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Taking Place: Rhetoric of Abstract Space and Construction of Literary Architectures

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Abstract

Taking Place: Rhetoric of Abstract Space and Construction of Literary Architectures
By Yelizaveta Goldfarb

Taking Place: Rhetoric of Abstract Space and Construction of Literary Architectures studies the nature of abstract space through literary modes of analysis. It argues that fields such as mathematics or philosophy, to which we traditionally turn in order to describe abstract space, merely use limited aspects of space to describe other subjects: ontologies, place relations, or social relations. What the dissertation finds is that literature actually has a privileged access to theory of abstract space since literature points to the provisionality of its "real" space and thus always threatens to peel away its fictionality, to deal with abstract space as an exposure. Abstract space, as explained by architect Tschumi, is "generally accepted as a *cosa mentale*, a sort of all-embracing set." It is difficult to pin down as an object of study since it is omnipresent and cannot be observed at a distance. Because of this difficulty, thinkers have needed to describe abstract space obliquely, and so they have always relied on rhetorical moves and figural representations in order to write about it. These texts range across varied Humanities fields: philosophy, mathematics, literature, cinema, semiotics, and visual art. The dissertation finds that although the terms change by fields, each discipline is interested in the same problem: How are we to place bounds of definition on a category which is by nature unbounded? Rather than approach abstract space by artificially bounding its unbounded shape, which the project argues is the tendency of mathematics and philosophy, this dissertation's approach preserves its manipulating, scattering, disorienting power. Scholarship on architecture and literature tends to neglect the "abstract space" aspect of spatial representation. These works (Kort 2004; De Lange 2008; Purdy 2011; Spurr 2012; Prieto 2013) focus on architecture as social shape-giving, but they do not fundamentally question this commonly accepted shape to spatiality. To remedy this gap, this dissertation keeps focus on the underlying questions of spatiality: abstract space in the forms of empty space, infinity, and virtual space. This dissertation is specifically interested in describing abstract space through architects and artists who set this aim as their goal also (Le Corbusier, Mies, Sitte, Vertov, Tarkovsky, Chekhov, Whitman, Kafka, Baudelaire, Nabokov). The narrative trajectory through these architects and artists moves from attempts to configure space to attempts to represent space to attempts to master space. In this way, the dissertation uses manageable aspects of abstract space in order to piece together a more comprehensive understanding of the effects, movements, and power of abstract space that does justice to its disorienting and slippery qualities.

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I INTRODUCTION

In his *Architecture and Disjunction* (1996), Bernard Tschumi distinguishes between the concept of space and the experience of space. Though they may appear to coincide, we will come to the realization, along a different path than Tschumi's, that the concept of space (abstract space) only coincides with the experience of space ("real" space) within carefully constructed parameters. We will find these parameters in certain literary architectures, and in examining them, we will uncover some of the behaviors of abstract space, which is a slippery, unobservable entity by its very nature. Though architects have struggled to merge theory and praxis, we will see that *literature* serves as a venue to create experiences of space that *do* coincide with the concept of space, and we will see that certain architects take advantage of this literary space, a "paper space".

Tschumi laments his early, naïve work when he believed that an idealized architecture could determine the events which took place within it, even to the point of denying entrance to unwelcome political events, such as fascism. As he gained experience, Tschumi recognized the practical impossibility of such an architectural power. And he spent his career teasing out the paradox between architectural concept and "real space": "the impossibility of questioning the nature of space and at the same time making or experiencing real space."[1]

Though it would seem to be proper to the realm of philosophy, this questioning of the nature of space is central to many architects' theoretical work, even as many suffer this same Tschumian problem of merging theory with design. Philosophy is no better at

[1] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1996), p. 47.

dealing with abstract space, even though it is often thought to be the privileged field for examining the abstract and the immaterial. Too often, a sense of abstract space is laid out briefly at the start of a philosophical text as a springboard for more seemingly nuanced philosophies, like investigations of temporality.

Though this dissertation focuses on architectural, literary, and cinematic accounts of space, several founding spatial philosophies should be addressed. Descartes and Leibniz considered "ideal" space to be absolutely full, a compendium of matter that is differentially ordered. But ultimately Descartes used this model to describe the ordering of being and Leibniz used this model to rid his ontology of space. Locke found "pure Space" to have no dimensions and no preordained constituency, an empty infinity. But he ultimately used this model to describe the function of objects within it. These various philosophies of abstract space are generated as starting points, as ground, for a subsequently fleshed understanding of our world. So Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Nature*, must lay out a clean notion of abstract space – it is pure externality, absolutely continuous and unmediated – in order to then complicate it with notions of duration, motion, "becoming", and matter.[2]

The problem with such philosophical approaches to abstract space is that they treat abstract space as an *a priori* category that remains homogenously static, a stability that can be built upon, covered over, or removed entirely without repercussions. As we will see, this is how certain urban planners and architects, such as Haussmann (Ch. 2) and Speer (Ch. 5), misunderstood the nature of abstract space and the potential for its manipulation. When transferring a philosophical model of abstract space to the realm of

[2] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, ed. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 28.

real manipulation, the philosophy is proven faulty. Here, again, we are faced with the Tschumian problem of dealing with the nature of space simultaneous with its building. Much contemporary scholarship on abstract space continues with the philosophical trend of using limited aspects of space to describe other subjects: ontologies, place relations, or social relations.[3] But this dissertation identifies several scholars' models that are more attentive to the difficulties and *aporias* of describing abstract space: Sitte's spatial instinct, Aristotle's spiraling infinity, Stepun's Russian horizon, Lefebvre's *agora*, and Derrida's abyss. These philosophical models unpack the problems of defining abstract space while maintaining the disorientation and unreadability of its slippery conception.

This dissertation argues that in order for abstract space to be better understood, the approach of its representation must be changed. If the misguided philosophical approach to abstract space is to homogenize it and strip it of its disorienting power, then a more appropriate approach preserves its manipulating, scattering power. Rather than approach abstract space by artificially bounding its unbounded shape, which we will see is a tendency of mathematics, this dissertation's approach begins with its physiological and psychological effects (Ch. 2) and its movements (Ch. 3) in order to better understand its iterative construction (Ch. 4) and its endless cycles (Ch. 5). Each model of representation presented here attempts primarily to preserve the disorientation of abstract space through the narrativization of architectures. These "literary architectures" make buildings, models of representation, that question the ways in which we imagine abstract space. Given that abstract space is a slippery subject which cannot be viewed from the

[3] As we will see in Kort, De Lange, Purdy, Spurr, and Prieto.

outside, this narrativized mode of analysis studies abstract space obliquely, through architectures that expose the nature of abstract space.

In a way, this narrativization is an *architectural* model for studying a subject, as architects tend to use narratives to construct a blueprint that inscribes an experience of space. In an architect's design process, he has a primary relationship to a relative, habitualized, dynamic "real" space that is then *narrativized* through an imaginary "paper space." This view of the architectural process places the architect on high as the model of narrative construction, more attuned to dynamism than philosophers, who tend to ground themselves on static systems. An architect constructs primarily out of anthropological lines of existence: traffic, usage, schedules, routines, functions, purposes, social rituals, global strategies. And his theoretical paper building emerges as an intersection of these anthropological lines.

Philippe Hamon rightly argues that "architects are quick to present themselves as 'story-men'" and that "all great architects were prolific writers" because narrativity is of "primordial importance"[4] in architecture. The architect's site of manipulation is paper, and he requires both abstract space and "real" space in order to narrativize place. Tschumi described this theoretical "paper space" as an imaginary space of fragments – words and drawings – that are necessarily inadequate to "real" space. The architect, then, becomes an interstitial figure who is contiguous with both the abstract and the real in order to construct concretized narrative. We will see that these "paper spaces" recognize the difficulty of describing abstract space. But rather than cover over this difficult figure,

[4] Phillipe Hamon, *Expositions: Literature and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century France*, trans. by Katia Sainson-Frank and Maguire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 30.

these architectural examples play with the disorder of abstract space that is generally so troublesome to "real" architectures.

Essential to the appropriate representation of abstract space is the recognition that abstract space is the agent of disorientation. The imaginary space of paper fragments that cannot be integrated into a clearly readable "real" space confirms this disorientation in form. But the disorientation of abstract space also exists on the level of movement, which is essential to architecture and narrative as well. In order for a space to be mappable and readable, it must encourage ordered movement. It must establish unique markers that will describe the path and speed of movement. But in abstract space, no markers exist, or, if they do, they are iterated to such a point that they become meaningless and tautological. The disorientation that is essential to the agency of abstract space, then, comes from its imposition of *immobility*: abstract space does not move itself from place to place and also it *inhibits* any progressive movement by its emptiness. It is for this reason that narrative models of abstract space have presented empty space, a common representation of abstract space, as the perfect prison: borderless and unnavigable. This prison emptiness is simultaneously transparent and endlessly opaque.[5]

Tschumi found it impossible for architecture to stand outside of space (to question it) and to experience space at the same time. In line with this *aporia*, this dissertation is interested in "literary architectures," which find the freedom through certain narrative manipulations to experience space while questioning the nature and representation of this space. The dissertation argues for the privileged perspective of narrative, which

[5] Anthony Vidler argues that the model of pure transparency that was popularized as socio-political control in modernism was a reaction to the fear of the dark of Enlightenment. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992).

understands abstract space through carefully designed constructions. For the sake of this dissertation, the term "literary architectures" will be used to identify specific kinds of architectures in narratives that work analogously to architecture: they are built in order to constrict and encourage the narrative in desired and planned directions.

These literary architectures do not simply stand as static backdrops or stages upon which narratives play out. Rather, they participate in the narrative's trajectory, much as "real" architecture is informed by anticipated movement, traffic, and modes of living. The most narratively-oriented architects, the self-proclaimed "story-men", create paper buildings that are designed to control and constrain their users. As users walk through these buildings, their narrative complex has already been designed. These buildings control passage, create obstacles and partitions, manage openings, and filter windows onto other worlds. In the same way, literary architectures are designed by writers as a system of constraints that will determine the course of narrative trajectory, both diegetically and non-diegetically.

As a complex of constraints, literary architectures run the risk of impracticality. This is not say that they run counter to the architectural mode; many theoretical architects' work is impractical and blueprints are unbuildable. An impractical literary architecture tends to look like an architecture in flux, a living building. We will see examples of this in Kafka (Ch. 2), whose work functions by narrative and formal iterative obstacles, in Vertov's *One Sixth Part of the World* (Ch. 4), which creates impossible virtual space by the technique of folding "real" spaces, and in Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* (Ch. 5), in which a limestone castle-prison is in perpetual disintegration and reconstitution.

We will also examine "practical" literary architectures, narrative buildings whose functions could be realized as "real" buildings. Again, the "practicality" of these literary architectures does not suggest that they function as a backdrop or stage for narrative to unfold. Their function is still bound up in a system of constraints, so that the proscenium frame of Chekhov's *The Seagull* (Ch. 3) works to structure the entire narrative and its form; the *tableaux vivants* and superimposed places of Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* (Ch. 3) plan the pacing and direction of the narrative gaze; Baudelaire's streets and rooftops (Ch. 2) constrict and release the traffic of experience; and Whitman's iterative photographic detail and pre-cinematic technologies (Ch. 4) train narrative focus.

Both of these impractical and practical literary architectures are structures that manipulate, seduce, and trap their users, both characters and readers. Literary architectures work doubly to narrate their character's movement and their readers' walk-through. In the same way that a building is defined as imposed order (*arche*) upon the disorientation of abstract space, literary architectures *give orders* to their diegetic and non-diegetic users. Through these orders, literary architectures make progress in understanding abstract space by enforcing the experience of its expansive immobility and disorientation in a variety of blueprints.

Scholarship which connects architecture with literature generally speaks to the architectural tropes taken on by literature or the appearance of architecture within literature. In this linking, abstract space is rarely addressed. This scholarship tends to map one field historically onto the other: literary trends inform the contemporary architect's inspiration or architectural trends arise in the contemporary literary imagery. In these accounts, literature stands as a medium which adopts structures in order to metaphorize

and to bring shape to societies, discourses, and identities. In the last decade, a handful of scholarship has been published on the relationship between architecture and literature. Wesley A. Kort's *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (2004)[6] addresses place-relations through the lens of literary texts, ultimately arguing that society is determined by particular engagements with constructed places. De Lange's *Literary Landscapes: from Modernism to Postcolonialism* (2008)[7] identifies narrative innovations resultant from crises of place. David Purdy's *On the Ruins of Babel* (2011)[8] identifies architectural analogies in literature as a means of explaining modes of thought or architectonics of discourse. David Spurr's *Architecture and Modern Literature* (2012)[9] links modernist literary tropes with their contemporary architectural types. Eric Prieto's *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (2013)[10] approaches literature as one of many representations of place that effect contemporary geographical identities.

These works focus on architecture as social shape-giving, but they do not fundamentally question this commonly accepted shape to spatiality. To remedy this gap, this dissertation keeps focus on the underlying questions of spatiality: abstract space in the forms of empty space, infinity, and virtual space. This dissertation is specifically interested in describing abstract space through architects and artists who set this aim as their goal also. The first part sets up the possibilities of interacting with abstract space through two explorations: agoraphobia in European modernism (Ch. 2) and the aesthetics

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[6] Wesley A. Kort, *Place and Space in Modern Fiction* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004).
[7] Attie De Lange, *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[8] Daniel L Purdy, *On the Ruins of Babel: Architectural Metaphor in German Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).
[9] David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2012).
[10] Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

of the frame in theater, art, and cinema (Ch. 3). The second part examines two treatments of spatial manipulation: creation of "virtual" spaces in early cinema and pre-cinematic technologies (Ch. 4) and political space in 1930s monumentalism (Ch. 5). This organizational trajectory moves from attempts to configure space to attempts to represent space to attempts to master space.

In Chapter Two, "Agoraphobia and Architectural Cures," we see the physiological and psychological problems of exposing abstract space and the immobility inscribed by it. This chapter acknowledges the inadequacy of describing abstract space by covering over it, thus misreading and misunderstanding it. Such seemingly theoretical misunderstanding has very "real" effects in the form of agoraphobia. The literary architectures of Baudelaire's Paris and Kafka's Prague show more appropriate treatments of urban planning that stay true to abstract space's essential immobility and address the risk and cure of agoraphobic effects.

We see more examples of misreading abstract space in Chapter Three, "Framing Infinity," which finds fault with mathematical and philosophical treatments of infinity. The chapter identifies Aristotle's counter-metaphysical representation of an endlessly uncoiling infinity as a more appropriate mode of describing abstract space. Chekhov's proscenium frame and Tarkovsky's superimpositions and *tableaux vivants* follow the Aristotelian model and appropriately represent the immobility of abstract space.

Chapter Four, "Folding Space," shifts from the infinity aspect of abstract space towards the virtual aspect. Here, the creation of "virtual space" in Vertov and Whitman helps us to understand the iterative folding of abstract space. In examining virtual space,

we can better conceptualize that the seeming contradiction of abstract space's iterative fullness and raw emptiness is reconciled.

The endless iteration essential to abstract space can be mistakenly modelled in the perpetual modification of architecture, and Chapter Five, "Decomposition and Ruin Lust," returns to such a misreading. Like the various modernist restructurings of urban plans of Chapter Two, Speer's monumentalism was based on the misguided belief that modeling the *effects* of abstract space iteration will instill the *power* of abstract space. In Nabokov's critique of this political tactic, we see that the degeneration of material which describes this ruin monumentalism ultimately shows abstract space to be unwieldable.

We can separate the treatments of abstract space in this dissertation into two categories: appropriate representations and misrepresentations. Both categories are imperfect in that they are mere covers meant to give the appearance of functioning like abstract space. But appropriate representations try to do justice to abstract space's slipperiness whereas misrepresentations treat abstract space as masterable and wieldable. By looking at various forms of "doing justice", such as Kafka's, Chekhov's, Tarkovsky's, Whitman's, and Nabokov's, we can learn about how abstract space looks and functions at a fictional distance in place of the impossible "real" distance from which to observe abstract space. This is how we question the nature of abstract space.

Misrepresentations of abstract space, such as Haussmann's and Speer's, tweak and degenerate space to such a point that the power of abstract space is exposed. For Haussmann, the misrepresentation through Euclidean geometry left physiological and psychological effects. For Speer, the assumption that the power of abstract space can be replicated and wielded exposed the unthinkable scale of abstract space. Through both of

these misrepresentations, we can see how abstract space underlies all forms of place relations and socio-political reform.

Throughout the dissertation, we will work with associations of abstract space by several of its more approachable and established aspects: empty space, infinity, virtual space, and immortality. We begin in Chapter Two with associations of "empty space": unknowable, disorienting, and unnavigable. In Chapter Three, we will look at "infinity" as another aspect of abstract space that has associations of natural space: comprehensible and approachable. In Chapter Four, we will look at "virtual space" as an aspect of abstract space that has associations of artificiality, immateriality, and the imaginary. And we will end in Chapter Five with the association of immortality: abstract space's endless temporality. Through these more manageable aspects of abstract space, we will piece together a more holistic understanding of the effects, movements, and power of abstract space.

II Agoraphobia and Architectural Cures

"the problem with space isn't just space; it is the fact that there are other people in it – other people who are creating it, determining it, composing it . . . is it surprising then, that space could seem a bit hostile?"[1]

We begin with an example of how abstract space, seemingly contained within the mind, can have debilitating physiological effects. In this account of agoraphobia, drawn heavily from architect Camillo Sitte's call for a reversal of modernist urban planning, spatial phobias are induced by disturbances in spatial intuition. Greek architecture, as seen in the *agora*, had been attuned to an innate appreciation for abstract space that dictated the construction of social spaces of interaction. Though Sitte does not explain this innate aesthetic sense beyond associating it with a child's intuition of space and navigation, he does expose the risk in disturbing this intuitive architectural balance, a sort of harboring cover that protects us from the power of abstract space. Once this cover is disturbed, as we will see in modernist urban plans, the exposure of abstract space instills agoraphobia whereby sufferers claim to be in contact with the void in commonplace social spaces like the street, square, and garden.

In efforts to reshape cities according to the efficiency of modernity, modern urban planners restructured many European cities, eradicating monuments, streets, and housing in the process. Most famously, Baron Georges-Eugéne Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris, starting in 1854, created a central density to its interior life by housing rising populations

[1] Kathleen M Kirby, *Indifferent Boundaries: Spatial Concepts of Human Subjectivity* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1996), p. 99.

in compressed spaces while creating an arterial plentitude to its external life by widening *allées* and creating rectilinear traffic. Intimate private gardens were replaced by geometric, bare public gardens which were largely filled with dust pollution and street noises.[2] Nature suffered within the city, either by way of pollution or the increasingly popular practice of geometric topiary. As a result of these external urban changes, modern inhabitants developed spatial phobias. Claustrophobia's brother agoraphobia was widely developed as a result of urban restructuring. And though there were calls, most notably by Viennese architect Camillo Sitte, for these modernist restructurings to cease or to return to classic urban planning, modern architects tended to ignore these possibilities in favor of experimenting with untested, riskier cures.

This chapter identifies the literary manifestation of agoraphobia in Baudelaire's Paris and the literary resistance to agoraphobia in Kafka's Prague and links these expressions to the emergence of a troubled modernist desire for agoraphobic relief in nature. Scholarship on Baudelaire and Kafka is too broad to be addressed comprehensively in this chapter. Instead, the chapter focuses on these writers' unique sensitivity to their changing cityscapes and willingness to pose architectural solutions to these changes. Though recent scholarship on Kafka has addressed his interest in architecture, most notably Ayad B. Rahmani's *Kafka's Architectures* (2014), the subject of agoraphobia has not been addressed in Baudelaire or Kafka. This chapter shows not only that Baudelaire's and Kafka's work was inflected by their changing cityscape, but

[2] This is not to say that modern urban planning established the first rectilinear gardens. As we will see later in the chapter, the tradition of *jardin à la française*, as seen in Versailles, were repurposed in modern urban planning. But this style had been criticized for its sterility and unwelcoming appearance since its institution.

also that they constructed their own solutions to emerging agoraphobia in the form of literary architectures.

Baudelaire's poetry often draws inspiration from the power of modern traffic and the anonymity allowed by speedy crowds. But he also felt a nostalgia for an era when Parisian streets belonged to the people, slow-moving individuals who took the time to stop, linger, and immerse themselves in architecture. In his "The Salon of 1859", Baudelaire laments the loss of sublime architectural and natural elements of Romantic landscape paintings. These modes of art took "their nourishment from ruins", and modern artists, with the increase in city dwelling, will never "feel a longing for those great lakes, representing immobility in despair: for immense mountains, staircases from our planet to the skies…; for castle keeps…; for crenellated abbeys, reflected in gloomy pools; for gigantic bridges, towering Ninevite constructions, haunts of dizziness."[3] Engagement with an ancient mode of living had been lost in the traffic-oriented, mobility-obsessed modern age. In his poetry, Baudelaire finds ways to reinstall this nostalgia into the speed of Haussmanian Paris. But at the same time, we will see him jab at the imposed efficiency of this new modern Paris. His architectural figures grow increasingly taller and purposefully ascend to no particular zenith, as though the Haussman renovations, which revere goal-driven movement, are also leading nowhere in particular.

Though he speaks to the shortage of immobile and unpurposeful urban experiences, Baudelaire's memory of a pre-Haussmanian Paris seems to be enough to sustain a classic aesthetic intuition in his poems. In "The Swan", he emphasizes the

[3] Charles Baudelaire, *Art in Paris, 1845-1862*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Publishers, 1965), pp. 201–2.

instability of modern cities: "(the form a city takes / More quickly shifts, alas, than does the mortal heart)."[4] But the narrator's memory is enough to revive an ancient urban landscape: "Paris may change, but in my melancholy mood / Nothing has budged! New palaces, blocks, scaffoldings, / Old neighborhoods, are allegorical for me, / And my dear memories are heavier than stone." Here, mood and psychology have the power to rebuild so powerfully that the narrator feels himself an "exiled soul" within his own city. But he does not understand his luck in such ability to construct with the imagination. For the large majority of Parisians after Haussman's renovations, the city had become a frightening, anxiety-inducing space, one in which a weaker mind than Baudelaire's or his narrator's would perish under the weight of agoraphobia symptoms.

This common modern man, part of the anonymous crowd, is radically changed in his relationship with space: he clears space of obstacles that slow his goals; he gives up more and more places designed for social interaction; and he relies on the new rectilinear plans as navigational tools to replace spatial intuition. In examining literary architectures of these effects and agoraphobic affects, we will be looking at the readability and unreadability of cities. On the one hand, we are looking at urban plans and maps as "readable": Haussman's plans, for example, were meant to be perfectly readable to any foreigner so that one would not need any special skills to navigate the new Paris. On the other hand, we are also thinking about "readability" as the efficiency of narrative progress. For Baudelaire, who emphasizes the remaining unreadability of a city like Paris that was rebuilt to be perfectly readable, and for Kafka, whose works have narrative obstacles that deny ease of reading and interpretation, efficiency of narrative progress is

[4] Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 173.

not necessarily desirable. When these authors recognize agoraphobia, they see in the modern spatial crisis an opportunity to complicate the seeming ease of hypertrophied Cartesianism.

The European struggle with its morphing open urban spaces peaked at the turn of the century, and this struggle was said to have been felt internally by its people in the form of phobia. Agoraphobia, a term established by doctors in Berlin and Vienna in the late 1860s, becomes, by the 1890s, overdiagnosed in Europe to the point of becoming termed a "fashionable" disease. It is also an "architect's" disease, a sort of vertigo on the ground, and it is architects, most notably Sitte, who align the emergence of agoraphobia with the corruption of open spaces and of classic urban proportions. European agoraphobia was alleviated by several scenarios: confines of the home, companionship in public spaces, or the feeling of freedom in open nature. Agoraphobic patients claimed that they felt less anxiety in a large space not surrounded by houses than in a space of the same size in a city. The sublimity of an open, infinite nature was decided to be a sort of cure, though we will see its failure as one.

For architects, the "fashionable" disease of agoraphobia inspired an influx of urban gardens, but it also began the push for architectural openness which would expose open horizons and eradicate inside/outside boundaries – a sort of urban garden without the green. This chapter interrogates these modernist impulses for transparency. If agoraphobia is indeed a symptom of a radical mistreatment of urban proportions, then the transparency dream of a glass city becomes a poor cure for a lost aesthetic and a poor substitute for the desire for green space.

A common misconception about agoraphobia is that it is a fear of crowds. Such a definition relies on one of multiple definitions of *agora*: assembly. But *agora* also identifies the *place* of assembly, and it is modernist architects seeking to understand agoraphobia who pointed to this second meaning as the true instiller of fear.[5] A Greek *agora*, an open square determined by suggested boundary that encourages interaction between citizens, is actually a positively sociable and homey space that would not incite fear. It is when the definitions and proportions of such a space are disturbed by modern urban planning, or when it is eradicated altogether by modernism, that agoraphobia emerges. So the term agoraphobia is a misnomer. It is not so much the assembly of people or the place of assembly that causes fear, but the risk of immobility in a new modernist world that requires speed and increasingly efficient traffic. Agoraphobia is actually an *anti*-agora-phobia, the fear created when the *agora* becomes obsolete and immobility becomes risky.

Etymologically, *agora* is already associated with the process of movement. The proto Indo-European *ag* means "to drive" or "to lead" cattle, the pre-Greek *aga* means "a drive" or "a driven group of people", and the early Greek *agra* is a hunting term that means "catching, seizing, grabbing, taking."[6] None of these terms quite addresses what the *agora* becomes as a democratic space of exchange, oration, and loitering. Within the Greek *agora*, certainly, people are socially corralled, but the *agora* is built specifically

[5] Scholarship on agoraphobia generally falls into two categories: clinical case studies and non-clinical literature. This chapter is more concerned with the second category, which is written largely by scholars of modernity such as Paul Carter, David Trotter, Joyce Davidson, and Anthony Vidler. For this group, agoraphobia is a movement inhibition and an urban estrangement rather than psychic displacement and fear of crowds, as it is largely described by clinicians.

[6] Henry George Liddell and Robert A. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 13.

with the intention of a space that is defined but not bounded. Hegel describes this particular kind of constructed space as a boundary of columns that mark the space without enclosing it as a solid wall or partition would.[7] We will see a more detailed account of this Hegelian *agora* in Chapter Four's discussion of virtual space.

The people within the *agora* are free to move about as they wish, and it is precisely this freedom of movement that allows them to stand still. The *agoraios*, the *agora*-loiterer, becomes a resultant figure, often associated with Socrates,[8] who claims to learn more from the *agora* than he does from nature, and with Aristophanes, who describes the *agoraios* as gossiper.[9] Such figures would feel at home in the most public spaces, encouraging others to idle within the marketplace through their gossip. It is this ability to loiter and slowly wander that is lost in modernist cities as they are rendered linear and encouraged traffic and speed. Immobility in such a city is frightening: you could be run over, pushed and shoved by a crowd, run into an undesirable acquaintance. If you stand still on the modern street or in a modern square, the city will eat you up. For this reason, loitering and meandering are no longer an option, and the possibility of bumping into someone, in all respects, becomes a scary thought. To sit in an open modernist square or garden, one felt as though on display, vulnerable to the gaze of the crowd.

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[7] G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. by T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), II, p. 666.

[8] Socrates arrives late to hear Gorgias because he was compelled "to loiter in the marketplace" (Plato and W. Hamilton, *Gorgias* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 19.) Carter argues that Socrates is suggesting that the marketplace has more to teach than the orators (Paul Carter, *Repressed Space: The Poetics of Agoraphobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), p. 125.)

[9] Aristophanes satirizes the *agoraios* as a "lover of learning, and trees and open country won't teach me anything, whereas men in the town do." This figure learns from loitering, observing, and relaying information within the social *agora* (*Plato's Phaedrus*, trans. by R. Hackforth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952), p. 25.)

Modernist cities are largely described as phobic by scholars. As Anthony Vidler explains of modernist "pathoscapes": "The nineteenth-century city had been understood to harbor dangerous diseases, epidemics, and equally dangerous social movements; it was the breeding ground of all-levelling masses, of frightening crowds, the insanitary home of millions, an asphalt and stone wilderness, the opposite of nature."[10] In addition to the agoraphobia of Westphal, du Saulle, and Sitte described in this chapter, the modernist city also instilled neurasthenia (as seen in George Beard), hysteria (as seen in Charcot), and claustrophobia (as seen in Benjamin Ball). Georg Simmel noted in 1903 that the mental life of urban landscapes was anti-social and driven by *Berührungsangst*, a fear of touching, which is translated in English as "agoraphobia."[11] Following these urban phobias, loitering in public spaces was actively discouraged. As Orwell joking writes in 1933, "Heaven knows what sitting on the pavement would lead to in London – prison, probably."[12] First a fear of the anti-*agora*, then a consequent social fear, agoraphobia changed both the way that modern man lived and also his interior life, his relationship to the external world and its people.

Another etymological relationship to *agora* deals with open landscape: *agros*. Here, the field, the country, and the farm are related to the *agora* in the sense that the *agora* is designed as an unbounded space. But when the *agros* is folded into the *agora*, it becomes a bounded unboundedness. The columns of the *agora*, which Hegel valued so much, allow for an intimacy of space while maintaining a horizon and line of sight. Here,

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[10] Anthony Vidler, 'Agoraphobia: Spatial Estrangement in Simmel and Kracauer', *New German Critique*, 54 (1991), 31–45 (p. 34).
[11] Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, trans. by T. Bottomore and D. Frisby (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 474.
[12] George Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972), p. 154.

as we will also find with the modernist architects' windows and glass houses, the freedom of the *agros*, the countryside, is able to be maintained simultaneous with the sheltering enclosure of the *agora*. This unique construction both insulates and disperses, and its curative effects have to do with this contradiction of space, the questioning of inside/outside distinctions.

It is no wonder that Baudelaire, in describing the Parisian menagerie-Carousel in "The Swan" should reference ancient Greek and Roman texts in order to describe the Haussman changes. To Baudelaire, the changes are both radically exciting and devastating.[13] Emerging from these two aspects, Baudelaire establishes his *flâneur* as a counter-agoraphobic, both reveling in modern changes and a master of ancient immobility. In a way, this *flâneur* figure is the resurfacing of the *agoraios*, but with a modern update. This new *agoraios*, the *flâneur*, "set[s] up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world . . ."[14] Such a troubling of inside/outside distinctions should remind us of the closed/open *agora* space. And insofar as the *agora* has been compared to the wilderness (*agros*), it is only a figure like the *flâneur*, with his spatial instincts intact, who has the tools to navigate the horizon of open nature. These two states of being – the ancient *agoraios* and modern

[13] As Richard Terdiman emphasizes, in 1859, when "The Swan" was written, Paris was still in the midst of Haussmannian reconstruction: "The Carrousel remembered in 'Le Cygne' in 1859 had been abruptly razed in 1852. Indeed, its demolition was the first, the founding act in the transformations that remade Paris under the Second Empire" (Richard Terdiman, *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 119.). Part of the demolition effect was to evict the artists who had loitered at the site of the original Carrousel, "representing themselves as figuratively homeless in Paris" (Terdiman, p. 116.)

[14] Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Publishers, 1970), p. 9.

flâneur – are certainly similar in their appreciation of this troubled boundary. But the *agoraios* was a natural byproduct of his environment, which encouraged such troubled boundary, whereas the *flâneur* was a rare explorer in a gridded, linear cage full of agoraphobics.

In this chapter, literature serves as more than mere example of agoraphobia in a modern city. As agoraphobia scholar Paul Carter has emphasized, "an agoraphobic poetics is not a poetics of agoraphobia."[15] Rather than just characterize the alienating experience of a phobia, Baudelaire provides a history of transition between two urban plans and posits solutions for escape from agoraphobia: relief in an approximation of nature within urban life. In Kafka also, as in Baudelaire, the presentation of agoraphobia serves to explain modern man's contradictory psychic states, fears, and desires, and to champion the confusion and immobility of a largely unmodernized city like Prague. Kafka's literary urban landscapes thrive on architectural and natural obstacles to traffic and speed: walls, mountains, labyrinths. These authors, in the face of emerging agoraphobia, experiment with architecture and landscape in the same way as their contemporary architects and urban planners. Within the unease of a changing urban system and contradictory spatial desires, all sorts of architectural proposals and perspectives become welcome.

Mobility and non-Euclidean space

The psychological effects of agoraphobia were first described in psychiatrist Carl Otto Westphal's 1871 account of three patients who dreaded particular social spaces of Berlin.

[15] Carter, p. 10.

He described a fear of empty space and empty streets that is most acute when there is no immediate boundary to the visual field. Other psychologists conferred this diagnosis of boundary confusion. French psychiatrist Legrand du Saulle in 1876 described a "*peur des espaces,"* a hesitation at a boundary and inability to advance or retreat from this boundary.[16] These boundaries are found at transition points between different sorts of spaces, such as streets and squares, indoors and outdoors, downstairs and upstairs. So agoraphobia, in this sense, can be induced by the recognition of an unnaturally imposed transition point: the edge of pavement, an awkwardly placed staircase, a window that unexpectedly overlooks a limitless expanse. Common boundaries instill a sense of general uncertainty about spatial orientation and dynamics. In this way, as scholar David Trotter points out in *The Uses of Phobia*, literature of agoraphobia introduces an uncertainty about the difference between the trivial and non-trivial. Kafka's literature of agoraphobia makes us uncertain about the difference between geometric definition and natural threshold. The attempt to rationalize and de-trivialize the instinctive architecture of old cities is exactly the impulse that makes geometry seem trivial and disturbs any innate certainty about inside and outside, about inner world and external world. Agoraphobia is the exposure of the trivial as non-trivial and the instilling of the trivial with the weight of uncertainty.

[16] Legrande famously rejects the term "agoraphobia" for being too narrow in scope. His "peur des espaces" encompassed all phobias that related to space, not just fear of streets and squares. Legrande writes of this general anxiety as an experience with the void: the patient "remains unhappily convinced that he could never face this void, this deserted place, or cross the space that is before him . . . No fear without the void, no calm without the appearance of a semblance of protection" *(Etude clinique su la peur des espaces (agoraphobie, des allemands) Névrose émotive* (from Anthony Vidler and Michael S. Roth, 'Psychopathologies of Modern Space: Metropolitan Fear from Agoraphobia to Estrangement', in *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 11–29 (p. 15).)

These elements of non-trivialization, especially when it comes to the uncertainty of society, are common to Kafka's *oeuvre*. Even if we do not recognize all of Kafka's characters as having social phobias, we can identify a general uncertainty about space and moving through space his work. But, in many ways, we can clearly describe the character K of Kafka's *The Castle* as an agoraphobe, though he has never been diagnosed as such by Kafka scholars. We first see him as an anxious outsider within the village outskirts, worried about his state of non-belonging and haunted by feelings of isolation. For K, spatial boundaries are difficult to comprehend: the difference between the cluster of buildings and the Castle tower, the difference between the peasants and the Castle, the Castle as a state of constriction and as a "free and light" space.

His reaction to these difficulties in spatial readability translate to an inner state of panic. We see this panic in K's physical reactions (perspiration, freezing in place), but we also see panic in the way he describes the buildings and spaces around him. The Castle tower, once it is actually revealed, is compared to a "melancholy resident"[17], a hermit who has broken through the spire into a haphazard zigzag shape. The main street, empty and endless, becomes "the clinging street" from which K needs relief, a "rescue" through companionship.[18] This contradictory push and pull of space during K's panic attacks is emblematic of agoraphobic symptoms.

Dr. J Headley Neale, a modern psychologist and sufferer of agoraphobia, described in 1898 the feeling of an agoraphobic panic attack. He felt as though he was falling to Earth and, simultaneously, as though the Earth were coming up towards him to

[17] Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. by Mark Harman (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), p. 8.
[18] Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 11.

crush him.[19] This specific panic attack incited by abstract space is the interaction of two forces, forced geometry and innate aesthetics, which are at odds in their interactions in modernized cities. The body is sandwiched between the push and pull of two sensibilities. We could imagine this dizzying, disorienting panic attack as an experience of vection, the illusion of self-motion by the actual motion of an external object. Most commonly we experience this effect when we sit on an immobile vehicle when a neighboring vehicle moves, making us inaccurately perceive movement in ourselves. When the visual field moves, it gives the illusion that the perceiver is moving while the world stands stationary, even though in actuality, it is happening the other way around.

This disorienting feeling of motion-in-immobility, either in an agoraphobia attack or in a vection, is brought on by a radically new experience of space. We can attribute the agoraphobic panic attack to changes in the urban landscape which brought radically new forms of motion into the otherwise slow-moving arena of pre-Industrial urban life. But another factor in this modernist spatiality which has not been addressed by scholarship is the discovery of non-Euclidean space. The popular effects of this discovery arrived slowly. So even though mathematicians such as Lobachevsky and Gauss discovered non-Euclidean space in the early 19th century, it did not enter popular acceptance until the late 19th century, alongside further work by mathematicians such as Poincaré.[20] But by this point, cities were being restructured according to rectilinear plans, essentially Euclidean grids artificially imposed upon what was increasingly seen to be a non-Euclidean space.

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[19] Neale J. Headley, 'Agoraphobia', *Lancet*, 2 (1898), 1322–23.

[20] For more on the history of non-Euclidean geometry, see Leonard Mlodinow, *Euclid's Window: The Story of Geometry from Parallel Lines to Hyperspace* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Graham Nerlich, *The Shape of Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Non-Euclidean geometry proved that parallel lines *do* intersect and that the shortest distance between points is not a line but a curve. Thus, Poincaré's homologies, Lobachevksy's hyperbolic geometry, and Gauss's geodesics changed the general perception of spatiality. Space ceased to be quite as efficiently readable as Euclidean geometry had made it seem. With Euclidean geometry, each experience of space had consistency; each space was continuous with the next, and so one could assume fluid transition from one space to the next. In small changes of location, Euclidean space seems to hold true. But once the perception of space is de-localized (as in the radical expansion of urban space) or the experience of space is changed radically (as with increased speed of traffic), the Euclidean form is approachable but not attainable. With the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry, it became clear that movement causes distortions.

To see that parallel lines do intersect, one can map a hyperbolic plane to a disc. A hyperbolic plane, unlike a Cartesian grid, recognizes that the shortest path between points is a curve, not a straight line. If we are to recognize the space in which we live as not rectilinear, we are thinking in geodesic and hyperbolic terms. To transform a hyperbolic plane, which might still seem to have local properties of rectilinearity in which one can still draw "parallel" straight lines to a disc, we can see clearly that the Euclidean parallel line postulate does not hold globally. Actually, these "parallel" straight line are geodesics which appear to be straight and parallel only on a local level. Under this transformation, all paths which would be straight lines under Euclidean geometry become semi-circular curves in a more nuanced and global understanding of space (Fig II.I, Fig II.II).

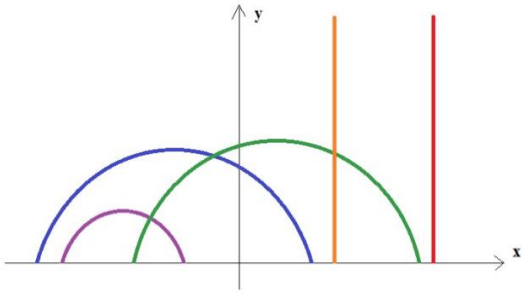

Figure II.I: hyperbolic plane

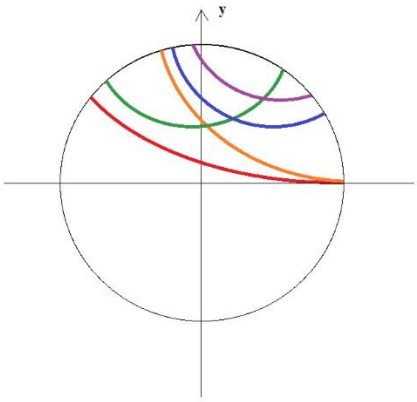

Figure II.II: mapped disc

These are really equivalent geometries, but one is compact and the other is unbounded. To see that the orange and red rays in Fig II.I approach one another is to check in Fig II.II that the orange and red arcs meet at a boundary point. This way, the intangible properties of the unbounded model (Fig II.I) can be visualized (Fig II.II), and, even better, faithfully measured. The formal properties in both models are exactly the same, but their perception is different: local properties are easier to study in the first model and global properties are much clearer in the second model.

The fact that parallel lines in the hyperbolic plane converge to each other is not obvious. But in the disc they converge obviously to the same point on the boundary circle of the disc. This "perspective", provided by adjusting the global description of space, through that function allows us to see this fact. In experiencing space, the moments which confuse human perception and the body, such as vection, are similar to this mathematical translation of "perspective": we view a movement happening somewhere else and translate it back to our own space as though the movement was happening here. We

recognize our mutual spaces as non-continuous and have a visceral response to the suddenly apparent differences in our spatial densities and textures. To move differently within a space is to experience that space within a different spatial model.

Given that non-Euclidean space is *variably* curved, objects will change shape as they move from one region to another (from one curvature to another). Small changes can be withstood by objects, but large changes can be destructive. In Euclidean models of space, parallel lines do not intersect, so we can assume that two objects travelling on parallel paths will maintain a constant, unchanging relationship to one another as they move towards their destination of infinity. But in non-Euclidean models of space we see infinity not as a destination but as the dense, unreachable boundary of a disc (as in Fig II.II). With this, we can understand movement as distortion, unevenly effecting each object as it travels.

To experience vection, then, is to be exposed to the fact that movement in space does not function evenly and perception of space cannot be the same across experience. Kafka's "On the Tram" gives us two spaces: a moving tram on which the narrator stands and the differently moving street on which a woman he is watching waits for the tram. In switching his attention between the moving tram space and the movement of the people on the street, the narrator becomes disoriented. And he is not just momentarily disoriented; the movement of the tram has thrown his whole world into question: "[I] am completely unsure of my footing in this world, in this town, in my family."[21] We might assume that he wants to defend his social position or indecisiveness in his world, but he is

[21] Franz Kafka, *The Complete Stories*, trans. by Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 2012), p. 388.

also unable to defend his physical position in this world. Under the effects of vection, he knows not if he is moving or standing still, if he is being "carried along by the tram" or standing immobile with the woman whose ear has captured his attention.

Kafka's short stories often give us a sense of impossible relative movement. In these instances, movement is only potential; there is an illusion movement given in the way that Kafka switches between past and present tenses. But also, the movement through non-Euclidean space does not function as we would expect in Euclidean space. We might expect in "The Next Village" that the "young man" could make a trip to the next village, a set distance, in a set amount of reasonable time. But in non-Euclidean space, which condenses space near boundaries and infinities such that movement to destinations becomes progressively more difficult as one approaches them, the distance to the next village is not set and countable.

Bergson describes this sensation by changing spatial planes as a "kaleidoscope" of space. In these moments, both "real" and "apparent" movement lie on the same plane, creating "a moving continuity . . . in which everything changes and yet remains."[22] For Kafka's narrator, the appearance of world homogeneity makes him feel as though he should be able to defend the changes which he feels, as though there is a stable point to which he should be referencing his motion. But in a variable, relative model of space, in non-Euclidean space, which the narrator has stumbled upon, no place will give him the relief of stability.

[22] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p. 197.

For us to delve into the discovery of non-Euclidean geometry and its effect on the perception of space is not to argue that common modern man (or Kafka) was educated in topology. He likely did not have a sense of *why* his changing urban landscape was causing distortions in his vision and compression in his body when he stepped into the disorientingly linear streets. But he was still surrounded by the effects of these discoveries in modern aesthetics that were very much informed by mathematical discoveries, culminating in the Cubism, Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism, and De Stijl movements.

The real crisis in spatial experience arose specifically in urban landscapes that had artificially imposed the Euclidean postulates, and it is the sudden contradiction of geometries that would inflict a sharp reaction like agoraphobia. It is almost as if classic urban proporations, as defended by Sitte, allowed for the true qualities of space to be forgotten under the persistence of narrow, localized experience of space. But with the widening of *allées*, the increased speed of motion, and imposition of rectilinear "infinite" lines of perspective, modern urban planning exposed the contradiction of its Euclidean plan in non-Euclidean space. To erase those spaces which allowed for immobility forced modern man to experience space differently and thrust him into this dizzying "kaleidoscope" of space.

Kafka's spatial obstacles

Though psychologists of the 1880s and 1890s noted that panic attacks were incited by empty *social* spaces, meaning empty spaces which should not actually be empty, they still held the environment responsible for agoraphobia. But natural emptiness did not

incite agoraphobia. In fact, empty natural landscape was thought to be a *cure* for agoraphobia. The architects who went about modernizing European cities created a unique social emptiness, a sort of ghost town effect, that created a boundary crisis.

This boundary crisis is dependent on vision, and insofar as the modern city has been described as "increasingly the city of the eye"[23], we can see why this modern moment forced the emergence of the boundary crisis. With the hyptertrophied Cartesian plan came the idealization of Cartesian vision: restricted and distanced. We will see more on critiques of this Cartesian vision in the following chapters. In Chapter Three, we will see how Lyotard describes vision as non-Euclidean and, thus, incompatible with classical painting perspectives. In Chapter Four, we will see how early cinema troubles Cartesian subjectivity through new constructions of vision. In Chapter Five, we will see a move away from visual experience of architecture to a Vitruvian corporeal experience of architecture.

From the modern, visually-determined boundary crisis, it is *sight* that induces a feeling of anxiety in agoraphobes.[24] Indeed, until K *sees* (or tries to see) the Castle, he does not experience anxiety, only minor disorientations and localized blankness. Kafka initially introduces the Castle's topography to us as an empty blankness – fog and darkness obscure the Castle hill, and it is described as a "seeming emptiness." This empty, uncluttered space is a land surveyor's dream, and K's description of empty blankness may be a mere desire for a simple job or for full topographic possibility. But K's problem of seeing what is right in front of him induces some anxiety from the start.

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[23] Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2005), p. 29.
[24] Théodule Ribot, *The Psychology of Emotions* (London: Walter Scott, 1897).

As an agoraphobe, K worries about others' "normal" experience of space; he is aware of the ease of others' non-agoraphobic experience of their environment and he is anxious about his abnormal experience. K does not notice the telephone under which he sleeps, and its discovery by common knowledge makes K feel as though the people around him are "about to jump on him." He "crawl[s] all the way under the blanket to escape at least the first assault."[25] He retreats to a domestic space to escape the anxiety of public sociality. When he finds that the terrifyingly empty main street is actually filled with travelers, who navigate it much more freely and quickly than K, he is struck by his outsiderness and isolation: "'Cause for a slight attack of despair,' was the thought that came to him."[26]

K works to make unreadable space readable. As a land surveyor, his job is to create simple, crisp geometry even in those spaces that cannot be reduced to straight lines and square plots. In this way, K is the modern man who comes to reformulate an old city and faces fierce resistance to modernity from the old city's inhabitants. Though Kafka scholars have made no mention of this connection, it is probable that K is modeled after the architect Alfred Hartig, who irreparably modified Prague's Old Town in the late 19th century, or the Slovenian architect Jože Plečnik, who worked on restructuring the Prague Castle from 1920 to 1935, or a combination of both historical figures.

Plečnik's changes to the Castle were informed by larger considerations of history, urban implications, and regionality. But he received resistance from the Czech community for his modernist adjustments, seen most sharply in his landscape design of

[25] Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 4.
[26] Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 14.

the new Paradise Garden (1924-1925), and for his outsider status as Slovenian-born and Viennese-educated. Locals called him a "barbarian." Though Kafka wrote *The Castle* in 1926, long before the Prague Castle restructuring was over, he was perhaps anticipating the strength of the Prague people's will to preserve their monuments and streets. The Society of Friends of Old Prague wrote a complaint in 1935 that forced Plečnik to resign: "We are now allowing a foreign architect, using a foreign style, and with neither love nor sensitivity for our historical monuments, to do what the former hostile government did not do. The women of the Czech Republic beg of you: Save our Castle."[27]

The conflation of the two forces – the need to modernize and the resistance of the townspeople – create a strange environment, unreadable to K's modernist sensibilities and inducing of agoraphobia within such a mind. Kafka wrote *The Castle* shortly after becoming enthralled with architectural practice, and he was aware of contemporary debates on preserving empty spaces within modern cities and the changing inside/outside boundaries of buildings. He attended a 1909 talk by Czech-born architect Adolf Loos on "Ornament and Crime", which denounced the use of ornament in modern aesthetics. Loos argued that the progress of modern man is marked by the elimination of ornament from objects, clothing, and buildings, and that ornamentation is appropriate only for "primitive" or "barbaric" cultures. Like Le Corbusier, Loos identifies the social and

[27] *Za starou Prahu, Vestnik pro ochranu pamatek* 19, nos. ¾ (1935), quoted by Vladimir Slapeta, 'Jože Plečnik and Prague', in *Jože Plečnik, Architect: 1872-1957*, ed. by François Burkhardt, Claude Eveno, and Podrecca, trans. by Carol Volk (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), p. 92. For more on Plečnik, see Caroline Constant, 'A Landscape "Fit for a Democracy": Jože Plečnik at Prague Castle', in *The Modern Architectural Landscape*, ed. by Caroline Constant (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Steven Mansbach, Therese O'Malley and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, 'Making the Past Modern: Jože Plečnik's Central European Landscapes in Prague and Ljubljana', in *Modernism and Landscape Architecture, 1890-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

ethical progression of man by his aesthetics: rectilinear and rational modern thinking in opposition to dissymmetric, zigzagged, and ornamented primitive thinking.

Though Kafka writes about his attendance to this Loos talk, it is unclear how much this particular kind of modernist minimalism effected his literary architectures. Certainly these minimalist, unornamented aesthetics are in line with the form of Kafka's writing – his compact aphorisms and dense stories –, but the architecture in his works denies efficacy of material. It puts up obstacles, stymying traffic, linear paths, and quick routes. We can see this effect most clearly in Kafka's walls of "The Great Wall of China" and "An Imperial Message", where the intended destination is postponed indefinitely by obstacles to be crossed and circumvented. Kafka's works are littered with a nostalgia for spatial obstacles: winding streets, intimate courtyards, labyrinthine pathways. These architectures serve as examples of the sorts of structures whose tearing down imposed agoraphobia. In maintaining such old remnants within an otherwise formally modernist aesthetic, Kafka maintains his Prague Castle and a strong Czech resistance to the modernization of old European cities. Transparency and long *allée* horizons do not fit in Kafka's work as appropriate cures to agoraphobia. In fact, the image of the endless *allée*, often represented as an endless hallway like in *Amerika*,[28] is a terrifying figure that induces panic. Kafka's works torture modern man's agoraphobia as a way of glorifying the old urban plans, which the agoraphobe can no longer navigate.

Architect Sitte was most fierce in his resistance to the de-aestheticization of cities by modernism, and, incidentally, was the first writer to posit a reason for *why* modern urban design would cause the newly established anxiety of agoraphobia. In 1889, Sitte

[28] Franz Kafka, *Amerika*, trans. by Will Muir and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), p. 75.

writes *City Planning According to Artistic Principle* in order to challenge the modern fashion of perfect geometry: parallel lines, squared plazas, and evenly spaced urban elements. This new modern geometry actually runs counter to classical proportions, and Sitte draws on several classical architects and artists, such as Vitruvius and Michelangelo, in order to prove a connection between innate aesthetic sense and classical art. What is interesting to Kafka's work, in particular, is Sitte's insistence that the new gridded structure has not only interrupted the modern man's "innate, instinctive aesthetic sense"[29], but also that modern urban changes have been internalized in modern man as spatial phobia. In cutting up empty spaces and disrupting natural lines of traffic and communication, modern urban changes create a sense of "disunity" in place of "harmony"[30], even as classical proportions relied on dissymmetry and contradiction and modern geometry relied on perfect symmetries and homogeny.

Sitte argued that modern city planning had disrupted two major elements of ancient practice: (1) it misappropriated empty space; and (2) it eradicated the theatrical illusion of deep space. Whereas ancient cities revered the open space of plazas, unhampered by fountains and sculptures, modern additions place these decorative elements right in the middle of previously empty plazas and squares. Sitte argues that we can see the "innate, instinctive aesthetic sense" for open space in children's play in snow and placement of snowmen. Children will naturally shape roads and paths in the snow according to lines of traffic, use these paths to create their snowmen, but then place the snowmen to the side of the remaining clean patches of undisturbed snow. These islands

[29] Camillo Sitte, *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*, trans. by George R Collins and Christiane Crasemann Collins (London: Phaidon Publishers, 1965), p. 20.
[30] Sitte, p. 4.

of snow are analogous to the ancient empty plazas, flanked by snowmen sculptures and fountains, respectively. It is only modern man, obsessed with grid systems, who would think to impose evenly distributed parallel lines in such snow play, then place snowmen in the dead center of snow islands for easy display.

A supporter of modern urban plans, architect Le Corbusier agreed with Sitte insofar as old European cities are designed by a series of adaptations according to traffic and need. Original huts, then houses, then plazas and monuments are placed alongside curvilinear roads of traffic. But Corbusier does not privilege this mode of building, calling it "The Pack-Donkey's Way" of existence. The sign of human experience, he argues, is the use of perfect geometry towards a goal:

> Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going; he has made up his mind to reach some particular place and he goes straight to it. The pack-donkey meanders along, meditates a little in his scatter-brained and distracted fashion, he zigzags in order to avoid the larger stones, or to ease the climb, or to gain a little shade; he takes the line of least resistance. But man governs his feelings by reason; he keeps his feelings and his instincts in check, subordinating them to the aim he has in view. He rules the brute creation by his intelligence. [31]

This Cartesian mode of construction is in favor of the gridded system which encourages movement and resists any "meandering" or, much more horrible, halting.[32] In such

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[31] Le Corbusier, *The City of To-Morrow and Its Planning*, trans. by Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), p. 10.

[32] Descartes writes in a similar way when describing how to find one's way out of the woods: one must walk in a straight line, no matter the obstacles, in order to find oneself elsewhere, beyond the wood. Any curvature in this path is risky, as it might bring one back into the wood. (René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*, trans. by Desmond M. Clarke (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 20.) Of course, Descartes is using this woods analogy as a way to describe a perfect urban planning, one which ideally would not be based on adaptation of previous structures, but would be completely original, designed by a single architect. Le Corbusier had a similar dream, once encouraging WWII's destruction for the possibility of having empty spaces in Europe on which to build a new city completely from scratch: the architect's dream, he wrote.

positive accounts of modern cities, the curve is the enemy: it is "ruinous, difficult and dangerous; it is a paralyzing thing."[33] Not simply an obstacle to traffic, the curve is *feared* in these accounts. We can read a tangible horror in accounts of regressive, imperfect urban layouts which pause and confuse traffic, encourage slowness and conversation, and create desire for slowness.

This agoraphobia is not so simple to identify with response to a particular cityscape. On the one hand, Sitte argues, agoraphobia is created by the modernization, the linearization of cities. Within the modern city, modern man turns agoraphobic. In this transition to modern planning, the inhabitant undergoes a radical phenomenological change. Sitte calls this change a loss: the eradication of an innate sense of aesthetics and balance. Le Corbusier agrees with Sitte's diagnosis, but champions this change as the perfection of human nature, the achievement of goals with rational efficacy. On the other hand, agoraphobia instills a fearful desire for the old city in modern man, and his agoraphobia is pointed towards a deep nostalgia for the old city. In his modernization, he also loses his innate sense of direction. The modern city is easily readable and is friendly to both the spatially illiterate and the foreigner. Modern man loses his sixth sense of navigation, both aesthetically and practically.

The Castle presents both sides of this agoraphobia. K is a modern man thrown into an old city. His agoraphobia had been instilled by his experience in modern cities, and he is frustrated by the old city's urban plan. But his agoraphobia is exacerbated further by his desire to read the old city, a skill which he has lost in his modernization. He

[33] Le Corbusier, p. 10.

finds Castle Hill to be unnavigable, and any information about the layout that he gains from its inhabitants only makes it more opaque and impenetrable.

Castle Hill also seems to shore up some nostalgia for old city elements in K's hometown. He fondly remembers a childhood of playing in a garden of overgrowing greenery. Such a garden element is, according to Sitte, markedly old – it is an element that he fiercely defends and attempts to preserve. But K is not afraid of these old elements in his childhood because, as Sitte has argued, children still have an innate aesthetic for dissymmetry and a sixth sense for navigation through labyrinthine territory. As an adult, K is no longer able to navigate in this way. In fact, gardens of *his* age do not even train the sixth sense as his childhood gardens had. Modern gardens, which are surrounded on all sides by street traffic, are "spiritually deadened," filled with dust and sound pollution, and deny halted interaction with others, even as they are meant to replace the eradicated *agora* in the modern city.

The immobility of these spaces of interaction is the element that K comes to associate with Castle Tower. Whereas originally K had described the Tower as a melancholic hermit bursting through a building as though he cannot stand to be alone, K comes to characterize the Tower as a person calmly staring off into space, "alone and unobserved", impervious to any observer's gaze. This calmness is frustrating to K: "his eye demanded [the slightest sign of life] and refused to tolerate the stillness."[34] His gaze slides off the search for life, just as his analogy of the calm man denies any observant gaze. Between the two anthropomorphic analogies of the Castle Tower we have both modes of agoraphobia in action: K anticipates a restructuring for the melancholic man, a

[34] Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 98.

destruction of the old tower with a figural and literal breakthrough, and also K is frustrated by its unreadable immobility, which escapes any of his meek attempts to break through it. K has a hard time standing still. In fact, every time he is forced to be immobile by the townspeople, he falls asleep, as though immobility is unthinkable except as a dreamscape. K spends his active time at Castle Hill trying to find centers of traffic, points which could serve as geometric readings of this strange space that he is unequipped to navigate, but he is unable to locate them.

One reason for the privileging of perfectly square plazas in the modern fashion of gridded cities is that the center could be easily found geometrically. Uneven plazas were often passed over for modern decorative elements, as the center was more difficult to find.[35] But Sitte privileges the odd shapes of irregular plazas, and he applauds ancient buildings that allow for "dual aspects" from multiple street alley views and that provide odd "diversity of effect" by interacting with neighboring buildings of different sizes. This constructed dissymmetry allowed for multiple viewpoints, multiple readings of urban space, and a resultant calmness in the aesthetic experience of spatial diversity. Ancient buildings – churches, theaters, and town halls – were classically constructed with shared walls. The proximity created an effect of interaction between buildings, a sort of unity in difference. Modern urban planning privileged individual plots with these same buildings isolated in the plots' geometric centers, "like a cake on a serving-platter." In this new fashion, "excluded is any successful achievement of perspective effects, for which it would be necessary to have deeper space – a plaza of a shape similar to a theater so that

[35] Sitte, p. 21.

the façade of the building could be viewed as a backdrop to a stage"[36] that interacts with its foregrounded partner.

There is a difference here between accumulation, of elements side-by-side, and Sitte's deep space, in which elements refer to one another and the background touches the foreground. Deleuze finds this "depth *of* field" sharply in some cinema's treatment of architecture: "The volume of each body overflows any given plane [plan], plunging into or emerging from shadow and expressing the relationship of this body with the others located in front or behind: an art of masses."[37] Deleuze comes to associate this "depth *of* field" with time and duration, which will be addressed in Chapter Three.

The difference between the "deeper space" created by the "backdrop to a stage" and the "scattering" created by the "cake on a serving-platter" marks, for Sitte, the origins of agoraphobia. It is almost as if the potential for agoraphobia were hiding, latent among the ancient urban proportions which had been determined by an "innate, instinctive aesthetic sense." But in the loss of this sense of taste, in the disturbance of urban proportions, the approximations of open nature within the city – empty squares, wide horizons, open lines of traffic and communication – are stifled. Modern man, then, is left with "the affliction of inflexible, geometric regularity"[38] that he must overcome.

We might see Kafka's "The Burrow" in this geometric building and the instilled paranoia in its inflexible builder. The narrator obsesses over the entranceways to the burrow structure – there must only be one, but he needs another to watch the first. This is

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[36] Sitte, p. 28.
[37] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 104.
[38] Sitte, p. 21.

the perfect model of restrictive architectural perspective. Here we can find similarity to the strict precision of modern urban changes, as modern planners would block off multiple streets and alleyways to plazas in order to control the place of perspective upon the great monuments. The diversity of perspective from multiple entranceways – the "dual perspective" – that Sitte had revered in ancient cities reduces in modernity to a flattened point of view that inflicts a sense of eeriness and isolation. In the modern arrangement of a single entranceway with an exit from which to watch the entranceway, the city plaza loses the "peace" of *agoras* which encouraged traffic and loitering, which provided "the totality of effect" of accumulation, of art and of people.

Gardens and transparency

In describing the faults of modern city greenery design, Sitte follows these same principles of freeing up empty squares. Poorly laid out greenery also has a negative psychological effect, even though vegetation is acknowledged as a cure to ailments:

> The melancholic city dweller suffers from a partly imaginary, partly real sickness of this sort, from a longing or nostalgia for unfettered nature. This ailment, which can be aggravated to the point of the loss of all desire to work, is not to be cured by unconscious inhalation of so many cubic yards of oxygen or ozone, but only by the sight of greenery, but the presence of beloved Mother Nature.[39]

Even "the mere suggestion, the mere sight of green foliage is in itself sufficient," and so Sitte favors the Roman Lateran's single tall palm tree and the Athenian Acropolis's lone olive tree for "spiritual nourishment" over the strict parallel lanes of modern *Allée* trees, which in their perfect geometry and uniformity provide no relief. Even the bundling of

[39] Sitte, p. 171.

trees in the center of traffic plazas, as modernists also tended to do with sculptures, monuments, and fountains, does not provide relief as city "air-pockets", since the dust and noise from the bordering traffic ruins any "psychological uplift of the spirit." Sitting in such a "garden", one finds no relaxation, only "isolation as if to be photographed or as if on exhibit."[40]

What *does* provide urban relief is trees placed according to common sense, without the stagnation of strict geometric rules: lines of trees only on the sunny side of the street, gatherings of greenery in the corner of a monument with decorative garden architecture to ease the transition between elements, or "motifs of the single tree" like the Acropolis's olive tree. And where modern gardens show us no signs of "total effect" through traffic relief, clean air, or variety in panorama, Sitte turns to old gardens which have been privatized in the face of the new urban landscape. These gardens are concretely enclosed by buildings (as courtyards) or by walls (as private spaces), and "are therefore free of wind and dust. They offer tranquility and idyllic calm." When these private old gardens were opened up to the public, as was common tradition several times a year, they overflowed with people desperate for such "sanitary greenery."[41] The lucky residents of these old districts lived as though they were in the country, with "light, sunshine, and a view into the green", the conditions required for psychological relief from agoraphobic symptoms and mental space for "intellectual pursuit" and artisan work.

What is strange in this discovery of an urban cure to agoraphobia is the contradiction that relief, generally found in *open* nature, in the city can only be found in a

[40] Sitte, p. 175.
[41] Sitte, pp. 179–183.

closed garden. It is as though the traffic of urban life precludes any stable relationship to greenery. To gain a view of greenery that could approximate open nature, modern man requires a shuttered garden and the restrictive framing of a window that acts as blinders to the traffic, noise, and dust of urban life. In a way, modern man relies on *gardens*, not open, unfettered nature, because modern man would not be able to navigate open space. As Carter has put it, the modern architect proves how "advanced" Western peoples were by how removed they are from their primitive instincts: "Agoraphobia was, in this sense, a symptom of regression, a return of the old faculty for returning."[42] A true garden, for Sitte, should be a replacement *agora* in which modern man could become more attuned to primitive immobility. But the fear of navigation in a truly open space would incite such panic that modern men are not likely to make use of gardens. Better to have a *view* of a garden from the safety of one's home rather than risk the possibility of not being able to find one's way home.

In this sense of agoraphobia as a loss of navigational abilities, Baudelaire's *flâneur* is clearly an outlier. He is an irregular modern figure in that he is a wanderer and loiterer, unafraid of being crushed by the crowds and speed and unafraid of immobility. Somehow, the *flâneur* is free of agoraphobia, and in this he is lucky. For other modern men, less confident in aimless browsing, Baudelaire gives a solution of spatial relief: a great view from the safety of one's own home. The poem "Landscape" provides a vertical escape from a horizontal affliction: the discovery of meditative, dreamy vistas from rooftops.

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[42] Carter, p. 62.

One of Baudelaire's more romantic depictions of the Paris cityscape, "Landscape" gives us a sea full of "masts", warm seasons, singing birds, and "the great, inspiring skies, magnificent and vast."[43] To give us such a vista, Baudelaire's narrator must write from the rooftop, at night – a location, perspective, and time that transforms the modern city into something more like open, quiet nature. To gain such perspective of Paris, the viewer must be raised high, avoid looking to the streets, and wait for the quiet calm of the moonlight. Even the window, down below in his apartment, does not approach the "landscape" of this rooftop view. Even through a raised window, the "riot" of the streets pierces into the inner space of writing, hard as the narrator tries to block out the disturbance of modernity. Along with the quiet, the nighttime rooftop allows for a far view, a horizon, and a sense of depth of field, as chimneys, steeples, and belfries overlap into the distance as though they were ship masts scattered across a sea. From this rooftop perspective, the ancient city's empty space (the vast sky) and deep space (the sea) are restored. In this way, Baudelaire is working within Sitte's guidelines for the preservation of empty space and deep space.

Architects also tried to compensate for agoraphobia, developed and maintained by the streets, in this very Baudelairean manner: raise the perspective with large windows to create a sense of wide horizon, depth of space, and quiet calm. Ironically, in Paris, the ability to have this curative heightened view was made possible by Haussman's renovations, which added upper stories to old buildings, thus allowing for rising populations to live in the center of Paris rather than expand the city limits outwards

[43] Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, p. 167.

towards the ghettoes.[44] The old windows of Paris, the vertical *porte fenêtre*, began to be questioned in the early 1920s as the best transparent threshold between inside and outside. These traditional double-hinged, vertical windows that opened into the room were defended by architect August Perret against his student Le Corbusier, who preferred horizontal panorama windows, in a public debate in the early 1920s.[45] The *porte fenêtre*, Perret argued, gives the inhabitant a complete sense of external space; he sees sections of the street, the garden, the houses, and the sky in one frame. The *fenêtre en longueur*, sometimes called a "landscape painting", Corbusier argued, gives the landscape an immediacy in its reduction of depth, as the panorama window opens up as a threshold whose frame and limit tends to vanish. In fact, in order to maintain the purity of this sort of vanishing threshold, Le Corbusier forbade his clients from dressing his windows with curtains.

These two types of windows seem to be at odds with one another. The traditional window gives a contextualized view of the external world, which might be an exhilarating sight if the window looked out onto the countryside, but which might turn frightening if the window looked out onto the busy urban streets. The modern panorama window gives a restricted view, and so can train the inhabitant to manage the external world in small pieces, but this restricted view makes the inhabitant susceptible to vection whereby external motion may be read as internal motion. Windows seem naturally to provide a troubling of the inside/outside boundary in their transparency, but the choice between types of boundary-troubling is not so natural. Baudelaire, though, does not seem

[44] Matthew Taunton, *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture, and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 10.
[45] For more on the Perret-Corbusier debate, see Bruno Reichlin, 'The Pros and Cons of the Horizontal Windows: The Perret-Le Corbusier Controversy', *Daidalos*, 13 (1984).

to make a choice, but rather combines both options into one view of transparency in his rooftop horizon. In line with Perret, who wanted to see all pieces of the cityscape, and in line with Le Corbusier, who wanted to emphasize the immense potential of spatial aesthetics, Baudelaire's narrator finds both context and dreamscape in his rooftop escape.

An extension of this rising modernist interest in windows and glass, the glass house trend began in the late 1920s. Transparent buildings, like Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (1929) and Farnsworth House (1945-51), trouble the inside/outside boundary, thus merging private and public life and frustrating the instinct to hide from social spaces. But on top of having the physical quality of transparency, the glass wall creates a transparency by its shared space. It is claimed *both* by internal space and external space. In this phenomenal transparency, the boundary-contradiction is resolved by demand for a new spatial vision and experience. The glass house trend hoped that by overlapping planes, a new spatial relationship could be formed, leaving the spatial phobias of modernism behind. In a way, these glass house projects adopt the Hegelian troubling of inside/outside in the *agora*.

Modernist landscape architects were trying to achieve this same effect of transparency by overlapping rectilinear interior spaces and rectilinear exterior design. Even as the curve was being celebrated in Art Nouveau movements, landscape architects, like André Vera, returned to a rectilinear tradition in his Parisian *tableaux-jardins* of the 1920s. They took the long-criticized *jardin à la française* of the Versailles tradition and reinstituted it in small portions of more stark geometric compartments in the middle of Paris. And they took the form of the Middle Ages cloister, something like the enclosed private gardens of Sitte's guidelines for agoraphobic relief, and turned them inside out so

that the gardens were visible in their insularity from the street. Vera's Noailles Garden, nestled under the shadow of the 19th-centuy Hôtel de Noailles, is a perfect example of a "rationalized garden" (Fig II.III).

Figure II.III: Vera's Noailles Garden

The garden is enclosed on all sides, discouraging of traffic. The walls have window and mirror inserts, providing both a public view onto the garden and the illusion of deep space by reflecting architecture, trees, and sky. In a technical way, this plan fits to Sitte's guidelines for classical urban planning: avoid agoraphobia by preserving open space and deep space. But the impetus for this "rationalized garden" – to eradicate the concretized boundary between inside and outside – fails to create an *agora* space. Like the *agora*, Vera's modern Parisian gardens create a lightly defined boundary that muddles the distinction between inside and outside. But unlike the *agora*, these gardens are not meant to serve as social spaces of mingling, exploring, and loitering. In fact, they were explicitly meant to provide a view from the hotel's windows, not for strolling.

Vera approved of green open spaces in their encouragement of health and hope. But in mathematics, he saw an encouragement of peace: "Mathematical beauty requires no ornamentation . . . Harmony creates the appearance of plenty, which brings joy and serenity of mind."[46] In this way, Vera felt that he could mimic the *effects* of open nature without mimicking its form. He helped to begin a new modernist tradition of contextualizing gardens with *indoor* spaces. His Noailles Garden does just this: the mirrored wall literally reflects the Hôtel de Noailles across the street and the geometric layout of the garden floor mimics both the hotel's geometric façade and the blueprint of the hotel floors. The layout has also been described as a carpet, as though it is an extension of the hotel's sitting room floor. In this way, a two-dimensional sense of architecture gives the garden a sense of domestic safety and comfort. It is not meant for strolling in; it is meant to be looked at from a distance – from across the street. In this gaze, the agoraphobe might find comfort in both the way that nature looks like his safe apartment and the way that it necessarily remains open, unpeopled, and unrushed. In the garden's resistance to traffic, it serves as a simulacrum of Baudelaire's transcendent rooftop.

Rather than *reverse* the agoraphobia problem in modern cities by returning to a classical aesthetic and retraining the modern man's aesthetic intuition and sixth sense, modern landscape architects, like Vera, found new solutions by *compensating* for agoraphobia. We can speak of our literary architects Kafka and Baudelaire in a similar way in terms of innovation, though not in deviation from the Sitte model. Insofar as Sitte deplores immense voids like *allées* because they provide no obstacles and encourage

[46] Vera, André "Hommage à Le Nôtre." Quoted from Dorothée Imbert, *The Modernist Garden in France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 76–7.

chaotic traffic and speed, Kafka's works thrive on obstacles, walls, and mountains to stymie efficiently linear traffic of bodies, narrative, and interpretation. Kafka, unknowingly, might be a student of Sitte's complaints, though he develops his own architectural experiments to work through them. And insofar as Sitte desires a return of wide horizons and deep architectural space, Baudelaire rediscovers these elements within Haussmanian Paris by changing his place of perspective.

It is not exactly that the modernist landscape architects' solutions towards architecturally treating agoraphobia worked in opposition to Sitte's model. They certainly took Sitte's classicism into account. But rather than return to a pre-Industrialist Age, the new models of modernist planning – experiments with windows, "rationalized gardens" or "picture gardens", glass houses – pushed modern sensibilities towards unknown aesthetic terrain. The risk here, one which even modern plan supporter Le Corbusier acknowledged, is that the nostalgia for old cities, simultaneously desired and feared, will never leave modern man, no matter how far he progresses past them. In turning away from classical proportions, modern architecture and garden design attempt to tease interior space outside of itself by replicating inner life within external spaces. Yet, at the same time, the essential elements of inner life – desire, fear, phobia – are ignored in the hope that turning away is a form of erasure, that inside/outside can be troubled without actually establishing new *agoras,* that natural horizons will never be covered over by design.

In Chapter Two, we will continue this discussion of open nature, but we shift to a more traditional view of nature as having an infinite quality that already wields deep space. In turning to Russian infinity, we see the difficulty of framing an unbounded space

as a theatrical and cinematic problem of perception. Any innate sense of space, a sith sense, as we found here, does not help navigate the desert of infinity, wich we will find denies any impositions of mapping or immobile aesthetic.

III Framing Infinity

"If the western European landscape is a plentitude of form in the narrowest space, the Russian landscape is antipathy to form running out to infinity."[1]

The abstract space of Chapter Two is narrowed here in the focus on infinity, one aspect of abstract space commonly understood as having something to do with nature or the natural quality of abstract space. The natural horizon, outer space, and the abyss are often taken as examples of infinity, though these examples certainly do not constitute all aspects of abstract space. As we will see, there are not only multiple examples of infinity representations, but mathematics claims that there are multiple infinities. The project of this chapter is to navigate between these different forms to find the representation that looks and acts most like abstract space as we have come to understand it in Chapter Two: disorienting and escaping all imposed boundary. On the way, we will navigate between metaphysical notions of an *a priori* infinity and mathematical infinities of "ideal boundaries." In looking at aesthetic representations as mediators between the philosophical and mathematical, we find that the representation that does justice to abstract space addresses the difficult boundary of the frame.

This chapter's interest is in several genres' frames – theater, painting, and film –, and it will examine the interactions of these different framing functions. In particular, this chapter examines the problem of framing an infinite landscape, of representing the spatially infinite as it unfolds in time. Does the mere act of framing a natural horizon, of

[1] Fedor Stepun, *The Russian Soul and Revolution*, trans. by Erminie Huntress (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1935), p. 20.

limiting it, change the aesthetics of boundlessness? Is there a way to frame infinity that will not ossify its unfolding temporality? With a represented infinity, framing functions by a double bind: first, the frame *holds* together image, representation, art; second, by the fact of an imposed boundary, framing *collapses* the inherently bound-*less* structure of infinity.[2] Such a paradox in representation makes infinity a particularly troubling concept to render figural. Representations of infinity thus require an artistic reserve that extends beyond mere rhetoric or perspectival technique.

The frames of aesthetic representation are often discounted as mere decorative functions, objects of use-value which are meant to remain unseen by the art viewer. As ornamentation, frames are not often thought to enter into the composition of art. They establish and maintain boundaries, identify the place of art, but they are not thought to participate in the place which they set apart. But even in such a dismissive view of the frame's relationship to art, it could be unthinkable to have art without a frame. Frames perform a separative function, distinguishing illusion from reality, representation from nature; yet they also participate in the artwork through this relationship of boundary.[3] And

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[2] Derrida writes of this holding and collapsing paradox with respect to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. The "imported frame" of the analytic of the beautiful is both constituted by the analytic and ruined by it. As applied to aesthetic judgment, the "*logical* frame is transposed and forced in to be imposed on a *nonlogical* structure" (Jacques Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 69.) "Nonlogical" because it does not relate to the object as an object of knowledge, this judgment structure cannot be addressed by Kant without the "bad" framing of the analytic of the beautiful. We will see the tendency for this same forced framing in various attempts to aestheticize infinity, a structure which by definition should not be bounded, but which seemingly cannot be addressed without a frame.

[3] Jacques Derrida, in his *Truth in Painting*, identifies this common anxiety surrounding the frame: "It is what the principal subject *must not become*, by being separated from itself: . . . *one must avoid* letting the *parerga* get the upper hand" (Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, p. 54.). But the problem with such an aesthetic imperative is that the frame will necessarily participate in the "principal subject" by way of "border-effects," by rubbing up against and impinging upon the "principal subject." In this sense, it is hard to determine where the frame begins and ends. From the perspective of the art-object, the frame is external; from the perspective of the wall, the frame is internal. Thus it is through the frame that preconceptions about art become muddied: "This delimitation of the center and the integrity of the representation, of its

the space of the frame will often determine the movement of our gaze – our readings, our wanderings.

Kant separates the mathematically infinite from the metaphysical infinite, arguing that mathematics treats infinity as an infinite regress, a series of knowledge that only gives the appearance of infinity, whereas metaphysics understands infinity as it really is, a complete unified whole that cannot be experienced but partially in finite pieces.[4] In a way, this mathematical description is just how Aristotle saw infinity: as untraversable and uncompletable. But Kant's sense of infinite regress is very much linked to an 18th-century knowledge of mathematics. In the 20th century, mathematics moved away from infinite sets to more nuanced treatments of infinity, still very different from Kant's metaphysical unified infinity, but with more functionality than only serial knowledge.

It is helpful here to begin with a brief discussion of mathematical infinity in order to then mark the bounds of philosophical and aesthetic infinities, on which this chapter will focus. Contemporary mathematics, since the turn of the 20th century, has constructed concepts of infinity in the process of working through several fields: number theory, set theory, geometry, topology, among others. Even when infinity is not the explicit object of study, fields of mathematics will often presuppose or establish an infinite *framework*. As we will see, it is this tendency in mathematics to create artificial infinities through

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inside and its outside, might already seem strange" (Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, p. 57.). Derrida reminds us that the "principal subject" is not a unified whole at all. In fact, the frame (the *parergon*, the accessory, the subordinate to the main work) merges into the work because the interior holds a lack: "The parergon inscribes something which comes as an extra, exterior to the proper field . . . but whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto, brush against, rub, press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking. It is lacking *in* something and it is lacking *from itself*" (Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, p. 56.). So the frame, which has no identifiable place of its own, is grounded by the structural link to the art which it frames.

[4] Infinity is just one of the *a priori* concepts which Kant claims can be separated into appearances and reality. (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by J.M.D. Meiklejohn (New York: Prometheus Books, 1990).)

frameworks that both runs counter to the aesthetic project of this chapter and establishes the basis for aesthetic representation of infinity. A transfinite mathematics is based on proofs that not all infinities are of the same size. To have multiple infinities of various sizes and scopes is anti-Kantian, but also, it allows for the aesthetic imagining of an infinity which is constantly flux, in a state of eternal return. Most famously, Georg Cantor, through his diagonal argument and his "infinite square", proved that the set of real numbers $\mathbb{R}$ (a set of infinite members) is larger than the set of natural numbers $\mathbb{N}$ (also a set of infinite members). Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (ZF or ZFC) describes contemporary set theory, more or less as Cantor had envisioned it, in nine axioms. In a way, these axioms outline an immobile system of set construction.

Running counter to this set theory is Set construction, an iterative conception using "pure" sets, those sets which would exist even if there were nothing but sets.[5] The most obvious of such Set construction is the iteratively created empty set: there is the empty set, Ø; there is also the Set whose sole member is Ø, {Ø}; there is also the Set whose sole members are Ø and {Ø}, {Ø, {Ø}}; and so on *ad infinitum*. Though these Sets are finite, a Set of these Sets gathered together comprises an infinite Set. And these infinite Sets belong to further Sets. This hierarchical process of Set construction is endless, and it establishes a temporality whereby each successive Set depends on the collection of the Set before it. Such endlessness is missing from ZF set theory, which gives us sets axiomatically, all at once *a priori*.[6]

In the field of topology, infinities can be defined by the construction of "ideal

[5] The imagining of a "pure" scenario that would allow for nothing but sets to exist is akin to a narrative staging. In fact, we will see how mathematical models use rhetorical moves and narrative techniques to establish specific kinds of worlds for which these various infinities could exist.

[6] For more on infinity in set theory, see A. W. Moore, *The Infinite* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

boundaries." We can take the set of all real numbers $\mathbb{R}$ as an infinite line and map it onto a circle such that each iterative loop that starts at an integer and ends at an integer will wrap around the circle a number of times in a specific direction. All integers, $\mathbb{Z} = \{\ldots -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, \ldots\}$, match to the same point in the circle. Thus the infinite line would be a "cover" of the compact circle. And we would have a "fundamental domain" which describes infinity by a single, unified shape rather than as an unending line. Taken to a higher dimension, an infinite set of paired coordinates, $\mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}$, will map to a torus (not as a sphere, as one might assume):

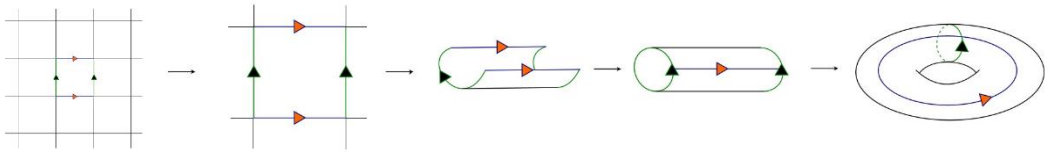

Figure III.I: $\mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}$ mapped to a torus

In this higher dimensional example, the lattice of integral points, $\mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$, maps to a single point on the torus. This circle and torus are classified by their loops of traversal. In the torus, a rational slope curve travels across the surface as a spiral, and it is thus described as one "closed curve". An irrational slope travels across the surface chaotically, a "dense orbit", complicated behavior which is easier to study when unpacked to an infinite line in $\mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}$. These infinite rays, which emanate from a single point on the plane $\mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{R}$, describe a horizon parameterized by a circle, the "ideal boundary", which is an artificially created infinity. This "ideal boundary" is a feature of the torus that is impossible to see in the torus itself without these topological techniques.[7]

[7] For more on fundamental groups and covering spaces, see Daniel K. Biss, 'A Generalized Approach to the Fundamental Group', *The American Mathematical Monthly*, October, 107.8 (2000), 711–20; Elon Lages Lima, *Fundamental Groups and Covering Spaces* (Natick: A K Peters, 2003).

Such a mathematical valuing of pluralism clearly runs counter to Kant's *a priori* notions of space and time. To have multiple infinities is to have the notion of infinite iteration (and plurality itself) *as* infinity. As modernist philosopher William James noted of this resistance to Kant:

> The essence of the Kantian contention is that there are not *spaces*, but *Space* – one infinite continuous *Unit* – and that our knowledge of *this* cannot be piecemeal affair, provided by summation and abstraction. To which the obvious reply is that, if any known thing bears on its front the *appearance* of piecemeal construction and abstraction, it is this very notion of the infinite unitary space of the world. It is a *notion*, if there ever was one; and no intuition.[8]

In giving credence to the *appearance* of infinity which presents itself as an unending, untraversable, uncompletable entity, James is pointing to the importance of representing the *form* of infinity, not just the totalized knowledge of infinity. In fact, if, as Kant argued, we simply cannot have a total knowledge of infinity, then it is only through the representation of its form in endless disorienting iterations that we can approach an understanding of infinity.

These mathematical treatments, as we have just seen in set theory and in topology, function by *manifesting* infinities in the service of describing mathematical objects.[9] In contrast, the typical philosophical treatment will discuss features of an *a priori* infinity, a metaphysical whole already in existence. The transition from mathematical infinity to

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[8] William James, 'The Perception of Space', *Mind*, 12 (1887), p. 542.

[9] It is worth noting that this mode of arbitrary manifestation does not sit well with all mathematicians. In fact, some mathematicians will always be interested in problems of inconsistency, failure, and illusion. For example, in set theory, the "axiom of choice" indicates the covering over of the fundamental question: is it always possible to arbitrarily pick a member from an infinite set? The field of Universal Algebra argues that the "axiom of choice" is assumed and untested, that sets might come to us as black boxes, and throws out any reliance on the "axiom of choice." As another example, C*-Algebra (or Non-Commutative Geometry) studies mirage algebras: algebra of functions which are not actually functions of anything.

questions of philosophical infinity requires an interrogation of boundaries and framings. In his *Prolegomena,* Kant attempts to separate mathematics from philosophy by such delineation. He sets up a new distinction between bound (*Grenze*) and limit (*Schranke*), correcting their flattened correspondence in *Critique of Pure Reason*. The *Schranke* of knowledge functions as a mere negation and identifies an incomplete quantity as the boundary of a discipline. Kant ascribes this *Schranke* to the methodology of mathematics and natural sciences, which do not care to approach the border, do not care to ask metaphysical questions at the border of knowledge: "In mathematics and natural science human reason admits of limits but not of bounds, viz., that something indeed lies outside it, at which it can never arrive, but not that it will at any point find completion in its internal progress."[10] It is with the double bind of the *Grenze* (bound) that reason can act philosophically, that philosophy can be tempted to cross the limits (*Schranke*) of knowledge, thus turning *Schranke* into *Grenze* by a negative, forbidding appeal.[11]

In the interrogation of boundary, philosophy must concern itself with questions of spatial and temporal infinities. Most commonly, philosophical notions of spatial infinity will presuppose a metaphysical temporality – a wholeness of time against which space can expose its limits. This chapter will provide a resistance to such metaphysical infinity, allowing for a view of spatial infinitude that unfolds in time, that does not assume a unity of any dimension. Representation of infinity has perhaps most readily been addressed in

[10] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena*, trans. by James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977), p. 4:353.
[11] Kant further muddies the distinction between *Schranke* and *Grenze* as reason is analogized on the border of *Grenze*. As Geoffrey Bennington points out, "*Any* de-termination *in general* is affected by this [attempt to secure a definite frontier between *Schranke* and *Grenze*], because this failure is the end of the end of pure reason, which finds itself only by losing itself in the zero thickness of the pure frontier as place of analogy *without term*" (Geoffrey Bennington, 'On Transcendental Fiction', *Discourse*, Winter, 29.1 (2007), 169–88 (p. 183).)

European Romanticism's natural sublime. Ultimately, the Romantic sublime, like many representations of infinity, subsumes the spatial for the purposes of representing a time immemorial or a wholeness of temporality. We are hard-pressed to find a representation of infinity that holds true to an infinite spatiality, a counter-metaphysical account of infinity, something akin to the unique spatial privilege given by Aristotle's *Physics*. By focusing on aesthetic manifestations of Aristotle's infinity, this chapter will provide resistance to the metaphysical methodology that largely ignores infinity's spatial register.

Aristotle's "potential infinity"

Aristotle separated himself from his Greek predecessors by identifying infinity as *untraversable*. His sense of "potential infinity", which forecloses any notion of an all-at-once infinitude, is never totally present. It is in a constant state of becoming; it is temporally continual, never beginning and never ending. The Greek *to apeiron*, that which has no *peras*, that which is unlimited or unbounded, is uniquely treated as spatial in Aristotle, rather than as a temporal unity, as largely seen in his predecessors and successors.

By definition, infinity defies determinacy and resists classification. And so it has always been a point of contention when it comes to its appearance, its aesthetics, and its representation. Perhaps in the face of this indeterminacy, many philosophies of infinity pepper mathematical description with a metaphysical sense of unity and wholeness, sometimes even perfection. For these metaphysical philosophies, infinity, as bound-less, represents ideal autonomy, a self-sufficient universality. But Aristotle's model of infinity

resists totalization in this sense. As A. W. Moore argues, "What [Aristotle] abhorred was the metaphysically infinite, and (relatedly) the actual infinite – a kind of incoherent compromise between the metaphysical and the mathematical, whereby endlessness was supposed to be wholly and completely present all at once."[12] Rather than a wholeness, what he calls "actual" infinity, of which we cannot conceive in total, Aristotle proposes an infinity that is defined by its very inability to be temporally thought. This "potential infinity" is untraversable, since a traversal takes time and a traversable infinity ("actual infinity") would make impossible claims about the whole of time. Against this "potential infinity", mathematical treatments of infinity fail to do justice to abstract space's unboundedness and metaphysical treatments of infinity fail to do justice to its iterative form.

Aristotle begins his discussion of infinity in *Physics* by identifying in it a uniquely *spatial* untraversability:

> We must begin by distinguishing the various ways in which the term 'infinite' is used: in one way, it is applied to what is incapable of being gone through, because it is not its nature to be gone through (the way in which the voice is invisible); in another, to what admits of a traversal which cannot be completed, or which can only be completed with difficulty, or what naturally admits of a traversal but does not have a traversal or limit.[13]

Of the three possible untraversabilities – incompletion (as in traveling a circle), physical difficulty (as in crossing a roaring river), unlimitedness (as in moving through unending space) – Aristotle ascribes only the last to infinity. Against philosophy and mathematics, we should see this as unique. Mathematics is more attuned to the incompletion aspect;

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[12] Moore, p. 44.
[13] Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 204a3–204a6.

metaphysics is more attuned to the grandiose physical difficulty aspect, as seen in the Romantic sublime. Though it may seem that a circular path would constitute an infinite untraversability – in that the traversal would be unending – the circle does not satisfy Aristotle's notion of infinity: "it is necessary also that the same part should never be taken twice. In the circle, the latter condition is not satisfied: it is true only that the next part is always different."[14]

By founding infinity on a uniquely *spatial* untraversability of unlimitedness (not incompletion or difficulty), Aristotle allows for a questioning of infinite temporality. And he begins this questioning with a series of sharp rifts from his predecessors. Aristotle disagrees with Democritus' and Anaximander's beliefs in infinity as a "principle" because a principle would place a limit on infinity, which would render it finite. Just as Democritus and Anaximander push this infinite principle towards the Divine in its deathlessness and imperishability,[15] so Aristotle retrieves the infinite from a pure notion of timeless totality, an immaterial infinite. But he also finds fault with a composite view of infinity, such as the Pythagoreans' treatment of infinity as *both* a totalized substance *and* a divisible entity. And Aristotle rebukes Zeno for his conflations of length and time, of spatial and temporal finitude: "there are two ways in which length and time and generally anything continuous are called infinite: they are called so either in respect of divisibility or in respect of their extremeties…. So we find that the time occupied by the passage over the infinite is not a finite but an infinite time."[16]

To separate the various notions of the infinite, Aristotle writes of two infinities:

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[14] Aristotle, pp. 206b34–207a6.
[15] Aristotle, pp. 203b3–203b15.
[16] Aristotle, pp. 233a22–233a31.

actual and potential. Actual infinity, which many of Aristotle's predecessors (and successors) uphold, would exist wholly at a particular *point in time*. In this actual infinity, metaphysics and Romanticism can experience infinity as sublime, as though overlooking the great abyss of infinity in one terrifying look. As we will see, Chekhov and Tarkovsky disagree with this representation, arguing for a more monotonous, temporally unfolding sense of infinite iteration.

Potential infinity, for which Aristotle argues, exists *over time*: "Nothing is complete which has no end and the end is a limit."[17] So it would seem that Aristotle's infinity is always, by necessity, potential since its spatial traversal can only be conceived *over time*. But certain Aristotle scholars, such as Jaako Hintikka, claim that every genuine possibility is at some time actualized, and so Aristotle's infinity could still transition from potential to actual. In this formulation, infinity is actualized not in one instance, but as a continual process, as Aristotle's famous Olympic Games example indicates:[18] "Although there is perhaps a rather loose sense in which the infinite may be said to exist only potentially, in the exact and proper sense in which it exists potentially, it also exists actually."[19]

Other Aristotle scholars, such as Jonathan Lear and A. W. Moore, argue that the actual requires a pointable instance of existence, so infinity stands as a counterexample to the transition from potential to actual existence. Though for Aristotle, that which we can

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[17] Aristotle, p. 207a14.

[18] ". . . we say that the infinite is in the sense in which we say it is day or it is the games, because one thing after another is always coming into existence. For of these things too the distinction between potential and actual existence holds. We say that there are Olympic games, both in the sense that they may occur and that they are actually occurring" (Aristotle, pp. 206a19–206a25.) Similar to the Olympic Games, we cannot encompass "day" by pointing to one instance of day. Rather, "day" is continually in existence, in instance after instance, *ad infinitum*.

[19] Jaako Hintikka, *Time and Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 116.

conceptualize must necessarily exist in a real world, whatever "actual infinity" we can imagine does not fit with this process. Since we cannot conceive of every distinct moment of an actual infinity, we cannot imagine infinity as a totality, and so the set of infinity cannot *actually* exist.

What does exist is a *potential* infinity, which looks like a function which iteratively divides itself rather than a linearly additive progression which extends into a magnitude. Aristotle is keener on paradoxes of spatial infinity which function by division:

> … in the direction of largeness it is always possible to think of a large number; for the number of times a magnitude can be bisected is infinite. Hence this infinite is potential, never actual: the number of parts that can be taken always surpasses any definite amount. But this number is not separable, and its infinity does not persist but consists in a process of coming to be, like time and the number of time. With magnitudes the contrary holds. What is continuous is divided *ad infinitum*, but there is no infinite in the direction of increase. For the size which it can potentially be, it can actually be. Hence since no sensible magnitude is infinite, it is impossible to exceed every definite magnitude, for if it were possible there would be something bigger than the heavens. (207b16-207b21)

Aristotle was suspicious of the notion that an infinite body or an infinite number of parts to a body should constitute an actual infinity. An *additive* progression of finite terms, which Aristotle ascribes to mathematicians' concept of infinity, will not attain any unique infinite member, and so it is useless to Aristotle's notion of potential infinity: "In point of fact [mathematicians] do not need the infinite and do not use it. They postulate only that a finite straight line may be produced as far as they wish."[20] Similarly, a body divided into an infinite number of parts will not be useful to Aristotle. It is the *process* of infinitely dividing a body which can give us insight into infinity – a *potential* infinity. Set in

[20]Aristotle, pp. 207b28–207b34. In a way, Aristotle is still right in the 20th century, when infinities are artificially constructed for the sake of describing movements and the relation of their elements.

motion, as a process of "becoming", infinity must be potential, dividing iteratively, including smaller and smaller moments within its set.

In this Aristotelian notion of infinity, which is by nature unpinnable – untraversable, divisible, in motion, iterative, potential –, how are we to draw its figure? European representations of infinity generally believe in an actual infinity, a metaphysical account of infinity: the sublime of Romantic poetry points to a fullness of time and a time immemorial. Though certainly there are exceptions to any generalization of a movement, Romantic treatments of infinity *tend* to emphasize its grandiosity, an instantaneous vastness of terrifying sublime effects. To experience infinity, as in Caspar David Friedrich's abyssal paintings, for example, is to be faced with a threat to your existence before an incomprehensible space given all at once. The Russian model, following Slavophile movement of the 19th century, which resisted European metaphysics, presented infinite space as monotonous. It is not presented all at once. In fact, one can only experience Russian infinity in iteration, one piece after the other, as elements of an infinite set. The wholeness of this set can never be comprehended all at once. Rather, it unfolds over time so that the monotony of this subdividing infinity makes time appear immobile.

Providing a counterexample to the Romantic tradition, this chapter examines two Russian representations of the infinite, aesthetics which are more attuned to Aristotelian, *spatial* notions of infinity. When time is slowed to a stand-still or does not progress smoothly by virtue of its state of "becoming", we have something like a Russian representation of infinity, which is defined in an Aristotelian manner by its untraversability. The Chekhov and Tarkovsky examples here mimic such temporal

immobility as a way of doing justice to the nature of abstract space.

This chapter examines two aesthetic routes that arguably adopt an Aristotelian understanding of infinity. The first, found in Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull*, maintains the untraversable, "invisible" movement by a stark refusal to re-present. Infinity, as recognized in Russia's landscape, is framed, but not aesthetically reproduced. In this way, it resists the mathematical institution of "ideal boundaries" by denying the bounding function of its frame. The second route, found in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*, constructs a representation of infinity, but maintains Aristotelian qualities of spatial untraversability and unmasterability through its unique treatment of time, a slowing to a stand-still according to traditions of *tableaux vivants*. These two aesthetic routes grapple with the particular difficulties of drawing the unbounded. They struggle to present a coherent vision of abstract space in infinity while maintaining the uniquely incoherent qualities of an Aristotelian untraversability.

Iteration in Chekhov

Fedor Stepun, in his *The Russian Soul and Revolution*, argues that the Russian landscape relates the form of a European topographical "plentitude" and extends it to an infinity.[21] The Russian horizon is a particularized cultural figure that forces the Russian "eye" to roam endlessly:

> In this repeated flight of the gaze to the horizon, in the way these horizons, holding nothing in their arms, waver, cross, disappear, and yet remain ever the same, the eye exiled in the Russian landscape experiences its lone,

[21] Stepun, p. 20.

> invisible beauty; a beauty without scenic effects, a distance without far views, more melody than picture.[22]

The unfettered Russian horizon is an unmasterable figure of self-sameness that seems always to be in motion. The eye travels across such a landscape endlessly without seeing anything new, yet it continues to attempt to see the Russian infinitude, this "lone, invisible beauty" of Russian land. The eye travels as though looking at a landscape painting, but in the empty plenitude of infinity, it cannot hold on to any particularity – of object, of moment –, and so it must continue to look without seeing, experiencing the landscape in a necessary state of "exile". This monotony of form comes to feel like a *mise-en-abyme* – endless replications of near self-same material, an infinite set of superfluous, null elements.

Infinity escapes visual concretization by its unending, iterative movement, which throws the gaze into a "flight", an "exile", as it consistently fails to master the landscape. Attempts to capture Russian infinitude in aesthetic representation will necessarily fail by virtue of this iterative movement. As a figure of Aristotelian infinity, and thus also of an iterative self-similarity, the Russian horizon holds a power that extends beyond mere aesthetic contemplation of nature. The dual force of Russia's landscape, Stepun argues, is mimicked in the Russian soul, which holds a tension "between holiness and barbarism,"[23] endlessly wavering and crossing between one and the other.

This movement, registered simultaneously as sameness and nothingness, is untranslatable by aesthetic reproduction, though technological advancements have

[22] Stepun, p. 20.
[23] Stepun, p. 23.

continually approached approximation of this iterative movement. As André Bazin famously argues in "The Myth of Total Cinema," the idea of a perfectly mimetic art, something akin to the technology of cinema, has been thought since ancient Egyptian arts. Where the arts fail, even in the technology of cinema, is in the lie they tell about movement and space. In "the automatic fixing of the image,"[24] we lose the invisible movement of an ideal space such as Russia's infinitude. And attempts to represent and mimic the movement of self-sameness ground an image whose represented reality remains fleeting, accidental, wavering, and iteratively crossing.

Chekhov was very interested in an aesthetic which would honor the accidental, the fleeting, the wavering. He was accused by his contemporary literary critics – most notably by the Kierkegaardian Lev Shestov – of instilling a mood of "hopelessness", and his plays are perhaps the most attuned of the whole Chekhovian *oeuvre* to the hopelessness of aesthetic iteration. His play *The Seagull* addresses artistic anxiety surrounding permanence and image fixation. At the play's start, Chekhov sets up a peculiar staging of a play-within-a-play[25] that frames Russia's infinite landscape. The stage of Treplev's outdoor theater has no backdrop; rather, the lake behind is framed by the stage construction: «Вот тебе и театр. Занавес, потом первая кулиса, потом вторая и дальше пустое пространство. Декораций никаких. Открывается вид прямо

[24] André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, trans. by Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 19.

[25] The *Hamlet* references and allusions in *The Seagull* are numerous. In addition to the staging (the play-within-a-play), Treplev and his actress mother speak to one another in *Hamlet* recitations, donning the roles of Hamlet and Gertrude; Treplev's father is absent; he speaks often of ghosts on the estate; and he is resentful of his mother's lover.

на озеро и на горизонт. Поднимем занавес ровно в половине девятого, когда взойдет луна.»[26]

The Seagull's natural landscape, framed as though it were a perspective painting, stands as both its authentic self and its representation, a semiotic *mise-en-abyme* which simultaneously represents the present moment (of the play-within-the-play) and «то, что будет через двести тысяч лет!»[27] The invisible movement of the Russian landscape, with its infinite, iterative horizon revealed at the curtain drop, is maintained by Treplev in his refusal to represent it. He frames infinity without trying to master it, thus forcing his audience's gaze into wandering "exile" as they search the "backdrop" for some reliable ground of a fixed image. But the landscape behind the stage, even as it is framed, does not function as a painting at all. It is constantly moving, a living artwork of sorts; yet it remains the same in its centrifugal motion which disperses any reliable particularity or temporal marker. Unlike metaphysics and Romanticism's accounts of infinity, which argue for a static sense of abstract space in any singular point in time, Treplev welcomes temporal shifts as they help to show the progression of infinity from dreamy fullness to stark nothingness:

> Треплев. ... пусть нам приснится то, что будет через двести тысяч лет!
> Сорин. Через двести тысяч лет ничего не будет.
> Треплев. Так вот пусть изобразят нам это ничего.[28]

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[26] "Here is our theater: The curtain, then the first wing, then the second, and beyond that – open space. No scenery of any sort. There is an open view of the lake and the horizon. We shall raise the curtain at exactly half-past eight, when the moon rises." (Andrei Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi* (Moskva: izdatel'stvo pravda, 1984), p. 334.)

[27] "that which will be in two hundred thousand years!" (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 340.)

[28] Treplev: … let us dream of what will be in two hundred thousand years!
Sorin: There will be nothing in two hundred thousand years.
Treplev: Then let them present that nothing to us. (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 340.)

Russia's infinitude is introduced as the backdrop of the present moment and simultaneously as the backdrop of "what will be in two hundred thousand years" and also simultaneously as "nothing." This infinity will not change even as it is indefinitely in flux. In Treplev's staging, time's exact measure has become irrelevant as the space behind the stage wavers and crosses between a stand-still – time slowed down to nothingness – and an absolute fullness – time sped up to a self-same moment. Treplev sets up a spatial infinity that does not rely on temporal markers. The Russian landscape is a pure space, "an open space", "an open view", which does not answer to time, and yet still determines the timing of Treplev's art and the moment of theater: "We shall raise the curtain at exactly half-past eight, when the moon rises."

Though Treplev intends for the play to sync up to nature's timeless temporality, this is far from a reasonable request of his actors, stagehands, and audience members. In fact, he has great difficulty with timing the play's premiere. Treplev's leading lady is late to arrive, his mother will not settle in her seat, and there is difficulty determining the precise moment of the moon's rising.[29] *The Seagull* is full of idealistic notions about nature and art which do not become fully or perfectly realized. Even Treplev's plea that modern theater be revitalized, turned away from petty mimetic moralism and spectacle, becomes adulterated by his play's silly special effects. Treplev rails against his mother, the famous, aging actress:

[29] The moon seems to be rising throughout the preparations for Treplev's play – some four pages of script. Nina worries that she is late to leave her father's house because "the sky is red, the moon is just rising" («красное небо, уже начинает восходить луна»). By the time she travels to the opposite side of the lake, where Treplev waits, "it's already evening; everything is getting dark" («уже вечер, темнеют все предметы») and Yakov confirms that the moon is rising. After a rush to begin, Treplev asks his mother to be patient and for his audience to wait a minute («через минуту»), as though he is waiting for the moon to rise. So it would seem that the very "exact" syncing with the moon at "half-past eight" is tepid at best, an idealism which cannot be realized. (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, pp. 337, 340.)

> Она знает также, что я не признаю театра. Она любит театр, ей кажется, что она служит человечеству, святому искуству, а по-моему, современный театр – это рутина, предрассудок. Когда поднимается занавес и при вечернем освещении, в комнате с тремя стенами, эти великие таланты, жрецы святого искусства изображают, как люди едят, пьют, любят, ходят, носят свои пиджаки; когда из пошлых картин и фраз стараются выудить мораль, – мораль маленькую, удобопонятную, полезную в домашнем обиходе; когда в тысяче вариаций мне подносят всё одно и то же, одно и то же, одно и то же, – то я бегу и бегу, как Мопассан бежал от Эйфелевой башни, которая давила ему мозг своею пошлостью.[30]

Treplev fails to see that he has adopted his mother's "belief in the theatre" and her "holy cause of art." He imagines himself to be a rebel, the keeper of a true dramaturgy that is closer to nature and that will outlive the fleeting aesthetic "tradition and conventionality" that plague the arts.

Treplev's disgust with modern theater stems from a dislike of pretension and artificiality – qualities that he associates with his mother. For him, the parroting of colloquial language and the representations of everyday objects and situations indicate a "petty" and "domestic" morality. In order to move beyond an ease "of comprehension," to produce theater which is deeply meaningful and revelatory, unfit for parlor talk, Treplev feels that he must tap into something immortal and immaterial, something akin to Russia's infinitude. So in place of "artificial light," he gives his audience moonlight. In place of "a room with three walls," he gives an open backdrop and a lake-side rock,

[30] "She knows, too, that I have no belief in the theatre. She loves the stage, fancies she is working for humanity, for the holy cause of art, while to my mind the modern theatre is nothing but tradition and conventionality. When the curtain goes up, and by artificial light, in a room with three walls, these great geniuses, the devotees of holy art, represent how people eat, drink, love, move about, and wear their jackets; when from these commonplace sentences and pictures they try to draw a moral – a petty moral, easy of comprehension and convenient for domestic use; when in a thousand variations I am offered the same thing over and over again – I run away as Maupassant ran away from the Eiffel Tower which weighed upon his brain with its vulgarity." (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 336.)

unmoved from its given place on earth, with the stage built around it. In place of "commonplace sentences and pictures," he gives grand, overstated monologues. And in place of a recognizable scene – "how people eat, drink, love, move about" –, his heroine perches on the rock, immobile.

But in avoiding the specific "vulgarities" of his mother's traditions, Treplev finds himself amidst a new set of unsettling theatrical habits, which are enumerated by his audience. Nina complains that "there is very little action" and no love story in the play – "nothing but speeches."[31] Treplev's mother calls the play "decadent" and, later, a mere "protest."[32] The schoolmaster does not understand why Treplev needs to produce such a stark play as resistance: «Никто не имеет основания отделять дух от материи, так как, быть может, самый дух есть совокупность материальных атомов.» [33] The doctor becomes irked by the uncanniness of the abandoned stage with its drawn curtain, and, later, lectures Treplev on the importance of having "a clear definite idea" and "aim" in a work of art,[34] arguing that Treplev will drive himself mad without one.

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[31] «В нашей пьесе мало действия, одна только читка. И в пьеце, по-моемы, непременно должна быть любовь...» (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 338.)

[32] «Это что-то декадентское» (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 341.); «для демонстрации» (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 342.)

[33] "No one has any grounds to separate spirit from matter, seeing that spirit itself may be a combination of material atoms." (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 343.) We might read into the schoolmaster's complaint the mentality of a mathematician who recognizes the elements that comprise an infinite set.

[34] «Вы должны знать, для чего пишете, иначе, если пойдете по этой живописной дороге без определенной цели, то вы заблудитесь и ваш талант погубит вас» (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 346.). Chekhov writes a similar argument to Suvorin in 1888: «если бы какой-нибудь автор похвастал мне, что он написал повесть без заранее обдуманного намерения, а только по вдохновению, то я назвал бы его сумасшедшим» ("if an author were to boast to me that he had written a story with no deliberate prior intention, but uniquely from inspiration, I would say he was mad") (Chekhov to Suvorin, Oct 27, 1888, in Andrei Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo 'nauka', 1980), p. 196.)

Incidentally, Chekhov had similar complaints about theater as *both* Treplev and Treplev's audience. In his theater reviews and in letters to fellow playwrights, Chekhov rails against the state of contemporary theater. He critiques theater for its repetitiveness, its glamor and *diva*s, its "simple amusement[s]."[35] He also critiques it for its pretentious lack of substantial subject matter. He writes to his colleagues that a play should have a goal, that writers are duty-bound to present an absolute and honest truth.[36] But he disagrees with the sort of lofty art that Treplev attempts to create: «Лучше из них реальны и пишут жизнь такою, какая она есть, но оттого, что каждая строчка пропитана, как соком, сознанием цели, Вы, кроме жизни, какая есть, чувствуете еще ту жизнь, какая должна быть, и это пленяет Вас.»[37] It is not enough to portray a shiny image of humanity. Like a landscape painting, Chekhov says, a play should show us even the "soiled bark and yellowed leaves."[38] Nor is it enough to overwhelm the audience with description of minutia. As Chekhov recommends to one writer: «Пейзаж Вы чувствуете, он у Вас хорош, но Вы не умеете экономить, и то и дело он попадается на глаза, когда не нужно, и даже один рассказ совсем исчезает под массой пейзажных обломков...»[39] The worst sin of theater, though, lies in its devotion to popularism and glamor: *diva* actresses, bootlicker critics who cater to them, audiences

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[35] "как забава" (Chekhov to Knipper, Sept 28, 1900, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 91.)

[36] «Ее назначение -- правда безусловная и честная» (Chekhov to Kiselyova, Jan 14, 1887, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 11.)

[37] "The best of [artists] are realists, who depict life as it is, but because every line is impregnated with the same sap, the constant awareness of the objective, we feel that, in addition to life as it really is, we are also being shown life as it should be, and that captivates us..." (Chekhov to Suvorin, Nov 25, 1892, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*.)

[38] «Вы заставили Левитана рисовать дерево, приказав ему не трогать грязной коры и пожелтевшей листвы» (Chekhov to Kiselyova, Jan 14, 1887, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 11.)

[39] "You can feel the landscape, you render it well, but you don't know how to economise, and from time to time it's brought into view when it isn't necessary, and one of your stories even disappears completely under a mass of landscape bits..." (Chekhov to Avilova, Nov 3/15, 1897, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*.)

who follow like “a flock of sheep”, and cheap stage tricks which aim for base entertainment.

The pointless entertainment factor of special effects, which became popularized in Moscow in the 1890s, is also disgusting to Treplev, yet he finds himself producing one of his own. He wants the full effect of a devil to emerge in his play, and he is adamant that it not be a traditional representation through costume or acting, but a presence which will be made known sensually. Two red lights are cast over the lake, intending the appearance of menacing eyes. Simultaneously, sulphur is released over the audience members so that they smell a distasteful burning while watching the two red lights burn in the distance. During the premiere, the effect is inefficiently carried out – the lights seem to come late, as Nina must pause in her monologues to give them time to appear, and the smell of sulphur is read by the audience as an accident. Treplev's mother asks her son directly: “Is that as it should be?” And then she laughs: “Oh, it's a stage effect!”[40] Treplev is embarrassed by the failure and the misreading of this serious climax, and he quickly shuts down the play.

Chekhov was similarly disgusted by and enamored with special effects. He had been exposed to the Hermitage's “Fantasy Theater”, run by Lentovsky and specializing in farce comedy, melodrama, and *feeries*. The theater readily used pyrotechnical effects in its sensational productions: fires, explosions, shootings. Chekhov generally poked fun at the effect of these productions – “Thanks to this new, bitter-sweet, German Liebergottic

[40] «Серой пахнет. Это так нужно? ... Да, это эффект.» (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 341.)

rubbish all Moscow smells of gunpowder"[41] – , but he imagined for himself a genuinely imaginative stage effect which would stimulate its audience's imagination rather than cheaply tickle the senses. We find the same impetus for a genuine effect in Treplev, though certainly Chekhov would find his attempt, with the smell of sulphur permeating the air, as distasteful as Lentovsky's. Without realizing it, Treplev, like his idol Maupassant, finds that the best place to avoid viewing "vulgarity" is to stand at its very center.

The frustration of aesthetic representation and the inability to create a "pure", "ideal" art drive Treplev to suicide. He desires a theater that will represent Russian infinitude to such a perfection that it is accepted into nature itself. We see Treplev's fate foreshadowed in the figure of the seagull, the outsider who cannot help but follow a hopeless dream. Nina, the play's love interest, is the first to mention the seagull: «А меня тянет сюда к озеру, как чайку...» [42] She also does not belong on this side of the lake, and though she is warned about the theater, she cannot help but become an actress. The literal seagull figure, which appears to us later in the play already dead, becomes the symbol of fate that haunts the country estate's inhabitants as a relic from the "other" side of the proscenium frame. Treplev admits to killing the seagull, and in presenting it to Nina as a gift of love, he solidifies their fate as misplaced abusers of nature's image. The characters begin to desperately co-opt images of the immortal world as their language. When Treplev is heartbroken and miserable, he speaks in terms of the lake: «я проснулся и

[41] Laurence Senelick, 'The Lake-Shore of Bohemia: "The Seagull"s Theatrical Context', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 29.2 (1977), 199–213.
[42] "I'm pulled to the lake here, like a seagull . . ." (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 337.).

вижу вот, будто это озеро вдруг высохо или утекло в землю.»[43] When Treplev is preparing his faint suicide, the seagull, preserved and stuffed, watches him from his writing desk, as though awaiting retribution.

Treplev dies in *The Seagull* with dampened impact. His gun fires offstage, and though the noise startles his mother, she is softly told that it is "nothing." In the last spoken words of the play, Treplev's death is announced to us in a whisper so as not to disturb her: «Уведите отсюда куда-ни-будь Ирину Николаевну. Дело в том, что Константин Гаврилович застрелился...»[44] The heights of drama are displaced in an anxiety over preserving peace. Treplev does not want to bother his mother with his depression, let alone his suicide, and so he dies in the stage wings. He organizes his death offstage as though he were in a Greek tragedy, leaving the doctor to play the role of chorus, telling Treplev's family and the audience of the unseen drama taking place. But, of course, Chekhov stages Treplev not as a tragic Greek hero, but as a foolish playwright, one who has the correct desires for theater reform but who lacks the talent of a true Symbolist, worthy of Chekhov's respect.

Treplev is a figure of failure: his play is mocked, his love-object is stolen, and he commits suicide quietly, without dramatic intrigue. Though Treplev is the writer and director who imagines the framing of infinity, we would do well not to confuse his ideas with Chekhov's. Where Treplev naively strives towards an authentic mimetic experience and is frustrated with his continual failures, Chekhov attributes meaning to the *necessary* failure of such a project. He writes often about his own failures in drama, yet he is never

[43] "I woke and saw that the lake had dried up or drained away into the earth" (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 354.)
[44] "Get Irina Nikolayevna away somehow. The fact is Konstantin Gavrilitch has shot himself . . ." (Chekhov, *Sochineniia v chetyrekh tomakh tom chetvertyi*, p. 384.)

shy to give critique to playwrights, actors, directors, and general theater-goers. In letters to his publisher Alexei Suvorin, Chekhov writes of butchering the conventions of theater with his work. *The Seagull* does violence to dramatic conventions by its jamming together of literary form into theater's frame:

> [Я] страшно вру против условий сцены. Комедия, три женских роли, шесть мужских, четыре акта, пейзаж (вид на озеро); много разговоров о литературе, мало действия . . .[45] Начал ее forte и кончил pianissimo -- вопреки всем правилам драматического искусства. Вышла повесть. Я более недоволен, чем доволен, и, читая свою новорожденную пьесу, еще раз убеждаюсь, что я совсем не драматург.[46]

Though he continually argues against his place in the theater (while at the same time marking his place within it as expert), Chekhov cannot seem to disentangle himself from the draw of the stage. There is something about this unique genre which Chekhov cannot shake, even as he admits that his work is more suited to literature.

Chekhov disagrees with his fellow writers and directors that theater is a school, a means of educating the masses. He much prefers analogies of courtrooms, and he uses these images widely in his letters concerning the judgments of theater, by critics and by audiences. It is not a writer's place to lay judgment on his characters; he is merely "a disinterested observer,"[47] a collector and selector of natural moments which are laid before the feet of his audience for judgment: «Суд обязан ставить правильно вопросы,

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[45] "I'm doing a terrible violence to the conventions of the stage. It's a comedy, three female roles, six male, four acts, a landscape (a view onto a lake), a great deal of conversation about literature, very little action . . ." (Chekhov to Suvorin, Oct 21, 1895, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 252.)

[46] "I've begun it *forte* and ended it *pianissimo* – contrary to all the canons of dramatic art. It's turned out like a short story. . . . I'm convinced yet again that I'm not a dramatist at all." (Chekhov to Suvorin, Oct 21, 1895, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 100.)

[47] «беспристрастным свидетелем» (Chekhov to Suvorin, May 30, 1888, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 190.)

а решают пусть присяжные, каждый на свой вкус.»[48] Chekhov, unlike his Treplev, generally dislikes premeditated morality or humanism. Art is not the place for laying out answers; an artist's only job is to identify the best way to pose a question. Even Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Pushkin's *Evgeny Onegin*, Chekhov says, provide no answers; «Вас вполне удовлетворяют, потому только, что все вопросы поставлены в них правильно.»[49] With his theory of laying out a problem without guarantee of resolution, it is easy to see why Chekhov had such an admiration for Symbolist and Modernist playwrights.[50] But this simple ideal, which requires temperance and surrender, is not an easy path to follow in writing; and in theater, it requires a great faith in the production team and in one's audience, the "jurors."

In Chekhov's letters emerges an anxiety over the gap which separates the art of playwriting from the art of production. Chekhov is often frustrated with good plays which are produced or acted poorly, and he worries about the fate of his own plays left in the hands of his actors, actresses, directors, and theater managers. Some of this anxiety surely is rooted in a vanity and a practicality – Chekhov is not so mired in his art that he does not see the value of high praises, good publicity, and the paychecks that come with it. But he also suffers over his inability to control the particularity of a performance, and it is a point of frustration that each audience member who writes to him has seen a different iteration of his work. The production of *The Seagull* in particular grates on him, as it flopped horribly in its first production at the Alexandrinsky in 1896 but then gained

[48] "the court is obliged to pose the questions correctly, but it is left to the jurors to resolve them, each in his own way." (Chekhov to Suvorin, Oct 27, 1888, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 196.)
[49] "but these works are totally satisfying, simply because all the questions are correctly posed" (Chekhov to Suvorin, Oct 27, 1888, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 196.)
[50] Chekhov claimed Ibsen and Maeterlinck as his favorite playwrights.

great praise after Stanislavsky took over its direction and staging at the Moscow Art Theater in 1898. On *The Seagull*, Chekhov alternately writes to his colleagues, fans, and family that he has "little luck in the theater"[51], that his work is "a tremendous failure"[52], and that he is so pleased with a performance, he "couldn't even believe that [he'd] written it."[53]

It is easy to read something of *The Seagull*'s Treplev in this anxiety; even as Treplev is a melancholic, untalented version of Chekhov, the production of *The Seagull* has turned Chekhov into his own worried, nervous creation. Chekhov often compares his plays to short stories, frustrated with the theater's temperament, and he often compares his colleagues' playwriting to landscape painting, a genre which makes a similar attempt to unify instantanaeity with timelessness. A painter sits before the landscape, daily incorporating particularities into an impossible view of nature as the whole of collected moments and as an impossibly unified horizon – a time immemorial. Combining the two genres – theater and painting –, Chekhov was fond of staging *tableaux vivants*,[54] inspired by famous poems and paintings. Such stagings bring focus to the temporal tension of aesthetically reproducing nature, similar to Treplev's attempt to frame Russia's infinitude as backdrop to his play.

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[51] «В театре мне так не везет, так не везет» (Chekhov to Shravrova-Yust, Dec 26, 1898, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 380.)

[52] «громадный неуспех» (Chekhov to Nemirovich-Danchenko, Nov 20, 1896, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 231.)

[53] «Местами даже не верилось, что это я написал» (Chekhov to Peshkov, May 9, 1899, in *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 179.)

[54] In a letter to Suvorin, Chekhov writes: «Я ставлю живую картину -- "Опять на родине". На сцене забытая усадьба, пейзаж, сосенки... входит фигура, загримированная Пушкиным, и читает стихи "Опять на родине". Даем "Дуэль Пушкина" -- живую картину, копию с картины Наумова.» ("I'm staging a *tableau vivant, On Returning to the Motherland*. On stage there will be an abandoned house; a landscape, some pine trees. And a man made up as Pushkin enters and recites the poem *On Returning to the Motherland*. We're also presenting another tableau vivant, Pushkin's *Duel*, after the painting by Naumov.") (Chekhov to Suvorin, Jan 17, 1899, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 24.)

Attempts made in *The Seagull* to constrain the image of nature inevitably fail. Even as the backdrop to a fleeting aesthetic experience, Russia does not remain immobile and cannot be described in large sweeps with the eye of a painter who stares at a landscape day after day. Its image is timeless, yet it can only be experienced by Chekhov's characters as instantaneous and non-repeatable. Literary critic Anton Chudakov notes that Chekhov's landscapes are not generalized as in Turgenev's work, but are made distinctive with defining features: ephemeral, unexpected, and in a strictly accidental mood. The landscape occurs "that evening and never again" from one particular point of view "whose position in space is precisely defined."[55] Chudakov translates the infamous Chekhovian "hopelessness"[56] into a tragic fact of unrepeatability. The natural horizon in *The Seagull* is stable in *theory* from the perspective of finite human experience, but it actually makes for a radically unpredictable backdrop, a symbol of Chekhovian contingency. Treplev's stage frame itself becomes a symbol which deceptively seems to hold its contents stable.

This anchored point of view might sound like Romanticism's treatment of infinity in that the proscenium frame seems to be a stable lens that directs our view onto the terrifying grandiose scope of the horizon, given to us all at once. But Treplev's proscenium frame does not inhibit the movement of infinity on the other side. Rather, this preserved iterative movement is the very quality of infinity that makes it unpredictable and unstable. As we saw earlier, Aristotle makes a point to distinguish the shape of a

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[55] «возникшее в этот вечер -- и никогда больше»; «положение которого в пространстве точно определено» (Aleksandr Pavlovich Chudakov, *Poetika Chekhova* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo 'nauka', 1971), p. 166.)

[56] Lev Shestov, 'Creation from Nothing: On Anton Chekhov', in *A Shestov Anthology*, ed. by Bernard Martin (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970), pp. 93–131 (pp. 93–131).

"potential" infinite series. It is not linear, growing progressively larger in an additive measure of magnitudes. Rather, infinity functions iteratively, in a circular fashion, yet not in a circle shape which would cover the same moment *ad infinitum*. Each moment must be unique and distinct from its set, even as the whole of infinity rotates back on itself.

An infinity of division will continue the same motion of dividing into smaller and smaller portions, taking on something extra into its set, even as we cannot predetermine what these extra somethings will be (they are not patterned, like an arithmetic progression): "The infinite turns out to be the contrary of what it is said to be. It is not what has nothing outside it that is infinite, but what always has something outside it."[57] Such a progression perhaps looks more like a spiral, like Dante's hell, a circle that continually reveals new sights.[58] The spiral is in a constant state of becoming, and it cannot be determined from outside as a wholeness or unity.[59] Rather, this creative motion implies a self-same perpetuation. And this is precisely the sort of iterative infinity – incrementally in motion yet maintaining an impression of self-sameness – which interests Stepun in Russia's infinitude. For Chekhov, the accidental, fixed point of view is *meant* to be repeated and iterated in a plurality of productions, all with their own particularities. It is in such an unmathematical set of iterations that an appropriate infinity can be revealed

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[57] Aristotle, pp. 206b34–207a6.

[58] Virgil to Dante: "You know that the place is circular; and though you have come far, always to the left in descending to the bottom, you have not yet turned through the whole circle; wherefore if aught new appears to us, it should not bring wonder to your face." (Alighieri Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. by Charles S. Singleton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 149.)

[59] Aristotle does not name the spiral as the shape of infinite motion, but he does point to a modified circle as something of an approximation: "This is indicated by the fact that rings also that have no bezel are described as infinite, because it is always possible to take a part which is outside a given part. The description depends on a certain similarity, but it is not true in the full sense of the word. This condition alone is not sufficient: it is necessary also that the same part should never be taken twice. In the circle, the latter condition is not satisfied: it is true only that the next part is always different" (Aristotle, pp. 206b34–207a6.).

and that drama is found to be the most appropriate genre for this Chekhovian project.

The Russian landscape is infinite, yet "always the same," filled with: "silent fields, unadorned woods, dusty country roads, swamps, slow streams, shaky hump-backed bridges, thatched-roofed wooden houses – all homely, all quickly built and erected casually from materials accidentally at hand. Nothing attracts the eye, nothing satisfies it, nothing dazzles it."[60] The sense of infinity implicit in such vastness is enhanced by inconsequential human life. There is no impetus to construct one's own fate, such as in monumental European architecture – in Speer's sense of "ruin value"[61] – or as in St. Petersburg's superman complex. It is no surprise, then, that Russia's infinitude has long served as a weapon in human trifles: this "land-ocean" has defeated Napoleon and has swallowed Moscow's political exiles. And Chekhov attributes the particularity of Russian suicide to this same unlivable expanse of space:

> Русская жизнь бьет на манер тысячепудового камня. В Западной Европе люди погибают оттого, что жить тесно и душно, у нас же оттого, что жить просторно... Простора так много, что маленькому человечку нет сил ориентироваться... Вот что я думаю о русских самоубийцах...[62]

In the unnavigable, untraversable Russian terrain, a landscape scattered only with "accidental" constructions which may just as well not exist, the human cannot help but to become lost.

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[60] Stepun, p. 20.

[61] Speer's ruin value valued building plans by how beautifully the structure would collapse; so the building would be deemed, even in its demise, as worthy of preservation. More on this in Chapter 4: Decomposition and Ruins: Nabokov.

[62] "Russian life oppresses the Russian man, to such a degree that he disappears without trace, it bears down on him like a ten-ton rock. People in the West perish because their life is too cramped and suffocating; here, they perish from too much space. There is so much space that a little human being hasn't the strength to get his bearings in it. That's what I think about Russian suicides..." (Chekhov to Grigorovich, Feb 5, 1888, in Chekhov, *Pis'ma v dvenadtsat' tomakh*, p. 292.)

The notion of agoraphobia did not exist in Russia as modern Europe was struggling with the disease. One explanation for this is this closeness to an "infinite" nature, which had once been identified as a cure to agoraphobia. In experience with the Russian landscape, the Russian people never lost their sixth sense. Though, Chekhov's words suggest that the disorienting effects of agoraphobia – the feeling of being crushed by the Earth – are the basis for Russian suicides. Perhaps in the same way that agoraphobia had its exceptional *flâneur* and *agoraios,* Russian intimacy with infinity had its suicidal outliers. In this way, we can regard these suicides as the Russian variety of agoraphobic symptoms, of losing one's way, also an epidemic in Russia as in Europe, but perhaps not as "fashionable" or popular a disease.

It is no wonder that the hopelessness of the Russian spirit is often attributed to Chekhov's work, and that he has been accused of poisoning the Russian soul. Shestov, in his "Creation from Nothing: On Anton Chekhov," pins Chekhov as the quintessential killer of human hope. He argues that Chekhov is indeed a unique artist in that he can create from nothing (rather than re-purposing his predecessors), but he is only successful because Tolstoy laid the groundwork for hopelessness to be palatable to the masses. It is mass appreciation of Chekhov that Shestov fears, as though the "poison" of Chekhovian hopelessness threatens to infect all of Chekhov's readers with sedentariness.[63] Against this background, Shestov discusses Chekhov's *The Seagull* as a play of "naked chance," of no real substance. Chekhov is made to seem obsessed with arbitrariness. His work, which arises almost involuntarily from "nothing," produces the inspiration for new works which will infect their readership with pitiful "anti-muses."

[63] Shestov, p. 103.

But perhaps Chekhov's turn to drama is actually a *hopeful* attempt to access an aesthetic system of iteration. The typically Chekhovian delays made through pauses, senseless description of objects, and accidental action are more impactful, repeatable material in the time and space of theater. The audience accesses Chekhov's anxiety, since he is at a loss to combine all of the scattered, unrepeatable moments into a centripetal thought. But in the iteration of the play itself, by its multiple performances, there is hope of accessing the immortality of infinity's form. In this sense of radical sameness, the monotony of superfluous detail, Chekhov's frame-within-a-frame attempts to capture a live photograph of Russian landscape that can *potentially* be resurrected in subsequent performances.

Stepun suggests a similar photographic treatment of Russia, as he notes simultaneity of the Russia's geographical vastness (Russia as a "land-ocean") and of the "stand-still of time" in this vastness. The landscape is infinite, yet "always the same," a space only incidentally scattered with human relics. The theoretical vastness of Russia is undercut by its repetitive imagery. Human interaction and construction within Russia's landscape is purely incidental and momentary. In Stepun, there is no move by the Russian "holy" spirit to create monuments which will absurdly exert their power over nature, which will plan to outlast human culture and politics, as we will see in Speer's monumentalism in Chapter Four.

As Peter Chaadaev argues in his critique of city-dwelling, Russians become nomadic in times of revolution, and this nomadism allows for artistic productivity on a national, even legendary, level. Perhaps this is why Treplev in *The Seagull* finds himself so frustratingly impotent with respect to his artistic merit. According to Chaadaev, the

Russian man can be susceptible, just like the European man, to losing himself by disorientation: «Человеку свойственно теряться, когда он не находит способа привести себя в связь с тем, что ему предшествует, и с тем, что за ним следует. Он лишается тогда всякой твердости, всякой уверенности. Не руководимый чувством непрерывности, он видит себя заблудившимся в мире.»[64] Treplev turns nature into an artistic symbol which can be considered from a distance, a constant background to his more immediate poetic concerns of immobility. The stage frame itself becomes a symbol which only tentatively holds Russia's infinitude in our eye. Of course, any attempt to domesticate Russian landscape must be futile, since Treplev's *tableau vivant* treatment of the terrain is ever-changing and ever-fleeting. And Chekhov's attempt to replicate the iterative quality of infinity will necessarily fall short. But this yearning and frustration with representation, held commonly by Treplev and his creator Chekhov, carries in it the sprouting impetus for an art which will coincide with the "invisible" movement of a Russian infinitude.

Tableaux vivants in Tarkovsky

The cinema screen has been lauded since the 1880s as the place of absolute mimesis, a full aesthetic representation of the world. Unlike painting, the cinema screen seems to capture life as it is lived, in motion and in flux. Unlike theater, the cinema screen provides stability of experience, a perfectly iterative performance. But these qualities

[64] "a man gets lost when he can find no means to bind himself with what has come before him and what will follow him. Then all consistency, all certainty escapes him. Lacking the guiding sense of continuous duration, he finds himself lost in the world." (Petr Chaadaev, 'Pis'mo pervoe', in *Stat'i i pis'ma* (Moskva: Sovremennik, 1989), pp. 38–56 (p. 45).)

which raise cinema are *imitations* of life, not life captured in its authenticity. Though the material of cinema is processed light, its mechanical capture is only seemingly automatized. Though the cinema screen gives us the impression of movement as it appears to us through the naked eye (without the mediation of camera), the apparatus has been constructed just so to encourage this impression. Film simulates motion through a series of imperfect, soft focus photographs which are projected at a rate of 24 frames per second. Thus it functions according to a sort of Zeno's paradox: we are given the *appearance* of motion by segmentation, but ultimately, pure motion is unthinkable. Cinema provides a "discontinuous motion"[65] which is consistently misread by the viewer as fluidity, as a perfect document of "real" space. This approximation is the only achievable approach to motion, like Zeno's approximation of infinity by division into smaller and smaller segments, all iterating an infinity which cannot be represented in its "pure" state.

But even in its deceptive mimetic qualities, cinema uniquely considers the aesthetics of movement in space. Arguably, certain plastic arts also struggle with the representation of movement, but cinema is, *by its very nature and definition*, tied to motion. Bazin names cinema the "image of duration." Jean-François Lyotard names it an "inscription of movement, a writing with movements."[66] And following this sense of a unique treatment of time and space, Erwin Panofsky argues that cinema is the only

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[65] ". . . a movie reel consists of a series of momentary shots succeeding one another with such speed that the human eye merges them; a series of immobile elements creates the illusion of motion. This is a demonstration of Zeno's paradox. The eye and the consciousness perceive immobility as motion . . . A film does not move; it only appears to move. Pure motion, as such, will never be reproduced in cinematography." (Viktor Shklovsky, *Literature and Cinematography*, trans. by Irina Masinovsky (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008), p. 31.)

[66] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Acinema', in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. by Phillip Rosen, trans. by Paisley N. Livingston (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 349–59 (p. 349).

representational art which escapes an idealistic conception of the world: "It is the movies, and only the movies, that do justice to that materialistic interpretation of the universe which, whether we like it or not, pervades contemporary civilization."[67] And even more unique is the capturing of this materialistic representation for a perfectly replicable aesthetic experience. Filmmaker Tarkovsky wrote that cinema provides a means for spatialization, printing, and collection of time:

> For the first time in the history of the arts, in the history of culture, man found the means to take an impression of time. And simultaneously the possibility of reproducing that time on screen as often as he wanted, to repeat it and go back to it. He acquired a matrix for actual time. Once seen and recorded, time could now be preserved in metal boxes over a long period (theoretically for ever).[68]

The quality of movement, duration, and becoming, so troublesome and ephemeral for many genres, paradoxically comes to define the field of cinema. Sequential printing on celluloid turns time to space, and iterative projection of this space-time makes "actual time" accessible on command.

From its nascence, cinema technology was employed for the propagation of theater by these very unique abilities: one could film a particular performance and one could reproduce that exact performance iteratively.[69] And though the notion of visual perspective changes with the advent of film – we see the depth of three dimensions projected equally on a flat surface –, the architecture of the theater remains largely the same. Beginning with early Greek theater, around 425 B.C., the proscenium stage frame

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[67] Erwin Panofsky, 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', in *Three Essays on Style*, ed. by Irving Lavin (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 91–128 (p. 120).
[68] Robert Bird, *Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), p. 62.
[69] In a way, this perfects the Chekhovian project of iteration. But, ultimately, it also destroys the effect of ephemerality and accident which are essential to his Aristotelean set of infinite iterations.

has marked the boundary between mimesis and its audience, much like the earlier-noted painting frame that marks the difference between the wall and the representation while also interrogating these distinctions of inside/outside. The proscenium frame also established direction of vision, perspectival lines that would come to determine art's technical representation of the world. Lost for many centuries to a circular-stage custom, the proscenium reemerged in the Renaissance by influence of perspectival painting[70] and Neoclassicism. Forced perspective from the Greek tradition is adopted and improved upon in several capacities: audience seating is arranged in a semicircle and raised for improved sight lines; the stage floor is sloped and stage wings are angled to encourage a sense of depth[71]; actors are grouped symmetrically around a central axis and in recessive diagonals.[72]

In the transition from theater to film, many of these same forced perspective traditions – depth of field, lines of acting, invisible fourth walls – were maintained. But, as Panofsky argues, even though theater architecture has not changed, the perspective of the spectator has turned static with cinema projections:

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[70] Several scientific perspective systems were developed in the Renaissance for perspectival painting and continued to be improved upon in subsequent aesthetic traditions. Linear (or central) perspective, attributed to Alberti, traces orthogonal lines into one vanishing point. Angular (or oblique) perspective uses two vanishing points. Inclined perspective uses three vanishing points and avoids objects drawn parallel to the picture plane. Synthetic perspective, attributed to da Vinci, curves some parallel edges to more realistically mimic optics. In parallel perspective – often seen in Asian art – parallel edges remain parallel in the representation, and orthogonal lines do not converge. In inverted perspective, orthogonals converge in front of the picture plane (we will return to this in Lyotard's discussion of Brunelleschi's box). In vanishing area perspective, orthogonals converge into a general region (not a vanishing point). In axial (or vanishing axis) perspective, orthogonals converge at a vertical axis. In bifocal perspective, orthogonal lines converge at two incompatible vanishing points.

[71] This effect of depth of field is famously exploited in Adelbert Ames' experiments in the 1930s. A room was constructed in such a way that a person moving through it would seem to grow or shrink. It is important to point out that this sort of effect, much like the stage effects of the Renaissance, is absolutely dependent on the viewer's place of perspective. For a theater audience, their seats have been rotated for optimal perspectival illusion. For Ames, the optical effect only works from a peephole view.

[72] For more on aesthetic perspective, see Erwin Panofsky, James J. Gibson, Julian Hochberg, Margaret A. Hagen, Rudolf Arnheim, Richard L. Gregory, and E.H. Gombrich.

> In theater, space is static, that is, the space represented on the stage, as well as the spatial relation of the beholder to the spectacle, is unalterably fixed. The spectator cannot leave his seat, and the setting of the stage cannot change, during one act. . . . With the movies the situation is reversed. Here, too, the spectator occupies a fixed seat, but only physically, not as the subject of an aesthetic experience. Aesthetically, he is in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with the lens of the camera, which permanently shifts in distance and direction."[73]

Yet in his static, fixed position, the spectator witnesses a radical treatment of space: not just bodies moving in space as on the stage, but space itself in motion, "approaching, receding, turning, dissolving and recrystallizing" through the camera, editing, and special effects.[74]

The best seat in the theater – the king's seat, towards which the performance is aimed and which provides the best perspective of the stage[75] – is made democratic through film. Lyotard has written on the "perspectivist stage" and the "monocular vision" of theater and painting, arguing for a resistance to classic representation by optical geometry. The king's seat provides a unique perspective of the world: "the eye of the monarch, positioned as indicated by the vanishing-point, receives this universe thus placed in order."[76] By placing the camera in the king's seat, the filmmaker gives everyone access to the ideal aesthetic experience and to a perspective of the world perfectly ordered.

Roland Barthes recognized a likeness in theater and photography in the absolute

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[73] Panofsky, 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', p. 96.
[74] Panofsky, 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures', pp. 96–98.
[75] Film theorist David Bordwell writes on the institution of the king's seat perspective: "Perspective scenography developed in the context of court festivities, with their large stage mansions and extensive machinery. As a result, the perspective eyepoint was determined by the position of the ruler's box in the auditorium. Indeed, entire theaters came to be built around the vantage point of the duke's or cardinal's seat; the sight lines of other seats were correspondingly distorted" (David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 6.).
[76] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 120.

contingency of the image or performance produced. In both genres, the impression of absolute reality is fleeting: once the performance is given or the photograph is taken, the coincidence with absolute reality is gone.[77] Can we recognize the same contingent relationship in cinema? Though film certainly takes fleeting photographs of a particularized performance, its iterative screenings of the performance cannot be so easily considered contingent. The screen disperses the image in its movement and flux, and it democratizes the aesthetic experience. The relationship of the camera to the screen is similar to that of Brunelleschi's box[78] to painting – the designed perspective gives a mechanical impression of space, a constructed representation of reality. Tarkovsky, who greatly disliked the trend of "filmed theater", found fault with this mechanized reproduction of space. His work enacts a different representation that is not married to a purely perspectival notion of reality.

For Lyotard also, the mirrored linear perspective of Brunelleschi's box requires resistance. To direct one's vision into a particular direction, Lyotard writes, is to "always [be] surrounded by a curved area where visibility is held in reserve yet isn't absent."[79] Thus the potential of perception is ever-present in the blurred curve skirting a linear focus. But as soon as the line of vision is shifted to sharpen and domesticate this blurred

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[77] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010).

[78] Brunelleschi's box was a mechanism which revolutionized perspectival painting before even Alberti's advent of linear perspective. The box, open at the top, contained Brunelleschi's drawing of the Dome of Florence façade and a back panel of buffed metal (in effect, a mirror). At the correct angle, viewed through the peephole of the box, the drawing would merge with the mirrored image of the actual Dome, thus proving that Brunelleschi's representation matches point-by-point with the image of the Dome. The peephole view denies peripheral vision. And the reflected image, as viewed through the box, is already a flattened representation of the actual Dome. It excludes optical curvature, and in its central focal perspective, the reflected image is more adaptable to aesthetic representation than a view of the Dome itself with the naked eye. For more on denied optics in Brunelleschi's box, see Jean-François Lyotard, 'Veduta on a Fragment on the "History" of Desire', in *Discourse, Figure*, trans. by Antony Hudek and Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp. 157–204..

[79] Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, p. 16.

space, the skirting shifts just out of reach. One cannot hold all points in focus simultaneously into the kind of imaginary perspective of landscape painting. Chekhov had understood this same problem as analogous to the difficulty of viewing infinity, which is why Treplev's backdrop is not a landscape painting. Sitte, in Chapter One, also recognized this problem in forcing abstract space into a Euclidean, gridded plan.

Vision is non-Euclidean, and so cannot be fully represented by a linear perspective of orthogonals. Recognition of curved space and our physical experience of space runs counter to a Cartesian mechanics, to which the camera eye is so often bound. In his explicit critique of Descartes, Lyotard questions the linearity of Cartesian thinking: "in what we call thinking the mind isn't 'directed' but suspended. . . You don't clear the ground to build unobstructed."[80] Rather than a segmented Cartesian grid which isolates monocular experience, from a peephole structure, Lyotard's space revels in its excess of vision, in its unpresentable places. Subjective perception cannot hold all possibility within itself, and so alternates irreducibly between vision and the invisible, between presentation and the unrepresentable, between finite and the infinite.

These radical spaces of non-mechanical perspective can be found in several aesthetic genres. Lyotard writes most explicitly on painting and its framing, but theatrical framing also allows for an excess of vision which cannot be accounted for in a monocular experience. A painting's frame functions similarly to a theater's footlights, Bazin tells us. Both demarcate a space that separates us from the work of art, and this demarcation allows for the work to have a contemplative, inward orientation. The stage is set up as a labyrinth – its wings, décor, curtains, and backdrop establish a space inaccessible and

[80] Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, p. 19.

unnavigable by the audience. The footlights center attention on the actors onstage, but the centripetal focus is an illusion that disperses in the back space, receding from the audience's view.

Lyotard also gives an analogy between the theatrical backstage and representational painting, arguing that both have three spatial limits that perform distinct functions. The theater or museum firstly sets up the space that allows for representation, and within it, the frame – the proscenium, stage edge, painting frame – is a second limit, a window onto a particular representation. The third limit is invisible; it functions by setting up the possibility of representation, while hiding itself from view as representation. Most easily recognized in theater by the backstage, this third limit is identified in painting as the distance point, often traced out of frame, invisible in the painting itself, yet fundamentally constructing that which has been made visible.[81]

Even as representational painting is geometrically constructed according to an invisible apparatus, identified in Lyotard, the edges of visibility are not so mathematically defined. A painting's frame demarcates a discontinuity that, Bazin argues, cannot be "geometrically established."[82] More than satisfying a decorative or rhetorical function, the painting's frame holds a space of entirely different orientation than the space out of frame. Bazin argues that framed, painted space, which establishes a sense of microcosm by its very separation from reality, is held entirely in its framed existence. Though some perspective theorists, such as Panofsky, link the advent of Brunelleschi's and Alberti's

[81] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Painting as Libidinal Set-Up (Genre: Improvised Speech)', in *The Lyotard Reader and Guide*, ed. by Keith Crome and Williams, trans. by Keith Crome and Mark Sinclair (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 302–29 (pp. 302–329).
[82] Bazin, p. 165.

perspectival painting to a new relationship between painting and reality,[83] this relationship would seem to be a matter of mere spatial coincidence. This perspectival representation actually tells us nothing new about reality. Regardless of how perspectivally precise, the painting remains a re-presentation, an illusion manifested by material fundamentally exterior to the space of its subject. Framed painted space has no recourse to what exists beyond the frame, and, as audience, we cannot ask what is happening in the painting just around the corner of the frame limit. Just as Chekhov had recognized that landscape painting is a collection of non-coincidental moments gathered into an imaginary scenario that actually has little to do with the reality of the landscape itself, we cannot associate the "beyond the frame" of a painting with the any reality which might exist there.

It is of the film screen that we can ask such questions. Cinema, though certainly rooted in painting and theater, escapes definition enforced by other art frames. The screen projection provides us with a *portion* of a new world, built of light, the material of optics, and presenting this light in motion, as we experience in direct vision. Unlike the landscape painting, the film screen gives us a coinciding capture of real elements, captured by light. Yet this portion of constructed world is inaccessible in full to its audience, like the backstage of theater, and is also inaccessible to its actors and author. What is right around the corner of the film screen is somewhat accessible, in that it has captured "real" space, but it is still not accessible, as the movement of the camera gaze is

[83] "[T]he beginning of the space no longer coincides with the border of the picture: rather, the picture plane cuts through the middle of the space. Space thus seems to extend forward across the picture plane. . . . The picture has become a mere "slice" of reality, to the extent and in the sense that imagined space now reaches out in all directions beyond represented space, that precisely the finiteness of the picture makes perceptible the infiniteness and continuity of the space" (Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), pp. 60–61.).

predetermined. So, to use Lyotard's terms, it is in film's nature to play with an excess of vision: the film screen can be a space which paradoxically presents vision as it holds this vision in reserve.

The two notions of space – the framed painting and the unframed film screen – seem incompatible, and Bazin was bothered by the practice of filming paintings, which jammed the centripetal frame into a centrifugal, dispersive space.[84] The result is neither a subjugation nor a betrayal of painting; "rather it is to provide [cinema] with a new form of existence. The film of a painting is an aesthetic symbiosis of screen and painting, as is the lichen of the algae and the mushroom."[85] This jamming creates an excess of vision that necessitates new aesthetic rules and genres and that allows for a new kind of spatial movement, perhaps akin to the spiraling Russian infinity which is simultaneously withdrawn and dispersive, simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal.

Tarkovsky was skeptical of incorporating formal traditions of painting and theater into cinema. He found that the clichés established by these other art forms were clouding the potential for cinema to function as a profound experience of time. But even in his resistance to other forms of art, Tarkovsky could not help but to focus attention on paintings and to labor over the *mise-en-scene* of his films. Like Chekhov, he was fond of *tableaux vivants*, and his shots, with their reflective stillness, are often described as paintings themselves.[86] Tarkovsky was particular in his treatment of time and generally

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[84] ". . . if we show a section of a painting on a screen, the space of the painting loses its orientation and its limits and is presented to the imagination as without any boundaries" (Bazin, p. 166.)

[85] Bazin, p. 168.

[86] Though Tarkovsky resisted direct adaptation between aesthetic genres, his films make extensive reference to paintings and his background as a painter inflects his cinema. Tarkovsky's writings make reference to Carpaccio, Cezanne, Dali, Magritte de Latour, van Gogh, Goya, El Greco, Picasso, Durer, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Giotto, among many others. And setting aside *Andrei Rublev* for its direct

resisted his predecessors' film forms. He could appreciate Eisenstein's montage for its revolution, but found it to be ultimately inadequate for the cinema's potential as a liberated aesthetic genre. And Vertov's rapid tempo of cuts did not appeal to the near-immobile, unfolding temporality of Tarkovsky's style.

Tarkovsky's *Stalker* was intended to feel like a single shot, "time and its passing ... revealed"[87]: no montage, no "dislocation of time" by cutting. Much like Treplev's impression of present time and of nothing and of "two hundred thousand years," Tarkovsky has an Aristotelian respect for the unknowable whole of time. We can only understand infinity as a spiraling, unfolding in time, and Tarkovsky could not envision such an unfolding, a state of "becoming", as a quickening aesthetic. So his films, especially his later *oeuvre*, slow down to a near stand-still with almost imperceptible zooms.[88] This sort of "extreme immobilization" is lauded in Lyotard's discussion of cinema:

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thematization of painting, Tarkovsky's films make extensive visual reference to particular paintings: *Mirror* lingers over Leonardo's *A Young Woman with a Juniper Twig* and his instructional writings on battlefield painting; *Nostalghia*'s narrative is motivated by Piero della Francesca's *Madonna del Parto,* a fresco featured in the film, and the heroine is a dead ringer for one of Piero's painted women; van Eyck's *The Adoration of the Lamb* is featured in the abandoned ruins of *Stalker*'s Zone; *Mirror* enacts Pieter Bruegel's *January (Hunters in the Snow)* and *Nostalghia* enacts Caspar David Friedrich's *Ruins of Abbey at Eldena* as *tableaux vivants*; Solaris replicates the earthly scene of *Hunters in the Snow,* which also hangs in the spaceship. But also, Tarkovsky's compositions have been widely recognized as painterly. His symmetrical framing is reminiscent of Renaissance perspective paintings. Often his *mise-en-scenes* are ordered as frontal perspectives with one vanishing point, flattening the image. For more on Tarkovsky's painting influence, see James Macgillivray, 'Andrei Tarkovsky's Madonna Del Parto', in *Tarkovsky*, trans. by Nathan Dunne (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008); Juhani Pallasmaa, 'Space and Image in Andrei Tarkovsky's "Nostalgia": Notes on a Phenomenology of Architecture in Cinema', in *Chora 1: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's Press, 1994), pp. 143–66.

[87] Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 194.

[88] Jennifer M. Barker recognizes a similarly near-imperceptible zoom in Tarkovsky's Mirror: "the forward-tracking camera performs a barely perceptible reverse zoom. Both movements, forward and reverse, continue for a brief few seconds . . . The slowness of the forward tracking motion and the slightness of the reverse zoom yield an effect that, though subtle, is dizzying" (Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 13.)

> We should read the term *emotion* as a *motion* moving toward its own exhaustion, an immobilizing motion, an immobilized mobilization. The representational arts offer two symmetrical examples of these intensities, one where immobility appears: the tableau vivant; another where agitation appears: lyric abstraction.[89]

At the pole of *tableau vivant*, Lyotard's "acinema" absorbs all fantasy, movement, disjunction into a core of absolute entropy. It exposes all potential combinations, contradictions, and representations. And in placing these potential interactions together, we see both the visible "real" and invisible "potential." In the moments when actors hold their poses, "all motion on the stage ceases, a temporally circumscribed and 'out-of-time' moment" that harkens to Diderot's tableaus and *apothéose* of staged melodrama.[90] Tarkovsky's filmed "paintings" continue to move imperceptibly, touching the order of infinity, accessing the nonrecurrent and unrepresentable.[91] These *tableaux vivants* allow for Tarkovsky to instill a "most intense agitation through [the work's] fascinating paralysis"[92] through both their radical stillness and their unorthodox construction of impossible spaces. His filmed places and times fold in on each other – not in a Vertovian jumping from place to place, but into a single, reflective shot (see Fig III.ii).

Though Tarkovsky resisted an Eisensteinian model of montage, calling it a relic from the silent film era which has become irrelevant, we cannot dismiss all Eisenstein influence from Tarkovsky's work. After all, the notions of disjunction and distortion, which Tarkovsky attributes to cinema's treatment of time, contain Eisenstein's cinematic impulses. For both filmmakers, cinema imposes images one on top of the other, a

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[89] Lyotard, 'Acinema', p. 356.
[90] Brigitte Peucker, *The Material Image: Art and Real in Film* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 30.
[91] Lyotard argues that the classic problem of representational arts is their "exclusion and foreclosure of all that is judged unrepresentable because nonrecurrent" (Lyotard, 'Acinema', p. 355.).
[92] Lyotard, 'Acinema', p. 357.

layering of impressions that allows for the retaining of one image even as another is presented for viewing.[93] Unlike literature, which functions by a linear grammar and a sequential experience of images, cinema allows for a simultaneity of contradictory images in its film grammar. Of course, many films ignore this unique potential, working in crude adaptation of other genres' language and form, most commonly theater and literature. But Eisenstein and Tarkovsky both argue that their work was unadapted and unadaptable to any other aesthetic form.

For Eisenstein, the layering of filmic images took a musical function and rendered it visual. Montage could produce an overtonal effect, by which two tones played simultaneously produce the illusion of a third tone, a higher tone not found in either of the parental notes. Most often found in *a cappella* or barbershop quartets, the overtone sublates by forcing together conflicting frequencies. In Eisenstein, this musical quality is made visual by forcing together conflicting graphics, not sequentially, but one on top of the other, just as in the musical overtone. The highest form of such layered collision, intellectual montage, renders on the screen the functions of thought, not as a logical, linear grammar, but as the unnavigable process of thought's infinity.

Tarkovsky wrote more directly on the unique sense of infinity in art and on the potential for cinema to uniquely address infinity through finite *mise-en-scene*. For him, man accesses a sense of infinity in dreams, memory, and spirituality. And it is precisely the "on top" quality of a film aesthetic that allows for such a sense of infinity to be manifested. But rather than an overtonal sense of aesthetic sublation, Tarkovsky's work

[93] Though it would seem that film is a linear progression of images by virtue of the film strip which sequentially frames soft focus photographs, projection of the film strip takes this spatial linearity and turns it to spatial layering on the screen. The Zeno's paradox of cinema, as described by Shklovsky, functions by imposition of one image *on top* of the other in order to give the impression of "real" motion.

layers disjunctive images on top of one another *in the same frame*. So Tarkovky's dream, memory, and spiritual shots jam together two differently functioning images into one space, one frame. We see this in *Nostalghia*'s ending shot, which places a Russian *dacha* and landscape within the ruins of an Italian cathedral.

Figure III.II: Tarkovksy, Nostalghia

The distorted quality of this opposition creates a new sense of the world and of thought, a "catharsis" with a depth of artistic images, ultimately "accumulat[ing] to form an all-embracing sphere that grows out into infinity."[94] Tarkovsky argues that even though we cannot avoid using the finite in order to evoke the infinite, by substitution "it is possible to create the illusion of the infinite: the image."[95] In Chekhov, the potential for this infinite image can be found in the iteration of finite performances. In Tarkovsky, we see the shorthand for Chekhov's technique. Images do not iterate, but they unfold slowly over

[94] Tarkovsky, p. 39.
[95] Tarkovsky, p. 38.

time so that enjambments of disparate spaces and *tableaux vivants* do justice to infinity's spiraling, just as Treplev's frame had done.

As we have seen in Bazin, who was struck by the spatial incompatibility of filming a painting, the marriage of contradictory spaces necessitates a new set of aesthetic rules and a radically new sense of genre. In Tarkovsky, we find this radicality in his treatment of time. As encouraged by the title of his autobiographical text, *Sculpting in Time*, readings of Tarkovsky's work have lauded his molding of time in a genre that by nature is spatial. But in the focus on temporality, these readings have dismissed what should be seen as a radical formation of *space*, a disjunctive layering which exceeds the bounds set by any one aesthetic genre, yet made possible only through an unusual, cinematic molding of time. In Tarkovsky's work, we see a unique *tableau* created through cinema, not as the filming of painting, but as the emergence of nature's infinity through a markedly slow reflection on *mise-en-scene* and a relationship to infinity through the distorting framing of architecture.[96]

Nostalghia registers a typically Tarkovskian narrativization of infinity: through boundlessness of memory and "profound alienation." Tarkovsky writes that his

[96] In *Nostalghia*, Tarkovsky takes the *Madonna Del Parto* out of its original site, the Capelia di Cimitero of Santa Maria, an imposing Baroque structure whose walls were "tryin[ing] to engulf the painting" (Guerra, *Tempo di Viaggio*), and moves it to the equally dark, tight space of the chapel in Monterchi. The fresco painting was detached from the original wall in 1910 from its architectural frame – an archway –, and it was placed in its own gold frame thereafter. Tarkovsky films the *Madonna Del Parto* in such a way that the architecture of the crypt becomes disfigured and unnavigable. In his detailed analysis of the Monterchi chapel architecture, James Macgillivray argues that Tarkovsky's filmic manipulation of the crypt space "cinematise"s the fresco. Tarkovsky's long duration shots, tracking shots, shot-countershots, and editing turn the crypt into a new structure: singular places double, some spaces slack, and the grid of columns which should help us map the crypt become a dark forest that disorients the path of our vision. "What were once absolutes in the architecture (the apse, the altar and the structure of the church) become relative conditions depending upon the contingencies of the camera's field view. The field condition inherent in the architecture and the visual field of the camera overlap and coincide." (Macgillivray, p. 171.).

Nostalghia expresses the "hopelessness of trying to grasp what is boundless."[97] In his films, the characters' static struggle to navigate infinity's invisible movement often renders them part of this horizon. They become the Stepunian arbitrary anthropomorphic structures. Tarkovskian emphasis on memory and alienation over the characters themselves perhaps is indicative of a Russian literary tradition of the superfluous man. It is arguably the very pressure of Russia's infinitude that rushes man to his superfluity – if not in Chekhovian suicide, then in his Tarkovskian subsumption to the horizon. No longer a significant place for the gaze to land, the characters are not at center stage in Tarkovsky's films.

In fact, Tarkovsky's work is propagated by still lifes: carefully staged *mise-en-scenes* which are presented as living photographs. Often tabletops filled with objects or scattered relics lying just below the surface of water, these *mise-en-scenes* appear to almost breathe, as though they are enacting an imperceptible animation. As *tableaux vivants*, living paintings, Tarkovsky's framings of Russian infinity contain the same aesthetic impulses and desires as Chekhov and his Treplev. And just as with Aristotle's potential infinity, Tarkovsky's temporality is stuck in state of becoming, a living standstill. He writes on his still lifes and landscapes: "I am … puzzled when I am told that people cannot simply enjoy watching nature, when it is lovingly reproduced on the screen, but have to look for some hidden meaning they feel it must contain." [98] Rather than contain the image of nature, Tarkovsky's frames guide our gaze and force us to grapple with infinity's excess of vision.

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[97] Tarkovsky, p. 203.
[98] Tarkovsky, p. 212.

The architecture ruins featured in Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia* take on framing functions in their photogenic lacework. Characters wander through the ruins, even dwell in them, but the building carcasses have lost their original utility. They have no doors; they are overgrown; they leak. This architecture is left only with aesthetic value, and the framing of dream, memory, and infinity through their walls takes on a theatrical substance: "Italy . . . stretches out above [Gorchakov] in magnificent ruins which seem to rise up out of nothing. These fragments of civilisation at once universal and alien, are like an epitaph to the futility of human endeavour, a sign that mankind has taken a path that can only lead to destruction."[99] But although *Nostalghia* is filled with the architectural remnants of human "endeavours", these carcasses serve to *frame a relationship* with infinity rather than mark the metaphysical boundary between immortality and finitude. The architecture, like Treplev's frame-within-a-frame, pushes our gaze into the strange, untraversable space which resists our attempts to navigate it. Looking into Tarkovsky's film frame is to struggle with an Aristotelian infinity constantly in flux, denying a wholeness to time. The "magnificent ruins which seem to rise up out of nothing" are resurrected for the purpose of focusing our attention, for without them, Tarkovsky's characters and audience would become lost under the Chekhovian weight of "too much space."

In the medium of cinema, Tarkovsky has access to new methods for playing out representations of infinitude and timelessness that are not accessible to Chekhov in his theater. *Nostalghia* plays with *The Seagull*'s particular theatrical framing and its staging of a *mise-en-abyme*. This is not to suggest that Tarkovsky was intentionally responding to

[99] Tarkovsky, p. 205.

or recalling Chekhov, only that the pieces have a striking progression in their aesthetic treatment of infinity. Tarkovsky was careful to distinguish his art form from dramaturgy, but his interest in iteration, untraversability, and the potential stand-still of time enact some of the anxieties which moved Chekhov to write and produce his plays. It would be fair to note that some of the frustrations which Chekhov expressed with theater are resolved in Tarkovsky's treatment of film form.

In *Nostalghia* we first feel the remnants of a stage in St. Catherine's "pool", a steaming bath which fills a recess in a ruined building. Some remaining walls and arches surround the pool, and Tarkovsky's camera watches the baths from behind the columns, from behind the wings, in Lyotard's third limit, so that it has a clear view of both inside the pool and of its skirting stage area. Bathers sit in St. Catherine's pool like an audience, so the narrative action happens at the corner, on two sides of them – they are at the center, looking out, commenting on the action on the raised "stage." When they approve of Domenico's recitation of God's words to St. Catherine, they clap and yell: "*Bravo*, Domenico!" Startled by the outburst of this audience, the three actors look around sheepishly until the camera zooms closer to them, eclipsing our view of the bathing audience with the actors' heads. In the intimacy of this framing, no longer reliant on the architectural staging of ruins, we are back in the mode of cinematic identification. The architectural *mise-en-scene* gives us a theatrical staging, reversed. In *The Seagull*, we also watched an audience watching, through the stage-within-a-stage. But in *Nostalghia*, we see the audience's gaze pointed back towards us, as it watches the actors who mediate the space between the two audiences, between the chorus and the camera.

We also find a Chekhovian framing of Russian infinitude in the second moment of merging landscapes in *Nostalghia*. Gorchakov opens an Italian door onto a Russian landscape which seems to be spilling into the room from the window frame. Some of the landscape lies in miniature before the open window, across which the camera travels as though it were in flight over a motionless, muddy river. The camera frame lifts into the window, and the landscape framed within it merges seamlessly with the microcrosm which lies in the foreground before it. This is an improvement on Treplev's stage, which is built around a stone and which frames the Russian landscape in its "window" backdrop. In *Nostalghia*, the Russian infinitude cannot be held at a distance, framed tentatively by the *mise-en-scene*. It rushes back through the stage frame, leaking into the side of human finitude. *To apeiron* appropriately resists its imposed bounds and refuses to be framed passively as an aesthetic object, a rendered painting. Or, it is as though the Lyotardian invisible backstage, the third limit, has seeped out from behind the wings, and both visible and invisible are rendered on the same plane.

The movement of this extended stand-still reflection is perhaps more readily understood through Tarkovsky's direct treatment of diegetic space in *Stalker*. This dilapidated landscape extends Stepun's difficulty of traversing Russia's infinitude. In *Stalker*, Tarkovsky's heroes are forced to navigate the space of The Zone according to abstract space's true disorienting nature; they walk it haltingly, in fractured, uncertain steps. The wide open space of The Zone becomes the perfectly unreadable maze in its scope and iterative emptiness.[100] Tarkovsky is often said to create his own temporality by

[100] Several other authors have dealt explicitly with the notion that infinity is a perfect maze and a thus a perfect prison. Infinite space has a dangerous, "swallowing", all-encompassing character. The hero of Krzhizhanovsky's "Quadraturin" becomes lost in an ever-expanding space. Borges writes of the

his folding lines of filming. Robert Bird calls this cinematic experience Dantian: "The peculiar meshing of gazes in each kind of space corresponds to a specific kind of time, which knits the spatial folds into a unique fabric of experience."[101] This new, folded temporality is not meant to represent finite, livable space. In fact, it is a denial of any proper manifestation of space, and so Tarkovsky's characters are at the mercy of this peculiar spatial fabric. But this is not a quantifiable, mappable, predictable arena in a Cartesian sense. The Stalker holds a certain power in his emotional knowledge of The Zone, like a *flâneur* or *agoraios*.

The Zone denies and defies Cartesian readings by its infinitely foldable infinity. Its power to consistently morph renders its architectural markers unreliable and superfluous. And even as Tarkovsky often frames his characters from above so that they are filmed against the earth, we cannot generate any coherent Cartesian topography from their interaction with the ground. The Zone cannot be understood by any traditional mode of reading topography, and so it functions as a maze, iteratively bending and folding onto itself. Experience of The Zone consists of an infinite set of linear traveling options, making it an ideal maze, set in motion by *to apeiron*.

The characters of *Stalker* lounge, wait, are brought to a living stand-still; they themselves turn to *tableaux vivants*, even as they search The Zone for the unreadable signs of traversing its infinitude. As they languish in the face of this invisible movement, we watch them experience abstract space. Here we are conspirators in the search for a shape to infinity. The audience is complicit in the desire for order, and rather than just be

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unnavigability of the desert in "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths". George Lucas's *THX 1138* (1971) shows infinite white space as the perfect, inescapable prison.

[101] Bird, p. 53.

left to wander the aesthetics of infinity ourselves, we are glad to have company in our gaze's Stepunian "flight" into The Zone's horizon. We are reminded of watching Nina's eye wander across Russia's infinitude, framed as her backdrop in Chekhov's *Seagull*. We watch her speak of the impossibility of representing a time immemorial, and we watch the characters who watch her struggle too, all the while struggling ourselves to navigate the infinitude of the framed landscape behind her. These gazes, intersecting at odd angles, watching and looking without seeing or locking, layer upon one another in the *mise-en-abyme* of a framed framing.

In this untraversable space where everything intersects but nothing seems to stick or stay still, there is also an inability to leave behind. Iterations make up an infinite set of matter in which each element points to an eternal return to the set. *Tableaux vivants* in Tarkovsky bolster his themes of memory and nostalgia in which Russian infinity can be left, but not escaped, as it re-iterates everywhere: in an Italian cathedral, in outer space, in a nuclear disaster site. This view of abstract space, through the lens of a natural infinity, responds to a slowing down, an immobility that can unfold the elements of iteration and the *mise-en-scene* of *tableaux vivants*.

In the following Chapter, we will see how Vertov and Whitman take an opposing approach: the speeding up of an infinite set of matter, folded together such that new immaterial space can be created: virtual space. Rather than concern themselves with the nature of infinity, Vertov and Whitman approach abstract space through the mode of virtuality. For them, this mode exposes the form of abstract space by working with assumptions of immateriality and invisibility already associated with "virtual space."

IV Folding Space

"If there is a single effect produced in architecture by folding, it will be the ability to integrate unrelated elements within a new continuous mixture."[1]

In the previous chapter, we gained an understanding of abstract space through the figure of infinity. The associations with infinity, that it is natural and endless, something like a visible horizon, helped us to visualize some of abstract space's qualities. But we also came to understand infinity as artificial (in its topological constructions) and untraversable, like an empty desert that disorients and spirals one's path. In transitioning to another spatial figure – virtual space – we can expect the same treatment. The associations with virtual space, that it is immaterial and imaginary, are helpful insofar as they help us to visualize aspects of abstract space. But we will also come to understand virtual space as a complicated space which is constructed by endlessly reproducing debris that organizes raw, blank space through rhythmic relationality. Simultaneously empty of subjects – a spatiality without things – and full of trivial detail, virtual space in this chapter gives us insight into how abstract space inflects social space through aesthetic techniques of flattening, collaging, and folding.

Turning back to architecture to begin discussion of folding, we can see in a modernist architect like Mies van der Rohe the inflection of photography and cinema as developed in 1920s Dada and film projects. Early manifestation of this folding technique

[1] Greg Lynn, 'Architectural Curvilinearity: The Folded, the Pliant, and the Supple', in *Folding in Architecture*, ed. by Andreas Papadakis (London: Architectural Design, 1993), pp. 8–15 (p. 8).

took the form of collage and montage projects, but later Mies was praised by deconstructivists like Eisenman for his folded architecture that deftly interrogated absence and presence through the non-place of the fold.

In 1939, Mies created his famous abstract photomontage for the development of the Resor House. Rather than an external image of the building itself, like his earlier photomontage experiments, this art piece presented exterior, framed views from the standpoint of the house: a piece of wood wall, a fragment of Paul Klee's painting *Colorful Meal* (*Bunte Mahlzeit*, 1928), and a photograph of the landscape one could see from inside the Resor House (*Fig IV.i*).

Figure IV.I: Mies, Resor House Project, 1939

Such a meager representation of the house through its framings can be seen as a culmination of Mies's career's thoughts and experiments. The wall stands free – a precursor to Mies's floating wall, a mere structural suggestion. It does not frame the painting, but stands in front of it and the landscape photograph, as through framed *by* them. The ghostly floating columns, so common in Mies's work, lead to the landscape,

providing some measure of perspective, but they do not impinge on the view, as though framing a non-visible glass wall.

Ultimately, these pieces are all flattened, an effect encouraged by the simplicity of Mies's architectural aims. For Mies, an art of unity is governed by an inner logic that enforces relations between each part of composition without creating hierarchy between them. Such a unity flattens the aesthetic elements and genres (architecture, painting, photography) in order that a new system of rationality and order of truth should emerge, a method similar to the "new objectivity" of 1920s photography, of which Mies had been supportive. This flattening of aesthetic elements is a unique montage aesthetic that we will attribute to a Vertovian influence. It resists a hierarchical dialectic that raises one foregrounded subject or one aesthetic genre. It is this sort of flattening that was later adopted by deconstructivists such as Tschumi and Eisenman in projects like *Parc de la Villette*, which refused to assign a purpose or function to any singular element or place within the architecture. As Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter argue in their *Collage City*, "a collage approach, an approach in which objects are conscripted or seduced from out of their context, is – at the present day – the only way of dealing with the ultimate problems of, either or both, utopia and tradition."[2]

Mies immersed himself in the artistic collage spirit that surrounded him in 1910s and 1920s Berlin. He participated in avant-garde discussions, made friends with prominent art critics, filled his buildings with permanent art pieces, even used Dada techniques to render theoretical architecture drawings. It is useful to see the material application of these aesthetic movements through the vision of an architect in order to

[2] Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 144.

position Mies's contemporary Dziga Vertov as a more theoretical and poetic designer of similar aesthetic tendencies. Insofar as architects and filmmakers are both stage-directors of narrative, we can position these two projects as participating in the same resistance to viewing art in dialectical terms that lead towards spiritual freedom. This is not to say that a dialectical approach is not appropriate to our discussion of collaged and folded art. In fact, we will see later through Deleuze that Vertov's view of subjectivity is dialectically constructed. But in Mies and Vertov, who both dealt with "visual music", Hegel's approach to aesthetics, and especially to music as a direct expression of free subjectivity, is adjusted. Rather than valuing music as the expression of a purely inward subjectivity which sweeps away any need for spatial dimension whatsoever, Vertov and Mies build musically out of deliberately spatial material: collage and montage. In this way, the immateriality of abstract space is modeled by virtual space not through an attachment to a transcendental inward subjectivity or spiritual freedom, but through the immaterial relationality of musical formation and visual interactions.

For Mies, Vertov, and Whitman, the narrative of rhythm in their aesthetic both accepts the immaterial quality of a Hegelian view of music, which favors its disappearance through non-objectivity,[3] like the virtuality of the *agora*, and resists any hierarchy that positions music over objective arts like architecture and sculpture. As we will see in Deleuze's discussion of Vertov, the dialectic of perception in objective arts is convincing also in film by way of the consciousness' cancelling out of objectivity. But

[3] Music's ephemerality allows it to "volatize its real or objective existence into an immediate temporal disappearance" (Hegel, II, p. 905.)

we will see that the Mies-Vertov-Whiman project differs slightly in its emphasis on relationality *between* objects simultaneous with the interaction of viewer and art.[4]

In setting up a collage and montage poetics that eliminates hierarchy in form, Mies, Vertov, and Whitman address rhythm as an organizer of aesthetics, an inner logic of unity. Ultimately, this rhythmic relationality leads Whitman to a theory unity under imperialism and leads Vertov to a unity through Eastern "backwardness". Born of an *agora* relationality, these artists' work necessarily lead back to social theories. But even these practical objectives of positing modes of sociality are poetic. Even Vertov's film, which is commissioned by the State Trade Organization to advertise its functions across all of Russia, is inspired by Whitman's poetry and reads like a love song to exotic borderlands and a mythologically constructed space of nationhood.

MIES'S PHOTOMONTAGE

Though Mies did not write on film, his interest in the new practice was made explicit by his service as a board member to the German League for Independent Film from its inception in 1930 after his support of Richter's league predecessor New Film Society from 1926 to 1927. Mies's interest in film, similar to Eisenstein's and Vertov's, was that it functioned by a visual music, a corporealized rhythm similar to the way that architects

[4] Levinas has a similar appreciation for rhythm's ability to fold in the listener as a fellow object of representation: "Rhythm represents a unique situation where we cannot speak of consent, assumption, initiative or freedom, because the subject is caught up and carried away by it. The subject is part of its representation. It is not even despite itself, for in rhythm there is no longer a oneself, but rather a sort of passage from oneself to anonymity" (Emmanuel Levinas, 'Time and the Other', in *The Levinas Reader*, ed. by Sean Hand, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Oxford: Wiley, 1989), pp. 132–133.)

of the 1920s were discussing architecture.[5] Eisenstein took this music as a guiding metaphor for his dialectical montage of harmonies, which found form in the sublation of individual frames and sequences, like notes in a chord. Vertov, in a different approach, saw film as musical by its rhythm, a non-hierarchical approach to musical form. Mies's architectural work was described as film-music, a new language of musicality entirely.

Critic and filmmaker Hans Richter wrote on the cinematic quality of Mies's plans: they "looked indeed … like music, just that visual music we were talking about, which we were discussing, working on and realizing in film. This was not only a plan, this was a new language – one that seemed to unite our generation."[6] Mies's connection to Eisenstein is fairly clear, as he was close friends with Richter, who had established the New Film Society in 1926, and had met Eisenstein in 1927. Certainly Eisenstein followed Mies's work; it is accepted that Mies was Eisenstein's inspiration for his planned 1920s film project *The Glass House*. But there is also evidence that Mies knew of Vertov's work. Richter wrote on Vertov; Mies would have been aware of the Blum plagiarism scandal surrounding *The Eleventh Year* in 1929 Berlin[7]; and as an active board member of the German League for Independent Film, Mies would have attended their 1930 screening of Vertov's *Enthusiasm*.

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[5] Eisenstein also discussed architecture in this manner. See Sergei M. Eisenstein, 'Montage and Architecture', in *Towards a Theory of Montage* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010)..

[6] Hans Richter, *Kopfe Und Hinterkopfe* (Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 1967), p. 70.

[7] Vertov's *The Eleventh Year* was involved in a plagiarism scandal upon its release. Extracts of the film were spliced with some of Dovzhenko's documentary footage by A.V. Blum and Leo Lania into a short film *In the Shadow of the Machine*, and this German short film was released in Berlin just months before Vertov's. Not only was Vertov accused of plagiarizing his own footage, but Blum had twisted Vertov's hopeful argument about the potential for coexistence of nature and industry into a damaging critique of industrialization, which mangles human bodies. Blum and Vertov exchanged accusatory letters through the German press, and Blum eventually admitted to his borrowing, though claimed that German films could not cite foreign sources. For the letters, see *Lines of Resistance*, ed. by Yuri Tsivian (Gemona, Udine: Le Giornate del Cinema Muto, 2004).

Peculiar to Mies's work is both his interest in public pavilion spaces, in the opening up of private space, and his anticipatory photomontage technique of rendering architectural images. Both of these concerns – of social interaction and of its complex layered representation – are shared by Vertov, who was making films in Ukraine simultaneous with Mies's work in Germany. We might see Mies as the Dada counterpart to Vertov's Constructivist aesthetic. Mies is more interested in blurring boundaries between old and new, between reality and fiction. Vertov is more interested in the utility of art. Yet, both artists manipulate images through layering for the sake of creating a virtual *agora* built of visual rhythm. This de-hierarchized aesthetic already complicates boundary by its very form. Similar to the infinite sets of matter in Chapter Two, the aesthetic of flattening objects and denying foregrounded subject expands its influence so that infinite regression of detail populates beyond any bounded frame of the artwork. Insofar as the virtual *agora* is immaterial, and thus unbounded, we can think of the "real" space of film not as a series of objects that ground, but as the material of relationality, ultimately creating a portion of abstract space that is wholly illusory and immaterial.

For Mies, the burgeoning field of cinema was interesting for its ability to project an illusory space. In Mies's photomontage, photographs are layered one-on-top-of-the-other to create a visualization of a potential reality. His famous 1922 Glass Skyscraper project photomontage superimposes the technical drawing of Mies's glass skyscraper with a quaint, traditional German street.

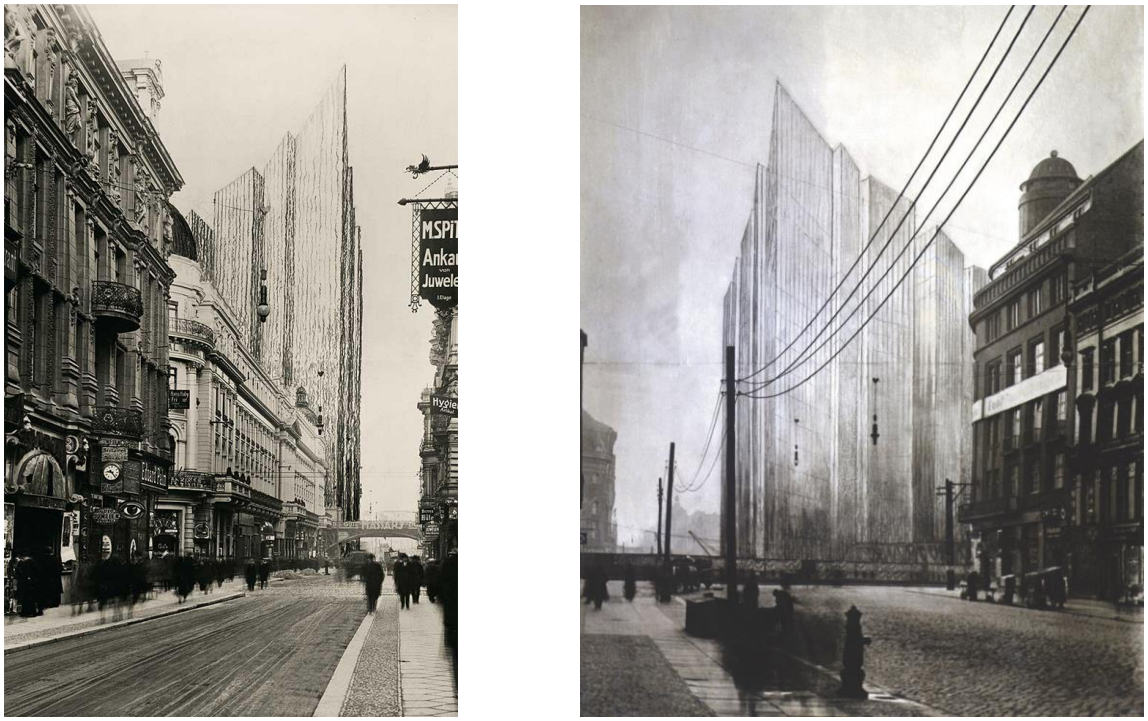

Figure IV.II: Mies, Friedrichstrasse Skyscraper Project

The choice of street, it has been suggested, references the Wilhelminian houses of expressionist stage-sets.[8] This photomontage must have been influenced by Mies's attendance at the "First International Dada Fair" in 1920, which focused heavily on cinema: on collage as a painting made "with the means of film"[9], on photomontage as a "static film"[10], on the future of cinema as Dadaist.[11] This is the very technique that Whitman had used in his photographic poems and in his excitement about pre-cinematic technologies. We can see Whitman as the precursor to both Vetov and Mies, and we can

[8] Martino Stierli, 'Mies Montage', *AA Files*, 61 (2010), 54–72 (p. 67).
[9] Wieland Herzfelde, 'First International Dada-Fair', *October*, 105 (2003), p. 104.
[10] Raoul Hausmann, 'Fotomontage', *Am Anfang War Dada*, 1972, 61–62 (pp. 61–62).
[11] Adolf Behne, 'Dada', *Die Freiheit*, 3.269 (1920).

see how Whitman, given the technological ability, would have been greatly interested in filmmaking, perhaps also in the "static film" aspect to which Mies had also been drawn.

The cutting and altering of photographs and images was nothing new to architecture. The technique of *machine retouche* (*maschinenretouche*), which isolated objects from their backgrounds by either a dimming or deleting effect, had already been used since the 1890s. And collages of sketches and photographs were becoming standard practice for architecture competitions. But Mies infused his photomontages with texture and rhythm that drew also from the tradition of frottage and cinematic stage sets. His choice to use a traditional Wilhelminian housing block to showcase his skyscraper[12] is a strategy of juxtaposition that treats existing architecture as a stage upon which Mies's architectural dreams may play out. As a theoretical architect and illusionist, Mies remains committed to the synthesis of reality and fiction.

In fact, Mies's buildings themselves maintained this illusory perspective. In treating the walkthrough of his buildings as an aesthetic experience, perhaps similar to the unfolding of cinematic space, Mies made a point of blending the stability of architectural walls with the illusion of art. His buildings make use of 19th century pre-cinematic technologies, such as paintings in the form of panoramas and dioramas, to separate large interior space into separate rooms. The walkthrough effect is two-fold: the client is given the suggestion of a wall by a floating painting without feeling blocked and isolated by the solidity of an actual wall, and the client is taken on a visual adventure, the temporal expansion of an illusion that unfolds as the viewer's eyes and legs move across

[12] The Glass Skyscraper photomontage is not meant to present the actual site of building. Such photomontage pieces were always framed as theoretical projects that had little to do with actual placement or commission.

its plane. The window, which would traditionally give this effect of the travelling, wandering eye through a non-architectural plane of external nature, as we have already seen in Le Corbusier's *fenêtre en longueur* in Chapter One, is brought within the boundary of the building.

Exterior reality (or virtual reality) can no longer be distinguished so easily from the concreteness and materiality of the inside architecture. This might be reminiscent of Hegel's explanation of the Greek *agora*, which is defined by the suggestion and subsequent incorporation of boundary:

> The peculiarity of Greek architecture is at once seen to consist in the fact that it gives shape to this supporting as such and therefore employs the column as the fundamental element in the purposiveness of architecture and beauty. . . a row of columns set up beside one another in a straight line marks a boundary, it does not enclose something as a solid wall or partition does. . .[13]

This resistance to the inside/outside boundary is also why Vertov and Mies adjust the Hegelian hierarchy of aesthetics that privileges music for its purely interior subjectivity. In a way, Mies and Vertov resist the Hegelian hierarchy of arts by merging the tendencies of this "objective" architectural model with the "subjective" musical model of rhythm. In opening this subjectivity to external reality, in expanding an immaterial consciousness to the immateriality of virtual space, Mies and Vertov aim to create an evenly relational sociality that is ordered by an inner logic of *agora* and rhythm. In Mies' project, he flattens the depth of field that would separate subject from object and de-hierarchizes his audience's subjective experience. In Vertov's project, he defines a Soviet nation not

[13] Hegel, II, p. 666.

negatively by external Western nations or by strict wall construction, but by the folding in of suggested boundaries into a virtual, dense core *agora*.

VIRTUAL *AGORA*

The virtual *agora* created by Vertov's camera and montage is a relative space in that it relates places to one another through the connective tissue of cinema. Yet the space itself, insofar as we can name the space of sociality as separate from the people within it, is an empty space. There is no particular object or relic within the space that gives it a functional quality. There are no distinctions or separations within the space that gives it a defining topography. Abstract space is no place because it exists in all places. So its heterogeneity is dependent on a unity of composition and relations. It is these qualities that Vertov recognizes in virtual space, and his folded aesthetic creates a virtual space whose construction models the workings of abstract space. In making use of abstract space for sociality, as in the Greek *agora*, the space maintains a balance of multifaceted qualities: immateriality constructed of scattered material, the ideal formed by the practical, the immediate brought forth by mediation.

Henri Lefebvre describes an originary spatial regime, which is modeled by the Greek *agora*, that he calls "absolute" space. Though in *The Production of Space* he uses terms similar to ones in this dissertation – " absolute", "historical", "abstract" – Lefebvre sets up a socially determined and socially perpetuating sense of space that does not coincide with our use of the term "abstract space" as the spatial category of widest reach and influence. These terms "absolute", "historical", and "abstract" describe, for Lefebvre,

the historical progression of human treatment of space: they follow one another and can be used to describe the same place over time. Lefebvre's "absolute space" is useful to us in describing the Greek *agora*, its original social practice, and its adoption by Vertov and Whitman to describe a relational space. But we should be careful not to mistake "absolute space" for our "abstract space", which cannot be defined simply by an *agora* model, or any one model, for that matter.

Lefebvre describes the mythical origins of absolute space as "a fragment of agro-pastroral space" created by peasants and nomadic pastoralists who then misattributed their creations to nature.[14] We can connect this relationship between the *agora* and nature to the *agros* root of *agora* discussed in Chapter One, which refers to an unbounded open nature such as a field or the countryside. In the wake of the creation of "agro-pastoral space", ancient Greek art aims to shape nature and, by consequence, to shape space. The Greek city and its *agora*, writes Lefebvre, ascribe to rules of unity which the Greeks called orders:

> The founding image of Greek space was a space already fully formed and carefully populated. . . . The Greek city, as a spatial and social hierarchy, utilized its meticulously defined space to bring demes, aristocratic clans, villages, and groups of craftsmen and traders together into the unity of the polis. At once means and end, at once knowledge and action, at once natural and political, this space was occupied by people and monuments. Its centre – the agora – served as focus, as gathering-place. At the highest point of the acropolis, the temple presided over and rounded out the city's spatio-temporal space. Built in no image, the temple was simply *there*, 'standing in the rocky valley'. It arranged and drew about itself (and about the god to which it was devoted) the grid of relations within which births and deaths, adversity and good fortune, victories and defeats came about (Heidegger). There was nothing decorative here, and nothing functional.

[14] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), p. 234. Lefebvre later calls the act of aestheticizing absolute space a violence that reduces the space of nature and the social space to an abstraction (285, 289).

> The space, the cut of the stones, the geometry of the masses, the overall scheme – none of these could be separated from the others.[15]

The Greeks valued orders because they dictated the ideal placement of architecture and art within space so that the Greek city maintained a unity without homogeneity. As a gathering-place, the *agora* is empty of relics and ornament, and serves as an idealized model of absolute space. To introduce monuments, tribunes, temples, or statues into a Greek *agora* would tamper with its concentration of absolute space and order of political and social balance. It would become a Roman Forum, which marks the first introduction of difference by splitting up the "unity of composition and proportion."[16]

In Chapter One, we established that the *agora* is a space that preserves the free and open movement of social interaction. It is constructed so that it does not have strict boundaries that would determine movement or instill a distinction of inside/outside. It is empty of any central fountain or statue, for these hierarchical objects would both impede the nature of gathering-place and instill a confused sense of movement. When this sort of social space is replaced with fast-moving *allées* and polluted recti-linear gardens, as we saw in European modernist urban plans, the effects are felt physiologically and psychologically. Lefebvre shifts the effects of *agora* loss from the psychological to the aesthetic. In Lefebvre's historical account of socio-spatial progression, the eradication of this model of absolute space led to an aesthetic emphasis on visual art, perception, and hierarchy of material by way of distanced view.

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[15] Lefebvre, p. 249.
[16] Lefebvre, p. 239..

Lefebvre describes the modern 20th-century state as an industry space that has been devastated by war and has been repleted with an accumulation of goods and materials. This is the culmination of a historical process which begins with the Roman Forum and which continues to litter absolute space by the production of difference.[17] The 12th century marks the secularization of space, freedom from politico-religious space, and the communitarian efforts of agricultural labor. The Middle Ages marks the emergence of marketplaces and networks. The 16th century marks the advent of a language of space, a Vitruvian space that speaks of the town as subject. From this discourse on space, we are given metaphoric accounts of space, as in Vitruvius. Architectural practice becomes reliant on what is written about space.

But also, Gothic architecture, as Panofsky argues, gives us a metonymic "logic of visualization" that places the sense of sight on high. As Panofsky argues, against his predecessors such as Hegel and Heidegger who privilege poetry for its inward subjectivity, it is painting, and later cinema, that are given "almost total priority" in the arts by way of their metonymic influence of distanced visuality. A line, a color, a light comes to describe the entire object represented.[18] This visual space, a space that has dominated the remnants of absolute space, functions by "a series of substitutions and displacements" of objects experienced at a necessary distance. The *agora* of empty space that focused people into immediate interaction and experience is held very tenuously in a

[17] Lefebvre, p. 250.

[18] Not only do the visual arts climb the aesthetic hierarchy, but every secondary sense is relegated to the language and sensuality of sight: "any non-optical impression – a tactile one, for example, or a muscular (rhythmic) one – is no longer anything more than a symbolic form of, or a transitional step towards, the visual. An object felt, tested by the hands, serves merely as an 'analogon' for the object perceived by sight. And Harmony, born through and for listening, is transposed into the visual realm; witness the almost total priority accorded the arts of the image (cinema, painting)" (Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, p. 286.).

visual space that depends on distance and difference. This is not to say that the *agora* is a uniform, homogenous space that offers no environmental texture. Rather, the *agora* is aimed at the comprehension of an entire group, including the space itself, in the texture of social relationality.

These complaints about the degeneration of absolute space and its abuse by a visual space find affinity with Vertov's suspicion of art, cinema's future, and treatment of national space. *A Sixth Part*'s collective Soviet space is defined not by strict boundaries, but by the endless folding of boundaries into a space of unity. Vertov's virtual *agora*, like the Greek *agora*, maintains its emptiness even as it is filled with the folding of peoples and geographies. It is not littered with objects and relics that stand isolated and independent. Rather, the *agora* is filled with *relations* and superimpositions of these relations. Such a space explores new forms of subjectivity that are not allowed by only the distanced view of a prioritized visual art or only the inward subjectivity of music.

Vertov's film, as a folding mechanism, is in control of its denizens: where, when, and how they travel through space. Vertov wants to retrain his viewers' notions of chronology and spatial linearity by folding traditional notions of time and space onto themselves, creating an overlapping network of temporalities and topographies. Architect Peter Eisenman speaks to a similarly folded place in opposition to the mechanical reproduction of media, in which "time has lost is immediacy."[19] Rather, he says, events that are determined by the fold "will involve both the simulacrum of time and place as

[19] Peter Eisenman, *Written into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 28.

well as the former reality of time and place"[20] and will gesture towards a futural spatio-temporal relationship.

Thus a spatial folding of Vertov's Russia will also necessarily involve a temporal folding through the event of film, and this new system of the fold will maintain the old ideas of a gridded, Cartesian space and a linear temporality. Like film, a modern building is "overwhelmed with a new mediated time of repetition"[21]: each walkthrough or architectural photograph is a replication, an "instant replay" of the art-object. Aspects of architectural singularity, Eisenman argues, can be maintained in the fold as a topological "event/structure" that maintains a before, after, and present in a simultaneous continuum while relating all architectural places through this immaterial fold place. This singularity emphasizes a "thisness" rather than a stable "objectness." And in taking away the distance necessary to master the object of architecture, the fold conceptualizes the difference between a topological surface and a Euclidean surface. Points in topological space and in the fold are not fixed coordinates, but are placeless except for their relationality.[22] This sense of topological singularity which unpacks a function of infinite relationality though any single point is precisely the project chased by Mies in his photomontage and imaginary architectural spaces.

In his *Written into the Void,* Eisenman is impressed with Mies's play between presence and absence in his architectural plans, which rely on voids and immaterial folds in order to establish connective tissue between old and new. Mies identifies a new

[20] Eisenman, *Written into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004*, p. 29.
[21] Eisenman Eisenman, *Written into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004*, p. 28.
[22] Peter Eisenman, 'Folding in Time', in *Folding in Architecture*, ed. by Andreas Papadakis (London: Architectural Design, 1993), pp. 23–29.

"definition of place for the collective . . . found in more subtle distinctions. It is achieved not with traditional physical boundaries, but rather by a texture of buildings and open spaces." This "zone of many layers", as Eisenman finds in Mies's IIT campus, is constructed with both physical properties and absences. His negative columns in IIT are of particular interest to Eisenman, who sees in them the presencing of non-presence, the mark of a virtual building that internalizes the conflict between figure and ground.

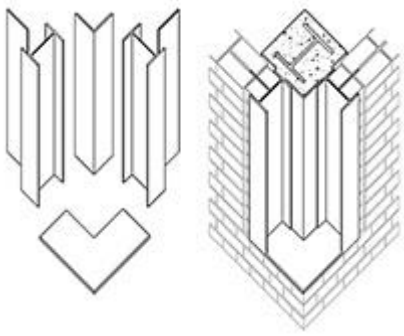

Figure IV.III: Mies, IIT Campus, negative columns

These negative columns harken back to the Greek *agora*, which was constructed of column series that suggested boundary without bounding like a wall: the absence of a wall made visible through columns. Mies, Eisenman argues, figures the ground with a "white absence" also seen in his Barcelona Pavilion: "it is both the absence of figure and revelation of a ground that appears as figure."[23] Lefebvre's Greek *agora* points to this same balance and unity through which the empty *agora* space emerges as a figure only by the relations that it encourages within it. Eisenman finds this same effect in Mies's

[23] Eisenman, *Written into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004*, p. 106.

collages, which he calls "plays between the real and the abstract",[24] an interaction of voids and solids that is manifested by the interaction of photographed landscapes.

Insofar as filmmakers are stage-directors of spectacle, Mies's work on spaces of projections and phantasmic intersections of imaginary places situates him in the realm of cinema. His early treatment of photomontage as a place of layering and virtual intersection was later developed in his staging of architecture as cinematic installation. Lutz Robbers argues that Mies's architecture was inflected by new radicalization of performance space. Mies's friend, Helleran, created *Festsaal*, a spatial experiment that presented a space of light, used for performance, but swept free of architectural markers of theater, such as stage props and proscenium frames. Instead, the space was filled with light which emanated from the walls themselves, and the *Festsaal* audience reported that they felt a unity with the space: "The space lived – it was a conspiring force, a co-creator of life."[25] The audience is no longer architecturally separated from the action or from the space of theater, as with the proscenium frame or Lyotard's second limit. In *Festaal*, "in the case of the light-room, the space, and along with it the subject, becomes activated and constructive."[26]

Mies's experience of the *Festsaal* inspired some light-emanating walls of his own in his studio, in the "Café Samt und Seide" (Cafe Velvet and Silk) at a 1927 exhibit, and in the refractive curtains of his Tugendhat House. This interest in light as an architecture is indicative of Mies's social theories. In fact, he was excited by the "psychological

[24] Eisenman, *Written into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004*, p. 107.
[25] Lutz Robbers, 'In the Soft Image of the City: Mies van Der Rohe and Cinematic Time', in *Design and Cinema: Form Follows Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 190.
[26] Robbers, p. 190.

unease" of his clients. His light walls encouraged them to see themselves as "silhouettes in space", as subjects of the room. This interplay between architecture and visitor broke the traditional relationship by forcing a questioning of subjectivity, of center, and of interaction with the space. Furthermore, building out of light models the immateriality of virtual space, which disturbs the immediate legibility of traditional architecture and its domesticating nature. Rather than a space of protection from externality, an architecture built of light folds the denizen into the space which he experiences. The singularity of his experience puts him in relation to his space not as a dominating user, but as an object through which this relational, immaterial space can be accessed.

We see this same externalized subjective effect in Mies's earlier photomontages, which at first glance might seem to be free of human figures, but are actually featuring "blurred" visitors, silhouetted ghosts (*Fig IV.ii*). The blurring effect is meant to be cinematic, a soft focus that gives the sense of movement instilled in a traditionally static genre. The figures bring a sense of living to the functional and constructivist tendencies of architecture. In this way, Mies is "staging" an event that allows for accident and, to use Vertov's language, "life caught unawares": "[Mies] places the subject in a constellation that requires persistent negotiations between threatening, formless and ephemeral contingency and rhythmic, form-giving structure."[27] The unity of Mies's design is maintained even as it is consistently undercut by his attention to emptiness, to disconcerting light, to movement, to unforseable event. Like Vertov's film, which aims to *act* upon its viewers, to include them as co-creators of the geographic and social unity seen on-screen, Mies's architecture aims to interact with its viewers for the purpose of

[27] Robbers, p. 191.

making them see that to which 19th-century perspectival art has made them blind. These mutual goals of exposure, both on the level of aesthetic creation – footage of "life caught unawares" or photomontage for Vertov – and on the level of effect – co-creating a national future or instilling a questioning of subjectivity for Whitman –, ultimately rely on the classic principles of *agora* that a unity can be erected in intersections within a sustained emptiness, that the suggestion of space and boundary unifies more effectively than strict regulations.

Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World*

In the shift from the spatiality of architecture to the spatiality of film, the material of montage changes; we shift from a presencing collage of objects to a futurist collage of people. For this reason, the *agora* is a helpful mediating figure that is carried over from architecture's interest in sociality to film's interest in relationality. As spaces that collect people, we see the architectural *agora* and cinematic montage in conversation. It is this ability to collect rather than to linearly narrate that makes the *agora* a strong model for Vertov's project of describing a new Russia that is defined, in many ways, by the abilities and aesthetics of film. Vertov's project to fold an infinite space into a compact collection of relationality also helps us to understand the form of abstract space through its relational *virtual* (or immaterial) quality.

Vertov's documentary projects address non-linearity in a similar manner to Tarkovsky's work, which layers images for the sake of representing memory (as we have seen in his *Nostalghia*); but Vertov works with non-fictional presentations of "real"

space. His technique of cross-cutting montage brings together peoples from various corners of Russia into one simultaneous event, suggesting an impossible proximity and an impossible temporality. His technique of superimposition and split-screens reorient the traditional linear travelogue or city symphony so that the film does not promote any one subjectivity or place of subject. Vertov resists the sequence shot in order to showcase action happening simultaneously on multiple planes and multiple fields. This virtual depth of field, which is created through a multiplicity of spaces rather than on a single stage.

Vertov's *agora* works like Mies' montages: no one subject stands in the foreground. Rather, the collage itself of various places brought into one imaginary space (a virtual space) is the subject. And the subjectivity of the film, usually associated with the gaze of the camera, becomes a folded, diverse "I" that infiltrates cameraman, audience, actors, and space itself. Vertov's project disperses the subject and collects subjectivities, so that in the virtual *agora* all perspectives are merged and all detail on all planes is foregrounded.

John MacKay develops a theory of convergence that argues that Vertov's cinema creates a virtual connective space between all individual viewership of film: film is a "kind of surrogate public space, […] a 'sensory agora,' wherein the perceptual worlds of different segments of Soviet society . . . could at once be experienced, contrasted, compared, and ultimately grasped as familiar elements of an expanding sensorium."[28] MacKay's argument is aimed at Vertov's first sound film *Enthusiasm*, so MacKay's

[28] John MacKay, 'Disorganized Noise: Enthusiasm and the Ear of the Collective', *KinoKultura*, 7 (2005), p. 4.

"sensory *agora*" is really a virtual space of aural experimentation and stimulation. In shifting this aural *agora* to an *agora* of perception, we will be navigating the implied and hidden "I"/eye in Vertov and Whitman and accessing a broad poetic consciousness on the level of filmmaking, as created by Vertov's *A Sixth Part of the World*.

We will follow MacKay's proposition of a Vertovian *agora*, but we will shift to a virtual space of topographical and geographical convergence, the connection of spaces through the mechanism of film technology. Devin Fore calls this connective tissue "связь" (tie, bond), a unique quality of cinema to construct a "binding substance, a means for catalyzing interactions between diverse and seemingly incommensurate objects."[29] Using film technology as a relay point in order to create this simultaneous "sensory agora" and catalyzing "связь", Vertov folds individual spaces and times from across Russia into a compact place of event.

In his *Kino-Eye* writings, Vertov argues for a revolution in filmmaking. He notices, as he is introducing uneducated, illiterate peasants to photography and film, that they have an innate sense of "acting" and of document. Any actor shown to these peasants is laughed at for his inauthenticity. It is the documentary-style images of individuals similar to the peasant viewers to which attention is paid. Illiterate viewers want to see what they already recognize,[30] and Vertov's cinema will give them somewhat familiar scenes, but his camera eye will always transform their human experience into a piece of the world belonging to a larger fabric:

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[29] Devin Fore, 'The Metabolic State: Dziga Vertov's The Eleventh Year', *October*, 145 (2013), 3–37 (p. 12).

[30] Vertov writes that it is the literate viewer who wants to see what he does not yet know (Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. by Annette Michelson, trans. by Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 62.).

> The mechanical eye, the camera, rejecting the human eye as crib sheet, gropes its way through the chaos of visual events, letting itself be drawn or repelled by movement, probing, as it goes, the path of its own movement. It experiments, distending times, dissecting movement, or, in contrary fashion, absorbing time within itself, swallowing years, thus schematizing processes of long duration inaccessible to the normal eye.[31]

In defending the mechanical subjectivity of the camera, Vertov points out the limitations of the human eye: it blinks, misses movement, cannot sort through the chaos of raw visual material. We will see Whitman's frustration with these same human qualities that struggle to adapt to photographic technologies. But most importantly, Vertov points out that human perception can only happen from a certain *place*. It is anchored to a body which is relatively static in its experience and cannot perceive itself as participating in its perceptions.

> From the human eye's viewpoint I haven't really the right to "edit in" myself beside those who are seated in this hall, for instance. Yet in kino-eye space, I can edit myself not only sitting here beside you, but in various parts of the globe. It would be absurd to create obstacles such as walls and distance for kino-eye. . . . The idea that truth is only what is seen by the human eye is refuted both by microscopic research and all the data supplied by the technologically aided eye in general. It is refuted by the *very nature of man's thought*.[32]

In a way, Vertov argues here that kino-eye is an optical unconscious whereby individual, subjective human perceptions, as captured by the surrogate camera, merge to form a network of past, present, and future perceptions. Through this logic, Vertov identifies kino-eye with scientific knowledge in that the level of information imperceptible to the human eye can be indefinitely uncovered.

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[31] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 19.
[32] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 125.

The human eye and the mechanical eye are linked for Vertov, and his montage does not try to use mechanical vision merely to recreate a human perception or a superhuman vision of the world. Instead, it seems that his kino-eye is inspired by a desire in human perception; it has been called forth by the limits and restrictions of the human eye. Thus Vertov becomes interested in various creative modes of documentary and reel filmmaking (over and above the manipulation of actors), which explore the boundlessness of a mechanical gaze informed by human vision and desire. He describes such filmmaking as "blueprints in motion", "an ordered fantasy of movement", "dynamic geometry."[33] It would seem that instead of a human-centered cinematic perception, Vertov argues the *space of filmmaking* to take the central role of cinema.

The gaze of *A Sixth Part*'s intertitles sets its sights on the audience ("Вы", plural "you") and then zooms in to the individual viewer ("Ты", singular "you"). Vertov calls to his viewers in text, in the manner of a poet – in the manner of his beloved Whitman –, and relies on the repetitive intertitle lists to create a rhythm in place of a stable soundtrack. But insofar as Vertov's project is aimed at the illiterate, he requires that the images will "speak" for themselves, that each audience member will be able to find a version of himself in the newsreel and found footage. We hop around Russia, bringing disparate corners of the landmass side-by-side; Vertov speeds between the Dagestan villages and the Siberian forests. In the expansion of the Russian's understanding of the Russian people – in the *agora* created –, Vertov moves back from the individualizing "Ты" to the all-inclusive "Вы".

[33] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 9.

This aesthetic gaze is differently constructed from any of the perspectival views we have seen thus far in the arts. Chapter Two described a progression of perspectival visual arts, from various vanishing points of Renaissance paintings to the effect of depth of field created by optical illusions. Theater adopted some of these perspectival effects of central axis, illusory depth of field, and orthogonal lines. And cinema, in its theatrical roots, adapted these painting perspectives through the mediator of theater. But the advent of perspective in theater was its coinciding of the spectator's gaze with a single perspective, a democratization of the king's seat. In Vertov's democratization of the filmic gaze, we have not one identification (between spectator and camera), but an expansion of consciousness that swallows all perspectives: within the screen, between spectator and camera, between camera and itself filming, between objects and people on film, and amongst all social *agora* participants.

Vertov has been known to play with the gaze of the camera and its coincidental investment in subjectivity. As MacKay points out, Vertov "remak[es] the very structure of the spectator's 'vantage-point'" by a transformation of consciousness through the camera eye.[34] Perhaps most famous for this effect is his *Man with the Movie Camera*, which makes visible the process of filming that is so often erased for the sake of sensory immersion. Vertov likes to show people of Moscow and Odessa responding to his camera as an object or the gazing eye. Upon recognition of their being filmed, the subjects become shy, overly aware; they begin to laugh at the awkwardness of their situation; they pretend to ignore the camera gaze. Even at this level of filming, in which the audience

[34] MacKay, p. 4.

experience runs through the camera gaze (and so cannot see the apparatus itself), Vertov's camera is made visible through subject reactions.

In more explicit scenes that feature the camera itself, the eye of subjectivity, as subject, the question of consciousness becomes more difficult. The audience experience runs through a camera gaze onto another camera gazing. At times, footage taken by this visible camera-object is shown as well. Thus the audience receives a total "vantage point" experience of the workings of consciousness: they see the camera gaze externally (as the camera is filmed) and internally (as the camera films). Certainly such a self-referential moment is not unique to cinema. The scene of writing in literature – and the *aporia* that text cannot observe itself as an object from a distance, separate from the material of language – is often mimicked and reproduced in cinema.[35] But there is a peculiarity in cinema's dependence on an optical perspective that allows for a play with Cartesian subjectivity, which seems inherent in the separation between the optical box of subjective ego (camera, audience) and the external world that it observes (film).

Descartes, who was very suspicious of human perception of reality, maintained rigidity in this separation between ego and world. To enter the world of projection, to see yourself within the world, would be homologous with an impossible perspective – something in the realm of the divine. On the level of *transforming* consciousness, as Michelson claims is Vertov's revolutionary act, his display of the cameraman on camera

[35] In a seminal text for auteur theory, Alexandre Astruc writes that cinema has gradually become a textual language, despite its origins in theory that resisted literary adaptation: "a form in which and by which artists can express their thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate their obsessions exactly as they do in the contemporary essay or novel." Astruc describes this new "age" of language as writing with a *camera-stylo* (camera-pen) in that cinema will have a flexibility and subtlety akin to literature. (Alexandre Astruc, 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: La Caméra-Stylo', in *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, ed. by Peter Graham (London: BFI Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 32.)

is comparable to a Lacanian mirror stage. To separate the subjective ego's gaze from the apparatus itself allows for a nuanced sense of identity. It is not that the camera eye works independently of the auteur or cameraman which it films, just as it is not that the *imago* seen in a mirror functions independently of the ego. Rather, the *distance* marked between the two functions creates a fundamental relation that drives sociality and an expanded consciousness.[36] This is not the distance of visuality, as we saw in Lefebvre's critique of the disappearing *agora*. This distance in consistututing identity allows subjectivity to transcend the bounds of the body through perception. For Vertov, kino-eye helps this transformation by allowing for subjectivity to *simultaneously* exist in multiple places.

Descartes would not support this deviation from the peephole model that radically cuts the ego off from the world. Gilles Deleuze relates this Cartesian flaw to an inability to understand the architectural fold: "A labyrinth is said, etymologically, to be multiple because it contains many folds. . . If Descartes did not know how to get through the labyrinth, it was because he sought its secret of continuity in rectilinear tracks . . . He knew the inclension of the soul as little as he did the curvature of matter."[37] According to this model, to understand subjectivity, one must also understand the true, non-Euclidean nature of space. We will see that for Vertov, too, the radicalization of communal subjectivity must come from the folding of space and the understanding of its virtual relationality through kino-eye.

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[36] The typical discussion of the mirror-stage and cinema, popularized in the 1960s and 1970s, surrounds the presentation of fantasized versions of the imaginary on screen in which the spectator will recognize himself un-disintegrated. For more on Lacan and cinema, see Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1982); Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, Autumn, 16.3 (1975), 6–18; Jean-Louis Baudry, 'Basic Effects of the Cinematographic Apparatus', in *Movies and Methods*, ed. by Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), II, 531–42.

[37] Gilles Deleuze, 'The Fold -- Leibniz and the Baroque: The Pleats of Matter', in *Folding in Architecture*, ed. by Andreas Papadakis (London: Architectural Design, 1993), pp. 17–21 (p. 17).

Deleuze, in his discussion of Vertov in *Cinema 1*, connects the human eye and the camera eye by a dialectic that correlates distant images with a constantly moving cognition. Even in a radical absence of the human eye or consciousness – in the absolute removal of the cameraman eye and the subjective camera gaze, in the treatment of every human subject as mere pieces of a larger material system, in the creation of an imaginary filmed space by false continuities – Vertov's film captures an "infinite set of matter"[38] that changes and shifts between and amongst spectator and composition. The spectator is drawn into the dialectic of matter, which can no longer be considered an organic whole, and so his transformation of consciousness will necessarily come from Vertov's shattering of the world-image:

> In Vertov the interval of movement is perception, the glance, the eye. But the eye is not the too-immobile human eye; it is the eye of the camera, that is an eye in matter, a perception such as it is in matter, as it extends from a point where an action begins to the limit of the reaction, as it fills the interval between the two, crossing the universe and beating in time to its intervals. The correlation between a non-human matter and a superhuman eye is the dialectic itself, because it is also the identity of a community of matter and a communism of man. And montage itself constantly adapts the transformations of movements in the material universe to the interval of movement in the eye of the camera: rhythm.[39]

A Sixth Part creates this rhythm both by stitching together distances in order to replicate and participate in this dialectic and by speaking to its viewers and subjects. The poetic, Whitman-esque intertitles address simultaneously human subjects, non-human subjects, and audience viewers. The effect is to bring together the most varied people into

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[38] When Deleuze writes on matter in cinema, he is referencing Bergson's conception of matter as an ensemble of images. Here, images are defined as existing somewhere between the "thing" and the "representation".

[39] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Minneapolis: Unversity of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 40.

conversation with one another in a virtual *agora*, but also to bond these connections with the connections already made in travel, machine, industry, exchanges. Similar to Deleuze's interest in Riemann's mathematical space, which is a non-Euclidean space built of relations between sets of local elements and properties, Vertov's interest in the *agora* comes from an emphasis on relationality. Without a centering agent or superhuman subjective eye, the distances themselves are at the forefront of the rhythmic assembly. Deleuze calls these distances the Vertovian "interval", which puts human-centered spaces into the world of matter.[40] In Vertovian montage, each point in space "perceives all the points on which it acts, or which act on it, however far these actions and reactions extend. This is the definition of objectivity, 'to see without boundaries or distances'."[41] The camera-eye does not coincide with the "I" of the human gaze, yet *A Sixth Part* takes on a voice in Vertov's poetic intertitles. Cinema speaks to us as an "I" without acting as centering agent or subjective protagonist. The intertitles form an exchange with the images, forming synthesized ideograms.

The Russian southerner, through Vertov's film, gets to travel north, just as the film has traveled to him on its agit-trains. Ultimately, Vertov's kino-eye is a travelogue, a means of virtually moving into spaces otherwise inaccessible. The most common spaces of movie-goers are ignored. It is the *borderlands* that interest Vertov: the coastline, the East, the tundra. It is through the folding of these edges, one on top of the other, that Vertov defines the USSR landmass – not as an opposition to the urban center or to the

[40] Deleuze points out that it is nothing new to present empty places as the editing of film footage. But traditionally, these empty places are still invested with the human subject and human perception. Vertov's revolution was to "restore the intervals to matter", to remove the human subject as the filmic superhuman eye, to place him in an equalized position with matter and machine (Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 81.)

[41] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 81.

West, but as a semi-mythical space captured uniquely by the camera eye and edited in such a way that the resulting "gaze" cannot be mistaken for a human one. And Vertov takes this impossible gaze one step further, by positioning the camera into places where the human eye could not fit or survive – underneath a train, inside a machine, on bridge wires. The camera-eye, for Vertov, can mimic the human eye and can improve on the human eye as its surrogate, thus appearing to us as a superhuman eye, but it is still limited by a relative stasis, what Deleuze calls the camera's "own condition of possibility."[42] In order to *see*, the camera must patiently sit still. It is after the fact of filming raw footage that film is able to *look*, by the function of montage, which stitches together distant views. Thus it is *montage* that can "objective" in its expanded views and unimpeded horizons.

Vertov's vested interest in cinema as a means of communication for the illiterate Soviet masses does not fully develop until after he has made *A Sixth Part*. His next film, *The Eleventh Year*, already relies less on intertitles, and his most famous film *Man with a Movie Camera*, produced three years later, uses text most sparingly.[43] *A Sixth Part*, then, stands as a unique instance of Vertov's intertitle poetry. Inspired by Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, which he carried in his back pocket while filming, Vertov uses intertitles to create a textual rhythm. The intertitles take care not to name time or place; they do not act as markers or information-providers for any particularity. They speak on behalf of the camera-eye, identifying the actions and movements that it sees, and they address the "actor" and viewer alike, drawing them in to cinematically participate.

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[42] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 81.

[43] Though in filming the urban advertising scene of *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov was sneaky in incorporating text outside of the direct intertitle tradition through labels and signs.

A Sixth Part was commissioned in 1926 by Gostorg, the State Trade Organization, as an advertisement for their wide national networks and influence on the economy. The use of travelogue for advertisement was nothing new in 1926. Travel literature, painting, and photography had long been displayed for education and propaganda on colonial expansion, military advances, and commercial exploitation. Film, by the 1910s, was added to the modes of visual travel accounts as an "enlightening" cinema.[44] Generally, these early ethnographic films were given a patriotic narrative, either as the colonial gaze on "exotic" lands or as the mobilizer of popular support through grand national landscapes. Each film was specific to its audience and its travel destination.

The Soviet Union took a shift in its propaganda film policy, and travelogues were forgone in favor of more explicit political *agitki* (agitationals): educational films on hygiene and instructional films on agricultural and industrial machinery. We see much of this influence in Vertov's films, which emphasize the workers' relationships with their machines and which anthropomorphize machinery in order to showcase an optimistic solidarity. But Vertov's scope was always wider, and his "cine-race" (*kino-probeg*) films, which display large swaths of land in one breath and which show a single task performed in multiplicity across the nation, establish a new genre that straddles the travelogue and the *agitki* categories.

Vertov aimed to show the USSR in its entirety. To educate movie-goers on the grand scale of their nation required a new approach. Audiences could no longer be

[44] The first Russian travel film, *Travel through Russia [Puteshestvie po Rossii]*, was produced by a Pathé regional office in 1907. Subsequent shorts would focus on topographical sectors (Western Russia, Central Russia, the Caucasus, Northern Russia, Siberia) or on "types" of indigenous Russian people and their customs. Each ethnographic film's scope was narrow and specific. Often, nonfiction footage would be cut with staged scenes, a tradition borrowed from war propaganda films.

considered specialized markets to whom it would be easy to cater. Without segmentation, Vertov's film would have to be able to advertise to everyone uniformly and to travel everywhere for distribution and projection. In this sense, Vertov was fully in line with the Soviet national policy – from Lenin's national policy of self-determination to Stalin's blooming tree of all nationalities.[45] Films in the mid-1920s focused on an organic unity of cultural plurality, even if it meant exposing cultural backwardness.

A Sixth Part does not aim to cover every national landscape, nor does it aim to display every Russian person for ethnographic study, though Vertov has been accused of being an "exoticism-hunter."[46] Ultimately, *A Sixth Part* remains faithful to its commissioner, and Gostorg is its final hero, though, in classic narrative unfolding, Gostorg does not emerge until the concluding two parts of the film. The film begins, strangely enough, with Germany, which becomes the symbol of the "land of Capital": peripheral and foreign. The German planes are quickly contrasted with collages of body parts, a classic Vertovian technique, each "dissection" introduced with "And you" (the plural "Вы") intertitles. Each "you" ("Вы") – a neck and back of head, hands, a face turning away bashfully, feet dancing – is addressed, but really the pluralization of body parts loosely constitute one whole, imaginary being. Vertov prepares us for the form of his film: each part is loosely connected under an argument about national network, but the final collage will not look like a whole nation, just the sketching of its outline and the layering of its functions.

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[45] For more on early Soviet ethnographic films, see Oksana Sarkisova, '"Life as It Should Be?" Early Non-Fiction Cinema in Russia', *Medien Und Zeit*, 1 (2003), 41–61; Smuil Lur'e's, 'Kul'turno-prosvetitel'nyi I nauchnyi kinematograf', *Soveskoe Kino*, 1 (1927). Examples are: *Baku, Batum and the Causausian Seashore* (1911), *Travel to Kamtka* (1911), *Peasant Riches of South Russia* (1912), *On the Deserted Shores* (1911), and *Over the White Sea* (1913).

[46] Reviews of *A Sixth Part* can be found in Tsivian.

This opening of a foreign body, presumably made of German bodies, gives us the constitution of a lazy being who dances and reclines, poses and smiles. This is nothing like the various Soviet peoples we are about to encounter. As Vertov moves East, away from the beneficiaries of Soviet export, his camera movements quicken and his subjects work harder. The film picks up speed by various travel means: Vertov's camera travels by horse, by train, by car, by ship, and all within the bounds of a Soviet sixth part of the world. We begin in Germany not to establish an outside to Russia, but rather to reclaim the goods that Russia has exported there, to fix the economic system by rushing the goods home. To rely less on export, Vertov seems to be saying, would be to refocus energy to the machines and labor on which Russia already runs. As an intertitle suggests, parroting Stalin's words, Russians are capable of producing their own "machines that build machines."

A Sixth Part is itself a machine that rebuilds the Soviet Union, just as the Revolution had the power to ideologically unite disparate peoples. Izmail Urazov, in a review of the film, calls the cultural empathy and connective tissue a "phantasmagoria" created by an "iron logic."[47] This machinery, something like a magic lantern, which creates photomontage illusions by projecting images on top of one another, takes us to distant places for the sake of showing the collapse of this distance. Some of this collapse is given by the straightforward montage effect of stitching footage from distant spaces, a "false continuity." But also Vertov plays with photomontage techniques of simultaneous imagery. He splits his screen both vertically and horizontally to showcase sets of footage

[47] Izmail Urazov, 'Shestaia Chast Mira', 1926.

simultaneously. And he superimposes two sets of footage onto the same screen in slow dissolves.

Figure IV.IV: Vertov, A Sixth Part of the World

More than a Gothic parlor trick, the film creates sociality by showcasing boundaries in such a way that the very concept of inside and outside shatter. The effect of these superimpositions is analogous to Tarkovsky's superimposition of a Russian dacha within an Italian cathedral in Chapter Two. But the rhythm of these two superimpositions differ: Tarkovsky's slow *tableau vivant* places emphasis on the impossible dream of existing in two beloved lands at once and Vertov's hectic montage places emphasis on the same action existing simultaneously in multiple places.

It is accepted that *A Sixth Part* is separated into five parts, though the parts are not announced or dismissed. Each part loosely travels to particular corners of the Soviet state, though none is bound to any particular corner. Unique to each part is the grammar and structure of its intertitles. Often written out by critics as a complete poem, the intertitles narrate with paired images rather than simply narrating the images to be shown. For this

reason, these images are often described as "ideograms", bound by the address of the intertitles and the subjective camera-eye that asks its subjects to recognize it.

The first part, often named "Capital", which features the foreign places profiting from Russian trade, is the most enclosed of the film, with interior shots. Soviet space, in contrast, features large swaths of nature with open horizons: seas, oceans, rivers, fields, mountains, forests. Part Two is structured by the repetitive "You"[48]: "you / you Tartars / you / you Buriats / Uzbeks / Kalmyks / Khakkass / mountaineers of the Caucasus / you, Komi people / of the Komi region / and you, / of a distant village..."[49] The intertitles, even on their own, show the rapid travel between various cultural groups and geographic terrains. But the footage maintains a fluidity, as though the camera has at its disposal all of these people and lands in one space, and it merely needs to turn on its neck to see them.

This "false continuity" is fixed, made less false, by the intertitles which provide identity to each turn.[50] And fluidity is maintained between distant Soviet places by the connective tissue of natural elements. Water connects the sheep herders of the sea with the sheep herders of the rivers. Horses connect Daigestan with the Siberian taiga. Boats connect the Pechora River with the ocean. Each scene also alternates its direction of

[48] The address begins with "Вы", but switches to "Ты" with shots of individual workers as a means of warning: "You [Ты]: do not get lost"

[49] Tsivian, p. 188. "Вы / Татары / Вы / Буряты / Узбеки / Калмыки / Хаккасы / горцы Кавказа / Вы, коми из области Коми / и Вы, из далекого Аула" (Dziga Vertov, *A Sixth Part of the World* (Sovkino, 1926).)

[50] Vertov is often critiqued for his resistance to names of places and dates even as he names himself an ethnographic documentarian. Though he rarely gives direct labels to his footage, he does leave clues, as in the case of *A Sixth Part*'s intertitles. The aim is not to deceive – we are not meant to believe that the Tartars and the Uzbeks live in one place. Rather, the fluidity is emphasized in order to make a point about the speed of industry and travel. Facts are sacrificed, but only to the least possible misleading way, for the sake of argument.

motion, so that people look and move from the upper-left of the screen down to the bottom-center and then from the upper-right of the screen down to the bottom-center.

Figure IV.V: Vertov, A Sixth Part of the World

These angles create the illusion of a shot-reverse-shot, which captures interaction of actors within the same space.

Part Three is structured by the repetition of "Your." But this is no longer a singular "You" that is addressed; this is not the call to participate in a network. This "Your" marks a belonging to the collective that Vertov has formed by his "You" address in Part Two. It is worth mentioning that the addressing subjective "I" of the intertitles is not directly present. Though consistently translated as "I see" ("Вижу"), the "I" of *A Sixth Part* is grammatically hidden, as Russian allows for a the verb to stand without its subject. "I" ("Я") never appears on the screen in an intertitle, but is replaced by the camera-eye subjectivity. Whitman's poetry allows for this same trick by his image-lists of objects that suggest an "I see" introduction without presenting it.

Vertov captures nature with as much excitement as he captures people. The sea is addressed, as Whitman might address it: "The Black Sea / and you, the sea that is frozen

at the Baltic Coasts . . . And you . . .”[51] Animals are recognized as important agents in the Soviet economy. They work as hard and as tirelessly as their human counterparts. People certainly appear on screen, but it not for the sake of examining them as exotic specimens according to a tradition of an ethnographic travelogue. Rather, the Soviet people are mostly filmed as tools which advance the function of machines or animals and which bolster the underlying economy network and the Gostorg network: the film's “связь”. Here nature is not opposed to industry; it is not exterminated by technology. Rather, a sense of nationhood is established in which all facets of life are striving towards the same underlying principles and orders. The land is linked with the animals; the cement plants are linked with dirt roads; the frozen sea is linked with the ice-breaker *Lenin.* There are no oppositions in Vertov's vision of the Soviet world that would juxtapose into a clean synthesis.

Part Four, which is dedicated to communication networks that are run by Gostorg, makes this unity most explicit with its insistent “as one”s (“вместе”):

helped by the ramified network of State Trade
however far away they should live
they build Socialism
as one
with poor and less-poor peasants who submit their grain to the co-operative
as one
with the peasants that are helped by the co-operative to obtain a tractor
and work the land collectively
as one
with the workers employed at a Socialist factory
as one
with the women workers employed at a Socialist factory[52]

[51] Tsivian, p. 191. (“вижу тебя. . . / Черное Море / и тебя море замерзшее у Балтийских берегов / . . . / и ты”, Vertov, *A Sixth Part of the World*.)

[52] Tsivian, p. 191.(“через разветвзения Государственной Торговли / как бы далеко они не жили / строют социализм / вместе с середняками и бедняками крестьянами сдающими свой хлеб

The most abstract of the film parts, this section requires the most guidance from its intertitles. This is where the Whitman image-lists of repetitive, inconsequential grammar disintegrate. The "as one" repetition no longer feels like a organizing principle that allows for unimpeded stitching of images one on top of the other, but rather, like a nagging point to be made.

Part Five gives a futural promise for the cultural implications of a Gostorg unified economy. The last fifteen minutes of film sit upon the Eastern-most edge of the Soviet land. The people are identified as backwards, stunted folk, yet they are promised progress and liberation by the unity that the film shows making its way to the outermost edges. These "Mongol" and "Samoyed" people "still cover their faces with a yashmak", still worship false gods (Menkve, Christ, Mohammed, Buddha),[53] still are illiterate, still are ignorant of socialist ways (such as "The Young Pioneers" and radio technologies). This space is treated like a mystical edge of the world: both an archaic and a mythical space. Yet it is this sort of Vertovian footage and commentary that incite accusations of Vertov as an exoticism-hunter. No less problematic, Vertov's goal here seems to be not to simply find the most exotic corners in order to film them, but to de-exoticise them, to educate and industrialize them in order to eradicate any notion of an Eastern-most border. For Vertov, the folding of each border space into a Soviet unity that still maintains cultural diversity is a means of reconstituting a lost sense of *agora*. We will see similar tendencies

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кооперативу / вместе с крестьянами получающшими через кооператив трактор / для коллективной обработки земли / вмест с рабочими на социалистическом заводе / бместе с работницами на социалистической фабрике", Vertov, *A Sixth Part of the World*.)

[53] "еще верят в помощь Магомета / еще верят в помощь Христа / в помощь Будды" (Vertov, *A Sixth Part of the World*.)

to collect peoples while virtually travelling across a vast terrain in one of Vertov's greatest poetic influences, Whitman.

WHITMAN INFLUENCE

Within Slavic film studies, it is more or less accepted that Vertov's film style is associated with Whitman's poetry. When pressed to give proof of this association, critics link Vertov to Whitman with two details: (1) an interview with Vertov's brother Mikhail Kaufman who stated that Vertov carried *Leaves of Grass* in his backpocket while filming; and (2) the list-like intertitles in *A Sixth Part of the World*. Beyond these two connections, critics have not delved far into the relationship between these two artists, though it is still generally stated as common knowledge that Vertov is "Whitmanesque". By looking closely at Vertov's journals and by dovetailing the two artists' aesthetic projects, we will see that Vertov did not merely borrow from Whitman's poetic style; he carried out the Whitman project which had already shown its cinematic aspirations.

Yuri Tsivian attributes Vertov's "I see" ("Вижу") listing style to Whitman's poetry, from which Vertov drew in his own poetry, and contemporaries of Vertov consistently pointed to his Whitman influence. In 1927, in response to *A Sixth Part*'s release, Ippolit Sokolov calls the epic repetition of "I see" (("Вижу") a "Whitman-Derzhavin style" that sets up the "backbone" of the film that otherwise would have little coherence in sequence or theme.[54] In 1929, in response to *Man with a Movie Camera*,

[54] Ippolit Sokolov, 'O filme "Shestaia chast mira"', *Kino-front*, 2 (1927), 9–12.

Naum Kaufman calls Vertov "a Soviet Whitman", a sort of improved version of the poet who can soak up more life and project more image than was possible in text.[55]

Leaves of Grass was first translated into Russian by Kornei Chukovsky in 1914, and it was a best seller in the Soviet Union until the late-1920s. Whitman was well-received in a post-Revolutionary Russia due to his interest in machines, the interaction of men and their industry, and urban crowds. His symbolist tendencies also paired well with the Futurist poetry of Mayakovsky, contemporary with the *Leaves of Grass* translation. Mayakovsky himself was a great Whitman fan, and was able to recite poems from memory to his friend Chukovsky. As Ben Singer has pointed out, "Vertov's early thinking about film took form . . . in a period when *Leaves of Grass* was literally a best-seller in Russia, and when Whitman's innovations in style and subject matter were at the forefront of literary discussion."[56] In a 1976 interview, Vertov's brother and cameraman Mikhail Kaufman confirmed the influence of Whitman on Vertov's intertitles.

Vertov was rumored to have carried a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in his pocket while filming, but this was common practice amongst filmmakers, especially given that *Leaves of Grass* was purposefully printed in pocket-size so that factory workers could carry it. That such radically different filmmakers as D. W. Griffith and Irving Rapper with such disparate cinema projects should be inspired by Whitman is impressive,[57] but this might have nothing to do with the poetry itself. Whitman was a well-known photography

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[55] Naum Kaufman, 'Chelovek s kinoapparatom', *Sovetskii ekran*, 5 (1929). From Tsivian, p. 331. Kaufman notes that Vertov's improvement on Whitman should be less attributed to Vertov's artistry than the fact that no poet has great foresight and will inevitably be improved upon.

[56] Ben Singer, 'Connoisseurs of Chaos: Whitman, Vertov, and the "Poetic Survey"', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 15.4 (1987), 247–58 (p. 248).

[57] For more on Whitman references and influences in cinema, see Kenneth M Price, 'Walt Whitman at the Movies: Cultural Memory and the Politics of Desire', in *Whitman East & West: New Contexts for Reading Walt Whitman*, ed. by Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2002), pp. 36–70.

enthusiast, drawing from the strange photographic qualities of simultaneity and unseen detail in his poetry. Early reactions to photography were confused by the amount of clutter and debris in the images – photographs made viewers aware of the things that would normally go unseen. In Whitman's poetry, this surprise is restaged with a montage of precise details arranged by a private, unobservable logic. Eisenstein called this structural principle "Walt Whitman's huge montage conception."[58] Whitman began shifting focus to metonymy over metaphor, to grasp life "in a flash, as it shifted, moved, evolved."[59]

Though Whitman died before ever seeing a nickelodeon, it is perhaps his unique link to technology in a time when most poets were suspicious of industrial innovations that makes him so heralded amongst filmmakers in the 1910s and 1920s. Whitman was friendly with Thomas Eakins[60], James Wallace Black[61], and Thomas Edison.[62] And he was alive to see many pre-cinematic technologies: the magic lantern, phonographs, Edison's kinetoscope. On such technologies, Whitman wrote: "The human expression is so fleeting; so quick; coming and going; all aids are welcome."[63]

Certainly there are generic and aesthetic affinities between Vertov and Whitman, which will be untangled here, but Vertov cites Whitman in his writings only *once*, in response to the bureaucratic obstacles unique to film, an industrial aesthetic work. Vertov

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[58] Sergei M. Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. & trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1977).
[59] Horace Traubel and others, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1906).
[60] Whitman and Eakins were close friends and discussed photographic work on motion studies. Eakins' *History of a Jump* was a contemporary with Muybridge's serial horse photographs which were so influential in cinema development.
[61] Black helped to develop the Magic Lantern, a pre-cinematic projection technology.
[62] Edison wished to "obtain a phonogram from the poet Whitman." There does exist a wax cylinder of Whitman reciting a portion of his poem "America".
[63] Traubel and others, p. 479.

is frustrated when Rene Clair's *Paris qui Dort* is released in Moscow in 1926, writing that "it pained [him]"[64] to see that his projects were being produced abroad when he was stuck in the mire of censorship, long approval waits, and stalls in production. It is peculiar that Vertov would be so taken with Clair's first work. As a surrealist exercise, it is entirely and obviously fictional, making use of crude special effects like freeze frames, overlaying frames, and animation which would continually link this film with the work of Georges Méliès; it is nothing like Vertov's project of "life caught unawares."[65] But Clair manages to narratively incorporate technology into a film that otherwise feels to Vertov like a city symphony. And Clair, in his silly tactics for social satire, manages to show a Paris being rediscovered and seen anew, perhaps in the same vein as Vertov's call for the camera to show what we look at but do not see.

Vertov might also have found some affinity with the figure of a mad scientist, as he saw his kino-eye work as scientific projects that "decipher reality" and "reveal truth." His theory of human perception might seem to be grounded in the observable details of men's lives, but his montage work aims to uncover a more totalizing understanding of the world, non-coincidental with human perception.[66] Deleuze ascribes Vertov's quick note on Clair's film with a great deal of influence: "for it reconciled a human world with the

[64] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 163.

[65] Clair's *Paris qui Dort* is a scifi comedy short about a mad scientist's ray gun that freezes the people of Paris in compromising positions. As Annette Michelson points out in her edition of *Kino-Eye*, "this comedy explores the interlacing themes of city life, temporality, work, and, by implication, film production" (Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 163.). The film showcases the same film technology and optical maneuvers that Vertov will pursue in *Man with a Movie Camera* (VUFKU, 1929).

[66] Lucy Fischer writes on this scientifically-grounded sense of perception in Vertov: "just as the scientist's depiction of the world has nothing to do with the average man's perception of the world (e.g., I see the sun "rise" and "set" and do not see the turning of the earth on its axis), so Vertov's depiction of the world in cinematic terms, through documentary, will be far from isomorphic with our perception of it. His model is life as it exists independent of the human preceptor, not life as experienced by Man." (Lucy Fischer, 'Enthusiasm: From Kino-Eye to Radio-Eye', *Film Quarterly*, Winter, 31.2 (1977), 25–36 (p. 28).

absence of man."[67] And in man's absence, in a town divested of its human "electrical discharge", montage captures a perception free of human vision and human subject, a scientific view of nature.

This non-human perception is the poetic urge that most interests and inspires Vertov. It is what he finds most captivating about Mayakovsky's rhythm and Whitman's form. But it seems that when transferred to cinema, the industry components of such an aesthetic project stifle the artistic process. Vertov spends much of his journals writing on the frustrations of film bureaucracy. Script approvals, rejections, and rewritings stall Vertov's work and prevent the production of his colleagues' projects. Mayakovsky, whose poetry was greatly admired by Vertov for seeing "what the ordinary eye [does] not see"[68], had aspirations to make films, but was stifled by the rejections of his scripts by Moscow film offices. In response to similar delays in his work with Rykachev and Ushakov, Vertov writes in a flurry about general misunderstandings regarding poetic documentary film. A film, he writes, can be simultaneously poetic and educational. It can carry "not dispassionate information, but the music of science": "the poetry of space", "the poetry of immensities", "the poetry of the universe."[69] It is here, in this outburst, that Vertov cites Whitman's "A Song of Joys", without introduction and with a very free translating hand. Whitman's line "For the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!" becomes a drawling distension in Vertov's hands:

> All this, O sea, I'd give away joyfully, if you'd give me the
> motion of your wave, a single splash, or if you'd
> breathe into

[67] Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 83.
[68] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 180.
[69] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, pp. 233–4.

my verse a single salty breath, and leave in it this scent.[70]

This liberty taken with Whitman's lines might give us an insight into what Vertov found so enticing about Whitman's poetry. The image of waves in motion expands into several snapshots: a splash, a breeze, a breath, a scent. It is almost as though Vertov is expanding the Whitman universe onto an even more miniscule level of detail. Whitman's interest, like Vertov's, in "a vast seething mass of *materials*"[71] secures an equalizing of detail – there are no hierarchies of aesthetics – and so each particularized image potentially unlocks more "trivial" image, more catalogs of detail. If at the core of this Whitman-Vertov poetry is a sense of endless raw material, then the resulting convergence of detail will always expand; the work is never finished.

Unlike his contemporaries who sprinkle their poetry with details of everyday life, Whitman "may have been the first to posit this empirical commitment as an aesthetic imperative."[72] Whitman loathed the loftiness of epic and picturesque poetry, and railed against romance genres: "As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentre in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things, they possess a superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance . . . That which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuissance and a revolt."[73] This sounds quite similar to the *Kino-Eye* stance on film-drama as an injustice done to the masses: "Stupefaction and suggestion – the art-drama's basic means of influence – relate to that of

[70] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 235.
[71] Letter to Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 27 April 1872. Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, ed. by Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 174–5.
[72] Singer, p. 251.
[73] Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1959), p. 17.

a religion and enable it for a time to maintain man in an excited unconscious state. . . . Film-drama is the opium of the people."[74]

In place of a cohesive narrative and a driving plot (both of which Vertov's contemporaries accused him of lacking), this poetry observes life from the point of view of its structure: social, economic, industrial. From this stance, Vertov's diary rant introduction to Whitman is a statement of their coextensive project:

> The poetry of science. The poetry of space. The poetry of unknown numbers. The poetry of immensities. The poetry of masses numbering millions. The poetry of happiness. The poetry of sorrow. The poetry of dreams. The poetry of friendship. The poetry of love. The poetry of universal brotherhood. The poetry of the universe. The poetry of labor. The poetry of nature.[75]

Perhaps we can read this outburst as another very loose translation of Whitman's "Song of Joys" in the lines dedicated to a sense of abstract space: "O to realize space! / The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds, / To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying / clouds, as one with them." Vertov links himself with Whitman by their mutual rendering of an objective social space inscribed by photographic texture. Here the clutter and debris that had so surprised and frustrated early photograph viewers are on display as the very stuff of everyday life, unmediated reality passed to the viewer as a virtual *agora*.

Insofar as Whitman could also be considered a creator of ethnographic montage, his poetry is an image-list of workers, producers, machinery, industry tools. The poem "A Song of Joys" enumerates types of labor and its tools: an engineer and his train, a

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[74] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, pp. 61–62.
[75] Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, p. 234.

horseman and his saddle, a fireman and his alarm, a fighter and his body, a fisherman and his eel-spear and lobster-pot, a blacksmith and his furnace, a soldier and his artillery, a whaleman and his harpoon, a farmer and his plow. Free verse allows Whitman to maintain a uniform grammar and tone so that rhythm is built on the acceleration of his catalog rather than the heightening of aesthetic categories. His lines repeat in form, but his images are in constant motion. "A Song of Joys" progresses through a series of transportation modes: a locomotive, horseback, a boat, a ship. And it ends on a condensed list of movements that stand in opposition to the stasis of "you solid motionless land": "To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on!"

Such frames of motion should remind us of the camera's "own condition of possibility": the recording eye must stand still even as it aims to document motion. Whitman gives us snapshots of motion, but his image-lists inscribe a sort of stable camera eye. Yet, just as Vertov had done more explicitly in *Man with a Movie Camera*, Whitman's subjective eye splits, views itself, disperses, and displaces endlessly. Ben Singer describes Whitman's identification with his varied subjects as:

> a complete union between the poet and the mass, as if he *incarnates* the diverse individuals he describes. . . . [Whitman] inscribes himself in the text with an affirmation of his basic kinship to his subjects of his poetic discourse. He merges with the characters he observes, claiming to embody a compound personality composed through a kind of superimposition upon his own subjectivity of the subjectivities of the myriad individuals he encounters.[76]

In this sense, Whitman's "you"s and "I"s are fluid, his subjectivity escaping the bounds of grammar to travel within his lists of movements. Amongst a list of city noises in "Song of

[76] Singer, p. 255.

Myself" – a list of classic Whitmanesque "The"s and "What"s – weaves an "I": "I mind them or the show or resonance of them – I come and depart." This "I" sees action in every layer of the *agora*, and he identifies himself participating in the action in the work of a critical observer. If *A Sixth Part*'s intertitles are an extension of this Whitman quasi-photographic project, then there too the "you"s and "I"s become fluid. As each ethnographic group and each type of worker are addressed, Vertov also hears the call. The poet and the filmmaker are coextensive of their subjects. They do not stand outside the *agora* as distant observers, but identify themselves as workers too, struggling alongside the masses.

Rather than relying on allusions and intertextual references, Vertov borrows structure and style from his beloved poets, often riffing off them in an extended translation of spirit. His later work of the 1930s returns to the poetic intertitles of *A Sixth Part* by laying out scripts in verse, which he calls "scientific and fantastic cinematic poems."[77] Vlada Petric points out that Vertov creates a hybrid of Mayakovsky's meter, which "underscores graphically outstanding details", and Whitman's "imaginistic presentation of nature and landscape."[78] Such inspirations, often taken up in his diaries in a critical emotional state, allow Vertov to quote loosely and to improve upon his idols.

Poetic image-lists for Vertov are inherently spatial, as evidenced by his "poem" stunt in his friend Lemberg's Moscow apartment:

> Vertov had covered the apartment – the walls and the ceiling – with a thick layer of soot. Imagine the parquet floor, and pitch-black darkness

[77] Published (but unrealized) script for "A Girl Plays the Piano" (1939).
[78] Vlada Petric, *Constructivism in Film: 'The Man with Th Movie Camera', A Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 38–9.

> above it. The black walls were all covered with clocks painted in chalk, with their hands all showing different times. Each clock had a pendulum painted under its face, and these pendulums, too, were arrested in different positions, as if captured in swing. I did not like this at all. Vertov took pains to convince me that I just was not getting it, the room was his masterpiece. Can't you see how the black paint creates the effect of infinite space stretching in all four directions?, he asked. And the clock-faces are a poem! Poem, I asked? Recite it. All right, listen: tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock, tick-tock. . .

Tsivian names this type of "multimedia" poetry "a peculiar bi-media antiphony", full of "parallelisms and repetitions."[79] Though this sort of extension of Vertov's poetic object into a list of parallels and repetitive lines is tempting, as in Lemberg's insistence on a recitation or on Tsivian's transcription of *A Sixth Part*'s intertitles into a merely textual poem, such a treatment might seem reductive. Vertov's spatial struggle is ultimately a classic literary problem: how to express simultaneity of image within the restrictive bounds of linearly unfolding language? To force his work into an oral or textual linearity seems to undo the aesthetic project at its core.

Rather than simply borrowing from Whitman, Vertov's work seems to extend some of Whitman's tendencies in form, interest, and theme, and to correct some of Whitman's imperialistic curiosities about topographical scope. Whitman was certainly interested in the bounds of industry, economy, and commerce, but his eagerness to expand American frontiers to the detriment of other nations would be considered, no doubt, aggressive by Vertov, who opted for an insular sort of patriotism. Whitman's "you"s and "I"s from the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* give way to the singular "he", who embodies the imperial gifter of Amerian industry. The 1872 edition of *Leaves of*

[79] Tsivian, p. 4.

Grass includes a heightened sense of imperialism in the added "Drum-Taps": "His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere – he colonizes the Pacific, the archipelagoes; / With the steam-ship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the wholesale engines of war, / With these, and the world-spreading factories, he interlinks all geography, all lands." For Whitman, boundaries are erased in the face of a new age of America and Americans, a new earth and a new man,"[80] as he writes in *Democratic Vistas* in 1892.

Replacing the workers and their tools, expansionist desires and explorers start to fan Whitman's industry flame. The modes of transportation which had opened frontiers and unified people in America are considered just the beginning of a larger, global project. In his 1871 "Prayer for Columbus", Whitman dreams of a passage to India: "I see over my own continent the Pacific Railroad surmounting every barrier, / I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world; / . . . Marking through these, and after all, in duplicate slender lines, / Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel, / Tying the Eastern to the Western sea, / The road between Europe and Asia." At first glance, Vertov would seem to have some affinity with this late Whitman work, given his interest in ethnography and travelogue. But this expansionist project does not fit Vertov's patriotism, which is insular in its breadth. *Leaves of Grass* seems to be enticing to filmmakers because of its simultaneous relation of a local to a cosmic geography and sociality. But in his later work, Whitman replaces the singular "you"s and "I"s with a universal "he" and replaces his image-lists with portrayals of crowds in parades, an indistinguishable mass of unified humanity and world spirit.

[80] Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, ed. by Ed Folsom (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009), p. 34.

It is perhaps in resistance to Whitman's imperialism that Vertov turns to another poet Sergei Yesenin to address Russia's future. Yesenin's poem "Soviet Russia", the namesake for *A Sixth Part of the World*, is less an inspiration to the film than the posing of a problem to which the film responds. The poem is about a changing, unrecognizable land: it asks "Where is our Motherland?" Yesenin's speaker will answer that he can no longer recognize it because he has not changed appropriately to her shifts. Vertov identifies "our Motherland" through a new vision set upon the same places and same faces that Russian poets have long explored. Yesenin sets up the same boundaries which Vertov will fold together with his camera: he names the Crimea, the mountains, villages, fields. He recognizes that for the new generation, "our whole land will be their mother", not just the singular villages in which they were born. In the last lines of the poem, he makes a shallow attempt to forge the old and new:

Цветите, юные! И здоровейте телом!
У вас иная жизнь, у вас другой напев.
А я пойду один к неведомым пределам,
Душой бунтующей навеки присмирев.

Но и тогда,
Когда во всей планете
Пройдет вражда племен,
Исчезнет ложь и грусть, —
Я буду воспевать
Всем существом в поэте
Шестую часть земли
С названьем кратким «Русь».[81]

[81] "Bloom, youth! And bring health through your body! / You have another life. You have another tune. / And I will go alone to unknown borders, / My rebellious soul long subdued. / But even then, / When across the whole planet / The animosity of tribes will come to an end, / Deception and sorrow will vanish, / I will sing praises / With all the soul in a poet / The sixth part of the land / With the nickname 'Rus.'"

In recognizing the need for an expanded view of Russia in order to evolve alongside a new order of industry and speed, Yesenin presents a damning view of progress, one filed with alienation, the feeling of being a stranger in one's own country. There is a hope that a new generation will find affinity in a unified, friendlier 'Rus', but the image of such a peaceful state cannot be found in Yesenin's vision. In the new bleakness, Yesenin's speaker finds that he, as a poet, is no longer needed as a voice of the people, that poetry has become obsolete. He speaks of a need for new "lyres", ones he does not know how to provide. The poem's lyrical imagery transitions from his mother's song, to his poetry, to "another tune" and "another life."

We can see in Vertov's explicit reference to Yesenin's poem an answer to its call. The new "lyre" is film, and its technology was created for the sake of addressing this "other life" with an "other tune." For Vertov, poetry is an antiquated art form that does not have the tools to address the inconsistencies between the speed of industry and the breadth of illiteracy. A new technology is needed to bring together the extended bounds of Russian territory. Whitman had been on the cusp of incorporating such technology into his poetry, and it is not unreasonable to say that Vertov continued Whitman's work in a form that Whitman may well have been interested in pursuing had he lived to see the moving picture.

In the following chapter, we will see a more radical form of this transition from spatial understanding in aesthetic representation to an attempt to socially control through space. As Whitman turned his nuanced understanding of the *agora* of infinite detail into an imperialist project of world domination, we will see in Chapter Five an attempt to manage people through a spatialized totalitarian control. In Speer's Nazi architecture,

these imperialistic tendencies increase in scale, as the totalitarian “ruin lust” turns to a desire for power over not just people and their culture, but also their history and futures.

V Decomposition and Ruin Lust

"This unique balance – between mechanical, inert matter which passively resists pressure, and informing spirituality which pushes upward – breaks, however, the instant a building crumbles. . . [N]atural forces begin to become master over the work of man."[1]

The aesthetics of ruins have been of interest to literature, philosophy, and art since the 18th century, when a neoclassical impulse grew into a Romantic fascination with Greek and Roman ruins that left no English estate free of a mock-decaying temple. The Romantics were keen on ruins' intersection of past and present, encounters with the quintessence of history. As Diderot famously noted, to see the Louvre in disrepair is to realize that "[e]verything comes to nothing, everything perishes, everything passes, only the world remains, only time endures."[2] This simultaneous fear of ruin and attraction to ruins encourages their preservation, their study, their mimics. So the mock-decaying temples, the follies, of English estates are attempts to vicariously command history, attempts to put the fearful sublime in its place. As we will see in Speer and in Nabokov, this impulse to control the effects of time can quickly turn absurdist and theatrical. To

[1] Georg Simmel and Kurt H Wolff, 'The Ruin', in *Georg Simmel 1858-1918: A Collection of Essays* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1959), pp. 260–62 (p. 259).

[2] Denis Diderot, 'Salon of 1767', in *Diderot on Art: The Salon of 1767*, trans. by John Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 196–97 (p. 198).

create an artificial future is a poor substitute for the sublimity of an authentic ruin: "how trite was this parody of the work of time"[3]

In modern ruin lust, the return to representations of ancient monuments serve as a pleasure of the imaginary. But the 20th century brought on a new kind of ruin: war rubble. The ruins of the 20th century have a different sublime character. Instead of standing as indicators of time's power and wear, 20th century ruins become a common visual metaphor for the instantaneous effects of war, for the power of the human will. As Sartre famously wrote, "My body is everywhere: the bomb which destroys my house also damages my body in so far as the house was already an indication of my body."[4] But this connection between building and body is nothing new, and we will see how the "ruin lust" of the 20th century borrows from an ancient paradigm. Since Vitruvius, c. 30-20 B.C., the correlation between buildings and human bodies has turned architecture into a surrogate body. Continual interest in this relationship has reduced Vitruvius to a seemingly linear thinker – symmetry above all – rather than a purveyor of the complicated relationship of survival and endurance between body and building.

Marius Sidoriuc writes on the status of wounded buildings and the rehabilitation of debris and ruin. He argues that ruins mark a transition period between eras, that political reorientation is marked by a physical reshaping of landscape.[5] Filmmaker Harun Farocki also has put emphasis on the readability of landscape reshaping in 20th century

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[3] Vladimir Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, trans. by Dmitri Nabokov (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 170."аляповастость этой пародии на работу времени" ('Priglashenie na kazn′', in *Sobranie sochinenii russkovo perioda v 5 tomach, tom 4* (Moskva: Simpozium, 2000), pp. 47–187 (p. 151).)

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. by Hazel E Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1984), p. 428.

[5] Marius Sidoriuc, 'The Concept of Ruin and the Ruin of Concepts', *Cultura International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology*, 6.1 (2009), 169–89 (p. 173).

warfare. Contemporary wars are won, he argues, on the basis of the visibility and readability of sequential air photography. The Nazis, for example, displayed these images "in their anticipated post-war future", and they "talked about the eradication of cities, which means the suspension of their symbolic existence on the map."[6] The 20th century witnessed a problem of ruinable material. Reinforced concrete, which became so popular for the sake of speedy building, does not deteriorate, but needs to be broken down forcibly into rubble. The ruins of 20th century warfare were not beautiful like the ancient Greeks' and Romans'. No one would want to mimic such ruins for their estate.

Hitler and Speer's Nazi architecture attempts to reinstate a classic ruin in the face of the 20th century's bombed rubble. Rather than stand in a preservationist limbo – Can the ruins be purposed? Should they be preserved for the sake of a historical readability? – Speer's "theory of ruin value" determines a building's ruin worth before its architectural inception. Instead of planning for a building's durability and instead of emphasizing a building's functional (sheltering) value, Speer's architecture assumed dysfunction before the building became dysfunctional as a ruin. Strangely, Speer used Hitler's love for Romantic treatments of ruins towards the reversal of the Romantic sense of history's wear: in Speer's architecture, buildings assume their dysfunction in their very blueprints and, in doing so, reverse the logic of a building whose purpose is to shelter the human body.

It is unclear in any present moment whether a standing building will become a ruin worthy of preservation, and it would seem an impossible gesture to guarantee a

[6] Harun Farocki, *Working on Sightlines*, ed. by Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), pp. 200–1.

building's future as preserved ruin. For neo-Classicists, the ruin was an indication of grand posterity, a cultural investment. But after the world wars, to be entitled "ruin", according to Sidoriuc, is to have a history of spectacular event. That which was a building is literally rewritten by the war spectacle: "The ruin as an object is the effect of that building's ruining. The building does not exist anymore. Now, there is only the ruin."[7] Debris and ruin cannot be spoken of in the present tense of buildings. Even to say of a landmark: "This is the battlefield" is really to mean "This *was* the battlefield." The ruin is always oriented towards the past, and thus has been classically seen as an escape from the "purely formal." Buildings become something else, something with a past which can be abandoned (ghost towns) or co-opted into new formations of future (memorial sites, renovations). So the resignification of "building" to "ruin" is a perversion; in the interpretation of history as physical landscape, ruins never exist in the present tense. They are always pointed towards the future, to the radically new, while looking still to the past for their narrative stories of spectacle. Ruin sites "mark an open interrogation on the past and future."[8]

But more than just a complicated intersection of temporal trajectories, a figural representation of temporal effects, the ruin site is a literal rewriting of material to the point of dysfunction and unlivability. Simmel saw the potential for "maximum charm"[9] in an unlivable aesthetics of ruin. Walter Benjamin saw in ruins the quintessential modernist fragment; modernist art, literature, and architecture were directed *a priori*

[7] Sidoriuc, p. 176.
[8] Sidoriuc, p. 188.
[9] Simmel and Wolff, p. 266.

towards the ruinous.[10] No one fragment, no one destined ruin, can guarantee endless functionality. Similarly, Jean-François Lyotard wrote of ruins as screens upon which modernism had projected its work on temporality,[11] buildings without support, without depth or livable substance. Andrew Benjamin speaks of ruins as melancholia, as the representation of loss,[12] and thus they stand as the re-presentation of an unnamable absence, a lost object. Jean Baudrillard writes on abandoned urban zones as an aesthetically uniform disintegration into a *terrain vague*[13]; all specificity already points to an indistinguishable unlivability. In all of these models, ruins are made unlivable for humans.[14] Surely, other living things survive in ruins, but since architecture is classically pointed towards the preservation of the human body, it becomes strange when architecture remains standing, and even revered, when it can no longer house humans.

As Andrew Benjamin argues, "Architecture is inevitably interarticulated with function or with program. . . . In architecture, forms function."[15] Such a unique and originary relationship with function differentiates architecture from conceptual art or sculpture. And it is this determination by originary function that links architecture from its very conception with time. Architecture "is located in a complex movement of historical time"[16]; it is constructed with this time in mind, and it functions by the

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[10] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), p. 178.
[11] Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and 'the Jews'*, trans. by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 43.
[12] Andrew Benjamin, *Architectural Philosophy* (New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000), p. 152.
[13] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Stimulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser, p. 1994.
[14] It is because of this relationship between human body and building that the architecture of Tarkovsky's films, as we saw in Chapter 3, becomes eerie. His buildings leak and crack and mold; they are unlivable and the humans who inhabit them come to resemble flora or fauna, natural yet inhuman outgrowths of this world.
[15] Andrew Benjamin, p. 11.
[16] Andrew Benjamin, p. 6.

unfolding of this time. We will see that ruins, the perpetual dissolution of architecture, mess with the seeming continuity of architectural time. They introduce discontinuity, a new staging of time that does not function.

If a ruin is a building constitutively *out-of-function*, the ruin has lost its originary program. And without its function, without its originary aim, the ruined building becomes the place of no-place, the marker of architectural threshold, the freedom from design. In its purposelessness, it defies traditional categories of architectural dialogue and rhetoric. And in its purity of form, it marks its own boundary. As Simmel points out, "The mystery of organic form lies in the fact that it is limit; it is at once the thing itself and the cessation of the thing, the domain in which the being and the no-more-being of the thing are one."[17] Even in the preservation of culture or political memory, as we will see in Speer and Hitler's ruin theory, it becomes impossible to maintain a building's originary purpose from first blueprint and equally impossible to provide a continuous narrative from blueprint to perpetual ruin. The claim to this sort of foresight and power is the totalitarian move *par excellence*, one which treats the building like a surrogate for the human body. As we will see, Speer and Hitler's totalitarian narrative claims to control history by treating the monumental building as the representation of political body and by demanding that its ruin, its carcass, be preserved by an aesthetic influence and control.

Nabokov's novel *Invitation to a Beheading* comments on this strange ruin temporality and the inadequacy of Speer's architectural plans. Using the novel, this chapter will make parallels between several terms: the human body, architectural

[17] Georg Simmel, 'Death and Immortality', in *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays with Journal Aphorisms*, ed. by John A. Y. Andrews, trans. by John A. Y. Andrews and Levine, pp. 63–98 (p. 63).

structure-as-body, and body politic. If the human body is the classical model for architectural design, insofar as architecture is designed to shelter the body, then Speer's perversion of architectural functionality disturbs the body-architecture parallel in a radical way. Designed so that Hitler could circumvent the powers of time and space, Speer's architecture makes a very motivated attempt to control the body politic through his ruin temporality. We will see, through Nabokov's anticipation of Speer's failure, that such thinking is faulty, and we will also see that the body-architecture parallel is in some ways a design that protects the political body, just as it protects the physical body.

Written in Berlin during the time of Speer and Hitler's work together, Nabokov's *Приглашение на казнь* (later to become *Invitation to a Beheading*) is an allegorical novel which deals with the rising air of monumentality in Germany. Nabokov interrupted his work on *Дар* (*The Gift*) in Spring 1934 when his preparatory Chernyshevsky research[18] gave him a burst of inspiration for a new novel. He claimed to have written *Приглашение* in "one fortnight of wonderful excitement and sustained inspiration."[19] The novel was published serially in 1935-1936. In defense of the novel after its publication, Nabokov gave differing accounts of its political content. First, he corrects his mother's approach to the novel as an allegory:

> твое толкование "Приглашения" совершенно неверно. Никаково не следует искать символа или иносказания. Он строго логичен и

[18] Nabokov had already been researching capital punishment in 1930. But in preparation for writing *Dar*, Nabokov's research on Chernyshevsky revealed that Chernyshevsky had to face ritual mock-execution before being exiled in 1864 (similarly to Doestoevky's infamous mock-execution in 1849). (Brian Boyd, '"Welcome to the Block": Priglashenie Na Kazn' / Invitation to a Beheading. A Documentary Record', in *Nabokov's 'Invitation to a Beheading': A Critical Companion*, ed. by Julian W. Connolly (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1997), pp. 141–80 (pp. 141–3).)

[19] Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 68.

> реален; он – самая простая ежедневная действительность, никаких особых объяснений не требующая.
>
> your explanation of 'Invitation' is completely wrong. You don't have to look for symbols or allegory. It's strictly logical and real; it's the simplest everyday reality, it doesn't require any special explanation. [20]

But several years later, he defends the historicity of his novel:

> I am afraid I shall always remain 'objective' and that I shall never, never, never write novels solving 'modern problems' or picturing 'the world unrest.' I am neither Upton Sinclair nor Sinclair Lewis. Literature will always remain a game for me, the secret rules of which preclude my following any aim foreign to its curiously divine nature. Incidentally I don't see much difference between Sov. Russia and Germany: it is the same kind of boot with the nails somewhat bloodier in the former one. On the other hand in my novels "Invit." and my last one the "Gift" I have in my own way reflected things and moods which are in direct connection with the times we live in.[21]

And several years later he describes *Приглашение* as dealing "with the incarceration of a rebel in a picture-postcard fortress by the buffoons and bullies of a Communazist state"[22], giving the novel a clear historical and geographic grounding.

Though the novel's reception is originally rooted in the German environment of its birth, its translations seem to push the interpretations of the text away from its roots. By the time Nabokov had recognized the translating talents of his son and hired him as the translator of *Приглашение* in 1950, he had developed a translating strategy that forbade him "to abridge, expand, or otherwise alter or cause to be altered, for the sake of belated improvement, one's own writings in translation."[23] So despite having seen the

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[20] Letter to Elena Ivanovna Nabokov, March 10, 1935. Trans. Brian Boyd. (Boyd, p. 147.)
[21] Letter to Altagracia de Jannelli, May 18, 1938. (Boyd, p. 149.)
[22] Vladimir Nabokov, *Conclusive Evidence: A Memoir* (New York: Harper, 1951), pp. 216–7.
[23] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 7.

Nazi regime unfold into what he termed, "its full volume of welcome,"[24] Nabokov resisted hinting at its historical finitude beyond what his 1934 novel anticipates. The English translation, *Invitation to a Beheading*, was published in 1959, and since its release has been often misread as a critique of Stalinism.

The novel concerns the incarceration of Cincinnatus, the sole prisoner of a dilapidated fortress, and his eventual beheading. During much of the novel Cincinnatus waits restlessly, unsure of how much time he has left before his execution, desiring to write his memoirs, but unwilling to leave them unfinished. In charge of his incarceration are theatrical legal figures Roman, Rodrig, Rodion – characters whom Nabokov has called "facets of the same many-faced monster," that monster presumably being related to Dostoevsky's Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. In Nabokov's reversal, the famous criminal becomes the parodic system of legal rigor, which terrorizes Cincinnatus with theatrics and cruel games. Between the first page, which gives us a glimpse of Cincinnatus' sentencing, and the last scene, his execution, we are swimming in an ocean of largely indistinct time, accentuated by three markers: a clock striking somewhere interjects the text with its chime or the arithmetic sequence of its ticks[25]; the turning of each page, of which the reader is called upon to be aware in an early apostrophe; and the accelerating decay of the prison walls.

In its focus on the temporality of building decay, *Invitation* exaggerates the conflicts of monumentality posed by Speer's architecture – between temporality and

[24] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 5.

[25] The clock may seem to be consistent at first, but later its chimes are deemed a "gimmick" ("уловок", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 128.) and the validity of its automated time-telling is questioned. The clock is also noted to have a blank face with painted-on hands, changed at every hour, marking a "tar brush time" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 135.) ("крашеному времени", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 128.).

space, between function and maintenance, between body and building – to a point of absurdity. Of particular interest in this chapter will be Nabokov's unique treatment of place: he creates a Panopticon-in-ruin, a decaying building re-purposed as an inescapable prison, just on the brink of ruination. Living at this threshold is its sole prisoner, Cincinnatus, who is at the mercy of the building and its political impositions. Here, the body will take many forms: Cincinnatus' biological human body, the building's decaying shell, the body of the text itself, and the political body, dispersed and uncannily intangible. Form and disintegration of form will have double valence here: both the loss of form in architecture and literature and the possibility of political change through this distortion and dysfunction.

VITRUVIAN BODIES

To speak of the body in relation to architecture, we must turn to Vitruvius. Historically, analogies of buildings to bodies are attributed to Vitruvius' corporeal symmetries: "Just as in the human body there is a harmonious quality of shapeliness expressed in terms of the cubit, foot, palm, digit, and other small units, so it is in completing works of architecture."[26] Vitruvius creates a language for architecture which is analogous to the human body. In this way, he builds a sort of semiotics through the body: we derive architectural meaning from the various units of a building relating to one another, and the analogy to the human body puts these units in relation. As we will see, Speer and Hitler will take these Vitruvian relations of body to building to an extreme which exceeds the

[26] Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. by Ingrid D Rowland and Thomas Noble Howe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 25.

reasonable implications of this analogy. In fact, they will push the body-building relation to a point which cannot be maintained in any practical mode of building, durability, or ruin. Nabokov will enhance and parody these totalitarian impulses to employ power through the body-building relationship. In *Invitation*, the body is forced to survive in an unlivable ruin, and the ruin responds to the body in theatrical, unpredictable, and counter-Vitruvian manners.

From the start of Vitruvius' work, he links the advent of architecture, of livability and preservation, with the creation of language. So, for him, architecture is already a semiotics. He begins *Ten Books on Architecture* with an origin myth for architecture which simultaneously is an origin myth for language and pits humans as natural imitators and representationists:

> The beginning of association among human beings, their meeting and living together, thus came into being because of the discovery of fire. When many people came into a single place, having, beyond all the other animals, this gift of nature: that they walked, not prone, but upright, they therefore could look upon the magnificence of the universe and the stars. For the same reason they were able to manipulate whatever object they wished, using their hands and other limbs. Some in the group began to make coverings of leaves, others to dig caves under the mountains. Many imitated the nest buildings of swallows and created places of mud and twigs where they might take cover. Then, observing each other's homes and adding new ideas to their own, they created better types of houses as the days went by.[27]

Humans construct shelters according to the natural materials found at their sides, available to their hands and limbs. So peoples in the woods, Vitruvius argues, used branches to build; peoples in the mountains adapted caves.[28] Alongside his origin myth,

[27] Vitruvius, p. 38.
[28] Vitruvius, p. 32.

Vitruvius glorifies the use of local materials and the imitation of nature in architectural aims.

Vitruvius gives these prescriptions of local material use with the ethical suggestion that a life of symmetry indicates an intimacy with nature and with the natural ideal of the human body. But it is too often that Vitruvius is remembered only for the Vitruvian Man, as made famous by da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (c 1490) and Cesariano's *Vitruvian Man* (c 1521). As much as Vitruvius focused on the human body in architecture, he was also interested in the durability of buildings, and he prescribed building guidelines to avoid ruination. Ultimately, such focus was in the interest of preserving the human body, in finding an architecture which would survive for the extension of its shelter. And Vitruvius consistently eschews aesthetic considerations in the interest of durability. In masonry, he argues against soft rubble, which is cheap and has a "subtle attractiveness", but which is ultimately short-lived: such building materials are "not the ones that will resist ruin as time passes."[29] Also exerting more time and money on building stone blocks in alternate layers as though they were brick will "achieve powers of durability for the walls such that they will last an eternity."[30] The shift from an aesthetic ease to a practical longevity seems to counter Vitruvius' contemporary reception, as so many architectural theorists have dismissed Vitruvius as an aesthete who is primarily interested in establishing or perpetuating classic proportions and symmetries.[31]

[29] Vitruvius, p. 40.
[30] Vitruvius, p. 39.
[31] Vitruvius was often criticized by his contemporaries for ignoring innovations. Alex Boethius argues in 1930 that Vitruvius was a reactionary, that he pulled back from vulgar and chaotic inventiveness of late

Often Vitruvius is accused of conservatism in his lack of interest in new architectural innovations. But it would seem that his "conservatism" is a practical outgrowth of his steadfast principle of reasoning and symmetry. He tells his readers that architects should have a communal understanding of their craft, much as "doctors and musicians share knowledge of the rhythm of our veins' pulse and the motion of our feet."[32] An architect should tap into an agreed upon architectural symmetry, which will guide his choices in material, placement, orientation, and so forth. Indecision, and perhaps also resultant innovation, has no place in the geometry of architecture. But this is not to imply that Vitruvius was rigid in his prescriptions. We find that his rules adjust according to the unique qualities of the architectural site and function: "Different resources occur in difference places."[33] Though his work is littered with imperatives, they are not meant to be applied blindly. Vitruvius calls this principle "allocation": that dwellings ought to be built according to habit, need, activity, person, function, means, materials, and site.

Vitruvius makes his point by anecdote, rhetorically impressing on his readers the need to take stock of materials and resources before determining proportion and symmetry.[34] He relays the story of Dinocrates the architect, who wants to carve Mount

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Republican architecture. In the mid-20th century Vitruvian thought was made obsolete by what John Ward-Perkins calls "the concrete revolution." But these misreadings of Vitruvius focus on his call for durability. What they under-read is his emphasis on functionality, specifically functionality towards preservation of human life.

[32] Vitruvius, p. 24.

[33] Vitruvius, p. 25.

[34] Vitruvius' *Ten Books on Architecture* is *libri decem*, a hybrid text which has technical instructions alongside literary aspirations. This style was popular during Vitruvius' lifetime and inspired creative writings of handbooks. This hybrid style allows Vitruvius to intersperse his instructional descriptions and diagrams with anecdotes and mythical stories. In this way, he shows us an experience and history of architecture that is both about functionality (with respect to the human body) and the imaginary (with respect to human creativity).

Athos into the image of man holding a libation bowl in his right hand, "where the waters of all the rivers that run on that mountain will gather together and plunge into the sea." King Alexander is impressed by the design, but when he understands that in this city plan, food would have to be imported by sea, not farmed on site, the flaw is exposed: "As much, therefore, as I think that the design is to be commended, the choice of the site is to be condemned."[35]

We should see it as curiously anticipatory that Vitruvius should use this anecdote of body architecture to lay out his methodology, as though he could foresee his oft-criticized legacy: the proportional Vitruvian man. This story warns us to not take the human body-architecture parallel too literally. A Mount Athos carved into the literal image of a man would starve its people, not protect them. In taking such literal form, the architecture would harm King Alexander's body politic. The architectural form and political form that takes the body-as-figure too literally becomes dangerous to the literal body. We will see that Speer makes a similar mistake in aspiring to the literalizing of the infinite as a way of controlling the body politic. As we saw in Chapter 3, Chekhov and Tarkovsky warn against such aspirations that ignore the unmasterability of infinite figures. The risk here is not just the failure of the literal to do justice to the figural, but the dissolution of the body politic itself or the physical harm of the literal bodies that compose it.

In advance of this corporeal proportionality, Vitruvius argues for an attention to materials. The peoples of forests should build roofed towers from leafy branches and mud. In the plains, dwellings should rest on dug trenches and should be built of cones of

[35] Vitruvius, p. 33.

rods, straw, stripped branches, and "immense mounds of earth."[36] In the swamps, huts should be made of reeds. The materials at hand determine the limits of building and thus the style of architecture. And Vitruvius scoffs at buildings which are made where they do not belong, explaining how quickly they will deteriorate in comparison to a site-appropriate design. In line with the perfectly symmetrical human body and the perfectly proportioned building comes an interest in Greek architecture. Vitruvius isolates some Greek techniques of building that would guarantee durability of structure and, later, durability of ruins. The ancient Greeks often used materials in unique construction methods, seeming to pay little attention to contemporary styles or fads. Vitruvius suggests that they tried to mimic nature in their masonry; by incorporating all four elements in their stone construction, the Greeks created mass rubble which functions with the strength of natural materials and which would seamlessly, beautifully decay back into natural rubble.

In *Invitation*, the narrative stone of which the prison fortress is built has been decaying into its original rock state, back into the local cliff material on which it is built. As a ruin, Nabokov's building site is free of classic architectural constrictions, and so it is able to function in a counter-architectural manner in that it resists functions of comfortable shelter. Part of this play with conventions emerges in a reversal of the Vitruvian body-building proportions. Nabokov gives a *horizontality* to the human proportions of his prison-fortress building. The prison-fortress houses Cincinnatus appropriately at times, allowing him to stand tall, allowing him to pace within his cell; but it also constricts him, forces him down to his knees and belly to wander through its

[36] Vitruvius, p. 34.

deteriorating walls: “отовсюду тесня, давила на хребет, колола в ладони, в колени кромешная тьма, полная осыпчивого треска” (“the pitch darkness, full of crumbling and crackling, squeezed Cincinnatus from all sides, pressed on his spine, prickled his palms and his knees...”)[37]

The deterioration of a building-in-ruin is felt through the body of its inhabitant. As the building falls to ruin, turning back to rubble, so Cincinnatus can feel his body contorting alongside this deterioration of human proportions. In fact, Cincinnatus seems almost to be regressing himself, turning inhuman amongst the loss of Vitruvian ratios; he worries that “the tunnel would collapse... [he] found himself in stone cul-de-sacs and, like some patient retreating animal, moved backwards; then, feeling out the tunnel's continuation, crawled on. He was impatient to lie down on something soft...”[38] Cincinnatus' body is a “mass of scrapes and bruises” after this travel through unfit spaces. His body is not sheltered by the architecture, but, perversely, damaged by it.

It becomes clear that the health of Cincinnatus' body runs parallel to the functionality of the prison-fortress. As the building collapses, he is brought to his knees under the pressure of its contracting walls. As he comes closer to his execution date, the building peels and crumbles and festers with more intensity. It is unclear which condition is a call and which is a response; the building may be coming apart in anticipation of the execution or the execution may be announced as a result of the building’s (and the body’s) decomposition. Cincinnatus' body mimics its surroundings just as the building

[37] Nabokov, ‘Priglashenie na kazn′’, p. 159.

[38] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 163–4.“ожидая обвала, ... попадал в каменные мешки, и, как смирное отступающее животное, подавался назад, и, нащупав продолжение хода, полз дальше. Ему не терпелось лечь на мягкое . . .” (Nabokov, ‘Priglashenie na kazn′’, p. 147.).

anticipates Cincinnatus' execution. In the space of the ruin, a causal temporality is no longer so clear. We cannot say with certainty which state is original: Cincinnatus' sentencing or the prison-fortress' disrepair. In this space of the ruin, and of narrative, the anticipatory gesture of time can take on a corporeal effect: Cincinnatus sits "in expectation of the unknown but near and inexorable date (which he distinctly anticipated as the wrenching, yanking, and crunch of a monstrous tooth, his whole body being the inflamed gum, and his head that tooth)"[39]

Invitation is not traditionally recognized as a novel of ruins or even of architecture, in any general sense. But many of its accepted readings – on absurdism, theatricality, totalitarianism[40] – intersect at the juncture of ruins, which litter the novel's topography. At the center of town is a factory in ruin; between the prison-fortress and the execution stage is an airport in ruin. The novel itself is in partial ruin. From its very start,

[39] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 72–3. "в ожидании неизвестного, но близкого, но неминучего скора этой казни (которая ясно предошущалась им как выверт, рывок и хруст чудовищного зуба, причем все его тело было воспаленной десной, а голова этим зубом)" (Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 87.)

[40] The novel has been described as transcendentalist (D. Barton Johnson) for its seeming yearning for a liberation into another dimension. It has been named as "metaphysical allegory" by Julian Moynahan in its seeming discount of material reality. Few critics seem to allow the novel a platform and power to question political methods themselves. As Dale E. Peterson has acknowledged, the original reviewers of Nabokov's English translation of *Invitation* condemned it as pure "celebrations of lexical play and imaginative artifice" ("Nabokov's *Invitation*: Literature as Execution"). But subsequent critics (publishing after 1970) have constructively commented on its artistic elements, almost to the point of reduction. Leona Toker and D. Barton Johnson, in particular, have dwelt not only on the portrayal of the artist in *Invitation*, but also on the very narrative structure as allegory for the expression of the inexpressible. In "Spatial Modeling and Deixis: Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading*," Johnson focuses on the link between reality and "verbal art," and in his "The Alpha and Omega of *Invitation to a Beheading*," establishes a construction of "prison-house of language" based on *Invitation* – the artist is restricted both by the language he is to work with and by the philistine audience that cannot or will not understand what he is trying to express. As political readers of the novel, nearly all critics bring Nabokov's personal history into the text – his émigré status and "escape" from Communism are an awkward beginning to most critical readings. In "*Invitation to a Beheading*: Nabokov and the Art of Politics," Robert Alter writes about *Invitation*'s totalitarian state as the "lineaments" of a fictional fantasy, and through this he realizes that the inner requisite to the totalitarian state is not necessarily the "need to achieve practical ends," which allows for something like Nazism to be conceived. However, Alter does not stick to these readings of the narrative as useful construction for the examination of politics. He reverts to the popular Aristotelean critique of the novel's self-conscious art as a model of morality.

it explicitly anticipates its end, calling on the reader to feel the limits of the pages with his fingers.[41] Sentences break off unexpectedly. The solidity of objects is questioned: some objects will vanish into thin air[42]; directions will suddenly change[43]; things fail to function as they are supposed to. The novel consistently points to the instability of its setting, which is built of fiction, a dimension-less stage which only mimics a "real" space, a "real" town, a "real" prison.

Invitation's prison-fortress is in disrepair or it is in the process of being repaired – the details here do not matter. In the consolidation of past and present in the space of ruin, the terms and order of causality are not applicable. Nabokov links both events in one gesture: Cincinnatus hears the inner walls cracking, and these sounds could just as well be "stonemasons . . . making repairs" as it could be the collapse of walls, the further ruining of the ruins.[44] But stonemasonry repair would not *end* the ruination; it would only

[41] "So we are nearing the end. The right-hand, still untasted part of the novel, which, during our delectable reading, we would lightly feel, mechanically testing whether there were still plenty left (and our fingers were always gladdened by the placid, faithful thickness) has suddenly, for no reason at all, become quite meager" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 12.). "Итак -- подбираемся к концу. Правая, еще непочатая часть развернутого романа, которую мы, посреди лакомого чтенья, легонько ощупывали, машинально проверяя, много ли еще (и все радовала пальцы спокойная, верная толщина), вдруг, ни с того ни с сего, оказалась совсем тощей" (Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', pp. 47–8.). We will see more on this self-referential quality of the novel later.

[42] "in spite of his majestic solidity, he calmly vanished, dissolving into the air" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 15.) ("несмотря на свою сановитую плотнсть, преспокойно исчез, растворившись в воздухе", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 49.); "suddenly [the towel] disappeared as if the very air had swallowed it" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 204.) ("внезапно она пропалаь это было так, словно самый воздух поглотил ее", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 174.); "made his way out of the cell, which in fact was no longer there" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 211.) ("выбрался наконец из камеры, которой, собственно, уже не было больше", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 179.)

[43] The directionality of hallways and stairwells will suddenly reverse (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 213.; Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 179.)

[44] Cincinnatus tries to identify the source of a crumbling which he hears emanating from within the fortress in hope that it is the sounds of a rescue mission: "visualized through the tympanum the secret passage, lengthening with every scrape, and sensed – as if thus the dark, tight pain in his chest were relieved – how the stones were being loosened, and he had already begun guessing, as he looked at the wall, where it would crack and burst open with a crash" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 147.) ("чувств, ясно, через слух видел потайной ход, удлиняющийся с каждым скребом, и ощущал, словно ему

prolong the ruin of the ruins, an enhancement of a site which the town holds in great esteem. It would not restore, make ruins fully functioning. It would only maintain the architectural limbo.

As Nabokov emphasizes, the state of disorder is already naturalized in a ruin: "There can be no disorder here – only a shifting about."[45] And on the level of textual form, the novel's predetermined end denies any telos to plot, making any suspense or crescendo of reading beside the point. In ruins, disorder replaces the architectural order (*arche*) and becomes the dominating order itself. The human proportions of architecture as prescribed by Vitruvius become geometric playthings in the transition to ruin. And as a corporeal determinant, this Vitruvian mathematics becomes unreliable in ruins *while still* maintaining a parallel relationship between body and building. This absurdism, as we will see, will take a psychological hold in *Invitation*, emphasizing the internal ramifications of formal geometry.

Vitruvius focuses his architectural dictum on external proportions with the ethical suggestion that a life of symmetry indicates an intimacy with nature and with the natural ideal of the human body. But Vitruvius also has a practical approach to architectural

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облегчали темную, тесную боль в груди, как расшатываются камни, и уже гадал, глядя на стену, где-то она даст трещину и с грохотом разверзнется", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 136.); "Maybe it was just stonemasons. Making repairs. An aural deception" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 155.) ("Может быть: просто каменщики. Чинят. Обман слуха.", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 141.); "some inner obstruction collapsed, and now the noises sounded with such vivid intensity... that their proximity was obvious: they were right there, directly behind the wall, which was melting like ice, and would break through it any instant now" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 157.) ("рухнула будто какая-то внутренняя прегпада, и уже теперь звуки проявились с такой выпуклостью и силой . . . что стало ясно: они вот тут, сразу за тающей, как лед, стеной, и вот сейчас, сейчас прорвутся", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 143.); "the yellow wall cracked about a yard above the floor in a lightninglike pattern, and immediately bulged from the pressure within, and suddenly burst open with a great crash" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 158.) ("желтая стена на аршин от пола дала молниевидную трещину, тот-час набрякла, толкаемая снутри, и внезапно с грохотом разверзлась", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 143.).

[45] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 132.

preservation, and he is fully aware of the inevitability of ruin, even as he tries to maintain an accordance with nature for the sake of durability. There is no guarantee in Vitruvius that a house will withstand time, will be unruinable. Rather, the locality of material is meant to encourage a natural symmetry, an aesthetics of geometry which is appropriate to a living – an encouragement of an architectural poetry achieved by ancient Greek architecture and ruins. And the ruin of local materials will return the material back to some sense of original form in its state of nature. Thus, the flow from natural material to architectural material and back to natural material, in Vitruvius' dictums, is ultimately fluid.

Of course, the "poetics" of architectural materials suggests a holistic fluidity that might not appear so poetic in its singular moments of construction and decay, as we will see in *Invitation*. On the opposite end to Vitruvius' durability, on the side of decay, the body is squeezed into unnatural living. In the unlivable space of an extreme ruin, as the one in which Nabokov's Cincinnatus is forced to live, the body is brought into painful, unmanageable contact with building, with decaying stone and raw rock. And, appropriately, Cincinnatus' decaying prison seems to be made of a material which can fulfill these paradoxical qualities at once: strong yet malleable, standing yet decaying, cavernous yet compressing.

Limestone

In architectural reality, if we are to find a material which holds a natural disorder while also suggesting a poetic wholeness in its continual decay, it would be limestone. An

appropriate intermediary between time and space, memory and physicality, the material of limestone has long been a subject of interest for both architects and poets, in part because it is a notoriously beautiful decayer. If the material of building determines the aesthetics of ruins, then limestone is by far the most valued ruinable stone. As Adrian Stokes has argued, limestone's weathering is the "most vivid" of materials partially because of its influence by the human body: it is "carved by the very breath we breathe" and the layers of varied touches sculpt the limestone, "record on its concrete shape in spatial, immediate simultaneous form, not only the winding passages of days and nights, the opening and shutting skies of warmth and wet, but also the sensitiveness, the vitality even, that each successive touching has communicated." [46]

The birth and death of limestone material is hard to pinpoint, and this makes it a material of particular theoretical interest in ruins. It is extracted as calcium carbonate by a process of deterioration from the earth's crust, itself deteriorated rock. This calcium carbonate is kept suspended in a solution by water's carbon dioxide. It travels through seas, lakes, rivers until it is extracted by plants and animals, whose decaying bodies cement into limestone. Stokes notes that this process is the perfect integration of the organic and inorganic into a single substance, "the symbol of life concreted into static objects, of Time concreted as Space."[47] Bodies literally form limestone quarries, and it is human bodies which give such unique form to limestone as breath and touch mold the material over time.

[46] Adrian Stokes, *Stones of Rimini* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), p. 15.
[47] Stokes, p. 52.

The weathering of rock – exposure to the elements in order to strengthen its character and durability – to turn it to masonry stone is also a sort of decay. Though it may appear to be an improvement upon Nature, the strengthening of quarried limestone is also a deterioration: “all stone weathering is stone disease.” And, as Vitruvius encourages, limestone is best used locally, sitting at the very angle and position as it was found. The effects of misuse appear in limestone as they would on a body. So Vitruvius' analogy of the body to building works in both directions. If limestone is treated poorly – by not allowing it to weather before building, by building with it in unnatural positions, by striking the stone at improper angles – it will discolor, bruise as living skin. Cracks impressed during the process of change will show up as veins in the stone. Hurt rock can develop an odor. Limestone will also decay by effects of soots and acids in urban atmospheres; it will deteriorate by impregnation of soluble salts from cement mortar joinings.

Practically speaking, limestone would seem a poor choice for durable building. But even so, it has inspired the architecture of many cities and the art of many sculptors. Though it may seem delicate, it is limestone's malleability which has made it so widely attractive to aesthetic form. When heated or compressed, limestone re-crystallizes into marble. Depending on the elements contained in the stone at the time of compression, this marble will have a different aesthetics. Most striking is black marble, which derives its deep color from a decaying vegetation trapped in the limestone at the moment of compression. In their malleability, limestone and marble are the perfect materials for sculpture and the intricacy of architectural details. And so limestone was used by Egyptians and Greeks for their classic architectures; Athens was built of local Pentelic

marble; Rome was built of local travertine; London largely used Kentish Rag, a uniquely soft, almost downy, chalk limestone. Architectural forms find a likeness in limestone material. In fact, as Stokes argues, architecture has long tried to mimic the natural contortions of limestone caves – their natural columns, arches, domes have inspired Classic, Renaissance, and Gothic architecture –, a natural predecessor for what has come to be recognized as an aesthetics of function that is based around the human and his body. And limestone's luminescence, which, due to its dense grain, plays with light to achieve a "flesh-like, diffused glow"[48], turns to limelight when heated. In one material we have the prototype for architecture, sculpture, and cinema.

The material which Nabokov uses for the prison of *Invitation* evolves over the course of the novel. Like limestone, it morphs as it decays. It begins to crack, bruise, and stink. And as it changes consistency, it linguistically shifts from stone (камень) to rock (скала/ горный/глыба/утес), as though the very words which construct the fortress' architecture were devolving back to their varied original, unarchitectured state through decay. From the start of the novel, we see the "fortress" (крепость) separated from its virgin "rocky base" (скалистого подножья). The Russian «скала» here denotes a large mass of rock, either a mountain or a cliff, full of sharp protrusions – an unquarried, unweathered rock that contrasts sharply with the stone of the architecture which stands upon it. Such a separation between stone (камень) and rock (скала) becomes increasingly less clear as the novel progresses. And as the stone turns to back to rock, in its process of decay, the use of "stone" in the text turns figural: "pale stony light", "stony solitude", "the night was impassive and stony", chess pieces "fashioned . . . so solidly,

[48] Stokes, pp. 52, 55.

that a stone might envy them."[49] "Stone" becomes a figure of rigidity, impassivity, unsensuousness – an architectural artificiality that must be overcome in the ruin process for a natural state of rock to re-emerge. In this way, "stone" comes to be seen as form that outlives its function, an unresponsive rigidity of purely systematic architecture.

From early in the novel, the literal stone of the fortress becomes explicitly linked with the rock on from which it evolved: "the cold wall – undoubtedly related to the rock on which the fortress had risen."[50] In the Russian *Приглашение*, this evolution is emphasized even more strongly; rather than sitting atop the cliff as a separate entity ("on which the fortress had risen"), the fortress has *grown* (выросла) atop the rock, suggesting at least a co-evolution of material, if not a directly causal relationship.[51] Later, when Cincinnatus breaches the line between fortress and cliff, we realize that the threshold is ephemeral: not a visible separation, but a faint smell that marks the transition from one space to another. Cincinnatus "caught the whiff of dampness and mold just as though he had passed from the bowels of the fortress wall into a natural cave, . . . and [he] crawled from a crack in the rock to freedom."[52] Here, the conflation of fortress and cliff has begun, though most clearly in the fortress bowels, as though the decay infects the architecture from its base and will make its move towards its spire. As Cincinnatus leaves the site on the way to his execution, he takes one last look at his prison, which has become a "blue, elaborate, many-towered, huge bulk of the fortress," inseparable from

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[49] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 41, 72, 139, 144.
[50] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 72.
[51] «холодной стены, несомненно сродной скале, на которой выросла крепость» (Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 86.) ("cold wall – undoubtedly related to the rock on which the fortress had risen", Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 72.).
[52] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 164. «пахную сыростью, плесенью, точно он из недр крепостной стены перешел в природную пещеру» (Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 148.)

the cliff beneath it, no longer "stone" with a single spire, but a nondescript "bulk" (громада) which incorporates all peaks and crags into a single rock formation.

From within the fortress, we can see the ways in which decay and transformation has set in. The prison walls are made of a strange material: a sort of limestone made animated and theatrical. It is malleable; it shifts; it plays games; it interiorizes itself in its inhabitant. Everywhere it seems to be constructed of shadows[53] or of "ghostly" trimmings[54]. By the end of its transformation, the fortress has "suffered a mild stroke, as the descending stairs were in reality ascending and vice versa."[55] But throughout the novel, the prison's material is in consistent deterioration, from its "peeling walls" to the very moonlight that enters its windows, shredding as it enters the rooms. The furniture is at one moment light props that can be moved and rearranged, and then suddenly become so heavy that they seem to be bolted to the floor.[56] The prison fortress is alternately the cavernous, airy shell of a building and a series of foreclosed corridors and tightly clenched doorways. Its power is instituted by the state, but it also functions *as* the state. We see the building house the totalitarianism which it then helps to enact upon Cincinnatus. At first glance, the cell seems to be unique, both in its features and in its number. Cincinnatus is the only prisoner of the building, and it is suggested that the rest of the building is emptied of remnants of its previous function.

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[53] Shadows perpetuate the prison fortress and encourage the efficacy of the building's "optical illusions" and theatrics (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 18, 24, 28, 36, 40, 92, 124.).

[54] "The stone steps were narrow and slippery, with the impalpable spiral of a ghostly railing." (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*.) ("Каменные ступени были склизки и узки, с неосязаемой спиралью призрачных перил", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 52.)

[55] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 213..

[56] After standing on the table to peek through the barred windows, "alas, the legs had been bolted down for ages" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 30.). ("увы, ножки были от века привинчены", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 60.)

We have few indications of what the prison would look like in a "real" space, in our space. It is alternately named "prison" and "fortress", but its spire tower would suggest that it was originally not meant for either one of these functions. From the view of the tower, which is so high that Cincinnatus climbs its spiral stairwell to near exhaustion, he can view the life-holding elsewheres, in particular the Tamara Gardens that he has romanticized from his cell. As his mind wanders the streets of the town below, he lingers on the "ruins of an ancient factory, the pride of the town" before the reality of his cell and barred windows seep into his memories and foreclose further wanderings. Like the prison fortress in which he barely sustains life, the ancient factory ruins have been preserved by the town intentionally. If the ancient factory is preserved out of pride, out of a preservation of culture, then perhaps the prison fortress is preserved as the last memory of a political system. The building is not meant for imprisonment, but perhaps retains some of its original law-setting function – a castle, a palace, a cathedral, a parliamentary house, the ruins of sovereignty's seat?

In the space of such a ruin that is repurposed as a prison, the temporality of ruin becomes spatialized. There is no "here" and "there" in a ruin. It is out of function, and so relies on the people to be given any use value and definition of its bounds. This is the dichotomy with which Nabokov likes to play: "here" and "there" as unique yet mutually interiorizable entities. Nabokov twists his "here"s and "there"s into intentionally unpinnable, unmappable categories. The prison cell is a poetic space that morphs, entertains, blossoms. It is an island of poetry set against the dark terrain of nothingness, a not yet poetized or visualized canvas. Nabokov is too well aware of this poetic convention, and he introduces the cell not as a structural unit that would describe by

microcosm the rest of the building, but as a solitary boat on dark, choppy waters. The cell door's peephole is "a leak in a boat", then a "porthole", and the jailor Rodion takes on "a skipper's stern attention":

> Rodion gazed through the blue porthole at the horizon, now rising, now falling. Who was becoming seasick? Cincinnatus. He broke out in a sweat, everything grew dark, and he could feel the rootlet of every hair. A clock struck – four or five times – with the vibrations and re-vibrations, and reverberations proper to a prison.[57]

The cell-as-boat sets Cincinnatus out to a nondescript sea. He is not on a journey to a particular destination; in fact, the ship does not seem to be in forward motion at all. The cell rises and falls enough to induce seasickness, a physiological disorientation. And the rhythm that the choppy sea of nothingness has induced in the cell transforms into reverberations of a clock striking the hour. The forward progression of time maps to a vertical motion in space. The shifting building calms itself in order to provide an explanation of its movements that would be "proper to a prison": the imposing reverberations of temporality. The stones of Cincinnatus' cell, and consequently Cincinnatus' body, are in deterioration by the force of Nature's most impressionistic tool: water. His body is acted upon in a violent watery sculpting, as though it were worked upon like limestone. From this first moment in his cell, Cincinnatus becomes pressured by the space which he inhabits and becomes haunted by the aspect of time which has already nauseated him. Just as everything in the novel is a theatrical façade, so the novel itself showcases its story world's incompletion and deterioration.

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[57] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 13. ("Родион смотрел в голубой глазок на поднимавшийся и падавший горизонт. Кому становилось тошно? Цинциннату. Вышибло пот, все потемнело, он чувствовал коренек каждого волоса. Пробили часы -- четыре или пять раз, и казематный отгул их, перегул и загулок вели себя подобающим образом", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 49.)

In this way, the space in which Cincinnatus is forced to live begins to seep into his being. It tries to enter him, to impose on him, to manipulate him in order to submit him to the architectonic of its building. Totalitarianism works by functions of interiorization. Power is not just imposed from the outside, but power is seeded from within, so that, ideally, totalitarianism becomes a self-sustaining system. It is not just state officials who watch and surveil, but also family and closest friends who watch and surveil. The world outside the state comes to seem scarily vast and foreign, and in parallel, the world outside of the individual who is wedded to the state is scarily vast and foreign. In Nabokov, we see a figure of interiorization immediately after the boat has returned to the shape of a cell: "Cincinnatus lowered his feet from the cot. A bowling ball rolled through his head, diagonally from nape to temple; it paused and started back."[58] As he is regaining his legs on land, Cincinnatus' head is still rocking like the boat. On this unstable ground, the bowling ball maps his mind, from corner to corner, and back. A terrifying figure, the bowling ball acts like a method of totalitarian control, measuring out intimate space in order to then confer control from within. To be internally mapped by the bowling ball is to run the risk of having one's "head pin" knocked down, a sort of internalized execution whose possibility emerges from an internalized control.

For its power, totalitarianism relies on the compulsory credibility of its fiction. And so it is easy for totalitarianism to take the abstract space of an imagined or intimate architecture and enforce its reality. It is easy for totalitarianism to use monumental architecture to write its own post-future. As Hannah Arendt has described in *The Origins*

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[58] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 14.("В голове, от затылка к виску, по диагонали, покатился кегельный шар, замер и поехал обратно", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 49.).

of Totalitarianism, this is a system of practical lies which treats a fictitious world as a tangible reality with such unrelenting vigor that it is fully indoctrinating. Such a system relies on tactics of illegality, secrecy, anti-utilitarian behavior, and anti-hierarchical structure.[59] In the case of Hitler's totalitarianism, an abstract, fictional system is concerned with self-preservation by telling the most absurd lies, one of which – the control of history through architecture – we will examine here. An abstract space is blueprinted so that it may appear to be real, and the unfavorable conditions of its practical concretization are ignored for the sake of upholding the totalitarian fiction. It is absolutely fitting to totalitarian impulses that Hitler and Speer would set their sights on turning the most unpredictable subject of architecture – ruin – into the monument of their post-historical certainty. While exposing this totalitarian control as fictional, *Invitation* uses the form of own fiction to showcase the complicity of "theory of ruin value" in the literal damaging effects on human bodies and the body politic.

SPEER'S *RUINENWERTTHEORIE*

Nazi architect Albert Speer was very concerned with the anticipation of future impressions given by a city's buildings, and he inscribed his blueprints for future buildings with their inevitable narrative of destruction and of memorialization. Hitler was enthralled by the ruins of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt,[60] and he wanted to maintain an impression of power and domination even in his state's inevitable death. Unlike the Romantics, who were interested in the fleetingness of life in the face of the sublime

[59] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 450–7.
[60] Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (London: Hutchinson, 2002), pp. 21–2.

power of time and nature, Hitler's "ruin lust" sought to evade the effects of time and nature in order to showcase the futural triumph of the human will. Speer, Hitler's architect, thus constructed his blueprints with the idea of ruin already informing the buildings' construction. He devised a *Ruinenwerttheorie*[61], "theory of ruin value," by which Hitler could judge his state's architectural worth. The presumed future is already inscribed in these blueprints; impressions on the other (whether future generations or the current enemy) weigh with as much value as impressions of architecture on their present inhabitants. As Rudy Koshar emphasizes: "It fulfilled its function of giving architectonic voice to a 'political life-form.'"[62]

A building, like a human body, cannot be expected to achieve immortality, and so aging must be planned for. Especially in war, the open carcasses of buildings, inevitable in the scene of combat, make such a notion of mortality inescapable. The "theory of ruin value" locks into the seductive thought that because time of ruin extends indefinitely, history can be controlled by planning for ruin. So, in this theory, Vitruvius' interest in a building's durability is taken to a political extreme, a totalitarian dream of permanent movement and a post-history. Speer takes the narration of an architect and perverts it to narrate a political future; we can see how this tactic of fictionality and narration would be a tempting model for Nabokov to expose as self-critique.

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[61] Albert Speer introduced *Ruinenwerttheorie* as means of creating an immortal ideology: "This distressing sight [of the ruins at the Zeppelin Field] made me think of an idea, which I later presented to Hitler pretentiously calling it: 'the theory on ruin value.' Buildings made in the modern spirit were, without a doubt, less able to throw to future generations that certain 'bridge to tradition' that Hitler demanded. It was inconceivable that some stacks of rusty iron could inspire the same heroic enthusiasm as the monuments of the past which Hitler admired. My 'theory' was searching for a way to get past this dilemma." His architecture was constructed ultimately for the eyes of generations "after hundreds of (by our reckoning) even after thousands of years." (Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, trans. by Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970), p. 56.)

[62] Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 130.

For Hitler, architecture was a means of preservation, and the "purpose" of his Nazi architecture was to "transmit his time and its spirit to posterity."[63] All Nazi architecture aspired to be monumental architecture, a building which would "bear witness" to future generations and would serve as a corrective. More than just a symbol of lost civilization or of nationhood, monumental architecture, for Hitler, speaks for the dead. It defends a future civilization by the silences of the past: "at their lowest ebb, their architecture will speak to them of former power."[64] Hitler opened his speech for the Nuremberg cornerstone-laying with similar sentiments: "But if the Movement should ever fall silent, even after thousands of years this witness here will speak. In the midst of a sacred grove of age-old oaks the people of that time will admire in reverent astonishment this first giant among the buildings of the Third Reich."[65] So *Ruinenwerttheorie* was meant to take the place of the helpless dead leaders, as though the demands of a dead politic were being voiced through architecture. Here, again, we see figural bodies standing in for literal bodies and the body politic. *Ruinenwerttheorie* would mimic the aesthetic greatness of the Roman ruins, but it would also, through this aesthetic draw, resist its own decay. It would control event through its seductive form.

Such an anxiety over the future permeates totalitarian politics. Most strikingly fascistic in *Ruinenwerttheorie* is the thought that future peoples would have *no choice* regarding preservation. A perfectly executed theory of ruin-value will *guarantee* awe and a delicate treatment of the site. We can also read this anxiety of physical mistreatment in Hitler's decree for the treatment of his own body. In realizing that anything could happen

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[63] Speer, p. 55.
[64] Speer, p. 56..
[65] Joachim Fest, *Hitler* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), p. 784.

to his body after his death – he cannot control such event just as Mussolini could not control the corporeal humiliation of his dead body – Hitler ordered that his dead body be disposed of by burning gasoline. Perhaps the Vitruvian relation between body and building did not register for Hitler, or perhaps it registered too late, after the institution of *Ruinenwerttheorie*, which is meant to foreclose such corporeal mistreatment.

The principles of the "law of ruins" claim to enact architectural control through "special materials" and "applying certain principles of statics."[66] Speer wanted to avoid modern constructions such as "steel girders and reinforced concrete", as they do not decay and their "weathering" (rusting) was aesthetically unpleasant. He witnessed this first-hand when clearing the ground of the Zeppelin field; the remains of the Nuremberg streetcar depot was a "dreary sight" of protruding iron reinforcements and concrete rubble. To build a "permanent type of construction" which will also fall apart beautifully, one would need impossibly tall walls of quality material which would let fall their roofs and ceilings, yet retain their posture under the strain of hundreds, even thousands, of years of wind. Naturally, both Hitler and Speer were drawn to limestone materials, which had built Rome, their ideal ruin model. But, as we will see, time and circumstance did not allow for the appropriate treatment of limestone in Nazi architecture. Instead, the Romantic preparatory drawings which Speer presented to Hitler, when built, became the very sturdy, concrete-based modernist architectures that they were trying to escape.

[66] Speer, p. 56.

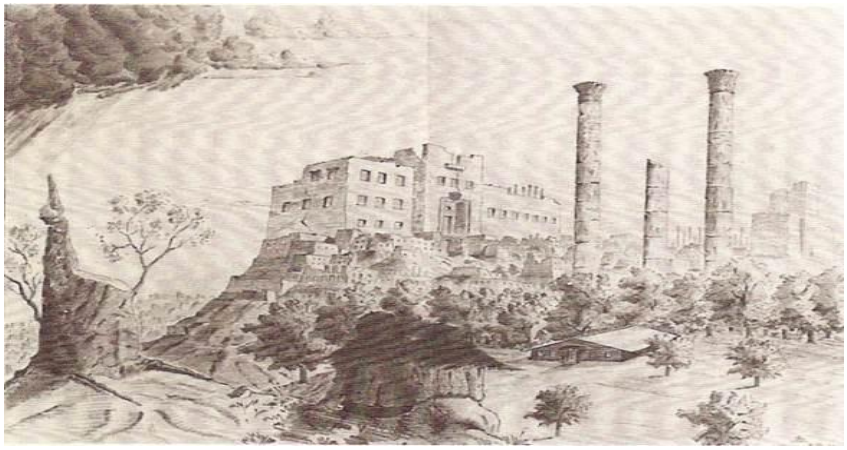

Figure V.I: Speer, Untitled (Columns of the Volkshalle *as Ruins), 1946-66*

In Speer's rendering of *Volkshalle*-in-ruin, the columns of the entrance way have withstood hundreds of years of wind and water. They stand tall and proud, leading the eye to the ruined great hall; only lightly decayed, it perches atop a rocky outcrop like the Acropolis. Though imposing, this decayed structure is not frightening and sinister as Diderot's projected Louvre ruins. These Speer drawings were considered blasphemous by Hitler's entourage: who could dare foresee the demise of a civilization which would never end?[67] Foresight seems to be the political move *par excellence*. As Arendt has noted, lying – even in its most diluted and innocent form of imagination – is the very basis of politics.[68] To claim foresight is to make politics. Yet, Speer's romantic drawing inscribes a telos to the Nazi civilization; to foresee the historical end is to both raise and decompose the state.

[67] Speer, p. 56.

[68] On lying: "the deliberate denial of factual truth – the ability to lie – and the capacity to change facts – the ability to act – are interconnected; they owe their existence to the same source: imagination" (5). On totalitarian lying: "This is one of the lessons that could be learned from the totalitarian experiments and the totalitarian rulers' frightening confidence in the power of lying – in their ability, for instance, to rewrite history again and again to adapt the past to the 'political line' of the present moment or to eliminate data that did not fit their ideology" (Hannah Arendt, 'Lying in Politics', in *Crises of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1972), pp. 1–48 (p. 7).)

If the present tense of the spectacle has become important in order to establish ruin value, this sense of Speer's architectural foresight has infected our automated reactions to events, perhaps most visibly in the face of 20th century war. Paul Virilio has aptly called this phenomenon of an event happening simultaneously with its archive a "pseudo-event," a staged reality. He connects Speer-the-architect to Speer-the-total-war-planner. So in this sense, the preservationist and the memorializer are synonymous with stage director: "For Speer, the architect had a cinematic function similar to that of the military commander – namely, the capacity to determine in a building *what is permanent and what is impermanent*."[69] Ruin value is newly read as cinematic and narrative value. As the event is happening, in its present tense even before it turns building to ruin, the contemporary gaze has already tested its cinematic and narrative potential. The reading gaze portends to predict the lasting value of an architecture: Is the building circumstantial to the event which destroyed it? Is it worth reconstruction? Will it be memorialized?

In narrativizing this state of anticipation and temporal instability, Nabokov's *Invitation* asks us what life would look like in the ruins. How would one live if forced into unlivable space? *Invitation* is created from within "the crack" between past and future that does not rely on a present tense. The novel exposes the cracks of its fiction by apostrophes, explicit artificiality of its diegesis, and reference to its translation. In this way, we are never certain of what exists in the *Invitation* world, of which fictional ground is stable. The novel explicitly apostrophizes at moments – in its title, in its call to the reader to turn its pages – but it also intermittently turns script-like with "*Exit*" directions[70]

[69] Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema*, trans. by Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 32.
[70] "*Exit*, backing out like a courtier." (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 130.)

and parenthetical remarks which command action or attitude[71], as though the non-diegetic world is being folded in on the novel's diegesis and as though discourse is being folded in on the story.

The thunderstorms are "performed", chapters end with formal announcements – "And thus the performance ended." –, characters are told to "play [their] roles", mistakes in the mise-en-scene are blamed on "the prop man". Throughout the English translation of the novel, there are several playful textual moments that require a Russian reader. But Nabokov will also explicitly point to the frustrations of translation, and the novel will point to its own non-diegetic process of translation: ". . . for this ought not to be, *ne dolzhno bïlo bï bït'* – only on the bark of the Russian language could such a fungus-like bunch of verbs have sprouted."[72] At one point, we see the little girl Emmie's face ripple as she shakes and ruffles the pages of Cincinnatus' books, as though she is shaking her own written face by shaking the books.[73] In a series of requests for Cincinnatus to participate in the fiction, we have this moment in which Emmie's face participates in the literal treatment of text. The ripples across her face expose the literality of book as book, as though the figural body is being disturbed by the very real implications of this totalitarian logic of fictionality.

The novel, in its narrative unpredictability, exists in a dimension-less, temporally unstable threshold: "Reveling in all the temptations of a circle, life whirled to a state of such giddiness that the ground fell away and, stumbling, falling, weakened by nausea and

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[71] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 130–133, 161, 173.

[72] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 192–3.("это ведь не должно бы, не должно бы было быть, было бы быть, -- только на коре русского языка могло вырасти это грибное губье сослагательного", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 166.).

[73] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 47–8. (Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 71.)

langour – ought I to say it? – finding itself in a new dimension, as it were... No one regrets the past, and even the very concept of 'past' has changed."[74] In constant anticipation of the beheading – of Cincinnatus, of the building, of the text –, the novel seems to sit at a standstill. It dares not progress linearly forward for fear of full disintegration. And so it seems to extend the moment of execution, delaying the inevitable cut and, in the meantime, extending "the crack" of time, a ruin temporality. This might remind us of the expanse of sameness in Russian infinity of Chapter 3. In a way, this is the same iterative stand-still, though here the novel exposes the totalitarian wish to master and control such standstill infinity.

It is no wonder that Nabokov chooses beheading as an execution method; it replicates ruin temporality and renders it political. The act of beheading is a minimalist function, favored for its instantaneous contact between the body and the law; Nabokov's *Invitation* extends this instantaneity into a temporality of ruins. And in *Invitation*'s comment on the body politic through the Cincinnatus' physical body, we can see that the head of the body is linked with the dissolution of state through beheading the head of the state. Just as Hitler had tried to preserve his physical body through the figural architecture-body parallel, we see the figural act of beheading as having the potential to throw actual disarray into a political system.

Michel Foucault notes the uniqueness of this instantaneous contact between body and law through the moment of execution by guillotine. In this reduction of death to "a

[74] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, pp. 50–1. ("Упиваясь всеми соблазнами круга, жизнь довертелась до такого головокружения, что земля ушла из-под ног, и, подкользнувшись, упав, ослабев от тошноты и томности . . . сказать ли? . . . очутившись как бы в другом измерении -- . . . никому не было жаль прошлого, да и само понятие «прошлого» сделалось другим", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 73.)

visible but instantaneous event"[75], the guillotine takes life nearly without touching the body. Thus with the guillotine, we have "abstraction of the law itself"; if we cannot point to the moment of contact, the moment of beheading, and similarly the moment of decay, then the law becomes non-visible and omnipresent, an abstraction to oppose the seemingly concrete spectacle of execution.

As Daniel Arasse describes the invisibility of the guillotine blade, "there lies the frightening paradox of the guillotine: this 'zero distance' defining an indivisible point *in time* is in spatial terms a height of fourteen feet. Raised to the top of the uprights, the blade defines a space which exposes the instant, which is a *spatial metaphor of the instant*."[76] In Nabokov, this "split second", "instantaneous event" is spatialized and extended by the prison ruins in which Cincinnatus is forced to await his unnamed execution. As a ruin stands for all past, present, and future building event while reducing these temporalities to a single concrete model, so Cincinnatus' prison is a spatialization, an extension, of a dimensionless temporality.[77] Here, secrecy is both a strategy of the state to torture extra-corporally and also to extend the moment of instantenaiety – a concretization or experience of instantaneous duration. Incidentally, this sense of concretized duration is often attributed to photography, and Nabokov, in the parody of

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[75] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 13.

[76] Daniel Arasse, *The Guillotine and the Terror*, trans. by Christopher Miller (London, England ; New York, USA: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1989), p. 36.

[77] Nabokov gives attention to modes of aesthetics which give models for this sort of temporality: "perhaps all of this pertains only to the snapshot, to a particular kind of heliotypy, to special forms of art, and the world really never was so sinuous, so humid and rapid – just as today our unsophisticated cameras record in their own way our hastily assembled and painted world." (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 51.) ("все это, быть может, относится только к снимку, к особой светописи, к особым формам этого искусства, и мир на самом деле вовсе не был столь изгибист, важен и скор, -- точно так же, как наши нехитрые аппараты по-своему запечатлевают наш сегодняшний наскоро сколоченный и покрашенный мир", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 73.)

this relationship, turns his executioner Pierre into a narcissistic photographer who wants to snap Cincinnatus' photo (or, rather, wants to take his head).[78]

But the model of the guillotine, which was designed to be a philanthropic – "a sign of man's love for man"[79] – in its gift of instantaneous enactment of law, does eventually malfunction. As Derrida traces in *The Death Penalty* from Arasse through Hugo, the clinical, democratic guillotine machine also comes to decay, just like every system of punishment before it. It malfunctions and becomes impractical, eventually needing to be replaced by other types of orders, other types of legal machines, perhaps less idealistically instantaneous, but also less bloody.[80] And these new machines malfunction, decay, and fulfill their destined replaceability.

Such an economy of substitution[81] is anticipated by Nabokov's *Invitation*, and Nabokov himself had a keen interest in the concept of a shifting death penalty and the theatricality of executions. Nabokov had been personally touched by death penalties: a family friend, poet Kondraty Ryleev, was hanged in 1825; Nabokov's grandfather, the

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[78] The photography in *Invitation* seems to be used to raise writing as a more worthy sense of art. The more despicable characters – Marthe, Pierre – are associated with photography. We see photographs everywhere: "home snapshots" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 82.), newspapers and magazines, kids trying to get "into the picture" at the scaffold (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 214.). Nabokov tells us that "unsophisticated cameras record" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 51.). But Cincinnatus, in his memoirs, is also trying to make a recording; he is also trying to capture himself. Nabokov seems to make a distinction between these two modes of self-capture. Unlike photography, which gives a concretization of instantaneity, a writing record has "the capacity to conjoin all of this in one point" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 52.), a sort of bricolage of individual moments into a one concrete model. It is also worth noting that the old-fashioned camera shutter is often referred to as a "guillotine" for its forceful close.

[79] In *Invitation*, this classic understanding of the guillotine as philanthropic is parodied. Cincinnatus is uncertain of the relationship between love and death: "Which will it be? A beheading or a tryst?" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 67.). And his executioner Pierre compares their relationship as one between a "blushing bride" and an "experienced bridegroom" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 162.).

[80] Jacques Derrida, *The Death Penalty, Vol 1*, ed. by Geoffrey Bennington, Marc Crépon, and Thomas Dutoit, trans. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[81] Derrida, *The Death Penalty, Vol 1*, p. 207.

Minister of Justice, had decreed an end to public executions, minimizing the spectacle of the event by bringing it inside the prison walls; Nabokov's father, a parliamentary leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party, who introduced a bill outlawing capital punishment into the First State Duma, was assassinated in 1922. But closer to the conception of *Invitation*, Nabokov inadvertently had been doing research on executions for his novel *Dar* (*The Gift*). In 1930, he had meetings with a German student Dietrich, who Nabokov wanted to save for future use in a novel: "A German friend of mine, whose hobby was capital punishment, and who saw it done with an axe in Regensburg, told me that the headsman was positively paternal."[82] And in his research on Chernyshevsky for *Dar*, Nabokov revisits the mock executions of Dostoevsky, Petrashevtsy, and Chernyshevsky, and the execution of the Decembrists.

Inspired by the trials and executions of these artistic influences, Nabokov writes *Invitation* quickly and with an eye to the decomposition of the theatrical capital punishment system. His Cincinnatus is written as the unwitting implementer of decay. From the start of *Invitation*, Cincinnatus anticipates his beheading, his corporeal ruin:

> He stood up and took off the dressing gown, the skullcap, the slippers. He took off the linen trousers and shirt. He took off his head like a toupee, took off his collarbones like shoulder straps, took off his rib cage like a hauberk. He took off his hips and his legs, he took off his arms like gauntlets and threw them in a corner. What was left of him gradually dissolved, hardly coloring the air.[83]

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[82] Letter to Edmund Wilson, Dec 15 1930. *Nabokov-Wilson Letters*, ed. by Simon Karlinsky (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 33.

[83] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 32.This narrative sequence is, in a way, a parody of a *blason*, in which each part of a woman's body is made separate as a way of poetic praise. ("Он встал, снял халат, ермолку, туфли. Снял полотняные штаны и рубашку. Снял, как парик, голову, снял ключицы, как ремни, снял грудную клетку, как кольчугу. Снял бедра, снял ноги, снял и бросил руки, как рукавицы, в угол. То, что оставалось от него, постепенно рассеялось, едва окрасив воздух", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 61.)

He recognizes the inevitability of ruin and systemic substitution, and he takes his body apart, almost mathematically, just as the fortress and scaffold will decompose at the end of the novel, as Cincinnatus' body walks away from it.

For Cincinnatus, the execution itself, the moment which has been extended on the stage of contact between body and law, never comes. His torture is not one just of the body, but also one of time. His execution is delayed, but as we find in the novel's conclusion, it is delayed indefinitely. Cincinnatus walks off the execution stage as it disintegrates – the building had been held together provisionally by its relation to Cincinnatus' body and to a tenuous totalitarian legality. But once this "abstraction of the law itself" is exposed, the theater that suggested architectural function decomposes. The ruin of the prison building is exposed as out-of-use and fictional; the execution thus cannot take place on its function-less stage. So even as the temporality of the instantaneous execution would resist the fleshed function of a spatialization, the ruin itself also necessitates a constant delay of event. It would seem, then, that Nabokov's ruined prison is *fated* to mis-function. And we see the same inevitable failure in Speer's "theory of ruin value." Whatever pretense of architectural or political function that the novel's theatrics presents is merely the workings of a self-sustaining system that cannot enact event outside of itself, cannot function on any particular thing.

More than a critique of art, the artist, or morality, Nabokov's *Invitation* allows for narrative to problematize politics firstly by establishing itself as a political, self-sustaining system. Dale E. Peterson stresses readers' participation in *Invitation*, and

describes them as "'co-creators' of the fate awaiting those enmeshed in a composition,"[84] thereby pointing to *Invitation* as a self-contained, self-referential text. The novel's very title unabashedly invites the reader to witness the novel's unraveling and inescapable demise. Throughout *Invitation*, Nabokov points to this "system" of text: characters attempt to escape their fate,[85] Cincinnatus measures his life by the paring down of a pencil[86] – he awaits the moment at which there can be nothing more written – and he is aware of being constantly watched through a peephole by observers and, later, a "predatory eye."[87]

In Nabokov criticism, this eye often is associated with the state apparatus, an eye of surveillance which watches over the life and death of its citizens. But in the scene of ruin theater, it is unclear what this eye is after and what it actually sees. A more appropriate understanding of the eye is aligned with voyeurism, which is also classically associated with ruins. As Rose Macaulay points out, ruin lust has to do with the exposure of what usually remains secreted and intimate: "The house has put on melodrama; people stop to stare; here is a domestic scene wide open for all to enjoy."[88] There is a theatricality already at play in the ruin, in the setting of a scene and the removal of the fourth wall. But in a ruin, the audience cannot watch in search of a narration, a

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[84] Dale E Peterson, 'Nabokov's "Invitation": Literature as Execution', *PMLA*, 96.5 (1981), 824–36 (p. 824).

[85] Toward the end of the novel Marthe innocently states, "They won't be coming for me for a while yet, I talked them into giving me oodles of time," to which Cincinnatus reminds her "every word we say . . . They will open it in a moment" (Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 201.) There is a precise awareness here of being watched, of words opened and uncovered. Marthe has negotiated her life beyond death – perhaps in another Nabokov text.

[86] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 206.

[87] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 122. ("хищный порыв взглядя сквозь дверь" Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 119.)

[88] Rose Macaulay, 'A Note on New Ruins', in *Ruins: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. by Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), pp. 27–28.

representation of reality. The ruin has already surpassed its past reality and its originary purpose. But the voyeur who looks into the ruin scene wants to regain the originary which has already disappeared. He wants to reconstitute that which was once visible and present, an impossibly tempting venture similar to the work of nostalgia and mourning. The voyeur feels called to the nostalgia of the ruin scene, and yet the ruin refuses him the reconstitutive effects of memory.

This power of ruin that eludes, misdirects, elicits desire is the power of abstract space that works through this history-in-architecture. Such an invisibility that one desires to render visible is the basis for representations of abstract space. For without the figural, this omnipresence cannot be imagined. The various dysfunctional figures of ruins that we pointed to earlier – Simmel's unlivabiliy, Walter Benjamin's fragment, Lyotard's screen, Andrew Benjamin's melancholia, Baudrillard's disintegration – all point to a wider spatialization that is locally represented in ruin dysfunction. And, as we have seen, it is Speer's project of *Ruinenwerttheorie* that fails to do justice to the "invisibility" of abstract space, as he tries to render the future, an analogously invisible category, visible through spatialization.

Derrida likens this voyeuristic ruin lust to the desire for representation as a reclaiming and a reconstitution. The ruin is not a representation, but a remnant which is worked over by decay. It is not an instantaneous event, but a slow apocalypse, one that

cannot separate "order" from "ruin."[89] He responds to Romantic ruin lust and Modernism's appropriation of this lust:

> The ruin is not in front of us; it is neither a spectacle nor a love object. It is experience itself: neither the abandoned yet still monumental fragment of a totality, nor, as Benjamin thought, simply a theme of baroque culture. It is precisely not a theme, for it ruins the theme, the position, the presentation or representation of anything and everything.... The ruin shows nothing at all and with a view to showing nothing at all.[90]

As "experience itself", the ruin sees, but cannot foresee. It is a fragment which cannot be integrated into the pattern from which it was born. It has disintegrated its original form, and in its disfunction, it loses its indexical status. It no longer points to a movement or a theme; a monument does not take the place of its signified event.

But the ruin has also accumulated too much history, anticipation, and investment from its voyeurs: it will no longer fit to the original pattern. To look into a ruin is to try to access the invisible through the remainders of visibility. Through Merleau-Ponty, Derrida addresses the ruin as an abyss; it is neither a collective nor an index, but rather an invisibility that cannot be named, pointed at, reproduced:

> I would rather have followed the traces of absolute invisibility. To be the other of the visible, absolute invisibility must neither take place elsewhere nor constitute another visible, that is something that does not yet appear or has already disappeared – something whose spectacle of monumental ruins would call for reconstitution, regathering from memory, rememberment.

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[89] On the origin of painting: "If revelation or contemplation brings to light what was already there from the beginning, if the apocalypse shows this there, then it also unveils in accordance with the event of a catastrophe or cataclysm. Order and ruin are no longer dissociated at the origin of drawing... A work is at once order and its ruin." (Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 122.)

[90] Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, p. 69.

> This nonvisible does not describe a phenomenon that is present elsewhere, that is latent, imaginary, unconscious, hidden or past.[91]

To look into the scene of ruin is to access a different sort of temporality of vision and experience. The voyeur does not see a model of past or the representation of present or a suggestion of future. Ruin, rather, sits between, in the imperceptible process of demise and transformation into the unrecognizable. Even as the voyeur thinks he can reconstitute a past memory that is coextensive of the ruin, the ruin itself is a non-indexical abyss that denies co-option within a system of representation and reference. It is the trace of invisibility; "an Augenblick without duration"; the temporality of instantaneous experience, barely concretized in space. This mode of experience is not just aware of its inevitable demise, but it *lives within* the moment of its demise. Even as the ruin process is already taking place from the very point of origination, the place of ruin embodies the temporality of decay.

Nabokov is well aware of this already-ruined temporality, and his characters are in constant anticipation of the text's demise; as the text progresses, the architecture, which may have made reference to a "real" space in a more traditionally Cartesian narrative, deteriorates beneath their feet. As their figural destruction nears, the characters' literal existence deteriorates. The reader becomes the executioner who invariably participates in the text's ruin. From the start of the novel, Nabokov calls on the reader to be aware of his physical influence over the text's narrative speed:

> So we are nearing the end. The right-hand, still untasted part of the novel, which, during our delectable reading, we would lightly feel, mechanically

[91] Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, p. 52. (from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. by Lefort, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).).

> testing whether there were still plenty left (and our fingers were always gladdened by the placid, faithful thickness) has suddenly, for no reason at all, become quite meager: a few minutes of quick reading, already downhill, and–O horrible![92]

The text progresses towards its own inevitable physical and narrative death. In this movement, we see the text as a complete, exclusive, and inescapable system with its own rigid, unchangeable laws, rules, and customs.

In *Invitation*, progression of time is mimicked as a sort of mode of theatrics – the impression of time passing, though it is a purely fictional time that does not associate with any true temporal markers. The clock which chimes throughout the text, much like in a Dostoevsky novel, has a sense of regulation at first. But it quickly degenerates into unpredictable patterns, "leisurely enumerations" of the temporal expanse of ruins, an endless waiting for a continually ruined end. Even as Cincinnatus consistently refers to his inevitable end – his beheading –, he cannot be sure of when this event will happen or even that it will take place. He claims to "foresee it all!" as he prepares for "the sob [he is] destined to emit and the terrible gurgling cough, uttered by the beheaded tyro."[93] But this point of convergence is delayed *ad infinitum*, and all of Cincinnatus' preparations amount to a torture without the timed event of execution. He asks his audience to "measure [him] while [he] lives – after it will be too late."[94] But it is already too late; Cincinnatus' body, like the fortress, is already in a state of ruin, already in the time of

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[92] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*. ("Итак -- подбираемся к концу. Правая, еще непочатая часть развернутого романа, которую мы, посреди лакомого чтенья, легонько ощупывали, машинально проверяя, много ли еще (и все радовала пальцы спокойная, верная толщина), вдруг, ни с того ни с сего, оказалась совсем тощей", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', pp. 47–8.).

[93] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 93. ("мой будший всхлип и страшный клокочущий кашель, которым исходит свежеобезглавленный", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 100.)

[94] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 26. ("Смерьте до смерти, -- потом будет поздно", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 57.)

ruin, pointed towards the undecidable "cavity of the future"[95] and of the present. Like an architectural ruin, Cincinnatus cannot determine the moment of deterioration, only the great temporal expanse of decay. And in the time of the ruin, the "crack" in which he lives, the belief in a fated point, a destiny, a future is useless.

The narrative action unfolds without a history, setting, or temporality, and so it becomes, in its self-containment, a system outside specific reference. It is difficult, then, to attribute this text to a critique of the Soviet regime, as there are no Soviet markers in place. In fact, the text denies any suggestion of or orientation with reality outside the novel. It draws into itself, denying history, nationhood, even language.[96] The political system in which Cincinnatus is stuck and to whose laws he is subject seems to follow some classic game-plays of totalitarianism. And Nabokov uses *Invitation* to enhance the absurdity of such political and social games. If our fascist systems were capable of a *Ruinenwerttheorie* which would perpetuate their legacy *ad infinitum*, what would living in such a ruin look like? How would their modes of control, these political games, disintegrate?

The power system of *Invitation* is an absurdly intricate theater with no playwright, no director, no controlling hand. It is self-perpetuating; it relies on absolute loyalty to what remains of central dynamism, but the edges of the stage and the illusion are starting to show. The system reveals nothing about its political inception. And the body-politic does not draw from any real-life examples. Without history, we cannot see how the

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[95] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 92.

[96] *Invitation* was published in Russian in 1935-1936 and an English translation by Nabokov and his son, Dmitri, was published in 1959, essentially giving us two original texts in two original languages, as both Russian and English versions were written by the author.

system was established, and this seems to be the point. In these prison ruins, we only have the remnants of a past political system, continuing to sustain itself from a previous momentum, but unable to draw power from a specific historical past and unable to guarantee a sustainable future.

We never see the sovereign himself, but we do have a theatrical focus on the propagation of bio-politics through a "double bind" system of individuals. These individuals are certainly seen and act as if they have an unusual devotion to the system, which is understandable in bio-political terms once they have been taken into the system and subjected to it. Foucault's "double bind" presents this phenomenon as two separate functions: political techniques, in which the state takes custody of the corporeal body of people into its center, and technologies of the self, in which individuals bind their identities and consciousness to the state by subjugation.[97] The state thus maintains power through its people rather than exclusively through its sovereign. In *Invitation*, we see characters who represent the direct power of law enforcement – the prison director, the prison guard, the executioner – as manifestations of political techniques. But the characters who do not have this invested power – Cincinnatus's mother, wife, in-laws – also support the state by their consistent devotion and unquestioned subjugation within it.

At certain moments in the narrative, Cincinnatus finds it difficult to resist this system of bio-politics, and we see him catch himself on the verge of falling into the false logic. Although he recognizes the forces of power — the prison director, the prison guard, the executioner — as extensions of the system and so avoids at all cost being taken

[97] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

in by their promises of friendship and escape, he cannot avoid their trickery and theatrics. The prison and the cell become stages upon which the executioner and the guard can perform their ruses. The executioner masks himself as a fellow inmate for most of the narration before revealing his true intentions; he breaks into dance and operatic performances with the prison director, and they stage what Cincinnatus takes to be a long escape tunnel that leads him straight back to his prison cell. A spider prop is set up in the corner of the cell and the guard maintains the illusion of the spider's authenticity by speaking to it and feeding it until it is swept away on the morning of Cincinnatus's execution. At one point, Cincinnatus recognizes his slow subjugation to the system, which will make it easier for the system to make the final "cut": "they have succeeded in softening me . . . I have grown so limp and soggy that they will be able to do it with a fruit knife."[98] The theatrics and the deception are a means of wearing down resistance, but Cincinnatus, in his ability to barely withstand the technique of weathering, uses this instability as an interior decay that breeds a useful uncertainty. The totalitarian absurdity that is used against Cincinnatus is turned against itself by his ruin logic of dysfunction.

In *Invitation*, ruin sites are coincidental with sites of theatricality. This pairing works for Nabokov in that it enhances the peculiar temporal crack which spatializes instantaneity and breeds absurdities:

> Beyond a bend of the Strop one could see the weed-blurred outlines of the ancient airport and the structure where they kept the venerable, decrepit airplane, with motley patches on its rusty wings, which was still sometimes

[98] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 124. ("А в общем, они, кажется, доконали меня, . . . Я так размяк, что это можно будет сделать фруктовым ножом", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 121.)

> used on holidays, principally for the amusement of cripples. Matter was weary. Time gently dozed.[99]

Just as the ruined airport takes on a theatrical role in its preservation, so we can assume that the prison-fortress which houses Cincinnatus is kept at its delicate balance of repair-disrepair for the purposes of theatrics. From the aerial view of the tower, we see that the prison-fortress is placed at the center of the town's attention: the town layout is described as a "hemicycle"[100], positioned in arcs which wrap around the prison. The audience eyes are in constant surveillance of the prison's acts; applause will suddenly erupt from no particular source.

But unlike the factory ruin or the airport ruin, the prison-fortress intends to manipulate with theatrics more than entertain. Here the theater means to break down Cincinnatus into political submission, an absurdist torture of sorts. To live in ruins is to live without the stability of logic, of knowledge. And to impose dysfunction through ruins is to live with too much of the wrong logic, an excess of dysfunctional knowledge. In ruins, one cannot be certain of one's surroundings. The illusion of a proper prison cell is always in the process of disintegrating. Walls are peeling; views to the outside are revealed to be painted backdrops; prison guards and directors are made-up, costumed, masked, scripted – they are intermittently named "clowns", "circus directors", "prop men". Cincinnatus lives within a play for which he has no script, yet in which he is expected to participate fully. Though Cincinnatus is infuriated with his position of

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[99] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 43. ("за изгибом Стропи виднелись наполовину заросшие очертания аэродрома и строение, где содержался почтенный, дряхлый, с рыжими, в пестрых заплатах, крыльяму самолет, который еще иногда пускался по праздникам -- главным обраом для развлечения калек.Вещество устало. Сладко дремало время", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 69.)

[100] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 42.

impotence, he is not a power-hungry figure. Like his namesake[101], he does not yearn to take the place of the sovereign; he is not greedy and is not susceptible to totalitarian rule himself.

Speer, to be certain, was enamored with Hitler and his entourage, and he was delighted to be brought into the higher ranks of power as Head Architect to the Third Reich. But to give Speer credit as the mastermind of Nazi architecture would be unjust. He worked under Hitler's strong hand and eye. In fact, this would later be Speer's defense against his political involvement in the Third Reich: his function was imposed and strongly monitored by Hitler himself. Speer was not a great architect, but his personality charmed Hitler, and their professional friendship won Speer several major architecture projects, including the Nuremberg stadium. Hitler pushed Speer to build as quickly as the Americans, and Speer kept this order at the forefront of his design process, even when it forced him to depart from his architectural theory. When designing under ruin theory, Speer should have constructed with a malleable material, something like the limestone mentioned earlier, for an aesthetic decay. But such construction would taken far too long for Hitler's quickened pace, so building frames were constructed with easy, indestructable material, with a outer facade of soft limestone.

How much Hitler knew about this deviation is unclear, though Speer claims in his memoirs that Hitler was intimately involved in the design process and approved many construction proposals personally. In the end, Speer's buildings were constructed as modernist architecture – with great reinforced concrete blocks –, undecaying and

[101] Nabokov's Cincinnatus is most likely a reference to the historical Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519-430 BC), who had dictatorship forced upon him and who returned his power as soon as the position was no longer needed.

unruinable. In such focus on the practicalities of building and the client's demands, Speer in effect ruined his "theory of ruin value". In fact, in place of the ruins of a great civilization, we are left with buildings which look awfully similar to the modernist architectures from which ruin theory was intended to stand apart.[102] Such a cosmetic application of a material as a façade to an underlying load-bearing structure is often called "rhetorical" by architects. It is, in effect, a theatrical gesture that is appropriate to the reliance on fiction in totalitarian control. But in this case, the scale of application is inappropriate, and the resulting effect grossly misjudges the unpredictability of limestone decay, which will quickly leave the fictiveness of this "rhetorical" totalitarian move exposed.

Ruin theory remains as an essential moment of totalitarian thought. But in place of its realized architecture, we have a remainder of monumental architecture: a remnant of the Third Reich that has been preserved for the sake of history and memory, but certainly not under the precept that Hitler had envisioned. The mechanism of ruin theory which would maintain an originary architectural aim through the building's decay has failed. And the hope that Hitler's civilization could be commanded to decay beautifully could not, ultimately, be realized.

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[102] Barbara Miller Lane argues that several factors led to the unoriginality and failure of Speer's design. Speer was not a very talented architect, and so relied heavily on inspiration from other sources (most notably from the Semitic Assur buildings which were published as reconstruction drawings by Walter Andrae in 1921). He was pressured by Hitler to build quickly, and so he used materials, such as reinforced concrete, which ran counter to the theory of ruin-value. Ultimately, "the concluding irony of this account of Speer's work is that, despite his genuine nationalism, his buildings closely resembled a widespread international movement in architecture in the 1930s." In resisting the influence of contemporary architecture, Nazi architecture came to look as near mirrors of the Modern Movement's extreme axiality and centrality, wall thickness, repetitive vertical elements, and unornamented minimalism. (B.M. Lane, 'Architects in Power: Politics and Ideology in the Work of Ernst May and Albert Speer', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Summer, 17.1 (1986), 283–310.) Where Speer aimed to create a building like Cincinnatus' prison, endlessly in flux, and thus never-ending, he was left with the irrelevancy of a nonsingularity.

Irony in Nabokov

In Nabokov's *Invitation,* we see two concurrent problems: a denial of a *Ruinenwerttheorie* reading and a misreading through the *Ruinenwerttheorie* logic. The totalitarian regime presented in *Invitation* does not provide the information necessary for Cincinnatus to interpret his surroundings and his narrative properly. And at the same time, the totalitarian regime itself does not comprehend its inability to control its future narrative. In *Invitation,* power is held by the totalitarian system and by the prison building itself in the ability to confuse and to deny clarity. Not only are details of Cincinnatus' death sentence – his crime, the rationale, the time of execution – withheld from him, but also the building which holds Cincinnatus functions as a maze with multiple entrances and exits, all of which are unnavigable. For Cincinnatus, the knowledge of the exact time of his physical (and textual) end would provide a space to fill and an ability to finalize his life in memoir – "There is the rare kind of time in which I live – the pause, the hiatus."[103] His uncertainty about how much time he has left forces him to live within a temporal crack, a repetitive time that has the ubiquitous possibility of progressing, yet remains always lodged between present and future. Without a specified ending, there is a space of uncertain, immeasurable temporality. And in the space of denied execution, in the space of endless suspension of the *Ruinenwerttheorie* reading, Cincinnatus is at the mercy of a spatial totalitarianism.

[103] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 53. ("вот редкий сорт времени, в котором живу", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 75.)

The text's language suggests this sort of crack in the specific focus on the threshold of here/there (тут/там) in the original Russian text of *Invitation*, *Приглашение на казнь,*[104] that Cincinnatus consistently evokes. The traces of the "тут"/"там" dynamic are for the most part lost in the English translation, but the terms remain hidden in titles and are recognizable there to the Russian reader. Nabokov's forcefully capitalized "Там" in the Russian becomes, in the English, the concealed "tam" of "tamarack" and "tum-tum-tum."[105] Most clearly we see "там" within the recurring memory of Тамарины Сады (Tamara Gardens), which for Cincinnatus has come to represent a place of freedom. The Russian reader will also recognize the concept of freedom in this novel as defined not by specific ideals but by negation. There are a number of Russian words that can be used to denote "there," (туда, вон), and Nabokov is deliberate in his choice. "Там" is defined as "не здесь" (not here), and this is the sense that we get from Cincinnatus' obsession with it: he is not yearning for a specific place or time of freedom, but rather his desire lies in the escape *from here*, from the place where the *Ruinenwerttheorie* reading, an anticipatory reading, is out of his hands. The prison is "here", but the very specificity of "here" is also Cincinnatus' prison. As we saw with Nabokov's enhancement of Vitruvius' body-building relationship, the ruin space incapacitates and presses down upon the body which it surrounds: "my task, a task of not

[104] See D. Barton Johnson, 'The Alpha and Omega of Nabokov's Prison-House of Language: Alphabetic Iconicism in "Invitation to a Beheading"', *Russian Literature*, 6 (1978), 347–65; D. Barton Johnson, 'Spatial Modeling and Deixis: Nabokov's "Invitation to a Beheading"', *Poetics Today*, Winter, 3.1 (1982), 81–98.

[105] On Tamara Gardens, Nabokov writes: «Зеленое, муравчатое Там, тамошние холмы, томление прудов, тамататам далекого оркестра...» ("That green turfy tamarack park, the languor of its ponds, the tum-tum-tum of a distant band", Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 19.). Russian seems to lend itself to the repetition of "там", and in Nabokov's English translation, the emphasis on "там" is reduced to mere alliteration and rhythm. The English reader misses the continual emphasis on "there", on life happening elsewhere, on the impotence of the "here", cracked ruins in which Cincinnatus is stuck.

now and not here. Not here! The horrible 'here,' the dark dungeon, in which a relentlessly howling heart is encarcerated, this 'here' holds and constricts me."[106]

Cincinnatus finds himself living within this pause between тут and там — an interstitial space which follows the temporal quality of ruins: not present or past or future. This mental and visual liberty is the "gnostical turpitude" for which he must pay. He is stuck in a space that mediates between his reality and an abstracted dream-state, a space that is unreachable and invisible: "How I wriggled out, slippery, naked! Yes, from a realm forbidden and inaccessible to others, yes."[107] More than a simple negation — an antithesis to reality or an alternate universe — this partial dream state is a space that stands beyond Cincinnatus's reality and the political system in which he lives.

If we follow the contention that *Invitation* is a self-sustaining, self-referential system, in both a political and a narrative sense, we are able to search for cracks within the text that act as political and narrative rebellions. Cincinnatus feels as if he is being dragged into "false logic,"[108] and he recognizes the possibility of escape within this system's logic: "That is how mathematics is created; it has its fatal flaw."[109] This crack, the "fatal flaw," comes from something that Cincinnatus finds organic, something apart from the bio-political mechanics of a system that recognizes its citizens as cogs and from a theory of narrative structure that grinds down its residents until they become

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[106] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 93. ("Не тут! Тупое 'тут', подпертое и запертое четою 'твердо', темная тюрьма, в которую заключен неуемно воющий ужас, держит меня и теснит", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 101.)

[107] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 90. ("Как я выскочил, -- скользкий, голый! Да, из области, другим заказанной и недоступной", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 99.)

[108] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 213.

[109] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 205. ("Так создается математика есть у нее свой губительный изъян", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn′', p. 174.)

transparent.[110] He discovers "the little crack in life . . . where it had once been soldered to something else, something genuinely alive . . . within this irreparable little crack decay has set in . . ."[111] This decay sits deep within the system, almost as though they have been co-created, elements re-crystallized like black marble and its decaying vegetation. But the origin of this crack and decay would be hard to find: the system functions on the order of perpetual deterioration, like limestone, like bricolage.

This little crack, as Cincinnatus discovers, is difficult to pin down. Partially this is because of its internal, self-induced nature, but also, it is because the crack permeates: once it sets in, everything is subject to its influence. Narratively, this lack of center is picked up in *Invitation*'s tone, as there is a constant turning away from direct, reliable signifiers.[112] Within this ghastly, dead-serious system of the dangerously unknown, of betrayal, of death, we have theater, phoniness, trickery, gimmicks, deception, parody, puns. The tone here is not one of lightness, but of incertitude, of instability. Once this irony sets into the narration (as theater and deception) and the narrative structure (by means of direct reference to the reader and his participation) it does not leave the text. What we see in *Invitation*, in Schlegel's terms, is "buffo," a "disruption of narrative illusion." The reader is called upon to participate in the novel and is directly summoned in asides. With the invitation for the reader to participate, the narrative spell is broken. This break lends itself to the "permanent parabasis" of irony, a "violent paradox" in and

[110] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 98. Cincinnatus says of his wife's grandparents: "one could already see through them."

[111] Nabokov, *Invitation to a Beheading*, p. 205. ("Я обнаружил дырочку в жизни, -- там, где она отломилась, где была спаяна некогда с чем-то другим, по-настоящему живым, значительным и огромным", Nabokov, 'Priglashenie na kazn'', p. 176.)

[112] In "The Concept of Irony," de Man identifies irony as a trope and ties this to Northrop Frye's definition of trope: "a pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning." (Paul de Man, 'The Concept of Irony', in *Aesthetic Ideology*, trans. by Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 163–84 (p. 164).)

of itself because of its permanence.[113] The reader is both made complicit in the beheading of the novel and empowered to not be complicit, to be an external voyeur.

Irony here does not simply act as a rhetorical device, only meant to affect the reader through narrative. Irony introduces the ultimate totalitarian risk. Once it figures into the equation of the system, everything is vulnerable to its trickery, and so nothing can be stable. Irony induces a general sense of unease. Classically, it hides meaning, and so there is already a sense of deception on the part of the receiver. Once this deception is introduced, paranoia sets in – suddenly everything is suspect of the ironic tone. Irony is transformed from a figure of speech to a figure of thought. It impresses its tone on the words and phrases around it, and instills unease and discomfort that give rise to questioning, criticism, and critique: the very basis of democratic thought.

Nabokov's novel ends with the moment of literal ruin. The execution stage crumbles beneath Cincinnatus as he stands up and walks away from it. The prison fortress decays irreparably at the moment of intended execution in anticipation of the body's ruin. Critics have read this scene in multiple ways: as the transition to the unknown,[114] as the experience of reading,[115] as the execution of choice in the face of totalitarianism.[116] With attention paid to the ruins which permeate the history and narrative of the text, its final scene exemplifies the flaw in Speer's *Ruinenwerttheorie*: no structure, no matter how totalitarian in its control of its denizens, can predict its place in the temporal stream. Like limestone, which develops out of ruin and is perpetually in

[113] de Man, p. 178.
[114] As in Johnson; Moynahan.
[115] As in Toker; Peterson..
[116] As in Alter.

ruin, every moment in this temporality looks the same. Arendt describes the device of totalitarian terror as an acceleration of historical and natural forces "to a speed they would never reach if left to themselves."[117] This terror is tantamount to Virilio's "pseudo-event", which imposes a feeling of predeterminedness, a standstill of time and space. So just as Cincinnatus feels as though he is living in a temporal crack, so Speer's totalitarian architectonic attempts to accelerate totalitarianism to a point of standstill temporal certainty. But this is an impossible certainty, and Nabokov exposes its workings with a poetics of constant decay without preconceived end that is both a temporal torture and a resistance to totalitarian certainty.

It makes perfect sense that Nabokov would eradicate traditional markers of temporality, thus fostering breeding ground for totalitarian control, in order to establish the site for his power-ridden, uncontrollable prison. In a totalitarian model of fictive, abstract space, time is virtually at a standstill. And the Stalinist and Nazi projects to escape history, to enter a post-historical state, set up an "ideal" space, one which is powerful, controls its inhabitants, and imposes confusion and disorientation on those who wish to map it or traverse it. A concretized architecture within this "ideal" space – only possible in the realm of the literary, which resides in the interstices between concretized and infinite, between "real" space and "ideal" space, between the visible and invisible – can no longer be *used* for shelter or for aesthetic experience or for proof of cultural remains. Such a post-historical architecture as in Nabokov's prison, or an architecture that lays claim to being post-historical, cannot be controlled by human event.

[117] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*, p. 466.

But when transferred into "real" space, the seductive fiction of controlling through architecture is just as "naïve" as a youthful Tschumi's desire to create an architecture that could, with certainty, withstand the impulse of fascism. Ultimately, ruins have little relation to the events which came to ruin them. And the attempt to read fluidly from past to future through a *Ruinenwerttheorie* fails because of the narrative break at the "moment" of ruin or, rather, in the time of perpetual ruin. Nabokov's Cincinnatus, who walks off the stage of his execution and walks off the page of his crumbling narrative, recognizes the instability of an architecture's future, even in its deceptively stable, pre-determined appearance. So even as Tschumi desires an architecture which would deny entrance to fascism, this desire itself starts to sound much like a fascistic fantasy: a denial of *Ruinenwerttheorie* through *Ruinenwerttheorie*.

The ending of *Invitation* can no longer be read as a definitive stop – to architecture, to totalitarianism, to ruin, or to the text. Cincinnatus walks off a disintegrating stage, but the stage, as we have been taught by the novel, will change form, will be reused and repurposed according to a logic of ruin temporality. Rock is weathered, formed into stone, which decays into new rock, ready for repurposed use. Architecture is art determined by function, but function itself is not a stable category. Like Cincinnatus' wife, who claims to have struck a deal to outlive the text – perhaps to be repurposed in another novel – architecture, even monumental architecture, has no sense of foresight, only a guarantee of substitution, a guarantee of becoming. And survival through durability, in this sense, is merely an acceptance and negotiation of this disordered order, a law of ruin.

The desire to command dysfunction and decomposition causes a misreading of the ruin scene by Speer and Hitler. The impulse for a Nazi aesthetic and the "theory of ruin value" is already instilled from the beginnings of architecture, from the very early Vitruvian desire to design durability, which instilled a sense of relative permanence in shelter and progress towards the advancement of civilization. But though ruin plays with architectural time by condensation, it cannot be reduced to a totalitarian staged reality; ruins resist the "pseudo-event." Speer and Hitler could stage the spectacle of ruin, but the temporal scale of ruin is actually vaster than they could account for. So their "rhetorical" application of limestone becomes absurd. This theatrical gesture, so common to totalitarian logic, does not function well here. Or, rather, their misreading functions *so* well that they cannot distinguish between planned decay and natural decay, between effectiveness and obsolescence, and the totalitarian system falls prey to its own fictions.

VI Conclusion

We can already see in Chapter Two ("Agoraphobia and Architectural Cures") in the discussion of modernist transparency the seeds for spatio-political manipulation. What might seem at first to be the overcompensation for physiological and psychological effects of agoraphobia quickly becomes the primary mode for socio-political control. After his encouragement of horizontal windows that manage the relationship between inside and outside, Le Corbusier will develop a theory of "hygienic space" that will be taken up in projects of total control through transparency, dovetailing the resurgent interest in Jeremy Bentham.

Chapter Five ("Decomposition and Ruin Lust") points to the general expansion of this modernist attempt to control through space. The modernist thought in Europe that transparency eradicates irrationality and tyranny becomes oddly reversed when it is used for the uni-directional surveillance and judicial control of societies. Rather than expose irrationality through full transparency, this tight uni-directional lens multiplies irrationality, distrust, and myth. But the uniqueness of the *Ruinenwerttheorie* historical moment is its attempt to control abstract space itself as a means of wielding power over socio-political relations. As Nabokov pointed out, instrumentalized transparency is the dark side of a utopian architectural dream to create buildings which can act politically.

We can see in the chapters on superimposition (Chapter Three "Framing Infinity"; Chapter Four "Folding Space") an attunement to this political danger of instrumentalizing transparency. In fact, the representations of Chekhov, Tarkovsky, Vertov, and Whitman are designed such that superimpositions can give a transparency to social and political

space. Chekhov and Tarkovsky aim to present the movement of abstract space with minimal intervention, a more direct view of its power. Vertov and Whitman aim to showcase wide expanses of detail in compact socio-political scenes, thus providing the global view simultaneous with the local view, a sort of global transparency that does not ignore any detail through local lenses. We might see this sort of imaginative "virtual space" as becoming perverted in a later notion of immaterial hyperspace that has little relation to socio-political realities of any "real" space.

This dissertation is historical insofar as it identifies a particular modernist moment that is forced to think about the effects and shape of abstract space. The specific historical moments presented here have been chosen for their relevancy to a study of spatial representation and control. But the dissertation is also theoretical in its insistence on a specific mode of analyzing the subject of abstract space, which cannot be studied at a distance. To create this distance, this dissertation adopted the lenses of literary architectures, which denied "real" space in their fictionality while still allowing for an analogy between the figural architectures and abstract space. In this way, we could learn about abstract space through these lenses and also understand the ways in which abstract space effects our historical world: its politics, social thought, and urban design.

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