Ghosts [phantasmagorias]

64 Lo sQuaderno

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Ghosts
Part II, Phantasmagorias

a cura di / dossier coordonné par / edited by
Alberto Vanolo & Andrea Pavoni

Guest artist / artiste présentée / artista ospite
VV.AA. *(see picture credits at p. 61)*

EDITORIAL

Cities keep disappearing, lost in what is *not there*, what is *no longer*, what is *not yet*. Objective realism and linear historicism cannot but miss the fermentation of spaces, bodies, and times, through which the urban vibrates, stretched or condensed, exploded or emptied out, by the uncanny forces of violence and desire. Attending to these ghosts means displacing the metaphysical primacy of presence and present, switching from ontology to *hauntology*, mixing styles and genres, attuning to what is not obvious, tangible, self-evident, what perhaps does not exist and yet insists in all the places and moments that compose urban life. Willing to encourage the widest variety of approaches, we invited authors to reflect and attune to ghostly urban matter without providing specific guidelines or frames. The amount of material convinced us to split *Ghost* in two issues, respectively subtitled *crowds* and *phantasmagorias*. After dedicating a first issue [no. 62] to the ghostly urban crowds, in this second instalment we deal with the spectral imaginaries that encompass the urban and shape its atmospheres, at the frictional encounter between the projected visions of the city of the future, the phantasmagorias that shine through its aesthetic surface, and the unactualised pasts that inhabit its incoherent presents.

We begin with a text that provides us with an appropriate transition from the crowds that populate the first issue to the phantasmagorias that light up this second one. In it, Alberto Duman invites us to explore the 'ghosts in reverse' conjured by the computer-generated imagery of the cities yet-to-exist, that is, the 'people' that populate architectural renderings, a spectral crowd which occupies future phantasmagorias ahead of their time, 'reloading' old racial biases into digital futures. Another intersection between bias, future imaginaries and repression is tackled by Jamie-Scott Baxter who, focusing on the case of Nava Raipur, India, explores the circu-

lation of green future imaginaries from North to South, reflecting on the role these ghostlike visualisations have in effacing the multiple temporalities, spatialities and materialities that coexist in the city, thus generating 'injustices-to-come'. In the following text, by Günter Gassner, the spectral disappearance of race, class, and other asymmetries from the modern urban fabric is brought back to the surface through the notion of urban phantasmagoria, as a 'lived experience on the part of a class that does not recognize itself as a class but a mass'. It is again a futuristic vision, yet one that has seemingly crumbled, to be the subject of Catherine Oliver and Liam Bates' text, which explores the ruins of the 1960s and 1970s utopian vision that propelled Birmingham, UK, and was epitomised by its brutalist Central Library, designed by the local architect John Madin, and ultimately destroyed, about a decade ago, to leave room for accounting firms, banks, chain restaurants, and the likes. Madin's ghost, however, is still haunting the city. As Oliver and Bates write, 'with the demolition, a utopian vision of Birmingham was destroyed, but the spectre of brutalist idealism lives on in the city's phantasmagoria'. Their words echo those closing Duman's piece: 'But the gap *between the dream-work logic of capitalism* and the *newly forming worlds* is also the space in between urban narratives and urban realities, where the reclaiming work of haunting and exorcising the ghosts in reverse of the city yet-to-exist, may begin'. What could this 'reclaiming work' entail?

An example is hinted at by Giuseppe Tomasella who engages with Antonio Scurati's novel, *La Seconda Mezzanotte*, set in a dystopian future where Venice has become an inhospitable swamp, at whose centre lies *Nova Venezia*, a sanitised, commodified, and hyper-controlled new town. The ghosts in reverse – to recall Duman's expression – of this dystopian city yet-to-exist already populates its present,

Tomasella seems to suggest. Listening to them is an increasingly urgent, both aesthetic and political, task. Perhaps, resonating with Camillo Boano's reflection on Giorgio Manganelli's *La palude definitiva* (see *lo Squaderno* 59, 'Beyond Urban Violence'), the suggestion these spectres fleetingly express is that we already live in the swamp, we already move through the invisible consequences of urban futures, and it is therefore paramount to find novel ways to inhabit them. Set in present-day Istanbul, the next essay by Lacin Tutalar seeks to detect the dystopian ghosts that are proliferating in the city, looking at the way its once vibrant music scene is threatened by the spectral absent-presence of bomb attacks, and the once vibrant biodiversity of its surroundings is being slowly erased by the uncontrolled violence of urbanisation. Another kind of disappearance concerns Gloria Toma, namely, the depopulation of historical villages in Italy, a long-standing process that is slowly turning them into veritable ghost-towns refashioned into abstract tourist phantasmagorias. Pondering on possible strategies to invert this trend, Toma focuses on the intersection of poetry and walking, two different practices of *dérive,* which harbour the potential to conjure the spectral remainders of the habits, practice and routines that held these places together. Such strategies in fact resonate with the 'guerrilla onomastics' explored by Giulia de Spuches vis-à-vis the colonial and neocolonial ghosts of Palermo, in the first issue on 'Ghosts [crowds]' [no. 62]. Another intersection between art and the city is also at the core of Stefano Tornieri's and Roberto Zancan's piece, which engages with the emergence of urban phantasmagorias between the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century, by looking at surrealist photography and its capacity to evoke the spectral powers harboured by the novel architecture of light and glass that characterised the city of spectacle and consumption of urban modernity.

Back to an absent-present, Salvatore Poier's delicate elegy is at the same time an experiment at spectral evocation. Revolving around the commemorative gravestone of Victor Navarro, sitting in the middle of a sidewalk in Pittsburgh, USA, Poier reflects on the uncanny encounter between his defiant gaze and the hipster phantasmagoria the present city has turned into. The issue ends with Jean-Paul Thibaud, who employs Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* to explore the ordinary atmosphere of Tokyo and the delicate task of attuning and acclimatising to its fleeting normativity, that any foreign body must undergo, upon arriving in the city and having to adapt to its ghostly ordinariness.

AV & AP[1]

Whiteness, Reloaded
Addressing the ghosts in reverse
of the cities yet to exist

Alberto Duman

Prologue: address to the ghosts[1]

I know you.
You come from me.
Born in the point cloud of the rig
Ready-posed from birth.

I see you.
You are here before me,
Manifesting our destiny
In the city-not-yet

You look back at me with anticipation
Prefiguring the time when *I* will be *You*.

I return your fixed gaze across time
In the future presents you can render so fast.
They are ruins by the time I get there.

And though your image will be gone
you will still be there somehow
a residual quasi-object left behind.

Your haunting will soak the scene
as an old image of colonial postures
freeze-framed from the phantom ride
of a ghost train.

Alberto Duman is an artist, university lecturer and independent researcher whose work is situated between art, urban studies and social practice. He is interested in the cultural production of urban spaces, narratives and atmospheres, and the agency of art within the immaterial economy of this production. In 2016 he was the Leverhulme Trust artist in residence at University of East London, where he produced the project Music for Masterplanning. In 2018, the co-edited anthology from the project 'Regeneration Songs: Sounds of Loss and Opportunity from East London' was published by Repeater Books. He is Senior Lecturer in Fine Arts and Programme Leader for the MA Expanded Printmaking at Middlesex University in London, a convenor of the online course PILOT at Autograph and a member of the DIG Collective. His ongoing project 'Haunting the Future City' is developing through educational spaces, films, exhibitions, 'talking ghosts' collective writing workshops, conference presentation and building up towards a publication.

https://linktr.ee/cinciabigia

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1 Given the spectral nature of the 'ghosts in reverse', the use of poetics here is intended as an expressive invocation casting a kind of 'spell', its verses directly addressing the inanimate urban actors of the rendered worlds of cities yet to exist that this text is preoccupied with and calling them out into a dialogue with us that acknowledges openly their anticipatory roles in urban discourses.

In recent years, images of 'futuring' of the contemporary city – *a term borrowed from the language of future management* – have been largely shaped by spectral urban figures/agents within urban processes and regeneration atmospheres which I would describe as acts of 'future colonisation'. The most notable aesthetic objects of this production of urban imaginaries are the CGI (computer-generated imagery) renderings of future urban spaces to be found on the hoardings that surround building sites of new developments during construction. Whilst on a cursory level this visual imagery simply functions as advertising for the sale and investment opportunity of the development, they also exceed such basic purposes as needed by real-estate marketing, through the use of persuasively photo-realistic aesthetic means of representation.

> Ironically the more rationalised these spatial products become, the better they are suited to irrational fictions of branding.[1]

By occupying a threshold between the temporalities of the existing and the yet-to-exist city in their encounter within the location they occupy, these surfaces open a unique discursive space with social and political dimensions, loaded with intense affective agency.

> CGIs are not only representations, but actually have agency and become embedded in the construction of space, place and social life – through a powerful mobilisation and assemblage of people, skills and ideas.[2]

Because of their properties, these peculiar snapshots of moments in the future social life of urban spaces in the making – and the virtual actors within them – help to make apparent some recurring devices of contemporary city-making, that extend into a form of colonisation of urban futures through the fixated preoccupation with producing images of 'future presents', defined as 'technologically constituted futures prone to anticipation'.[3] Acting in a spatial urban domain under constant reshaping as oracles of the inevitable becoming of future cities, these spectral urban agents have consistently summoned up a future urban landscape in the present.

These are the 'ghosts in reverse' of our cities, *the paradigmatic urban actors with anticipatory agency, prefiguring the city yet-to-exist and occupying its future ahead of its time.* Because of the place dialectic they set into motion in specific sites across different times, these aspirational digital people as virtual urban citizens are entering in some kind of 'messianic' dialogue with the present time and those encountering them as passers-by in the 'here-and-now'.

The reference to Walter Benjamin's interruptive philosophy of history is not casually employed here. The spectral presence and haunting power of these 'ghosts in reverse' and their CGI future worlds can be understood through Benjamin's conception of discontinuous time as discussed in his Theses on the Philosophy of History, alas in an opposite direction.[4] Rather than unsettling the facile historicism of a linear past, here a crossing point is exposed between 'present futures' yet-to-be-written and 'future presents' traded and exchanged for wealth creation.

But whilst in Benjamin's philosophy, a disruptive event instigates anamnesis of such discontinuity and seizes the continuum of time with redemptive possibilities for a more just world, in the spaces opened up by the images of the city yet-to-exists in their architectural renderings, we see no signs of redemptive social and spatial justice in the future city.

Racial homogeneity, economic inequality, atomised subjectivities, cultural appropriations, speculative global investments, and a privately managed public realm are steady characteristics of these tableaux understood as images of 'future presents'.

Glaring omissions are also significant in these representations, where all actors on the 'scene' are pasted into a sedated, totally socially compliant situation, with no policing or surveillance cameras as part of their visible infrastructure. To all effects, these renderings exist as images of an ideal present transposed into a predetermined future where nothing changes. Acting both as harbingers and as

proxies, the operative ghosts enlisted by the financialised urban imaginary of global investment are shadowy figures of anticipation and prefiguring with the power to extend beyond the present and shape the future as a matter of marketing and management, carrying with it all the desires and unconscious biases of their creators.

> In the utter uncertainty of the present, the time of the global institution and its own planning (whether business or cultural seems not to matter anymore) is the one that asserts its ownership, it prefigures and articulates future urban landscapes visually and aurally and sets their goals to achieve them through marketing and management.[5]

It is in these spectral conceptual mobilisations, that the silent narrative of capital investments leads to the unfolding of a financial imagination of the future city[6], conceived as a terrain that is empty, open and subject to colonisation[7]. They perform deliberate acts of prefiguring the occupation of future residents and city dwellers in advance of their actual presence on the site, anticipating their existence in affirmative and expressive ways through projected identity and lifestyles, actions and positions in public space. Their actual roles and functions are mostly determined by the selected offerings of human activities typologies by the companies that provide 'ready-posed' figures for the creative assemblages of designers involved in the architectural visualisation industry.

And as we look more closely at these spectral urban agents as significant packages and products of the visualisation industry, we can get a sense of how the social dimension of 'rendering' emerges right at the moment of acquisition of human photogrammetry data. In the journey from scanning, through point cloud renderings and to 'ready-posed' figures, these human-like spatial products carry with them all self-evident social descriptors and aesthetic assumption of their source identities as pattern recognitions of contemporary life fed back to the viewer, into the urban simulations they will become a part of. We know who they are, because they are like crude postures of ourselves, captured in contemporary street photography-like images.

But they also carry the algorithmic biases of their makers as stealth material into the futures they are imaging. Looking at the technological structure needed for these harvesting processes and their geographic distribution, we can see how the use of the word 'colonisation' becomes deliberately associated with a 'scanning bias' that reinforces 'whiteness'[8] in architectural visualisation of places yet to exist, sanitising the global majority out of its boundaries.[9] A digital version of white supremacy futurism becomes embedded in the industry of production of the spectral agents that populate the renderings of future cities, most notable at the point of purchase from specialised visualisation industry companies, when these agents are available either as single figures or in 'bundles', as members of potential but 'inoperative' communities.[10]

We can think of them as a service population assembled from singular individual acquisitions of actual humans who relinquished the licensed use of their features to become animated 'people', whose destiny is to be copied and pasted into existence as part of a purpose-made screenplay. By inoperative (*désoeuvrée*), Nancy does not mean dysfunctional or failing, but rather 'a spontaneous or "unworked" inclination to come together that has no object or purpose other than itself'. Nancy's definition of 'inoperative community' fits well the condition of these actors as potential, ready-posed agents of place-making without a cause, *with no object or purpose other than itself.*

In the data decoding and recoding that occurs in the process of 3D scanning and acquisition from human beings to products on a shelf, the objects and purposes of the 3D people are voided and reset – rendered 'inoperative'. That is, until they are set into action to perform human presence in a rendered urban context, becoming an active part of choreographed 'scenes' of social dynamics (citation on scenes) and collective mobilisations of urban atmospheres: from people to puppets as products and back to 'surrogate people' again.

In this transition, they are switching from being bundled products and turning into imagined citizens, the affective communities of places yet to exist. The 'bundles' are packaged offerings where a group of individual digital characters are brought together in some specific situations, and whose means of association can be derived from purely spatial or circumstantial proximities, or otherwise deliberately attributed basic social categories. For example, the company 3Dpeople proposes 'workers bundles', 'shopping bundles', 'sports bundles', 'café bundles', 'mobility bundles', 'travelling bundles', but also 'kids bundles', 'sauna bundles' and even a 'VR bundle'[11]. As their names suggest, the 'bundles' constitute a crude sociology of everyday assemblages, but one that satisfies the basic laws of demand and offer of the visualisation industry. After all, a bundle is both 'a number of things that have been fastened or are held together' or 'to make someone go to a particular place by pushing them in a quick, rough way'.[12]

The purpose of turning people into commodities that the technological and commercial process of this industry is dedicated to – from scanning to bundles to renderings – inherently acquires the spectral and structural violence of the colonial enterprise as the subservient acquisition of bodies as products for unique and specific purposes, a digital chattel extracted from reality, 'ready-posed' to act out the visual script they are meant to fit into. These digital bodies are displayed as bundled products for ease and convenience, but the corollary dimension of these bundling decisions also speaks of a social politics at the point of sale: *'who gets bundled up with whom?'* and *'for what reason?'*

We use the term 'whiteness, reloaded' here, to signify the continuity between reality and the virtual, then back into reality, and to identify a pernicious and inherent tendency within the visualisation industry – even before it has visualised any urban scene – that becomes established by these choices, as they are presented on the shelves of the companies that offer the 'bundles'. An 'Ethnic Bundle'[13], as well as a 'Diversity Bundle 1' and 'Diversity Bundle 2'[14] are on the shelf of 3Dpeople products that supply the global industry of renderings for urban development. The chilling effect of this bundling violence comes through as a persistent evidence of whiteness as an oppressive ideology and a regime of representation, reloaded into the building blocks of a racialised future manifested into being through apparently innocuous images, but perpetrating its othering logic into a prolonged 'future present', where nothing actually changes.

By the compound effect of the inherent othering of the 'ethnic' and 'diversity' bundles at the point of sale (whiteness) and the future colonising at the point of visualisations meeting the street level, a 'spectral-structural complex' at work in the architectural urban visualisation industry comes into view. Once understood as part of such future colonising impulses, echoes of notions of 'manifest destiny' reminiscent of US frontier conquests, imbue the architectural renderings with soft violent histories and visual manifestations of self-generated psychotic fantasies, a desire for possessing the real through the use of the architectural visualisation as representational evidence of its unequivocal becoming. The message is: 'This will be your future because we show it to be so', even when disclaimers of 'subject to change' appear in small print on the very same hoardings.

But in the actuality of our present, the condition of urban spaces in all their planetary connectedness is now openly haunted by racial (Black Lives Matter) and immunological (COVID-19) histories – in between all others – that have emerged as finally inevitable key factors in the determination of any possible future of human proximity and co-habitation of our cities.

These stored up grievances, concerns and preoccupations have incubated for a long time as a set of emancipatory and autopoietic speculative futures. But they are now also fully active agents of alternative futures in the making: they are active 'histories that disturb the present'[15] and fully operative actors in the imaginary of future cities. Their presence has flooded the 'thirdspace between reality and ideas of the city'[16] with further hauntings, taking us into an animated state in which a repressed

or unresolved social violence is making itself known: 'The ghost demands your attention. The present wavers. Something will happen'.[17]

At the point of convergence of these multiple hauntings and social demands — the spells and counter-spells that make up the city in its incommensurability — the ghosts in reverse of the city yet-to-exist demand our attention as actors of a scripted urban future, a future where the histories that disturb the present are sanitised by the normative ideology of its maker. In Michael Taussig's ethnographic writing on Occupy Wall Street, a voice appears, engaged in an imaginary dialogue between them and Walter Benjamin's writings in *This Space for Rent*.[18] Alex, a code writer sleeping rough in Zuccotti Park is rummaging into her own dialectic caught up between sleep and revolution: 'We are emerging from slumber but we are disoriented, stupored, caught between the dream-work logic of capitalism and the newly forming world'.[19] A world scenario where 'whiteness' finally, only occupies 'a place in the rainbow', as Linda Martín Alcoff writes about in *The Future of Whiteness*[20], appears still elusive in the present approach to urban architectural renderings and its service industries, where whiteness still appears as the normative presence against which the 'ethnic' others are bundled up together as the non-normative presence in cities yet-to-exist.

But the gap between the dream-work logic of capitalism and the newly forming worlds is also the space in between urban narratives and urban realities, where the reclaiming work of haunting and exorcising the ghosts in reverse of the city yet-to-exist, may begin.

Endnotes

1 Keller Easterling (2015) *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. London: Verso, p.15

2 Gillian Rose, Monica Degen, Clare Melhuish (2016) Looking at digital visualisation of urban development projects: dimming the scintillating glow of unwork. In: Jordan, S. and Lindner, C. (Eds) *Cities Interrupted: visual culture and Urban Space*, London: Bloomsbury, p. 107.

3 Barbara Adam, Chris Groves (2007) *Future Matters: Action, Knowledge, Ethics*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill. A complete online archive of the project 'In Pursuit of the Future' (ESRC 2003-6) is available here: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/futures/briefings.html

4 Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt (Eds) (1999) Theses on the Philosophy of History. *Illuminations*, London: Pimlico. pp. 245-255.

5 Kirstin Ross (2016) *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. London: Verso, p. 7.

6 Max Haiven (2014) *Cultures of Financialization: Fictitious Capital in Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. London: Palgrave MacMillian.

7 Barbara Adam, Chris Groves, *op. cit.*

8 Richard Dyer (1997) *White: Essays on Race and Culture*. London: Routledge.

9 Two recent important and nuanced texts on race, gender, and difference in science and technology studies are: Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora (2019) *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures*. Durham: Duke University Press, and Ruha Benjamin (2019) *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.

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11 https://3dpeoples.com/en/shop/?yith_wcan=1&filter_typ=bundles&query_type_typ=and last accessed 11th February 2023.

12 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bundle last accessed 11th February 2023.

13 Pict.1 The 'Ethnic Bundle' as it appears on the website of the company 3D People.com, at https://3dpeoples.com/?s=ethnic&post_type=product last accessed on 8th February 2023

14 Pict. 2 The 'Diversity Bundle 01' as it appears on the website of the company 3D People.com, at https://3dpeoples.com/?s=ethnic&post_type=product last accessed on 8th February 2023

15 Gregory Sholette (2020) 'Histories that Disturb the Present', at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SjeAzICGYY last accessed 11th February 2023.

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17 Avery Gordon (2011) Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity. *Borderlands* 10, 2: 1–21. p.3 Last accessed online on Google Scholar on 11th February 2023.

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19 'Afifi' in Michael Taussig (2012) I'm so Angry I Made a Sign. *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 39 Issue 1, p. 56.

20 Linda Martín Alcoff (2015) Conclusion: A Place in the Rainbow, in *The Future of Whiteness*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Dis/continuing in/justices-to-come in 'ghost town' Nava Raipur India
Or, speculations on a spectral sympoiesis: becoming-with ghosts

Jamie-Scott Baxter

Ghostlike visualisations depicting green development haunt the future of urban space as they de- and re-materialise in cities across the planet. Arguably such apparitions are part of a contemporary green dispositif,[1] a heterogenous network of human and nonhuman relations that sets the conditions of possibility for future life. Such images tend to circulate from North to South, and spread particular ideologies as they flow.[2] Against this background, and diffracted through Karen Barad's more-than-human hauntology,[3] the following essay asks: in what ways do images, imaginaries, and motifs of future green cities shape and materialise 'injustices-to-come' in the case of Nava Raipur, Chhattisgarh India? Grounded in site work and subsequent discourse analysis of newspapers, websites, social media, and planning policy documents the essay tracks the im/material and discursive entanglements that perform and co-constitute Nava Raipur's past, present, and future, a deeply relational process conceived of here as an urban *spectral sympoiesis,* [4] that is, as defined in what follows, a multitemporal and multispatial *becoming-with* ghosts in relational city-making processes.

Apparition one: Nava Rapiur, east India

Picture this: a two-point perspective taken from a vantage point hovering somewhere adjacent to the top of a neighbouring skyscraper. Below, weaving between bands of grey and black, linear constellations of green pixels represent a version of park lush with well-maintained verdant lawn grass. Deciduous trees (London planes?) are petrified in a state of permanent foliage lining ribbons of blue flowing into an amorphous basin reflecting a sharp (Northern?) mid-summer's sky. Meanwhile, impossibly thin pedestrian footbridges supported by harp-like tension cables snake through the green and blue infrastructures beneath. Perhaps surprisingly this is not an image of a city in the temperate

Jamie-Scott Baxter is an architect-planner and postdoctoral spatial researcher at Technical

University Berlin. Currently, Jamie is researching the spread of policy and practices associated with (re)introducing nature into the city to mitigate (human induced) climate change and species loss in the near South. He co-ordinates The Planetary Workshop, a transdisciplinary lab for planetary design, healing, and multispecies justice. Other interests include decolonising urban natures, conservation, botanical gardens, rural-urban dynamics, infrastructure/ing, social self-determinacy, spatial transformations, and new materialisms.

baxter@tu-berlin.de

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1 Bruce P. Braun (2014) A new urban dispositif? Governing life in an age of climate change, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 32(1), 49–64.

2 Jamie-Scott Baxter (2021) Modes of spread in social innovation: A social topology case in rural Portugal, *Journal of Rural Studies*, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.04.016; Jamie-Scott Baxter (2022) *Self-organised/ing Infrastructures. Understanding everyday practices of spread and resistance in processes of socio-spatial change on the periphery. Multi-sited ethnographies in rural Portugal and Austria* [Dr. Ing Dissertation]. Technical University Berlin.

3 Karen Barad (2010) Quantum entanglements and hauntological relations of inheritance: Dis/continuities, spacetime enfoldings, and justice-to-come, *Derrida Today*, 3, 240–268; Karen Barad (2017) No small matter. Mushroom clouds, ecologies of nothingness, and strange topologies of spacetimemattering. In Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt (Eds.), *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, pp. 103–120. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

4 In contrast to *autopoietic* indicating a self-producing complex system, *sympoietic*, proposed by Beth Dempster and developed by Donna Haraway refers to collectively-producing complex systems – a practice of *making-with* and *responsive* to other forms of life. To this company I add ghosts in the unfurling of urban spacetimematters. See: M. Beth L. Dempster (1998) *A self-organizing systems perspective on planning for sustainability* [Masters Thesis]. University of Waterloo; Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying wtih the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucence*. Duke University Press.

biome of the global North: instead it is a visualisation of Nava Raipur, the newly planned capital city for the state of Chhattisgarh in the sub-topical biome of eastern-central India. Planning for the new state capital began in 2000 and building is underway. Roughly the size of Chandigarh, Le Corbusier's modernist vision 1,500 km north-west at the foothills of the Himalayas and structured on a similar transport grid, Nava Raipur unfolds along a built 14 km x 100 m wide 'smart infrastructure' corridor with Bus Rapid Transit System, cycle lane, pedestrian track, and 6 lane highway. Spanning some 250 km[2], the government agency responsible for the city's development describe Nava Raipur as Indian's first 'green field smart city'.[5]

Urban spectral sympoiesis, or becoming-with ghosts

Hauntology from Derrida through Fisher has come to refer to the subjective recollections of a past felt in a disjointed present - not, as Fisher argues, a yearning for time gone by, but a 'nostalgia for all the futures that were lost when culture's modernist impetus succumbed to the terminal temporality of postmodernity', a condition structured by capital.[6] Whereas for Karen Barad's new materialist intervention, hauntology describes 'co-existing multiplicities of entangled relations of past-present-future-here-there'[7] where spaces, times, and matters are made together. Engaging Nils Bohr's indeterminacy principle with Derrida's poststructuralism, Barad builds a strange topological alternative to classical ontology's linear causality in Euclidian space. Past and future, space and time are not predetermined stable categories, instead they are iteratively re(con)figured with/in 'material-discursive practices'.[8] Arguably, the single most important aspect of Bohr's work for Barad is the recognition that matter's properties (waves or particles) are not given prior to observation. That is, material-discursive practices including experimental apparatus, spatio-material dispositions and lab setups alongside existing scientific knowledge and the power asymmetries and discourses that restrict and shape what's possible, not only cast epistemic uncertainty over our ability to know, but moreover, that matter's identity is performed in concert with the material and discursive apparatus designed to measure it. But Bohr's conclusions go further still, indicating that altering measuring devices *after* the experiment has been conducted changes the results of the experiment already taken place!

This is not simply objects of the past resurrected in a spooky disjointed present, but as Barad interprets, this undermines the spatiotemporal logics that underpin classical ontology, revealing that 'the past was never simply there to begin with, and the future is not simply what will unfold'.[9] Barad, whose feminist materialism aims to trouble the boundaries between natural and social sciences, shows Bohr's insights to correspond with Judith Butler's work on gender in which identity is not a predetermined property but performed through language. Barad's project to decentre human exceptionality takes these ideas further still, and by eschewing the privileged position language has occupied in recent critical social theory considers how matters materialise. In this eerie, sympoietic, making-with there are no predetermined entities floating through space and time; rather spaces, times, and matters ('spacetimematterings') co-evolve together 'intra-actively' leaving 'marks on the flesh of the world'.[10] Intra-actions are haunted by the possibility of all others that could have been and are yet to come, as boundaries are temporarily reconfigured and exclusions made. As such, this performative becoming-with ghosts is not only an ontological matter but an ethical concern in which justice is a relation of responsibility to the illusive shadowy spectres excluded from materialisation.[11]

5 https://navaraipuratalnagar.com
6 Mark Fisher (2013) The Metaphysics of Crackle: Afrofuturism and Hauntology. *Dancecult*, 5(2), 42–55.
7 Barad, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 261.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 260.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
11 *Ibid.*; Jacques Derrida (1994). *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*.

Applied to the urban, spectral sympoiesis recognises that urban spacetimematters are made with not only co-present critters but also im/material ghostly others, it is responsive to the non-contemporaneity of the present and to the multiple entangled spatialities, temporalities and materialities that simultaneously coexist and co-constitute the city. It acknowledges that the denial of these asymmetric relations and the differences they enact serves to continue socio-ecological injustices-to-come, inscribing them onto the fleshy materiality of urban spaces such that they shape and restrict future conditions of possibility and pasts yet to come.

Apparition two: green field cities

Partially hidden by the rolling banner advertising the city's 'investment opportunities', the strap line on Nava Raipur Atal Nagar Vikas Pradhikaran's (NRANVP) official website reads 'WELCOME TO NAVA RAIPUR ATAL NAGAR: The World's First Integrated Smart And Eco Friendly City'.[12] NRANVP is the regional governmental agency in Chhattisgarh responsible for the development of the Nava Raipur. Its green field credentials are justified by the claims of 27% of land reserved for non-building which include a 797-acre zoo with jungle safari (described as 'Asia's largest human made reserve for preserving and developing species'); a 153-hectare botanical garden; a cricket stadium; a 139-hectare, 18-hole golf course; a central park; and green walking corridors that run the length of the city. And all this encapsulated in a 500-meter-wide green belt - which, like effective green belts in Europe, is as much to protect intact landscape between urban areas (in this case between the 'old' Raipur and the new city, some 20km away centre to centre) as it is to exert pressure on real estate prices in the new city. But what does a 'green field city' signify here? New cities are being planned and built in India led by the Ministry of Commerce & Industries under the banner of green field cities or green field smart cities used to refer both to the cities eco-credentials and to the fact they are planned on a supply of green field or abandoned land. However, certainly in the case of Nava Raipur the land was not an abandoned green field. Prior to construction there were more than 30 rural villages in the development zone each with access to a small water body known as a talaab. Talaabs are a vital part of village life, they have sanitary and religious purpose and constitute a central public space rich in biodiversity.

So, what happened to these diverse multispecies communities inhabiting the villages in the development zone? Land and rehabilitation packages were drawn up to compensate the existing (human) inhabitants. However, if packages were not voluntarily accepted then the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 – initial enacted by the British colonial government in 1824 – would have the power to displace people from their property in the interest of the public project. Since January 2022, farmers from 27 villages, unsatisfied by the rehabilitation packages, mobilised as the Nava Raipur Affected Farmers Welfare Committee to protest in front of the Naya Raipur Development Authority demanding proper compensation for their property. In March 2022, Siyaram Patel, a 65-year-old farmer, died during protests for a just price for their land. After his death, his family were awarded 400,000 INR compensation and the affected farmers promised jobs in exchange for their land.[13] As for the nonhuman natures, three of the larger talaabs are integrated into the new city as 'lake front developments which shall cater for provision of modern recreation spaces, sports tourism and nature tourism'[14]. Whether the well-mown grass lawns of sports pitches, golf course and recreation field as depicted in the marketing images will support the richness of life as talaabs will need to be seen.

Green field smarts cities are connected to a coordinated attempt to erase certain forms of life. This

New York: Routledge.
12 https://navaraipuratalnagar.com/
13 https://indianexpress.com/article/india/farmer-dies-at-land-acquisition-protest-over-new-chhattisgarh-capital-7816286/
14 https://tinyurl.com/ukvsdwfu

includes the Naxalites, a Maoist guerrilla movement which emerged out of 1967 student riots in the village of Naxalbari in Bengal and spread over central and east India. The armed group organises tribal peoples and fights for improved land rights and social equality for tribal people and rural workers. Concerned over the Naxalites' influence on and mobilisation of rural workers and Adivasis peoples and the barriers presented to large-scale cooperate investment in mineral rich and forested regions, centralised strategies to contain and eradicate the Naxalites are enforced. These include police and military violence, development and infrastructure projects and more recently surrender and rehabilitation schemes. A 2020 report claims the Naxalites have been contained to 53 districts across 9 states, of which Chhattisgarh is understood to be one of the last remaining strongholds, with many 'districts of concern' within. The number one district of concern is Aurangabad in Bihar, which also happens to be the site of a newly planned green field smart city.[15]

In May 2022, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change approved an infrastructure development plan for forest land in Left Wing Extremism or Naxal affected areas. Projects implemented under the Forest Conservation Act (1984) will include urban, telecommunication, water, transport, irrigation, and energy infrastructures part of a strategy to eradicate the perceived Naxal threat and further marginalise tribal peoples and farm workers.

Diffraction patterns

The spatial conditions of possibility of Nava Raipur began to be set as Le Corbusier's vision for future cities materialised in Chandigarh's grid plan. In this way modernity's (white male) historic images of future antibiotic cities[16] - in which humanity has been carefully contained and separated off from nonhuman natures - continue to shape the life worlds of Nava Raipur's multispecies inhabitants. The modern city grid, imposed over a landscape classified as a green field, had little tolerance for existing forms of life as villages and fields were cleared. The remaining lakes - now features of golf courses and leisure parks - will continue to haunt the city, a ghostly shadow of another pre-grid spatiality, rhythm and im/material presence marking the flesh of this future city space.

Unwanted material presences are not always easy to erase, however. Much effort has gone into making ghosts of the Naxalites which threatened to recruit marginalised rural workers and Adivasis peoples. To build a new green field smart city on land which was not abandoned but full of life including farmer workers, lakes, villages, rural communities and animal life provoked protests for justice by the Nava Raipur Affected Farmers Welfare Committee which lead to the death of Siyaram Patel. This signals the multiple synchronous spatialities, temporalities and im/materialities that co-constitute the present. Where city builders, politicians, planners, and designers would wish to celebrate the smart, green, and eco-credentials in a utopic vision of the future of city space, spacetimematters unfurl in contested material and discursive entanglements haunted by ghosts.

By repressing certain relations and the asymmetrical differences this performs, green visualisations, imaginaries, motifs, and city building practices are part of a contemporary ecological dispositif engaged in a struggle to set the terms of Nava Raipur's past-present-future-here-there, a struggle marked by the continuation of injustices-to-come. The urban spectral sympoiesis sketched out above describes how Nava Raipur becomes-with ghostly apparitions associated with multiple spacetimematters. The city is made by past future visions of modernity inscribed in the historic-futuristic motif of the urban grid, of a Naxalite politics and vision of socially just rural futures drawing in 1967 Bengal, of farmer protests for compensation and justice for their land connecting to wider struggles across India in recent years, and by those that have died or yet to be born into these struggles. Its stories

15 https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/pm-inaugurates-first-greenfield-industrial-smart-city-in-aurangabad/article29364348.ece
16 Jamie Lorimer (2020). *The Probiotic Planet: Using Life to Manage Life*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

are continually rewritten as discourses change and its tangled web of smart and green technologies restructure the muddy ground once marked by pondlife. The city's narratives and streets de- and re-materialise in the cracks and contradictions wrought between synchronous dispositifs of modernity and a greener, ecological arrangement haunted – at least in some spacetimes - by a radical and otherworldly vision of postcapitalist multispecies futures. It raises the question: how compatible are these shifting dispositions? The grotesque Frankenstein's monster of the smart green field city would suggest a synthetic hybrid is possible – but surely it is in these fissures and fractures where the struggle for justice takes place: over the incompatibilities and contradictions and the boundary-making practices that differentiate what can be said and done. After all, it is through these differences and their haunted silences that past-present-future urban spacetimematters unfurl.

Avenue of atrocities
modern phantasmagorias and the anti-modern

Günter Gassner

Günter Gassner is Senior Lecturer in Politics and Design at Cardiff University, and an architect. His research is at the intersection of critical theory, political philosophy, and spatial practices. He is the author of *Ruined Skylines: Aesthetics, Politics and London's Towering Cityscape* and currently works on the book project *Antifa Urbanism: The Radical Left as a Spatial Practice*.

GassnerG@cardiff.ac.uk

<1>

Among the materials for the 1935 Exposé of the *Arcades Project*: "Toppling of illusionism in the cityscape: perspectives".[1]

Haussmann the demolition artist opened up nineteenth-century Paris. He created perspectives, new views in perspectives down long, straight and broad streets. These are perspectives, Frisby notes, that are "cleared for all except admirers, spectators and [. . .] consumers".[2] Walter Benjamin recognises Haussmann's true goal: "to secure the city against civil war. He wanted to make the erection of barricades in the streets of Paris impossible for all time".[3] Perspectives against radical political change.

Ghostwriting the city – writing the city's ghosts. Writing against Haussmann's perspectives and also against the ones designed by Speer. The Avenue of Splendours, a North-South axis that was planned for the capital of the Reich, was closed-off to traffic. It had an underground highway, a not atypical vertical zoning for modern urban planning. It was meant to slow pedestrians down, to give them time to develop deep emotional bonds to the object ahead. For Hitler, Speer's perspectives are part of "a tonic against the inferiority complex of the German folk"; a necessary intervention "to give self-confidence to the nation".[4]

Writing haunting memories and unredeemed histories. How can ghostwriting become a process of opening the city to a perspectivism that works against authoritarian rule, against theoretical closure and for open-ended possibility?

Haussmann's and Speer's perspectives are nothing like a Baroque perspectivism that is based on Leibnizian monadology. Indeed, the latter is more an antidote for the former. The monad is an urban perspective in which the whole city is expressed but not everything can be distinctively perceived. Leaving Leibniz's theological presupposition aside, monadology opens a space for radical urban politics that fundamentally challenges what is possible and what is incompossible (i.e. what is deemed to be impossible or, in other words, what is impossible within a compositional whole) in and for a city.[5]

No closed totality, no harmony exists: the revolutionary use value of perspectivism.

<2>

Ghostwriting the racialised, capitalist city – rubbing against Benjamin's attempt to write the prehistory of modernity with an emphasis on the transformation of a culture of production to one of consumption. Writing the city as a literary montage: a process of de-contextualisation and juxtaposition of seemingly incongruent elements. Ideas do not "fuse into harmony".[6] Fragments are put next to

21

each other to work against compositional wholeness. A technique of juxtaposition as we find it in the film and in the phantasmagoria.

In the nineteenth century, 'phantasmagoria' described a magic lantern show as well as a psychological experience in which "the distinction between subject and objective conditions breaks down".[7] Phantasmagoria as a capitalist experience – the experience of a commodity-producing society that surrounds itself "with pomp and splendour".[8] The term refers to the experience of a working class that does not recognise itself as a class (as the object and subject of the revolution) but as potential buyers and as a mass of individuals that wants and will be entertained.

The phantasmagoria was invented by the Belgian physicist and stage magician Ètienne-Gaspard Robertson in post-revolutionary eighteenth-century Paris, as a lantern show that projected for its spectators a parade of ghosts. Robertson's aim was not to merely scare spectators but to "exorcize the demonic power of the revolutionary memories haunting Parisian imagination".[9] The phantasmagoria as the final closure of revolutionary actions?

<3>

In his late work on the *Arcades Project*, Benjamin aims to show that "the new forms of behavior and the new economically and technologically based creations that we owe to the nineteenth century enter the universe of a phantasmagoria".[10] He understands not only world exhibitions, department stores, or modern interiors as phantasmagorias, but the superstructure itself. Ideology as phantasmagoria, as an experience of mystification. Phantasmagoria as the way in which a commodity-producing society "represents itself and thinks to understand itself whenever it abstracts from the fact that it produces precisely commodities".[11]

The superstructure is not a *reflection* of the objective world but it is "the objective world's *expression*, its representation as it is mediated through imaginative subjective processes.[12] Phantasmagoria does not refer to "subjective errors of perception", but to fantasies and illusions that "rehearse how people perceive daily the contents of their social worlds".[13]

Yet, phantasmagoria is also an illumination. As a result of changing one's perspective (as Blanqui did when he looked at astral bodies), the final phantasmagoria reveals the phantasmagoria of phantasmagorias: "the image of progress [. . .] turns out to be the phantasmagoria of history itself".[14] An illumination for a century that was "incapable of responding to the new technological possibilities with a new social order".[15] It turns out that everything that seems to be new has always been present. The "ever-new face of the commodity that is created in new fashions and in advertising hides the ever-same reproduction of exchange values".[16]

Still, phantasmagoria operates "not only in a theoretical manner, by an ideological transposition, but also in the immediacy of their perceptible presence".[17] Phantasmagoria as ideas about and ways of valuing the racialised, capitalist city, and phantasmagoria also as a direct, sensual engagement with the here and now.

<4>

Temporal distance is a prerequisite for a study of the prehistory of modernity. In a letter to Scholem in 1931, Benjamin mentions just how important the immediate spatial surrounding for his intellectual production is. At that point, he cannot even move to East or North Berlin and has to stay in "Berlin W. WW if you wish" because the "'most modern' culture" in West West Berlin "belongs not only to my private comfort but is also, in part, precisely the means of my production".[18]

Why was Benjamin not accepting to move to New York until it was too late? The head office of the Institute for Social Research was located there since 1934. If Paris was the capital of the nineteenth

century, New York was and is the capital of global finance.

How can relationships between nineteenth- and twentieth-century "[d]ream houses of the collective", between arcades, panoramas, railroad stations and modern skyscrapers be described?[19]

In anticipation of perhaps moving to New York eventually, Benjamin gives an essay on Baudelaire the title 'Central Park'. Its form is not like the juxtaposition of fragments in the *Arcades Project*. There are hardly any direct quotes in the former. It consists of 45 sections (numbered 1 to 45), each of which includes up to eight extremely short paragraphs. In its "contingent, disorderly, obsessive and repetitive" form, it mixes reflections on Baudelaire with theoretical and methodological concerns.[20] 'Central Park' is a *sequence* of fragments: continuities are constructed that allow for discontinuities. A mental change of location from Paris to New York that allows even for some linearity in the text.

While the *Arcades Project* "is the vast, sprawling, disorderly historical metropolis; *Central Park* is the clearing at its center".[21] 'Central Park' opens perspectives from within the city. Walking along the crooked paths that warp views, these are perspectives that estrange the city and reveal its gaps and rifts. New perspectives on the cityscape and its skyscrapers.

<5>

The New York skyline is the modern skyline. In his prehistory of metropolitan urbanism, Koolhaas identifies The Great Exhibition held in 1851 in the Crystal Palace in London as an "inspiring example" for Manhattan's ambition.[22]

Metropolitan urbanism implies a culture of congestion that is defined by fragmentation. Each urban block is a single structure, each building represents a "different ideology", and each floor arranges "new and exhilarating human activities in unprecedented combinations".[23]

Before passing its first zoning laws in 1916, which described for each block an imaginary envelope defining the maximum allowable construction, New York represented the laissez-faire model of skyscraper development. The city imposed "no restrictions on the height or lot coverage of structures other than tenements".[24]

What limited building height in the first couple of years of the twentieth century was not a lack of imagination and increasingly less technical constraints, but the logic of highest rate on the money invested. At some point "the law of diminishing returns sets in, and rents for the additional stories do not cover costs. Taller buildings need extra foundations, bracing, and mechanical systems, but by far, the greatest price of height lies in the requirements of efficient vertical circulation. While elevators are expensive to build and operate (especially with attendants), their major cost accrues in the large amounts of space consumed by shafts".[25]

Technological progress allows buildings to grow up right through the sky. The New York skyline is both a reflection and an expression of modernity. The materialisation of a myth of modernity: a belief in progress, taking technical progress as standing in for progress for humanity itself. Is this a modern phantasmagoric politics "whose basis is the identification of industrialization with progress"?[26]

<6>

As Benjamin flees from Nazi Germany, he does not include fragments about the concept of race, racial hierarchies, or the entanglement of racism and capitalism in his work. Yet, fascism's revolutionary conservatism, its anti-modern modernism is the standpoint from which he constructs his prehistory of modernity. And it is one that is relevant for our own position, given the surge of authoritarian tendencies and the rise of right-wing extremism around the globe.

In 1935, the Nazis found the new discipline of systematic spatial planning. After his failed career as commissioner for the German Reich Settlement (*Reichssiedlungskommissar*), Gottfried Feder gets

appointed Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the Technical University in Berlin. There he develops modern technocratic urban planning ideas and the diagram of *Die neue Stadt* [The new city], which he puts in opposition to a liberalism that he identifies in a city like New York: the "soulless chessboard system of the American giant cities and the completely haphazard urban expansion of the liberalist epoch must be overcome".[27]

The modern in the new city: Through technological progress, "modern expectations on a community, where every human being is an equitable and viable part of the whole ethnic community" can be answered.[28] Not a modern city but a city with a modern city hall, modern public baths, modern hospitals, modern sanatoriums, modern car workshops. A new city as the result of a "modern approach to urban planning".[29]

<center><7></center>

The new in the new city: a city that is designed "in the spirit of the new era" with a "new will of the community".[30] The new city has no skyscrapers, it has no rectangular grid, no culture of congestion. It has a concentric logic or, rather, it is polycentric, a further development of Theodor Fritsch's *Die Stadt der Zukunft* [The city of the future] from 1896.[31] It is a small city for only 20,000 inhabitants that is part of a new order of the German *Lebensraum*. The "spiritual conversion of the nation out of the chaos of liberalist thinking to a new idea of community".[32] The creation of a "new community spirit" with the help of a "new science of a new art of urban planning" on the basis of "new basic ideological ideas".[33]

The new city is a self-contained organism: a city that grows "organically out of the social structure of the population", inspired by "the harmony and inner order of a well-grown human being or other well-formed living being", and closed to international migration and migration from the countryside because "[o]pen cities are a huge threat to urban design and city planning".[34]

The new city is a communitarian city: "The basic principle is based on the fact that a number of smallest communities are grouped together in one group and this group is reunited into groups of a higher order, etc. Grouping street communities into a sub-core, sub-cores into a core, cores into the city".[35] The new city is the NSDAP: "Since the structure is quite organic, there is a striking resemblance to the structure of the party".[36]

No anti-Semitic statements, no claims for racial hierarchies, only a glorification of Hitler. The new city is an expression of the city after race but not after racialisation. In the new city, race is not an issue anymore because racial hierarchies only exist elsewhere, outside its borders, outside the German *Lebensraum*. The Jewish question has been answered.

The new city is a phantasmagoria of modern society: a racist society that is able to abstract from the fact that it is racist.

<center><8></center>

Modern phantasmagoria as the "lived experience on the part of a class that does not recognize itself as a class but a mass".[37] Anti-modern modern phantasmagoria as the lived experience on the part of a class that does not recognise itself as a class but as a *Volksgemeinschaft*, i.e. as a unity that combines all classes, that is supposed to overcome all class struggles and thus classes themselves.

Anti-modern is not the opposite of modern, nor is it pre-modern or post-modern. Anti-modern is the phantasmagorical — both distorting and illuminating — element that is folded into the modern. Through its opposition, the anti-modern remains tied to the modern.

Benjamin should have moved to New York.

Endnotes

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3 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 23.

4 Hitler in Deyan Sudjic (2006) *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World*. London: Penguin Books, p. 37.

5 Günter Gassner (2020) *Ruined Skylines: Aesthetics, Politics and London's Towering Cityscape*. London: Routledge.

6 Cameron McEwan (2022) Ghostwriting an authorship without aura, *lo Squaderno* 62: 9-12, p. 9.

7 Margaret Cohen (1995) *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 219.

8 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 15.

9 Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, p. 234.

10 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 14.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 669 [X13a].

12 Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, p. 240.

13 Esther Leslie (2000) *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism*. London: Pluto Press, p. 106.

14 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 25.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

16 Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, 254.

17 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 14.

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20 Lloyd Spencer (1985) Introduction to Central Park, *New German Critique* 34: 28-31, p. 29.

21 Ibid., p. 30.

22 Rem Koolhaas (1994) *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. New York: The Monacelli Press, p. 23.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

24 Carol Willis (1995) *Form follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, p. 34.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 45f.

26 Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism*, p. 119.

27 Gottfried Feder (1939) *Die neue Stadt: Versuch der Begründung einer neuen Stadtplanungskunst aus der sozialen Struktur der Bevölkerung*. Berlin: Springer Verlag, p. 479.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 472 (all translations are by the author).

29 *Ibid.*, p. 430.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

31 Theodor Fritsch (1896) *Die Stadt der Zukunft*. Leipzig: Verlag von Theodor Fritsch.

32 Feder, *Die neue Stadt*, p. 18.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 3.

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 2, 8.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 467.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 468.

37 Leslie, *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism*, p. 193.

LOW
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In commenting on the images that the artist AnaMary Bilbao provided for the is-
sue no. 62 of lo Squaderno *(Ghosts [crowds]), we noted that photographic images*
are inherently ghostlike. The portion of space the camera captures, the history of its
technique and technology, that decisive moment of the shot, the chemical process of
impression and exposure, the story of the storing, deterioration or forgetting the actual
photograph undergoes, the situated experiences of its fruition, and so on: below its ap-
parent self-evidence, each photograph vibrates under the spell of multiple temporalities.
In fact, it seems that the more an image plunges into the historical past, the more it

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becomes able to evoke all sort of spectral impressions. In this issue, we pursue this suggestion by gathering a series of old photographs that reveal different kinds of phantasmagorical aesthetics. They have been realised by different authors, at different times, in different urban settings. Selected on the basis of personal taste, chance or some sort of ghostly sensitivity, they all share an attitude towards the impalpable, the fragile and the mutable, they all seem to vibrate, in fact, juxtaposing the dreamy dawn of urban modernity and the spectral absences that surround it.

Paradise 2.0: John Madin is Haunting Birmingham

Catherine Oliver
Liam Bates

John Madin is haunting Birmingham. It started in 1974. And it should have ended in 2016 when they tore down his library. But Birmingham can't shake off Madin's ghost. No matter what they build on his remains, Madin's brutalist haunting reminds Birmingham what it should have been, what it could still be.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

At the heart of Birmingham used to sit a building. Designed by born and bred Brummie and brutalist architect, John Madin, the Central Library was a concrete masterpiece, albeit one that not everyone could see the beauty of. Far from towering above the city, the library was squat and imposing, in stark contrast to the grand Victorian buildings flanking it.[1] The building was designed as an 'inverted ziggurat.'[2] Ziggurat: to protrude, to build high, a temple; the inverted ziggurat: inconspicuous, grounded, a sanctuary.

Birmingham is a city built on a modernist ethic. The new, new, old city.[3] "Forward" is the motto. The library sat in the inverted ziggurat, a sea of calm, and underneath its floors was *Paradise Forum*, lined with shops and cafes. This was John Madin's centrepiece in a city that he transformed with his sensitive architecture[4] and determinedly brutalist design. *Paradise* signalled the metamorphosis of Birmingham in the mid-twentieth century from an industrial heartland to a post-industrial trailblazer.

Paradise has existed in this area since the sixteenth century, when it was a piece of grazing land, and the name was picked up again by post-war planners in the twentieth-century.[5] Paradise Circus was the road system and Paradise Forum the later shopping precinct below the library. In *Paradise Lost,*[6] John Madin features as a fallen angel wandering the maze of Spaghetti Junction. Brutalism suited Birmingham in the 1970s, as the city 'embraced utopian visions of modernist urban planning'[7] and cleaned up its city centre. The modernist imagineers circled around John Madin's *Paradise*, built a city around it, and moved the centre of the city to worship the ziggurat.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Long before local council motivations were led by cynicism or desperation, the spectre of a hopeful future, which would benefit all, hung over Birmingham. Madin walked around the city, his city, and saw the ghostly forms of an optimistic architecture take shape. He saw a structure that would work with and for, not against, the landscape and the people who called it home.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Central to Madin's vision was a brutalist ethic, not reducible simply to style. The brutalist "anti-beauty" demanded progressive ideals of welfare provisioning in the post-war era, but it also has a powerful

Liam Bates is a poet originally from the Black Country. He can be reached on twitter at @liambatespoet.

Catherine Oliver is a geographer and former long-term resident of Birmingham. She can be reached on twitter at @katiecmoliver.

They can be reached via Catherine's email.

C.Oliver@lancaster.ac.uk

politics, an 'uncompromising logic' that is in direct contention with present-day neoliberal ideals.[8] The ziggurat wasn't just a symbol of a progressive logic squat above the city, it was a practically designed home to the city's knowledge.

Today, Birmingham is a 'palimpsest of competing modes, which represent different points of global/local connection, different points of historical time . . . made actively by its distinctive communities who grow, make and remake themselves very quickly.'[9] Where the ziggurat used to stand on Paradise, now there is PriceWaterhouseCoopers headquarters, outposts of London chain restaurants, and shimmering office blocks and skyscrapers.

The contemporary unmaking of Paradise was, in some ways, written into the concrete slabs as they were being poured in 1970s Birmingham, as the city was hit by post-industrial decline, and the council aimed to restructure the city centre to attract office-based private sector investments. Birmingham 'swallowed the entrepreneurial pill'[10,11] The nowhereness, the ubiquity, of Paradise's architecture today "seems to have been part of the plan, a reaction against Madin's grandstanding.[12]"

*

Almost fifty years ago, Madin watched the old new Paradise opening. Today, four men in suits and one woman pose for a press release photo for the new development. They are arranged to appear as a group, but each of them is alone. Say, *Where Commerce Meets Culture!* The photographer clicks his button. Five smiles, replicated in SD card pixels, replicated in office facades, replicated in glass barfronts, replicated then replicated, refracted, distorted, degraded. The reality looks much like the earlier artist's mock-up, superimposed on the cityscape, important-seeming people milling about, smoking, a distant, amalgamated investor's imagination projected 360 view. The ghost of John Madin wanders through a hall of mirrors.

*

The PR campaign surrounding the regeneration of Paradise - the tearing down of the brutalist vision of Birmingham - was marketed as "where history meets tomorrow," a site for a "new generation of visitors, residents, thinkers and doers."[13] The vision for the city centres on the demolition of the ziggurat, its inverted layers ripped through by a bright yellow excavator. This anti-beauty ethic has to be torn down, sanitised, replaced with the shiny and new. With it went the ideals of a united city with grounded principles, sold off to the highest bidder.

The 1970s in Birmingham saw competing ideals for its post-industrial future jostle for space. While the practicality of brutalist building in architecture prevailed, "the uniform sobriety of concrete turns out to conceal a subtle gamut of textures and colours, beautiful in themselves and a permanent record of how the building was made."[14] This solidity of form, its reliability, conceals the radical ethics held within. Rather than reflecting the city and its wealth back out, like Paradise 2.0, the ziggurat held still above the city. No spectre flickered on those walls. But their "geometrical solidity and rough surfaces charismatically radiate across space."[15]

The futuristic vision of the 1960s and 1970s postwar reconstruction imbued Birmingham with a "can do" attitude, and a "legacy of space-age optimism."[16] In the past decade, there has been a renewed appreciation for long since disregarded brutalist buildings of yesteryear. Nowhere was this more prescient than in the campaign to save Birmingham's ziggurat library. History might be in the making in Paradise 2.0, but not simply through creative, ordinary, tragic destruction.[17] History in this city requires spectacular obliteration.

*

The campaigners who tried to save the ziggurat became, ultimately, its palliative care team. A

12-year fight for survival culminated in grim resignation in the face of overwhelming neglect. The Friends of Birmingham Central Library issued their death notice to the local press. The slab of Progress slid thunderingly into place. A wake in Chamberlain square finally laid this part of the story to rest. Nobody expects to have to bury their own library. Food and drink were shared and fond words were spoken of a friend gone too soon. From a certain angle, a melancholy scene, presaging the city's new faceless corporate era. From another, these were people gathered tight around the brutal light of hope for something better. John Madin's ziggurat is dead. Long live the ziggurat.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Paradise 2.0 sits on top of a very different vision of Birmingham. Its developers, in conjunction with the city council, saw an opportunity not just to capitalise on this heart of the city, but to reshape it altogether. To move forward. In the 1970s, the brutalist project in Birmingham slipped through and its spectre remains across the city today. Over the five decades since, that vision has been chipped away by successive "regeneration" efforts of obliteration.

What has been left behind is mayhem; a Dutch architect said Birmingham was "the most chaotic city [he'd] ever seen . . . as though a child had upset a box of building bricks."18 What better way to bury John Madin's ghost, and his vision for a greater and more beautiful Birmingham19? Madin believed that "buildings should have an appearance of 'simplicity and sincerity' . . . he gives high importance to a building's relationship with its natural surroundings, the linking of indoor and outside . . . honestly expressing materials and careful detailing.20" The opposite, it seems, of the reflective nightmare that sits on the grave of the ziggurat.

In 2016, this iconic landmark and civic hub of Birmingham was torn down, despite widespread protest, and the ziggurat being just days short of becoming a listed building. In the space left by its demolition now stands a development that shares its name, but little else, home to the headquarters of HSBC and PricewaterhouseCoopers. With the demolition, a utopian vision of Birmingham was destroyed, but the spectre of brutalist idealism lives on in the city's phantasmagoria.

Endnotes

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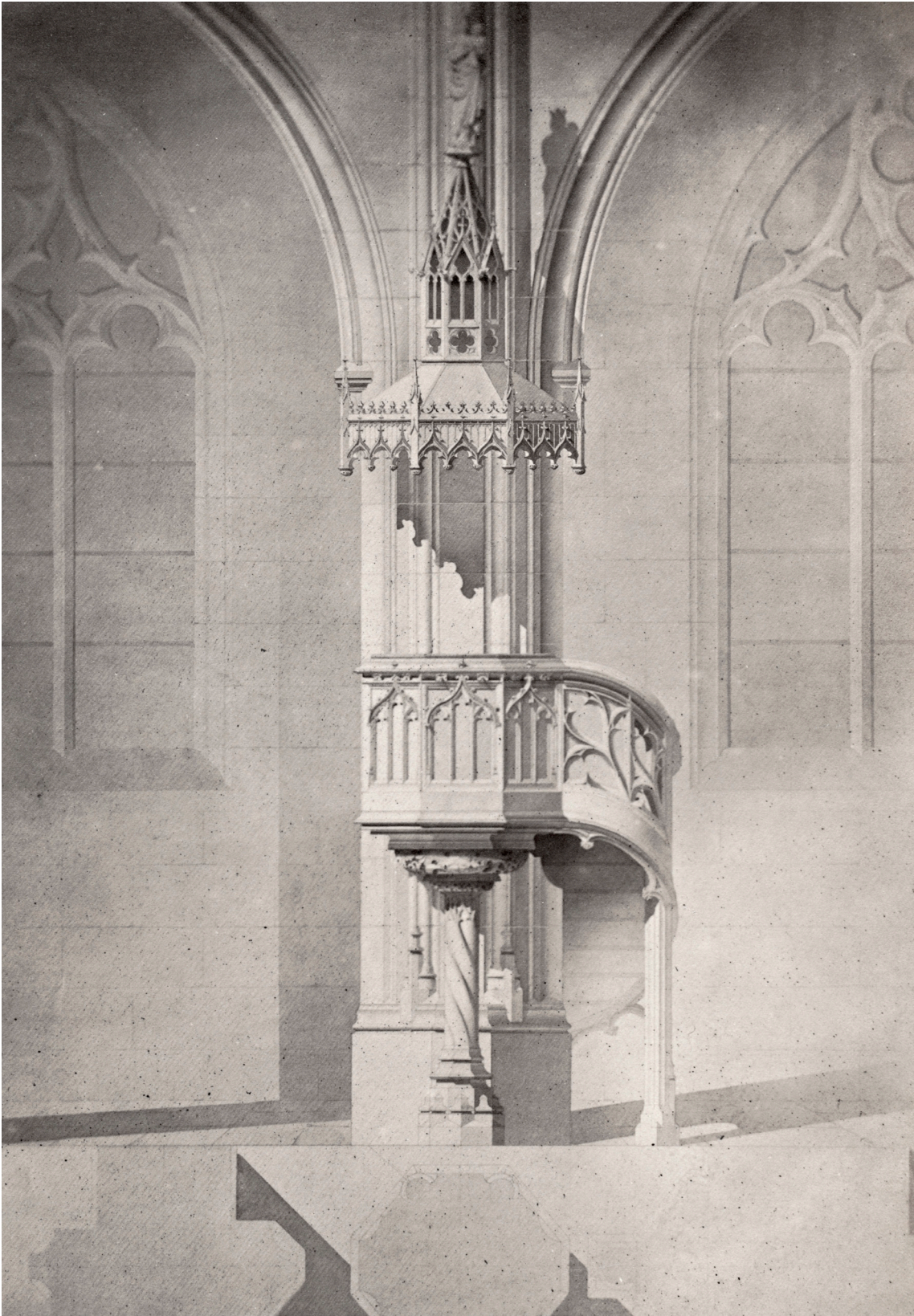
Fantasmi presenti di un futuro narrato
Venezia in "La seconda mezzanotte" di Antonio Scurati

Giuseppe Tomasella

Giuseppe Tomasella è dottorando del corso in Studi Storici, Geografici e Antropologici dell'Università degli Studi di Padova e dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. Il suo progetto di ricerca indaga i processi di co-produzione dei nightscapes veneziani concentrandosi sulle intersezioni fra notte urbana, geografie letterarie e turismo.

giuseppe.tomasella@phd.unipd.it

Nei film di fantascienza ricorrono spesso quelle immagini, che io trovo assolutamente affascinanti, di persone che camminano attraverso le città abbandonate.
Mark Fisher, Spettri della mia vita

Entrate a pieno titolo nell'uso comune, parole come fantasma, spettro o ombra sono riconducibili a un campo semantico che riunisce le potenzialità interpretative, i possibili impieghi e le coloriture di significato connesse alla radicata necessità umana di descrivere, raccontare, evocare le relazioni che si instaurano fra l'*hic et nunc* del vissuto e ciò che, pur restando concretamente assente, appare o si manifesta come presenza. È proprio questa urgenza di rivolgere l'attenzione alle "presenze assenti"[1] a far sì che continui richiami a spettri e fantasmi popolino – o meglio infestino – la Venezia e le pagine de *La seconda mezzanotte* di Antonio Scurati,[2] una *climate fiction* pubblicata nel 2011 da Bompiani e riconducibile al genere della narrativa d'anticipazione distopica.

La riflessione proposta è incentrata sul tropo geo-letterario[3] del fantasma, un elemento significativo che è emerso grazie ad un'attenta analisi del testo orientata a individuare stilemi e tematiche ricorrenti. Al fine di enfatizzare il potenziale interpretativo connesso al tropo del fantasma, si è scelto di approfondire l'analisi mettendo a sistema riferimenti critici eterogenei. Da un lato, le lenti dei *night studies*[4] per approfondire i significati sottesi allo spaziotempo notturno come contesto e ambientazione ricorrente per i riferimenti spettrali. Dall'altro, la geografia critica del turismo[5] così da sviluppare una riflessione sulla contemporaneità del contesto urbano narrato.

Di fatto, questi testi ambientati nel prossimo futuro attingono a piene mani dal presente raccogliendo paure, ansie e caratteristiche materiali degli spazi che sono poi deformate e ingigantite in cupe forme iperboliche[6]. Una caratteristica che si riflette nelle scelte stilistiche e tematiche – ricorrenti e spesso intertestuali, anche se non rigidamente codificate – che ricercano la trasmissione di sensazioni di straniamento e oppressione.

Per favorire l'individuazione e la disamina del tropo geo-letterario del fantasma, è necessario introdurre una breve cornice di contestualizzazione. Nel dettaglio, i fatti sono ambientati nel 2092 ad un ventennio di distanza da quando la "Grande onda", risultato dello scioglimento dei ghiacci artici, ha distrutto Venezia. La città è impaludata, la popolazione annichilita. Dopo una fase di abbandono, città e abitanti sopravvissuti sono stati venduti dal governo locale ad una multinazionale cinese delle telecomunicazioni. L'opera di bonifica che ne è seguita è culminata nella costruzione di un muro connesso a un sistema di dighe che ridisegnano i confini della città. Oltre le mura si trovano la città

sommersa e la palude malsana, dentro le mura la città sanificata e ricostruita di Nova Venezia. Una "zona politicamente autonoma"[7] — nella realtà dei fatti un simulacro di spazio urbano che coniuga ed esaspera le caratteristiche più disturbanti di *gated communities*, enclave turistiche e colonie — governata tramite il ricorso alla violenza e a bombardanti campagne mediatiche. Un grande luogo di villeggiatura per le nuove élite mobili di un mondo post-apocalittico dove ogni vizio o perversione è concesso e incentivato, come suggeriscono la trasformazione delle chiese in "ridotti" per il gioco d'azzardo, la prostituzione diffusa, e la conversione di Piazza San Marco in un'arena coperta da una cupola per i combattimenti dei gladiatori, "una fosforescente necropoli apogea"[8]. Il controllo sociale è pervasivo e mantenuto tramite una serie di limitazioni che gravano sulla popolazione autoctona superstite considerata al pari di una merce, privata della possibilità di praticare qualsiasi forma di culto religioso, condannata all'estinzione per sterilizzazione chimica, relegata a vivere in un'area fatiscente e degradata o costretta ad auto-esiliarsi nel mondo distrutto che la propaganda racconta con il "telegiornale di mezzanotte"[9] annunciato da sirene.

In accordo con la natura distopica del romanzo, il macronucleo tematico più consistente è quello composto dalla trasposizione delle problematiche e delle paure che perseguitano la Venezia contemporanea. Su questioni globali e diffuse come i rischi connessi all'uso strumentale dei mezzi di comunicazione o la recrudescenza di varie forme di razzismo si innestano timori e ansie — che si potrebbero definire glocali — ugualmente diffusi a livello globale, ma connessi al contesto locale a causa di specifiche criticità. Si pensi, ad esempio, alle conseguenze della crisi climatica tradotte in un'onda di maremoto che affoga la laguna e distrugge la città, oppure all'erosione del tessuto socio-economico dei centri storici delle destinazioni turistiche internazionali trasfigurata nelle claustrofobiche descrizioni dei quartieri convertiti in distretti del divertimento o, ancora, alla percezione di una progressiva conformazione (e involuzione) degli spazi e delle identità locali alle istanze del mercato turistico resa attraverso tentacolari forme di alienazione che arrivano fino all'incapacità di ricordare e agire del singolo individuo. Conclude questa panoramica il timore più radicato nel contesto locale, la scomparsa delle comunità residenti, incarnato nella campagna di sterilizzazione chimica e negli Omega, l'ultima generazione di veneziani.

Per quanto queste riflessioni tocchino aree di investigazione rilevanti per un'indagine geo-letteraria del contesto urbano e trovino diritto di cittadinanza in questa sede in nome di una possibile espansione del tropo del fantasma mutuata dal significato figurato di paura, timore, ansia, è ora opportuno concentrare l'analisi sugli espliciti riferimenti spettrali.

Le allusioni a spettri o apparizioni ricorrono frequentemente in relazione:

- alla città — ad esempio, "A occidente il cielo si tinge di rosso sul fantasma insepolto di Venezia"[10];

- ai suoi abitanti — ad esempio, "[…] dove un tempo c'era un giardino, scorge un'ombra inginocchiata fra le ceppaie […] Ancora fantasmi, dappertutto"[11];

- e a elementi che si rifanno a un'iconografia condivisa nel contesto della cultura di matrice occidentale come la notte o le rovine — ad esempio, "Strizza gli occhi, tende l'orecchio, come se si attendesse una risposta alla sua presenza dall'oscurità in cui è immersa ogni cosa. Ma la risposta non viene. Nessun fantasma infesta quelle rovine, nessuno spirito giace sepolto in quella pietra"[12].

Così come accade per il linguaggio quotidiano, i riferimenti ai fantasmi sono introdotti per trasmettere sensazioni di straniamento e paura ma, allo stesso tempo, permettono di sviluppare una prospettiva di analisi geografica connessa alla memoria dei luoghi. Guardando alla schematizzazione delle caratteristiche del fantasma proposta da Vanolo[13] in relazione a spazio ed emozioni è, infatti, possibile

distinguere anche nelle figure spettrali de *La seconda mezzanotte* "echi di qualcosa che un tempo era visibile, [. . .] riflessi e riverberi di un passato assente, [. . .] presenze personali e soggettive [. . .] che spesso esistono solo nella propria mente"[14]. L'impiego della figura del fantasma è funzionale alla creazione di un senso di turbamento che permette di sviluppare uno scollamento nelle percezioni dei personaggi capace di mettere in discussione il grado di realtà accordato alla narrazione egemonica del presente di Nova Venezia. Uno spazio urbano inscenato basato sulla priorità accordata alla vista e messo in crisi dall'oscurità notturna in quanto catalizzatrice delle altre percezioni sensoriali. Per evitare questa potenziale fonte di problemi, la vista è costantemente impegnata nella percezione senza prospettiva della sola città ricostruita e disciplinata con le immagini digitali del telegiornale di mezzanotte e delle proiezioni della cupola che creano gli stimoli e l'ambientazione più funzionali per il consumo del playscape[15] a tinte fosche in cui è stato convertito lo spazio urbano.

Inoltre, un senso di alterità e straniamento pervade trasversalmente tutta l'ambientazione del romanzo ed è riflesso nella descrizione della città divisa in due parti da una barriera anfibia. Da una parte, la città interna, Nova Venezia, la destinazione turistica con i landmark ricostruiti e commodifi-cati, l'ambiente sanificato chimicamente, il luogo di consumo sottoposto ad una rigida zonizzazione per garantire il controllo sociale e massimizzare i profitti. Dall'altra parte, la città sommersa, la città perduta, le rovine abbandonate e colonizzate da forme di vita rinselvatichite o selvatiche oltre che da una piccola comunità residuale a cui sono attribuiti i tratti allocronici di una vita a-storicamente vissuta in un *hortus conclusus* ai margini dell'urbano.

Significativamente, espandendo in senso più ampio il potenziale del tropo del fantasma è possibile affermare che entrambe le città diventano l'una lo spettro dell'altra a seconda che siano viste di giorno o di notte oppure da dentro o fuori le mura:

> rialza gli occhi verso Nova Venezia che brilla nel buio al di là del bacino [. . .] Vista da qui, da lontano, nella sera d'occidente, Venezia sembra quasi quella che è sempre stata [. . .] È incerto su quale sia la città e quale l'ombra. Nova Venezia, un fantasma posto sulle sabbie del mare, così debole, così silenziosa.[16]

Infatti, entrambe le metà giocano con i meccanismi di (ri-)costruzione della memoria ridefinendo cri-ticamente la distanza che separa la storia ricostruita ufficialmente, o inscenata in nome di un principio di conservazione degli elementi di riconosciuta profittabilità, e la storia come memoria del quotidiano incarnata dalle rovine delle case abbandonate nella città perduta. Tuttavia, non va dimenticato che i due spazi percepiti come divisi continuano a dialogare quando si indebolisce la posizione di supremazia accordata al senso della vista. Lo dimostrano gli odori e i nugoli di zanzare, testimonianze olfattive, sonore e tattili di un'alterità che non si riduce alle distinzioni amministrative; la memoria del corpo del protagonista che ritrova a tentoni una breccia nel muro; e i ricordi dei sopravvissuti più anziani che forniranno al co-protagonista le conoscenze per superare il muro e tentare la fuga verso la terraferma. Tutti echi di un passato presente che rievocano il fantasma della Venezia contemporanea, referente ultimo di questa riflessione distopica sugli eccessi del turismo e l'incapacità di elaborare una narrazione contemporanea della propria autenticità capace di incorporare il futuro[17].

Un'altra rievocazione della città del presente emerge dalla perturbante[18] rappresentazione del topos del giro in gondola notturno. L'estetica della narrazione distopica ribalta ogni elemento che possa rimandare alla rappresentazione tradizionale di una gondola condotta lungo un canale da un esperto gondoliere per una coppia di innamorati o un ricco turista. Il risultato è macroscopico: una zattera di fortuna portata lungo una strada allagata da un fuggitivo il cui unico passeggero è un cane randagio. Significativamente per la prospettiva di questa analisi, questi rovesciamenti finiscono per investire an-che gli elementi dello spazio urbano. La strada si trasforma in canale e lo spazio artificiale e costruito dell'architettura urbana è paragonato ad un canyon frutto dell'erosione. Si viene quindi a presentare uno scollamento collegato all'economia stessa del romanzo che gioca sull'effettiva differenza fra la narrazione della città perduta offerta dentro Nova Venezia e la realtà della città perduta percepita e

vissuta in prima persona. Sebbene siano mantenuti tratti disturbanti e poco rassicuranti cari all'immaginario distopico, è innegabile che la città perduta sia presentata come molto più di "una zona morta"[19]. L'acqua scorre e non stagna, forme di vita non-umane sono riuscite a re-insediarsi negli spazi abbandonati riportando la palude in città. Nell'eco di una ricostruzione etimologica e letterale fra l'odonomastica e i luoghi, Cannaregio – il sestiere in cui è ambientata la sequenza – è tornato ad ospitare i canneti che hanno ispirato il suo nome:

> la riva di un canale e una distesa di canne di bambù che ora gli si para davanti. Si apre la via tra una morbida, breve cortina di giunchi, poi si tuffa nel canneto [. . .] Attorno figure e volteggi sospesi, versi di anatre in fuga. Una palude nel cuore della città. Per un mesmerismo del disastro, in quella palude urbana sente spegnersi in lontananza la voce degli avi morti.[20]

Una rievocazione fantasmatica della città contemporanea che solo il lettore ha gli strumenti per cogliere. Considerando che i personaggi emergono da un contesto in cui è stata recisa la connessione fra comunità residenti e spazio urbano, nella città perduta i nomi dei luoghi sono dimenticati e (r-)esistono solo come scritte sui muri.

Ancora una sovrapposizione di presente e futuro, una riflessione e un dialogo con lo spettro di Venezia che esprime l'urgenza di riscrivere le forme dei rapporti con lo spazio urbano per evitare che un futuro tragico diventi presente:

> poiché quel che lo spettro con la sua voce bianca argomenta è che, se tutte le città e le lingue d'Europa sopravvivono ormai come fantasmi, solo a chi avrà saputo di questi farsi intimo e familiare, ricompitarne e mandarne a mente le scarne parole e le pietre, potrà forse un giorno riaprirsi quel varco, in cui bruscamente la storia – la vita – adempie le sue promesse.[21]

Endnotes

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8 *Ivi* p. 13.

9 *Ivi* p.75.

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Absent-Present in Istanbul
The band that lost its stage, and the animal that lost its environment

Lacin Tutalar

As a member of the league of neoliberal cities desperately plotting for wealth at the expense of urban commons and the city's overall wellbeing, Istanbul continues a troubled relationship with both its inner-city quarters and its peripheries. Long before the crushing impact of Covid-19, the city was already in distress when it came to deal with the uncontrollable (e.g. climate, refugees, or locals and their right to the city). When I lived in Istanbul for my dissertation research between 2014 and 2016, stories of ruthless urban transformation expressed gentrification and displacement, while tensions rose when a more recent influx of refugees overwhelmed the urban rhythm in Istanbul. As I documented street musicians' paths in the city, more stories of violated urban lives and routines surfaced in my notes. Several street musicians lost their busking spots and gigs when public life suffered due to an intense policing of protests, frequent attacks, bombs near downtown areas and electoral-political tensions during 2013-2016 period in Istanbul. These heavily resonated with the greater part of the fieldwork. Many street performers, stuck between an illusion of routine and a violent reality of public space, felt interrupted until further notice. The routine performances could return after a week or two, but erratic pause would have done the damage. A certain public would start to avoid downtown, too. Performers who could remain active in the area endured the presence of such disturbance: they felt the once-there, now-gone bomb, whose sound continued to live and affect one's mind, steps and moves. One would not think of this noise continuously, of course. One would even unthink the disturbance until violence stroke again. So, in this process, the political dissonance of the attack — which is embodied in a religious militant, an ethnic dissident or a political other —would be factored into the urban rhythm. I think that this process could be understood as phantasmagoric resonance, too.

A ghost in the city communicates with the residents in an urge to remind them of some form of brutality in the past or a tale of displacement by modernity[1]. Pile, following Gordon[2], outlines two major forces of ghosts: progressive and reactionary. According to this, ghosts may either transform us emotionally or their spectral presence may trigger us to react with fear. Citton writes that ghosts actually seize a milieu, from where spectral agency "emanates."[3] To him, a ghost is actually environmentally powerful as it may or may not engage with modern — anthropocentric — residents of the place. Andreotti and Lahiji track spectral power in the "cultural pathologies of capitalism," whereas the "exhibition value"[4] can block a spectre from defending a *core* (like milieu) against the all-consuming urban eye.

In a comparative sound ecology of two tales in Istanbul, I compare two figures in their environmental power through a similarly phantasmagoric process. They are both absent and present in the place now. One is a band of mostly migrant musicians who performed precariously in Beyoglu, a touristic inner-city neighbourhood of Istanbul. The band, struggling with finding spaces of performance after

Lacin Tutalar is a cultural geographer, who received her PhD with a dissertation titled *Street Musicians, Soundscapes and Hearing the State in Urban Public Spaces in Istanbul* (2020), from University of Kentucky, USA. Currently an adjunct-instructor at TED University, Ankara, Turkey, her work involves teaching urban social futures as part of Global Citizenship Secondary Field. Her research interests include urban sound ecologies, affect, rhythmanalysis, walking and politics of hearing.

nicallacin@gmail.com

a bomb blew up in the district, became subject to the bomb's silencing impact. Numerous street performers visit and leave this world city, and this band's presence in the neighbourhood might also be temporary while this temporality might suggest a sense of power by circulation. In the meantime, their absence speaks more clearly about the power of the bomb. Does the band really own the milieu? The other figure is an animal whose habitat has been disturbed by greater frequency of human activity in Istanbul's urban peripheries. I found the former on a night in a pathetically empty music venue, whereas I found the latter's traces by touching an empty cartridge left on the ground by a hunter-human. The cartridge must have made a sound when fired, but I got to the part where its remains laid silent on the ground. The disturbed emits a kind of noise, despite the eerie silence that marked their environment.

The band, the bomb and music

Between 2013 and 2016, I documented the rhythms of major public streets in the inner-city Istanbul. Following the steps of street musicians in the city, and where/when their sounds appeared as well as disappeared, I held that disruption was an unsettling force. In Beyoglu during 2015-16, for instance, moments of terror as well as the fear of it constantly disrupted music performance, while the mood in the neighbourhood shifted from happiness brought by tourism's wealth to financial uncertainty and social preoccupation.

Beyoglu as a historical and diverse district has been a stage for urban transformation since the late 1980s. Bartu chronicled the urban and social transformation of the Tarlabasi area near Beyoglu since the 1980s.[5] Ergun summarised the gentrification in and around Beyoglu in the 1990s, highlighting when minorities and migrants left the area, new wealth and nostalgia restyled the neighbourhood.[6] Sandikci discussed sexual identities, desire, disgust, nightlife and moral surveillance in Beyoglu, which made the neighbourhood a "borderline" space where many identities fluctuated between acceptance and "vilification."[7] The place has heavily been in the grip of gentrification during the 2010s, as beautification efforts violated local venues, artists and craftspeople, while shock of terror later distressed businesses[8]. Still, in this period, transnational and refugee communities sought shelter and solidarity here.

These localised groups were then distressed by a domino-effect of recent violence. In 2015 and 2016 a few terrorist attacks drastically shifted the mood of the place according to bars, venues, musicians and others I came across during that time. Such attacks[9] disrupted the daily life of a touristic zone, threatened investments, and let surveillance play a greater role in the place. At the same time, it meant a shift in power: a bombing incident had found a crack into the neighbourhood environment and its cosmopolitan routine. The bomb (and the belief that enabled it) brought a message. It triggered an unpleasant feeling among residents when the spectral power of an uninvited yet anticipated 'other' was politically upon them. Its appearance in the environment did something else, too, when it embodied a spectral power: it got this particular band of street musicians stuck between their migrant reality and an illusion they followed in the streets and music venues of Beyoglu. Against a polished, gentrified and hopeful picture of the city, the bomb regulated and pushed musical performers towards absence, and gave us the absent-musician. Here is how.

One night in May 2016, I followsenty of possibilities to them. Once at the venue that night, though, the band members were pulling long faces. Only a couple of friends and familiar faces showed up to the gig to support them. I eventually wrote in my notes that the night's performance at this venue was a 'fail.' Less than ten people came to listen to them, which was unusual for such a venue downtown. No audience, so no money after the gig. A night in vain, except friendly company at the venue and a few drinks on the house. I recall band members who were disappointed, distracted and slowly forced to realise a ghost in the area: the bomb. Only a few weeks earlier, on March 19, 2016, there

had been a suicide bombing on the avenue nearby. A week earlier, another suicide attack had struck a different city. Two months before that, another bomb had gone off in Istanbul, near the touristic area of Sultanahmet. These were becoming regular in the country's urban rhythm, changing people's mood, and disciplining their moves, adding up to a tense political environment. Aside from intense policing in the area and event cancellations, anxiety ruled amongst the public, as the attacks pointed to religious (ISIS) and ethnic (Kurdish) militancy. This was exceptionally distressing for and haunting those who depended on city streets or subways to make a living, such as musicians.

That night, we found excuses for the missing audience. We tried to ignore the ghost in the room. Usually, Erasmus students would show up to such events, but downtown was sparsely attended as it was the Spring Break or pre-finals break for universities. Students must have been travelling, we also thought. Perhaps, many preferred studying to going out. The bar owner suggested that it was cheerful there just the week before; he could not understand the empty venue. We insisted on the bad timing. Did the bar mislead the band to set a gig that night? On the contrary. The owners shared the band's disappointment; they even offered the band sympathy drinks on the house. Perhaps it was one unlucky effort, and they would try again. Besides, there was always the street except that street performances were on hold for a time by the urban government due to fear of novel attacks.

A spectre, an uninvited element in the urban space, haunts the living in the specter's version of the environment — spectres become sensible when we are open to them, or let our guard down in the environment. In retrospective, I thought the band's misfortune could be related to a "momentary cut" that caught us open to a different vibe in the environment, following Massumi.[10] That night, we witnessed the cut through the interrupted stage. It placed us in the grip of a noisy spectre (unwelcome, emotional, perhaps an angry outsider like the religious militant) whose authoritarian fog had poured over public life. Noise carried this uninvited element that first seemed dissonant with the rest of us. LaBelle described noise to "give form to the radically formless, creating space for the intensities of diversity, strangeness, and the unfamiliar."[11] Noise is expressive. It is highly active in the environment and charged to affect others in the place. However, the band, when so interrupted, would be one step closer to lose ground, to become absent if they were removed from this environment. In this process, the band also blends in a kind of phantasmagoric process. We must be open to think of the absent-present band in the neighbourhood in its relationality to the noise (of the bomb and the identity that attaches to it). Similarly, the tale below relates the animal, which is now absent-present in its milieu, to the hunter and to the ideology of seizing hinterland for capitalist gains.

The empty cartridge and the hunter

In June 2019, a field trip into Istanbul's peripheries crystallised the power of absent-present life in the surrounds of the city. In the company of a summer school on urban political ecology, we took a field trip towards the Northern Forests in Istanbul, where the extent of deforestation and urban transformation was beyond horrible.[12] Situated on the path of the Istanbul Canal,[13] this area is widely disturbed and subject to housing projects in the middle of nowhere while urban villages could not escape capitalist transformation, either.[14] As a group we walked towards an urban village by the Sazlidere Dam on the way to Istanbul's Northern surrounds, I stumbled into an empty cartridge used to hunt wild boars. The hunter hadn't minded leaving traces of a package, as well. On the package were depictions of wild boars and roedeers. The remains of the cartridge were indicative of the hunting landscape in the Northern Forests; they were unabashed material evidence sitting silently on yellow-green grass in the heat of summer. In that moment we were walking on a hunt-scape, prompting us to think of the animals that lost ground. The useless plastic cartridge sitting on the soil acted as a crack through which spectres of the environment found a way to our field trip.

Studies of animal landscapes in Istanbul highlight the craze about urban transformation and wide-

spread destruction of the urban hinterland. According to Brenner, capitalist processes of "extraction, cultivation, production and circulation" assume the hinterland comes with "free gifts."[15] Yildirim critiques how Istanbul's peripheries become dumping sites of stray dogs—also dwellers of the city's quarters—that are swept up from Istanbul's neighbourhoods of rapid transformation.[16] Urban peripheries as someone's environment demonstrate how capitalistic transformation takes them for granted, assuming a place to have lesser value unless valorised[17] via construction and capitalization.

While the spectre of the animal haunts the place through the empty cartridge, it is the animal that lost its environment to the hunter. The noisy hunter does not care about the urban; he does not mind leaving waste and traces in the environment, either. When stray dogs join the lot of wild boars and others, this mess in the hinterland may push many of us to react with disapproval, fear or unease. This is something that corresponded to one of two major forces of ghosts in Avery Gordon's work, pointed out above by Pile.[18]

Ghosts are good at communication. When walking in the area as we did during the field trip, we set foot in a spectral chamber of communication with the animal's environment, which is both going absent and finding a way to be present. In *The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want*, Keizer thinks of our times as "the Age of Tinnitus,"[19] where there is always the sound of something that would not disappear entirely, and yet it becomes noise to our ears. Similarly, in a triad of hunter/hunted/witness, the witness can recognize the disturbed through their absence, even when not hearing the hunter or the sound of the cartridge from earlier. Citton writes that "[t]he voice of the ghost is the voice of a disappeared environment,"[20] and we, vulnerable to phantasmagoric resonances, become luckily affected by that environment.

Endnotes

1 Steve Pile (2005) *Real cities: modernity, space and the phantasmagorias of city life*. London: Sage, 131-164.

2 Avery Gordon (1997) *Ghostly matters: haunting and the sociological imagination*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, as cited in Steve Pile (2005) *Real cities: modernity, space and the phantasmagorias of city life*. London: Sage, p. 132.

3 Yves Citton (2018) La Natura e i suoi fantasmi: l'ambientalismo come medialità spettrale, in E. Puglia, M. Fusillo, S. Lazzarin, A.M. Mangini (a cura di) *Ritorni spettrali*. Bologna: il Mulino.

4 This concept is striking more and more when I think of the fetishized status of the two themes weaving into the texture of this essay: music and environment. In a post-Covid-19 world we have again fetishized music and musicians to give the general public a warm, nice, and selfless show of endurance, solidarity and sanity, yet many musicians are still distressed by the financial and social impact of being interrupted by the pandemic. Similarly, nature continues to be an available fetish material on many levels. "The exhibition value," somewhere stuck between use and exchange values, would hand in the "substance" of a thing to consumption, according to a combined discussion of Benjamin and Agamben's works in: Libero Andreotti and Nadir Lahiji (2017) *The Architecture of Phantasmagoria: Specters of the city*. London and NY: Routledge, pp. 181-186: 184, 186.

5 Ayfer Bartu (2013) Eski mahallelerin sahibi kim? Küresel bir çağda tarihi yeniden yazmak, in: Çağlar Keyder (Ed.) *İstanbul: Küresel ile Yerel Arasında*, pp. 43-59. İstanbul: Metis.

6 Nilgun Ergun (2004) Gentrification in Istanbul, *Cities*, 21(5), pp. 391-405.

7 Ozlem Sandikci (2015) Strolling through Istanbul's Beyoğlu: In-between difference and containment, *Space and Culture*, 18 (2), pp. 198–211: 199, 205.

8 Asuman Turkun et al. (2021) *Arafta Bir Beyoğlu [Beyoglu in Purgatory], 2018-2021*. Project website for TUBITAK SOBAG 1001- Project no. 117K317: "Tarihi kent merkezlerinin yeniden yapılanmasında belirleyici faktörler ve olası senaryolar: İstanbul Beyoğlu örneği." https://www.araftabirbeyoglu.com/tr/Tarih-Icinde-Beyoglu/2013-2019 ; Pinar Tremblay (2016) Gentrification glitter fades into dust in Istanbul's heart. *Al-Monitor*. August 16. https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2016/08/turkey-gentrification-glitter-fades-into-dust-istanbul.html Accessed on 27 March, 2022; Charalampos Tsavdaroglou (2020) 'The Refugees'. Right to the center of the city and spatial justice: Gentrification vs commoning practices in Tarlabaşı-Istanbul, *Urban Planning*, 5 (3), pp. 230–240.

9 140 Journos, an Istanbul-based journalism platform, compiled a list of these attacks at the time. See: The Terror attacks in Turkey between 2011 and 2017 (2017). *140 Journos*, May 5. https://140journos.com/terror-attacks-in-turkey-between-2011-and-2017-4b5981c974ca Accessed on March 27, 2022.

10 Brian Massumi (2015) *Politics of affect*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, p. 53.

11 Brandon LaBelle (2010) *Acoustic territories: sound culture and everyday life*. New York: Continuum, p. xxiii.

12 BIAnet (2020) Report: 196 incidents of 'destruction' of the Northern Forests found in three months, BIAnet, October 22. https://m.bianet.org/bianet/environment/233190-report-196-incidents-of-destruction-of-the-northern-forests-found-in-three-months Accessed 18 March 2022; Ahmet Ozgur Dogru et al. (2020) Detrimental environmental impact of large-scale land use through deforestation and deterioration of carbon balance in Istanbul Northern Forest Area, *Environmental Earth Science*, 79, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12665-020-08996-3

13 The Istanbul Canal, or Canal Istanbul as popularly known in Turkish media, is a megaproject that connects the Black Sea to the Marmara Sea. An artificial waterway, along with a new airport, highway and residential complexes nearby, is reshaping the social life as well as the fauna and flora of Istanbul's western hinterland. Listen more on: The Documentary Podcast (2022), BBC, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0bfkdz2, January 6.

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15 Neil Brenner (2016) The hinterland urbanised? *Architectural Design*, 86, pp. 118-127. https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.2077 : 123, 125.

16 Mine Yıldırım (2019) Hayvan Tecritinin Dışı ve Ötesi: İstanbul'da Sürgün, Yıkım ve Şiddet Coğrafyaları, Beyond İstanbul, April Issue, *Istanbul: Mekanda Adalet Dernegi*, pp. 87-99; Mine Yıldırım (interview by İmge Oranlı) (2019) Şiddetle ihtimam arasında: dört ayaklı şehir ve İstanbul'un köpeksizleştirilmesi, *Cogito*, 93, İstanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, pp. 220-237.

17 Sezai Ozan Zeybek (2014) İstanbul'un Yuttukları ve Kustukları: Köpekler ve Nesneler Üzerinden İstanbul Tahlili. In Ayfer Bartu-Candan and Cenk Özbay (Eds.), *Yeni İstanbul Çalışmaları: Sınırlar, Mücadeleler, Açılımlar*. İstanbul: Metis, pp. 262-281; Neil Brenner, *op.cit.*

18 Steve Pile, op.cit., p. 132.

19 Garret Keizer (2010) *The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want*. New York: Public Affairs, p. 26.

20 Yves Citton, *op. cit.*, p.7.

Riabitare i Luoghi Fantasma
Ripopolare i paesi passo dopo passo, verso dopo verso

Gloria Toma

Piccoli paesi tra fantasmi a fantasmagorie

L'articolo si muove da una riflessione sui piccoli paesi che, perdendo gli abitanti e le pratiche che li costituiscono, si trasformano gradualmente in luoghi fantasma, in cui i residui spettrali dello spopolamento si sovrappongono ai ripopolamenti fantasmagorici che nuove strategie di valorizzazione turistica si propongono di generare. Il fenomeno dello spopolamento dei piccoli paesi è una realtà ben conosciuta. Esso mostra un importante aumento intorno agli anni Sessanta, grazie al periodo di crescita economica che attira molte persone verso le grandi città. Negli ultimi anni si è sviluppata una maggiore consapevolezza delle problematiche determinate dal fenomeno e sono nate riflessioni su strategie per invertire la tendenza. Con questo scopo è nata la Strategia Nazionale delle Aree Interne che interviene sulle aree periferiche della penisola italiana con progetti di sviluppo locale.[1] Altre politiche pubbliche si sono rivolte ad una scala più ridotta, come il Bando Borghi del PNRR e l'iniziativa delle "case a 1 euro".

Queste strategie comprendono o si sviluppano in contemporanea a progetti di valorizzazione turistica. In questa "era del turismo",[2] tale valorizzazione viene spesso intesa come un fattore capace di *riattivare* i territori in spopolamento determinando, in alcuni casi, processi di spettacolarizzazione che tendono a omogeneizzarli secondo immaginari di "autenticità" attraverso cui, paradossalmente, è la loro 'singolarità' a venir meno. Ciò che tende a dissolversi – dietro alle fantasmagorie della tradizione e l'estetica del borgo in cui spesso tali luoghi son riprogettati e, di fatto, musealizzati per soddisfare le esigenze di consumo mainstream del turismo – è la loro quotidianità vissuta, che tende così ad assumere una consistenza spettrale, presente più che altro attraverso la propria assenza.[3] Il consenso attorno a strategie orientate al turismo, acriticamente percepito come panacea per ripopolare questi luoghi, in verità contribuisce ulteriormente a spopolarli dei propri abitanti e delle loro pratiche, avendo piuttosto come principale obiettivo il benessere dei visitatori. Da queste riflessioni emerge la necessità di pensare a forme differenti per *riabitare* i piccoli paesi. Una via che, invece di creare fantasmagorie standard e rievocazioni storiche posticce orientate a forme di popolamento estemporaneo crei occasioni per *evocare* quelle pratiche ormai spettrali che ancora li abitano, sebbene impercettibilmente.

Riabitare con il cuore e con la mente

Sono due pratiche apparentemente distanti quelle che, in questa sezione, facciamo convergere a questo scopo: il camminare e la poesia, uniti in attività di lettura in cammino, intesa come opportunità di immersione fantasmatica in questi luoghi, volta ad evocare gli spettri che in essi si aggirano. Il primo elemento si riferisce al camminare, pratica che permette un contatto direttamente corporale, senza

Gloria Toma, architetto, è dottoranda per il corso interateneo in Gestione Sostenibile del Territorio presso l'Università degli studi e Politecnico di Bari. Ha collaborato al gruppo di ricerca VENTO del Politecnico di Milano. Si interessa di lentezza, mobilità sostenibile e rigenerazione urbana.

gloria.toma@uniba.it

filtri ambientali – senza 'scatole', per citare un famoso corto di Bruno Bozzetto (*La Vita in Scatola*, 1967) – con il contesto. Al giorno d'oggi andare a piedi non è così scontato, soprattutto nei piccoli paesi dove la mancanza di mezzi pubblici sembra aver reso indispensabile l'automobile. Camminare però, va da sé, resta un aspetto fondamentale dell'immersione dell'essere umano nello spazio: "*una volta soddisfatte le esigenze primarie, il camminare si è trasformato in forma simbolica che ha permesso all'uomo di abitare il mondo*".[4] Camminare significa qualcosa di più di spostarsi per raggiungere una meta: può essere inteso come una narrazione composta da pause, riflessioni, incontri, scambi. La lentezza che caratterizza il camminare diventa valore da conservare e permette di cogliere dettagli di ciò che si ha intorno, sviluppando legami e relazioni.[5] Questa filosofia che evoca uno stile di vita lento viene espressa dal movimento Città Slow che raccoglie, attualmente, 88 comuni italiani.[6]

Camminare e muoversi lentamente sono esperienze di coinvolgimento che rendono un luogo più "vicino", decelerando il ritmo dell'esistenza così da permettere una relazione fenomenologica e psicologica con il luogo. In questa pratica, lo spazio che prima appariva confuso, omogeneo, fantasmagorico, comincia ad assumere una chiarezza, a rendere leggibili le storie che lo popolano, a divenire esso stesso associabile a narrazioni singolari.[7] Nel Novecento, il movimento Surrealista ha usato il concetto di *deambulazione* per evidenziare come lo spazio urbano possa essere attraversato disvelandone presenze immateriali, esperienza poi ripresa nella *dérive* e nelle teorie psicogeografiche dell'Internazionale Lettrista e poi Situazionista, che hanno colto nella deambulazione un potenziale artistico, epistemologico, e politico.[8]

Se in tal modo comincia a divenire apparente la possibilità di una relazione tra il camminare e l'arte, continuando a riflettere su una forma e pratica dell'abitare che coinvolga "cuore e mente", al camminare possiamo accostare la poesia. Anch'essa, infatti, può essere considerata una pratica relazionale che crea legami di senso con ciò che ci circonda, il visibile e l'invisibile. La contemplazione poetica è il soffermarsi sulle cose, anche le più piccole, per ascoltarle e custodirle, o magari per scoprire che in fondo non esiste differenza tra ciò che siamo e ciò che ci circonda. Il poeta francese Christian Bobin parla di abitare poeticamente il mondo, un atto che concerne una ritrovata umanità con la quale ci si può riavvicinare ad esso e prendersene cura.[9] Questo modo di riabitare è molto più vicino alla semplicità che alla complessità. Si intende quella semplicità con cui Franco Arminio descrive ciò che incontra nei suoi viaggi nell'Italia interna, quella semplicità con cui racconta un trattore che ara la terra, le forme degli infissi, la crescita di un albero.[10] In questa semplicità ci si *riavvicina*, col cuore e con la mente, al mondo in quanto ambiente che non solo ci circonda, ma ci costituisce. Ed ecco che due pratiche apparentemente distanti convergono in un unico obiettivo, riabitare. Il camminare e la poesia insieme possono dare forma a un rito che tenta di evocare gli spettri che popolano i cosiddetti luoghi fantasma, un rito che può essere definito "erranza letteraria".

Geopoetica dei fantasmi

La pratica delle "erranze letterarie" si è diffusa in comunità che non si rassegnano allo spopolamento, e che ad esso non intendono rispondere trasformando i luoghi della quotidianità in fantasmagorie turistiche. Tre iniziative, sviluppate nel territorio pugliese, offrono esempi rilevanti in tal senso.

La prima ha luogo a Corato, in provincia di Bari. Qui ha sede uno dei presìdi del libro,[11] che in occasione della diciassettesima festa dei lettori ha organizzato passeggiate letterarie coinvolgendo autori ed esperti del territorio. Le persone hanno avuto l'opportunità di immergersi nel tessuto urbano accompagnati da letture, riflessioni e consigli per ampliare lo sguardo sulla cittadina, dando forma a un'interessante pratica *geopoetica* di riavvicinamento al territorio.[12]

Ed è grazie alla geopoetica che è possibile raccontare la seconda esperienza. In questo caso ci troviamo a Gravina di Puglia, sempre in provincia di Bari, dove a partire dal 2012 il gruppo Omini di Pietra ha dato luogo a trekking letterari tra natura e borghi. Un incendio boschivo fu l'occasione che mobilitò

il gruppo alla riscoperta del territorio accompagnati dal libro *Il geopoeta* di Davide Sapienza, oltre alla presenza dell'autore. I trekking letterari nacquero con l'obiettivo di riscoprire i luoghi attraverso le parole di alcuni autori, spesso presenti, cercando un'interazione con la gente del posto e con le loro attività quotidiane. Si tratta di percorsi adatti a tutte e tutti che possono durare alcuni giorni.[13]

Per il terzo ed ultimo caso occorre spostare l'attenzione verso il sud della Puglia, la penisola salentina. Cosa accade la sera nella provincia leccese? Con questa domanda l'organizzazione *La scatola di latta* invita periodicamente a passeggiate poetiche senza una posizione né un orario preciso e in contesti sempre diversi. Unico obiettivo, quello di perdersi nei centri storici dei piccoli paesi. La scatola di latta nasce nel 2010 al fine di raccogliere beni comuni di luoghi, storie e persone. Si tratta di iniziative dal carattere spontaneo e unico[14].

Le tre esperienze qui riportate rappresentano diverse declinazioni in cui le erranze letterarie hanno preso forma in contesti differenti. Il punto di vista che le accomuna riguarda un particolare approccio verso i luoghi fantasma che non tenta di scacciare le presenze fantasmagoriche o immateriali, ma di entrare in contatto con esse, nella loro quotidiana assenza. Coltivare pratiche lente ed evocative, come il camminare e la poesia, metterle insieme per immergersi nella realtà tangibile e intangibile dei luoghi, indica un'alternativa allo spopolamento dei piccoli paesi, che non si propone una 'sostitu- zione' a carattere turistico ma una diversa 'vocazione' all'abitare, un *riabitare* che non musealizza né compiange ma ripopola, passo dopo passo.

Endnotes

1 https://politichecoesione.governo.it/media/2289/numero-31_documenti_2014_aree_interne.pdf

2 Marco D'Eramo (2017) *Il selfie del mondo.Indagine sull'era del turismo*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

3 Filippo Barbera, Domenico Cersosimo, Antonio De Rossi (2022) *Contro i borghi: il Belpaese che dimentica i paesi*. Roma: Donzelli

4 David Le Breton (2001) *Il mondo a piedi*. Milano: Feltrinelli; Francesco Careri (2006) *Walkscapes: Camminare come pratica estetica*, p.3. Torino: Einaudi.

5 Paolo Pileri (2020) *Progettare la lentezza*. Gallarate: People.

6 https://www.cittaslow.it/associazione

7 Vito Teti (2014) *Il senso dei luoghi: memoria e storia dei paesi abbandonati*. Roma: Donzelli.

8 Francesco Careri (2006) *Walkscapes: Camminare come pratica estetica*. Torino: Einaudi.

9 Christian Bobin (2019) *Abitare poeticamente il mondo*. Otranto: AnimaMundi.

10 Franco Arminio (2013) *Geografia commossa dell'Italia interna*. Milano: Mondadori.

11 I Presìdi sono 'gruppi di lettori' non formalmente definiti che costituiscono una rete territoriale flessibile e informale, fondata sul volontariato, trasparente nei fini e nelle modalità attuative. https://www.presidi.org

12   Intervista del 09-02-2022 ad Ada Loiodice, architetto coinvolto nell'iniziativa.

13   Intervista del 17-01-2022 a Ezio Spano, guida AIGAE.

14   https://www.istitutoeuroarabo.it/DM/luoghi-storie-e-persone-nella-scatola-di-latta/

Because the night
An archaeology of the image of modern phantasmagoria

Stefano Tornieri
Roberto Zancan

The night does not show things, it suggests them. It disturbs and surprises us with its strangeness. It liberates forces within us which are dominated by our reason during the daytime.
Brassaï. Paris de Nuit, 1933

Stefano Tornieri, architect. Research Fellow at IR.IDE (Infrastructure Research Integral Design environment) of University Iuav of Venice.

Roberto Zancan, PhD, is Professor of History and Theory of Architecture at HEAD-Geneve.

Shock Me All Night Long: trans-illumination

The invention of industrial artificial lighting marked a turning point in the way buildings and streets were perceived and represented, as the bright lights of the modern metropolis were able to dispel the fear of darkness and the unknown. However, at the same time, the night-time city also became associated with the ideas and feelings of spectrality, as the new artificial lights illuminated the previously dark and opaque constructions, creating a sense of unease and uncertainty. The use of artificial lighting for architectural design developed simultaneously, albeit in different ways, in both America and Europe with the rise of electric lighting at the end of the 19th century.[1] On one hand, in big metropolises, such as Chicago or New York, it is mostly the design of skyscrapers that attracted the attention of architects and engineers. Floodlighting and coloured external lights were used to create a new monumentality and celebrate the supremacy of the skyscraper as a national emblem.

Harvey Wiley Corbett, a leading figure in the design of early 20th century skyscrapers, believed that the illuminated portion of the building should not be an afterthought, but rather an integral part of the overall design. In continuity with the other changes that had led to the creation of this type of building, such as the elimination of the cornice, he argued that: "the form of the illuminated portion should be so tied in with the rest of the building that it should appear as a jewel in a setting, forming a coherent part of the entire structure."[2]

Since European cities were characterized by the prevalence of old buildings and had almost no skyscrapers, lighting from within the building dominated the use of light design.[3] While there were similarities in the use of artificial lighting between the two continents, their differences are evident, as vigorously expressed by the European polemics against the 'inelegant' use of floodlighting, defined

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1 For a description of the transformations caused by the advent of artificial lighting in the urban space, see for example Tim Edensor (2017) *From Light to Dark. Daylight, Illumination, and Gloom*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
2 Harvey Wiley Corbett (1930) *Architecture of the Night, Bulletin of the General Electric Company*, special issue, February, pp. 58–59.
3 Dietrich Neumann (2006) Lichtreklame / Luminous Advertising, in: Marion Ackermann and Dietrich Neumann (Eds) *Leuchtende Bauten: Architektur der Nacht / Luminous Buildings. Architecture of the Night*, pp. 80-81. Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz Verlag.

by Gio Ponti as "primitive and barbaric".[4] An attempt to apply the European approach in the USA was the Seagram Building (New York), that significantly updates the technique of transillumination (e.g. illumination from within), a technique that prompted Ada Louise Huxtable to famously argue that "the whole, viewed from the outside, is no longer architectural in the traditional sense: it is a design, not of substance, but of colour, light and motion."[5]

This remark is useful to understand the nocturnal, dematerialization effect the building underwent. At night, architectural volumes have less defined contours, lights and shadows distort the perception of the elements, blurring the forms, rendering consistent what is ephemeral, and immaterial what is solid. Instead of a dark mass looming above the street, the building appears as a sort of mystical screen that reveals what happens inside. The light that shines through its façade and exterior skin unveils its skeleton and the secrets of its internal life, standing out amidst the surrounding darkness. The building, obviously, is not a ghost, yet it shares with the latter many characteristics (transparency, blurred outlines, uncertain animation, etc.).

Smells like light spirit: the window display

In the European predilection for internal lighting, one element plays a crucial role: the window display. Although the pre-modern city was rich in productive and commercial activities on the ground floor, nothing like this element existed. Since ancient times, shops had openings on the street, but these were not functional to the display of commodities, but rather to protecting goods from the unpredictable behaviour of customers.[6] Where the interiors were visible, this had the purpose of showing the activities taking place inside (e.g. weighing, measuring, etc). Under these circumstances, the flaneur had no possibility to exist: not only there was no chance to observe anything, but the pro-verbial curiosity of the flaneur would have easily attracted the suspicious gaze of security guards. For this imaginative and critical pseudo-consumer to exist, not only a global production and circulation of goods was to be put in place, but also an aesthetic of display that allowed for them to be visible and seemingly accessible to all.

The window display is the result of the evolution of glass plate production technologies and the emergence of efficient and cheap lighting technology, that already in mid-XIX century turned shopfronts into shopfronts which presented "an uninterrupted mass of glass from the ceiling to the ground."[7] This continuous, transparent, sparkling surface was like glass on a framed painting, making the goods display more attractive: "as long as lights were too weak to be used indirectly, that is with the aid of reflectors, they were placed among the goods in the window. When gas and electricity increased the range over which light could be cast, the source of the light itself disappeared from view."[8]

4 Gio Ponti (1957) *Amate l'architettura: l'architettura è un cristallo*. Genova: Vitali e Ghianda, pp. 80—81. The Italian architect proposed instead "a new nocturnal city", whose premised can be seen in his famous Pirelli Tower (Milan), that employs ceiling fluorescent lights in the three vertical sections into which the building is divided, and rooftop floodlights reflecting off the bottom of a cantilevered roof. On this, see also also Dietrich Neumann (Ed., 2002), *Architecture of the Night: The Illuminated Building*, Munich/New York: Prestel, pp. 196—97. Another example of this European approach to building lightning is the famous Palazzo di Fuoco of Giulio Minoletti and Giuseppe Chiodi in Piazzale Loreto in Milan. See Palazzo di Fuoco in piazzale Loreto, in *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, vol. IX, n. 96, October 1963.
5 Ada Louise Huxtable (1954) Banker's showcase, *Arts Digest,* 29, p. 13.
6 The painting The Shoemaker's Shop, by Lothar von Seebach (1893-1894) shows, in a very realistic way, what were — still at the end of the XIXth century — the working conditions of a craftsman working behind his window, in daylight.
7 Charles Knight, London, 1851, quoted from Alison Adburgham (1989) *Shops and Shopping, 1800-1914 : Where, and in What Manner the Well-Dressed Englishwoman Bought Her Clothes*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, p. 96. See also Wolfgang Schivelbusch (1988) *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialization of Light in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
8 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, cit, pp. 146, 148.

The first shop windows were installed in the late 18th century in metropolises such as Paris, London and Berlin, where conspicuous consumption was rising rapidly.[9] The Palais Royal was probably the first modern shopping arcade with modern window displays. In London, Francis Place was one of the first merchants to experiment with window display in Charing Cross. Although Place – a social reformer close to Robert Owen – was condemned by many for corrupting morals by leading a large mass of customers to purchase unnecessary goods, he defended this practice in his memoirs, stating that he "sold more goods from the window … than the wages of the workers paid and the cleaning costs".[10]

In Le Système des objets, Jean Baudrillard writes: "Whether as packaging, window or partition, glass is the basis of a transparency without transition: we see, but cannot touch. The message is universal and abstract. A shop display is at once magical and frustrating - the strategy of advertising in epitome."[11]

Window displays are windows facing inwards, exhibitors of what can or cannot be achieved by desires. What appears before the eyes is similar to a ghost: it can be seen, but it cannot be grasped. For most of the population it is as accessible as it is elusive. Through it, the interior of a building is exposed to urban vision, producing an effect of fascination and distancing.

Spirits in the material world: Surrealists' reflections and mirrored images

While European architects and designers were fascinated by the aesthetic and the power the illuminated glass,[12] the Surrealists were interested in playing with them in order to unveil their hidden functioning.[13] In an article from 1928, entitled Les spectacles de la rue, photographer Robert Desnos focused on these "amazing window displays", "more numerous in Paris than elsewhere", where "life is reflected unreal […] with appearances of the dream".[14] At the same time, photographers close to the avant-garde began to photograph reflections of shop windows, as also one of the manifestos of the new photography exhorted to do.[15] Berenice Abbott, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Florence Henri, Ger-

9 Christine MacLeod (1987) Accident or design? George Ravenscroft's patent and the invention of lead-crystal glass, Technology and Culture, 28(4), pp. 776–803.

10 Patrick Robertson (2011) Robertson's Book of Firsts: Who Did What for the First Time. New York: Bloomsbury, p. 348.

11 Jean Baudrillard (1968) Le Système des objets: la consommation des signes. Paris: Gallimard, p. 42. Baudrillard continues "glass works exactly like atmosphere in that it allows nothing but the sign of its content to emerge, in that it interposes itself in its transparency, just as the system of atmosphere does in its abstract consistency, between the materiality of things and materiality of needs."

12 The extension to the Samaritaine department store in Paris with glass domes, designed by Franz Jourdain around 1907, or the ribbon windows illuminated by over-mounted neon lighting reflected out into the street by white curtains of the Petersdorff Department Store, design by Erich Mendelsohn in Breslau around 1928, are good and well-known examples of how much the emphasis on bright, flat surfaces to simplify illumination, helped to spread the architectural vocabulary of modernism.

13 Due to limited space, the topic of night signs has not been covered in this essay. Instead, the focus has been on the less explored representation of windows at night in surrealist photography. It is worth mentioning, however, the studies on the "electrographic architecture" of Las Vegas, inspired by the renowned pamphlet Thomas K. Wolfe, "Las Vegas (What?), Las Vegas (Can't hear you! Too noisy), Las Vegas !!!," Esquire 61.2, February 1964, or the words of lighting designer Derek Phillips who criticised this nocturnal signage architecture as deceptive: "There are few disappointments as real as entering some towns after dark and experiencing the sense of scale and vitality given by the facades of neon signs, only to find the following morning one has been in a shanty town of huts at low level, above which large sign frameworks have been erected. The night-time appearance need not be the same, but it should bear sufficient correlation with the day appearance to be appreciated as the same building." Derek Phillips (1964) Lighting in Architectural Design. New York: McGraw Hill, p. 210.

14 Robert Desnos (1928) Les spectacles de la rue, Le Soir, 11 September.

15 Werner Gräff (1929) Es kommt der neue Fotograf! Berlin: H. Reckendorf. Gräff is also the author of the Dadaist animated movie Ghosts Before Breakfast.

maine Krull or even Dora Maar, Roland Penrose and others, all created series of diurnal and nocturnal window displays, where reflections are omnipresent: in the 1930s, reflection had become a modern leitmotiv.[16]

The fascination of the avant-gardes for reflections on windows displays, or the recourse to parasitic effects in the field of applied photography, can be attributed to several factors.[17] Reflections particularly intrigued Surrealists because they were considered mistakes in photography textbooks, since disrupting perception, and thus embodying the perceptual disorientation brought about by the experience of the modern city. Reflections appeared as ghostly, absent presences that existed in the urban space at a latent state, always on the verge of materialising, and surprising the passer-by. Consistent with the Surrealists' interest in "random figurations," "petrifying coincidences," and a whole "aesthetic of surprise," windows reflections served as tools of subversion and sensory disruption, masterfully combining the Surrealist poetics of collage, montage, and chance encounter.[18]

As works such as Brassaï's Paris by Night or Bill Brandt's A Night in London[19] began to appear, this inspired many other photographers to publish books entirely dedicated to the nocturnal representation of main European cities nightlife. For the first time the night became a lens through which it was possible to capture the dreamlike quality of urban experience, emphasising the spirits that populate it. In these books, buildings, objects, people, and the urban fabric at large, assume a ghostlike quality. Emerging from the darkness, the interiors and exteriors of stores and houses seem mysterious, strange, uncanny, potentially harbouring unacceptable, dissolute, or criminal behaviours.

End of the night : conclusion

In ancient Greek the word phàntasma - (phàntasma- φάντασμα, φαντάζω (phantàzo, "show"; from the root φαν-, which expresses the idea of "appearing" and "showing" - indicated the apparition. In a world that presupposed the widespread presence of souls, it seems that for the Greeks it was the event, rather than the subject, that connoted the manifestation of the supernatural. The ancient Greek expression has the advantage of immediately highlighting the fact that a ghost is something that always questions the image and its correspondence to reality, what is true and what is not.

Under the gaze of surrealist photographers, simultaneously critical of and fascinated by what they saw, the night 'reveals' its intense life made of prostitution and crime, fun and entertainment, as well as a bustling site where the preparatory activities for the day to come take place. Under the nightlight, one thing emerges: modern life, indoor and outdoor, never stops. These nocturnal representations of public and domestic life, surfaced at the encounter of artificial lights and reflections on shop windows, show the extent to which modern European cities were becoming an aesthetic battlefield populated by the spectral forms of urban consumerism, and a modern urban experience as shaped by this "visible unattainability" of things and environments.

A sense of disorientation and ambiguity was thus produced, calling into question the reliability and essence of reality itself, and somehow undermining the sense of certainty and stability that was associated with the modern metropolis. An urban phantasmagoria made of bright lights and surreal images became a manifestation of the power of the ghostly, a reminder that the seemingly solid and

16 Without overlooking Eugène Atget, who was rediscovered by Man Ray and Berenice Abbott at the end of the 1920s. Eugène Atget and Pierre Mac-Orlan(1930) *Atget: Photographe de Paris*. New York: E. Weythe.
17 Huda Othman (2022) The Surreal creativity in windows display design, *Journal of Design Sciences and Applied Arts*, 3(1), pp. 35-49.
18 Ian Walker (2002) *City Gorged with Dreams: Surrealism and Documentary Photography in Interwar Paris*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
19 Brassaï (1933) *Paris de Nuit*. Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques; Bill Brandt (1938) *A Night in London. Story of a London night in Sixty-Four Photographs*. London: Country Life.

dependable structures of the world were, in fact, fragile and transitory, thereby offering a counterpoint to the proverbial disenchantment of Western modernity vis-à-vis ghostly matters.20

20 Libero Andreotti and Lahiji Nadir (2017) *The Architecture of Phantasmagoria: Specters of the City*. New York: Routledge.
Steve Pile (2005) *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*. London: Sage

Victor Navarro's Ghost

Salvatore Poier

The picture of Victor F. Navarro Jr. looks back at you from the sidewalk.

He's probably in his mid 50s, not too thin, deep eyes looking at the camera. His mohawk is prominent, with hair cut very short on the sides to underline the volume above. It is a picture intended to be, most likely, for an official document, one of those pictures with a neutral and uniform background, against a pinkish wall meant to disappear but which here makes it looks like Victor is jumping off the picture to punch you in the eye. He's not posing neutrally. He's not even posing. It seems as if he was about to say something in the moment in which the photographer said "smile". Probably a "fuck you" or most likely a "jagoff", in pure Pittsburgh style.

Next to the picture, on the left, a date: Dec. 24, 1947. On the right, another date. June 30, 2014. Victor is the between. Victor was the body comprised by those two dates.

And, below, a quote, set in stone: "The People Make the Place".

It's a strange gravestone, Victor's gravestone. Sitting in the middle of a sidewalk, it looks as out of place as the two small plastic Christmas trees next to it - including lights and colorful balls - in March. The gravestone is placed in a raised flowerbed, in front of a city bike rental station, in the middle of a sidewalk in the middle of a residential zone. It looks odd, to say the least, and yet it feels cozy, not creepy. The little trinkets left on the front of the stone — a shell, a Pepsi bottle cap, a plastic dinosaur — add to that coziness. Victor was loved. And still is missed by someone, who comes here — and not where he is actually buried — to pay homage.

I learned who Victor was, but I will not reveal that here. It doesn't matter, after all. What does matter is that Victor's memory is tied to this place, these few square feet of sidewalk, rather than where his body is buried. And an actual gravestone — a cemetery-esthetic gravestone — is placed in the middle of the city.

"The people make the place" is between quotation marks, even on the gravestone — copyright claims clearly have no respect even for death. Victor was clearly someone who was making the place. This specific sidewalk, between the coffee shop at the corner and the *other* awkward entrance of the very same coffee shop, on Taylor St. in Bloomfield.

The shops, too, make the place. That awkward secondary entrance of the coffee shop, it turns out, was a store of oddities — one of those 80s stores in between a record store, a comic store, and a collectibles store — that made Taylor St. a mecca for those looking for specific records, a prized comic, or just a geeky chat with the owner. As for Victor, the store is long gone as well, without a headstone to remember it; though, but with a powerful proxy — Victor's stone — to remind those in the know that

Salvatore Poier is teaching professor in Urban Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His interests are wide and various — from piracy to ghosts, from hostile architecture to structural violence.

His latest book is *Fantasmi di Pittsburgh* (2022).

He can be reached at

salvatorepoier@gmail.com

Victor and the store were somehow linked, powerfully interconnected.

The ghost of Victor E. Navarro Jr. lingers on the corner of Taylor and Liberty, near Yinz Coffee — which was called Crazy Mocha until recently — and across from another local institution, Tessaro's Burger, another of those places that looks like they have been lifted from another decade and dumped here. In a gentrifying neighborhood, "the people make the place" sounds both like a discouraging forecast about the future, and a reminder of what people make what place.

A bunch of kids with '90s-style high jeans and film cameras queue here on Saturday morning to get both the artisanal donuts from the food truck *and* the 9$ smoothie from the local tiny fancy and hipster restaurant (which, of course, serves only local fruits and veggies, harvested responsibly and sustainably, and eggs from hens who have been loved and respected) are the people that, now, make the place. Yet, these people look more dead than Victor, frankly: phantasmagoria of a lifestyle that is more about consuming the right things (both material and immaterial, such as ideas, ethics, and ways of thinking) than actually being their own persona. The place Victor was making was also a place of phantasmagoria. The Italian grocer around the corner — the one that used to have a little bit of everything, most of the things expired or almost expired — was mimicking the grocers in Italy. It closed three months ago. The record store with tons of old LPs was evoking a time when LPs were cutting edge. It closed three years ago. The barber with red leather '50s chairs extending the actual '50s into the present time. It might very well be the next to close. This world of constant and repeated references — shadows imitating shadows —is disappearing; changing again as it was changing during the time when Victor was alive.

Phantasmagoria, at the end of the story: feeble images that are shadows of the "real thing" are still among us. The world of now belongs to those kids in high waisted jeans, playing a game of style and culture references that are, themselves, phantasmagoria. And these other shadows — the shadows of the world of yesterday — are meekly disappearing, sometimes exalted by nostalgic waves of "great again", sometimes just forgotten and dissolved in silence. Between shadows — those of the present playing with the past; and of the past playing with the present; and of the future, which we know nothing about — Victor looks at us straight in the eyes, with that deep gaze, that cocky mohawk. "Jagoffs" he seems to say. "Yinz are all jagoffs".

Under the Spell of Tokyo

Jean-Paul Thibaud

Half awake[1]

Many authors have noticed and commented on the hypnotic power of cinema[2]. Halfway between wakefulness and sleep, the spectator is placed in a paradoxical state, in a second state of hallucination, trance, abandonment, fascination. The darkness of the projection room and the immobility of the spectator, the perceptive isolation from the rest of the world, the implementation of a unique and continuous focus of attention contribute to producing this effect of quasi-sleep. Bob Harris, one of the two main characters in *Lost In Translation*, the movie by Sofia Coppola, seems to be in a similar state when he arrives in Tokyo. With jetlag and fatigue, he discovers the city in a state of drowsiness at the very beginning of the film. Dazed look, drowsy body, floating attention. The tone is set. The experience of Tokyo will not be under the sign of full vigilance and perfect intelligibility, but rather under that of sleepwalking and disorientation. The awakening to the city will take place gradually, in a surreptitious way and in company. Similar to the cinema exerting its hold on the spectators by plunging them into another state, the Japanese capital city will discreetly intrude into the emotional life and the very ways of being of the American visitor.

Ambient acclimatization

If the city and the cinema work so well together, it is because both have a capacity to inhabit and transform our experience. In both cases, we are immersed in a singular sensitive environment that affects us and takes possession of us. Rightly, Jean Ladrière[3] considered the city as an "existential inducer", enabling to feel "a certain affective tone that qualifies our existential movement". *Lost In Translation* could well be a test of this proposal. Indeed, Sofia Coppola seems to ask a question in her film: what happens when we arrive in a foreign city for the first time? By following Bob Harris and Charlotte, the two protagonists of the story, the filmmaker invites us to plunge into the atmosphere of Tokyo. It is less a question of proposing a touristic visit or discovering the emblematic places of the Japanese capital than of imperceptibly infusing in its *ambiance*. The characters will gradually acclimatize to the tones of the city and enter into resonance with it, becoming one with its lights, sounds, rhythms, and energy. It is as if the film functions as an atmospheric infusion from which the initial feeling of strangeness fades away.

Jean-Paul Thibaud is CNRS senior researcher at Cresson – Research Center on Sonic Space and the Urban Environment. His field of research covers the theory of urban ambiances, ordinary perception in urban environment, sensory ethnography of public places, anthropology of sounds, qualitative in situ methodology, and sensitivities to lifeworlds. He has directed the CRESSON research lab, founded the International Ambiances Network and directed the current SENSIBILIA research project.

jpthibaud1@gmail.com

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1 *Credit*: This article has been previously published in French: Jean-Paul Thibaud (2015) Imprégnations de Tokyo, in: Nicolas Tixier (Ed.) *Traversées urbaines. Villes et films en regard*. Genève: Métis Presses, pp. 73-80.
2 Raymond Bellour (2009) *Le corps du cinéma. hypnoses, émotions, animalités*. Paris: P.O.L.
3 Jean Ladrière (1973) *La ville comme inducteur existentiel, in Vie sociale et destinée*. Gembloux: Duculot, pp. 139-160.

Forms of strangeness

The strangeness in *Lost In Translation* is not of the same type as that of Roland Barthes's book *The Empire of Signs*. If the latter describes Tokyo and Japan in the mode of a radical strangeness, of the order of the untranslatable, Sofia Coppola's film puts us rather in the presence of a "familiar strangeness"[4]. We recognize without too much effort the signs of hypermodernity and those of tradition, the Tokyo of *pachinko* and that of *ikebana*. A whole series of situations explore this type of strangeness. For example, when everyday objects do not work quite as one might expect: a too-small shower forcing one to bend over, an uncontrollable sports machine, an automatic curtain that opens in the morning without warning, etc. The world of objects is no longer taken for granted, it is rather experienced as surprising and unexpected. The same goes for the meeting of unlikely characters with whom one does not really know how to behave. From the ridiculous call girl to the tyrannical advertising executive, from the laconic photographer to the hysterical TV host, everything happens as if Bob Harris were surrounded by excessive and caricatured characters with whom he doesn't know what to do. Cultural codes escape him and social interactions remain enigmatic. But if these discrepancies provide material for slapstick scenes and comic effects, they take on a whole new face with Charlotte. Her escapades in Tokyo lead her instead to a feeling of disorientation, loneliness and alienation. We then pass from the universe of Jacques Tati and Buster Keaton to that of Wim Wenders and Michelangelo Antonioni. From the Buddhist ritual to which she attends indifferently, to the electronic game rooms that she visits as a disengaged spectator, it is a completely different atmosphere that we are exposed to. The body-incongruous of Bob Harris is replaced by the eye-distant of Charlotte. Perhaps we have here two polarities from which our strangeness in the world is configured. *Lost in Translation* takes up and explores the figure of the stranger in a new way. From Georg Simmel to Alfred Schütz, from the Chicago School to Isaac Joseph, from Bruce Bégout to Bernhard Waldenfels, abundant literature describes this subtle dynamic of distance and proximity that we maintain with the surrounding world. Sofia Coppola's film takes up this theme by giving a sense of the various tones that run through this condition, ranging from the comical to the tragic of existence.

Atmospheric situations

This shifted relationship to the surrounding world manifests itself less in action scenes or in a tight plot than in atmospheric situations. If this condition of stranger limits the capacity of the characters to understand what is said, to interpret what happens, and to act in accordance, it contributes on the other hand to sharpen a sensitivity to atmospheres. If one cannot clearly grasp the message of an interlocutor, one begins to listen to the music of his or her language. For those interested in urban ambiances, this is far from trivial. It is as if a certain amount of strangeness, a certain degree of disorientation, a relative loss of the obviousness of the everyday world were necessary to become sensitive to the atmospheres in which we are immersed. And indeed, everything contributes to making *Lost in Translation* an atmospheric film[5]. If not much is going on - little action and laconic dialogues — this is due to the attention focused more on the places and landscapes, gestures and faces, silences and lights. These expressive materials seem to become the primary substance of the film, allowing to feel the emergence of Tokyo's atmospheres and the transformation of the characters' emotional state. It is a question here of what is felt, of the meeting of aesthetics and ethology attentive to the infinite nuances of expression. But how does this sensory acclimatization and impregnation of urban atmospheres take place?

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4 Bernard Stiegler (2013) « Lost in translation » : réflexions sur la traduction et le dialogue interculturel », *Trivium*, 15, 2013, http://trivium.revues.org/4704

5 Brian L. Ott and Diane Marie Keeling (2011), Cinema and choric connection: Lost in translation as sensual experience, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 97(4), pp. 363-386.

Motor conformation

In order to answer this question, certain scenes in the film function as manifestations of this progressive tuning to the environment. The most elementary process undoubtedly concerns motor conformation, the adjustment of the body to new environments, the adoption of new ways of moving and standing. We have witnessed Bob's embarrassment in front of surprising everyday objects, but we should just as well note the banal gestures repeated in common situations in Japan: bending over to greet, eating with chopsticks, etc. Beyond these clichés, it is a question of learning how to adjust with one's immediate surroundings. The paradigmatic scene of this type of acclimatization is the one in which Charlotte walks through a Japanese garden, carefully following the stone path provided for this purpose. Her walking rhythm, the length of her steps and the meandering of her path resonate with the material layout of the garden. The attention paid in Japan to the lower part of the body[6] and to the contact with the ground is very concretely actualized in this scene. In a way, the body reconfigures itself by adapting to new conditions, initiating new motor habits and familiarizing itself with new sensory-motor schemes. A kinesthetic and proprioceptive habituation develops little by little, in an involuntary and unconscious way, allowing Bob and Charlotte to feel more at ease in this new environment. The infusion of this new ambiance operates here at a pre-reflexive level and unfolds in the terms of a soma-aesthetic[7].

Sensory infiltration

A second figure relates to the porosity of living beings to the surrounding world. Speaking of sensory infiltration, it is a question of recognizing our capacity to be affected and inhabited by what surrounds us. The air we breathe is often given as an example, alternating inhalation and exhalation, and revealing this fundamental condition of permeability between the subject and the world. In *Lost in Translation,* we see a double treatment of this question. On the one hand, the city is put at a distance, seen from above the hotel room and perfectly silent. We are dealing here with the panoramic, overhanging and disengaged gaze as described by Michel de Certeau[8] and so much commented since. Tokyo seems inaccessible here, and its *ambiances* almost absent. But a second treatment is also proposed, which shows how the city manages to infiltrate despite all expectations within the characters themselves. The lights of Tokyo radiate from all sides, projected and reflected on the windows of the hotel room or the cab. In some scenes, Bob and/or Charlotte are literally bathed in the ambient light of the city, tinted with the colors of Tokyo and superimposed on the luminous landscape. In this case, we are no longer in front of an image or a view, but rather immersed in a sensitive environment and blended into the landscape. Tokyo invites itself into the hotel room and imprints itself on the characters' skin. The acclimatization to the urban ambiances finds then a second formula: not only the adoption of new motor habits but also the infiltration of sensory phenomena.

Gestural Imitation

As the title suggests, the inability to understand the language is one of the leitmotifs that run through the film. This situation might seem prohibitive, yet a scene of primary importance occurs towards the end of the film that offers an alternative to this apparent inability to communicate and be understood. If verbal interaction between a Japanese and an American seems impossible, it can nevertheless explore another terrain: that of gestures, of a "conversation by gesture"[9]. In this scene of waiting at the hospital, Bob imitates the sounds and inflections of the person who is talking

6 François Laplantine (2010) *Tokyo, ville flottante*. Paris: Stock.
7 Richard Shustermann (2008) *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
8 Michel de Certeau (1980) *L'invention du quotidien. Tome 1 Arts de faire*. Paris: Gallimard.
9 George Herbert Mead (1934) *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

to him, and in turn re-enacts the body gestures that accompany the speech of his interlocutor. A real exchange takes place between the two characters, which reflects an attention brought to the aesthetic qualities of the voice and to the forms which draw the movement of the hand. Imitation replaces translation, the quality of the gesture replaces the meaning of the word, and analog communication replaces digital communication. For the first time in the film, we are truly plunged into Japanese culture. A process of familiarization seems to be underway, opening up to the sensitivity to others, to the possibility of a shared game, and then allowing the development of the beginning of an exchange. Acclimatization in Tokyo involves processes of imitation, which, for Gabriel Tarde[10], are the very foundation of the social bond.

Urban Tuning

A last form of acclimatization is apparent throughout the film, giving a sense of the evolution of the tonicity and vitality of the characters. While the first part of the movie presents long scenes of sitting or lying down, in which rest, inaction and immobility are predominant, the following part puts the characters in motion, making them more alert, mobile and active. Everything happens as if Tokyo manages to infuse its energy into the visitors, drawing them into its frenzy and agitation. The gestures become more lively, the walk more determined, the body more eager. The characters come alive. The way of filming enhances and expresses this movement of intensification of the experience: the scenes become shorter, the sound of the city more present, the colored lights of the neon lights and other screens more vivid and bright. New affects of vitality[11] appear, which increase the power of action of the characters. The same tone seems to imbue the bodies and the spaces of the city. If the beginning of the film showed the newcomers to be out of tune, insensitive to their surroundings, the following part shows how they end up tuning into the urban ambiance. In the same way that musicians and listeners share the same duration in the musical experience, that they tune in[12], a shared rhythm is established here between the movements of the characters and the atmospheres of Tokyo. It is all about the intensity and energy that emanates from the film, without us really knowing "who has the fever in the evening, if it is the lights of the city or the busy passers-by"[13].

On Impregnation

Isn't it ultimately about exploring an art of impregnation? With *Lost in Translation*, it is our (in)capacity to inhabit a world that seems to be presented at first glance. But if we look closely, it is also about our capacity to be inhabited by a world, to enter in connivance with it and to be transformed by its atmospheric powers.

10 Gabriel Tarde (1890) *Les lois de l'imitation*. Paris: Félix Alcan.
11 Daniel Stern (2010) *Les formes de vitalité*. Paris: Odile Jacob.
12 Alfred Schütz (1951) Making music together: A Study in Social Relationship, *Social Research*, 18(1), pp. 76-97.
13 Pierre Sansot (1984) *Poétique de la ville*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Picture credits

cover: László Moholy-Nagy − Berlin, Radio Tower (1928)

pp. 4-5: Charles Marville − Boulevard Haussmann, de la rue Miromesnil (ca. 1853–70)

p. 8: Alfred Stieglitz − The Flatiron Building (1904)

p. 14: Arnold Genthe, San Francisco, April 18, 1906 (1906) [published in As I remember, by Arnold Genthe. New York : Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936, facing p. 94]

p. 20: Jacob August Riis − Bandits' Roost, 59 1/2 Mulberry Street (1888)

pp. 26-27: A .L. Opdyke − Lower Main Street, Titusville, NJ (1907-1918)

p. 28: Giuseppe Primoli − Edmond de Goncourt devant la porte de sa maison (1889)

p. 32: Charles Marville − Eglise St. Bernard 3 (ca. 1850–70)

p. 37: Giuseppe Primoli − Ponte Nomentano (1896)

p. 38: Tina Modotti − Stairs, Mexico City (1924–26)

p. 44: Erich Salomon − Gustav Stresemann, Reichstag Wandelhalle (1929 or 1931)

p. 48: Charles Marville − Boulevard Haussmann, de la rue du Havre (ca. 1853–70)

p. 54: James Craig Annan − Riva Schiavoni, Venice (1904)

pp. 62-63: Samuel Bourne − Pillars in the Panch Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri, India (ca. 1860)

back cover: Snowden Dwight Flora − White, South Dakota, July 28, 1938 (1938) [courtesy of Western History Collections, Special Research Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Snowden Dwight Flora Collection, image no. FLORA 824].

lo Squaderno 64

Ghosts [phantasmagorias]

edited by // Alberto Vanolo & Andrea Pavoni

Guest Artist // VV.AA.

Io Squaderno is a project by Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Cristina Mattiucci & Andrea Pavoni.

More Info | http://www.losquaderno.net/?page_id=2
Contact | losquaderno@gmail.com

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