/ BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU:

THE SUBVERSION OF MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE /

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ABSTRACT =====

This thesis is a mediated discourse that explores how technology and perception can both subvert and (re) establish architectural meaning and the figural in our present post-modern condition. It explores how cinema and film, as both art and technology, can unearth the problems that lie in technology's influence on human perception. Proposing a new building for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) the design thesis attempts to make such an inquiry on perception and its relationship to technology. As new modes of perceptions arise from this tension, so do new ways of perceiving and engaging with art and technology, expanding our perceptions and understanding of the world. Only through a careful mediation between science and perception, a mediation that moves us towards the *Real*, can we reconcile the apparent rupture or loss of meaning of the figural in post-modern architecture and allow the (re) conquering of the human body as an authentic placeholder and metaphor.

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PREFACE |||||

As one of the most discussed works when exploring the relationship between illusion and reality, Marcel Duchamp's work *Tu m'* (1918) demonstrates the tension between technology and perception as the ambiguity of projection:

In *Tu m'*, Duchamp questions the distinction between appearance and apparition, the delay between presence and representation. He uses projection shadows as the trace of existing objects, yet he preserves a distance between the imprint and the 'shadow tracers,' creating a variation on the theme of anamorphosis. In contrast to traditional works of this kind, in the modern anamorphosis the *truth* of the image is no longer revealed to the beholder from a fixed position. The painting calls for a new form of *participation* of the spectator, for a dynamic involvement in the process of creation.¹

Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'* (1918) in Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louise Pelletier The Perspective Hinge (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997) 327.

Calling for a new form of participation the apostrophe in *Tu m'* projects an unknown verb, one that suggests a possible, but unknown relationship, between “you” and “I”—between the projection and the self. If we inverted the assumption that projection is a representational illusion—one that *Tu m'* presupposes—and rather than regarding projection as never really present, we consider the consequences of regarding projection as being the actual ‘thing.’ The projection or mediation of the work becomes, in a sense, the work itself. This thesis focuses on our role of “participation” as mediation between the work and its interpretation.

¹ Perez-Gomez and Pelletier, 327.

As a word of warning to the reader, the thesis document itself subverts certain structural conventions of the research paper. The thesis suggests subversion as a new mode of “participation” between the viewer and the work of architecture, and as such, the document itself takes on a non-linear narrative structure that forces the reader to participate in the process of imagination. The document never takes on explicit descriptions of the design proposal, but allows transversal glances at the architecture that allude to the fluid and oscillating state of architectural meaning and its interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

The thesis document will set up boundaries for the design project thereby establishing the theoretical context that will guide the design decisions of the architectural proposal. Not existing within a context-less realm, but within our present context, that of the imaginary and the interpretations of various theories, the thesis will meander over, under, around and through philosophies, theories and works. These fluid boundaries will allow a mediated discourse on how technology and perception can both subvert and (re) establish architectural meaning and the figural in our present post-modern condition.

The first section explores how the labyrinth, as an architectural metaphor, has the ability to (de) stabilise and (re) centre meaning. Allowing meaning to be questioned, deconstructed and (re) established as it travels transversely through theories and styles to articulate a deeply rooted, yet fluid, architectural tradition. Exploring the disruptive and (de) stabilising, yet necessary, breaks in the architectural metaphor, this section will also further examine the consequences of the denial of meaning in architecture. In the post-modern condition, architectural meaning, as language, is often being deconstructed using Jacques Derrida's linguistic theories. By dissecting the dangers of these attempts to cleanse recent architecture of its meaning, Bernard Tschumi's *parc de La Villette* will be critically examined. The goal is not to dismiss the study of architecture as language but rather to suggest that its meaning should only be (de) stabilised or questioned as long as it is somehow (re) established or (re) invented. As a precursor to Derrida's theories, George

Bataille's labyrinthine process has this ability to subvert, rather than deconstruct language, at once maintaining the foundation, fluidity *and* instability of meaning.

The *generative* subversion of this labyrinthine tradition will form a foundation for the thesis; reconciling the apparent rupture or loss of meaning and the figural in architecture it will allow the re-conquering of the human body as an authentic placeholder and metaphor through a careful mediation between science and perception. This section will finally examine how John Hejduk's architectural works attempt to reconcile this apparent loss of meaning and the figural in architecture through an interweaving of form with narrative and program.

In the second section, post-modern writer, Kurt Vonnegut's creative process will be discussed as a fictive literary site for the design thesis. Like Hejduk, Vonnegut's novels create a series of autobiographical "untruths" that, with the participation of the readers, are (re) interpreted as both collective and personal "truths." Thus Vonnegut critically explores the blurred and ambiguous, yet intertwined, relationships between reality, fiction and making. Seven literary sites were chosen from Vonnegut's earlier novels not as an attempt to directly link fiction to reality or theory to practice, but to create a discursive structure for an architectural investigation that explores the oscillation between these realms.

The third and final section will examine more closely the complex relationship between technology and perception. Many of the difficulties concerning film, as both art and technology, lie in how it shapes human perceptions and the design thesis's proposal for a new building for the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) shall make such inquires on the nature of perception and its relationship to technology. Technology, as a

device infused with a conflicting tradition, expands perceptions by forcing the (de) stabilisation of the body. This (de) centring motivates a necessary (re) centring that allows the human body to reconcile its complex relationship with technology. As new modes of perceptions arise from this tension, so do new ways of perceiving and engaging with art and technology thereby expanding our perceptions and understanding of the world.

Although, the thesis focuses on the essential oscillation of architectural meaning, oscillation should not be confused with the “fold,” where folding implies one object/thing that doubles back onto itself to create relationships that are innately self-referential. A work that “folds back onto itself” infers that it is self-referential and excludes any external context; the fold is not mediation between two or more separate objects/things, but a mediation of the ‘self’ in a removed and isolated environment. The thesis as oscillation differs since it takes into account the work's contexts, multiple disciplines and theories without resting on a single premise. The thesis is neither a “fold” nor a destination point to a linear process, as an end to any single theory, but is part of a cyclical or oscillating process of mediation between *theory* and *practice*. Like the labyrinth it may at times manifest itself as linear; but is ultimately without a clear beginning or end and continuously cycles or oscillates back as it is always (re) defining itself.

THE LABYRINTH: AN ARCHITECTURAL METAPHOR

Digital image, *Between Time and Timbuktu*, by the author (2005).

This first section explores how the fluidity the labyrinth, as an architectural metaphor, has the ability to (de) stabilize and (re) centre meaning. Allowing meaning to be questioned, deconstructed and (re) established, it moves transversely moves through theories and styles as it articulates a deeply rooted, yet fluid, architectural tradition. The development of this tradition of oscillation will form the foundation for the thesis and will act as a means to reconcile the apparent rupture or loss of meaning and the figural in architecture; it will investigate subversion and (re) conquering of the human body as an authentic placeholder and metaphor.

idea of architecture.³ Having the power to mend the apparent gap between chaos and the order of the cosmos, the labyrinth represented an important mediating metaphor in Western traditions that depicted the tensions between the *chaos* and *order* of the city. Where *chaos* can be revealed as *order* through architecture, and the exterior of the labyrinth can mask the disorder that lay within, the labyrinth could only mask its disorder until the illusion of order had to be inevitably shattered. Perez-Gomez warns that:

Daedalus is thus an architect-craftsman of an ambiguous nature. He concealed a monster within a labyrinth and a deceptive woman in a machine of leather and wood. The craftsman creates form and beauty, but also illusions. In giving form and meaning to matter, art is also in danger of falsifying the divine truth. This ambiguity, which is part of the human condition, is as prevalent now as it was then.⁴

Every nine years, Minos fed the Minotaur Athenian youths sent as a tribute from Athens. At the time of the third tribute, Theseus was sent to Crete to be sacrificed. But, Ariadne, Minos's daughter, fell in love with the young prince and was determined to save him from the Minotaur and the labyrinth. Ariadne had given Theseus a ball of pitch, which he threw into the Minotaur's gaping mouth. Choking on the ball and unable to attack, the Minotaur fell victim to Theseus's sword or, in other accounts, his club. The event can be defined as a battle between worlds of the conscious and unconscious, where:

Theseus, the Patriarchal hero of Athens, and the Minotaur, the symbol of matriarchy, are engaged in a life or death struggle that pits against one another two opposing and irreconcilable views of man's life on earth. The battle that was waged in the meandering labyrinth and the dark corridors of the labyrinth pitted Patriarchy against Matriarchy, the urge towards the spiritual against the pull of the earth-bound, man's desire for ego consciousness against the dark world of the unconscious.⁵

³ Perez-Gomez, *AA Files* 51.

⁴ Perez-Gomez, *AA Files* 12.

⁵ Gaetano Cipolla, *Labyrinth: Studies on an Archetype* (New York: Legas, 1987) 21.

On the advice of Daedalus, Ariadne had given Theseus a clue of thread that he tied to the entrance of the labyrinth and unwound as he followed the twisting paths to the centre. Theseus rewound thread, retracing his steps, and emerged safely from the inextricable labyrinth. Only with the aid of Daedalus was Theseus able to transcend the labyrinth and find the right path. In some versions the thread was from Ariadne's own hair, reinforcing the notion that order may lie in the body itself. While others suggest that the thread is a symbol of the umbilical cord through which Theseus was re-born. Regardless of the interpretation, the (re) centring or (re) ordering of the world, through metaphor, must relate to the human body where its very foundation lies.

Following Daedalus's dual betrayal, Minos imprisoned Daedalus and his son Icarus in the labyrinth. Daedalus fabricated wings to allow Icarus and himself to escape the maze by flight. Icarus, ignoring his father's advice to take the middle course to prevent the sun from melting the wax that held his feathers in place, soared sunward and subsequently plummeted into the sea. Symbolically only Daedalus, as its inventor-architect, was allowed to rise above the labyrinth, revealing its order; and Icarus, refusing to remain in the realm of man, plummeted to his death. Icarus had to perish for wanting to fly up towards the gods and in doing so attempting to break the greater order of the cosmos.

simultaneous and perspective dependent order/chaos, of an organizing totality controlling complexly organized parts.”⁷

The multicursal, rather than consisting of a single crucial choice, extends to a series of choices or repeated confrontations without apparent end until the centre or exit is achieved. In the individually oriented multicursal labyrinth, the maze-treader is responsible for his outcome through an individual process that involves a series of choices or challenges. In *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, Penelope Doob Reed writes that:

Hence this maze is a perfect symbol of intellectual and moral difficulties as well as aesthetic complexity. The characteristic quality of movement through such a maze is halting, episodic, with each fork or alternative requiring a pause for thought or decision. The direction of movement is constantly shifting, now here, now there, as the wanderer's choices and the maze's paths lead him.⁸

The essence of this labyrinth thus appeared to be based on confusion, doubt, frustration and ambiguity. The maze-treader should not only fear the Minotaur, but also the risk of getting perpetually lost or imprisoned within the labyrinth itself.

The original Cretan Labyrinth of Knossos, built in 1930 BCE and ruled by King Mino, as the myth of

Fig. 2. Reconstructed 'ground-floor' plan of the Knossos Labyrinth, Rodney Castleden, *The Knossos Labyrinth* (London: Routledge, 1990) 114.

⁷ Reed 102.

⁸ Reed 46.

Theseus and the Minotaur suggests, is in fact multicursal rather than unicursal like all its visual depictions. (see fig.2) At first glance this may seem problematic; however, if one passes successfully through a multicursal labyrinth without retracing one's steps, a mapping of a unicursal labyrinth would appear.⁹ Similarly, Ariadne's thread, acts as the unicursal that creates order within the multicursal. Based on this premise, the unicursal must exist within the penetrable and extricable multicursal labyrinth; in this case, their dual natures exist in a simultaneous relationship to each other.

Although it is a multicursal labyrinth, the Temple of Knossos also retains its unicursal order through the ritualistic events and dances that occur within its walls. "In archaic times, the dance *was* the architecture. The space of architecture was the space of ritual and not an objective, geometric entity. The connection between the idea of the labyrinth and the ritual dance was further emphasized in the myth."¹⁰ Similarly, after having killed the Minotaur and escaped, Theseus rehearsed rituals that included sacrificial offerings to the gods, and engaged in a dance with a collective group, 'whose figures imitated the meanders of the labyrinth'.¹¹ These ritualistic dances further reinforced a (re) centring that occurs through the spatio-temporal movements of the human body.

The unicursal labyrinth with its implied visual complexity and illusion of chaos, and the multicursal with its ritualistic dance and order, embody not a literal but an implied mediation between order and chaos. The unicursal and the multicursal are thus infinitely linked and interchangeable, each existing within the other. Suggesting a

⁹ Reed 53.

¹⁰ Perez-Gomez, AA Files 53

¹¹ Perez-Gomez, AA Files 53.

complex, yet co-existing, relationship between the embodied notion of time/ space and its geometric representation.

REPRESENTATIONAL SHIFT =====

Only after the Renaissance were multicursal labyrinths represented visually. The shift in this visual representation of the labyrinth from unicursal to multicursal suggests the challenge of "universal truth" by that of the "individual" that occurred during the Enlightenment period of the Renaissance. In the tracing of a maze at the entrance of the parish church of St Quentin, France both multicursal and unicursal labyrinth co-exist. (see fig. 3) Therefore imposing order on chaos, "reflecting order through its precise geometrical external lines and chaos through the meandering and confusing path-ways of its internal space."¹²

Fig. 3. Maze at the entrance to the parish church of St Quentin, France, Janet Bord, Mazes and Labyrinths of the World (Great Britain: The Anchor Press, 1976) 94.

Classical writers knew a great deal about the Pythagorean choice represented by the letter 'Y', one road leading to pleasure and the other austere to virtue.¹³ Christian writers would also lend the image biblical authority by referring to Matthew 7:13-14, the choice between the broad path to destruction and the narrow way to life.¹⁴ During the

¹² Gaetano Cipolla, Labyrinth: Studies on an Archetype (New York: Legas, 1987) 5.

¹³ A clearer distinction between the visual and literary labyrinths will be established further in the text.

¹⁴ Cipolla

Renaissance, Dante expressed this Christian labyrinthine nature of life and fate in his 1419 manuscript *Inferno*¹⁵. In his philosophical writings he recognizes the loss of the right path of the Y, to be of the realm of the underworld, where man is doomed to wander aimlessly lost for eternity. However, he also recognized the process to redemption and ultimate salvation as an alternation between the left and the right path. The battle between *good* and *evil*, where it was believed that *good* must ultimately prevail in order to escape the labyrinth of the underworld. “Losing the right path is equivalently symbolically to entering into an exit less labyrinth.”¹⁶

In opposition to Dante’s reiteration of the labyrinth, the writings of fellow Renaissance writer, Petrarch, were significantly different. Petrarch's writing and life, through an unhealthy lifelong obsession with a married woman named Laura (there is debate as to whether she actually existed or was a creation of Petrarch's imagination), had become a labyrinthine prison:

The poet is saying that he had entered into a labyrinth of his own volition; his presence within the labyrinth, which is equivalent to the death of the spirit, to the complete

Fig. 4. Piranesi’s Labyrinthine Prisons in John Wilton-Ely, Giovanni Battista Piranesi: the complete etchings (San Francisco : Alan Wofsy, 1994).

¹⁵ Cipolla

¹⁶ Cipolla 45.

immobility of the soul in this journey to salvation. If Petrarch considered his plight in terms of a struggle within a labyrinth, as I am suggesting, his efforts must have been translated with the image “wandering”, for that is the fate befalling those who cannot find their way out. He describes his wandering through deserted caverns, through valleys and fields, through cities, and through the labyrinthine world. One may even suggest that there is something obsessive about it, if it appears even in his own personal life. Petrarch seems to be struggling constantly with an entangling reality, an enormous and intricate world turned labyrinth.¹⁷

amounts to obsessively getting further entangled within a meandering labyrinthine prison of mental confusion. Trapped in a labyrinth of his own making without a centre or exits; he is relentlessly searching for a means to escape, not only the labyrinth, but also architecture *itself*. It is Tschumi's belief that post-modern architecture should break any link to history or context, and that there is "no longer any relationship possible between architecture and program, architecture and meaning."¹⁸ Disconcerting and upsetting this statement by Tschumi not only disrupts but also suggests an eradication of the two relationships that are essential in the making of architecture.

As a precursor to *parc de La Villette*, Tschumi's conceptual project *Rituals* (1978) considered how rituals could regulate spaces. Using the James Whale's film *Frankenstein* as a movement generator, "three banal rituals have been isolated – and three subsequent spaces defined."¹⁹ Derived from frames taken from the film, Ritual 1—

Fig 5. The Dance, "Rituals", Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 2000) 22-23.

The Dance, Ritual 2—The Chase, and Ritual 3—The Fight were expressed as graphic studies that explored how a "movement diagram becomes architecture."²⁰ In the dance scene, an abstract space was created through an arbitrary process defined from a

¹⁸ Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjuncture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996) 204.

¹⁹ Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000) 19.

²⁰ Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* 39.

diagrammatic interpretation of these movements taken from frozen moments of film. (see fig. 5) It was Tschumi's belief that, "abstract parameters and the depths of human experience are 'architecturally' independent," and that "anything can be a program for architecture,"²¹ thereby separating what he calls conceptual space from real space, separating abstraction from experience.

This notion of ritualistic "dance" is very different, almost opposite to Theseus's dance with the Minotaur in which lies the temporal, spatial and mythological realms of experience. Traditionally, "the possible relationship between these ritual dances [labyrinthine dance] and the rituals of the foundation of cities in Roman times, in which an essentially invisible ritual created an invisible wall which made the city secure; the ritual was so important, in fact, that it has to be re-enacted periodically."²² In this cosmological picture the importance of the ritual not only lies in its physical enactment but in its greater meaning and centring power. The myth of Theseus bears a strong reference to the human body and gives it meaning, but Tschumi's dance denies any meaningful spatial and temporal relationships that are and always have been essential to architecture.

In *parc de La Villette* (1982-98), Tschumi further regards ritual as the exploration between abstract space, movement and action, and attempts to remove meaning from the ritual. Describing a programmatic deconstruction, he isolates architectural elements such as: Points, Lines and Surfaces, referring to what he considers to be point-like activities, linear activities and surface activities. (see fig. 6) By separating these activities and representing them in a purely graphic and abstract mode, Tschumi reinforces what he

²¹ Tschumi, *Event-Cities* 2 19.

considers as the necessary split between architecture and program, stating “that there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the two terms of program and architecture.”²³

Fig. 6,7. Site manipulation of Bernard Tschumi's *parc de La Villette*, Paris, Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000) 54-56.

As a precedent for the La Villette project a point grid was defined as an “abstracted point grid [that] functioned as a mediator between the text and the site.”²⁴ With its structure based on James Joyce's labyrinthine text *Finnegan's Wake*, Tschumi's urban project in Paris, *parc de La Villette*, uses superimpositions, juxtapositions, and permutations to destabilize architectural meaning and its reference to the city. (see fig. 7) Using this arbitrary point grid of individual *folies*, translatable as madneses or irrationalities, the *folies* were meant to simultaneously ‘gather’ and ‘disperse’ pedestrian

²² Perez-Gomez, *AA Files* 53.

²³ Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* 194.

²⁴ Tschumi, *Event-Cities 2* 42.

activity, each *folie* having individual but unrelated programmatic functions that relate to autonomous signs independent of programmatic concerns.²⁵ (see fig. 8, 9)

Fig. 8 and 9. North entrance and plan of parc de La Villette, Paris, Bernard Tschumi, Event-Cities 2 (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 2000) 71, 142.

As each construction or *folie* is part of this grid that distributes them evenly and in a non-hierarchical manner throughout the site. The grid is also used, as a purely theoretical exercise, as a re-structuring device that ends up as superficial gesture: a gesture that for Tschumi symbolizes the establishment a new basis for architecture.

Tschumi further isolates these *folies* by encasing them in 10x10x10 meter cubes, using an axonometric representational space to objectify them, thereby eradicating the labyrinth's inherent fluidity and experiential nature. Rather, he focuses on the mechanical aspect of transformation as an exercise where *La Villette* is the product of "the application of a device or formula," according to him:

²⁵ Tschumi, Event-Cities 2 53.

“No semantic intensions govern the transformations of La Villette; they result from the application of a device or formula... Architectural relations are never semantic, syntactic, or formal, in the sense of formal logic. Instead, a better analogy to these montage and mixing techniques might be found in Dziga Vertov’s or Sergei Eisenstein’s work in the cinema.”²⁶

The result is architecture with an arbitrary spatial configuration that lacks any spatial quality, materiality or reference to the human body. Although Tschumi argues that *parc de La Villette* is not a purely theoretical project, it remains at that level, never being translated or transmuted into an architecture that holds meaning and relates to the human body.

This rejection of architectural meaning, either through context, history or program, expressed in *La Villette*, takes the shape of the rejection of the site’s boundaries and thresholds, abolishing the very notion of interior and exterior that describes the labyrinth’s very essence. Tschumi partially attributes this treatment of the notion of limits as being evident in the work of Joyce and Bataille, claiming that they both “worked at the edge of philosophy and non-philosophy, of literature and non-literature.”²⁷ Unfortunately, he neglects to differentiate between the act of questioning the limits and fully abolishing or disregarding the limits. It is in *La Villette*, with the use of an infinite structural grid, one that extends beyond the site, that Tschumi suggests a boundary-less world, one that has no limit; making us question how something without a limit may even exist.

²⁶ Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjuncture* 185. Further in the thesis the early cinematic montages of Vertov and Eisenstein will be examined to establish that Tschumi’s interpretation of their works is flawed, as the cinematic montage is a *deliberate* process that creates ‘new’ cinematic spaces and narrative structures.

²⁷ Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjuncture* 210.

Architectural critic, Denis Hollier points out that *parc de La Villette* is described by Derrida as “spaced out” or “spacy” and is expressed as an operant that pins “architecture against itself,” stating that:

‘...Architecture against itself,’ Bernard Tschumi, the park’s architect, labels it: architecture against architecture... Such a project calls upon a loss of meaning, to give it a dionysiac dimension: it explicitly takes issue with what Tschumi describes as an essential premise of architecture, ‘the idea of a meaning immanent in architectural structures’; the park, a post-modern ‘assault on meaning,’ claims as its main purpose to ‘dismantle meaning.’²⁸

Hollier further questions Tschumi’s interpretation of Derrida’s texts, inquiring, “What is hiding under this uncanny park that somehow claims to be the official park of the Uncanny? ...What would a labyrinth be without a minotaur: a labyrinth without blood?”²⁹ As an attack on itself, Tschumi’s architecture is attempting to cleanse itself of meaning. Sited on a former central slaughterhouse district of *La Villette*, the project strives to cleanse Paris of the grime and blood of the site’s history.

Hollier criticizes the project based on Georges Bataille’s texts in which Bataille discusses the roles of the Slaughterhouse and the Museum, *l’Abattoir et le Musée*, as creating an intertwined system of *repulsion* and *attraction*. The Slaughterhouse is given religious dimension, where the ugliness of butchering, either sacrificial or for slaughter, endures the image of (de) composition, an image that prompts a (re) composition by the Museum as a pathological need for cleanliness. Bataille writes that: “A museum is like the lungs of a great city: the crowd floods into the museum every Sunday like blood and

²⁸ Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989) xi.

²⁹ Hollier xi.

it leaves purified and fresh.”³⁰ Although the Slaughterhouse and the Museum are at opposite poles, where one repels and the other attracts, where one (de) centres and the other is centripetal, what is important about the system is the space between the poles; it is the flow of blood from the heart to the lungs and back again that is vital.

Fig. 10, 11. Photographs of *parc de La Villette* taken by the author. (2004)

Fig. 12, 13. Photographs of *parc de La Villette* taken by the author. (2004)

³⁰ Hollier xiii.

The fact that the site where architecture is apparently turning on itself was once bloodied and stained by raw flesh, the site of the Slaughterhouse, and what it is now a public park and Museum of Science and Technology, is what Hollier describes as: “an uncanny holocaust, a pure consumption with no remains, no trace, a total sacrifice, bloody but with a blood that does not stain, that leaves no memory.”³¹

This desire for an architecture that is devoid of meaning, an architecture that has cleansed itself of *itself*, completely relinquishes the power of the architect inherited from Daedalus, and described as “the power to create form and beauty, but also illusion.”³² In this case, Tschumi’s and other deconstructivists,’ such as Peter Eisenman, not only relinquished the power to create meaning in architecture but also allowed meaning to be established in a purely arbitrary manner. According to Eisenman, “what is being proposed [by the deconstructivists] is an expansion beyond the limitation presented by the classical mode to the realization of architecture as an independent discourse, free of external values; that is, the intersection of the meaningful, the arbitrary and the timeless in the artificial.”³³ In this statement lies the impossibility of having a self-enclosed totality within our reality, the impossibility of surgically removing the heart of a city from its lungs. Rejecting the existence of the unicursal within the multicursal labyrinth, fundamentally refusing to grasp Ariadne’s thread, while at the same time rejecting the basis of architecture itself, meaning and the architectural metaphor, only pushes Tschumi and other deconstructivist architects deeper into the labyrinthine prison. Refusing to

³¹ Hollier xxi.

³² Perez-Gomez, AA Files 12.

³³ Peter Eisenman, “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End.” Architecture Theory Since 1968, ed. K. Michael Hays (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998) 530.

acknowledge the boundaries of the labyrinth, they are senselessly attempting to escape the inescapable, leaving them imprisoned in the labyrinth.

Since we've established the impossibility of non-referential architecture, as through the existence of the unicursal within the multicursal, it seems dangerous to allow meaning to be established in this purely arbitrary manner, or rather for meaning to be disassembled, without being (re) invented within certain boundaries. Manfredo Tafuri further elaborates on this dilemma:

Perhaps we can now see more clearly the danger that lies in the analyses of a Blanchot, a Barthes, a Derrida. By willingly taking on the plural aspects of objects themselves written in the plural—literary works acting as human sciences—these critical languages prevent themselves from crossing the threshold that divides language from language, one system of power from other systems of power. They can break up works and texts, construct fascinating genealogies, hypnotically illuminate historical knots glossed over by facile readings. But they must necessarily negate the existence of the *historic space*. It is indisputable that the task of science is to cut rather than to join together. And it is equally indisputable that the true supersignifying metaphor—supersignifying to the point of impenetrability—is the linearity of scientific discourse: a discourse that by definition has sought to eliminate every metaphor from itself. Therefore, it is not against the acceptance of metaphor or aphorism within the historical science that we protest. The real problem is how to protect a criticism capable of constantly putting itself into crisis by putting into crisis the real.³⁴

This brings us to address the paradox where the use of language as a science, which cuts, shreds and severs meaning, is also the very thing that keeps meaning alive. For Bataille, at the heart of the labyrinth, “there is thus in each man, an animal shut up in prison like a convict, and there is a door, and if one cracks open the door the animal tears

³⁴ Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman. (Cambridge/London: The MIT Press, 1987) 9.

out like a convict finding an exit.”³⁵ In this statement he is indicating the paradoxical relationship between the irrational and scientific knowledge along with its pursuits.

To further comprehend this paradox, *La tache aveugle* or the blind spot of Bataille’s Pineal Eye is a concept we must briefly touch upon. Given the heavy responsibility by Descartes of temporally uniting the mind and the body, the elusive pineal gland—or pineal eye—an organ upon which was projected fantasies that were anything but scientific, but rather that embodied the mysteries and paradoxes of the human body.³⁶ While Bataille sometimes describes the Pineal Eye as being myth, sometimes fantasy, it is always introduced as being that which gives science its sense by being both rejected and accepted by science and at once establishing and threatening it. Therefore, “by wanting there to be only meaning, wanting sense without risking nonsense, one paradoxically obtains only nonsense. Meaning is meaning at risk.”³⁷ For Bataille, nothing makes sense until confronted by its negation, as states Hollier:

... death provides a sense for life...a thing’s sense is the rupture of its identity, that which exceeds it, that by means of which it exceeds and is not itself but that which is beyond it, or its absence. Science does not make sense because the aim of its proportions is to enclose beings inside their identities. This blind spot, where it sums itself up by going beyond itself, is the sense of science, this blind spot that is both the support and undoing of science; without which it would be nothing, yet which at the same time reduces it to nothing.³⁸

Going back to Tschumi, the problem that occurs when architecture bases its critical theory on Derrida’s deconstruction of language is that it deconstructs the architectural language, a language that was traditionally based on metaphor, without (re)

³⁵ Hollier 94. Quoted from George Bataille’s text “Metamorphose” (1929).

³⁶ Hollier 113.

³⁷ Hollier 97.

assembling it or creating new meaning. Although this is perhaps not Derrida's intention, what often begins as a deconstruction of the architectural language stalls in place and remains frozen or paralyzed, unable to be (re) interpreted into some thing 'new.' Preventing critical discourse, this paralysis of meaning prevents architecture from putting itself into the essential crisis of meaning that sustains it, thereby leading us to question how to maintain this essential balance or rather unbalance.

[illegible]

All of existence, as far as men are concerned, is specifically bound up with language, whose terms decide each individual's vision of it. Each person can imagine his total existence, even for his own eyes, only by means of words. Words rise up in his head bearing all their multitude of human or suprahuman existences in relation to which his personal existence exists. The individual being is, therefore, only something mediated by words that can present a being only arbitrarily as an 'autonomous being,' though very profoundly as a 'related being.' It is only necessary to track for a little while the routes repeatedly taken by words to discover the disconcerting sight of a human being's labyrinthine structure.³⁹

Georges Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe."

As the precursor to the literary theories of Derrida, Foucault and Barthes, the writings of Georges Bataille, will perhaps allude to how architecture can work against the non-referential disposition of the analysis of a Derrida. The notion of the labyrinth in architecture, like literature, often leads to problems concerning the dangers of the obsessive tendency towards the abstract and non-referential. Bataille sidesteps the danger

³⁸ Hollier 97.

³⁹ Georges Bataille quoted in Hollier 57.

of getting paralyzed by describing the labyrinth as the transversal in his writing, process work and teleology, where Hollier further elaborates that:

The labyrinth is the transversal described by Bataille's writing to the precise extent that this writing did not stop describing itself (de-inscribing itself), that is picking up on itself and starting over, losing itself and reproducing itself in a movement one could call self-referential, if it were not simultaneously the loss of self and of referent. Writing that does not refer back to self, that does not fold back on self, but continually strays from the straight, expected route.⁴⁰

What Bataille is suggesting is by no means a return to the myth of Daedalus in which the architect is the "inventor" or "creator" of the labyrinth. He is not accepting Man to be the ultimate inventor of the labyrinth, but rather that the labyrinth has no creator; it is not a form that we can manipulate and control, but one that is somehow continuously (re)inventing itself. For Bataille, the labyrinth has moved beyond being merely a creation or invention, we must forget⁴¹ the legend of Daedalus, the labyrinth has no creator, inventor or author. Possessing neither human nor natural foundations the labyrinth is "the space where oppositions disintegrate and grow complicated, where diacritical couples are unbalanced and perverted, etc., where the system upon which linguistic function is based disintegrates, but somehow disintegrates by itself, having jammed its own works."⁴²

The labyrinth is what Bataille calls 'drunken space,' its boundless limits break open lexical prisons by preventing any word from ever finding a resting place and reaching a state of arrested meaning.⁴³ This process forces words to transcend, not in a

⁴⁰ Hollier 58.

⁴¹ By 'forget' I don't mean dismiss or disregard. Forgetting is often necessary in order to question.

⁴² Hollier 57-8.

⁴³ Hollier 60.

religious sense, but where their meaning is lost or put at risk while the labyrinth multiplies meanings by inverting and splitting them, by making words 'drunk'.

The labyrinth is not a safe space, but the disoriented space of someone who has lost their way, whether he has had the good fortune to transform the steps he is taking into a dance, or more banally has let spatial intoxication lead him astray: the labyrinth is drunken space. The drunkenness is not without vertigo; drunken words have meaning no more than the drunken man has balance. The axes of orientation (up/down, left/right, back/forth) are astray. The inner ear returns to the level of immaturity associated with infancy: upon these bodily passages, referred to as labyrinth, orientation and disorientation depend.⁴⁴

The labyrinth is not an object or a referent, in it exists no category of subjectivity or category of objectivity; in this sense one is neither ever inside nor outside of the labyrinth, proximity and separation are therefore also indistinguishable.⁴⁵ In Micheal Ayrton's 1967 novel entitled *The Maze Maker*, his Daedalus character comments that:

Each man's life is a labyrinth at the center of which lies his death, and even after death it may be that he passes through a final maze before it is all ended for him. Within the great maze of a man's life are many smaller ones, each seemingly complete in itself, and in passing through each one he dies in part, for in each he leaves behind him a part of his life and his death behind him. It is a paradox of the labyrinth that its center appears to be the way to freedom.⁴⁶

From the labyrinth's perspective one is never aware of their position as a reference to its exterior or interior, one is never inside or outside of it, entering and exiting becomes indistinguishable. It is constantly shedding its skin and inverting itself, in which case attempting to escape its grasp would only seem foolish. For this reason "Bataille reverses the traditional metaphorical sense of the labyrinth that generally links it with the desire to

⁴⁴ Hollier 58-9.

⁴⁵ Hollier 58.

⁴⁶ Janet Bord, *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World* (Great Britain: The Anchor Press, 1976) 161.

get out...he denounces the wish that it lead somewhere, have a solution because the only result of this wish is that, far from being a real exit from the labyrinth, it transforms labyrinth into prison.”⁴⁷ Rather than getting imprisoned within the labyrinth like Tschumi, Bataille accepts that there is no exit. He sets it up as the locus of *excess without issue*; the desire brought forth is not a desire to return or get out, but one similar to the Minotaur’s desire to uncover the realm of the *other*, “to rediscover the monstrous metamorphoses repressed by the prison;”⁴⁸ therefore, inverting the myth’s traditional interpretation that has Theseus, symbol of reason and knowledge, triumph against the Minotaur, symbol of *otherness* and meaning.

In the surrealist periodical *Acephale*, Bataille uses Andre Masson’s Headless Man as an analogy, making reference to the human body without a head as a rejection of identification; neither man nor god, this mediated subject is drawn into the labyrinth where it is able to rediscover itself as *other*, monster or Minotaur. “It is not me but it is more myself than myself,” says Bataille of the ‘Headless Man;’ “his guts are the maze in which he has become lost himself, losing me with him, and where I rediscover myself being him, that is—monster.”⁴⁹ (see fig. 14)

Fig. 14. Andre Masson’s Headless Man on the cover of *Acephale*, published from June 1936 to June 1939.

⁴⁷ Hollier 60.

⁴⁸ Hollier 62.

⁴⁹ Hollier 64.

In Bataille's own words, "Man has escaped his head as the convict escapes from prisons," and "man's revolt against prison is a rebellion against his own form, against the human figure."⁵⁰ We can comprehend Tschumi's architecture as such: as a rebellion against its—architecture's—own form, attempting to permanently escape the human body and its conditions. The 'escape' that Bataille describes is not a *permanent escape*, as Tschumi desires, but *perpetual escapes*; where architecture can never fully escape the human form, man can never escape his head or the convict escape his prison. It is not outside the labyrinth that this subversive escape should be desired, but inside it, for there is no exterior or interior, only labyrinth.

There is no question that the labyrinth is the site of violent oppositions and of the locus of debates between lexical and syntactic functions, between semantics and syntax, a debate where sense is always threatened and non-sense is never triumphant.⁵¹ For this reason the labyrinth can never exist on its own, within the labyrinth must also exist the pyramid. In traditional cases, the pyramid, as the denial of the subject, is objectified. As both a covered tomb and a staircase leading to the gods, it is perceived as the way out of the labyrinth. Arising from man's yearning to transcend his own mortality, to become eternal, the pyramid is climbed and one is allowed to "look down on it [the labyrinth], like Icarus, from above. From the summit of the pyramid the entire labyrinth would fit inside an optical cone, it is the very structure of vision, of theory that has at its summit the divine eye of being."⁵² As Bataille suggests, that 'being' slips away to reveal the pyramid, "if someone simultaneously 'being' and knowledge is mutilated by being

⁵⁰ George Bataille quoted in Hollier xii.

⁵¹ Hollier 69.

⁵² Hollier 72-3.

reduced to knowledge...Everything would be visibly connected if, with a single glance, one would discover the line left behind everywhere by Ariadne's thread leading thought through its own labyrinth."⁵³

It is important to be aware that Icarus flies away, above the labyrinth, only to fall back down into it again. This does not insinuate that the pyramid should not be scaled, but rather that one *must* tackle it, giving way to its linearity and reaching its peak only to fall back into the labyrinth. Essentially, part of a process of inquiry, the pyramid belongs to the labyrinth, being a product of the labyrinth itself. In the same way as the unicursal and the multicursal are infinitely linked and interchangeable, both existing within each other, the pyramid emerges from the flesh of the labyrinth, where both are infinitely connected. Architecture, like writing, must travel in the labyrinth; as Bataille often suggests, it "must necessarily pass through a pyramidal moment."⁵⁴ One is not faced with the choice of picking an alternative, either the labyrinth or the pyramid, but each implies the other. This is why the architectural analysis of a Derrida becomes problematic and we must understand that architecture is not language; although architecture is like language it has its own linguistic structure and semantics. Where literature exists somewhere between vocabulary and semantics, architecture exists somewhere between *function* and *meaning*, *program* and *form*, the *concrete* and the *Real*.

⁵³ Georges Bataille quoted in Hollier 72.

⁵⁴ Hollier 73.

importance of the spatial and temporal relationships that architecture maintains with the human body; “It is here that human life becomes situated and centered; from here it unfolds and comes to encompass a temporal and spatial world”⁵⁶

There is no denying that Hejduk’s reinterpretations of myth and ritual have a Surrealist and dream-like quality to them; produced by juxtaposing and linking images to meaning, his interpretations allow him to respond to the subconscious desires of the dweller. Responding to the deeper temperament of dwelling he explores the architectural potential of the simultaneous relationship between dreams and reality—desires and truth.

Considering the paradoxical science of *pataphysics* defined by Perez-Gomez as:

“Pataphysics is the science of the exceptional, a science of the imaginary solutions, a celebration of mystery; indeed, it is analogous to art. Its master key is *irony*: what science clarifies is what remains obscure. Pataphysics enacts discovery through making; it celebrates technical processes and architecture as a verb. The artist’s life is the paradigmatic work of art. In this sense the aim to deconstruct the distance between form and content... a process of self-transformation that takes precedence over formal products. Pataphysics demands a new relationship between thinking and making, where the thinking and values are crucial and the act ‘calculated,’ yet there is never a method or instrumental theory.”⁵⁷

Little explanation is needed to understand how Hejduk’s architecture is defined by this science of paradox. Unlike Tschumi’s architecture, Hejduk is able to maintain a deliberate intension that, although not based on a specific method or instrumental theory, can, nevertheless, express a strong architectural and theoretical process.

⁵⁶ Bernd Jager, “Body, House and City: The intertwining of embodiment, inhabitation and civilization,” *Dwelling Place and Environment: Towards a phenomenology of person and world*, ed. David Seamon and Robert Mugerauer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985) 218.

⁵⁷ Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louise Pelletier, *The Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997) 297.

The slippery nature of meaning in Hejduk's architecture is best described by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of *depth*.⁵⁸ Perez-Gomez also depicts *depth* as having an important impact on not only architectural making, but the *reception* and *interpretation* of architectural works, as he describes: "this overlapping of vision and motion blurs the traditional oppositions of contemplation and action, vision and visibility, activity and passivity [; as a] result the body is at the same time decentring and centring," and also having "immense consequences...for legitimizing the role of the poetic (personal) imagination in architectural making."⁵⁹ Merleau-Ponty does not regard *depth* as a third dimension but as containing all other dimensions; it is our experience of the reversibility of dimensions. For Merleau-Ponty the world of reality as we perceive it, what he calls the 'flesh of the world,' is both spatial *and* temporal; "neither purely transparent nor completely opaque, the flesh is an interplay of dimensionalities, of light and dark."⁶⁰ The space contained by the *flesh* is for Hejduk very shallow yet at the same instance infinite in *depth*. Hejduk's masques refer to more than the proverbial gap between mask and face, but to the oscillation between architecture and the body — artifice and the *flesh* — and most importantly between technology and perception; an oscillation that dissolves the traditional oppositions found in the experience of time and space.

An experimental masque, Hejduk's construction *The Collapse of Time* is not a measuring device but a model for the multiplicity and *pliability* of time and architectural thought. Hejduk's clock structure (de) stabilizes the linear structure of both scientific and

⁵⁸ By using Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* I am not suggesting that architecture can only be approached in terms of the senses, as does the pure theory of Phenomenology. Nevertheless, architecture as a something that is built in the actual world and experienced through the senses should equally be interpretable through the senses, although not necessarily restricting its interpretation to the senses.

⁵⁹ Perez-Gomez, *The Perspective Hinge* 335.

historical time and (re) establishes the time of fiction—a time of paradox that allows the co-existence of technology and perception. Erected in London’s Bedford Square, as Hejduk’s instructional narrative suggests, the construction is not only meant to allow time to travel through it, but also space. A cabinet for death the tower folds down into its own death bed, but also rises again to retain the monumentality of an obelisk, according to David Shapiro, “this clock does indeed dip into its own coffin and rises to become a powerful tower of wholeness and of the possibility of perspective.”⁶¹ This clock construction’s nomadic character not only suggests the spatial instability of time, but the dissolving of the oppositions between time and space:

Not only does the Clock/Collapse of Time travel through time, but it enables time to travel through it...Presenting these different positions of time together, and in a way that fuses time and space into suggestive, although ambiguous, paradigms of knowledge (spatial time, flat time, perspective time...) effectively dissolves the opposition between linear and cyclical time, between history and the eternal return, without positing a new temporal construct. Time as such collapses into a kind of timelessness (could this be what ‘spatial time’ implies?), which is distinguished from the timelessness of idealist classicism.⁶²

In the work, Hejduk mends the chaotic effect of introducing multiple temporal structures by also establishing a parallel poetic narrative that acts as a *pliable*, yet ‘uninterruptible time;’ “a clock that removes the right time restores the true time,”⁶³ In his narrative Hejduk also revives the time of poetry or fiction by inserting a woman as a shaman that restores the space of *otherness* through the reciting of the poem *The Sleep of Adam*.

⁶⁰ Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” quoted in Alberto Perez-Gomez, *The Perspective Hinge*, 336.

⁶¹ David Shapiro, “The Clock of Deletion: Time And John Hejduk’s Architecture.” Foreword. *The Collapse of Time: And Other Diary Constructions* by John Hejduk (London: Architectural Association, 1987).

⁶² Mertins 23-24.

⁶³ Shapiro.

Fig. 16, 17 *Clock/Collapse of Time* in London's Bedford Square in John Hejduk, The Collapse of Time and Other Diary Constructions (London: AA, 1987).

Hejduk maintains an essential distance between thought and making, between the imaginary and architecture. Plato's *chōra*, as the distance between the actor and viewer in Greek theatre and the space that Vitruvius identified as the *depth* of architecture, often re-surfaces in Hejduk's work. As the space of interpretation between *Being* and *becoming*, *chōra* "seems to evoke the 'blind spot' in human works that makes them significant, the space of metaphor and the space of collage, which is also the place where meaning is granted to human life, a space that 'precedes' any linguistic models of signification."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Perez-Gomez, The Perspective Hinge 337.

The double distance often discussed by both Walter Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty allows works to set their own distance between *ce que nous voyons*, what we see, and the double meaning of *ce qui nous regarde*, what is watching us *and* what concerns us, not only giving the statement the two-dimensional relationship of viewer/viewed, but a *depth* found in the multiplicity of its interpretations. As Perez-Gomez points out: “To acknowledge the distance is to accept that the work of art concerns [and is influenced by] us, that it is *not* self-referential—which is precisely the source of the ‘poetic,’ irrespective of artistic medium.”⁶⁵ This distance of interpretation is vital in giving architecture meaning. For Hejduk that such a distance is based on loss is what makes it overtly anthropomorphic:

Hejduk’s objects nevertheless ask the viewer, too, to work through a kind of architectural mirror stage—the moment of recognition that our very identity is based on loss. The viewer encounters an architecture overtly anthropomorphic but not quite human. We see not so much a reflection of ourselves as a shadow or a distortion, an image that disturbs our narcissistic gaze through what might be called an ‘inmixing of otherness,’ presenting itself as *other* to our body and our subjectivity.⁶⁶

Hejduk considers literature, art, and architecture as the *shells of thought*; based on loss these shells are similar to Bataille’s labyrinthine process that constantly sheds its skin as it inverts and (re) invents itself. As thought is allowed to travel through architecture—through time and space—it leaves its shells behind as it moves beyond. For Detlef Mertins Hejduk’s remnant shells are part of a “mystery that will forever elude the subject, slipping past its technologies of knowledge and resisting assimilation by theory.

⁶⁵ Perez-Gomez, *The Perspective Hinge* 333.

⁶⁶ Michael K Hays, “Hejduk’s Chronotope (An Introduction),” *Hejduk’s Chronotope* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press for the Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1996) 18.

The shell of thought is that aspect of the subject that overflows the subject, but to which the Object / Subject teasingly leads our reflections.”⁶⁷

Fig. 18 *Cemetery for the Ashes of Thought* in John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa: Works 1947-1983* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985) 328.

Hejduk also claims that, it is the always-impending death of architecture that ‘makes’ it architecture. This tension gives architecture meaning as it relates it to the human body. Its oscillation is crucial to architecture’s survival; in *The Mask of Medusa* Hejduk concluded that, like existence, architecture can only exist in a continuous free fall between meaning

⁶⁷ Mertins 26.

and emptiness, and that architecture must therefore constantly be in an indeterminate state between life and death—between centred and (de) centred conditions.⁶⁸

In his architectural fictions Hejduk concerns himself with how architecture can configure a better and richer world, creating new meaning in our condition of dislocation and loss. In discussions on Hejduk, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies on loss and the desire often surface:

For Deleuze and Guattari use faciality to coordinate an entire regime of loss and desired redemption (they put the face of Christ in the center of that regime) and the visible *marks* of the pathos. Faciality understood in this way resonates with Hejduk's attempt to put the best face on our condition of dislocation and loss—a face, produced by the very threat of loss, that helps us for a moment to forget. And of course, it resonates with what I earlier called his radical figurality, whose motifs range from overt anthropomorphism to the consistent centering devices (the axes of the Ferris wheels, pinwheels, and stars, the centers of the single cells, the crossings) and the desperate symmetries of doubling and mirroring.⁶⁹ (see. fig. 18)

Based on the tracing of thought as a process, this Hejdukian world ends up being a trace of John Hejduk himself; a world rooted in an intimate and personal architecture that dwells in his thoughts, memories and obsessions. Peggy Deamer suggests that by inserting his persona into the architectural discourse, Hejduk inadvertently directs attention to himself as the author, or to the mystery surrounding its interpretation, and subverts the conventions of critical discourse. Not establishing his architecture on a theoretical basis or instrumental theory, but rather on a 'personal' approach to architecture he creates a displacement of critical space. Although the use of his own thoughts and obsessions as fuel for his architecture can threaten to become grossly self-

⁶⁸ Daniel Libeskind, introduction, The Mask of Medusa by John Hejduk (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).

indulgent, Hejduk's works end up possessing a strange familiarity: a familiarity that paradoxically endures both, a strong collective and individual connection to its audience, and an aloof detachment of the subject.

Discussing Hejduk's work as autobiographical, Deamer establishes the problems with the "I" in autobiography; where traditionally autobiography is best understood as a series of dualities (subject/object, past/present), binaries that pin content against narrative. As creator Hejduk (de) stabilizes these traditional dualities by subverting the autobiographical "I" and allowing it to be (re) established in three ways: as the author, as the narrator and as the hero.⁷⁰ Deamer describes the author, as being present in the form of the work, the narrator, present in the style of its presentation, and the hero, as the content of the work.

As the author Hejduk refuses to guide the reader/viewer through a text that would clarify his intensions and make them explicitly apparent, never overtly telling the viewer what they are confronted with in the works. On the other hand, the simple presence of the narrator, as mediator or shaman of the performance, "simultaneously hides him [Hejduk, the author] and draws attention to this authority."⁷¹ And the hero, as the character who performs the actions and thinks the thoughts, for Hejduk encompasses multiple heroes where his Angels, Masques and the Clock/Collapse of Time all embody a larger persona that forms Hejduk's alter ego:

In this autobiographical hall of mirrors, the heroes personify not only the author, but the narrator as well. Like the author—John Hejduk—these heroes are bulky and awkward; their hair is out of control. These personalities are closed and defensive; opaque and

⁶⁹ Hays 17.

⁷⁰ Peggy Deamer, "Me, Myself, and I," *Hejduk's Chronotope*, ed. Michael K. Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press for the Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1996).

unforgiving; they prescribe and enact rituals; they read and write texts. Like the narrator, these heroes are tourists and shamans whose identities are not determined by the community they inhabit but are instead fixed by their own physical and spiritual itinerary; they are the “other” whose foreign character threatens the society.⁷²

This autobiographical “I” is guided by the psychoanalytical self inspection of a structural narcissism, as Deamer states: “narcissism because the self, as Narcissus realized, can never break the chain of self-referentiality for the fear of discovering its own irrelevance.”⁷³ In both autobiography and psychosis lies the danger of the objectification of the self by the urge to transcend mortality by solidifying life into the object. It is precisely this fear of a solidifying irrelevance that makes Hejduk’s architecture so powerful, like Bataille’s reference to the Headless Man, one must attempt to escape his own form to rediscover himself as *other*. For Hejduk, autobiography is a double-edged sword that cuts, shreds and destroys in one direction and one that also clear a path for the reinstatement of meaning and the *other*. Hejduk uses autobiography not to build a linear genealogy, but to create fictive narratives that explores the labyrinthine depths of the unconscious and the realms of desire and the dream. Not only accepting the labyrinth, but the existence of its necessary pyramidal moment, or the unicursal within the multicursal.

⁷¹ Deamer 67.

⁷² Deamer 68.

⁷³ Deamer 69.

BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU: |||||

Loree Rackstraw

⁷⁰ Loree Rackstraw, "Quantum Leaps in the Vonnegut Mindfield," *At Millennium's End*, ed. Kevin Alexander Boon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) 60.

personal interpretations. As a postmodern writer, Kurt Vonnegut critically explores the blurred and ambiguous, yet intertwined, relationship between reality, fiction and making. This relationship along with the novel's reoccurring themes and Vonnegut's creative process are perfect for an excursion through the labyrinth of the imaginary.

Much of Vonnegut's early novels are all various attempts by the American author to recount his experiences in Dresden, Germany, where in 1945, as a prisoner of war, he witnessed and survived the bombing destruction of the entire city by his own army and countrymen. Sheltered by the meat locker of a slaughterhouse during the firebombing, Vonnegut was then forced to unearth the charred bodies of those who perished. During the decade that followed, Vonnegut struggled, attempting to reconcile and (re) construct a memory of the specific event. Although never fully achieving his goal to write an historical account of what actually happened, he writes a series of indirectly related—both to the event and to each

Fig. 19 Dada photomontage by John Heartfield
Have No Fear—He's a Vegetarian (1936)
Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History* (New York:
Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1995) 1085.

other—short stories and novels. These literary works have overlapping issues, places, and characters, yet remain independent and complete works. This early body of work begins

with the 1959 novel *The Sirens of Titan*, and culminates with the 1969 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*.

Although considered a science fiction writer, Vonnegut's literary collages, all fall into a blurred realm between fiction, autobiography and philosophy. Injecting himself into his work through narrative, he also often inserts himself as a non-consequential character into his fictions. This allows him, as the author, to also become an actor, not only giving the narrator the traditional transcendental and removed position, but allowing him to also become an active participant in evaluating causality, constructing fiction and subsequently staging desire. Peter Reed in the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* describes his work as a:

[C]haotic fictional universe abounds in wonder, coincidence, randomness and irrationality. Science fiction helps lend form to the presentation of his worldviews without imposing a falsifying causality upon it. In his vision the fantastic offers perception into the quotidian, rather than escape from it. Science fiction is also technically useful, he has said, in providing a distance perspective, 'moving the camera out into space' as it were.

Fig. 20 Frame from the T.V. production *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5: A Space Fantasy* based on materials by Kurt Vonnegut. Kurt Vonnegut, *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5* (New York: Delacorte, 1972).

As a reoccurring theme in most of his novels, Vonnegut sometimes uses the metaphor of technology as a machine of war and destruction, and like in Bataille's *tache aveugle*, Vonnegut finds in it the paradox of the pursuit of modern science. In *Cat's Cradle* (1963) the blind pursuit of science, brings yet again—after the A-bomb—the imminent treat of “the end of the world,” this time in the form of a second Ice Age delivered by the newest scientific invention, Ice-Nine. Discussing the illusion of the “end of the world,” critic Jean Baudrillard writes that: “I feel neither the horror nor the charm of nuclear power but rather the horror and the charm of the ice age; not the suspense and not the final flash.”⁷⁰ Just as *Cat's Cradle* focuses on patterns of destruction, Baudrillard believes that these reoccurring fears of catastrophic events are nothing more than

Fig. 21 Frame from the T.V. production *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5: A Space Fantasy* based on materials by Kurt Vonnegut. Kurt Vonnegut, *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5* (New York: Delacorte, 1972).

an illusion, and that the illusion itself is the catastrophe:

Intellectually, this has all occurred a thousand times already, all the catastrophe is now a kind of painted ribbon. The coarse projection into a film is only a diversion from the nuclearization of everyday life. Better yet, this film itself is our catastrophe. It does not represent our catastrophe, it does not allow it to be dreamt. On the contrary, it says that

⁷⁰ Jean Baudrillard, “The Anorexic Ruins,” *Looking Back on the End of the World*, ed. Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf, trans. David Antal (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989) 36.

the catastrophe is already there, that it has already occurred *because the very idea of the catastrophe is impossible*.⁷¹

According to Baudrillard the Postmodern is beyond crisis, humanity can no longer oscillate around a hypothetical centre since it lacks any gravitational centre. His belief is that we are beyond *generative* destruction, that once de-centered we can no longer (re) centre ourselves and we have lost any perspective we may have had in the past. In which case, we merely continue to become de-centered to the point of excess and for him this type of existence has become meaningless. Vonnegut's views differ from Baurillard, but are often confused with his nihilistic views on technology and progress. Although Vonnegut is extremely critical of

Fig. 22 Printed silkscreen from Kurt Vonnegut, May I Have this Dance? (2004).

technology, he always leaves the reader with a humanist stance, leaving the reader with a troubled but optimistic situation; after having (de) centered and (de) stabilized events, contexts and belief systems, Vonnegut leaves the reader in a *generative* condition that allows for (re) centering and a (re) establishment of meaning.

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vonnegut views the firebombing of Dresden—a non-military city—during World War II as an example of the senseless, but inevitable

⁷¹ Baudrillard 37.

destruction caused by technology. He critically juxtaposes the metaphors of the machine, the power and destruction of war and technology against the fearfulness and physical vulnerability of the soldiers. Vonnegut depicts the soldiers as ridiculous and helpless, not portraying the glory of war, but humanity's vulnerability in the face of war. Moreover, the work's alternative title: *The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* suggests a heightened perception of the weakness, fragility and mortality of the human body.

In order to (re) sensitize our perception towards the ephemeral nature of the human body, like Hejduk's *Clock/Collapse of Time*, Vonnegut shifts the temporal and spatial relationships in several of his novels. The first chapter in *The Sirens of Titan* titled *Between Timid and Timbuktu*, refers to the words that are between "timid" and "Timbuktu" in the dictionary, words that all refer to time and the experience of it. In 1971, the National Educational Television produced a ninety-minute TV show called *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5: A Space Fantasy*; the short film took several unrelated incidents from Vonnegut's stories and created from them a rough script that was later loosely expanded upon by the cast. In the dictionary interestingly enough there is nothing between time and Timbuktu. Timbuktu itself refers not only to a real place, a town in North Mali, but also to any remote place or 'nowhere,' as used in the expression *from here to Timbuktu*.⁷² And time is defined as: "the indefinite and continuous duration of existence seen as a series of events progressing from past through the present into the future. The passage of time regarded as affecting people or things."⁷³ In the objective world of the dictionary there is only a blank space between time and

⁷² Canadian Oxford.

⁷³ Canadian Oxford.

place, but arguably in this gap between the two terms lies what Brian Massumi considers the realm of *potential*. Using Henri Bergson as philosophical precursor he considers that:

... [The] super-abstract realm of potential; that realm of the virtual as having a different temporal structure, in which past and future brush shoulders with no mediating present, and as having a different, recursive causality; the virtual as cresting in a liminal realm of emergence, where halfactualized action and expressions arise like waves on a sea to which most no sooner return.⁷⁴

Fig. 23 Frames from the T.V. production *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5: A Space Fantasy* based on materials by Kurt Vonnegut. Kurt Vonnegut, *Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5* (New York: Delacorte, 1972).

In both novels, *Sirens of Titan* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the main characters simultaneously experience the past and future, never truly existing in the present, but rather existing simultaneously everywhere they have ever existed or will ever exist. In

⁷⁴ Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 31.

1972, *Slaughterhouse-Five* was re-made into a movie and according to Kevin Alexander Boon and David Pringle the:

Key to the success of the film is the way that time is handled. The structure of the film reproduces the effect of time-tripping. To watch the film is to become like Billy Pilgrim—unstuck in time. We, like Pilgrim, are torn from scene to scene, leaping from one moment in Pilgrim's life to another with no *seeming* rationale. In a lesser filmmaker's hands, such a nontraditional structure could have been disastrous, but Hill pulls it off—twenty-two years before Quentin Tarantino receives praise for accomplishing the same feat on *Pulp Fiction*.⁷⁵

Deleuze discusses this notion of *pure becoming without being* as opposed to pure being without becoming, "the pure becoming-without-being means that one should sidestep the present – it never 'actually occurs,' it is 'always forthcoming and already past.' As such, pure becoming suspends sequentiality and directionality."⁷⁶ Vonnegut uses *becoming* in its pure state to temporarily remove historical events, such as World War II, from their harsh reality.

As Deleuze puts it, the emergence of the *New* occurs when a work overturns its historical context, "the event's becoming is

Fig. 24 Printed silkscreen by Kurt Vonnegut
"Black Heart" Black and White Edition (2004)

⁷⁵ Kevin Alexander Boon and David Pringle, "Vonnegut Films," *At Millennium's End*, ed. Kevin Alexander Boon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) 190.

⁷⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 9. Quoted from Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 170-71.

beyond the scope of history...becoming isn't part of history; history amounts only to the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' to create something new."⁷⁷ Vonnegut considers this and alludes to the problematic nature of viewing history in a linear way, viewing it as an impeding temporal structure that prevents new social patterns from arising.

According to Loree Rackstraw, in *Quantum Leaps in the Vonnegut Mindfield*, "[I]t was clear that myths can change or new ones can arise in response to both natural and historical events. Cultural myths seem to play an evolutionary function in that they can help persons and societies adapt to change."⁷⁸ She conveys the Buddhist notion of *being-time* or sense of *hereness*, where everything that is, is, was and will always be, and that it will remain out there forever. Compare this notion with a quote from *Slaughterhouse-Five*:

When a person dies he only *appears* to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist. The Tralfamadorians can look at different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains, for instance. They can see how permanent all the moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them.⁷⁹

Although this notion of time is not a new one for many Eastern philosophies, it over-turns the very foundation of Western thought. Rackstraw believes that Vonnegut's "stories reveal how Western language and institutions have structured our awareness of what is real and valuable in ways that can blind us to the dangers of our behavior as it affects the life of our planet," and believes that the author's "antiheroes defamiliarize [these]

⁷⁷ Zizek 11.

⁷⁸ Loree Rackstraw 49.

⁷⁹ Loree Rackstraw 50. Quoted from Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* 23.

traditional ways of seeing and knowing.”⁸⁰ She believes that if mythic themes, like dreams, come from the unconscious of the human imagination, its realm is inspired by the energies of the body, further observing that:

Vonnegut the mythmaker, taking clues from the sciences, replaces the old picture of a purposeful cosmos set in an orderly pattern by a rational and just logos. Instead, he offers new ‘harmless untruths’ about a paradoxical universe governed largely by chance and ongoing energy transformations of indifferent natural processes. Rather than offering principals of conduct in a world that seems to change with each new way we find to observe it, his stories comfort by making us laugh, by suggesting talent be used for creative expressions.⁸¹

Acknowledging that literary theory is related, but distinctively different, than architecture, Derrida, who was persistent in directing his criticism towards the principle of ‘order’ introduced by the Greek, also questioned this logos that was articulated through a language whose syntax and logic evolved from a linear perception of time with an implicit causality. As a literary theory, deconstruction claims, “human consciousness is paradoxically incapable of objectively knowing truth,” because the mind invents a differentiated interpretation of the ‘truth,’ which Derrida calls the ‘trace.’⁸² The mind thereby struggles to differentiate between the ‘truth’ and the ‘trace,’ a struggle that it can never fully free itself from. Semiotician Robert Scholes, himself a critic of deconstruction, agrees with Derrida, that “perception is coded by language that is always figurative rather than literal, [therefore] perception is inevitably distorted and never accurate”⁸³ It is this distortion of ‘truth’ that Vonnegut intentionally makes use of, yet warns against by making the reader aware of the dangers of illusion that the Western

⁸⁰ Loree Rackstraw 51.

⁸¹ Loree Rackstraw 53.

⁸² Loree Rackstraw 54.

⁸³ Robert Scholes quoted in Loree Rackstraw 54.

notion of 'truth' supports; a tradition that often gives off the illusion that as a society we are always moving forward towards meaningful goals, while blinding us to the possibly disastrous outcomes. Vonnegut questions and plays with this notion as his works oscillate between *The Sirens of Titan*'s Winston Niles Rumfoord's 'beautifully detached viewpoint,' or *Slaughterhouse-Five*'s Billy Pilgrim's 'time tripping' and the more traditional linear narrative structures found in both novels.

Vonnegut views film as a device with the possibility to cripple the meticulous illusions of his works and with reason. The 1962 novel *Mother Night*'s adaptation to film, produced by Keith Gordon in 1996, is criticized as:

...not treating the medium of film with that questioning eye that Vonnegut casts on the novel, Gordon fails to keep the film from reproducing, in his own mode of presentation, the monoperspectival morality that Vonnegut condemns...Vonnegut's novel [has] the difficult task of thinking about these totalizing logics, seeking a newly multipersonal way of thinking about history and responsibility, not setting into fixities of moral certainty. Gordon's film, in contrast, falls back into ways of representing the past that offer the false comfort of summary judgment.⁸⁴

Although film may cripple his illusion; in retrospect of another work, *Between Time and Timbuktu*, Vonnegut reflects that, "The worst thing about film, from my point of view, is that it cripples illusions which I have encouraged people to create in their heads. Film doesn't create illusions. It makes them impossible. It is a bullying form of reality, like the model rooms in the furniture department of Bloomingdale's." Aside from his critical views, Vonnegut later admits to laughing and crying with joy when watching the film, understanding that the film may have crippled his literary illusions only to (re) mediate them into something new.

⁸⁴ Boon 178.

Kurt Vonnegut

As a *generative* exercise the following literary sites, taken from Kurt Vonnegut's early novels, embody theoretical issues that are addressed in the thesis. These literary spaces are interpreted, either with the aid of allegory or metaphor, into various programmatic relationship and spatial qualities in the architectural proposition. Allowing overlap, this is not an attempt to directly link these realms from theory to practice, but to create a discursive structure or basis for the architectural investigation. (See appendix A for original passages)

⁸⁵ Kurt Vonnegut, preface, Between Time and Timbuktu or Prometheus-5 (New York: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, 1972). In this quote, Vonnegut admits that the film had to cripple the illusions created by his novels if the work was to stand on its own.

SKULL ANTENNAS AND OXYGEN PILLS (*THE SIRENS OF TITAN*)
MY SOUL AND MY MEAT (*BLUEBEARD*)

As Vonnegut often challenges the Cartesian mind/body split. In *The Sirens of Titan* he uses *Skull Antennas* and *Oxygen Pills* as allegories that either control or sustain the mind and the body, while in *Bluebeard* he is more direct and debates the control of *My Meat and My Soul*.

He describes the body or *the meat* in a raw, almost animalistic way. Where as a symbol of the irrational the body often loses control and tears out like an enraged beast. Leaving the mind, what he calls *the neon tube*, frozen in the backseat re-assuring itself that it never had any control and that what ever happens was and is beyond its control.

These dual relationships that Vonnegut sometimes describes as a dance of co-existence and, at other times, as a marionette who is momentarily aware of its strings, forces us to question the relationship between the puppet and the strings or the at other times the true nature of the dance.

THE CAVES OF MERCURY AND THE HARMONIUMS (*THE SIRENS OF TITAN*)

For Vonnegut the vision of the eye is illusion. Questioning the validity of a pure state of phenomenology in a world of illusion, this passage describes an extreme blindness to illusion that allows the harmoniums to in a way transcend illusion only to move into a state of absolute indifference.

Feeding on the vibration given off by the human body, the harmoniums are sightless to the illusions of Mercury's dark hemisphere. Only able to touch or feel sound

vibrations they absorb the energies of the planet, music and the human body through an unmediated process. For the harmoniums there is neither birth nor death, only a process of continuous (re) generation.

They only communicate two messages: one of presence and the other of acknowledgement of another's presence. In fact the harmoniums have no family structure, no religion, no social interaction, no war, no reason for conflict and therefore remain in a paralyzed state of peace and fulfillment, only this state also becomes irrelevant to the harmoniums because to them life itself has no meaning.

Although they are blind and indifferent to anything else, they arrange themselves into beautiful patterns, sometimes spelling out messages on the cave walls. It is through the harmoniums that the space travelers receive a message, "*turn the ship upside down*" so its navigation system can re-sense its way out of the labyrinthine depths of the caves.

THE BOOKSTORE IN TIME'S SQUARE (*SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5*)

Located in New York City's Time's Square, this bookstore is nothing but a front for peep shows and the sale of pornographic materials. The passage itself signifies a pivotal point in the novel where both the narrator (Billy, the main character) and the readers are given a glimpse that suggests that the very foundation of the novel is based on an illusion. It is here that the novel's well-woven fiction begins to unravel, for a moment we are given a partial glimpse of its illusion only to be pulled back into its labyrinthine structure.

As the tear in the illusion disappears as abruptly as it was revealed, the fiction is restored, and the reader would have failed to notice if they had blinked. It is at this

moment that, although semi-exposed, the illusion of fiction is questioned, but never truly validated. The reader comprehends the fragility of the illusion, where the line between truth and fiction is based on perspective and its context; where a slight change in context or shift in perspective is often enough to shatter the brittle illusion.

In this strange place Billy is viewed as a pervert for seeking to “buy the window dressing” and not accepting it as such, choosing the illusion over the pornographic is the perversion. Vonnegut differentiates the illusion from the pornographic. Where the pornographic is a frozen and dead moment that reveal everything, yet nothing as it destroys desire. The illusion on the other hand is very much alive. Always changing the illusion is in a constant tension as it pulsates each time its nature is momentarily revealed only to immediately readjust itself.

TRALFAMADORIAN NOVEL (*SLAUGHTERHOUSE 5*)

“The Tralfamadorian have a peculiarly aesthetic—and as it happens, anaesthetic—perspective. The Tralfamadorians perceive history as they would a painting, that is, at first ‘glance,’ and construct novels reflective of this timeless, nonlinear view.”⁸⁶ In this non-perspectival view everything is revealed as time collapses onto itself and time and space are severed. Billy Pilgrim becomes ‘unstuck in time’ and “the Tralfamadorians (who can see in the fourth dimension) gives him [Billy] a new way of understanding how humans participate in the invention of ‘reality’”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ David Andrews, “Vonnegut and Aesthetic Humanism,” *At Millennium’s End*, ed. Kevin Alexander Boon (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) 25.

⁸⁷ Rackstraw 57.

RABO KARABEKIAN'S PAINTING (*BLUEBEARD*)

David Andrews suggests that Vonnegut displays an approach of *Aesthetic Humanism* towards the work of art and its representation, where for Vonnegut “an artwork is always for things external to itself, that is, for creators and perceivers. In this regard, art has two primary positive effects on creators and perceivers: therapeutic and communicative.”⁸⁸ If the act of *making* has the ability to be immediately therapeutic for the artist, the bond between creator and perceiver also poses a communicative or interpretative function that has a secondary more potent therapeutic value.

Vonnegut's work oscillates between what is aesthetic and anesthetic, while he “registers its [art's] fascination with human experience not through ‘pure’ or exclusivist techniques but through techniques that bridge the imaginary gap between merely expedient concepts like ‘representationalism’ and ‘formalism.’”⁸⁹ Rabo Karabekian's painting signifies a process based on de-centering and re-centering that merges life and art; for Vonnegut art is no longer about emulating a specific style free of external influence, but rather dependent of its context and interpretation. As Vonnegut questions monumentality and the aesthetics of art he dissolves the fence-like painting and frees Rabo of the restrictions of history and representation.

“SKIP'S” MUSEUM (*THE SIRENS OF TITAN*)

As the stage for Rumford's timely apparitions “Skip's” Museum is frozen in time. The room, as a monument to the past, displays natural and scientific artifacts; it stores

⁸⁸ Andrews 19.

⁸⁹ Andrews 36.

and protects Rumford's childhood memories, preserving them as long as he remains 'unstuck' in time. An "architectural mistake" the room remains isolated and protected from change, remaining in a removed position despite any change in its context.

GREGORY'S STUDIO (*BLUEBEARD*)

Gregory's studio is a space that generates and harbors illusions as it also simultaneously creates and kills the work of art. In the novel *Bluebeard*, Vonnegut dissects various historical processes that he believes corrupt art and its interpretation. As he carries his criticism towards technology and other forms of artifice into this probing of art and representation, he warns against the dangers of evaluating and producing art with a scientific approach. As he alludes to something similar to Walter Benjamin's penetrating devices, he describes a photorealist painting by Gregory: "the bone was bone, the fur was fur, the hair was hair, the dust was dust ...and the water dripping from the skylight in my painting was not only the wettest water you ever saw: in each droplet, if you looked at it through a magnifying glass, there was the whole damned studio!"⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Kurt Vonnegut, *Bluebeard* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1987) 146-47.

THE SEVEN LITERARY SITES . . .

SKULL ANTENNAS AND OXYGEN PILLS/ MEAT AND SOUL

CAVES OF MERCURY AND THE HARMONIUMS

THE BOOKSTORE IN TIME'S SQUARE

TRALFAMADORIAN NOVEL

RABO KARABEKIAN'S PAINTING

"SKIP'S" MUSEUM

GREGORY'S STUDIO

THE NFB BUILDING WILL INCLUDE:

SCULL ANTENNAS AND OXYGEN PILLS / MEAT AND SOUL ----- MIND / BODY ----- DANCE

ADMINISTRATION

CAVES OF MERCURY ----- ILLUSION ----- PERCEPTION ----- SKIN

VIEWING STATIONS

BOOKSTORE IN TIME'S SQUARE ----- PROJECTION ----- VIEWER / VIEWED

MAIN THEATRE

TRALFAMADORIAN NOVEL ----- TIME ----- FRAME ----- COLLAPSING SPACES

CIRCULATION

RABO'S PAINTING ----- PROCESS ----- CREATIVE BECOMING

INCUBATION THEATRE

"SKIP'S" MUSEUM ----- ARTIFACT ----- MEMORY ----- MONUMENTALITY

ARCHIVES

STUDIO ----- SOCIAL SPACE ----- CREATIVE EXCESS

EXTERIOR PROJECTION AREA

THE ARCHITECTURAL METAPHOR IS NON-STATIC AND ITS FLUID NATURE ALLOWS IT TO CHANGE AND EVOLVE.
AS THE PROJECT DEVELOPED ITS PROGRAMMATIC RELATIONSHIPS AND SPACES BEGAN TO INFLUENCE AND
CROSS-CONTAMINATE EACH OTHER, ALLOWING NEW RELATIONSHIPS TO BE REVEALED.

Digital image, *Between Time and Timbuktu*, by the author (2005).

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This section of the thesis will weave its way through philosophy, film, and architecture, making inquiries on the nature of perception and its relationship to technology. Technology's relationship to the human body oscillates between destabilizing metaphors such as war and destruction, and an opposing centripetal *generative* potential. Film and recently digital media, as both art and technology, makes significant inquiries on the nature of perception and its relationship to technology. As a device infused with a conflicting tradition, it expands perceptions by forcing a de-stabilization of the body; a (de) centring that motivates a necessary (re) centring and allows the human body to reconcile its complex relationship with technology. As new modes of representation arise from this tension so does new ways of perceiving technology and it is this fluctuation between centred and (de) centred states that is necessary in developing new perceptions of art and technology.

PROGRAM: NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

*In its early years, the NFB was central to the development of the film industry in Canada; it played a key role by being a powerful incubator of new talents and new artistic forms. In its heyday NFB artists and artisans were hailed for their new work in the development of a new cinematographic language... The idea is to restore the creative relationships that once existed to support the development of a new cinematographic language, to have a technical base that is at the forefront. They will be on the leading edge of new technologies and quick to adapt to new formats and new ways of working with sound and images.*⁹²

National Film Board of Canada

Although the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) headquarters are still located in Ottawa, a city that has been intimately and historically involved in Canada's film industry since its infancy, today the city lacks the public presence of the institution, and despite the NFB's public facilities in two of the country's main film hubs—Montreal and Toronto—it remains important that the institution regain its public presence in Ottawa. (see figs. 25,

Fig. 25 Frame from the NFB animation depicting the main entrance to the proposed building, by the author.

26) With the increasing commercialization of the Toronto and, more recently, Montreal film industries, Ottawa as the host of the Ottawa International Animation Festival and other independent film festivals encourages and supports local, national and international independent filmmakers and animators.

⁹² NFB.ca, 2004, The National Film Board of Canada, Oct. 2004 <<http://www.nfb.ca/>>.

One of the NFB's main goals is "To foster innovation, experimentation in traditional media, new media and alternative fiction, we will dedicate resources to model innovation and act as a catalyst for change."⁹³ They anticipate, with the aid of new media, to provide new opportunities for the exchange of dialogues on the art of filmmaking and wish to extend the reach of the NFB by providing on-line resources and further access to national and international films to the public.

Fig. 26 Aerial view of the proposed site for the NFB, by the author.

Many works nurtured by the NFB influence and cross-contaminate each other and blur the boundaries between fiction and reality—animation and the documentary; two such works are Laurence Green's documentary *Alter Egos* and Chris Landreth's animation *Ryan*. (see. figs. 27, 28) As an animated tribute to the Canadian animator Ryan Larkin, who is described as: "A gentleman panhandler. One of the pioneers of Canadian animation. Oscar nominee. Poor beggar. An artist unable to create. God observing the

⁹³ National Film Board of Canada.

world. Fallen angel. Arrogant. Shy. Broken. Not destroyed,”⁹⁴ the animation based in the three-dimensional world Landreth calls “psychological realism,” follows how Ryan, who thirty years ago produced some of the NFB’s most influential works, now panhandles in the streets of Montreal. Questioning how an artistic genius like Larkin could have taken such a path, we hear the strange, twisted and broken voices of Landreth, Larkin himself and the people who have known him re-incarnated as 3D generated characters described as: “people whose appearances are bizarre, humorous or disturbing... [yet] incredibly realistic and detailed;” a world encapsulated in the words of Anais Nin: “We don’t see things as they are. We see things as we are.”⁹⁵

Figs. 27, 28 Left *Alter Egos* written and directed by Laurence Green (2004) and *Ryan*, directed by Chris Landreth (2004)

In the documentary *Alter Egos*, a study on artists, addiction and creativity, Ryan Larkin and Chris Landreth *are* Alter Egos. As Ryan is living every artist’s worst nightmare: losing his ability to create, Chris’s career, as a rising star in animation, is on the opposite trajectory; a fragile course that Ryan once maintained more than thirty years before when he was one of the world’s most celebrated animators.⁹⁶

These two mutually supporting independent films not only depict an example of the interesting dynamics between the documentary and fiction that the NFB nurtures, but

⁹⁴ National Film Board of Canada

⁹⁵ National Film Board of Canada

⁹⁶ National Film Board of Canada

the fragile nature of the creative process itself. A process that the NFB recognizes as important, “To allow the NFB’s unique way of making films to flourish, we will develop the artist-artisan relationship in the creative process... making films, where the artists and artisan collaborate from the concept stage to the post-production to push forward the art form.”⁹⁷

Figs. 29, 30 Frames from the NFB animation, by the author.

⁹⁷ National Film Board of Canada.

AS THE PROJECT'S PYRAMIDAL MOMENT, THE ARCHITECTURAL PLANS ALLOWS FOR A MOMENT OF CLARITY,
ALLOWING US TO RISES ABOVE THE LABYRINTH.

ALMOST DEAD AND WAITING TO BE SHED THEY BECOME THE SKINS OF ARCHITECTURAL THOUGHT.

SUB-LEVEL PLAN

73.9

SOMERSET STREET

BANK STREET

MaCLAREN STREET

scale: 1:400

GROUND LEVEL PLAN

scale: 1:400

LEVEL 1 PLAN

scale: 1:400

LEVEL 2 PLAN

scale: 1:400

LEVEL 3 PLAN

LEVELS 4, 5 & 6 PLANS

**DESPITE ALL MY FUTILE ATTEMPTS THERE IS NO WAY TO CAPTURE PURE THOUGHT AND
SKETCHING IS PERHAPS ITS CLOSEST MEDIATOR.**

**NEVER TRULY TO SCALE NOR CONSISTENT THESE SKETCHES MAKE UP THE ARCHITECTURAL
'UNTRUTHS' THAT SEDUCE THE EYE AND THE MIND.**

THE ARCHITECTURAL OBJECT IS PERPETUALLY TRAPPED BETWEEN A SPATIAL CONSTRUCTION
AND A SCALED MODEL, AND AS SUCH, IS IN CONSTANT DENIAL OF ITS FORM.

THIS ABSTRACTION OF SCALE IS AT ONCE THREATENING AND ESSENTIAL TO ARCHITECTURE.

ARCHIVES AND EXTERIOR PROJECTION AREA

ARCHIVES AND EXTERIOR PROJECTION AREA

INCUBATION THEATRE ENTRANCE

CIRCULATION

mediates, but can also, with its anthropomorphic and metaphorical qualities, simultaneously juxtapose, reconcile and blur the edges between these centered and de-centered states of the body.

With the advent of the twentieth century and the invention of the video camera, cinema increasingly began to rely on the camera as a simple recording device that only “captures” an already existing reality; implying that cinema was nothing more than a way to photograph or document what was already existing rather than creating new cinematic spaces.⁹⁹ In his influential writing, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin criticizes that:

... [I]n the studio the mechanical equipment has penetrated so deeply into reality that its pure aspect freed from the foreign substance of equipment is the result of a special procedure, namely, the shooting by the specially adjusted camera and the mounting of the shot together with other similar ones. The equipment-free aspect of reality here has become the height of artifice; the sight of immediate reality has become an orchid in the land of technology.¹⁰⁰

Figs. 33, 34 Frames from Sergei Vertrov, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).

Film director Sergei Eisenstein described two kinds of mimesis: one that copies form, which he criticized, and another that imitated the principle behind the surface object. This

⁹⁹ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁰ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973) 233.

second mode allowed penetration through the skin to the skeletal, becoming a new generative device that dissolved the old mode of vision and produced a new one. Contrary to Benjamin, Eisenstein's use of the surgical metaphor did not refer to an objectifying penetration of reality, but one that expanded and revealed something new or unable to be seen by the human eye. Although Benjamin is critical of the video camera's disposition to duplicate reality, he nevertheless recognizes its potential to also expand it:

Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension... With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations by the subject...Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously explored penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless Benjamin also mourned the loss of what he called the “aura” of the work of art, a condition based on authenticity, a condition that cannot exist in film due to its ability to be duplicated and mass-produced; suggesting that art itself must be redefined if film is to be considered art. Suggesting that Hegel's idea of art as a complete closed unit, a static original or an absolute, begged to be questioned and (re) defined. Witnessing such a line of inquiry, art itself was questioned and explored, then subverted and (re) defined through the use of new mediums and technologies.

¹⁰¹ Benjamin 236.

THE CAMERA'S SOMETIMES PENETRATING EYE ALLOWS US TO DEVELOP NEW PERCEPTIONS OF
REALITY, EXPANDING REALITY BY GIVING IT ITS OWN EYES.

SURREALISM AND DESIRE

Keeping with the Surrealist project, Benjamin set out to explore how the dream had the potential to invert the secrets of architecture. Capturing an aura of the fleeting or blurred—what Roland Barthes referred to as the “punctum” of a photographic image—Benjamin called the “something that cannot be silenced.”¹⁰² For Surrealism, this “something that cannot be silenced” is also the “something that cannot be attained.” Based on Lacanian psychoanalysis of the unconscious and the language of the dream, an absence becomes infinitely desirable because it is never attainable. Linda Williams, in *Figures of Desire*, iterates that:

The Surrealists took pleasure in the paradoxical fact that the unparalleled visual perception of the film image is only a projected illusion—an absence that creates the illusion of presence. The relation of the spectator to the cinematic image thus parallels the relation of the human subject to the *other scene* of the unconscious. For the unconscious, too, is a scene that is never directly present and is only indicated—as in dreams—by an illusionary image. Thus the film and the dream resemble each other most in their ability to project desire. This is so precisely in both cases that projected image of this desire is radically not there.¹⁰³

Philosopher, Slavoj Žižek defines this as the crucial importance for his Lacanian perspective and refers to the *contents* of Zeno's literary points. Reverting to Achilles and the tortoise from the *Iliad*, he points out that: "As in a dream, the pursuer never succeeds in catching up with the fugitive whom he is after, and the fugitive likewise cannot ever clearly escape his pursuer."¹⁰⁴ This sets the paradox for the relationship between the subject and the object-cause of his desire. The object-cause can never be attained no

¹⁰² Benjamin.

¹⁰³ Linda Williams, *Figures of Desire* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981) 210.

¹⁰⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998) 4. Example taken from the *Iliad*.

matter what we do to attain it and likewise the object-cause of desire can never escape the subject. The closer the subject circles the object-cause, the more unattainable it is to grasp, making it impossible to reach.

According to the Lacanian notion of anxiety: the disappearance of this desire causes anxiety to occur.¹⁰⁵ It is never lacking the object of desire, but rather getting too close to the object and losing that very desire to obtain the object that causes anxiety. The desire generated by the fantasy of literary and cinematic fictions not only prevents anxiety but it also allows us to form a healthy perception of the actual world. The reduction of fantasy to everyday common reality would cause the desire's gaze of to fall apart, causing an inability to articulate desire by this folding of the gap between fantasy and reality.¹⁰⁶ In Alfred Hitchcock's film *Vertigo*, the rage that Scotties' experiences when he realizes that Judy, the woman he was trying to transform into Madeleine, is actually Madeleine, or rather Madeleine is Judy and Madeleine does not exist, demonstrates the fatal result of this loss of desire.¹⁰⁷ In the film, Hitchcock uses the silhouette as a projection of Scotties desire to transform Judy into Madeleine and vice-versa. (see figs. 35-37)

Figs. 35-37 Silhouettes of Madeleine and/or Judy, Alfred Hitchcock, *Vertigo* (1958).

¹⁰⁵ Zizek, *Looking Awry*.

¹⁰⁶ Zizek, *Looking Awry*.

¹⁰⁷ Slavoj Zizek, *Organs without bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Zizek also suggests that fantasy space functions as a generative surface, as a screen for the projection of desire.¹⁰⁸ It becomes an empty space where the nostalgic desires and distorted memories of fiction can be projected, suggesting that:

... the fantasy stages not a scene on which our desire is fulfilled, fully satisfied, but on the contrary, a scene that realizes, stages, the desire as such...desire is not something given in advance but something that has to be constructed—and it is precisely the role of fantasy to give the coordinates of the subject's desire, to specify its object, to locate the position the subject assumes in it. It is only through fantasy that the subject is constituted as desiring: *through fantasy, we learn how to desire.*¹⁰⁹

Figs. 38, 39 Max Ernst, *Les malheurs des immortels* (1922) and *La puberté proche n'a pas...* (1920?), in John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Work*, (London:Thames and Hudson, 1967).

Going back to the Lacanian notion of anxiety, where the reduction of fantasy to everyday common reality and the folding of the gap between fantasy and reality may causes the deterioration of the viewer's ability to articulate desire. The lack of evidence

¹⁰⁸Zizek, *Looking Awry*.

¹⁰⁹Zizek, *Looking Awry* 6.

of the image's subjectivity would equally cause a crisis of perception where the viewer is deprived of an anthropomorphic relationship to the work. This is precisely why *montage* must have traces of a semantic clash, juxtaposing mediums, perspectives, scales or contexts. Max Ernst uses many of these techniques in his collages, depicting impossible overlaps of bodies in space and giving clues of the multiplicity of meaning in his work. (see figs. 38-42)

Figs. 40-42 Max Ernst, *Une semaine de bonte* (1934) and *La femme 100 tetes* (1929) in John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Work*, (London:Thames and Hudson, 1967).

THE ROLE OF THE SECTION IS NOT TO CUT, BUT TO HIDE AND REVEAL.

SECTION 1'50'

AS I BEGAN TO PLAY WITH THE SEVEN PASSAGES FROM THE VONNEGUT NOVELS, I DREW OUT INTERESTING WORDS, PHRASES OR EVEN REPEATED PATTERNS. ALSO REMOVING FROM THE TEXT. THIS LOSS AND BLOCKING OUT OF MEANING MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS REVEALING AND (RE) COMPOSITION. THE INTUITIVE EXERCISE ITSELF TOOK PERHAPS LESS THAN AN HOUR, BUT SEEMED TO FLOW AND QUICKLY TOOK ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN, AS VONNEGUT WOULD SAY, "THE IMPOSSIBLE CREATURE LIVED."

LATER ON I EXPANDED ON THIS NARRATIVE BY CREATING A SHORT ANIMATION THAT INTERPRETED AND EXPLORED THE SPATIAL QUALITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS OF THE LITERARY SPACES.

ON THE 9TH OF JULY, THE SHORT ANIMATION BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU WAS SCREENED TO A PUBLIC AT THE CENTRETOWN MOVIES OUTDOOR FILM FESTIVAL, AN ANNUAL COMMUNITY FESTIVAL THAT TRANSFORMS UNUSED PUBLIC SPACES IN OTTAWA'S DOWNTOWN CORE INTO A NON-PROFIT OPEN-AIR WALK-IN THEATRE.

THIS TIME PROJECTED ONTO A FENCE AT THE ADULT HIGH SCHOOL ON SLATER, I HAD NOT INTENDED FOR THE WORK TO BE PUBLICLY SCREENED. ODDLY THE UNEXPECTED PERFORMANCE GAVE IT NEW LIFE, A NEW MEANING. IT WAS (RE) BORN IN A SENSE, FREED FROM THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE THESIS IT WAS (RE) INVENTED BY THE AUDIENCE.

IT'S AN INTELLIGENCE TEST! (p.198)

In the novel, the "intelligence" mentioned was a series of questions and hints carefully posed by Rundford who simultaneously existed in all temporal and spatial dimensions. "THINK" the creatures would say, giving Pink hints on how to get off this world of his Earth. When the "unlabeled" beings came to him, he said, "GIVE UP!" and they went down, allowing the space ship's navigation equipment to re-sense its way out of the underground.

The creatures have only one sense: touch.

They are capable of transmitting and receiving information. The first is an automatic response to the second, and the second is an automatic response to the first. The first is, "Here I am, here I am, here I am." The second is, "So glad you are, so glad you are, so glad you are."

The song their planet sings is important to them, for the creatures are nourished by vibrations. They feed on mechanical energy.

The creatures cling to the singing walls of their eggs.

In that way, they are the song and the song is their life.

They also feed on music vibrations given out by the human body.

and the walls of the eggs in their depths are the same as the walls of the eggs in their depths.

Through blind and indifferent to anyone's volition, they often arrange themselves so as to present a regular and dazzling pattern of jonquil-yellow and vivid aquamarine diamonds.

They are called harmoniums. (p. 188-90)

~~~~~ 2 ~~~~~
John Dight

he realized that he had read it before—years ago.

They were put on display

sopping wet.

making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't

It was a ridiculous story.

he realized that he had read it before—years ago.

They were put on display

sopping wet.

making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't

It was a ridiculous story.

he realized that he had read it before—years ago.

They were put on display

sopping wet.

making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't

It was a ridiculous story.

he realized that he had read it before—years ago.

They were put on display

sopping wet.

making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't

It was a ridiculous story.

Some of the people were looking at each other instead of the merchandise.

Billy was reading "What you want's in the back."

Jesus and the time machine.

the one about

Jesus Christ, where did you find this thing?" And so on.

and he had to tell the other clerks about this pervert who wanted to buy the window

dressing.

They had been watching him, too.

041

he realized that he had read it before—years ago.

They were put on display

sopping wet.

making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't

Jesus Christ, where did you find this thing?" And so on.

and he had to tell the other clerks about this pervert who wanted to buy the window

dressing.

They had been watching him, too.

041

paint: SKIP'S MUSEUM

museum of mortal remains endoskeletons and exoskeletons--of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chiton--of doilies and oris and residua of souls long gone. Most of the specimens were those that a child

paint: SKIP'S MUSEUM

museum of mortal remains endoskeletons and exoskeletons--of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chiton--of doilies and oris and residua of souls long gone. Most of the specimens were those that a child

paint: SKIP'S MUSEUM

museum of mortal remains endoskeletons and exoskeletons--of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chiton--of doilies and oris and residua of souls long gone. Most of the specimens were those that a child

paint: SKIP'S MUSEUM

museum of mortal remains endoskeletons and exoskeletons--of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chiton--of doilies and oris and residua of souls long gone. Most of the specimens were those that a child

Char Davies

¹¹⁰ Davies, "Landscape, Earth, Body, Space, and Time in the Immersive Virtual Environments *Osmose* and *Ephemere*."

¹¹¹ Alberto Perez-Gomez and Louise Pelletier, The Perspective Hinge (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997) 321.

¹¹² El Lissitzky quoted in Perez-Gomez, *The Perspective Hinge* 321.

¹¹³ El Lissitzky quoted in Perez-Gomez, *The Perspective Hinge* 321.

exploring such a temporal embodied experience, one that like architecture is based in both time and space as it directly relates to the human body.

Petran Kockelkoren states that the philosophical notion of alienation previously attributed to technology is beginning to lose its validity and believes that today:

“...people are becoming more aware of the influences that the material aspects of technological products have on how we orient ourselves by means of the senses. New technologies open up new registers of perception, and that calls for a corresponding new visual repertoire. The cultural processes in which technology extends our ability to perceive, redistributes social relations, and thereby elicits new visual language and conferral of meanings, is called technological mediation.”¹¹⁴

Figs. 43, 44 Frames from the NFB animation, by the author.

Kockelkoren also attempts to bridge the existing gap between science and art, calling for a rethinking of technology and art, and their relationships to each other. Virtual Reality (VR) artist Char Davies does exactly what Kockelkoren is suggesting in her works *Osmose* and *Ephemere*. (see figs. 45, 46) The fully immersive works, which are based on metaphors of the body and the natural environment, enable a (re) centring of the fragmented and (de) centred post-modern body. In the *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard wrote that: “By changing space, by leaving the space of one’s usual

¹¹⁴ Kockelkoren 8.

sensibilities, one enters into the communication with a space that is psychically innovative...for we do not change place, we change our nature.”¹¹⁵ Davies goes on to clarify that: “such potential exists *only* to the extent that a virtual environment is designed to be *unlike* the space of our usual perceptions, that it is not used to mimetically reproduce literal appearances or habitual behaviors from the ‘real’ world.”¹¹⁶

In her early work, Davies was searching for a medium that would allow her to experiment with an alternative space that questions and challenges Cartesian perception and representation; after attempting painting as a medium, then film, she discovered the potential of VR, what she prefers to call *immersive virtual space*.¹¹⁷ In her own words, she acknowledges that “Lefebvre calls for the production of ‘counter space’ as an alternative against the homogenizing

Figs. 45, 46 Screen captures from Char Davies' *Immersive virtual space, Ephemere* (1998).

¹¹⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Paris, Press universitaire de France, 1967) 206. In this quote, Bachelard uses ‘our nature’ to designate the way we understand, perceive and relate to the external world.

¹¹⁶ Char Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns,” *Hybrid Reality: Art, Technology and the Human Factor*, ed. Hal Thwaites, (Montreal: International Society on Virtual Systems and Multimedia, 2003).

¹¹⁷ I will also use the term *immersive virtual space* rather than virtual reality (VR). The notion of ‘virtual reality’ is a miserable idea, one that reinforces an imitating reality by reproducing its experience in an artificial medium, whereas *virtual space* is a space of virtuality that is embodied in infinite possibilities actualizing in a multitude of ways. Philosophically the virtual encompasses the nature of things and activities that exist but are not tangible—the virtual is real but not concrete.

effect of the absolute space of the Western metaphysics and science: I consider my virtual environments as steps towards producing such a space.”¹¹⁸

In Davies’ environments, rather than lamenting the loss of humanness caused by technology, she attempts to re-sensitize our perception of our own being in the world, calling for a subversion of conventional VR approaches. Recognizing that the origins of three-dimensional technology are deeply imbedded within the Cartesian philosophic tradition, a tradition based on the mind/body split, Davies questions the basis of this tradition, considering it to have contributed to an historic devaluation and objectification of the human body.¹¹⁹ She acknowledges that VR technology is not neutral and that it carries Cartesian values that are connected to the spatial, visual and interactive metaphors associated with a conventional or common understanding of VR. Davies refers to what Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* identifies as the reign of the King Logos: “King Logos is guarded on one hand by the Eye—the eye of God, of the Father, of the Master or Boss—which answers to the primacy of the visual realm with its images and its graphic dimension, and on the other hand by the phallic (military and the heroic) principle, which belongs, as one of its chief properties, to abstract space.”¹²⁰ Lefebvre lays claim that the tradition of the Western philosophy of Descartes and passed on by Hegel has *betrayed* the human body—*abandoned* and *denied* it—the body unable to endure the conceptual split between ‘object’ and ‘subject:’ a tradition where the subjectivity of desire and the objectivity of idea were reduced to the internal and the external, never allowed to co-exist within the same conceptual space.

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¹¹⁸ Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns.”

¹¹⁹ Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns.”

¹²⁰ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) 408. Char Davies often refers to Lefebvre’s notion of ‘King Logos’ in her writings, basing much of the theoretical driving force behind her work on this important notion.

Figs. 47-49 Frames from NFB animation, by the author.

Lefebvre also suggests that: “Today the human body is establishing itself firmly, as base and foundation, *beyond philosophy*, beyond discourse, and beyond the theory of discourse. Theoretical thought, carrying reflection on the subject and the object beyond the old concepts, has re-embraced the body along with space, in space, and as a generator (producer) of space.”¹²¹ Rather than merely changing the connotations of ‘objects’ within the traditional western framework of philosophy, contemporary discourse must subvert it by critically going through and beyond its boundaries. For Lefebvre, going beyond philosophy means to go beyond the locus of *substitutions* and *separations*, establishing itself beyond the substitutions conducted by the abstraction of the body and of space, and beyond the separations produced by dualist relationships such as: mind/body, logical/irrational, male/female, or knowledge/meaning.

Figs. 50, 51 Frames from the NFB animation, by the author.

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¹²¹ Lefebvre 407.

Granting that VR technology still reflects Lefebvre's supremacy of the eye, Davies interprets technology's tendency towards mimetic representation as a further reinforcement of the Cartesian tradition. Conventional VR also reinforces a controlling viewpoint that manipulates hard-edged objects floating in an empty space. Giving the illusion of total control, hand-held navigational devices such as joysticks, keyboards or the mouse, along with the user-interfaces associated with the digital media, reinforce a dominating and authoritative movement through space, a movement that denies and isolates the body.

Using painting as a medium for her early investigations, Davies turned her attention to her myopic eyesight, allowing her not merely to develop a unique visual aesthetic, but more importantly an alternative experiential space that questions perception and representation. (see figs. 52, 53) The semblance of what is solid, surface, edge, and the distinctions between figure/ground, inside/outside, observer/observed; relationships that often objectify our representations of reality are dissolved in the work. Her goal is to create

Figs. 52, 53 Oil on canvas, Char Davies, *Lake*, (1987) and digital image in light box, made from 3-D software, Char Davies, *Roots*, (1991).

non-Cartesian spaces, spaces that, rather than delineating sharply defined separate objects in "empty" space, produce an "ambiguous intermingling of varying voluminous

luminosities and hues.”¹²² Rather than displaying a dominating Cartesian visual accuracy, the spaces generated in her immersive virtual environments use various semi-transparencies and semiabstract semi-representational forms; this manipulation allows what she calls another way of “re-sensing” the human body to come forward.¹²³

Figs. 54, 55 Frames from the NFB animation, by the author.

Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind*, writes that “space conceived from an embodied perspective is no longer what it was in Descartes’ *Dioptric*,” the geometer looking over the object and re-constructing it from the outside, “but rather such space starts from the perceiver...I do not see space according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it.”¹²⁴ It is precisely that separation between exterior/interior and object/subject, which must be questioned. In Davies’ works, rather than using dominating modes of navigation, the participant or the *immersant* uses their breathing in an intuitive and visceral way to navigate, to ascend or descend, shifting their centre of balance in a mostly vertical fashion. Davies describes the *encompassing* spatial quality of immersion as key, “The implication of this emphasis on my part is a deliberately shifted focus from

¹²² Char Davies, “Landscape, Earth, Body, Space, and Time in the Immersive Virtual Environments *Osmose* and *Ephemere*,” *Women, Art and Technology*, ed. Judy Malloy (London: MIT Press, 2003).

¹²³ Davies, “Landscape, Earth, Body, Space, and Time in the Immersive Virtual Environments *Osmose* and *Ephemere*.”

¹²⁴ Quoted in Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns.”

world, “The responses of many participants initially caught us by surprise, in terms of their emotionality, including euphoria and tears of loss.”¹²⁷ As a (re) sensing based on loss this medium has a surprisingly deep impact on the artist/participant’s emotional and bodily relationship to the work.

Action art, performance, and the ‘happenings’ of the 1950’s and 1960’s upset Hegel’s theory of art and aesthetics, uprooting the concept of ‘the work of art’ by breaking down its detached and static state. Ephemeral interactions with an audience allowed contradictions, layers of meaning, and chance elements to enter the works of art. Considered works in progress, ‘the happenings’ transformed nonlinear events into narratives created through audience participation; these spatiotemporal works “dislocate the central position of the author by harnessing the imagination of the participants/viewers.”¹²⁸

“In ‘Opera Aperta’ [Umberto Eco], the work of art is no longer a sort of encoded or enciphered message, viewed from the inside of production, to be deciphered by the observer using a repertoire of keys. Instead, it is an arrangement of possibilities; according to Eco, an ensemble of forms of organization, where many are entrusted with the initiative of the interpreter...an image is the sum of the possible narratives, histories, or interpretations that it allows, it is not pre-determined as classical artworks, in Eco’s words ‘The task of an open artwork is to give us a picture of discontinuity; it doesn’t tell of it, it is it.’”¹²⁹

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¹²⁷ Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns.”

¹²⁸ Oliver Grau, “Charlotte Davies: Osmose,” Visual Art From Illusion to Immersion (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003).

¹²⁹ Grau, “Charlotte Davies: Osmose.”

The participant is able to produce space using their body and the rhythms of their breathing to navigate. (see fig. 57) The high level of performance and the relationship between perceiver and perceived is blurred as screens are set up around the immersant creating shadows of the performance. During public exhibitions of *Osmose* and *Ephemere*, the immersant's physical actions are projected as a silhouette in real-time and alongside them a stereographic projection of the three-dimensional world experienced and created by the immersant, thereby drawing attention to the relationship between the work and the human

Fig. 57. Headset used in *Osmose* and *Ephemere*.

body. The experiences of these works take the shape of a theatrical performance that is not self-enclosed but can also be viewed by others at varying levels of interactions.

Figs. 58, 59 Frames from the NFB animation depicting the exterior projection area, by the author.

Davies performances allow both the ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ gazes to be captured by the viewers and the environments themselves, allowing both the participant to be immersed in the artistic flow and the audience to engage it as a witness the dance-like performance of the immersant. As Davies draws out:

Intermingling of spatialities—interior and exterior, mental, physical and social—which can be artistically-constructed, bodily inhabited and performed...virtual space is a new kind of conceptual and experimental working space, one that not only paradoxically integrates the virtual and the real, but which potentially (when constructed in a certain way) facilitates a dissolution of conventional boundaries between perceiver and perceived.¹³⁰

It is not only this dissolution of boundaries that is most compelling, but also the (re) establishing of new boundaries through an engagement with the work. It is this sort of engagement with the work of art or architecture that critically (re) establishes its context and meaning.

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¹³⁰ Davies, “Rethinking VR: Key Concepts and Concerns.”

CONCLUSION

Destroying meaning without (re) assembling it or creating 'new' meaning causes critical discourse to be averted and creates a paralysis of meaning that prevent architecture from putting itself into the crucial crisis of meaning that sustains it. If architecture exists somewhere between *function* and *meaning*, *program* and *form*, the *concrete* and the *Real*, the scientific and historical time and space, along with its linear structure, must be (de) stabilized and (re) established through a movement towards the *imaginary* and the *Real*. Architecture exists in this realm of paradox that also allows the co-existence of technology and perception.

The architectural metaphor has the ability to (de) stabilize and (re) centre meaning, allowing meaning to be questioned, deconstructed and (re) established as it moves transversely through architecture. Although many consider this attempt to maintain a constant oscillation between centred and (de) centred states as a problem, it becomes evident that this is not a problem to be solved, but an existing condition. A (re) centring does not describe a 'return' to a previous centre, but the desire to find its 'new' location. This centre is not fixed in a central position, but moves at the edges of *otherness* towards the *Real*, it is constantly subverting itself, eluding our grasp and slipping past our apprehension, causing us to desire it.

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APPENDIX A: LITERARY SPACES

Skull Antennas and Oxygen Pills (Sirens of Titan) / My Soul and My Meat (Bluebeard)

At the hospital they even had to explain to Unk what Combat Respiratory Rations or CRR's or goofballs were—had to tell him to take one every six hours or suffocate. These were oxygen pills that made up for the fact that there wasn't any oxygen in the Martian atmosphere.

At the hospital they even had to explain to Unk that there was a radio antenna under the crown of his skull, and that it would hurt him whenever he did something a good soldier wouldn't ever do. The antenna also would give him orders and furnish drum music to march to. They said that not just Unk but everybody had an antenna like that—doctors and nurses and four-star generals included. It was a very democratic army, they said.

(100, Sirens of Titan)

Rented a tent, a tent, a tent;

Rented a tent, a tent, a tent;

Rented a tent!

Rented a tent!

Rented a tent, a tent, a tent.

—SNARE DRUM ON MARS

(95, Sirens of Titan)

"I can't help it," I said. "My soul knows my meat is doing bad things, and is embarrassed. But my meat just keeps right on doing bad, dumb things."

"Your what and your what?" he said.

"My soul and my meat," I said.

"They're separate?" he said.

"I sure hope they are," I said. I laughed. "I would hate to be responsible for what my meat does." I told him, only half joking, about how I imagined the soul of each person, myself included, as being a sort of flexible neon tube inside. All the tube could do was receive news about what was happening with the meat, over which it had no control.

(273, Bluebeard)

The Caves of Mercury and the Harmoniums (Sirens of Titan)

Unk and Boaz came in for a landing on the dark side of Mercury, seventy-nine Earthling days out of Mars. They did not know that the planet on which they were landing was Mercury.

They thought the Sun was terrifyingly large—But that didn't keep them from thinking that where they were landing was Earth.

They blacked out during the period of sharp deceleration. Now they were regaining consciousness—were being treated to a cruel and lovely illusion.

It seemed to Unk and Boaz that their ship was settling slowly among skyscrapers over which searchlights played.

"They aren't shooting," said Boaz. "Either the war's over, or ain't begun."

The merry beams of light they saw were not from searchlights. The beams came from tall crystals on the borderline between the light and dark hemispheres of Mercury. Those crystals on

the dark side caught the beams and passed them on.

It was easy to believe that the searchlights were playing over a sophisticated civilization indeed. It was easy to mistake the dense forest of giant blue-white crystals for skyscrapers, stupendous and beautiful.

Unk, standing at a porthole, wept quietly. He was weeping for love, for family, for friendship, for truth, for civilization. The things he wept for were all abstractions, since his memory could furnish few faces or artifacts with which his imagination might fashion a passion play. (190-91)

He saw that the creatures nearest the porthole had outlined in aquamarine a perfect, pale yellow letter T.

The marking of a T was well within the limits of probability for brainless creatures distributing themselves at random. But when

Unk saw that the T was preceded by a perfect S. And the S was preceded by a perfect E.

Unk moved his head to one side, looked through the porthole obliquely. The movement gave him a perspective down a hundred yards of harmonium-infested wall.

Unk was flabbergasted to see that the harmoniums were forming a message in dazzling letters.

The message was this, in pale yellow, outlined in aquamarine:

IT'S AN INTELLIGENCE TEST! (198)

HARMONIUM—The only known form of life on the planet Mercury. The harmonium is a cave-dweller. A more gracious creature would be hard to imagine.

—A Child's Cyclopedia of Wonders and Things to Do. (187)

There are creatures in the deep caves of Mercury.

The song their planet signs is important to them, for the creatures are nourished by vibrations. They feed on mechanical energy.

The creatures cling to the singing walls of their caves.

In that way, they eat the song of Mercury. [They also feed on music vibrations and the ones given out by the human body.]

The caves of Mercury are cozily warm in their depths.

The walls of the caves in their depths are phosphorescent. They give off a jonquil-yellow light.

The creatures in the caves are translucent. When they cling to the walls, light from the phosphorescent walls comes right through them. The yellow light from the walls, however, is turned, when passed through the bodies of the creatures, to a vivid aquamarine.

Nature is a wonderful thing.

The creatures in the caves look very much like small and spineless kites. They are diamond-shaped, a foot high and eight inches wide when fully mature.

They have no more thickness than the skin of a toy balloon.

Each creature has four feeble suction cups—one at each of its corners. The cups enable it to cling, and to feel out the places where the song of Mercury is best.

Having found a place that promises a good meal, the creatures lay themselves against the wall like wet wallpaper.

There is no need for a circulatory system in the creatures. They are so thin that life-giving vibrations can make all their cells tingle without intermediaries.

The creatures do not excrete.

The creatures reproduce by flaking. The young, when shed by a parent, are indistinguishable from dandruff.

There is only one sex.

Every creature simply sheds flakes of his own kind, and his own kind is like everybody else's kind.

There is no childhood as such. Flakes begin flaking three Earthlings hours after they themselves have been shed.

They do not reach maturity, then deteriorate and die. They reach maturity and stay in full bloom, so to speak, for as long as Mercury cares to sing.

There is no way in which one creature can harm another, and no motive for one's harming another.

Hunger, envy, ambition, fear, indignation, religion, and sexual lust are irrelevant and unknown.

The creatures have only one sense: touch.

They have weak powers of telepathy. The messages they are capable of transmitting and receiving are almost as monotonous as the song of Mercury. They have only two possible messages. The first is an automatic response to the second, and the second is an automatic response to the first.

The first is, "Here I am, here I am, here I am."

The second is, "So glad you are, so glad you are, so glad you are."

There is one last characteristic of the creatures that has not been explained on utilitarian grounds: the creatures seem to like to arrange themselves in striking patterns on the phosphorescent walls.

Through blind and indifferent to anyone's watching, they often arrange themselves so as to present a regular and dazzling pattern of jonquil-yellow and vivid aquamarine diamonds. The yellow comes from the bare cave walls. The aquamarine is the light of the walls filtered through the bodies of the creatures.

Because of their love for the music and their willingness to deploy themselves in the service of beauty, the creatures are given a lovely name by the Earthlings.

They are called harmoniums. (188-90)

The Bookstore in Time's Square (Slaughterhouse 5)

The news of the day, meanwhile was being written in a ribbon of lights on a building to Billy's back. The window reflected the news. It was about power and sports and anger and death. So it goes.

Billy went into the bookstore.

A sign in there said that adults only were allowed in the back. There were peep shows in the back that showed movies of young women and men with no clothes on. It cost a quarter to look into the machine for one minute. There were still photographs of naked young people for sale back there, too. You could take those home. The stills were a lot more Tralfamadorian than the movies, since you could look at them whenever you wanted to, and they wouldn't change. Twenty years in the future, those girls would still be young, would still be smiling or smoldering or simply looking stupid, with their legs wide open. Some of them were eating lollipops or bananas. They would still be eating those. And the peckers of the young men would still be semi-erect, and their muscles would be bulging like cannonballs.

*But Billy Pilgrim wasn't beguiled by the back of the store. He was thrilled by the Kilgore Trout novels in the front. The titles were all new to him, or he thought they were. Now he opened one. It seemed all right for him to do that. Everybody else in the store was pawing things. The name of the book was *The Big Board*. He got a few paragraphs into it, and then he realized that he had read it before—years ago, in the veterans' hospital. It was about an Earthling man and woman who were kidnapped by extra-terrestrials. They were put on display in a zoo on a planet called Zircon212.*

Tralfamadorian Novel (Slaughterhouse 5)

"Only Tralfamadorian novels, which I'm afraid you couldn't begin to understand," said the speaker on the wall.

"Let me look at one anyway."

*So they sent him several. They were little things. A dozen of them might have had the bulk of *Valley of the Dolls*—with all its ups and downs, up and downs.*

Billy couldn't read Tralfamadorian, of course, but he could at least see how the books were laid out—in brief clumps of symbols

The bookstore was run by seeming quintuplets, by five short, bald men chewing unlit cigars that were sopping wet. They never smiled, and each one had a stool to perch on. They were making money running a paper-and-celluloid whorehouse. They didn't have hard-ons. Neither did Billy Pilgrim. Everybody else did. It was a ridiculous store, all about love and babies.

The clerks occasionally told somebody to buy or get out, not to just look and look and look and paw and paw. Some of the people were looking at each other instead of the merchandise.

A clerk came up to Billy and told him the good stuff was in the back, that the books Billy was reading were window dressing. "What you want's in the back."

So Billy moved a little farther back, but not as far as the part for adults only. He moved because of absentminded politeness, taking a Trout book with him—the one about Jesus and the time machine.

Another clerk came up to Billy and asked him if he was going to buy the book or not, and Billy said that he wanted to buy it, please. He had his back to a rack of paperback books about oral-genital contacts from ancient Egypt to the present and so on, and the clerk supposed Billy was reading one of these. So he was startled when he saw what Billy's book was. He said, "Jesus Christ, where did you find this thing?" And so on, and he had to tell the other clerks about this pervert who wanted to buy the window dressing. The clerks already knew about Billy. They had been watching him, too. (200-04)

separated by stars. Billy commented that the clumps might be telegrams.

"Exactly," said the voice.

"They are telegrams?"

"There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right: each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message—describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages except that the author has chosen them

carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time. (p.88)

"There was a lot that Billy said that was gibberish to the Tralfamadorians, too. They

Rabo Karabekian's Painting (Bluebeard)

Never again would the canvas of life, so to speak, help me and a partner create a sexual masterpiece.

Rabo Karabekian, then, created at least one masterpiece as a lover, which was necessarily created in private and vanished from the Earth even more quickly than the paintings which made me a footnote in Art History...

After the war, when I told Terry Kitchen something about my three hours of ideal lovemaking with Marilee, and how contentedly adrift in the cosmos they made me feel, he said this: "You were experiencing a non-epiphany."

"A what?" I said.

"A concept of my own invention," he said. This was back when he was still a talker instead of a painter, long before I bought him the spray rig. As far as that goes, I was nothing but a talker and a painters' groupie. I was still going to become a businessman.

"The trouble with God isn't that He so seldom make Himself known to us," he went on. "The trouble with God is exactly the opposite: He's holding you and me and everybody else by the scruff of the neck practically constantly."

He said he had just come from an afternoon at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where so many of the paintings were about God's giving instructions, to Adam and Eve and the Virgin Mary, and various saints in agony and so on. "These moments are very rare, if you can believe the painters—but who was ever nitwit enough to believe a painter?" he said, and he ordered another double Scotch, I'm sure, for which I would pay. "Such moments are often called 'epiphanies' and I'm here to tell you they are as houseflies," he said.

"I see," I said. I think Pollock was there listening to all this, although he and Kitchen and I were not yet known as the "Three Musketeers." He was a real painter, so he hardly

couldn't imagine what time looked like to him. Billy had given up on explaining that. The guide outside had to explain as best he could.

The guide invited the crowd to imagine that they were looking across a desert at a mountain range on a day that was twinkling bright and clear. They could look at a peak or a bird or a cloud, at a stone right in front of them, or even down into a canyon behind them." (114-15)

talked at all. After Terry Kitchen become a real painter, he, too, hardly talked at all.

"'Contentedly adrift in the cosmos,' were you?" Kitchen said to me. "That is a perfect description of a non-epiphany, that rarest of moments, when God Almighty lets go of the scruff of your neck and lets you be human for a little while. How long did the feeling last?" (182-84)

kar*a*bek*i*an (kar-a-bek-e-an), n. (from Rabo Karabekian, U.S. 20th cent. painter). Fiasco in which a person causes total destruction of own work and reputation through stupidity, carelessness or both. (p.286)

Out in the barn were eight panels of primed and stretched canvas placed side by side, each one eight feet by eight feet. They formed, as I told her, a continuous surface sixty-four feet long. They were held upright in back by two-by-fours, and ran like a fence down the middle of the potato barn. These were the same panels which had shed the paint and tape of what had been my most famous and then most infamous creation, the picture which had graced and then disgraced the lobby of GEFFCo headquarters on Park Avenue: 'Windsor Blue Number Seventeen'...

I had the eight panels purged of every trace of the faithless Sateen Dura-Luxes, and restretched and reprimed. I had them set up in the barn, dazzling white in their restored virginity, just as they had been before I transmuted them into 'Windsor Blue Number Seventeen.'

I explained to my wife that this eccentric project was an exorcism of an unhappy

past, a symbolic repairing of all the damage I had done to myself and others during my brief career as a painter. That was yet another instance, though, of putting into words what could not be put into words: why and how a painting had come to be.

The long and narrow barn, a century old, was as much a part of it as all that white, white, white.

The powerful floodlights dangling from tracks on the ceiling were part of it, pouring megawatts of energy into all that white sizing, making it far whiter than I would have believed could ever be. I had caused those artificial suns to be installed when receiving the commission to create 'Windsor Blue Number Seventeen.'

"What are you going to do with it next?" dear Edith asked.

"It's done," I said.

"Are you going to sign it?" she said.

"That would spoil it," I replied. "A flyspeck would spoil it."

"Does it have a title?" she said.

"Yes," I said, and I gave it a title on the spot, one as long as the title Paul Slazinger had given his book on successful revolutions: 'I Tried and Failed and Cleaned Up Afterwards, so It's Your Turn Now.' ...

"Hold my wake in the barn, Edith," I said, "and when people ask you about all the white, white, white, you tell them that it was your husband's last painting, even though he didn't paint it. And then you tell them what the title is."

But she died first, and only two months after that. Her heart stopped, and down she fell into a flower bed.

"No pain," the doctor said.

At her burial at noon in Green River Cemetery, in a grave only a few yards from those of the other two Musketeers, Jackson Pollock and Terry Kitchen, I had my strongest vision yet of human souls unencumbered, unembarrassed by their unruly meat. There was this rectangular hole in the ground, and standing around it were all these pure and innocent neon tubes.

I was crazy? You bet.

Her wake was in the home of a friend of hers, not mine a mile up the beach from here. The husband did not attend!

Nor did he reenter this house, where he had been so useless and contented and loved without reason for one third of his life and one quarter of the twentieth century.

He went out to the barn, unlocked the sliding doors and turned on the lights. He stared at all that white.

Then he got into his Mercedes and drove to a hardware store in East Hampton, which carried art supplies. I bought everything a painter could ever wish for, save for the ingredient he himself would have to supply: soul, soul, soul...

The servants had quit. I had become an untamed old raccoon again, who spent all his life in and around the potato barn. I kept the sliding doors closed, so that nobody could see what it was that I did in there. I did it for six months!

When I was done, I bought five more locks and hasps for the sliding doors, and snapped them shut...

I unlocked the barn doors and reached inside, my fingers on the light switch. "Scared?" I said.

"Yes," she said.

"So am I," I said.

Remember now: we were standing at the extreme right end of a painting eight feet high and sixty-four feet long. When I turned on the floodlights, we would be seeing the picture compressed by foreshortening to a seeming triangle eight feet high, all right, but only five feet wide. There was no telling from that vantage point what the painting really was—what the painting was all about.

I flicked on the switch.

There was a moment of silence, and then Mrs. Berman gasped in wonderment.

"Stay right where you are," I told her, "and tell me what you think of it."

"I can't come any farther?" she said.

"In a minute," I said, "but first I want to hear you say what it looks like from here."

"A big fence," she said.

"Go on," I said.

"A very big fence, an incredible high and long fence," she said, "every square inch of it encrusted with the most gorgeous jewelry."

"Thank you very much," I said. "And now take my hand and close your eyes. I am going to lead you to the middle, and you can look again."

She closed her eyes, and she followed me as unresistingly as a toy balloon.

When we were in the middle, with thirty-two feet of the painting extending to either side, I told her to open her eyes again.

We were standing on the rim of a beautiful green valley in the springtime. By actual count, there were five thousand, two hundred and nineteen people on the rim with us

or down below. The largest person was the size of a cigarette, and the smallest a flyspeck. There were farmhouses here and there, and the ruins of a medieval watchtower on the rim where we stood. The picture was so realistic that it might have been a photograph.

“Skip’s” Museum (Sirens of Titan)

“This room,” said Rumford. With a limp right hand, he made the magical sign for spiral staircase. “It was one of the few things in life I ever really wanted with all my heart when I was a boy—this little room.”

He nodded at shelves that ran six feet up the window wall. The shelves were beautifully made. Over the shelves was a driftwood plank that had written on it in blue paint: SKIP’S MUSEUM.

Skip’s Museum was a museum of mortal remains--of endoskeletons and exoskeletons--of shells, coral, bone, cartilage, and chiton--of

“Where are we?” said Circe Berman.
“Where I was,” I said, “when the sun came up the day the Second World War ended in Europe.” (287-98)

dottles and orts and residua of souls long gone. Most of the specimens were those that a child--presumably Skip--could find easily on the beaches and in the woods of Newport. Some were obviously expensive presents to a child extraordinarily interested in the science of biology.

Chief among these presents was the complete skeleton of an adult human male.

There was also the empty suit of armor of an armadillo, a stuffed dodo, and the long spiral tusk of a narwhal, playfully labeled by Skip, Unicorn Horn.” (18-19)

Gregory’s Studio (Bluebeard)

Fred led me to the foot of the staircase down which Marilee had tumbled, which would deliver me up to one end of the holy of holies, the studio. It looked dark up there. I was to climb the stairs alone. It was easy to believe that there was a gallows tree dangling a noose over a trap door up there.

So up I went. I stopped at the head of the stairs, and perceived an impossibility: six fireplaces, with a coal fire glowing in the hearth of every one.

Let me explain architecturally what was really going on. Gregory, you see, had bought three typical New York brownstones, each one three windows wide, four floors high, and fifty feet deep, with two fireplaces on each floor. I had supposed that he owned only the townhouse with the oak door and the Gorgon knocker infected with verdigris. So I was unprepared for the vista on the top floor, which seemed to violate all laws of time and space by going on and on and on. Down on the lower floors, including the basement, he had joined up the three houses with doors and archways. On the top floor, through, he had ripped out the dividing walls entirely, from end to end and side to side leaving only those six free-standing fireplaces. (103-04)

The only illumination that first night came from the six coal fires, and from pale zebra stripes on the ceiling. The stripes were light from a streetlamp below—cut to ribbon by nine windows overlooking East Forty-eighth Street.

Where was Dan Gregory? I could not see him at first. He was motionless and silent—and shapeless in a voluminous black caftan, displaying his back to me, and low, hunched over on a camel saddle before a fireplace in the middle, about twenty feet from me. I identified the objects on the mantelpiece above him before I understood where he was. They were the whitest things in the grotto. They were eight human skulls, an octave arranged in order of size, with a child’s at the one end and a great-grandfather’s at the other—a marimba for cannibals.

There was a kind of music up there, a tedious fugue for pots and pans deployed under a leaking skylight to the right of Gregory. The skylight was under a blanket of melting snow. (104, Bluebeard)

“Ker-plunk.” Silence. “Plink-pank.” Silence. “Ploop.” Silence. That was how the song of the skylight went as my gaze probed Dan Gregory’s one indubitable masterpiece, that studio—his one work of breathtaking originality.

A simple inventory of the weapons and tools and idols and icons and hats and helmets and ship models and airplane models and stuffed animals, including a crocodile and an upright polar bear, in the masterpiece would be amazing enough. But think of this: there were fifty-two

mirrors of every conceivable period and shape, many of them hung in unexpected places at crazy angles, to multiply even the bewildered observer to infinity. There at the top of the stairs, with Dan Gregory invisible to me, I myself was everywhere!" (105)