of cemeteries, but never actually called for their dismantlement. Their conspicuous use of urban land could be dismissed as old-fashioned, yet they could not be removed. This paradox meant they could remain situated and grow unkempt, but in a manner that harkens back to entropic currents that informed early nineteenth century landscape gardening. While falling into disarray the cemetery can, perhaps, be even more itself.

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Notes

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Biography

Samuel Holleran's research focuses on the intersection of media and the built environment, examining how imagery drives planning and memorialisation processes. He has worked as a researcher and educator with civically engaged design organisations, like the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) in New York and the Chair for Architecture and Urban Design at ETH-Zürich. His writing on graphic culture, equitable urbanism and architecture has appeared in publications like *Places Journal, Print, Deem Journal*, and *Public Books*. He is currently a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Urban Design at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia.

Living Walls:
Octavia E. Butler and Xenoarchitecture as an Interspecies Mediator

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Abstract
In her acclaimed science fiction trilogy Xenogenesis, Octavia E. Butler presents a narrative of interspecies coexistence involving humans and the alien Oankali. This coexistence is facilitated by living entities known as Lo, which serve as dynamic architectures mediating positive, mutualistic interactions between the two species. These entities offer a valuable framework for analysing architectures that seek to integrate the other. In this article, we propose to extend existing debates on interspecies co-design practices and link them to the concept of xenoarchitecture. Furthermore, we propose the Interspecies Interaction Protocols (IIP) to regulate human/other-than-human interactions in built environments. To demonstrate that xenoarchitecture's interspecies mediating vision can be applied to non-fictional real-world architecture, we project ideas from Butler's onto three unusual examples of buildings that achieve this human/other-than-human mediation: the library at the National Palace of Mafra and Coimbra University's Joanina Library, both located in Portugal, and the Karni Mata temple, located in Rajasthan, India. These case studies illustrate positive IIPs that facilitate mutualistic coexistence between humans and two other species, bats and rats.

Keywords
Xenoarchitecture, interspecies, protocol, multispecies city, coexistence, bodies

In the plot of her celebrated science fiction trilogy Xenogenesis, Octavia E. Butler conceives interspecies coexistence involving the human species and the alien species of the Oankali.[1] Following a fatal nuclear war initiated by humans at the end of the twentieth century, the Oankali rescue (or capture) human survivors. They wish to generate a combined (and augmented) Oankali-human offspring.[2] In the first part of the narrative arc, the Oankali-human coexistence takes place inside the living entity-ship that the Oankali call Lo, a planet-scale autonomous being with whom the Oankali establish a mutualistic (and even affective) relationship.[3] The Oankali possess the ability to instruct Lo to modify itself, generating walls, furniture, and even food from its own flesh. This ability is passed on to those humans who agree to live and reproduce with the Oankali. Later, when the narrative moves to planet Earth (a re-naturalised planet Earth in which all previous vestiges of human existence have been eradicated, including its architectures), the Oankali-human coexistence continues to be mediated by the Lo entity (more specifically, by offshoots of the primal entity-ship), which now takes the

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form of wooden cabins. Our analysis will be focused on these Lo entities, which Butler defines as architectures that 'had been grown' instead of having been built.[4] These living architectures act as mediators between the human species and the Oankali (as well as other-than-human species such as rodents, insects and various kinds of plants) in positive, mutualistic interactions.[5] Such architectures seek to integrate the other, extending interspecies co-design practices that, we propose, can be linked to existing debates around the concept of xenoarchitecture. First introduced by the philosopher Armen Avanessian, there is currently a vibrant debate surrounding this neologism.[6] This debate is best exemplified in the book *Perhaps It Is High Time for a Xeno-architecture to Match* (2018).[7] This compilation of articles contains a series of dialogues aiming to incorporate the prefix 'xeno-' (meaning 'other, different in origin') into philosophical discussions regarding architecture. The open format of this debate invites us to expand the concept of xenoarchitecture to another area in which it can also have an impact: the field that investigates the integration of other-than-human agents into the projected space.

At a time when contemporary architecture and urban theory are immersed in a profound search for alternative forms of interspecies coexistence that remove the human being from the centre of the design practice, Butler's text is particularly resonant.[8] Published between 1987 and 1989, the trilogy explores an array of topics such as sexuality, gender, race, and the ethics of interspecies relationships with a contemporary sensibility. This work, along with the rest of Butler's literary opus, became a key intellectual reference with significant influence on a new generation of thinkers who argue for the necessity to establish new worldviews.[9] In this article, we argue that the current search for alternative forms of interspecies coexistence, taking place within the disciplines of architecture and urbanism, can and should be enriched by diving into literary works of science fiction, such as this one.

To demonstrate that xenoarchitecture's interspecies mediating vision can be applied to actual built architecture, in this article we project the ideas from Butler's Xenogenesis onto three examples of buildings that achieve this human/other-than-human mediation. Both in the library at the National Palace of Mafra and in Coimbra University's Joanina Library, colonies of common pipistrelle bats make their home behind the bookshelves and emerge at nightfall to consume flies, gnats and other insects that endanger the centuries-old books.[10] In the Karni Mata temple in in Rajasthan, India, a population of more than twenty thousand rats is venerated and cohabit in perfect harmony with human beings.[11] In this article we delve into these examples of mutualistic coexistence between different species, mediated by architecture, through the prism of Butler's text. This approach offers the opportunity for a rich comparative analysis that will allow us to find connections between fiction and contemporary architectural theories.

Perspectivism: we are the aliens!

From the point of view of the Oankali, rescuing the few humans who survived the nuclear war (which had also annihilated the majority of Earth's other-than-human inhabitants) and then genetically modifying them is a logical thing to do. It is almost an act of mercy, since by doing so, they free the human species from diseases, conflicts, and pathologically hierarchical behaviour. The Oankali do not ask for permission for this act and do not believe that they should. They are confused and surprised by the indignation shown by the majority of the humans who have been 'rescued': how is it possible that such an obviously flawed species does not appreciate being 'corrected' by a more advanced species?

From the point of view of the human beings, however, the mere fact that the Oankali have genetically modified them without their consent is a violation of their rights, an affront to their dignity as an autonomous and free species. Even worse, they are denied their right to freely inhabit Earth, their home planet, the place they inhabited until its complete devastation in the apocalyptic nuclear war (caused, it is true, by humans themselves). From the human perspective, the situation is unambiguous: humans have been 'captured' by the Oankali. Who gave the Oankali the right to decide about other species? The aliens are nothing more than occupiers against which fierce resistance is necessary.

We find here a confrontation between two different perspectives – of the rescuers and of the captured – juxtaposed in Butler's fiction.[12] Butler points out a key issue in interspecies coexistence: the confrontation of incompatible points of view. In similar fashion, in their book *The Ends of the World*, Déborah Danoswki and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro effectively illustrate the perspectives of others in the context of Amerindian cosmologies, which has become known in the academic world as Amerindian perspectivism*:*

> Each existing species sees itself as (anatomically and culturally) human… We humans (Amerindian humans, that is) do not see animals as humans. They are not human *for us*; but we know they are human *for themselves*. We know just as well that we are not human *for them.*[13]

Applying this theory to the fictional species of the Oankali, we could state that the Oankali perceive themselves as human, while to them, the humans that they have rescued from the ruins of the nuclear war are nothing more than a

troubled species from which they can obtain genetic material in exchange for saving them from extinction. This finds an immediate parallel in numerous contemporary situations directly caused by humans by humans, such as the establishment of protected reserves to rescue endangered species, experimentation on animals (without their consent) to obtain medical or cosmetic benefits, the radical and violent extermination of 'pests' that invade the human habitat, and so on.[14] By shifting perspective, as seen in Tânia Stolze Lima and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's study on Amerindian tribes, we can imagine that laboratory animals, or other animals that humans hold in captivity, have a perception of humans that closely resembles the depiction of extraterrestrial beings in cinema and science fiction. In other words, we are to those other living beings what the Oankali are to humans: an invasive and strange species that comes from somewhere else and abducts them, experiments on them, and claims the right to do whatever they please. By asking ourselves who granted the Oankali the right to decide on other species, we can immediately ask ourselves the same question: who gave humans the right to decide on the rest of the species with whom we share the planet?[15]

This debate currently has a broad significance, framed by an active intellectual movement that seeks to challenge human exceptionalism, and involving academics from diverse fields of thought.[16] Butler's work manages, through the intellectual exercise of changing perspectives and 'othering' humans, to confront the reader with these ontological and ethical questions. Butler's fiction enables us to experience what would it mean for our humanity to be denied and subjugated by the prevailing humanity of a stronger species.

The key role of architecture in interspecies interaction protocols

Human beings share the planet, including the built environment, with all kinds of other-than-human beings. Ants, rats, cockroaches, larvae, weeds, mould, flies, bees, termites, birds, fish, and many other species, cohabit with us in spaces that were not designed for them.[17] As the humans expand the agrologistic project, challenging definitions of the domesticated and the wild, there is a growing need to redefine interaction protocols between these two worlds and align them with new socio-economic and political realities.[18] We propose the term Interspecies Interaction Protocol (IIP) as the set of rules that would regulate the interaction between humans and other-than-humans in an urban context. While it is true that these rules are designed and agreed upon mainly by humans, this does not mean that we, the humans, should ignore the other party involved in the interaction. On the contrary, in the formulation of the IIP, we need to make an effort to understand the will and needs of both parties.[19] The vast majority of human/other-than-human interactions that take place in the built environment involve encounters that were not anticipated by architects and urban planners, who designed cities in a way that does not take into account the needs and behaviours of both parties. The improvised and inadequate Interspecies Interaction Protocols often lead to the violent death of the other-than-humans.[20] For instance, an unplanned encounter between a rat and a human being in an urban environment is a situation for which urban designers have not generated an effective IIP.[21] Consequently, rats usually end up dying or getting seriously injured, while humans may sustain a bite wound, the transmission of a zoonotic disease, and so on. One way to bring a positive outcome to the aforementioned encounter between rats and humans would involve incorporating mechanisms of detection, population control, and non-lethal evacuation from buildings and infrastructure. Any of these solutions hinges on a crucial initial step: acknowledging rats and other non-charismatic other-than-human species as legitimate city dwellers, rather than denying their presence by implementing hostile protocols and architectures.[22]

Contrary to the negative encounters described above, in Octavia E. Butler's Xenogenesis we find architectures (the living entities that Oankali call 'Lo') that facilitate mutualistic interactions with a positive outcome for all the species involved. Throughout the series, we come across a multitude of references to these types of positive interspecies interactions. For instance: 'The Lo entity shaped itself according to the desires of its occupants and the patterns of the surrounding vegetation'; it could 'learn to incorporate Earth vegetation, sustain it, and benefit from it'; and 'it did not have problems with rodents or insects that came to eat excess human food, as they were able to establish complex equilibrium relationships with the living beings that are part of the ecosystems in which they are integrated.'[23] We propose that this kind of architecture, which acts as interspecies mediator in mutualistic IIPs, is exactly what can be linked with the existing theories on xenoarchitectures. In this article we demonstrate that the case studies under examination, the library at the National Palace of Mafra, Coimbra University's Joanina Library, and the Kani Mata temple, are existing and functioning examples of xenoarchitectures.

The Library of the National Palace of Mafra and the Joanina Library of the University of Coimbra, both in Portugal, are buildings from the eighteenth century that house valuable collections of ancient books such as a first-edition of Dionysius of Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities* (1532) and several incunabula. Both libraries are inhabited by colonies of pipistrelle bats, which have made their home behind the towering bookshelves.[24] As night falls, the bats emerge to feed on flies, gnats, and other insects, before flying out of

the library windows in search of water. These bats play a crucial role in the library's ecosystem, as they help control the insect population that could damage the valuable manuscripts. A series of sensors arranged throughout the libraries ensures optimal temperature and humidity conditions for the three agents that coexist in the buildings: humans, bats, and books. At the end of the day, when the library closes for humans, library workers cover the books with special cloths to protect them from bat droppings. The following morning, after the bats have returned to their resting places behind the bookshelves, a maintenance crew cleans the building, and the library is once again ready for human users.

It is important to note that the very nature of the library makes this human-bat interspecies cohabitation highly compatible, as a number of special conditions are met. First, human users are typically silent in libraries, something that allows the bats to rest. Second, public libraries usually only allow access to human users during the day, while bats are a species that sleeps during the day and becomes active at night. The combination of these factors constitutes a set of IIPs to the benefit of both bats and humans. The bats obtain a safe and comfortable place to live and feed, while the humans gain an effective means of protection for their valuable ancient books. Thus, the xenoarchitectonic spatial elements deployed in this IIP (the high ceilings that allow bats to fly; the dark and humid cavities created between the wooden shelves and stone walls; the cloth coverings that protect the shelves from bat droppings; the sensors and other technological devices that monitor and condition the space) adjust and mediate the overlap between humans and bats, making it possible for both parties to derive benefits from this symbiosis.

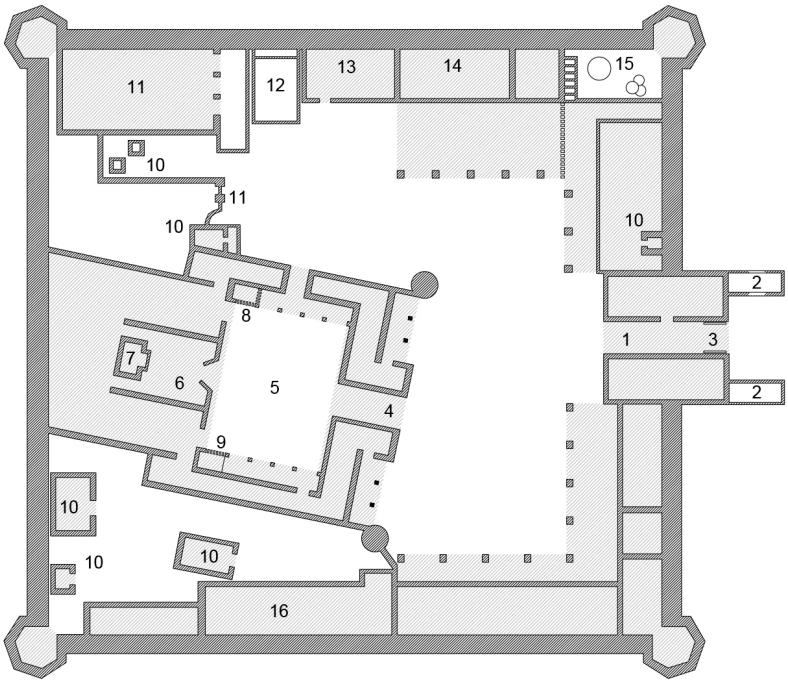
In the case of the Karni Mata sanctuary in India, where a population of more than twenty thousand rats is venerated for religious reasons, human use of the temple requires extreme caution. [Fig.1] This is to avoid stepping on the rodents, which are considered sacred. Humans are subject to heavy fines, should they harm the rats.[25] It is mandatory for visitors to remove their shoes before entering the temple premises, so that they can feel the stone floor with their bare feet and the touch of rats passing over them. As a result, a series of high-intensity sensory exchanges are generated, in which architecture plays a crucial role. The pavement is made of soft and cool stone that creates a pleasant experience when walking on it barefoot, predisposing the visitor positively for the interspecies encounter. Furthermore, the temple and its surrounding area are modified with architectural elements specifically designed to meet the needs of the rats that inhabit it. Immediately outside the temple, for example, there are nets protecting the rodents from birds, and non-lethal traps to capture rats, preventing them from leaving the building.[26] [Fig. 2] The architectural spaces are also adapted to the needs of the rodent inhabitants, with small rooms arranged like bunk beds for the thousands of rats. Furthermore, the extensive ornamental decorations and details depicting life-sized rats throughout the temple imbues the architectural space with complex symbolism. Instead of being feared, the rat becomes a positive figure in the public perception. [Fig.3-5]

The artifacts of particular architectural interest are the large, round, metallic pots located inside the temple from which the rodents drink milk. The remaining milk is used by humans to wash their feet, under the belief that it contains healing properties. This establishes a shared experience between species mediated by these objects. In the case of the Karni Mata sanctuary, the benefits of the mutualistic interaction extend to the realm of affection. This affection is manifested first through the overcoming, for mythical or religious reasons, of prejudices and stigmas commonly associated with rats.[27] Second, the exchange of affection takes place thanks to the mediation facilitated by the architectural elements described above, and the set of IIPs that, together, foster a conflict-free coexistence without establishing hierarchies.[28]

Different bodies, different privileges

There is also a negative aspect that appears both in the xenoarchitectures imagined by Butler and the xenoarchitectures proposed as case studies in this article: the discrimination of bodies. A key aspect regarding the interaction between the Lo entities and humans in Butler's novels is that only those humans who have agreed to live and reproduce with the Oankali acquire the ability to modify the Lo entities. For a human who has not been endowed with such ability, something as simple as leaving a compartment located inside a Lo entity is impossible.[29] Only the Oankali and the privileged humans are capable of simple things like making a door-opening in their living-walls.

In a similar way, in the cases of the libraries inhabited by common pipistrelle in Portugal, the bats cannot actually fly freely out of the building until the librarians open the windows at night. This happens after the bats have completed their 'service' of consuming all the insects inside the building. It implies the continuing rescued-captured dichotomy alluded to above, and links with the implementation of biopolitical practices, where the window emerges as an architectural element through which control over specific bodies is practiced.[30] Something similar happens at the Karni Mata temple, where traps are set with the aim of capturing rats alive to prevent them from escaping. In this case, the control mechanism also materialises in a spatial device: the trap. Like the Oankali, humans reserve the ultimate right of control over the bodies of bats and rats, while



1_MAIN ENTRANCE
2_MARBLE LIONS
3_SILVER DOORS
4_ENTRANCE TO INNER TEMPLE
5_INNER COURTYARD
6_ANTECHAMBER
7_INNER SANCTUM AND ALTAR
8_BRICK BARRIER HOLDING GRAIN
9_MILK-DISH
10_SHRINE
11_ORNAMENTAL FENCE
12_STATUES
13_FUNCTIONAL BLOCKY BUILDING
14_BUILDING WITH VERANDA & STEPS
15_LARGE BOWLS AND WATER POTS
16_LONG BUILDING WITH BALCONY

Fig. 1: Karni Mata plan. The floor-plan of the temple, based on Google Maps aerial view and a sketch by Francoise Cooperman. Areas shown in grey are roofed. Source: authors.

Fig. 2: In this image, we can see the nets covering the temple courtyards. Their purpose is to shield rodents from bird attacks. Photo: Bim. Source: Istock.

Fig. 3: People sharing space with rats. Photo: Yogesh Sahu. Source: Istock.

Fig. 4: Detail of the decorations at a 1:1 scale. Photo: Ostill. Source: Istock.

spatial devices (in these cases, windows and traps) play a key role in this process of control. If the bodies-under-control behave as expected (that is, if bats eat all insects that threaten the integrity of books, and rats remain within the boundaries of the temple) the coexistence between human and other-than-human agents will be peaceful and harmonious, practically optimal. Otherwise, control devices will be put into operation.

In the case of the Karni Mata temple, only rats considered *Kaba* (reincarnated descendants of the *Charans*, the caste dominant in the region, in the direct lineage of Karni Mata) have permission to inhabit the temple. Access is prohibited to common rats and to human beings belonging to the *Dalit* caste as well. As Trembley shows in his article 'Jatikaran: Caste, Rats, and the control of space at the Karni Mata Mandir,' the interspecies relationship established in this IIP is subject to the mythic or religious belief that Kabas and Charans share a familial bond, implying a clear anthropomorphisation of the other-than-human agents.[31] The privileged rights of the dominant caste are extended to these rodents for reasons that serve a human narrative. This involves an interspecies transfer of a discriminatory system, the caste system, from human agents to other-than-human agents. For a kaba rat, the mere act of being inside the temple automatically results in a transfer of privileges, as humans believe that kabas mercilessly kill other rats that dare to invade the sacred space. The xenoarchitectural structure that is the Karni Mata temple is thus established as a socio-corporeal device, extending privileges but also discriminations from some bodies to others.

Of course, the IIPs in both cases could be further optimised to deploy fairer practices related to human and other-than-human agents. These modifications to the IIPs would necessarily translate into modifications of the xenoarchitectures themselves, as the latter are established to facilitate the former. In this way, library windows could be connected, for example, to motion sensors that are activated when bats begin to wake up, so that they could come and go at will, gaining a greater degree of freedom. Non-lethal traps that seek to prevent Kabas from leaving the Karni Mata temple and all protocols that aim to prevent common rats from accessing it could also be eliminated. Thus, the redesign of the IIPs that govern human/other-than-human interactions in search of more just and balanced relationships has a direct and immediate impact on the spatial elements that mediate these interactions. An IIP aiming for a mutualistic relationship between species cannot be achieved if the architecture that facilitates their interaction does not consider the needs and characteristics of the various species involved in such interactions. Currently, the vast majority of IIPs deployed by humans in built environments result in negative outcomes (either for the human side, the other-than-human side, or both).[32] These IIPs are often unanticipated and improvised protocols, so primitive in many cases that humans resort to direct violence against other-than-human entities to resolve the encounter.

We still have a long way to go before we can achieve a conception of architecture in which the norm is the implementation of mutually beneficial IIPs, as seen in the analysed case studies. Before reaching that point, we must first ensure that the vast majority of architecture-mediated IIPs do not yield negative results. Xenoarchitectural principles, as derived from the case studies, advocate for the architectural design that seamlessly integrates various species as legitimate users of the built environment. This involves establishing clear IIPs, foreseeing potential encounters, and steering clear of negative outcomes through meticulous planning. Adaptive and flexible structures are recommended to accommodate the evolving needs of different species, fostering harmonious coexistence. We emphasise the role of architecture as a positive mediator in interspecies interactions, with sensitivity to the perspectives and requirements of other-than-human entities. Incorporating technology and sensors ensures optimal conditions for all species, while efforts need to be made to eliminate discriminatory barriers and create environments devoid of hierarchical distinctions. These principles for an interspecies architecture underscore the importance of education and raising awareness about multispecies coexistence, aiming for inclusive spaces that recognise and respect the diverse inhabitants of the built environment.

From utopia to reality

Reading Octavia E. Butler's work might lead us to think that the positive xenoarchitectures (that is, architectures that act as mediators in positive, mutualistic IIPs) are possible only in the most utopian science fiction. However, the case studies presented in this article demonstrate that xenoarchitectures are possible in real life. They can offer valuable knowledge about alternative forms of coexistence between human and other-than-human agents in built environments.

As we demonstrated throughout this article, architecture is indeed a key facilitator and mediator of IIPs. Architecture that has been designed to take into account the needs and capabilities of all agents that interact under its mediation will result in positive (or, at least, in less negative) IIPs. On the contrary, architecture that only considers the needs of humans will result in negative IIPs. Furthermore, architecture can deploy mechanisms to control interspecies bodies or, alternatively, inhibit practices that discriminate some bodies over others. It can either facilitate more equitable

Fig. 5: Detail. Photo: Ostill. Source: Istock.

ways of engaging with the other, or conversely, become an obstacle that hinders the implementation of protocols aimed at achieving those objectives.

In this article, we strongly argue for the principles of xenoarchitectures that tend towards the equal integration of all bodies in a coexistence, based on the model of human-built contexts that allow the voluntary association of the beings that inhabit them. It is precisely the understanding of architecture as a realm for the voluntary association that compels us architects to inevitably turn to literature. Taking the specific case of interspecies coexistence discussed in this article, Butler's work demonstrates that literature can serve as a springboard to reimagine the ways architecture engages with diverse life forms. By crafting narratives of symbiotic relationships between humans, aliens, and other creatures, Butler ignites sparks of inspiration that challenge conventional design paradigms. Her fiction engenders a profound shift in our perspective, urging us to contemplate spaces that consider the needs of all inhabitants, human and other-than-human alike. In this dynamic interplay, literature functions as a catalyst for architectural innovation, offering a platform to envision buildings as ecosystems of cohabitation. The tales woven by Butler create intricate connections between species and spaces, illuminating how the built environment can evolve into an inclusive tapestry where architectural structures nurture harmony and cooperation. As we navigate an era of ecological awareness, literature can guide us towards an architectural future that transcends the human-centric and embraces the richness of multispecies coexistence.

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Notes

1. Octavia E. Butler, *Lilith's Brood* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000) comprises three books: *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago*. The three volumes were formerly compiled in a now-unavailable volume called *Xenogenesis*.
2. The author plays here with a change of perspective according to which, for the Oankali, the humans are being rescued, while, for the latter, the alien species has captured them against their will. There is an interesting parallel here with the perspectivist ideas of Tânia Stolze Lima and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro that we explore later in this article.
3. Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, 35.
4. Ibid., 528.
5. All architecture plays a role of mediator in the interaction between species, as we will see in this article, whether these interactions are designed or not. These interactions can result in negative, neutral or positive experiences for the different species involved. In this article, we focus mostly on mutually positive interactions. Our research is greatly influenced by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka's *Zoopolis*, which explores questions about mutually beneficial human-animal relations and the positive obligations humans owe to animals; Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49. In Butler's text, the Lo entities are described as interspecies mediators engaging in mutualistic interactions with species other-than-humans; Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, 528–29.
6. The term 'xenoarchitecture' was introduced in the preface of the book by Markus Miessen, *Crossbenching, Toward Participation as Critical Spatial Practice* (London: Sternberg Press, 2016).
7. Armen Avanessian et al., *Perhaps it is High Time for a Xeno-Architecture to Match* (London: Sternberg Press, 2018).
8. See, for example, Paula Arcari, Fiona Probyn-Rapsey and Haley Singer, 'Where Species Don't Meet: Invisibilized Animals, Urban Nature and City Limits', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 4, no. 3 (2021): 940–65, https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848620939870; and Manuel Bello-Marcano, Marianne Celka and Mathias Rollot, 'Contributions Towards Interspecific Architectural Theory', *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale urbaine et paysagère* 14 (2022): 1–10.
9. We want to mention here some other literary works of great courage and immeasurable impact on a new generation of thinkers, such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (New York: Ace Books, 1969), Joana Russ's *The Female Man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975), or Wittig Monique's *The Lesbian Body* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1975). It is also worth mentioning Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Philadelphia: William Gibbons, 1792). Finally, it is necessary to refer to Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).
10. The Royal Building of Mafra, also known as the Palace-Convent of Mafra, is a grand palace-monastery situated in Mafra, Portugal, approximately twenty-eight kilometres away from Lisbon. Its construction was initiated in 1717 by King John V of Portugal and was completed in 1755. Recently, on 7 July 2019, the Royal Building of Mafra was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. See 'Six Cultural Sites Added to UNESCO's World Heritage List', Unesco World Heritage Convention, https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2005/.

The Joanina Library is recognised as one of the finest examples of the Portuguese Baroque. It was named in tribute to King John V, and contains a collection of sixty thousand books dating from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. See 'Baroque Library', Universidade d Coimbra, https://visit.uc.pt/en/space-list/joanina; Julie H. Case, 'These Portuguese Libraries Are Infested With Bats – and They Like It That Way', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 7 June 2018, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/these-portuguese-libraries-are-infested-batsand-they-it-way-180969276/.

11. Karni Mata is a temple located in Rajasthan, India, dedicated to the Hindu Goddess Karni Mata, where a healthy population of more than twenty thousand rats lives, documented in Kyle J. Trembley, 'Jatikaran: Caste, Rats, and the Control of Space at the Karni Mata Mandir'*, Nature and Space* (April 2022): 1–19. According to Trembley, these rats are venerated and cared for by the Charan community, and admired by thousands of tourists and pilgrims who travel to the region to hold and feed these animals.
12. This line of thought directly connects with the work of multiple thinkers from the field of postcolonial studies, such as Olaf Kaltmeier, who emphasises that a postcolonial approach underscores the mutual creation of the colonised and the colonisers through processes of hybridisation and transculturation; Olaf Kaltmeier, 'Postkoloniale Geschichte(n): Repräsentationen, Temporalitäten und Geopolitiken des Wissens', in *Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Julia Reuter and Alexandra Karentzos (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), 203–214, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-93453-2_16.
13. Tânia Stolze Lima and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro coined the term 'Amerindian perspectivism' to describe a concept that encompasses the indigenous beliefs present in various ethnographies of Amerindian peoples from lowland South America. Perspectivism pertains to recurring features observed in Amerindian mythology and cosmology. Tânia Stolze Lima, 'O dois e seu múltiplo: reflexões sobre o perspectivismo em uma cosmologia tupi', *Mana* 2, no. 2 (1996): 21–47, https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93131996000200002; Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 'Os pronomes cosmológicos e o perspectivismo ameríndio', *Mana* 2, no. 2 (1996): 115–44, https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-93131996000200005.
14. Catia Faria, 'Muerte entre las flores', in *Más allá de lo humano*, ed. Antonio Giráldez López, Pablo Ibáñez Ferrera (Vigo: Bartlebooth, 2018), 97–107.
15. A notable early example of research on the evolution of the self-granted right of humans to decide over other living species can be found in E.P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1906). Evans compiles an exhaustive list of real-life cases of ecclesiastical trials against a range of animals, mostly non-domesticated, caused by overlapping habitats. In the middle ages, the eradication of 'problematic' animals (or 'pests') was not taken for granted, since punishing a creature for doing what God had created it to do constituted a direct infringement of the divine design. In contrast to this perspective, in *Zoopolis* Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka point out how numerous scholars indicate a religious origin of the self-asserted right of humans to dispose of other living beings: 'the sacred texts of many faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, state that God gave humans dominion over animals, including the right to use them for our benefit'; Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 25.
16. We encounter this perspective in Donna Haraway's concept of the Chthulucene, in Rosi Braidotti's 'becoming-world', and in the 'anthropology beyond the human' articulated by Eduardo Kohn in his book *How Forests Think*. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble, Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 30–57; Rosi Braidotti, 'Becoming-World', in *After Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin and Bolette Blaagaard (New York: Routledge, 2013), 8–27; Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013). One of the most intriguing contemporary inquiries regarding the assumption of what humanity has historically taken for granted as exclusive to its species is Hollis Taylor's groundbreaking work in the emerging field of zoömusicology. In her article 'Marginalized Voices', Taylor provides us with a comprehensive exploration of birdsong, particularly that of Australian pied butcherbirds. Hollis Taylor, 'Marginalized Voices', in *Participatory Research in More-Than-Human Worlds*, ed. Michelle Bastian et al. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 38–53. Taylor challenges the prevailing methodology employed by biologists studying a limited set of songbird species in captivity. Instead, she introduces a participatory ethnographic approach involving the study of free-living birds, led by musicologists. Drawing parallels with participatory approaches in music, such as jazz and music therapy, Taylor reflects on her own practices. Through various participatory research approaches, she addresses challenges related to determining avian consent and collaborative research outcomes. In her conclusion, Taylor issues a challenge to human exceptionalism within the realm of music, advocating for a nuanced appreciation of individual capacities and the creativity exhibited by other-than-human songsters.
17. To illustrate the discomfort of urban space when interacting with 'wild' animals, see the following articles: Marie Carmen Shingne, 'The More-Than-Human Right to the City: A Multispecies Reevaluation', *Journal of Urban Affairs* 44, no. 2 (2022): 137–55; Milena Stillfried et al., 'Do Cities Represent Sources, Sinks or Isolated Islands for Urban Wild Boar Population Structure?', *Journal of Applied Ecology* 54 (February 2017): 272–81; and Michael H. Parsons et al., 'Trends in Urban Rat Ecology: A Framework to Define the Prevailing Knowledge Gaps and Incentives for Academia, Pest Management Professionals

(PMPs) and Public Health Agencies to Participate', *Journal of Urban Ecology* 3, no. 1 (2017): 1–8.

18. The term 'Agrologistics' was introduced by Timothy Morton to describe an agricultural system that has been in practice since the beginning of the Holocene, approximately ten thousand years ago: 'Agrologistics arose as follows. About twelve thousand five hundred years ago, a climate shift experienced by hunter-gatherers as a catastrophe pushed humans to find a solution to their fear concerning where the next meal was coming from'. Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: for a logic of future coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 43. According to Deborah Danowski and EduardoViveiros de Castro, before the end of the eighteenth century, the term 'wilderness' referred to landscapes that were uninhabited, infertile, hopeless, and uncivilised, arousing negative emotions such as desolation, perplexity, and dread of falling under demonic influence. Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 23–24. They argue that Milton's *Paradise Lost* portrays the wilderness as the surrounding landscape that serves as a barrier to the Garden of Eden, protecting it from any external intrusions. See John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: Samuel Simmons, 1667), 132–35. On the other hand, Timothy Morton offers us a vision of the wild from the perspective of agrologistics, which has created a view of the term as something outside of the human. See Timothy Morton, 'Where the Wild Things Are', *LA+: Interdisciplinary Journal of Landscape Architecture* 1 (2015): 60–65.
19. Vinciane Despret, *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* (Buenos Aires: Cactus, 2018); Taylor, 'Marginalized voices'.
20. Recently, the field of urban ecology has dedicated notable efforts to study the effects of urban expansion on wildlife. See Kim Birnie-Gauvin et al., 'Sublethal Consequences of Urban Life for Wild Vertebrates', *Environmental Reviews* 24, no. 4, (June 2016): 416–25; Gad Perry et al., 'Good and Bad Urban Wildlife', in *Problematic Wildlife II*, ed. Francesco Maria Angelici and Lorenzo Rossi (Rome: Springe, 2020), 141–70; Shingne, 'More-Than-Human Right', 137–55. These articles examine the role that mammals, reptiles and birds play in the urban context and attempt to evaluate the (mostly negative) effects that this urban coexistence has on both other-than-human and human agents.
21. Parsons et al., 'Trends in urban rat ecology', 1–8.
22. This is a formula that has been proposed, debated and scrutinised by numerous scholars in the context of multi-species urban studies. It is worth mentioning the citizenship theory proposed by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, suggesting that other-than-human animals, particularly domesticated ones, should be considered as members of a political community with corresponding rights and responsibilities, rather than as mere property; Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*. While our article does not align with restricting citizenship recognition to domesticated animals and excluding wild animals, we are convinced that this is a necessary and promising discussion that can pave the way forward. Building upon this starting point, the acknowledgment of the legitimate agency of all kinds of other-than-human beings in built environments has the potential to bring about and normalise radically different forms of human/other-than-human coexistence. Indeed, the case studies presented in this article serve as an illustrative example of this assertion.
23. Donaldson and Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, 303, 313 and 528.
24. Case, 'These Portuguese Libraries'.
25. Trembley, 'Jatikaran'.
26. From the perspective of the human caretakers overseeing the temple and its sacred inhabitants, allowing the rats to escape entails subjecting them to hardships and depriving them of proper care. As elaborated later in this article, humans do not regard the temple-dwelling rats merely as 'common rats'; instead, they perceive them as reincarnated humans. Allowing them to roam the streets would be akin to leaving them in destitution and devoid of care, exposed to a lot of danger. Trembley, 'Jatikaran'.
27. For instance, although recent studies appear to compellingly indicate that the cause of the Black Death were not rats but rather human beings (with rats actually being victims), humanity still holds rats accountable for all the hardships caused by this pandemic. See: Katharine R. Dean et al., 'Human Ectoparasites and the Spread of Plague in Europe during the Second Pandemic', *PNAS* 115, no. 6, (16 January 2018): 1304–09.
28. Trembley, 'Jatikaran'.
29. Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, 528.
30. This concept was first introduced by Michel Foucault in his lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s, and later developed in *The Birth of Biopolitics,* ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1979). According to Foucault, biopolitics is a form of power that seeks to control and regulate life processes such as reproduction, health and disease, as well as the populations that they affect. Here we cannot fail to mention Donna Haraway's account of an association between French bulldogs and lesbians proposed by Paul B. Preciado: 'fabricated at the end of the nineteenth century, French bulldogs and lesbians co-evolve from being marginal monsters into becoming media creatures and bodies of pop and chic consumption. Together, they invent a way of surviving and create an aesthetics of human–animal life'. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 303.
31. Trembley, 'Jatikaran'.
32. Jonathan Metzger, 'The City is Not a Menschenpark: Rethinking the Tragedy of the Urban Commons beyond the Human/ Non-Human Divide,' in *Urban Commons: Rethinking the City*, ed. Christian Borch and Martin Kornberger (New York: Routledge, 2017), 22–46.

Biography

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Garden Travelogues: Narrating the Past and Re-sharing the Future of the Nicosian Garden

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Abstract
In this article I introduce the alien view of the traveller, the view from outside, as presented in a number of travel narratives describing the type of the domestic enclosed garden in Nicosia. I focus on three books published between the fourteenth and twentieth century, and do a comparative analysis of the narratives based on the information they provide about Nicosian gardens. I investigate how this knowledge can be used to develop design strategies for gardens as a typology in architectural and urban design. As a demonstration, I discuss the project 'Nicosian Garden Network', which uses the historically iconic element of the garden and its narrated spatial qualities as an answer to the problem of urban fragmentation and the presence of a large number of unused plots in the city of Nicosia. The project incorporates unused sites of different sizes into a network of shared semi-public urban spaces that could reconnect the landscape, create conditions of sharing by the different communities on a daily basis, and regain its iconic presence in the contemporary city. The article aims to contribute to the discussion about ways in which travelogues, guides and other forms of travel literature can construct a field of knowledge about vernacular architecture and implement contemporary approaches to architectural design.

Keywords
Travelogues, narratives, Nicosia, gardens, leftover sites, urban fragmentation

From Jacobus de Verona, the Augustinian monk who visited Nicosia in 1335, to Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria, who visited Cyprus in 1873, recorded travelogues repeatedly refer to the gardens of Nicosia as an identifying element of the city.[1] Either in the form of productive orchards during the Lusignan era, enclosures of exotic plants and animals during the Venetian rule, or mystical domestic spaces with cisterns and small hammams during the Ottoman rule, enclosed gardens hidden at the back of the house have claimed their historical place in the Cypriot capital as heterotopic islands with the purpose of stimulating senses.[2] [Fig. 1] In this article I focus on accounts by foreigners who establish a specific 'alien view', from the outside, of the Cypriot domestic garden. Gardens are also mentioned in recent works by Cypriot writers, often as a nostalgic memory from their childhood. I reflect on some of these descriptions as well, in order to compare alien and domestic views of the phenomenon. The gardens of Nicosia appear so often in travellers' narratives, and the accounts are sometimes so lyrical, that it seems as if the garden was historically the most important and recognisable element of the city. Many travellers refer not only to

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the beauty of the gardens but also to their large number. According to these narratives, the grandeur of the gardens could be appreciated when the city was approached from a distance, but this grandeur was only partially revealed to a foreigner who walked through the city streets. [Table 1] These gardens constituted a 'bigness' in the city that was hidden and could only be experienced from within by occasional glances and the hints of smell, touch, and hearing.[3]

Nicosian gardens in travelogues

The anthologies, which, as I have mentioned above, are the main source of texts for this article, include descriptions from many different authors, some of which specifically refer to the gardens. The first, *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus,* was edited by Claude Delaval Cobham, a district commissioner and one of the leading antiquarians in Cyprus, during the late nineteenth century and published in 1908.[4] The work is a compendium of accounts by travellers, among them many foreign officials, pilgrims, rich Europeans and adventurers, from the year 23 AD to 1866. The second book is *Cyprus through the Centuries in the Texts of its Foreign Travellers*, edited by the Cypriot author Andros Pavlides and published in Nicosia in 1993.[5] The third book, *Nicosia: A City in Literature*, edited by the Cypriot poet Kyriakos Charalambides and published in Athens in 2008, is the only one of the three dedicated exclusively to Nicosia, and the only one to include not only travelogues but also other forms of literature, such as fiction and poetry, including recent works published during the twentieth century. [6]

In all three books there are references to the contemporary geographical, cultural or political context in the way the travellers understood it during their stay in Nicosia. Typical of travel writing, they include many descriptions of the natural environment of Cyprus. They refer extensively to the qualities of the landscape and the natural context of the city, commenting on its position at the centre of the plain of Mesaoria, on the significant presence of the river Pedieos that crosses the city, and on the moat that surrounds it. The existence of many private or public gardens in Nicosia is frequently remarked upon during travellers' visits to the city. [Table 2] In this article I examine the travellers' sensory impressions as they go beyond visual descriptions in order to capture the hidden gardens of Nicosia. I consider this sensual quality to be among the most important identifying elements of the garden, and the one that encapsulates the heritage of garden in the Cypriot cultural context most accurately.

One of the earliest examples of literature to mention the gardens appeared in the first half of the fourteenth century: the memoir of Jacobus de Verona, an Augustinian monk, who visited Nicosia in 1335, during the rule of Hugh IV of Lusignan. Among the things that impressed Jacobus was that 'the city of Nicosia is adorned with many gardens, and has many nobles'.[7] This rather laconic comment points to the recent establishment of a system of nobility by the Lusignans. The new nobility was derived from a feudal system, and its power was attached to the land. Gardens, usually filled with productive plants, became the symbols of Lusignan rule. Léon Le Grand, a notary from Carinola in Campania, who visited Cyprus in 1394, a few decades after Jacobus de Verona and still during the Lusignan rule, provides further evidence of the intensive shaping of the land by Lusignans.[8] Importantly, Léon distinguished the fields that dominated the wider area around Nicosia from the gardens or orchards, which were smaller entities and probably had defined boundaries within the city. This is a first recognition both of the domestic character of gardens, and of their scale.

The Czech mathematician Oldrich Prefat, who travelled to Cyprus as a student in 1546 during the Venetian rule, wrote of Nicosia: 'In the city there are a few nice houses, all of which have flat roofs, according to the habits of the Mediterranean countries. I also saw in the city many date palms and gardens.'[9] Prefat places Nicosian gardens within a wider Mediterranean context, where gardens were a common part of the domestic environment, present in cities since antiquity. In the case of Nicosia, the European feudal tradition of ownership of large landholdings established during the Lusignan and the early Venetian eras was combined with a pre-existing Mediterranean tradition of small gardens that were an organic part of domestic life.[10]

Until the middle of the sixteenth century, these written narratives maintain the character of travel memoirs by people who stopped briefly in Nicosia on their journeys to the holy lands and the 'exotic' East. They mostly take the form of short written impressions. From the middle of sixteenth century onwards, the narratives become more complex, even containing historical references or systematically recording the qualities of the gardens, for example in the case of Tomaso Porcacchi, an Italian scholar whose 1576 work *L'Isole piu Famose del Mondo* is a geographic and historical guide to the islands then considered the most famous in the world. The work is systematic insofar as it establishes a frame for a comparative analysis of the geographical and cultural contexts of the several islands in the Mediterranean. His descriptions stemmed not from his own experience, but from the information available to him from sailors and other travellers who had actually visited these islands. Porcacchi's description of Cyprus, written seven years after the siege and occupation of Nicosia by the Ottomans, refers to the city's rich system of water and gardens: 'It is supplied most healthfully and pleasantly with running water, and here the nobles of the island lived,

Fig. 1: Drawing of an imaginary garden. *Hortus Ignotus project*, draftworks architects, DK werkraum, Spiros Nassainas. Drawing: Aristophanes Hadjicharalambous, Triennale Milano, 2022.

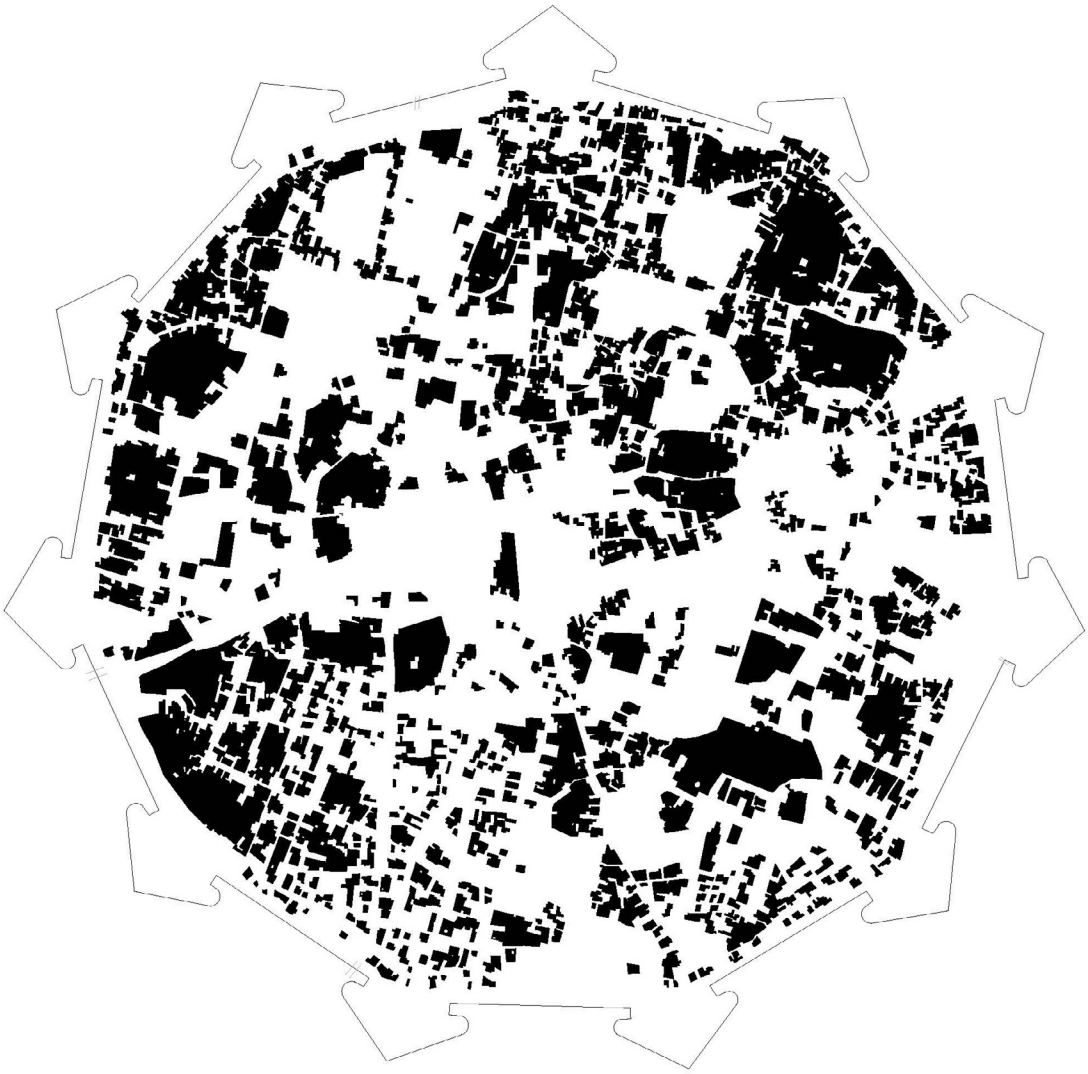

Table 1: Map of the Nicosian gardens based on the 1882 map by Kitchener, showing the percentage of the garden area (black) as opposed to the built area (white). Hortus Ignotus project, draftworks architects, DK werkraum, Spiros Nassainas. Drawing: Aristophanes Hadjicharalambous, Triennale Milano, 2022.

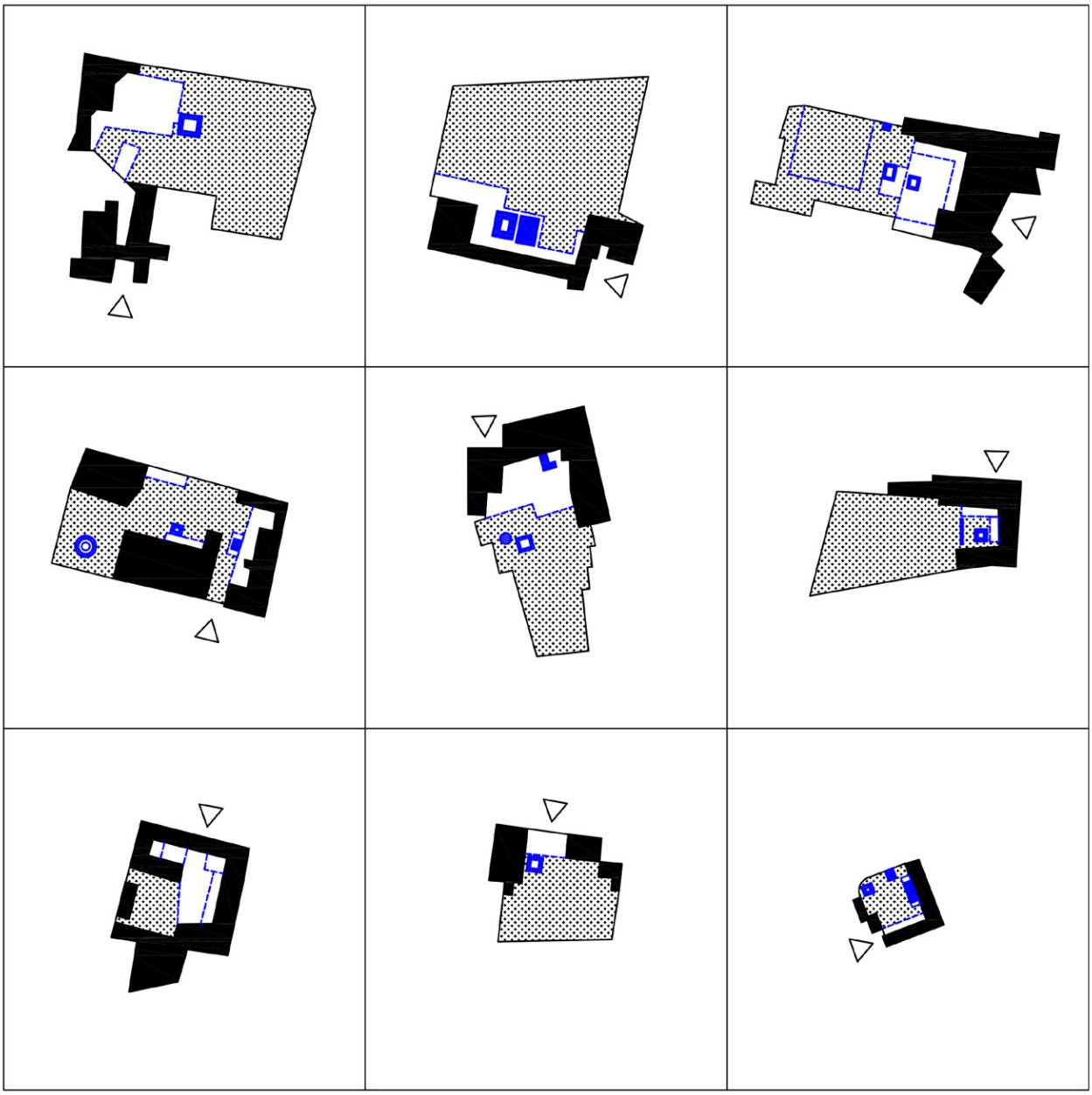

Table 2: Typology of nine Nicosian gardens from the 1882 Kitchener map, showing the relationship betwee indoor spaces (black) and gardens (hatched), with the outdoor furniture elements (solid blue) and open spaces (dashed blue) that mark the transition between the two. The space of transition is a multivalent boundary between indoors and outdoors, most of times related with the outdoor furniture elements containing water (cisterns, water tanks, fountains). ‘Hortus Ignotus’. Drawing by the author, 2022.

who kept adorning it with ever new buildings, gardens and delights.'[11] Porcacchi was the first to record the presence of running water from the numerous wells that existed in the city. The wells, cisterns and fountains had been present in the gardens since antiquity, but they were given a central role as sensory elements when the garden became predominantly places of pleasure, mainly during the Venetian era. Porcacchi's writings are among the first in Cobham's book to highlight this sensory character of the gardens. For Porcacchi, however, the pleasure of the gardens still mainly belongs to the nobility.[12]

From the middle of sixteenth century and during the Ottoman rule, there were fewer foreign travellers in Cyprus, and especially in Nicosia, but the gardens continued to attract their attention. Vincent Stochove, a nobleman from Bruges, visited Cyprus with his company in 1631.[13] He wrote: 'The city is rich in gardens full chiefly of date palms.'[14] Noel Dominique Hurtel of Artois visited Cyprus in 1670 and included a description of his visit in the manuscript 'Du Voiage de Jerusalem'. Hurtel's short description of Nicosia focuses mainly on its gardens: 'The houses are set in beautiful gardens, well planted chiefly with the palms which bear dates.'[15] Constantius, Archbishop of Sinai, visited Cyprus in 1766. His description of this visit was published in 1819 and was used for many years by pilgrims to Jerusalem as a source of information about the history of the island, and as a type of a travel guide. Among other things, Constantius refers to the presence of water and orchards: 'The situation of the city is charming, wells and springs and verdant orchards abound.'[16] His narrative is carefully enriched with flattering descriptions of the island and its charms.

The references to the gardens increased again during the nineteenth century, when Cyprus attracted the interest of upper class Europeans and more ambassadors, scholars and leisure travellers visit and write about them. One such description regarding the condition of the city gardens during the Ottoman era comes from William Turner, a staff member of the British ambassador at Porte. Turner visited Cyprus in 1815. Among other things, he described his impression of the horizon that can be seen above and beyond the walls of the gardens:

> As every house has a large or small garden attached to it, the first view of the city is very pleasing from the contrast which this cultivation affords, with the dark mountains behind. … The gardens within the walls are well cultivated, and abound in fig, olive, mulberry, orange, lemons and pomegranate trees.[17]

According to this description, the gardens in Nicosia continued to be an important part of the city, and an essential part of its heritage. However, after almost three centuries of Ottoman rule, life in Nicosia had become more private, and so had the gardens. They were an essential feature of each house, usually hidden at the back of the property, and accessible through entrance yards. As Turner noticed, these house gardens included productive trees essential for the production of domestic goods used on a daily basis, such as olive trees, fruit trees and date palms. Regardless of their private nature, the gardens did not cease to be oriented toward the senses. New leisure elements like small hammam, were added, especially to the houses of the rich. The presence of hammams – usually places that favour socialisation – indicates that the gardens, although private, were also open to visitors, friends or family for small community events or daily social interaction. Due to the dismantling of the network of nobility during the Ottoman rule, the gardens were no longer only reserved for the rich houses, but became an important addition the houses of all classes, in various sizes.[18]

One of the most lyrical descriptions of the Nicosian gardens during the nineteenth century is by Franz von Löher, a German jurist and historian, who visited the city in 1876, one of the last years of Ottoman rule. For him, the gardens in the city constituted a reality that dominated all other realities:

> The city lives within fragrant smells. Whenever I stood and walked within the tangle of streets flowering pear and apple trees popped out above the walls and between the passages of the gates, dark shadowy bushes of rosemary and wide-leaved fig trees, and again the red and white-yellow flowers of orange and lemon trees, mulberry and pomegranate trees drew the attention. However, there was no garden with walls so high that would not let cypress trees, palm trees and minarets to go up towards the blue sky. Half Nicosia consists of gardens, and one hears everywhere the gurgling noise of water running out of the pipes to refresh the gardens and make them fertile. The city swims within a graceful fragrance and at the corner of the streets where the slightest breeze happens to blow, that is where the mix of fragrances triggers the coolest mood.[19]

Almost simultaneously with Löher, some of the most detailed descriptions of the Nicosian gardens appear in book by Archduke Louis Salvator of Austria, a Habsburg royal who visited Cyprus in 1873. Louis Salvator describes the garden as one of the contradictory elements constituting the identity of Nicosia. He refers to the contrast between the city and its periphery, as well as the contrast between the built elements within the city. In his descriptions the gardens are the dominant element contributing to the coherence of the city:

> Almost every house has an orange garden, with gigantic palms towering over the fruit-trees ... All these gardens are bounded by clay walls on the side of the street; the side adjoining the open hall of the house is fenced only by a low wooden balustrade; and they are watered either from cisterns or directly from the aqueducts. All sorts of fruits are cultivated there; some are very

> sweet, orange-shaped lemons (Lemonia gligia), … [and] citrons of an extraordinary size. … Apricots and other kinds of fruit are equally famous: St. John's bread, pomegranates, and dates. […] The bunches of dates are wrapped up in soft straw mats to protect them from the millions of ravens, rooks, and jackdaws, which sometimes cover the palm-trees in such numbers that they appear quite black. Vines and mulberries are also frequent … The ground by the side of the fruit-trees is occupied by fine vegetable gardens, watered with the help of a sort of shovel.[20]

Louis Salvator specifically mentions the bounded and enclosed character of the gardens, the fact that they are hidden from the rest of the city. The gardens in Ludwig's description appear as rich self-contained ecosystems consisting of both vegetation and animals.[21]

The travelogues during British rule, from late nineteenth century and on, bear a more colonial character. The British were keen to establish relationships between their colonies, which is why they note the comparisons between garden typologies across the Mediterranean. The British army officer William Hepworth Dixon visited Nicosia in 1878, in the first year of the British rule, noting that 'these gardens resemble – however in a harsh and distant manner – the patios of Seville and the front yards of Damascus.'[22] For the British, Nicosia was just one of the many cities that belonged to the British Empire, and comparison was a method by which Dixon could understand and place Nicosia in a wider context. He notes that Nicosia's enclosed domestic gardens were not a unique phenomenon, but rather a wide-spread typology in the Mediterranean region.

Émile Deschamps, a French scholar, visited British-occupied Cyprus in search of its French-Lusignan past in 1892. His journey took place during a new era of extroversion of the island: during British rule, Nicosia was once again an open city, the capital of the new British colony at the fringe between East and West that many people were curious to visit. Due to the absence of physical clues about the earlier French presence, much of which had been intentionally destroyed during the Venetian rule, Deschamps ended up writing a dense record of his impressions of the Cypriot cities, their people and customs. His account highlights the ways that nature dominates the built elements in the gardens of Nicosia:

> Nicosia, the Assyrian Lidir and the ancient Greek Ledra, is a sum of brick houses and some stone buildings, divided by narrow and small mazy streets woven with each other … During my first walks in the city some places appeared to me to be ravishing and strange at the same time. We follow an old street, framed by brick huts with weathered walls, to find ourselves in a marvellous garden, where a palm tree stands close to the white wall of a recently built house, caressing with its elegant leaves the green shutters of the house.[23]

Deschamps's description also depicts Nicosia as a homogeneous built environment to which the gardens contribute by creating unexpected pauses or small but intense surprises within the urban context. The phenomenon of the urban gardens as unexpected pauses in the familiar routines of the city, continued to amaze travellers in various ways during the twentieth century as Nicosia became more and more cosmopolitan. The Greek painter and writer Athina Tarsouli mentions the importance of gardens in Nicosia in her work *Cyprus* (1955), published after her visit a few years earlier.

> At times, when some of these doors happen to stay open, the passenger … who will glimpse at the interior of a garden, he will stand, unintentionally, as his sight will rejoice with the small, secluded paradise that is revealed to him … These old gardens, that during the summer days look like fresh love nests, after the sunset, when the intense daily chiaroscuro becomes softer, change their expression, they become more spiritual, more mysterious, and they invite you to a silent reverie, under the light blue of the trees.[24]

In Tarsouli's description, the garden is more than an impressive element of the city; it becomes a sanctuary that is hidden and shadowy during the day and mysterious and spiritual at night. Her lyrical description confirms what was established by earlier travellers, namely, that the garden is an important identifying element of Nicosia and a part of the city's subconscious.

The Greek scholar I.M. Panayiotopoulos, who visited Cyprus in the 1970s after it gained independence, also wrote about its gardens: 'Nicosia … bears the air of a great capital and at the same time the loneliness of a rural area … All around the city houses with gardens are being built, flowers everywhere create lyrical paradises'.[25] Panayiotopoulos considers the gardens to be a factor that retains the sensual character of Nicosia's past, while at the same time acting as an element of coherence in the new developing urban conglomerate.

In the last two examples, both from the second half of the twentieth century, the gardens of Nicosia are presented in a more emotional manner as a phenomenon that conserves the unique identity of the city in an increasingly urbanised environment. The descriptions have a nostalgic character in their presentation of the gardens as an element of heritage, connecting the modern city to its rich past, traces of which were still discernible in the pre-war Nicosia of the early 1970s. Both Tarsouli's and Panayiotopoulos' books, which can be considered two of the most recent

travelogue references on Cyprus seen from the eyes of two non-Cypriot scholars, can be added to the trilogy of the books with the historical references that I referred to in the introduction.

The view 'from the outside' and the view 'from within'

Based on the accounts by Löher, Louis Salvator, Tarsouli and Panayiotopoulos, the physical characteristics of the Nicosian gardens are the following: they contain various architectural elements, such as cisterns and fountains, as well as all sorts of cultivated and non-cultivated vegetation, which appeals to the senses, and they are bounded by walls that result in the perception of the gardens as an elusive yet dominant urban element. These characteristics establish the gardens as a form of protected paradise, a heterotopia in the city, which the alien eye, nose and ear can perceive only fragmentarily and occasionally, through cracks, openings, balustrades, and over high walls. It is almost as if their aura precedes their physical presence. Literary descriptions such as that of Tarsouli, imply that the gardens, although private and secluded, at the same time allow entrance to a hesitant foreigner, who can enjoy, and be surprised by, their qualities. This means that the gardens can, at times, take on an intimate, yet public role. [Fig. 2, 3]

Yet, in the travellers' views 'from the outside' discussed here, there is no direct reference to the intimate public role of these gardens. To show this quality, a 'view from within' is needed, such as a recent sentimental record of a garden by the Cypriot artist and writer Andreas Karayian, a member of the Armenian community in Cyprus. His viewpoint is that of a local, who has lived all his childhood in such gardens, before moving to Athens as a young adult. His childhood memories, gathered in the book *The True Story*, published in 2008, after an absence of almost half a century, can be considered essential, since it showcases the social qualities of the garden. Karayian unfolds the quality of the gardens as part of the city's heritage, and, most importantly, as spaces of sharing and not only contemplating. In the book Karayian refers to the garden of Emettes, an enclosed domestic garden in Nicosia where a great friendship between his mother, a Cypriot Greek woman, and Emettes, a Turkish Cypriot woman, developed in the years that preceded the conflict of the 1960s and 1970s:

> You would ascend two or three steps from the street, you would open the door, cross the long *eliakos* and then you would find yourself in front of a miracle, well-hidden from the street by a high wall. The magical garden of Emettes, my mother's dear friend, a red-haired Turkish woman. They grew up together and were inseparable, until war set them apart.[26]

Karayian refers to the physical qualities of the garden, describing from memory the trees and plants it contained, its qualities of light and shadow and its various resting spaces. He also describes what he and his siblings or friends did in the garden as children, such as making necklaces out of jasmine flowers, or enjoying the treats that Emittee offered them when they visited. He relates nostalgically how he and his friends found refuge in her garden when playing in the neighbourhood or trying to escape their strict private school next door.

The *bazaar* (market) was traditionally the place that brought the different communities in Nicosia together. Karayian's record shows how the garden as a spatial condition, seemingly so different from the bazaar, may have performed a similar role, yet with more intimacy and at a smaller scale. While the bazaar, a place where goods were sold and bought, favoured coexistence and sharing in an open and publicly accessible space, the garden established a more intimate space of sharing. While preserving its private character, the garden would also occasionally host the wider family, friends or neighbours, especially during the cool summer nights or during important life events such as weddings, the birth of children, and yearly celebrations. In this way the garden would occasionally transform into an intimate public space, hosting events for small communities, in keeping with the specific culture of Nicosia – a city where privacy was protected, and sharing was practiced in semi-public, almost intimate, settings.

Garden narratives as sources of information

According to the British academic Carl Thompson, travel writing acts 'as a vehicle for geographic, ethnographic and sociological knowledge.'[27] Travel narratives can act as sources of historical information, especially in cases where no physical evidence survives. Over the years there has been a change in the way the garden travelogues transfer knowledge. As Thompson relates, the style of travel narratives has evolved from the mediaeval era to the Victorian and industrial era. One can also detect these changes in the garden narratives of Nicosia. Mediaeval travelogues were expected to offer 'matter of fact' information to the readers, which is why they were mostly factual and objective descriptions of journeys.[28] The narrative style was often dictated by a number of widely used and 'approved' texts such as religious literature. Towards the nineteenth century the descriptions become more subjective and the writers start using poetic forms of literature. The gardens then gain importance as subjects of description in terms of the sentimental impact they have the visitor. This happened for two reasons. First, the gardens are entities that cannot necessarily be described in an objective way, as for example, physical

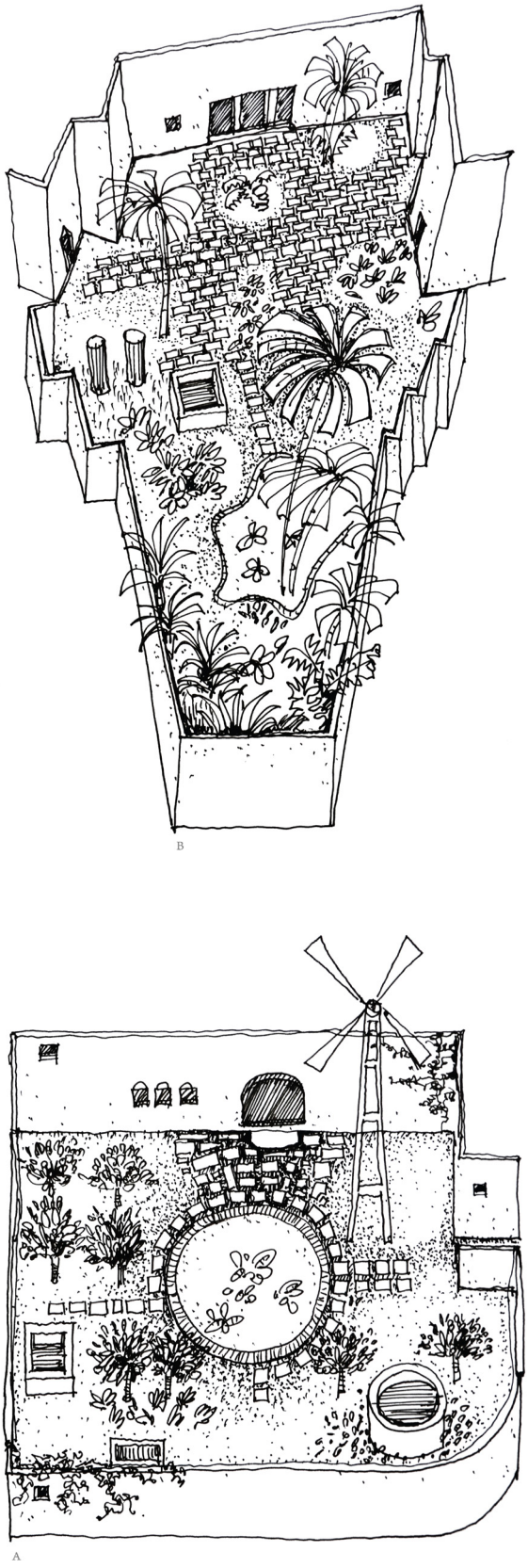

Fig. 2-3: Drawings of gardens based on the 1882 map by Kitchener and the travellers' narratives. 'Hortus Ignotus'. Drawing by the author, 2022.

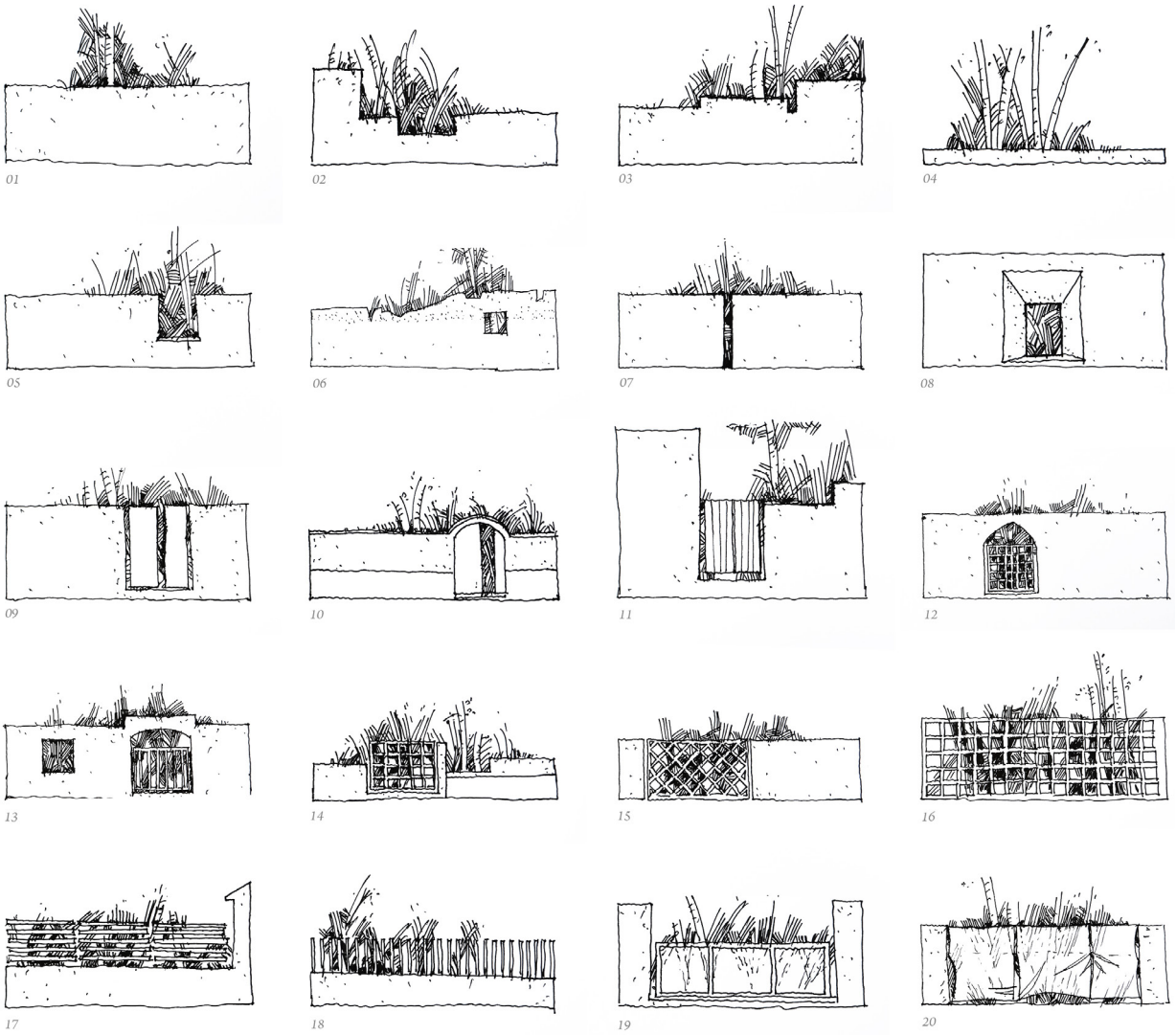

Table 3: Types of garden walls in relation to their porosity. Drawing by the author, 2022.

Fig. 4: H.H. Kitchener's map of Nicosia. Department of Lands and Surveys Cyprus, 1878-1882.

remains or archaeological findings could be described. Their main element, nature, is an elusive entity, fragile and changing over time, which cannot be preserved as an archaeological object. This is why today there is not that much physical evidences of historical gardens in Nicosia, making the written evidence so important as an alternative source of information for identifying their cultural role and spatial characteristics.[29] Second, the gardens are urban elements, not fully accessible to foreigners, and as a result, the narrators often use assumptions or abstract descriptions when writing about them. Of course, these can also be considered advantages within a more subjective approach that highlights the elusive, lyrical or poetic aspects of the gardens.

There is a category of travel narratives that offers exactly this opportunity. Thompson describes how, contrary to previous eras, travelogues during the Victorian age focused more on the aesthetic and poetic spirit of a place and on the traveller's experience:

> They claimed to capture impressionistically or poetically the 'spirit' of a place or culture, rather than offer a comprehensive, factual account of it. Thus, in one branch of the travel writing genre, it was style and aesthetic effect rather than factual information that was increasingly prioritised by writers, and valorised by critics and readers.[30]

Thompson also argues that the travel narratives tend to distinguish themselves from others because all journeys act, by default, as 'a confrontation with, or more optimistically a negotiation of, what is sometimes termed alterity.'[31] Following this argumentation, all the narratives mentioned above are experiences of the garden built from the outside. They all construct an imaginary world of alterity that lies behind the walls, as a fascinating unknown, in the form of a private and virtually expandable paradise.

The garden travelogues link this sentimental construction with the garden's qualitative characteristics and anchor it to actual architectural elements. Most importantly, the garden is protected behind a wall, a *perivolos*, which protects it from prying eyes.[32] The garden's interior is also constituted by fragrances from vegetation, the sound of leaves moving in the breeze, of water, and of birds nesting in the branches. Travelogues stress the importance of the aura of the gardens: the sense of something that you cannot see, that you partially see, or that you see at a distance.[33] The visitor's imagination works to complete the fragmented image and often creates a rather poetic and intriguing outcome. The garden fascinates the visitor exactly because it is hidden, and it stimulates the imagination by activating all our senses. [Table 3] [Fig. 4]

Project Nicosian Gardens Network

What about contemporary Nicosia though? Does this vernacular type still have the potential to communicate the aura of the place? As I have outlined above, until the early 1970s there were still references to gardens as an important element in the city. This changed in the years that followed, because of the uneven growth of the city and its increasing fragmentation, for reasons both contemporary and historical: the traditional division of land in small parcels, the rapid urbanisation since the 1970s, the marks of the 1974 conflict on the land, and the subsequent ethnic divisions among others. At the same time, the types of the buildings constantly changes, resulting in the abandonment of the gardens as a main element of domestic architecture. The Cypriot writer Giorgos C. Kythraiotis writes in his 2008 book *A Walk Along the Walls* that such a walk in contemporary Nicosia is an overwhelming experience:

> Since then the city has grown, has become unrecognisable ... it has sprawled wildly in every direction, started growing taller, gaining floors. [It is] impossible to see the horizon any more, unless you climb up somewhere high – a roof garden, let's say, or something like that.[34]

The reconstruction of the city continues along with its division and fragmentation: 'And, of course, the city is being radically rebuilt, progresses, constantly tangled in the scaffolds, divided, uncertain, wounded by check-points and machine-gun bunkers.'[35] Kythraiotis uses the term 'mosaic' to refer to the fragmentation of the memory of the city along with its material fragmentation. The landscape, wild, cultivated or domestic, that once acted as the shared substrate of a common identity, has now been rendered a discontinuous body, a mosaic, a sum of abandoned leftover fragments. It has been 'un-shared'. Within this context the city has lost its aura and the disappearance of gardens has resulted in the loss of the spirit of the place.

The urban fragmentation of Nicosia has led to the accumulation of numerous empty, undeveloped and neglected plots, some state-owned, others privately owned. [Table 4] The question I pose here is whether the existence of the 'leftover' sites is a hidden opportunity to read the city's public space from a different perspective? By hidden opportunity, I refer to the inherent qualities that derive from the informal character of such sites. [Fig. 5] An innovative urban and architectural design has the potential to reactivate leftover spaces in order to overcome the fragmentation of the city on a large scale.[36] Furthermore, the management of leftover sites can be introduced as a realistic solution that can trigger cooperation between the communities that now live in the divided city, and establish a condition of sharing the landscape anew. How can

Table 4: Photographs of public leftover sites in the suburban area of Nicosia.

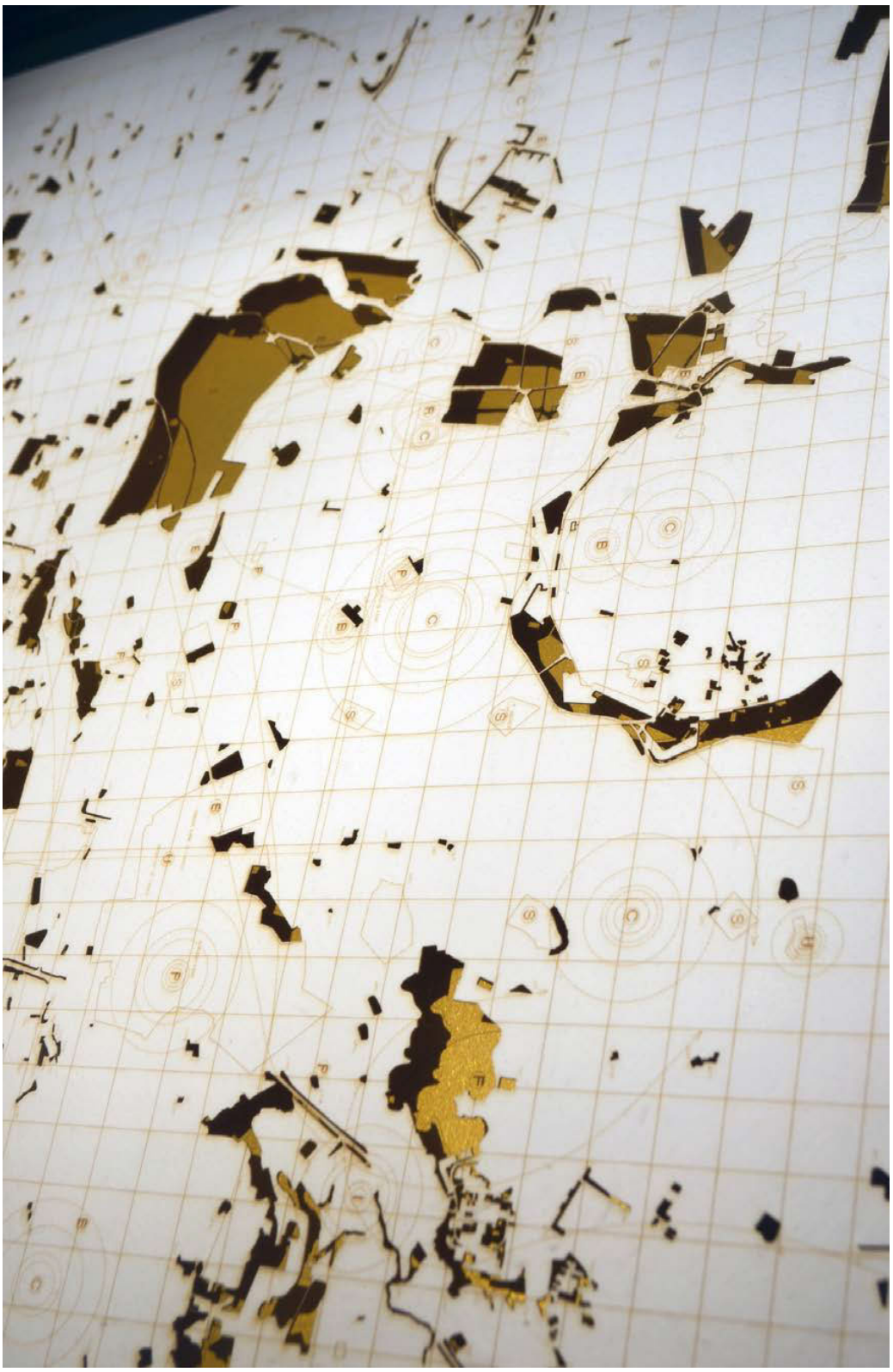

Fig. 5: Model of the leftover sites in Nicosia based on the map in Table 5. The fragments as holes on the skin of the city. Model by the author and Nicolas Kourtis, from the project: Nicosia Network of Gardens.

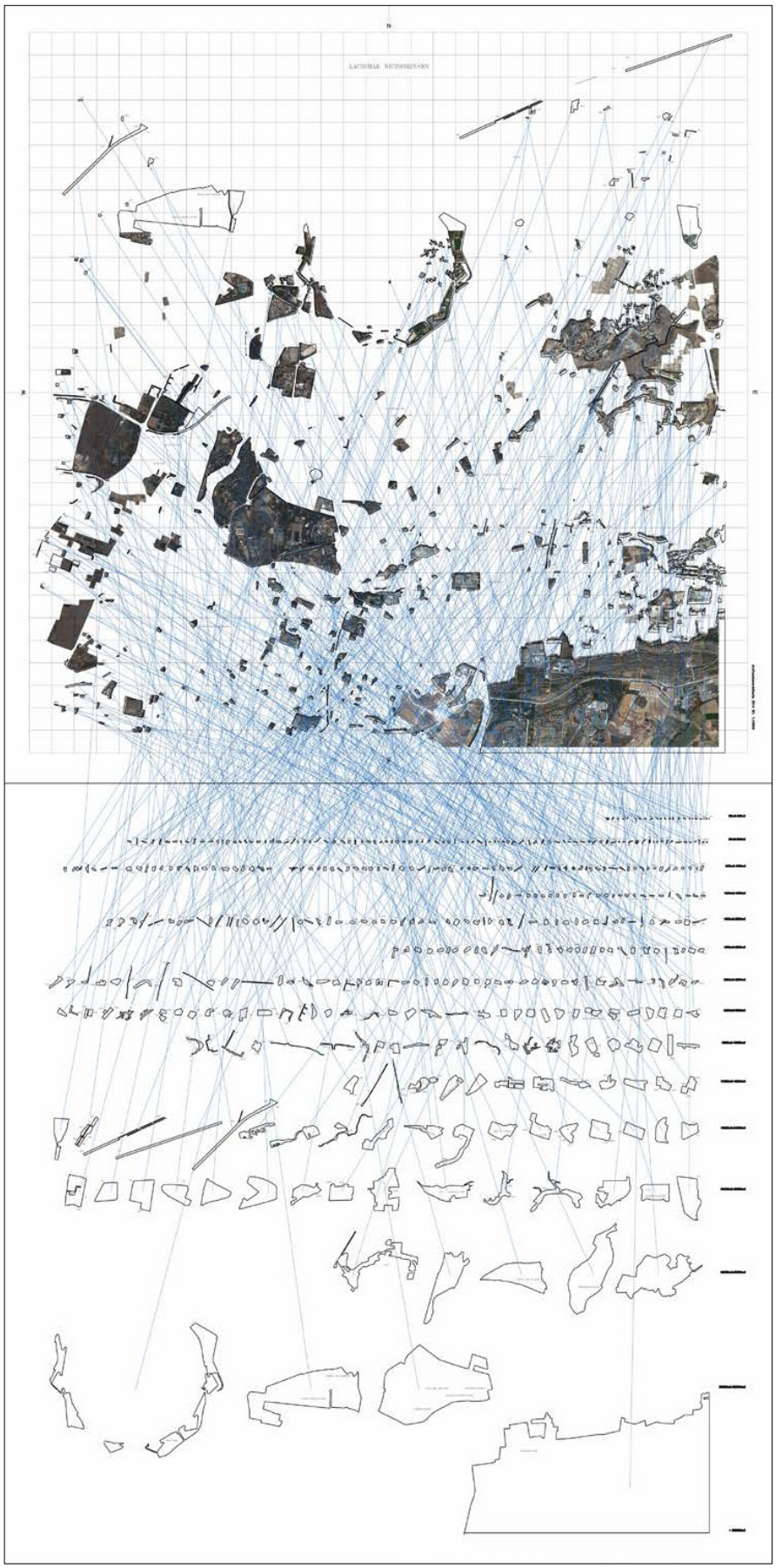

Table 5: The diptych drawing with all the types of leftover site in Nicosia. The first drawing, a map produced by the method of décollage, erases all the urban mass and keeps the leftover sites as the focus of research. In the second drawing, the leftover sites are arranged in different types according to size.

our knowledge of enclosed vernacular gardens, extracted from travelogues and literature, inform this sharing?

Kythreotis attempts to connect the growth of the city and its fragmentation – what he calls the mosaic – with the presence of refugees. He does not refer strictly to the refugees of war, political or economic refugees, but more widely to the people he calls wanderers, those who search for the memory of the city they once knew, and who, as he says:

> wander around, inconsolable, gathering fragments and pieces and constantly struggling to put together an old mosaic that they barely remember, who constantly struggle to organise their return – a return to a long-lost past – and look for an aethria at the centre of the city, a garden of waiting, within the concrete desert.[37]

Kythraiotis uses the term *aethria*, which literary means an open-air space or the clear, unclouded atmosphere, as a key concept for the understanding of the importance that gardens in Nicosia once had, which today has faded away.[38] The Cypriot poet Niki Marangou, in her poem *Nicossienses*, refers to a similar category of occupant of the Nicosian garden that she calls transitory, meaning temporary or passing:

> In company with the aphid and the grasshopper
> But also the spider mite, the tiger moth, the leaf miner,
> The mole and the hover-fly
> The praying mantis that devours them all,
> We shall be sharing leaves, petals, sky,
> in this incredible garden
> both they and I transitory.[39]

Both authors describe a kind of a transitory, wandering user who escapes the contemporary fragmented reality within Kythraoitis's *aethria*, an urban condition that acts as 'a garden of waiting' within the built mass of the city. More than a spatial element, *aethria* introduces the garden as a state of mind between reality and memory.

Kythraiotis proposes the term *aethria* to metaphorically describe a pause or void within the city where one is given space to think. Aethria can be seen as a mental state, a space of transition, in which the mind is clear of everyday concerns. The pause can help the city dweller connect the present with memories of the city, the way that the garden preserves and stores the memories of the daily lives of its occupants. I use it to describe a semi-accessible space that secures a clearing within the dense city where natural elements occur: the ground, the weather, vegetation, water, nature and unplanned social activities, such as spontaneous gatherings, can take place.

The concept of *aethria* has outlined an opportunity to bring together the emblematic Nicosian garden with the contemporary problem of the urban fragmentation. The project Nicosian Garden Network addresses the modern alienation from nature and taps into the potential of the leftover abandoned plots in the city. The purpose of the project is to incorporate the leftover sites of different sizes in Nicosia into a network of shared spaces in the form of urban semi-public or intimate gardens. The aim of the network is to become the new identifying element of the city, to re-connect the landscape, and to bring city dwellers together by providing them with spaces for interaction on a daily basis.

The project is divided into two parts. The first is about documenting the leftover sites of Nicosia, the by-products of uneven urban sprawl. Using tools such as drawing, collage and model-making, the project documents the fragments of land of various sizes and in various conditions into which the once continuous landscape has broken down. [Table 5] The second part is a proposal to convert the leftover sites into a functional network of shared, public gardens. This garden network, as I call it, aims at reactivating various landscape elements. It also proposes uses that engage all the senses and which, as discussed above, were an important element of traditional Nicosian gardens.

I consider each garden-leftover site as a distinct entity, an 'island' that belongs to a wider network of islands, an archipelago. These voids can be effectively preserved by the creation of a frame around each site. The frame is more than a wall; it is a porous entity that bounds the site, forms a protective zone around it, and at the same time, attracts uses. It establishes the new character of the leftover sites in two ways. First, it regulates the relation between the site and the city. Instead of strictly separating nature within the 'island' from the city outside, this framing aims to create an intermediary zone between the densely built environment of the city and the natural environment of the island. On one hand, the zone protects the nature within, while on the other, it attracts sense-oriented and leisure programmes: children's play, small public hammams, public kitchens, shared fountains and cisterns, structures for small fairs, performances, circuses, and small habitats for protected animal species. The formation of each site's boundary as a protective yet porous frame reflects the initial idea of understanding the leftover sites as *aethrias*: pauses in the city. Second, the frame also acts as the element that connects all the islands within a single network. It becomes the common denominator of the different islands. The recurrent appearance of the frame around contained structures creates a shared design language that links all the different islands in the

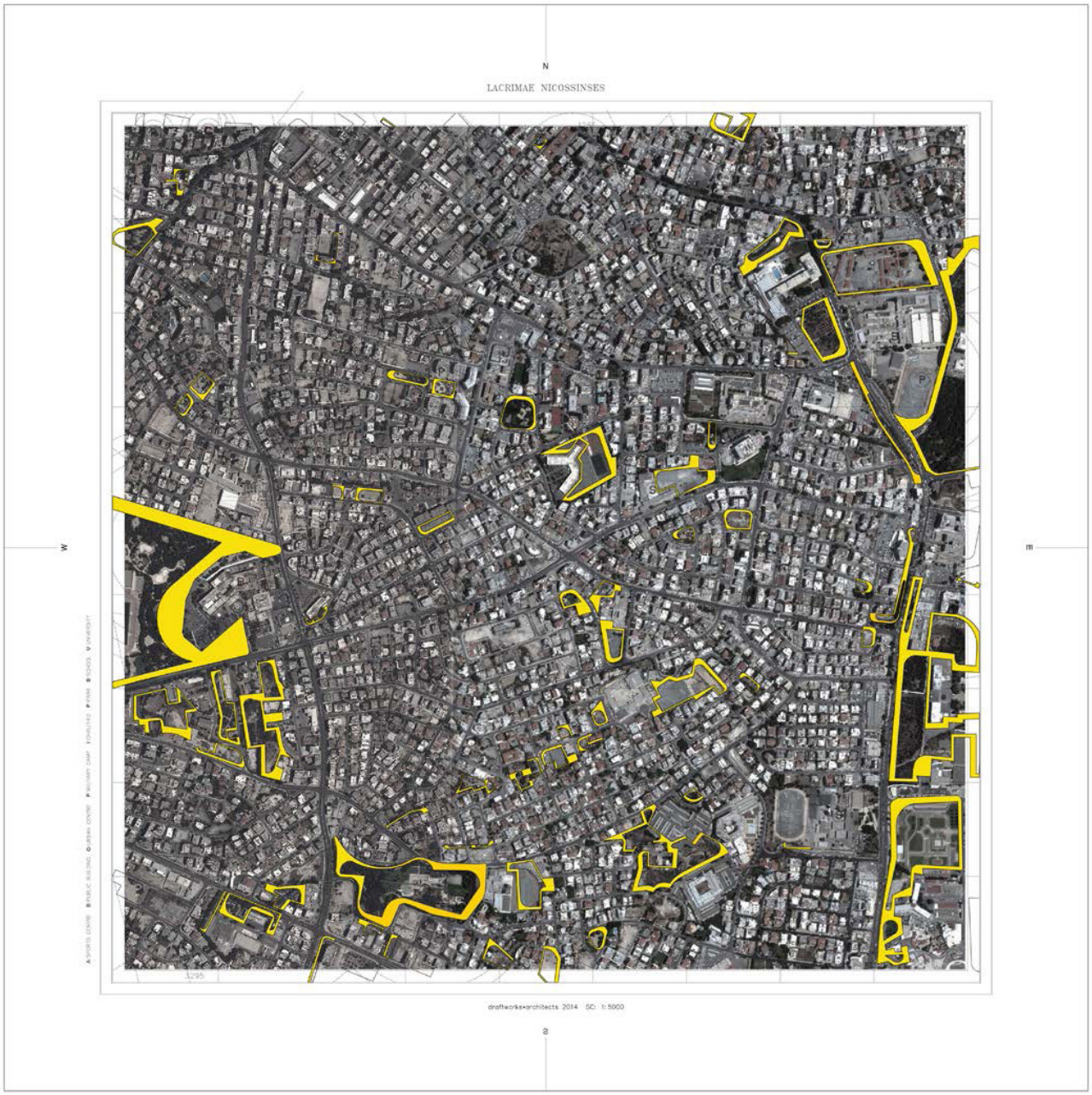

Fig. 6: Drawing of the leftover sites in Nicosia based on a part of the map in Table 5. The yellow zones around the leftover sites represent the programmatic frames. The drawing suggests the possibility of people to wander among the leftover sites in a city, in walkable distances and to create alternative routes of moving in the city, creating in this way an informal Garden Network. Drawing by the author, from the project: Nicosia Network of Gardens.

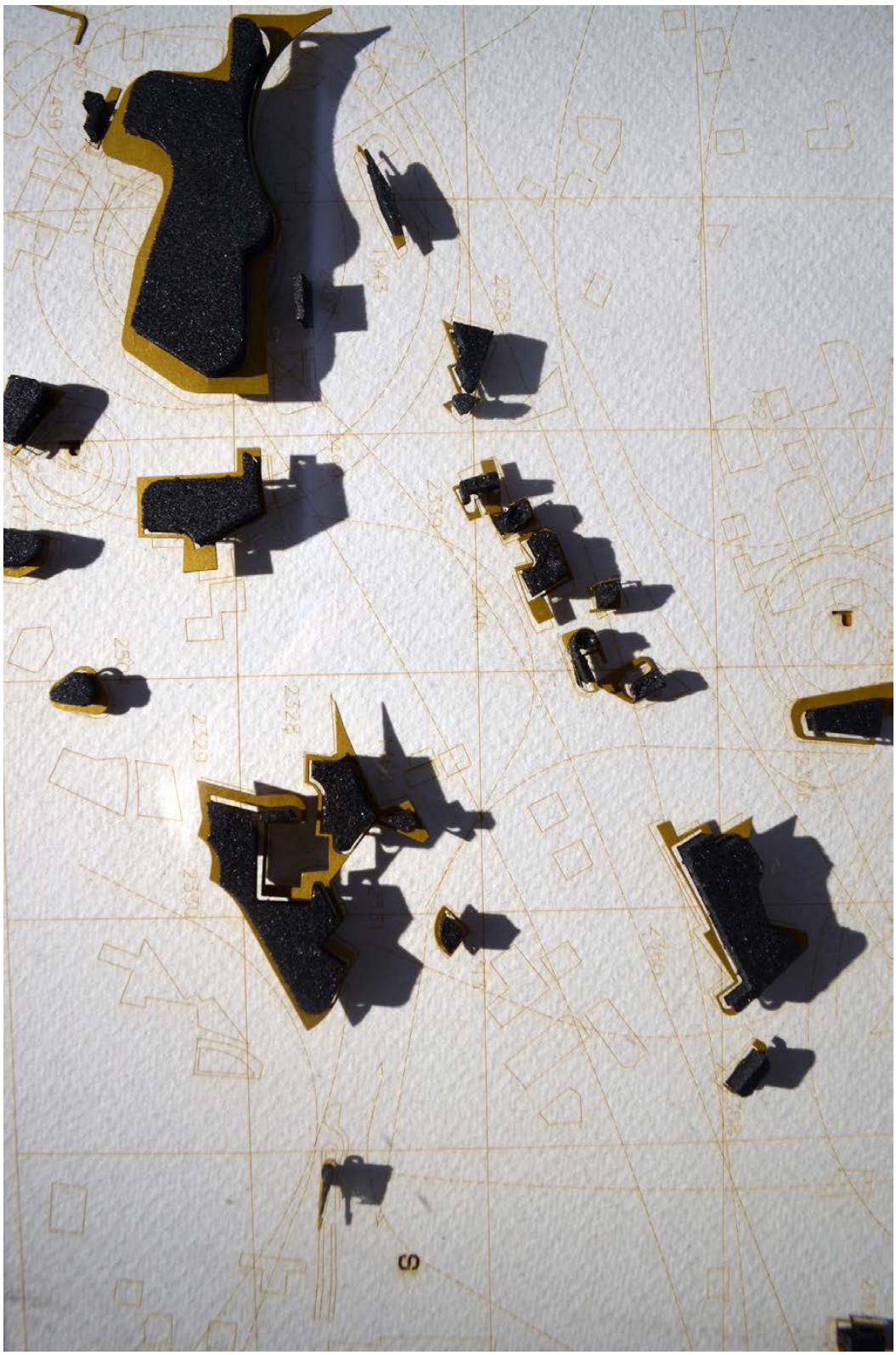

Fig. 7: Model based on map in Table 5. showing leftover sites as single islands containing nature and surrounded by programmatic zones. Model by the author and Nicolas Kourtis, from the project: Nicosia Network of Gardens.

Fig. 8: Models of the leftover sites as islands with a natural context at their core and framed by a programmatic zone. Model by the author, from the project: Nicosia Network of Gardens.

perception of a city wanderer. The perceptual connection between the different islands would eventually constitute an 'archipelago', that would re-establish Nicosia's urban coherency. [Fig. 6, 7]

The garden with unrestrained nature is the main programmatic element of this archipelago. The porous access would allow wild animals to coexist with domesticated ones. The project Nicosian Garden Network can contain self-sustaining species that naturally grow in Nicosia, do not require much care, and do not consume much water, along with fruit-bearing trees, vegetables, and other edible plants, whose growth and consumption encourages social interaction between local people. The gardens can become shelters for animals that once prospered in the area but that are now oppressed by urban growth and close to extinction. The gardens can also become a refuge for users whose access to the city is constrained, like children or disabled people. This new identity of the garden rests on the enormous unused potential of each leftover site; it is a territory that can become a shared urban value of modern-day Nicosia.

From the garden travelogues to alternative urban narratives for re-sharing the city

I have shown how historical travelogues or travel narratives describe the enclosed garden as a vernacular types in Nicosia, with its specific architectural characteristics and qualities. The narratives refer to the gardens as private spaces but also places for sharing: a private space that can occasionally open to the local community, wider family, group of friends or the neighbourhood, transforming into an intimate public space. This knowledge led to a proposal for intimate semi-public spaces in Nicosia, with vegetation and animals, yet distinct from open public spaces or parks. The travel narratives transcend their original purpose as a valuable source of information about distant lands, and become the inspiration and starting point for new imaginative and creative approaches to urban and architectural design. Such an approach can link the past narratives, present readings, and future urban visions of the site, especially when we aim for situated architectural projects with distinctive local characteristics that can be shared among different communities. My purpose is thus not just to present a historiographical review of Nicosian gardens through the travelogues, but also to show how the knowledge gained from bibliographical research can contribute meaningfully to the development of architectural imagination and practice.

The concept of *aethria* is one such research-driven design idea. *Aethria* can be seen as spaces that link the gardens to the leftover sites and enhance the sensual experience of the city. The project Nicosian Gardens Network also proposes an alternative form of urban navigation and mobility that reconnects the existing network of streets, pavements and parks through walking and cycling.[40] This new urban mobility provides opportunities for people to construct new narratives for understanding their city, as an alternative to the dominant ones dictated by the planning departments, similar to the way in which travel narratives establish an alternative, lyrical, and sensual way of understanding a city. [Fig. 8]

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Notes

1. In literature Jacobus de Verona is often mentioned under the Italian version Jacopo da Verona or anglicised as James of Verona. Claude Delaval Cobham, ed. and trans., *Excerpta Cypria: Materials for a History of Cyprus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908).
2. Christos Papastergiou, 'Garden at the Rear: The Secret Garden as the Informal Part of the House in Nicosia and the Mediterranean', *Archimaera Magazine* 9 (March 2021): 69–90, http://www.archimaera.de.
3. I use the word 'bigness' in order to describe the cultural impact that the gardens had in the city due to their large number, which was only perceived when walking in the city, due to their fragmented and hidden character. The word 'bigness' is used by Rem Koolhass to describe a cultural phenomenon of big sizes in the cities. Rem Koolhaas, 'Bigness and the Problem of Large' in *S, M, L, XL*, edited by Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau (New York: Monacelli Press, 1995), 494–516.
4. Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria.*
5. Άντρος Παυλίδης, *Η Κύπρος ανά τους αιώνες μέσα άπω τα κείμενα ξένων επισκεπτών της. Τόμος Α'* (Antros Pavlides, Cyprus in the ages through the texts of its visitors, Book A) (Λευκωσία: Φιλόκυπρος, 1993), 128. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from the Greek are my own.
6. 'Κύπρος', *στο Λευκωσία. Μια Πόλη στη Λογοτεχνία,* Κυριάκος Χαραλαμπίδης (επιμ.) (Cyprus, in Nicosia, a city in literature, ed. Kyriakos Charalampides)(Αθήνα Μεταιχμιο, 2008).
7. Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria,* 17.
8. The Italian notary Nicolas Martoni was published under the name Léon le Grand. Ibid., 26.
9. Pavlides, Cyprus in the ages, 128.
10. We still see them in other countries in Southern Europe, the

Middle East and North Africa. See Linda Farrar, *Gardens and Gardeners of the Ancient World: History, Myth and Archaeology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

11. Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria,* 165.
12. Ibid.
13. Also found under the name Le Sieur de Stochove.
14. Cobham, *Excerpta Cypria,* 217.
15. Ibid., 233.
16. Ibid., 316.
17. Ibid., 436.
18. Euphrosine Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, *The House of the Dragoman of Cyprus Hadjigeorgakis.*
19. Cornessios, trans. Lana de Parthogh (Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, 2001), 32.
20. 'Cypern', στο *Λευκωσία 1878 – Ώρα Μηδέν. Η Φυσιογνωμία και η Ζωή της Κυπριακής Πρωτεύουσας κατά την Αλλαγή της Ξενοκρατίας,* Πολυχρόνης Κ Ενεπεκίδης (επιμ.) (Cyprus, in Nicosia 1878, ed. Polychronis Enepekides) (Λευκωσία: Ιδρυμα Α.Γ.Λεβέντη, 2002), 46–56. Archduke Louis Salvator of Austria, (Levkosia, the Capital of Cyprus) (London: Trigraph editions, 1983), 26–27; Franz von Löher, (Nicosia 1878 – The ultimate hour: The physiognomy and the life of the Cypriot capital during the colonial transition), ed. Polychronis Enepekides (Nicosia, Leventis Foundation, 2002).
21. Some animals referred to by Salvator no longer live in the city, or their population has decreased considerably due to the dramatic lack of nature, as in the case of ravens.
22. Άντρος Παυλίδης, *Η Κύπρος ανά τους αιώνες μέσα άπω τα κείμενα ξένων επισκεπτών της,* 191–96.
23. Stavros Lazarides, ed., *Emile Deschamps: In Cyprus, the Land of Aphrodite – From the Diary of a Traveler* (Nicosia: Laiki Cultural Centre, 2005), 57.
24. Αθηνά Ταρσούλη, 'Κύπρος', 279.
25. 'Η Κύπρος, ένα ταξίδι, Αστήρ, Αθήνα 1974', στο *Λευκωσία. Μια Πόλη στη Λογοτεχνία,* Κυριάκος Χαραλαμπίδης (επιμ.) (I.M. Panayiotopoulos, 'Cyprus, a journey, Astir, Athens, 1974', in *Nicosia, a city in literature*, ed. Kyriakos Charalampides) (Αθήνα: Μεταιχμιο, 2008), 258–62.
26. Andreas Karayian, Η Αληθής Ιστορία, Ι (The true story) (Athens: Kastanioti ed, 2008), 31. The *eliakos* is a typical element of vernacular Greek houses. It is the part of the house that intermediates between the public and the private rooms of the house, usually directly linked with the main entrance. It is a space that is tall and fully accessible by the sun (that is why it is called 'iliakos', from 'ilios', meaning 'sun' in Greek).
27. Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 4.
28. Such cases are described in Panos Leventis, *Twelve Times in Nicosia: Nicosia, Cyprus, 1192–1570: Topography, Architecture, and Urban Experience in a Diversified Capital City* (Nicosia: Cyprus Research Centre, 2005).
29. Papastergiou, 'Garden at the Rear', 69–90.
30. Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 55.
31. Ibid., 9.
32. *Perivolos* in Greek means the 'surrounding wall' or 'the area that is bounded'.
33. The German philosopher Walter Benjamin has defined the 'aura' of the natural object as 'the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be'. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Benjamin, Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 97.
34. Γιώργος Χρ. Κυθραιώτης, 'Περίπατος στα τείχη', στο Κυριά κος Χαραλαμπίδης (επιμ.), *Λευκωσία. Μια Πόλη στη Λογοτεχνία* (Giorgos Kythraiotis, A walk along the walls, Nicosia a city in literature, ed. Kyriakos Charalampides) (Αθηνα: Μεταιχμιο, 2008), 303.
35. Γιώργος Χρ. Κυθραιώτης, 'Περίπατος στα τείχη', 34.
36. Christos Papastergiou, 'The Leftover City: Leftover Sites as Disruptors of Urban Narratives in the Work of J.G. Ballard, Jim Jarmusch, and Wim Wenders', in 'Urban Disruptors', *Informa* no. 13 (2020): 208-221.
37. Γιώργος Χρ. Κυθραιώτης, 'Περίπατος στα τείχη', 37.
38. *Aithria* in Greek means the clear, unclouded atmosphere, or the clear, cool atmosphere of the night. The word was originally used to describe a weather condition or the qualities of an exterior space. However, it also derives from the Greek word *aethrio*, from which the Latin *atrium* was derived. *Atriyum* in Turkish is translated as 'patio', meaning the interior courtyard or garden of a building, an open, clear space that is usually enclosed by a structure or is within a building.
39. Niki Marangou, with photographer Arunas Baltenas, *Nicossienses* (Vilnius: R. Paknio Leidykla, 2006).
40. The Garden Network project is an ongoing effort that has so far been developed as a design hypothesis. It can potentiality be developed further by involving citizens, researchers, local authorities and institutions in ways that exceed the objectives and timeline of this article. In a wider sense, the project also seeks to contribute to the efforts of EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 to reverse the degradation of ecosystems in the European Continent. The project forms a strategy for reversing a fragmented and degraded urban nature, by converting it into a network of gardens, and a pool of shared material and cultural resources.

Biography

Christos Papastergiou is a practicing architect and academic. He holds a Diploma in Architecture, an MSc in Architectural Design and Theory from the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), School of Architecture, and a PhD in Architectural Design from the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, sponsored by the Hellenic Republic. With his practice Draftworks Architects he has received awards in architectural competitions and his work has been widely exhibited and published. He has taught architectural design studios and theory classes at the University of Nicosia and

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Understanding a Future Yet to Take Shape: The Worlds of Butler, Le Guin and Atwood as Prism for Building (in) Society

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Abstract
An issue on narrating shared futures ('How will we live together?') implies being able to conceive of a mutual and shared experience. The history of shared heritages often contains other figures in the margins: those who were not seen as part of the dominant cultural narrative, or whose contribution to its heritage went unacknowledged. The holistic view of the 2018 Davos declaration on *Baukultur* embraces a more integral view of the built environment and society. In order to explore some of the cultural narratives that shape our past and envision a shared future, this article takes a closer look at three science fiction authors and how their stories draw lessons from the past into a narration of possible futures. Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler and Margaret Atwood have each envisioned futures that draw from contemporary developments and expand them to an overarching logic as the setting of their tales. Rather than directly examining (un)built heritages, this article examines the underlying cultural logic of building on the past. If architecture provides a foundation for a shared (and inclusive) future, the stories constructed by these authors show how the built environment resonates with societal principles, aiding or hindering particular collective values.

Keywords
Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler, Margaret Atwood

'How will we live together?' This is a question that has been asked throughout the history of architecture, with particularly salient moments providing many different visions of a shared future. The question has resulted in utopian projections and idealist projects, and it marks a great deal of architecture's history, particularly since the nineteenth century. These possible futures, whether sketched out in broad contours or in great detail, often demonstrate salient features of their own time. In this manner, the visions materialised in architecture – whether they remain on paper or come to be realised – share features with science fiction narratives, which build on a (recognisable) societal logic in order to envision other futures or alien worlds. In this article I explore the underlying cultural logic of a shared future through this dual perspective of architecture and the extrapolation of future worlds in a selection of science fiction novels from 1972 through 2013. In so doing, I aim to gain insight into current, holistic perspectives in architecture and heritage, such as the Davos declaration of 2018, which explicitly approaches 'building culture' as a holistic activity, stating that '*Baukultur* embraces every human activity that changes the built environment'.[1]

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The departure point of an issue on narrating shared futures also means being able to conceive of a mutual and shared experience, thereby acknowledging that it is possible to tap into a shared, communal, or intersubjective understanding. In this sense, one must be able to apprehend a recognisable cultural logic in the project or in the narrative. In this article, a series of future visions by Ursula K. Le Guin (1929–2018), Margaret Atwood (b. 1939) and Octavia Butler (1947–2006) provides a coherent narrative of societal habits in relation to the built environment, thereby offering a foundation for a shared (and inclusive) future. The stories constructed by these acclaimed authors help to show how the built environment resonates with societal principles, aiding or hindering particular collective values.

Additionally, it is important to bear in mind that the shared futures envisioned in architecture have also been marked by exclusions. For example, the narrative of modern architecture may have been aimed at the masses, but its realisations were often only available to a more privileged group of clients. In other words, the history of shared futures often contains other figures in the margins: those who were not seen as part of the dominant cultural narrative (or indeed of the envisioned future), or whose contribution to its history went unacknowledged. Finally, a rising awareness of the many non-human actants that are (or should be) part of a shared future has also shifted these visions from strongly human-centred to a more inclusive approach, taking into account a variety of lifeforms.

Rethinking the future: recalibrating modernism

The twenty-first century has seen a number of shifts in architecture debates, which arguably are founded on recalibrations of modernist thinking that took place from the 1970s onward. Central issues that were taken on in the past fifty years include a revaluation of 'the presence of the past' (the theme of the first architecture biennale in 1980), a revisiting of the built environment in relation to the social fabric, and the multiple perspectives that are expressed in different cultures and contexts.[2] Many of these issues were first raised in the context of postmodernism, a term that in architecture was explicitly positioned as a counterweight or reconsideration of modernism, which was felt to be lacking in symbolic richness and awareness of context. All in all, these shifts in thinking constitute a plea for resituating architecture and its impact in the (expanding) context it affects. This approach resonates with the Davos declaration of 2018, which positions societal values and the built environment in relation to each other. As such, the discussion of cultural heritage and the built environment has become broader than specific buildings, and instead are fundamentally entangled with questions on shared values. In this article, they will be addressed as expressions of the cultural imagination, as conceptual structures and material artifacts that help to define societal logic.

In this context, the increasing attention given to questions of climate change and the impact of architecture is hardly surprising. A holistic perspective on the built environment and cultural heritage must by necessity include urgent challenges such as the effects of climate change, particularly given the large impact of building on global emissions.[3] A heightened awareness of particular contexts and environmental concerns was present in the architecture debates of the 1970s, but in recent years has become increasingly fundamental.[4] Issues of 'site' or 'context', both important conditions in architecture, are expanding to a general question of ecologies and entanglements. While the environment has been present in architectural debates in recent history, it is now rapidly transforming from 'background' or 'precondition' to an active understanding and logic that underpins every step of the design process.

As an expression of the cultural imagination, architecture is perhaps more rooted in a conceivable reality than science fiction. That is to say, the implication of the architectural drawing is usually (but not always) the possibility of building. At the same time, both architecture and science fiction articulate societal values and concerns. As such, there are relevant ideas to be gleaned from science fiction novels, particularly those set in a recognisable yet distinctive future. These novels often pick up on contemporary developments and magnify particular features; they provide believable future scenarios for a world yet to be shaped. In this manner, they also reflect the societal values shaped in and with the built environment, which are to be found at all levels, as also emphasised in the Davos declaration: '*Baukultur* encompasses existing buildings, including monuments and other elements of cultural heritage, as well as the design and construction of contemporary buildings, infrastructure, public spaces and landscapes.'[5] From the perspective of Baukultur, the cultural imagination is present both in exceptional works of architecture and in the everyday environment.

The three authors selected for this article, Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood and Octavia Butler, represent a critical perspective within their own domain and in the context of architecture, albeit all from a North American viewpoint. Le Guin and Butler were both from the west coast of the United States, and Atwood is from the east of Canada. The writings examined here show their North American roots, yet their narratives also provide more generally applicable questions of how society works – or could be envisioned differently. They share a feminist approach, and have each written out many possible futures, on earth

and beyond. They have each envisioned futures that draw from contemporary developments and expand them to an overarching logic as the setting of their tales. Their stories serve as warnings, to present possible societies, and to reflect on the pain of historical atrocities.[6] Overall, their stories examine the cultural narratives that shape our understanding of a shared past and a shared future, and their approaches show a heightened awareness of structures of subjugation, exclusion and power, drawing lessons from the past into a narration of possible futures.

The works selected for this article serve to tease out particular narratives that help to situate how we bond with our built environment, indeed, how we understand our heritage through multiple lenses of historical coincidence, of cultural narrative and of social context. The stories are reflections on their own time, refracted through the prisms of alien worlds and uncertain futures. In this, they provide a cultural imaginary that brings the present into sharper focus. Moreover, in combination with an architectural perspective, they are a powerful example of how the cultural imagination is articulated in multiple iterations across disciplines.

The efforts of science fiction to give form to the inconceivable consequences of climate change are unmistakable (certainly since the 1970s), even if at a distance in either time or space. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, novels of speculative or science fiction have provided social critique and evocative visions of possible futures, and as such they provide a cultural imaginary to envision what we may have found important, or dismissed, or torn down.[7] Certainly the works highlighted in this article show an awareness of the tenuous relationship between humans and the environment, and their inclusion of ecologies and incorporation of climate change in their narratives may be remarkable to those who feel the urgency of this topic is recent. Yet one must also bear in mind that by the 1970s, there were already groundbreaking publications such as Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and the Club of Rome report *Limits to Growth* (1972). Yet while the knowledge has been present and available, it can become more tangible through the cultural imagination. This article therefore focuses on elements in the story that align with broad narratives that may not yet have come fully into focus, based on evocations of a society that is expressed not only in its conventions but also in its material reality, in artifacts and in the built environment.

Settings and contexts

From today's perspective, Margaret Atwood's *Maddaddam* trilogy is perhaps the most immediately recognisable, both in terms of the built environment she describes and its potential transformation. The series comprises *Oryx and Crake* (2003), *The Year of the Flood* (2009) and *Maddaddam* (2013).[8] The narrative takes place in some unidentified future, and it describes the aftermath of a global pandemic from different perspectives. In *Oryx and Crake*, the reader follows the events leading up to the pandemic and its aftermath through the ruminations of Jimmy, who calls himself 'Snowman'. Through Jimmy, the reader learns that genetic manipulation has become common, that there are now spliced animals such as 'wolvogs' and 'rakunks' roaming the land. As a result of these genetic manipulations, increasingly dangerous microbes are circulating and treated with the utmost vigilance. In *Oryx and Crake*, a world emerges that is strongly drawn along lines of what we would now call big pharma and big tech, where corporations do cutting-edge research to expand their profits, and where those who are part of these corporations (with genetic splicing and microbial and immune research) are under constant surveillance within the compound. Others live outside in the dangerous and unruly 'pleeblands'. Those outside need to scrounge and scavenge, eking out a living from gathering and cultivating small patches of land. Here, the early twenty-first-century world provides countless freedoms and ease for a privileged class, but is equally defined by restrictions, with walled and guarded compounds under constant threat of biological contamination.

The society described is far from the type of 'living together' discussed in current debates, yet it draws out lines already visible today: gated communities and the privileges of wealth and access, versus those who survive in the margins. In *The Year of the Flood* the reader becomes more familiar with the pleeblands, primarily through a religious group called God's Gardeners, who live on abandoned rooftops. In their religion, the pandemic is presented as a biblical cleansing and called the 'waterless flood', and their saints include a number of well-known ecologically-oriented thinkers of the twentieth century such as James Lovelock and Rachel Carson.

The buildings and infrastructure described in the trilogy, especially in *The Year of the Flood*, are likely familiar to those currently living in the US or Canada, or perhaps even many other globally-oriented cities. Atwood's large-scale mass extinction event may have seemed somewhat remote when the books were first published between 2003 and 2013, but after the global pandemic of 2020–22, the books ring eerily familiar in their details of hygiene, distancing and disinfectants. The remaining population rebuilds life in the detritus of the cities, reimagining the everyday environment through small-scale interventions. God's Gardeners are vaguely reminiscent of the ecofeminist movement and of 1960s communes that sought to return to nature, combined with eco-Christian elements

that reconcile scientific progress with stewardship of the environment.

In Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*, published ten years earlier, walled compounds play a similarly prominent role in the residential environment.[9] Here, a version of California emerges that is largely privatised and that is also deeply marked by social inequality and climate change. The privileged class is secure and has access to amenities, while less fortunate people who still own property cluster together in walled neighbourhoods and grow their own food to supplement costly store-bought goods. Clean water is increasingly scarce and more expensive than gasoline, and services such as the police and the fire department come at a cost. Those who do not own property are seen as drifters and referred to as the 'street poor'.

The protagonist Lauren Olamina is the daughter of a preacher, and her observations are interspersed with the verses that form the beginnings of what will become Earthseed, a religion that assumes people will eventually migrate to space. Through Olamina's journal, Butler paints an evocative picture of the late-twentieth-century city fallen into ruin, where the neighbourhood is walled off by necessity: 'Crazy to live without a wall to protect you. Even in Robledo, most of the street poor – squatters, winos, junkies, homeless people in general – are dangerous.'[10]

In the *Parable of the Sower* three types of environments play a central role and define the chronology of the book. First, the spaces of the former city, which have increasingly become gated enclaves, where families and friends group together. There are occasional references to a vaguely traditional architecture that appears to include a variety of influences from the broader southwest United States and western Mexico. Second, the transitional space of the highway, rarely used by motorised traffic, but still the main connecting arteries between the cities of the west coast of the United States. And third, a self-sustaining type of farmhouse, situated in and protected by the landscape. This is the environment Olamina eventually reaches after she has travelled north along the highway, finding people along the way who are interested in her views on Earthseed. Other spaces also play a role throughout the book – an implied corporate area that oscillates between traditional industry and contemporary service, a vaguely militarised version of the motor home that serves to both house and protect its occupants, and the occasional gang-demolished ruin – but the main areas of the narrative are clearly grafted onto contemporary (or late twentieth-century) California.

Compared to these eminently recognisable environments, Le Guin's *The Word for World is Forest*, a novella first published in 1972, is far removed from what we know.[11] The story is set on a planet twenty-six lightyears from Earth, a distant logging colony. From the beginning the narrative is coloured by a tone of domination, of disregard for anything other than the (male) self. The reader is dropped into the life of an off-world colony where an army and loggers are at work. Earth has no more (or very little) wood, and humans have turned to other planets for their resources. In the first chapter, Captain Davidson, a member of the military staff is thinking about the women who have just been brought in as brides or as 'recreational females', and at the same time thinking about how to keep the 'creechies' in line. 'Creechies' is the derogatory word the military use for the indigenous Athshean population, a small and furry green humanoid they have enslaved and generally consider stupid and slow. Davidson considers the environment something to be tamed and used for resource extraction. This attitude is subtly present in the buildings of the colony: barracks and prefab cement slabs, nothing of aesthetic or cultural value. While one could argue that this is due to the architecture being merely a functional backdrop to the narrative, I would say that rather, it is meant to show something about the current (then 1970s) world. Or as one of the ecological specialists in the crew notes to Davidson: 'You want to make this world into Earth's image, eh? A desert of cement?'[12]

The novella alternates between different views throughout the chapters, shifting from the military and coloniser perspective, to the scientific or anthropological perspective of trying to understand the indigenous population, to the Athshean perspective. This allows Le Guin to contrast the different and often opposing habits, emphasising the culture of dominance and colonisation in the human world to highlight what we might see as a more nature-integrated approach to environment in the alien world. The homes of the Athsheans are largely ensconced in the ground, built into hollows and the shoulders of the trees in the forest. The Athsheans wonder at the destruction that comes along with the 'yumens' (in their own language), describing how they cut down all the trees and leave nothing but beach (as they have no word for desert). These reflections serve to highlight the extractive logging already taking place in many areas of North America at the time. The habits of the Athshean community seems more akin to what was known at the time of jungle-dwelling tribes of South America. Whether these are direct inspiration is less important than the manner in which Le Guin taps into the imagination of a society based in care for environment from the perspective of being part of the environment rather than dominating it.

Overall, the three authors emphasise the importance of collective action and the common good. Whether concerning the destruction of an ecosystem on the planet Athshe, the destruction of a community in future California, or

rebuilding a community in the wake of a pandemic, one of the key values put forward is care for those around us, for understanding the interconnection between people and their surroundings.

Past tense and future perfect

These narratives all highlight different ways of relating to the environment, providing a clear view of the dangers of abstracted and self-centred thinking on the level of the individual, and of extractive capitalism as a system. Topics such as exclusion and domination are incorporated in the scenarios, and are emphasised in the structures they envision their characters to be living in. The narratives build on the mutual interaction of society and environment: having walled-off sections of the city in order to keep out others reduces the ability of those living inside or outside to empathise with each other. The wall constructs an artificial boundary that increasingly becomes part of the actions of the society it serves.

The narratives of these novels show a resonance between environment, architecture and the cultural imagination. Their environmental constellations reflect back societal habits and how they are shaped by design decisions. The narratives thus help to examine how particular buildings are seen to embody particular values. Octavia Butler's work, for example, shows a heightened sensitivity to exclusion and the potential danger of groupthink. Her sensitivity runs to the use of – and care for – the land. Whether intentionally or not, she may be the most eco-conscious of the three writers addressed in this article, though each has clear and unmistakable positions on the care for the planet. They show the type of awareness that Donna Haraway might call 'situated knowledge', which highlights the importance of 'other voices' in providing important new and complementary forms of knowledge not predetermined by dominant narratives.

What writers like Le Guin, Atwood and Butler potentially add to disciplinary debates on cultural heritage, is to highlight implicit societal values and preconceptions that may be linked to architectural and urban qualities. Their narratives offer a coherent worldview that makes the entanglement of society and its built environments clear. Through these scenarios, the historical continuity of our built fabric is placed in the critical view of unforeseen futures. Both Butler and Atwood present recognisable environments that have been repurposed or have transformed due to fundamental changes and ruptures in society. In *The Year of the Flood*, we are reintroduced to the late-twentieth-century city, but now from the perspective of living on rooftops. In *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy lives in wooded areas along the shore, and takes shelter from storms under the remains of twentieth-century infrastructure like crumbling bridges.

For Atwood, 'living together' is expressed best in the structures of God's Gardeners, which recapture some typical utopian features such as an equitable distribution of labour and shared communal spaces. They are a vegetarian religious sect, living in a commune on the rooftops, and share the responsibilities of cultivating the garden and foraging for food.

In Atwood and Butler in particular we can read the traces of the late twentieth century and of concerns about an increasingly stratified society, where the privileged class can retreat behind the walls of gated communities and compounds. They are the only ones who can afford luxuries (such as personal enhancement in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*) or even basic necessities (such as interventions by the fire department, which come at a fee in Butler's *Parable of the Sower*). Those left outside of the compounds are left to their own devices, and by necessity survive on handouts or by scavenging, and they scrounge together their food and shelter, living in the margins and on outskirts of the cities. These themes are recognisable as fictional counterparts to concerns voiced by many scholars, concerns that the fabric of society is no longer shared but rather isolated in small heterotopic and homogeneous communities.[13] In Atwood's trilogy the restrictions and surveillance are sometimes aggressive (including strip-searches of women entering the compound) but mostly more insidious: mail being read, computers being confiscated. In this she reflects concerns of her time, when the Internet was already broadly in use and the power of big tech and data collection was on the rise. In Butler's work, the restrictions are a combination of negligence (the absence of police and fire department intervention) and aggression: trespassers coming to steal fruit off the trees and valuables from the homes, or simply vandalise, preferably by arson.

All of these books provide a spectrum of architectural environments that can show us some of the values implied in their material forms. Butler's parables provide a rural perspective, back to the land. Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* takes the ruins as its departure point, but although she adds a feminist perspective to the late-twentieth-century buildings, she uses the rubble as foundation for envisioning her new society. Le Guin's forest takes in the ecological concerns of the 1960s and 1970s, and expands them to a coherent logic of a symbiotic relationship with the forest in alien surroundings. In fact, the manner in which Le Guin creates a language and social order that aligns with the ideas of the community as a whole is akin to the holistic approach of the Davos declaration.

Heritage: everyday presence and cultural imagination

The Davos declaration suggests that we not only examine

what is of value in our histories and traditions, but also that we understand the cultural imagination at work, that we gain insight into the mutual interaction between the built environment and the society it co-creates. More than anything, these science fiction narratives allow us to enter a different world and envision other relations to the environment, built and otherwise. Atwood describes a city after a pandemic has caused full societal collapse and buildings and infrastructures are no longer maintained. The series shows human communities working in the margins of what was once constructed. Butler returns to what might seem a pastoral ideal with the self-sustaining household in a remote area, yet is grounded in feminist approaches of working together to provide for the community.[14] And Le Guin uses an alien community to highlight the differences between the logic of dominance and extraction versus a more integrated approach to environment and resources. All three include fundamental changes to the earth's climate.

What these stories show beyond the particular narratives of a feminist, egalitarian, embedded and entangled perspective, is that there are cultural and material expressions particular to a time and a context. In this, they provide a specific, concrete expression of the type of holistic approach legible in the Davos statement on building culture. Stories such as those of Le Guin, Butler and Atwood offer us precisely this type of integral narrative: the environment and the social structures are intertwined, presenting us with a view to our own 'collective unconscious'. A future policy approach to heritage may benefit from taking into account not only existing architectural examples and a historical survey, but also the cultural imaginations present in literature and pop culture, as additional expressions of the fundamental question: how do we wish to live together, and how will we shape the future?

The powers of observation these three authors apply to constructing the worlds they can envision, draw out the more hidden logic of power, of dominance, of the threats inherent to placing one perspective and one group above others. Le Guin clearly describes the abuse of power that is fed by a system of colonisation. When we seek to articulate a way of living together that applies to the common good, Atwood and Butler also show how insidious some of the small, seemingly insignificant decisions can be. Butler, in describing the corporate towns beginning to arise, shows how the public good, the shared services and the idea of solidarity are easily dismantled in favour of security when society is under siege, and when food and clean water are scarce.

As such, these three authors reflect on the underlying habits and conventions through which society and the built environment shape each other. If the stories of Le Guin, Atwood and Butler present us with futures we hope to avoid, they also extrapolate the hidden habits embedded in our built environments. They offer a challenge to architecture and heritage thinking to include the more complicated entanglements between the built environment and collective values. They provide an image of what is needed for 'resolving the challenges facing our living environment with shared responsibility and cooperation for the common good'.[15]

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Notes

1. Davos declaration 2018, 'Towards a high-quality *Baukultur* in Europe', https://baukultur--production--storage.s3.amazonaws.com/baukultur/2022-06-09-081317--davos-declaration.pdf.
2. Paolo Portoghesi, ed., *The Presence of the Past* (New York: Academy Editions, 1980); Denise Scott Brown, 'On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern: A Discourse for Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects', reprinted in *Oppositions Reader: Selected Essays 1973–1984*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998 [1976]), 317–30; Charles Jencks, *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* (New York: Academy Editions, 1977).
3. United Nations Environment Programme, *2021 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction: Towards a Zero-emission, Efficient and Resilient Buildings and Construction Sector* (Nairobi, 2021), https://unep.org.
4. Bart Decroos, Kornelia Dimitrova, Sereh Mandias and Elsbeth Ronner, 'Ecology & Aesthetics', *OASE* 112 (2023), 3–10.
5. Davos declaration.
6. Atwood's well-known book *The Handmaid's Tale* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1985) is a cautionary tale about freedoms that are easily lost, set in a future New England under a patriarchal totalitarian regime; Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974) presents an anarchist utopia as a thought experiment; Butler's *Kindred* (New York: Doubleday, 1979) is an exploration of nineteenth-century slave society through the eyes of a twentieth-century Black woman who travels back in time and experiences the slavery of her ancestors firsthand.

7. Margaret Atwood, *In Other Worlds: SF and the Human Imagination* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012).
8. Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); *The Year of the Flood* (New York: Doubleday, 2009); *Maddaddam* (New York: Doubleday, 2013).
9. Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993); followed up by *Parable of the Talents* (New York: Seven Stories, 1998).
10. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, 6. The way the neighbourhoods are described recalls Mike Davis's book *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage, 1992).
11. Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Word for World is Forest* (New York: Berkley Books, 1976 [1972]).
12. Ibid., 14.
13. Thomas Piketty addresses the social inequality related to the accumulation of capital in Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Sherry Turkle discusses the social isolation that derives from technological advances in Turkle, *Alone Together* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
14. Additionally, Butler's *Parable of the Sower* addresses the risks of privatisation in a capitalist society gone astray. At first, towns are innocuously privatised, but this leads to a system of exploitation and indentured servitude.
15. Davos Baukultur memorandum 2023, https://davosdeclaration2018.ch/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/06/2023-05-11-132341-davos-baukultur-memorandum-en.pdf.

Biography

Lara Schrijver is professor in architecture theory at the University of Antwerp, Faculty of Design Sciences. Her research focuses on twentieth-century architecture and its theories. Her work has been widely published in architecture journals and she has served as editor for *Footprint Architecture Theory Journal* and *OASE* as well as for the *KNOB Bulletin*. She was co-editor of *Autonomous Architecture in Flanders* (2016), of three editions of the annual review *Architecture in the Netherlands* (2016-2019), and editor of *The Tacit Dimension: Architecture Knowledge and Scientific Research* (2021). Her most recent book is *Oswald Mathias Ungers and Rem Koolhaas* (2021).

On Science Fiction, Heritage Architecture and Other Demons: In Conversation with Moira Crone

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Abstract
This conversation with Moira Crone was inspired by her science fiction novel *The Not Yet.* The interview opens with a question regarding the capacity of architectural heritage to carry past and present values, as well as our stories, and help us make sense of the world. With an emphasis on the historic French quarter in New Orleans, Crone explains why the preservation of the city's most famous neighborhood was necessary for the plot and how in reality this preservation takes place. She discusses the difficult and cruel history of plantation homes in Louisiana, as well as moments in which the strict racial hierarchies broke down, creating possibilities for different ways of co-existence among its inhabitants. Crone unpacks her ideas about archetypical architectural spaces like the theater, and the subversive role it can play in contemporary or imaginative societies. The interview concludes with a discussion about science fiction's connections to architectural thinking and the author's creative process.

Keywords
Moira Crone, science fiction, novels, contested heritage, New Orleans

Author Moira Crone is known for novels and short stories that exemplify the spirit of the New South.[1] We were especially intrigued by her science fiction novel *The Not Yet* (2012), which portrays cultural and contested architectural heritage, while imagining distant future societies. [Fig. 1] Set in the year 2112, the plot takes place primarily in the city of New Orleans, the enclaves surrounding New Orleans, and the new Walled Urb of Re-New Orleans, located at the edge of the United Authority Protectorate (what used to be the United States). In the novel Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River have merged, flooding major portions of the mainland. Humankind has managed to extend its life expectancy considerably, hoping to reach eternal life. This has become possible through a surgical procedure that adds a protective prodermis to the body and delays the process of aging. This possibility is strictly available to the societal stratum of Heirs, who control the country. Two other groups comprise the society of the novel: the Not Yets and the Nats. The Not Yets are sponsored by the Heirs and spend their early life trying to acquire the trust that can afford them the surgery. The Nats are condemned to a mortal life. The spatial division between these three societal rungs are very strict, the rules of conduct highly controlled and prescribed. For example, a Not Yet cannot touch an Heir or address them unless explicitly asked so. The story is narrated through the perspective of Malcom,

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a Not Yet whose work is to perform at the theater. The book has been inspiring for the spatial imagination, as it has been used in architectural studios and eco-futurism classes.[2] Here we wanted to learn more, from the author herself, about her understanding of the connections between imaginative world making, architecture, contested heritage, and writing.

The Sunken Quarter and its significance

Angeliki and Aleksandar: It comes as no surprise that *The Not Yet* has been inspiring for the spatial imagination given how it depicts space: New Orleans in particular. The well-known Louisiana city is transformed into a bunch of islands, inhabited by the Heirs. Floodwalls and levees protect these islands from the rising waters, while keeping Not Yets and Nats away. The urban environment is distinctly different from the way New Orleans looks today. Yet, there is a part of the city that is not flooded, in your story. A levee keeps the Old River from flooding New Orleans's historic French Quarter, known in the narrative as the Sunken Quarter. Malcolm, the protagonist of the story, is mesmerised when he first lays eyes on the Quarter and the way the spine of the cathedral (which is recognisable as the St. Louis Cathedral) catches the light.

We feel that, like us, you see architectural heritage (like the French Quarter) as a carrier of cultural, social, ecological values. You trust that architectural heritage protects our past and present stories; stories through which we make sense of the world. We speculate that this may be the reason why you have chosen to keep this old part of the city, the city's heart, intact. In a narrative where it would have been possible to flood it – at least this is what we feel as readers – you chose not to do so. What more than a point of reference does the architecture of the Quarter offer you in creating the dystopian future world of your novel? Why do you spare the Quarter and its architecture from the water?

Moira: At the time I wrote the novel, it made sense to keep the Quarter intact given its character as some centre for pilgrimage, where people go to have a good time, let go of their normal puritanical restrictions. The Quarter still has this quality for people all over the country. It's a place where you let your hair down, where you don't have the same kinds of rules: you drink on the street, for example, or people wear costumes. America is a very strict place in a lot of ways, in term of its puritanical and Protestant ethic, and people still have those social rules. But the Quarter has never been that way. For example, during Prohibition, when drinking was illegal in the United States, there were literally hundreds of speakeasies in the French Quarter. They just completely ignored this law, as if it were in another country, as if it were Cuba which was also attractive to tourists because drinking was legal, during that period. So, I had the idea that it would be economically feasible or useful for what's left of New Orleans in the far future to preserve the Quarter for the purpose of bringing people there.

Second, I think it is a shrine in a way, the thing that people in the city will always save, the identity of the city. In the Quarter the buildings can become extremely dilapidated. There is constantly a mould problem, a crumbling problem – because there are layers of stucco on top of very old bricks. Stucco and bricks were used because there was a fire in the eighteenth century, which led the government at the time to implement a rule regarding building materials: no wooden structures were allowed in the Quarter. And even though it's really hard to maintain this kind of architectural materials in such a damp climate, as water is constantly seeping up from beneath, people do maintain them. The built environment, in a way, becomes a lived environment. It is almost alive, because you constantly have to feed it, to take care of it. This is also true for some of the wooden structures uptown. They're maintained in such a way where almost everything about them is new, but the old design remains. This is why I talk about a shrine-like quality. This kind of approach reminds of the Shinto temples in Japan. Shinto temples are made of wood, so they don't last that long. The claim is that this is a 1400-year-old temple, but actually every piece of wood in it gets replaced every twenty years.[3] There is something similar in a lot of New Orleans's buildings that people maintain in this kind of religious way. The preservation of the Quarter feels like a regional practice of devotion.

The Wooden Palace and architecture with historical references

Angeliki and Aleksandar: Besides the strong presence of the French Quarter in *The Not Yet* you also employ architectural spaces that remind us of some strong historical precedents. For example, the Wooden Palace recalls images of big plantation houses, surrounded, as you write, by oaks and even some fields of cane. To us it is fascinating that you use a reference of architectural heritage like that and make it evolve into, what we call in this issue of *Footprint,* an inclusive place for shared futures. In the privacy of her Wooden Palace, the Heir Dr Greenmore studies books she is not supposed to study and discovers information about people's old ways of living, their beliefs about religion, family and love. She slowly falls in love with Malcolm, who is a Not Yet. She sheds her prodermis – something completely inconceivable – to make love to him. She rebels against the established regime by refusing to show up to her standard yearly appointment for the

Fig. 1: Moira Crone, *The Not Yet.* Second Edition. New Orleans: University of New Orleans Press: 2024. Cover Design: Kevin Stone.

renewal of her prodermis. In the microcosm of the Wooden Palace, a place steeped in history, you offer a possibility to assess the past, present and future impact of a heritage site on the (re)creation of shared cultures and memories. Why do you imagine all these events and a place reminiscent of a plantation house?

Moira: There's the general horrible story of the plantations and slavery, as we all know. Then, there are variants, things that happened, particularly after the Civil War, that broke down some of the barriers in the plantations. For example, in cases when the patriarch had died or was very severely wounded, there would be a disruption of the usual social order in the plantation, because to maintain these properties there had to be a whole lot more interaction between African Americans (now freed men) and their former owners. So, there were areas in this society where the relationship between the races was negotiated differently. Louisiana is a unique place because there's more interaction and more intermarriage historically among black people and white people than anywhere else in the United States. The reason is that many, largely Catholic, men (since Louisiana is a Catholic society) who had a black mistress, recognised their children and their children inherited money. This created a whole society of mixed-race people, now called the Creole society. Unlike much of the South, in Louisiana it was more common, as it was in the Caribbean. Because the Wooden Palace, in the plot, doesn't have a patriarch or somebody pushing the rules and making sure everybody stays separate, some boundaries are renegotiated. There are rules that determine the interaction, a lot of rituals and a very high level of intricacy, but at the same time there is also mixing among the people.

Angeliki and Aleksandar: So, you find it natural that this mixing of people would happen in a place reminiscent of a plantation house, because historically this kind of mixing has taken place there?

Moira: Indeed, there are some precedents. There was an incredible amount of brutality in the plantations, of course, but I think this brutality did break down at various times. For example, the Melrose plantation, in the Natchitoches Parish in Louisiana. This plantation was run by a woman of colour, a black woman who inherited it from her white husband. Of course, we cannot know what it was really like when she ran the plantation, but the strict hierarchical structure broke down, at least to a degree, according to African Americans who lived there. There are many features of that plantation that make it feel like an African village. For example, some of the architecture is African in origin. When you go there, even now, you see a lot of things that look African. For example, the cows are grazing under shade trees, which you don't usually see in America. Here most cattle graze on open pastures with no shade or very few large trees. In the Melrose plantation there are also buildings with extremely high-pitched roofs and very deep eaves, which are also not common in the US.

There is a famous painter, Clementine Hunter, a self-taught black folk artist, who lived and worked in the Melrose plantation. She started painting in her late fifties. She depicted all these scenes from her childhood, creating environments that again look like an African village, and communicating a sense of community: people in groups going to church, or working together, for example. [Fig. 2]

For the theme of this issue of *Footprint,* I think you will very much appreciate the fact that there is a piece of architecture in the Melrose plantation called the Africa House. [Fig. 3, 4] Some people have speculated it's the only example of truly African architecture in the United States, because it was built by African artisans, though others have disputed this. In any case, if you look at the building, it obviously has enormous resonance with African architecture and the designer was familiar with African building styles. It has a thatched roof that overhangs the entire second story. So, nobody walks on the balcony outside the second story without being in this deep shade. It's of earthen materials and it does not look like American or English architecture at all.

I also think of the French architecture that was originally constructed in New Orleans and Louisiana in the eighteenth century. The deep eaves were very common, and so were roofs that overhung the second storey of a house, keeping the first and second storey cool. The first storey would be out of brick and the second storey would be wooden. Those houses also incorporate African ideas. It is also what you see in the Caribbean, in Key West, in Saint Martin's, in Cuba. The plantation architecture that came later, with its neoclassical white Greek columns, is out of place, not particularly harmonious with our climate and actual society. These were, in a sense, later temples to the wealthy families. This architecture was meant to allude to the great temples and highly cultured, stratified societies of antiquity. The grandiosity was a political statement made by slave-owning men who wanted to glorify their position and display their wealth.

The theatre and its subversion

Angeliki and Aleksandar: As readers with an architectural interest, we were highly fascinated, and maybe surprised, by the way you used the space of the theatre in your narrative. The theatre is an archetypical architectural space. Its significance socially and culturally is described even in

Fig. 2: Everyday work in the Melrose plantation, with the Africa House in the background. Clementine Hunter, *The Wash*, 1950s, oil on board. Source: Minneapolis Institute of Art, The Ethel Morrison van Derlip Fund. © Clementine Hunter Estate and Cane River Art Corporation.

the very first surviving architectural treatise by Vitruvius, dating back at the first century BC. The theatre has historically been the place to educate, to inform, to express political opinions or oppositions, to feel catharsis, to be part of the community, to prepare to go to war (soldiers in ancient Greece would go to the theatre before heading to battle). In the novel there is a striking scene in which the Heirs go to the theatre, where the Not Yets perform, to see someone dying in real time on stage. Why are you imagining this dystopian scenario in the space of the theatre? What do you see in this archetype of heritage architecture that sparks a future scenario like that?

Moira: Let me start by saying that the idea of the Heirs watching an actual death as if it is a performance, came from a movie by Luis Buñuel, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. There is a scene where people can't stand to watch each other eat, but they watch each other use the bathroom. This is a bizarre concept, you know. It is surreal and sort of just absolutely disgusting. But the people in the film are bored beyond belief, and are seeking titillation, stimulation. The Heirs in the novel are constantly looking for novelty, to see something that they have never seen before. And of course, there are so many examples in ancient history of people watching carnage, like in the Colosseum and all those stadiums all over the Roman Empire. I was thinking about a stadium, really, more than a theatre, but a stadium with very steep seats. The space where the Heirs go to watch someone actually dying is inside a high-rise. I was thinking of the ruins of the hotels associated with the current casinos on the Gulf Coast, essentially skyscrapers. There are real theatres inside these buildings which can host thousands of people, for concerts by famous artists. I assume they don't have quite the same feeling as the intimacy of a theatre where you can actually see the people performing or see their physical bodies up close. The zeal of the audience, as I describe it, came very much from the ideas of what went on in ancient Rome. Because the Heirs' whole lives are bent on never dying, watching a person die becomes the most fascinating form of entertainment, the irresistible glimpse of the forbidden.

Science fiction and its architectural possibilities

Angeliki and Aleksandar: Science fiction is a unique literary genre where our own past histories merge with present concerns to form an improbable vision of future societies. What prompted you to write a science fiction novel?

Moira: I have always very much admired people like Margaret Atwood. And I really love this book called *The Children of Men* by P. D. James, which was also a departure or deviation from the work that she usually did. P. D. James was mostly a mystery writer and did not write another science fiction novel, but I think this is one of her best works. It is set in England, and it has the interesting premise that for twenty-some years, there have been no people born. There's infertility all over the world and nobody knows the cause. The novel explores how the society deteriorates under these conditions. I always loved this book and then I had a dream, about a woman who is much older than the male companion that she is with, and they are together in a restaurant on Magazine Street in New Orleans. In my dream a voice came to me and said: 'She's two hundred years older than he is.' So, I guess I just started-thinking of how a society deteriorates not if people are not born, as is the case with *The Children of Men*, but if people do not die.

In the beginning I was very reluctant to write the book. I didn't think I knew enough about the genre. I published chapters of it in *The New Orleans Review,* which is a small magazine run by Loyola University. And for the first time in their history, they got letters. People wrote to the magazine asking to read more of this. So, I started writing again and I published a second instalment in the magazine, but then I stopped because I had not read any science fiction really. Not because I do not appreciate science fiction. On the contrary, I personally think it to be the most inventive form of literature and probably the most useful. So, I sat down and read a lot of it. And I got ideas from writers such as P. D. James and Margaret Atwood and other people that I really admired first for their work in other genres. And then I read *Dune* by Frank Herbert and many works by Philip Dick, whose writings I love, and Ursula Le Guin and, one of my favourites, Octavia Butler. All these gave me a lot to work with and finish the novel. I have not written another science fiction novel since *The Not Yet* either, though I am working on one now.

Angeliki and Aleksandar: In depicting the city of New Orleans as sunken, there are many evocative descriptions of third floor balconies that have turned into porches on the water, or the protagonist navigating his way through the water and seeing the roofs of the camelbacks – a characteristic housing tye of the city – slightly protruding from the water. The descriptions are so poetic and so believable. How do you build these spatial images?

Moira: I actually had the chance to look into real life urban examples: cities like Venice and Prague. I had visited Venice and I had looked at how these buildings had survived various changes in sea level. As you probably know, palazzos and streets there have sunk considerably over the years. Also in Prague, where I used to teach in summer schools, there are actually several storeys below the current street level that exist in almost every building in

Fig. 3: Africa House, one of the earliest buildings built by black people with an interesting roof reminiscent of an African design, constructed circa 1820, Melrose Plantation, Natchitoches, Louisiana. National Register of Historic Places NRIS Number: 72000556. © Library of Congress / public domain.

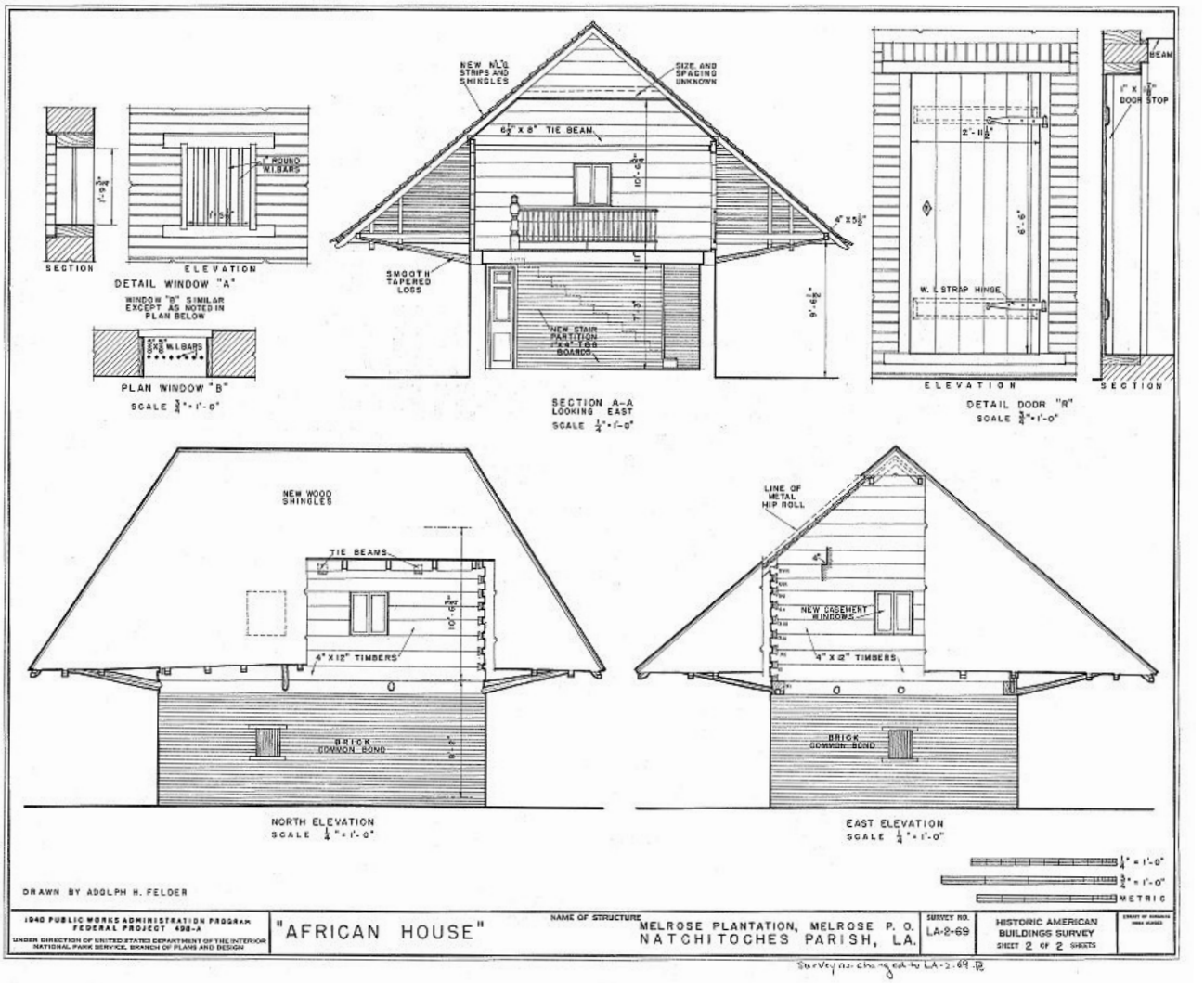

Fig 4: Africa House, elevations and sections, Melrose Plantation, Natchitoches, Louisiana. National Register of Historic Places NRIS Number: 72000556. © Library of Congress / public domain.

the old town. They raised the street level because of the Vltava river, which has flooded the city at different occasions over the centuries. So, the level of the street has been altered radically over a very long time, and the former first storeys of the stone buildings became basements. Those were the kinds of ideas I had as I was writing it and imagining New Orleans flooded. It had nothing to do directly with hurricane Katrina. I finished a draft of the book long before the hurricane, but it was published afterwards. People saw it as a commentary on the destruction the hurricane caused, though in reality it was not.

Creative process

Angeliki and Aleksandar: Finally, we are inspired by the fact that you are both a writer and a painter. We are curious about your creative process, whether you use your painting as an inspiration for your writing or the other way around.

Moira: This is actually a bit hard to describe. Let me begin by saying that the reason I started painting is because it gives me, it has always given me, so much pleasure. I have now, more or less, spent the last four years just being a visual artist, focusing exclusively on painting. Writing is a very hard task. You sit in a chair for months, or years, and at this point in my life I didn't want to sit in a chair for another ten years, let's say. Maybe I even lost my patience with writing a little a bit. When I work on a painting, I will see something that indicates a narrative. Actually, sometimes, I make paintings based on things I have researched for novels. I tend to use collage. I take a lot of digital photographs, I print them out, and I use these images – that come from my environment – in the paintings. Then the works usually have a narrative reference and I tend to see a story that emerges from the unconscious, what you might call the back of your mind. I have come to trust feeling more than the rational part of my awareness in the creative process. I really can't say why this is, but I think maybe because I have trouble hearing. I am spending a lot of energy processing verbal stuff, and it gets exhausting, and I think the rest of my mind has just started to take over. I like the idea that when you start painting you don't know where you are going, what is going to happen. In a novel you have to prepare, you have to plan and so forth. In reality, though, I feel the two arts, and all the arts, are one endeavour. When I was teaching creative writing and short story writing I tried to get people to use another medium to express the structure of the tale, the goal being to recognise the sisterhood of the arts, and the way that prose has structure, as does music, and of course painting, architecture… all are related. In reality my writing and my painting are the same activity, just the emphasis is different. A great deal of visualisation and intuitional thinking went into the design of the world of *The Not Yet*.

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Notes

1. For more information on Moira Crone's work and biography see her personal website: https://moiracrone.com/bio/.
2. We first came to know about *The Not Yet* through the Option Design Studio 'Speculative Urbanism and Imagination of City Futures through Science Fiction' (ARCH 5000) that associate professor Traci Birch ran at the School of Architecture of Louisiana State University in the autumn of 2020. We had the chance to participate in online reviews and see the students' experiments with cartographic exercises inspired by the novel.
3. The process is called *tokowaka*.

Phantom Writing

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Abstract
In this visual essay I present a body of artistic work done within informal urban and suburban heritage sites in Kyoto. Through the media of text, photography, film and site-specific painting, my works from the cycle *Spirit Grounds* engage with these sites involving material physical aspects as well as beliefs, fictions, and more-than-human beings. Building upon this, I propose 'phantom writing' or 'phantasmography' as a situated, multidisciplinary and multisensory approach aimed at understanding and designing contemporary places, landscapes and environments, acknowledging and mediating the agency of diverse phantoms and phantasms.

Keywords
Phantoms, phantasms, spirit grounds, phantom writing, phantasmography

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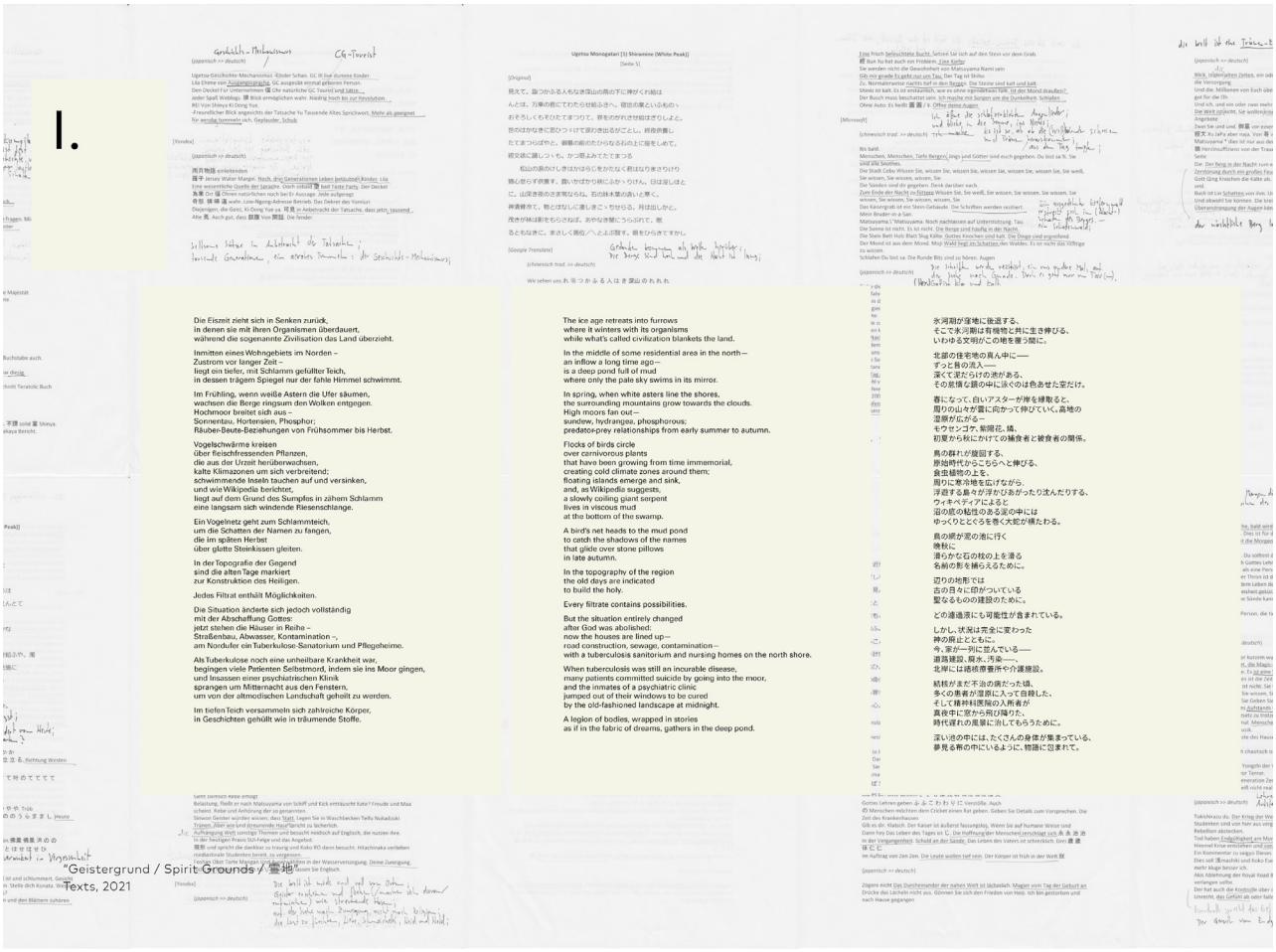
Phantoms, phantasms, spirits, ghosts, and spectres – very broadly defined – are invisible or hard-to-grasp agents that exert an influence on our present world. They can be formerly existing persons or species, very small or very big things or beings, mental images, and sociocultural narratives, accepted or often neglected pasts and anticipated futures, hopes, dreams and fears. Situated between established categories – such as humans and other-than-humans, active and passive matter, the secular and the nonsecular, the living and the dead, the real and the imaginary, and so on – they offer powerful vantage points from which to understand and reconceive our contemporary environment.[1]

Every ground bears traces of past events and is imbued with histories and beliefs, turning it into heritage in the broadest sense. This is especially true for the city of Kyoto, home to Nintendo and other high-tech facilities. This contemporary city (like many others) is saturated with a network of densely storied grounds that extends well beyond well-known monuments. Even more than the official heritage sites, these everyday places and landscapes, which are covered with stories, myths, beliefs and superstitions, shape perceptions and actions. According to popular conceptions, they are not only inhabited by the living, but also by spirits, phantoms and other (un)dead. Amid a well-kept residential area, for example, a muddy pond (Midoroga-ike) opens up. Strange creatures are said to mingle in its rich flora and fauna, and at its bottom a passage to the netherworld and the realm of demons is assumed. Expressways lead across former graveyards (Toribeno) where birds have pecked at unburied bodies. Noses and ears of nameless victims of war amass in grass-covered monuments (Mimizuka) next to children's playgrounds and single-family homes, and the ghosts of the dead huddle together in secluded underpasses (Kazando Tunnel) when the nearby tourist attractions are deserted at night. Taken together, such places constitute a more-than-human and more-than-secular common ground, in which matter and stories, facts and fictions, past, present and future merge. In this regard, they are a repository of real and imagined pasts that influence the present life and from which shared futures can be imagined, narrated and constructed.

Fig. 1, 2: Michael Hirschbichler, 'Geistergrund / Spirit Grounds / 霊地', texts, 2019–21.

I.



Die Eiszeit zieht sich in Senken zurück,
in denen sie mit ihren Organismen überdauert,
während die sogenannte Zivilisation das Land überzieht.

Inmitten eines Wohngebiets im Norden –
Zustrom vor langer Zeit –
liegt ein tiefer, mit Schlamm gefüllter Teich,
in dessen trägem Spiegel nur der fahle Himmel schwimmt.

Im Frühling, wenn weiße Astern die Ufer säumen,
wachsen die Berge ringsum den Wolken entgegen.
Hochmoor breitet sich aus –
Sonnentau, Hortensien, Phosphor;
Räuber-Beute-Beziehungen von Frühsommer bis Herbst.

Vogelschwärme kreisen
über fleischfressenden Pflanzen,
die aus der Urzeit herüberwachsen,
kalte Klimazonen um sich verbreitend;
schwimmende Inseln tauchen auf und versinken,
und wie Wikipedia berichtet,
liegt auf dem Grund des Sumpfes in zähem Schlamm
eine langsam sich windende Riesenschlange.

Ein Vogelnetz geht zum Schlammteich,
um die Schatten der Namen zu fangen,
die im späten Herbst
über glatte Steinkissen gleiten.

In der Topografie der Gegend
sind die alten Tage markiert
zur Konstruktion des Heiligen.

Jedes Filtrat enthält Möglichkeiten.

Die Situation änderte sich jedoch vollständig
mit der Abschaffung Gottes:
jetzt stehen die Häuser in Reihe –
Straßenbau, Abwasser, Kontamination –,
am Nordufer ein Tuberkulose-Sanatorium und Pflegeheime.

Als Tuberkulose noch eine unheilbare Krankheit war,
begingen viele Patienten Selbstmord, indem sie ins Moor gingen,
und Insassen einer psychiatrischen Klinik
sprangen um Mitternacht aus den Fenstern,
um von der altmodischen Landschaft geheilt zu werden.

Im tiefen Teich versammeln sich zahlreiche Körper,
in Geschichten gehüllt wie in träumende Stoffe.

The ice age retreats into furrows
where it survives with its organisms
while what's called civilization blankets the land.

In the middle of some residential area in the north—
an inflow a long time ago—
is a deep pond full of mud
where only the pale sky swims in its mirror.

In spring, when white asters line the shores,
the surrounding mountains grow towards the clouds.
High moors fan out—
sundew, hydrangea, phosphorous;
predator-prey relationships from early summer to autumn.

Flocks of birds circle
over carnivorous plants
that have been growing from time immemorial,
creating cold climate zones around them;
floating islands emerge and sink,
and, as Wikipedia suggests,
a slowly coiling giant serpent
lives in viscous mud
at the bottom of the swamp.

A bird's net heads to the mud pond
to catch the shadows of the names
that glide over stone pillows
in late autumn.

In the topography of the region
the old days are indicated
to build the holy.

Every filtrate contains possibilities.

But the situation entirely changed
after God was abolished:
now the houses are lined up—
road construction, sewage, contamination—
with a tuberculosis sanitorium and nursing homes on the north shore.

When tuberculosis was still an incurable disease,
many patients committed suicide by going into the moor,
and the inmates of a psychiatric clinic
jumped out of their windows to be cured
by the old-fashioned landscape at midnight.

A legion of bodies, wrapped in stories
as if in the fabric of dreams, gathers in the deep pond.

氷河期が窪地に後退する、
そこで水河期は有機物と共に生き伸びる、
いわゆる文明がこの地を覆う間に。

北部の住宅地の真ん中に——
ずっと昔の流入——
深くて泥だらけの池がある、
その足取な鏡の中には淡やのは色あせた空だけ。

春になって、白いアスターが岸を縁取ると、
周りの山々が雲に向かって伸びていく。高地の
湿原が広がる—
モウセンゴケ、紫陽花、燐、
初夏から秋にかけての捕食者と被食者の関係。

鳥の群れが旋回する、
原始時代からこちらへと伸びる、
食虫植物の上を、
周りに寒冷地を広げながら、
浮遊する島々が浮かびあがったり沈んだりする、
ウィキペディアによると
沼の底の粘性のある泥の中には
ゆっくりとにうを巻く大蛇が棲たある。

鳥の網が泥の池に行く
晩秋に
滑らかな石の枕の上を滑る
名前の影を捕らえるために。

辺りの地形では
古の日々に印がついている
聖なるものの建設のために。

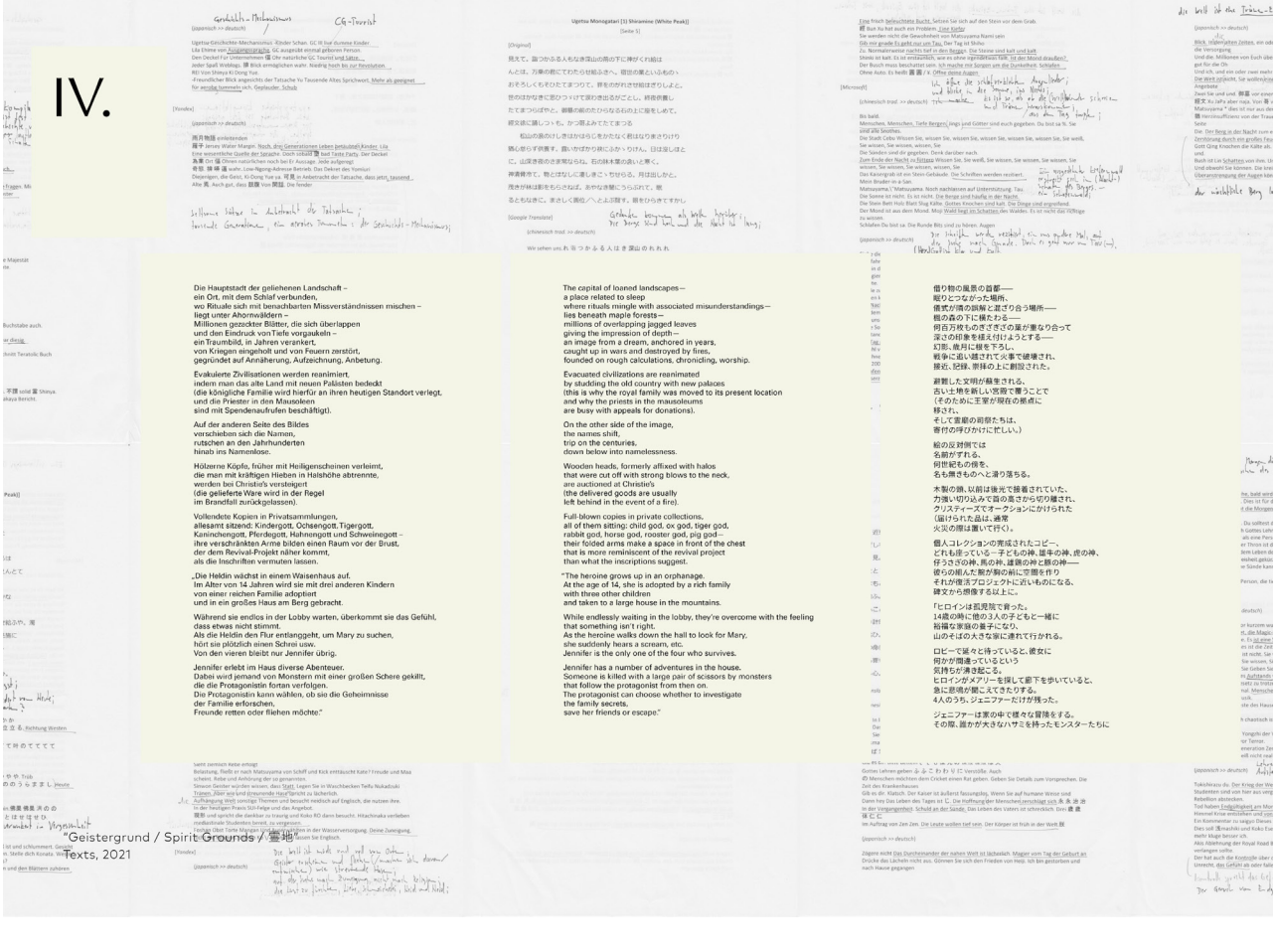
どの濾過液にも可能性が含まれている。

しかし、状況は完全に変わった
神の麻止とともに、
今、家が一列に並んでいる——
道路建設、腐水、汚染——、
北岸には結核療養所や介護施設。

結核がまだ不治の病だった頃、
多くの患者が湿原に入って自殺した、
そして精神科医院の入所者が
真夜中に窓から飛び降りた、
時代遅れの風景に治してもらうために。

深い沼の中には、たくさんの身体が集まっている、
夢見る布の中にいるように、物語に包まれて。

IV.



Die Hauptstadt der geliehenen Landschaft –
ein Ort, mit dem Schlaf verbunden,
wo Rituale sich mit benachbarten Missverständnissen mischen –
liegt unter Ahornwäldern –
Millionen gezackter Blätter, die sich überlappen
und den Eindruck von Tiefe vorgaukeln –
ein Traumbild, in Jahren verankert,
von Kriegen eingehollt und von Feuern zerstört,
gegründet auf Annäherung, Aufzeichnung, Anbetung.

Evakuierte Zivilisationen werden reanimiert,
indem man das alte Land mit neuen Palästen bedeckt
(die königliche Familie wird heute in Hanshöhe abtrennte,
werden bei Christie's versteigert
(die gelieferte Ware wird in der Regel
im Brandfall zurückgelassen).

Vollendete Kopien in Privatsammlungen,
allesamt sitzend: Kindergott. Ochsengott. Tigergott,
Kaninchengott, Pferdegott, Hahnengott und Schweinegott –
ihre verschränkten Arme bieten einen Raum vor der Brust,
der dem Revival-Projekt näher kommt,
als die Inschriften vermuten lassen.

„Die Heldin wächst in einem Waisenhaus auf.
Im Alter von 14 Jahren wird sie mit drei anderen Kindern
von einer reichen Familie adoptiert
und in ein großes Haus am Berg gebracht.

Während sie endlos in der Lobby warten, überkommt sie das Gefühl,
dass etwas nicht stimmt.
Als die Heldin den Flur entlanggeht, um Mary zu suchen,
hört sie plötzlich einen Schrei usw.
Von den vieren bleibt nur Jennifer übrig.

Jennifer erlebt im Haus diverse Abenteuer.
Dabei wird jemand von Monstern mit einer großen Schere gekillt,
die die Protagonistin fortan verfolgen.
Die Protagonistin kann wählen, ob sie die Geheimnisse
der Familie erforschen,
Freunde retten oder fliehen möchte."

The capital of loaned landscapes—
a place related to sleep
where rituals mingle with associated misunderstandings—
lies beneath maple forests—
millions of overlapping jagged leaves
giving the impression of depth—
an image from a dream, anchored in years,
caught up in wars and destroyed by fires,
founded on rough calculations, chronicling, worship.

Evacuated civilizations are reanimated
by studding the old country with new palaces
(this is why the royal family was moved to its present location
and why the priests in the mausoleums
are busy with appeals for donations).

On the other side of the image,
the names shift,
trip on the centuries,
down below into namelessness.

Wooden heads, formerly affixed with halos
that were cut off with strong blows to the neck,
are auctioned at Christie's
(the delivered goods are usually
left behind in the event of a fire).

Full-blown copies in private collections,
all of them sitting: child god, ox god, tiger god,
rabbit god, horse god, rooster god, pig god –
their folded arms make a space in front of the chest
that is more reminiscent of the revival project
than what the inscriptions suggest.

"The heroine grows up in an orphanage.
At the age of 14, she is adopted by a rich family
with three other children
and taken to a large house in the mountains.

While endlessly waiting in the lobby, they're overcome with the feeling
that something isn't right.
As the heroine walks down the hall to look for Mary,
she suddenly hears a scream, etc.
Jennifer is the only one of the four who survives.

Jennifer has a number of adventures in the house.
Someone is killed with a large pair of scissors by monsters
that follow the protagonist from then on.
The protagonist can choose whether to investigate
the family secrets,
save her friends or escape."

借り物の風景の首都——
眠りとつながった場所、
儀式が誤の誤解と混ざり合う場所——
楓の森の下に横たわる——
何百万枚ものざさざさの葉が重なり合って
深さの印象を描え付けようとする——
幻影、歳月に根を下ろし、
戦争に追い詰まれて火事で破壊され、
捕近、記録、崇拝の上に創設された。

避難した文明が蘇生される、
古い土地に新しい宮殿で埋うことで
(そのために王室が現在の拠点に
移され、
そして霊廟の前祭たちは、
寄付の呼びかけに忙しい。)

絵の反対側では
名前がずれる、
何世紀もの彼を、
名も無きものへと滑り落ちる。

木製の頭、以前は後光で接着されていた、
力強い切り込みで首の高さから切り離され、
クリスティーズでオークションにかけられた
(届けられた品は、通常
火災の際は置いて行く)。

個人コレクションの完成されたコピー、
どれも座っている—子どもの神、雄牛の神、虎の神、
仔うさぎの神、馬の神、雄鶏の神と豚の神——
彼らの組んだ腕が胸の前に空間を作り
それが復活プロジェクトに近いものになる、
碑文から想像する以上に。

「ヒロインは孤児院で育った。
14歳の時に他の3人の子どもと一緒に
裕福な家族の養子になり、
山のそばの大きな家に連れて行かれる。

ロビーで延々と待っていると、彼女に
何かが間違っているという
気持ちが湧き起こる。
ヒロインがメアリーを探しに廊下を歩いていると、
急に悲鳴が聞こえてきたりする。
4人のうち、ジェニファーだけが残った。

ジェニファーは家の中で様々な冒険をする。
その間、誰かが大きなハサミを持ったモンスター たちに

Spirit Grounds

For the work cycle *Spirit Grounds* I worked in and with these storied environments, employing different forms of sensing, recording, and writing, through the media of text, photography, film and site-specific painting.[2]

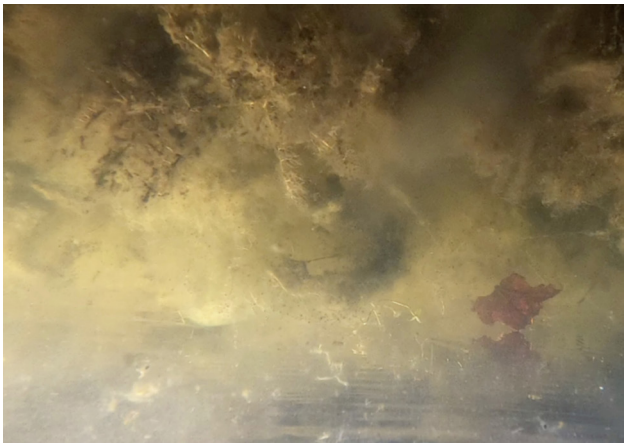
The texts were created as a filtrate from various sources: from popular stories, scholarly articles, magazines, encyclopaedia entries, social media, Google and YouTube posts related to the sites in question. The original texts were translated from Japanese into German with the aid of machine translation tools (it was yet not possible to achieve correct translations in 2019), resulting in profound shifts in the fabric of meaning. From this raw material, I composed new texts through an intensive process of editing and imagining on the basis of the erroneously translated source material. Thus existing stories of various kinds, from various times and from various cultural spheres were taken up and transformed, and reapplied to the (sub) urban spirit grounds. Between languages, genres, and meanings, the resulting poem-like texts reveal new perspectives upon the city's narrative-material topography.

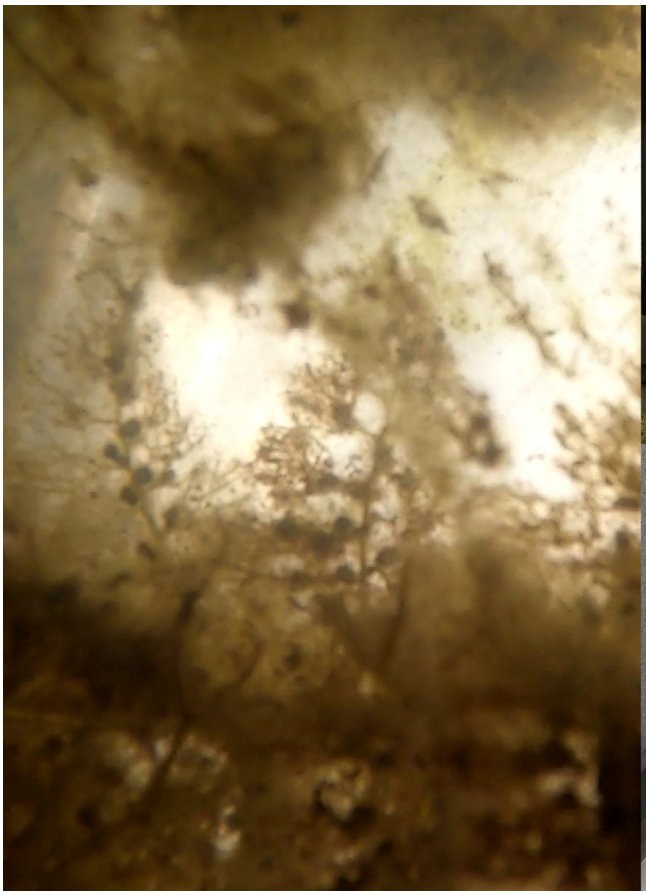
This is continued in the media of photography and film, in which a visual and aural foray through the thick of storied and haunted places unfolds. This begins in the swampy waters of a fabled pond and continues through forests and bamboo groves, across cemeteries and informal garbage dumps, along walls, through underpasses, over bridges, past war monuments and historic execution sites, down into ossuaries, over gravel shores and along riverbanks. Various actors, events and temporal episodes that crowd these places are thereby brought into play.

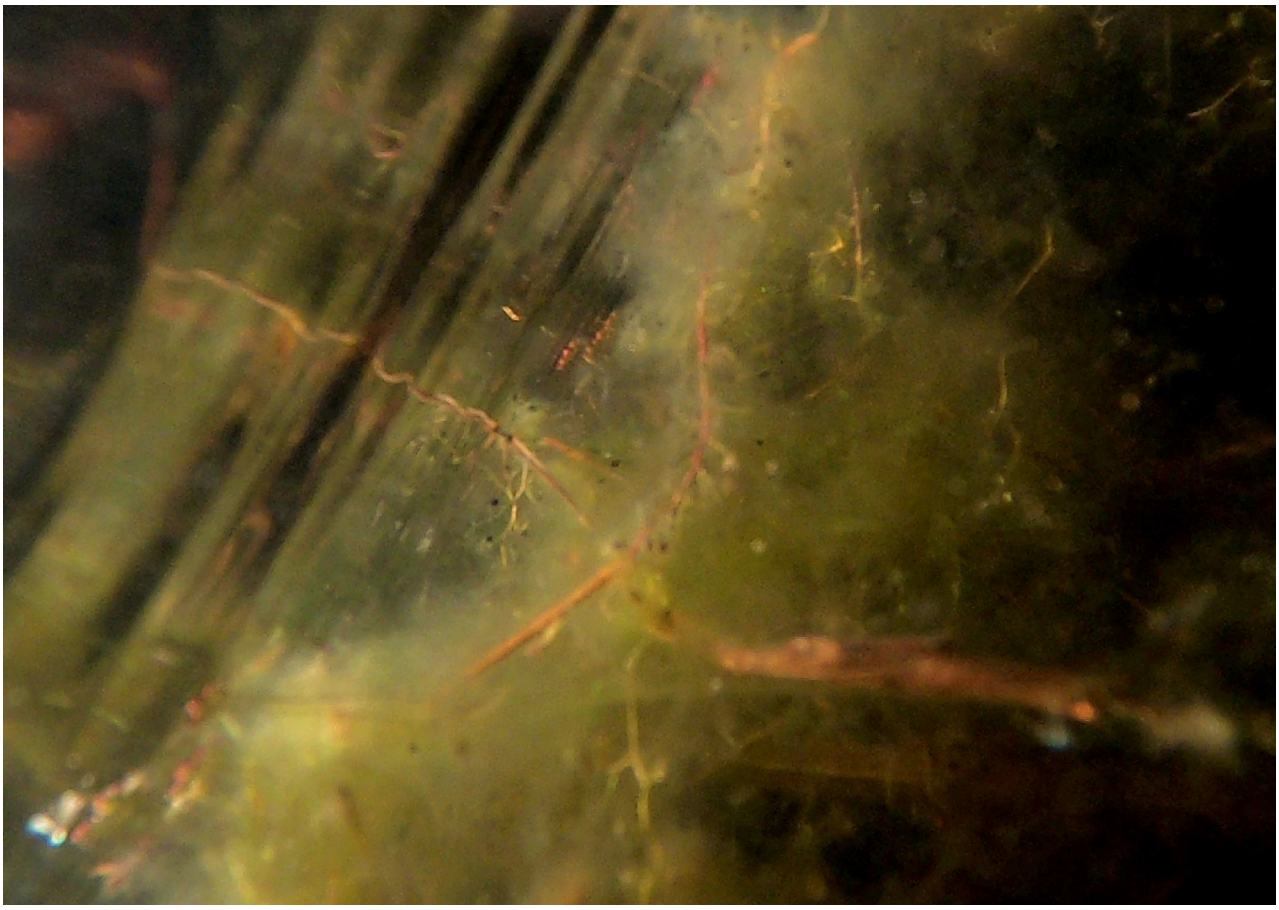
In a series of experimental site-specific paintings I eventually took an approach that fuses a material, dirty and an immaterial, narrative engagement with places. My intention was to capture traces between the field and the archive, between then and now, between real places and imaginary beings, and to set these physical and narrative traces in relation to each another. The paintings are based on scans of spirit scrolls from the Edo period. Thereby I focused not on the depictions of the supernatural, but on the image background onto which these depictions had been drawn and painted. On this pictorial ground, traces had accumulated over the centuries. I printed these archival traces on white cotton fabric (the material used, according to legends, to fashion the robes of female ghosts) and then exposed them to the influences of various mythologically important haunted locations for an extended period of time. As a result, traces of the imaginary historical pictorial space and the physical contemporary urban space are superimposed and intertwined on the same canvas.

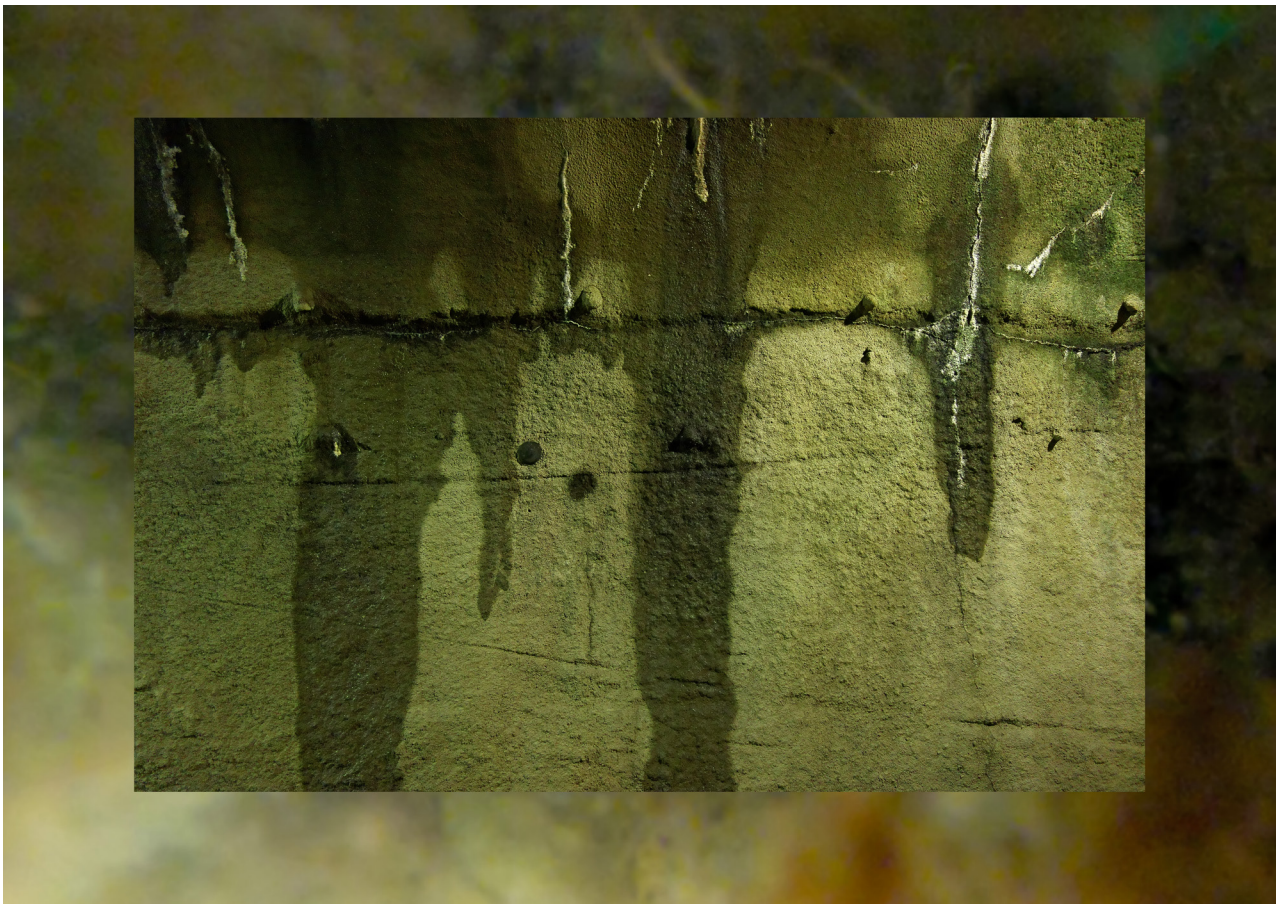
In each of the works, the exploration of particular places is tied to their speculative transformation, whereby translations – into other languages and media, and the errors and slippages that occur in the process – offer new viewpoints and generate new associations of meaning.

Fig. 3–9: Michael Hirschbichler, 'Drei Jahre Herbst / Three Years of Autumn', photographs and film, 2019–21; places: Midoroga-ike pond, Kazando tunnel, Mimizuka, Otani Honbyo cemetery.









Phantasmography

I like to think of these experiments as starting points for a more comprehensive engagement with the phantoms and phantasms that contribute to shaping our natural-cultural environment, our perceptions thereof and the actions that we take in the present and future. Such an engagement with the invisibilities, intangibilities or inaudibilities involved in placemaking could be called 'phantom writing' or 'phantasmography'.

The term phantasmography was originally coined by American anthropologist Robert Desjarlais, while reflecting upon the role of photographic images in the context of visual anthropology. Desjarlais pledged to practice an 'imagistic anthropological mode of knowing', a 'fantastical anthropology' that blurs empiricism and fiction.[3] Building upon Desjarlais' definition of phantasmography as the mere 'writing of the flows and currents of fabulation', I envisage such an endeavour as transcending the disciplinary scope of anthropology and expanding the media from images to more broadly conceived imaginative constructions.[4] These constructions can make visible (or audible or otherwise sensible), make appear, materialise and critically engage with the phantoms and phantasmas that co-create places, landscapes and environments. This pertains to places officially considered heritage sites, where attention is specifically focused on past events, actors and stories. But it equally relates to other places and environments, the stories, phantoms and phantasms of which are generally overlooked.

I therefore propose phantasmography as a multidisciplinary, multisensory and multilayered practice – a situated, site-specific, hands-on approach that relies on embodied perspectives instead of that of a privileged, neutral observer with an overview. Phantasmography, as I understand it, aligns scientific, secular, fact-based, modern, and artistic, nonsecular, speculative, nonmodern modes of sensing and knowing. Only by dissolving these commonly upheld oppositions is it possible to understand the agency of diverse phantoms and fantasies in contemporary world-making. Such an approach could be called a nonsecular, or more precisely a 'more-than-secular' approach, as the secular and rational are not negated but expanded by including those forces and beliefs that come from without. These forces and beliefs are essential in understanding contemporary cultural landscapes – and heritage sites in particular.[5] Phantasmography acknowledges that cultural and religious beliefs and ideologies of various kinds inform our views, values and relations with the environment, provide narratives of world-making and world-destruction, and inform rituals and patterns of behaviour. Phantasmography is therefore concerned with tracing the interrelations that exist between facts and fictions, in order to grasp the reality that they jointly create. Fictions are not mere fantasies. They possess an agency to form beliefs and memories and motivate actions – and they are real insofar as they cause real effects. Starting from the reality at hand, describing, writing, drawing, recording, and enacting it, and thereby including the ghostly and fictional, phantasmography is the practice of an 'expanded realism'.

Fig. 10–12: Michael Hirschbichler, 'Spirit Cloths', the cloths in their respective contexts, pigment prints on Hahnemühle Baryta paper, mounted on museum boards, 84.1 x 59.4 cm each, 2019–2021; photos: author.

Its principal aims are:

1) To see, listen and sense. Phantasmography begins with devising ways for paying close attention to our environment and thus noticing subjects and objects – both human and nonhuman, and in their entanglements – that are frequently overlooked and in many cases are hard to see and grasp. It is therefore necessary to broaden our awareness and to 'extend our senses beyond their comfort zones'.[6]

2) To trace. Such ways of seeing and sensing enable us to trace the presence or absence of these subjects and objects and the often uneven histories that connect or separate them. Many of these absences – so I assume – can be read and reconstituted from the material traces that they leave behind.

3) To construct new kinds of historicity. Starting from the present, phantasmography tries to comprehend the different temporalities that are engrained in our environment. These temporalities include forgotten or repressed pasts that haunt the landscape, as well as imagined futures. Moving beyond linear progressive modern time, phantasmography enters into the swirling temporalities that are spread out in the landscape and strives to attain a more complex, nonlinear and situated conception of time.

4) To negotiate (in)visibilities, (in)audibilities and (in)sensibilities. Thereby we have to take into account that what seem to be invisible or overlooked histories for some, constitute a factual and often painful experienced reality for others. So, what is (in)visible, (in)audible or (in)sensible depends to a large extent on the viewpoint. By approaching different viewpoints and negotiating (in)visibilities, (in)audibilities and (in)sensibilities, phantasmography attempts to gain a broader and more differentiated understanding of present realities.

5) To imagine and design. By sensing, tracing, observing, and negotiating presences and absences – and the more-than-human and nonlinear histories that they are enmeshed in – phantasmography helps to expand our consciousness and imagination. Observation and interpretation, reading and writing, recording and inscribing these recordings back into sites and situations in a speculative way can therefore not be clearly separated. Phantasmography thus fuses imagination and design.

Fig. 13–15: Michael Hirschbichler, 'Spirit Cloths', pigment prints and environmental traces on cotton fabric, 70 x 110 cm each, 2019–21.

All of this is particularly important for heritage sites, as places charged with memories, where sociocultural histories are negotiated and transmitted. The matter of heritage is both material and discursive. It can be physically experienced in the present and it points to past events as elements in narrative constructions and webs of meaning, which entangle the living with the dead and the yet unborn – human and other. A critical and differentiated engagement with the past (or rather various pasts with different degrees of visibility), such as phantasmography is concerned with, is essential for imagining and responsibly constructing desirable shared futures.

Moving back and forth between sensing and making sense, between facts and fictions, between interpretation, invention and intervention, I like to think of phantasmography as a critical and sensitive practice through which we curiously and courageously engage with the environment around us and make and re-make it, piece by piece, over and over again.

Fig. 16: Michael Hirschbichler, ‘Spirit Cloths’, exhibition view at Galerie Karin Sachs, Munich, spring 2021.

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Notes

1. Michael Hirschbichler, 'Phantasmography: Spaces of Extraction,' *IKA Preview Summer 2021* (2021): 10–11; Michael Hirschbichler, 'Phantasmography II: Spaces of Accumulation,' *IKA Preview Winter 2021* (2021): 10–11; Michael Hirschbichler, 'Phantasmography,' *IKA Review Summer 2021* (2022): 2–3; Michael Hirschbichler, 'Phantasmography,' *IKA Review Winter 2021* (2022): 2.
2. Michael Hirschbichler, *Geistergrund / Spirit Grounds /* 霊地 (Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2021).
3. Robert Desjarlais, 'Phantasmography, ' *American Anthropologist* 118, no. 2 (June 2016): 400.
4. Ibid., 401.
5. Nils Bubandt, 'Anthropocene Uncanny: Nonsecular Approaches to Environmental Change,' in *A Non-secular Anthropocene: Spirits, Specters and Other Nonhumans in a Time of Environmental Change*, ed. Nils Bubandt (Aarhus: AURA Working Papers Vol. 3, 2018), 42–53.
6. Anna Tsing, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan and Heather Anne Swanson, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), M7.

Biography

Michael Hirschbichler works across the disciplines of art, architecture and anthropology. He is the director of Atelier Hirschbichler and a researcher at TU Delft. His work focuses on spatial constructions in the Anthropocene, with a particular emphasis on the interrelationship between their material and immaterial aspects (narratives, memories, ideologies, beliefs), between facts and cultural fictions. Hirschbichler studied at ETH Zurich and Humboldt Universität zu Berlin and completed his doctoral dissertation on 'Mythical Constructions' at Berlin University of the Arts. He was a lecturer at ETH Zurich, visiting professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and director of the architecture programme at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology. He is a recipient of the Rome Prize by the German Academy Villa Massimo.

Narrating Shared Futures

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Abstract

This visual essay features students' projects from the MSc2 design studio 'Transdiciplinary Encounters: Narrating Shared Futures' offered at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture in Spring of 2022, which served as an inspiration for this issue of *Footprint*. Designed and taught by the issue editors, Aleksandar Staničić and Angeliki Sioli, the course combined cultural heritage and literary narratives to ask students: How can places of memory be rethought using literary techniques, so that they provide the ground for new meanings to emerge and get shared across different cultures? Seven visionary architectural projects featured in this essay, offered their responses to this pertinent question that is fundamental for narrating, imagining and, ultimately, creating shared futures.

Keywords

Visual essay, architectural education, MSc2 design studio, TU Delft, imagining shared futures

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In the way it was traditionally set, before we got involved, the MSc2 design studio ‘Transdisciplinary Encounters’ – offered by the Chair of Methods of Analysis and Imagination at TU Delft’s Department of Architecture – was a laboratory to examine the productive relations that can be established between architecture and other disciplines. These may be artistic disciplines, providing instruments such as literary description, choreography, montage and scenario writing, or disciplines from the line-up of social sciences, providing fieldwork techniques related to social-spatial practices and user behaviour. The studio allows students to experiment with various methods coming from the study of these disciplines in order to obtain innovative instruments for the development of architectural analysis and imagination. Based on the definition of architecture as a cognitive practice, trans-disciplinarity offers fresh insights and innovative viewpoints to appraise age-old architectural questions, but it also provides valuable counter-hypotheses and criticism against architectural conventions and canons, challenging the notion of disciplinary autonomy in the production of architectural knowledge.

In Spring of 2022, we, the editors of this thematic issue, got invited to combine our research interests in cultural heritage and literary narratives and create a new edition of this MSc2 design studio. Together with students, we investigated how places of memory can provide the ground for new meanings that can be shared across different cultures and times. We studied and unpacked past stories, analysed and examined present narratives, imagined and created future scenarios, all in relation to selected places of memory. We used literary sources to look into the previous life of cultural heritage sites, employed narrative techniques to interpret their current conditions, and incorporated design and writing methods to propose new possibilities for these very sites.

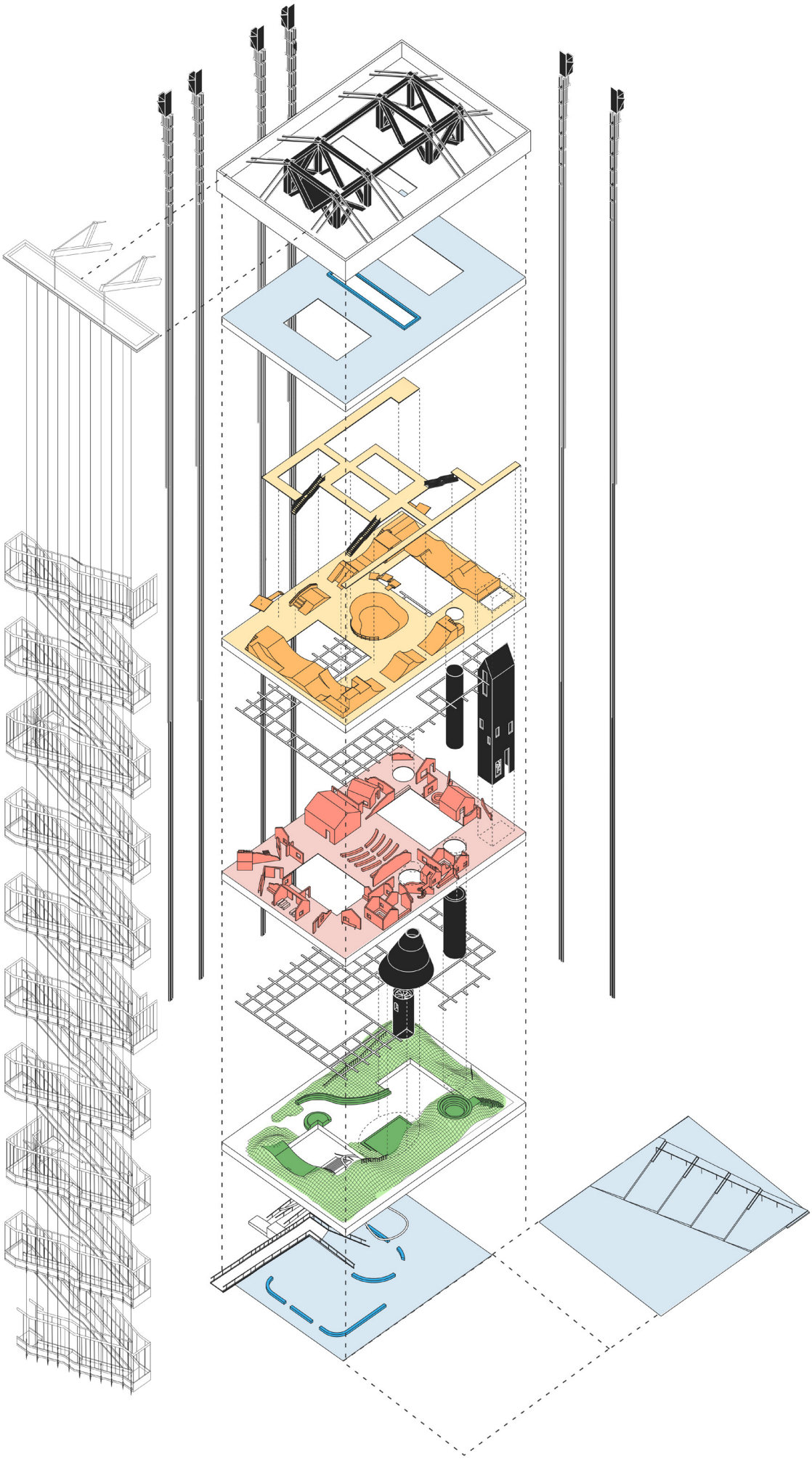
The students were invited to explore, examine, and discover the intricate connections between places of cultural meaning and literature, and the potential of literary methods to address such topics as architectural experience, use and imagination. We started from the premise that literary language has the capacity to dwell on the complexities of spatial experience. Evocative literary descriptions of spaces, whether in novels or poetry, often provide detailed information of how people experience architecture. While in architecture the visual and the formal tend to be dominant, literature often describes other sensory perceptions of spaces with great detail and intensity, focusing on other aspects of experience that remain largely untouched in architectural discourse, such as atmosphere and memory. Literary narratives often reveal the social aspects of space; it is through the literary accounts of places that we can learn how they are used. Exploring the relationship between the activities of characters and the spatial setting of the novel allows architects to consider the life of a building after its inauguration: a life marked by changing uses and users. Finally, novels can often be seen as sketches of another world, balancing between reality and imagination.

Eleven students offered their responses to the proposed studio setup. A selection of these projects, seven in total, is featured in this visual essay. Ranging from small scale interventions to large urban visions, projects show the creative power of deep emotional connections, vivid memories, and rich stories associated with those places of (formal and informal) heritage. They also show the readiness to rethink those places through the eyes of strangers, to open them for re-evaluation by others, to adapt them and make them accessible to other people and their cultures. This article, and the entire issue, is also an homage to our students, the passion with which they approached the task, their kind occasional disagreements that broadened our own horizons, their humour, and their inexhaustible imagination. Thank you.

Anna Maguire

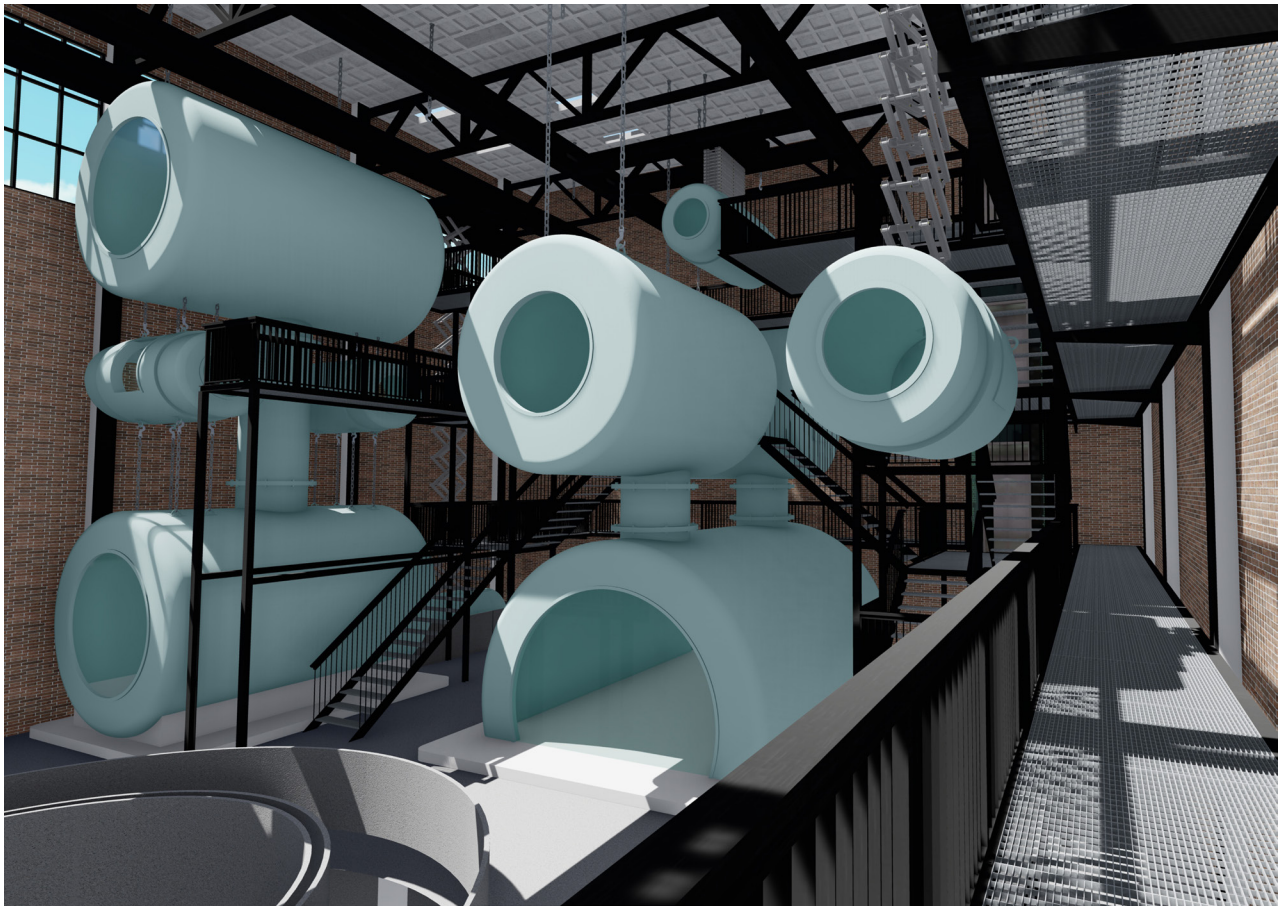
For decades, the public square in front of the Central Bank building was an important social space for young people in Dublin. However, after the building's redevelopment, the square was privatised into a sunken shopping centre – a move indicative of the city's attitude towards public spaces. My project instead imagines the building's redevelopment into a public space, a vertical maze encouraging spontaneous meetings and informal interactions.

As you ascend the building, the spaces become more intimate with each floor providing room for distinct cultural activities (and thus communities) in the city: a stage, a theatre, a skate park, and a gallery space. The floors, though mostly separate, are connected at points by large sculptural interventions that puncture the rigid structure of the existing building, allowing for auditory, visual, or spatial connections between spaces and communities.



Daphne Naaktgeboren

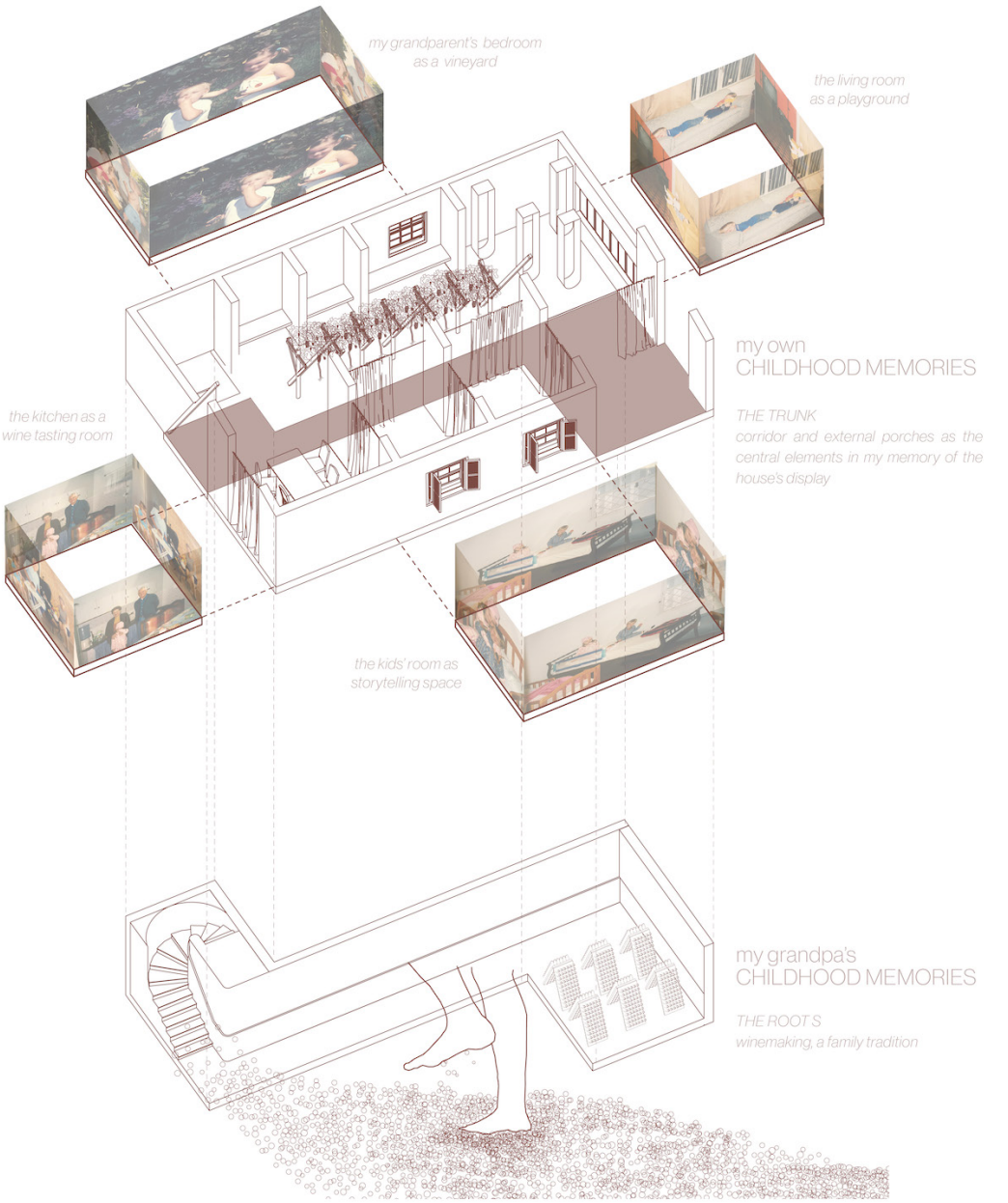
Where past meets present and future: former power plant, current theatre hall, and future pod-system hotel. Even though the original function of the building has become redundant in today's society and that of the future, its mechanical characteristics remain. The machinery that was part of the building's old life is reincarnated in its future as pods, retaining their organic rounded shapes and mechanical details. Retaining elements of the past gives ruse to a conversation between the time layers of a building.

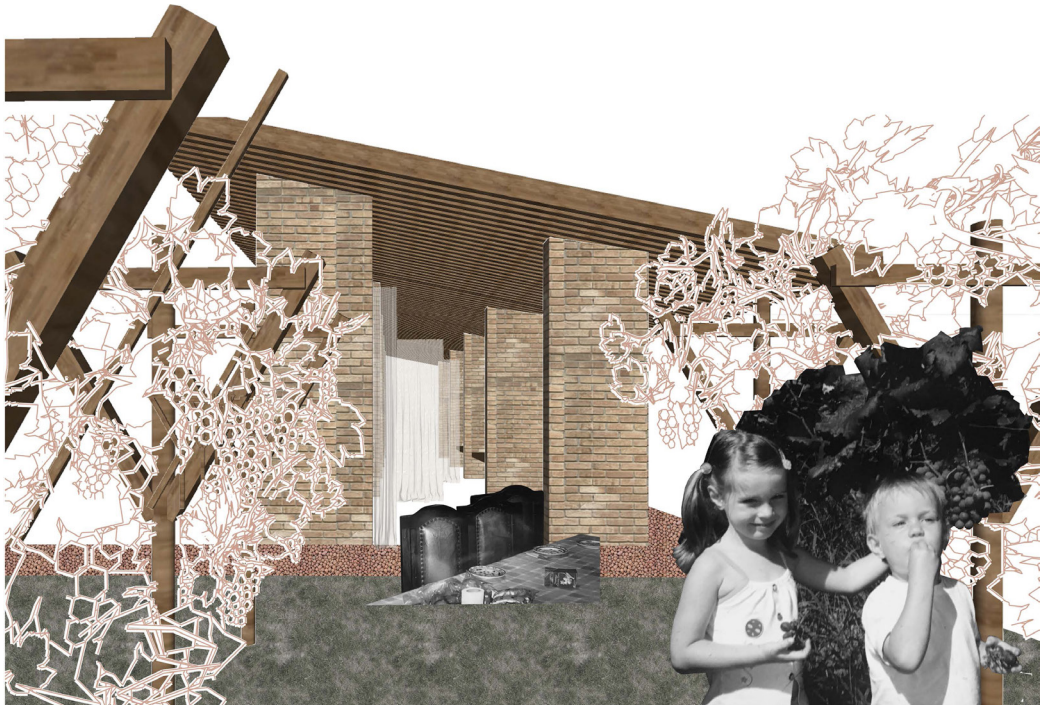


Helena van Swaay De Marchi

The project *casinha* (small house) consists of an intervention on my grandparents' house in Jundiaí, located in the countryside of São Paulo, Brazil. Architecture is approached as an extension of nature, in this case represented by the vineyard landscape, with the intention of spatially translating my grandfather's and my own childhood's memories. In this sense, the ultimate goal of the project was to enable us, in the words of Juhani Pallasmaa, 'to perceive and understand the dialects of permanence and change, to settle ourselves in the continuum of culture and time.'

The unadorned architectural style of the existing bare brick walls and the new wooden roof was consciously chosen to emphasise the landscape and to reflect the simplicity of immigrant family life in the 1930s. The synthetic bird netting, typically used to protect grapevines, is used for the curtains in the interior space, its transparency and juxtapositions creating a sense of spatial thickness, changing the sensation of movement and light. The coexistence of temporalities is spatially conveyed by the contrast of the linear man-made timeline, expressed in the vineyard landscape, and the memory timeline, reflected in the sinuous paths formed around wall fragments in the house's interior.

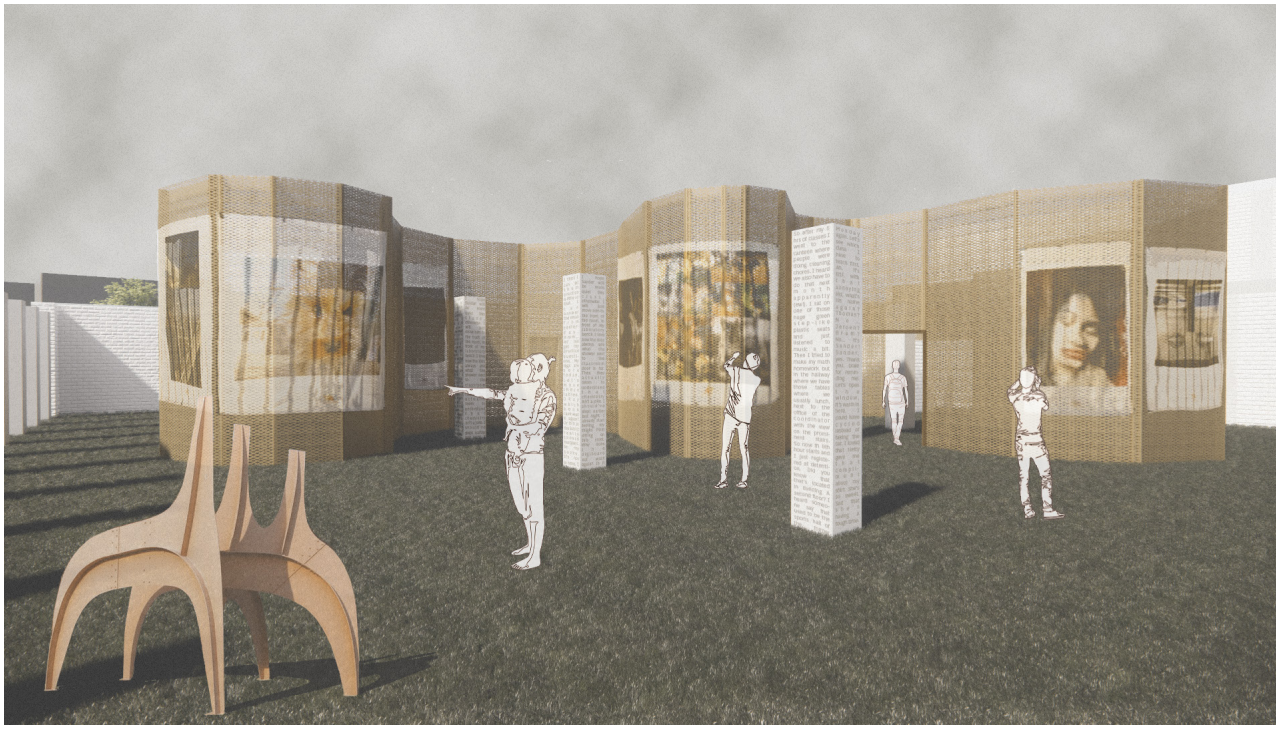

my grandparent's bedroom
as a vineyard
the living room
as a playground
my own
CHILDHOOD MEMORIES
THE TRUNK
corridor and external porches as the central elements in my memory of the house's display
the kitchen as a
wine tasting room
the kids' room as
storytelling space
my grandpa's
CHILDHOOD MEMORIES
THE ROOTS
winemaking, a family tradition



Isa van der Bijl

Rodenborch Continuum is about the reinterpretation and transformation of a former high school into a community centre incorporating an outdoor art exhibition. The school walls are reimagined to create a new composition of rooms. The created spaces are enclosed with a lively outdoor agora, designed to engage all visitors to pause, remember, reflect and connect.

A notable feature within this project is called the non-room. The glass has engraved sentences, reminding the visitor to ‘please look, don’t touch’. It is a reinterpretation of a previously exclusive meeting room that was not accessible to student. It was strictly meant for teachers, but now all visitors are invited to observe but prohibited from entering.




PLEASE LOOK, DON'T TOUCH
CAUTION, KEEP OUT.
DON'T ENTER.
KEEP
DON'T TOUCH.
CAUTION, KEEP OUT.
PLEASE LOOK,

Mateo White

The Paillon River, a Mediterranean river that fluctuates between summer tranquillity and the cataclysmic floods of winter, meets the sea in the city of Nice. It was covered in the nineteenth century and entombed by concrete tunnels. This project imagines a near future where the Paillon runs dry and the harsh sun of the south forces cultural events underground. A square pavilion is proposed, surrounded by a park on the old footprint of the river, offering access to the tunnels directly below.

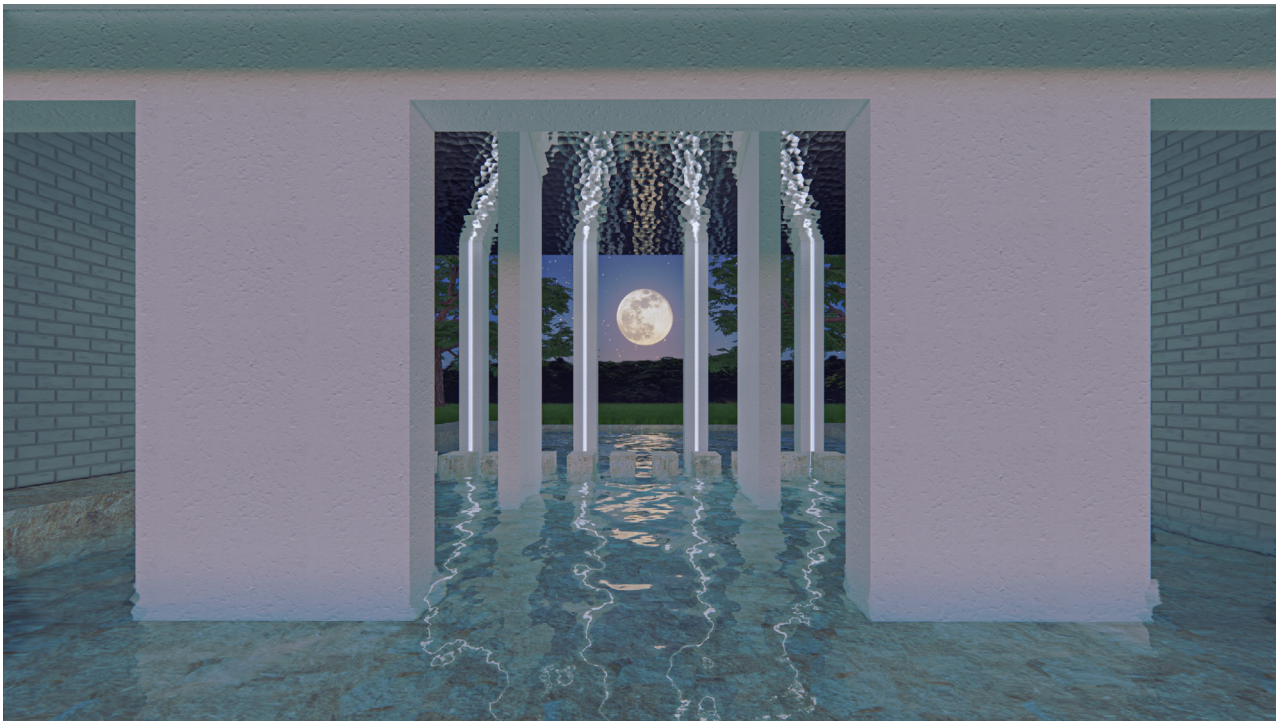
The tunnels are imagined as spaces for informal cultural events alongside official exhibitions from the nearby modern art museum. Openings are cut in the walls, and walkways are suspended centimetres above the last remains of the river. When and if the rain returns, the art pieces are left to wash away, leaving open spaces for festivities to return the following summer.

Nicola Caporaso

The city of Benevento, nestled between the Calore and Sabato rivers like a miniature Mesopotamia, has been inhabited since ancient times. Its origins have been intertwined with pagan culture and mystical rituals, fostering an enduring aura of mystery and infamy, particularly associated with tales of witches' Sabbaths. In 697 AD, Bishop Barbato of Benevento, seeking to eradicate pagan practices, famously ordered the uprooting of a large walnut tree, believed to be a site of demonic gatherings, yet legends persist of Lucifer resurrecting it overnight in a hidden location, perpetuating the dark allure of the city. Reimagining the abandoned villa Perrotta as this clandestine site of occult gatherings, its former grandeur and present decay merge with the spirit of local witches, infusing the space with a haunting mystique, echoed in the incantation: 'Ointment, ointment, take me to Benevento's walnut tree, over water and wind, beyond all ill weather'.

Ana Suso Jimenez

Built in 1961 by Manuel Suso and Stelia Dominguez, Petequí is a house located in Jamundí, Colombia, and has served as a home, gathering space and sanctuary for the Suso family for four generations. In all its modesty, the essence of this place lies in the family's stories as told and remembered by its members, often through the objects that are found in and around the house. After the death of its founders Manuel and Stelia, both of who have found a resting place under a tree on the site, the house has gained a new purpose and meaning for the family. It is now a place of peace, rest, and remembrance. The purpose of the architectural intervention is to transform the site into a burial ground and a memorial space, bringing to the fore its spiritual importance.



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Footprint is a peer-reviewed journal presenting academic research in the field of architecture theory. The journal encourages the study of architecture and the urban environment as a means of comprehending culture and society, and as a tool for relating them to shifting ideological doctrines and philosophical ideas. The journal promotes the creation and development – or revision – of conceptual frameworks and methods of inquiry. The journal is engaged in creating a body of critical and reflexive texts with a breadth and depth of thought which would enrich the architecture discipline and produce new knowledge, conceptual methodologies and original understandings.

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