The Editioning of Gardens

Rites of Passage

1995-2006

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[EPIGRAPH]

One of the surest conditions of human action is the fact that the further away is the goal towards which we are struggling, and the less we desire to help ourselves to the fruit of our efforts, the more certain we are of our success.
–John Ruskin

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

I. THE INEXPLICABLE OTHER OF GARDENS

The categorization of gardens is a quite clumsy affair, historically or otherwise: formal/informal; wild/tamed; Baroque/Modern; Classical/Neoclassical; etc. These terms are always applied retrospectively. If the postmodern condition is the privileging of the proverbial "now," when everything is present all at once as immanentist paradox, and historical time or the march of progress has effectively collapsed, gardens are the perfect embodiment of such a sentiment. They are notoriously unstable in terms of their owners' intent and constantly changing montages of effects and affect – materiality and phenomenon. It is possible that the best description of gardens is "cinematic," as they change with the seasons and they evolve in a type of time-lapse or stop-motion photography most often recorded in the eye of the beholder but also captured in amateur and professional photography. There are even moments when the garden "enters" the house, as light enters the camera obscura, and the image of the outside appears on the inside, this image sometimes a moving image – for example, miniature videos playing on a kitchen wall, or the filtered light of late day casting a spectral, animated "net" over a dusky interior.

The value of gardens is, therefore, always in the eye of the beholder. The appreciation of gardens is an intensely personal affair, in an existentially profound way, even when they are polite public gardens, such as in the United Kingdom. Yet, as incredibly complex assemblages, gardens require constant maintenance or, in the case of the wild or naturalistic garden, the apparent opposite – intentional or benign neglect. Intentionality is the key. Gardens in the Czech Republic, for example, show both traits, even if most are residential and might be called "haute-bourgeois" appendages to relatively recently constructed or re-constructed domiciles. The Velvet Revolution of 1989 ushered in a host of extravagances previously suppressed by the Communist ideology of post-war Czechoslovakia. Gardens as status symbols quite simply did not exist other than as historical relics. The notable renovation of the somewhat shabby public gardens of Czech cities (Prague's great baroque gardens are an excellent example) has, since the mid-to-late 1990s, given way to the construction of new private utopias, many for the rich (or those who benefited most from the freeing of the Czech economy to market forces), but many for the not-so-rich as well. The ramshackle country garden attached to country house or the urban patch of neglected land kept as kitchen garden in the years of enforced austerity might be said to have undergone a revolution of its own, a refurbishment as amenity, or a shift toward neo-liberal trophy based nonetheless in a debauched form of genius loci. Alexander Pope's admonitions to consult the genius of place notwithstanding, Czech gardens today reflect Czech society today. Yet the art of the garden requires, regardless of provenance, and regardless of location or purpose, an editioning strategy that resembles the choices made to produce a book or a work of art, with the result "archived" in the living milieu of the setting.

These moving images of gardens are also moving hieroglyphs, and they disintegrate in a higher register or zone that becomes intensely felt – an emotional or ethical electrical charge kicking in, where a relationship between things and concepts emerges that is the mark of the spectral aspect noted. In effect, and certainly *as affect*, these hieroglyphs are signalling the editioning strategy of the garden as book or work of art. They also free the image from the artefact and set it adrift on a sea of inner speculations about cosmos and microcosmos – the book or work of art always a micro-world held in tension with a larger "outside" or Other that is the mark of the "Il y a" (as conceptualized by Emmanuel Levinas). This "Il y a" is, in Lacanian exegesis, the spectral form the Real takes, an impossible Other that never arrives. It is hypothetically "out there" but uncognizable. Landscape historiography may access this "out there," but it always does so under the spell of history as "the history of history." As such, many of the essays assembled here are both historical and art-historical, in the conventional senses, while others are pulse-taking essays associated with the immanentist paradox associated with the ever-shifting "now" that animates garden and landscape design. Notably, it is also all but impossible to separate gardens from architecture, even if modernist-era disciplines attempt to do so – "garden" quite often reduced to tabula rasa. And it is also all but impossible to separate landscape architecture from urban design, even if the fashion statements associated with academia, many re-visited here, tend to do so, always to the detriment of both subjects addressed. While many of the essays – short or long – presented here address just such fashion statements in the making, it is also quite obvious that given the "past" nature (tense) of many of these essays "now," that absurd reductionism has permitted the test of time and duly and gratefully failed.

As emotional or existentially charged field of spectral operations, the garden, the landscape, or the city might then be kicked further "upstairs" or "upstream" – to a zone where far-fetching or highly moral speculations appear, occur, and/or wage war. Often such speculations are only tangential to the gardener, the landscape architect, or the urban designer, a sense that something miraculous is at play, even if in the semi-sinister and broken Lacanian

worldview that miraculous thing at play is the proverbial Thing that eats subjects (devours human subjects and destroys human agency). If "Lacan" and Lacanian theory may be said to have crossed and crossed out the post-structuralist insurrection, we might thank Lacanianism for pointing out our collective symptoms, and Žižek, Badiou, et al. for encouraging us to enjoy them "in passing."

All of this is to say that the aesthetic hides the moral, and vice versa, and gardens observed are gardens felt. The historical sensibility, if it has any value, is to be found embedded in the time-senses of the garden, with the verb the first point of exit or purchase (point of departure or leverage) for gardens as editioned works en route elsewhere. "To be" in the life of the garden is "to change." This change affects the gardener, and the hieroglyphs recorded by camera, or in the mental image of the historian or critic, work upon the transpersonal subjective field that has produced the garden as artefact – the "outside" of the larger field in which the garden image is situated turning toward the interior (the garden or the image of the garden), and the "inside" turning toward the exterior (the world beyond the garden and the existential fold in which it sits and/or operates). This is the meta-historical remainder that makes the art of gardens also a widely observed "scholarly" endeavour – but in the sense that gardens are "almost texts," and reading them requires, at a minimum, a working knowledge of both history and metaphysics.

II. THE MILITARY ENCAMPMENTS OF GOD

Nikos Kazantzakis' *The Saviors of God* (1927) is well worth examining for this often-monstrous relationship between garden and world (man and cosmos).[1] The gardener does, after all, stand between these two worlds. The section entitled "The Relationship between Man and Nature" opens with: "ALL THIS WORLD, all this rich, endless flow of appearances is not a deception, a multicolored phantasmagoria of our mirroring mind. Nor is it absolute reality which lives and evolves freely, independent of our mind's power." The capitals are instructive. "ALL THIS WORLD" signals the outside (the "Il y a"). Kazantzakis engages the double bind of the world we inhabit, where the outside (the objective) and the inside (the subjective) condition one another without actually existing as such – i.e., in isolation. Sense perception creates this schism. He follows with: "It is not the resplendent robe which arrays the mystic body of God. Nor the obscurely translucent partition between man and mystery." The outside is not "the everything" it appears to be. He takes this primordial or immemorial strife further (as divine comedy) and converts these two apparent worlds into warring armies: "These two armies, the dark and the light, the armies of life and of death, collide eternally. The visible signs of this collision are, for us, plants, animals, men." What he then does is convert the entire battlefield to a moral and artistic agenda. "Even the most humble insect and the most insignificant idea are the military encampments of God. Within them, all of God is arranged in fighting position for a critical battle." Kazantzakis is setting up the classical "straw man" – the scarecrow that guards the garden. It is also an extreme existentialist posture. His rule or form-of-life then becomes a Nietzschean will to power (invoking Voltaire's *Candide* and half of classical literature in the process): "Impose order, the order of your brain, on the flowing anarchy of the world. Incise your plan of battle clearly on the face of the abyss." Yet neither is this a "biblical" injunction to divide and conquer – to subjugate. The point is to "see" the world for what it is, and to interact with it in the highest manner possible – to cultivate and to invoke or picture one world (the One that Kazantzakis will then admit does not exist, implying it actually is either a phantasm or it needs to be created ex nihilo). The great "as if" of all humanist endeavours, and which we – according to the great humanists – are ultimately responsible for.

In applying Kazantzakis' primordial drama of the outside versus the inside to gardens, with the image of the first garden (Eden) never far away, qualities emerge that define gardens: "When a man fighting with chaos subdues a series of appearances to the laws of his mind and strictly confines these laws within the boundaries of reason, then the world breathes, the voices are ranged in order, the future becomes clarified, and all the dark and endless quantities of numbers are freed by submitting to mystical quality." We see and sense "Apollo and Dionysus" – as unity … The metaphors are militant: "If you are a laborer, then till the earth, help it to bear fruit. The seeds in the earth cry out, and God cries out within the seeds. Set him free! A field awaits its deliverance at your hands, a machine awaits its soul. You may never be saved unless you save them." And: "Joy! Joy! I did not know that all this world is so much part of me, that we are all one army, that windflowers and stars struggle to right and left of me and do not know me; but I turn to them and hail them." We see and sense "Francis of Assisi" … No doubt this text from 1927 also has its own trans-historical value as a warning to all who might side with the machinic vision of modernity – of the reduction of life to utopian machine. Today we inhabit the same questions, yet countering now post-capitalist visions of technocratic determinism or the ironic and entertaining machinations of post-humanist

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[1] Nikos Kazantzakis, *The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises*, trans. Kimon Friar (New York: Touchstone/Simon & Schuster, 1960). First published in *Anayennisi* (*Renaissance*) (Athens, Greece: 1927).

hubris. Nothing much has changed at that deep level of the transfiguration of worlds that the arts instill. Kazantzakis' works (most especially his hallucinatory and fiery novels) all point in the opposite direction, toward an inspired anti-modernism that was more avant-garde than any other avant-garde that may be cited in the lineage of modernist art movements, the landscape of the early twentieth century strewn with outmoded artistic experiments and bankrupted philosophical and political premises – all more or less justifications for "flattening" the world.

This extreme reading of the world as eternal confrontation between machine (gravity) and grace (transcendence), with echoes of Simone Weil, as embodied in the exhortations to engage in battle with the machine, delivers the garden to the role of the "flame": "Terror and Silence. And between them, a Flame." Here the image of the camera obscura returns, the garden requiring both a light source and a black box to properly register in the world, to be properly viewed by subjects or captured as image or moving image by camera. Arguably, it is within the blackbox that works-based agency becomes moral agency. That dynamic eludes customization by design. Instead, it inhabits worlds as a form of prior art. To that end, it is necessary to see and hear gardens as emblems; and to perhaps honor them as the original blackbox.

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PART I
THINGS CZECH
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DREAMING PRAGUE GARDENS: PART I

I. PROLOGUE: A GARDEN WITHOUT QUALITIES?

Tempus item per se non est.[1]
–Lucretius

The restoration of palaces and gardens in Prague's famed Malá Strana quarter is well underway, some open, others under scaffold and builder's rubble. The scraping, digging, wrecking, and rending veers toward stasis – much undone, incomplete, and phased. Some sites are newly resurfaced, inhabited by fresh-faced plants, benches, and arbors. Statuary has been recast and walls re-laid with newly tinted mortar. A mélange of competing interests, aesthetics, and styles marks the restored gardens with leisure and commercial aspects, a shift toward a new picturesque of late-capitalism in Central Europe, a neo-neo-baroque syntax hiding or obliterating the nuance or spirit of authenticity. The real and the fictitious, the cycle and the epicycle, melt into one slightly mischievous present.

These new facades, following the perceived lines of the historical Baroque garden, are often comic (tragi-comic), laughable trifles – a stylish modus vivendi – giving life, anemic or vital, to the site, which below this surface has both an intrinsic vitality and historicity. What is surface can be erased with ease. The deeper currents – amid vine and terrace – remain. The mystique of ruins is often more pleasing than artless restoration.

History is epicycloid (one circle rolling about another), generating a hypocycle – the flower of Time. And, too, a garden. And, too (alas), as garden, History is both restored and annihilated; doubled, tripled, reduced, pock-marked – a mathematical model of partition, replication, denigration and synthesis. The latter, only, in "the best of all possible worlds," Panglossian or Hegelian.

History collapses into histories (hiatus and histrionic), the noble dream of objectivity only possible at some hypothetical zenith, a noontide when the ebb and flow is arrested, momentarily, prior to the necessary slide into and toward a type of evening-tide. This latter tide is marked by the lure of dusky, shadowy revelation – long shadows, twilight, rising moon and stars, light from other suns and orbs, and periodicity on display in wholly other epicycloid configurations. Copernican epicycles aside, Big History seems also to have its center outside a static Earth-based cosmology.

Vrtbovská Palace (at the intersection of Karmelistká and Tržiště streets) is perhaps at a strategic locus in this admittedly theoretical and shifting territoriality of surface – its largess now under transformation. The makeover intends to sweep away the recent history of the site not to reveal its former glory but to unveil a very polished present (a veneer or body that might or might not glow with the underlying Real Presence or soul of the site). The nature of History Itself is unearthed in the process. The alternative task of representing a fleeting consciousness of site is not archaeological, nor technological, but ontological. The garden is a palimpsest always, an ephemeral entity, but also a site or a place of fleeting symbolic and cultural memory (implicit or imposed). Gardens are repeatedly re-inscribed with new iconographic terms. Half obliterate a building, and the site remains an architectural graveyard with traces of its former state. Let a garden run wild, and its former identity merely indwells (broods) amid the chaos alive in an altered mode of being. Resurface and restore it and this former Self (Real Presence) may or may not be plainly evident or felt. But it is there to the alert inner eye, a ghostly presence. Alas, current restoration practices rarely succeed at reviving the spirit of a garden.

The tension between surface and depth is the animating spirit of Vrtbovská garden, a tiny, beautifully terraced "baroque" garden in Malá Strana, Prague's Lesser Quarter. This faceted gem, set into the hillside of Petřín, is contiguous with the palace gardens of Vratislavská and Schonbornská, with views north, from the rear terraces (over rooftops), to the churches of St. Nicholas (Sv. Mikuláš) and St. Vitus (Sv. Vít), the latter at Hradčany (Prague Castle). The American Embassy is in the Schonbornská palace. In 1971, the Schonbornská garden was considered one of the few "unaltered" baroque gardens left in Prague, a reading difficult to accept today given its rather banal present condition.[2] A Viennese development company has subdivided Vratislavská palace into corporate office suites with Canon (patron of simulacra) occupying the rear pavilion adjacent to Vrtbovská's Neptune Gate. These two palace gardens (Vrtbovská and Vratislavská) are separate entities in name only, sharing site and garden-architectural dialect (architectonic dialect). Each is "framed," literally and in a theatrical sense, by its respective

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[1] Lucretius (Titus Lucretius Carus), *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), Book I, Line 459; "Time also exists not of itself."

[2] Olga Bašeová, "Special Problems Connected with the Conservation of Gardens of Historical Interest in Czechoslovakia," in *ICOMOS – International Symposium on the Conservation and Restoration of Gardens of Historical Interest* (Paris: ICOMOS, 1971), pp. 153-54.

structural enclosure, with glimpses of the other from the higher levels. Vrtbovská is by far the more elegant – its compact nuance eclipses Vratislavská's unfortunate present-day condition, a two-level field with predictable enclosure of plastered brick walls offset by tubular white-metal rose arbors, the latter a horticultural convenience borrowed perhaps from the communist-era rosarium atop Petřín. It is now a picture of a commercial-corporate enclave. There is air of panopticon, with all mystery and subversion erased, and small satellite dishes have sprouted in the lower garden terrace. Vrtbovská rings true in the other senses of "garden," but it is a ruin in the throes of a makeover at this writing (1995). Its vital interior is on display amid the wreckage of the outer shell. It is hoped that the restoration team of Eko-Prague can bring a complexity to the restoration effort despite signs that the importation of modern lighting and overly chaste masonry and plantings may, too, disfigure this once magnificent garden.

Shared tales of Vratislavská and Vrtbovská – subterranean tunnels, springs, graves, fire pits and counterfeiting – i.e., sub-rosa conditions – indicate a dissembling, deceptive veneer is hardly new. Vrtbovská garden is an "eclogue" awaiting translation – a fragment – a type of noetic architectonic construct covering an esoteric historical allegory. The Neptune Gate alone suggests the inspiration for this garden-eclogue is "hidden springs" – Vratislavská garden sharing this subtext – a temporal manifestation in built form of eternal, but terrestrial flux. Vrtbovská exudes elegance and skillful exploitation of social and geographical position. The restoration is focused on the recovery of structural integrity and the overt iconographic program via sculpture and fresco. The presence of groundwater, and its ability to undermine walls and terraces, has dictated an excavation and technical reconfiguration of the surfaces leaving intact the spatial and architectonic composition. Would that a poetic hand were to guide the re-writing of its walls.

The formal structure of Vrtbovská garden is comprised of fountains (two), *gloriet* (Neptune Gate), grotto-like *sala terrena* (loggia), aviary, statuary (by Matthias Braun), frescoes (by Václav Reiner), and parterres (*giardinetti*). It is attached to the rear of a 17th-century palace (built over a Renaissance palace) at the foot of Petřín Hill, site of 12th-century vineyards on the southeast and a quarry on the north. It is an aesthetic marriage of peculiar forces ecological, cultural, and political. The garden was designed c. 1720 by František Maxmilián Kaňka. The recent restoration efforts have recapitulated these forces (since 1992), re-aligning the cultural-political program after the 1989 Velvet Revolution – a shift from communist-era kindergarten, with gardens left to Nature, to a mix of market-rate housing and offices – in what might be termed a "palace coup." ODS (Civic Democrats), center-right party of then Prime Minister Václav Klaus, tried in vain to appropriate the palace for party headquarters. They lost. The re-embellishment of a former aristocratic seat for calculated, public philanthropic ends in the late-twentieth century released structural forces inherent in the place itself – i.e., the tussle brought to light the most-times-hidden (perennial) struggle for control of seats of power, the proverbial "springs."

This urban "baroque" composition is mostly intact, albeit cracked and with certain lacunae, because of the suzereignty of privilege. The latest regime of public trust will surely efface the historical notion of privilege, but in doing so risk the imposture of authenticity. The pretensions of the baroque nobility to classical noblesse required the instauration of a sophisticated iconographic program to imply benevolence and dispel envy. Whether of the seasons, the muses, or the gods, the figurative content provided the aural magic to salon and *fête* – the historical one or the modern touristic. Amid torchlight, the terraces were, in the 18th and 19th centuries, no doubt haunting, evocative, alluring and educative, as they might be again with a lighter touch than is normally forthcoming in renovating private gardens for public functions. The 18th-century sense of the classical, still nourished by Renaissance aesthetics, attempted by coded language to connect this northern Habsburg capital to memorable and mythic Neapolitan and Roman milieux – courts and villas – by way of Vienna, center of the Holy Roman Empire. The connection was made through transmontane artisans travelling from Italy to Vienna to Prague – the so-called "croissant baroque."[3] The aural magic was carried in gesture and in monumentality (grandeur). The famous Atlas sculpture, over the gate at Vrtbovská palace, clearly carried the figurative weight in this extraordinary garden/palace. It alone implies connections to the mythic past. The expressions of noblesse oblige, and the inevitable extension of the then-prestigious Learned Societies into the garden, as picture gallery, meant the site itself grew, terrace by terrace, image by image, to a momentary stasis – a synthetic moment. An aristocratic conceit, the whole edifice then slid, by the decades, mirroring the fortunes of the Czech Lands, into the oblivion of unnatural naturalness, a Romantic denouement, prior to the latest resurrection of its symbolic, cultural body half hidden in the on-going make-over. Once again the aviary may dance and sing, as the *sala terrena*, the fountains may burst forth out of Petřín's brooding figure, and "Kafka's Castle" to the north may see yet a new regime seek its reflection in the waters of History. These epicycles are not a matter of eternal recurrence but of recapitulation and innovation – till all is set right.

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[3] Dominique Fernandez, *Le banquet des anges: L'Europe baroque de Rome à Prague* (Paris: Plon, 1984).

II. THE SECRET LIFE – THE HYPHENATED GARDEN

What is life? A frenzy. What is life? An illusion, a shadow, a fiction. And the greatest good is of slight worth, as all life is a dream.[4]
–Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1636)

The secret of Vrtbovská garden in Malá Strana is that, in spirit, it is a *Mannerist-Baroque* design despite its c.1720 provenance. The architect credited with the first plan, Kaňka (c.1674-1766), converted the vineyards then covering the south slope of Petřín to a closed, terraced garden resembling those of late 16th-century Tuscany and Rome. Kaňka was also the architect of the late 17th-century Cerninská garden (attached to the largest Baroque palace in Malá Strana).[5] Mannerist gardens in Italy were typically comprised of "romantic artificialities," the now memorable landscape montages built up out of "rocks, grottoes, giants and secret fountains […] often incorporated in a ground design that continued the basic geometry of the Renaissance."[6] In the Czech Lands "the decorative system used in the *salae terrenae* and in garden architecture developed from Italian Mannerism with motifs of ruins and grottoes."[7] In the estimation of English landscape architect and historian Geoffrey Jellicoe (his own work nourished by northern Italian landscape architecture), the Italian villas "represented the struggles of Mannerism […] to escape from the classic frame, a thoughtful culmination of which was the Villa Gamberaia at Settignano (c. 1610) echoing as it seemed to do many parts of the individual human mind."[8] Other Italian Mannerist gardens include Villa Capponi at Arcetri, the phantasmagoric Villa Orsini at Bomarzo, and early parts of the landscape ensemble at the Boboli Gardens in Florence. Bursting free of the classical frame, each of these gardens established a type of dreamscape recurring throughout post-Renaissance art, architecture, and literature. There are secret affinities between disparate epochs; the 18th-century English Arcadians (William Kent, Alexander Pope, William Shenstone) derived their fire from Renaissance and Mannerist evocations of an imaginative and synchronic time (a deranged historicity), as did other architects, painters, and poets from the Enlightenment to contemporary post-cultural times. A transitional figure in Czech painting is Karel Škréta (1610-1674). Škréta, influenced by Bohemian Mannerism, absorbed neoclassical styles via trips to Italy and contact with works by Titian, Caravaggio and Poussin.[9] The classical frame burst so-to-speak in the Mannerist transitional period to include other, suppressed histories; this is the transcultural milieu of the *lumière mystérieuse*, a term coined in the 18th century connoting picturesque magic.[10] This mood, in the neoclassical period, denoted *lacrimae rerum*, invoked poetic sadness through scenes of natural beauty, which suggested "the passage of many centuries of human history."[11] Mannerist innovations have been said to "give a complete artistic physiognomy to the garden."[12] To resurrect this physiognomy requires wading into the polyvalent historic currents of the late Renaissance and the early Baroque.

The peripatetic Tyrolese sculptor Matthias Bernard Braun von Braun (1684-1738) perfected *il stilo berninesco* of the time, the early 1700s, but also retained the Rudolfine quest for symbolic, allegorical, and mythological hyperbolic expressions of anxiety associated with Mannerism. Braun "breathes a disquietude, an unrestrained excitement into his subjects, capturing them in moments of anxiety, even paroxysm. He tends toward hyperbole, outbursts of the senses, passionate distortion: with a whirlwind of fluttering clothes ruffled by jagged points and pleats twisted like knots he heightens the agitation and anguish of his labile, violently mobile spirits. Their fiery Berninian dynamism has a reverse side of desperation, as if exuberant gestures were attempting to cover a presentiment of nothingness."[13]

Rudolf II, Holy Roman Emperor (1576-1612), raised in Spain, established his court in Prague collecting, over thirty years, a kaleidoscopic cast of cosmopolitan artists, architects, mathematicians, astronomer-astrologers, alchemists, and illuminati. Central to the eclectic munificence of the royal patron was an obsessive, almost-deranged quest for the secret algorithms of life, argot of humanist inquiry into the secret laws of moral and natural philosophy

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[4] Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño* (Madrid, 1636).
[5] See: Zdeněk Wirth, *"*František Maxmilián Kaňka: Náčrt k monografii barokového architekta," in Oldřich J. Blažíček, Jan Květ, eds., *Cestami umění: Sborník prací k poctě šedesátých narozenin Antonína Matějčka* (Prague: Melantrich, 1949), pp. 161-175.
[6] Geoffrey Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), p. 165.
[7] Pavel Preiss, Emanuel Poche, *Pražské paláce* (Prague: Odeon, 1977), p. 381.
[8] Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man*, p. 165.
[9] Michal Šroněk, "Sculpture and Painting in Prague, 1550-1650," in Eliška Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City* (Prague: Prague Castle Administration; London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), p. 370.
[10] Helene Furján, "The Specular Spectacle of the House of the Collector," *Assemblage* 34 (December 1997): p. 80.
[11] Ellis Waterhouse, c. 1960, quoted in David Maland, *Europe in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 102.
[12] Francesco Gurrieri, Judith Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens* (Florence: Edam, 1972), p. 9.
[13] Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Magic Prague* (London: Picador, 1995), p. 193.

(the so-called "philosophical magic" of Renaissance humanism). Post-Rudolfine Prague was awash in such heretical pursuits well into the 18th century.

Braun, the "Mannerist-Baroque" sculptor, well after Rudolf's downfall, combined Counter-Reformation emphasis on religious sensibility with residual traces, in Prague, of Renaissance speculative philosophy, the bizarre amalgam of neo-platonic and Christian intellectualism sponsored by Marsilio Ficino (1433-99) and the Florentine Platonists under the patronage of Cosimo de' Medici. Braun's 1710 statue of St. Luitgarda (Lutgard), on the Charles Bridge (commissioned by Cistercian nuns) employs the Mannerist *figura serpentina*. The ensemble is to be viewed from various sides. This artistic principle hearkens back to the Renaissance concept of *concordia discors*: "There is an intellectual world, which is true: it is revealed by the *disgeno interno*, by poetic insight, by spiritual perception, by conscious learning. But sensible forms are eternally uncertain: they are partial, lacking order and harmony, and can confuse, even completely mislead the observer."[14] Coupled with his allegorical Virtues and Vices at the hospital in Kuks, plus his extraordinary hermits carved out of live stone and situated in the adjacent forest, Braun's work attests to participation in an underground humanist avant-garde linked by memory, through the aristocracy, to Rudolfine Prague. Archaeological, scientific and cultural analysis of the sculptural ensemble at Kuks is currently underway in a belated attempt to arrest the disintegration of the in situ, historic lapidarium in the so-called Bethlehem Wood.[15]

Kuks was a Protestant enclave, northeast of Prague, on the Elbe. A "spa," its founder Franz Anton von Sporck ran afoul of the Counter-Reformation Church for his "philosophical views." Braun's models for the mythological figures at Vrtbovská garden – the seven Roman gods, plus Atlas, putti and dragon – are iconographic gestures reaching back over centuries, past the Thirty Years' War, to Prague's Golden Age, the time of Rudolf II's court, and further. Václav Reiner (c. 1689-1743), painter of allegorical frescoes in various Malá Strana palaces (including Vrtbovská, Cerninská, Ledeburská), epitomized Bohemian early Baroque expressionist art. His Ceres and Bacchus at Vrtbovská were also favorite subjects of the Rudolfine court artists.

Consistent with this extension of Mannerism into 1700s Prague is the transitional and fantastical Wallenstein Palace (built 1621-1623), which includes Mannerist architectural elements and decorative arts though it generally is referred to as the "first Baroque palace" built in Prague in contemporary guide books. Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius von Wallenstein (1583-1634) was "duke of this and prince of that," after distinguishing himself in the suppression of the Protestants and the catastrophic pan-European Thirty Years' War. Richly rewarded for his military prowess, Wallenstein amassed titles, estates, and powers seized from the vanquished. Wallenstein's great garden loggia, part and parcel of his new palace in Malá Strana, closely resembles that of Agostino Chigi (banker to the popes; d. 1512) in Rome ("noted for his pomp and encouragement of art"[16]). Chigi's loggia is decorated with celebrated frescoes by Raphael (or perhaps his assistants) depicting scenes from the "fable of Cupid and Psyche from *The Golden Ass*, the racy Latin romance of Apuleius."[17] Wallenstein, like Chigi, was a power broker and required a residence that exuded maximum connections. His palace, below Prague Castle (Hradčany), was intended to rival if not eclipse that seat of former royal privilege. When Rudolf fell from grace, deposed by his brother, the court moved back to Vienna. In this vacuum Wallenstein became de facto prince of Prague.

Wallenstein's garden loggia (*sala terrena*) is credited to the Italian architect Giovanni Pieroni da Galiano (1586-c. 1654), built 1624-1627. The garden proper is credited to Nicolo Sebregondi (c. 1610-1652) and Pieroni, built 1625-1630. Pieroni was a cosmopolite, an architect-engineer arriving in Prague by way of Vienna and working on the fortification of both cities. He also worked on the fortification of Spilberk Castle in Brno (1640, 1648), a stronghold with a somewhat sinister history. Friend of both Galileo and Kepler, Pieroni proved useful to Wallenstein in matters practical and theoretical.

The Wallenstein garden itself brims, to this day, with Mannerist gestures. These include mythological statuary (c. 1620) by Adriaen de Vries (c. 1545-1626), a "Rudolfine court artist" (originals pillaged in 1648 in the Thirty Years' War and now in Drottningholm, Sweden), and a grotto-like perimeter wall with an embedded aviary, where the palace wing and loggia mark the west garden elevation. The wall is a monumental grotto turned inside out. Its encrusted "calcareous" surface reveals serpents and marine forms upon closer inspection. The original garden statuary included a stunning Laocoön (c. 1623) designed to be viewed from multiple angles. Allegorical frescos adorning the vault of the loggia, depicting Wallenstein's military adventures with veiled references to "The Aeneid" and other heroic classical cycles, and, within the palace proper, a highly-ornate "astrological passage" by

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[14] R. J. W. Evans, "Prague Mannerism and the Magic Universe," in R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576-1612* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 267.

[15] Jiří Kaše, Petr Kotlí, *Braunův Betlém: Drama krajiny a umění v proměnách času* (Prague; Litomyšl: Paseka, 1999).

[16] Roger Jones, Nicholas Penny, *Raphael* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 183.

[17] Ibid., p. 183.

Italian painter Bartolommeo Baccio del Bianco (1604-1656), attest to Wallenstein's taste for mythic self-aggrandizement. "In its arrangement, decoration and some peculiarities this is a quite unique building in world Mannerist and Baroque art. [The astrological passage] is to be found on the second floor of the connecting section between the north and south wings of the palace, which divides the first and second courtyard and is oriented north-south. Below it, on the first floor of this section, is the passage usually called 'the Baroque passage' with a much lower ceiling, quite differently treated both architecturally and graphically."[18]

Wallenstein's palace is a hodgepodge of influences. The lower passage is decorated with scenes from Ovid's "Metamorphoses," an obvious link to another Mannerist monument, just outside the city, the Star Pavilion, built by Arch Duke Ferdinand II of the Tyrol (1529-1595) at White Mountain (Bílá Hora) between 1555 and 1558. The Star Pavilion , built with a star-shaped ground plan, contains "as yet undecipherable Ovidian frescoes."[19] Clearly, Mannerist elementalism was abroad in Bohemia in an experimental form before the reign of Rudolf II and before the Imperial court moved from Vienna to Prague. Rudolf's uncle Ferdinand II and father Maximilien II were notable Habsburg humanists. But Rudolf elevated Mannerism to the new Habsburg court style. Wallenstein merely stole some of its shine. The Star Pavilion is an early embodiment of designs found in Renaissance architectural treatises, notably those of Sebastiano Serlio and Pietro di Giacomo Cantaneo, but rarely ever built. Works by both authors were part of the imperial library in Prague in the 16th century.[20]

Wallenstein consciously invoked the fabled imperium of Rudolf II by mimicking the grandeur and Mannerist sensibility of the era. Transcribing these effects, he also distanced himself from the disgraced "mad" emperor. Notably he did not share Rudolf or Chigi's penchant for artistic pornography. What has been said of Chigi, however, might equally be applied to Generalissimo Wallenstein: "As with so many patrons of this period [the late Renaissance in Chigi's case] it is not clear how much he valued art as distinct from luxury."[21] "An arriviste, Wallenstein seems to have felt all the more the need for splendid appearances."[22]

Following in miniature the cues of the royal Baroque gardens of Versailles (1624-1670), Vienna's Schönbrunn (1622-1698), and Caserta (c. 1752), the urban Baroque garden embodies the same basic geometric (taxonomic) form. In Malá Strana Baroque palaces appeared en masse throughout the 1700s including Ledeburská (c. 1720), Thun-Hohenstein (1747), Lobkovický (early 1700s), Furstenbergská (c. 1750), and Kolowratská (c. 1785). A fire in Malá Strana in 1541 cleared away much of the Renaissance fabric. Fragments were incorporated into a new wave of building beginning c. 1576 with the arrival in Prague of Rudolf II, and culminating 200 years later well after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

The 17th-century European court style was the *stile all'antica*, imported from Italy. Schönborn palace and garden, also at the base of Petřín, was built in the mid-17th century amid the surviving older palaces of Malá Strana dating to the Renaissance. The garden has lost most of its original qualities over time. 1600-1700 witnessed the development of a secular Baroque style in Prague. Michna palace (c. 1644) and the Wallenstein palace (1621-1623), both built during the Thirty Years' War, inaugurated this secularization of the Baroque by way of a "secular Mannerist" transitional style. Middle-European Mannerism subsequently absorbed "cisalpine" elements through the peregrinations of the nobility (during the on-again-off-again war) and the wayfaring artisans called upon to build in Prague.[23] This expansion of the Baroque to the residential city occurred primarily after the fall of Rudolf II (1612) and following the 1618-1620 revolt of the estates. The rebellion by a faction of the nobility against Habsburg hegemony fomented the decisive Battle of White Mountain (1620), which fomented, in turn, the hot and cold Thirty Years' War.

Prague baroque gardens despite their date of provenance straddle timeframes; they are Mannerist-Baroque. The numerous early-Baroque palaces of Malá Strana were essentially assembled from Renaissance fragments. This process of assimilation was intermittent with periods of consolidation. The revolt of the Bohemian estates and the Thirty Years' War effectively wrecked trade in Prague and then all over Europe. Building continued apace after the wars. It was, however, only one year after the leaders of the revolt were executed in Prague's Old Town Square, that Sezima of Vrtba acquired the old Renaissance palace on the present-day corner of Karmelistká and Tržiště streets, a mere cannon shot from the Castle. The unfortunate previous owner, Kryštof Harant of Polžice and Bezdružice, lost titles, property and his life, as did 26 other co-conspirators (including the Rector of Prague University, Johannes

[18] Milan Špůrek, *Praga Mysteriosa* (Prague: Eminent, 1996), p. 60.

[19] Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450-1800* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 148.

[20] Ivan Muchka, "Catalogue: Imperial Court," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 587.

[21] Jones, Penny, *Raphael*, p. 92.

[22] Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City*, p. 250.

[23] Pavel Vleck, "Architecture in Prague: 1550-1650," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, pp. 345-51.

Jessenius), for his part in the revolt against the provincial governors and the subsequent organized insurrection. For the grisly details see Angelo Maria Ripellino's *Magic Prague*.[24] Sezima of Vrtba acquired the prestigious property in 1622. The garden would not be conjured up for about 98 years. A good portion of those 98 years saw armies from as far away as Sweden systematically storming and pillaging Prague on a regular basis.

This tragic period in Czech history has been somewhat poorly assimilated in the national psyche. White Mountain is seen both as a heroic moment of insurrection against imperial forces and as the end of the Kingdom of Bohemia, and, therefore, a disaster. Everything that came afterwards is "après le deluge."

III. MANNERISM – THE ANTI-LUCID SUBLIME

Il manierismo is typically traced back to the writings of Giorgio Vasari (1511-74), "art historian" and chronicler (chanticleer) of Italian Renaissance artists. Vasari studied under Michelangelo and is better known today, as a visual artist, for his architecture than for his painting. He is also credited with early elements of the Boboli Gardens in Florence.

Mannerism, as a stylistic enterprise, is sandwiched between the High Renaissance and the Baroque periods in art historical narratives. It is, however, more elusive, it appears and disappears in time. It is possible to see its traces in Neoclassicism and Romanticism. Mannerism pervades the neoclassical paintings of Poussin (1613-75), Rosa (1615-73) and Claude (1600-82). It returns in the later neoclassical architectures of Ledoux (1736-1806) and Lequeu (1757-1826), and in the paintings of Hubert Robert (1733-1808). And, then again, it shines in the admixtures of Romanticism, Symbolism, Surrealism, and Poetism in the late-19th and early 20th centuries. Mannerism is a synchronic phenomenon. Schelling called arguments about aesthetics "literary peasant wars." "Only philosophy can open the primary sources of art for reflection."[25]

Vasari called attention to the spirit of Mannerism in 1550, characterized by a break with the lucid, harmonious ideal of Renaissance aesthetics, a breach apparent in the late works of Michelangelo (1475-1564) and the coterminous works of architects Michele Sanmichele (c. 1487-1559) and Giulio Romano (c. 1492-1546). Michelangelo's Porta Pia in Rome (c. 1561) is a proto-Mannerist composition, a strange symbolism-laden gateway to the north. Pius IV was hoping to encourage new building in the north of the city, within the walls, and discourage nobles from building estates outside the city. To facilitate this program, he commissioned a new avenue, Via Pia, and a new gate. "The portal provided a stark statement of what lay beyond the elegant new thoroughfare … Porta Pia warns the citizen he is departing into a world of savage license."[26] Michelangelo's gate to the north is heavily rusticated with a mix of Tuscan and Doric orders. A savage head growls from above the keystone. The sack of Rome, a mere 34 years earlier, still reverberated within the walled city.

Mannerism seems to be a byproduct of angst among the intelligentsia, a creeping discomfit with the idealism of the High Renaissance. Religious, social and scientific license was in the air. Peasant wars in Germany (1524-1525), Copernicus' revelations regarding the heliocentric order of the universe (1512), discovery of the New World by Columbus, and the ongoing Protestant agitation to the north left the serene preoccupations of the Renaissance at best picturesque. Vasari's emphasis on movement, on the *figura serpentina*, in the plastic arts and painting announced a new dynamism and a leap into the unknown. A fusion of the arts is prefigured in the fine art of the period and a new elitist paradigm – the Renaissance philosopher-engineer "skilled in all aspects of the Vitruvian arts such as military technology, architecture and garden and theatre design."[27]

Scientific and magical humanism took root especially in the north (where it was relatively safe to flirt with heresy). The court of Rudolf II in Prague was a particularly hospitable redoubt. "Representatives of free thought and the seekers of esoteric truths did not disappear [with the Counter-Reformation]. They formed an exciting layer of late Renaissance humanists who embraced all sorts of heterodoxy, from mystical enthusiasts and hermetic Neoplatonists through near-atheist sceptics."[28] A particularly extreme form of racial profiling appeared in Michael Servetus' 1535 *Ptolemy's Geography*: "As is commonly said, Hungary in particular produces cattle; Bavaria, pigs; Franconia, stumps, turnips and licorice; Swabia, bawds; Bohemia, heretics …" This pseudo-scholarly tirade goes on to conclude: "Finally, all Germany, and all the north, gluttons and drunkards."[29] Notwithstanding the polemical

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[24] Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, p. 154.
[25] F.W.J. von Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 11. First published *Über das Verhältniss der bildenden Künste zu der Natur* (Munich: Krüll, 1807).
[26] John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 328.
[27] Penelope Gouk, "Natural Philosophy and Natural Magic," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 235.
[28] Ibid., p. 223.
[29] Charles Donald O'Malley, *Michael Servetus* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), p. 33.

nature of this survey, Silesia (a province of Bohemia) has a long history of nurturing mystics and heretics (from Jakob Boehme to Angelus Silesius to Rudolf Steiner).

Tuscan architect Giovanni Gargiolli (1540-1608) entered Rudolf's service in 1585 in Prague. In 1586-94 he designed the domed cylindrical grotto in the Royal Enclosure at Bubeneč, reminiscent of Michele Sanmichele's Porta Nuova (1533-40) in Verona, an ensemble including a pool and an arcaded *sala terrena*. In 1588-93 Gargiolli designed an Italian garden at the Royal Castle at Brandýs nad Labem (Brandeis), comprised of four low terraces with a secret garden, a summerhouse, and fountains. At Lány he built for Rudolf the three-wing hunting lodge which remains, to this day, the Czech President's summer palace.[30] Gargiolli was a Mannerist architect. Notable Mannerist painters came in tow: Bartholomaeus Spranger, c. 1580; Adriaen de Vries, c. 1593; and Hans von Aachen, c. 1591-92.[31]

Mannerism and Natural Magic, hand in hand, seemed in pursuit of "ultimate power," "ultimate truths," and "pleasure, beauty and even eternal life."[32] By way of a curious if bizarre amalgam and half-scientific, half-mystical fusion of the arts and sciences, the pansophic vision of Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) was realized, if only for a brief period, in Rudolfine Prague. Agrippa's vision of "a hierarchy of worlds" created by God "from the void" was similarly expressed in the later pursuits of the Baroque humanist Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský, 1592-1670), the outlawed Protestant savant and friend of Milton, pursued across Europe during the Thirty Years' War. Agrippa's universalism pictured a cosmos arranged in a "descending order of perfection." This neo-platonic golden chain was comprised of the empyrean, realm of angels and demons …, the ethereal realm comprising the fixed stars and the seven planets and, finally, the elemental world, which extended from the earth to the moon."[33] This latter sublunary world is a holdover from the platonic medieval worldview where everything sublunar is flawed and compromised. In the Rudolfine era, however, fascination rather than repulsion fueled the Mannerist interest in Natural Philosophy and Nature. Former iconographic forms were stretched and reinterpreted to picture not a malevolent or grossly disfigured sublunary world but a beautiful and beguiling if not dangerous realm permeated by the influences of the higher regions. Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia libri tres* (c. 1533) included the theory of celestial correspondences, which attributed to astral influences the power to animate statues. Mythopoetic license permitted a re-coding of the classical to include the fantastic and the erotic. It was all more or less tolerated until it began to take on political and social import. Perhaps one of the most compelling Mannerist gardens was that of Frederick V at Heidelberg, c. 1614, the same Frederick that was caught up in the Rosicrucian plot to install a Protestant (i.e., Frederick) on the Bohemian throne in 1619.[34]

In 1599 the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546-1601) was brought to Bohemia and parked in a castle in Benátky, near Prague, by Rudolf. He was given so vast an allowance that the Royal Exchequer was kept busy dreaming up excuses not to pay it. Rudolf's stable of alchemists, on the other hand, was denied royal subsidies since they could, or so they claimed, "manufacture" gold. Brahe, like Newton afterwards, retained a belief in the existence of "an extremely fine ether linking the sublunar realm with the cosmos."[35] His assistant in Bohemia, Johannes Kepler, was later both royal astronomer and royal astrologer to Rudolf. These agents brought the anti-lucid sublime of alchemy and astrology in tow, adding another layer to Prague's mystical legacy.

The persistence of the pansophic worldview in the north followed the path of Mannerism. "An important feature of Mannerism was its exclusive nature, its aristocratic character."[36] The same was true of alchemy. These intellectual pursuits were primarily court-sponsored intrigues. In the generally tolerant 16th century, magical humanism was not yet repressed under the Catholic Church. Indeed, many clerics were patrons of the arcane arts. Former Dominican monk Giordano Bruno passed through Prague, in 1588, on his tragic path to Venice where he was arrested in 1592 and burned at the stake in Rome in 1600, the turning point vis-à-vis repression of philosophical magic. Copernicus (1473-1543), the reluctant humanist, was encouraged by Pope Paul III (1468-1549) to publish his opus *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*. He resisted until the bitter end only half-believing in his own theories rather than fearing persecution. The book arrived in his lap on his deathbed.[37]

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[30] Jarmila Krčálová, "La toscana e l'architettura di Rodolfo II: Giovanni Gargiolli a Praga," in *Firenze e la toscana dei Medici nell europa del '500, vol 3* (Florence: Leo S. Olschi, 1983), pp. 1029-51.
[31] Marcin Fabianski, "Spranger and Italian Painting," *Apollo* 141, no. 397 (March 1995): p. 22.
[32] Gouk, "Natural Philosophy and Natural Magic," p. 237.
[33] Ibid., p. 233.
[34] Frances Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).
[35] Gouk, op. cit., p. 236.
[36] Gyorgi E. Szonyi, "Scientific and Magical Humanism at the court of Rudolf II," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 233.
[37] Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers* (London: Arkana, 1989), p. 121.

The speculative élan of Mannerism is perhaps most sumptuously pictured in Bartholomaeus Spranger's *Triumph of Wisdom* (1595 or c. 1605), "a masterpiece of skillful rule-breaking."[38] Spranger's painting must have been a cherished touchstone for Rudolf. In the "squeezed space" of the painting "effetely beautiful faces" surround Minerva standing in a "provocative contrapposto," a "short-skirted legs-apart pose," "whose breasts are so much more succulently offered to the spectator than through the classical device of the slipped chiton, the long robe fallen from the shoulder."[39] This is the warrior goddess made human. This is the warrior goddess, whom for Schelling "encompasses within herself all forms of the elevated and the powerful, the creative and destructive, the unifying and the divisive," transformed into a femme fatale, readied for the cover of *Vogue*.

Rudolf never married, but he was no doubt secretly wed to Sophia-Wisdom-Minerva, notwithstanding his so-called "madness." As court painter, Spranger (1546-c. 1611) enjoyed a particularly close alliance with Rudolf. "Spranger had to work in the Emperor's private chambers." Rudolf "took a lively interest in what the artist was doing."[40] In Spranger's humanist cosmology (he was a Protestant), Minerva was the patroness of the Liberal Arts – especially painting. A 1628 engraving by Jan Muller (after a painting by Spranger), *Mercury takes the Young Artist to Minerva*, is annotated in Latin with the legend "Minerva decorates the zealous youth, beautiful in his ox's hide, with a laurel wreath for his head and also a palm frond."[41]

In the Spranger painting *Triumph of Wisdom* a pudgy putto with drooping eyes and reddish nose (reminiscent of Rudolf without beard) passes a palm frond to Minerva who stands like St. Michael or the Hindu Shiva with one foot on Ignorance. Minerva is surrounded by allegories of the Arts and Sciences (the effete faces), with the muses Bellona (War) and Clio (History) in the foreground. The painting's iconography has been interpreted by art historians as related to Rudolf's ennobling of painting to the status of Liberal Art in 1595 by Letter of Majesty. But there are certain other intimations as well.[42] Spranger, sojourner in Italy like so many transmontane artists of the time, by the 1590s had absorbed the influences of Hans von Aachen and other more mature court painters. Perhaps the influence of Raphael's *School of Athens* (c. 1510-12) in the Vatican Palace is evident in the *Triumph of Wisdom* in an oblique manner. In Raphael's masterpiece Minerva and Apollo stand in niches framing the architectural mise-en-scène, above the famous scene of Greek savants assembled for a convivial symposium in a Renaissance *sala grande*. Minerva stands ramrod straight with the famous Medusa-headed shield in one hand and a lance in the other. Apollo, however, has adopted the "sinuous pose which anticipates, even if it did not influence, the Apollo made by Jacopo Sansovino for the Loggettia in Venice and the statuette of Apollo, with a similarly effeminate build but yet more narcissistic contrapposto, created by Giambologna [1573-75 for the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence] … There is a type of beauty proposed here, just as there was in the Sappho [in Raphael's *Parnassus*, 1509-11], which would increasingly attract the leading artists in Italy over the following centuries."[43] And attract the attention of younger artists bound, in time, for Rudolf's court in Prague. Spranger, after leaving Antwerp, traveled to Prague by way of Italy and Vienna. Arriving in Rome in 1566, he worked on the Farnese villa at Caprarola, built by Vignola (1559-75), a notable Mannerist villa. He was introduced at the Viennese court of Maximilien II (Rudolf's father) by Giambologna. In the *Triumph of Wisdom* there is a transposition of the Raphael Apollo and Minerva. Through Spranger's imagination, Minerva has taken on a contrapposto pose literally mirroring that of Raphael's and Giambologna's Apollo, becoming in the process nursemaid and femme fatale, at once, in a painting that must have roused Rudolf to near tears.

Minerva, the same patron of the fine arts, stands on the railing between the second and third terrace, a century or so later, at Vrtbovská garden guarding the sacred upper terrace, the empyrean, one of seven guardians. Ceres and Bacchus (favored subjects of the Rudolfine court painters) inhabit the lower terrace (*sala terrena* and aviary) at Vrtbovská, the sublunary world, images of fertility and wildness, intemperance and agriculture. The Rudolfine era did not end in the early 1600s, it merely went underground.

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[38] John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London: Harper-Collins, 1993), p. 245.
[39] Ibid., pp. 245-46.
[40] Thea Vignau-Wilberg, "*Pictor Doctus*: Drawing and the Theory of Art around 1600," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 185.
[41] Ibid., p. 179.
[42] Lubomír Konečný, "Picturing the Artist in Rudolfine Prague," in Fučíková, ed., *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 107.
[43] Jones, Penny, *Raphael*, pp. 75-76.

DREAMING PRAGUE GARDENS: PART II

I. THE MYTHIC FABRIC

> Mythology is nothing other than the universe in its highest manifestation, in its absolute form, the true universe in itself, image or symbol of life and wondrous chaos in the divine imagination, itself already poetry and yet in and for itself the content and element of poesy.[1]
> –F.W.J. von Schelling (1859)

Vrtbovská garden's Mannerist soul is betrayed both by its nervous aura and form. The aura is its furtive historicity – the spirit of its time – covered by years of banditry and partly teased forth by recent restoration efforts. The formal aspects preserve, as a trace, this historicity. Its classification as a "Baroque" garden is based on a reading of the geometric form and date of provenance alone. The undercurrents are, however, more complex. Dreaming the context, subjectively reinventing the auratic subtexts, we give back to the garden an eminent transcultural form, a synchronic significance within the continuum of intellectual history.

The Roman deities by Braun are the first order of reading. The seven deities are arrayed along the parapet (on pedestals) of the upper, third terrace. They demarcate a zone between the mundane world and the higher world. This uppermost world is the neo-platonic primum mobile, the sphere of the fixed stars. The tripartite scheme of the garden may be read as a subtle anti-humanist, proto-cosmological treatise. Schelling's 1859 remarks about the properties of each deity, and their symbolic significance, are relative to a synchronic decoding of the present form of the garden. Schelling absorbed a neo-platonic "essentialist" worldview – a symptom of post-Kantian philosophy of history – albeit with Romantic conflation – that locates chaos in the imaginative tableau of the "divine." This reading echoes the distant but culturally pervasive distress of Mannerism – a cyclic reversal, displacement, and inversion of humanist values. In Plato's *Timaeus*, primordial chaos was anterior to divinity. The demiurge was charged with ruling and ordering the inchoate, primordial realm of matter (Nature). Romanticism transferred chaos (back) to the sphere of the divine, an "archaic" gesture, giving to the pantheon of gods an anarchic "surfeit of being." As in Plotinean neo-platonism (and William Blake's visionary universe) the demiurge (Ancient of Days) – image of despotism – was demoted. The seven deities situated within the Vrtbovská garden tripartite schema represent a synoptic, critical program lurking in the heart of the garden. This program may be inferred from the iconology of the ensemble and its location. The gods mediate the lower and upper realms – placed above two thirds of the garden. The deities, taken en masse (*pace* Schelling's mythology as "poesy en masse"), produce the image of a phalanx guarding the upper third terrace: Vulcan, "formative artist of clever works"; Apollo, "point of indifference in the ideal world," "god of light, of ideas, of living form"; Mars, "corresponds on the ideal side of Vulcan"; Minerva, "encompasses within herself all forms of the elevated and the powerful, the creative and destructive, the unifying and the divisive"; Juno, "pure power, but without sublime wisdom"; Jupiter, "absolute point of indifference; absolute power inheres within him coupled with absolute wisdom"; and Diana, "image of nature."[2] The remaining figures provided by Braun (Atlas, putti, dragon, and fighting boys) and fresco painter Václav Reiner (Ceres, Bacchus) are supplements to the Roman pantheon and de facto *sub specie aeternitatis*. The typical play of forms and figures of the lower terraces – a traditional capriccio – is surmounted by the more grave, mythic content of the upper level. The "above," here, is also a "beyond" – it stands removed from the lower two-thirds of the garden, critically apart. The squabbling youngsters (image of political factions?), the dragon and the two fertility gods – plus the caged birds of the aviary – signal a lower order of being, "against" the upper, "transcendent" realm of the gods.

Atlas, at the "base" of the garden, the "foundation," would seem to represent, in this analysis, mundanity or – in phenomenological terms – "being … manifest as a burden." Heidegger's ontological language – "throwness," "the that of its there," "falling prey" – reconceptualized the basic fundaments of classical exegesis. Atlas/Hercules in the baroque garden was usually placed below a monumental terrace or edifice to properly picture the ontological condition of estrangement and labor. Atlas, as a former titan, pictures Heidegger's remarks regarding being-in-the-world or being ensnared in time: "An existential mode of being-in-the-world is documented in the phenomenon of falling prey."[3] For this same reason Peter Greenaway opened his 1992-93 Louvre Parti Pris exhibition, "Le Bruit des Nuages – Flying Out of this World," with an image of Atlas and an elegiac ode to gravity, "Earth-bound with

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[1] Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, pp. 41-42, et passim.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY, 1996), p. 165. First published *Sein und Zeit* (Halle-an-der-Saale/Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927).

gravity": "Atlas, the man who carries the world, becomes the book of the maps of the world. An example of man, or God, into book. Few have that honour."[4] The lower terraces of Vrtbovská garden – "the world" – would then seem to picture "thrownness" in its existential mode. This implicit anxiety, operating within the remnants of the normative Renaissance worldview of harmonic relationships between mankind and the cosmos, is the first signifying subtext in the garden's intellectual substance. There is the suggestion of a tragic rupture (again) in the nature of things.

Michel de Certeau, in *The Mystic Fable* (1992), qualified the mnemonic game played by "mystic authors" as a type of demarcation of a frontier or territory within discourse. "These ancient authors introduce into our present-day world the language of a 'nostalgia' in relation to that other country [a third, strange region – limbo] … What these authors bring into play is therefore not reducible to an interest in the past, nor to even a voyage into the recesses of our memory. *They are like statues erected to mark the boundaries of an 'elsewhere' that is not remote, a place they both produce and guard.* They form, with their bodies and their texts, a frontier that divides space and transforms their reader into an inhabitant of the country, or the suburbs, far from the nowhere where they house the essential. They articulate in this way the foreignness of our own place, and therefore a desire to return to our native land."[5] The zone within Vrtbovská garden where these statues exercise their magic is the edge of the superlative – the transition to the highest of three terraces – within a tripartite schema. The garden terraces rise to that apotheosis in the third terrace, the lower two connected to the palace by architectural frames grounded in an architectural man-made system. The third terrace, free of the palace, is firmly planted into the sloping flank of Petřín grounded in a natural system – a proverbial "starry thicket." The lower terraces are decidedly rooted in the ground plan of the palace. Petřín is the focal point of the mysterious other, the superlative. Nature and Otherness seem to be privileged over culture and discourse.

There seems to be a formal distinction implied between the innocence of the natural orders and the tragic dimension of the man-made world – an inversion or split in the harmonic system of the humanists. Notably, proto-Enlightenment Baroque philosophy (Leibniz, Spinoza, Descartes) qualified Renaissance humanism through a rigorous systematic integration of science and metaphysics. Spinoza could prove the existence of God but not of Man. Ficino effectively altered the medieval perception of the world, unifying the higher and lower orders (a development on scholastic metaphysics) to include participation of the platonic copy in the ideal. The upper and lower worlds moved closer as a result, in Renaissance philosophy and theology. With Baroque philosophy mechanistic models of cosmology began to be applied to ontology. Objective systems became "innocent" and "good" while subjective systems were perceived as tainted. Moral philosophy and logic and reason (paired) became separate pursuits. The wheel turned, traveling closer to present-day empiricism (and skepticism) while flattening something poetic and mystical in the imaginary topology of human systems – another necessary Fall. Between the Renaissance and the Baroque is the nervous-unnerving disquiet of the Mannerist complex, an uncertainty regarding all systems of order and a complementary quest for transcendence.

It is "here," in this narrative dream, that the author requests that the reader free associate. To bring these cultural forces to play in the analysis of a garden fragment, from the exact historical moment that moral philosophy and natural philosophy split company, requires that a faculty within reason and anterior to empiricism be employed.

This cultural disquietude is expressed in the "rising" form of the garden – a tropological system expressing the layers of reality previously smoothed over in the humanist worldview. The upper, third terrace at Vrtbovská garden is qualitatively different than the two lower zones – it is sacred. The lower two terraces embrace the Renaissance-Baroque palace and establish the structural logic of the complex. An axis is established at the rear, west wing with each terrace narrowing as it climbs the hill. The final resting point (where one turns to look back) is also a "haunted" vanishing point. This high point is where a *gloriet*, a small shrine, is built into the enclosing wall. The *gloriet* has grotto-like aspects intended to invoke Neptune, the missing prime deity, and an oculus guarded by figures of his consorts Hermaphrodite and Salmacis. The axis is occluded by virtue of the layered composition, stepping upwards by flanking, curving twin stairs from second to third level and by similar but gated means from terrace one to two. This elongation is a Mannerist development of centralized Renaissance plans. The lowest two terraces are *giardinetto*-style parterres with circular fountains at the midpoints and on axis. The uppermost, third terrace has triangular ground panels enhancing the overall perspective of narrowing terraces and pointing to the *gloriet* at the terminus of the central axis. The *gloriet* sits atop a small podium and is reached by a short stair semi-circular in plan – a plinth. The entire formal apparatus is northern Italian Renaissance. The synchronic "mannerist" elements are more shadowy. This is the haunting of the form by expressionist figural gestures (including the

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[4] Peter Greenaway, *Le Bruit des Nuages – Flying Out of this World* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1992), p. 21.
[5] Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 2. Italics added. First published *La fable mystique: XVIe-XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

gesticulating deities by Braun). A primary source of water (Petřín Itself) is implied in the position of the *gloriet*, pushed as it is into the hillside and surmounting the vanishing point (struck by the hoof of winged thought). The mythic stature of Petřín (Parnassus) is belied by its 327-meter height.

Only from the third terrace are open views established, over the rooftops, north and east, to Prague Castle (Hradčany), St. Nicholas Church and the Old Town (across the Vltava River). St. Nicholas was built in the mid-18th century and was not part of the original view, a panorama that included Hradčany and the rolling green Bohemian landscape to the northeast – the Bohemian "sea." The view today is of rooftops over rooftops. At about 3,000 square meters, Vrtbovská is one of the smallest palace gardens in Malá Strana. Consistent with Renaissance and Baroque architectural theory, the palace and garden exploit theatrical structural devices to introduce dramatic perspectives. "The invention of the terrace and of long raised walks derived not only from a desire to integrate the fabric of the building into the land surrounding it but also from a wish to create a variety of viewpoints and theatrical perspectives."[6] These views were, then, animated or framed by "delicate wrought-iron gates, or pillars placed at oblique angles and surmounted by lively sculptures."[7] This is the mise-en-scène perspective initiated in Mannerism and perfected in the Baroque. The attenuated (stretched) form of the terraces at Vrtbovská is reminiscent of comments by Lucretius on the abode of the gods – they exist in the "spaces between the worlds" (the *intermundia*) and are of such fine substance that they are invisible to the eye and only intelligible within the mind.[8] This architectural theatricality was later exploited to excess in late Baroque and Rococo churches – especially those in Bavaria (Balthasar Neumann) with their lumpen rooflines and "landscaped" interiors.[9]

Vrtbovská garden is entered, today and probably in the 1700s, from the street, through a gated alley off-axis with the garden proper. It was once well within the Castle fortifications, which were demolished by Empress Marie Theresa in the 18th century. This oblique access is staged as a processional through the building volume. Passing through a stucco gate, with Atlas (Titan) above the portal, and approaching the lower outer wall of the second terrace, a turn to the right (north) reveals an opening to the garden at a point between terrace one and two. The sequence emphasizes the close relationship of the lowest terrace and the palace. The lowest of the three terraces is effectively a courtyard, framed on the south by a *sala terrena* and on the north by an aviary. The eastern end of the terrace is framed by the rear wing of the trapezoidal palace, and the western edge is enclosed by a stucco wall with symmetrically placed doors leading into an open passage, and stair, to the second terrace.

II. ABSOLUTE HISTORY

Counter-Reformation Absolutism came to be expressed across Europe in numerous ways, not the least being the great Baroque gardens and palaces of royalist Europe. Louis XIV's Versailles was copied and copied and copied, from Vienna to Naples to Potsdam. The Habsburg hegemony adopted the code, but it was never expressed in Prague, which descended into economic and cultural marginality after Rudolf II with the return of the imperial court to Vienna. It did appear, however briefly, in regional castles as a conscious form of obeisance to the ruling Habsburgs, before being swept away by the English landscape style that arrived via Germany in the 19th century.

The absolutist tendencies of the Baroque were however thrust upon Bohemia in the form of new churches, palaces and seminaries. Vast parts of Malá Strana were demolished for the new building program, Wallenstein's efforts included. "At the turn of the eighteenth century, however, conditions began to change. The nobles started loosening their ties with the Viennese court … As the eighteenth century progressed, the patricians and the clergy engaged in a kind of intense building competition … Prague became a city of architectural wonders. But tears and blood combined with the mortar in her Baroque churches. The powerful portal Atlantes by Braun supporting the balcony of the Clam-Gallas Palace (1713-25) seem to allude to the Czech people, burdened with privations and bowed under the weight of so much pomp."[10]

At Caserta, in Naples, the guiding theoretician was Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), the renowned mythographer. Like Colbert, at Versailles, Vico provided Vanvitelli's royal palace for Carlo di Borbone (of the French Bourbon dynasty) with the interpretive apparatus for the king's wholesale usurpation of classical mythology. The Neapolitan thinker, with Luigi Vanvitelli, converted a Baroque "barracks" into a monument of so-called "pure"

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[6] Anna Maria Matteuci, "The Italian Baroque and Rococo Garden," in Monique Mosser, Georges Teyssot, eds., *The Architecture of Western Gardens* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 148.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book V, Lines 146-55.
[9] Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Borromini and the Bohemian Baroque," in Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture: Meaning and Place, Selected Essays* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), pp. 61-76.
[10] Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, pp. 189-90.

classicism.[11] Vico's instrumentalist historiography was profoundly suited to support the symbolic orders of Absolutism: "Architectonic justice, anchored in number, is indeed the cause of all things. It surrounds, controls, pervades the laws of private property, of merit of subjects in a kingdom, and of their dignity in a phenomenon called *lex rectrix*. The *lex rectrix* consists of the laws that correct inequities in acquisition, disposition, or possession. The just measures of the latter things are in turn called the *lex aequatrix*. Both the 'restituting' and the 'equalizing' law are dependent on architectonic justice because they work through number, and number in turn 'plants' propriety in the soul of the legislator, the monarch."[12] From here, the appropriation of all of history and mythology to support Absolutism is short work for the architect and the court iconographer.

Caserta was converted into a grand processional, a River-Road, usurping all Roman and classical origins in the process. Vico's gloss linked Carlo to Aeneas and the founding myths of the Roman Republic through appropriation of the iephic and tropographic Neapolitan landscape. From ancient Greek colonies in pre-Roman Naples to early Roman villas in Naples, a totalizing narrative was constructed on the ground to conclude with the glorious reign of Carlo. A mythic historicism pervades the entire building program and is typical of the Counter-Reformation Baroque re-conquest of the more permissive historiography of the Renaissance and Mannerist mindset. Greek and Roman deities were assembled, figurative geographies were plotted, and marvelous waterworks were conceived as inspirational tableaux to culminate in the proposed but never completed fountain of Juno and Aeolus, a device intended to commemorate the arrival of Aeneas (Carlo) in Naples. The Absolute Monarch apparently had finite means.

Caserta was begun in 1752 and is one of the last great Baroque palaces of the period. It seems to more than adequately represent the last hurrah of the age of despotism. The picturesque Italian-inspired "Georgian" landscapes of England were the new wave. Already in France the enlightened aristocracy was possessed by the English Arcadian style. A century later the style would migrate to the Czech Lands by way of Germany.

But in Bohemia, in the 18th century, something else was afoot. In Angelo Maria Ripellino's estimation there is a subtle alchemy evident in a new building program: "The palaces of Malá Strana, the paintings and frescos of Karel Škréta, Petr Brandl, Václav Vavřinec Reiner, the statue gallery on the Charles Bridge, Braun's sculptures in Kuks, the churches of Giovanni Santini-Aichl and Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer – they all bear witness to the amazing fervour with which the Czech milieu appropriated Baroque stylistic premises as it recovered from its humiliation." The implantation on the Charles Bridge (then called the Prague Bridge) of the "sandstone gallery" of saints may have symbolized "the victory of the Counter-Reformation," but the eclectic iconography is unique to Czech Baroque arts (inclusive of Braun's St. Luitgarda). This "emporium of saints" is said, today, to hold "highly learned theological disputations at midnight, passing on their captious concerns to the drunks in the neighboring taverns." Present-day tales of this apocryphal midnight séance are derived from the work of Czech Surrealist poet Vítězslav Nezval, writing after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and a century or more after the Counter-Reformation re-conquest of Bohemia. Nezval notes (in his Apollinaire-inspired reverie *Pražský chodec*): "No one who has failed to see these statues leaving their suicidal pedestals on certain nights not recorded in the calendar, mixing with the passers-by and admiring the twelve bridges of Prague (they are not all visible from here) can ever understand my poetry."[13]

Nezval's remarks are not merely a picturesque Surrealist memento – they acknowledge what Giorgio Agamben has more recently called the implicit "fixity of images": "For in every image there is always a kind of *ligatio* at work, a power that paralyzes, whose spell needs to be broken; it is as if, from the whole history of art, a mute invocation were raised towards the freeing of the image in gesture. This much was expressed in those Greek legends about statues breaking the fetters that contain them and beginning to move; but it is also the intention that philosophy entrusts to the idea, which is not at all – as it is commonly interpreted – a static archetype, but rather a constellation in which phenomena are composed in a gesture."[14]

The curious resurrection of Mannerist and Renaissance aesthetics during the height of Counter-Reformation hegemony is a sign that the imperial code was breached by artists looking over their shoulders and simultaneously back to the glory years of Charles IV and Rudolf II, imperial rulers but of an autonomous Bohemian kingdom. Kilian Ignaz and Christoph Dientzenhofer, Giovanni Santini-Aichl, Giovanni Battista Alliprandi,

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[11] George Hersey, *Architecture, Poetry, and Number in the Royal Palace at Caserta* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), p. 4.
[12] Ibid., p. 51.
[13] Vítězslav Nezval, *Pražský chodec*, Dílo XXXI (Prague: Československý Spisovatel, 1958); cited in Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, p. 204.
[14] Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Gesture," in Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993), p. 139. First published *Infanzia e storia: Distruzione dell'esperienza e origine della storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 2001).

František Maxmilián Kaňka, Václav Reiner, and Matthias Braun form a type of cultural "Boolean chain or cloud" that explains (by association) the milieux of early Baroque art and architecture in Malá Strana. "Malá Strana and the green slope of Petřín Hill were converted into a sort of *boite à perspective* or *boite d'optique* in which each part fitted marvelously into the whole and fine buildings were graced with terraced gardens."[15] The deployment of such a style at this time was typically Czech: i.e., a subtle act of resistance to absolutist Baroque hegemony.

III. A SMALL HISTORY OF MALÁ STRANA

Malá Strana, first settled in 1257, is a tightly packed quarter of Prague, below the Castle. It rests in a natural hollow (amphitheater) on the northwest, "left" bank of the Vltava (Moldau), a wide, gracious river that winds more or less north through Prague and Bohemia merging with the Elbe (Smetana's "Vltava," with its rippling opening, rousing intermezzo and gliding adieu). Malá Strana (a.k.a. the Kleinseite district in German Baroque Prague) is brimming with discontinuous and fragmentary historic structures. It is also, since 1992, held hostage to the conservative edicts of the World Heritage site program within UNESCO. In return for this designation, Malá Strana gets hordes of cultural tourists infiltrating every nook and cranny of the historical assemblage in search of glimpses of the Romanesque, the Gothic, the Renaissance, and the Baroque. The Mannerist has appropriately slipped through the cracks, based as it was on imaginative lacunae – ghosts and ruins. The later Neo-Classical, Neo-Renaissance, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Constructivist, and Functionalist styles are all accounted for in present-day Prague. Malá Strana is far and away "Baroque," though it includes Renaissance and neoclassical fabric. It is "centered" in Malostranské náměstí (Small Town Square) where the dominant monument is the domed St. Nicholas church, built for the Jesuits in 1732-37 by brothers Christoph and Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer. Malá Strana's Mannerist elements, however, have been swallowed by the omnivorous Baroque. Historians, true to form, indulging in Schelling's "literary peasant wars," continue to dispute whether or not a Mannerist style actually can be ferreted out of the admixture of Renaissance-Baroque arts and architecture.[16] To pick out the Mannerist is homologous to mind reading. It is a style within a style. Or, to use a more colorful simile, it is the proverbial riddle wrapped within an enigma. Mannerism's origin in the rivalry (*pas de deux*) between Michelangelo and Raphael is but one clue to its psychological complex. Perhaps it should be called the Mannerist complex versus the Mannerist style, after Gaston Bachelard's poetic system in *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*.[17] Such an approach would consider Mannerism a very fluid artistic sensibility running through the interstices of systems, flitting in and out of the historical register. Such a view of Mannerist works was in fact adopted by the Expressionists, and disparaged by orthodox scholars. Nevertheless, there is something heedlessly furtive about the intellectual currents that produced the great works of the period, characterized by Nikolas Pevsner as representing the perverse spiritual state of mind of the 16th century (c. 1520-1590) – i.e., "ghostly, remote, disquiet, melancholy, unreal, irrational, strained, macabre, ambiguous."[18]

Vrtbovská garden and palace was re-classicized in the 19th century, which means that it was "denatured" in the pursuit of a stripped-down, conventional "neo-classical" look. The Mannerist vision was further blurred. From 1886 to 1889, the artist Mikoláš Aleš (1868-1936) – a beloved Czech painter, draughtsman, and sgraffito artist – a sentimental artist in the manner of Arthur Rackham and N. C. Wyeth – used a portion of the rear south wing for a studio. In the Communist era the palace was apportioned to apparatchiks (Ministry of Forestry) and, alternatively, made a kindergarten. In the 1950s Czech photographer Josef Sudek (1896-1976) shot the ruined, overgrown terraces and included the dreamy images in his series "Prague Gardens" (1950-54).

Photographs in Olga Bašeová's *Pražské zahrady* (1991) show the post-communist state of the Malá Strana palace gardens. Ledeburská, Malá Furstenburská, and Vrtbovská are all depicted in a state of casual abandonment with cracked walls, grassed-over terraces, lawns, peeling frescoes, white park benches, sand paths, loose masses of shrubbery, and dysfunctional fountains (oozing turgid water). The Kinský garden, also on Petřín, has fared better owing to its Romantic origins in 1855, a style that absorbs the shocks of abandonment more agreeably. Wallenstein garden, a public park in the communist era, has been cleaned and replanted with clipped low hedges interplanted with grass. Copies of the de Vries sculptures have been installed and an array of white benches facing the loggia have been laid out for evening and weekend concerts. These images all pre-date the early-1990s restoration efforts

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[15] Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, pp. 190-204.

[16] Emanuel Poche, *Encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění* (Prague: Academia, 1975), pp. 289-92.

[17] Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, trans. Alan C.M. Ross (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). First published *La psychanalysis du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

[18] Nikolas Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design, Vol. 1: From Mannerism to Romanticism* (New York: Walker & Company, 1968); re: Kenneth Clarke's *A Failure of Nerve: Italian Painting, 1520-1535* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

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by the Ministry of Culture to restore and reprogram the palace gardens for cultural events and contemporary civic functions.[19] The new Czech Senate moved into a wing of the Wallenstein palace in the mid-1990s.

Post-Baroque Malá Strana was of such picturesque value that it inspired literary, poetic, and scholarly works from the Romantics to the Surrealists to the Structuralists. Foremost among the Romantic was Jan Neruda's *Tales of Malá Strana* – a subtle indictment of bourgeois life in an apartment block facing Petřín's hallowed backside. In the second half of the 20th century the gardens began to appear in photographic collections, well before and after Sudek's famous 1950s series.[20] Malá Strana's "Baroque" gardens were documented in Karel Plicka and Emanuel Poche's *Procházek Prahou* (1966) and in Plicka's *Praha ve fotografii* (1960).[21] Literary, photographic, and scholarly studies were mixed together throughout the 20th century in a type of on-again-off-again national revival.[22] Angelo Maria Ripellino's magisterial *Magic Prague* summarizes the various currents in literature and poetry of the Biedermeier and Early Modernist period with an inspired reading of the German and Czech poets mesmerized by the baroque essence of Malá Strana: "Modern Czech poetry is full of sculpture … There is an intense relationship between the writhings of Braun's statues and the anguish in the poetry of a Halas, Zahradníček or Holan. For the Baroque is the lifeblood of Czech poetry … In its robust metaphors, its visual and theatrical bias, its use of paradox, hyperbole, verbal embellishment, symbolism, its accumulation of asyndeta, *its sense of rapture and decay*."[23]

Jaroslav Seifert's powerful, poetist-inspired impressions of Malá Strana were resurrected as late as 1985 – influencing, for example, Gian Paolo Tozzoli's *Mala Strana (1981-1985)*.[24] Seifert (1901-1986), at first a proletarian poet and practitioner of Poetism (Devětsil), also supplied Sudek (in the 1950s) with poetic passages for the latter's plentiful publications documenting "the poet of Prague's" masterful photographic peregrinations. Considered an "ardent, dreamy lyric poet" associated with the First Republic, Seifert's politically charged, yet lachrymose "15 Sonnets on Prague" (written in 1948 and previously only published in small bibliophile editions or buried in his collected works) were duly resurrected in book form in the 1970s – as protest against the Communist State.[25] "Ardent" or "dreamy" apparently also contains both "fiery" and "lachrymose." If the Czech poets of the interwar period – following the Romantics Karel Hynek Mácha, Jan Neruda, Otokar Březina – flirted with Surrealism and Poetism in the 20s and 30s, they nonetheless all but abandoned the games "after they had served their purpose in fructifying style."[26] If Czech literature of the First Republic was "filled with a vitalist spirit, a faith in reality, with a tendency toward Naturalism rather than Romanticism,"[27] it clearly was also influenced by the extant, magical-realist aspects of Czech baroque culture that exuded ennui and exuberance, at once. Such is the same spirit that animates Sudek's photography. Sudek's Realist (oftimes Surrealist) photography is allied with the Czech avant-garde Modernist quest for authenticity and national renewal. But there are undercurrents of Romanticism too. Sudek's reliance on chiaroscuro is a Mannerist-inspired evocation of anxiety. Call it "Naturalism," but it is also subtly "super-natural."

Realism notwithstanding, the most celebrated and popular poet of the Romantic and inter-war period was Otokar Březina. Czech literary scholar Arne Novák describes Březina as possessing "a mystical poet's vision of the universe" nourished by Renaissance influences and humanist rhetoric. Late 19th-century and early 20th-century Czech poetry, despite its increasingly proletarian outworks, in many ways recapitulated 15th- and 16th-century Czech humanism, "the synthesis of classical and local culture." The "artfully woven syntax and lofty rhetorical style" resurfaced so-to-speak in First Republic idealism pared with a nascent Realism. Poetism, c. 1920, inspired by French Surrealism, embodied the more extreme mannerist forms of Czech humanism. Czech Romantic-Surrealist poet Vítězslav Nezval (1900-1958) embodied the shift from Romanticism to Realism. In Novák's words, Nezval

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[19] Olga Bašeová, *Pražské zahrady* (Prague: Panorama, 1991).
[20] Alžběta Birnbaumová, *Pražské zahrady* (Prague: Kniha o Praze, 1931); Petra Dillingra (P. Dillinger), Emanuel Poche, *Malostranské zahrady* (Prague: A.L. Jirout, 1948).
[21] Karel Plicka, Emanuel Poche, *Procházek Prahou* (Prague: Orbis, 1966); Karel Plicka, *Praha ve fotografii* (Prague: Panorama, 1960).
[22] Václav Hlavsa, Jirí Vancura, *Malá Strana/Mensí Mesto prazské* (Prague: Státní Nakladatelství Technické Literatury (SNTL), 1983); Oldřich J. Blažíček, "Plastika v pražských historických zahradách," in Zdislav Buříva, ed., *Staletá praha X: Pražské zahrady a parky, archeologické výzkumy* (Prague: Panorama, 1980); Emilia Ter-Akopowowa, "Malá Strana," *Umana avventura* 5, no. 14 (Spring-Summer 1990): pp. 32-43; Gian Paolo Tozzoli, *Mala Strana (1981-1985)* (Milan: All'Insegna del Pesce d'Oro, 1985).
[23] Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, pp. 193-94. Italics added.
[24] Tozzoli, *Mala Strana (1981-1985)*.
[25] Arne Novák, *Czech Literature*, trans. Peter Kussi, ed. William E. Harkins (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1976), p. 322. Regarding the various editions of "15 Sonnets," see: "Corrections," *Index on Censorship* 5, no. 2 (1976): p. 90.
[26] Ibid., p. 20.
[27] Ibid., p. 21.

moved, in time, from "extolling the magic of sensuality and dreams, the foam of life and artistic novelties, erotic play and enticing fantasies" to addressing "the painful and even tragic aspects of existence."[28] This is the Romantic/Post-Romantic dialectic. Sudek and Nezval collaborated in 1948 on *Praha, Prague*. Realism is the diacritical "/" between Romanticism and Post-Romanticism.

Prague Baroque has inspired countless panegyrics – and elegiacs – over the past century. *Le banquet des anges* (1984), by Dominique Fernandez, is one of the more recent efforts in this literary tradition. Prague Baroque is presented as a climax – a consummation in the North – like Mannerism – of an Italian inspiration. "Elle n'inspire ni respect ni admiration, elle touche, il faut l'aimer pour la comprendre, on ne peut avoir avec elle que des rapports personnels et tendres. Jardins Vrtba, Jardins Kolovrat, Montée au Château par les ruelles escarpées, communion avec les pierres, avec les arbres."[29]

The Vrtbovská garden restoration team – EkoPrague, with Ivan Březina (of Mepro Ateliér), garden architect – undertook the current restoration plan in 1992 after winning a competition. Work began in 1993, interrupted in 1994 by vanishing funds (the era of "tunneling" – legal embezzlement – in the banking sector). The final cost of the restoration was in the neighborhood of 32.5 million Czech crowns (a little over 1 million US dollars). A French lighting company, BEGA, contributed 2 million crowns worth of modern lighting. "Restored" statues were installed, new copies of old copies. The original Braun statues were moved to the National Museum long ago. Several (including Atlas) appear in the book *Lapidárium Národního musea* (1958), edited by Vladimír Denkstein, et al., with photographs by Josef Sudek.[30] The first set of copies, deteriorated by smog and acid rain, were replaced in the recent restoration effort by new cast-stone copies. The rundown first copies were cast-resin. The Ministry of Forests (and Parks), last tenant of two-thirds of the palace under the Communists, was pushed out in the early 1990s (well after the Velvet Revolution of 1989). Controlled by Prague 1 Administrative District and the Ministry of Culture, the palace now houses some private apartments, the Karmel Company, and the Count Swartzenburg Foundation. The garden is again open to the public and for more lavish, private parties and soirées, all for a fee.

Below this new order are the submerged torrents of Renaissance-Baroque-Romantic agitation, apostasy and hypersensitivity to the tragic history of Bohemia. The new surface will eventually crack and bring forth the vapors of this repressed entelechy, in time.

January 1995

IV. EPILOGUE (1999)

Vrtbovská garden is again open, but its secret life is safe, obscured beneath the recent renovations and the cultural ubiquity of the "Baroque." Stealing a page from the literature of Magical Prague, a body of speculation derived from medieval sources but renewed in early 1900s fiction and 1930s Surrealism, an entirely different order of measuring the importance of Vrtbovská garden is possible.

According to such tradition, Prague is a city built on a template of sacred geographical premises. This view is based on macrocosmic and microcosmic analogues derived in turn from archaic readings of geo-physical and astro-physical relationships. The phenomenological writings of the architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz are permeated with this reliance on the vague, old science of geomancy and figurative architectonics.

The argument is as follows: Prague lies at the center of Europe and is perfectly poised to express the physical-figurative essence of "the center." Figurative, quizzical maps of the city's monuments, arrayed along cardinal axes (with the Vltava flowing through the idealized template), "confirm" the oldest layer of the ancient city as a reflection of the heavens. Dating to the 6th century, Prague was built up in layers, all of which somehow, today, co-exist and support the iconology of the sacred construct. "In Prague, thus, we encounter a particular kind of 'microstructure'; a structure whose richness does not only reside in the micro scale, but in what is dimly suggested."[31]

This densely wound fabric is "sprung" in the squares, orchards, and gardens of the city, and "punctuated" by the legendary one hundred spires of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque churches. The whole of Bohemia is condensed in the capital city: "[T]he hill and the river are opposed complementary forces, which make nature

[28] Ibid., p. 321.
[29] Fernandez, *Le banquet des anges*, p. 349.
[30] Vladimír Denkstein, Jana Kybalová, Zoroslava Drobná, eds., *Lapidárium Národního musea* (Prague: Státní Nakladatelství Krásné Literatury, Hudby a umění (SNKLHU), 1958).
[31] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), p. 83.

become alive with expressive power."[32] Rudolf II's kunst- and wunder-kammer (collection of miniature natural and man-made wonders) and the agate-encrusted chapel at St. Vitus (noted by Apollinaire) are further crystallizations of this figurative, microcosmic phantasmagoria. The Emperor's collection "was a goldmine of minute objects put together with microscopic care: minute ivorywork on nutshells, cherry pits and shells, delicate ornamented enamelware …" "Goldsmiths at the Prague Court inlaid shark's teeth in gold as serpent's tongues …" "Stone polishers chiselled rough crystals, *handsteine*, into miraculous landscapes, crucifixion scenes and models of mines."[33] Vrtbovská garden is also an expression of this aestheticized miniaturization of the world, of analogies nesting within analogies, but of a cultural typology.

Angelo Maria Ripellino's *Praga Magica* (1973) encapsulated the entropic poetics of Kafka, Meyrink, and the later Dadaists and Surrealists, a reading of Prague's shadowlands and underworlds, albeit fervidly post-Romantic readings of urban and cultural decay – a literature of demented pullulation, ghosts, and golems. This is a Decadent recapitulation of the Golden Age. An outstretched skein, Magical Humanism is a thread winding through Czech culture for 500 years.

These latter forms mark the outer historic reaches of the Rudolfine era. The poetics of decay are premised on a tragic, degraded historicism. The old forms were, c. 1900, a debris field floating in the dark Bohemian imagination. This is the pre-modernist midnight reverie, a psychosis presaging the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Secessionist, Cubist, Constructivist, and Functionalist insurrections were to follow in rapid succession, a frenzied attempt to salvage the spirit of innovation from the spirit of despair. Kafka, the "Hunger Artist," did not live long enough to see the results of the insurrections (dying in 1924). His intense individualism would not have found much solace in any such anti-historical, utopian movements anyway. His solipsism perfectly encompassed the former claustrophobia of Prague's Jewish Quarter and divisions within the city. His existentialist novels, all published after his death, have fixed forever the image of a rotting, labyrinthine decrepit city. (Two of the greatest popular attractions, today, in Prague tourism are "traces" of Kafka and "traces" of Mozart.) The Old Town, the New Town, and the Small Town are all relative terms. Malá Strana was founded in 1257, the Old Town in 1232-34, and the New Town in 1348. The Jewish Quarter, in the northern stretches of the Old Town, was demolished in the late 19th century. Urban renewal started, however, in the middle 18th century. In 1749, by decree of Empress Marie Theresa, most of Prague's fortifications were pulled down opening up vast new areas for public parks and avenues lined with trees. By 1900 the city was soaked in one thousand years of strife and glory. Its next one hundred years would be no different. Kafka merely noted the death rattle of one long phase.

By the 1950s the gardens of Malá Strana were picturesque ruins, overgrown and haunted by the vagaries of history. Following the Communist putsch ownership of the palaces was disputed and the government converted the former noble estates to so-called public facilities. Ministries and apparatchiks were parked in the decaying quarters. The gardens were left to nature's fickle care. Photographed in the 1950s by Sudek, the gardens of Malá Strana represented a ragged yet dignified pre-Communist legacy. Sudek's black-and-white photographs of these former privileged enclaves exuded ennui and nostalgia at once. Seifert's poetry, often paired with Sudek's photography, rivals that of Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798-1837) for lachrymose effect. Leopardi has been called the first aesthetician of ennui. Beneath the rampant vegetation and cracked masonry a former glory was evident. Prague's glory days were still evident between the cracks and in the political and cultural margins cautiously encoded into Sudek's work. His photographic series of St. Vitus is perhaps his best-known series (now and then). Vrtbovská's terraces were bedecked in the 1950s with crabgrass and wildflowers. Rampant vines draped the stairs and walls. Wild species from Petřín's slopes invaded the walled garden. The statuary was packed off to the museums, and the stucco and fresco decorative elements slowly slid into the murk and mire of Communist-era indifference.

In essence, the gardens of Malá Strana were put to sleep, an act of architectural euthanasia. In sleeping, however, the dreaming of the gardens began. This dreaming merged with the dreaming of the Czech people … back to the First Republic … and beyond … in reverse to the Golden Age of Rudolfine Prague … and to the mythic founders of the city, the 9th century Premyslids of Vyšehrad. Czech historiography acknowledges the mystical roots of the city in the veneration of the oldest layers of its fortifications, a Michelet-like reverie. The southwest foundations of the first castle (Vyšehrad) are linked by a diagonal stroke to the northeast Romanesque, Gothic, and Baroque ensemble at Hradčany (Prague Castle). Charles IV (1316-1378) is revered, today, perhaps more than Rudolf II (the recent rehabilitation of Rudolf's legacy notwithstanding). Both were Holy Roman Emperors who, ruling from Prague, conferred on the city a cultural preeminence – in Europe – to rival Paris, Berlin, or Vienna.

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[32] Ibid., p. 85.
[33] Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, pp. 74-75.

The Czech nation is said to transcend political arrangements. The Czech sense of identity is *trans*-political.[34] With the respect accorded multiple incarnations of the Habsburg hegemony, within a grander one-thousand-year trajectory, the Czech nation is essentially cosmopolitan and humanist. A "Catholic" country, it also sponsored the earliest Protestant revolts against the Church. Today, still a Catholic country, most Czechs profess a mischievous agnosticism or a vague pantheistic view of nature and culture. Since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, a mostly peaceful transition to democratic government, the Czech Republic, minus the revanchist elements of Slovakia, has re-emerged as a secular-humanist culture with profound links to Middle European speculative philosophy. In reverse, Structuralism (at Charles University), Surrealism, Romanticism and Protestantism (notably in the Moravian Brethren and Comenius) have left traces of resistance to narrow ideological mandates imposed from outside (or within). These forms of resistance color Czech culture to this day with a kaleidoscopic, synoptic worldview rooted in crosscurrents of past struggles and a land perceived for centuries as the crossroads of Europe.

This "coloratura" is perfectly reflected in the ancient forms of the city and in the modern preoccupations of the people: there is a curious fascination abroad in the Czech Republic for the cult of genius loci expressed in a burgeoning literature of syncretist, mytho-poetic license. The legends and fantastications of the Magical Prague literature summarize this quest for a totalizing vision: "On the border between the zodiacal signs of Cancer and Leo in the circuit of the zodiac we cross an important watershed between the past and the future. It is a great zodiacal threshold dividing the ancestors from the progeny. The fixed fiery sign of Leo, under the rule of the Sun, represents the health and strength of new life, conceived in youth and love, like in the narrower sense of the world, creativity itself."[35]

This borderline (borderland) runs northwest through Petřín lacing together those palaces of Malá Strana huddled at the southeast flank of Petřín, through Strahov (the great seminary and library), and to White Mountain (with its Star Pavilion). The symbolic center of Prague is the 12th-century Romanesque rotunda of the Holy Cross, in the Old Town. The actual center of "the holy astral geometric structure" is the presbytery of the church of St. Michael in Opatovice, also in the Old Town.[36] Seven and twelve are the original magic numbers animating Prague's ancient ground plan. They are derived from the seven planets of the ancient cosmology and the twelve signs of the zodiac. This geometric plan stitches together the major architectural monuments of historic Prague. To presume that this magical mathematical content was still operative in Baroque Prague is not farfetched. Johannes Kepler was still kicking around and providing horoscopes for General Wallenstein in the middle 1600s. Wallenstein also commissioned the famous astrological passage for his then new palace in Malá Strana. The unproveable conjecture that Vrtbovská garden and palace inhabits this same sensibility, falling as it does on the sacred northwest axis, is the so-called riddle within the enigma. If the garden has a mystical content by virtue of this shared sacred geographic template (its close relationship to Petřín) and the Mannerist template (somewhat emasculated by recent efforts), its power to incite imaginative speculation is in no way diminished by its current neo-capitalist guise. Mannerist or Baroque, this site is marked out for magical-realist significance by its very location. It harbors its secrets within the patina provided by Time Itself. Historiography Itself may well be nothing more than a surrationalist dream-state, the dream of dreams.

V. NOCTURNE

I saw life in infinite metamorphoses
and blessed the human desire
to hasten after new stars
flaring up and going out
behind the glass window of night[37]
–Vítězslav Nezval (1921)

In the sumptuous gauze of sleep – in mid-August Prague – Vrtbovská garden gloams, an ecstatic crespuscular state of half-agitation beneath a stilled surface, half-lit by moon and *torchières*. The shell-encrusted *gloriet* (Palissy-inspired blind grotto) shimmers, animated by Desire – a Venusian froth and wavering, watery sheen just below the marbled surface – Venus emerging from the /Sea/. Adumbration of depth (quest for immortality within the contingent), a foaming mirage floats in the mind's eye in the mist of sleep.

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[34] Ladislav Holý, *Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation: National Identity and the Post-Communist Social Transformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
[35] Špůrek, *Praga Mysteriosa*, p. 101.
[36] Ibid., p. 14, 81, et passim.
[37] Vítězslav Nezval, "Podivuhodný kouzelník" (1922), English translation in Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, p. 63.

The aviary skitters with birdsong – Miltonian "wood notes wild." The *sala terrena* thrums with awakening basso continuo. The garden terraces flutter with vine and citrus leaves fading in the chiaroscuroed hues of disintegrating dusk. The seven Roman gods – Vulcan, Mars, Minerva, Apollo, Juno, Jupiter, Diana – haunt the uppermost terrace parapet. Gesticulating madly, they hover at the edge of the abyss of shadow engulfing the lower two terraces of the garden veiled in shadows cast by the dimming terracotta roof and the darkening scaffold of horse chestnut outside the garden walls. Petřín's vine-swathed slope is smudged gray-green with evening's thickening ink. The timbre of baroque chamber music eclipses the last notes of dying day. The birds in the aviary and the trees quiet.

This half-melancholy moment, in which the garden flowers whorl inward petals clasp over solar heart, springs from Petřín Itself, a taste of Bohemian slumber in the wilds of the Austro-Hungarian thicket (a sleeping within dreaming) in Mittel-Europa's exuberant and resistant heart. Holy orders are observed in the monastic abbeys of Malá Strana – vespers – as deeper shadows still settle on the gardens and palaces of the cramped residential city. Behind fast-closed doors and gates an irresistible urge to slip unseen arises, through secret passages into secret gardens, verdant orchards, grape-choked vineyards, seemingly blind alleys and *allées* of pollarded plane trees. Blending with night shadows, the illicit embrace of night fuels the bold to cunning and subterfuge. Whispering instructions, passing secretive notes of assignation, slipping silently (anonymously) below peacock-laden, leaden boughs through tightly wound, tree-draped streets, velvet- and silk-robed shades flit in and out of hidden gates and passages.

The vespertine hour passes into night, the rogue hours bloom with midnight's flowers, the gyrating gods are motionless upon their pedestals, the bird song is long ceased save cooing and murmuring doves in attic dovecots. Torches burned out, night blackens into abysmal tones of blackest black. Moon set, stars prick from eternity the night's vault with slivers of gold and silver. The milky elliptic is churned by the passing of the Great Swan, sailing down the heavens at the edge of Time Itself.

Far, far below the churning celestial tide, within a mere speck of masonry, mud and vegetation, silence engulfs the garden at the center of the world. A quickening pulse, invading the dream, beats an at-first-all-but-inaudible rhythm, rising, then, to an elemental accelerando overlaid and consummated by a crescendo fortissimo, followed by a whimpering diminuendo. Locked in the eternal embrace of Time Not Itself, smiling, wrapped in the opalescent folds of the dream within the dream, dawn drifts over the horizon, rose-red and incarnadine, drop by drop.

"The sun is but a morning star."[38]

August 1999

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[38] Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 333. First published *Walden: Or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854).

WILD & WILDER

My first impression of Villa Tugendhat (1930), Mies van der Rohe's masterpiece in Brno, Czech Republic, is colored by a curious anomaly in the recently restored structure – a crack in the exterior wall of the villa inhabited by honeybees. This otherwise classic, rational modernist monument is already re-colonized by wild nature; albeit, a small inroad.

Tugendhat is powerful, a suburban nest for newlyweds, compact and virtuous in all things modern, full of curious gestures to grandiosity – full-storey doors, monumental glass enclosures on three sides implying a relationship to the infinite beyond the structure of the villa. Rich veneers of stone and wood remind one of the Barcelona Pavilion (1929). The rationalist use of a grid of supporting columns (space- and wall-generating units) frees the interior of the need for *actual* load-bearing walls. Each vestige of wall, then, performs a different task – blocking a view here, rounding a space there ...

All in all, Tugendhat is a moment of architectural history frozen in time. Architecture may be "frozen music," but it is also "frozen time." The bees, then, are harbingers of a type of "Spring" – after "Winter." A small crack in the ice offers a space for the irruption of the Other into the emptiness of the Frozen Moment.

At Kew Gardens (a very large, expansive unit near London and part of the "Royal Botanic Garden franchise"), the breadth of the park-like grounds is structured, here and there, by architectural elements both formal and informal. The conservatories and the adjacent alpine and taxonomic gardens, the new Japanese garden notwithstanding (as it still seems just "out of the box" after three years), lend to the open park an episodic narrative of alternating, sometimes competing experiences. The greater part of Kew is its broad, tree-strewn grassland and glades, partly now gone to seed as the curators pay homage to the wildflowers that are "colonizing" the meadows and glades. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, episodic effects in literature and art are described as lacking value if not linked by a larger, all-encompassing theme or concept. At Kew this concept is Nature and its volition – that is, to overwhelm and define everything in its path. The dialectic is developed in its inevitable collision with Culture. Horticulture is just a favoring of Nature in a scientific context – the mission of Kew. The great drama of Kew is its subtle battle with Nature through Horticulture, perhaps to make Nature dance to a more civil tune.

But it is Sir William Chambers' Ruined Arch (c. 1760) at the edge of the park that commands the eye, the subtle eye, in the sense that all of Kew is secretly striving to mimic the mock indifference of the Arch. This folly, constructed to appear antique, and much further ruined since, stands aloof from Kew proper, an architecturally benign shrug to the ongoing grooming of the park. It rivals the crack at Tugendhat for poetic and dissonant effect. Both are openings to the ineffable: wild bees, wild nature, and wild imagination. The episodic is transcended by the irrepressible success of Nature and Time.

POSTSCRIPT

The bees build in the crevices
Of loosening masonry, and there
The mother birds bring grubs and flies.
My wall is loosening; honey bees,
Come live in the empty house of the stare.[1]

May 1997

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[1] William Butler Yeats, "The Stare's Nest by My Window," from "Meditations in Time of Civil War" (1922).

ANGEL CITY

Jean Nouvel's Golden Angel office tower in Prague is scheduled to open in November 2000, but it has already weathered official and unofficial criticism for more than ten years. The building is a prelude to Nouvel's more ambitious Angel City plan, which when completed will encompass 60,000 square meters of office space, 9,000 square meters of retail and 10,000 square meters of apartments and recreational space.

Criticism of Golden Angel, primarily from local architects, has focused on its scale, materials, and imagery. Golden Angel, actually four linked buildings, will feature a white-and-grey concrete frame visible beneath the 32.5-meter glass outer wall of the main facade. The building varies from five to seven storeys and is linked by covered walkways and passages. Nouvel has incorporated the image of a guardian angel on the facade of the tower, which faces the Vltava River and the 10th-century ruins of Vyšehrad on the opposite bank. The proposed "angel," controversially, is a still of Bruno Ganz, the actor-angel from Wim Wenders' 1987 film *Wings of Desire*. The wrap-around glass facade will also feature images of clouds drifting across the glass curtain wall and snippets of Czech poetry on the subject of angels.

(For the full-bore scandal surrounding the planning origins of this project, plus the awe-inspiring machinations of the current Czech architectural scene, see the sister essay "Read & Weep: Scandal in Bohemia.")

Golden Angel is sited on a main thoroughfare in Smíchov – an aging 500-acre industrial sector of the city – and sits above the Anděl (Angel) subway station that serves upwards of 20,000 passengers a day. The structure will include 13,000 square meters of office space and 7,000 square meters of retail. Scheduled retail components include a department store, a Dutch supermarket franchise, numerous small shops plus a 224-space parking garage.

Funded by the Dutch-Swiss financial services consortium ING, the same firm that brought Prague the controversial Frank Gehry-Vlado Milunić "Dancing Building" (a.k.a. "The Fred and Ginger Building"), Golden Angel is expected to cost $27 to $28 million. It will be the first step toward transforming Smíchov into an alternative city center, less for the millions of tourists that descend on Prague each year than for beseiged locals.

Nouvel's 1985 planning study for Smíchov is representative of the architect's theory of "spot intervention," or strategic insertions meant to release latent urban energy ("urban acupuncture"). Nouvel's Angel City, immediately behind Golden Angel, will include a multiplex cinema, restaurants, small shops, a bowling alley and apartments. A third non-Nouvel component, New Smíchov, yet to be fully funded, is also planned. Construction is ready to start, given the immense hole in the ground at the site of a former Tatra car parts factory.

OUTTAKES

As of June 2001, the first section of Angel City is complete, including Golden Angel, and the second portion is fast approaching closure. The Angel building is extraordinary and may be seen from long views along Karmelitská Street approaching Smíchov from Malá Strana. The angel, after all the fuss, is, in fact, Bruno Ganz and he is pensively gazing down at the busy intersection of the working-class neighborhood. The shops in the ground-floor sections of the complex are filled with upper-echelon consumer goods and may help slake the profound desire for immediate gratification felt by the post-communist populace.

A book recounting the evolution of the project was published by the architecture journal *Zlatý Rez (Golden Section)*. See Irena Fialová, ed., *Zlatý Anděl: Jean Nouvel v Praze* (Prague: Zlatý Rez, 2000).

Summer 1999

A version of this text appeared in *Architectural Record*. See: Gavin Keeney, "Enduring Obstacles and Angst, Nouvel's Prague Plan Progresses," *Architectural Record* 187, no. 10 (October 1999): p. 62.

READ & WEEP: SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

I. CZECH ANGELS

A very clever French architect, Jean Nouvel, has proposed a new complex of buildings in working-class Smíchov (Prague, Czech Republic) for the Dutch-Swiss bank ING. The overall project – Angel City – is huge. The central feature is a commercial "city within a city" (a department store, a supermarket, restaurants, small shops, office suites, bowling alley, apartments, multiplex cinema). A stand-alone project – Golden Angel – with the image of an "angel" serigraphed onto the eight-story glass facade is the keynote building in the commercial revitalization of this down-at-the-heels district. It is situated over the Anděl subway station ("Moscow" Station in the recent film *Kolya*). The angel motif is inspired by both the historic place name for the area – Anděl – and German Wim Wenders' 1987 film *Wings of Desire*; a film set in Berlin. Local architects and critics say "Okay, but the angel must be Czech," German actor Bruno Ganz with ponytail and trench coat (or American Peter Falk!) notwithstanding. On the left bank of the Vltava, the ING plan was to include a glass office tower on the river's edge but this has been delayed. The local critics say "Yes, but it cannot be as tall as monuments at Vyšehrad," the 10th-century ruined castle precinct and necropolis immediately opposite on the right bank. The project architects point out that there are already water towers on buildings in the area that are as tall as any of Vyšehrad's architectural remains. The Czech architect-critics say "Yes, but you will have offices in your tower, placing people higher than the sacred ruins." The local architects working for Architectures Jean Nouvel point out that many of the former water towers actually now have small offices or apartments in them. The Czech critics are not impressed. They suggest the tower be masonry, not glass. Oddly, no one has asked the obvious question: "What do the Czech angels think?" This critical dance might then appropriate the all-purpose, unassailable excuse for *not* doing something – "The dead would not like it."

II. LITE NEO-FUNCTIONALISM

Czech "lite neo-functionalism" or "diet neo-functionalism," not unlike Diet Coke, is nowhere near the Real Thing. It tastes vaguely like "classic functionalism" but has a somewhat flat or synthetic aftertaste. A Brno, Masaryk University professor has been making the rounds recently speaking out against this "reactionary" pseudo avant-garde affectation. Apparently, contemporary Czech architects mimic Czech functionalism of the 1920s and 1930s to "borrow" rigor and avoid post-historical pastiche, which is universally loathed by all Czech neo-modernist architects. Ironically, the Czech lite neo-functionalist aesthetic is exactly what it seeks to avoid – a post-modern version of functionalism. Canadian-born American architect Frank Gehry's "Dancing Building" – a.k.a. "The Fred and Ginger Building" or "The Nederlander Building" – in Prague, designed with Vlado Milunić, ex-pat Yugoslav architect and friend of Czech President Václav Havel, is categorically dissed in the neo-functionalist architectural sub-culture. Milunić, for his part in this critical *danse macabre*, is finishing up a new housing complex – Areál Hvězda – in Petřiny, an upscale residential neighborhood in Prague 6 amid significant green reserves. Czech critics say the project resembles a "Chinese village." Working with a street plan that twists and turns and with a color and formal palette that offends the neo-modernist and traditionalist architects alike, Milunić has intentionally created a controversial alternative vision for residential, non-commercial, non-historical Prague. Whether or not this will become simply another swathe of pricey housing for Prague's *nouveaux riches* remains to be seen. Some of the most bizarre new housing in Prague, however, now can be found in Průhonice, a park-like suburb of the city dubbed "Beverly Hills" by disgruntled commoners.

Lite neo-functionalism, however, remains the "style du jour" applied to most new commercial projects as well as a wide range of private homes and public buildings in the post-communist Czech consumer culture. Antecedent to the International Style, Czech functionalism was appropriated by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock in the seminal *The International Style* (1932), a mostly mid-century book (in terms of impact) that established ("stripped, cubic, and [nominally] white") modern architecture as the de facto corporate style in America and around the world. The current Czech style wars, far from invoking the universal principles of the International Style, seem instead irrevocably beached on the sands of professional envy and anxiety.

Emil Přikryl's new Galerie Benedikta Rejta in Louny is named for the renowned German-born Gothic architect Benedikt Rejt, the architect responsible for the earliest portions of St. Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle (Hradčany) – a "Medieval" cathedral, not finished until 1929. Přikryl's gallery interior evokes awe and quiescence with sensuously polished concrete surfaces and a juxtaposition of primary forms that flatten in the half-lit interior into apparent abstract two-dimensional compositions. The building was – long ago – a brewery. It has been remodeled with such a spare aesthetic that one can surreally imagine the now invisible ancient vats slowly dissolving into a non-corporeal parallel world – foaming barley, yeast, and Bohemian hops overflowing to produce

the verdant rolling hills and murky mysterious rivers and streams of Western Bohemia. There are details in Přikryl's gallery vaguely reminiscent of the work of Italian architect Carlo Scarpa – e.g., where new floors almost meet the lower, original floor – but without the signature de luxe materials of Scarpa projects. Budget constraints kept this project heartbreakingly modest. And there are manipulations of light and shadow reminiscent of Japanese architect Tadao Ando's work. These qualities underwrite the liminal, "utopian" atmospherics of a building that could be anywhere or nowhere. Přikryl was – notably – part of SIAL, a communist-era architectural think tank at Liberec that was allowed to explore experimental forms of architecture but rarely allowed to build anything.

Czech critics are thus far mostly mute about Galerie Benedikta Rejta, an appropriate silence though it is also a subtle form of censure in the sub-rosa culture of Czech architectural criticism. This sub-rosa culture operates in the pubs and academies and should perhaps be called instead "the *sub-prunus* complex," after the famously potent *slivovice*, a high-octane "tonic" distilled from plums. (Přikryl's project was first broached in a discussion with the editor of the Prague journal *Architekt* regarding 16th-century Mannerism in the Czech Lands. But the journal publishes mostly neo-functionalist building projects, reflecting its role as the beacon of architectural good taste, and its annual Grand Prix Award typically goes to a neo-functionalist architect.)

In a later conversation with Přikryl, the label "Mannerist" was heartily embraced by the architect as a badge of honor – or courage. He was aware of the esoteric theories of Max Dvořák, little known Czech-Austrian art historian of the c.1900 Vienna School, regarding the synchronic or structural significance of Mannerism. Notably, Dvořák also promoted a theory of national styles as opposed to the purely structural theories of Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin. Přikryl recounted in exacting detail a recent trip he took with his students at the Academy of Fine Arts (Prague) dubbed the "cult tour." They visited Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier's pilgrimage chapel of Nôtre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp, French architect Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's Saltworks at Chaux, Silesian-Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum at Dornach and Swiss architect Peter Zumthor's Thermal Baths at Vals. The spirit of Mannerism indirectly animates all of these projects. Mannerism defies diachronic historicism. The words of British political philosopher Terry Eagleton on German philosopher Walter Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* (tragedy) come to mind: "Historicism ... is thus the final triumphant tyranny of the concept, the relentless sublation of discrete particulars to a system radically closed in its very dreary infinity. What will blast such closure to bits then, is the constellation *jetztzeit* [present-times], in which a particular present reaches out a redemptive hand to a particular piece of the past about to go under." These words, juxtaposed to those of Vlado Milunić, in a recent interview in *Architekt* 3/99, suggest the current anxiety in Czech architecture circles is in fact a sign of a secret resurgent "Mannerist" phase underway: "When I do my work I stand my ground. If everyone worked like Kotik or A.D.N.S. it would be sad. But I am tolerant of other views. I do not judge them. It is nice that everyone see things differently. That is what makes it interesting. Architecture is a reflection of life and the contents of life are irony, humor, hyperbole, melancholia, despair and so on. Functionalists fall short of expressing all of that with their boxes." Raise a parting glass to neo-functionalism.

It is important to note that much of this culture of fear and loathing is played out in the academies. Czech academic architects, teaching in the three Prague schools with professional design programs, are required to spend a major portion of their time and energy fending off attacks by entrenched senior faculty. An exception is architect Bořek Šípek, appointed Castle Architect by Václav Havel in the early 1990s. (Šípek volunteered and received no compensation.) Šípek has sustained attacks by Czech architects since his return to Prague, from Holland, after the Velvet Revolution. His "*fauve*" design style is antithetical to the prevailing neo-functionalist aesthetic. Shrugging off criticism of his work at the Castle, Šípek has immersed himself in his international design work. Both an industrial designer (glass and furniture) and an architect (galleries and houses), Šípek is unperturbed by the *danse macabre*, unlike many architects in the Czech Republic hard pressed for commissions. The coming of the European Union to Central Europe (as early as 2003) will alter and intensify this game through an influx of foreign architects and the reciprocal opportunity for Czech architects to work in Western Europe.

III. SAD PICTURE

A certain Madame M, a wealthy American from New York (widowed and in possession of a substantial fortune), has offered the City of Prague a highly prized collection of paintings by Czech František Kupka, collected by her deceased Czech husband, in return for a new museum for her eponymous foundation. The City offered up an old, crumbling mill on Kampa, an artificial "island" in the Vltava River formed by a Renaissance mill race and sparsely populated by Renaissance and Baroque buildings. Charles Bridge crosses the northern end of the "island." A part of Malá Strana, the heart of the Left Bank, the structure has been abandoned and padlocked for decades and is guarded today by dogs and private security police.

Madame M organized a design competition for the part restoration, part conversion of the mill to a gallery with a restaurant, shops, and offices for the foundation. The design competition was officially sanctioned by the Czech Chamber of Architects and, therefore, strictly controlled by the rules of "open" competitions. The jury met in early 1999 to review the projects and found that Madame M had appointed herself president of the jury. After premiating three projects, the jury was instructed by the self-appointed president to award the commission to #19. Project 19 was submitted by a Viennese architect and friend of Madame M. The jury refused, Madame M annulled the competition in July, citing "corruption" – which, in fact, is correct – and threatened to withdraw the gift of Kupka paintings. The Mayor and City of Prague Administration rolled over and a new competition was announced. The so-called winner of this second competition will be required to work with Madame M's friend in Vienna. The building is still crumbling while the "rules" of the new competition are ironed out and the winners of the first competition are hung out to dry. In the building's "front yard" is Prague's very own Needle Park.

IV. "KAFKA'S CASTLE"

Passing up the back steps to Hradčany (Prague Castle) and strolling through Slovene architect Jože Plečnik's Paradise Garden (built on the ramparts in the 1920s), practicing Jacqueline Kennedy's "blind sight" (looking straight ahead and slightly down), it is wise to rest briefly above the terraced Baroque gardens of Malá Strana. Allowing for the tourist hordes to pass by, it is then possible to quickly transit Plečnik's Bull Stair to the Third Courtyard of Prague Castle (Hradčany). Taking a deep breath, and if you move quickly, you can then weave through the swarming tourists (notice the guide holding the telltale umbrella, electric cattle prod or mop head aloft) and past the mostly German Gothic (plus Romanesque/Gothic Revival) St. Vitus Cathedral. Entering the second courtyard, the passage through the Spanish Hall permits a speedy exit from the surging courtyards of the Castle. Passing the powder-blue uniformed sentries transfixed before striped pillboxes and the claque of camera-toting Euro-pensioners, it is possible to safely cross the bridge/causeway bisecting the Stag's Moat, against the oncoming crowd. Skirting the presidential villa with American architect John Hejduk's "House of the Suicide" and "House of the Mother of the Suicide" memorial to Jan Palach in the back garden, you may then dash to the northwest end of the Royal Gardens and duck inside. Once past the gate, one is welcomed by an enfilade of historic buildings lining the garden designed by Italian Renaissance architect cosmopolites, including the sgraffitoed Royal Ball Court, and terminating in the lovely Renaissance Queen Anne "Belvedere" ("Summerhouse"). Nearby the Ball Court, British-Czech architect Eva Jiřičná's newly minted Orangery sits just below the edge of the garden plateau, almost within the Harts' moat where Austro-Hungarian Emperor Rudolf II kept wild deer. A very long glass vault supported by external steel truss work, the Orangery is off limits to the public. It is used apparently to rejuvenate plants from the interior of the Castle – "after their stint in national service," as a friend quipped. It is, then, a "plant hospital." The location is the exact site of a Renaissance Orangery built for Rudolf II. Life support for Renaissance citrus has metamorphosed into life support for the late-modern houseplant. The verdant waterless moat, below the Orangery, will remain "wild" nature, a somewhat naturalistic passage through the wildly touristic castle precinct. Nearly two-thirds of Prague Castle's operating budget is subsidized by leasing historic castle properties to shops, pubs, and restaurants, and by annual blockbuster exhibitions orchestrated by the Castle Administration.

V. O STAR PAVILION!

Walking to the Star Pavilion at White Mountain (Bílá hora) is a metaphysically disquieting experience these days. Site of the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, Bílá hora is a type of "Calvary" ("Golgotha") for Czech nationalism. It is in the northwest suburbs of Prague, near Ruzyně International Airport. The pavilion, built in 1555-1557 by Habsburg Arch Duke Ferdinand (Rudolf II's uncle), is a rare example of a building realized from the idealized plans of Italian Renaissance architectural theoretician Sebastiano Serlio. Inside, cryptic Ovid-inspired frescos remain "undecipherable." The allegorical Mannerist paintings have defied the interpretive methodologies of art historians to this day.

It is said that former Czech hyper-capitalist Prime Minister Václav Klaus likes to roam the park. The Czech-German anti-Klaus graffiti on the park benches might confirm this rumor – "Heraus Klaus!" Bílá hora is covered with White Oak forest, which is cut through by radial axes originating with the points of the star-shaped plan of the pavilion. The wood is also said to be a favored haunting ground for Prague's hardworking prostitutes – clients in tow. The radial woodland alleys serve the unintentional role of secluded parking groves. These twin rumors invite a Rabelais-inspired transliteration of Bílá hora – "buy la whora!" American Dollars or Deutsche Marks preferred.

"Closed for reconstruction," the Star Pavilion might serve as a secret *paysage moralisé* for the entire Czech post-communist maláise. The lush green lawn in front of the Star Pavilion, well within the surrounding wood and no doubt post-Battle of White Mountain, is said *sotto voce* to be the site of mass graves from the slaughter of 1612. The defeated Protestant armies were mostly Hungarian, German, Dutch, and Swedish princely militias with ex-pat Czech Protestant and mercenary troops in the ranks. The ex-pat Protestant Czech troops as well as their new-found North European brethren were somewhat shocked to find, upon their return to confront the Counter-Reformation Habsburg and Catholic armies, that much of the local population had gone over to the enemy in their absence. This bizarre anti-ex-pat complex continues today in the tortured body politic – architectural and otherwise. Prime Minister Klaus famously spearheaded the denial of restitution of property to ex-pat Czechs – primarily real estate seized during the communist regime – in the first years following the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Only recently have ex-patriots been allowed to reclaim their citizenship – albeit, well after restitution laws have expired.

This apocryphal graveyard, now trimmed with roses and plane trees, and forming a picturesque front lawn to the Star Pavilion, seems sadly and inexcusably devoid of purpose or meaning. The Villa will reopen as yet another gallery-tourist attraction and the hundreds, if not thousands of visitors – it is off the beaten track – will cross the preternaturally green lawn without any idea of its deeper significance. Most of the several million tourists that descend on Prague each year will miss it altogether anyway because of its remote location. They will spy its peculiar form from their airplanes as they descend to Ruzyně Airport. It is, nonetheless, the quintessential multi-national monument in a country that has always been cosmopolitan at heart. As an architectural icon, the Star Pavilion might also serve to remind Czech and non-Czech alike – as if that were necessary – that borders and nation states are mere articles of convenience in a world rapidly approaching its secret dream and origin, the horizontal integration of cultural difference. With its parallel flows of workers, ideas, and capital, horizontal integration is nothing new. Vertical integration, however, the stuff of hegemony and nightmares, is an altogether different matter.

September 1999

THE BODY OF THE CITY

If you make your way to the top of the Žižkov television tower, or any other tower in Prague (Gothic, Baroque, or such), the panoramic views of the City are stunning; but these views are also relatively meaningless because they momentarily violate the scale and texture of the city and provide a privileged point of view not in keeping with the day-to-day experience of Prague. They are rare, pseudo-transcendent events, and they operate as symbolic exceptions (extensions) to the horizontal and optical unveiling of the city's "body."

The optical and psychological (haptic) effect of Prague's famous complex structure is also its conceptual-corporeal soul. This secretive power within the City's form reveals itself in a topological and topographical striptease – the zones between building complexes and at the edges of architectural formations emerge as if intimately offered to the *flâneur*, voyeur, and traveler. A slow, evolutionary form of intimacy, it is a value that is immanent, versus transcendent, residing within the physical, factual nature of the compact central city and, more primitively, more simplistically, in the more expansive, outer districts where vestiges of natural systems remain. This *frisson* (or nervous energy) comes to expression in its most potent form – as an optical, specular, and gestural dynamic – at the banks of the Vltava and on the peaks (Petřín, Hradčany, Vyšehrad, Letná) of the urban landscape. These in-between places are in many ways "erogenous" zones – passages or transitional features of the city-body formed by concentration, expansion, and interrelation. Such a dimension is not a dream or fantasy but very real, and primarily subliminally or unconsciously experienced.

It is with surprise, then, that Richard Meier and Partners' project planned for Pankrác, the ECM Radio Plaza, is promoted in the master plan documents as honoring this physiognomy when, in fact, Meier's transcendent, triumphalist, monumental and abstract architecture is completely at odds with this finely tuned, speculative substrata. The "detailed" urban analysis of Meier's master plan is purely formalistic and consistent with the utopian character of such dogmatic architectures.

The existing high-rise structures on the flattened hilltop in Prague 4, built in the 1970s, were and remain questionable objects placed without sensitivity to the immediate and comprehensive environs of the Right Bank. The re-cladding and multiplication of these objects with a ground-floor plaza that feigns or pretends to provide public open-space amenities is a rehearsing of the perennial fiction of modern urban planning, a ruse (trick), as the monumental character of the complex re-stages this classic error as, now, a "thoughtful, respectful, and forward-looking" urban typology.

Angel City, and Golden Angel, by Jean Nouvel, in Smíchov, is, by comparison, a work of extraordinary delicacy. Its insertion into the working-class enclave in Prague 5 was the result of an entirely different process; that is, Nouvel's famous concept of "urban acupuncture." Meier's exercise in neo-monumentality builds upon a former flawed master plan and further exploits the location and infrastructure of a problematic commercial complex. Such complexes have suspect rationales for consuming public resources – for example, Rockefeller Center in Manhattan or La Défense in Paris.

Angel City does not pretend to offer public space – given its overt appropriation of streets, blocks, and, indeed, the subway (as clients). To claim so would be an obvious lie. Nouvel, instead, gave to the city an enigmatic, signature building/complex that speaks to the optical unconscious of Prague's collective existence. Meier and Partners offers only the image of a commercial acropolis, vaingloriously compared to Prague Castle (Hradčany) in the master plan. ECM Radio Plaza, as proposed, serves only the grandeur of the commercial vision and not the city itself. Nouvel's project connects to the subversive, scopic (playful, voyeuristic) nature of the city and provides the Smíchov district with a figure of semi-tragic complexity and, therefore, immanence.

The so-called "landscape" … Given that ECM Radio Plaza is to be built in seven phases, there is no way to guarantee that the faux (pseudo-) municipal or public gestures will be realized; and it is evident that the idea of landscape represented here is a fabulous tableau of stone and trees with generic green zones surrounding select buildings. There is, in fact, very little landscape to speak of, notwithstanding the proposed tree-lined avenues (boulevards) on the five sides of the site. (The statistical evidence for this lack of landscape is carefully concealed in the numerical data presented in the master plan document. Of the entire Pentagon site, 72,750 square meters are built form and 23,450 square meters are so-called green space. This first figure includes 321,100 square meters of real estate. The vast majority of space is paved plaza and the Pankrác Centrum includes even less landscape – though the plan claims 17 percent. If you subtract the two recreational pavilions included to boost the percentage of green space in this portion of the Pentagon, the result *for landscape* is exactly thirteen trees.) The emphasis on retail and office space (plus the storage of cars) claims the vast bulk of the site and the remainder is classic neo-modern, pseudo-public open space.

The complex is brazenly grand and ambitious. Too little concerned with its long-term impact on the city, with its out-sized demand on services, it represents a vigorous assault on the fragile structure of Prague and its

physical complexity. It is the wrong language and the wrong message to the past and the future. It is also likely to be replicated around the city's edges, and, like the panel fields (the mid-rise concrete apartments blocks circling Prague), the model will further crush the last rich, heterogeneous reserves of the city and its lineaments – that is, the landscape and topographic features that lie just below the masonry and paving, bleeding and bruised, or subsist disfigured and as mere vestiges at the outskirts of the city.

POSTSCRIPTS

Dvakrát k Pankrácké pláni – Vlado Milunić (PES/CZ) – "Z duše mì mluví Gavin Keeney, který pochopil, že je v Praze nutné hledat podstatne hlubší koreny než je avantgarda a Havlícek. Predpokladem je souznení s erotogenními zónami mesta. Neco podobného je platné také pro urychlovace. Uvádím zámerne príklad z jaderné fyziky, tak aby tomu rozumeli úplne všichni. Magnetické pole se musí nejdríve dostat na vlnovou délku elektronù a pak je postupne nalákat na jinou rychlost. Je to ne nepodobné tomu, když chci nekoho sbalit."

"I could sign the words of Gavin Keeney who has understood that in Prague it is necessary to search for substantially deeper roots than the avant-garde and Havlícek. The resonance (harmony?) with the erotogenic zones of the city is the precondition. The same principle counts for nuclear accelerators. I give an example from nuclear physics on purpose so that everyone understands. The magnetic field must first harmonize with the wavelength of the electrons and then it can seduce them to another velocity. Not unlike the situation when I want to chat up someone ..." (Translation by Michal Kavan)

June 2001

A version of this essay originally appeared, in Czech, in *Architekt*. See: Gavin Keeney, "The Body of the City," *Architekt* 8 (September 2001): p. 6.

GNOMIC WORKS: THE SCULPTURAL WORKS OF KURT GEBAUER

My first encounter with the work of Czech sculptor Kurt Gebauer occurred in 1995, the year his *Pyramidal Dwarf* (1992) appeared in St. George Square, in the third courtyard of Prague Castle (Hradčany). This pyramidal stone object (an all-but-abstract gnome) was situated in such a way that it aligned with the spires of St. George Church but deferred to the majestic Gothic (and neo-Gothic) pile of St. Vitus Cathedral, a conflation of effects based on the idea of the pinnacle and the blessed pointed head of ecclesiastical architecture. The irregular sandstone form (385 cm. tall) was fractured in two places – one intended, one caused by vandals – perhaps a coincidence, but certainly reminiscent of Jože Plečnik's obelisk, which also broke when it was being erected in the same courtyard over sixty years earlier. According to Gebauer, this particular sculpture was an exercise in "architectural logic" and "not a problem of genre," although it played in no small way with the synchronic vagaries of aspiration itself. Gebauer later explained the "logic" of the composition in purely formalistic terms – as negotiating the primary, Gothic syntax of the third courtyard – suggesting that, in this case, the primitive object transcends the anxiety-ridden genre of politicized works of art. (*Pyramidal Dwarf* was subsequently moved to the Deer Moat, "below Prague Castle (Hradčany)," where it resides at this time amid the verdure of the naturalistic ravine that slices through the castle mount.)

It was immediately following this encounter with the tectonic, giant "dwarf" (a complete contradiction/contraction of terms), that I met Kurt Gebauer, finding him at his home *not coincidentally* adjacent to the official residence of President Václav Havel – as they have been friends since Havel's days as dissident playwright – and not far from the Castle. In his garden were the various grotesque gnomes (Trpasličí) – that is, fibreglas/resin versions – that he first illicitly deployed in 1985 (at Galerie H, Kostelec nad Černými Lesy) in a mock send-up of so-called "normalization" under the Communists. *Dwarf Monument*, a large menacing dwarf with arm raised, and *Dwarf Dog* also first appeared in 1985, in Vojanovy Sady (Vojan Park), Prague. Indeed, *Dwarf Monument* later went on tour, in 1987, traveling to New York, Paris, Berlin, Regensberg, and Helsinki. These were the formal precursors to *Pyramidal Dwarf*, though the ideas animating them are traceable to a set of drawings called *Normalization* (two dwarfs beating a skull) from 1972. Gebauer finally created the first set of dwarfs in 1985, eight in ten days, as a parody of Czech society in the last, dark days of communist rule.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Czech artists had agitated against the "genocide of gnomes" – mocking the roundup of bourgeois cultural practices perpetrated by the State Security (STB) apparatus. In Gebauer's imagination this confrontation took the form of a hybridization of forms deriving monumentality from the Social Realist sculpture of the period and combining it with the diminutive stature typical of the garden gnome/dwarf – a clash between totalitarian *diktat* and good old-fashioned bourgeois bad taste. Gebauer's gnomes became – post-Velvet Revolution (1989) – bored, idle secret police-type gnomes, unable to cope (in 1995) with the post-communist state of things. One guzzled beer from a tankard, half reclining on one elbow and slowly rotting into the earth. Other gnomes leaned, perched, and hid amid the ramshackle garden. One (*Myslitel* or *Thinker*) – seated on the wall of the garden separating Gebauer's residence and Havel's – was painted red. Another (*Bachar*) was perched in the trees and held a crude wooden rifle "guarding" (as it were) Havel's flank. Another had "leapt" the wall entirely and taken up residence in Havel's garden. This latter gnome, code-named *Fizl*, was spying (hand raised over eyes) ostensibly for interlopers, but more likely on President Havel ("Making sure he was working," said Gebauer). Also in Gebauer's garden (a kind of morgue for his retired exhibitions) were the buxom bathing damsels from *Bohemian Pond* (c. 1988, re-deployed in Vojanovy Sady, Prague, in 2000).

All of this explication led to a conversation on the nature of representation (vis-à-vis repression), which to Gebauer requires going "only so far." To go any further than "only so far" risks either the atrocious or the bathetic. For Gebauer, this translates into an artistic process that unveils both natural and unnatural "chemical" cultural and personal relationships ("elective affinities," perhaps). Nature and human nature combine in relationships that are sustainable and pleasant. Nature and culture often combine, on the other hand, to produce the tragic.

Gebauer's exceptional restraint is focused in a unique intellectual-emotional realm that combines concepts and feelings. This liminal zone is "the heart" – the true seat of the mind. The work often is mordantly comic and even dark, but it is never self-conscious or merely parodic. The art of (the sometimes lacerating) gesture is at the heart of this "zone" (half-nether region) – a figure of resistance to both dogma and to refinement. It is a half-inarticulate, half-articulate shadowland where some things are best left unsaid (*pace* Wittgenstein). From this extraordinary place that resides in everyone still breathing (thinking/feeling) comes, however, whispers, echoes, and cries – of both primordial angst and raucous, preternatural joy.

The limits of Gebauer's art are self-imposed. Working typically (and deliberately) with found rock forms, plaster, or resin, Gebauer shapes these raw materials only so far as necessary – the work is less gnomic than Joseph Beuys, and most Fluxus fabrications, but related in the sense that Gebauer has sought not to create aesthetic objects

so much as to provoke aesthetic reflection. A very small, delicate portion of his production is almost fully realized "life forms" – not quite full-scale to indicate the therapeutic degree of separation from realism Gebauer maintains in the rare instances when he ventures in the direction of full-blown figuration. Some of these figures from the 1970s (*Weirdie Girl*, *Running Girl*, and *On A Swing*) are extraordinarily lyric (and "singular," or compressed into a state of extraordinary tension). In the case of *Running Girl* (1975), every gesture of the young girl "in flight" contains the expression of unfettered freedom that her almost startled face conveys. The flying hair, the folds and creases of her wind-swept shirt dress, and the out-swung arms all portray the same elemental *joie de vivre* and innocence coupled with nervous tension.

It was Gebauer's retrospective exhibition in the famous industrial city of Zlín ("home" of Baťa) in 2001 (at the State Gallery) that sealed my impressions regarding Gebauer's mysterious poetic sensibility; something operating outside of/beyond any identifiable norm. Gebauer's famous Studio of Universal Sculpture at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design (Prague) also produced a parallel exhibition in Zlín by his students ("Universal Sculpture") that was at best provocative and at worst incoherent. Gebauer's effect was evident in the rustic materiality of the presentations and in the wry, sometimes absurd ideational constructs pictured, but what was missing was that exquisite personal sensibility that pushes his work into an indefinable category, a category that includes a prescience for the sublime *and* the ridiculous, but a personal territory that also contains secret algorithms for sustaining life against all forms of extremism – something that cannot be transmitted to students nor captured, thankfully, in words.

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April 2002

L'HUMANITÉ: VOTRE VOUS

> Nothing can convey the extent of the change that has taken place in the meaning of experience so much as the resulting reversal of the status of the imagination.[1]
> –Giorgio Agamben

Being modern no longer means to be Modern (MoMA's problem, perhaps) … There are enough holes in the edifice of Modernity proper (and Modernism) to suggest that these holes represent former repressions … And, if this leads straight into the topologically distressed terrain of affectivity, so be it … Effects produce *affects* … New terrain is formed in the imagination, out of words that almost always precede thought … Thought already once removed, or twice removed, returns to the inmost territory of words in and of Itself (out of Necessity) …

The photographic works of Alfons Maria Mucha (see *Alfons Mucha*, FotoTorst, 2000) supply a surreptitious and contingent record of the emergence of 20th-century art and architecture from the second-to-last, *fin-de-siècle* maelstrom, continental style, that swept through Europe prior to the devastation of the two World Wars – that is to say, Mucha's peripatetic life (1860-1930) oddly coincided with the collapse of various, decrepit imperial orders. Regarding affectivity, the Torst text introducing Mucha's photographic output from 1895 through 1905 (La Belle Époque), as above, suggests that a certain "some-thing else" saved his work from the obliterating vortex of art historicism: "Mucha used his great sense of decorative line and harmonious color to create clear composition, simply described figures, striking detail and ornament, pleasing pastels, and an erotic undercurrent that remained within the bounds of [then] good taste." It would seem, then, that he described a world within a world … Or, perhaps, the world emerging from the ruins of another (passing) world – his work a sublime index. "But Mucha's posters were not merely a way of achieving fame; they enabled his legacy to return from the chasm of condemnation into which it had been cast by proponents of rationalistic Constructivism, Functionalism, and the *Neue Sachlichkeit*." This latter *New Objectivity* is the eternal return of Reason (in its many guises), no matter that Reason (and Objectivity, Pragmatism, and Determinism) is, to this day, ill-defined, if not hyperbolically misunderstood as a corrective almost always levelled at *other times* and *other places* – most especially those *other* times and places that lead toward the imaginative jouissance of interiority and inspired subjectivity, the "land" of affects (where effects are converted to *experience*). Art Nouveau may have morphed, in a relatively short time, into Art Deco, yet the disdain of the 1920s avant-garde for such stylistic aberrations remains a curious episode in the emasculation of affectivity and the production of the machinic new world of the 20th century.

Mucha's photographs were created, in his own time, and remain today, as an archive – a not-coincidental act of harvesting and experimentation, versus a quest for a final product or a so-called work of art (an as-yet, elusive status for photography at the turn of the century). Perhaps like Gerhard Richter, Mucha used photography to supplement his work as a graphic designer and painter. Perhaps, too, this idea of supplement is a key concept in unravelling the pretensions of all reputed, autonomous works – as such, architecture, certainly, with its implicit/overt quest for iconicity and objecthood, is a prime suspect for further interrogation. Today, apropos of the diminishing nature of first nature, photography has fully arrived as the interpretive-documentary gesture, *ne plus ultra*, for measuring experience (for archiving the world). Hence the intense interest in Ruff, Struth, and Gursky … Here, no doubt, is the meaning of the word *index* applied to works of art (and architecture), *pace* Rosalind E. Krauss (and, more recently, Peter Eisenman) …

What seems absolutely crazy, then, is that the return of process-driven paradigms in the late 1980s, and the sustained deployment of the same cultural forces throughout the 1990s, has led putative forms of avant-garde architectures into a terrain of endless derivatives and datascapes that masquerade as authenticity – or "honesty" (Neo-Realism, Neo-Pragmatism) – vis-à-vis subjective, artistic, and affective forms of design and, critically, critical *inquiry*. In architecture, "symbolic" orders have been relegated to the drawing board and the parallel world of paper architecture. For this reason, the recent John Hejduk exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art was especially searing … Almost entirely missing in this "new objectivity" was/remains the remains of experience all but exterminated in the last round of new objectivity (High Modernism). In allied arts – most especially literature and film (and new media) – wholly new experiments in longing and affectivity (that is, attempts to re-ensoul the world) abound … And yet, architecture hangs by a gossamer thread, the proverbial black pearl suspended in an abyss, waiting, always waiting, to get out of its own way; to escape its own definitions, biases, and prejudices. And, should anyone think that this need to *move* again has been more or less satisfied by the aggressive agencies of deconstruction and/or other marvellous (now-spent) forms of post-structuralist thought, one need only take the pulse of *what is being built* (real estate), and, perhaps, *what is on offer* (more of the same), to see that Agamben's remarks

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[1] Agamben, *Infancy and History*, p. 24.

regarding the death of experience of the world rolls onward. The greatest error to be made in the "theater" of architecture is to think (or *act*) as if architecture is not first and foremost a mental and "spiritual" act of inhabiting the world; to somehow forget what you can hardly remember. Or, that architecture is the apparatus of the world, as it (the idea of a "world") is constructed atop everything "given" – the "as such" nature of this everything given is the locus of the most advanced operations in art and architecture (a form of *structural anamnesis*) … And if one is to appropriate this very trendy word "operation," it is only to perform an operation on the de-naturing operations of the last incarnations of "new objectivity," to finally release and free the nevertheless irrepressible forces of imagination and spirit that actually move everything anyway.

Arguably, there are no *singular* works of art and architecture (every icon requires an iconostasis) – every *thing* depends on everything. The opposite point of view is part of the myth that constantly undermines the world (and experience), literally mining the world of everything precious. What is required is strenuous (rigorous) critical-poetical works of affective *jouissance* (unauthorized works of sublime potential, sublime contingent works that undermine that very *undermining* spirit). This resurgence, already *felt*/to be experienced, is not unlike the extraordinarily haunting, apparently wordless song that haunts Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Nostalghia* (1983), a song that permeates the dissolute nature of the architectural *mise en scène* of this cinematic masterwork – a work that resides in coordinates of an exhilarating universality. This universality is also predicated on a thematic form of "exile" personified by Andrei, the poet, wandering Italy; a cipher for Tarkovsky's wanderings … The song appearing and vanishing, here and there, in association with the free-associative images and concepts of a form of nostalgia that has nothing whatsoever to do with a mawkish longing for things past or things spent, but – instead – a longing for things-in/of/for-themselves (for things alive to the world); or a world within the world that has gone relentlessly awry, through the best intentions of the on-rushing spirit of inquiry that manifests in the bizarrely out-modish term "humanity." This term is the terminal term of all artistic production – the term that signals a turn (a residence/home), always – and signals, as well, a turning back to go forward … As such, the conceptual sign "humanity" is at risk every day.

The idea of Humanity infers a home-less, state-less state of being (of becoming) … Its own coordinates are outside/within all contingent expressions, artistic or otherwise. In architecture this state comes home (not unlike the proverbial cows) when some-thing else "sings" … This "singing" is the adventitious spirit that haunts cultural production (a spirit of a type of non-technological, interiorized "utopia"), but also haunts the topological imagination – the imagination as it is formed atop what is and suggests what might be (through acts of demolition, renovation, and/or acts of recovery) … In architecture this "atop what is" is the covering/lining that conceals what always is present (and as present, today, most often "absent") … The conceptual sign of "humanity" returns, without warning, as a gesture within all marginal acts and marginalized gestures – or, returns to return for the simple fact that it has never left. Hal Hartley's film *No Such Thing* (2001), without question, points elliptically toward this truth … For these reasons, today, we see/witness the idea that Humanity is most fully represented in the peripheral vision of on-racing instrumentalities, as a perpetual casualty. This conceptual apparatus (Instrumental Reason), as slippery as any slope, actually produces the vision of a form of humanity not as sign for an unapproachable "Other," but as a sign of its own very specific force (*gravitas*) – that is to say, the production of an endlessly falling world within a neutral world … And it is this tragic neutral (neutered) world, the world otherwise known as Humanity, that slowly/quickly goes endlessly awry until, one day, the full coordinates of its "taking place" (Agamben, again) are disclosed and/or unearthed.

POSTSCRIPTS

A picture, I would say, acts aggressively: it enters the soul, without consideration, through an open window. The observer can do whatever he wants with it. He can ignore it, prevent it from entering his consciousness, or, led by its outer appearance, he can stop in front of the work and perhaps even seek its content and meaning and, eventually, find in it the essence, of either beauty or truth, on account of which the work came into being.[2]
–Alfons Mucha (1930)

Nota Bene: Prague publisher Torst's series on modern Czech photography includes monographs on: Alexandr Hackenschmied, Bohdan Holomicek, Alfons Mucha, Jindřich Štyrský, Zdeněk Tmej**,** Jaroslav Rössler, Karel Teige, Karel Cudlin, Viktor Kolář, Antonin Kratochvíl, Josef Sudek, and Josef Koudelka.

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[2] Alfons Mucha (1930), cited in Josef Moucha, Jiří Řapek, *Alfons Mucha* (Prague: Torst, 2000).

Some of the more extraordinary photographs "by" Mucha, presented in the Torst edition, are of his Paris studio, c. 1900. In this series (including self-portraits and "sittings," not all necessarily taken by Mucha), one finds an almost-mad expressionistic mélange of bizarre signifiers – things ("stuff" or *bric-à-brac*) piled atop things – and Mucha glaring at the camera, ostensibly "interrogating" *himself*. Mucha's fascination with chance occurrences during the contact print-making session (i.e., distortions, chemical aberrations, etc.) suggests a highly-fertile (febrile) imagination "open" to the whims of fate; to the possibilities/excitations associated with *frottage* (provocatively "rubbing" one thing against another, perhaps "against the grain"), and an openness to, in other words, things-*not*-in/of-themselves. Perhaps, herein lies the origin of Georges Bataille's fascination with Art Nouveau photography.

Votre vous (*et mon moi*) – Regarding anti-humanism (and post-humanism), there exists a variety of varieties … Perhaps the most interesting and compelling response to implicit anti-humanism is Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" (1945), somehow addressed to/aimed at Jean-Paul Sartre. Perhaps Heidegger saw Existentialism as a form of anti-humanism. Nevertheless, as long as the concept of humanity is of the type that instills inhumanity, humanism will almost always invoke its antithesis. It is unkind to be against one's own kind, but as long as one's kind is unkind, anti-humanism will be on offer as its antidote. Heidegger, of course, situates Being in an originary realm co-terminous, to a degree, with language. His own performative anti-humanism is aimed at restoring the concept of *humanitas* to a place before "metaphysics" (and subject/object dialectics) … Therefore, it might be argued that subjectivity and *humanitas* are of the same source … the same non-thing …

October 2003

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HOUSE OF THE WIND: MAY DAY

Out of one window, Žižkov Television Tower … Out of another (opposite), Plečnik's Church of the Sacred Heart … Vinohrady, Prague … Nearby, Olšanské hřbitovy, a mostly 19th-century cemetery (a nominally "dead" cemetery, and, therefore, very much alive), necropolis, jam-packed, crumbling mausolea-lined streets and avenues, ivy-covered iron crosses, tombs upon tombs, as many as twelve burials per plot … Plot upon plot (subplot by subplot) … Narrative lines twirled in time (lost) in a sign of "the given," and "the taken-away" … Encased, engulfed in an urban forest … urban chasm (chaosmos) … One mausoleum or two now fully restored, others boarded, bricked-up and/or broken (vandalized), abandoned, yet not forgotten … A tomb designed by Jan Kotěra (neo-classicist and Secession-inspired Czech architect), assisted by an artist (name slipped away, now, from memory, unrecognized) … Jan Kotěra, the renowned architect whom invited Plečnik to Prague in the 1920s? …

Crazy Daisy (U Sládečků) café nearby, entered through a red, British phone booth … Shades of time-traveling … Ancient (antique) appliances and accouterments of times past adorning walls, ledges, shelves … Stove-top toaster … Concertina, French horns … Defunct Granta, Simplex, Royal, Remington typewriters … Tennis racket and press … Mantle with clocks, all telling different times, cameras, lantern, radio … An undulating caerulean-blue ceiling cloth with golden stars "penetrated" by the severed trunk of a birch tree (*axis mundi*) … Consumer detritus from another era (eras), two days following May Day and the Czech Lands' entry into the EU, street parades, parties, and demonstrations, oddly at odds, marking the moment, marking time-always-passing … Almost 200 years of history buried in the wild, overgrown temenos of Vinohrad cemetery across the way … New granite cube, fan-paving has been added at the entrance road just inside the main gate …

Monuments … Doors left ajar, frozen in stone …Bored (idling) angels …Brooding putti/bambini … Half-abstracted willow/wisteria … Obelisk, urns, trace of angel gone (flown/stolen) … Graveyard of funerary syntax (styles/histories) … Gothic-baroque syntheses, diminutive Romanesque rotunda (engulfed in shadows, with saplings and grass sprouting from its tiled roof) … Monstrous granite bell-shaped tombeau …

Lime (Tilia) alleys, maple seedlings bursting forth here and there, ivy clamoring over most everything, occasional walnut … Wild herbs, forbs, wandering vines … Generic garden plants and otherwise gone astray … "Weeds" … Nettle, myrtle, ferns, Rosa, Viola, dandelion …

A house where the wind lives … Empty awaiting new tenants … Photographer Jan Saudek's atelier one floor below where these words now appear … Photographer/aesthetician of paradoxes … The empty room swept by the breezes sweeping in through open windows … All windows left open to sweep away the past … Some furnishings, a single pot to boil water … Empty cabinets and wardrobes, strange green upholstered couch and chair …

The wind inhabits this house, pulsing, breathing … The windows sigh, opening and closing, nothing fixed, latches warped, fittings decayed, worn, never meeting … Water runs slowly across the kitchen floor, leaking from the drain of the sink, a stream marked (now) by two sets of footprints …

The world unwound … All things in their own time … Erasures and re-writings … What is needed is reverse landscape architecture (and reverse architecture), to erase things outmoded, useless, to open space (new space/time) to other things, to some-thing else, to undo what has been wound too tightly, overwrought, manic things that occlude everything else, /S/ (Spirit) …The night-sky is always there, even at mid-day (with tea), seen from the "now" of/within the imagination … The "sound" foundation of things to which all things return, from which all things arrive (appear) and are freely given … Erasing things "writes" other things (some-times), allows what is continually repressed to make its way into the world, along its own axis, in its own manner of speaking, and in its own time …

May 2004

ARCHITECTURAL EYEWASH: PRAHA 2004

In the Kaleidoskop column of *Respekt* (May 17-23, 2004), Praha's finest newspaper, architectural historian (and specialist on the subject of early 20th-century Czech architecture) Zdeněk Lukeš unleashed a scorching (sardonic) critique of the Czech Chamber of Architects' Grand Prix for architecture, denouncing (mocking) the picturesque nature of the annual competition.[1] In particular, he lambastes its dependence on pure imagery, especially glamorous photographic, almost pornographic images taken in the evening, striking images of depopulated buildings glowing from within, in the half-light, a type of long-exposure photography that can make any building whatsoever look ravishing. Lukeš seconds Sir Colin Stansfield Smith (member of the 2004 Grand Prix board), arguing that the jury should visit all of the buildings vying for the award and interview the users (as well as the investors), while also conceiving of a prize that defies the existing categories (residence, office building, urban plan, etc.), embracing, then, the totality (the existential gestalt) of the works under review (waiting, if necessary, a few years before considering a building for an award).

In the impressionistic harangue, Lukeš goes on to describe the ludicrous project for a Salvador Dalí museum in Praha (by "galerista Miro Smolák") for a non-existent collection of paintings. This tale already begins to perversely resemble the origins of the museum recently installed in an old mill, Sovovy mlýny, on Kampa, an island hugging the Left Bank of the Vltava. A city-owned building, it was leased to a foundation established after an absurd and botched design competition, innocently authorized by the Czech Chamber of Architects, and based on the premise that the museum (and, therefore, the city) would receive a collection of František Kupka paintings from the widow of a wealthy Czech ex-pat. The Dalí House fantasy also seems to summarize the current state of art-chitecture, here and there, or the speculative élan of high-end and boutique museums designed by star architects (a.k.a. starchitects). "Here" (in Praha) Daniel Libeskind has been invited to submit a design. Few people in the official Praha art scene seem to want or understand the need for this newest imposition, although, as always, the city will decide behind mostly closed doors what is what (what is useful and what is not).

While Lukeš was venting his spleen in the pages of *Respekt*, the May 12-25, 2004 issue of the *Prague Post* reported, in a front-page article entitled "Maverick architect eyes site on Vltava," that Smolák and Libeskind favor building the Dalí House on the embankment at the end of Revoluční Street. The article describes the controversy, who's for and who's against (the mayor seems to be "for"), making passing and ill-informed references to the Vlado Milunić/Frank Gehry "Dancing Building" (a.k.a. the Nederlander Building and/or the Fred and Ginger Building) on the embankment in the New Town and Jean Nouvel's Zlatý Anděl (Golden Angel)tucked into Prague-Smíchov, across the river.[2] Both of *these* buildings actually respect their respective locations, whereas Libeskind's proposed architectural object/icon (the "transformation of a circle into a square and back again into a circle") would sit awkwardly amidst the mostly low-rise buildings along the bend of the river in the Old Town. A single "authorized" rendering reproduced by various print and electronic media shows the building, in perspective, bursting forth into the warped perspectival space (picture plane) of architectural (mis)representation. Oddly, the *Prague Post* somehow manages to describe the Dalí House as a "seven-storey gallery," whereas the rendering, "taken" from across the river along the embankment, shows an expansive, aggressive volumetric something-or-other that is clearly not seven storeys. Yet missing storeys is part and parcel of every architectural tall-tale. Apparently, some architects looking at Praha from far away still see a naïve city susceptible to the usual architectural eyewash that passes as "realism," while, in fact, present-day architectural rhetoric (inclusive of photo-realistic renderings) is almost always selling a fantasy. What is most unsettling (bizarre), however, is that Libeskind's strident rendering of the Dalí House actually overstates (*over sells*) the arrogance of the building and he ends up (once again) with his foot in his mouth.

Nouvel's Anděl project (an office and shopping complex) for ING is a not-inelegant example of so-called "urban acupuncture," mostly delightful impositions (urbanistic interpellations) that release latent (pent-up) energies; in the case of Anděl, in a somewhat down-at-the-heels, working-class neighborhood long slated in various 20th-century urban plans as an alternative city center. Thousands of workers pass through this section of the city daily on foot, on the subway, and by tram (streetcar). It is not Nouvel's fault if Smíchov's pent-up energy was primarily real-estate speculation and rampant consumer desire for the latest in fashionable (and expensive) things.

On the other hand, Milunić's "Dancing Building" (it is said that Gehry was merely called in to provide "starchitect" cachet for the developer) "dances" provocatively, but with a modicum of decorum, *within* the folded street-wall of the Right Bank, at the intersection of two busy thoroughfares, one heading straight across the Vltava, the other along its embankment. The deluxe restaurant on the ground floor and the twisted, open floor plans of the

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[1] Zdeněk Lukeš, "Jak hodnotit architekturu, Dalí v Vltany …," *Respekt* XV, no. 21 (May 17-23, 2004): p. 18.
[2] For a report on Nouvel's Anděl project, see Gavin Keeney, "Enduring Obstacles and Angst, Nouvel's Prague Plan Progresses," *Architectural Record* 187, no. 10 (October 1999): p. 62.

upper offices (with erratically placed windows that offer your knee or the ceiling fan a view of the Vltava) may provide a glamorous retreat for Praha's trend-setting entrepreneurial set, yet the building was thoroughly vetted through both official and unofficial (favorable and vicious) criticism, as will be the Dalí House. Milunić (with Gehry) and ING (again) prevailed with the assistance of then President Václav Havel, resolutely leaning in favor of the project (he formerly lived just down the street, during the communist years, and his once-affluent family, once-upon-a-time developers, once owned a portion of the block). The finishing touch of the Dancing Building, the curiously crumpled cupola, was ceremoniously flown into place by a Soviet-era military helicopter.

As a footnote to Praha's illustrious 1990s' makeover, after the 1989 Velvet Revolution, it was Havel, working with architect-designer Bořek Šípek (nominally Castle Architect throughout the Velvet Presidency), who altered the iconography (and iconology) of the Castle (always "Kafka's Castle") by strategic interventions within the compound, including his somewhat wild new entrance to the President's Office, in the Second Courtyard. Šípek also brought his Sottsass-inspired aesthetic to the interiors, a curious blend of effects and affects that are no doubt in the process of being erased (if they are not already erased) by Havel's successor (and enemy) Thatcherite neo-conservative Václav Klaus, head of the appropriately named, right-leaning ODS party.[3]

As for the "hypothetical collection of works by Dalí" cited in the Lukeš send-up, the *Prague Post* explains: "The proposed museum would house some 1,500 works by the Spanish surrealist, most of them on loan from the Dalí Foundation in Figueres, Spain, and from German collector Richard Meier. Additionally, it would contain space for exhibitions, a theater, shops, a library, a depository for contemporary art and accommodations for artists.[4] These redundancies (vagaries of the architectural program) perhaps account for the inexplicable bulk of the Dalí House rendering, suggesting, in turn, that the project is, in fact, a stalking horse for a complex real-estate pyramid scheme (and the paper confirms the rumor that one of the investors is, indeed, a Russian bank).

Dubbed Dalí House, at first (and in Libeskind's brash renderings), Smolák has since backed off and now refers to the proposed facility as the "Palace of Art Prague." Echoing the bombast of the Richard Meier & Partners Architects' high-rise project at Pankrác (i.e., the architect, not the above-mentioned art collector), a project now dramatically scaled back,[5] Libeskind is quoted in the *Prague Post* article as saying (remarks most likely taken from the official press release): "It's very much related to Prague, to the forms and traditions of Prague, it tells a story that intersects Dalí and 20th-century art, Prague, the 21st century and imagination."[6] As if that was not quite enough, Libeskind adds: "If you don't have a future, you don't have a past, and if you don't have a past, you won't have a future."[7] The Dalí House is projected to cost 700 million koruna (CZK) or 26 million dollars (USD) if it ever sees the light of day. Meanwhile, "galerista Smolák" runs his limited-edition art operation from a decommissioned church, near Strahov monastery.

June 2004

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[3] The Havel-Šípek era at Prague Castle has recently been documented in Petr Volf's *Václav Havel-Bořek Šípek: Hradni prace 1992-2002* (Prague: Breda, 2003); text in Czech and English.
[4] "Maverick architect eyes site on Vltava," *Prague Post* 14, no. 20 (May 12-25, 2004): p. 1.
[5] For a critique of this project, see Gavin Keeney, "The Body of the City," *Architekt* 8 (September 2001): ADD PAGE NUMBERS.
[6] "Maverick architect eyes site on Vltava," *Prague Post*: p. 2.
[7] Ibid.

MORAVIAN SHADOWS

For the rapture of the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a lethargic element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. This chasm of oblivion separates the worlds of everyday reality and of Dionysian reality. But as soon as this everyday reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such, with nausea: an ascetic, will-negating mood is the fruit of these states.[1]
–Friedrich Nietzsche (1872)

Every theory is a working hypothesis fostered by our interest in the facts themselves: theory is essential for sorting out the pertinent facts and ordering them in a system – it is for that and no more. The very need for some particular set of facts, the very prerequisite of having some particular conceptual sign – these are conditions dictated by contemporary life with its specific problems. History is, in effect, a science of complex analogies, a science of double vision: the facts of the past have meanings for us that differentiate them and place them, invariably and inevitably, in a system under the sign of contemporary problems. Thus one set of problems supplants another. History in this sense is a special method of studying the present with the aid of the facts of the past.[2]
–Boris M. Ejxenbaum (1929)

I. THE BIRTH OF SHADOWS

Shadows imply three-dimensionality in a physical, formal sense and four-dimensionality in a higher, phenomenal modality – i.e., in the latter case, that sense that suggests the passage of time and the presence of the past (absence). The second sense of shadows requires a meta-aesthetic, perhaps metaphysical ambiance in the play of light and dark that does not merely supplement but completes the physical dimensionality of built and natural form.

In Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) shadows are not mentioned per se but inferred in the Apollinian-Dionysian dyad, the interpenetrating of the shining one (Apollo) and the dark one (Dionysus). Shadows fall, as it were, across the Greek stage, and in all classical philology, as a representational language of exegetical interpolation – deducing the here from the there – an intimation of those antinomies (opposing and imposing forces) Nietzsche identified as animating and attendant to the birth of tragedy. These forces are much more proscribed today then even in Nietzsche's time, and might be summarized as the underlying (unruly) generative codes of cultural systems – the repressed sublimity of systems and the prime gesture of the episteme (formerly the Zeitgeist). The raw, unbridled nature of nature (the inner nature of nature) is a doubled nature that is not merely the sign of the natural but also the foundation stone of the concept of the preternatural (and the primordial) or the so-called "divine ground" (not to be mistaken for an ontological ground) – or, in part, the mostly subterranean system of "things hidden since the foundation of the world" (the titanic realms of the pre-Olympian gods, for sure, but also the very battle of the Olympian gods to humanize the structure of things and hold at bay the tragic undercurrents of life here and there). These are the penultimate "abstract" generative forces that animate shadows – the underlying struggle for taking-place, for the enunciation of being (for calling forth collective being). Beyond Apollo – the sun – is the world of archaic, vital, wild, incoherent, allusive, fetching, sometimes savage, often revolutionary antecedents to the frozen, fixed, polished, day-lit, practical, orderly, effete, and merely formal rules and idioms of commonplace life.

The anti-Nietzschean nonsense that such is a picture of chaos and violence itself conveys the necessary aversion to "shadows" required to favor and privilege the so-called pure land of clarity, order, and light. "Sweetness and light" is Nietzsche's borrowed, Victorian terminology for mocking the naive pleasure found in light culture (a culture of vast repressions) devoid of shadows and adumbration of depth. Formal systems, as provisional systems, require as *mise en scène* a stage cleared of ambiguity and incoherence – a theater cleared of divine madness and inspiration. Hence Antonin Artaud's polemic, *The Theater and Its Double* (1938) ... Hence too Tristan Tzara and Hugo Ball's madcap theatrics in Zurich, at the Cabaret Voltaire, following on the mass destruction of World War I ... Language it seems, in its most abstract instantiation, is oddly at odds with this other "abstract"; it cannot contain it. Logic, nominally, brooks no shadows or aporia while relying on illogical and farcical repressions. *A priori* is white light; logic bathes itself in this light and is the systematic denaturing of the vast wilderness of linguistic substructure. Hence Ludwig Wittgenstein's hyper-logical *Tractatus* (1921) and his later reversal of his own prohibitions against "everything else" ... In shadow resides this *everything else* – e.g., intimations of the immortal,

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), pp. 59-60. First published *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1872).
[2] Boris M. Ejxenbaum, "Literary Environment," trans. I.R. Titunik, in Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska, eds., *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive, 2002), p. 56. Ejxenbaum's "Literary Environment" first published in 1929.

catastrophic infinitude underwriting daylight. The fascinating glimmering (fluctuating tonalities) of dimmed (fading and/or passing) light is not available to night. Dimmed light is effectively half-light, twilight, not the absence of light nor the great plenitude of the midnight sky. Within the night sky moves celestial beings. Within the half-lit, sub-lunar world moves lesser gods and (if the Gnostics are to be believed) the demi-urge ...

The gnomon of the sundial divides the light "disclosing the hour." Below the upright figure, a metonym for the upright human being and human subjectivity, falls the shadow – a horizontal shade that crosses and climbs all obstructing objects, projecting into the recesses of time and space (and the mind). (Sigmund Freud built his insights on the unconscious by problematizing this "uprightness," in "Civilization and Its Discontents," 1930.) The fourth dimension, time, emerges in a speculative turn of mind, upon reflection, the doubling of mind, in the interstices of measure and projection (systems dividing chaos, most notably pictured in William Blake's demi-urge, the so-called Ancient of Days). The fallen world of appearances – of anamorphic forms – is the realm of distortion and attenuation. The quest to purify this realm of its disturbing irreality requires the conceptual sign of the void (the Absolute) – the metaphysical cancellation of the anamorphic, distraught figures of half-light. Abstract paired with abstract yields nil – nothing can survive in the excessive glare (or vertiginous black) of the void (hence all utopias are endlessly deferred and/or the Cloud of Unknowing engulfs every-thing). The superlative value of the void stands as the empty vessel of duration, the long insufferable now (and often a condition falsely identified with the universal or timeless). Typically formulated as the most prescient, non-forward-looking configuration of time and space – the conceptual sign of the void (the universal) is, in fact, an existential holding pattern (or joint-stock "trading" company) suspended in a second nothingness. Filled with light or filled with night (darkness), the void is no longer of this world; it is a dematerialization (not unlike the "capita" of late-capitalism). It is no longer void, however, when it is crossed by shadow (or penetrated by light), when shadows cross its face revealing its perimeter, its containment of volume and its emptiness as a ruse. It is not possible, after all, to posit a true void except in the mind. A void is a stratagem (an abstraction) until it falls victim to reality (contingency), and reality – in its factual, actual sense – does not permit the survival of the void. The real voids the void, filling it with incipient new life, at first the shadow and, then, everything that follows in the path of this half-light. Here is the origin of the cyclical nature of all revolutionary formalisms – e.g., those oftimes extreme formalisms that accompanied the arrival and morpho-genetic development of modernity, or the birth of new cultural systems, from the Renaissance to the Russian Revolution, from Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and Giordano Bruno to Boris Ejxenbaum, Mixail Baxtin and Roman Jakobson (by way of the French Revolution) – illustrating the intense, dialectical nature of history with its own inherent, structural ruse, offering itself up as "past past" to restructure and impose/condition a "present past." The common understanding that nature abhors a vacuum is but a reflection of this more sublime truth. Something – whatever – must fill up and overflow in time. That this same something (whatever) is underwritten by vast shadowlands is the great, open secret. That radical works are essentially "futural" (from the future) is, in turn, a second ruse insofar as this "futural" aspect is meant to circumvent the everyday hegemony of the present past, a present (only in name) that Ernst Bloch rightly identified, in *The Spirit of Utopia* (1918), as a just passed present, or "there" versus "here."

II. THE CZECH LANDS

Moravia is a land of shadows, its historic legacy built-up over ten centuries. Ask a Czech where the deepest, most profound shadows are and they will mention the forest, not castles and cloisters. This relation to culture is dialectical and expressed typically by ennui – a surfeit of dealing with the vast terrain of Czech history. The earliest kingdoms are the stuff of fairy tales and legends, the most recent regimes the stuff of nightmares.

Czech history and the Czech lands are littered with ruins, the remains of conquests, compromises, and catastrophes. Bohemia and Moravia are buried deep in the long shadows of imperial conquest and pacts with neighboring regimes. An Austro-Hungarian "thicket," the architectural-cultural structure of this central European territory is thick with intrigue. Nature is a respite, a time out or a time without these horrors. The hilltop castles and the urban strongholds remain as witnesses to the layered, clotted texture of Czech historiography. It is ironical, then, that Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat (in Brno, Moravia) was purposely constructed to frame a view to Spilberk Castle, a castle that plays a minor, but sinister role in Stendhal's great novel *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839), as specter, the ghastly nature of the hilltop prison "disinterestingly" reduced to a picturesque thing by the iconic, modern villa (built by a brilliant, reductive modernist architect and rigorously trashed by Karel Teige, "*enfant terrible* of the Czech avant garde" in the early 1930s).

Nominally a "Catholic country," the Czechs remain, *per force*, pagans. Where nature and architecture meet there is a storied, ambient admixture of memory and forgetting (selective amnesia). In the orchards or parks of Czech cities one is mostly outside time, momentarily, save the intrusion of the occasional historic monument and the

ever-present wrapper – e.g., walls, edges, gates, ramparts. The parks and orchards are almost cultural voids but not quite emptied yet of the detritus of history. The park is often the provisional void surrounded and crisscrossed by the structural shadows of the historic city. Nature overruns the architectural forms of past eras and comes to an uneasy truce with the persistence of hewn stone and articulated ruins. (Thus, for half-polemical reasons, the Czech communist regime let the mostly Baroque-era palaces and gardens of Malá Strana rot and slowly sink into oblivion.) The Hunger Wall runs up the south-facing slope of the modest but "vast" 327-meter high Petřín, a mostly green enclave near Prague Castle, in Malá Strana (the Lesser Quarter), and straight to Strahov, the great monastic pile built in the Counter Reformation. Along this 14th-century wall are breaks and crumbling portions all buried in the sylvan entourage, deep in green shade and almost dreaming a five-century gap in the warp and woof of time. The Hunger Wall, built by Charles IV to help feed idle workers after the completion of the then-new New Town, serves as a hinge between the past past and the present past – i.e., a crumbling hinge notable for its revered status as the post-communist, cowboy-capitalist political-business cabal now running the country into the ground "tunnels" (loots) the last assets from public ministries and public companies on the road to total privatization of the Czech economy.

Cultural shadows are, of course, unstable; they require critical examination – imagination – to appear and disappear. They are non-objective, fleeting formulations prompted by very real, quotidian shadows. Thus, they have been called shades, or ghosts, figments, as it were, of the penumbra, the transitional zone between light and shadow. In deep shadow there is nothing. Perhaps this transitional zone is the same place that Lucretius denotes as the domain of the gods, the so-called *intermundia* ...

The implication for architectural and landscape-architectural design (and for discursive praxis, or criticism) is profound. Shadow play incorporates the full scope of theoretical and analytical praxis – viz., to "do shadows" is to theorize depth (the distance implicit and sometimes explicit in all things). In design the shadow comes with the architectonic; it is an effect of the concatenation of forms. Baroque facades seem to delight in and anticipate the evening; the long angles of the setting sun. In winter these surfaces are alive with creeping patterns of light and shade. The shadowy recesses of buildings massed to dramatic effect suggest tragic interpolations – the arcade or the peristyle suggest zones of spatial intrigue, of conflict and conniving, of secretive and furtive, clandestine and covert activities. Hence the immense élan of the neoclassical, topological painting (and painted architectural *fabrique* as rubric), Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784), *pace* Jean Starobinski, summing up the potential of the deeply shadowed arcade to represent vast layers of political intrigue. The portico and the loggia are transitional, liminal places (noetic, figurative gestures) that invite both assignation and assassination. There is the dangerous passage from interior to exterior, or vice versa, in the typological place of exchange, and the strategic transfer of one condition to another. At the entrance of the grotto is the liquid expression of figures and textures that represent and instigate metamorphosis. Danger haunts such transitional passages.

The metamorphic threshold (re-deployed in late-modern architecture as "event horizon," i.e., the entrance to a black hole where things are atomized), or the penumbra, is emblematic of the gray zone, the shadowy swath (nether land) of the mind where stillness (light) and echoes (darkness) come to meet one another. In the "green" shade of trees there is a type of "riparian" excess, below the canopy. In the unseen root zone and rhizosphere, therein exists a complex of relationships and forces that nourishes the tree. The tree is mirrored below ground, in its ramified root system, as it is above ground by its trunk and branch system. In summertime is the added effect, in deciduous trees, of the flowering and leaf-bearing mass. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe pictured this unfolding as a primal evocation of the *urphlanz* – the leaf being the prototypical (signature) form of plant growth. In *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790), Goethe reloads the almost spent concept of entelechy, showing in verse form how the plant proceeds from bud to leaf to flower through a spiraling outward offset by a periodic turning inward represented by the clasped form of a pair of young leaves only to, in time, burst into bloom and launch pollen and then seeds into its very own "literary environment," the place of the plant's taking-place. Below ground, in the warmth of summer's soil, is the extraordinary, parallel alchemical activity of fungal, insect, and arthropod communities – a chemistry sprung to life in the generative matrix hidden in the darkness of the earth. The "green" shade of the shadow of the tree canopy buzzes with a life matched by its efflorescence in summer, of flowers and leaves – the linden, for example, teaming with the additional license of honey bees gathering pollen. The subterranean mirror world is alive with the chemical storm that nature reserves to provoke an above-ground explosion of form and effect. Hence William Butler Yeats' "Come live in the empty house of the stare" ...

Porta Coeli, a Cistercian abbey in Moravia, near the provincial town of Tišnov, is nestled between the green hills with a rumored pagan shrine to the west and the rising sun to the east. The gate to the grounds of the cloister opens at a 90-degree bend in a busy commercial street, with the rumbling passage of cars, lorries, and buses. Within the gate is a long, irregular green (commons) pierced by the entrance drive with a thick planting of linden trees creating a blinding darkness. The trees are only 100 years old (perhaps) but form a dense passage with glimpses of the Gothic-Baroque church beyond illumined by rays of light from the passing sun. The entry court is

surrounded by buildings of different periods and the original fabric of the compound is lost in these additional, utilitarian layers and emendations. There is, however, an explicit point where the geometric relationship of the buildings is quite pronounced and a glimpse into the past past is provided. This hinge is the classic perspectival hinge of Medieval planning and is all the more evident due to the erasures that have occurred over time. Enclosing walls have come down and vanished, and the volumes of the buildings now surrounded by mature trees stand in stark relief and disclose their relationship to one another more profoundly than if they were still wrapped in the masonry of the fortifications. The splashes of light that reveal these forms are now modulated by the play of shadow from the grove of trees. The main passage was once a muddy thoroughfare (in the days when the cloister still functioned as a commercial trading post). Today it is a reflective, naturalistic approximation of the "before" and "after" of architecture.

The outer buildings and the passage through the lindens all lead to the celebrated portal (with tympanum) of the Gothic church, guarded by twin lions, Christ, and his twelve apostles. Marauding, 17th-century Swedish troops are said to have lopped off the head of one lion, but it has been patched up. The 19th-century statue of Emperor Franz-Josef, from the inner court, and facing the tympanum, is missing (only the pedestal remains); it is perhaps at the bottom of the nearby lake. The interior of the church offers an entirely man-made shade, a sanctuary built to the glory of the Church Triumphant and penetrated by rays of light through carefully articulated windows of colored glass, including a monumental Medieval rose window. The glory of the vast volume of enclosed space is cut through by this light and the ravishing decorative arts of the Baroque assault the senses, with the ritualized space of the altar as the central spectacle. From within the arcaded innermost courtyard of the cloister one can, wrapped within the volume of the entire ensemble (while looking up), detect traces of the Romanesque church buried below the Baroque. These traces are discernible in the articulation of the outer walls below the eaves of the sanctuary, and in the detailing of the cubic tower supporting the main bell tower. This Romanesque "scaffolding" yet supports the Baroque church, as the Gothic portal and tympanum announce yet another layer within the architectural *mise en scène*, leading inward (picturing a "telescopic" falling out of time by way of a series of diminishing, receding "representational" doors) to the sacred void of the sanctuary, filled, in turn, with the ravishing gestural arts of the Baroque interior.

This second, interior shadowland is a virtual shadowland – it is an imaginary vessel devoted to transcendence, versus immanence. The world of nature, by contrast, represents the ever-fallen, post-Edenic world of human endeavor, whereas the Church attempts to prepare a privileged zone, a purely reflective vehicle for the transfiguration of the tragic. These sanctuaries perform the ancient rite of passage to another land – a great ark on a sea of turbulence – closed off from the impure land of natural and preternatural agitation, that world of shadows unredeemed by the magical reconfiguration of the world within the cloister and abbey. The royal patrons of this sacred ark (buried beneath its stones) purchased one-way passage to glory after despoiling the world at large through *de rigueur* dynastic machinations. The "vague green twilight" of the natural world – Julien Gracq's words from *Au château d'Argol* (1938) – is yet haunted by such vainglories, by scandals, treachery, and capitulation.[3] Perhaps it was St. Francis, erstwhile troubadour, who came closest to the sublime truth that "Heaven" is actually *this world* made virtuous.

The fortunes of Porta Coeli (Heaven's Gate) waxed and waned throughout its 600-year evolution to an enclave of exquisite silence, situated between a provincial city and small villages rife with the everyday agitation of post-communist society. The economic structures that supported the abbey have long since collapsed and it serves now, primarily, as a repository of memories. An on-site museum serves up shards of history (semi-precious stones mined from the region's hills and domestic tidbits from the cloister's heyday) while the grounds, church and cloister (as ensemble) tell of a vast enterprise eclipsed by time and pockmarked by endless internecine warfare and strife. The inner cluster of buildings is stabilized while the outer is crumbling. Restoration has saved the historic core while reality and its vicissitudes has claimed the rest. A huge penumbra encircles this enclave, the aurora of an uncanny a-historical eclipse, but it is strangely set (positioned in present-times) to burst into a dazzling blast of light at some

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[3] Gracq is describing a ruined small chapel (the Chapel of the Abyss) encountered by the two male protagonists of his gothic-surrealist tragedy. "It presented the image of marvellous antiquity and in more than one place fragments of the delicate arches had fallen onto the black grass, where they shone like the white and scattered limbs of a hero treacherously felled, to whom the mysterious oratory would consecrate to the end of time the tears of an insatiable sorrow. Crazy vines with curiously lacy leaves, roots with vigorous thorns, and tufts of grey oats clung to the stones. On all sides the forest encircled it like a stifling cloak, and under the thick branches there floated a vague green twilight that had all the immobility of stagnant water: the place seemed so perfectly enclosed that the confined air could no more circulate there than in a long-closed room, and drifting around the walls in an opaque cloud, imbued for centuries with the persistent perfumes of moss and dried stones, it seemed like an odorant balm into which the precious relics had fallen." Julien Gracq, *Château d'Argol* (1938), trans. Louise Varèse (London: Pushkin Press, 1999), pp. 85-86. First published *Au château d'Argol* (Paris: José Corti, 1938).

future moment when history ends, or the dialectical games of past past and present past collapse utterly exhausted. Porta Coeli's troubles are a subclass (an epicycle) of the troubles of the greater Czech lands – it has always been a part-national, part-international, part-supranational (plus supernatural) enterprise. On that more sublime level, rotating on a much larger wheel, beyond the tortured, petty cycles of national, political, and economic fratricide, Porta Coeli (as conceptual sign and actually existing thing) is (in many ways) the ultimate shadowland where day and night transact secret pacts for the glory of the "world to come," here and now.

III. THE SIGN OF THE SUBLIME

Within the alcoves and shaded reserves of architectural and urban form is an analogous "chemical" (chimeric) *esprit de coeur* to that which animates the archetypal shaded linden grove – i.e., a potential cultural excitation (most commonly shut down as quickly as it arrives). This is the after-half-life of architecture, and its "radio-active" possibility. Architectural isotopes (tropes) are essentially typological and universal (interchangeable). This life passes in the gaps between things (after hours). This is the echo of the cultural staged in the static, transformed spaces of buildings; the inner clash of ideas and concepts hidden within the de-natured, deracinated modern concept of the "aesthetic." To read and/or hear this clash one must become, alas, an "aesthetician" of form. This architectural surplus is the proverbial trace and/or ghost of what is suppressed by most architectures, and by architecture as a built form of hegemony. This architectural thing-not-in-itself represents the registration of nominal, singular things in a much larger index – viz., an index that is quite often stashed below deck, in the cargo hold, in unmarked crates, aboard the onrushing ship of modern architecture. This echo represents, performatively (self-consciously), "other possible histories." It is less a "haunting" than an "illumination" or lighting up of the dim interior of architecture in search for suppressed signifiers. The idea of the present past is its closest approximation even though the present past is part of the normalizing game to recycle the outmoded and defer the radical undoing of the entire non-edifying structure of the prison-house of architecture. The best historians are, therefore, also poets. The majority of life transpires in shadowlands; this includes transgressions. Yet, to cultivate a life of shadows is not to commit treason, nor to transgress, but to dream, working against the tedium of hegemonic noontide. Evening-tide is the magical transitional time of day when poet, prophet, profiteer, king, serf, proletariat, and president inhabit a level playing field. It is the time of the death of the hegemonic that may be discerned in lengthening shadows. Noontide is clamorous by comparison (even if Giacomo Leopardi, "aesthetician of ennui," claimed it is the hour of absolute stillness). Evening-tide is langorous, dreamy, and visionary. At noon everything stands still, including, according to poets, the Sun. At evening the last rays of the Sun glance off stone and steel and glass, off leaf and bark and long-gazing face to catch the edge of things. Perhaps at no other time is the ever-elusive/allusive thing-in-itself (plus the thing-not-in-itself) revealed and more present (luminous) than in evening; i.e., less atrophied and less specified. If Virgil discovered "evening" (its poetic form), as some say, it was because it is the *inherent* hour, the time when time shines from within and the passage of moments, specks of time, time's dust, drips into the mind (a form of metaphysical honey gathered in the extravagant wilderness of evening). The charged expectation of the hour of evening, that pellucid zone between day and night, is the ultimate passageway to the interior of things. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (1933) inhabit the same synchronic, literary dream-space. Formalist-structuralist criticism of the 1920s and 1930s and high post-structuralist voyages into indeterminancy and intertextuality in the 1980s are intimately coupled, half-secretly conjoined bedmates; the bed was the 20th century. The offspring could be dazzling.

Formalist strategies actually have an extraordinary, far-fetching effect on built form (as on literary form). Coupled with "contextualized discursive praxis" – that so-called 1980s thing – cultural forms can be revamped, revised, and revivified. In terms of shadowlands this constitutes re-writing the half-hidden codes of cultural production, or diving into the subterranean matrix that supports the "above-ground" structure. Certain artists, certain writers (and certain film makers) do this out of necessity. Andrei Tarkovsky, for one, realized he had no choice whatsoever.

It is perhaps not coincidental that Roman Jakobson (associated with the legendary Prague School of structural linguistics) gave a seminal lecture in Brno (Moravia), "The Dominant" (1935), that signaled the shift from late formalism to high structuralism in the critical-analytical game of literary exegesis.[4] The "How is it made?" of

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[4] "Jakobson here sees the new inquiries into the structural characteristics of verbal art as a third stage of Formalist research as opposed to its earlier stage of semantic emphasis and its still earlier form-oriented beginnings. Thus Formalism gradually underwent the conversion to Structuralism through its growing awareness of the delicate relationship between material manifestation and the complex code of normative rules." Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska, in Matejka, Pomorska, eds., *Readings in Russian Poetics*, p. xxi. "The dominant specifies the work. The specific trait of bound language is obviously its

Russian formalism morphed quickly into the proto-structuralist, operational query "What does it do?" Jakobson also laid out the coordinates for investigating what might best be termed the critical-poetic tripwire, or the "spring" that is tightly wound within language and animates all discourses (including architectural discourse). It is for this reason that Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism (and, later, *post-structuralism*) shared a common concern with *poetic language*. The idea of the dominant resonates within the complex of early formulations that later became the foundation for the post-structuralist and deconstructivist obsession with interrogating form. A type of shadowy, literary intrigue (which includes identifying the implicit underlying structures of signifying and operational systems) can be, arguably, detected in late-structuralist, rationalist, and post-structuralist critiques of architecture and architectural discourses as a type of *double shadowland* within modernity – on the one hand the quest for pure form is built up on massive repressions and sublimations, while on the other hand the supporting apparatus for the modernist juggernaut seeks to undo and de-stabilize the entire horrific operation. The Venice School – Manfredo Tafuri, et al. – brought this second agenda *per force* into architecture, and its effects are still felt today in the work of its latter-day adherents, e.g., Massimo Cacciari and, to a degree, Giorgio Agamben. Curiously, what Cacciari and Agamben both strenuously seek to re-situate (re-inscribe), at this late date, is poetic language and the concept (sign) of the *cultural constellation* (a synonym for "shadows"). Indeed, Jakobson and his comrades proved conclusively that a discipline, no matter how prosaic, also engenders a discourse (and, thus, discourse analysis). When analytical and abstract discourses topple over, the investigation and regeneration of the poetic structure of things returns (at times with a vengeance).

Formalisms are at first strenuously focused on the specificity of a discipline – its so-called autonomy. Architectural formalism has often mistakenly been equated, in the same way as literary formalism was mistakenly equated (and defined by its detractors), with a reductive, annihilating spirit. This spirit is the quest for an unmediated, absolute some-thing within everything else (the so-called forces of art). As the formalist agenda moves forward, and is bent to new purposes, semantic content is always re-loaded. The cyclical nature of formalism reveals that it is neither one thing nor another but, instead, part of a complex. It is this complex that prefigures the shadowy, recondite, inner world of things and representational systems. As such, formalism is an exquisite means of re-writing the world. As it is often explained away as excessive abstraction, formalism is also perceived (by its critics) as a giant eraser. This giant erasure can, in turn, be perceived as a means of constructing a void – a shadowless petrie dish. When all is said, done, and undone, shadows once again "cross" the petrie dish.

It is this now-classic, cyclical "return of the repressed" (André Breton's insight by way of Sigmund Freud) that is dealt a provisional death blow in Bachelard's concept of dialectical sublimation, versus continual sublimation. Bachelard derives this form of "cultural fire," in *La psychanalyse du feu* (1938), from a close reading of Novalis.[5] It is Bachelard's privileging of Novalis' concept of intellectual fire ("The blue flower is also red …") that unnerves the reader as a revolutionary some-thing else appears on the horizon of thought. In Novalis' universe, as in Bachelard's, rationalism is only to be dispensed with through the development of surrationalism (a poetic rationalism, or poeticized rationalism). This is also what almost-always appears and disappears, here and there, then and now, for reasons specific to the architecture of various forms of hegemony. The letter kills the spirit (over and over) ... It is the surrational component, in human nature and human reason, that can discern, read, process, and situate (insofar as "situate" means to put into play and/or critique) the shadowlands between Pascal's two infinities (transposed in Kant to "the starry sky above and the moral law within"). Perhaps it is the commingling of these two things, in the human-divine constellation otherwise known as civilization, that produces (has produced, will produce) the most sublime shadowlands of all.

<div align="right">October 2004</div>

A version of this essay appeared in *Landscape Review*. See: Gavin Keeney, "Moravian Shadows," *Landscape Review* 8, no. 2 (October 2004): pp. 29-42.

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prosodic pattern, its verse [structural] form. It might seem that this is simply a tautology: verse is verse [architecture is architecture]. However, we must constantly bear in mind that the element which specifies a given variety of language [form] dominates the entire structure and thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them.... We may seek a dominant not only in the poetic [architectural] work of an individual artist [architect] and not only in the poetic [architectural] canon, the set of norms of a given school, but also in the art of a given epoch, viewed as a particular whole." Roman Jakobson, "The Dominant," trans. Karol Magassy, in ibid., pp. 82-83. Jakobson's "The Dominant" first published in 1935.

[5] See "The Novalis Complex," in Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*.

THE NEAR & THE FAR: MORAVIAN GARDEN

I. THE GARDEN (C. 1999)

Johannes Kepler's Ellipse and Carpinus betulus arbor, two new elements to a South Moravian country garden ...

The serpentine stone walk is merely an alteration to the earlier straight stone walk, but with the addition of alpine plants along the edge. A Tsuga canadensis hedge is planned for the lower edge of the terraced garden (the very young plants have been added and will take ten years to close in). The top edge of the stone retaining wall, re-pointed in 1995 and dropping five feet to the grass path along the river, was planted with Parthenocissus quinquefolia (the seed gathered from a railroad siding in Brno in 1995). It now cascades the full distance to the ground below. Clematis, Euonymous, and Hydrangea anomala petiolaris have been added below the wall to further veil the stone expanse. The southwest corner of the wall is being built up around the well (above the wall) with perennials and woodland shrubs (Sambucus pubens and Corylus avellana). – UPDATE: The Tsuga hedge is now two years old and about twelve inches tall (June 2001).

In the upper garden, Kepler's Ellipse is edged with transplanted clumps of wild Festuca and wild Asarum, tufts of Armeria alpina, splotches of Sedum, and reddish granite stones from the river. A single Acer palmatum dessicatum has been added on a small "mountain" of red stones from the river with white-veined black stones as a "peak." This two-stone palette was used in the re-paving of the town square in nearby Tišnov.

Three Cupressus leylandii have been added to the edge of the serpentine walk for scale and to provide a figurative "descent" toward the river from the house. The Hindu Vastushastra has vetted all locations. This Hindu "atom bomb" has also justified the obliteration of Forsythia near the house and English Ivy on the barn.

The base of the Carpinus arbor has been planted at the four corners with English Ivy and Clematis. The arbor was fabricated out of four three-inch thick Carpinus trees cut from a copse above the village and bent into an arch. The side branches were retained to weave into the tracery of the arbor. It will, in time, again be green. The bent Carpinus tracery is fixed in place with steel wire and concrete footings. The Ivy will attempt to pull it to the ground. Its height is about ten feet to allow for hanging vines at the top of the arch. Its footprint is irregular, the frame displaced by shifting the second set of uprights to face the garden. The first set is aligned with the corner of the adjacent building. The resultant footprint is a pattern similar to the body of the constellation Orion. – UPDATE: The arbor fell apart ... The four uprights remain (June 2001). Live Carpinus will be added when these poles collapse.

Grass has been altered from "running" status to "carpet" status with concise, curving edges. White clover seed has been sprinkled about and dolomitic lime added. The grass carpets will be pampered beyond belief – they will be magic carpets. The grass ellipse is exactly the size required to set up a small tent. Beds have been cut out of the former lawn and "sculpted" to rise above the pristine grass carpets. Local cut grasses (hay), compost, sand (imported) and leaf mould from the coniferous woods has been used to raise the profile of the beds and "seal" them. The cut sod was inverted and buried below the top layers of amendments and mulch. Water is brought from the river by hand. – UPDATE: More grass has been removed and the hour approaches when there will be only two very pristine ovals of green amid the riotous vegetation (June 2001).

The outer face of the old stone terrace wall contains "weeps," the point where underground terracotta drain tiles from the rainwater collection system daylight. During showers the rainwater runs off the terracotta roof into rain gutters and into the underground pipes. The weeps will be covered with masks in the future. The spouting water will be captured in gardens along the base of the wall. The rain and gray water systems in the garden are to be integrated into a collection and storage continuum for recycling and conservation. Overflow will spill out through the masked weeps. – UPDATE: No masks have been unearthed yet (June 2001).

Very small boxwood plants are being trained and shaped to stand in for planets in the Kepler Ellipse. Plants all are purchased from local sources or raised from seed. Most are introduced to the garden when very small. The future growth of the larger species will eventually displace surrounding plantings and the garden will evolve from child's play to serious mischief.

II. NOTES & POST-RATIONALIZATIONS:

Toy snakes and lizards have been placed on sunning stones in the upper garden (Ellipse). – UPDATE: They have vanished (June 2001).

A particular type of crumbling stone (that reminds me of my teeth) has been chosen as occasional accent (it is a type of decomposing quartz or feldspar).

White quartz stones have been added to the mix of edging stones along the serpentine walk to reflect moonlight (to aid night vision).

The quartz stones appear occasionally in the river, washing downstream from the deep gorges upstream.

Flat stones have been stacked loosely in a curving wall along the lower grass carpet marking a bed of cinnamon-scented red roses.

The flat stone wall attracts crickets and the shelves formed by the layers are a basking place and terrace for the same.

The walls are watered (irrigated) by hand to benefit the crickets.

CD-ROM disks have been suspended from the fruit trees and currant bushes with light fishing mono-filament to warn off birds. – UPDATE: They have been discontinued by the keeper (June 2001).

Turning in the breezes they resemble the moon and wandering stars (planets).

There are plans to break open the wall of one of the buildings for use as a *sala terrena*. – UPDATE: This has been done and built-in furniture fashioned from ancient planks of Sycamore have been installed (June 2001).

At 7 p.m. long shadows cross the garden as the sun sets behind the western hills. – UPDATE: See the sister essay "Moravian Shadows" (January 2006) ...

Smoke from evening fires swirls around the river basin invading the garden with its acrid perfume and its sensuous gauze (see image above for traces of this ambient element).

Swallows perform aerial acrobatics mimicking the over flights of the Czech Army fighters. – The Czechs are still flying Soviet-era MIGs but have recently tendered requests for modern "Western" jets.

An evening procession of ducks from the neighboring farm signals nightfall.

The slender profile of the upright duck has been secretly incorporated into the plan of the garden.

III. DISCURSUS I (2002)

Depth Charges – An evolutionary approach to restoring depth will work just fine. Cannibalizing both the truly historic and the simply overrated fake historic aspects is possible through a method of appropriation versus demolition. Grafting depth onto the insipid requires that the best be salvaged and incorporated and the worst be simply savaged. *Land* is what matters. Position and juxtaposition reign supreme. The translation of one form to another, in an incremental manner, will reveal the potential (repressed) linguistic dust present in the most pathetic examples of building. This "dust" is a fertile duplicity that will allow great latitude for true cultural renovation.

The Case of the Insignificant – A small Moravian garden. To the east, hills (and the rising sun); to the south, hills; to the north, hills; to the west, hills (and the setting sun). It is very small and very insignificant.

Within its tiny borders, formed by stone walls – walls surmounted by fences and the walls of the country house – is a series of plots, traces of the former the farmyard.

These plots have an explicit rectilinear nature and are the remains of utility. To transform them, now, in the 21st century, to an aesthetic and purely intangible significance (a tangible insignificance) is to purposely violate the orthogonal and utilitarian. This also implies the addition of semantic depth – a dimension of pure "writing" against the formal and functional history of the site.

The first act was re-pointing the exterior of the south-facing retaining wall, above the river/stream and below the garden. The next, ongoing, is to obscure that very geometric structure, that is the "mineralogical" – or stone on stone. The ever-tempting signature conifers were moved or removed early on from within the garden. The stone walkways were dug out and realigned (unaligned/maligned). The straight lines were inflected, or warped or lost within new vegetation. The edges became volumes and the layers (terraces) were altered *without* relation to the formal four-square plan. An ellipse replaced a large blue spruce and its green (lawn) became a new center (mini solar system). The green ellipse is wrapped with plants (planets), and ever-changing in seasonal qualities. The center is the place where the sun makes its most vivid presence known in the garden. The dimension is calculated to accommodate the outstretched human body (the sun-bathing human body), or a table and a few chairs. At this center, in centripetal fashion, the lower terraces unfurl from the forces set in play by this green void.

A second ellipse is under way, a few steps below and to the west, a subsidiary system. It borders the vestigial vegetable plot and is violated by a currant bush and a plum tree, both hangers-on from the previous regime. This western ellipse is also a patch of grass edged by a new, curving stone sitting-wall and plants, including a somewhat ancient and mature lilac at the northwest edge. To leave the higher ellipse and pass to the lower, one must engage the rainwater cistern, with its awkward open cubic form protruding from the ground. Above it rises a towering Thuja (cedar) – positive and negative volumes representing both the presence and absence of the outmoded garden. The cistern is empty (because it leaks). The Thuja is slated to be cut by half (because it is out of scale). This juncture is the messy collision of the former state and its successor – the crashing together of two systems.

The lower garden (of which the second ellipse is part) will be expanded (by its extension into the lowest portion of the garden below the plum tree) and defined by a shift in grades (wide grass steps will lead out to the "Strand" – the strip of garden just above the stone retaining wall and below the first ellipse). Tsuga canadensis (hemlock) have been introduced (very young plants) to grow up at this edge and close in (as an evergreen perimeter). The Strand will become a sand or gravel swathe (it is now grass). It too will have an irregular "wave" edge condition and be framed by vegetation. Within it, the view will "close" (sitting), and "open" (standing). From the first ellipse the view will be over the Strand to the far bank of the river, the lindens, and the south hills. The multiple "horizons" build from within the garden to the penultimate "horizon," the curving green mass of the hills against the sky. These horizons *are not lines*.

The most ridiculous and sublime measures are required to alter the views of the garden *from the outside*. The stone walls and the house volume are excessively orthogonal from the exterior approaches. Below the wall, a cataclysm of plants is required to stage the illusion of thickness and vagueness (distance). To block these last vestiges of the skeletal past will require fulsome, corporeal excess of planting – thick, uneven, woolly, wild, extravagant gestures of colonization and conquest. The heavy structure of the architecture must vanish beneath the luxuriant, generative contingency of massed, polyvalent, polyglot, polymorphous green. This ambient edge and new amorphous volumetric condition will ensure that the last traces of precision and intrepid rigor vanish (to the eye and soul) and merge with the effervescent froth of the animated universe of garden and not garden. Here the real nature of shade and light will mix and confound the lasting imprint of utility and its cousin, banality. The great cycle of the seasons and the revolution of the heavens seek, too, respite in the idleness of green shadows.

There are numerous types of order that disturb the soul – one alone will suffice. The stringent, often puritanical inroads of utility and function are prime agents of inner tedium. To loose the proto-generative is to enhance the seductive veil thrown over such measures by nature and by artifice, those gestures that loosen the bonds that hold in thrall the vivid undercurrents of the world and its secret vivaciousness. Shadows are generative – the nurseries of imagination. As sub genius loci effects, shadows, the play of light and darkness, are the eternal return of a spirit that animates life, time, and desire. Yes, Winter *and* Spring, Summer *and* Autumn. But most of all, Spring and Autumn are idyllic, signature times for gardens and for architecture (for garden architecture). The stillness of Winter and the cacophony of Summer are balanced in the twin, generative gestures of the year's morning and evening.

IV. DISCURSUS II (2004)

I took the soil the moles offered, below the new stone steps and low wall, and spread it over the cut (salvaged), newly installed sod at the top of the wall/steps, dusting it with sand, spreading a thin layer of quick-lime, and grass seed … Thor rolled in, rumbling, and the short outburst lasted just long enough to wash the seed into place amid the blades of grass and trefoil leaves of white clover … "I heard, at the bottom of the garden, the last peals of thunder growling among the lilacs …" …

Twenty-four hours after Thor passed through the stream turned brown from silt washed down from (presumably) the uplands where trees are cut on the steep slopes of the valley (somewhat indiscriminately these days) … I noted a small bird carrying a single strand of hair in its beak … The swallows were dancing in the evening sky … The rockery has expanded, and the fading clumps of Armeria maritima were moved to this new portion of the garden from the Kepler Ellipse (where they were languishing beneath the lush foliage of herbaceous perennials) …

Armeria, echoes of Iona (*pour mon moi*) … The Western Isles (of Scotland) … fragments of an Archie Fisher song go round in my head, "I came to a western island; / As far as a man can walk is my land. / I cleared ten acres and a house I built / Into the side of the hill." … "The roof leaks, the windows rattle, / And the grass in the high ground won't feed cattle; / The west wind blowin' off the sea / Makes it hard to grow a tree …" … "Some nights, when the bright lights flicker, / I sail to the mainland for my liquor. / Haven't got a woman to call my own, / But I never wake up alone …" … "A man needs to feel the ground / And the wind to tell him that the world spins 'round; / To watch the stars and taste the sea, / And a woman to keep him free …" … (Eildon Music, 1976) …

Strange gnats hover in the air … Flies swirl, spiraling in midair, aloft on miniature thermals … Yet a fly is not an eagle nor hawk … In the garden, early blooms … Magnolia, Primula, Myosotis, Bergenia (just passed), Aquilegia, Pheasant's-Eye Narcissus (Poet's Narcissus), Doronicum, Clematis alpina (starting its seasonal climb toward the stars) … Newly planted Nepeta, Lilacs, Peonies (in bud), splashes of color in freshly planted pots (here and there) … Helleborus (hanging on, not yet ideally situated) … Lascivious green fronds of ferns (delicate, upright … others with inward-turned tips, waiting awhile longer to reach outwards, switching from vertical to horizontal

deployment) … A few days later, frost nips the tips of the ferns … Cold nights and sometimes sleet in the early morning …

Cinnamon-streaked crosiers, Pulmonaria (lungwort), Dicentra … Ribes (currant bushes, standard form, single-stemmed) crowded into the corner of the shrinking vegetable plot at the far north-western edge of the garden … First flush of Iberis …

Skryje is a village with perhaps twenty to thirty small houses, many summer houses (dachas) … Because it is in a valley, the road more or less ends here, with impassable passes through the wooded hills of north-west Moravia …

The country house is almost a compound, with additions over time spread over the perhaps one-half hectare site … In the front portion, along the road, an enterprising soul has rented one small room for an impromptu weekend pub … for 1000 KC per year (about $40 US) … It operates off the map (radar), for the most part, as does the village itself …

S and I go for evening beer (Černá Hora, Black Mountain) … 11 KC for a large glass … Everyone else is working on a tab … The blue cash-box is mostly idle, whereas the notebook full of tallies (strokes) is annotated every few minutes … A car arrives with new half kegs … and two bags of chips (which are passed around, gratis …) …

Ten to twelve locals are downing beer after beer, a small stove ticking away, burning pine, warming the room … A pair of shoes, an umbrella, a picture of Václav Havel and Gustáv Husák (Havel's enemy, his *bête noire*) adorn the four walls … They silently ignore one another … Three dogs wander about or nap on chairs … A black poodle, a white spaniel, and a mongrel dachshund (brown with a striking white diamond on the back of its elongated neck) …

It's all Czech, this evening … I don't understand much at all … I do detect a furious debate about the US as the new Russia (viz., Soviet Union) … a new imperial cancer and/or pox … The former fearless Czech communist leader Husák is frowning … Havel is smiling … They stare past one another, gazes crossing in mid-air, overseeing, refereeing this debate … Their pictures bracket the non-sense of the current neo-imperial nightmares, here and not-here (in one form or another …) …

The woman with the black fingernails and orange hair is passing beer after beer down the table while wildly carrying the debate … To her left is a barrel-chested man with wisps of hair tucked beneath his cloth, visor-less cap … His pale-blue trousers are patched with a dark-blue cloth … threadbare … Another man, sitting next to the cat-napping dachshund, gazes blankly off into space, occasionally returning to make a point … A three-light chandelier-type light fixture with two lights (bulbs) illuminates a scene straight out of a Daumier print … This pub, always-already below the salt, somehow measures time (and life/humanity) for this handful of quibbling souls …

Sad-eyed, 35-year-old M (her Slovak husband in jail for some sort of blue-collar, economic crime) reaches over the makeshift bar to draw beer from the tap … In-between fetching beers she devours an entire bag of chips … The saliva from the white spaniel has dried just above my knee on my recently hand-washed black jeans … The brown dachshund (with the white diamond on the back of its neck), curled up on the chair next to the man staring off into space, holds one ear aloft, cocked (the other flopped downwards), listening … Occasionally s/he opens one eye to measure the crowd (to see if his/her master/mistress has left, perhaps … who knows …) …

A frost is expected tonight … the stars appear far-away and dim … The air, chilled, is damp and sweet with wood-smoke … Night, and its very own "velvet revolution," has fallen …

The ailing, ancient lilacs … Syringa vulgaris (Common Lilac) … They are late this year and the old stems are covered with peeling bark and lichen … I pruned away the dead wood, climbing into the multi-stemmed base, poised, snipping and sawing … I set aside the cuttings for a lilac fire … With a wire brush, I scrubbed away the old bark and lichen revealing a tawny, golden under-hue … They lean out over the second grass ellipse/oval, newly trimmed, over a low stone sitting wall constructed a few years ago … I mixed wood ash and nettle water in a bucket with more water and brushed this slurry onto the stems from the base to the newer, somewhat greener wood in the crown … These lilacs are in some way S's mother's double … They have been here since the beginning … She is fond of them and worries about them as she worries about her own failing health … Her ailments and those of the lilac tree are the same … Time has taken its toll … Perhaps she could sense the treatment – the "manicure," the exfoliation (scrubbing), and ash-mud application (masque) – miles away in Brno …

H. brought a large tome on Jan Blažej Santini Aichel's bizarre, sacred 18th-century, high-Baroque architecture, published (lavishly) by Charles University (Praha) in 1998, text in Czech … Santini's output was prodigious; a wild form of Czech high-Baroque syntheses based on Italian-Baroque influences (including innumerable outrageous buildings constructed by Italian architects working in the Habsburg Czech Lands for the Church after the brutally squelched insurrections of the Protestant nobility) … An architectural influenza, then … The pictures are not in "Czech," but an odd, ideal (universal) language of forms … Baroque-Gothic forms … spatial

and decorative (the decorative quite often feigning authenticity … painterly effects … painted plaster made to look like marble or stone … Angels perched/roosting about the typically billowing spaces of baroque interiors) … "Italianate" excursions, constructed on the run, in haste, in a period of perhaps fifty to seventy years, many after-Santini (after his death), and only "based" on his plans … Yet rooted in the northern soil of the nominally "Catholic" Czech Lands … Between 1700 and 1750, for the most part, dozens of churches, chapels, and monastic compounds went up, Santini turning out plans from the sacred lathe of his imagination, a production (mostly in brick) much denigrated, later, by the arch-ideologues of Modernism proper (the enemies of "historicism") … His workshop no doubt was aligned with the obscure sources of pure ideality buried within the Counter-Reformation assault (well after the Thirty Years' War), when built propaganda was produced en masse like the annual crops of wheat and barley … Fervid, fermented geometries after Borromini and Brandl … Interiors after Bernini (literally), in Praha and northwest Moravia (in particular), Zd'ar somehow the epicenter of the most abstruse, fabulous (troubling) works …

The botched pruning of the plum tree was resolved by sawing off all the stumps near-flush with the trunk (leaving a small nub to allow the wound to "heal," produce – in time – "closure" …) … This state of things came about when two Hornbeam (Carpinus) trees were added to each side of the old tree, as understudies, in preparation for eventual removal of the senescent plum …

Venturing further into the canopy, I sawed away at extraneous branches of the plum, those competing with one another (overlapping), and any dead wood and/or shoots rising vertically from within the inner part of the crown … The wind was gusting and I rode out the swaying tree from within the forked upper reaches of the pliant tree … Eyes from passersby and inquisitive townspeople followed these antics … The ladder reached only so far, to the first tier of mature branches leaving the column of the trunk, and I stepped into the architecture of the canopy, testing each limb in advance, leaving behind the solid (immoveable) structure of the ladder and lower tree for the upper, mobile (waving) infrastructure of the perhaps thirty-foot tall plum … I removed all competing branches, save one (which would have left a huge hole in the canopy), throwing the cut branches (afterwards) over the garden wall onto the tops of the chicken-wire-covered compost frames, collecting small twigs and branches in a basket for a small fire, adding them to the lilac cuttings for a future "ceremonial" fire by the streamside (always at twilight … evening) …

Notes from the Tišnov nursery … Chamaecyparis lawsoniana "White Spot" … Buxus sempervirens (558 KC to 748 KC … KC = Czech koruna …$1 US = 25 KC) … Buddleia weyeriana, B. davidii, B. alternifolia … Euonymous europaeus ("Spindle-tree" … the same one we see often growing in the thickets, spread by seed by birds … 198 KC) … Hydrangea anomala "Cordifolia" (the same as H. anomala petiolaris?) … Confirming plants already planted … and sizing up alternatives … Which Buddleia did S plant? … The little Buxus s. plants we put in years ago are now worth (at retail) $20 to $30 US … Looking for Azaleas to grow in pots … Rhododendron "Persil" (white … 568 KC), R. "Kermesiana" (pink … 218 KC), R. "Geisha Orange" (85 KC) … perhaps …

Time out, Brno … Went to see the Josef Čapek exhibition, "Josef Čapek: The Humblest Art" (works from 1914-1924), at Moravské galerie … "Modern artistic sentiment delights in expressing itself in the most comprehensive manner through the maximum economy." (JC, 1924) … Karel's brother … It was Josef who coined, for Karel, the word *robot* … Here are Josef's expressive, eclectic paintings from the 1910s and early 1920s … Heads, torsos, half-length figures of women c. 1914 greet you as you enter the first gallery (watercolor on paper, plus ink and collage, ink and charcoal variations) … Enigmatic expressions … one eye, an "x" for a mouth, sidewise sweep of hair ("Head of a Young Woman with Ribbon," 1914) … "Meditative calm," and lyrical half-abstractions … "Fractions of an almost agonizing sharpness emerged.… Soothing womanly line, man's dark torso and a wholly imperceptible face.… Just before they vanished from sight, the images sharpened with an air of tranquility and empathy, as if a flow of water stopped …" (JC, "Manuscript Found on the Street," 1915) … "Geometric signs: and fragment[s] of reality introduced through a concrete detail [vestige] …" (Wall text, with interpellations, "Assembling the Figure") … "La Toilette" (series, c. 1916-1917, linocut on paper), recurring (wan/thin) smile, angular elbows, jutting breasts, tilted head, "high" stylized banalities (lyrical reductions) … all of these works are small, intimate anti-portraits … "Street Walker" (oil on canvas, perhaps 24" x 24," 1918), blue-violet aura, diagonal bird-like prostitute/silhouette, black forms against the vague illumination of a streetlamp/orb … "Angles, light and letters" *après* Picasso and Léger (*leger*demain) … and Braque … animistic rites folded into urban *bric-à-brac* … "Disclaimed versions" c. 1918, or small paintings torn into six pieces and reassembled here and now … jig-saw puzzles … "Primitivism and magic realism" (Wall text) … Čapek's *The Humblest Art* (Aventinum, 1920) returns "to harmony and idyll," or "melancholy that springs from an unfulfilled longing for a lost paradise" (Wall text) … à la Henri Rousseau … "sanctity of everyday life" … or "glancing at a Singer sewing machine" which "falsifies nothing in this world" … Tired, then, of the phantasmatic and sinister world of late-Expressionism (lingering on in/through Cubism) … Moravské galerie v Brně, 03/26/04 through 05/23/04 …

Watering … I make singular, repeated trips to the river with watering can in hand to bring the greenish-brown water up the fifty feet or so to the garden … up one set of stairs, remembering to duck, to not bang my head on the low limb of the prune tree guarding the entrance to the garden from below … Perhaps if I was putting out a fire I would carry two buckets at once, and hasten less slowly … Each bucket is delivered to the beds in a coarse fountain /spray of drops and streams through the metal rose at the end of the watering can's sleek, galvanized steel neck/spout … It is, then, an aesthetic thing not to be maximized (nor underestimated), nor Taylorized (though during droughts it is less likely to please in quite the same nonchalant manner …) … As the artificial rain-shower travels over the terrain of the beds, washing away bits of mulch and sand, settling things, the last drops are deliberately (carefully) allowed to fall, slowly, in their minute particularity, upon a sprig of violet, a single rosette of sedum hiding between two stones, a clod of dirt, a crease of stone, a whorl of fern … till the can is spent … totally, and completely …

A sinuous, curving line derived from the upright body of the wayfaring "cosmic" ducks (which wander up and down the stream each evening), previously installed in the early ground plan of the garden (but later obscured by subsequent work), has returned, today, in the form of a freshly cut edge in the lowest terrace (above the lower garden wall), tracing (yet departing as well) the curvature of the stacked small, flat-stone edge that marks the lower, second-to-last bed … Below this new line (drawn with spade and sand), a last strip of grass/lawn (swirling) leads toward the new rockery … Below this last strip of grass, the Hemlock (Tsuga) bed (young trees spaced one-spade length apart, one day to "close," forming a low, loose hedge) … Beyond that, the Woodbine (grown from seed purloined in a waste-place in Brno years ago) trails/spills over the wall, dropping/ falling half of the five feet or so to the compost frames below, outside the garden itself …

"Walk the mystery of the curve …" … As with the care of soil, one does not water plants, per se, but beds (and rock edges and steps …) … the garden milieu (milieux), its *mise en scène* is what is most supportive (important) within this theater of affects (never effects, nor causes and effects) … As the secret "total work of art," a garden is a multiplicity of "folded" and nominal effects (superabundant, saturated – hopefully – as an affective milieu …) … The fertility of the soil is mirrored overhead, at night, within the starry vault, with/by analogues that suggest intense carnality within all things … luminosity … and most of all, within imagination (the "soil" from which a garden lives) … I detect in Dante's placing Beatrice's eyes in the starry heavens/vault a neo-Platonic some-thing else, no doubt by way of medieval Arabic sources (streams/"electrical" so-called cultural currents) … The sky mirrors things-not-in-themselves, or – depending on your point of view/bias – everything and/or nothing (at all) … mirroring your worldview … or vice versa (to Stendhal's "happy few") … Said Coleridge to Southey …

We went to the new super-supermarket, Globus, and paid the 15 KC for a cart in the US-style vacuous parking lot … To enter the aisles you have to make a hard right just inside the automatic doors and pass through acres of plastic house-wares, plastic clothes, tires, coolers, appliances, etcetera … Nonetheless, when examining eggs, some of them still had feathers on them (plus that now common-place red date-stamp …) …

"The mountain rose before me / from a deep well of desire / And the fountain of forgiveness / beyond the ice and the fire …" … Sometimes Skryje is like a prison-house, other times a make-shift monastery (perhaps charterhouse …) … Other-times … Sometimes it seems like a rustic version of a bankrupted (poor) Renaissance villa, situated in the hills, facing down time itself, a therapeutic distance from everything else but itself … And not unlike "Back to Ireland," that small stretch of cobble-beach on Iona where reputedly Columba sat, "back" (turned to) Ireland (from whence he came … in self-imposed exile …), here one sits "back" to Praha or "back" to Brno (yet never "back" to New York … because one always needs a way out …) … *Et in Arcadia ego* (so "they" say, and write … and argue over …) … All things post-Romantic then … and why not? … inclusive of, of course, gardens ("places of best-kept secrets …") …

In the morning, three cups of coffee (Turkish style) and three cigarettes (Sparta, red pack), back-to-back, one after another … Some bread with butter, two eggs (soft-boiled) with salt and pepper … The spring water is always cold, the well water always dirty (contaminated with silt), the rain almost always falls in-between bursts of brilliant daylight, yet sometimes at night … The dogs next door, across the stream, always bark in the late afternoon, the rooster and his three or four hens always wanders to and fro, along the embankment of the stream, below the garden, the clouds almost always race past, up the valley (west-southwest) … The forest is still, flanking the hills … Silent pines crown the upper reaches, opening to high fields …

No one knows where S's mom disposes of the spoils of the outhouse since she was admonished for putting it in the compost … It is a rich, dark secret … Perhaps she does away with this surplus matter under cover of darkness (night soil at nightfall) or at 5 a.m. in the morning … Wherever it goes, now, its end is known only to her (and any other eyes open at the appointed hour) … No one asks … The grass grows greener somewhere … and hopefully the algae bloom in the river is not related to this aporia (non-crescent hole in things) …

Two days ago we visited a church completed in 1771, based on plans by Santini (1671-1727) … Not "pure" Santini, this high-Baroque pile struck the eye immediately, with forcefulness, as H's van descended the bend in the road, entering into the small village of Křtiny … St. Mary's (1771), built atop the former site of an indulgence-selling parish in the Middle Ages … that is, site of a former Gothic church sacked by the Hussites in 1424 … Not far away (up the road, around the bend, and atop a hill) a small shrine tucked below linden trees, apparent site of an apparition of the Virgin c. 1210 … The statue of the Virgin in the church at Křtiny is said to have vanished from time to time, back then, only to turn up at this "preferred" location, only to be hauled back to the parish HQ below … Baroque angels are said to have turned their backs on the sanctuary of the Gothic church when the priests ignored the Virgin's wishes to build instead at the site of her visitations … In Santini's church, the same high-Baroque angels (high above the sanctuary) gesture heavenwards … Frescos rise above this, above all, by Jan Jiří Etgens (1643-1754), a painted illusion for/of transcendence (transcendental airs … then …) … Baroque atmospherics and set pieces … A dove, with outstretched wings, plies (sails across) the space of implied-apotheosis, the zenith, where the plum-colored clouds and amassed saints vanish/melt into thin air (vaporized), into a pale-golden aureole of light (not-light … but lumen … light illuminated from within …) … Jan Blažej Santini Aichel, Praha-based architect, son of stone-cutters, one leg possibly shorter than the other (like Byron) … "Star" Santini attractions at Žďár nad Sázavou (in north-west Moravia) include the Dolní (Lower) Hřbitov (Cemetery) attached to the Church of Jan Nepomucký (1719-1722) …

Driving along the valley, south, back toward Brno, we stopped at the entrance to a series of now-secured underground caverns/passages that continue up the valley for miles upon miles, carved out of rock by an underground river, and site of an inexplicable Iron-Age (Bronze-Age?) mystery (discovered/unearthed in the late 19th century by a German archaeologist) … That is, a chieftain buried in a carriage, with his entire entourage … ritual slaughter … Buried with grain, relics, weapons, and an eerie, totemic bull (with gemstone eyes) … The air escaping from the gated entrance to the caverns is bone-chilling cold … *Time exhales* … The river here vanishes each year, goes below, carving its way through the ancient substrate of Moravia …The valley is littered with medieval light-industrial ruins … smelting, stone-cutting, mining … St. Mary's at Křtiny marks time in its own way, an eschatological (or is it teleological) full-stop disclosed somewhere in the vague, atmospheric vaults overhead … the vaults below filled with painted skulls … skulls wearing simulated green garlands … a hypothetical outside-time (and a very real *inside*-time) … A crown set upon an era (era upon era, following eras … until time stops, again, in its tracks … inhales …) … The dream to start again (over again), in unknown-time … some other-time …

January 2006

PART II

LANDSCAPE + ARCHITECTURE

2002-2006

LANDSCAPE FORMALISM, ANYONE?

I. INTRODUCTION

Landscape + architecture = Utopia. Utopia = Hegelian synthesis. Hegelian synthesis = A back door to Paradise ...

II. ARABESQUE(S)/ECHOES

Reverse Architectures(s) / Reverse Reifications – Typology can never account for meaning, whereas topology may … Thought (knowledge) is topological. And while formalisms are a form of topological knotting (knowing), radical formalisms are also discursive antidotes to the outworn and the spent forms of instrumental systems (reason) …

Hence *esthétique + poétique* (Surrationalism … or, philosophical aesthetics …) – Phenomenologies in architecture (Bataille / Benjamin / De Chirico / Rossi / Abraham / Hejduk / Ando / Holl) – Cinematic architectures (… Vittorio Storaro's *Writing with Light* …) … Erasures / archaisms (Robbe-Grillet / Leenhardt) – Žižek/Badiou & Marion (Agamben + Cacciari) – Czech nomads (Loos / Flusser / Koudelka) – Heresies (Bruno / Pascal / Novalis / Brecht / Artaud / Benjamin / Godard / Smithson / Matta-Clark / Noguchi / Cacciari / Isozaki / Derrida) – The Archive of Architecture as tomb (Derrida's *Archive Fever*) / Mirror-writing – Sub-linguistic territories (dust) / Thresholds – Vertiginous black (sublime scare tactics) – "Aura" (milieux and anti-milieux) / Everything Else

III. THUS SPAKE TAFURI

Almost thirty years ago Manfredo Tafuri published *Progetto e Utopia* (Bari: Guis, Laterza & Figli, 1973). If Schlesinger's thirty-year cycles have any cultural (versus economic) validity, an outbreak of Utopian thought ought to be *just around the corner*!

> In the first place, the "formal approach to problems of aesthetic communication offered a formidable theoretical basis to the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century […] In the second place, it must be born[e] in mind that the contributions of Wittgenstein, Carnap, and Frege established almost simultaneously the areas of pertinence relative to grammar, logic, and semiology.[1]

> The fact is that the discovery of the possibility of inflecting signs devoid of any significance, of manipulating arbitrary relationships between linguistic "materials" in themselves mute or indifferent, did away with any pretense of art as a "political" expression or protest. The only utopia the art of the avant-garde was able to proffer was the *technological utopia*.[2]

> Through semiology architecture seeks its own meaning, while tormented by the sense of having lost its meaning altogether.[3]

> Nevertheless, the semantic analysis of the language [of artistic forms] has stimulated a resurgence of the artistic-literary avant-garde […] Furthermore, it should be noted that the artistic conception of indeterminateness, of the open-ended work, of ambiguity raised to an institution, is concentrated – in a large part of the cases – precisely in fields defined by the new techniques of man-machine communication. The case of music *ex machina* is only the most explicit example of this.[4]

Manfredo Tafuri's caustic analysis, as above, of architectural formalism in the 1973 essay "Architecture and Its Double: Semiology and Formalism"[5] holds true, to this day, because architecture (+ landscape) has dodged the "political" and the "utopian" since the collapse of modernist architecture just before and/or during the time his essay was penned. That architecture *and* landscape have remained separate was and *is*, in fact, the entire problem. Neo-modernism and systems-driven design then and now may attempt a new "open work" but its language remains,

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[1] Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigi la Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), p. 152. First published *Progetto e Utopia* (Bari: Guis, Laterza & Figli, 1973).
[2] Ibid., p. 153.
[3] Ibid., p. 161.
[4] Ibid., pp. 161; 163
[5] Ibid., pp. 150-69.

constitutionally, an empty vessel. A revitalization of form – landscape + architecture – would engage the vacated premises of semantic pretense, while giving up the fear of ideology. In landscape *minus* architecture the only persistent form of ideology is *ecology*.

Tafuri's negative dialectic is played out in neo-modern architecture from Herzog & de Meuron to Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas's *terrain vague* (or junk-space) is the ultimate embrace of everything Tafuri despised. The *via negativa* (which always presupposes a *positive* path) of neo-modern architecture is temporally enshrined in the work of architects such as Peter Eisenman and Daniel Libeskind – a scintillating absence. A proleptic formalism was presaged in Frank Gehry's work around the time of Vitra, though now he has veered into neo-expressionism, and by accident appears in certain projects by Eisenman when landscape (or an ambient environmental surplus) is fortuitously incorporated. Gehry's new Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles will have a garden because Gehry decided it would be nice to have the colors of trees and flowers reflected in its metallic facade. But presence generally hides amid the vast terrain of "indeterminateness." Latter-day modernist architects will certainly tell you what they disdain but rarely indicate what they admire (other than their own reputations). That they do not like their own "children" (Koolhaas and Eisenman) and spend much capital denouncing them is a sign that presence waits in the wings.

In landscape + architecture the formalist agendas of modernism have collapsed and the neo-baroque maneuvers of the L.A. tribe look typically ridiculous in present-day circumstances. These now historical agencies have spawned an illiterate breed of pseudo-design styles. Geometry and empty form have always held sway, appeared *au courant*, when ideas and concepts have depleted themselves. "Connected as they are to capital's extension of the use of science and automation, these languages are systems of communication that come into being *from a plan of development*."[6]

Tafuri damns architecture for losing its meaning, while asking what, if any, new meaning it may strive for. By way of a conclusion – an elusive one at that – he formulates a role for architecture *beyond utilitarianism* where objective and subjective means intertwine. The poetic *and* the rational (Bachelard's *sur*rational) holds an ever expansive magic willfulness *within* landscape + architecture and in rare outbreaks produces the semiologically profound figure of architectural redemption – a back door to presence. Colin Rowe broached this secret – through an unacknowledged appropriation of Heinrich von Kleist (in *The Architecture of Good Intentions*, 1994)[7] – but failed (as architecture always fails) to take it to the next level where the cultural figures of landscape *and* architecture merge.

> The "fall" of modern art [architecture] is the final testimony of bourgeois ambiguity, torn between "positive" objectives and the pitiless self-exploration of its own objective commercialization. No "salvation" is any longer to be found within it: neither wandering restlessly in labyrinths of images so multivalent they end in muteness [e.g., Hejduk], nor enclosed in the stubborn silence of geometry content with its own perfection [e.g., Meier].[8]

That said, Tafuri (like Walter Benjamin) proposes critical operations that expose architectural ideology and, importantly (and unlike Deconstruction, which is a permanent demolition project), retrieve the significant resources of past times (historical forms) abandoned along the way in the positivist quest for an Absolute Architecture (a technological utopia). This cataclysmic conclusion brings with it the complicated rhetoric of the "aura" and "presence," that which we have come to expect (always problematized by Tafuri) since Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin looked modernity in the eye and found it wanting. Benjamin's lament – found in the duplicitous relationship to the concept of aura – is found in Tafuri, and, as a result, he appears nostalgic but tearless – as one might expect from a post-romantic Marxist. In *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* Tafuri circles back in his "Problems in the Form of a Conclusion" (via a secret loop within the text) to Chapter One, "Reason's Adventure: Naturalism and the City in the Century of Enlightenment"; and the book goes on forever.

Tafuri's analysis of the bourgeois intellectual's romance with urban chaos (Baudelaire), a cipher for "nature," unveils several moments – now lost – that were occluded in the radical agendas of the early 20th-century avant-garde movements: 1/ The acknowledgment of Nature as a vast reserve (Other) against which the image of the city is constructed; 2/ Nature as a semantic preserve within the city (insofar as nature is an idea); and 3/ Games played that might best be denounced as scenography. The latter is the all-purpose condemnation of picture-making

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[6] Ibid., p. 151.

[7] The author was present, in Ithaca, at the lectures Rowe gave just prior to the publication of *The Architecture of Good Intentions: Towards a Possible Retrospect* (London: Academy, 1994). These lectures, while strenuously intertextual, as Rowe famously elides various disciplines, *never* approached the ground itself of architecture; that is to say, Rowe ignored the ontological and remained within the charmed hermeneutic circle of architectural discourse.

[8] Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 181.

versus architecture, utilized by hardened modernists (critic Wilfried Wang on Peter Zumthor), as if nature and "organicity" were but a scenic resource. And Tafuri brings into focus 18th- and 19th-century revolutionary prospects for restructuring the early modern city through ideal plans that systematize nature (and capitalist production) as an ambient and picturesque component (set piece) of utopian *mise en scène*. These pictures – made totally abstract in the 20th century by avant-garde reduction (the equivalent in language is El Lissitzky's "Prouns," (1920s) – see also the NYPL exhibition, "Utopia" – are evidence of a romantic clash (a tragic *figura*) or a great slash in the canvas of modernity that is as yet unresolved. (Consider the paintings of Gerhard Richter.)

Landscape + architecture, then, was architecture + landscape. Today, landscape formalism has thoroughly absorbed the picturesque and transformed it into "Graphics" derived from powerful 3D modeling software (see Tom Leader's remarks in *Juncus* on the Parc Downsview Park design competition). The picturesque is now a "system" – and, as a system, nature as picture is no longer naively presented as a surplus but an integral element of the production of space. The Fresh Kills Landfill to Landscape design competition also proved this "emergent" trend. Pre-revolutionary and revolutionary signs – the gestures of Romanticism(s) encoded in Garden Cities – is now re-absorbed and redeployed in vast, inter-textual games associated with post-industrial sites worldwide (games that include Olympic Games and World Expos) and the near geologic logic of the anti-master plan. The anti-master plan is the proverbial chicken come home to roost (in the city) … Folded, sculpted, deformed, roiled, excavated, wrapped, and warped nature is the anti-picturesque (Mannerist) spectacle preceding not a new baroque but a new concept of nature (and perhaps, unless it is a mirage, a new Earth).

IV. THUS SPAKE CACCIARI

Massimo Cacciari – former Mayor of Venice, former Member of the European Parliament – more than trumped Tafuri with his masterful *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). Cacciari, product of the same school of thought as Tafuri (i.e., the School of Venice, established in 1936 by Giuseppe Samona), is also author of *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), a book that delves into the extraordinary cultural cross-currents converging on Vienna at the end of the 19th century. These currents included: psychoanalysis, linguistics, *secessionist* forces in art and architecture, philosophy, music, literature, poetry, and theater.[9] These forces might best be described as *tactical maneuvers*, i.e., attempts, to opt-out of the dicta of bourgeois culture. It was here, at this potent point in time, that the most succinct critiques of modernism were penned. It was also at this auspicious moment, as the Austro-Hungarian Empire imploded, that a heterogeneous admixture of repressed cultural memories overran Western orthodoxy – and it is for this reason that both Tafuri and Cacciari have focused intently on Vienna.

In *Architecture and Nihilism* Cacciari rounds up the usual suspects – including Benjamin and including *Benjamin's* usual suspects – and settles into a retrospective analysis of the work of architect Adolf Loos. The lynchpin in this set of bruising essays is "Negative Thought and Artistic Representation."[10] Cacciari identifies de Saussure's "analyses of the transcendent relation between thought and being" as the beginning of the end, or the beginning of the beginning for language that "does not dominate any *thing*." Such a language "exists in relation to *nothing*."[11] Hence, in his analytic, the demise of culture (and he means the culture of Western orthodoxy) is the inevitable outcome, as is the emergence of "rationality" as compensation and its ghosts – *forms of alienation*.

It was in Hegel's "Lectures on Aesthetics" (c. 1828-30) that the principal work of demolition was accomplished regarding "artistic forms and signification." Hegel, according to Cacciari, had "grasped the fact that artistic representation was condemned to mere ironic dispersion or fantastic individuality." This damning conclusion opened the door to a physiology of artistic forms first broached in the work of Wölfflin and Company and later absorbed into avant-garde experiments *tout court*.

Hence Tafuri's (and Cacciari's) animosity toward the autistic games of the avant-garde and, on the other hand, the fantastic *capriccios* of the alienated soul – e.g., Hoffmann, Kafka, Nezval, et al. – or Nietzschean superfluous men. For Cacciari, the fantastic is "the shock that has already assumed a form of self-expression and become a system, a structure: it is the further, decisive maturation of shock within the processes of rationalization that invests the artistic forms themselves, and that these forms integrate in a functional way."[12] It would seem that alienation – a byproduct of Modernity proper? – has also produced its most impressive ghosts. This might explain

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[9] Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), passim.
[10] Ibid., pp. 56-67.
[11] Ibid., p. 57.
[12] Ibid., p. 59.

both Tafuri's and Cacciari's impatience with Surrealism, etc. (Tafuri called Surrealism "emblems of an intellectual bad conscience") but also the great admiration for Loos, an architect who despised equally the Werkbund syndrome and the hypno-erotic efflorescence known as Art Nouveau or Jugendstil.

It is Loos who bears in Cacciari's presentation the emblem of the Angel – as in Benjamin this is conferred on Karl Kraus – an entirely problematic image given that this Angel is facing the past but moving backward toward the future. In the essay "Loos and His Angel,"[13] Cacciari lets loose a torrent of catastrophic prose in praise of the near-deaf Loos as he rails against the rationalist beast taking over the empty shell of post-Habsburg Europe. "Loos is obsessed with renouncing language that claims to be liberated from all presuppositions and to serve as text in itself. He sees in it the diabolical gesture of those who abandon the past, who do not recognize the right that it has over us, and hence persist in desiring its overthrow."[14]

Cacciari positions Loos as a mad prophet *after* the Turning Point … Loos had utmost admiration for Otto Wagner, even if Wagner was partly responsible for the proliferation of a style of architecture antithetical to Loos' intellectual rigorous planometrics. Loos matched in built form the intensity of his rhetoric by producing Villa Karma (1906) and Villa Müller (1930) – buildings misunderstood to this day as harbingers of functionalism – buildings that in fact *stand outside of Time Itself*.

Cacciari echoes Walter Benjamin's auratic philosophical conundrum in claiming for Loos the project of collecting the shattered and "entering with it into a *sympathy* deeper than all critique."[15] Loos' buildings were in many ways a refusal to engage the modern world. The austere, blank exterior was countered in most cases by a fabulous (even fantastic!) interior life built through a complex articulation of the plan that has come down to us in the form of *raum plan* and entirely at odds with the strenuous formalisms of functionalism – a style that all but eclipsed Loos' experiments with architectural space.

Cacciari closes his survey of architectural nihilism with an extraordinary description of the "radical uprooting" imposed by architectural modernity: "Streets and axes that intersect [and] lead to no place …" – "The metropolis … as the great metaphor of the calculating intellect devoid of all ends …" – "Space and time are a-rithmetically measurable, detachable, and reconstructible …" – "Nostalgic attempts to charge the products of universal uprootedness with quality, propriety, and values …" – "Combinatory – consoling hypotheses …" – "The dream of an order of fully transparent function, of an alert criticism of ideology …" – and, "Aestheticism of the sign without qualities."[16]

But he goes one step further and claims that attempts to recover the fragments of the shattered experience of the world perhaps require reinvesting utopia with symbolical purpose, "upstream" as it were.[17] The ideal city of the Renaissance included "astrological, hermetic, and magical motifs" all but erased in the transmission of these metaphysical designs into the present. Resisting a "nostalgic *confusio*," Cacciari all but endorses an architecture of resistance – one that might in certain times have to play *formalist games* to re-enact (or renew) the lost, the recondite, and the shattered images of life *with* qualities (beyond the hegemon).

V. THUS SPAKE JAMESON

In *The Prison-house of Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), Fredric Jameson reported on the maneuvers of the early 20th-century revolution in linguistics and the parallel absorption of much of that radical *matériel* by Russian formalists. Jameson summarized Saussure's project as the "separation of the synchronic from the diachronic, of historical from structural research"[18] in piquant contradistinction to 19th-century academic "philology" (as well as the poetic philology of the German Romantics). "Saussure's originality was to have insisted on the fact that language as a total system is complete at every moment, no matter what happens to have been altered in it a moment before."[19] This re-definition of the significance of language was based on the idea that language actually represents the "perpetual present," and Jameson laid out the now recognizable coordinates of this taxonomic shift: syntagmatic/paradigmatic; horizontal/vertical; and diachronic/synchronic. For Jameson, the

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[13] Ibid., pp. 143-49.
[14] Ibid., p. 149.
[15] Ibid., p. 147.
[16] Ibid., pp. 199-201.
[17] Ibid., p. 207.
[18] Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-house of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 5.
[19] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

synchronic is the "associative," as represented by the imminence of verbs (and in certain uninflected, i.e., English nouns). This latter idea leads directly to the idea of the immanent nature of things.

Russian formalism focussed intently on the "literariness" of early structuralist operations – taking off from both Roman Jakobson's idea of *literaturnost*, or *literature itself*, and Mayakovsky's experiments with visual language. In the practice of "literariness," literature becomes self-conscious or hyper-conscious, and what is omitted (or suppressed and/or rejected) is as important as what is admitted. In formalist projects the first moves are almost always negative. For example, Russian formalists attempted to demolish the idea that literature had any philosophical significance, only to re-load *new* significance later. Russian formalism also tried to distance itself from Symbolism by repudiating the notion of "thinking in images."[20]

The first agitations of formalist agendas are anti-essentialist assaults on convention, or the de-flowering of rhetoric. Most eventually turn toward a phenomenology of one kind or another, slowly re-building that which they first set out to destroy – a *landscape* or *topology of things*. What remains forever anathema to formalism, however, is the return of abstraction or any type of metaphysics. The long-range goal of convening significance in the ordinary, and of accentuating imminence *and* immanence, remains *until the bitter end* (that is, until formalism is undone by a retro-grade movement from within or from without).

Jameson mocked the presumptions of the Russian formalists by frequently quoting Viktor Shklovsky, so-called president of the Society for the Investigation of Poetic Language – a "society" not of the usual type, but a loose confederation (or constellation) of forces shaping the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s. The Society's rhetoric illustrates how one generation consumes the former – Chronos-like – spitting out unsavory aspects along the way. Shklovsky is cited as the source for the clever notion that "liquidation of one school by another" is carried out "uncle to nephew" versus "father to son."[21] A synchronic type of transgression occurs when a new school overthrows that preceeding it. The steps are: 1/ Isolation of a pure system; 2/ Production of variables within synchronic operations; 3/ A return to diachrony (between synchronic "moments"); and 4/ The reformulation of the problems of language – this last perhaps summarizing the entire sordid affair.

French Structuralism bears a close resemblance to Russian Structuralism except, according to Jameson, it is less a case of passing "nephew to uncle" than "crossed twins." French Structuralism – which gave us Structural Anthropology and the entertaining vicissitudes of Semiology – was more acutely concerned with the "sign-system as ideology," whereas Russian formalism was blatantly anti-system, or anti-political, period. French Structuralism absorbed Existentialism and Western Marxism and only fell, in 1968, when – as it has been said – "structure took to the streets." It also was rabidly deterministic until post-structuralism came along and re-introduced the long shadows of imagination and subjectivity, something central to Russian formalism and Czech Surrealism despite both's flirtation with Constructivism.

Karel Teige (1900-1951), exemplar of Czech Surrealism, first cut his teeth as Poetist, a follower of the French avant-garde in the late 1920s. He was a prominent member of the Czech Devetsil group (1920-31) and editor of both *Disk* and *ReD* (founded by Teige in 1927), irregular journals for the artistic-literary movement centered in Prague. This movement sought the integration of art, architecture, photography, and literature primarily through the art of assemblage or collage. The movement's debt to Russian formalism was obvious, as, too, was the counterpull of French Surrealism and post-Zurich, Hannoverian and Berlin Dada.

Teige was mixed up in the promiscuous currents of left-leaning movements, from the East and the West, but eventually jettisoned his troubled relationship with Le Corbusier and Purism. He was a life-long critic of modernist architecture, though he initially embraced Le Corbusier's revolutionary villas (culminating in 1929-31 with Villa Savoye). The progenitors of the International Style (promulgated in 1932 at MoMA in New York) were to be found both in France and the first Czechoslovak Republic. This did not prevent Teige from vigorously denouncing Mies van der Rohe's Tugendhat villa (1928-30), in Brno (Moravia). The "radically simplified form" of modern architecture troubled Teige, especially as it became increasingly monolithic, and he subsequently launched a unique philosophical assemblage of sorts by combining radical utilitarianism and "lyrical subjectivity" (or, "Constructivism and Poetism") – these latter terminologies taken from the *Grove Dictionary of Art*'s gloss of both "Karel Teige" and "Devetsil."

Teige "jumped ship" in the 1930s, leaving the modernist faction's fascination with machines and mass-produced commodities behind. His writing and his artistic output in the '40s and '50s became strenuously apocalyptic. Somehow Teige survived the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia and continued his collaborations with poets and artists. In his unfinished *Fenomenologie umeni (Phenomenology of Art)* (1950-51), Teige unleashed an anti-theory of art, so to speak. This final vision for Teige was fiercely materialistic and anarchic, but it also seemed

[20] Ibid., p. 45.
[21] Ibid., p. 53.

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to echo with a vast array of suppressed signifiers – Jameson's "associative"? – or the linguistic magic which lies just below the surface of all totalizing systems. As modern architecture and modern art crystallized and hung suspended in time and space – stuck in its own utopian gestures – Teige threw aside caution and perfected the art of erotic photomontage and high-borne rhetoric that astounds (and confounds) proper, orthodox modernists to this day.

"The Theory of Art is remodeled into a theoretical construction of a broader scope, and imagination is freed from its exclusive dependence on aesthetics."[22] Teige renounced the pure formalist agenda and pounced instead on a more vague, proto-aesthetic territory perhaps Coleridgean or Borgean in its dimensions. "Transposing the question of the basis and function of art from the metaphysical sphere to the historical ground," Teige rediscovered the submerged *topoi* of the constructive imagination.[23]

VI. THUS SPAKE ŽIŽEK

It is in Slavoj Žižek's reading of Hegel, in *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), a work aimed at the redemption of the Cartesian subject, that evidence of the serial significance of formalism is unearthed. With this tome, Žižek broke into Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and returned with the filched idols (idyls) of metaphysical and abstract thought.

The movement of the spirit toward itself is also the movement of the subject toward the object. For Žižek, however, the subject and the object are synonymous *in the Universal*. When, finally, the dust settles over the defunct, multitudinous forms of post-modernism, the Cartesian subject will stand face to face with itself.

> On a first approach, things seem clear and unambiguous: the philosopher of abstract universality is Kant (and, in Kant's steps, Fichte): in Kant's philosophy, the Universal (the moral Law) functions as the abstract *Sollen*, that which "ought to be" and which, as such, possesses a terrorist/subversive potential – the Universal stands for an impossible/ unconditional demand, whose power of negativity is destined to undermine any concrete totality; against this tradition of abstract/negative universality opposed to its particular content, Hegel emphasizes how true universality is actualized in the series of concrete determinations perceived by the abstract point of view of Understanding as the obstacle to the full realization of the Universal (say, the universal moral Duty is actualized, becomes effective, through the concrete wealth of particular human passions and strivings devalued by Kant as "pathological" obstacles).[24]

In other words, Žižek claims that Hegel inverted Kant's theory of the Universal moral imperative – as Karl Marx later reversed the direction of Hegel's dialectic.

Žižek further problematizes his own insight by adding that there are other ways of perceiving universality: i.e., "positive Universality as a mere impassive/neutral medium of the coexistence of its particular content (the 'mute universality' of a species defined by what all members of the species have in common), and Universality in its actual existence, which is *individuality*, the assertion of the subject as unique and irreducible to the particular concrete totality into which he is inserted."[25] Furthermore,

> With regard to the opposition between abstract and concrete Universality, this means that the only way towards a truly "concrete" universality leads through the full assertion of the radical negativity by means of which the universal negates its entire particular content: despite misleading appearances, it is the "mute universality" of the neutral container of the particular content which is the predominant form of abstract universality. In other words, the only way for a Universality to become "concrete" is to stop being a neutral-abstract medium of its particular content, and to *include itself among its particular subspecies*. What this means is that, paradoxically, the first step towards "concrete universality" is the radical negation of the entire particular content: only through such a negation does the Universal gain existence, become visible "as such."[26]

<superscript>22</superscript> Miroslav Petříček, "Karel Teige: Art Theory Between Phenomenology and Structuralism," in Eric Dluhosch, Rostislav Švácha, eds., *Karel Teige / 1900-1951: L'enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), p. 326.
<superscript>23</superscript> Karel Teige, "Osvobozování života a poezie" (1945-1948), in Karel Teige, *Osvobozování života a poesie: Studie z 40. let. Výborz díla*, Vol. 3, ed. Jiří Brabec, Vratislav Effenberger, Květoslav Chvatík, Robert Kalivoda (Prague: Aurora/Český Spisovatel, 1994), p. 460; cited in Dluhosch and Švácha, eds., *Karel Teige / 1900-1951*.
<superscript>24</superscript> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 91.
<superscript>25</superscript> Ibid.
<superscript>26</superscript> Ibid., p. 92.

Žižek traces the movements of the idealist subject as it reaches for the speculative hammer, arguing that the dialectic structure of Hegel's proto-system is merely provisional "so that he can then propose as the third moment the absolute Idea, the synthesis of subjective logic with objectivity."[27]

Curiously, Žižek records this dialectical maneuver by sorting through Hegel's conception of "substance as subject," wherein the sticky notion of "negation of negation" is central. Žižek finds in Hegel's argument an "anamorphic stain" – a blind spot, or Lacanian lacuna – noting "the anamorphic stain corrects the standard 'subjective idealism' by rendering the gap between the eye and the gaze [of the Other]: the receiving subject is always-already gazed at from a point that eludes his eyes."[28]

This "haunting" of perception – its doubling – is Žižek's way of setting the stage for the reappearance of the Greek chorus, so to speak. His goal is to prove that modern subjectivity contains (though it appears to *not* contain) that which it has thrust elsewhere – i.e., above, below, or beyond. Žižek points out that Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) was, in fact, that which it presumed to instead project – the future of metaphysics itself.

Negation – as a prime element of formalism – therefore is a trick or anamorphic game. In Hegel's system, the Idea (Logic) can be negated in two ways: "in the guise of Nature as well as in the guise of the finite Spirit."[29] Finite Spirit (or "active subjectivity") is the cipher for the alienated, Cartesian subject – the hyper-conscious modern ego standing (as it were) at the gates to Eden, but stuck in the anamorphic distortion of Being There.

Žižek's idea of reconciliation in the Universal (that which the finite Spirit opposes) sidesteps well-worn metaphors and goes straight to the "logic of the signifier" – a Lacanian terrain, but nonetheless *a propos*. This territory is the "space in which he [the finite Spirit] interacts with other subjects."[30] Within this "complex" lies hidden the truth that the Self and Other are *the same thing*. Therefore, the formalist agenda of altering social substance through agitation is called into question, given that it attacks itself.

Notably, Žižek comes round to noting that Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1966) seems hung up on that very gap, and, perhaps favoring a more elastic temperament, alludes to Walter Benjamin's insight into the nature of the object (as in the historical relic or moment) that signifies not a specific time or place but a plethora of times and places (opportunities and possibilities), such that the Thing becomes a *memento mori* or self-inflected thought itself. "There is something in the object that forever resists being translated into our conceptual network."[31] This "excess," or "that which eludes our grasp in the Thing" is "the traces of *failures*, the *absences* inscribed in its positive existence."[32]

All of this "action" takes place in the second chapter "The Hegelian Ticklish Subject" (pp. 70-123), beginning with the section "What Is 'Negation of Negation'?" and culminating in "Towards a Materialist Theory of Grace." The most telling passage, in-between, regards Hegel's discovery that:

> We fail to grasp the Absolute *precisely in so far as we continue to presuppose that, above and beyond the domain of our finite reflected reasoning, there is an Absolute to be grasped* – we actually overcome the limitation of external reflection by simply becoming aware of how this external reflection is inherent to the Absolute itself.[33]

Detouring through *pro forma*, legalistic arguments regarding law and order, Žižek arrives "home," at the idea of concrete Universality, unpacking his crate of explosives and setting them before the reader. The grand finale – the fireworks – regards the persistent gap between abstract and concrete reality: "There is no way of escaping formalism within the horizon of modernity."[34] Here we circle close to Nietzsche's Master-Slave conundrum by way of a side trip through Lacan's Master-Signifier conceit. Anyway, the symbolic order of the world is torn asunder by either of two, twin agencies: 1/ The irruption of the Real; or 2/ The gesture of the Sovereign. To this we might add a third means, or synthetic counter-moment – *the formalist moment*. Opposite the symbolic is the Real, pure contingency, or the World Itself. Pure contingency is the foundation of all formalist agendas. First comes "radical negativity" – discarding corrupted forms of expression, genres, what have you – and, later, back flows signification like water, purified of symbolic rubbish and toxins. What is *omitted* is as significant as what is *admitted*!

Landscape formalism, anyone?

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[27] Ibid., p. 81.
[28] Ibid., p. 79.
[29] Ibid., p. 80.
[30] Ibid., p. 81.
[31] Ibid., p. 89.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p. 84.
[34] Ibid., p. 114.

NOTES

If we take Adolf Loos' remarks to heart, those regarding his well-known diagnosis that architecture is *not* an art, or that it is only an art when it comes to reside in the tomb, we may find a perhaps sardonic summary judgment that architecture primarily services the capitalist machine (the production of things always for sale, or conversely, and perversely, the production of compensatory spectacle), versus doing nominally *nothing* (as art attempts) or serving the future or the Eternal. Thus, Arnold Hauser's tomb (proposed by Loos in the early 1920s, but unbuilt) speaks out of its own void about the "Other" always betrayed in architecture, an "Other" that finally comes home *to* the tomb (as it always does in Levinas as well, so to speak). That is, intertextual symbolical orders outside / beyond singular, authorized orders contain the principal means (the privileged site) of (for) overcoming the stalemate within instrumentalized (purely rationalized) systems (despite Tzonis and Lefaivre's assertions that even architectural functionalism fudged the results of this quest for rationalization[35]). This privileged principle, in turn, marks the "surreal" (surrational) *je ne sais quoi* of critical engagement, and, as sign behind all signs (as super-sign, /S/), the proverbial Way Out. In other words, sometimes it is better to light a small candle than to rail against the darkness. / Tafuri's criticism of operative criticism notwithstanding, it was Tafuri and his cadre at Venice that toppled the last pillars of modernist architectural hegemony in the name of *criticism itself* (otherwise known as *history*).

POSTSCRIPTS

> Topological thought (the "topological Self") has no temperature. It is the ultimate site (taking-place) of "cold" fusion, infinitely and finitely productive of the thing otherwise known as The Fusion Thing.[36]
> –Dr. Prof. Ing. I.M. Avenarius

TAFURI (AFTER THE FACT)/TOPOLOGICAL THOUGHT – Taking apart ideology (ideality), for ideality's sake … Interrogating architectural form (autonomy), for autonomy's sake … Denouncing utopian modernism, for Utopia's sake … Ripping into operative criticism, for criticism's sake … Thus spake (wrote) Tafuri / The foremost retrospective gaze into/through Tafuri's work occurred in *ANY* 25/26 (2000), with essays by Peter Eisenman, Ignasi de Solà-Morales, K. Michael Hays, Mark Wigley, Georges Teyssot, Kurt W. Forster et al. … "Evidence in Tafuri's research is usually negative evidence: slips, denials, omissions, contradictions, paradoxes. The historian/shrink has to let the subject do the talking – by exposing all the multilayered detail to be found in the archive – and patiently watch for the contradictions, the twists and turns that point to deeper complications. There should be no force, or willful organization, whether it be force by neglect or force by imposing conceptual schemes on the evidence [as in operative criticism, merely one of Tafuri's famous bugaboos …]." – Mark Wigley, "Post-Operative History," *ANY* 25/26 (2000), p. 11 / The issue includes "History as a Project: An Interview with Manfredo Tafuri," by Luisa Passerini …

Regarding formalism in literary criticism, see Paul de Man, "Semiology and Rhetoric," *Diacritics* 3, no. 3 (Fall 1973): pp. 27-23 / This seminal essay also appeared in Julian Wolfreys, ed., *Literary Theories: A Reader and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) …

Regarding ADOLF LOOS, see: Werner Oechslin, ed., *Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, and the Road to Modern Architecture*, trans. Lynnette Widder (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002) / Burkhardt Rukschcio, *Adolf Loos* (Vienna: Graphische Sammlung Albertina, 1989) – Exhibition catalogue (2 December 1989 through 25 February 1990) / Burkhardt Rukschcio, Roland Schachel, *Adolf Loos* (Salzburg/Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1982) …

MORE ON KAREL TEIGE

Rassegna 15, no. 53 (March 1993) – "Karel Teige, Architecture and Poetry" – Guest edited by Hanna Císařová and Manuela Castagnara Codeluppi – See especially, "Surrealism and Functionalism: Teige's Dual Way," by Hanna Cisarova, pp. 79-88 …

Karel Teige, *Modern Architecture in Czechoslovakia* (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2000) – Edited by Julia Bloomfield, Vladimir Slapeta, et al. – Translated by Irena Zantovska Murray – Introduction by Jean-Louis

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[35] Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, "The Machine in Architectural Thinking," *Daidalos* 18 (December 15, 1985): pp. 16-26.
[36] I.M. Avenarius, *Bons Mots* (London: Sub-Verso Press, n.d.), n.p.

Cohen – Cohen's gloss of Teige's "defining moments," in the introduction, is extremely entertaining. He struggles to encapsulate Teige's extreme protean activities within an array of international avant-garde movements. Cohen's greatest error is in marginalizing Teige's anarchic streak, or dismissing his non-ideological activities as dilettantish – a "failure" to synthesize a "system." The 400-plus photomontages created by Teige between 1935-1951 cannot be easily dismissed despite his association with rationalist and functionalist architects. Perhaps it is Teige's architectural criticism that is promiscuous, versus his graphic arts? Cohen describes the photomontages in a manner that is inconsistent with the sober nature of his over-all assessment of Teige's contribution to the emergence of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia: "Hills and dales transformed themselves into womens bodies; or the same body forms were set against industrial landscapes in a subversive counterpoint" (p. 8) producing a "confrontation between the order of desire and that of the prosaic geometries of the avant-garde" (p. 11). Needless-to-say, Teige has never been comfortably assimilated into the history of modern architecture because his interests *transcended* architecture.

MIXED NOTES ON RUSSIAN FORMALISM

Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska, eds., *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Chicago: Dalkey Archive, 2002) …

Regarding Roman Jakobson's lecture, "The Dominant," delivered at Masaryk University, Brno in 1935: "Jakobson here sees the new inquiries into the structural characteristics of verbal art as a third stage of Formalist research as opposed to its earlier stage of semantic emphasis and its still earlier form-oriented beginnings. Thus Formalism gradually underwent the conversion to Structuralism through its growing awareness of the delicate relationship between material manifestation and the complex code of normative rules." Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska, p. xxi …

Jakobson on the structuralist concept of "The Dominant" (transferred, by way of strategic insertions, to a provisional critique of architectural hegemony today): "The dominant specifies the work. The specific trait of bound language is obviously its prosodic pattern, its verse [structural] form. It might seem that this is simply a tautology: verse is verse [architecture is architecture]. However, we must constantly bear in mind that the element which specifies a given variety of language [form] dominates the entire structure and thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them…. We may seek a dominant not only in the poetic [architectural] work of an individual artist [architect] and not only in the poetic [architectural] canon, the set of norms of a given school, but also in the art of a given epoch, viewed as a particular whole." Roman Jakobson, "The Dominant" (1935), pp. 82-83 [with insertions] …

Jakobson on the "deformation" of ideograms (received forms) in literature and painting: "Can the question be raised about a higher degree of verisimilitude of this or that poetic trope? Can one say that that one metaphor or metonymy is conventional or, so to say, figurative? … It is necessary to learn the conventional language of painting in order to 'see' a picture, just as it is impossible to understand what is spoken without knowing the language. This conventional, traditional aspect of painting to a great extent conditions the very act of our visual perception. As tradition accumulates, the painted image becomes an ideogram, a formula, to which the object portrayed is linked by contiguity. Recognition becomes instantaneous. We no longer see a picture.

The ideogram needs to be deformed. The artist-innovator must impose a new form upon our perception, if we are to detect in a given thing those traits which went unnoticed the day before. He may present the object in an unusual perspective; he may violate the rules of composition canonized by his predecessors…. The motivation behind this 'disorder' was the desire for a closer approximation of reality. The urge to deform an ideogram usually underlies the *Sturm und Drang* stage of new artistic currents." Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in Art" (1921), p. 40 …

Ejxenbaum on the "past past" and the "present past": "Every theory is a working hypothesis fostered by our interest in the facts themselves: theory is essential for sorting out the pertinent facts and ordering them in a system – it is for that and no more. The very need for some particular set of facts, the very prerequisite of having some particular conceptual sign – these are conditions dictated by contemporary life with its specific problems. History is, in effect, a science of complex analogies, a science of double vision: the facts of the past have meanings for us that differentiate them and place them, invariably and inevitably, in a system under the sign of contemporary problems.

Thus one set of problems supplants another. History in this sense is a special method of studying the present with the aid of the facts of the past." Boris M. Ejxenbaum, "Literary Environment" (1929), p. 56 …

Jakobson on the dialectical nature of forms of realism: "As the tradition equating realism with *C* became established, new realist artists (in the *A*1 sense) were compelled to call themselves neorealists, realists in the higher sense of the word, or naturalists, and they drew a line between quasi- or pseudo-realism (*C*) and what they conceived to be genuine realism (i.e., their own). 'I am a realist, but only in the higher sense of the word,' Dostoevskij declared. And an almost identical declaration has been made by the Symbolists, by Italian and Russian Futurists, by German Expressionists, and so on and on." Roman Jakobson, "On Realism in Art" (1921), p. 43 …

Mixail Baxtin on "hidden and overt" polemic: "To draw a distinct dividing line between the hidden and the overt, open polemic in a concrete case sometimes proves quite difficult, but the conceptual differences are essential. Overt polemic is simply directed toward the other speech act, the one being refuted, as its own referential object. Hidden polemic is usually focused on some referential object which it denotes, depicts, expresses – and only obliquely does it strike at the other speech act, somehow clashing with it on the grounds of the referent itself. As a result, the latter begins to influence the author's speech from within. It is for that reason we call hidden polemic double-voiced, although the relationship of the two voices here is special. The other intention does not enter explicitly into the discourse but is only reflected in it, determining its tone and meaning. One speech act acutely senses another speech act close by, one addressed to the same topic, and this recognition determines its entire structure." Mixail Baxtin, "Discourse Typology in Prose" (1929), p. 188 …

Mixail Baxtin on "hidden polemic" and "hidden dialogue": "Especially significant and important for our subsequent aims is hidden dialogue (not to be identified with hidden polemic). Imagine a dialogue between two persons in which the statements of the second speaker are deleted, but in such a way that the general sense is not disrupted. The second speaker's presence is not shown; his actual words are not given, but the deep impressions of these words has a determining effect on all the utterances made by one who does not speak. We feel that this is a conversation of the most intense kind, because each uttered word, in all its fiber, responds and reacts to the invisible partner, referring to something outside itself, beyond its limits, the unspoken word of the other speaker. In Dostoevskij's works this hidden dialogue occupies a very important place and is extremely subtle and profoundly elaborated." Mixail Baxtin, "Discourse Typology in Prose" (1929), pp. 189-90 …

EVIDENTIARY OUTTAKES (PASSIM)

> *Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge / Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom*[37]
> –Tristan Tzara

NOTHINGNESS REVISITED

"The Big Nothing" 2004 @ the ICA (Philadelphia) …

> Still, I said I was glad to have come across the show, and it was not just because I liked a few works here and there. It was because this show suggests a cheering thought, which may seem like an odd remark to make about a muddle about nothing, except that, as Emily Dickinson put it, sometimes saying nothing 'says the most.' / This is a fundamental lesson of Minimalism, whose intersection with Conceptualism and other radical 1960's movements like Fluxus is the true, poorly articulated heart of this exhibition. What all those movements shared, and what keeps them current, was the idea that in art, as in life, no is often the first constructive step toward yes.[38]

And …

> Aesthetic programs for a radical reduction of means and effects in art – including the ultimate demand, for the renunciation of art itself – can't be taken at face value, undialectically. These are neither consistent policies for artists

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[37] Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto, 1918," in Robin Walz, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 153-54.
[38] Michael Kimmelman, "Artists who just say no. To everything," *The New York Times*, June 25, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/25/arts/art-review-artists-who-just-say-no-to-everything.html.

nor merely hostile gestures aimed at audiences. Silence and allied ideas (like emptiness, reduction, the "zero degree") are boundary notions with a complex set of uses; leading terms of a particular spiritual and cultural rhetoric.[39]

And …

Eternity can be read in a composition of serene, solid, precisely inserted volumes, *a priori* since long ago, and forever.[40]
–Jean Nouvel

SOME-THING ELSE

In contemporary architecture, the poetics of de-materialization play on surface mystery, uncertainty of perception, ambiguity and illusion to convey the "aesthetics of virtual reality" that Jean Nouvel spoke of with regard to his Fondation Cartier [1994], where tall dark glass panels reflect and multiply images and layers. Matter is thus not so much a means of defining the limits of the building as of liberating perception, introducing vibration and a host of changing and fragile readings, opening the way to the invisible and to emotion. In this "aesthetics of the miracle" as described by the architect, mystery remains entire, the result is present but we are not aware of the means to achieve it, our emotion derives from perception of a building "set free", which offers itself to our regard like an object, an inhabited painting.[41]

The medium must disappear in what we see, in the absolute that shows itself resplendent in it.[42]

May 2002

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[39] Susan Sontag (under the influence of Roland Barthes), "The Aesthetics of Silence," *Aspen* 5/6 (1967), "The Minimalism Issue": Archived by Ubu Web.
[40] Jean Nouvel (regarding Nouvel's series of "pavilions" at Expo 2002, Murten-Morat, Switzerland), in *El Croquis* 112/113 (2002), "Jean Nouvel 1994-2002": p. 217.
[41] Salwa and Selma Mirou, "Oraisons modernes," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 356 (January-February 2005): p. 53.
[42] Giorgio Agamben, *Image et mémoire* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004), cited in Mirou, "Oraisons modernes."

NETHERLANDISH URBANISM: GOLDEN APPLES, JUMPING RATS & THE LYING MIRROR

Even the hollowest nut still wants to be cracked.[1]
–Friedrich Nietzsche

I. ALL-PURPOSE DISCLAIMER & TRAVELER'S ADVISORY

Adherents/partisans of Dutch urbanism and super-urbanism should consult with their physicians before reading this essay. This essay is copyrighted and may be used for personal therapeutic purposes only. Any resemblance to actual persons, firms, or fashionable entities in the world of contemporary landscape + architecture + urbanism is purely intentional. Primers for students of "total flow" include: MVRDV's *FARMAX* (1998), Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau's *S, M, L, XL* (1997), and Chora/Raoul Bunschoten's *Urban Flotsam* (2001). For alternatives to Nether(out)landish urbanism, please consult/indulge your own subjectivity.

II. THAT SINKING FEELING

On the occasion of the re-publication of *S, M, L, XL* (1997/2002) …

The modern city, in its metropolitan evolution, *radiates out* from its center, *overwhelming* any surviving elements of the past. Its settlements become 'cases' of its irradiating system, along the center-periphery axes. But we can also observe a phenomenon which, at a certain point, seems irreversible: this expansion becomes increasingly a question of opportunity, without programming or control. The more the metropolitan "nerve network" expands, devouring the surrounding territory, the more its "spirit" seems to be lost; the more "powerful" it becomes, the less it seems capable of ordering-rationalizing the life that takes place inside it. The metropolitan intellect, its *Nervenleben*, undergoes a sort of "spatial crisis" – which is perfectly comparable to the one that effects the Leviathan State, the modern state in its territorially determined sovereignty. The powers that determine metropolitan growth increasingly encounter difficulty in "territorializing" themselves, in "incarnating" a territorial order, giving rise to forms of legible-observable forms of coexistence in the territory, in spatial terms.[2]

Why the KOOLHAAS/OMA-MVRDV-WEST 8 architectural-landscape architectural axis is essentially depleted (exhausted) is because it seized upon and amplified a fallacious, deterministic-materialist agenda while denigrating, vacating, and de-naturing the radical nature of ideation (the production of ideas) and most positive forms of figurative rhetoric, as all faux avant-garde architectures are wont to do to claim/seize the ground of so-called advanced architectural production. This amplification of an elective emptiness (relativism) effectively bracketed the always already hegemonic nature of architecture-as-incipient-system; i.e., the unavoidable fact that architecture is complicit in the production of de-naturing systems, socio-economic anomie, and alienation. This seizure included forward-leaning representations (new graphic conventions) as well as mis-representations of history and ideation as a corrupt, hopeless tableaux of lies (a game), while avoiding the prime issue that ideation is also the locus of the true avant-garde, or those – it might be said – willing to climb out onto a limb from time to time (metaphorically and meritoriously) to pluck the golden apples of the future. In other words, there is no escaping ideology. Such things – e.g., the very idea of "golden apples" – are inherently heretical to the machinistic methodologies of everyday architectural and landscape architectural determinisms as they are to the neo-modernist sensibility forever this side of high-modernist hegemony. Silver apples will have to suffice.

What is essentially missing – the "golden apple" – is a valid, rigorous, glorious, and hyper-real critique of ideology, or a critique of critiques, that goes into/beyond the material versus simply re-writing or re-diagramming it; viz., refusing to re-aestheticize the surface of modernism (or refusing to re-surface the modernist aesthetic). Deconstruction almost produced such a hyper-critique but stayed within/strayed into, instead, the putative autonomous territory of free-floating signifiers producing a seemingly permanent negative dialectic or a seemingly permanent disconnection between the signified and the signifier. The brilliant (formalistic) language games of deconstruction, out of necessity, avoided at all costs any form of "synthesis," given that such a concept is, *avant la lettre*, suspect terrain – rightly so, but also "wrongly so," insofar as this terrain is also the *meta-historical* ground/source for liberation from signifying chains (bankrupt ideologies).

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.62. First published *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* (Parts 1-3, Chemnitz: Ernst Schmeitzner, 1883-1884; part 4, Leipzig: C.G. Naumann, 1891).
[2] Massimo Cacciari, "Nomads in Prison," *Casabella* 705 (2002): ADD PAGE NUMBER.

The perennial need for this glorious critique of critiques is also why Manfredo Tafuri, Massimo Cacciari, and Giorgio Agamben (the Italian neo-Marxist triumvirate) are more important (prescient) for present-day landscape + architecture than Gilles Deleuze, Manuel de Landa, and Paul Virilio. Cacciari and Tafuri go back to/retrieve Walter Benjamin's project of divining the dying, flickering flames of failed moments within the rubble of historical structure (within ruined past times), while Agamben, editor of Benjamin's *Complete Works* (in Italian), takes this timeless, synchronic hyper-critique forward into the always-unchartable territory of the poetic (see *Infancy and History*, 1993, *The End of the Poem: Studies in Poetics*, 1999, and *Potentialities*, 1999). Also in Agamben and Cacciari, we may detect traces of the *incomplete* Heideggerean project, a quest for a slippery, lithesome, poeticized Sublime operating in the margins of ideologies and systems and within the temporizing coordinates of *critiques* of ideologies and systems. With Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian neo-Marxist magus, we see the long shadows of Hegel and Lacan twisting and turning toward "S" – synthesis, the Sublime, Spirit, or some-thing else – because the present-day coordinates of cultural production are hopelessly corrupted by the all-but-invisible flow of capital and its trace elements (imagery), a flow weirdly privileged in the perverse penchant for datascapes and total flow moving in neo-modernist, Netherlandish-inspired architecture and landscape urbanism.

The critical-poetical task will NOT be carried further by such hyper-realist, anti-idealist postures. The arguments against ideation that pass for "pragmatism" are suspect, anti-cultural arguments. They co-opt themselves. To invoke the "hidden hand" – however ironically – or to foreground information and/or posit writing machines (the apparatus that produces/processes information) *versus ideas* is to negate negation, or to void the whole point of an avant-garde. If it walks and quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck.

Sooner or later this nihilistic, neo-modernist school will implode. Already signs exist that rats are jumping ship … The categorical repressions of data and pseudo-empirical maps, or that which is obscured by data and pseudo-empirical maps, is quite simply everything that actually matters. That "everything" automatically ("as such") resides in the realm of ideas, which is why words (language, texts, discourse) are infinitely more powerful (plastic/malleable and forward-and-backward-leaning) and explosive (radical) than the slick imagery that substitutes for the constantly shifting/evolving inner world of cultural rhetoric and poetics. The critical-poetical flame that passes through/consumes things is the quintessential sign of "S."

III. THAT NINETIES THING

The embrace of "ambient" (supposedly indeterminate) forces of cultural production, the prototypical 1990s thing, is essentially a fiction, a response to/retreat from "central planning" and the endless banality of the modernist city and the now-disgraced urban master plan. In running to embrace "market forces" and the IT revolution, while retaining traces of the moral agenda of utopian modernism, Dutch urbanism in turn embraced the machine that produces the empty imagery of the capitalist city, and, ironically, engaged the mirror-image of loathed, bureaucratic urban planning. The "branding" stratagems associated with haute-bourgeois fashion and consumerism are intimately conjoined to the Netherlandish model and programmatical aspects of urban planning have mutated into oftimes delirious gestures that feign dissociation. The "wink and nod" neo-modernist methodology, in fact, is aimed in two directions – to the abstract "market," and to the abstract "public" – and the timeless, Janus-faced predilection of fashionable architectures is exposed as a form of "marketing." One curious after-effect of this process is that ambient cultural forces become a surrogate for ambient environmental factors and the late-modern city becomes a pernicious theme park devoid of the Real. Exceptions to this scenario are, increasingly, *exceptionally* rare.

Ultimately, what's left of left-leaning "central planning" agencies in the late-modern city might declare sectors of the city off-limits to such programmatic indiscretions, siding with the abstract "public" (so to speak). Such places *seem to exist* in the form of "parks," although parks come today (as yesterday) with a knotted, tangled mass of hidden agendas not the least of which is the cultural apparatus commonly required to pay for the park and its maintenance. What might be more ambitious, efficacious, and edifying is the possible construction of no-go zones, not unlike The Zone in Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979). Q: "What does it do?" A: "Absolutely nothing." In terms of wishfulfillment, such zones might replace the post-industrial cultural park, so prevalent today, as a new type of "wilderness" – "wilderness" being in this equation the opposite of "real estate." Here, a faint trace of Parsifal's failed mission is detectable insofar as we, too, may not be "asking the right question." Are *we* not, given the state of things, in the process of becoming the next caretakers of the same-old broken promises?

IV. THE LYING MIRROR

Is nature "the mirror"? Or, is the representation (art, etc.) "the mirror"? Or, is the space in-between in fact "the mirror," and the world, as such, is on one side, while all manner of representations are on the other? What

happens when/if we collapse the space in-between to its absolute minimum? Are we left tapping on the glass? Is it possible for the glass to vanish/to be destroyed? Is this even desirable? And, if so, what then is the condition of the world, the so-called Real, and what becomes of the idea of representations? Why does the image/conceit of the mirror persist? Is it the image of the agency of "intellection" – self-consciousness – or "something else"? Is it Žižek's "indivisible remainder" that which haunts Western subjectivity?

   The "indivisible thing" (remainder) within everything is the slippery slope of the subject (intellection within intellection). The other thing is the object (Agamben's thing-as-constellation). Architecture almost always sides with the object. Perhaps the highest modality of the former, the subject, is the rational-poetical. Of the latter, the object, it seems that the rational-empirical analytic reigns supreme insofar as "it" is perceived as some-thing to apprehend (enslave within the intellectual/symbolic web of signifying, instrumentalized structures). That this operation of apprehension occurs *within the subject* seems to generally escape notice. What both subject and object have in common/share is also a possible way out of the ontological "stand-off" – this stand-off being the subject-object dialectic reduced, in the subject's most fundamental experience of the world, to an "anamorphic stain" (Žižek's diagnosis for abject modern subjectivity), or an irreducible, residual veil of distortions (representations) preventing "contact" with the Real. Is this the realm of the Kantian *a priori*? Can the *a priori* be re-written *a fortiori* (*a posteriori*)? Choose your poison … This putative commonality within representational systems, the so-called "as such" (things given), is the spirit of "S," synthesis, or the so-called supreme ground of all things; e.g., "the coming, coming" (Heidegger), "the coming singularity" (Agamben), radical contingency (*passim*), etc, etc. Anyone concerned with such things must eventually return to Hegel to confront the on-rushing, mutating mirror-vortex of representations, and, as it were, "dive in." "Swimming upstream" – "forward into the past," to the critical-poetical headwaters of cultural production – one might find that "things given" are actually the same things as "things made," or, at the least, that they are made of the same thing. "There all barrel-hoops are knit, / There all serpent-tails are bit."

<center>NOTA BENE</center>

For the latest language games regarding "flow," see *Archis* 5 (2002). For the latest imagery vis-à-vis sexy, scintillating nothingness, see MVRDV, *El Croquis* 111 (2002).

<div align="right">December 2002</div>

PARTING SHOTS

A REFRACTED HISTORY (SUMMARY) OF THE 20TH CENTURY
THE ALWAYS-ALREADY DEFERRED FUSION OF LANDSCAPE + ARCHITECTURE

The page contains a single sentence: "Underneath it all he knew that one cannot go beyond because there isn't any." The sentence is repeated over and over for the whole length of the page, giving the impression of a wall, of an impediment. There are no periods or commas or margins, a wall, in fact, of words that illustrate the meaning of the sentence, the collision with a wall behind which there is nothing. But towards the bottom and on the right, in one of the sentences the word *any* is missing. A sensitive eye can discover the hole among the bricks, the light that shows through.[1]
–Julio Cortázar (1966)

I. HISTORIOGRAPHY, FORMALISM(S) & CRITICAL HISTORY

In early structuralism (Roman Jakobson) there exists the theory of the dominant – e.g., the visual arts in the Renaissance, music in Romanticism – to which other forms conform/strive to merge. In modernism the dominant is/was science – and linguistics, architecture, sociology, psychology, etc. attempted to produce a synthetical system outside of/in contradistinction to the humanities. This is the either/or implicit to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1921), which, of course, he abandoned after the Russellian project collapsed.

In Russian Formalism we see the first moves toward a system of signs freed from semantic content. This is also why Russian Formalism appealed to the neo-rationalist architects of the 1960s and 1970s. The endgame however (Tafuri's idea of hegemony returning) of formalism was futurism, suprematism, constructivism and functionalism – all more or less new forms of architectural nihilism (see Massimo Cacciari) at first and, then, new forms of architectural dogma. Berdayev's suggestion (via Dostoievski) that communism failed because it was not spiritual contains a suggestion that the humanities and science are essentially irreconcilable until systems are truly "open" – hence Umberto Eco's anti-ideological concept of the "open work." The mechanistic worldview and the organic worldview are two mutually antagonistic and insufficient themes that plague philosophy and architecture. (See José Ortega y Gasset.)

Russian landscape – the silent and primordial figures and gestures lurking in the literature and art of the (lost) Silver Age (1890-1920) – gave way to the slashing, machinic universe of agit-prop avant-gardism. Socialist Realism killed even that latter, mechanistic worldview in favor of heroic images of an always-deferred material and technological utopia. Manfredo Tafuri's utopic realm of the sphere – versus the fallen world of the labyrinth – was idealism pictorialized. In the rarified realm of "structure," politics (and ideology) was momentarily bracketed (or pre-prepared) before re-deployment. Hence, Tafuri favored – even against his own better judgment – the meta-logical games of formalism as acts of resistance and criticality (and often, Artaud-like aesthetic cruelty).

Lyricism returned in the 1950s thaw in Russian literature, and it is that spirit, plus an intense inner working of the subject/object dialectic, that animates the cinema of Andrei Tarkovsky. Landscape, in Tarkovsky's world, is *mise en scène*, and it reflects, always, an inner condition, as does the supporting apparatus of architecture (often ruined architecture) and the things of everyday life. Tarkovsky connects the latter-day Russian aesthetic of the tragic to the pre-Revolution mysticism of Russian lyric poetry and literature.

It might be said that landscape returns *in waves* (in movements through things), versus as an object or set of objects. An ecology of signifying forms is the meta-ecological model underlying signifying chains. New topographies and the renovation of the architectonic aspect of design almost always prefigure a re-deployment (re-surfacing) of repressed content (other possible futures, or always already deferred alternative models). The ideological aspect of the aesthetic (Terry Eagleton) consists of the mask that Tafuri considered the chief characteristic of Gramscian hegemony. In theory, this mask must be removed and the underlying content exposed and transformed to liberate consciousness (Demetri Porphyrios). Thus, radical formalism comes and goes – it's here, and then *not here* – as the diachronic history of architecture reveals the diachronic nature of signifying systems. Synchronic applications, on the other hand, are typically applied to the critical-historical operations of philosophy, history (art and architectural), and aesthetics.

Curiously, avant-garde modernist and late-modernist art and architecture share an innate anima toward the return of the out-moded (Hal Foster). Paradoxically, late-modern (or neo-modern) art and architectures also permit a selective return of certain forms of avant-garde formalism – the primary example in neo-modernist architecture is

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[1] Julio Cortázar, *Hopscotch: A Novel*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Pantheon, 1966), p. 66. First published *Rayuela* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1963).

the persistence of varieties of purism and architectures of liminalism (the Whites, or the New York Five) and minimalism. Blame Kenneth Frampton for the New York Five, if you will, but their collective position was an act of recovery and renovation of principles buried in the avalanche of generic modernism after Le Corbusier. The so-called corporate modernism of the post-WW2 period led directly to the crisis of the 1960s. Tafuri may have denounced historiography as mythography, but critical history also contains its own mythicizing subject (e.g., the architecture of deferred utopias reaching back to the Renaissance), this other subject perhaps present most powerfully in Jacques Derrida's concept of the Other (*l'autre*). (See Tafuri on Alberti.)

The problem well may be that architecture is implicitly hegemonic in itself – as it almost always denies ground. Its own version of hegemony is built into its reliance on materialization and the technological spirit. It is this latter thing that emanates from within hegemony as a form of positivism that takes no prisoners. This primary urge within architecture is the place where architecture is overwhelmed and appropriated by conventional/instrumentalized forms of everyday hegemony. The age-old architectonic of metaphysics underwrites this doubling of hegemony. Deconstruction is but one way "through the mirror," though not quite a "way out."

Machine-age romanticism pervades modern architecture. This is the "machine ate the garden" syndrome. It is prefigured in William Blake and Henry David Thoreau and problematized by Leo Marx and proponents of the industrial sublime. The hegemonic aspects of architecture crush landscape (its most obvious "other"), whenever its own precious autonomy is threatened (and thus, too, Derrida's meditation on the implicit violence in the construction of ipseity versus alterity, self at the expense of not-self, and hence Raimund Abraham's admission that the first act of architecture is to make a mark, inscribing a violent rupture into things). This is most evident in urban environments. This aggressive autonomy issues forth from architecture in defense of its hegemonic status – utopian or otherwise. The avant-garde is complicit in this handing over of architecture to everyday hegemony insofar as it abdicates its responsibility to prevent the collapse of free consciousness into new empty forms (new masks). Clement Greenberg's "Towards a New Laocoön" (1940) preceded the hegemony of abstract expressionism and set the stage for the 1960s revolt of conceptualism and minimalism. G.E. Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766) simply countered the late-Baroque concentration of the arts in de-materialized spiritual form by placing limits on literary and plastic art forms. Heinrich Wölfflin produced an art history without names that essentially took the synchronic approach to reading form to a new level of systemization by way of psychological precepts. His gift was absorbed into Russian Formalism by way of symbolism and then futurism. This abstract approach to mining history came to an apotheosis in structuralism (by way of Ferdinand de Saussure), and was undone in turn by post-structuralism, in which case the diachronic political critique of post-Marxism extracted maximum revenge on the tyranny of the signifier.

Today, we see the advent of a deterministic virtuality (an almost-new vitalism) that impregnates everything with the shimmering sign of nothingness. This nothingness – the ultra-depleted surface of things – is, paradoxically, valorized as the most prescient of conditions, as the late-modern subject is primary presented as a void (a virtual and virtuous nothingness). This renascent nihilism suggests that architecture has grown weary of its complicity in hegemonic orders and has elected, instead, to play, versus resist. Such a strategy also suggests that the flotsam or debris field of architectural deconstruction has opened up to purely instrumental and ad hoc games played from "inside" architectural production – i.e., within the folds of information and data that produce/impress the architectural image as well as the architectural object. As the shimmering architectures of the de-materialized subject are increasingly realized as *actual* cultural fabric, the anti-ideological ideology of "total flow" might be expected to reveal itself. That this pluralistic, negative ideology has arrived out of a deconstruction of previous ideologies is fully consistent with the nature of the production of architectures. What is curious is the maelstrom of incorporations that occur in the intertextual apparatus of architectural virtuality and de-materialization. As the architectural object moves closer to a field condition in and of itself, a wide array of previously repressed material is folded into the matrix. This new "ecology" is, in fact, a form of psycho-social re-conditioning – and the incorporation of the idea of "landscape," as figure or fold, suggests a possible way out of the deterministic circle inscribed in the generation of purely synthetical environments. This way out is *through* the proverbial hole in the wall of the architectural image – the "cracked" and "broken" surface that only appears smooth. A possible re-inscription of depth is in and of itself predisposed to return "landscape + architecture" to its place in the creative construction of consciousness. This concept of depth approaches Martin Heidegger's "running ahead to meet the past," and, as a cipher for the production of timeliness, such an approach precludes complete immersion in the detritus of over-determined, collapsing systems and/or the seductive, de-materialized field of flows and vectors. Despite the scintillating presence of surface, at some point the issue of architecture's ontological ground must be formally re-addressed. Hence architecture's indexicality, and its implicit role as cultural and post-cultural "archive."

The possibility of access to history is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural. This is the first principle of all hermeneutics.[2]

For Derrida, the future itself has a future … Thus, the wheel rolls on and on, turning over and over, crushing incomplete school after incomplete school. The provisionary nature of form-making is revealed in the process – and the essentialist worldview within such processes escapes unscathed to return another day as another attempt to reach the ontological ground beneath our feet and some form of synthesis, or, as Walter Benjamin proclaimed, "The Coming Philosophy."

II. ARCHITECTURAL HORIZONS: TIME NOT-ITSELF

On arriving at a location, my first work is an unconscious act of seeing: a walk. Then, slowly, after having decided on a focus and framing my concern, I begin to experience the conscious act of seeing. This is a magic moment in my work, which I compare to a walk in the forest looking for mushrooms. Vision is now completely focused. It sees and looks for only one thing. It is driven to capture one thing again and again with an almost unfulfillable desire. It is then that I begin to wonder whether the building is concealing something I may never be able to capture in its entirety. Can it be that the building has a soul?[3]
–Hélène Binet

Upon disposing of (setting aside) the achingly beautiful photographs of so-called natural landscapes (the Sierra Club idiom) and the glossy, romanticized vernacular images of working landscapes (the National Geographic idiom) – or first and second nature – and circling this same window on the world (photography) in search of something more *timely* (third or "fourth" nature), the image of the subject/object dialectic re-appears through the agency of the putative autonomy of the photographic work of art. (See Aleksandr Rodchenko, Edward Steichen/Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Josef Koudelka.)

The sense of time not itself provided in Heidegger's 1924 lecture "The Concept of Time" pushes toward the foreground in the various worldviews contained in photography – whether the socio-politically charged works of Magnum or the extreme, aesthetic ambient landscapes of Karl Blossfeldt, Michael Kenna, Geoffrey James, Balthazar Korab, plus architectural and fashion photography in general. Closer to the origins of modern photography, the work of Steichen, Walker Evans, Rodchenko, Man Ray, Josef Sudek, et al. picture the *élan vital* (Roger Caillois' inertia of the *élan vital*) – the inner history – of photographic subjectivity through an apparent objective apparatus; an apparatus that proves in the end to be mythic, versus empirical. These early progenitors of the photographic aesthetic meld the expressionist, constructivist, and cubist affects of an inquiry into form and the interplay of object and field, the latter most often portrayed as shadow or tenebrous void out of which emerge the forms of life (often as vestige, phantom, and/or fragment) imbued with momentary auratic, if not symbolic, verisimilitude, only to fade into the fixity of the frozen image. Hence two forms of darkness are suggested …

In architectural photography (Sudek, Ezra Stoller, Julius Shulman, Marc Llimargas, or Hélène Binet) and fashion photography (Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon, Steven Meisel, Juergen Teller, Nick Knight), the concept of trace and vestige moves to a new level of significance, productivity, and seductivity in the suggestive, yet aborted, narrative content, landscape (urban and otherwise) often providing a telltale (palpable) intonation or adumbrative depth suggesting a deferred grounding of abstract (de-materialized) desire in consumption, appropriation, expropriation, and photogenic simulation; i.e., various forms of re-appropriation. That such aesthetic precepts have further burrowed their way forth in the present-day image of architecture through computer-generated simulations is, therefore, no surprise.

In the photographic expropriation of landscape, in and of itself, the image of constructed ground (space) – whether gardens, cities, parks, cemeteries, airports, etc. – supports subtle but persistent themes consistent with the production of an elective, versus enforced, hegemony. This surplus hegemony is elective insofar as such circumstances are either avoidable or generally out of reach. The nature of time, as relative to environments and variable milieux, and as depicted in an imagery that selectively edits/represents cultural values (currents) and implicit historicity (timeliness), or that which asks "How?," frames and enhances the authorized and unauthorized perceptions of cultural conditioning; viz., the emptiness of the typical modern architectural image is an elective minimalism as are the polished products of the sensuous and seductive editorial pages of glossy fashion magazines that often appropriate and "re-style" classic, baroque, and modern landscape gardens as *mise en scène* supporting the

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[2] Martin Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1989), p. 25. See: *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
[3] Hélène Binet, in Peter Zumthor, *Peter Zumthor Works: Buildings and Projects* 1979-1997 (Baden: Lars Müller, 1998), p. 253.

dream-state of haute-couture fashion and design (e.g., the editorial pages of *Vogue*). Indeed, such fashion statements operate within the world of photography as excess (a type of hallucination) glorifying the scenographic and privileged places and attitudes (*modus vivendi*) identified as *de luxe* and or elite in the rarified upper reaches of society, a class-conscious production of cultural identity. In turn, a titillating noirish under-/over-world is suggested in the extreme and phantasmatic imagery that is folded into such normative fashion pages (e.g., Helmut Newton and J**ue**rgen Teller) as an image of extravagance, decadence, and an excess of "success" (freedom through mock bondage). This latter imagery substantiates the ineluctable charisma of the urban chic and is present in diverse forms, including the presentation graphics of present-day architects and landscape architects (per the Surrealists, a colonizing of the unconscious mechanisms of desire).

The ageless, immortal landscape that stands just outside this frame (process) of forceful or frivolous "acculturation," as a "timelessness" within timeliness, in turn, supports the indeterminate nature of the authorized/unauthorized activities of the elite, the voyeur, the flaneur, the aesthete, the connoisseur, and the so-called cognoscenti (fashionisti) – an explicit confrontation/clash of the microcosmic, iconoclastic architectures of the heterogeneous with those of the everyday world of the hoi polloi. The macrocosmic image – the wide world – often is deployed as a spectral other and supports a synoptic, panoptic return to preternatural and natural vectors of consciousness ostensibly outside historical time and its proscribed, constructed ground. Landscapes of the primordial ground condition and re-insinuate the elemental dialectic of self and ground through a social and aesthetic reductionism to primitive or unalloyed terms consistent with the concept of wilderness and primitivity. (Hence Derrida's and deconstruction's attempt to forestall the re-naturalization of blind metaphysical assumptions and precepts.)The structural and operational terms of such groundings are built upon the innate aesthetic allure of things archaic and/or of a radically contingent "nature." "Landscape + architecture" appears, then, as ever, suspended in the void between Pascal's two infinities, suggesting, in turn, the primary somatic substance within all architectures.

The production of time (timeliness) – as time has no abstract reality, as such, other than the neutral concept of timelessness – is as often a surplus as an intentional affect of design. The promenade (*architecturale* and *cinématique*), the cemetery or park as heterotopia (see Michel Foucault), the cacophonous urban bazaar and street, the implied orthodoxy of certain styles and modes of structural landscape – historical (diachronic) and trans-historical (synchronic), or "isms" of various orders – all effectively produce fictionalized forms of time bound up within a system of inferences and discursive structures that are both concealed and masked (see Tafuri, Fredric Jameson, and Mike Davis), as all hegemonic systems construct a surface to which things are projected. In the latter case – e.g., in the synchronic plenitude of avant-garde formalisms – much modernist landscape is complicit in the spurious conflating of the timeless and the timely, primarily through an extension of seriality and cinematic aesthetic strategies inconsistent with unmasking conventions and undermining the everyday (default) mode of the production of time and space. It is the putative production of authenticity that motivates the avant-garde ("every new age requires new forms"), through the agency of Zeitgeist or episteme, while almost always the operative forms are re-absorbed into a new conformity. The bricolage of post-modern landscape and architecture, or the pop and minimalist landscapes of the 1980s avant-garde, is, thereby, directly implicated in the demotion of landscape architecture to a type of brinksmanship, versus an authentic re-writing of the codes of everydayness. This denial takes both the form of a-historical games and faux avant-garde agitation (art-house provocations, installation art, etc.). It is the polar opposite of the utilitarian and pragmatic (often conservative and reactionary) modes utilized by the status quo. In most cases the faux avant-garde and the pragmatic are both facile and instrumentalized representations of landscape as surface, intentionally glossing or bracketing cultural and intellectual depth, troublesome and pernicious forms of ideology, and introducing a type of determinism by way of formalizing contingent systems. In other words, the "How?" is endlessly supplanted by "What?"

The legendary fixity of images (see Vítězslav Nezval and Yeats, both nominally Symbolists) is a relatively ancient problem in aesthetics, while the structural and contingent gestures of design and representation betray or conceal this concept, insofar as they produce a product or condition, versus a continuum. In the case of the production of a continuum, time is portrayed through a dynamic, yet temporal, synthesis (syrrhesis) of structural and ambient forces – an avant-ecology of signifying factors (images, signs, forms, functions) that imply, as well as access, a vast otherness within, beyond, above, or below the constructed ground of image/place and image/time. Rote fixity collapses under such immense pressures and time opens up to other times; to other horizons, the nature of time itself (implied historicity) forced to the foreground or gesturing wildly in the background. In-between, almost always, remains the subject (the proverbial, metaphysical, irreducible middle-ground) situated at the crossroads of vertical and horizontal axes, x, y, z (the conventional coordinates of constructed space) replaced by "fourth" nature – "fourth" nature being the very image of being, a sublime portent for the cipher of time not itself, or time as the provisional field for the non-ideological unity of things. Here the specter of the time-crucified subject

looms large against the primordial darkness of the archaic imaginary (an apparently archaic other-worldliness and/or nothingness as ur-ground).

III. THE FUSION THING: "TOTAL FLOW" OR NOTHINGNESS?

> There exist *mute* edifices – constructions and lodgings; and there exist edifices that speak; but there are others still – and they are the most rare – which *sing*.[4]
> –Massimo Cacciari

The historical, diachronic interplay of "landscape + architecture" in modern architectural production is/was at times a visionary *pas de deux*, while at other times an anti-visionary *danse macabre* (*danse mécanique*). In the latter case, landscape (milieu, ambiance, ground) is eclipsed and/or flattened in the strenuous and sometimes idealistic (utopian) siege represented by high-borne modernist formalisms (technocratic, positivist, pragmatic, and programmatic). In such scenarios, landscape became an almost nothing, not by design, but by proscription, elimination, and/or abstraction. In this essentialist project, landscape became de-natured space, returning only later as "ground."

In the somewhat delicate, often lyrical, case of the *pas de deux*, landscape is situated at the elective nexus of interpenetrating systems (architectonic and environmental fields), as intermediate condition, or simply noted, in passing, as a surplus value incorporated into the development of the architectural object by juxtaposition. The extension of architectural eIements into the near landscape in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, or Carlo Scarpa, and the penetration of the building by so-called free-flowing or layered space suggests the classical disposition of positive and negative, solid and void (i.e., topology), and the articulation (if not transformation) of architectural forms to fully synthetic forms in the rare instances when landscape and site impregnate architecture with a prescient, auratic "interiority" and/or formal radiance that plays out in an explicit synthesis of verticality and horizontality – as in early modernist villas – thereby picturing the contingent, material conditions for architecture's emergence. The most immaterial aspects of ambient environmental factors – the play of light and shadow – often provide architecture with an archaic uncanniness (an elemental timeliness) that is purely ephemeral and, most usually, unintended (purely incidental). Tadao Ando and Steven Holl are masters of this poetic/phenomenological genre, while others (Frank Gehry) simply accept the inevitable "patina" of building marked by time. The mutable materiality of architecture supported this embrace of the ambient, as glass curtain walls and metal cladding became ever more common and de-materializations occurred in the genre, noted explicitly by MoMA's 1995-1996 exhibition "Light Construction." Dan Graham's mirrored pavilions play wonderfully with this omniscient quality of glass, doubling the field of vision such that the very field of representation breaks down into a prismatic and often kaleidoscopic universe of shards, filters, and superimpositions – the effect entirely dependent on the setting of the object in the landscape. This latter de-materialization invokes the concept of "total flow" and the tendency toward objectifying surface at the expense of depth.

Outside of this cyclic, accidental, and discontinuous emergence of sublimated aspects of architecture's implicit ground, a third order of symbolization and abstraction is to be found that represents a preliminary and provisional synthesis of subject/object relations – i.e., most often a figurative symbiosis built *into form* and described as the gestural or sublime fusion of "form" and "content" in sculpture and the hybridized field of land art, most especially, where discursive orders are stripped away and an elemental, generative, and formal essence presses forward. In the case of art, and its near-automatic assumption of conceptual autonomy, the works of Isamu Noguchi and Robert Smithson, plus the avalanche of land-art inspired landscape architecture after the 1960s, re-present the archaic and liminal nature of almost-first nature (perhaps "fourth" nature) through hyper-sensual manipulations of form and a presentiment, if not an acclamation, of pre-linguistic forms and seminal structural operations, versus aspects of full-blown discourse or discursivity (the full-fledged signifying agency given to language games proper). "Here," timeliness is reduced to an iconic presence tipping inexorably toward absence (timelessness). These liminal measures most often take the form of excavations or insertions (interventions) that at the least pretend to re-write the codes of occupying or mapping presence. This type of "deep-sea diving" comes in many forms and is not limited to the delineation of art-in-the-landscape, or art-as-landscape. The concise, inward-driven nature of such expression is primarily poetic and is found in all of the arts. This archaistic *jouissance* deliberately invokes the ontological ground as a place "before" – *pre-existent to* – the emergence of the imaginary (the phantasmatic world of doubled and/or tripled ir-realities) and the Symbolic (the so-called fallen world of the abject signifier). These figures play in the dust

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[4] Massimo Cacciari, "Eupalinos or Architecture" (1980), in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), p. 399. First published in *Oppositions* 21 (Summer 1980).

of the Self, seemingly before the emergence of the ego (and super ego). Such fictive gestures also act as analogs for the extreme interiority of works of art and architecture prior to their deployment as cultural signs and tropes (figures of speech and thought). In the process of stripping away the detritus of signifying chains (ossified and/or fossilized modes of expression and discourse), such maneuvers circle the same ground repeatedly. The eventual collapse of the operative figures of near-speech simply occurs as the work vanishes into the annals of art or architectural history. The dissolution of many of Michael Heizer's and Smithson's remote works matters hardly at all given that they were intentionally situated in a mythicized "wilderness" as a strategic critique of the production of modern art and the machinations of the artworld. Thus, to thoroughly work through fragments, after Derrida, is often a more profound recovery of the spirit of a work (a time) than to dive into the entire output of an author. Perhaps here is Walter Benjamin's fascination with ruins, as well as his desire to construct a text entirely from quotations (as in the case of the unfinished *Passagenwerk*).

From 1930 to 1960, the time of the emergence of high modern architecture (and the International Style), landscape was effectively subjugated by the ordeal/onslaught of hyper-structural and technocratic instrumentalities – cultural, political, economic, and otherwise. The image of techno-utopian architecture and the architect as glossy man accompanied the last hurrah for pseudo-messianic modernism. The high architectonic was at best complemented by neutral ground/landscape (often tawdry "ground"), though *most often* ground/landscape was "locked away" in the spatial assault of low-formalist and high-functionalist orthogonal systems – or, super functionalism. The amalgam that came to be known as corporate modernism, and which was typified by Mies van der Rohe's transcendent glass office buildings (set upon pristine podiums), is/was, according to Cacciari and Josep Quetglas, the pure reification and *secularization* of the certain abstracted aspects of sacral architectures past. This "classicism" (or classic modernism) masked the origins of the modernist experiment in socially self-conscious experiments in formmaking – e.g., Mies' problematical Berlin period – and became hypostatized in the omniscient and omnivorous over-production of sterile corporate architectures. Most mid-century modern landscape architecture, following suit, adopted the dominant visual code of geometricism and the architectonic logic of *plan libre* as the spirit of the age, overthrowing the last vestiges of Romanticism, post-Romanticism, and the late-Olmstedian picturesque. The latter continued well into the mid-1900s transposed into the form of national parks and interstate transportation systems. In the case of the exemplars of modern landscape architecture (e.g., Dan Kiley, Garrett Eckbo, Christopher Tunnard, Hideo Sasaki, and Peter Walker), an attendant minimalism (expressed in rampant seriality and typological reduction) secured the accommodation of landscape to architecture, albeit through subjugation and abstraction. Antoni Gaudí, Roberto Burle Marx, and Luis Barragán, on the other hand, appear to represent unique expressions of critical regionalism before it was characterized as such by Kenneth Frampton.

[Bracketed, herein, is the entire section of faux-populist, pop, and vernacular architectures from theorists such as Reyner Banham, Robert Venturi, Bernard Rudofsky, J.B. Jackson, and Christopher Alexander, to the late-modern syncretism of "everyday" and new-urbanist fantasies. In the case of Banham, machine-age romanticism had its Second Coming. In the case of New Urbanism, typologically driven post-modernism returned in the form of an elective code. The classicizing aspects of New Urbanism, however reductive, remained open enough to absorb the experimental alienated architecture of Aldo Rossi as well as certain aspects of the critique of urbanism associated with the Tendenza and European neo-rationalism.]

After the 1960s, as the hegemony of abstract planning and object-oriented modern architecture increasingly fell into disarray (and disrespect), various alternative visions emerged alongside post-modernism (after 1968) both reviving and re-negotiating the language of generic historical form and the geometric and material expressions of late-modernity – modernity being measured, to paraphrase Jacques Lacan, "from the Renaissance to the so-called zenith of the 20th century." In the 1980s, as the last signs of the ecological and vernacular movements of the 1970s faded or were absorbed into a new artistic vision of landscape architecture (including expropriated affects of land art), a new wave of design speculation, which premiated or gave equal merit to ground, submerged the last vestiges of high (mid-century) modernism and the ubiquity of the "neo-baroque" landscapes of corporate campuses and urban entourage (Walker's "everything three meters apart"). Rote geometricism continued as a default methodology in landscape urbanism, especially in the case of 1980s urban projects that sought to revitalize the devastated economic prospects of the city center. The waterfront "festival marketplace" became the new re-urban model, ending/peaking – *thankfully* – with Battery Park City in the late-1980s.

In landscape architecture various neo-modernist schools attempted a revival of geometricism, but without the astringent and therapeutic measures of pure (and *grave*) formalism, as was occurring in architecture, while post-modern schools evolved toward a neo-minimalist, surrationalist, or neo-mannerist mode of representation. Deconstructivist-inspired landscape urbanism appeared as figurative "anti-storyboards" in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily in the guise of international design competitions (see Berlin after 1989). Narratology and linguistics permeated the "expanded field" (Rosalind E. Krauss' term) inherited from the 1960s, but failed to secure the poetic

task of re-writing the foundational language common to "landscape + architecture." Rather than search for primordial, pre-linguistic analogs in design languages, linguistics was applied in a very literal, superficial, and artificial manner as "reading and writing" the landscape (a prosaic, somewhat reactionary attempt to imbue landscape with narrative power and suspect "aura").

As "landscape + architecture" attempted to re-align the dysfunctional and infrastructural contingencies of the modern city through landscape urbanism, late-modernism also clashed with New Urbanism. "Landscape + architecture" fell into vogue, however, only insofar as the type and scale of projects and commissions required the collaboration of multiple disciplines and aesthetic considerations and/or the agency of computer-generated modeling software promoted convergence (see Parc Downsview Park). This nascent order only tangentially embraced the artistic *jouissance* of renascent forms of formalism – that always-estranged and strange dialectical/synthetic hybridization of milieu and anti-milieu that returns at times of cultural crisis. The deterministic and materialistic (anti-humanistic) systems of planning which evolved from Ian McHarg's system of mapping (planning) produced a new wave characterized by an obsession with *terrain vague* and junk space, while new ecological imperatives were advanced in the necessary re-appropriation of post-industrial wastelands, urban and ex-urban. This latter movement, post-McHarg, returned to landscape the dynamic instrumentalities of process-driven design, while adding wholly new representational systems and blurring/ obscuring relative scales and normative graphic conventions. Montage and mapping were combined to produce a new avant-garde sensibility, even though much of the intellectual rigor of the Dadaist-inspired idiom was off-loaded or simply repressed after initial gestures toward a new anti-aesthetic (as rebellion).

Today, following this historical mélange of schools and movements, the always already deferred synthesis/syrrhesis of "landscape + architecture" – that which resides uneasily in the interstices of all instrumentalized and discriminatory systems and/or fields, and that which has been problematized as "in-betweenness" – may be seen exacting revenge in the form of an irruptive other-worldliness in the operations of various latter-day conceptual artists (the truly irrepressible avant-gardists). This other-worldliness (which is radically contingent versus transcendental) comes to expression in the form of the attempt to bring/harness the figures and forces (gestures) of things and milieux – an ambient intellectual and environmental syrrhesis (flowing together) – that counters cyclical reification, outright expropriation, and rote appropriation. As K. Michael Hays has recently pointed out in *Perspecta* 32 ("Resurfacing Modernism"), the late-1990s emphasis on flows (datascapes, vectors, etc.) in mostly virtual architectures might, in itself, end in a return to a mere emphasis on imagology and surface without the induction of the intellectual coordinates that support critical-historical consciousness.[5] Virtuality is, after all, the present-day reified realm of the imaginary. To prevent this collapse, the poetic, intertextual, and the extreme formalistic gestures harvested from structuralism and post-structuralism must be re-visited. This quest to bring ambient cultural and natural forces to play within the axes of three-dimensional space – to produce the near-total work of art – stands astride the conflicting claims of architecture to be both an art and a science. It is in the former instance, in architecture as a hyper-conscious (self-conscious and critical) art, that the more profound exemplifications of "landscape + architecture" will be found. Everything else will proceed per usual.

An "elective" synthesis of "landscape + architecture" will be accomplished in the future, as it has always been accomplished in the past, in the singular work of art. The forms and types of this "near-total work of art" are variegated and not reducible to landscape or architecture, but, instead, open onto a vast, heterogeneous field that is symptomatic of the human condition; that field of subjective topographies comprised of the fundamental unanswerable questions and paradoxes of worldliness and timeliness.

POSTSCRIPTS

For there a fatal image grows / That the stormy night receives, / Roots half hidden under snows, / Broken boughs and blackened leaves.[6]
–William Butler Yeats

MIXED METAPHORS

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[5] K. Michael Hays, "Prolegomenon for a Study Linking the Advanced Architecture of the Present to That of the 1970s through Ideologies of Media, the Experience of Cities in Transition, and the Ongoing Effects of Reification," *Perspecta* 32 (2001), "Resurfacing Modernism": pp. 100-107.
[6] William Butler Yeats, "The Two Trees." First published in *The Countess Kathleen, and Various Legends and Lyrics* (London: Unwin, 1892).

And, to exploit an ancient metaphor, if one wants to water a tree, it is necessary to concentrate one's efforts on the roots versus the leaves, branches, and trunk. Mixing metaphors, *pace* Yeats, it may also be useful to consider the image of the mirror, and its problematic double nature. On one side is the so-called objective world endlessly reflected in the tain, while the image or representation is what is actually perceived. That everything is "backwards" in a mirror is the essence/origin of the task of critical inquiry. To go "into the mirror" or "through the looking glass" implies passing a threshold and entering another world. This other world lies beyond the image, and beyond the tain, wherein it is said a monster resides guarding the passage to the other side. (See Rodolphe Gasché on Derrida, in *The Tain of the Mirror*, 1986.) The other side is, in effect, the source of the mirror itself and the world. It is "there" that the principles and archetypal conditions of experience of the world are to be found. "There," imagination, subjectivity, and poetics converge, while looking back one sees the Real through the newly transparent agency of the absent mirror.

ULTRA-MODERNE (NE PLUS ULTRA)

When pushed up against the wall, we will almost always be faced with the question, "What are the limits of representation and language?" This near-metaphysical question mark hangs over all cultural production, including (especially) "landscape + architecture."

There is no singular answer.

Faced with the deterministic, nihilistic machinations of forms disconnected from a transcendent signifier (emptied of real/irreal content, or inverted, twisted, and contorted such that this "content" is rendered meaningless) – the legacy of structuralism/post-structuralism (ultra-modernity) – one can finally fathom (sound) Artaud's condemnation of language as the dominant mode of expression in theater, and approach his concept of *mise en scène*, or everything else that may, potentially, substitute for (supplement) the poverty of depleted forms. *Mise en scène*, as it were, represents another field – albeit, an infinitely expandable field of things that "cantilever" into presence from the void of absence.

This leads straight to the possibility of an ecology of signifying subjects (versus objects), each one, *pace* Leibniz, reflecting the other and inflecting (creating) time itself. This also leads straight to Levinas' obsession with death as the ultimate experience of time through negation. (See Derrida's *The Gift of Death*, 1996.) It might be inferred that this "end" as catastrophic "beginning" is, in fact, the most extreme occasion in which to render the veil of representations null and void – yet, as a gesture toward recovery of presence (depth) versus absence.

The entire debris field of depleted representation and language as an autonomous, almost malicious (pernicious) force field then collapses into "some-thing else" – that some-thing else is indicated in the mute and minute particulars of an atomistic (monadistic) universe of discrete subjects, endlessly mirroring one another, "signaling through the flames" (per Artaud), and animated by agencies that operate "beyond the frame" of representation and before/within language. Thus, "immodernity" (or the always already *futural* nature of representations) conditions things in a temporal locus (the present-present) by way of a future that never arrives because it is already present.

October 2002

THE POTENT KEEL: SUBLIME AESTHETICS

Benjamin's historian is not interested in exercising control over the past through the use of an ostensibly critical and objective method. The task of the historian rather is to strike a spark by bringing past and present together in an image of truth, an image in which "the Then (*das Gewesene*) and the Now (*das Jetzt*) come into a constellation like a flash of lightning." The "lightning flash" in effect "rescues" the past not by fitting the past into the flow of events but by interrupting that flow. And the constellations are constantly being reformed. Benjamin's historian is not the social scientist following a positive method to construct the truth of the past out of the raw material of, for example, memories. Neither is the historian the hermeneutical deployer of narrative strategies to give memories meaning in an interpretive framework. The historian is rather the *chiffonnier,* the ragpicker, rummaging through the detritus of history looking for the cast-off, the discarded, and that which is in danger of being lost. Put another way, the task of the historian is to "brush history against the grain."[1]
–Steven Ostovich

I. À LA RIGUEUR

The primary flaw in modern-day aesthetics (if such a thing even exists) is that it has reduced primary connections with things to secondary, tertiary, and – worse – endlessly mediated and instrumentalized relations that produce a vast Book of Lies. This "book" is the "machine" that is eating the world. Walter Benjamin (as eschatologist) sought to burst this all-encompassing bubble of myriad reflections while – in a sense – stuck in the Frankfurt School's operational datum, a post-Kantian datum, which developed an unending critique of forms of alienation and anomie – an unending negative dialectic. This critique could not assimilate Benjamin's intuitions regarding primary forms (cultural and otherwise) and his most heretical writings (vis-à-vis the School) were dismissed as "undisciplined." Hence Hannah Arendt's misreadings of Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1950) … Hence, too, the suppression of Akhmatova and Pasternak, in Soviet Russia, and the aggressivity of the utopian vision unleashed by revolutionary forces in Europe with its technological sublime mirroring a teleological drive toward subsuming subjectivity itself within a monstrous objectivity at the very heart of Socialist Realism. The disappearance of the radically contingent forms of Russian Formalism within the collective drive to utopia signals, if anything, that such moments are truly irruptive and leave but a residue as they vanish, and as they are co-opted and turned to propagandistic purposes (or reified into nothingness, as in the West). It was not until the 1950s (with the death of Stalin) that this "Winter" began to shift into a type of "Spring," in Russia, and new works of a type not seen since the Silver Age (the late 1890s, early 1900s) emerged from the ashes of the Russian soul.

It is the critical-poetical vision (the surrationalist vision) that permeates Benjamin's unassimilated (unassimilable) works … This vision is of primary intuitions regarding things and forms, but most especially cultural forms (as perceived in the corrupt continuum of bastardized, official histories). The task of the poetic is, according to Andrei Tarkovsky, to forestall the catastrophic – which the poet almost always sees directly in everything. This catastrophic is the vision of the Angel (in Benjamin's work) viewing the wreckage of history while racing backward into the future. This sentiment reveals the nature of nostalgia, insofar as nostalgia is a form of futurity itself (being futural) …

> Living among the debris of the past, the nostalgic's challenge is to construct a world and an identity out of this debris. Put in terms from Benjamin, it is possible to speak of the "shock" of nostalgia […] "Nostalgia" is the refusal to let the past be simply past while resisting its incorporation into the present. There is a future content to nostalgia that can be dangerous.[2]

II. THE MAIN EVENT

The chief concern of Aristotle's *Poetics* (the first "proper" aesthetics, c.330 BC) was that a work of art not be episodic … This complaint resonates today insofar as everything is intentionally episodic every day. That things are disconnected from (bereft of) their milieux is the prime event in Capitalism Triumphant. An aesthetics that drips *caritas* (charity) would strive to exempt things from this horrible process of de-naturing everything … A de facto anti-capitalist aesthetic is, in fact, what is most direly sought in Art (which is why any art in service to the machine is a half-bastardized art automatically) … It is this presentiment that led Kant to his delimitation of artistic

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[1] Steven Ostovich, "Epilogue: Dangerous Memories," in Alon Confino, Peter Fritzsche, eds., *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2002).
[2] Ibid.

autonomy. But it is this same thing, today, that both justifies hijacking everything in the name of pragmatics (productivity), while at the same time giving solace to those working for "some-thing else" who wish to defy the ultra-banal state of things and remain, until called, "extra-territorial" … Is everything to become a mere "episode" within the capitalist machine? Is it possible to fashion an anti-capitalist sublime?

All architectures that have jettisoned an ethics (in pursuit of specious autonomy) serve the machine while claiming otherwise … It cannot be otherwise (one cannot serve two masters). Architecture resembles nothing other than the two-headed monarchy of the late Austro-Hungarian empire, trying to look regal in its bereft (tattered) state; and always falling as it attempts to rise … Robert Musil's extreme, intellectually charged (unfinished) novel *The Man without Qualities* (*Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* rendered almost meaningless through translation, and meaning – in George Steiner's estimation – "'The Man Whose 'I' Is in Search of His 'Me'") seems poised in/at that place where an aesthetics of an exorbitant beauty (and price) might rise, only if (only if … only if) "self-possession" has any currency whatsoever, now and then, versus the empty gesture of autonomy such a term implies in a philological "landscape" devoid of fiery perturbational, critical-poetic hyper conceits on the path to the Some-thing Else proper.

It is axiomatic that hyper-capitalism will always shut down such things, out of its perverse, internal logic; out of its own self-possessing necessity … Yet, that such a non-thing might have a form of hyper-consciousness usually ascribed to sentient beings is a curious *cultural* conceit in/for itself. But it is no different a curious thing than the arguments supporting architectural autonomy. Such arguments are constructed by the machine itself, and the machine must roll on at all costs, flattening everything in its path. Fredric Jameson's idea that "theory" is a creation of late-capitalism is prescient, insofar as "theory" exists as an elective antidote to an endless field of commodification. Primarily "academic exercises," theory proved its true nature when it turned on its head and became anti-theory (neo-vitalistic operational games) … And so forth … An aesthetics that might take up residence elsewhere (an aesthetics that might resemble clouds drifting across the "sky") would, instead, be unassimilable by the machine. Not unlike Tagore's poetry, it would be heard in the fields "sung by lowly peasants" while also printed and marketed – in deluxe folios – at the outer edges of the overlapping circles of artistic disciplines "here" and "there." It would be *pervasive* …

III. ARCHITECTURES DE JOUISSANCE

Which is why (which is why …) we must develop an aesthetics of "landscape" (an aesthetics that includes – folds into itself – architecture) … Which is why an aesthetics of landscape would be first and foremost an aesthetics of words … Which is why we have no choice but to "harvest" the 20th century, expropriating every failed moment, every promise not broken, and every thing that has not yet been appropriated for instrumental reason. This is also why an aesthetics of immanence (an "immodernity" always upon us, almost always "there" but not "there") will arrive whether or not we choose to acknowledge it … For these reasons (and there really is no other option except to flatten everything left and right in the pursuit of an all-encompassing hegemony of de-materialized things, endlessly circling, endlessly – hopelessly – de-natured and "lost") an aesthetics of immanence is imminent …

There are vital movements (moments) in architecture that are endlessly short-circuited … It is possible that this short-circuiting is a byproduct of the all-but invisible machinations of the machine eating everything. It is also possible that these moments are staged offstage such that the principal action ("building") remains immune to the agitation and destabilizing "nature" of such moments. Given the immense élan of academic exercises, one must come to terms with the fact that "theory," as it resides "offstage," is defined by its separateness, versus its integrity. For it to fall is presaged in its marginality – as it will always be marginalized as "theory" … It is evident in the superstructures of professional and academic practices that praxis (and *praxes*) defines not so much a "making" as a denial of "useless" things. It is the "useless" that provides the tensions, torsion, and caesuras underwriting (in-forming) the topologies of praxis. They are, obviously, not quite so "useless" after all … This duality is inescapable only in the sense that one or the other presumes priority in the individual, as professional disciplines do not really exist except as an assemblage of individuals. It is a sign of the capitalist drive toward the de-materialization of everything that non-things (e.g., corporate entities) have been granted the status of individuals. Such forces survive (surpass) individuals – they make a mockery of individuality itself – demolishing anything (any alternative or other option) while swallowing everything useful. To remain "provisionally useless," then, is the first moment of an aesthetics of immanence. Perhaps it is instructive to remember that both Tadao Ando and Carlo Scarpa represent "unlicensed" autodidacts (that is, "unauthorized" poets of form) …

And so, winged-thought: The "insane" Hölderlin holed up in his tower, walls plastered with maps; Bruno wandering England and Europe, and, then, burned at the stake by the Church Triumphant; Byron swimming through the canals of Venice at night, torch in hand; Zarathustra's (Nietzsche's) "discovery" of the devastating Eternal

Return of the Same; the Asian image of Ourobouros biting off its own tail; Yeats in *his* tower, writing up a storm; troubadours rounded up with Cathari; Francis of Assisi (erstwhile troubadour) receiving the stigmata high atop a ragged mountain; Unamuno's wild vision of vertiginous black (nothingness) by way of Velázquez's *Cristo crucificado* (1632); and on and on …

IV. THE IMPERSONAL PERSONAL

In cultivating such an aesthetics (of immanence), it is necessary to find the impersonal in the personal and the personal in the impersonal. There is no other way … This aesthetics of words contains (as it always contains) the secret paroxysm, the "shuddering" in everything. The eschatological spirit that moves such things is uncannily the same spirit that moves within every person. The faux universal mathesis (Dostoievski's Grand Inquisitor) seizing this spirit must be set aside (ignored) for the advancement of a new aesthetics of immanence. The Coming Coming (a sticky mess, perhaps) is the actually existing state of things (the "given") that comprises the "gift of the world."

The pathetic fallacies associated with former landscape ideologies (aesthetic systems) are of no use … They are the reason why reason itself (rational thought) has fled elsewhere. A "reason" that has nothing to do with (nor resembles) instrumental reason … This reason is completely unreasonable in its demands on everything (every single person) … For this reason it is all but impossible to utilize, today, the word *reason*.

There are vast, hidden "geographies" (topologies) of "S" (Spirit) – this spirit is almost entirely useless in the conventional sense of the word. IT cannot be reified (and reified … and reified) … IT is suspended in a void (protected), surrounded by nothingness. IT is the vertiginous black rapturized by Unamuno (seen in the painting of a dead Christ by Velázquez and seen in the darkening puddles of rainy, stormy pre-Civil War Spain) … IT has been called the Cloud of Unknowing by those who know … Whatever IT is, IT cannot be turned into anything other than what IT is.

Such an aesthetics must remain – *per force* – individualized, resisting all forms of mediation … It must be extraordinarily surreptitious. For it to register in everything else, it must remain gossamer (as gossamer as words). It must defy the detritus of the world of fallen things (things enslaved) … It is the mark of a Some-thing Else that must be born in the individual soul. It is a small flame within all things (within all things that are "on fire") … As such, landscape – in its normative sense – becomes an "abnormal," sublime tableau of "fire signs."

> When we speak the word "life", it must be understood we are not referring to life as we know it from its surface of fact, but to that fragile, fluctuating center which forms never reach. And if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames.[3]

V. THE BLOOD-RED WINE

For this reason, the look in Mandelstam's eyes in his official prison portrait is otherworldly … There is no looking away from this look. This one photograph eclipses all of the photographs of Rodchenko, all photographs of the Soviet industrial sublime, the sea of nameless workers erecting the "worker's paradise" … Dostoievski was right …

Today, what is the unnerving nerve of/within landscape photography? Why does it do what it does? Why is it so profoundly, unwaveringly precise in its estimation of the state of things? Ruff and Struth, Koudelka and Salgado turn an all-seeing lens toward the mirror (Yeats' "outer glass of weariness") and its monstrous, unnatural hyper-nature … "Here" is a diabolical landscape aesthetics writ large, very large (in very large prints, oftimes digitally altered to enhance the extraordinary aura-less aura – the emptiness). Landscape + Architecture + Aura collapses into an abject nothingness, when it might – instead – prefigure a new renaissance, an encounter best called L+AURA (after Petrarch's muse, and in honor of Walter Benjamin) …

VI. AESTHETICIANS OF ENNUI

Eschatological excesses … Brechtian signposts … Godard's *Éloge de l'amour* (*In Praise of Love*) … "Quelque chose … Quelque chose … Quelque chose …" An eschatological aesthetics of everything cues diremptions and/or irruptions, revealing the incessant slippage in-between things (of things) … Godard's exquisite

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[3] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 13. First published *Le théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

swan song (starting out with gorgeous black-and-white film stock, and switching to garish color video, dissolving … disintegrating) seems poised between worlds – "this" one and "another." An elegiac "song," this film embodies everything "waving good-bye" every day. Godard's autobiographical *JLG/JLG* – Lake Geneva lapping at its edges – pushed the cinematic edge of things to its limit insofar as the exiled auteur (at home in Switzerland, ignoring Paris), speaking from the shadows, felt compelled to explain the inexplicable nature of images through images, through the imperfect impersonal ("It is raining …") … An an-aesthetics of extreme sublimity … Quelque chose …

  Tarkovsky's *Stalker* – The Room in the Zone … It is raining … The writer, and the scientist, and the guide (Stalker) sit at the edge of this room that grants wishes. The scientist pitches a detached nuclear detonator into the pool of water and the water begins to bleed … Tarkovsky's watery cinematic world bleeds ennui and nostalgia. In this world things are constantly disintegrating (and architectures are constantly "s"mouldering before our eyes) … The long silences (and the long, painful tracking shots) are punctuated by stray sounds – dripping water, rustling foliage, a fragment of a song or poem … *Mise en scène* overwhelms dialogue: Time expands and contracts; dreams trigger dreams; mirrors reflect mirrors … And so, the great Russian soul reflects the little mist-filled circle of the world. And for this same reason Theo Angelopoulos awaits inclement weather to shoot his own visions of the world gone awry … As in Theo Angelopoulos' *Mia Eoniotita Ke Mia Mera* (*Eternity and A Day*, 1998) … "How long is forever?" …

<center>NOTES</center>

Regarding Capitalism Triumphant, see Arundhati Roy, "Come September," in *War Talk* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2003) …

Regarding the "gift of the world," see Jacob Rogozinski, "The Gift of the World," in Jean-François Courtine, et al., *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, trans. Jeffrey Librett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) …

Regarding George Steiner's remarks apropos of Musil's *The Man without Qualities*, see George Steiner, "The Unfinished," *The New Yorker* (April 17, 1995): pp. 101-106 …

Regarding the double-edged nature of nostalgia, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) …

<div align="right">August 2003</div>

MANFREDO TAFURI IS DEAD: LONG LIVE "MANFREDO TAFURI"

> Every day I write the list / Of reasons why I still believe they do exist / (A thousand beautiful things) / And even though it's hard to see / The glass is full and not half empty / (A thousand beautiful things) / So … light me up like the sun / To cool down with your rain / I never want to close my eyes again / Never close my eyes / Never close my eyes[1]
> –Annie Lennox (2003)

In accordance with the principles of structural linguistics, Roman Jakobson proposed (in 1935) that every age may be seen to exhibit a dominant characteristic (spirit). That is to say, "in the arts and humanities" an operational datum may be discerned within the spirit of an age to which multiple and disparate disciplines nonetheless aspire. In the 20th century this datum was nominally "science," or, more precisely, "rationality" and its synonyms – e.g., objectivity, positivism, empiricism. As the dominant tone in progressive activities (including modern architectures), all forms of dissonance, rebellion, and – indeed – radicality were automatically conditioned by this dominant (taking refuge from, or taking up residency near, in relation to, or alongside of "rationality"). For this reason, Manfredo Tafuri effectively denounced all readings of the so-called irrational nature of Dada and Surrealism as misunderstandings of either movement's automatic obeisance to the mechanistic and nihilistic anti-spirit ruling and ruining the first third of the 20th century (as if they were merely irritants to an otherwise monolithic structure).

And even if, as some say, "the sign has set" (that structuralism and post-structuralism have passed), we are still collectively (by virtue of our shared humanity) living in the state of semi-darkness that permeates Tafuri's c.1968 reading of the ship of modern architecture cut free from its moorings – a state of disarray regardless of whether Tafuri's negativity (his negative dialectic) has fallen, in the meantime, into disuse and/or abject disregard. This late-modern darkness – situated, in turn, in a temporal high-capitalist moment – reveals as much as obscures certain other options outside the categorical rejection (dis-embodiment) of ideology foretold by Tafuri, as a renascent surreptitious spirit may also be discerned in non-structural arts (especially criticism and philosophy, but also literature). The complete surrender to technical issues (symptomatic of post-theory), the unofficial operative datum within most modern and neo-modern architectures, is therefore premature. If Tafuri could find little solace in the loss of architecture's ontological significance (a way out of the labyrinth of instrumentalized orders and intentional dis-orders), it was primarily due to the highly anachronistic and abstract reading he rendered of a discipline caught near the end of a relatively long-term death spiral – a death to be followed by a possible rebirth. This fall and subsequent rise is always already written within the pages of architectural history and historiography but prefigured preeminently in the now-bankrupt casuistry of architectural historicism. So much for so-called progress, rationality's endless excuse (and curse).

During Hurricane Isabel (September 17-18, 2003), while parked in Norfolk, VA, and without power, I re-read Tafuri's seminal *Architecture and Utopia* (1976), revisiting the collapse of utopian presentiments in the face of the all-pervasive, all-consuming machine that 20th-century architecture resembled in its most minute (mute) particulars; and in its prescient capitulation (devolution) towards a mere material economy devoid of any significance other than productive and technical tasks consistent with the technological atopia prefigured in its apparent late 19th-century, "industrial" origins. Indeed, since the collapse of planning – since the 1960s and its usurpation by mere real estate speculation – architecture has lost almost every ability to express anything comprehensive or utopian except through the fragment (piece work) or the personal utopia of the private residence. The collapse of planning per se lead directly to the rise of anti-planning, a form of ad hoc planning that justified the conversion of former "provisional" public resources, and the interconnections between them, to additional opportunities for structural manipulation (which leads almost always to exploitation). This is also why current proclamations regarding landscape urbanism are not quite good enough a response to the urban crisis of space and the attendant marginalization of everything (meaning the conversion of everything real and/or unreal to futures, options, flows, datascapes, etc.) within an advanced capitalist "topology" – a sinister topology premised on an endlessly-shifting "nothingness" insofar as universals (humanistic concerns) are stowed in the negative forms (spaces) of this fast-moving and contorted facsimile world.

Tafuri travelled widely through the terrain of 20th-century architecture unmasking the various pretensions of form (especially *forms of formalism*) to counter the worst ravages of the on-rushing capitalist machine, citing en route the completion of the first Soviet Five Year Plan as foil (even if the results of this plan are now proven to have been thoroughly cooked). His animosity to purely "useless"' (formal) exercises in architectural rhetoric or poetics is

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[1] Annie Lennox, "A Thousand Beautiful Things" (BMG Music Publishing Ltd., 2003). From Annie Lennox, *Bare* (RCA, J Records/BMG, 2003). Audio CD.

purely performative, however, given his measured embrace in the 1980s of acts of demolition and resistance to the machine (e.g., deconstructivist architectures). Tafuri illustrated for us all the maneuvers of the machine as it jettisons old forms of ideology (as it moves forward); those discarded forms, in turn, forming often the immediate nature of a "useless" past partly inhabited by capitalism's interlocutors (i.e., ruins inhabited by hermits, or cast-off shells appropriated by so-called critical inquiry). This useless immediate past is, in effect, a *picturesque debris field* left behind as the machine moves on mowing down everything in its path. Tafuri's pessimism was well-founded (and breathtaking), even if it was also unnaturally aimed in the wrong direction – i.e., at the system, versus beyond the system, or not quite reaching the actual locus of the true coordinates of ideological production.

Yet, given the rhetorical blinders (and blunders) symptomatic of this time (the "manifestos" of Christopher Alexander, Robert Venturi and/or Ian McHarg, for example), and given Tafuri's materialist anti-aesthetic, the time was not then ripe for a shift from purely technological concerns to some-thing else, despite the darker works of Aldo Rossi, Robert Smithson, and Michael Heizer, or the precise, anti-expressionist formulations of Donald Judd and Richard Serra. The post-1960s turn (detour) into semiotics, also denounced by Tafuri in the essay "Architecture and Its Double" , was (and remains in its latterday hermeneutic and narratological forms) a matter, for the most part, of re-tooling or undermining established ("dominant") discourses rather than a departure of any significance. This *nearly missing* some-thing else might be described today as a non-dialectical plunge to the "ground" that supports architecture; a plunge that necessitates architecture's re-embrace of landscape and its former (pre-Olmstedian) sub-linguistic cognates (something already underway anyway). These cognates represent the structure of thought itself, as the term "architectonic" implies when shorn of its modernist gambit on tectonic jouissance (Kenneth Frampton's error), and the inter-relation of things and thought in an intellectually charged field of *immediately present* representations (built or otherwise). It is the departed spirit of John Hejduk, perhaps, that will assist the rebirth of architecture, at some point, given the posthumous incorporation of two formerly site-less towers he designed in Peter Eisenman's Cultural Center for Santiago de Compostela, a work clearly "from the future," yet set to arrive anyday and sure to constitute the first canonical work of 21st-century architecture.

While Tafuri could appreciate aspects of Walter Benjamin's critique of the technological hubris consuming the modern world, he was also unable to invest much personal capital in Benjamin's more unworldly (nominally "mystical") concerns – or Benjamin's hyper-radical, eschatological vision – insofar as this side of Benjamin's work remained unassimilable to then avant-garde materialist readings of architecture and its other, "utopia." It is for this reason that Tafuri's pessimism seems almost diabolical (at times), as if a Marxist Mephistopheles had slipped under the door of his study in Venice and whispered dark secrets regarding the future of architecture while also offering up the image of a cultural, burnt tableau as architecture's end (its final state).

It is Tafuri's automatic (reflexive) animosity to subjective models of resistance that seems dated today, given that every attempt to socialize architecture has proven singularly ineffective (as if Tafuri's spectral "ideology of the plan" actually foresees and preempts such things). Due to High Capitalism's ceaseless conquest by way of de-materialization of all things once "given" (the liquidation of things and the production of endless de-materialized flows), the subject (subjectivity itself) is indeed suspect terrain. Tafuri's rejection of subjective autonomy (in art or any cultural discipline) and his pronouncements regarding the death of intellectual work was correct, then, as long as culturally productive disciplines remained disconnected and neutered, per force, by the advanced prognostics of the machine moving closer with each passing day toward the last speck of autonomous territory represented by the human heart.

Yet, as things became increasingly caught up within the web of expanding nerve networks (including erstwhile, purely "humanistic" concerns) the necessary resistance remained "off-stage" in the form of that thing that could not ever be fully assimilated by technological and materialistic forces – i.e., the original source of everything, the texture and seeming irreality of language and representation as it exists as a complex below the level of received discourse and antecedent to all manipulations of advanced technological systems (including present-day forms – i.e., computers and all forms of programming, surveillance, and data mining).

It is, today (as always), these two non-things – ur-language and ur-representation – that cannot be turned into facsimile things or instrumentalized non-things. And it was these two non-things that the spirit of structuralism and post-structuralism addressed, even if structuralism and post-structuralism (each in its own way) produced an advanced discourse based on an apparent tyranny of the sign. For such tyrannies to fall is axiomatic.

> The world was meant for you and me / To figure out our destiny / (A thousand beautiful things) / To live / To die / To breathe / To sleep / To try to make your life complete / (Yea Yea) / So … light me up like the sun / To cool down with

your rain / I never want to close my eyes again / Never close my eyes / Never close my eyes … / That is everything I have to say / (That's all I have to say)[2]

Yet, what Tafuri sensed has come about anyway. And that is that the increasingly unitary machinistic force operative within late-modern culture has now set its collective sight on the human soul. This last conquest is the ultimate battleground. One might then think that Benjamin's apocalyptic vision was not entirely mistaken. The hurricane raging outside, just now – and I go out to see, hear and feel *her* force – is a force that one must reckon with within oneself, as one must reckon with everything that appears to appear of its own volition. That the current state of affairs (the advanced state of economic-deterministic totalization, the rush towards nothingness) is a force of an unnatural, almost abstract nature only reinforces the necessity of forging a "way out" – i.e., that we must now fight for everything that is presumed to be given when it is instead a form of taking (an abstract act of eminent domain) that is always presented as *fait accompli*. That what was given and what is taken is also constructed (but increasingly in the gaps and artificial memories of data banks in-between real things) underscores the gravity of the necessary plunge to a source beyond, below, above the machinistic spirit consuming everything. The coordinates (the cognates) are no longer to be found in mere things but in the place where mere things are turned into real (illuminated) things. That is to say, advanced thought (and advanced architectures) will always return to *thought and language*, the non-place where life emerges from the experience of what is left of the world.

While the time of Tafuri's analysis has passed, it is not without its own time (its own universalizing merit). What has occurred in the meantime is that the imaginative terrain of the world has been revealed as ruled, after all, by subtle yet malleable instances of figuration and conjecture. And if Massimo Cacciari's shadow falls forward from within Tafuri's critique, forward and into the present, we might discern a second wind for the fabled School of Venice's investigations into the significance of architectural figuration, even if Cacciari has moved on toward what appears to be the precise ground of the impending battle, "radical subjectivity" and a "sublime aesthetics," extracted in part from the ruins of post-structuralism. but also from within the more abstruse writings of Benjamin, Adolf Loos, and Robert Musil (all adherents, perhaps, to a perennial, synchronic *pre*-structuralism).

This other *terrain vague* (perhaps resembling an out-of-focus photograph by Thomas Ruff, but certainly antithetical to Koolhaasian junk-space) is the shared ontological ground in the forward-leaning works of Giorgio Agamben and Cacciari. It also moves in renascent rhetorical and critical-poetical forms of literature, art criticism, and cultural history. This residue (ash) is the so-called philosopher's stone, the byproduct of the on-going conflagration at the most foundational levels of discourse, at the elemental level of experience of the world. Something else, meanwhile, is percolating off the map and in the anterooms of cultural production, in the ateliers and workshops of the hard-pressed "useless" intelligentsia, Tafuri's out-flanked and out-moded "intellectual workers." These workers are drawn, not unlike moths, to the aesthetic flame at the center of the world ("inside" the world of representations that form the world, but also productive of all cultural representations and all language games, Agamben's state of "infancy" within poetic forms of language). This is the place of reckoning now revealed for what it is and might be, an elective void (nothingness) or an electrifying some-thing else, a landscape of ur-facts (Agamben's *urfaktum*). This some-thing is constructed of things not subjugated (free subjects) and non-things (concepts) that inform things. It is a zone, then, where dreams are not de facto nightmares, and where darkness is illumined by the flame of imagination and language.

> Among all the historical avant-garde movements, autonomy of formal construction no longer necessarily meant controlling daily existence through form. They were now disposed to accept the idea that it is experience that dominates the subject. The problem was to "plan the disappearance of the subject", to cancel the anguish caused by the pathetic (or ridiculous) resistance of the individual to the structures of domination that close in upon him [/her], to indicate the voluntary and docile submission to those structures of domination as the promised land of universal planning, paradise on earth is realized through the "disappearance of the tragic."[3]

Thus, Tafuri delivered the death blow (*coup de grâce*) to the historicized concept of *Kultur* (19th-century "Spirit") – but he also delivered us, by way of this end reading, into the hands of instrumentalized everything (reason stacked upon reason), since, for him, there was no apparent alternative.

Nowadays, the idea of the city-machine reigns supreme (hence landscape urbanism) and its *nervensleben* (nervous system, nerve network) rises to the proverbial surface of neo-modern attempts to come to terms with the thickened, clotted, complexified physical and virtual coordinates of this condition. This term, *nervensleben*, is to be found both in Tafuri's work (in the form of Georg Simmel), and in Cacciari's work (in the form of attempts to incite

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[2] Lennox, "A Thousand Beautiful Things." From Annie Lennox, *Bare* (RCA, J Records/BMG, 2003). Audio CD.
[3] Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 73.

new heretical readings and acts apropos of the technocratic appropriation of everything now underway). Thus Cacciari's essay "Nomads in Prison" (*Casabella*), and thus Cacciari's exit from politics and his embrace of philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics (plus his "tell-tale" downtime spent up on Mount Athos). For Simmel, the modern metropolis resembled a permanent, concretized Newtonian calculus writ large: "All things float with equal specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money. All things lie on the same level and differ from one another only in size of the area which they cover."[4] … Or, as many have repeated (after Marx), "All that is solid melts into the air …"

For Cacciari (after Simmel), "Intellectualization … and commercialization are brought together in the *blasé* attitude: with it the metropolis finally creates its 'type', its structure 'in general' finally becomes a social reality and a cultural fact. It is money that has here found its most authentic bearer …"[5]

Given the evolution of Cacciari's thought, and given that he is the most prominent heir to Tafuri's intellectual legacy, it is then highly significant to detect in his recent work the conceptual sign of that some-thing else that is always at stake. The game has quickened in the past thirty to forty years. This some-thing else is a heightened sense for things as they represent formal and informal aspects of representation itself. And if this leads straight into the terrain or landscape of idealism, so be it; and it need not be re-worked German Idealism (*Kultur*). If this renascent idealism implicates an aesthetics of the Sublime, it is perhaps time to properly locate the Sublime in cultural terms versus in nominal natural forces (hurricanes included). This sublime aesthetics is the source of nearly everything important anyway. It is, in humanistic terms, the actually existing origin of all things buried in all things. For Benjamin it was quite simply the revolutionary moment present in all moments.

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> The beauty that you gave / Has turned upon itself / And all the things you said / Evaporated / Evaporated … / Was I blind / Deaf and dumb / To the words slipped from your tongue?[6]
> –Annie Lennox (2003)

All lyrics from Annie Lennox's "A Thousand Beautiful Things" (BMG Music Publishing Ltd., 2003), except those immediately above (from "Honestly"). Annie Lennox's song cycle *Bare* (2003) is an intensely introspective work of art that bares the final frontier for the machine that is always already eating the garden, i.e., the human heart.

Regarding Jakobson's idea of the dominant [with insertions]:

> The dominant specifies the work. The specific trait of bound language is obviously its prosodic pattern, its verse [structural] form. It might seem that this is simply a tautology: verse is verse [architecture is architecture]. However, we must constantly bear in mind that the element which specifies a given variety of language [form] dominates the entire structure and thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them…. We may seek a dominant not only in the poetic [architectural] work of an individual artist [architect] and not only in the poetic [architectural] canon, the set of norms of a given school, but also in the art of a given epoch, viewed as a particular whole."[7]

Regarding the work on language of Massimo Cacciari and Giorgio Agamben, the key works are Cacciari's *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point* and *Architecture and Nihilism*, and Agamben's *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, *The End of the Poem*, and *Potentialities*. Parallel moves in political ontology are to be found in the recent works of Slavoj Žižek (*The Ticklish Subject*) and Alain Badiou (*Infinite Thought*). A similar spirit of inquiry re-accessing lost ground occurs in Terry Eagleton's *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Fredric Jameson's *A Singular Modernity*, and Jean Nouvel and Jean Baudrillard's *Singular Objects of Architecture*, all publications that have appeared within the last two or so years.

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[4] Ibid., pp. 87-88.
[5] Massimo Cacciari, "Note sulla dialettica del negativo nell'epoca della Metropoli," *Angelus Novus* 21 (1971); cited in Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 88, fn 58.
[6] Annie Lennox, "Honestly" (BMG Music Publishing Ltd., 2003). From Lennox, *Bare* (RCA, J Records/BMG, 2003).
[7] Roman Jakobson, "The Dominant" (lecture delivered at Masaryk University, Brno, 1935), in Ladislav Matejka, Krystyna Pomorska, eds., *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971; Chicago: Dalkey Archive, 2002), pp. 82-83.

All passages, inferences, etc. attributed to Manfredo Tafuri are from *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigi La Penta (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976).

September 2003

TECHNO-HIPHOP ARCHITECTURE IN SINGAPORE

The next speculative bubble, following on the implosion of the IT bubble, is, arguably, the bio-technical bubble, as witnessed by various speculative architectures now being built, here and there, to accommodate this advancing, onrushing amalgam of various new scientific disciplines engendered by the mapping of the human genome and its corollary, bio-engineering. Such architectural analogues to this fast-mutating, brave new world include high-tech centers yet underway, such as the United Arab Emirates' Dubai Media City, Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (and Cyberjaya), and South Korea's Digital Media City. If these represent the receding last wave, it is the bio-medical mini-cities such as India's forward-leaning (proposed) ICICI Park in Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh), the proposed redevelopment of Mission Bay in San Francisco around medical research facilities, and, most telling of all, the One-North project in Buona Vista, south-central Singapore, based on a master plan by Zaha Hadid, which signals a shift away from financial services (as represented by Singapore's high-rise center) and IT *per se* toward "emerging technologies" formalized in the development of new science centers (indeed, science *cities*) – a shift, in fact, merging IT and bio-medical research, and engendering a new market for global financial services. In developing nations, at least those attempting to attract the next wave of international speculative capital, servicing the information-technology sector is giving way to servicing the bio-technological and genetic engineering sectors.

A glance at the February 21-27 edition of *The Economist*, entitled "The New Jobs Migration," proves the point insofar as parts of Asia and Southeast Asia remain the largest emergent economies in the world, and the primary targets of "service-sector" job migration. *The Economist* reports that this process of "international competition … impinging on industries previously sheltered from it by the constraints of technology and geography"[1] is, in fact, *the thing of the moment*. The brave new world of neo-liberal trade is, then, the context in which a new breed of techno-hiphop architectures operate, an *architecture parlante*, after all, expressing the speculative élan (spirit) of this bio-technical new frontier – albeit, to some, a somewhat frightening and spectral brave new world, not unlike *Huxley's* Brave New World. Consistent with this instrumentalized architectural language is so-called "biotech" art, typified by the works of Christine Borland and Eduardo Kac. Both techno-artistic genres are indicative of a species of contemporary critical inquiry that sample the future – a sampling, that is, of a *possible* future generalized under the rubric "post-humanism."*

The first phase of Singapore's One-North complex is nearly complete and includes the Biopolis (officially opened October 2003), a 2-million-sq.-ft. (185,173 sq. m. with 5,000 sq. m. of commercial space) portion of the Hadid master plan composed of seven 8-12 storey buildings (Centros, Matrix, Genome, Chromos, Proteus, Nanos, and Helios) on a 40,000-sq.-m. site linked by exoskeletal, Giger-esque, aerial bridges. (The entire One-North project will cover 200 hectares and take from 15 to 20 years to complete.) The Biopolis is billed as a "state-of-the-art research hub […] for Biomedical Sciences." It is situated in the vicinity of the National University of Singapore and the National University Hospital for synergistic purposes. (The entrance to the Biopolis is "guarded" by the new headquarters for the Ministry of Education, a physical and paternal relationship that begs several perhaps unanswerable questions.) A list of "Who's [Who] at the Biopolis" (public and private research entities) includes: Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS); Bioinformatics Institute (BII); Exploit Technologies Pte Ltd (ETPL); Paradigm Therapeutics; Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases (NITD); and a plethora of parallel biomedical R&D activities. "About 2,000 researchers will work at the Biopolis when it is fully operational."[2] The first phases of the project have successfully attracted large, international pharmaceutical firms to establish research facilities within its borders, as with most of Singapore's service-related economy, this project relies as much on international labor and capital – guest scholars, "technopreneurs," scientists, and venture capitalist – as do the microprocessor plants (e.g., Hewlett Packard) typical of the last wave of industrial development. Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB) reported that the Biomedical Sciences sector expanded by 48 percent (to S$9.7 billion) in 2002, with companies such as Schering-Plough, Wyeth and Siemens establishing biopharmaceutical facilities within the island borders of the modern city-state.

Representative of the "fusion" ethic at the heart of One-North, distinguished international advisors include: architect Kisho Kurokawa, Alfonso Vegara (Taller de Ideas Group, Madrid), and MIT's resident "futurist" William Mitchell. Primary research activities for One-North were, however, jump-started with the assistance of the Biomedical Research Council (BMRC) under the direction of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), the latter founded in 2000 expressly for this project. The first five research institutes installed at the

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[1] "The New Jobs Migration," *The Economist* (February 21-27, 2004): p. 11. See "The New Jobs Migration," *The Economist*, February 21-27, 2004, https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/2004-02-21.
[2] JTC Corporation (Jurong Town Corporation), "JTC Product Fact Sheet" (2003), p. 2.

Biopolis are associated with A*STAR (and A*STAR is answerable the Ministry of Education?). To lure private companies to lease and/or build facilities at One-North, the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) will supply financial incentives in the form of grants and subsidies. Whereas the government has invested S$200 million up front, at least 80 percent of the overall project will rely on private sector development.**

Hadid's "figural" master plan evokes a mutating sequence of volumetric forms, twisting and turning under the implied "weight" of an unknown future, an expressive and anxious quality representative of "the dynamism of the interaction between physical and human 'force-fields.'"[3] One-North is a seriously and self-consciously styled "icon" for this unknown future, totem for the "knowledge economy," an "intellectually stimulating and creative environment for entrepreneurs, scientists and researchers to congregate, interact and exchange ideas."[4] Its gestalt is a formal gesture toward fluidity (a contradiction) and relentless change (flux) – or, the "future" *now*.

These are not secure compounds. Kisho Kurokawa's "Fusionopolis" (formerly called the Technopolis) is intended to provide the cosmopolitan heart of the One-North complex, within the area designated as Central Xchange, neighboring Life Xchange (inclusive of the Biopolis). Fusionopolis will be devoted to infocomms (ICT), media and educational industries. Its resident-workers (the Central Xchange plan includes a live-work quarter in the Nepal region) will subscribe to an on-demand (on-tap) menu of various "Next-Gen" ICT (infocomm) services offered through the One-North Web portal. "The most happening place in one-north, Central Xchange burns 24/7 with an intense excitement. Novel events, world cuisine, experimental arts and technology showcase – this is where the 'techies' get serious and the media guys chill out to the sound and lights of downtown one-north." ("Fusionopolis @ One-North: A New Urban Culture in the Making," JTC brochure.)

The Fusionopolis will consume 1.2 hectares of the One-North site, a condensation of resources allowed by the two towers (also linked by sets of sky bridges) designed by Kurokawa. The 26- and 25-storey towers will comprise 120,000 sq. m. of floor space. Completion is projected for 2005. This hyperactive portion of the overall development project includes a new MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) station on North Buena Vista Road and a PMS (People-Mover System) designed to convey visitors and residents to/from Central Xchange.

One-North includes both passive and active (and inter-active) intelligent building technologies (district cooling, pneumatic waste conveyance, computerized louvers to block out direct sunlight and reduce heat gain, skygardens and green balconies, de-ionized water on tap, solar-heated water supply, plus integrated energy monitoring systems). Climatic mediation in the form of landscaped zones (including a 17-hectare park up the middle with mature trees) dovetail with the more intensively interactive portions of the development. At the Epi-center (within the Biopolis/Life Xchange zone) wind-tunnel studies have been used amidst retail and entertainment/dining facilities to ameliorate the humid tropical conditions typical of Singapore. The name "One-North" comes, in fact, from the geographical fact that Singapore is one degree north of the Equator. The Epi-center also is the site for various site-specific artistic installations, including "firefly" LED lights suspended within the canopy a mature Rain Tree saved from felling during construction. Buildings within the Epi-center will be washed with multi-colored light and electronic imagery, both part and parcel of the dynamic image intended to convey both *fusion* and *frisson*.

The last phases of the One-North master plan, Vista Xchange (the business hub with offices, hotels and subsidiary services) and Future Xchange (unspecified), will complete the build-out of the 200-hectare, 20-year project. Perhaps it comes as no surprise, then, to find alongside the physical superstructure, forward-leaning legislative structures such as a self-proclaimed "landmark" IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) protection framework to guarantee companies located in, or re-locating to, Singapore adequate safeguards for their R&D activities in a highly-sensitive, patent-intensive industry. As if to answer other, more complicated questions vis-à-vis the entire bioengineering juggernaut, Singapore has also instituted a regulatory commission (the Bioethics Advisory Committee, or BAC) to "address the potential legal, ethical and social issues that may arise from biomedical research in Singapore."

NOTES

*The 2004 Adelaide Festival (South Australia) included an exhibition entitled "The Art of the Bio-tech Era" at the Experimental Art Foundation (February 27-April 3).

Stephanie Radok, "Emergence of a New Culture," *Adelaide Review* 247 (April 2004):

[3] Ibid., p. 4.
[4] Ibid., p. 6.

A combination of hubris and humility, knowledge and ignorance comes across in the works on show. EAF director Melentie Pandilovski claims that a change in human consciousness is needed in order to understand the implications of biotech art […] A tiny ear was cultured during the show. Tissue engineering and stem cell technologies mean that a model of the ear is gradually replaced by living tissue, in this case human tissue harvested from the artist Stelarc. The ear was semi-living and thus not self-sufficient. It needed to be tended and fed regularly, like a baby or a tamagotchi […] No works in the show deal with immortality but the ghost of Frankenstein lurks in the wings. One of the *Tissue Culture* collaborators, Oran Catts, described the work as not about science but about life. The possibility of the extension of human life, the artificial enhancement of the body, the extension of evolution to unknown frontiers determined by humans, are some of the further dimensions of this work […] These are just a few examples of the fertile and complex connections and cultural commentaries made by Biotech Art, which draws attention to what could easily remain hived off into specialist fields of inquiry – medicine, patents, plant breeding and so on. And it is the ethical issues which come to the fore at all times in discussion of such work.[5]

As an (un)natural supplement to the R&D activities at One-North, it is also quite unlikely that any of these "critical" art forms will be exhibited there. It is more likely that the "virtual" weather and ambient environmental installations of artists such as Olafur Eliasson and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer will turn up, in the future, within the lifestyle zones at One-North, a more acceptable supplement to the crazy-quilt (hyper-synthetical) "future" pictured in the matrix of disciplines residing there.

**The list of government ministries, authorities, and agencies involved in One-North as "partners" includes: Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Community Development and Sports; Ministry of Education; Ministry of the Environment; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts; Ministry of Manpower; Ministry of National Development; Ministry of Transport; Agency for Science, Technology and Research; Economic Development Board; Housing and Development Board; Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore; Land Transport Authority; National Arts Council; National Heritage Board; National Parks Board; Singapore Land Authority; Singapore Tourism Board; Urban Redevelopment Authority; Fire Safety Bureau; Nanyang Technological University; and National University of Singapore.

BIOPOLIS/PROJECT TEAM

Owner: JTC Corporation
Master Planner: Zaha Hadid Architects Ltd.
Project Manager: Jurong Consultants Pte. Ltd.
Main Contractors: Substructure – GreatEarth Construction Pte Ltd; Superstructure – Samsung Corporation
Interior Design: DB&B Pte. Ltd.
Lighting Consultant: Lighting Design Partnership Ltd.
Landscape Consultant: Peridian Asia Pte. Ltd.
Environmental Consultant: URS Consulting Pte. Ltd.
Security Consultant: Cisco Security Consultancy
ICT Service Provider: A consortium led by National Computer Systems Pte. Ltd.

WEBSITES/ONE-NORTH

One-North – http://www.one-north.com
JTC Corporation – http://www.jtc.gov.sg

WEBSITES/A*STAR RESEARCH INSTITUTES @ THE BIOPOLIS

Bioprocessing Technology Centre (BTC) – http://www.btc.a-star.edu.sg
Bioinformatics Institute (BII) – http://www.bii.a-star.edu.sg
Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS) – http://www.gis.a-star.edu.sg
Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IMCB) – http://www.imcb.a-star.edu.sg
Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN) – http://www.ibn.a-star.edu.sg

April 2004

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[5] Stephanie Radok, "Emergence of a New Culture," *Adelaide Review* 247 (April 2004): p. 29.

PAYS DE TENDRE: /S/OMETHING-ELSE

I. SKATING ON THIN ICE

Within the swirling narrative of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (*À la recherche du temps perdu*) may be found the mysterious, sinuous figure of the proverbial Figure 8 (*figura serpentina*), a sign for/of Infinity and Eternity, at once, or Ourobouros biting (off) his/her own tail. Yet this sign is also the sign of the printed page, of memory (with its inversions, dissociations, dislocations, and falsifications), and of "landscape," *in its most archaic sense*, the latter most especially when it comes to reside in the literary imagination, leaving behind its impress, so to speak, or its trace. If the Figure 8 represents the simultaneous presentation of both the recto and verso of Time (always capitalized in Proust to signify ideal time), various works of art (music, architecture, cinema, and literature) carry within them this self-same duplicity; i.e., the exceptional work of art *as icon* (passage to somewhere else) carries the signature of both an inner and an outer time. Actual things are transposed in such works to simulacra or virtual "landscapes" (a virtual "nature") situated as a work of art *in time*, but also moving "in and out of time" by way of inflection, allusion, and metaphor. It is this virtual "nature" that is, in fact, irrepressible – despite all claims otherwise by types of formal expression and experimentation (forms of avant-garde reduction) that claim to eliminate anything whatsoever not specific to its own purpose, anything extraneous, or anything intertextual. Such formalist assaults on convention indulge in the game of reduction, seriality, and abstraction for reasons specific to their own agenda, first and foremost, temporally reclaiming a suspect ground (their own self-proclaimed autonomy), but actually remaining nonetheless within the charmed, topological space (knot) of figural representation. As such, subsequent appropriations of such figural and gestural forms of expression carry with them (below deck, so to speak), everything left behind. That which was left behind, in turn, is the cause of the haunting of form – of its famous instability and transitivity – or the reason why it is all but impossible to escape the return gaze of that which calls from within both things (which are, in fact, complexes or constellations) and representations (which are, after all, forms of lost time). Academic arguments regarding "authenticity" notwithstanding, the call of that which haunts form is the transposed call of that which haunts nature. It is Rousseau whom we should thank for this insight (even if he did not have it *as such*). Such a concept of nature, however, is further complicated by the attendant fact that such a "nature" has actually nothing at all to do with what passes as the so-called natural world. Instead, what is prefigured in the Figure 8 is also prefigured in the haunting of form. This something that stands behind the haunting of both time and form is, ineluctably, the open secret that subjectivity and its vicissitudes (its modalities) carries within it a call that remains always outside of time and beyond the physical coordinates of what passes for the Real.[1]

In *The Crossing of the Visible* (2004), Jean-Luc Marion circles and re-circles the phenomenal qualities associated with the haunting (or return gaze) of certain exceptional works of art, privileging painting, which he concludes constitute the "stigmata of the invisible." It is probably not a coincidence, then, that Marion's concept of iconicity privileges what Lacan denotes as a dangerous "psychic" knot where the Real might irrupt – a knot at the intersection of the Symbolic and the Imaginary axes of his system. This leads toward a strange convergence of the two nominally antithetical systems. Marion utilizes the concept of the gaze of the icon to illustrate how two gazes meet, how one calls to the other, and the other responds, whereas Lacan sees in the parallel figure of his system – the intersection of two subjective structures – the threat of rupture within subjectivity itself. The two points of view are not so far apart in the sense of *what is lost*. In both cases, what is lost also represents a significant gain *for subjectivity* insofar as what is gained is an expanded horizon (*an expanded time*) for Being. This encounter is an encounter with the Sublime (what Marion renames saturated phenomenon). Going further, in *Being Given* (2002), Marion unveils, while not quite exposing, what is ultimately at stake in the call and response he describes regarding saturated phenomenon.[2] Namely, buried in the notes, one finds the following extract from Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), "Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice … If [this guide] speaks to all hearts, then why are there so few of them who hear it? Well, this is because it speaks to us *in nature's language*, which everything has made us forget … It no longer speaks to us. It no longer responds to us. And after such a long

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[1] "The invisible gives relief to the visible as one gives a title and a fief [territory] – in order to ennoble. From this the first paradox of perspective must be considered before every painting: the visible increases in direct proportion to the invisible. The more the invisible is increased, the more the visible is deepened." Jean-Luc Marion, *The Crossing of the Visible*, trans. James K.A. Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 5. First published *La croisée du visible* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1991).

[2] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness*, trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002). First published *Étant donné: Essai d'une phénoménology de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997).

contempt for it, to recall it costs as much as banishing it did."[3] Rousseau does not mean to say (as Marion does not mean to say) that nature is a language per se. What Rousseau does say (write) is that "nature" is a language utilized by our "immortal" conscience to speak to us – it calls to us for this very purpose, and it haunts us nonetheless when we have ceased listening for it.

Utilizing Lacan's triadic structure for subjectivity (the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real), imagine three overlapping circles in which the lozenge formed by the intersection, and the central point (the "I," the self), represent subjectivity. Superimposing all three circles (assuming, in an abstract manner, that they are the same size), one arrives at a singular image of cosmogonic "nature" ("cosmogonic eros," the World, and the /S/elf, ipseity and alterity dissolved in a synthetic, perhaps originary unity). It is this "nature" that ultimately haunts subjectivity. Dissolving the circumference of the circle, then, one arrives at /S/ome-thing Else, a something else (synthesis and singular mark of the Absolute) that signifies everything else. There appears, in this last image (a mere speck floating in boundless space) an almost Vedic image of timeless (universal) homogeneity, canceling temporal heterogeneity perhaps (within its call), and it is for this reason that any investigation of literatures tracing the Figure 8 (New England Transcendentalism, German Romanticism, Symbolism, and Expressionism) must also take into account encounters with Vedic and/or Vedic-derived literatures. Meyrink, for example, has been called a "Buddhist." While Tagore, more or less a symbolist, has also remained more or less inassimilable, because his lyrical works inhabit a visionary field irreducible to any recognizable contingent terrain, various and sundry artistic and literary adventures assembled under the rubric "Symbolism" (inclusive of Rilke, but perhaps more tellingly Alexandr Blok) trace the self-same call by way of so-called Orphism, a peculiar version of the call reaching back (figuratively) to the echoing shores of Asia Minor. In "sailing to Byzantium," with Yeats, what else is one doing but returning, as it were, to the outer edges of Europe, plunging into a seemingly archaic world to offset the perceived loss of depth in the overly intellectualized and de-natured Symbolic of "the West." If in the films of Andrei Tarkovsky one finds Spirit invariably represented as falling rain (*Mirror*), or flowing water (*Stalker* and *Nostalghia*), it is in part due to the necessity of outfoxing the Soviet censors, while also proving (categorically and cinematically) that "nature" indeed speaks a mostly sublime language through inference and affect versus a lingua franca (patois) of mere material (empirical) facts and figures.

Jacques-Alain Miller, official keeper of the Lacanian flame, admits, in laying out the present-day coordinates of the Imaginary/Symbolic analytic, that although the Other (the "plus one," the absent Father, and/or the all-purpose dybbuk of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory) does not exist, its place ("The Names-of-the-Father") in the structure of subjectivity is nonetheless required. In the postmodern landscape (contemporary "civilization"), of which the US (or that which Miller denotes as "United Symptoms") is the exemplar, the Other that does not exist is deployed, instead, horizontally and takes up residence in postmodern subjectivity as the everyday spectacle of symptoms covering this Absence. He claims, therefore, that in the present era the Imaginary and the Symbolic have moved much closer together than, say, since Freud and the Victorian era (which only ended with the end of World War I). These symptoms are essentially formerly forbidden pleasures, and, collectively, signal an elective landscape of self-consciously constructed neuroses. In bidding the postmodern subject to enjoy his/her symptoms, Lacan (and Miller) are endorsing the substitution of semblants of the Other for its previously, wholly spectral "nature," in other words to fill in this absence with whatever titillating something you might have at hand.[4]

II. LE TEMPS PERDU & THE FIGURE 8

For the buttercups grew past numbering, in this spot which they had chosen for their games among the grass, standing singly, in couples, in whole companies, yellow as the yolk of eggs, and glowing with an added luster, I felt, because, being powerless to consummate with my palate the pleasure which the sight of them never failed to give, I would let it accumulate as my eyes ranged over their golden expanse, until it became potent enough to produce an effect of absolute, purposeless beauty; and so it had been from my earliest childhood, when from the tow-path I had stretched out my arms towards them before I could even properly spell their charming name – a name fit for the Prince in some fairy-tale – immigrants, perhaps, from Asia centuries ago, but naturalised now for ever in the village, satisfied with

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[3] Marion, *Being Given*, p. 373, italics added.

[4] See James Mellard's review of *Almanac of Psychoanalysis: Psychoanalytic Stories after Freud and Lacan*, ed. Ruth Golan, Gabriel Dahan, Shlomo Lieber, and Rivka Warshawsky (Tel Aviv: Groupe Israelienne de l'École Européene, 1998), in *Style* (1998). The above gloss of the postmodern miasma is derived from Mellard's review, which privileges the contribution of Jacques-Alain Miller to the *Almanac*, since, and after all, Miller is the heir apparent to the Lacanian school of post-Freudian mischief. It is no doubt instructive that Slovenian-Lacanian magus Slavoj Žižek has, since 1998, considerably altered his tune regarding the pleasurable nature of the collective neurosis surrounding the loss of the figure of the Other (the Figure 8), resituating within his own analytic the spectral something else ("plus one") previously denoted as the Universal.

their modest horizon, rejoicing in the sunshine and the water's edge, faithful to their little glimpse of the railway-station, yet keeping nonetheless like some of our old paintings, in their plebeian simplicity, a poetic scintillation from the golden East.[5]
–Marcel Proust

Perhaps it is Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (published serially between 1913-1927) that stands as the seminal event (rupture and turning point) in modern literature, not Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), opening a view onto the exceptional landscapes of emotion (a territory written into things and nearly synonymous with *paysages moralisés*, moral landscapes, dating to "whenever") present in works of the imagination with a synchronic, historical "nature" traceable through Proust to another past, a past that must include, in any survey or mapping of such things, both present-day (present-past) manifestations, such as Giuliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (2002) and past-past encounters, such as (and in no particular order), Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), not to mention his "walks," which, in turn, cues Herder's "walks" (in *Critical Forests*, 1769), leading back (in the spiraling path of reflection) to Rousseau's "walks" (*Reveries*, 1782) and "idylls" (*Confessions*, 1782), which seem to answer (echo) the call of Madeleine de Scudéry's 17th-century rhetorical promenade through Versailles (*La promenade de Versailles*, 1669), and implicating by associative magic innumerable voyages literary and otherwise, here and there, moral and sentimental, metaphorical and merely affected.

Proust's famous recollections of Combray (a mythicized provincial town based on Illiers, a "moveable" landscape insofar as he placed it in the shifting, unstable place of his febrile imagination, his own *carte de tendre*), the dual tracts, the frequent walks along Swann's Way and Guermantes Way, the extraordinary description of "useless beauty" in the passage on buttercups in the latter, are profoundly in-born(e), reloading certain aspects of the nature of topographical (topological) novels and essays, a vague genre that owes as much to Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) as to the Romantics, yet accessing something more delicate and tremulous (even morose) than places expropriated for purely polemical, formalistic, or moralistic reasons.

It is Stanley Cavell's *Senses of Walden* (1972) that unpacks the intensely anarchic spirit, the proverbial fire-power of Thoreau's *Walden*, in that Thoreau has been misappropriated and misread so many times, coming to rest (at last, pathetically) in epigraphs affixed to sentimental natural scenes in all manner of popular media, such as Sierra Club calendars, hapless greeting cards, and super-saturated collections of specular, "naturalistic" photography (for example, Eliot Porter), proving (as Cavell's phenomenological project is disposed to prove) that any possible reading of *Walden* automatically links backwards and forwards, in time and out of time, to the ultimate "ground" for such "nature" writings, to the internal landscape of the proverbial Figure 8, a figure traced in the mind's eye on the ice of a frozen Walden Pond (skating on thin ice, then) in the form of Thoreau plumbing its depths, in winter, seeking its true depth (versus its rumored, legendary depth) not so much to debunk myths as to stage something else, a something else that also resides in *Walden*'s nine bean rows (folded into and echoing within Yeats' equally misappropriated "Lake Isle of Innisfree"), notably a something else that appears to have a marvelous contingency (actual and factual "ground") that prefigures a second "ground"; the place where nature melds with culture and disposes of the last antagonisms associated with the metaphysical rupture between things and ideas.[6]

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[5] Marcel Proust, "Swann's Way," *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol. 1, Pléiade edition, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage, 1982), p. 183. Proust's 4,000+-page novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in its various incarnations, has been taken up by various interpretive communities for various reasons, not the least of which is its exemplary deployment of various forms of time and various forms of space. See: George Poulet, *L'espace proustien* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982); Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979); Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Antoine Compagnon, *Proust entre deux siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1989); Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972); Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970); Julia Kristeva, *Le temps sensible: Proust et l'expérience littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994); Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959); and Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931). The definitive edition of *À la recherche du temps perdu* appeared in 1954, published by Gallimard. This edition is the foundation for the three-volume English translation published in 1982 by Vintage.
[6] Perhaps immediately in front of, so to speak, but on the way to "wilderness" is the neo-classical *fête* (and *fête champêtre*), a theatrical and musical romp (often with fireworks) usually staged just off-stage, as such things were staged at Versailles in the so-called "wildernesses" constructed by Le Nôtre, areas enclosed by *treillage* and/or tall hedges and used for temporal amusements of court. These places at Versailles, in turn, are answered by a very different "wilderness" in the anti-Cartesian, "English-style" gardens and estates that members of the enlightened aristocracy in France built in the run up to the Revolution. The most famous, Ermenonville, where Rousseau spent his last days, has been left to more or less rot in the ensuing years, while the baroque gardens of the French-style have been beautifully maintained and/or restored over the centuries. The oddest of these mnemonic "wildernesses," however, is the Désert de Retz, not far from Versailles, a type of intentionally deranged landscape (the word "désert" referring to a place set aside) composed of irregular masses of vegetation and faux ruins and follies, one of which (the

With Proust's journey through an already past 19th-century France, through its vanishing modes of self-representation, the passage "Place-Names: The Name" within "Swann's Way" (1913) is nothing short of sensational. With its enraptured description of the Alleé des Acacias in the Bois de Boulogne, wrapped in the spiraling tendrils of Proust's prose, the mysterious and affective twists and turns of a completely synthetical landscape (a zoological and botanic "parade-ground") are transposed into an allegorical landscape; its purpose, should such "purposeless beauty" have one, comes to rest (an uneasy rest) in the simple statement, by Proust, that, anyway, "It was Mme Swann whom I wished to see, and I waited for her to go past."[7]

Curious, then, Proust's self-proclaimed admiration for Stendhal, an author famous for describing landscape in the most perfunctory and impatient manner (see his summary statements regarding the landscape "above" Lake Como, boyhood home of "our hero" Fabrizio), or Proust's literary recollection that his sole purpose in wanting to visit Parma was based on his being enamored of Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1838), a state of agitation ever-present in Proust's own novel that includes a remarkable description of his anticipation of an Easter trip to Venice and Florence, ending with his becoming so distraught at its prospects, that the family doctor orders the trip canceled, given the impressionable youth's chronically inflamed nervous state. "I had to be put to bed with a fever so persistent that the doctor declared not only that a visit to Florence and Venice was absolutely out of the question, but that, even when I had completely recovered, I must for at least a year give up all idea of travelling and be kept from anything that was liable to excite me."[8] Needless to say, it is the impending sense of excitation, for cities fused in his mind's eye with the works of Fra Angelico, Giotto, Giorgione, and Titian, works he has most often "met" in the pages of affected prose associated with the aesthetics movement (the Art for Art's Sake crowd), that brought on the collapse. This anticipatory exaltation oscillated between simultaneous, dual aspirations (and apprehensions), to visit both the seaside fastnesses of Norman-Gothic Balbec (in Normandy), a singular gothic-Romantic destination (where he imagines falling prey to the call of brooding, wild nature), and Tuscany's effeminate "city of lilies" (Florence), or La Serenissima (Venice), where he could already see that "the Ponte Vecchio was heaped high with an abundance of hyacinths and anemones, and that the spring sunshine was already tinging the waters of the Grand Canal with so dusky an azure, with emeralds so splendid, that when they washed against the foot of a Titian painting they could vie with it in the richness of their coloring."[9] Balbec, beckoning with its "wild race of fisherman for whom no more than their whales had there been any Middle Ages," stoked Proust's desire for "storms at sea and for Norman Gothic," for placing himself at "the shores of Hell," while sunny visions of Italy's art-soaked "shores" stoked the other side of his nature.[10] Brought on by actual weather, or what transpired outside his window, these alternating states delimit the dialectical struggle underway within his soul. Here, as in poetic language par excellence, very real weather invokes internal weather, as the imagination extracts from natural phenomenon its corollary in psychic phenomenon. Julien Gracq's gothic-surrealist novel *Au château d'Argol* (1938) inhabits this very same "landscape."

And yet the most prosaic of things could prompt in Proust such rapturous outbursts, sending him into a tailspin, including a turn through the pages of a Baedeker or the time-tables of trains leaving Paris: "And for all that the motive force of my exaltation was in longing for aesthetic enjoyments, the guide-books ministered even more to it than books on aesthetics, and, more again than the guide-books, the railway time-tables."[11] It was, on the other hand, his appetite for a type of disembodied Time (or "imaginary Time"[12]), the irreal space of literature and art, which sent him invariably off the deep end. For yet a third seduction is interpolated between his dueling desires for antithetically placed places (the wild Atlantic versus the serene Mediterranean), this third figure being the operatic siren of the day, "Berma." After floating back and forth between visions of Normandy and Italy, Proust returns to amplify upon his unrequited passion for "Berma," "the sublime artist whose genius Bergotte had proclaimed."[13] His parents will not let him attend the opera, should it incite another episode of nervous exhaustion. Frustratingly, Proust

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monstrous, "de-capitated" column) served as the residence for the eccentric aristocratic owner, Monsieur de Monville, a place frequented (later) by the Surrealists, when it was a double ruin, and a place recently (in the 1990s) cleaned up and "restored." Roland Joffé's film *Vatel* (2000), a cinematic-culinary feast, is exquisite for its depictions of the era of the Sun King, as it is for its depictions of the *fêtes* held in the gardens of noble estates. This film was shot (in part) at Chantilly, André Le Nôtre's self-proclaimed "favorite project." Regarding the "nature" implicit and "explicit" to Versailles, see Allen S. Weiss' *Mirrors of Infinity* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995).

[7] Proust, "Swann's Way," *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol. 1, p. 453.
[8] Ibid., p. 427.
[9] Ibid., p. 425.
[10] Ibid., pp. 418, 420.
[11] Ibid., p. 424.
[12] Ibid., p. 426.
[13] Ibid., p. 427.

has never actually heard "Berma" sing (and what happens when he finally does is another story). Yet it is the florid pages of "Bergotte" that has attuned him to this wonder, as such writings are also responsible for various and sundry passions he has indulged solely (firstly) in the pages of books. Indeed, bored with the Champs-Elyseés, where he would go in the custody of his nanny Françoise, he admits, "If only Bergotte had described the place in one of his books, I should no doubt have longed to get to know it, like so many things else of which a simulacrum had first found its way into my imagination."[14]

Is the excitable Proust, reigned in repeatedly on doctor's orders, the model for Nick Cave's faux-neurotic, burnt-romantic alter ego (musical persona), the variable and volatile anti-hero (anti-heroes) who inhabits the twisted lyrics of his literary songbook? From the earliest post-punk Cave, to the goth Cave, to the more recent, lyrical, yet always neurotic Cave of *The Boatman's Call* (1997), *No More Shall We Part* (2001), and *Nocturama* (2003), landscape as cartography of nerve and blood reigns supreme, the protagonists of this musical terrain wandering to and fro, following the high, sometimes sonorous, sometimes dissonant arc of the electric violin or skulking along with the low, keel-like thrust of the electric bass, ploughing ahead, never the less, through the visionary, allusive sea of places and place-names, affectations and disaffections, avowals and disavowals, gloom-laden cathedrals and sunny gardens, city streets and haunted waste-places, through saturnine voyages and descents into madness, and, always returning (with hallucinatory precision) "home," where the unhappy wife is yet again rearranging the furniture, or the children are lost below fifteen feet of pure white snow, or the nurse prohibits going out while administering the necessary medication.

III. SYNAESTHETIC VOYAGES

And if musical signatures (sonorities and dissonances) evoke landscapes, against the higher avocation of all musical formalisms, whose fault is it? Proust expends much ink detailing the awe-inspiring effect of one short musical phrase that captivates Swann in his path to falling in love with Odette ("Swann in Love"), a path that is inaugurated in his very first visit to the Verdurins' salon, a phrase carried by the violin and echoed by the piano in "the *andante* of Vinteuil's sonata for piano and violin."[15] "And it had been a source of keen pleasure when, below the delicate line of the violin-part, slender and commanding, he had suddenly become aware of the mass of the piano-part beginning to surge upward in plashing waves of sound, multiform but indivisible, smooth yet restless, like the deep blue tumult of the sea, silvered and charmed into a minor key by the moonlight."[16] This musical phrase returns, interminably, haunting Swann, and undergoing an alchemical fusion with his soul, informing the transformation from miserable rake to happy cuckold that Proust draws out over the course of 109 pages.

If it is romantic expression that is to be blamed here (and yet Chopin has fallen out of favor, already, in the more fashionable salons), it is musical formalism ("atonality") and serialism that will attempt to wipe the slate clean in the early 20th century, as it tried (again), to the same effect (that is, its own marginalization), in the form of minimalism in the late 20th century. Proust and Cocteau's fondness for the proto-serialist compositions of Satie's (1866-1925) *musique d'ameublement* (furniture music), in the late 1910s and early 1920s, notwithstanding, it was the twin forces of Stravinsky's (1882-1971) tonal extravagances, especially with the Ballets Russes (and in particular *The Rite of Spring*, 1913), and Webern's (1883-1945) transparent and precise reductions that took music by storm in the early years of musical formalism, Stravinsky avoiding so-called atonality altogether until very late (1951). These at-first expressive innovations and deconstructions (de-centerings/shifts in emphasis), inaugurated with the Second Vienna School (Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern), arrived well after the exquisite post-Romantic indulgences of Mahler (1860-1911), tonalities shot through with dissonance, had waned. Yet who is to blame for the persistence of accidental or intentional mimetic properties in music (the appearance of transposed natural forms) is also a question that resonates wildly on the frontiers of all investigations into musical form and musical ontology (Jankélévitch especially) insofar as formalism is often merely a reaction by the so-called avant-garde to the dull thud of spent forms hitting the ground.

"Who is to blame?" is, of course, a ridiculous question to ask when it amounts to asking the equally ridiculous question "Why is there not nothing?" Schoenberg, in fact, reloaded tonal (expressive) qualities early (actually never quite giving them up), while Webern never looked back and is reckoned the progenitor of mid-to-late 20th-century serialism. The gathering storm of atonal music, a vigorous assault on the leftover conventions of 19th-century composition, was, after all, *a storm*. It came and went, leaving behind a landscape refreshed and a musical landscape reborn, a multivalent landscape that bloomed in unexpected and variegated fashion. Indeed, Satie's 1917

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 231.
[16] Ibid., p. 227.

ballet "Parade" (with Cocteau and Picasso on board, produced by Diaghilev of the Ballets Russes) provided a most peculiar touchstone for the extreme measures taken, then, to demolish decorum and set into motion a Dada-inspired musical revolution. What hides within such experiments is not so much the elimination of the figurative and tropic gestures of classical tonality (and what exactly carries landscape into music?) but a stripping away of certain affective qualities to, in the fashion of the times, perform a type of psychoanalytic purge (shock therapy or surgery) on the perceived knotted and tangled mass of half-unconscious mechanisms buried within musical expression. To this end, not unlike the mixed legacies of the Dadaists and Surrealists, musical expression came to include ironical forms of mechanistic (and chance) encounters with purely contingent forces, a very early *danse mécanique*. This passage included a type of *musique noir*, an Expressionist phase (an updated *danse macabre*), that brought forward various hauntings within music that typically pass in the night. Perhaps it was aleatory music that took up the last traces of the latter, while total serialism (by mid-century) came to express a new quest to produce music that referred only to itself, to the reduced site of the twelve-tone structure left behind by Schoenberg.

Regarding *The Rite of Spring*, Joan Acocella wrote in *The New Yorker* (May 7, 2001): "The score of 'The Rite [of Spring]' survived, but the ballet, after nine performances in 1913, was never given again. People remembered it almost with fear. Jacques Rivière wrote that it analyzed human beings down to 'germ layers, zones, circles, placentas.' (Nijinsky said the same thing: 'It is the life of the stones and the trees. There are no human beings in it.') It was hideous, Rivière said, and stupendous: it 'alters the very source of all our aesthetic judgments.'"[17] This would seem to confirm that at that time (1913) the idea of Pascal's (le génie français) *discours naturel* was *very, very much alive.*[18]

Fast forward, then, to June 6, 2004 and the last episode ("All Due Respect") of the next-to-last season for HBO's smash hit series, *The Sopranos*. Yet first listen to Van Morrison's strange musical voyage otherwise known as *What's Wrong With This Picture* (2003). First of all, and obviously, there is no picture anywhere on or in the CD. It is a rhetorical question, pure provocation, as the music here is not only a heartfelt tribute to rhythm-and-blues, jazz, and funk, Morrison's very own "wilderness" (to which he returns often), but also a massive swipe at the arrogance of rock-and-roll and pop. The critics have lined up to carp that Morrison carps too often about the perceived misfortunes of his own fame. Indeed, amidst the exuberant refrains of this musical tsunami are sarcastic and utterly nasty things aimed at the celebrity-obsessed world of popular music. But that is hardly the point. Morrison is pointing to the "wilderness" again, musically that is, while sounding the old battle cry of emotionally charged, and topologically inflected, pure musical form. The lyrics hardly matter.

Forward to June 6, then, and *The Sopranos*. Gliding in and out of the one-hour program is Morrison's 1970 song "Glad Tidings," "And we'll send you glad tidings from New York / Open up your eyes so you may see / Ask you not to read between the lines / Hope that you will come in right on time …"[19] As Tony Soprano roams in his personal, hellish version of gloaming (looking terribly disheveled) – i.e., dealing with the fallout of onrushing gang warfare – Morrison's song appears and disappears, returning at the end with the credits. The rival Brooklyn mobsters, seeking revenge for various heinous crimes perpetrated by the Soprano-led gang, is arrested en masse at the end of this year's installments in a serial, rancid, and sordid tale. Needless to say, the HBO appropriation of this song is totally absurd yet also weirdly apropos of the moment – Tony Soprano's reprieve. Morrison's song is famously without any precise content. It is a mesmeric bit of lyrical nothingness, a peculiar formalist work referring only to itself (its own repressed significance). Folded into an episode of *The Sopranos*, it takes on a quite different nature, mirroring a very different landscape. It recalls (if memory does not desert me) the last episode of *The Prisoner* (1967-68), where the Marseillaise-charged Beatles' tune "All You Need is Love" (1967) is woven into the closing scene of the prisoner ("Number 6") escaping through a kaleidoscopic tunnel to freedom. In the case of the appropriation of Morrison's song, we have both the vulgar theft of something formerly extraordinary for extraordinarily banal purposes (intentionally banal purposes). The song registers in this context only by suppressing various aspects of its singular nature. Yet it worked marvelously as a signature gesture rounding out the intent of the concluding episode of this arguably brilliant (if not deranged) series. In a word, it delivered what Morrison's wholly vague song always withheld. Morrison's song announced the imminent arrival, "Glad Tidings," of an unnamed surprise. Used here, it is tied to the delivery of the finale, the reprieve. That is, the song and the producers wiped clean the slate for Tony Soprano, giving him a new lease on life, and the series a new season (a new chance) in

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[17] Joan Acocella, "The Lost Nijinsky," *The New Yorker* (May 7, 2001): pp. 94-97.
[18] This red thread running through more or less all of Pascal's writings on the nature of subjectivity is dealt with in Louis Marin's extraordinary essay, "On the Sublime, Infinity, Je Ne Sais Quoi," in Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
[19] Van Morrison, "Glad Tidings" (Caledonia Soul Music/WB Music Corp, 1970). From Van Morrison, *Moon Dance* (Warner Bros. Music Corp., 1970). Audio CD.

which to re-complicate life for the mobsters idolized in the looking-glass of the tele-visual spectacle. Never fear, the bloodbath will return next season.

Yet someone at HBO is doing some serious research insofar as the conflation of this one song with this one episode is truly stunning. We will know that this is in fact the case, when and if Gillian Welch shows up covering the credits for HBO's latest smash hit series *Dead Wood*, a grisly and pornographic vision of the Wild West that owes more to Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) than anyone at HBO would probably like to admit. That said, one has to wonder if Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999) had any influence on the stereotyped, stylized personae of the weirdest of the weird mobsters in *The Sopranos*. The post-modern disease, endless semiosis, goes on. HBO is merely more adroit than the hapless networks at mining its artistic potential. Reality television is one thing, Irreal television is another.

It is the art of appropriation that feeds these *noir-ish* series and much of contemporary cinema. Whereas it is Tarantino's films that seem to shout most loudly "Here is cinematic formalism," Jim Jarmusch and Lars von Trier (for example) are ultimately after something else, even if both seem to owe something to the art films of Andy Warhol. These latter two filmmakers are genre-bending auteurs, as one might also say of Tarantino. What distinguishes Jarmusch and von Trier, however, from Tarantino and faux auteurs is the fact that the faux auteur is complicit in the production of spectacle not as anti-spectacle but *as art*, which is part and parcel of the spectacle of the post-modern condition (abject nihilism). That said, the cinematic works of Jarmusch, von Trier, and others (Greenaway, Wenders, and Kaurismäki) reside in an entirely different landscape. This other landscape is a landscape of affects, versus effects. It has been said that the effect produces the affect. Yet it is also possible to go directly to the land of affects (*pays de tendre*), as Proust does with *Remembrance of Things Past*, and as certain forms of musical expression do by transcending the mere obsession with syntactical games (syntactical operations *without* metaphorical affects). Curiously, it is Philip Glass' score for Martin Scorsese's *Kundun* (1997) that violates Glass' own serial and minimalist principles (as von Trier often violates the principles of Dogma, his own minimalist manifesto), principles that were no doubt set aside because a film score is first and foremost an affective landscape.

We arrive "home," then, where no doubt the nurse has our medication ready and the furniture has been rearranged again. This "home," to which we are always returning anyway (just as the "home" in Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, 1972), has little if anything to do with anything prosaic, anything nominally singular, or anything vaguely resembling a physical or literal geography. It represents, instead, the vast, irrepressible, intertextual, and intersubjective "nature" of things-not-in-themselves (things held in tension, things cantilevering into and *through* time, contra Kant), things suspended in representational milieux, and a type of associative (poetical) magic which is embedded within the lacerating, gestural qualities of both figurative art and certain kinds of abstract art, most especially Abstract Expressionism, which, in turn, is why the reductive ravages of 1960s' Minimalism was primarily a reaction to/against the expressive language of the latter.

> Don't it gratify when you see it materialize / Right in front of your eyes / That surprise / La, la, la, la … / And they'll lay you down low and easy[20]

Here, then, finally, returns the Figure 8, the topological knot and moebius strip inhabiting all of Morrison's music, a figure that circles (twists) back upon itself seemingly prefiguring the arrival of something else, the annunciation of Self to itself.[21] And if this self-annunciation oddly registers with Levinas' attempts to prefigure the annunciation of the always absent "Other," make no mistake, it is because in the folds of Time (various times) this "Other" arrives through its very own annunciation at the gates of the self as that nominal "self" dissolves into something else. Levinas' musings in this regard dovetail with Derrida's musings on the death of the subject (the death of the subject as object, as singular thing). In Morrison's music, throughout nearly the entire output of his musical career, he is always at the edge of the world (of things) looking both backwards and forwards

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[20] Morrison, "Glad Tidings." From Morrison, *Moon Dance* (Warner Bros. Music Corp., 1970).

[21] Regarding the Figure 8, as deployed herein, the number 8 is usually seen to be a metonym (if not symbol or icon, even) for Infinity (the concept of Infinity being a particularly potent example, cited often, of an encounter within thought *with the Sublime*). It is Gustav Meyrink's genre-busting, nominally Expressionist novel *The White Dominican* (1921) that reveals a secret regarding this figure insofar as that novel seems to do one thing while doing another. Anyway, what Meyrink discloses, in the course of his somewhat bizarre story, is that at some level or someplace (a place which he "properly" leaves *to the imagination* of the reader to provide), the figure of Infinity and the figure of Eternity become one and the same figure. And yet the place where this insight finally unfolds is the rooftop of the protagonist's ancestral house, a house that is progressively closed off (lower floors abandoned) as successive generations come to live there. Needless to say, the lower storeys of this house are haunted by the shades of his ancestors. And there are dueling landscapes here, one which he visits in his dreams and the other in which he lives and toils, playing out his fate (following the tugs and pulls of Meyrink, the puppet-master).

(simultaneously) at himself, announcing himself. The magisterial, archaic sweep of "Ancient Highway" (1995) is exactly of this "nature." It is for this reason that the anticipatory nature of his best (and his most gnomic) work signals the self as mirror, a return to Lacan's Mirror Stage (if you wish), but only in the sense that the self that announces itself resides beyond the mirror in a landscape of affective forms and figures, in a *pays de tendre* that is buried at the very foot (foundation) of the world, in the Imaginary, that realm which Lacan needlessly pillories (as phantasmatic) and which psychoanalysis in general has grossly misunderstood (grossly disfigured).

IV. LOOP-THE-LOOP

Lacan's obsession with the moebius strip seems to signal a riddle wrapped within an enigma; namely, that somewhere from within the twists and turns of his own Freudian-derived system echoes of an irresolvable conundrum are to be heard. It is this conundrum that, arguably, is taken up by the late Lacanians, Slavoj Žižek included, and the mischievous forms of cultural criticism generated utilizing Lacan's triadic system based on the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real (the "Borromean knot of subjectivity"). Of the latter, suffice to say, the real Real is represented as something that can only be approached through a type of breakdown in the consciousness of the subject (the ego), as it is never actually experienced *except as rupture*. The approach of irruptions of the Real, then, take on phantasmatic qualities as these impending episodes are dealt with in the Imaginary, or re-situated, after the fact, in the Symbolic. The Symbolic seems to be roughly equivalent, in Lacanian exegesis, with the so-called world; that is, the world as a structured system of mutually agreed upon (communally established) forms (discourses) that provide a nominal residence for personal and collective identity. Julia Kristeva's Lacanian-inspired work, most especially *Histoires d'amour* (1983), reaches back to pre-modern forms of subjectivity (embedded in literary and allegorical literatures) to trace forward the emergent lines of modern subjectivity, placing particular emphasis on the transformational and lyrical gestures found within the wildly indeterminate landscapes of medieval romances. Žižek's hyper-charged critiques of contemporary culture use film and other masked (and mass) symptoms of the present-day collective psychosis to illustrate the manner in which both phantasmatic (neurotic and imaginary) works of high and low art and abstract (empty) gestures of academic formalisms spread throughout the representational structure of "the world" to both divert and channel our abject alienation with things and our willful, voracious despoliation of the very "ground beneath our feet"; i.e., how it comes to pass that we disfigure the speculative ontological ground marking the site of our Being and transpose it into the unreal and surreal ground of the spectral "the Big Other," "the Real," and "the Symbolic" *as complex* (and by implication convert a possible ground to a "nature" that is, after all, a very thin filmic membrane stretched taut over an existential void, or the traumatic relationship modern subjectivity has formed with the Imaginary). It is, however, his political writing (alongside that of Alain Badiou) that parts way with merely describing the spectacle (the symptoms, which he suggests we "enjoy") and prescribes something else. For Žižek, this something else is not a sublime aesthetics (as one might say was the ultimate goal of post-structuralism) but a rapprochement with aspects of the discredited Absolute (Synthesis), a "medieval" Romance of the Rose (if not the Grail), if there ever was one, and yet, with Žižek (and Badiou), a quest for Truth in an age when The Big Lie has found purchase in nearly every form of contingent expression.

It is the Imaginary (the origin of the virtual) that subtends all possible chords, a geometry of another kind which resides outside of formalist expression but which is accessed by formalist expression, even the most reductive forms of formalist expression, whether or not such expressions admit to this fundamental mystery or not. Therefore, the irreducible *pays de tendre*, situated "below" everything else, is also (and always) the something else prefigured in every*thing* else, an "above," "beyond," and "over there."

POSTSCRIPTS/LAST RITES

M. de Lemarck distinguished between nature and life. In his eyes, nature was stone and ash, a granite tomb, death. Life came into play only as a strange and singularly productive accident, a prolonged struggle with here or there more or less balance or success, but always finally defeated in the end; cold motionlessness reigned afterwards as before.[22]
–Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve

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[22] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Volupté* (1834), cited in Georges Canguilhem, "The Living and Its Milieu," *Grey Room* 03 (Spring 2001): p. 30 (note 12).

Somewhere and nowhere in every Derridean topography is a secret place, a crypt whose coordinates cannot be plotted. This place exceeds any ordinary topographical placement.[23]
–J. Hillis Miller

June 2004

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[23] J. Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 296; cited in Paivi Kymäläinen, "Topologies of Becoming: Deferred Presence in Writing," *Space & Culture* 6, no. 3 (August 2003): p. 245 (epigraph).

THE HIGH LINE & THE RETURN OF THE IRREAL

> The High Line is an abandoned 1.5-mile stretch of overgrown railroad viaduct that runs from the Meatpacking district to Hell's Kitchen – and straight into the imaginations of a growing number of New Yorkers who see it as proof that, even in an urban jungle, the forces of nature are still at work.[1]
> –Julie Iovine

The explicit coup by Field Operations in winning its second major urban design competition within the span of four years in New York City (the firm also won the Fresh Kills Landfill to Landscape End-Use Master Plan Competition) underscores several points all at once regarding the present-day prospects for new urban landscape.

First and foremost is the paucity of uncontaminated open space in the contemporary city for new parks, while at the same time urban brownfields continue to come up for redevelopment. In the case of the High Line (an ageing elevated rail bed spanning 22 blocks and running just west of Tenth Avenue, from 34th Street, south to Gansevoort Street), the coordinates for contextualizing such a project are quite literally off the map in the sense that this stretch of concrete and steel runs as much through irreal as real territory. Passing through the heart of Chelsea's fashionable arts district, and situated in a portion of Manhattan that still retains an urban industrial edginess, the High Line is unnaturally given to acts of design provocation.

The four finalist master plan teams (selected from 52 entries) represent various aspects of the professional colonization of a fashionable and somewhat profitable sub-genre within urban design – that is, the re-appropriation of spent infrastructure. The composition of each team, incorporating an array of technical and creative sub-consultants, suggests that the significance of the High Line lies as much in its incommensurate, cinematic qualities (a strip of urban "celluloid") as in its normative iconic status as decaying urban infrastructure. It is not surprising, then, to find in several of the schemes a version of montage utilized (as in the films of Eisenstein or Greenaway) to register multiple frames of reference and multiple narratives. The Holl- and Hadid-led teams, in particular, indulge in lacerating imagery, fusing time and space through iconic intensity – i.e., a type of architectural gesturalism that implies through snapshots a critically-inflected assault on present-day urbanism.

Yet the winning Field Operations proposal is significantly different than the Hadid or Holl plans, as it is miles from the TerraGRAM plan. The TerraGRAM plan, while citing Archigram and Robert Smithson as spiritual forebears, makes little headway in actual program and much noise about open-ended planning with unfortunate swipes at formalism ("form obsession"). It is the rhetoric of the team that tells the greater tale insofar as the principal excuses for temporizing (e.g., deferring to future processes, inclusive of public charrettes) represent what is past versus what is upon us. Weak design is often the result of design by committee, or abdication on the part of the party ultimately responsible for making sense of the conflicting claims of vested interests ("shareholders") and the abstract "public." Whereas the four High Line teams have, in several instances, identical sub-consultants (part and parcel of the game today in assembling the large interdisciplinary teams required), it is the distinct differences between the *lead players* that mark this competition as a signal event on the horizon of contemporary urban design. As a result, the High Line represents a type of suture between the recent past and the near future, both in terms of design and process.

Ever since the Parc de la Villette competition (Paris, 1982-83), the architectonic "anti-nature" of new urban parks has generally foregrounded an anti-pastoral, anti-picturesque anima – notwithstanding the Mau/Koolhaas stab at pastoral scenography for Parc Downsview Park, Toronto.[2] While nature may be fashionable again, today, it remains nonetheless chained to the prison-house wall. Past representations of this mixed legacy, this proverbial tug-of-war between nature and culture (now typically dismissed as a useless dialectical exercise), include the innumerable waterfront redevelopment schemes of the 1980s and 1990s, at which Hargreaves and Van Valkenburgh Associates excelled. Thus, even though both firms are to be found here, we also are fortunate to find Zaha Hadid and Steven Holl in command of two of the four High Line competition teams. Their presence more than proves the point

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[1] Julie Iovine, "Elevated Visions," *The New York Times Magazine* (July 11, 2004): p. 29.
[2] For Parc de la Villette, see: Marianne Barzilay, et al., *L'invention du parc: Parc de la Villette, Paris concours international, 1982-1983* (Paris: Graphite Editions, 1984); and Lodewijk Baljon, *Designing Parks [an examination of contemporary approaches to design in landscape architecture, based on a comparative design analysis of entries for the Concours International, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982-3]* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 1992). For the Parc Downsview Park competition (1999-2000), see: Robert Somol, "All Systems Go!: The Terminal Nature of Contemporary Urbanism," in Julia Czerniak, ed., *Downsview Park Toronto* (New York: Prestel, 2002); and "Downsview Park Toronto," *Lotus International* 109 (2001). For more recent examples of landscape urbanism, see: *Lotus International* 117 (June 2003); and "Velocità controllate," *Lotus Navigator* 8 (2003). For Fresh Kills, see Gavin Keeney, "A Benign Visage for Capitalism's Golgotha: Fresh Kills, Where All that Solid Waste Melts into the Landscape," *Competitions* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2002): pp. 28-41.

that multiple agendas are at stake: 1/ formally addressing the aforementioned issue of diminishing returns in public open space planning; 2/ the necessity of highly interdisciplinary teams to tackle the unresolved standoff between so-called formal (active) and informal (passive) urban park design; 3/ countering the lead role played by economic determinism in urban design; 4/ bypassing the entirely ludicrous arguments regarding nature versus the city; and 5/ overcoming the 1990s fetishization of crumbling infrastructure as a type of sublime surplus "after modernism" and after Robert Smithson.[3] If proposals to bury the High Line or the Brighton West Pier in surreal and simulated natural systems are in fact signs of something else dawning in the imaginative labyrinth of urban design (perhaps a tilt toward "purposeless beauty"), such projects may also indicate that it is again acceptable for an urban park (naturalistic or otherwise) to do virtually nothing much at all.

The Hadid-led team is exemplary in its approach to re-envisioning such "useless" form; indeed, it might be accused of "form obsession." Yet, it is this very obsession that makes the plan compelling. It is Hadid's open thinking (thinking the complex, versus thinking the reduction or the reaction) that is responsible for her ascendance this past decade, and it accounts for the seductive folds, twists, and interweavings of the team's proposal. As in most of the plans presented, Hadid, et al. envision the terminus of the line at Gansevoort Street as a type of elevated Piccadilly Circus or event space. Hadid has retained the essence of the radical constructivist and supremacist quest for evocative form while adding the topological inversions (twists and turns) that have recently displaced purely orthogonal, architectonic systems in instances where *architecture becomes site*.

The presence of Olafur Eliasson on the Field Operations/Diller Scofido + Renfro team is a sign that in compiling its proposal Field Operations looked straight into the looking-glass of present-day installation art for inspiration and talent. Eliasson's "Weather Project" at the Tate Modern drew record crowds in 2003-2004 with its simulation of a sun shining through an artificial haze within the great void of the Turbine Hall.[4] What is afoot today, inclusive of topological and morphogenetic extravagance (as was on display in the architecture section at the 2004 Venice Biennale), is a powerful re-animation of all the forces bracketed by the abstract and functionalist bias of reductive architectural high modernism.

Field Operations has, therefore, "arrived" in the sense that they acknowledge that the now past, 1990s *neo-modernist* fantasies regarding urban landscape as synonymous with infrastructure (or junk-space) are no longer quite good enough. And, as Fresh Kills proves, urban ecology is as much a spectral thing as it is a scientific undertaking. Brownfields are by nature horrific sites given to the specular, form-haunted gestures of art + landscape + architecture, a new-found hybrid sensibility that does not merely fetishize dysfunctional and decaying urban systems but also critically engages what *is wrong*, what *has gone wrong*, and why it *went wrong* in the first place.

Within the Field Operations plan, urban simulations or unnatural passages quite literally flow through the 1.45 miles of the elevated viaduct, each portion mutating in relation or contradistinction to what is above, below or alongside the rail bed. The transformational grammar of the compositional "field" embraces a form of urban ecology that is as much an artform as a science, wherein the irreal returns. This return, presently well underway in the fine arts as an affective, post-metaphysical Sublime, is now making inroads in landscape + architecture, or in the increasingly significant instances where landscape and architecture overlap and merge. Reloading transcendence in immanence *is the new game*.

Steven Holl's phenomenologically informed investigations of architectural *mise en scène* (e.g., Kiasma, Helsinki, 1998, with Juhani Pallasmaa) and his poetic turns into "parallax" and "intertwining" (the topological-phenomenal intervals between things) has led, in turn, to a rich panoply of projects that embrace eye and mind, body and spirit, earth and sky. Here, where he looks out his office window everyday to see an actually existing metaphor

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[3] See: Robert Smithson, *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), especially "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects" (1973), pp. 100-13, "Frederick Law Olmsted & the Dialectic Tradition" (1973), pp. 157-71, "The Iconography of Desolation" (c. 1962), pp. 320-27; and Marianne Brouwer, "To Be Saved is *Passé*: Robert Smithson & the Entropy of Modernism," *Archis* 6 (1994): pp. 52-61.

[4] "Eliasson has been careful to make us aware of the mechanics, that what he has done is a trick, a thing of smoke and mirrors, and an 18,000-watt bank of sodium yellow streetlight bulbs. You can walk under the sun, and see behind the backlit screen, the weather wafting from the smoke generators. But nor do we forget that a Turner is just paint." Adrian Searle, "Reflecting on sublime smoke and mirrors," *The Guardian*, October 16, 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/oct/16/arts.artsnews. "Weather Project" was on view at the Tate Modern October 16, 2003-March 21, 2004. A parallel phenomenon in this regard is the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, inclusive of "Amodal Suspension" (Relational Architecture 8), Yamaguchi Center for Arts and Media (Yamaguchi, Japan), 2003. "'Amodal Suspension' uses encoding to make visible this extralinguistic effectiveness: the force of language. This is the variable that is being analogically presented. The display conveys the *feel* of a statement's impact without its meaning. We get the same feel from the firefly's inhuman light show of exoskeletal love. It is impossible to watch them and not get the uncanny feeling that they are 'talking' to each other." Brian Massumi, "On Amodal Suspension," *Artforum* 42, no. 3 (November 2003): pp. 37-45.

for all of that, he has also found an actually existing site for his experiments in form to take wing. The chief concern for the Holl team seems to be to puncture, perforate and otherwise accentuate what moves above, below and through the High Line corridor. While many vignettes within the four proposals do just this, Holl's plan is essentially theatrical and closer to Matta-Clark's legacy of slicing into things than the TerraGRAM plan is, despite claims otherwise, to the phantasmatic and apocalyptic "ruins" ironicized and romanticized by Robert Smithson.

While Field Operations has managed to fold into its purview the manifold contingencies that come to reside in urban "fields" without converting such things of "purposeless beauty" to mere datascapes or information flows – two slightly derelict strategies associated with 1990s Netherlandish urbanism – the question as to whether Landscape Urbanism is the Brave New World remains open.

If Landscape Urbanism is the future, given the rate of urbanization worldwide, it will no doubt be a decapitalized landscape urbanism that includes the imaginative, analogical, and unavoidable processes of change, metamorphosis, and synthesis that move within dynamic systems. Smithson's trademark exploitation of entropy and dissolution was the opposite – a then necessary excavation of the moldering underbelly of modernism and a harbinger of the linguistic tropes of post-modernism. Smithson's appropriation by landscape architects, from the 1970s forward, is a sign that the collective guilty conscience shared by the modern disciplines of landscape architecture and architecture remains in play as both fields remain uneasy with their complicity in the production of static, denatured, inhumane environments.

"Nature" (and an emergent aesthetics that embraces "saturated phenomena") has indeed returned, but in a post-traumatic and therapeutic sense to haunt and re-colonize our world. That world includes our interior world, our imagination, and that haunting implies (as Rousseau implied in *Émile*) that our collective conscience speaks to us by way of the sigilistic (irreal) language of the natural world.[5]

POSTSCRIPT

While the High Line appears to represent the immediate future of urban design (the design of so-called "irreal" real estate) and a nominal "return" of what has long been held in suspension (buried below the strained hubris of urban infrastructural systems), the process of the competition clearly represents the past. This process involved *two competitions*, with the first drawing over 700 entries from around the world with an average entry fee of between $50.00 and $100.00. This two-phase process also included what one savvy commentator has called "the cultural-architectural-political directorate," insofar as many of the jurors from round one turned up on design teams in round two. The unofficial excuse for the two competitions (an "ideas" competition and a competition for a "workable" master plan) is that the former was required to generate publicity and options for the project, while the latter was required to formally engender a plan that is implementable (i.e., realistic). As a measure of the combined success of these back-to-back competitions, on October 6, 2004 Mayor Bloomberg announced $43.25 million (over four years) for the High Line project, toward design and engineering, and pending clarification of ownership and public access. There is, however, no reason why a properly administered ideas competition cannot also produce a "workable" master plan.

October 2004

A version of this essay appeared in *Competitions*. See: Gavin Keeney, "The High Line and the Return of the Irreal: A Second Competition for a Real Project," *Competitions* 14, no. 4 (Winter 2004-2005): pp. 12-19.

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[5] Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (1762): "Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice.… If [this guide] speaks to all hearts, then why are there so few of them who hear it? Well, this is because it speaks to us *in nature's language*, which everything has made us forget.… It no longer speaks to us. It no longer responds to us. And after such a long contempt for it, to recall it costs as much as banishing it did." Italics added. Cited in Marion, *Being Given*, p. 373. The term "saturated phenomena" comes from Marion's post-phenomenological trilogy that includes *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (2002), *Being Given* (1997), and *Reduction and Givenness* (1998h). Jean-Luc Marion is heir apparent to the triple legacies of Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Derrida.

/LU/: BLACK SUN @ MOMA

> A garden's silence is made of sounds. Press your ear to a tree and listen.[1]
> –Michelangelo Antonioni

The thing otherwise known as /LU/ (Landscape Urbanism), an empty signifier signifying merely itself, appears at MoMA's "Groundswell" exhibition in all of its muted glory, as eclipse, as possible-impossible synthesis of Landscape + Architecture + Urbanism, and (more critically) as an a-critical something large that looms in the architectural imagination as the (un)natural outcome of 10-plus years of advanced work in academies and studios, work effectively obliterating other options (such as an embrace of the "Real") and presenting the ultimate *fait accompli* – for example, contemporary urbanism as a network of madly interconnected, totally (totalized) synthetic (instrumentalized) pseudo-environments.

Arguably, the current vogue for an advanced synthetical /LU/ was imported to the US from Europe and the UK (by way of the Netherlands and the Architectural Association in London), in the early 1990s, in response to the mostly bathetic (and hopelessly pathetic) state of things landscape-architectural, its arrival signaling a turn into hybrid urban *mise en scène* (as pursued by MVRDV and West 8 in Holland), a purview more or less obsessed with spent infrastructure and, in inept and horribly trenchant ways, renascent (post-McHarg) ideas (however vague) of urban ecology as information flows and so-called datascapes. Tied to 1980s urban renewal by the elastic bonds of contiguity (as post-modernism is tied to modernism), and part and parcel of the extreme hubris of that decade (yet somehow post-Paris and post-Mitterrand Grand Projets anyway), Landscape Urbanism was the proverbial phoenix rising from the ashes of the post-industrial city in a decade marked by architectural arrogance masquerading as theory – a post-industrial (and edgy) artifact unto itself, which suggested the return of the amalgam (the constellation, or event) after so much discredited non-sense associated with modernist utopian projects and the polyglot affectations of post-modernism (the latter, despite claims otherwise by its detractors, inclusive of the strident, formalist maneuvers of the rare deconstructivist-inspired operations, surgical and strategic, rarely built but influential nonetheless).[2]

Yet despite this seemingly progressive embrace of a slightly broken set of justifications for collecting the detritus of the shattered modernist city, below the dead and dying operational interventions in cities worldwide lurked an unholy embrace of subtle forms of nonetheless *rampant* exploitation (claws extended), making the so-called progressive maneuvers of landscape urbanists oftentimes synonymous with regressive and/or repressive orders operating increasingly from within the vast dematerialized and de-territorialized "venues" of late-capitalism (and neo-liberalism).

The 1990s version of /LU/ that came over from the Netherlands and the UK owes a great debt to the late-1980s hollow, neo-realist gestures of OMA and Koolhaas, most especially by way of the ridiculous, empty figure of *terrain vague* (foolishly valorized by figures as eminent as Ignasi de Solà-Morales and Massimo Cacciari), a vast indeterminate (often Deleuzionary) field of criss-crossing forces and systems wherein nominal existentialist maneuvers might take place (nomadologies), situating a late-Situationist anti-ethos (the anti-spectacle) amidst the muck and mire of de-racinated, leftover bits of urban fabric or forsaken terrain in-between the fully instrumentalized urban *bric-à-brac* that constitutes the contemporary city worldwide. This *terrain vague*, while often (in fact) a "*terroir vague*," was then perceived as a type of titillating frontier, while after all such fragments of the broken landscape of modernity were always only waiting to be stitched back into the machinic operations of Leviathan (the modern State as colossal economic clockworks).

As all of this is more than self-evident today, it is a marvel to see Landscape Urbanism continue today to embrace the now-obvious pernicious and adventitious machine that is turning everything into something that can be bought and sold (and ultimately controlled and/or voided when necessary). The age-old conundrum of the urban square as place of revolution, insurrection, and (of course) punishment more than attests to the radical potential in such systems that swerve between machine and subject. Georges Bataille's premonitions regarding such, by way of backward glances into twisted forms of sinister Parisian urbanism, as Walter Benjamin's "Arcades Project", dovetail ironically with the absent critique today of what is lost below arch-determinism, and what is occluded beneath the irresponsible "realism" of contemporary urbanism flying under the sexed-up sign of morphological innovation.

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[1] Monica Vitti as Valentina (Signorini Ghirardini), in Michelangelo Antonioni, *La Notte* (1960).

[2] The catalogue: Peter Reed, ed., *Groundswell* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005). For an anti-catalogue, see Richard Weller, ed., *Room 4.1.3: Innovations in Landscape Architecture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), a survey of landscape-architectural work truly "off the map," and all but unbuilt.

Thus, the post-industrial thing is also the latest, perhaps most ferocious example of creeping economic determinism (culture as mechanism) and the flattening of the last frontier (which is also the *first frontier*); that is, human subjectivity or human "nature." In the face of a machinic spirit quite literally out of control and running amok (if not on auto-pilot), the world is re-configured every day as perpetual (endlessly re-written) artifact. Surrealism's diagnosis that early 20th-century advertising represented the colonization of the subconscious, registers, therefore, in the annals of operative criticism (given that the Surrealists countered with an equally absurd version of deranged signs) as the penultimate expression of tragic currents unremittingly at play in urban systems.

As the /LU/ juggernaut reaches apogee, it is also likely that its trajectory through the stratosphere will, in turn, sponsor the ejection of modules (satellites) that appear critical while criticality itself belongs "on earth" and "at home," or "at large," and truly on the margins as nascent (and renascent) forms of formalism, or built critique, returning always just in time (on time and in time) – that is to say, an irrepressible some-thing else calls, a both necessary and superfluous some-thing else in the double sense that any avant-garde also must undo all pretensions to reconciliation with authorized narratives and undo at once the pseudo-avant-garde postures of academicians and practitioners wont to claim ownership of discourse, for obvious reasons, obviously, and for spurious reasons, spuriously – both wont to circle the wagons and reclaim autonomy while actually vacating the dire and radical "nature" of that always suspect autonomy anyway (a relic of modernity's ill-conceived quest for transcendence at the expense of everything else).

For the same reasons that people should be human beings first, before they are black, female, handicapped, stupid, or what-have-you, Landscape +Architecture should be grounded (rooted) in the earth first, versus floating off in a virtual paradise or wasteland. To this /LU/ will return, because it must, once it has passed through its very own nihilism (its very own eclipse/nothingness), venturing once again into the ontological soup, or the slippery non-place from which it emerges every moment without fail, whether or not it cares to see or hear (or think) what is real and what is true (and what is "given") – and whether or not it cares to hear the siren song of Earth itself. To abandon the critical coordinates of its own arrival on the stage is to turn those coordinates over to the machinic, programmatic, and virtual mechanisms of the voracious and monstrous steamroller now (and once again) approaching the gates of human subjectivity.

Countering all of that, then, and operative in the allied arts (for example, music, cinema, and the visual arts) but nearly totally absent from architecture, one may hear traces of a song that calls, an Earth that calls, a confluence of the real and the given and its excessive provisionality, all of which remains offstage, offlimits and – essentially – off the map *out of necessity*.[3] If MoMA's curators (Peter Reed, et al.) missed or chose to ignore the current "twittering in the trees" (that is, other forms and figures of Landscape + Architecture), they cannot be blamed so much as chastised for practicing that special form of myopia that passes for pulse-taking exhibitions, here and there (and especially in Venice every two years), a purblind approach (based in part by adopting elective blinkers) that nearly always misses what is arriving or about to arrive, given that such representations of the state of things are automatically retrospective exercises, exercises clearly aimed at a reasonably obvious audience (the abstract public), and out of step, out of time, and out of sync with that extraordinary process of inversion, implosion, and insurrection that marks the annals and chronicles of architectural and artistic practice. Obviously, MoMA has done (again) what it always does (and does reasonably well), by assembling under the specious sign of "contemporary landscape design" a thematic event orchestrated around an already-spent force.

Better, then, not to mention a single project currently encased in the upper reaches of the Taniguchi re-designed vitrine that MoMA ultimately is and point elsewhere, instead, to things not on MoMA's radar or things about to spring into view from behind the screen (the curtain); things heedlessly out there or nowhere, an out there and nowhere that presents a more fitting present-tense for landscape-architectural production by going willy-nilly outside the authorized parameters utilized by MoMA and the academies, a lost cause aimed nonetheless at fostering an instrumental identity for a profession truly without bounds.

On the near horizon we find Peter Eisenman's Cultural Center for Santiago de Compostela, Galicia (under construction but not on display at MoMA) about to rear its lovely, "proverbial" three heads amidst so much rubbish elsewhere, rising in the public's eye as mirage (as will the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in Berlin,

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[3] Paul Virilio, François Burkhardt, "Abbiamo Bisogno del Sottosuolo" ("We Need the Below-Ground"), *Domus* 879 (March 2005), pp. 108-12. Regarding Hans Hollein's unbuilt Guggenheim Museum, Salzburg (competition c.1989): "PV: To my mind, the great success of contemporary art, aside from video installations which interest me a lot, is land art. And what is land art? It is art in the ground. It is the architecturing of a place. It is working with the architecture of the ground. It is about reintroducing art into the earth…. Today, through land art and its modernity, this return to a carving of land by sculptors, by architects or by landscape designers is in my view one of the most successful things in the history of art and the one with the biggest future." Ibid., p. 112.

lurch at least momentarily, in May 2005, into the middle of the collective radar). Tracking in reverse earlier forms of building-as-site – such as Raimund Abraham's 1970s neo-rationalist work (consistent with both Eisenman's and John Hejduk's 1970s neo-rationalist excavations), one cannot help be struck by the peculiar presence of two towers at Santiago designed by the late Hejduk, but "built" by Eisenman. If the language games of the faux neo-modernist /LU/ projects at MoMA are to be properly contextualized, or recognized as what they are, they are also to be constellated against and/or in (re)view of the savage marks of the ontological experiments conducted on the ashes and bones of architectures past, acts of contrition (perhaps) by architects working "inside" the tomb of architecture ("belatedly," as archaeologists), digging to pull it (the *discipline as discourse*) up by its own bootstraps and find (as it was quite lost then as now) the origin of the mauling and making of sites. One wants to ask Eisenman, then: "Peter, Santiago, c'est votre vous, mais oui?"

Land Art notwithstanding, /LU/ owes its highly-suspect notoriety to all that has been obliterated by the machine it services, and the anti-humanism at its dark heart (its elective post-humanism) is the darkest portion of its spectacularly (un)natural acts of abject instrumentalization of everything in its path. To punch holes then in this strategic veneer (a black shroud thrown over an otherwise dangerously indeterminate terrain, or Earth itself) is to also save Landscape + Architecture from its current self, and to liberate what always lies within it – its obviously dangerous (and therefore repressed) *sublime potential*.

POSTSCRIPTS

EISENMAN (NOW & THEN) – Peter Noever, ed., *Peter Eisenman: Barefoot on White-hot Walls* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2005); catalogue for the exhibition @ MAK, Vienna, December 12, 2004-May 22, 2005. Peter Eisenman, *Codex* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2005). Mark Rakatansky, ed., *Eisenman Inside Out: Selected Writings, 1963-1988* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). Andrew Benjamin, Cynthia Davidson, eds., *Blurred Zones: Investigations of the Interstitial, Eisenman Architects 1988-1998* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2003). Peter Eisenman, *Diagram Diaries* (New York: Universe, 1999). *Codex* (due in April 2005) will include essays by Peter Eisenman, plus 300 illustrations, including the code-driven work behind, beneath, and buried within the majestic and magisterial Cultural Center for Santiago de Compostela.

EISENMAN / BERLIN & BEYOND – The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is scheduled to open in May 2005 … A photo-documentary publication will follow (in June), from Lars Müller (with photographs by Hélène Binet and an as-yet-unspecified second photographer), on the implicit nature of the site, the process of construction, and the over-arching epic phenomenon of the project *per se*, inclusive of the Spring 2005 "opening" itself." Regarding PE's "Garden of Lost Footsteps" , at Castelvecchio, Verona (June 27, 2004-March 28, 2005), an *hommage* to Carlo Scarpa, see the catalogue for the installation, *The Garden of Lost Footsteps* (Venice: Marsilio, 2004). For "this + that," and other PE effects, in a nutshell, see "Faculty News," *Constructs: Yale School of Architecture* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2005): p. 25.

THE TOPOLOGICAL SUPPLEMENT

So in what, exactly, does the difference between Lacan and deconstruction reside? Let me elaborate this crucial point apropos [of] the Derridean couple, "supplement/centre". In a way reminiscent of the Foucauldian endless variations on the complex of heterogeneity of power relations (they run upwards, downwards, laterally), Derrida also likes to indulge heavily in exuberant variations on the paradoxical character of the supplement (the excessive element which is neither inside nor outside; it sticks out of the series it belongs to and simultaneously completes it, etc.). Lacan, on the contrary – by means of a gesture which, of course, for Derrida would undoubtably signal reinscription into traditional philosophical discourse – *directly offers a concept of this element*, namely the concept of the Master-Signifier, S1, in relation to S2, the "ordinary" chain of knowledge. This concept is not a simple unambiguous concept, but the concept of the structural [topological] ambiguity itself. That is to say, Lacan reunites in one and the same concept what Derrida keeps apart [splits]. In Lacan, S1 stands for the supplement – the trait which sticks out, but is as such, in its very excess, unavoidable; and, simultaneously, for the totalizing Master-Signifier. Therein, in this "speculative identity" of the supplement and the Centre, resides the implicit "Hegelian" move of Lacan: the Centre which Derrida endeavours to "deconstruct" is ultimately the very supplement which threatens to disrupt its totalizing power, or, to put it in Kierkegaardese, supplement to the Centre itself "in its becoming". In this precise sense, supplement is the condition of possibility *and* the condition of impossibility of the Centre.[4]
– Slavoj Žižek

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[4] Slavoj Žižek, "The Eclipse of Meaning" (1994), in Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 209-10.

/LU/, NO THANKS – What "sticks out" of urban systems (architectural and landscape-architectural) is the Real Itself (as it always already supplements constructed systems). In the case of the city, this Some-thing Else (often a telluric something else) is always suppressed for structural reasons. It appears spectral as it pulls further and further away (further from Truth). This "Real" is not simply "Nature" (whatever that is); it is also the irreal or spectral thing-in-itself (a post-Kantian thing-in-itself), insofar as the topological knot that all cities ultimately represent represents figuration and representation, as such. The "as such" (or "the given") is as much the space of the topological knot as anything inscribed within it. Thus all attempts to inscribe difference (while done so, typically, horizontally and/or rhyzomatically) fail due to the missing principle embedded in all topological thought; that is, that topological thought contains the traumatic kernel (as Žižek would say) of the Real plus its other (the Big Other or otherwise) – a field, then, of repressions that sponsor the appearance of the phantasmatic (haunted) "nature" contained within urban systems. To excavate the Real is to also "free" it from all such repressions (and reifications as markets, economic flows, datascapes and what-have-you today in the de-natured, new-ish, inter-disciplinary Master-Signifier, Landscape Urbanism). Thus, architecture-as-site remains the principal problem (and the principal "radical" form) of all formalist insurrections. Thus, too, the ontological returns, until the object of architecture is no longer the object *per se* but instead topological thought itself …

March/June 2005

LANDSCAPE + ARCHITECTURE ABOUT ALMOST NOTHING

I. THE PRESENT-PAST/MERCI BUTTERCUPS

For the buttercups grew past numbering, in this spot which they had chosen for their games among the grass, standing singly, in couples, in whole companies, yellow as the yolk of eggs, and glowing with an added luster, I felt, because, being powerless to consummate with my palate the pleasure which the sight of them never failed to give, I would let it accumulate as my eyes ranged over their golden expanse, until it became potent enough to produce an effect of absolute, purposeless beauty; and so it had been from my earliest childhood, when from the tow-path I had stretched out my arms towards them before I could even properly spell their charming name – a name fit for the Prince in some fairy-tale – immigrants, perhaps, from Asia centuries ago, but naturalised now for ever in the village, satisfied with their modest horizon, rejoicing in the sunshine and the water's edge, faithful to their little glimpse of the railway-station, yet keeping nonetheless like some of our old paintings, in their plebeian simplicity, a poetic scintillation from the golden East.[1]
–Marcel Proust

Proust's elegant evocations of "useless beauty" notwithstanding, perhaps it is Flaubert's desire to write a novel nominally "about nothing" that echoes here in the provisional and elective nature of *Landscapes About Almost Nothing*, an almost nothing that is, indeed, /S/ome-thing Else, a some-thing else that is, in turn, a type of "nothing" only in the sense that such an almost nothing passes through phenomenological reduction (the formalist moment) toward *everything else* (everything repressed in the normative, present-day deployment of landscape architecture *as a singular, professional discipline*) … Therefore, the call and allure of Landscape + Architecture (+ +), until the cows come home, so to speak …

II. PRÉCIS

Not so much about Burle Marx as /S/ome-thing Else, the material presented herein is intended to underscore the irrepressible élan of *formalism + phenomenology*, the twin peaks of modern artistic experience, as represented in the fusion of landscape + architecture. This compilation is intended as an adjunct to the essay "Landscape Formalism, Anyone?" – where a return to *a type of* formalism is rehearsed.

Formalism + phenomenology is not to be confused with *mimimalism*, which is a game unto itself. Landscape formalism is not landscape minimalism, and *landscape + architecture about almost nothing* is not a return to the serial excesses (flapdoodle) of mid-century modern landscape architecture (something which, in fact, persisted well into the 1980s). Instead, this amalgam (which is essentially synchronic and *approaches the universal*) is in many ways the synthesis of what Hal Foster has noted as the unresolved Constructivist-Surrealist dilemma – or a "cultural" duplicity – that rises and falls on subject-object problems associated with perception and ideation. As architecture moves away from *fixity* – buildings frozen in time and space – landscape moves closer to architecture and the *amalgam*. When this amalgam (perhaps a *just-milieu*) is also infused with hermetic *utopian* characteristics, then, and only then, is the fusion of the sign and the signified accomplished.

III. BURLE MARX TIME

The gardens and parks of Roberto Burle Marx (1909-94) constitute one of those rare moments in landscape architecture when things take precedence over the clamour of sensibility (aesthetics) – or when landscape architecture becomes nearly an index (inventory) of "almost nothing." By "almost nothing" is meant nothing less than the Real versus the Symbolic.

The work of Burle Marx has remained influential to this day *because of this incipient universality* – because his work is not *over*loaded with the stylistic (syntactic) apparatus (detritus) of a time and place, and because within this *almost nothing* there are signs of pure desire, a quest for configuring radical contingency – the well-worn and tiresome reference (recourse) to Cubism by scholars, to explain Burle Marx, is, in fact, an unintended red herring. Yes, Burle Marx returned from Paris, in the 1920s, infused with enthusiasm for formalist games – but he did not merely transcribe those games within the circle of then contemporary landscape architecture. A dispassionate look at his work indicates that he inscribed within the horizon of garden design a *passion for the autonomy of things* that is belied (vigorously concealed) by the geometric intricacy of his designs.

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[1] Proust, "Swann's Way," *Remembrance of Things Past*, Vol. 1, p. 183.

What betrays this artistic agenda, however, is the *expansiveness* of Burle Marx landscapes. Even within the more modest outlays of land or territory – such as Sítio Roberto Burle Marx (1941-) – the vectors of his design apparatus swerve away off/into the anamorphic hinterland of perception (the gap in-between Self and Other) illuminating *along the way* the superb isolation of things, or the primal authority and autonomy of the object. This in-betweenness is not the same thing as that thing which haunts architectural discourse today – i.e., the in-between thing of architecure + landscape, or the inside-outside thing of dematerialized architecture (inclusive of the digital vortex). This time, or in Burle Marx time, the in-between is more like that in-between time that is registered in the paintings of Gerhard Richter – the eerie, preternatural time inside of/illuminating the constitutional myopia of the Symbolic as it fails to register accurately (i.e., without re-ordering/disfiguring) the object of contemplation – and, as it ultimately fails to comprehend and contain the thing it sets out to encompass. (It is no coincidence that Burle Marx was also an accomplished painter.) This failure, when inverted, becomes *artfulness itself*, or the seeing of the other as an autonomous subject – to be revered – in the liberation of things from duplicity and the still-born canons of author*ized* sensibilities.

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Roberto Silva, *New Brazilian Gardens: The Legacy of Burle Marx* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006).

Marta Iris Montero, *Burle Marx: Jardins lyriques* (Paris: Actes Sud, 2001) – "Paysagiste, peintre, musicien, sculpteur, architecte, le Brésilien Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994) aimait avant tout la nature et les plantes. Ses parcs publics et ses jardins, tout en pleins et déliés, colorés de grands aplats monochromes ondulants, s'inscrivent en douceur dans la ville ou le paysage. Pour lui, chacune de ses créations devait faire coexister en harmonie monde végétal et vie humaine. Ce livre, écrit par sa collaboratrice-complice, est l'un des rares consacrés à cet artiste, qui révolutionna pourtant dès les années 30 l'art des jardins."

Christopher Bradley-Hole, *Jardins contemporains* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001) – "Lignes fluides et dépouillées, plantes sculpturales, couleurs en demi-teintes, le jardin de style minimaliste inspire calme, sérénité, énergie. Contemporain, ses racines piochent dans les religions méditatives de Chine et du Japon, et dans les proportions géométriquement pures de l'architecture de la Renaissance italienne. Moderne, il refuse les pastiches du passé, se construit en accord avec les nouvelles technologies et l'écologie. Ce livre nous propose un passionnant tour du monde d'œuvres minimalistes par un adepte de cette philosophie."

Rossana Vaccarino, with William S. Saunders, Eric Kramer, eds., *Roberto Burle Marx: Landscapes Reflected*, Landscape Views 3 (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000) – This book, an outgrowth of Rossana Vaccarino's researches of Burle Marx's legacy, while at the Harvard GSD, contains essays by Silvio Soares Macedo, Lelia Coelho Frota, Rossana Vaccarino, and Anita de la Rosa de Berrizbeitia. Berrizbeitia's essay is significant in that it undoes much of the damage done by "scholars" attributing Burle Marx's "aesthetic" to his association with European modernism. Berrizbeitia's essay argues that the work of Burle Marx was, in fact, *endogenous* – her critique of Parque del Este (in Caracas, Venezuela) resists the opposing contemporary discourses of "critical regionalism" and the reductive, formalist historiography of modern art and architecture. "Endogenous," in this context, means "growing from within" Burle Marx himself and Venezuela itself – a hybridization of forces that is unique versus categorical.

Anita Berrizbeitia, *Roberto Burle Marx in Caracas: Parque del Este, 1956-1961* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

Ivo Mesquita, ed., *Roberto Burle Marx: Landscape Architect* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

MORE ABOUT ALMOST NOTHING

WTC PARK? – *The New York Times Magazine* (May 16, 2004) – Vision plans for a possible World Trade Center (Ground Zero) park …

TIME OUT OF TIME – Funerary Monument for Commemorating the Dead at the World Trade Center – "An important emotional aspect of this proposal arises out of the fact that it is immersive. The immersive level of involvement (which has the power to change the way people feel) has been an efficacious impulse since prehistoric

times – occasioning elegant sacred mounds and evocative funerary temples. This experience was aptly demonstrated to me on my visit in 1995 to a prehistoric immersive funerary space built atop a small hilltop in Ireland called Newgrange. Newgrange is a stone and turf mound about 280 feet in diameter and 44 feet high (in restored form) which contains a thin passage leading to the central apse-like burial chamber. Entry into its inner space was arduous. It was not a long passage, but a difficult one, because one must slither through a very narrow passage corridor before reaching the pivotal opening." Joseph Nechvatal (New York, New York) …

THE ABSENT FATHER – "Things are forever misleading us … They feign singularity when in fact they are the result of manifold factors and forces … Nothing is simply black and/or white … The work of architecture, as it stands alone and mired in singularity, effaces the entire spectrum (the spectral nature) of its being … All architecture is haunted by its own mythic reserve … its own repressions and sublimations (continuous or dialectical …) … It must, in fact, be addressed as a person …"

"WINTER" AND MAYBE "SPRING" IN BERLIN – "Duration is experienced by a descent into self. Each instant is there; nothing is definitive since each instant remakes the past." Emmanuel Levinas / Peter Eisenman's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe …

WAVE GARDEN by Yusuke Obuchi @ Storefront for Art & Architecture, May 16 through June 29, 2002 – "Wave Garden is an electrical power plant that floats off the coast of Central California, and derives energy from the movement of ocean waves. Yusuke Obuchi's installation, Wave Garden, features what he refers to as a *drawing machine* – a 4' x 6' floating membrane made of 1734 articulated panels suspended by a system of 3468 counter weights and over 8 miles of fishing line." – "For most viewers the immediate parallels for the *Wave Garden* will be the Earthworks of the 1960s and '70s, but it sits uneasily in this genealogy. It might be reminiscent of another California dream, the *Running Fence* of Christo, but it is the *Running Fence* with brains that retain a social substance […] The Wave Garden is wondrously altruistic in comparison with such projects." Hal Foster / "Wave Garden" was published in *Archiprix International* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2004), pp. 66-67 …

MISCELLANEOUS TREES – Takenosuke Tatsui, ed., *Garden Views IV: Tree and Moss Gardens* (Tokyo: Kenchiku Shiryo Kenkyusha, 1991) – A short, exacting survey of very small, mostly residential modern gardens in Japan, based on traditional precepts, utilizing *zoki* ("miscellaneous trees," deciduous species grown in the Kanto plain with "calculated abandon") and supplemented by carefully-crafted plantings of moss, ferns, bamboo, azalea, and grasses architecturally accentuated with elegant stone walks, walls, occasional stepping-stones, and splashes of water – The premiere moss-gardening territories in Japan are, therefore, the provinces of Kansai and North Honshu …

DILLER & SCOFIDIO – Blur Building – See "Water + Architecture + Water" for a review of the Van Alen Institute exhibition "Architecture + Water" (2002) – The Blur Building (plus several other Diller + Scofidio projects) was published in *Prototypo* 006 (Lisbon) – Also, on the *Prototypo* website, you will find "Jump Cuts" and "Bad Press," two disquisitions on the discursive architecture(s) of Diller + Scofidio – The Blur Building was part of Expo 2002 (Yverdon-les-Bains, Switzerland) …

May 2006

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