Everydayness

CONTEMPORARY AESTHETIC APPROACHES

EDITED BY

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Everydayness. Contemporary Aesthetic Approaches

All papers included in this collection have been subjected to a double-blind
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Une Liaison Dangereuse

Lisa Giombini, Adrián Kvokačka

Abstract: What is the philosophy of everydayness and why is it important (if ever)? And what is the role of aesthetics in our dealings with everyday life? This introduction surveys some crucial issues that emerge when examining the notion of everydayness from a philosophical perspective. It offers a trajectory of the main approaches to the notion of everyday life that are relevant to understanding its contemporary developments. While interest in the everyday aspects of reality has been a neglected feature in the history of Western thought, everydayness has re-emerged recently as a central theme in aesthetics. The introduction also surveys the papers included in the collection and provides insight into their organization.

Keywords: Everydayness, Philosophy of Everyday Life, Everyday Aesthetics

1 Prelude. A History of Neglect

What is the philosophy of everydayness and why is it important (if ever)? And what is the role of aesthetics in our dealings with everyday life? These questions are puzzling. Everydayness is per se an incredibly slippery notion. It is at the same time the most obvious and the most elusive of ideas (Storey 2014, pp. 2-3). Rita Felski (2000, p. 77) describes everyday life as "the essential, taken-for-granted continuum of mundane activities that frames our forays into more esoteric or exotic worlds. It is the ultimate non-negotiable reality, the unavoidable basis for all other forms of human endeavor". "Life without everydayness" claims Ossi Naukkarinen (2013), "is practically impossible, and it is difficult to even imagine a life that would be completely noneveryday-like." Nevertheless, despite its pervasiveness, we are seemingly unable to explain what everydayness is. The everyday, comments Maurice Blanchot (1987,

pp. 12-13), is "what is most difficult to discover". Just as one submits it to critical scrutiny, "the everyday escapes".

While art, from Hesiod to through Flemish painting, the modern novel, Impressionism, and twentieth-century avant-gardes, has always been fascinated by the most mundane dimension of life, philosophers, on their side, have been inclined to ignore everydayness for centuries.[1] Since its Greek inception, philosophy was considered a product of the *polis*, the city, the public space. It concerned the *politeia*: discourses happening in the public arena within a community of citizens, all men, all equal before the law, all different from other non-citizens. Tales from the past of philosophy are all about these public spaces: squares, markets, worship areas, universities, and palaces of power.
Everyday life, the dimension where the satisfaction of our most intimate bodily needs takes place – eating, cooking, feeding, dressing, cleaning, householding, washing up, sleeping, resting, taking care, nursing, loving – was relegated to the periphery of civilized concern. Locked in the four walls of the house, it was hidden from other people's eyes, the prerogative of women, children, and slaves. It was considered personal and private and as such, a-political and a-philosophical.

What kind of philosophy can there be for everyday life, that which brings one back to their animal nature, their biological needs, and the necessities of survival? What is Beautiful, Good, and True in the world of low instincts and feminine concerns that hide in the kitchen and the bedroom, populate the garden and the yard? Taken as synonymous with commonsense and taken-for-grantedness, everydayness was regarded as the opposite of serious reflection and speculation, the symbol of a non-critical attitude towards the world.

This philosophical neglect of the everyday aspects of our life had many practical ramifications. As feminist scholarship has noticed (e.g. Smith 1987), it caused everydayness to become a dimension in which wrongs, oppression, and injustices have been hidden, forgotten, and mechanically reproduced for centuries. It is within and through the

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[1] This claim should be taken cum *grano salis*. Obviously, the implication here is not that ancient philosophers did not concern themselves altogether with everyday life. One need only think of Stoicism and Epicureanism to gain evidence of the contrary. Ancient philosophers' interest in everyday life, however, was eminently practical in nature. As a matter of fact, critics agree that everydayness, as an object of theoretical rather than practical investigation, is a modern concept, dating back to the late nineteenth century if not the beginning of the twentieth century (Lefebvre 1947/1991; Bennett and Watson 2002, p. x). For further discussion on the relationship between ancient philosophy and everydayness see Curnow (2009).

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sphere of everydayness that gender inequality has been executed and justified, pervasively and over time. It is within and through everyday life that social and class imbalance have been pursued and reiterated.

On a theoretical level, forgetting about everyday life also meant for philosophy to forget something about its own origins. The everyday is where the lived experience constituting both material reality and subjective consciousness is located. It is the incubator of most of the ideas that have nourished our culture and society, a reservoir of insights for philosophical investigation not provided by politics, science, or art. And, contrary to common belief, the everyday is imbued with diverse strands of thought and beliefs, from the scientific to the religious to the philosophical. The opposition between everydayness and philosophical reflection; 'natural attitude' and 'theoretical attitude'; everyday thinking and critical thinking is therefore preposterous.

2 The Times Are A-Changin'

Over the past few decades, something in this mechanism of withdrawal has been broken. The causes for this shift are a matter of speculation, but a central role is played by the rapidly transforming fabric of contemporary life, which creates a new awareness of the mundane and its conceptual underpinnings. In the chaotic vortex of the postmodern, globalized world, change is often perceived by individuals as being imposed rather than sought after. Accordingly, everyday routines and habits appear more as a means for preserving personal autonomy, memory, and identity, rather than as an evidence of our animal nature. Everyday life, which was long disregarded or taken for granted, has become attractive in both its actual and its traditional forms as a way to safeguard the distinctive qualities of a world that is currently threatened and disappearing. Seen as a bulwark against the currently wide-spreading sense of homelessness and placelessness (Relph 1976; Arefi 2007; Freestone and Liu 2016), it is hailed as a source of cultural value and strength, something to be investigated and rediscovered (Saito 2007, 2017; Carter and Yuedi 2014).

In the domain of social sciences, a driving impulse behind the reevaluation of everydayness has come from the often-cited work of two French intellectuals, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, perhaps the most prominent twentieth-century analysts of the everyday.[2] In his three-volume *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947/1991, 1961/2008a,

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[2] Other important philosophers and sociologists that contributed to shaping our notion

1981/2008b) Lefebvre draws heavily on the work of Marx to criticize the dynamics of capitalism, its routinization and alienation, and proposes a radical reconstruction of everyday life with the human subject as an active creative force. For Lefebvre, everyday life is a material by-product of capitalism, but it is also connected to bodily and affective rhythms and hence retains a utopian power. De Certeau's *Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), in contrast, understands everyday life as a terrain of revolt and subversion, where the "tactics" of the dominated can subvert capitalist "strategies" with acts of popular resistance. De Certeau's investigations into the realm of routine practices such as walking, reading, dwelling, and cooking are guided by his belief that despite repressive aspects of modern society, there exists an element of creative opposition to these structures enacted daily by ordinary people.

Variously inspired by the work of Lefebvre and de Certeau, an extensive tradition of scholarly writing has recently emerged that puts everyday life at the core of its interests. Everydayness has gained today a crucial place as an autonomous object of critical reflection in cultural studies, sociology, history, feminism, and represents an important reference point in many other areas within the humanities, including philosophy (Sandywell 2010; Harootunian 2010; Jacobsen 2018).[3] A common intuition underlying these approaches is that if 'everyday' is characterized in terms of the mundane, the commonplace, and the familiar, the first question that needs to be posed is: "*whose* everyday?". Given the enormous differences in human lives across different periods and social contexts, talking about everydayness in general seems shallow. Everyday life changes from person to person, place to place, culture to culture. None has exactly the same everyday as someone else or could live her life in exactly the same way (Naukkarinen 2013). Moreover, even for the same person, everyday life also happens to change over time. An adult person's everyday is obviously different from when they were a child or a teenager.

Despite the large degree of variation related to provenance, age, and lifestyle, however, many contemporary accounts of the everyday emphasize the fact that everydayness resists, at least in part, the dynamics of history and change (Felski 2020, p. 78). Everyday life has indeed features of universality. Everybody, beyond age, personal history, culture,

of everydayness are Lukács, Bourdieu, Heidegger, Heller, Schutz, Simmel, Dewey and Habermas, among others.

[3] Everydayness is now a key term not only in ethics, political philosophy, and phenomenology, but also in the field of metaphysics. See for example Baker (2007).

class, and ethnicity, eats, dresses, dwells someplace, sleeps, and washes on a daily basis. Everybody uses a series of objects in their daily life: furniture, different kinds of tools, clothes, machines, and dwells in some places: the home, the workplace, the streets, the neighborhood, and the city. We are all similarly anchored in the mundane.

A shared belief in this regard is that a list of objects or events is unable to fully capture the meaning of everydayness. This understanding justifies the phenomenological concern shared by most philosophical studies devoted to everyday life (see Begout 2005; Pollio, Henley, Thompson 1997; Schmid, Thonhauser 2017). More than a limited set of things and activities, the everyday should be construed as a way of relating to the world, the experience of becoming accustomed to certain places, behaviors, and practices, which come to seem familiar and normal to us. Everydayness, it is claimed, is not an intrinsic quality that characterizes particular actions or objects. It is rather a lived process of routinization that all individuals experience in their life (Highmore 2002, 2004), one that lies more at the level of relation than at that of ontology. Interestingly, ancient Stoicism used the term *oikeiôsis* to describe this process, a word meaning 'appropriation', 'habituation', and 'endearment' (Coccia 2021). *Oikeiôsis* signifies the sense of being 'at home' (*oikos*), of belonging to and by extension becoming 'familiarized' or 'intimate' with something. Anything that is subject to *oikeiôsis* becomes part of our everyday life, and while some objects, actions, and events may look more 'everyday' than others (washing one's teeth, having lunch, shopping for food), this does not prevent others from falling in the category under different circumstances.

In a similar way, it is widely recognized today that everydayness does not form a clear-cut category in the proper sense of the term.[4] Everydayness is rather the evanescent web that brings together the animate and the inanimate, the material and the affective, objects and people, and conflates oneself and others into the basic unit of what we call 'life'. This elusiveness also explains an aspect that Lefebvre (1991, p.18) already underlined as essential for everyday life, that is, its ambiguity. The sphere of everydayness intersects but does not coincide with the distinction between the individual and the collective, the private and the public, the cyclical and the linear, the conscious and the unconscious. Furthermore, the everyday is not simply interchangeable

[4] See especially Storey (2014, pp. 1-3); for discussions in aesthetics see Leddy (2012, 2015); Naukkarinen (2013, 2017); Puolakka (2014).

with the ordinary, the boredom, the humdrum. While people's everyday life is made up of routine, repetition, and habits, it also comprises exceptional events such as experiences of trauma, births, deaths, love, sexual passion, moments of heightened consciousness and contemplation, which sharply break away from everyday routines. This, as we shall see momentarily, creates a tension between features of the ordinary and the extraordinary in everydayness, and constitutes a continuing source of trouble for many scholars concerned with the topic.

3 Aesthetics and Everydayness

With respect to the contemporary process of reimagining everyday life, its nature, character, and significance, aesthetic concerns are essential for highlighting the valuable aspects of everydayness (Highmore 2004, pp. 311-312). As a matter of fact, the conviction that the everyday can only be redeemed by its aesthetic transfiguration was already a hidden motif for the social and political tradition exemplified by Lefebvre and De Certeau. In their work, the transvaluation of everydayness took the form of the aestheticization of daily reality, which was countered by experiences of repetition and routine (Felski 2008, p. 80). By contrast, current approaches to the aesthetics of everyday life aim at capturing the aesthetic value of our daily humdrum while respecting its intrinsic everyday nature. Calling us back to the mundane itself, such approaches intend to prove how aesthetic qualities are already embedded in the ordinary fabric of everyday life, which is thus by itself aesthetically fulfilling. Everyday life no longer appears as the grey and obscure background of philosophical, political, and artistic activity, but becomes an object of aesthetic inquiry in its own right.

The philosophy of John Dewey represents the main source of inspiration in this attempt to rehabilitate aesthetically the experience of the quotidian. In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey proposed the idea that aesthetic experience is "an experience" that arises and stands out from the indistinct flow of daily humdrum. Although the title of the book may tempt one to think otherwise, Dewey's primary intuition was that any aspect of people's everyday life can possess aesthetic qualities - great food, games, interesting conversations - if it satisfies us and leads us to reflection. In this way, Dewey paved the way for opening the scope of aesthetic inquiry to the multiplicity of everyday life. Another central reference for contemporary investigations in the aesthetics of everydayness is the work dedicated by the American philosopher Arnold

Berleant (1991, 1992) to the notion of aesthetic engagement. According to Berleant, engagement defines the interactive and immersive relationship that arises between the experiencing agent and the object of experience. Emphasizing the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic perception, Berleant's understanding of engagement offers a meaningful alternative to traditional aesthetic theories and provides the basis for a comprehensive approach applicable to both the domains of fine arts, the environment, and everyday life.

Another central reference for investigations in the aesthetics of everydayness is the work that the American philosopher Arnold Berleant (1991, 1992) devoted to the notion of aesthetic engagement. According to Berleant, engagement defines the interactive and immersive relationship that arises between the experiencing agent and the object of experience. Emphasizing the holistic, contextual character of aesthetic perception, Berleant's understanding of engagement offers a meaningful alternative to traditional aesthetic theories and provides the basis for a comprehensive approach, applicable to both the domains of fine arts, the environment, and everyday life.[5]

Drawing on Dewey's pragmatism and Berleant's engaged aesthetic approach, since the early 2000s a whole new branch of philosophical research has emerged, whose main focus is the aesthetic reevaluation of everyday life. Developed initially in the Anglo-American milieu, so-called Everyday Aesthetics represents a response to the traditional Western understanding of aesthetics as a philosophy of art that dominated the scholarly debate until the mid-twentieth century. An important step forward in the advancement of the field was the publication of the collection *Aesthetics of Everyday Life* edited by Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith in 2005, which featured intervention by several well-known figures in the contemporary debate such as Thomas Leddy, Yuriko Saito, Arnold Berleant, Arto Haapala, Emily Brady, and Wolfgang Welsch, among others. The volume showed for the first time the plurality of issues that can be analyzed through the perspective of an aesthetics of the everyday, proposing also some key terms for its conceptual development. Two years later, in 2007, the publication of *Everyday Aesthetics. Prosaics, the Play*

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[5] This also justifies the close relationship that exists between everyday aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. Despite not being interchangeable, the two disciplines have complementary natures and rely on the same methodological premises (e.g. the notion of aesthetic engagement). As evidence, many authors who specialize in one field also work in the other (e.g. Saito 2007, 2017; Brady 2003, 2013; Lehtinen 2020a, 2020b; Welsch 2003; Diaconu 2011, 2015).

of Culture and Social Identities, by Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics*, by Yuriko Saito, officially sanctioned the birth of Everyday Aesthetics as a sub-discipline on its own.

In recent years, Everyday Aesthetics has experienced a blossoming in scientific discourse. Issues related to the aesthetics of quotidian life are today all the rage in books, journals, and conferences and the area is currently gaining momentum in many European countries, Italy and Slovakia included.[6] However, while the aesthetic appraisal of daily experience is of concern to an increasing number of authors, the questions of what specifically defines the core concepts of the discipline and how these concepts affect the aesthetic theory that is proposed are still highly disputed. For example, there is no consensus as to what 'everyday' and 'aesthetics' in 'everyday aesthetics' mean and how they are related to each other. And what do ordinariness and extraordinariness have to do with them?

In the following section, we will take a quick audit of some of the major controversies that animate discussions in Everyday Aesthetics, in order to clarify the conceptual framework within which the essays that compose this book are situated.

4 A Dangerous Relationship

The first problem that arises when examining the field of Everyday Aesthetics is that the scope and boundaries of the discipline largely remain unclear. What are we to include within the notion of 'everyday life', whose aesthetic qualities everyday aestheticians aim to investigate? Scholars disagree about which objects, practices, or activities can be subsumed under the notion of everydayness.

One possible approach is to define the everyday *via negationis* by assuming that everydayness includes anything that does not fall within the field of fine arts or nature. In this way, practically all perceptible objects could be considered a proper item of investigation for Everyday Aesthetics (Leddy 2012), not only ordinary practices, but also special events such as weddings, travel, scenically staged environments, parties,

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[6] For recent work in everyday aesthetics in Europe, see e.g., in Denmark: Friberg, Vasquez 2017; in Finland: Kuisma, Lehtinen, Mäcklin 2019; in France: Formis 2010; in Italy: Matteucci 2017; Di Stefano 2017; Iannilli 2019; in Poland: Andrzejewski 2014; Salwa 2019; in Spain: León 2019, among the others. A comprehensive overview of recent European perspectives on everyday aesthetics can be found in the special issue of *ESPES. The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics* edited by Di Stefano and Lehtinen, forthcoming in 2021.

interior decoration, and so on. The alternative solution consists in thinking that everydayness is a quality characterising solely and exclusively those aspects of our lives that are widely shared and multiply instantiated in our routines or habits. (Haapala 2005; Saito 2007; Forsey 2013a, 2013b; Melchionne 2011, 2013 and Naukkarinen 2013).

The question at stake in this dispute is whether 'the everyday' can be taken as synonymous with 'the ordinary'. Does everydayness correspond strictly to what is ordinary, commonplace, and mundane or does it also include exceptional occasions, practices, or activities? According to Kevin Melchionne (2013), for instance, the only proper objects of Everyday Aesthetics are "food, wardrobe, dwelling, conviviality, and going out." These objects are 'everyday' because of their daily presence in the life of a wide amount of people. Their commonality, repetitive presence, and pervasiveness justify their relevance for the field, although they provide modest satisfaction when compared to works of art or other exceptional events.

The debate over what falls within the scope of the discipline foreshadows another important issue in contemporary research in Everyday Aesthetics, one related to the methodology that is suitable to this kind of inquiry. What approach is the most appropriate to investigate the aesthetic properties of everyday life, however we choose to define them? In the literature, a distinction emerges around two main positions. Either having an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary is construed as implying a process of distancing, defamiliarization, or estrangement; or it is seen as requiring an attempt to aesthetically appreciate the ordinary as such.

According to the former position, everyday life is by itself so familiar, so ordinary, and so routine-like that it forms a kind of frameless background. In order for this background to count as a proper object for aesthetic scrutiny, it needs to be rendered out-of-the-ordinary, unfamiliar, or strange. The aesthetic potential of our daily life can only be discovered if we capture the 'extraordinary in the ordinary' by raising "the everyday above the ordinary and the routine" (Puolakka 2018) and by giving it "heightened significance", what Thomas Leddy (2012) calls an "aura". However, while the idea of experiencing and appreciating the ordinary as extraordinary follows a rather traditional path in aesthetics discourse, many writers have pointed out this strategy eventually leads to losing the very "everyday-ness" of everyday experience, which was the object of our interest in the first place (Saito 2017, 2019; Haapala 2005; Irvin 2008; Forsey 2014).

Moving from this concern, sych authors maintain that the main aim of Everyday Aesthetics should be to aesthetically grasp the ordinary without manipulating it, that is, to experience it 'as such'. This implies considering the mundane aspects of everyday life as aesthetically appreciable per se by emphasising for example the sense of comforting stability we feel when carrying out our daily routines in a familiar setting (Haapala 2005); the pleasure we gain by the appropriate functioning of commonplace objects and tools (Forsey 2014); or the fulfilment we derive by paying mindful attention to the activities of our everyday life (Saito 2017). Difficulties arise, however, when we try to explain what is distinctly aesthetic in experiences related to comfort, stability, and functionality (Dowling 2010; Matteucci 2017). To what extent can the feeling of familiarity and belonging count as pleasures from a specifically aesthetic viewpoint and not, as it may be the case, from a different cognitive, epistemological, social, biological, perspective?

These questions also form the backbone of the ongoing conversation concerning the degree of autonomy of Everyday Aesthetics with respect to so-called 'traditional aesthetics'. How should we conceptualize the relationship between this new sub-discipline and the philosophical field from which it originated?

Here, some scholars seem to endorse an inclusivist approach relying on the assumption that the notions at work in disputes over the value of art can be fruitfully extended and re-adapted to include experiences from daily life (Dowling 2010; Leddy 2012; Ratiu 2013). This might restore continuity between the humble events, doings, and activities that constitute our everyday life and the refined forms of aesthetic experiences that characterise artistic production and reception, which are the traditional subject of aesthetics (Matteucci 2017). To dismiss the aesthetic tradition entirely means instead leaving Everyday Aesthetics without a theoretical foundation that could support further conceptual progress (Forsey 2014).

Other writers, conversely, are inclined to grant greater autonomy to Everyday Aesthetics with regard to the sphere of the philosophy of art (Haapala 2005; Saito 2007; Melchionne 2011). Subscribing to the view that daily life can afford paradigmatic instances of aesthetic experience, they maintain that investigations into Everyday Aesthetics need not be bound by the limitations and conventions that temper discussions of value in art.

Between these two extreme poles, many intermediate stances have also been proposed that try to interpret more flexibly the relationship

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between aesthetics of everyday life and the philosophy of art (Forsey 2014; Matteucci 2017). According to these latter accounts, aesthetic properties are not extraordinary facts that are 'separate or exotic', but emerge contextually along with our other concerns that are central to our lives.

As can be seen from the previous discussion, the methodological disputes involved in recent work in Everyday Aesthetics, including the fundamental problem of its definition, are far from being solved. Arguably, this is because aesthetic investigations into the nature of everydayness bring with them very complex theoretical questions concerning the status of the aesthetic, the relationship between aesthetic values and different kinds of values, the meaning of everyday life, and the role of normativity and intersubjectivity in philosophy. In this regard, while the multiplicity of approaches in Everyday Aesthetics debates may be an advantage for the field, ensuring conceptual pluralism and diversity, it also represents a possible threat, with the risk for scholars of getting lost in a fragmented landscape of case studies.

In conclusion, despite the variety of perspectives on the table, it is important to underline that there is at least one crucial aspect binding together different accounts of Everyday Aesthetics. This has to do with the shared assumption that emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of everyday life may not only be of theoretical and philosophical relevance but is also endowed with moral and practical implications. In line with the tradition of *ästhetische Bildung*, interest in Everyday Aesthetics is commonly perceived by practitioners as part of a broader concern for the quality of our lived experience, a moral tool for developing people into more deliberate, aware members of society and community (Saito 2017). In this sense, as Elisabetta Di Stefano (2017, p. 9) comments:: "Aesthetics, as long as it is not separated from morality and engagement, can have a driving role in improving the reality around us. It is our aesthetic considerations that lead us to make the world more human, the society more just, the future more sustainable."[7]

By prioritizing the material and biological subject that is doing the experience, Everyday Aesthetics brings to the fore the hidden practices of everyday life in all their bodily, social, and cultural complexity. As the topics it scrutinizes are accessible to everyone, regardless of their cultural

[7] Our translation from Italian: "[…] l'estetica, purché non sia separata dalla morale e dall'impegno, può avere una grande forza propulsiva nel migliorare la realtà che ci circonda. Sono le considerazioni estetiche che ci muovono nel rendere il mondo più umano, la società più giusta, il futuro più sostenibile".

education, religious affiliation, or social status, it may stand as an instrument of exchange and communication for different ethnicities and cultures,[8] a platform where instances of political freedom and liberty of thought, self-righteousness and resistance can be given public voice (Virmani 2016; Vihalem 2018). We believe that the essays included in this collection provide clear evidence of this potential.

5 The Structure of This Volume

Most contributors to this volume are aestheticians, in addition to art historians, literary critics, and cultural historians. The issues addressed in this book, however, are not themselves 'aesthetic' in the traditional sense in which 'representation', 'expression', or 'meaning' are. Rather, what is emphasized is the pervasive presence of aesthetics in various spheres of daily life, from dwelling to clothing, walking, and eating. The twenty chapters that comprise this volume testify to the different ways in which this presence manifests itself in our everydayness. Nevertheless, each of the topics discussed can be seen as an ingredient in a heterogeneous whole, clarified and extended by its relationship with the others. Just as aesthetic experience is complex and made up of diverse elements, so is the various aesthetic significance of everyday life that is explored here. Dwelling, walking, clothing, eating, and the like provide diversity while the aesthetic focus on an individual's growth and well-being unifies the discussion. The volume is arranged into four parts.

Part 1, 'The Environment, Cities, and the Everyday', presents several analyses that address the aesthetics of everyday environments and cities.

These environments are shaped by the intentions of designers and the actions of builders, but, as **Sanna Lehtinen** argues in her contribution, their temporality also influences how they are perceived, experienced, and used. Intergenerational aesthetic values are thus important to understand how to maintain and take care of these environments.

Following on from questions of urban architecture, **Zoltan Somhegyi**'s essay considers the disturbing sublimity of ruinous urban spaces and environments. While we appreciate areas of urban and industrial decay aesthetically, we tend to dislike natural decay. Somhegyi

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[8] An example of the cross-cultural dimension of everyday aesthetics is the volume edited by Curtis L. Carter and Liu Yuedi in 2012. As the editors claim (2012, p. viii) the aim of this work is to encourage the cultural dialogue between the West and the East, with a view to building a new form of aesthetics of everyday life from a global perspective.

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proposes that this reluctance depends on our commitment to nature's irreplaceability and value.

The aesthetic appreciation of city environments is also central in **Yevheniia Butsykina**'s chapter. By introducing the case of makeshift gardens on the Rusanivka Channel in Kyiv, Ukraine, Butsykina shows how aesthetic practices of care can transform alienated urban landscapes into a dear, familiar place.

Our relationship with the city is also the focus of **Filip Šenk**'s paper. Šenk examines the nature of place experience in the urban context by drawing on the notion of edge experience. The constitutive relationship between places and their edges is emphasized by Šenk with regard to the case study of the park in Štefánik Square, in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic.

With **Petra Baďová**'s essay we turn the focus to the notion of dwelling and its symbolic implications. Baďová explores the meanings that are embodied in the architectural shapes of a 'home' to show their deep, archetypal character. Different types of houses testify variously to our preconscious aesthetic relationship to the world.

Part 2, 'The Body and the Everyday', discusses the role of practices and activities related to the body in the everyday experience.

In his chapter, **Ian King** investigates the potential of clothing and dress to define personal identity via expressive forms of non-verbal communication. Turning to Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasm, King raises questions regarding the status and relationship of dress with the body, showing that dress provides a direct instrument for appreciating the guise of everyday aesthetics.

Clothing is also the object of **Elena Abate**'s contribution. Abate proposes a new perspective on fashion that draws on Wittgenstein's concept of "form of life". The practices of clothing, Abate argues, give rise to a 'grammar' that is able to encode social and aesthetic messages.

The topic of fashion receives further investigation in **Michaela Malíčková**'s chapter. Malíčková approaches fashion semiotically as evidence of the individualistic tendencies that characterise the modern subject. Fashion appears in this light as an important tool of self-expression for both the individual and diverse social communities.

Andrej Démuth and **Slávka Démuthova** present us with the question of the aesthetic appeal of suffering and self-harm in their visual representation in the arts and literature. Combining evidence from the neuroscientific literature with art-historical investigations, the

authors discuss the attractiveness of suffering displayed in everyday life as well as in artistic contexts.

Attention to the living, experiencing body is also present in **Lukáš Makky**'s chapter. Makky scrutinises the bodily interactions that take place when we are immersed in a city to underline the virtues and limits of a somaesthetic approach. Makky's idea is that the body, as a tool for experiencing the city aesthetically, is per se insufficient unless knowledge and contextual information are duly taken into account.

Part 3, 'Art, Culture and the Everyday', includes essays that describe and interpret the aesthetic import of particular types of cultural practices shaping our everyday experience.

In **Elisabetta Di Stefano**'s chapter, the analysis of food preparation and consumption is pursued through the lens of the ordinary-extraordinary dichotomy. While the experience of eating has often been interpreted in an analogy with art appreciation, food preparation and consumption also have ordinary qualities. Di Stefano's proposal is to keep these two features together by how food can allow the extraordinary to manifest itself in everyday life.

Looking at the reality of contemporary globalised and consumerist societies, **Polona Tratnik**'s essay investigates how recent art has reacted towards the capitalist system, its ideology and dynamics. To examine postmodern art's criticism towards consumerism, Tratnik considers examples of performances where supermarkets, the 'temples of consumption', become the object of an act of artistic revolt.

A critique of capitalist society and consumerism is also implicit in **David Ewing**'s contribution, devoted to the analysis of Georges Perec's novel Thing. A Story of the Sixties (1965). By dramatizing the effects of consumerist dreams and aspirations on the protagonists' lives, Ewing suggests that the novel defines everyday experience as opposed to mimesis and defined by intransitive escapism.

Tordis Berstrand explores the existential implications of dwelling. Berstrand underlines how the work Merzbau, by the German artist Kurt Schwitters, is able to transform a seemingly ordinary house into an extraordinary architecture. Linking Western concepts of dwelling to traditional Chinese aesthetics, Berstrand promotes a trans-cultural reconceptualisation of the living space.

The making of a space into a home-place is also at the core of **Corine van Emmerik**'s chapter. van Emmerik analyses the practices that help create comfort and familiarity in the dramatic context of a refugee camp in Palestine. Drawing on the philosophical concept of Sumud, she shows

how domestic activities such as gardening may generate a space that is perceived as familiar also in the midst of a traumatic reality.

An ethical-political concern also characterises **Carolina Gomes**' contribution. Gomes reviews recent philosophical approaches that question the aesthetic and ethical implications of morally provocative art. By focusing on some of the most debated positions in the literature, Gomes interprets controversial forms of contemporary public art as a platform for testing social and political values.

Part 4, 'Methodological Approaches to the Everyday', involves a shift towards the methodological and meta-theoretical implications of everyday aesthetics.

Ancuta Mortu's chapter provides an examination of the notion of an aesthetic act, which forms the basis of the engaged approach promoted by authors in both everyday and environmental aesthetics. Investigating the alternative models of distance and engagement, Mortu interprets the aesthetic acts in light of a broader debate in contemporary philosophy to underline its relevance for aesthetic appreciation.

The notion of routine and the problem of its aesthetic appreciation is the focus of **Michaela Paštéková**. Paštéková addresses the question of how the pandemic has changed the perception of our everyday rituals and habits. Emphasizing the aesthetic quality of these practices by making their performative character explicit, she claims, can be an effective way to restore feelings of safety and familiarity even amidst uncertain times.

Swantje Martach's contribution concerns the central issue of how we can appreciate beauty in everyday life without betraying its ordinary nature. Martach's proposal appeals to recent research in the field of speculative philosophy as a possible solution to the problem. Recurring to speculation, Martach suggests, gives us a chance to engage with the aesthetic qualities of the everyday without intruding on them, thus preserving their fundamental ordinariness.

The aesthetic qualities of everyday life are also at the center of **Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska**'s essay. Phenomenology, Szyszkowska claims, gives us a methodological framework to appraise and describe the aesthetic value found in everyday experiences. By focusing on the phenomenological notion of listening-in, the chapter proposes an understanding of our dealings with everyday reality as an attentive, open, and engaged aesthetic relation to the world-as-experienced.

As can be noticed, all the essays in this collection are highly varied in scope, focus, and methodology and mirror thereby the difficulty of finding a singular and objective approach within the aesthetics and the

philosophy of everyday life. We hope, however, that behind the individual pieces of this composite mosaic of topics and ideas a cohesive pattern can be discerned, which tells us a story about who we are and what life is. Our wish is that this book will make a small contribution to this story too.

Acknowledgements

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Part I
The Environment, Cities,
and the Everyday

<div align="center">

CHAPTER 1

Another Look at the City. Emphasizing Temporality in Urban Aesthetics

Sanna Lehtinen

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Abstract: Cities are usually formed over long periods of time. The subjective experience of time on the scale of a human individual comes together with the longer lifespan of human made constructions in contemporary cities. Intergenerational aesthetic values are negotiated together with short-term trends and both have an influence on how cities become perceived, experienced, and used. Changes in the material conditions define the aesthetic qualities of urban environments. Building, demolition, and acts of care and maintenance are needed to keep the material system of the city functioning. The forms of urban structures draw direct aesthetic attention as they are being designed and redesigned in these processes. Buildings and architecture as such have for long carried meanings beyond the mere function of giving shelter. Building materials, for example, prove to be a central source of new meanings as they are currently being re-evaluated from the perspective of ecological and sustainability values. This article outlines how philosophical urban aesthetics can take into account the explicit aspects of aesthetic value change in cities. The article shows how the idea of aesthetic sustainability could be introduced into urban aesthetics in a way that will increase our understanding of how aesthetics and sustainability are and could further be interlinked in contemporary and future urban environments.

Keywords: Urban Aesthetics, Intergenerational Aesthetics, Everyday Aesthetics, Urban Everyday, Aesthetic Sustainability

1 Introduction

This article stems from a need to advance some central tenets of contemporary philosophical urban aesthetics. The advancement concerns taking better into consideration the increasingly relevant temporal change in the case of cities as well as in aesthetic values themselves. If the 'first look' at the city from the perspective of

philosophical aesthetics has focused on the sensory and spatial stimuli that the city has to offer (e.g. Berleant and Carlson 2007; Milani 2017), the second, updated look focuses on how cities are perceived and evaluated always in flux, their aesthetic qualities unfolding in temporal as much as spatial terms (e. g. Haapala 2005; Lehtinen 2020b; Lobo 2020). The temporal emphasis in aesthetics has been articulated already in recent developments in new areas such as everyday aesthetics, which deals by definition with the everyday as a temporally determined part of human life. The everyday is, however, a rather relational and subjective concept compared to the time cycles that dictate how a city looks and feels. Another important direction for developing aesthetics with temporality in mind is the current transdisciplinary emphasis on ecological thinking and sustainability transformations. The implication of transformations point towards processual changes as a result of both intentional and unintentional human activity and these processes in themselves would benefit from understanding the explicit and implicit roles of aesthetics in them.

This article discusses two possible directions for advancing explicitly temporal thinking in urban aesthetics, namely those of intergenerational thinking on one hand and sustainability approach on the other hand. The intention is to describe in which ways these broad disciplinary border-crossing conceptual frameworks are influencing also how aesthetic values are understood now and towards the future. One of the aims of this contribution is to make visible how urban aesthetic values do not exist in a vacuum, but are instead strongly linked to other contemporary discussions and areas of value deliberation. In the very final part of the article, the aim of increasing the use of wood as building material in the urban environment is presented briefly as a case example of a contemporary transdisciplinary urban project, which exemplifies in an impactful way how the temporal scope of aesthetic values gets interpreted in practice.

2 From Spatial to Temporal Perspective in Urban Aesthetics

The appearances of human settlements of all types change and evolve with time. This change concerns the whole spectrum of human habitation from the more dispersed and rural to compact and fully urbanized communities. Contemporary cities globally are no exception in this regard: they are not stable entities but, instead, constantly at the focus of a continuous process of building, demolishing, and repairing.

The long- and short-term urban development processes are managed by authorities and some type of legal procedures in most civilizations globally. However, the experiential repercussions of the city as a process are very complex and go often beyond the intended effects. The changes in how features of a city become experienced are thus difficult to plan in advance. Even with careful planning and predicting, seemingly independent decisions accumulate into an overall aesthetic character of a place: a process in which overall aesthetic deliberation plays little role in the end. Besides this jigsaw puzzle of aesthetic elements in construing an urban place, all kinds of traces of previous generations of humans and non-humans alike are visible and expressively present in the urban landscape. The amount of cohesion and the ratio between the intended and unintended elements in cities is of course not stable, but varies according to the type of city, community, and governance model.

The philosophical subspecialty of urban aesthetics has been developed to study the aesthetic qualities and values of cities with a more focused effort since the 1990's (von Bonsdorff 2002; Berleant and Carlson 2007; Lehtinen 2020b). The field has been marked by focus on the built and human environment in opposition to more natural environments, but this dichotomy-based approach is currently severely questioned by the posthuman paradigm as well as transdisciplinary approaches such as sustainability science and studies. In its current form, urban aesthetics is influenced also by philosophy of the city (Philosophy of the City Research Group; Meagher & al. 2019) and a selection of theoretical approaches in contemporary philosophy and aesthetics of architecture and urban planning.

As emerging focus areas in urban aesthetics, the following ones are recognised here: 1) *global cities*: challenging the Eurocentric notions of the aesthetic ideals of cities, 2) *aesthetic temporality*: explicating the aesthetic impacts of the processual nature of urban transformations, and 3) *technological change*: recognizing and assessing the aesthetics of fast technological development in cities. Interestingly, all these areas of future research put emphasis on temporally developing conceptualizations of urban aesthetics as well as experiences which unfold only with time.

Cities are not static entities but follow a type of dynamic logic of change. They are continuously re-evaluated and altered to cater the changing needs of the community. Part of this change is intentional and coordinated, but unintentional change is equally taking place. Intentional change consists of both complex and collaborative practices of urban planning, design, and development as well as of the repeating acts of

care and maintenance. What is common for both types of human collective activities is the more or less implicit attention to the temporal nature of the built structures of the city. This attention is aimed either at creating longevity or enabling change towards communally beneficial end goals. However, the temporality of city environments is not entirely intentionally driven either. The unintentional changes can be abrupt as in the cases of natural or human originating catastrophes such as extreme weather phenomena or acts of terrorism. The unintentional changes come also in the form of more gradual degradation as in the case of animal or plant species taking over less maintained places. The ratio of the intentional and unintentional elements varies from a city to another and the distinction is not always possible to make in the first place. Even in the case of clearly definable examples such as invasive plant species changing entire urban landscapes, one reason is rarely enough to explain the complex array of changes taking place.

While the dynamics of change of contemporary urban habitats globally are studied in detail in directions as diverse as urban ecology and urban planning, for example, the aesthetic implications of urban change have not been traditionally at the centre of attention. This is partly due to the marginal status of aesthetic theory as an area of contemporary knowledge competency in comparison to other areas in urban studies. Partly, it is because cities are being observed in scientific discourse prevalently as places determined by economic and social forces, instead of putting focused efforts on analysing the prerequisites of pleasant and liveable living environments for human and nonhuman species alike. Although subjective variations in the broad spectrum of aesthetic preferences make them statistically challenging to chart, these preferences nonetheless have a significant effect on the general trends that lead into thriving economies somewhere or shrinking cities elsewhere.

It is not insignificant that urban aesthetics can also be presented as a specific subfield of the broader area of environmental aesthetics, gaining more prominence as the phenomenon of urbanization has not shown signs of slowing down. Instead, and despite recent pandemic flight from the cities, urbanization is proving to be one of the foremost characteristics of the 21st century, challenging traditional ways of thinking to find new angles to what types of environments are pleasant or desirable to live in. Environmentalist thinking in relation to cities is developing into a truly significant way of reconceptualizing the use and development of urban space. Nature-based solutions in materials and

processes are an example of how sustainability is a driver for future-oriented planning solutions. The simultaneous development of new and emerging technologies, on the other hand, is also in its own way concerned with urban futures. In relation to the broader environmental focus in aesthetics, ecological sustainability frames itself as a principle that redefines the production of goods as well as in their consumption. Translated into contemporary aesthetic thinking, especially in the context of the aesthetics of the everyday, environmental sustainability articulates itself even more broadly, ranging from the practices of production and consumption to everyday aesthetically-induced preferences and seemingly spontaneous decision-making processes (Lehtinen 2021). Importantly, both the environmentalist and the technological innovation emphasizing 'smart city' orientations are visible in contemporary philosophical and practical urban aesthetic thinking, but it is becoming increasingly central to see how they can be bridged in thinking about sustainable urban futures. Urban aesthetics as a philosophical field is well applicable to bridge these two often unnecessarily opposed paradigms of thinking about the urban lifeform. At the very least, with the magnifying lens of urban aesthetics the city is studied first and foremost through its perceptual and experiential qualities. The look and feel of a city are thus always a mélange of human and non-human elements alike: any projected false dichotomies of 'natural nature' and the human-originating technological engagement evaporate in close contact with the perceptual sphere of the city itself. In fact, the city is formed perceptually as a constellation of places, cityscapes, objects, living creatures, trajectories, and interactions of various kinds. One does not necessarily pay that much attention to the details of the city amidst the everyday life and to an extent, one becomes even oblivious to their familiarity (Haapala 2005). This everyday familiarity does not, however, entail that the city would need to stay unchanged.

Everyday aesthetics demarcates another significant paradigm shift in the urban aesthetic approach. So far, the main focus of everyday aesthetics has been on defining the very everydayness of the everyday itself. The everyday is an intuitively easy concept to grasp, yet it is like slippery soap to the one trying to give a precise definition of it. When discussing the everyday, the point of reference is always to some extent "*my* everyday *now*", a heavily subjective and contextual, ultimately experiential concept (Naukkarinen 2013). Besides broadening the everyday aesthetic categories (Leddy 2012) this combination of unavoidability and slipperiness is also the most exciting turn in everyday

aesthetics when trying to define the temporality of the everyday urban lifeworld. With added emphasis on the everyday, the temporality of daily aesthetic phenomena becomes prevalent. How the rhythms, routines, and recurring events make time experienced in the Bergsonian sense, as duration, is at the core of understanding the inevitable changes occurring within the scope of any given city.

3 Intergenerational Aesthetic Choices: Wood as Building Material

Intergenerational aesthetics is a recent formulation in philosophical and applied aesthetics, which describes and analyses the temporal aspects of aesthetic value change (Emily Brady has brought up this concept in her talk in Edinburgh in 2016; Lehtinen 2020a; Capdevila-Werning and Lehtinen 2021). Concerning environmental issues at large, aesthetic values are not necessarily universally set spatial or temporal rules but, instead, they change according to the currently prevailing other values and meanings attached to the objects of appreciation. This differs substantially from the persistent ideas that aesthetically positive values in urban environments follow from the universally valid pleasant formal features, such as harmony or the golden ratio. In everyday and ecological aesthetics this change has been acknowledged to an interesting extent already (Saito 2007; Brady 2014) but the broader discussion regarding the more radical intergenerational aspects of aesthetic values is yet to take place.

Intergenerational thinking is briefly mentioned here as a first step towards discussing the intergenerational roles of aesthetic values. It is left for future studies to explicate the relationship of intergenerational and aesthetic values more closely. Considering how aesthetic values are traditionally understood, as being based on or expressed in highly subjective experiences, fitting them in the intergenerational scheme might seem problematic. This example is to show that there is reason to discuss values in the temporally determined framework, and not only through formal aesthetic features, qualities, or the notion of taste.

In contemporary cities globally, intergenerational aesthetics concerns directly the multiple layers and the interplay of traces of human activity. The decisions of past generations will determine the field of action and decision-making for the generations to come. Traces of previous generations have affected the layout of the city and also its main character, what is conceived as possible within it. Most of these traces are intentional but the ensuing aesthetic combinations are often

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unintentional. Whereas in agricultural landscapes, in which, if untended, nature will take over fields and cultivated forests fairly quickly, the traces of human life in cities are more deeply carved into the environment. These effects do not concern only the visible parts of the city but the invisible parts as well: human traces are to be found in the ground, in the air, and the inevitable flow of water. Radiation and airborne particle pollution are examples of long-term effects on the porous surface of the urban habitat and, eventually, the human bodies themselves.

Intergenerational thinking in philosophy, in environmental or social philosophy in particular, has focused especially on the obligations to future generations (Groves 2014). These obligations and the temporal distance make the relationship between generations significantly different than relations between contemporaries. There is imbalance in reciprocity and, more closely, in what forms moral and aesthetic values take. Some values are clearly more long-lasting, and others more prone to change. From the contemporary perspective, ecological values are affecting aesthetic values and it is possible to trace these changes. Some examples are the aesthetic acceptance of wind turbines (Saito 2007) or how aesthetic value is detached from the artistic intention and moved towards ecological aesthetics in the case of landmark architecture (Capdevila-Werning and Lehtinen 2021).

Emergence of ethics of care in intergenerational ethics is one recent development that has significance for the urban environment. This strand of thinking has brought together origins as diverse as Heidegger and feminist care ethics (Groves 2014). Focus on care and maintenance in philosophy and urban thinking has been gaining increasingly interest as thinkers in diverse directions such as Yuriko Saito in aesthetics (2020), Steven Vogel in environmental and infrastructure ethics (2019), Mark Thomas Young in philosophy of engineering (2020), Shannon Mattern in anthropology (2018), and myself in urban aesthetics (Lehtinen 2020c) have contributed to the discussion of this topic. Care implies futurity and the adjoining sustainability paradigm requires thinking forward even to an uncomfortable degree: this translates into an exacerbated need to face the uncertainty related to future times (Groves 2014). In aesthetics, the longevity of the aesthetic choices of our era as such is a source of uncertainty but sustainability concerns cause even deeper trepidation. We might and should ask more often: "Are these changes/choices necessary?" and "Do we know enough of the harmful effects to the environment?"

The cyclical nature of aesthetic trends and continuous maintenance do not go well with the central premises of Western philosophical thinking: striving towards universal and enduring values. In aesthetics, the 20th century in particular was marked by both an attempt to find universal aesthetic value in pure formalistic ethos and a remarkable opening towards aesthetic relativism with the ensuing stylistic plurality. This dichotomy is not even a deep contradiction as it manages to explain a plethora of aesthetically interesting yet temporally short-lived styles. In architecture and urban planning, the push and pull of classical versus contextual beauty has been especially clear. From the universality of function-determined purity of functionalism to the playful referential aesthetics of postmodernism, the need to take a position either in favour or against any prevalent 'ism' has been an important signifier of having developed a socially conscious and securely defined form of taste. What is thus the place of aesthetics in the normative thought of sustainability transformations in general and urban sustainability in particular?

Intergenerational aesthetics is a new articulation to explicate temporal change in aesthetic values and aesthetic obligations towards future generations (Capdevila-Werning and Lehtinen 2021). In practice, this means consciousness of the long-term effects of contemporary aesthetic choices and that current aesthetic preferences should not dictate the outcome irreversibly for the generations to come. The increasing requirements for ecological sustainability are changing the temporal logic of the urban everyday. To contextualize this, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no 11 focuses on "Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (UN 2020). This includes issues and focus areas such as urban nature, air quality, urban transportation, infrastructure, energy, health & wellbeing, social equity, and economic viability. The multifaceted issues are grouped under one goal and thus the interrelated nature of urban sustainability goals is acknowledged. This is something to keep in mind, although for the sake of brevity and scope, the focus in this paper is especially on how to increase and support the sustainability of the built environment and, even more, how aesthetic thinking can contribute to this. The intergenerational perspective on urban aesthetics does not imply cultivating an individualist ethics of obligations towards the future generations but the focus is on recognizing the overlapping networks of responsibilities. What is at stake is aligning the aesthetic and ethical values so that the aesthetic scope of the future generations is not limited unnecessarily. Thus, the strict obligation-based ethos of

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intergenerational theories is replaced by an emphasis on resilience and changing nature of human aesthetic values.

An interesting example of this phenomenon is the new wooden building paradigm, which is gaining prominence especially in Northern Europe and the Nordics more specifically, after a long hiatus. The increase in interest in the possibilities of high-rise wood buildings is due to growing scientific evidence about the carbon-sinking effects of wood material (Amiri et al. 2020). Wood as a building material is one of the oldest in human use, but became increasingly shunned in the 20th century dense metropolitan areas. It was not only considered a fire-hazard but also a sign of lesser means compared to more durable and expensive brick buildings. However, now the appreciation of the material is gaining new traction fast. Looking at the carbon footprint only, wood as building material would be a far better choice compared to concrete in most urban environments. Carbon footprint does not of course determine the overall sustainability of any material (there are territorial and climate differences and other local materials can be more sustainable locally, for example), but the difference is so clear that a serious reconsideration of the value of wood as a building material is needed.

The ongoing increase in the use of wood as building material is studied from the sustainability perspective, addressing ecological, environmental, and economical facets. This necessitates also the reassessment of its aesthetic values and potentialities as part of the social and cultural sustainability. If wood is not accepted due to how it looks, it is difficult to reach the level of use that reaching the set sustainability goals would require. As an organic material, it shows signs of aging and use and these signs, such as patina and change in colour, show as a change in the appearance of buildings (e.g., Saito 2007; Kalakoski 2016). With the natural weathering process of unfinished wood, the roughening of the surface keeps on developing for years and the outcome can be difficult to predict. Another central aesthetic consideration relates to the style that is associated with wooden buildings: the material itself is open to new types of building techniques but the nostalgic associations might limit how it is expected to be used.

The acclimatisation of architecture to accept these types of unstable changes requires thinking about the future of the building more as a dynamic process than as a stable state to be preserved in the intended original form. In fact, any sort of idealised original form in most cases is not even an option, since buildings consist of overlapping structures and objects added through time and they always need some type of upkeep

and maintenance that alters them at the same time as keeping them in condition. Restoration and preservation practices have long taken the aging process into consideration, in making decisions about either maintaining something in pristine conditions or even emphasizing the signs of aging as an aesthetically significant part of the restored building.

4 Conclusion

This article has focused on presenting some ideas for further research by showing why there is a need to articulate urban environmental aesthetics to take more explicitly into consideration the perspective of temporality. Emphasis has been given to how the increasingly valuable inter- and transdisciplinary sustainability framework can be of use in this process and re-evaluation of the field of urban aesthetics. Sustainability concerns extend the discussion over values, as well as others, over a longer time span. The perspective of future human and non-human generations and their preferences are to be taken more systematically into account when planning aesthetically significant features of urban environments. The globally recognized challenges such as anthropogenic climate change and broader sustainability deficiency concerns directly the lived quality of most urban environments globally. Even though the theoretical and scientific discussions are considered to address most directly the sustainability goals of the society, it should be taken into consideration that some sustainability issues become experientially explicit in the repeating and habitual interactions with everyday urban places.

   As a solution to bridge some gaps between sustainable solutions and governing aesthetic preferences, this article has offered an informed understanding of the sustainability transformation solutions, especially relating to the aesthetic changes of building materials. This implies that the overall role of aesthetics in a shift towards more circular modes of production and consumption is more central than what is currently understood. The increase in the use of wood as building material has been presented as a case example. Recognized as carbon sinks, a steep increase in the preferences for wooden urban tall buildings is offered as a solution to some urban sustainability transformations. This requires taking a more positive stance towards the wear and tear that the organic material will inevitably show. Aesthetic qualities of wooden buildings require thus a reassessment in terms of their intergenerational aesthetic qualities. This is strongly linked to the more subtle tones of everyday

aesthetic experiences, as they sensitize and condition to evaluate and assess aesthetically the sustainable building materials in practice.

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CHAPTER 2

Aesthetics and Environmental Dereliction. The Ambiguous Sublimity of Destroyed Environments

Zoltán Somhegyi

Abstract: Destroyed natural environments and derelict urban and industrial sites may all evoke an ambiguously disturbing sublimity. Landscapes that are devastated through heavy industrial activity or seriously altered due to climate change as well as decaying urban and industrial sites can all lead to challenging our notion of aesthetic experience. Both these types of decay, i.e. the ones concerning the natural environment and urban and industrial areas, are shown in artworks such as photographs, paintings, and (multimedia) installations. This is of course in line with the historical origins of the subject-matter. However, while explorers enjoy physically visiting areas of urban and industrial decay, only very few of them would go to a large-scale devastated area such as an oil field, an open-cast mine or a poisonously flooded area to experience it physically (Kover 2014). How can we account for these different attitudes?

Keywords: Sublime, Natural Environment, Built Environment, Environmental Dereliction, Aesthetics of Decay

1 Introduction

Hard-dry lands with animal skeletons, landslides washing off entire villages, floods bringing away buildings as if they were tree leaves, empty factories eaten up by rust and vegetation, abandoned neighbourhoods left in decay due to poisonous ground or radioactive air pollution, endless fields of waste, rivers drastically changing colours because of the chemicals poured into them and mountains of trash – these and similar, tragic images we are regularly shown nowadays; in fact, we are practically bombarded with them: images of environmental dereliction of all sorts and types. Right at the beginning, however, I want to emphasise that I do

not have any problems with this 'being bombarded with', given the crucial, essential and existential importance not only of environmental dereliction in itself, but also of those multiple and convoluted issues that result in environmental dereliction. It is highly pressing for the human species to resolve all these complex and interrelated global issues, and these images are strong reminders of this duty. Therefore, such images are strong reminders and their presentation serves as imperatives to act and react.

At the same time, however, I am interested in the various aesthetic questions and perspectives that both these sites and their representations contain, in the hope that these will offer further insights into environmental issues as well as into aesthetics itself. The aesthetic and ethical implications of the environmental crisis, including the ones regarding representation and experience, are truly complex. Changes in the modes of perception of these issues may modify not only the interpretation of the problems but also the possible range of solutions to choose from. As an illustration of this complexity, we can consider American philosopher Erich Hatala Matthes' (2020) inspiring analysis of endangered coastal cities as a case study. The considerations formulated in Matthes' essay (2020, pp. 179, 181), however, are applicable also to other instances of threatened areas:

> We are now in a position to see that while climate change is presented (accurately) as the major environmental problem of our time, it is also part of our heritage. [...] Rising sea levels are not simply threatening our heritage, but they are also part of our environmental heritage – the inheritance of generations of industrial activity fueling anthropogenic climate change. We are endeavoring to save the coast from ourselves. [...] The ruins of coastal places operate as a devastating criticism of the capitalist-industrial forces that have driven anthropogenic climate change. But they also offer the promise of finding new meanings in these altered spaces – sites that might bring us together in opposition to the forces that engendered them, and inspire novel visions of a different future.

Highlighting the complexity of the particular environmental issue of coastal cities demonstrates that the same phenomenon can have multiple possible readings. A shift of perspective can thus become beneficial in finding a new basis for learning from the crisis and aiming at potential solutions.

In order to examine the variety of the issues connected to aesthetics and experience, let us have a look at some features typical of different

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types of derelict environments. In my above listing the reader may have noticed that I have mixed 'natural' places and artificial or urban ones. Although I am aware of their different particularities, they have much in common that is important for our present study. Both are affected by the overarching phenomenon of the mass destruction of our planet caused by human activity, to which we all contribute to a lesser or greater deal. A further interesting aspect however is that certain elements of the decaying environment are or were originally the contributors or sometimes even the initiators of dereliction itself, even if today they appear just as decaying as the others. I am referring here to the factories and industrial sites that constituted the production places for items of mass production, in the service of the consumer society's need of cheap, throwable and often-to-be-changed items, including for example the plasticware that now fills the lands and kills the animals in the oceans, or cars that pollute the air. It is curious to see that destruction can also reach those places where the objects that contribute to this very destruction were and are produced.

Even if there are significant differences both in the modes and in the reasons of the dereliction manifested in natural, urban and industrial sites, they can often evoke an ambiguously disturbing sublimity. Landscapes that are devastated through heavy industrial activities, or seriously altered due to climate change, as well as such parts of rustbelt cities or factory sites that fell into decay because of declining industry can all trigger challenging aesthetic experiences and lead to uncosy feelings.

Needless to say, these aforementioned challenging aesthetic experiences are not something that we could read through the lens of the classical category of the beautiful, and even the 'ambiguously disturbing sublimity' is not a manifestation of the sublime that has an overtly large proportion of appealing, attractive or fascinating elements (see more on the category of beautiful, also in connection with sublime, in Kvokačka 2018; on its status in contemporary aesthetic discourse, see Kvokačka 2020). The reason for which it can nevertheless be described with the help of the latter term is that it shares with classical sublime the immense power that overwhelms us and our capacities through perception. As renown, the classical interpretation of the category of sublime in the 18th century was traditionally related the power of sublime to the perception of immense oceans, endless deserts or threatening high mountains (see a detailed survey of the sublimity of some of these sceneries in Dufy 2013). The difference, in our

contemporary cases, is that unlike in the classical instances, these appearances of sublime do not contain much appealing, delightful or seductive components, despite the fact that some aspects, e.g. their sheer size or the overwhelming power they used to represent, can nevertheless seem fascinating for many. This peculiar version of the sublime and its consequences is what interests us here. They will offer us a chance to engage in some other aesthetic-related considerations and elements while at the same time presenting us with some instances that are nonetheless related to blatant existential threats. This is why it seems worth examining the issue a bit more.

2 Classical Instances

Coming back again to the various forms of environmental dereliction that I listed at the beginning, it may seem surprising that I have mixed natural surroundings, urban places and industrial spaces. As I have explained, the reason for this mixing is that these are all affected by some kind of destruction. There is, however, another reason why they can be all discussed together, even if at first glance natural and industrial sites seem to have so little in common, and this is connected again to the concept of sublime. Whatever distant these two types of derelictions seem to be from each other now, there are some commonalities in their perception. The forms of their visual representation are also mutually influencing each other.

Throughout the 18th century, sublime was regularly analysed with regard to, and its interpretation illustrated with, unclassical landscapes. Unclassical, or, as it is perhaps better to say 'not-classically-beautiful' landscape formations became representative examples of the sublime. We can see pictorial antecedents of this already in the works of some 17th century painters, which focused on certain landscape formations' as "wild beauty" (*orrida bellezza*), to recall the Italian painter Salvator Rosa's expression (quoted from his letter to G. B. Ricciardi in Schama (1996, p. 456). In this sense, the classical, beautiful, mainly Mediterranean, landscapes had their unclassical, sublime counterpart in the representation of Alpine scenes and Northern and Nordic regions. There, instead of the harmonious and mild shapes typically associated with Arcadian and Mediterranean regions, the challenging and frightening features – that, at the same time, were also considered spiritually elevating – is what dominated the representation of the scene. In certain interpretations, these features were not only spiritually

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elevating, but also contributed to the noble intellectual introspection and evoked artistic creativity.[1]

This representation of the sublime, however, only concerns the landscapes themselves. The more fascinating issue is that around the turn of the 19th century, the aesthetic category of sublime started to be used for interpreting phenomena in the industrial and urban context too (Whyte 1994). This is clearly connected to the speed characterising the growth of cities, industrial areas and factories – both in their size and in the number of inhabitants and people working in them – during the first Industrial Revolution. The quickly increasing cities started to appear frightening, disorienting, full of unfamiliar and threatening aspects. In this way, they took on aspects that, a few decades earlier, characterised the particularity of unclassical sublime landscapes. In a similar way, also industrial complexes obtained sublime qualities by being likened to instances of natural sublime, and vice versa. The mutuality of this analogy is demonstrated by the fact that impressive natural phenomena were described with references to industrial activities, like in the case of volcanologist Sir William Hamilton's description of the 1766 – 1767 eruptions of the Vesuvius, compared in his 1772 book to foundries (Bätschmann 1989, p. 64, see also Duffy 2013, especially Chapter 2).

The parallelism between natural and industrial areas did not simply act at the level of poetic descriptions and textual metaphors, for it also played a role in the visual arts, as Oskar Bätschmann reminds us in his seminal book on landscape painting: "Bemerkenswert ist die Übertragung dieser Darstellung der Naturkräfte in eines der ersten Industriebilder" (Bätschmann 1989, p. 64). These considerations refer to a comparison between Philip Jacques de Loutherbourg's painting *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801) and Johan Christian Claussen Dahl's *Eruption of the Vesuvius* (1826), where two completely diverse scenes are depicted with very similar pictorial tools and in a quite analogous style. In Dahl's painting, the powerful natural phenomenon of the volcano is shown in its frightening yet fascinating power, as exemplified by the figures walking around the rim of the crater to observe the spectacle as closely as possible. In Loutherbourg's work, conversely, the industrial activity is placed in the far background, with less 'visitors' close to the scene. Nevertheless, the sublime power of these diverse phenomena is rendered in a very similar way: the tonalities of red are equally powerful, the overwhelming amount of fire and smoke equally dominate

[1] See more on the history of this shift in Somhegyi (2016).

a significant proportion of the pictorial surface, and in both cases the painters have left some 'normal' landscape around the main motif as a strong contrast. In both cases, the particular emphasis given by the artists to the phenomenon depicted and its juxtaposition with the 'regular' and 'natural' world is what represents the focus of the picture. Despite the constitutive differences between the subject-matter of these paintings, a strong parallel is drawn in the description of the visual effects of these sights and sites. This similar visuality can be explained through reference to the sublimity of these natural and industrial-urban scenes, which also evokes a great deal of curiosity, respect and acceptance in us for the power of these phenomena.

As we approach our own time, it is exactly this curiosity, interest and respect that will turn into either an ungraspable anxiety or even into an elemental and existential fear of the (near) future, and this makes the examination of the issues surrounding both the visuality and the actual, personal experience of environmental dereliction worth pursuing.

3 Contemporary Cases

Now that we have seen that historically there can be a connection or even a mutual influence in both the perception and representation of sublime features in natural and urban-industrial environments, broadly understood, we can turn to the analysis of the disturbing sublimity of contemporary examples in particular.

Today we regularly see all sorts of terribly devastated sites as an illustration and proof of the close-to-suicidal activity of mankind, resulting in polluted lands, derelict neighbourhoods and destroyed landscapes. In this sense, the subject-matter of these images (some artistic, some coming from the news and the media) is in some way comparable to the representation of classical sublime phenomena also for the way in which it affects our contemporary environment, by highlighting for instance certain manifestations of such powerful elements in which power exceeds human strength, even when these very powerful elements are of human origin but have gone beyond our control. What is noteworthy, in the contemporary situation, is the difference between the curiosity aroused in us by the representation of these sites and our actual experiencing them, and this is what interests me the most here.

Let us go back once again to my initial list of different types of derelict environments. One of them, I suppose, may not seem 'so' terrible as the others, and this is the "empty factories eaten up by rust

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and vegetation." Indeed, although these decaying industrial sites, similarly to their natural counterparts, are also the result of environmental dereliction, and arouse in the observers uncosy and unsettling emotions, they usually have visitors, physical visitors. By 'physical visitors' I mean not merely people who appreciate them in and through artworks, e.g. photographs, paintings, (multimedia) installations, but people who come to see them directly, with the exact intention of experiencing their aesthetic and emotional effect in person. Hence the difference I have mentioned: while many explorers and melancholic visitors enjoy visiting areas of urban decay, only very few of them would travel to a large-scale devastated area, an oil field, an open-cast mine or a poisonously flooded area to experience it physically. I will now consider some further aspects of this difference.

The activity of visiting urban and industrial decay is often referred to as *urbex* – i.e., urban exploration –, *haikyo* (in Japanese) or *ruinporn*, depending on the location, the nature, the aesthetic departure point or the ethical implications of the activity.[2] There are many possible motives driving this activity, several of which are connected to the nature of the experience itself. As Tim Edensor scrutinises, in such places we have a truly multi-sensory experience, with stimuli and phenomena that we are normally saved of, including not only disturbing sights but also peculiar smells, creepy sounds, possibly harmful haptic encounters and so on, which may trigger novel experience and involuntary memories (Edensor 2007 and Edensor 2005a). On another note, Edensor also reminds us how, especially in the decaying industrial sites, we can realise the quick or even sudden fall of the formerly well-organised space by the disorganisation of spatial relationships, i.e. of the well-structuredness that was originally aimed at obtaining maximum efficiency – a basic criterion of industrial success (Edensor 2005b).

These sorts of visits, again, do not typically concern devastated natural landscapes, vast oil fields, open cast mines, and areas of waste deposition. In fact, the point is not only that we do not usually go to such places, but we do not even want to, or, to put it differently, we do not really have the courage to visit them. This is exactly one of the reasons why for example Tihamer Richard Kover (2014, p. 145) appreciates Edward Burtynsky's challenging works: "he affords and confronts us with a sight that few of us have the courage to witness."[3]

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[2] See more on these in Somhegyi (2020a), especially Chapter 5.
[3] See some further considerations on the aesthetic consequences of these questions in Somhegyi (2020b).

Emily Brady (2013, p. 173) also emphasizes the aesthetic and ethical clashes that one may encounter when observing such sites, both represented and/or in person:

> As the disturbing, harmful origins of that terrible beauty become clear, aesthetic and moral values may come into conflict, making aesthetic appreciation more challenging. In actual experiences of these places, rather than photographic renderings of them, aesthetic appreciation may become blocked. When it is not, there will be uneasiness in the contemplation of something possessing life-denying qualities.

There are several possible explanations justifying why we are less afraid to confront derelict urban spaces compared to witnessing the natural environment being destroyed, even if both of these experiences could, in one way or another, provide us with an opportunity to encounter modern forms of sublime. Some of these explanations are more prosaic, others are more 'theoretical.'

Among the more common and straightforward reasons, we can mention the issue of reachability: while in almost every larger town we may find abandoned and decaying factories and derelict neighbourhoods, natural environmental destruction – related for example to open-cast mines, oil fields, less regulated factories or poisonous fields – often happens in distant places, almost unreachable regions or even in other continents.

This issue also has to do with the scale of these phenomena, which is naturally a basic factor in any forms and manifestations of the sublime in general. Paradoxically, however, from a 'visitor' point of view, while a decaying urban environment, whatever grand it may be, still remain of human size, so that frightened and sublime-seeking visitors can get a glimpse of it when they want to feel the powerful elements destroying it and their effects, in many instances the extra-urban places where natural dereliction could be experienced surpasses us in its physical extension. Again, this is needed to get a sense of the sublime in cases of disturbing sublimity; nevertheless, if someone, despite the aforementioned difficulties, actually managed to reach these places of natural dereliction, she could only perceive a tiny fraction of the full strength of the experience. She would not feel overwhelmed by it – a typical feeling of the sublime – just simply physically lost.

These considerations, however, seem secondary when compared to the less prosaic and more emotional, aesthetic and existential reasons that justify our preference for derelict urban spaces. Indeed, we are

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arguably much less afraid of facing disruption in man-made, artificial areas than devastation in the natural environment. When devastation is affecting 'only' man-made complexes, it looks less frightening and less harmful to observe and even, in certain sense, to enjoy aesthetically, as we could learn for example from the aforementioned works by Tim Edensor (2005a, 2007). This reluctance to appreciate the environmental dereliction of nature probably depends on the fact that we are at least unconsciously aware of nature crucial weight, of its irreplaceability, and of the fact that what we lose in this case is way more essential than in the case of slowly disappearing industrial zones.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed why indirect encounters via artistic representations or media images trigger serious concerns on the fate of our natural and artificial environment, not lastly through the sublime features of such depictions, and may even lead to a desire for experiencing urban and industrial decay in its real essence. However, we become significantly more hesitant of facing natural environmental dereliction directly, despite its aesthetic potential, and even despite the opportunity it gives us to experience contemporary manifestations of the sublime. When our real, elemental and essential existence is at stake, we do not have the courage to encounter dereliction directly.

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The Aesthetic Value of Vernacular Gardens in Ukrainian Cities. A Case Study from Rusanivka Residential District, Kyiv

Yevheniia Butsykina

Abstract: This paper addresses the aesthetic value of vernacular gardens in a Ukrainian urban environment. By introducing the case of a makeshift garden on the Rusanivka Channel in Kyiv, Ukraine, I discuss how private spatial practices can match a dynamic and alienated urban landscape. To examine the problem of the aesthetic evaluation of the garden, I shall resort to ideas coming from the framework of the philosophy and aesthetics of everyday life and the aesthetics of engagement. The concepts of aesthetic experience, private practices in the urban space, native and foreign places, landscapes, and the garden as an object of aesthetic perception form the basis for my investigation in the aesthetic import of vernacular gardens.

Keywords: Aesthetic Appreciation, Aesthetic Experience, Aesthetic Value, Everyday Aesthetics, Post-Soviet Urbanism, Urban Anaesthetics, Vernacular Garden

1 Introduction

This research constitutes a new area of investigation, which emerges from the attempt to explain the phenomenon of vernacular gardens in Ukraine. By introducing the case of a peculiar district in Kyiv, the city in which I reside, I hereby raise the question of the possibility and criteria for an aesthetic appreciation of vernacular gardens and aim at outlining the challenges arising from an attempt to answer this question. This question remains open and can be solved only through the integration of historical, social and cultural perspectives and observations, as I will try

to do in the course of my analysis. The paper is structured as follows.

First, I provide a theoretical and conceptual framework for highlighting the peculiarities of this case. I begin with a brief history of the Rusanivka district and its distinctive features, and I proceed with a description of the garden itself and the reasons for its emergence. I outline three major aspects of the sociocultural context determining the emergence and development of this type of garden that will help us solve the problem of their aesthetic appreciation. The first is the tradition of Soviet horticultural practices and, in particular, the phenomenon of summer cottages or, as they are commonly called, dachas, a suburban area of land (usually six acres in area), which the Soviet state allotted to its citizens from the 1950s. The second is the tradition of Ukrainian peasant life, including folklore and gardens, which is clearly reflected in the work of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko. The third is an appeal to post-Soviet modernity, and particularly to the existence of a split in contemporary society: those who reproduce Soviet practices and those who deny them and want to forget. Finally, I will articulate the problem of aesthetic appreciation of these gardens in the context of the aspects I have listed and discussed: the specifics of such practices in the post-Soviet urban space.

2 History of the Rusanivka Channel

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the area of Rusanivka remained an untouched corner of nature. In 1961, with Khrushchev as the general secretary of the USSR, it became necessary to develop the city on the left bank of the Dnipro River as part of the next wave of urbanisation in Kyiv and the construction of new enterprises. Rusanivka is the first residential area in the world to be located on an alluvial sand bed with an artificial water channel.

In 1962, Rusanivka turned into an island. Then, in 1963, when the Channel was almost finished - separating the district from the strait by only a small soil cofferdam - the first inhabitants began to appear on the massif, and a road bridge was built across the Channel. From that time, the Rusanivka Channel has become very popular and has been the pride of local residents. In the winter, people skate on the Channel and play hockey. Still in the Soviet times, every summer, a floating rental station of boats and water bicycles operated on the Channel for residents and guests of Kyiv. At the beginning of the season or in the fall, a marathon was organised for rowing and sailing athletes (Shevchenko 2016).

With time, the island turned green and blossomed, thanks to the care of its residents. Since it was mainly the 'intelligentsia' - people of creative and respectable professions, such as scientists, sportsmen, artists, moviemakers and outstanding people in various fields - who were settled here, many libraries were opened in Rusanivka to maintain its cultural level.

After the collapse of the USSR, however, the first generation of residents of the district either died, emigrated or sold real estate. The district has progressively lost the unity of its population and the community. Today, many residents of the area and houses near the Channel come there at night to drink alcohol and often damage public property (benches, waste bins, etc.) and the newly planted trees. The city authorities do not allocate a budget for the complex maintenance of the Channel and the surrounding area. The Channel requires cleaning and updating the irrigation system of the slopes, which are rarely cut.

Figure 1: The Rusanivka Channel, Kyiv, Ukraine.
Source: Photo by the author

The vernacular garden was planted by locals on the coast of the Rusanivka Channel in spring-summer 2020. The following list includes some key characteristics of the garden: the locals are dissatisfied with the passivity of utilities; the gardeners are mainly women aged 60-75 who

retain the desire and physical ability to work on the land in their free time; the garden is a mixture of flowers, berries and vegetables, which follows the practice of post-Soviet gardening in the dachas; and the gardeners' children (now 30-45 years old) are reluctant to work on the dachas, spending their time growing vegetables and fruits, preferring to buy dachas to use as a place for a suburban vacation. Gardeners admit that they garden as a leisure practice, as there is no possibility to do so in the suburbs. Therefore, gardening can be characterised as non-utilitarian, despite the fact that vegetables are grown in the garden (melons, pumpkins, zucchini, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc). The main goal is indeed not the harvest but the chance to contemplate the results of one's own labour, although this does not exclude the possibility that in the future, with the expansion of the garden area, the harvest will be large enough and of significant interest to gardener

3 The Vernacular Garden

The first thing to notice is that the local community seems to have a positive experience with the place; they gather and communicate around the gardening area. The women gardeners bring their grandchildren there, showing them and teaching them how to grow flowers and vegetables. Also, the neighbours bring their young children to watch the gardening process. When observing these gardens, a person from the 'post-Soviet space' immediately recognises a typical way of organising and decorating the dacha's yard. During the existence of the Soviet Union, the state could not fully provide the urban population with food, and since the time of Khrushchev, it had been giving people the opportunity through subsistence farming to independently provide their family with food for a whole year: in spring and summer with fresh vegetables, berries and fruit, and in winter with canned varieties of the same foods.

The techniques and methods of 'subsistence farming' became even more important during and especially after perestroika (in the second half of the 1980s) and after the collapse of the Soviet Union when many people lost their jobs or did not receive wages and could provide their families with food only through work on the dachas. Thus, a dacha, a garden and a kitchen garden have always been a condition of stability and independence for people in an extremely unstable situation in a state characterised by a lack of trust in the government. It is a symbol of internal emigration, accompanied by tendencies towards suburbanisation.

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Another important aspect characterising the garden is the use of furniture and improvised means, which were collected from garbage dumps to decorate the suburban space. In the Soviet times, people had no opportunity to purchase additional furniture and equipment for a dacha. Therefore, they turned to their imagination and created details for decorating the dacha garden and the interior of their country house in a do-it-yourself manner by using objects found outdoors.

Figure 2: The vernacular garden, Kyiv, Ukraine.
Source: Photo by the author

A further important aspect concerns the fact that a small land plot of a garden near a house bears a symbolic meaning in Ukrainian rural culture, which is also represented in the work of the Taras Shevchenko and, in particular, in the first line of his poem 'Evening': "A little cherry garden around the house…" written in 1847 in the casemate of St. Petersburg where he was a political prisoner. A garden is a place of Ukrainian peasant unity with the earth, which is a basic need for survival as well as for aesthetic pleasure. I cite here the Ukrainian writer and translator Volodymyr Dibrova (2019):

A 'little garden' is something private, it is a space that should not be encroached upon by neighbours or by the state. In the categories of Marxism-Leninism, Ukrainians were and remain 'small owners.' Even now,

when long-urbanised Ukrainians have the opportunity to get a piece of land in a country cooperative, their 'earth genes' wake up.

Dibrova focusses here on Ukrainians' attitude toward their land: at the beginning of the twentieth century, most Ukrainian peasants lived through the process of collectivisation, when, in fact, the Soviet state took away their land, livestock and tools for cultivating the land in order to transfer the land into common use within the framework of collective households. Many refused to give up their land and because of this they were repressed and killed. Despite the next seventy years of collective farming, Ukrainians retained a reverent attitude towards their land in their culture and life (Shevchenko's poem is a symbol of this attitude), and after the collapse of the USSR, most of them privatised their plots of land. Within the framework of Soviet ideology, such an attitude towards private property was assessed negatively, and in the minds of a city resident, owning land for cultivating edible crops was perceived as something rural and provincial.

Figure 3: View of the vernacular garden and the Rusanivka channel, Kyiv, Ukraine. Source: Photo by the author

In this context, the vernacular garden of Kyiv is of particular interest, because the love of horticultural practices has led to the unauthorised planting of a garden in a public urban space for which it was not

originally intended. The cultivation of such a garden in a post-Soviet urban space may be interpreted by urban dwellers as alien and inappropriate.

The third aspect that needs discussion is the modern conditions of social life in Ukrainian cities. Neglected public spaces are one of the main urban concerns for the Ukrainian capital. In Kyiv, the presence of no man's land is extremely common, even though these public spaces should play a key role in the interaction of citizens and the city. However, Kyiv residents rarely take on the responsibility of arranging their adjacent territories or public places, as inhabitants consider them to be the duty of public utilities. Nevertheless, the city's authorities do not pay enough attention to this, and the adjacent territories are abandoned. This problem may run deeper: there is likely a general loss of a sense of community. Ukrainian people seem to have lost the importance of coexistence and the feeling of a shared responsibility for public spaces (Salizhenko 2014).

4 Case-Study Analysis

In view of the above, I now address the question of the possibility and the criteria for an aesthetic appreciation of vernacular practices in urban space. This type of garden appears to be paradoxical, given what I have argued above. The paradox lies in the muddling between the private and the public: a garden is cultivated in a public space yet in the tradition of a private natural economy. In addition, one should also bear in mind the collective trauma of Ukrainian peasants who survived massive collectivisation in the 1920s and 1930s. Analogously, one has to consider the drama of the Soviet people who were forced to oppose their private dachas in favour of public urban space. Public urban spaces were integral to the socialist ideology of the Soviet people but did not provide an opportunity to eat regularly or provide food of high quality. Finally, it is also important to pay attention to the modern indifference and commercial exploitation of public space by urban residents. All of these issues found the problematic nature of a combination of public and private, which manifests itself in vernacular gardens in a very peculiar way.

Nowadays, the problem of aesthetic evaluation has received substantial attention from scholars, especially within the approach of the everyday aesthetics. As Adrián Kvokačka (2020, p. 274) remarks, "Gaining importance of everyday aesthetics can bridge the gap between the scientific discourse and our daily practice." Particularly, the aesthetic

study of objects such as the urban space elements, and, in particular, the garden, have become widespread. For instance, the issue of urban landscape evaluation is raised by such aestheticians as Arnold Berleant, Pauline von Bonsdorff, Arto Haapala, Thomas Leddy, Stephanie Ross, Yrjö Sepänmaa and many others, whose ideas are presented in *The Aesthetics of Human Environments* (Berleant and Carlson 2007).

When it comes to a vernacular garden created in an area that used to be a failed socialist project, however, we must re-raise the question of the possibility of aesthetic evaluation and, specifically, the grounds for it. The observations made are based on the experience of contemplating such a type of garden and the attempts to evaluate it aesthetically leads indeed to an internal contradiction: a private practice, which represents a concern for a common space, penetrates the urban public space, which for decades has not been developed and has become a space of alienation. An aesthetic impression of the space is formed: it looks eclectic and even chaotic, but everyone is free to carry out any activity on this territory; someone could destroy and corrupt and someone could care and decorate.

The problem of the contradiction between the private and the public in considering the aesthetics of the everyday can be solved with the help of the approach suggested by Arto Haapala (2005), who addresses the concept of 'place' in his analysis. In Haapala's view (2005, p. 42), 'place' is a concept that combines physical and cultural characteristics and that, presenting itself as an everyday object of aesthetic evaluation, becomes a reference point for understanding the cultural landscape: "When a place has a genius, a spirit – both words we understand metaphorically rather than literally – then we assume a much larger and a very different context than the mere physical space. A place in this sense does not necessarily have to be a cultural milieu, although it often is."

Haapala (2005) distinguishes two types of places and corresponding landscapes, which he calls familiar and strange places. The basis for opposing these concepts is how much the subject knows and is accustomed to this or that place of living:

> The aesthetic standards differ when considering strange versus familiar surroundings. One major difference stems from the ontology, or from the existential structure of the place […]. The aesthetics of place is stamped by our existential structures; in one sense of the word, it is more subjective than the aesthetics of unfamiliar surroundings (Haapala 2005, p. 50).

From Haapala's perspective, the case of the vernacular garden on the Rusanivka Channel can be interpreted as a combination of the notions of familiarity and strangeness being reunited in the same space. While the post-Soviet area and its elements have become an object of aesthetic alienation during the independence of Ukraine, the garden itself, in this case, serves as a way of integrating residents into the alienated landscape. If we consider the Channel as a combination between "familiar" and "strange" elements, then the garden is an object that contributes to making this place more familiar through an initial vivid aesthetic impression (characterised by surprise, attention, and positive appreciation), and then through a number of calmer and subtler sensations (daily observation of the gardeners' work, pleasure from contemplation of flowering, caring, etc).

'Experience' is also a central concept in the attempt to substantiate a way to evaluate the vernacular garden aesthetically. Richard Shusterman (2008, p. 79), one of the most prominent contemporary researchers and interpreters of the concept of 'aesthetic experience', analyses the history of this concept in the aesthetic discourse and arrives at the following conclusion: "Experience displays the same double-barrelled objective-subjective character […] the object of experience (what is experienced) and the way (or "the how") that object is experienced by a subject […]. It can refer to a completed event (or product) but also to a continuing process of experiencing."

The focus on the interrelationship between the subject and the object of aesthetic experience entails the analysis of diverse – including negative – experiences, which depend not only on the subject and its overall personal cultural context but also on the cultural context of the landscape and place as objects. In this way, we can arrive at the possibility of shaping an aesthetic appreciation based on this complex and even contradictory experience: the vernacular garden can be appreciated as a way to transform alienated urban space into collaborative gardening practices, which qualifies as an aesthetic experience of the familiar.

> Aesthetic experience can certainly be fragmented, dissonant, disrupted, and incomplete […] Experiences of fragmentation, dissonance, and breaking off can, however, also be positively appreciated aesthetically (for example, if they have certain qualities of novelty, complexity, meaning, and interest), even if such value cannot always be explained in terms of pleasure in feeling these qualities or in overcoming them (Shusterman 2008, p. 86).

In line with these words, the analysis and evaluation of the vernacular garden give us the opportunity to understand aesthetic experience in its incompleteness, fragmentation and fundamentally contradictory aspects (for it is neither negative nor positive), which also reflects the peculiarity of the cultural and aesthetic perception of the modern Ukrainian urban resident.

In considering such an aesthetic experience, I would like to link it with the concept of spatial practice as an object of aesthetic appreciation. Michel de Certeau (1984, p. 96) contrasts it with the collective urbanistic system of control and order:

One can analyse the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated or eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developed and insinuated themselves into the networks of surveillance.

Within the framework of spatial practices and urbanistic system opposition, private spatial practices (among which we can include vernacular gardening) are a prerequisite for the subject to undergo an aesthetic experience based on the location where such a person resides. Such practices make the city district a familiar place laden with relevant aesthetic qualities. These considerations imply that the object of aesthetic appreciation is not primarily the garden, but rather the practice of gardening in its continuance, incompleteness and dynamism. To continue with Certeau's analogy, in the Rusanivka district, spatial practices stand not for the urbanistic system, but rather the absence of this system, due to inconsistent urban planning and administration.

To analyse the experience of the landscape as a strange or familiar place, as a result, I focus on the experience of the gardener as the main subject of the aesthetic evaluation of the urban landscape and its elements as an object. A number of aestheticians place the gardener's experience as the object of their research. Stephanie Ross (2007, p. 267) draws attention to the subject of aesthetic perception and evaluation of the garden in its complexity – the gardener who experiences 'the pride of possession, the challenge and engagement of an ongoing project'. Pauline von Bonsdorff (2005) focused on the concept of 'agricultural work', which is perceived as a part of 'both engagement and participation, and to use two key terms of Arnold Berleant, of a human being in the landscape'. American researcher Victor Rivera-Diaz (2020)

raises the question of the aesthetic appreciation of urban agriculture in the context of an eclectic urban landscape:

Urban agriculture resides in the space between a city of material growth and a fundamental need for the signs of sustenance. Embedded in these food production areas is a vision of ecological balance, per the human tendency to interpret a landscape according to one's affective experience. This response is elicited by a care aesthetic, often associated with agricultural landscapes, as well as a metropolitan landscape where multitudinous vernacular accounts invoke intimate details of a place in the minds of many.

In my opinion, care is the keyword here. A feeling of caring is what can be found in analysing the aesthetic experience of vernacular gardening in an urban space. The gardener's experience has been analysed in this paper from the historical, cultural and social context of a specific place (a micro-district in Kyiv) and a specific practice (gardening in a post-Soviet city), behind which, foremost, the attitude of the gardener's care to the lived place is hidden. Looking more closely at the plants, flowers, berries and fruit trees being grown there, one can trace the gardener's desire to transform an alienated area into a place of affection.

5 Conclusion

Raising the problem of the aesthetic appreciation value of vernacular gardens considering specifically the practice of gardening in the post-Soviet urban space, I have attempted to elucidate the complexity and contradictions of this phenomenon. This has allowed me to analyse this object using the well-developed tools advanced by the philosophy and aesthetics of everyday life: the aesthetics of engagement and urban aesthetics, as well as the discourse regarding the aesthetic experience of being in a dynamic urban space. The analysis of these aesthetic approaches allows for a reconceptualization of the aesthetic evaluation of the vernacular gardens considered in the context of a post-Soviet urban space. The aesthetic value of this type of garden arises from the joint experience of the gardener and the observer, who are united by being in a common space and by a shared desire to overcome alienation and transform this space into a familiar place.

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CHAPTER 4

On the Interaction of Here and There. Places in the City

Filip Šenk

Abstract: The paper focuses on place and place experience in a city. It examines the nature of place experience, especially the experience of place edges. Looking at the writings of urban planner and urban theorist Kevin A. Lynch, architecture historian and theoretician Christian Norberg-Schulz and philosopher Edward S. Casey, the paper seeks relevant terms to account for the edge experience. Especially in the works of Casey one can find a series of key observations and terms for constitutive relationships of places and their edges. These findings are confronted in the paper with the specific place experience of the park on Štefánik Square, in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic, with its *Monument to the Fighters and the Victims for Freedom of the Country* by the Stolín brothers (2000). To deal with ambivalences of the place experience named in the paper, I introduce the term 'fold' as a way to capture and understand how interconnected these ambivalences are.

Keywords: Place, Sense of Place, Place Experience, Edge, Place in the City, Fold

1 Introduction

For the majority of people, a city environment is the most common frame of everyday life. It is already a well-known fact that the majority of people on planet Earth live in cities. And it is also safe to claim that the number of people living in cities all around the world will rise in the near future.[1] The city thus becomes the basic framework for the experience of the world or in a more general sense, for our existential experience. From a historical point of view, this is a recent fact. Since the industrial revolution, the development of cities has been almost furious.

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[1] According to the UN report *2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects*, in 2050 68 % of the world population will live in urban areas. In 2018 the number was 55 %.

Yet there is no vocabulary which could fully describe qualities that are constituting places in the city, nor do we really know how to fully grasp where we find ourselves when in the city. In this paper, I shall look at the complexity of places and their edges and confront the findings with one particular place in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic. Through an examination of this specific place experience near the Technical University of Liberec and the Regional Gallery, I show how intricate the grasp of the edges, and consequently the nature of this place, are. It is a place I repeatedly visit because of the unique *Monument to the Fighters and the Victims for Freedom of the Country by the Stolín brothers* (2000) and these experiences inspired me to find out more about the nature of places in the cities in general.

My view is based on a few basic assumptions. First, I see the city as an ambivalent context. On one hand, the city is made of firm mass forming clear borderlines and paths that we can take. The city is thus something clearly determined that generates a certain type of action, even though it is necessary to bear in mind that cities are living organisms and thus always changing. At the same time, their firm structure allows for innumerable variations and creates a complex network that develops in all possible directions. Still the structure of the city enables us to be oriented, to have a sense of place, and to identify with certain points or locations in the city. It is worth mentioning here that places in the city take various forms including frictions that create folds between inside and outside, between private and public, between interior and exterior (Mongin 2015, p. 17). To make my case as easy as possible, I try to avoid frictions of private and public spheres and focus in my case study on a public park with a public work of art.

Broadly speaking, to have a sense of orientation in the city, a balance of places and flows is a crucial matter as much as the conjunction of continuity and discontinuity of movement. In this context, continuity means the possibility to cross innumerable edges of places, to move between places. Discontinuity means in such a polarity the basic way places differ from each other. If the structure of the city is based merely on discontinuity, edges tend to be impenetrable and consequently the city dissolves to fragments. However, neglecting the discontinuity threatens to ruin the edges completely, which may lead to uniformity. The role of the edges of places is central in the experience of the city. It may seem that edges of places are the most easily describable features of places because they allow the experience of place to happen. In this paper, however, I argue that edges are complex and worth noticing because they build key relationships and connections in the city structure. More

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precise and deeper reading of place edges will help us to understand the qualities of a place and grasp the city in a more profound way.

2 Where the Place Starts and Ends: Edges

In this section, I shall focus on the vocabulary we use to describe the experience of a place and particularly its edges. The fundamental quality of a place is that it is somehow enclosed. Looking at the overlapping fields of philosophy – especially phenomenology – and architectural history and theory, one finds several key authors who examined the notion of place and place experience.[2] I rely here on one particularly relevant study by the American philosopher Edward S. Casey, a well-recognized authority in the field of place studies. However, before I do get to the study *Place and Edge* (Casey 2015, pp. 23-38) it is worthwhile discussing the works by Kevin Lynch and Christian Norberg-Schulz, who both contributed significantly to the understanding of place and place experience.

In the field of urban theory and perception of the city, the urban planner Lynch presented a strong argument for the value of the human experience of the city. At the beginning of his notorious book *The Image of the City* (1960), Lynch writes about the experience of and in the city: "Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences" (Lynch 1960, p. 1). While the importance of this quotation will become clear later on, for now my aim is to focus only on Lynch's view on edges in the city. I skip the key terms he uses, legibility and imageability, even though both terms have a relevance for the understanding of a place. To be in a place one must be able to recognize its edges or borderlines, must be within it. It should be noted that there is an important distinction between place and space. Place experience differs from space experience in one crucial way: space is limitless, boundless and open to infinity; on the contrary, what makes something a place is the presence of some kind of limit or enclosure.[3]

[2] In recent architectural practices of architects like Steven Holl, Peter Zumthor, Rick Joy, Bijoy Jain, to name just a few, the concept of place is important. In architectural theory and history, Juhani Pallasmaa and Robert McCarter as well as Pierre von Meiss, and Tomáš Valena contributed key ideas to the place studies. All these authors are more or less influenced and inspired by phenomenology, namely by Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jeff Malpas, but also by the 'post-phenomenology' of Peter Sloterdijk.

[3] More on the difference of place and space thinking in architecture can be found in Šenk (2019, pp. 91-114).

When Lynch thinks about edges, he is not really interested in the introspection of place experience or in the way edges reveal themselves. In his reading of the city, Lynch is keen to identify elements that in fact serve as a kind of limit. Lynch (1960, p. 62) states: "Edges are the linear elements not considered as paths: they are usually, but not quite always, the boundaries between two kinds of areas." However, a few paragraphs later he mentions pathways as possible boundaries too. Most of the time these limits divide two areas. It is vital for Lynch to plainly name these city elements because they are formative for the experience of the city. However, the edge itself is mostly identified with a specific material or a geographical element or a combination of both. Lynch does not put much of an emphasis in his research on how we actually perceive the edge in our experience as he does not strive to describe or understand what it means to be in place. He cares more about the structure of the city and its experience.

In the writings of the Norwegian architectural historian and theoretician Norberg-Schulz, the concept of 'sense of place' has a significant position. One can even claim it is one of the key concepts he is working with. Notably, he also published a book, Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture (1980) on this issue. The significance of place for Norberg-Schulz cannot be overstated because it is a fundamental expression of the relationship between humans and the world. The sense of place is a form of this relationship that makes the world meaningful in our experience. Place is thus a fundamental condition for a human being in his strive for orientation in the world. We can also substitute the term with others like imago mundi or microcosmos, as Norberg-Schulz (1980, p. 17) does, to stress the idea of place as a world in a palpably specific and also enclosed situation.

The sense of place is one of the ways in which we can identify ourselves with our environment and thus see the environment as meaningful. It cannot be a random spot in an undivided space, for a place is unique. To capture the singularity of place we have to grasp its complexity and according to Norberg-Schulz, we can only perceive it as a total phenomenon. It is impossible to reduce the sense of place to one feature of the place.

Having said that, Norberg-Schulz is also clear about the changeability of place. Every place changes according to the season and light conditions and yet this fact is not an obstacle for its continuous presence. The Norwegian author even uses the term *stabilitas loci* by which he means our need for the continued existence of a place (Norberg-Schulz 1980, p. 18). Only such continuity can be a ground for

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our orientation in an ever-changing world. The question, however, is exactly what guarantees this continuity.

To answer this question Norberg-Schulz also tries to identify the structure of a place. We already know there must be some form of enclosure. The edge of a place can take different forms: it can even be a change of texture of the earth (Norberg-Schulz 1980, p. 58). Thus, his understanding of the notion of edge is close to Lynch's view, as both tend to identify the edge with a specific material and do not really strive to name the relationships between the experience of being in the place and the experience of leaving it. For my further focus on the edge of a place, it is important that Norberg-Schulz (1980, p. 59) stresses the openness of the edge and the way in which, in his view, all spatial structures are based on centrality and longitudinal schemes.

To make a brief summary, even though place and sense of place are vital concepts for both Lynch and Norberg-Schulz, a subtle analysis of the edges of places in the city and their role are missing in their conception. Even though both authors understood the role of the edge, and especially Norberg-Schulz understands place as the existential anchor, they address places as whole cities and look for repetitive qualities of places in a city rather than address particular place experience in the city.[4] The relationships and connections between places and flows in the city are not considered.

3 Edward S. Casey: Place and Edge

The previous considerations serve well as an introduction to look more closely at the study *Place and Edge* by Edward S. Casey (2015, pp. 23-38). This paper is crucial in this context because the American philosopher focuses exactly on the experience of the edges of place in a city. For his examination he does not choose a random experience, as Casey observes the immediate experience of a place in the city where he lives, New York (110th St.). He literally starts with the most common of experiences in the city, namely, the experience of leaving home and getting out on the street. It is possible, however, to question the notion of street as a place because naturally a street can or even should be considered a flow. The distinction is not clear as some streets have a character of a place for a number of reasons including state of traffic, width etc. To get the reader into the place experience, Casey starts to describe all the elements that participate in its character. The place where he finds himself consists

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[4] To make it crystal clear, Norberg-Schulz makes for instance an analysis of Prague in *Genius loci*, while my case study here is focused on just one square.

of material elements such as cars, houses, or trees as well as immaterial elements such as the rhythm of car movement, people movement, and sunlight, just to name a few. As he shows, in general it is not that difficult to conceive and capture where we are, we know how to describe it and what vocabulary to use to share it. What is difficult though is to find a clear line where the sense of place actually starts. It is even difficult to find the language to describe such an experience.

There are of course terms and vocabularies that are used on a daily basis in fields like city geography. However, as Casey shows, these are not adequate to capture the experience of a place. City geography is a fit tool for administration and urban planning, but the single person experience takes part in it only on a very limited scale. The description of place is common part of the city geography vocabulary but it captures the place from the outside, almost from an objectifying distance (Casey 2015, p. 25), where the edges are represented as specific lines and points on the map.

Casey is instead trying to get inside the place experience and therefore starts with a recognition of the role that bodily presence plays therein. In his endeavour, as already stated, he begins with the simple experience of leaving a house. At home, there is a clear line between outside and inside, and we are familiar with both parts. The experience we have of the opposite street façade is different because it is only made of the outside part. The edge experience here reveals something typical of place experience: the edge changes as we move. We cannot identify the edge with one simple thing or element because it has many aspects that constitute the experience (colour, texture, height, architectural style).

If we follow Casey on the streets we encounter many other edges immediately. There is a sidewalk, there are shops but there is also the sky. He appears to be in a world where things 'ready-to-hand' prevail with one major exception, which is the sky. The quality and texture of edges that form the ready-to-hand things or manmade are significantly different from those that are not. We can for now stay with the ready-to-hand context, for which Casey tries to capture the complex nature of place edges with specific relationship terms. The first relationship is the edge-edge relationship. One edge is never solitary in our experience, it is always connected with different edges (Casey 2015, p. 28).

It may seem for a moment that Casey is doing a rash move here. So far it is not clear what the edges are, except that the edge is a complex element and he already speaks of edge/edge relationship. However, we should bear in mind that the edge/edge relationship is not a relationship

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of two well defined and closed (mostly material) entities. The edge/edge relationship idea reveals the constitutive quality of place edge: it is the blending and intertwining that is constitutive for the edge experience. Casey goes on to specify the edge/edge relationship with two specific modes of the relationship. He creates a basic taxonomy of edge relationships and explains them with examples:

> In certain cases, it signifies the *sharing* of edges – sometimes clearly distinguished as with the chock-a-block edges of stores next to each other on W. 110th St.; sometimes so deeply merged that we cannot tell them apart, as when a table top is made from pieces of the same wood so finely glued together as to be indistinguishable in their edges; and sometimes distinctively different but such that we cannot say to which thing or place the edge belong […] (Ibid.)

The other possibility is edges that are not shared and yet closely collude. Casey writes:

> In this instance, we can discern two variations: edges that are separately distinguishable but together outline a given physical object (and to this degree belong to it), and edges that interact with the immediate background of the same object, thus sprawling edges in this background that do not belong intrinsically to it (e. g. of a building as profiled against a car or of hills in Central Park seen through tree branches): negative edges in that they belong in the first place to another object, as we witness in the edges of shadows. (Ibid.)

Places are defined by edges that take the form of one of the edge/edge relationships. Thus, the edge of a place is rather interactive in its nature, it does not arise from the substance of place. We have to focus on the relational features of edges and how they participate with the environment. That is why Casey now turns attention to the openness of the edge. He gets back to the 110th St. experience and focuses on the vistas opening at both ends of this street. They present a layered form of the edge and with parks at both ends that show how they can change in time. These edges are porous, open, and above all, they merge with the environment and at the same time can enclose a place; "they extend that place into what lies around it – they take it into the circumambient space" (Casey 2015, p. 30).

At the end of the text, Casey then comes up with two more distinctions of how edges are related to places. One is *terminus ad quem* and the second *terminus a quo*. The first one in its essence is a reflection

of the transition from one place to another. The second captures the experience of place as something that ends somewhere and I can see other places (Casey 2015, p. 35).

In the text we have examined, Casey introduces some key questions of how to define places in the city. In comparison with Lynch and Norberg-Schulz, he makes a scale shift that proves to be fundamental because on the level of direct experience he provides a taxonomy of relationships that constitute the place experience. While Norberg-Schulz emphasized the existential meaning of place enough and made a number of useful taxonomies of natural and artificial places, Casey captures the vagueness or even blurriness of place edges and shows how interactive the edges are.

Nevertheless, I also believe there are several motives that need further investigation. First, if we are already aware that the edge is interactive, it is worth exploring how viewing the edge as an event might be relevant. Second, especially in the case of places in the city, one cannot only define a place in the city with its edges but also through other places and actually edges that do not belong to an immediate visual experience of a place. Seeing the city as an overlapping network of places, webs of communications, and flows means also acknowledging that there are a number of symbolic and value-related connections that are present and have a certain impact on the identity of a place and consequently of the city, too.

4 Case Study: Park on Štefánik Square, Liberec

To show what I mean by these claims, I will consider as a case study one particular place in the city of Liberec, Czech Republic, namely the park on the Štefánik Square with the *Monument to the Fighters and the Victims for Freedom of the Country* by the Stolín brothers (2000).

The park is a public place that is located outside the historical core of the city and is a location that came about when the city was responding to major issues due to its rapid industrial development. Liberec is a city in mountain topography and there is therefore a lot of dynamic terrain movement and the place I focus on here is to be found on one traditional route leading to the city centre from the northeast. Nowadays, under the current polycentric condition of the city, the park has become one of the many urban centres. In the following, I apply Casey's findings to analysis of this place but also suggest a possible path for further investigation.

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Figure 1: Park on Štefánik square with a view on Vítězná street, Liberec, 2000.
Source: Photo by Michaela Říhová

The park is a well-defined part of the city structure. It almost appears to be a green island clearly formed by surrounding streets. I picked this example precisely because, at first sight, defining its edges seems to cause no trouble at all. Since there is an evident line between the grass and the street, there can be no mistake where the grass starts. But should we focus just on this moment of transition, we would be stuck with views and terms of city geography, which, as has been said, do not capture the actual bodily experience. However, they may help to gain a basic overview. The Park has a triangle shape with terrain waves rising to the northwest side. Although there are grown trees, the overall character of the park is open and without any sense of strict order.

To make my case more explicit I start by dealing with the experience of this place directly from within. The Park finds itself in front of the barracks (a large closed area) and the other two sides of the triangle are lined with houses and villas. In my bodily experience, these are what make the edge so well readable together with the clear line of the grass with their firm and quiet presence. They embody a clear mark between public and private areas.

If I now keep looking around, I can follow the streets and especially the Vítězná street to the southeast. At the end of the road, on the horizon, there is a school building from the 1930s. The terrain creates

a movement from the high horizon with the school building at the top and then in my direction falling down to the crossroads with the Museum and the Regional Gallery (formerly the city baths) and from there it again slowly rises up to the barracks where it stops. Because of all these immediate experiences, it is impossible to identify the edge with just this line even though the transition between hard and soft ground is clear here. That would be a reduction of a too complex situation. The line certainly is a solid part of the edge experience but as we learn from Casey, edges are interactive and therefore, we have to look for edge/edge relationships rather than for a one clear (material) line. Now, to put it as bluntly as possible, the question is whether the just mentioned school building on the horizon is also part of the edge of the place where I find myself. The answer comes again from the nature of the edge discussed by Casey. It belongs to a different edge but in my experience, these collude and thus also connect one place with another.

It is important to state that movement in the park is not strictly directed by its design. The earth pathway leads only around the grass area and not into it although it is a free entry area; that is a conscious designers' decision by the Stolín brothers.[5] The architect Petr and the sculptor Jan aimed to create an experience of the place that allows the visitor to decide freely on how to move around. Dealing with the task to create a contemporary form of a monument at the end of the millennium, they just wanted to avoid using the traditional figurative or abstract statue. First of all, the whole park is the actual monument, not just the newly added structure on its southwest part.

The land in the park was moved in a particular way to create a terrain wave which ends the terrain movement following Vítězná street. The new object-art structure is consciously decentred from this line. The position of the structure does not follow any clear axis in the park. The visitor thus has to find their own way to get into the structure. It is likely the visitor will only slowly get there because the form of the structure suggests at first sight an industrial utilitarian object like a ventilation system. From a certain distance, the objects seem passive but as you move in between the two blocks, they come to life. There are two wire cuboids filled with equipment presenting information, shining with lights and blowing air from several tubes.

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[5] Architecture theoretician and historian Monika Mitášová cooperated on the project.

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Figure 2: Petr and Jan Stolín, *Monument to the fighters and the victims for freedom of the country*, Liberec, 2000.
Source: Photo archive of the artists

Is it possible to claim that the beholder grasps the place experience at this precise in-between moment? It certainly is a spot with the clearest edges. Yet we have to take in account that there is a different time horizon involved here. Being in-between here means both bodily activating the 'life of the place' and at the same time also kind of losing the sense of place because the displayed information brings in different places and times. One possible way to deal with such an experience is to use the term 'fold'[6] that suggests continuity and condensed spatial and time experience. With the idea of a fold the edges seem to be temporal-spatial events. The idea of fold allows to capture the key place qualities of temporal-spatial continuity and close connection to other places in a city.

Last but not least, something more needs to be said about the form of the monument, because it supports the idea of fold. It has been said that places in the city take part in different connections and networks in the city and that their edges connect different places. It is also important to take into account the connections that are not based on direct visual connection. In this particular case, the monument uses the machinist

[6] The term is loosely based on Deleuze's understanding of fold. I do not apply Deleuze's view of the term strictly here (see Deleuze 1992).

aesthetics with a tight connection to nature (park). To put it plainly, it unites technical and natural forms to get a strong sense of place.

In the case of Liberec, the city is an obvious link to the key neo-modernist building that serves today as a symbol of the region and that is justly considered to be one the best pieces of architecture built after the World War II in the Czech Republic (or Czechoslovakia). The elegant geometry of *Hotel and TV Transmitter Ještěd*, on the very top of the Ještěd mountain, both respects the extreme natural site and embodies the technical optimism of modern age with its cosmic-age-inspired design. Its architect, Karel Hubáček,[7] contributed very much to the new identity of the city by designing several important buildings since the 1960s. There is no immediate visual connection between the monument by the Stolín brothers and the *Hotel and TV Transmitter Ještěd* (1973), but there is a formal, material, and even ideological one. This connection is part of the 'fold experience' in which one can expand the immediate bodily experience.
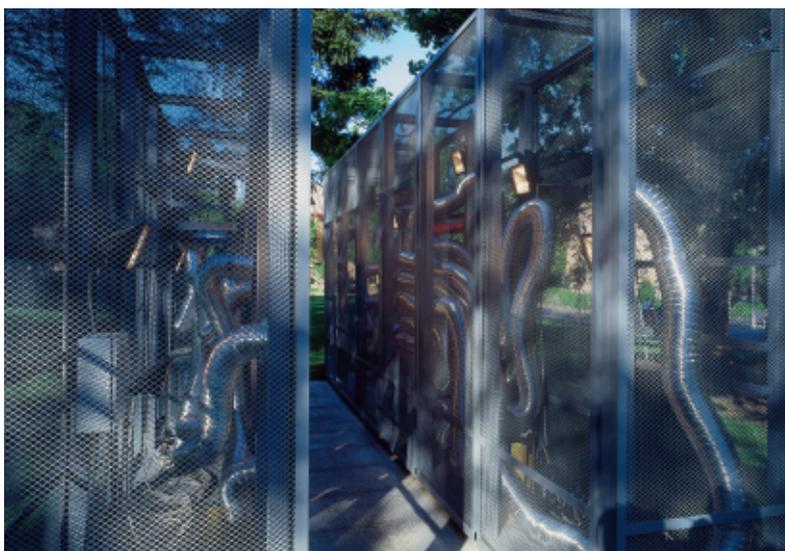
Figure 3: Petr and Jan Stolín, *Monument to the fighters and the victims for freedom of the country*, Liberec, 2000.
Source: Photo archive of the artists

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[7] In close cooperation with structural engineers Zdeněk Patrman and Zdeněk Zachař.

5 Conclusion

It may seem that the experiences of places in cities are the most common and unproblematic of experiences. However, as I tried to show in this paper, it is not a simple and straightforward experience at all. When we look closer on what constitutes a place, we realize how complicated it is to capture the complex nature of its key qualities. I was particularly interested here in the edges of places, simply because a place is best understood as a form of enclosure. However, a place certainly is not a cell made of four walls and an open sky. While considering the edge drawing especially on Casey's essay Place and Edge, it became clear that an edge is in its nature interactive and rather complex in its relationships and connections. Thus, when speaking of place and its experience it is important to acknowledge its ambivalence. Place experience is always singular and yet it is also an experience of a multitude through its edges and through the fact that it belongs to several networks in the framework of the city. It is an experience of enclosure and at the same time of openness and connection with other places.

Based on the case study of the park on Štefánik Square, in Liberec, and of its monument, I argued here that there are places where ideological connections have to be taken into account unless we lose key aspects of the place experience. Therefore, I suggested that the term 'fold' could capture both the enclosure and openness of edges as well as the condensed spatial and time experience. Such an approach could bring forward the relevant differences while at the same time preserving the stress on continuity as it was revealed in the consideration of edges.

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CHAPTER 5

The Archetypal Aesthetics of Dwellings
Petra Baďová

Abstract: Images of houses resonate strongly in our culture as they are part of our national and social identity. What do the types of dwellings that surround us every day testify about? What meanings are embodied in the architectural shapes and surfaces? What echoes resonate through the building materials and the immediate surroundings of a house? The aim of this paper is to decode the speech of dwellings and determine the features of their archetypal aesthetics. This interpretative probe focuses on the basic types of houses in Slovakia, foreshadowing their shape and archetypal character.

Keywords: Dwelling, Archetypes, Memory, Environment, Material

1 Introduction. Archetype of the House-Home

> An old house, a shadowy porch, tiles, a crumbling Arab decoration, a man sitting against the wall, a deserted street, a Mediterranean tree (Charles Clifford's Alhambra): this old photograph (1854) touches me: it is quite simply there that I should like to live. This desire affects me at a depth and according to roots which I do not know (Barthes 1981, p. 38).

Barthes' comment describes the feeling we have when we are faced with the image of a house. It is not important whether the house is real, fictitious or 'inhabited' through literature, film and visual arts. What makes the images of a house resonate so strongly within us? What is the nature of this aesthetic experience? If the images of a house go deep and follow roots that are unknown to us, can we term them *archetypal*?

The word 'archetype' (from the Greek *archétypon*) represents an original form, a blueprint, an original. In conjunction with architecture, an archetype can be understood as an 'original shape' (e.g. the archetype of the roof is a pyramid or triangle), but also as

a metaphor and allusion (e.g. a building is labelled a box). According to Carl Gustav Jung (1997), archetypes represent the primary structural elements of the human psyche. Archetypal motives are the patterns of thought and behaviour common to humanity across time and space, and they steer individual consciousness. They form the basic content of religious and mythological stories, fairy tales and legends. The archetypes of dwellings therefore capture the echoes of something *original* and *generic* at the same time; a certain kind of archetypal idea that goes beyond architecture and extends to socio-cultural anthropology.

It is almost impossible to search for some generic idea of a house, since it occurs in artistic expression and religious and mythological ideas in different cultures. However, art contains constant images of houses/dwellings where patterns of thinking and behaviour can be identified.

The Slovak word *dom* (house), for example, contains the root *dem*, which means 'to build' or 'construct.' The term house is therefore used in this study to mean a building or structure whose function and meaning lie in the meaning of the word *domov* (home). We generally understand a home not primarily as an architecturally constructed space (outside), but rather as an experienced space (inside).

While both concepts can be explained from a philosophical perspective, in this paper, however, I analyse basic types of houses that form the scenery of home, at least as we know it in my home country, Slovakia. I try to uncover the archetypal foundations that lie behind different types of houses and apartment buildings in Slovakia, identifying the symbolic and imaginative connections that link them to the specific environment in which they are located. To this end, I introduce some basic universal models that can be seen and experienced in different contexts, for example, as part of fairy tales, legends and stories, visual art and film works, book illustrations, spontaneous drawings of children, and so on. In all these different cases, my aim is the same: to show how images of real buildings resonate and overlap with images from our distant past.

2 Cottage Versus Tower

Most of Slovakia's population lives in detached houses or apartment buildings.[1] According to Abraham Harold Maslow (2014), both of these

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[1] According to the 2017 research on housing in Europe, 51 % of Slovaks live in flats, 48 % in houses and 1 % in other properties. According to the same statistics, a similar situation can be observed in the neighbouring Czech Republic. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Housing_statistics/sk). Another

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options cover the basic human need to live. It is obvious that living in either an apartment or a house is characterized by different qualities. My goal is not to compare these qualities or evaluate the options available in the individual types of homes. I want to look beyond the colourful facades of the existing detached houses and apartment houses and unveil their *archetypal nature*. The houses and apartment buildings in Slovakia visibly relate to their prototypes – *cottage* and *tower* – in their basic architectural morphology.

According to the literary scientist Vladimír Macura (1997),[2] a cottage is an emblematic feature of the Czech (but also Slovak and Polish) culture. It is part of national self-reflection; it relates to the characteristics of the given nation and what its people consider 'theirs'. A cottage usually appears in the country's romantic imagination, visual and literary works, and it can be frequently found as a universal Christmas and winter motif in postcards.

A painting of a house lit up inside, embedded in the snowy country, or a cottage on the edge of a forest, personifies *idyll*. The literary theorists Daniela Hodrová and Macura (1997) name the basic attributes of a cottage, which include modesty and *inconspicuousness* (small dimensions), hidden nature and secludedness from the surrounding environment (a house is surrounded by trees), and quietness. The image of a cottage allows the recipient to escape to safety and timelessness, it represents an abode of affection and love, a space bound with happiness, and it is analogous to the Bethlehem abode. In this perspective, the house-cottage is linked to the idyllic nature of childhood.

Since our birth, our dwelling is gradually becoming part of our known world. Gaston Bachelard (1990) states that our house is our first universe. A human being is protected in it and surrounded by a benevolent matter. An abode provides a *hiding place*, it is a *cozy refuge*, a *secret shelter*, and it invokes a feeling of safety. In the context of the above, can we talk of a kind of motherly (accept, nurture, facilitate growth) and fatherly (protection against rain, sleeping guard) aspect of a cottage. The motherly and fatherly positions form part of any occupied

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research from 2011 presents the data on the number of occupied houses in the Slovak Republic: 905,815 (84.6 % of the total number of houses).

[2] Macura (1997) analyzed the cottage as a literary topos especially in the literature of the 18th and 19th century. His findings and observations, however, can be generalized and applied to characterize the cottage as an archetype.

space, including the tower.

A *tower* is defined in the dictionaries as a slender and tall building standing alone, or built into a fortification. Here, I use it as an archetypal image of an apartment building. The basic attributes of a tower include *uprightness* and *centrism*. Hodrová (1997) likens the topos of a tower to a vertical labyrinth, and she highlights several themes in it. Some of them also apply to the image of an apartment house. The theme of wandering (a helix spiral staircase in the tower and an ordinary staircase in the apartment building can act as a labyrinth); hidden identity of the character (neighbourhood anonymity of the residents from different entrances, but with a common wall); loneliness, separation, and isolation can be considered essential. In connection with the tower, Hodrová draws our attention to its introspection, its centre (figuratively, we could talk about some sort of egocentricity); she likens the tower to a *prison* (in an apartment building, this place is evoked by the cellar, but also the bars on the ground floor windows). The dynamic shape of a tower evokes growth – a residential building that at the time of construction evoked the prosperity of the state. If we admit that the tower can be viewed as an archetype of the apartment building, then we can also add the 'Babel' adjective to it. Both buildings are in fact characterized by the diversity and multiplicity of their population.

According to the publicly available statistics, the number of occupied houses in Slovakia totals one million, and the number of occupied apartments/flats is two million.[3] Most houses are, of course, situated in the countryside, and apartment buildings are part of the urban environment. A house (an archetype of the cottage) versus residential apartment building (the archetype of the Tower of Babel) is one of the most striking contrasts in the Slovak *city – village* culture.

2.2 City Versus Village

The city-village binary opposition highlights some other characteristics of the cottage and tower archetype. I will attempt to illustrate these by referring to the works of Slovak artist Tomáš Džadoň's *Monument of Folk Architecture* and Slovak cinematographer Juraj Chlpík's *The Identities of Petržalka*. In the first case, we are dealing with an installation of a visual artist in Slovakia in Košice while in the second case, we are dealing with a film documentary by a Slovak director.

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[3] The data were taken from the census published by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2020). The census is held every ten years, and the 2021 census is currently in preparation.

Figure 1: Tomáš Džadoň: *Monument of folk architecture* (2013-2016), Košice, Slovakia. Source: Photo by Palko Matia

The installation by Tomáš Džadoň called *Monument of Folk Architecture* (2013-2016) includes three authentic log houses (log barns from the villages of Liptovská Teplička and Párnica na Orave) placed on the roof of a high-rise apartment building in a Košice housing estate. The cabins/ log houses are located high above ground as something distant, unattainable, something we look up to, but they also represent something that we tend to overlook exactly because of its close proximity. The installation connects the original folk architecture with what came later, housing. Džadoň called the work a *Memorial*. It should therefore remind us of something we should not forget. "The Slovak villages still have plenty of traditional architecture that remind us of what we have lost among the 'šumperák' houses, brizolit cubes, or the modern 'catalo' houses" (Džadoň 2017, p. 135).

The cabins on the roof are as if they have been uprooted – as if their 'base' pushed them up and now carries them as a burden. They are secluded in an urban area, away from time and space where they rightfully belong. The buildings without doors and windows evoke the impression of being sealed, empty and lifeless. The contemporaries live in another puzzle – in a block of flats. The timbered barns reflect a way

of life that has almost completely faded away – the photographic work by Martin Martinček and a documentary by Dušan Hanák (*Pictures of the Old World*, 1972) are its memorial.

Figure 2: Juraj Bartoš: *Petržalka* (1977 – 1983), Bratislava, Slovakia.
Source: Documentary photograph, SNG

The prefabricated apartment houses have no dedicated 'open-air museums' yet, because we still live in them. However, living in an apartment block already has its documentary filmmakers. One of them is the photographer and director Juraj Chlpík with his copyrighted project *The Identities of Petržalka*, a suburb of Bratislava.[4] "Most of the projects I know have depicted Petržalka from the outside, or in the entrances and underground passageways. I went inside - I wanted to show it as no one before," says Chlpík, "I wondered how a person can affect an environment so uniform to feel comfortable in it, and also how the environment affects the person, and if at all" (Németh 2011).

In 2005-2006, Chlpík created portraits of people in Petržalka and of the apartments they live in. Large format diptychs, in the form of studio images of the inhabitants along with photos of their private

[4] More specifically, Petržalka is a housing estate district in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. The area of Petržalka is 28.68 square kilometers and the population density is 23597.98 inhabitants/km².

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space and the length of the period they lived in this estate, were installed on the New Bridge in Bratislava. In 2010 the project turned into a documentary, and in 2011 it was published as a photographic publication.

Most of Chlpík's protagonists were not born in Petržalka, as the construction of the suburb began in 1973. Petržalka (historically Engerau-Ligetfalu), as claimed by a historian Ján Čomaj (2008), is currently the largest housing estate in Central Europe and was originally the largest village in Czechoslovakia. During the construction phase, the native inhabitants of Petržalka had to abandon their homes, and almost all buildings were pulled down. Shortly thereafter (the first prefab panel houses were occupied in 1977), the area on the right bank of the Danube changed radically.

Like other socialist housing estates, Petržalka was not prepared for a mass influx of new residents. According to the testimonies from Chlpík's document, the housing estate had no roads and basic amenities, and the apartments in the blocks of flats only served mainly as a place for an overnight stay. Petržalka was seen as an inevitable dormitory for the new inhabitants of Bratislava, a concrete jungle, "a city without qualities" (Gindl 2011, p. 84). For many residents, it only represented a temporary housing solution. As Slovak philosopher Miroslav Marcelli (2011, p. 1) comments:

> Increasingly, however, it becomes evident that Petržalka turned into a home for the first generation of inhabitants. At the same time, the generation of their parents grew old here. As a result, the inhabitants of Petržalka clearly differentiated and individualized themselves. They are no longer mere immigrants into the city, which accepted them, but maintains an aloof attitude toward them. They are searching for their own identity. And how this process marked their life attitudes, perceptions and behaviour patterns – that is a question for the theories dealing with contemporary social reality.

3 Archetypal Images of Houses in the Environment

Alain de Botton (2008, p. 60) has written:

> To describe a building as beautiful therefore suggests more than a mere aesthetic fondness; it implies an attraction to the particular way of life this structure is promoting through its roof, door handles, window frames, staircase and furnishings. A feeling of beauty is a sign that we have come upon a material articulation of certain of our ideas of a good life.

De Botton also believes that architectural styles may become "emotional souvenirs of the moments and settings in which we came across them" (Botton 2008, p. 78). In this part of the study, I focus on the archetypal images of houses in the environment. Following de Botton, my standpoint is the resonance of images of real buildings scattered in Slovakia and their overlap with images from the distant past.

3.1 House in the Field (and Houses Made of Clay)

The image of a house in the field includes the oldest image of a human dwelling. A house in the field is a proof that human beings have felt the land and farming and have begun transforming the landscape. A hunter was turned into a shepherd and farmer, and religious concepts also were transformed. During the formation of the first human settlements, the cult of the Great Mother was formed, and the life-giving generative power of the earth was worshiped.[5]

In the archetypal images, a house in the field is inhabited by simple and hardworking people. Their existence is tied to the natural course of events and cycle of seasons. Life is mainly lived outdoors in the fields and the house is used as a place to prepare food, spend the night and rest during the long winters. The house personifies humility, balance and conscientiousness, solidarity, cohesion of the family and self-sufficiency. It is quiet, cozy and connected with nature and the earth in its basic maternal principle. The house is 'rooted' in clay and in the mass, with the immanent process of creation and demise, which enables growth.

Clay is the most accessible material to build homes. In Slovakia, clay houses were built mainly in the lowlands and lower valleys of rivers (southern and southwestern areas and the Eastern Slovak Lowland). The original fully or partially buried houses, Slavonic dwellings of the Great Moravian period with a square or rectangular layout,[6] were gradually replaced by stacked houses, houses built by mud injection;[7] houses built

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[5] In Slovakia, the Slavic goddess of fertility and long life Mokoša/Mokuša/Živa/Siva was venerated. The cult of the Great Mother is directly linked to the rich agrarian cult, which, as Slavkovský claims (2002), had been present in Slovakia until the first half of the 20th century.

[6] The houses were partially buried in the ground. A typical single-room dwelling was formed by a columnar structure planted vertically in the ground, horizontally placed twigs, sprayed with kneaded clay. This method of construction was used in the southern regions of Slovakia for centuries. For more information, see Mjartan (1975), Thurzo (2004).

[7] The walls of homes built by mud injection were approximately one meter wide and built by gradually injecting clay mixed with straw between the wall plates, which were removed after the wall dried.

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by stacking cylinders of wet clay and dried mud/adobe bricks, and later of burnt bricks.

Older clay houses had thatched roofs covered with straw or reeds. The chopped straw and chaff were mixed with clay and shaped into cylinders and bricks, making the field an essential part of the dwelling. The image of a house in the field can be freely linked with the image of a house on the *meadow, pasture*, in the *vineyard, orchard*, but also in the *garden*. The garden in this case is an extract of the field and symbolizes abundance thanks to its content (flowers, vegetables, fruit trees), it is a *locus amoenus* (a gracious place, a place in the care of humans), an *Elysium/Elysion/Champs Field* in the Greek mythology and Eden in the Bible.

3.2 A house on the Edge of the Forest and in the Forest (and Wooden Houses)

The topos of a *house on the edge of the forest* marks the boundary between civilization and wilderness. This house stands between the cultivated, subdued and serving field and an autonomous and boisterous forest. One surface is represented by human-planted crops in organized lines or slick lanes on a well-defined stretch of land, the other is represented by trees, shrubs, grasses, herbs, fungi and mosses usually in rough terrain. The house on the edge of the forest is thus situated somewhere on the border between order and chaos, openness and closeness, light and gloom. The image of a house in the woods, as discussed below, refers to the boundary in a different way.

The archetypal image of a *house in the woods* personifies the proclivity to wildness. The forest is a natural habitat for wild animals and not humans. According to Czech aesthetician Dušan Šindelář (1978), human beings in an arranged environment usually feel the confirmation of themselves as human beings. The forest, a disorganized and seemingly chaotic environment, can thus evoke innate dispositions and instincts.

In the archetypal images, a house in the forest is inhabited by humans with certain animalistic attributes (e.g. impulsiveness and intuitiveness). We assume they have a reclusive, introverted, and perhaps misanthropic nature, or the archetype of a shade in Jung's theory. In fairy tales and superstitious narratives, the forest is inhabited by characters with an ambivalent personality (e.g. a witch, magicians, characters enchanted into animal form, a werewolf etc.), giants with exceptional physical strength, wild women (goddesses, grgalica, Runa

etc.).[8] The rich representation of forest spirits and creatures in the fairy tales, historic tales, legends and superstitious concepts proves that human beings perceived the forest as a dangerous and unpredictable place – known as a place of horror, or the *locus horribilis*, in literary topology.

Forests have become home to those who are not afraid of the mysteries of nature, respect it, and are able to use it for their own benefit (herbalists); those who did not dull their hunting instincts (hunters), or those whose brute strength, pride and resilience is mirrored by the forest (loggers and foresters). The forest has also become home to those who for various reasons sought shelter from the human community, i.e. the robbers, soldiers, and as evidenced by Kroutvor (2015), even the philosophers.

Unlike houses in the field, the house in the forest is never dominant, it is small and hidden under trees or surrounded by bushes, which confirms the fact that a human being is not the master in this area. Forest dwellings also have a temporary character, as if the humans naturally adopted a visitor status and accepted the fact that the forest has been around for much longer and will be around for longer. The forest does not allow us (metaphorically and literally) to look far and build homes for the next generation. The wood used for the construction in the forest is subject to rapid degradation.

Dwellings in the forest (as for instance in forester's lodges, cottages, shelters) are not surrounded by fences, and they are often unlocked. These complexes are increasingly perceived through a romantic or horror filter. This romantic or horror optic can also be applied to the environment of the forest itself, and our movement in it.

The memories of the forest are also conveyed by log homes and wooden buildings. How much forest is preserved in one cabin/log house and how much magic is left of it? In Slovakia, log houses were primarily built in the northern mountainous areas where conifers grow in abundance. The shingles covering the roof were also made of wood. In some regions, wooden houses were decorated by painting or carving ornaments and symbols. The image of a house in the forest also resonates well in the Robinson-like tree houses, in the backyard wooden shed, in a shack on the outskirts, or in a house overgrown with creepers etc.

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[8] Each of these characters has its own specific characteristics, which overlap in certain cases. *Grgalica/grgolica* is a local Slovak demon that suffocates its victims and manifests itself through a drawing hoot.

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3.3 A House by the Water (and Glass Houses)

The archetypal image of the house by the water takes many forms. It covers the images of *houses at the wells, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, marshes, seas or oceans.*[9] Water symbolizes purity and it is the "medium used in ritual purification and baptism, rebirth and regeneration" (Ibid.) A dwelling at the spring evokes the idea of miraculous water and its healing effects and life-giving properties. A house by the river abounds with joy, spontaneity, constant happenings, movement and life. The mills are most frequently seen around rivers. The river, its flow and momentum determined where the mill would be positioned. The mass of water spun the mill wheel and drove the mechanism of the machine. The mill architecture is directly tied to the river, its strength and ferocity.[10] The clicking of the mill machines is accompanied by the splashing of river water, jabber and gaiety. The archetypal image of a house by the river is inhabited by a miller, his family, children and helpers. A house by the river embodies freshness, variability, boisterousness, and accumulation of a lot of energy.[11]

Houses at the lake are characterized by silence and peace. Standing water provides moisture for the trees and plants in their vicinity, and it emanates seriousness thanks to its green colour. A swamp is a certain mix of stillness and moisture. A lake, on the contrary, activates. It invites us for a swim, it purifies and clarifies the mind, and mirrors the surroundings. The phenomenon of water (especially in the form of a pond or lake) includes the feminine life-giving element, plasticity and transient nature. The feminine element also inhabits the archetypal images of houses near the pond, lake, marsh mythical characters of water fairies, rusalkas, bewitched virgins, etc.). Houses by the water can be found in almost every town in Slovakia. Although the river waterways were regulated and their branches diverted or hidden in underground pipes, one can still find streets that mirror the curve of dead riverbeds.

[9] Due to my focus on Slovakia, the last two images will not be discussed. Also, we will omit the archetypal images of *houses at waterfalls* (typical for alpine countries, Iceland and Japan).

[10] In Slovakia, the traditional *riverfront mills* were built with artificial water channels - water feed channels running in parallel with the river and forming the so-called mill islands, *coastal edge mills* and *ship mills*. Edge mills were concentrated on the Little Danube waterway and were its regional specificity. For more information, see Mlynka (2006).

[11] The energy contained in a flowing river was used not only for grinding cereal grains, but also for wood cutting etc. Currently, several mills have been converted to hydropower plants.

Rivers in the past served the town as a source of food and water, they also served as a security boundary and a traffic artery. At present, the rivers and their surroundings are mainly used as a recreational area and they can greatly influence the sense of identity of the citizens of the town/city the river flows through. The rivers co-create the face and shape of many Slovak cities (e.g. Piešťany, Košice, Žilina, Bratislava, Nitra). Some riverbanks are converted into nature and others are built up, but no mills can be found anymore.

The general visual qualities of water include clarity and ability to reflect light - they mirror and make the illusion of an image. Same qualities can be spotted in houses/buildings made of glass (administrative and shopping centres, hotels), which are part of larger cities just like rivers. There are many analogies between glass buildings built at the intersection of thoroughfares, houses by the water and the characteristics of rivers, and some of them are more prominent than others. A glass aluminium (for example, the shopping centre *Mlyny* in Nitra) provides no shelter and its walls are transparent. The surfaces (walls, floor) are smooth and shiny and reflect light. One can see a parallel between the flow of escalators and visitors and the fluidity of a river.

The river in the past represented a link with remote places and it enabled the formation of business trade routes, provided fresh and new ideas and exclusive merchandise, and linked the polarity between 'our' and 'foreign'. However, it also represented a border between the two banks and two parts of the city. The paradox of simultaneous connecting and separating also applies to the archetypal images of the river as a border between two worlds (dimensions) and a pond, lake, spring (well) as a passage between them.

3.4 Home in the Heights (and Houses Made of Concrete)

Only a few would dispute the effort of the builders of a *house in high places* (on the rocks, on top of the mountain) when building it. When we ascend a dwelling on top of the hill (e.g. a castle) and enjoy the scenic view, our view is free from the view of the castle lord and the people who served in the castle. According to architect Tomáš Valena (2018), mountains are a remote and secluded place for the inhabitants of the valley, which is visually present but in actuality it is away from everyday life. Valena states that mountains in its extremes (rock, snow, ice) can be hostile to human beings; they "express the unattainable nature and

mysterious isolation and fill us with dread; their genius loci appears to be powerful and majestic – an undisputed ruler of his place" (Valena 2018, p. 42).

In the archetypal images, a house in the heights is inhabited by the characters such as kings, semi-divine beings, ghosts, knights and giants, all exceeding the dimensions of an everyday person one way or another. To live 'up' means to live closer to 'heaven' and closer to the divine elements, although it is questionable to what extent we can reflect on the sacred and secular approaching/ascent to the divine/God. A mountain has a sacred character; in Christianity is a place where ongoing conversations with God (and his revelation) are held and where sacrifices are made.t has a similar significance even in other religions. A house in the heights loses contact with the ground (the fertile soils in the lowlands), it stands on the strong stony ground or on the rock with almost no vegetation. It promotes a feeling of loneliness, for while a plain is sufficiently large and hospitable for all, there is not enough space on top of the mountain.

A dwelling in the heights is naturally singled out from the country and it literally protrudes out of it;it does not belong to the horizontal plane of the country, but rather to its vertical features. Typically, no straight road leads to it and one needs to climb gradually in switchbacks, i.e. walk 'back and forth' (just like by stairs in a block of flats). A block of flats/apartment buildings is the most prominent equivalent of a house in the heights. Its concrete walls are gray and monolithic just like rock; its residents (people of indoor type) live 'high above ground', in isolation, and have limited contact with the environment.

3.5 Home in the Depths (and Houses Made of Rock)

The common feature of houses in the depths (caves, underground bunkers, houses excavated in rock) is their unobtrusiveness. They cannot be bypassed because the outside is not visible. The habitable cavities are part of the natural whole and they are adapted to life in concealment. Valena (2018, p. 44) distinguishes two types of natural places - material and spatial. He considers a cave a perfect natural spatial place.

> It is immersed in the ground, completely surrounded by rock, yet seemingly effortlessly defying the immense pressure with its concave and infinitely spatial shell. The cave creates a space in its sheer spatial absence, thus offering protection, but the incalculable risk of being crushed is equally omnipresent. This dichotomy is an essential feature of the cave.

Space inside the cave is not readily discernible for humans. To navigate the maze of long rising and falling corridors, large halls and deep passageways is not easy even for the visitors of accessible sections of the cave without a guide. How does the cave labyrinth affect a speleologist and what feelings did its discoverers have? According to Valena (2018), the space in a cave is denied by perpetual darkness. The darkness is only removed, says Valena, when light is brought inside, and only to a limited extent.

Visitors are always and repeatedly enchanted by the height of the individual halls, shapes, colors of the cave formations, ambience, sound properties of the cave space, its clean air, illusions of reflection in the see-through lakes, and they can experience the "inner workings" of the Earth. However, they move in a humanized space (the walk is made easy thanks to the paths, stairways, bridges, lighting, etc.). The movement of the discoverers is much more cautious than the movement of visitors – it reminds us of toddlers – climbing, crawling, movement in the dark. How were the caves discovered by our distant ancestors? How much magic was revealed through the flickering light of the fire and dancing shadows?

The original hiding place of our ancestors was shaped by water. Later, when man intervened, the inner space was arduously accommodated to the human shape and scale. Cliff dwellings, however, retained some of the features of the caves (stable lower temperature, humidity, darkness etc.).[12] To a lesser extent, the features of the caves are also preserved in houses made of stone.[13]   In the archetypal images, a house in the depths inhabited by hermits, chthonic gods, demonic beings (connected with the night and darkness) and miniature figures of dwarfs and elves.

4 Construction Materials and Their Meaning

According to ethnographer Ján Mjartan (1975), the oldest materials used in Slovakia to build dwellings are osiers and clay. The choice of material in the past was based on the natural conditions of a particular locality, the way of life, level of economy, cultural traditions of the region; nowadays it is more a question of personal preference. The new

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[12] The oldest rock dwellings in Slovakia are found in the volcanic Štiavnica Hills near Štúrovo in the village of Lišov and Brhlovce. To this day, many of them are still inhabited or used for food storage.

[13] The dwellings made of worked stone were mainly built in the area of Central Pohronie.

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buildings and historic homes, however, are linked to the principle of combining materials, with one of them being dominant. Another common denominator is the granting or denial of the very nature of the material. The buildings from the last decade are typical for new materials and imitations of the original (e. g. the use of tiles imitating stone). Can the imitations of materials capture the vibrations of its foreshadow? Where is the mass memory anchored? How does the material nature of dwellings reveal their archetypal aesthetics? The answers to the above questions are yet unknown. However, partial answers can be found in the revelation of archetypal nature in the material.

Clay refers to the field and unevenness of the earth. It is permanently inhabited by a number of microorganisms. In connection with water, soil provides the plants with space, matter and nutrients for growth, and then takes them back. The experience of modelling clay and experiencing its malleability, the precariousness of walking in mud experiencing its compliance, of grinding dry lumps under the weight of the foot experiencing its fluidity: all points to the timeliness and apparent strength of (our) shape since childhood.

Wood refers to the forest, a diverse community of plants, mosses, lichens, fungi and animals. A log house (or parquet floor) remembers the links between the root systems, symbiosis of species, nests in the treetops and lores between the roots, and the balance between herbivores and predators. Each piece of wood (the body of a tree) is unique. It reminds us of the existence of ourselves as a fibre and the interconnection of the particulars and the whole.

Glass (also in a fragmented state) refers to water. It is transparent, clear, cold, crisp, smooth and hygienic. The rainbow-like reflections, gaiety and carelessness of glass form a counterweight to the depth of clay (earth) and extraction of wood (forest). Glass is, just like water, a variable substance (having its liquid and solid form). Does the illusion of mirroring remind us of the two faces of the world? Does an optical illusion teach us not to rely merely on what we see?

Stone refers to mountains. In the properties (coldness, hardness, density), we can feel the remoteness, distance, uncollectibility, stubbornness (similar to the properties of metal). Stone is stable and solid, and it forms a tangible support, the basis for construction. With its durability, it reminds of eternity.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I focused on different types of environmental dwelling in the Slovak cultural and social context. The archetype of the cottage versus the archetype of the tower represents a basic contrast in Slovak culture - the town versus the village. The connections between dwelling and environment, related to images of houses within the environment - the house in the field by the water or in the forest, the house located high above and in the depth and the connections between dwelling and a certain material (clay, wood, stone, glass, metal, concrete) have been crucial for this investigation. Studying these connections provides a valuable strategy to connect the past and the present with awareness of their reciprocal continuity, as well as a way to experience the environment more meaningfully.

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Part II
The Body and the Everyday

Dress and the Body. An Essential Reciprocal Relationship in Everyday Aesthetics

Ian W. King

Abstract: Clothing or Dress is not something that we simply wear to keep warm or to protect our modesty. It possesses much deeper and more significant potential. Not least, it is the means by which we provide a personal and expressive form of non-verbal communication to audiences (and sometimes ourselves) about who we are. In this way, dress often characterizes the guise of subsequent communication – both verbally and non-verbally – not only between the wearer and the audience, but also internally to the wearer themselves. Amongst other things, this raises questions regarding the status and relationship of dress with the body, and as such, in the chapter, noting recent claims regarding the status (and privileging) of objects in new materialist writings, and turning to Merleau-Ponty's underdeveloped notion of chiasm; I argue that this is in fact a relationship of essential reciprocity and certainly not one about privileging one over the other.

Keywords: Chiasm, Communication, Dress, New Materialism, Object to Body Relationship

Art concentrates and intensifies the aesthetic qualities we find in non-aspects of our lives […] Whether by the mediation of art or not, ordinary objects can (his emphasis) be seen in a way that gives them heightened significance, making them, sometimes surprisingly, objects of awe or at least, of fascination (Leddy 2015).

1 Introduction

My opening argument in this chapter is that 'what we wear' provides a valuable and immediately accessible means to understanding the guise

of aesthetics in everyday life. In this brief chapter I will not spend time rehearsing again the guise of everyday aesthetics – as I have little doubt that this will have been introduced and argued elsewhere in this book, so therefore I will assume that you are familiar with these claims – but what I should not assume is that you have the same familiarity with regards the potential of clothing/fashion and its value for exemplifying the guise and potential of understanding everyday aesthetics. For me, some of the examples put forward to exemplify everyday aesthetics require the reader to focus more on the feeling of 'everydayness' rather than provide a means/object to illustrate (for example, laundry or sitting quietly – see Saito 2009; Melchionne 2013). Therefore, for me, there is something missing in these types of accounts that I hope to demonstrate through this chapter that clothes/fashion does not neglect.

Let me start my claims, firstly, by saying that what we wear (and I will use the abbreviation of 'dress' here to encompass a range of descriptors – fashion, clothing, wearables etc) provides an indication of who we are as individuals. It should be understood that dress unlike language does not attempt (or is it capable) in providing an exact code of meaning in communication, rather its attributes are most valuable as a means for generating a 'feeling' or more accurately in philosophy terms, 'sentience', both for the wearer at one level but also at another, for the audience regarding the wearer of dress. In other words, as was suggested above, ideal for consideration for admittance to discussions of the everyday with the additional currency that is also an accessible 'object' for the vast majority of people.

As adults what lies in our wardrobes/closets (and other similar places) reflects a series of specific choices regarding how we want to appear or represent ourselves before an audience. The nature of this audience is important – they can either be multiple or singular and either be familiar or unfamiliar. And of course, the issues of conventions place a restriction on these choices, and I will elaborate on this further below. I also will not make these same claims when talking about dependents, rather my argument is reserved for persons able to express their own choice in wearing. Of course, this may not necessarily mean everything that we wear – so to further refine my argument, I confine my claim to what we 'regularly' wear in everyday life. For me, the difference between regularly wearing an item of dress, against something that is worn for special occasions produces different sets of arguments and these are often conditioned by the nature of the event, and this indeed might not be included in the 'everyday'. I think if I were to rehearse more carefully the

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issues regarding 'special occasions' and isolated wear then this will produce other, additional arguments and there is insufficient space here to rehearse these in the detail required.

Therefore, in conducting ourselves on a regular basis in our everyday world many of us choose to wear something that sends a message – it may not be a conscious decision to communicate – but the reality is that we do. Of course, this does not mean on every occasion we are intentionally sending a message to an external audience; for dress also is a form of personal communication to the wearer themselves. Therefore, the communicative potential of dress is not always intended for external audiences. What makes things complex is that for these external audiences, similar to verbal language, is that its message is not always consistent. Let me enlarge and initially concentrate my claims on the ability of dress to communicate with external audiences.

Firstly, for external audiences our choice of dress reflects a desire to represent something about ourselves – and this can either be to a lesser or greater degree – in other words, we want to wear something that we feel comfortable and 'fits' with our identity and that this choice reflects a primordial desire to communicate this meaning to others. Only mitigated/ punctuated by the need to start again either by facing a different event/ circumstance (or even perhaps a different audience) and therefore the need to choose alternative dress to meet the anticipated needs of a different context. This type of activity is felt and intuitively applied by the majority of us as we envisage our engagement with the everyday life over the period ahead (for a more detailed explanation see King 2017).

Even the most uninterested person in their own dress will have made similar choices (for example: being neutral, or wanting to be hidden etc.) about what they wear and how it represents themselves to others.

Of course, if we live in a solitary existence with no prospect of meeting others, then our choices reflect a different scenario and expectation, one that is 'not' governed by our desire to communicate to an external audience; and in these circumstances we employ dress purely for ourselves – for functional or comfort reasons. We, in these circumstances, then wear things to 'relax' around the house or even perhaps 'now' as many of us are in lockdown, we fall into the pattern of only presenting to ourselves.

2 Why Dress?

It seems to me that dress is the perfect exemplar for characterizing everyday life. Firstly, it is not vague, distant or invisible, rather it is

something physical, beautiful and relevant to each of us as we all go about our lives in the real world. In fact, dress is characterized by accessibility and democracy (such is consumerism!) and possesses a dynamism that fits well into modern contemporary life. This contrasts sharply with traditional discussions of aesthetics and its fascination with fine arts - these are often located in divorced places (museums, galleries) or possessing features that make them impenetrable to whole sectors of everyday persons. Dress does not discriminate against gender, age or religion and normally it is non-confrontational. We see dress everywhere – TV, computers, city centres, magazines. It is one of the most successful industries in the world, employs millions of people and indisputably it is one of the most innovative creative arenas etc. However, on the negative side, it is also guilty of massive environmental damage and employment issues – and in these, and associated areas, it does need to get its act together and invest in a more responsible future. Therefore, in summary it is relevant and its popularity on many covers of magazines, advertisements etc suggests that it indeed possesses the ability to communicate.

Suggesting that dress can communicate is not new. I have suggested above that dress provides information to audiences (see Barnard 2002). But can it? Does it possess a specific voice, or does it possess other communicative characteristics? The answer to these questions is: 'Yes' – but to varying degrees. For example, if the audience for a particular wearer is familiar, then the signal of dress might be more meaningful and precise – that is, the wearing of a certain colour or style might provide a powerful indicator of mood, desire, etc. whereas for unfamiliar audiences dress provides a powerful initial signal as we 'pass' people in everyday life – one that produces a 'sign' that precedes language conversation – one that may predicate the nature of any subsequent conversation or opinion. This is useful for appreciating aesthetics because it is grounded in pre-linguistic meaning and confers on the experience a sense of wholeness.

The wearing of a uniform – for instance, a traditional doctor's coat or a nurse's uniform or perhaps the habit of a religious person or even a member of the police – in each of these (and other) examples dress provides a clear signal of recognition. It is then (subject to the motivation of the moment) that we decide to either verbally engage or not. If we choose not to engage it should not be interpreted as the dress has not fulfilled its potential. For its purpose is not necessarily to always invoke a conversation, rather its aim is often simply to generate

an aesthetic 'feeling' for the audience. If looking at the other does not lead to a conversation (or other further layers of meaning beyond the initial moment) there might be multiple reasons for this non-engagement – including time, interest, distraction etc. Dress does not guarantee an impact - it is simply an invitation: a starting point. This silent meaning might be sufficient to have lasting value for members of the audience – thus, for me, dress represents our most primordial form of communication.

Of course, the accuracy and sophistication of dress as an intentional means of precise communication is unlikely – semiotician Fred Davis (1992, p. 5) describes dress as possessing a 'quasi-code' (in semiotics terms). He elaborates:

> that although it draws on the conventional visual and tactile symbols of culture it does so allusively, ambiguously, and inchoately so that the meanings evoked by the combinations and permutations of the code's keys (i.e. fabric, texture, colour, pattern, volume, silhouette and occasion) are forever shifting and in process (Davis 1992, p. 5).

This choice leads me to clarify what the intentional qualities of dress is. For me, one of the most important qualities of dress is that it is an excellent means of exemplifying 'intentionality' - a concept that is often slippery (see for example: Brentano 1874; Husserl 1900). In terms of discussions of aesthetics and its relationship to disinterestedness the concept of intentionality is not normally examined.

Yet, this is an oversight. For through phenomenology and discussions of everyday aesthetics, we can note, argues French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 105) that: "through the body that we can appreciate our intentional opening to the understanding of the world." For Merleau-Ponty, our bodies are not merely a thing – they are lived – they are "phenomenal." He enlarges further: "It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 106). This quote reveals the potential of the body to be more than simply an object from which to view broadly speaking, rather it reveals through intentionality that it is interested in the relationship between our own mental states and external objects/events (outside the body). Thus, dress is an effective means of mediation from mental state to the concreteness of everyday life. It is normally difficult to find concrete examples to

illustrate this argument – but, for example, in verbal language, the speaker can deny or change their thinking and reasoning; whereas the evidence of what is worn on the body is undeniable. It is there for all to see – thus, it is this concrete evidence that provides direct causal links and therefore produces interpretation and meaning.

The body is the essential ingredient for understanding the nature of what is 'dress' – for without the body and in particular its movement, 'dress' remains either a piece of fabric or an empty item. It is the body and its movement in wearing dress that gives this fabric its 'being' – of course, it might be equally claimed that it is the fabric itself that generates something equally important towards the body. This is the start of the claims by recent discussions labelled 'new materialism'. Let me enlarge further in the next section.

3 The Status of Dress

Partly my motivation for writing this chapter is to offer a response to New Materialist claims regarding dress in relation to the body. Yet, in opening this aspect of our examination it is also an opportunity to rehearse a relationship between dress and body that exceeds simply clothing being worn on the body. Let me attempt to elaborate.

Firstly, for those unaware of new materialism (and I might need to also include Object-Oriented Ontology - OOO), they claim that there is an anthropocentric imbalance that favours the human and therefore overlooks their reliance (and therefore status) of material/things. Since its arrival in the 1990s, there has been various elaborations and attempts to de-couple these relationships – often because they are argued to be negative ones, the inference being that people are seemingly exploiting objects/things and not giving them suitable respect or recognition that they deserve. This may be the case for some relations, but for me, I would argue that inherently dress and its relationship to the body is one of essential reciprocity, that is, a relational balance between 'body to dress' and likewise 'dress to body'. It may be for some readers the distinction I offer is an identical relationship. But if we return to the writings of Merleau-Ponty he offers a different perspective. His notion of chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1968) provides a means to understand this relationship through a different lens and one that therefore generates an appreciation of the contribution of each.

Merleau-Ponty (1968) presents the example of our two hands interlocked with each other – where one is holding the other in a firm

grasp; thus, in such a way, where one hand is touching and the other one is being held. For Merleau-Ponty such an action reveals that there is no sharp division between 'sensing' (the feel of the hand holding) and 'sensed' (the felt of the hand being held), rather, for him using his terminology, there occurs a form of chiasmic overlapping relationship. Merleau-Ponty's example relies on the hand and therefore our fingers and its facility for touch – whereas for the arguments here, and I think Merleau-Ponty would agree, we should not confine our thoughts regarding sensing and sensed exclusively to our hands. Rather we can feel with our skin as well as our fingers/hands – both on the outside but also internally.

Our skin is our largest sensory organ. The very top layer is the epidermis and contains very sensitive cells called 'touch receptors' that generate for the brain a rich variety of information about the environment the body is in. As we clothe it with dress our skin feels its impact. Of course, my hands (and fingers) are vital in placing it on my body but once it is worn then I feel its surface pressed on my body. Yet, once the dress is on my body, they are no longer felt as separate items, but rather they merge together and overlap creating an essential relationship where both feel natural to each other.

Furthermore, extending Merleau-Ponty's example a little further, as I look in the mirror to my reflected appearance and within its frame I can see my reflected self of my body enclosed in this dress – I see not only the appearance of dress, but I can concurrently feel its warmth, weight, (and texture, if I were to brush my fingers over its surface). Therefore, with this elaboration, we are witnessing both visually, and sensually feeling, a complex interaction that both exemplifies sensing and sensed and further amplifies this through a form of visual confirmation. We now can, if we reflect and break down this relationship, it is one that exceeds a relationship between body and dress, for we also have to include that our fingers, hands, skin, and the visual together with our mental assessment of fit and how we feel this experience conforms to our projected intention to portray and communicate a particular message to our anticipated external audiences. Furthermore, the visual through the auspices of the reflected image of our appearance in the mirror, this either provides an endorsement or perhaps even a refutation of my intention and message through wearing the dress on the body. That is, as I look at the image in the mirror and although it feels good on my skin, my assessment of it may not be consistent with the image I want to communicate to external audiences. In these circumstances, I may

remove it and look for a substitute. This balancing between internal and external assessments of our dress with/on our bodies in everyday life might well become a compromise in order to fulfil its practical needs (for example: getting to work on time or meeting someone for an appointment) – but for some of us, such a compromise is not acceptable and therefore we continue to experiment with changing dress in order to fulfil the harmony between felt and visual as described above. This is indeed a complex but rich means of knowing about the sophistication of our bodies and its relationship with dress. Dress here then is not simply an item to clothe our bodies for warmth or protection rather it reveals an essential reciprocal relationship that goes to the very core of our everyday lives.

4 Discussion

Therefore, returning to the essence of new materialist claims, for me, in denying the presence of the body through privileging the dress fails to appreciate the essential relationship of the body and likewise the body without dress literally reveals a state of undress. Of course, if anything, the problem for dress (unlike the body) is this issue of substitutes. That is, a body can choose alternative dress to clothe them and therefore this perhaps leads to dispute the status of specific dress. However, what this latter observation also provokes is the realization that any dress hanging in a wardrobe/closet without regular use reflects our current societal problem of over-consumerism and furthermore, perhaps demonstrates the need for recycling of it to a different audience one that would more regularly employ it? Therefore, it might be claimed that dress does not have an essential relationship with a particular body – as it can be transferred to a new wearer, but the question arises – if there is no body that wears it – is it still dress or is it simply cloth hanging in a wardrobe/closet?

This leads me to voice a question: is this an admission of the limits of the value of dress or alternatively is this then what Zizek (2014) warned us about – that is, supporters of new materialism are looking to claim a status for objects/things that is similar to the status of people? If this is so, then Zizek might be asking is the inference then that objects/things aspire to be subjective? However, I am not convinced that this is the substance of the new materialist claims rather it is simply a form of recognition for the role and contribution of the object.

What I am suggesting in terms of the relationship between body and dress is that privileging the body or de-coupling body from the dress or

simply privileging the dress independent of the body may at one level seem appropriate, but at other levels, it may reveal limits and inequalities if the desire were indeed to seek a status similar to people. Above we spoke about reciprocity and substitutes and this may reveal a power inequality, but this overlooks a more critical and substantive argument and this I hope to develop a little further here.

Returning Merleau-Ponty's claim regarding Chiasm – a concept unfortunately, not fully developed due to his untimely early death at the age of 53 years in the early 1960s – we are left to speculate how he might have amplified its potential and this concept has been subsequently widely examined – but never with dress. As Emmanuel de Saint Aubert (2005, p. 165) notes, Merleau-Ponty's interest in this term may have been inspired precisely by its dual sense, which suggests it as a figure for thinking through the relationship between the body and the mind, the factual and the ideal. Toadvine (2011) suggests as well the unity-in-difference of the chiasma ("like the chiasm [chiasma] of the eyes, this one is also what makes us belong to the same world" (Merleau-Ponty 1968, p. 215). Of course, dress and the body are not of the same world – one is indeed an object and the other a live, feeling 'homo sapiens' – and yet at the same time there is an essential relationship of body with dress (and vice-versa) – it may not be a relationship to specific items of dress, but it certainly is an essential reciprocal relationship with dress overall.

As a general structure of mediation, chiasms may be found operative in any number of relationships and at different levels of complexity, according to Merleau-Ponty, including the relationships between mind and body, self and world, self and other, fact and idea, silence and speech, imaginary and real, past and present, Being and beings, philosophy and non- philosophy. In a sense, then, there is not one chiasm but many. As Renaud Barbaras (2004, p. 307) notes, "It is necessary [...] to picture the universe as intuited by Merleau-Ponty as a proliferation of chiasms that integrate themselves according to different levels of generality." Certainly, what chiasm reveals is that when dress is placed on the body and we reflect on its presence we might as we reflect a desire to separate them but in reality, they also achieve a form of 'encroachment', in the sense that they cross into each other and blur their boundaries – and yet concurrently without their distinctive properties being erased. There is still the cloth of dress that is different from the skin on our bodies. In other words, we experience this crossing in a corporeal way, that is, as a structure of our sensible exchange with our own bodies, what Merleau-Ponty (1968, p. 146) introduced as a form of Dehiscence.

The body's (flesh) is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in particular when the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things, such that, simultaneously, as (his emphasis) tangible it descends among them, as (again his emphasis) touching it dominates them all and draws this relationship and even this double relationship from itself, by dehiscence or fission of its own mass.

For Merleau-Ponty then this dehiscence coincides with Chiasm especially when there is a touch which is touched and perceive which is then perceived. Perhaps this chiasmic relationship might resonate with new materialist writings? I am reminded of the opening paragraph written by Karen Barad (2007, p. IX), a well-known proponent of New materialism who writes in the opening words of the preface to her book the following words:

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.

The inference for me in appreciating the contribution of object/thing is an appreciation of their status at a similar level. I am not sure this occurs in terms of the body/dress relationship that I describe here. There is certainly mutual appreciation, but it seems to me, the notion of substitutes reduces the currency of the claim. Barad (2007) employed quantum physics as the means for her explanation. Whilst I acknowledge and support much of what she says – where a relation is mutually dependent then recognition of the status of the parties needs to be appreciated – but in life, relations do not always remain stable and whilst with some relations it reveals the independence of the parties, in others it reveals inequalities. Of course, some readers might be appalled that the wearer possesses this choice but this is the reality of the relationship and situation.

5 Conclusion

In this brief paper it has been suggested that dress provides a rich and accessible means of appreciating the guise of everyday aesthetics. My claim is that in terms of everyday aesthetics, dress is an effective communicator that fulfils the important role as an accessible and

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democratic means of exemplification. The second half of the paper looks to respond to new materialist claims regarding the status of dress and here I employed the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his unfinished claims regarding 'chiasm'. Here I suggest rather than privileging either the body or the dress as deserving primary status, that in fact, their relationship is one of an essential reciprocity that appreciates their respective contributions.

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CHAPTER 7

Dressing as an Ordinary Aesthetic Practice

Elena Abate

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to briefly present a new perspective on fashion as an ordinary aesthetics, based on Wittgenstein's later aesthetic conception. In order to analyse the ordinary dimension of fashion, I will start from Giovanni Matteucci's account of fashion as an aesthetic phenomenon as presented in his *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion* (2017). There, Matteucci introduces the idea of juxtaposing the Wittgensteinian concept of "form of life" to fashion. Accordingly, my aim in this paper is to show the resemblances between the Wittgensteinian concept of "form of life" and the ordinary practice of dressing, and to characterize thereby the aesthetic connotations of the practice of fashion. I will claim that the act of dressing everyday structurally employs a kind of language which can be defined as aesthetic — according to Wittgenstein's aesthetic account as presented during his Lectures in Cambridge in 1933 and 1938. Conclusively, I argue that in fashion (intended as everyday dressing) there is an interrelation between the grammar of language and socially encoded aesthetic responses: fashion sets new rules that define the meaning of dresses; these rules, in turn, are not eternal since they follow fashion's cyclical seasonality and personal good taste. Thus, anyone who daily commits to the practices of clothing can acquire sensitivity to the rules and train within the same "grammar of dressing."

Keywords: Fashion, Aesthetic Rules, Wittgenstein, Form of Life, Grammar

1 Introduction

Since the study of fashion has been undertaken within several disciplines over time, finding a clear and exact definition of the term "fashion" is a challenging matter. In fact, I believe there is no single definition of this term that is capable of explaining every distinctive aspect of the phenomenon. Take for example Kawamura's (2005, p. 43) definition, which takes fashion to be "a system of institutions, organizations,

groups, producers, events and practices." Although Kawamura's interpretation of fashion is quite precise and exhaustive, it is arguable that the term "fashion" carries even more significance than he allows, insofar as, say, fashion is also a general cultural or soft-cultural phenomenon.

Until recently, this ordinary dimension of fashion, as a practice embedded in our lives and cultures, has received comparatively little attention in philosophy. Yet there is reason to consider this ordinary dimension of fashion as an aesthetic phenomenon in modern times. Nowadays, a multitude of aesthetic elements are intertwined with our life (see Di Stefano 2012) and the routine of dressing and its ordinariness have acquired an aesthetic form: dressing ourselves daily is not only a practical task that we accomplish in order to be decent or attractive to other people, but it concerns aesthetic properties and values. In this paper, I aim at briefly introducing a philosophical account of the intrinsic aesthetic mechanisms behind our ordinary practice of dressing, inspired by Wittgenstein's later aesthetic considerations. To this end, in this first section I first say a bit more about the ordinary aesthetic dimension of clothing.

2 The Ordinary Aesthetic Dimension of Clothing

The ordinary dimension of fashion regards a routine that "remains with people over time" (Buckley and Clark 2012, p. 19). We experience fashion every day without noticing that we are experiencing it. Since "the everyday is beneath our attention (Sheringham 2006, p. 22)", dressing ourselves is perceived to be obvious, and thereby it escapes our notice.[1] In fashion the perception of everydayness is hard to locate since fashion is mostly identified with modernity, fastness, fleetingness. However, if we pay attention to how fashion works, we can easily see that fashion is able to create a conjunction between modernity (intended as velocity and variableness) and everydayness.

To be sure, fashion as a system is perceived as extraordinary, extravagant, uncommon, since it has to do with runways, luxury brands, seasonality and renewing trends: it aims at producing allure for its objects, pushing the mass to consume the most of what is created: "fashion provides products which are bought because of the

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[1] "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes.) [...] And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful" (Wittgenstein 1953, §129).

attractiveness of the meta-goods that are attached to them" (Meinhold 2013, p. 135). However, in truth fashion is both ordinary − in its everyday dimension − and extraordinary – insofar as the system of fashion sets the seasonality and the novelty. People constantly dress themselves and, in this way, depict their interpretation of fashion cycles. Accordingly, the question arises about the extent to which the practice of dressing daily is intertwined with aesthetics, and indeed about how such practice shapes our interaction with reality underneath the surface (see Matteucci 2016).

Regarding this latter issue, I believe that a philosophical consideration of the ordinary dimension of fashion is needed. Traditionally, fashion has been considered lacking in a solid theoretical basis inasmuch as it is treated as a "a bundle of problems that join together in an irregular manner" (Matteucci 2017, p. 13); luckily, in his *Philosophical Perspectives on Fashion* (2017), Matteucci has recently presented a comparison between four analytical aesthetic theories and fashion, showing that a systematic philosophical account of the phenomenon of fashion is not beyond our reach. In my view, the juxtaposition of Wollheim's (1968) aesthetic theory to fashion could be the best option to describe the ordinary aspect of fashion providing a new perspective of fashion in everyday life.

Outlining what is to be understood as art and as aesthetics, Wollheim (1968, §45, §46-49, §51-53, §55) compares art to a "form of life." Invoking the Wittgensteinian concept of "form of life" in aesthetics implies considering experiential and cultural practices in which the subjects involved express themselves by drawing a horizon of shared taste. However, expressing one's own horizon of taste does not mean establishing a static set of signs or indexes to represent things, following a semiotic *modus operandi*. On the contrary, drawing a horizon of taste is to bring out the physiognomy of things in a common way, one expressing familiarity. A system of familiar aesthetic relations, in this sense, is manifested through various forms of taste, such as art and, as I wish to show below, even fashion.

3 The Philosophical Investigations and the Lectures on Aesthetics

In order to apply the concept of "form of life" to fashion, it is essential first of all to introduce these very concepts and other correlated notions, with respect to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. As I started to hint above, to invoke the concept of 'form of life' is to appeal to a set of habits, intrinsic experiences, indeed

a language and its uses. This *Übereinstimmung* constitutes an intersubjective agreement situated in language, which is interpreted as a universal medium and as a place of consensus and possible constitution of experience in the world (Borutti 1993, p. 1). Language as a form of life is a condition of a possible community. The concept of "form of life" is tied by Wittgenstein to the concept of language (cf. Wittgenstein 1953, §19 − §23) and, consequently, to the concept of "language game" Language games, Wittgenstein says, are "objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language by way not only of similarities, but also of dissimilarities" (Wittgenstein 1953, §130). Language games are models that expand our way of looking at language and allow us to observe its multiplicity. By talking of "games", Wittgenstein intended to stress the importance of rules and *regularity*: "the rule may be an aid in teaching the game" (Wittgenstein 1953, §54). One can learn a rule either by observing a game or by playing it. In the latter case, a player can understand the rules of a game directly through practice.

In the case of language, this means that one can understand the meaning of different words in a language game and the specific rules governing their use, as the game allows access to a field of application of the words themselves (the use of the words in language). In fact, Wittgenstein affirms also that "without these rules, the word has no meaning, and if the rules change also the meaning changes" (Wittgenstein 1953, §552). By following the rule, one can understand, at the same time, what the rule is and how to apply it.

Furthermore, "also 'obeying a rule' is a practice", according to Wittgenstein. "And to *think* one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying a rule would be the same thing as obeying it" (Wittgenstein 1953, §202). In fact, to follow a rule is a public practice as it implies the recognition of the rule by people who follow the same rule: it requires approvals, disapprovals, gestures, orders that enforce the rule, and so on. According to Wittgenstein, these are "grammatical annotations" on the expression of following a rule that concerns habits upon which humans agree.

Now that I have briefly clarified Wittgenstein's notions of "form of life", "language game" and "rule", we can take into consideration his aesthetic conception. Concerning the latter, it is indispensable to mention Wittgenstein's *Lectures in 1930 − 33* and *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology, and Religious Belief*. There, Wittgenstein (1967, 1:1)

starts by investigating what could be meant by 'Aesthetics', claiming that the aesthetic field "is very big and entirely misunderstood." Wittgenstein primarily focused on the use of aesthetic expressions and their linguistic form, exploring how and where aesthetic judgments are employed in daily life. He counters traditional aesthetic discourse by paying attention to what happens in real life, claiming that "what we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (Wittgenstein 1953, § 48). The issue is localizing the source of what Wittgenstein called "aesthetic puzzlement": when we encounter certain artworks, we experience disquiet or aesthetic discomfort and, at the very same time, we feel confused on the source of our experience (Johannessen 2004, p. 17).

According to Wittgenstein, the concept of aesthetics deals with whether something is working or not, if it is pleasant or unpleasant, if it has the right expression or the right gesture – or not. In other words, aesthetics is about understanding whether something is right or wrong, and indeed about providing reasons for this. With respect to understanding something correctly in aesthetics, Wittgenstein (1967, 1:11-12) significantly mentions aesthetic rules. In fact, acquiring familiarity with a set of *aesthetic rules* is essential to grasp criteria of aesthetic correctness or aesthetic incorrectness. Consequently, the more accurate our knowledge of aesthetic rules is, the more appropriate our aesthetic judgments will be. In fact, as Wittgenstein claimed (1967, 1:15), aesthetic rules are vital to aesthetic judgments, for "if I hadn't learnt the rules, I wouldn't be able to make the aesthetic judgement. In learning the rules, you get a more and more refined judgement. Learning the rules actually changes your judgement."

The meaning of an aesthetic judgment, and indeed of all the aesthetic activities that surround it, can be found within the socio-cultural context in which the judgement is used, and thus, ultimately, in its role in our "way of living." In a way, our paradigms of aesthetic evaluation are as obscure or complicated as is their intertwining with our form of cultural life: they cannot be easily grasped by concepts. In fact, expressions of aesthetic judgement show complicated roles within the culture of a historic period. As Richard Shusterman affirms (1986, p. 99), "our aesthetic concepts are inextricably bound up in our form of life, in ways of living which change over history through social, technical and even theoretical developments". To understand and describe an aesthetic language game, it seems necessary to adopt aesthetic practices through which it is possible to develop aesthetic sensitivity.

Lastly, another essential element in Wittgenstein's conception of aesthetics is the notion of an aesthetic reaction, Aesthetic reactions involve expressions and gestures aimed at the object that prompts them. According to Wittgenstein (1967, 2:10), aesthetic reactions are of great significance in addressing the concept of aesthetics: in fact, through aesthetic reactions it is possible to go back to the reason – as opposed to the cause – which motivates our aesthetic reactions in the first place. The aim is trying to resolve our aesthetic puzzlement by giving aesthetic explanations. Indeed, as Wittgenstein (2016, 9:27) pointed out: "The question of Aesthetics is not: Do you like it? But, if you do, why do you?" Aesthetic impressions and reactions cannot be explained by external-causal matters: "There is a 'Why?' to aesthetic discomfort not a 'cause' to it" (Wittgenstein 1967, 2:19).

4 Dressing According to the Rules: The Aesthetic Form of Life

Keeping in mind what we have said so far, it is now possible to briefly delineate an aesthetic theory of fashion mechanism. My aim is to see if the ordinary dimensions of fashion can be compared with the Wittgensteinian perspective, or, equivalently, to evaluate the extent to which Wittgenstein's aesthetic conception can be fruitfully juxtaposed to fashion.

First, the act of dressing ourselves in our daily routine displays a series of aesthetic rules, according to which we match our fashion items. The rules concerning fashion are arbitrary because they are tied to the context and the historical period in which they develop: they are not eternal, for they follow a temporal cyclic evolution immanent to fashion itself. In fact, as Finnish philosopher Hanne Appelqvist (2019, p. 988) points out, "the rules can be changed and abandoned as we go along." Therefore, the meaning of clothes is linked to different ordinary contexts and so it depends upon the use we make of them: just like the meaning of a word can change according to its use and the context of its employment, so too a garment worn in a certain way or in a certain place and time can acquire different meanings. The act of dressing following the aesthetic rules that govern a certain context is an action – which ultimately constitutes a practice. Furthermore, aesthetic rules are mostly explained and understood by means of practice; in fact, precise training is required to dress properly. This training can be both *stricto sensu* practical, as we exercise inventing new matches of items, and practical in a wider sense, insofar as language is a practice, and we certainly employ language in aesthetic training, through

"expressions of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement (cf. Wittgenstein 1953, §208)."[2]

With exercise and training one can access the 'grammar of dressing' − i.e. the set of rules on how to dress − thanks to which it is possible to learn, on the one hand, how to apply the rules in the right context, and on the other hand, how to acquire a competent judgment on fashion-related matters.[3] In this way, we can become sensitive to the rules that govern the phenomenon of fashion. And the more we become sensitive to these rules, the more we will be likely to become experts in the field of fashion. By becoming familiar with the "grammar of dressing" it is also possible to create interpretative spaces of fashion, which contribute to creating new rules of and for fashion. The fashion experts, those who understand fashion, are the yardstick with which to compare oneself when one is trained in fashion.

Furthermore, fashion is also a source of aesthetic reactions: a shorter or longer dress can cause in us an uncomfortable reaction that can be expressed through a sign of disapproval (verbal or non-verbal), as well as through reactions of appreciation (cf. Wittgenstein 1967, 1:13). In our everydayness, the frequent use of a garment denotes the pleasure one feels towards it. In this sense, the use of a garment can express both the meaning of a dress in a certain context and the pleasure we feel for certain garments. Furthermore, we can express in fashion aesthetic judgments based on aesthetic criteria of correctness. In fact, when we make an aesthetic judgment in fashion, we refer to a set of more or less evident rules, indicating the correctness (or not) of certain items of clothing or accessories. But how do we know when a fashion's match is aesthetically correct or wrong?

Here, close to the aesthetic concept of correctness, we encounter another central Wittgensteinian notion, namely the notion of "clicking." A "click" might be configured as a perception of correctness that takes place when something has occurred (e. g.: a clock whose hands reach a perfectly symmetrical position). In fact, since the rules of fashion are conceptually difficult to grasp, the parameter of fashion-related judgments would also be difficult to understand if the "clicking" did not

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[2] Expressions such as "I love your skirt" or "This jacket suits you better than that one" or "This colour doesn't suit you" might be a reference to linguistic training.

[3] Sensitivity to the grammar of dressing is shown in our ability to discern which garment is best for each occasion. Once one acquires sensitivity to the rules and context, one will be more competent in giving fashion judgments, which are expressed with advice and suggestions.

come into play: it is nothing more than a last proof of the correct way to follow a certain rule.

There are, however, some problems with this aesthetic paradigm of fashion. The main one is that, on this account, the set of rules to which we appeal daily in dressing, and with which we express aesthetic judgments, are almost never explicit and clear. It is very difficult to draw up an exhaustive list of rules according to which to dress in everyday life and that may provide us with a stable criterion of aesthetic judgment, since understanding and describing the rules that govern fashion is almost as difficult as defining the use of expressions of aesthetic judgment. To have a chance to succeed in understanding aesthetic judgements, one needs to be familiar with the kind of aesthetic rules that govern fashion.

One solution to this problem could be to look at our analogy with language games: dressing up in fashion or dressing for a specific occasion is nothing more than engaging in different language games. Only by playing one game rather than another is it possible to understand the rules that guide it. In the same way, it is therefore possible to understand the rules and aesthetic reactions that guide fashion. In fact, the correctness of a certain dress for a given context only emerges when two people play the same aesthetic language game and can therefore assess what is right or wrong in clothing. By sharing the same language game of fashion, it is possible to grasp the rules that govern it, therefore attaining an ever more refined understanding of how to dress properly on a given type of occasion.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, considering what we have discussed so far, it seems that the combination of Wittgenstein's aesthetic-linguistic paradigm with fashion can work. As a matter of fact, the meaning of a dress can change depending on the context; the rules that fashion follows are not eternal, and therefore reconcile with the properties of cyclicality and the ephemeral being of fashion. Thus, the meaning of a dress will also change as the rules concerning how to dress change. This set of rules constitutes a grammar proper to fashion, or a "grammar of dressing." Further, the practice of following a rule is consolidated thanks to a mimetic training through which it is possible to acquire sensitivity to the rules, and thereby to become experts with respect to the rule. Since these rules are not eternal, it is also possible to modify some of them,

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giving space to the need for differentiation and expression of one's identity, while at the same time not disregarding criteria of correctness or incorrectness concerning the way of dressing. We can therefore say that fashion is a constellation of aesthetic language games – interpreted as sets of linguistic and cultural practices that constantly intertwine, which form an aesthetic language with a grammar of its own.

Finally, a form of life organizes the set of human practices in cultural and historical communities, and fashion could be one of these historical and cultural practices, though it structures or organizes itself according to its own, time-bound aesthetic rules. In this sense, fashion could be called an "aesthetic form of life." An aesthetic form of life acts as a shared horizon in which mutual understanding is possible and in which a sense of belonging to a sociocultural community is formed. In the same way, fashion as an aesthetic form of life draws horizons of taste shared by the community, in which to recognize oneself aesthetically, creating a common aesthetic sense in which to move in the daily contexts of life.

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CHAPTER 8

Fashion as a Cultural Intertext
Michaela Malíčková

Abstract: In accordance with Gilles Lipovetsky (2002), this paper explores fashion, its current form and functions, as a consequence of the development of the modern Western world. Although the author points out different possibilities for the discursive reading of fashion in the cultural space, emphasis is put on the discourse led by the rise of an individualized subject, which is a symptom of modern democratic societies. Within this frame, fashion is a proof of individualistic tendencies and autonomous subjectivity, which enable it to function as an important tool of self-expression for both the individual and diverse social communities. In this context, fashion clothes – functioning as a costume – claim authenticity as well as other qualities that strengthen the differentiating possibilities as well as capabilities on the axis me/us, he/you, own/other. Moreover, the language of fashion has been influenced by globalization in recent decades, which encourages the emergence of culturally layered texts and the circulation of various kinds of cultural borrowings. With regard to this issue, the paper focuses on the Japanese street fashion 'Harajuku' as a representative example of what will be considered as an intertextually-coded individualized subcultural costume.

Keywords: Fashion, Intertext, Intercultural Loan, Self-expression, Costume

1 Introduction. Fashion as a Text in Discursive Reading(s)

Clothing appears, now more than ever, as a statement with claims to autonomy, which manifests itself in relation to the weakening of many of clothing's original functions. Its autonomy does not in any way imply that clothing has ceased to exist in the space of cultural, social and economic relations, but the authority of these relations is significantly smaller than in previous developmental periods of fashion. As far as the 20th and in a natural continuance 21st century are concerned, clothing liberates itself from the dictates of taste of the social elite (royal court, nobility, bourgeoisie), while its economic accessibility is increasing. The

obligation of clothing to function as an instrument of identification of social hierarchy is weakened, and its cultural identity is loosened as a result of its saturation with multicultural codes. If we want to correctly evaluate the semantic and value potential of clothing, we need to ask how it actually functions in the cultural space.

Fashion – not just clothing, which is the primary focus of this paper – works as a semiotic system and can be read as a text, i.e. a syntagmatic chain (formed by T-shirt, skirt, stockings, sneakers, cap, jacket) of paradigmatic elements (such as sneakers as one particular shoe style). Clothing presents a statement with a certain degree of intentionality, conceptuality, complexity and semantic value. As a cultural text, it responds to the developmental dynamics of other cultural texts, which it can interact with. Therefore, it appears useful to think of fashion as of an intertext, a text within a network of other texts, and to ask what cultural texts are of interest to us in relation to the examination of the text-forming units of fashion. What discourses[1] organize cultural (inter)texts into semantically comprehensible units? From this point of view there are several discourses that come into play, so that in this paper, we will briefly explore fashion in culture as a space of historical dynamics; national or ethnic dynamics; religiosity; gender perspectives; and the rise of the individualized subject.

Historical dynamics can be exemplified by the presence of Elizabethan elements in contemporary fashion. The characteristic qualities of Elizabethan fashion were defined for subsequent generations at the end of the 16th century by Queen Elizabeth I. Their use, often spectacular, can be found in the collections of Paul Gautier, Vivienne Westwood, Martin Margiela and Sarah Burton.[2] Although their motivation often resides in the return to the golden age of England and the homage to the queen as a fashion icon, i.e. in the strengthening of the authority of the dominant image of a historical person and time, re-interpretative moments, which demystify this image or mystify unofficial

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[1] Discourse is an unconscious order that crosses various structures of cultural space and organizes its particular units/elements in relations which create these structures. The discursive reading determines the viewpoint and the key to the selection of elements which are subsequently put in order or rather layered in(to) a meaning-creating whole. As a result, there is not one single fashion and just one single history of fashion, but there are several 'fashions' as well as several 'histories' of fashion. Discursive reading is always a cultural investigation, which can use semiological analysis, as it is in this case.

[2] On the echo of Elizabethan era in fashion see more in [online]. [Accessed: 15.9.2020]. Available at: https://www.crfashionbook.com/fashion/a27227943/elizabethan-fashion-runway-designers/.

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versions or motifs, are also present. For example, Burton created a collection for the British fashion house Alexander McQueen for the autumn/winter season of 2013 – 2014 conceived as an allusion to Elizabeth I's life. The more intimate optics used in the collection highlights primarily the mystifying moments of the queen's personal story. The designer plays an ambivalent semantic game with motifs of chastity, purity, seduction, power, freedom and non-freedom, which can be understood thanks to the knowledge of historical codes.

If the texts of fashion are considered as part of the space of national or ethnic dynamics, one can observe the relationship of modern clothing to the folklore tradition, or the manifestations of folklore in it. In the 1940s, for example, the growing interest in folk art in the Czech environment was also reflected in clothing culture. Ľudmila Kybalová states in one of the volumes of *Dějiny odívaní* (History of Clothing, 2009) that, in addition to efforts to preserve the purity of folk costume, there was also a trend recommending the use of folk costume elements in urban clothing. This could be exemplified by the artificially created garment (the so-called 'šohajka') using cuts and decorative elements of folk clothing (Kybalová 2009, p. 155). The tendency to revive ties with traditional folk culture is also evident in the contemporary period. Part of the subcultural aesthetics of hipsters, for example, resides in the revitalization of folklore elements in the context of modern life, often in an urban environment. Examining the relationship between hipster aesthetics and folklore with an emphasis on the Moravian region, the Czech aesthetician Lenka Lee states (2019, p. 47):

> Influenced by this vivid folklore tradition, the hipster culture adopted and implemented some folklore influences, elements and motives. We can see it especially in tattoos, fashion and food. I think that this connection between hipsters and folklorism mirrors the phenomena mentioned above – the hipsters preserving the experience of the former generations, the romantic (and naive) yearning for the good old days and the vivid folklore tradition in the Moravian region.

The mixing of chronotopes symptomatic for different generations, social and economic environments, and the like, required, in addition to a nostalgic, loving absorption of folklore elements, playful-ironic codes that release the original ties to folklore elements. This aesthetic openness allows cultural loans in aesthetic practice and stresses, above all, the problem of authenticity, but also of originality, measure, stylization and, in borderline cases, even of intellectual property as a possible ethical

issue in professional discussion. Other discursive readings of fashion can also be discussed: the tension between the covered and uncovered body could be meaningful in a culture as with respect to religiosity, while the weakening of gender distinctions culminating in unisex fashion is relevant in terms of gender codes. As foreshadowed, here my analysis is guided by taking into account the rise of the individualized subject which is to a high extent responsible for the existence of modern democratic societies in the Western world.

2 Fashion as a Tool for Asserting the Subject

The notion of an autonomous subject, progressively arisen over the centuries in the tradition of European civilization, represents the precondition (and consequence at the same time) for modern societies born in the foundations of post-war Western Europe and America. As a point of this development, the 20th century's autonomous subject relates to a completely new sort of experience, described by Lipovetsky (2002),[3] in connection with fashion, as a consequence of the development of the modern Western world in the last phase of democracy.

In the rise of an autonomous subjectivity open to the development of critical and tolerant consciousness, fashion demonstrates the role of seduction, transience and even frivolity. In modern democratic societies, unlike clothing/habit in primitive societies, fashion requires a certain limitation of the influence of the past (and tradition per se) and devalues to some extent the social order. Fashion sanctifies imagination, originality, and aesthetic initiative. It demands an autonomous aesthetic logic, which is absent, for example, in clothing that is only varied in the historical perspective (for example, the Japanese kimono), i.e. it creates only another long-standing collective norm (Lipovetsky 2002, p. 35).

Strictly speaking, fashion did not appear until the 14th century for several reasons. Also importantly, there is a clear distinction between men's and women's clothing which lasts until the 20th century, and at the same time, change (as a cultural fact in general) is no longer a secondary, rare and accidental phenomenon. It is turned into a permanent rule of pleasure in higher society. Volatility starts to function as one of the constitutive structures of mundane life (Lipovetsky 2002, p. 39). The

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[3] Here and in the following, the page number refers to the Czech translation of Lipovetsky's *L'empire de l'éphémère. La mode et son destin dans les sociétés modernes* (Lipovetsky 2002).

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autonomy of fashion, however, resides in the fact that it creates tension between the norm and personal taste, between the conformism of the whole and the free choice of the details, between mimeticism (in the overall structure of clothing) and individualism in detail. In this tension, a space is created in which fashion becomes an expression of a free subject and individual initiative, while it is historically moving towards a great paradox clarified further.

3 Clothing as a Costume

In accordance with the discourse determined by the individualized subject, in this section, I further ponder on the role of clothing as costume. Here I do not mean just clothing as a set of elements typical of a particular country, historical period or specific activity. I mean a theatrical or carnival costume, the wearing of which evokes a role. A role requires a costume, despite the fact that individualized clothing largely resigns from the role of a stratifier of social hierarchy. With regard to this long-standing role of fashion, Lipovetsky (2002) states that the scheme of social differentiation, which has long been considered the key to decoding the essence of fashion, does not satisfactorily explain the logic of fashion instability. In his view, values that encouraged novelty and the expression of individuality played an important role in promoting the fashion system of the Late Middle Ages.

In more than six centuries, the position of fashion in society has changed dramatically. It no longer represents just an aesthetic congruence or an embellishment of collective life, but has reached the culmination of historical development and transformed society into its image (Lipovetsky 2002, pp. 13-15). It is in connection with the relationship of fashion to social space that the above-mentioned paradox needs to be explained. According to Lipovetsky, the originality and ambivalence of fashion lies in the fact that it functions as a factor of social discrimination and a clear sign of social superiority; however, at the same time it represents a significant driver of the democratic revolution.

On the one hand, the originality and ambivalence of fashion has disrupted the established distinctions and has allowed the qualities to be brought closer and confused, but on the other hand, it has reintroduced – albeit in a different way – the age-old logic of ostentatious display of power, the shine of a symbol of domination and social otherness. The paradox of fashion is that the ostentatious exhibition of hierarchical

symbols contributed to the movement towards equality in appearance (Lipovetsky 2002, pp. 58-59). Fashion clothing thus gained the most precious of its competencies: it became a medium of self-expression. The term self-expression is here understood as a total sum of "typical expressive aspects by which a person (group) reveals their identity and the understanding of reality" (Plesník et al. 2008, p. 45). What is one's own is transposed into a style that is concretized in the dynamics between stylization and authenticity, or in Lipovetsky's language, between mimeticism and individualism. What is authentic is a guarantee of sincerity, convincingness, authenticity of expression and individuality is its highest value. Authentic codes usually assume spontaneity that guarantees minimal corrections. Individualized clothing corrects authentic codes in two poles of stylization to varying degrees. It either hyperbolizes them in an effort to strengthen the individuality of the costume or weakens them in favour of certain types of conventions, which the wearer usually chooses voluntarily. S/he is not subject to formal authorities, but natural authorities can change his/her individualized costume (self-expression of myself) into a group costume (self-expression of ourselves).

The matter of authentic codes mentioned above might be exemplified by a subcultural costume in which the individual self-expression intersects with identification with a group. The weakening of the self in favour of 'us' happens not only with a clear intention to confirm some communal identity but also to strengthen the self's uniqueness, its individuality in relation to 'they', to make visible the dynamics between inside and outside.

Individualized clothing, especially when it represents a subcultural identity, functions analogously as a costume. And not just because it is so intended, but mainly because it is so perceived. It is a conceptualized medium of information transfer, a tool of semantization and evaluation. In this sense, the costume functions as an extension of the mask, the essence of which I understand in agreement with Vít Erban (2010), as a means of becoming an identity, while the principle of masking (including costume) is based on bodily paradox, i.e. the ambivalence of our bodily experience. It moves between our inner (individual) self and the outer (social) self, and the mask/costume helps us to fix the chosen identity at a given moment (Erban 2010, pp. 134-135). The costume is in this perspective the result of awareness of the choice of identity, and thus the originally spontaneous experience can be ritualized thanks to aestheticization and stylization.

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A costume is able to function as a medium of self-expression. In this sense, it is both a personalized garment and a tool for identifying with the role that its wearer chooses. It is a mediator of personal emotional comfort, also an instrument of social self-confidence, it is an instrument of power. Such a costume is very personal, claiming authenticity, originality and other qualities that strengthen the distinctive communication competences on the axis of binary oppositions: I-he, we-you, inside-outside, own-other. The costume is radicalized clothing, because its main task is to express, to demonstrate an aesthetic attitude. It is not only an expression of taste preferences but also of worldviews, including a possible ideological perspective. The costume, as a medium of self-expression, reveals what the wearer currently considers to be his/her own in the cultural tradition – the costume expresses an attitude and creates: spatial-temporal coordinates of being here and now (it creates synchronous bonds); spatial-temporal bonds in cultural memory (it constructs diachronic bonds). This is done through a communication situation which has the nature of a dialogue.

The concept of the dialogical nature of culture, as presented by Jurij Lotman (1994) in his elaboration of Mikhail M. Bakhtin's theses, will help create a contextual field in which all considerations about fashion take place. I see fashion not only as a synecdochical part of culture, but also from the perspective of its defining logic, which is characterized by the dynamics of mimeticism and individualism and tension between innovation and convention. Lotman (1994) points out that culture is based on at least two communication systems, which do not seek only the most authentic (i.e. the most accurate) transmission of information, but also the creation of new information. He uses the communication situation of a mother and a child to illustrate the natural formation of the laws of communication exchange, in which two subjects are interested in exchanging information stored in differently coded systems. It contains a dynamic alternation of statements, breaks (silence, listening), imitation, translation. It is a situation defined by a double transmission, by an orientation towards a foreign word and an effort to include a foreign word in one's own language (Lotman 1994, pp. 53-55). Thus, a new language is created as a productive encounter of several communication situations, not as a result of a compromise, but as a confirmation of the desire to understand (to lead a dialogue) and therefore to reformulate. Lotman concretizes Bakhtin's[4] idea of dialogue, which precedes language, in

[4] Within the frame of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin's thoughts, the concept of a dialogue is basic, crucial and recurrent. See more in Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays* (1981/1975).

a cultural space filled with many speech genres and methodologically supports this notion of cultural exchange as a parallel between the polyglottic mechanism of cultural semiotics and the two-hemisphere structure of individual consciousness. The key to understanding resides in the alternating activity of competing types of consciousness, one of which is focused on marginal desemantization and free play of signs and the other on their equally marginal semantization and connection with external reality (Lotman 1994, p. 37).

Processes analogous to those that take place between cerebral hemispheres, alternation of hemisphere dominance, states of dynamic changes or, on the contrary, of attenuation and peace, can be also identified in the cultural space. Just as the exchange of stimuli and information between hemispheres ensures a smooth emotional and intellectual functioning of a human being in the world, permanent dialogue in the cultural space is the guarantor of its functionality. Dynamic periods are the result of a dominant update of one (right- or left-hemispherical) tendency, while the other brakes reciprocally. Culture then appears to us as monolithic: we tend to perceive it in its entirety and name it according to its dominant manifestations (e. g. Gothic, Baroque, etc.). The necessary polystructure then moves to the periphery (as an underground culture for example) and forms a dynamic reserve for future stages of development. The dialogue in the cultural space does not stop, it rustles along the edges, languages overlap, transcend, mix, and gradually dissolve the seeming integrity of the dominant culture. The formation of a new language is a result of the disruption of the existing dominant cultural order, which is desirable since it prevents stagnation and regression. Although the exchange of information can also mean a significant weakening for specific manifestations of non-dominant culture (subcultural aesthetics, peripheral themes, value deviations of minorities, etc.), it is regenerative and revitalizing for culture in general.

4 Harajuku Style - Japanese Street Fashion

Harajuku, Japanese street fashion, can be regarded as a representative space of intense intercultural dialogue. Undoubtedly, clothing functions here as a costume, i.e., as a demonstrated materialized desire for an aestheticized statement. Harajuku was continuously mapped by the Japanese photographer Shoichi Aoki in the monthly magazine *Fruits* from 1997 to 2017. Thanks to this professional focus and systematic documentation, harajuku can be now regarded not only as a fashion

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wave, but as a distinctive cultural phenomenon, even as a subculture. Although subcultural identity is often associated with a symptomatic appearance of its members, clothing rarely serves as the main defining element. Undoubtedly, harajuku can be labelled as a subculture of fashion. When Lipovetsky (2002, p. 58) states that the style of clothing does not only serve as an indicator of social difference, but its function is ritual, there is no better example than harajuku. It represents ritualized seduction in the whole complexity of semantic possibilities – from socializing, through erotic aspect, from power to a purely poetic play of loose semiocity. A literally fascinating internal tension is created by the chronotopic uniqueness of this subcultural scene that ties to a specific time and space, in relation to its globalized (spatially, diachronically eradicated) aesthetic codes.

The name itself reveals its spatial ties to a city district of Tokyo, Japan, known as the centre of youth culture (predominantly in its teens), with galleries, museums, cafes and especially boutiques presenting everything from the work of new domestic fashion designers, through cosplay costumes to luxury collections of world fashion icons. To a large extent this part of the city functioned as a magnificent pedestrian zone with a myriad of attractive streets; a change in the organization of transport a few years back partially affected the atmosphere of the place, which may be one of the reasons that weakened the subcultural manifestations associated with harajuku fashion.

It is worth mentioning that the scene chronicler Shoichi Aoki at some point quit the publishing of the print magazine *Fruits*. The media often linked the end of the golden age of Japanese street fashion with commercial reasons, the success of clothing chains with cheaper clothing and with adapting elements of alternative, often original DIY fashion, to a fashion of commercial nature. Harajuku street fashion concretizes the dynamics between the mainstream and the periphery in a specific way. It is usually the mainstream, dominant culture that draws from the periphery, colonizes it, and thus revitalizes its language (themes, values, etc.). From the beginning, harajuku has drawn on the codes of global popular culture, which is defined primarily (but not exclusively) by the American or Euro-American environment. In our cultural context, much of it can be considered the culture of the centre. In Japan, however, many popular culture forms are peripheral influences, and so in my optics there is an inverted coding of both the mainstream-periphery relationship and the exotic-domestic relationship.

The absorption of Western cultural codes in Japan does not have a long tradition. Japan has long resisted the seduction (and the pressure) of economic contacts with foreign countries. Only in the second half of the 19th century, the United States managed to break their economic isolation. The Japanese welcomed the news of the foreign Western world, one that they considered progressive, with immense interest. Japan has started a period of the so-called double life at that time that lasts to this day. Western clothing influenced men's fashion first, in women's fashion the kimono resisted European dresses longer, since it was more suitable for the slender figures of Japanese women, and it was more comfortable and more suitable for Japanese interiors (Winkelhöfer 1999, pp. 222-226). On the one hand, the 20th century brought a more significant cultural mixing to Japanese culture, but on the other hand, it introduced uniforms in some organizational units of social space. This change also affected the school environment at various levels of study, and although in the second half of the 20th century the obligation to wear a school uniform was abolished in many schools, culturally the uniform remained associated mainly with the iconic image of the schoolgirl. The school uniform thus identifies the teenager primarily as a member of the group. However, as Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter recall in *The Rebell sell* (published in English in 2004),[5] the uniform serves a dual function as a legitimizing symbol of membership. On the one hand, it distinguishes the members from other groups and the rest of the society, on the other hand, it introduces conformity within the group. The uniform is thus paradoxically elitist and democratic at the same time. Moreover, it often provides an important and desirable social distance, such as a monk's robe or a nurse's uniform (Heath and Potter 2012, pp. 174-178).

In its deepest essence, a uniform contradicts the complexity of the subcultural costume, although both are a tool for demonstrating social identity. A uniform (like the army uniform) often aims to create an identity that Nathan Joseph calls a total uniform. This reduces the individual to a member of the system with clearly valid norms; it is perceived as a representative of an authoritarian, conformist, or repressive society, and naturally evokes a protest in various countercultural movements (Heath and Potter 2012, p. 174). The subcultural costume always takes into account the individual in the group, while the very tension between uniformity and individualism

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[5] Here and in the following, the page number refers to the Czech translation of *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed* (Heath and Potter 2012).

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represents a legible signal of many relationships and values of a particular subculture. The costume of a skinhead is much closer to the uniform than the hippie costume, which is highly individualized, and this is probably why we find its revitalized versions in Japanese street fashion.

Harajuku style, although externally perceived and reflected as a compact phenomenon, focuses on an individualized style in which several symptom groups can be identified (Lolita, Gyaru, Ganguro, Kogal, Decora, Visual kei, Angura kei, Cult party kei, Dolly kei, Fairy kei, Peeps, Kimono style, etc.). Thanks to the accumulation and condensation of a number of diverse cultural stimuli, motifs, stylistic elements and expressive qualities, it functions as a laboratory of intercultural relations. The Harajuku costume combines elements of traditional Japanese clothing (such as geta clogs and tabi socks) with typical elements of American culture (cowboy hat, leather rock'n'roll jacket) in an often seemingly completely free combination of partial motifs. Many costumes are more compact in terms of their expressiveness and even on the paradigmatic axis they choose details that present predominantly, for example, the Victorian era, often iconizing it in direct relation to the image of an innocent schoolgirl, thus creating a Victorian version of Lolita. Although members of the Harajuku scene do not use their clothing to express demonstrated resistance, they are not a revolting counterculture, but rather a culture of possibility (or possibilities); their subcultural costume certainly does not refuse the subversive potential of style, which Dick Hebdige (2002, p. 26) sees as a natural part of subcultural character. The used multicultural features acquire a symbolic potential, their value naturally multiplies in the eclectic costume, while their formal sign is often strengthened at the expense of semantics. The processes of appropriation of cultural phenomena also involve the risk of a high degree of formalization, which may lead to the emptying of their original meanings, or to their complete dissolution in the new context.

However, the circulation of cultural loans – in the form of paraphrases, pseudo-citations, allusions, systemic continuity, aesthetic abbreviations and the like –, can mean the re-emergence of the forgotten, the hidden, as well as its revitalization and appreciation in new cultural chronotopes and especially in currently experienced existential ties. I am convinced that they legitimize the right to cultural loans in an individualized costume, in which adoption and appropriation of the other is a manifestation of a desire to understand. Moreover, it is often

used as evidence of a willingness to understand or comprehend in itself. The right to a cultural loan is confirmed by the very authentic processes of semantization, which re-evaluate it, literally sanctifying its meaning existentially.

5 Conclusion

Complications connected with the right to a cultural loan begin where the individualized costume ends. If one is interested in its use in the costume from an authorial collection, one has to address it considering the degree of originality that such a fashion collection, as a text with artistic potential, will have. One must consider the extent of authentic appreciation against the trivial principle of making something more special and exotic, and observe its transformations in the processes of consumption. One can participate in its meaningful appropriation and prevent it from an autotelic expropriation. Thanks to the permanent circulation of cultural loans in various cultural environments, in the most diverse speech genres described by Bakhtin, the semantic layers of intercultural loans multiply and their value is affected. Fashion is therefore a process of a natural cultural exchange, the results of a dialogue, which does not know the limits of regions, nationalities, ethnicities, and applies the rules of natural dialogue of two people who try to understand each other.

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The Aesthetics of Suffering or Being Enchanted by Van Gogh's Ear

Andrej Démuth, Slávka Démuthova

Abstract: The paper focuses on an analysis of the aesthetic appeal of suffering in the visual arts and literature with special regard to the problem of self-harm and its visual representation. The text is based on the assumption that suffering is part of our everyday life. However, the way it is expressed may lead to something that is not everyday – it is addressed to others – to try to change their perceptions and actions. On the contrary, self-torture or self-sacrifice is, in principle, considered to be uncommon, and their temporal domain is rather non-everydayness. This non-everydayness has attracted some attention from the days of Attis, through Christ, to the ear of van Gogh. Although self-harm and self-torture may and often have in principle a hidden and intimate character, they are nevertheless addressed to a certain audience that is supposed to see them and whom they affect. The paper considers selected reasons for the aesthetic appeal of (self-) suffering and focuses on the visual rhetoric of bodily self-harm as a means to make the inner world of the individual visible. It analyses some forms of self-harm, along with their aesthetic presentation in everyday life, as well as in an artistic environment. The authors thus aim to clarify the attractiveness of the suffering that is displayed as well as the various forms of the aesthetics of suffering and self-harm, which has both historical and modern forms.

Keywords: Self-harm, Suffering, Aesthetics, Kintsugi, van Gogh

1 Suffering in Art

Pain and suffering are undoubtedly an integral part of our day-to-day lives and almost everyone experiences them. We tend to shy away from pain rather than seeking it out, and we look for various ways to avoid it, or – if it does occur – not to feel it. Yet, in art, the situation is usually reversed. Pain and hardship are frequently used in artistic renderings and are a way for the artist to reach their audience. There are several examples of artworks that depict pain and suffering, starting with the

ancient myths and depictions of hardship (e.g. Attis, Prometheus, or the birth of tragedy as a dramatic genre), through the pain and suffering of the journeys and trials of the ancient heroes or heroes from the Middle Ages – especially, for example, the pain of Christ (e.g. Grünewald's paintings) and his followers, of martyrs and penitents, through the various paintings by Memling and Bosch with depictions of suffering in hell (based on motifs from Dante's description) to various forms of torture, depictions of sadism and satanism, or a penchant for cruelty; but also personal suffering due to the loss of a loved one, guilt, anxiety and depression (e.g. the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, the drowning of Ophelia, etc., Dürer's *Melancolia*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*), to modern expressions of suffering, which are represented by, for example, *The Scream* by Munch, the works of Dalí (e.g. *The Face of War*) or Francis Bacon. What all these works of art mainly share is their expressive and non-traditional portrayal of something which somehow naturally forms a part of our everyday lives (pain and suffering). However, these artworks render it in a non-traditional and uncommon way. So, where is the magic, the attractiveness and the charm in the artistic depiction of pain and suffering? Is it only the way in which they are depicted and their non-traditional context?

One answer to this question is the assumption that artworks that are tragic and depict pain speak to us through their ability to touch on our empathy and sympathy. Experience shows that when we encounter situations in which someone else experiences deep emotions, most people are able to detect this emotional state and very often sympathise with the feelings they perceive in the individual or individuals. The reason is that people are social beings, not only in Aristotle's understanding, but also from a Darwinian perspective. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1972), Darwin showed that the experience of various somatic states, including emotions, is of great importance to humans and other social animals. Emotions play an important role, not only in the sense that they make certain, very important, contents from the environment of Antonio Damasio's somatic markers available to us (Damasio 1994; in a different context Husserl 2009; Démuth 2019), but especially as this experience is manifested externally, which means that the experience does not trap the individual in the world of their feelings, but rather the opposite: an important part of the emotional message is devoted to others, not only to themselves. The reason for this mainly lies in the evolutionary advantage of this behaviour.

The somatic state experienced by an individual is not only an expression of the optimisation of the body of the organism in terms of the prepared reaction (Ekman and Friesen 1975), but it is also expressed outwardly, which makes us 'readable'. Anger is a sign of being ready to attack and is closely linked with an expression of intimidation or a warning to the other person to stop their irritating behaviour. Conversely, a smile is an expression of openness, of being relaxed and 'the truce of weapons' (the weapon being our teeth – we reveal them as a way of showing that we do not intend to use them), although this could be an insult in certain contexts. The outward expression of emotions encourages the possible cooperation between individuals, to achieve a higher number of overall benefits as a consequence of the cooperative behaviour (Démuth 2013, 2019). At the same time, it is a means for the creation of connections and fostering of relationships (as a form of reward and punishment). In this spirit, for example Michael Trimbe (2012) speaks of crying and tears, Edmund T. Rolls (2005) of the social aspect of emotions and Nico Fridja and Batja Mesquite (1994) generally mention the social role of emotions.

There are many ways in which we learn to understand the emotional expressions of others. It is highly demanding to comprehend some expressions, considering how complex, mixed and socially conditioned they are. On the other hand, other expressions seem to have evolutionary origins, and how we understand them is determined by species-specific sedimented experience. Giacomo Rizzolatti's theory of mirroring neurons can also be interpreted in this spirit. Based on a series of trials and observations, Rizzollati and Laila Craighero (2004) concluded that we have a specific type of neurons which mirror the activity of the observed subject. This manifests itself, for example, in the phenomenon that when we see someone with their tongue out, the neurons associated with the control of poking our tongue out are activated. If we see a frowning face, we also tend to frown. The existence of these neurons is genetically determined, and they have evolved because they facilitate the understanding of certain social activities. Therefore, the sight of a sad face activates the plethora of brain cells and centres that are associated with sadness, starting with the activation of the mirroring neurons. This may be why it is usually quite naturally expected that the sight of a person who is suffering will provoke sympathy and an effort to participate, not only for social reasons. Understanding the emotions of others (empathy) allows us to share emotions – to sympathise (Démuth 2019). The link between the sensory and motor centres in the brain is bilateral. As demonstrated by

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Daniel Kahneman (2011), the activation of facial muscles in the specific configuration of an emotional expression may activate the experience of the feeling itself. Seeing or imagining suffering leads to sympathy, which forms a bond between the perceived and the perceiver.

The second neurocognitive theory used in the interpretation of the attractiveness of suffering and therefore the possible relationship between liking and pain is the theory of common neural centres (especially the amygdala, pallidium, and nucleus accumbens) and pathways. Pain and pleasure use the same dopamine and opioid systems (the reward system), and as such operate along similar principles. From Spinoza or Descartes, it has been assumed that these feelings are in opposition to each other (or are the opposite poles of the same continuum), or that they at least work in opposition. But there are also theories suggesting a completely different 'architecture' of suffering and pain. One way or another, most types of pain activate the same structures and systems, which are active when we like something or when we experience pleasant feelings. This partially explains why it is possible to combine pleasure and pain in several, not only masochist, feelings. Suffering and pain may excite us, especially if we do not directly experience them, but only observe them in someone else. What they especially have in common is the rise in excitement and tension and the attention that is drawn by the experience itself.

An example of this understanding is the analogy of the beauty of pain with the attractiveness of fear and anxiety, as described by Rudolf Starý in his essay *Medúsa v novější době kamenné* (Medusa in the Modern Stone Age, 1994). Starý realises that according to Greek mythology, one of the Gorgons, Medusa, had such a terrifying and horrendous face that anyone who saw her turned to stone in terror. The only way to kill her was to cut off her head, just as Perseus did as per his instructions from Pallas Athena. Not only did she tell him how to do it, but she also gave him a metal shield and a sword to use to do it. The terror of seeing Medusa with his own eyes would kill him. Therefore, the only way to see her safely was to look at her reflection in the shield given to him by the goddess of wisdom. This may be why many people adore the fear and dread that come from otherwise safe situations. We have been listening to terrifying fairy tales since we were children; watching thrillers or horror movies we experience a certain tension, but mostly we are safe and have a real certainty that we are not physically in danger. We enjoy watching terrifying scenes and illusionary danger. Yet, we do not enjoy undergoing real danger and risk.

The situation is similar in respect to pain and suffering. If we feel it indirectly or if we have it under control, it does not have to represent a danger or something undesirable, quite the opposite. It draws attention, it activates, but does not kill. It is the sight of Medusa's face through the shield of Pallas Athena. At the same time, it is interesting that it is difficult to tear your gaze away from pain and suffering, horror and fright, just as from the appearance of Medusa. Although ugliness and suffering are not usually enjoyable, the terror of their reflection does not directly harm us. The tabloid press and other media are well-aware of this fact and exploit our never-ending interest in, and the attractiveness of, the unhappiness, pain and suffering of others. Even readers who seek these tragedies realise this.

> We are – as Marlow said last night, quoting Damien Hirst – a 'trauma culture', expecting to watch an artist's suffering play out on canvas or stage or screen – and relating to them through it (Barnett 2008).

The reason we are sensitive to the pain and suffering of others lies in the fact that they may be giving us an important signal – they might signal danger. If someone is injured, we could be injured too. Hence, we do not usually ignore someone crying, tears or pain. A pain-soaked, screwed up face does not resemble its bearer, quite the opposite – it is the face of Medusa and is intended to communicate something unusual and uncommon. As such, it points to the extraordinary situation of the sufferer.

The suffering of others thus draws attention to our own fragility and vulnerability, and not only in the Heideggerian sense that only the awareness of our own death or injury reveals to us the limitations of our own existence. The perception of the suffering of others also draws our attention to our coexistence in the sense of being with others. Van Gogh's madness charms us by its extraordinary nature, but also by a certain universal nature of the principle behind it. It is an unusual act, regardless whether it was the result of a failed romance, creative madness, the symptoms of drug withdrawal, depression, or schizophrenia. But equally, it is something that each of us could experience. All of us are occasionally unhappy, depressed, deceived or hurt. All of us know physical and mental suffering and hardship, which is why we are also concerned by the situation. But not everyone feels the intensity of the experience to the same extent; the experience does not lead all of us to take such a radical and unusual step as van Gogh. This makes him a unique example. And uniqueness is attractive.

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According to certain theories, the suffering of artists such as Van Gogh, Goya, Ella Fitzgerald or Amy Winehouse is not only unique in its intensity but also in its specific nature. Some scholars even believe that the originality and artistic uniqueness of these important artists lies in their distinctive experience of their own hardships (Richardson et al. 2017). Although psychological and neuroanatomical studies may reveal certain specific links between the disorders or personality characteristics of individual artists, we believe that it was not the uniqueness of their perception and experience, but rather the originality and precision of their expression of those feelings and states that made them exceptional and glorious.

Winfried Menninghaus and his colleagues at the *Frankfurt Institute of Empirical Aesthetics* have, for a long time, been researching the role of pain, hardship and suffering in the artistic process and in the perception of art. They found out that the greater the number of domains an artwork affects, the greater the effect it has on us. In other words: art strikes us not only by being well-crafted and well-presented – beautiful and original – but also by touching our deepest and existential emotions and feelings. "Sadness and joy turned out to be the two preeminent emotions involved in episodes of being moved" (Menninhaus et al. 2015). Thus, works that produced mixed emotions, or rather touched one's perception through more than one mental domain, left a stronger aesthetic impression on the observer. In addition, they also found out that so-called negative emotions, which include pain and suffering, play an important role not only in drama (far beyond tragedy), but they are significantly more effective than any other emotion in art in general. The basic explanation for this statement is that "negative emotions have been shown to be particularly powerful in securing attention, intense emotional involvement, and high memorability – and hence precisely in what artworks strive for" (Menninghaus et al. 2017a, p. 1).

It may sound like a paradox, but the reason why we enjoy art that evokes mixed or mostly negative emotions, according to cognitive scientists, is that they impact us in a deeper and long-lasting way. Terror, fear, pain, or sadness shock us and force us to pay more attention to the motif. But being shocked or disturbed is not enough to make us like something. Quite the opposite, this may often represent an obstacle to liking. If we fear something, if it scares us or triggers disgust, our natural reaction is to divert our attention and run to something that is more suitable and that reassures us. However, Menninghaus et al. (2017b) point out that negative emotions provoked by a piece of art only work if

we maintain a distance and they remain a reflection in the legendary shield of Pallas Athena. They warn us of a problem, but do not deter us. On the contrary, they allow us to see the beauty in 'terrible' and 'painful' things. We do not wish to contemplate whether this beauty stems from the suffering that the artist must withstand and overcome. Neither do we intend to interpret why the symbol of Pegas, a legendary mythical horse and the symbol of poetry, was born from the blood or the severed head of Medusa. In the second part of this essay, we wish to pay attention to the paradox of the relationship between self-harm and its aesthetics from the perspective of the self-harmer.

2 The Aesthetics of Self-harm

Physical self-ham is a surprisingly common form of maladaptive behaviour. Scientists even speak of a certain pandemic of this behaviour.[1] In contemporary Western culture, it is possible to identify fashion styles or trends that utilise the connection between beauty and pain or suffering, such as the use of piercings and tattoos (which were originally manifestations of a subculture), through various beauty techniques (in the past, these included corsets, leg deformities, today they mostly include surgical procedures) to fashionable styles such as Emo or Gothic, based on the promotion of emotions such as sadness, inner pain, depression and suffering. Non-suicidal self-harming behaviour has occurred in all periods, even in the past, but scientific literature did not pay adequate attention to it, even though particular traces of it can be identified in historical art.

What is remarkable from the point of view of an uninvolved observer is not the connection between beauty and pain that the subject must often overcome in order to achieve beauty, but rather the motives that lead the subject to aestheticize suffering and pain – to express them in a way which is supposed to be attractive.

Van Gogh's action in severing a part of his ear is often attributed to various different motives. But whether it was due to his dispute with Gauguin, an attempt to cope with the loss of Brother Theo, or any other personal hardship, it is clear that it was a shocking gesture by the painter

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[1] One of the reasons for the increasing prevalence of self-harming behaviour is its accessibility through media. In the 1990s, most self-harming individuals experienced their own self-harm first and only then met someone with a similar problem, while in the first decade of this century (mainly due to the Internet) the opposite is true and most people first learned about self-harm in the media and only then did they attempt this behaviour themselves (Favazza and Conerio 1989; Favazza 2011).

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to express something that he was unable to adequately express in any other way. Similarly, Dalí's excesses, caused by his painful love for Gala, could be perceived as expressing what he felt, but could not put into words.

In its essence, self-harm in humans is a paradox. In most cases of self-harm, this paradox is enhanced by the fact that they occur on the threshold of private and public. Some acts of self-harm are meant to be a scream aimed at someone else. And since it is a scream, it is intended to be loud, but not articulated in a normal way. It is intended to express what cannot be pronounced. This is why Van Gogh does not keep the piece of his ear, but leaves it in a brothel, wrapped in a tissue, with a note. Hence, self-harm is often not aimed at the person who is harmed, but rather at the harmer, who does not see that someone is suffering as a consequence of their actions or inaction. When performing this type of gestures, it is very important how the expression of self-sacrifice is arranged.

Thus, self-harming behaviour creates its own distinct aesthetics. The essence of this aesthetics is to make the biggest possible impression on the emotions of the percipient. The problem with some forms of self-harming behaviour is that it does not have just to be a reckless appeal and a gesture to someone else. A more frequent aspect of this behaviour is that it is done in private and secretly. Cutting, burning our own skin, tearing our hair or hitting ourselves all lead to hidden injuries. They are hidden under our clothing and if they are revealed, the sufferer has a believable explanation, which conceals the true origin of the injury. So why do they suffer it if it is not supposed to be seen by others?

One reason for self-harm is the transformation of mental suffering into physical pain. Mental pain tends to be unbearable because it is not under our control. It is often vague, uncompromising, or obsessive, it can be controlled for a while by another activity, but it usually returns and often with the same, if not greater pressure. However, this is not true of the physical pain that the individual controls. Not only are they ready for it, but thanks to various defence mechanisms, the physical pain caused by cutting, for example, not only blanks out the mental suffering, but thanks to its own endorphins and opiates, it also provides a considerable amount of relief. Moreover, the individual has it more or less under control – its intensity, location and duration. Thus, in addition to relief, physical pain has another phenomenologically important aspect – it allows the pain hidden in the soul, in the depths of the body, out and allows it to surface – allows it to be embodied and thus grasped. It is no

coincidence that many are relieved to see blood flowing from their wounds, as if their pain and tension were washed away, as if the wound was opening the way 'to' and 'from' the deeper levels of our existence. And this is also reflected in the aestheticization and expression of suffering in scenes that are ready for it (e.g., Tumbrl). We often find a combination of innocence and purity in contrast with blood or open or healed wounds. These two moments are the key in the symbolism of self-harm.

Open wounds or blood symbolise relief from pain, its sharing, the release of tension. They are a scream and provide an insight into the deeper levels of experience. They are a means of revealing the inner world, the transition from pain to evidence (Alderton 2018; Jamison 2014). At the same time, they leave scars, which permanently demonstrate suffering (Jamison 2014), one's own past and what the individual has gone through. In the spirit of the Japanese art of *Kintsugi*, every wound is a place where fragility and strength meet: fragility resembling vulnerability and strength stemming from the fact that the wound, after it is pulled back together, is stronger than that which has not had to resist anything. Hiding imperfections by touching them up so that they cannot be seen is thus a kind of deception, against which stands the ideal that one should acknowledge one's own imperfections and fragility, which uplifts the individual even more. This is why the art of *Kintsugi* uses a mixture of glue and gold instead of clear glue, in order to highlight the lines of healed damage. Clearly, damage reveals fragility and harm and evokes a feeling of great remorse and pain over the loss of something valuable (*Mottainai*). On the other hand, a scar stems from the ideal of *Wabi-sabi* – the beauty found in imperfections and in disturbing something original and untouched.

Not everyone who commits self-harm is aware of this Japanese ideal and not everyone reflects on the beauty in being damaged. However, what they understand is that the scar allows them to repeatedly experience the associated pain, as if it were a reflection in Perseus's shield. This repeated experience, now perceived with a certain distance, again allows individuals to feel relief from the flow of pain or tension, but also to see the beauty in suffering, its reasons, or in the process used to overcome it.

3 The Attractiveness of Suffering

The attractiveness of pain and suffering in art is linked to the attractiveness and attention drawn by pain in real life. Unusual forms of

pain (e. g., crucifixion, infernal torments etc.), their unusual causes or ways to deal with them, attract our attention because in a certain way, they also concern us. They remind us of the past, when we have experienced pain and suffering, which is why we empathise and sympathise with those who are suffering. We repeatedly experience it, but this time from a safe distance. The depicted pain draws our attention to everything that signals it, while a safe distance allows us to experience even the tiniest nuances of the artistic representation of human suffering. The presence of a painful impulse brings our past to life, creates new bonds and seals our personal history with the contemporary experience.

Thus, representations of pain touch our presence. The emotions they evoke here and now are the evidence of reality and the present. A feeling of pain is an immediate warning of danger or the vulnerability of the subject. It warns us where harm may occur. However, the emotions that trigger pain are more complex – they reveal to us that we are fragile and destructible beings. They also emphasise that contact with ourselves or with the world that sometimes forces us to pay our dues in the form of suffering. The suffering depicted is therefore only a reminder of our own finality and impermanence through someone else. It awakens the part of us that we share. Sympathising thus creates a truthfulness, which connects us to other beings across time and space.

Observing the depicted pain equally manifests a possible future. We may see potential self-sacrifice in the depicted pain and we may also see that the value of being lies in overcoming obstacles. Nevertheless, a face filled with pain will finally return to its original form, the open wound will heal and the grief will disappear, although the wounds should be visible and golden, as an important memento of the value of life. Therefore, pain is the affirmation of the price and the value of being that we taste in both our lives and art.

Acknowledgements

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The Soma and the City.
A Critical Approach

Lukáš Makky

Abstract: This paper deals with urban aesthetics as one of the main research fields in contemporary aesthetics, placing particular emphasis on the recipient's aesthetic experience of the city. The overall aim is to discuss the kind of aesthetic interactions we have when immersed in a city. Somaesthetic experience (Shusterman 1999) represents the core notion in this survey and establishes the discussion about the role of body sensations in the process of experiencing the city. The attempt is to underline the virtues and limits of a somaesthetic approach when applied to the case of the city. One of the main outcomes is the claim that the body, as an instrument for experiencing the city, is insufficient. Cognition, knowledge, context, and information are necessary for a more intense and richer experience of the city.

Keywords: Urban Aesthetic, Aesthetic of the City, Aesthetic Engagement, Aesthetic Experience, Somaesthetic Experience

1 Introduction

The aesthetics of the city is currently an issue of increasing interest within aesthetic research (see for example Algreen-Ussing et al. 2000; Berleant 1992; Berleant and Carlson 2007; Haapala 1998; Erzen and Milani 2012; Nasar 1988; Shusterman 2019b), bringing many new questions and theoretical challenges in the context of environmental studies. The city itself is not just a cultural and historical place but also a special environment that offers a great number of aesthetic impulses and possibilities for aesthetic interaction. The ongoing global situation has shown us very explicitly how dramatically any aesthetic environment can change from one day to another when one needs to narrow one's own existence to a single flat, and every banal aspect of life acquires

new qualities. Participation in the life of the city shapes our everyday existence (Santora 2012) and the way we perceive and appreciate the city as recipients. Arnold Berleant (1986) stresses the perceptual aspect of experience and understands the city as a "place of vital activity." This means that the city cannot exist without its dwellers and all the people living there co-create the final picture and the sensation one gets from it. This cooperative and collective interaction is what creates the city. This 'participation in the life' of the city raises questions about the position of the recipient in the city, as they are moving freely around the city. What is it like to experience a city aesthetically? And what kind of experience is the experience one can have in a city? Is there room for any 'aesthetic distance' between us and the city that we are experiencing?

To answer these questions, we need to distinguish between the city as a place (environment) that we are living in, and the representation of the city as an aesthetic object that we are looking at, a distinction that is crucial for understanding the meaning of aesthetic experience in the urban environment. The first section of the paper deals with this issue, asks about the position of the recipient in the process of aesthetic interaction and in aesthetic experience, and raises the questions of aesthetic disinterestedness and aesthetic engagement. The second section discusses a way of appreciating the city based on the notion of experience, especially the approach developed by Richard Shusterman (1999) in his project of somaesthetics. Shusterman's approach is inspired by Dewey (see Shusterman 2016, 2019), although there are some discrepancies between the two approaches.[1] Shusterman (2012b) orients his investigation solely on the body, even when he argues that he wants to get rid of the dualism between material and immaterial, body and mind, and elaborately explains how we can understand the world through the body. Following Shusterman, I argue that the body is crucial in the environment of the city, and provides the recipient with all the necessary aesthetic impulses, as the first and most relevant or resourceful tool of experiencing the city. Contra Shusterman, however, I will claim that aesthetic interaction and experience of the city cannot be simply limited to the body. Information, context and cognition play a fundamental role in allowing a deeper and more complex aesthetic experience of the city and need to be also taken into account in their connection and cooperation with bodily sensations.

[1] For a pragmatist critique of Dewey´s understanding of aesthetic experience as formulated by Richard Rorthy see Shusterman (2016, pp. 158-169).

2 Recipient in/of the City

Let us imagine that we are walking along an alley of a city, an alley that we know about, but we had never walked there before. There is everything in this alley: beautiful small buildings with worn shutters that are in some poetic way really intriguing but also full garbage containers, small dried-up flowers behind windows, industrial buildings that are still running, and also some trees and grass. We experience some sensation, maybe we are attracted by something we see during this walk. We realize that some of the experienced stimuli affect us. This experience of the city cannot be mediated by other means than the body because everything depends on our measure of involvement in the city. Can we aesthetically experience the city *because* we are walking through and are immersed in this environment or *despite* the fact that we are walking and are immersed in it?

The main problem in examining the aesthetics of the city, hidden in this example, is the very fact that recipients are not only impartial observers, but participate in the life of the city by themselves and are a part (or one of the aspects) of the city.[2] Therefore, almost every activity that they do and perform becomes a piece of the city itself and can influence other recipients/dwellers. This problem brings about a crucial issue in aesthetics: the dialectics of disinterestedness and involvement in aesthetic phenomena (Zuska 2002).[3] Arnold Berleant (2017, p. 10) questioned the concept of disinterestedness as a notion that is linked with a lack of interest. In contrast, disinterestedness, according to him, implies a form of appreciation that is not distracted by external interests. The general idea that there is a clear opposition between disinterestedness and interestedness is for him not valid since the dialectical relationship between those two notions is anything but simple. The recipients can either experience some aesthetic phenomena in

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[2] An appropriate example could be participating in a happening or performance in the public space, because in city life the recipient is not immune to the city. We cannot change the fact that we are part of the city; we are walking on the streets, living in the infrastructure, hearing the echoes of the city and so on.

[3] According to James Elkins (2001), the more you critically approach an aesthetic object, the more your experience loses in the value of experience. In other words, distancing oneself from an aesthetic object, Elkins believes, may imply being unable to appreciate the object adequately. From another methodological point of view, "we can ask" Theodor W. Adorno (2003), what to do with this dialectic of empirical experience and knowledge and artistic/aesthetic experience. He argues that too much information and empirical knowledge disturbs our aesthetic experience of the fine arts but, according to him, some background knowledge is necessary.

a 'disinterested' state of mind, where they are focused only on appreciating such phenomena, or in an 'interested' state of mind, which does not automatically mean that they are influenced by external facts and that they are unable to react to the experienced phenomena.

The case of the city is particularly revealing in this discussion. To be a city dweller or to be a recipient of a city means that one is living in the city, is active during their exploration, and is constantly experiencing something. One's participation in the city is always immersive, for immersion is the only way one can start to experience the city.

Berleant (2013) introduces in this regard the concept of aesthetic engagement: an alternative to aesthetic disinterestedness that originates in the verb 'to engage with' in an aesthetic sense as opposed to observing something. Engagement is in some sense personal and intimate. Berleant explains aesthetic engagement as a rejection of the subject-object dualism. He resolves the issue of dualism by the suggestion that the object and subject do not have to be separated. In this regard, he introduces the notion of aesthetic fields. Aesthetic fields are defined by four principles: the appreciator, the object, the activity or event, and some kind of activation element (Berleant 2017, p. 11).[4] The components of an aesthetic field are not separated from one another, they are rather interconnected and undergo continuous exchange (Berleant 2017). This continuous exchange is crucial in experiencing the city, because the experience of the city does not take place in one single moment but lasts for a longer time. We experience aesthetic aspects of the city over time, and our experience itself is constantly evolving.

Berleant (2015) claims that most often we are used to thinking of the city as a place, as a carrier of some special identity of a place, but this notion of the city is incomplete. The city always represents something more than a material structure of streets, buildings and parks. The perception of the city, and the structure of all the perceived aspects of the city, creates something immaterial and maybe metaphysical; yet something that we can actually perceive. In general, we can say that every

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[4] Vlastimil Zuska (2002) also supports Berleant's approach. He is convinced that, in the act of aesthetic distance, we deliberately choose the objects we are distancing from. We decide what is the subject and what is the object of distance and what is not. In other words, aesthetic distance is always an activity of the subject. Similarly to Berleant, Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz (2017) also claims that we are always involved in a certain environment, with the emphasis put on the word involved. To sum up, every time we need to make a decision from some point of view, we are bound to this position.

city is, in some way, special, or special in the combination of those aspects, and therefore it is impossible to experience as a whole during one single moment. In this sense, a city is not simply a physical construction or location. A city is determined by its life, and is more vivid and transformative than just any place: it is *inhabited* and this fact creates the specifics of its atmosphere. In this way, as Berleant (2015) stresses, the city, as an environment of aesthetic interaction and experience, is not simply a locale – it is something much more intangible or ungraspable.

While involvement is present in every interaction we have with the world, experiencing the city thus implies even a further degree of engagement. We are experiencing the city on a daily basis, every time we look from the window; we walk on the street, or open the window and hear the exterior sound. We cannot escape this interaction and therefore we cannot fully (even if we wanted to) distance ourselves. A city is not an object that you can appreciate in a detached way but an entity that we experience only thanks to our participation in it, something that we can appreciate mainly because of this participation. Our involvement in the city is not only emotional or mental but also physical. The city as the object of our aesthetic appreciation cannot be objectified: not even if we are looking at the buildings, streets, trees, lights. The city needs to be understood as a structure that emanates some kind of aura and creates the atmosphere that we are interacting with; our experience is based on the characteristics of the atmosphere of urban space. Therefore, disinterestedness as a theoretical concept does not work in the case of the city, because as a recipient, one needs to be involved to some extent: one needs to be engaged.

In the following sections, I will focus on the notion of aesthetic and somaesthetic experience in the context of urban appreciation. Somaesthetic experience,[5] in particular, will be described as a specific aesthetic experience mainly based on the body sensation. The body is a necessary tool for experiencing the city, to move around the city (see Santora 2012), and to exist as a part of the city. The dominance of the body in this kind of situation is a strong enough reason for Shusterman (1999) to think about a new kind of aesthetic experience altogether, what he calls 'somaesthetic experience'.

[5] Shusterman (1999) is speaking of somatic experience in the context of aesthetic experience crucial for somaesthetics.

3 Aesthetic and Somaesthetic Experience of the City

In the previous section, I argued that our aesthetic interaction with the city needs to be conceived of as a matter of aesthetic engagement. In this sense, I can only agree with French philosopher Nathalie Blanc (2013) that practical experience shapes our aesthetic experience of the city. Practical and aesthetic experience are connected because there is no doubt that we experience some aesthetic sensations during practical everyday activities. These activities are usually perceived and assessed through the body (body cognition): through our senses that are apparatus of our soma/body. According to Shusterman (1999), the body has a crucial role in the aesthetic experience, and is altogether necessary for having an aesthetic experience.

Shusterman (1999) proposes, therefore, a new branch of aesthetics, somaesthetics (as a body centered discipline), which is based on Dewey's (1980) notion of aesthetic experience.[6] His approach stresses that the body is prior to every action and every interaction that we make, and restructures the notion of aesthetic experience according to these assumptions. Bodily perception, body consciousness, body cognition, affection and experience are dominant notions of somaesthetics.

Somaesthetics, as defined by Shusterman, "unconditionally accepts that our bodies represent the core of our being and identity" (Cunningham 2008, p. 56). At the same time, somaesthetics is based on Baumgarten's understanding of aesthetics as a "life-improving cognitive discipline" (Shusterman 1999, p. 301) that involves theory and practical exercise at the same time. This theoretical and practical duplicity of somaesthetics makes it somewhat problematic in philosophical discourse. At the same time, somaesthetics is focused on an "improvement of sensory perception" (Shusterman 1999, p. 300) that creates the base for further more intense experiences. Through our lived experience we can improve the ability of our body and our senses and especially the awareness we have of our body. Indeed, somaesthetics is defined by Shusterman as a "critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory aesthetic appreciation

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[6] Key features of aesthetic experience are *particularity* – aesthetic experience differs from all other forms of experience based on something unspecific; *interaction* – aesthetic experience is dependent on the interaction between the recipient and the object, or as was said, on the interaction between the components of the aesthetic field; *activity* – aesthetic experience involves active participation of the recipient in the phenomena or event (see Dewey 1980).

(aesthesis) and creative self-fashioning" (Shusterman 1999, p. 302). The body is in this regard understood as a tool for our experience, an instrument to gain something.

Shusterman (1999) identifies therefore three fundamental dimensions of somaesthetics: 1) analytic somaesthetics, which is focused on the basic nature of bodily practices, functions and perceptions and is descriptive in nature; 2) pragmatic somaesthetics, which proposes specific methods of bodily improvement and contains representational and experiential forms; and 3) practical somaesthetics, which is concerned with activity, not with theory. Shusterman mainly develops the last form of somaesthetics, even if he discusses all of them.

In Shusterman's (1999) practical somaesthetics, the body is a source, a medium, a tool, yet also the outcome of our experience; it is the agent that allows us to react in some way (mostly bodily, but often aesthetically) and offers a variety of impulses and feelings. Every impulse that humans experience causes some physical reaction. Bodily reactions are natural components of our existence: we smile and feel comfortable when we experience something pleasant; when we feel frightened, we react with chills and feel a real amount of stress. Relevantly to my purposes here, these bodily reactions, according to Shusterman, also represent the basis of our experience of the city, as the body is not just to be thought of as a sensory tool but also as the source of any aesthetic experience can have of an urban environment (see Shusterman 2019a, 2019b). At the same time, he argues that one of the city key elements, functions, values and challenges "is the providing of aesthetic experience" (Shusterman 2019b, p. 32).

Surely, the city as an environment offers many aesthetic stimuli, and we need to use our body to the fullest to interact with all the aesthetic impulses in the city. We use the body to move around the city, to walk through its streets, to sit in a park, and that is exactly why it is the orientation of the recipient/dweller in the urban environment through the body that creates the environment (Santora 2012) or the atmosphere.

The atmosphere of the city results from our interaction (preferably but not exclusively emotional) with the city. Gerold Böhme (2017) actually understands it as a fundamental concept of a new aesthetics: one can enter into an atmosphere and feel it in every environment. The notion of atmosphere "implies a certain affective quality of (lived and non-geometrical) space" (Griffero & Tedeschini 2019, p. 2), and is often understood as an "emotional space that involves one's body." This

emotional space is more about our feelings than about some physical properties of the city, even if these properties and different aspects of the city create the conditions for the atmosphere to exist. One central aspect of the atmospheric approach is the nonphysical body that we feel and "whose atmospheric resonances we can describe only from our first-person perspectives" (Griffero & Tedeschini 2019, p. 2). In this way, this approach shares with somaesthetics the fact that everything is based on body sensations, as an atmosphere is an outcome of individual, intuitive, first-hand experience.

Shusterman (2019) also works with the concept of atmosphere, yet he thinks that atmosphere is constituted by the experienced qualities before the division into objective or subjective elements takes place. The interaction of the recipient and environment is, according to him, a key aspect here. Atmosphere is therefore, according to him, something that is experienced on a daily basis, and represents the perceptive aspect of the city based on the material and physical structure of the city.

The notion of atmosphere, as an important concept of urban aesthetics, testifies again to the fact that we cannot interact with the city without our body and biological receptors: we can experience only what we see, smell, touch or hear. Everything we feel is bound to our senses and in some sense limited by our body. Strictly speaking, somaesthetic experience is indeed defined by the transformation of our body according to aesthetic conditions; in our case, according to the urban infrastructure, and through the influence on the movements, or behavior, of our body (Shusterman 1999).

Somaesthetics can thus be beneficial in urban experience and create an advantage for the recipient when interacting with the city: it improves the experience, and allows for more intense bodily feelings. For example, through a somaesthetic approach, recipients might feel the atmosphere of the city in a stronger way, or gain some 'somatic intuition' or 'somatic knowledge' that they can use in their further interactions with other cities. This kind of learning might help them evolve in their experience of the city and modify their future reactions to cities.

4 Limits of Somaesthetics

Our experience of the city, however, is not simply based on seeing buildings, streets, or districts. It changes and evolves according to the number of cities that we recipients or dwellers have visited in our life, or according to the information, context and knowledge that we possess.

For example, it seems that we need to know some facts about the history of the city to experience it aesthetically. Correct information can determine aesthetic value and create a basis for meaningful aesthetic experiences. Some information about the reconstruction of burned-out parts of a city, for instance, can increase the quality and intensity of our experience. The fact that we are walking through an old street that was burned down a hundred years ago is the type of information that impresses us as recipients. In these cases, knowledge plays a big role in the aesthetic experience and the body is no longer the most important aspect to consider (see also Shusterman 2019b, pp. 14-15).

Shusterman (1999) admits that somaesthetics cannot only be about the body and that some cognitive/intellectual understanding is also needed. He uses the notion of "informed aesthetic experience" to address this issue. According to him, the facts that we learn from socio-historical inquiry may play a role in our aesthetic experience (Shusterman 2019a, pp. 3-4). However, he believes that an informed aesthetic experience is only necessary if information can transform the quality of experience (Shusterman 2019a). What is in question, he claims, is the value or intensity of the experience, not its occurrence. Aesthetic experience can indeed take place, according to Shusterman, even *without* this information.

While the importance of cognitive information is partly acknowledged by Shusterman, it only occupies a secondary position in his thinking, and neither is accounted for or developed extensively. This is especially problematic. Although somaesthetic experience is a necessary elemental level of every experience, to the extent that we cannot experience anything without it, and it is also an immanent part of aesthetic experience, it is not enough by itself to account for the richness of our aesthetic interaction with the city. Findings that are a necessary part of our perception of the city are determined not only by the body as a receptor or by the atmosphere that is perceived, but also, and primarily, by contextualised knowledge that shapes the outcomes of our bodily or somaesthetic perceptions.

Pentti Määttänen (2010, p. 57), for one, has underlined this limit of somaesthetics. "The body is an object of experience, not an instrument of experiencing the world". These words express clearly what is the major worry I have concerning Shusterman's somaesthetic approach as applied to the urban environment. Focusing mostly on body-improvement practices, somaesthetics takes the body as the *goal*, rather than just the *tool*, of the urban experience. Of course, somaesthetic

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practices are relevant to our experience of the city. Yet, in Shusterman's characterisation, experiencing the city does not seem to be the real purpose of these practices, but only represents the space where these practices can take place. For example, Shusterman talks about moving *around* the city as a praxis that can improve our health; he reflects on the proper and most efficient way of breathing while walking so as to increase our bodily consciousness and awareness (Shusterman 2019b, p. 16). These performative somaesthetic activities (Shusterman 1999), as he depicts them, are mostly concerned with the body and its improvement, not with the *city* itself as the object of our interest. From the perspective of urban aesthetics, however, the city itself should be the focus of our attention, not the body, even though cities can only be experienced through the body and with the help of the body.

To sum up, my idea is that only by recognizing the role that knowledge plays in our experiences can practical somaesthetics be seen as a truly meliorative praxis able to enhance our perceptual senses and bodily reactions. Knowledge is a determining factor for the improvement of our body as an instrument. It helps the somaesthetic experience last longer and be more intense and remarkable, because it subtracts it from the fleeting sensations of our bodily interaction with the environment and gives it a more stable cognitive basis. Conversely, if all the relevance is put on the body, and if the body is the only object of our concern, then something fundamental of our experience of the city is lost: the city itself.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the city is not a work of art or an object that one can appreciate in a detached way. Urban aesthetics is thus incompatible with a disinterested aesthetic approach. As an immersive, participative experience, it demands engagement. The city is indeed not simply a material place or a physical locale – recipients *interact* with the atmosphere of the city, the perceptual, emotional and immaterial aspects of it. These aspects induce a bodily reaction in the recipient, which is, as I have claimed, a precondition for experiencing a city aesthetically. However, there is much more to an aesthetic experience of the city than just somatic sensations. Considering the role of contextual knowledge and information about the city's history and evolution in time is indeed fundamental to account for the experience we make from an urban environment. Cognitive knowledge prolongs the somaesthetic experience

and intensifies our appreciation, making it more vivid, significant, and permanent.

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Part III
Art, Culture, and the Everyday

Food: An Ordinary Practice or an Extraordinary Experience?

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Abstract: Food and the practice of cooking hold a privileged place in contemporary aesthetics, as attested by the extensive literature that has been devoted to this topic. Food has been addressed in both Anglo-American and European studies from multiple points of view, including a cognitivist, pragmatist, phenomenological, everyday and somaesthetic perspective. In this essay I will try to identify a path that allows us to hold together these readings through the ordinary-extraordinary dichotomy. First, I shall analyze food through the lens of the extraordinary, taking into consideration some examples in which food is presented as a true work of art in museums or as an exceptional experience in increasingly aestheticized daily life. Then, using the key of the ordinary, I will consider food preparation and consumption as routine practices. Finally, I will make an attempt to reconcile the two categories by identifying the moments in which the extraordinary manifests itself in everyday

Keywords: Everyday Aesthetics, Food, Extraordinary/Ordinary, Aesthetics of Atmosphere, Cooking

1 Introduction

Food has a high-ranking place in contemporary research in aesthetics, as it has been investigated in both Anglo-American and European studies from a variety of points of view.[1] Based on a cognitivist framework, notably in the footsteps of Nelson Goodman (1977), numerous inquiries have focused on 'when' food turns into a work of art, and have looked into artists' installations and performances revolving around food.[2] Differently, by embracing John Dewey's (1958) pragmatism, other

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[1] For an overview, see Perullo (2018).
[2] For an overview on this debate, see Korsmayer (2002, Chapter 4).

inquiries have dealt with the practice of cooking and eating food as a participatory and community-based activity; phenomenology, and above all the aesthetics of atmospheres, has discussed taste, the sense of smell, and the design of environments, including those where food is consumed (Tellenbach 1981; Böhme and Engels-Schwarzpaul 2017); Everyday Aesthetics has included cooking, eating and food packaging among the typical aesthetic practices of everyday life; and Somaesthetics has brought into focus the relation between food and psycho-physical wellbeing (Pryba 2016), thus filling a gap in the somatic accounts aiming to define the 'art of living.'

While relying on the interpretative dichotomy ordinary-extraordinary, this essay develops along a path that cuts across all the above theoretical approaches and holds them together. First, food will be scrutinized through the categories that pertain to the sphere of the extraordinary. In this respect some instances will be discussed, in which food is presented either as a work of art in its own right, for example in exhibitions and in museums, or as a unique and special experience in our increasingly aestheticized everyday life (Welsch 1997). After that, with reference to the ordinary key, the preparation and consumption of food will be investigated as part of daily and routine activities. Finally, a conciliation between the two aspects will be attempted by identifying those moments in which what is extraordinary appears in everyday life.

2 Food as an Extraordinary Event

Ancient philosophical theories differentiate between higher senses (i.e. sight and hearing), which are apt to lead theoretical processing, and those pertaining to the lower, material, bodily realm (i.e. taste, touch, and smell). This hierarchy within senses had repercussions also on culinary art (Brady 2012), which since antiquity ranked among the *artes mechanicae*, that is to say the servile practices (Tatarkiewicz 1980). Over time, however, the preparation and the consumption of food have received artistic recognition, making an entry in the 'art world': in galleries, museums, exhibitions, etc. (Danto 1964). Among the many possible examples, one might want to mention the innovative experimentations of futurist cuisine, Joseph Beuys and Daniel Spoerri's Eat Art, and Rirkrit Tiravanija's performances.

This transition from 'not-art' to 'art' can be read through a key of the notion of *artification* as investigated by Natalie Heinich and Roberta Shapiro (2012). In the wake of Nelson Goodman's contribution (1977),

the two sociologists have identified the conditions and social processes leading to the acknowledgment of the artistic value of folk cultural forms, including food.

By shifting the focus from the production to the enjoyment of food, the collaboration occasionally developing among artists, designers, and chefs can be interpreted on the level of an aesthetic experience. These unusual collaborations are indeed aimed at setting the stage for the consumption of food – going as far as to design furnishings and the shape of plates – as to allow the clients to experience unique and exceptional emotions.

In reality the contamination between art and food striving to produce an aesthetic experience boasts a long and ancient tradition. One could mention here the banquets of the Middle Ages, when musicians, actors, and acrobats would entertain guests, and the great edible constructions of the nineteenth-century cuisine, such as Marie-Antoine Carême's marzipan architectures and Auguste Escoffier's ice sculptures (Rambourg 2010). Even today, culinary art is often inspired by the form and language of painting and sculpture, not only making a display of creativity but also eliciting a multi-sensory experience. The aestheticization defining contemporary society seems indeed to linger also over food, which is often presented according to the form and format aiming to trigger aesthetic emotions, in the same way as works of art do.

This trend introduces the aesthetic experience of food as an extraordinary event, the main features of which are its rarity and its high costs, these place it in the realm of luxury. Within this range we can find star chef creations, such as those signed by Ferran Adrià, Pierre Gagnaire, and Heston Blumenthal, which rely on technical innovations in the food industry supported by advances in physics and chemistry (Solier 2010). The techno-emotional cuisine of the renown Spanish chef Ferran Adrià provides indeed an interesting case study. While working as a chef at the ElBulli restaurant, he used to set the stage for a theatralization of the gastronomic experience. Inspired by futurist suggestions, his avant-garde cuisine took advantage of technical innovations in the processing of ingredients in order to create intense multi-sensory experiences. Offered in small bites, food was supposed to be surprising and exciting (Perullo 2017, p. 27). A conceptual approach to cooking was there at stake, inasmuch as the preparation of dishes supported by technology was not primarily functional to taste and the corresponding pleasure or sense-based enjoyment, but rather geared to the new and original, made

to arouse a cognitive and cultural appreciation. What happens then is a 'transfiguration of the commonplace' (Danto 1981) and food acquires some sort of 'aura' similar to that of works of art.

The notion of aura, developed by the German philosopher Walter Benjamin (2002), makes frequent appearance in the European debate on contemporary art as to indicate the bestowing of artistic status to practices and objects traditionally excluded from the realm of art. However, the aura oozing from food in luxury restaurants is a 'worldly' aura, resulting from the aestheticization of everyday life. Food acquires the 'exhibition value' of museum-compatible works of art, but not the 'cult value' connected to the original ritual function of art (Benjamin 2002, p. 107).

Whereas food would previously only give off the scent of something delicious, nowadays – quoting Yves Michaud's (2011) famous metaphor – we can say that it gives off 'aesthetic ether.' However, while belonging to the realm of the extraordinary, the relation between aesthetics and food is limited to the *mise en place* of dishes, to the creativity of the chef, to the visual quality of food, in reference to aesthetic categories – that is to say, cognitive, expressive or representational categories – that are extraneous to gastronomy. This implies that food itself is not seen in this realm as a potential vector of ordinary experiences that can be both satisfying and aesthetic.

3 Food as an Ordinary Practice

Within contemporary philosophy the preparation and consumption of food as ordinary practices have been investigated by those who take an interest in everyday experiences inspired by John Dewey (Somaesthetics; Everyday Aesthetics). Somaesthetics is a philosophical approach first promoted by Richard Shusterman (2008). It focuses on the living body and its relation to the environment aimed at achieving psycho-physical wellbeing. According to this perspective, the aesthetic experience of food can be directed toward a form of consumption which is respectful of natural resources and of the people involved in the process of production. This includes paying more attention to the quality of food and to the consequences it has on its consumers in terms of health and wellbeing. According to Somaesthetics – where dietetics and pleasure merge together and are indistinguishable – the tasting experience of food is only an intermediary stage in a process, which starts with the careful selection and processing of ingredients and ends with a good digestion by the consumer.

In this regard, the issue of authenticity becomes relevant also for the taste enjoyment. Following Danto (1981, p. 14) who emphasises the pre-eminence of the work of art's cognitive aspects over the perceptual ones, Carolyn Korsmayer points out (1991, p. 91) that "the interpretation – the recognition of the substance to be ingested – precedes or coincides with the taste enjoyment." Hence the importance of products with 'protected designation origin', because correctly identifying the history, origin and characteristics of the food increases the pleasure of the experience, reassuring the consumer of the authenticity and goodness of the product.

A corporeality-centred reading paves the way to unprecedented horizons of experience not only from the point of view of the consumer, but also from the point of view of those who, in their job, as a hobby or out of necessity, are busy with the preparation of food on a daily basis. As every craft, also cooking is an 'embodied knowledge', which through practice reaches self-perfecting (Sennet 2009). Like gymnastics, cooking belongs to the realm of activities for which repetition is something positive and necessary to improve the results.

The notion of repetitiveness characterized early debates in Everyday Aesthetics (Naukkarinen 2013; Melchionne 2013, 2014), as they focused on the identification of the aesthetic practices that are typical of everyday life (e. g. eating, cooking, getting dressed, etc.). And precisely the notion of positive repetitiveness has been seen by Melchionne (2014) not only as indispensable, but also as a key category within this philosophical approach. While still evolving and exploring new possibilities, the repetition of gestures generates a bodily rhythm releasing energy and becoming an experience. This is why many people find cooking relaxing and take pleasure in it.

According to Yuriko Saito (2007, p. 116), in order to aesthetically appreciate food like any other daily practice, it is not necessary to consider it as a work of art, but to let it emerge from the routine, paying attention to sensitiveness. Saito claims that the aesthetic attitude engrained in Japanese culture engages all senses in the appreciation of food, which is the result of a meticulous preparation aimed at best expressing the peculiarities and freshness of the ingredients. Even food packaging favours organic materials, which are supposed not only to please the eye, but also to entice the senses of touch, smell and taste.

Furthermore, Saito (2007, pp. 121-123) emphasizes to what extent the balance of several factors (e. g. time of day or year, season, environment, occasion, table setting, conversation, music, etc.) is a key to

the transformation of an ordinary experience into 'an experience,' that is to say a truly full, satisfying experience, worth aesthetic appreciation in compliance with Dewey's theory:

> The multi-sensory dimension of our eating is not limited to ingesting food itself; it extends to the entire experience induced by our handling of the container, utensil, and the like [...]. Furthermore, in addition to the multi-sensory experience surrounding the act of eating and drinking, our appreciation of food is inseparable from the whole ambience orchestrated by a number of other ingredients: table setting, the environment in which we are eating, its occasion, time of the day and year, the atmosphere created by the conversation between and among our eating companions, and so on (Saito 2007, p. 120).

Although Saito lays emphasis on the peculiar atmosphere of some events, she seems unaware of coming very close to the issues investigated by the aesthetics of atmospheres, born within the context of German phenomenology.[3] In this respect, the notion of 'atmospheric space' has been put forward by Gernot Böhme, one of the major advocates of the 'new phenomenological aesthetics.' Spaces (indoors or outdoors, public or private) can be uplifting or oppressing; they can be bright, cold, welcoming, festive, sober; they can convey an atmosphere that is repelling or attractive, austere or intimate. According to Böhme, the atmosphere is the result of emanations – more precisely 'ecstasies' – which are not intrinsic properties of things or people, as they are perceived in the relation between subject and object: "The new resulting aesthetics is concerned with the relation between environmental qualities and human states. This 'and', this in-between, by means of which environmental qualities and states are related, is atmosphere" (Böhme 2017, p. 30).

While the environment in which a meal is eaten plays an important role, those. who design spaces and furnishing should therefore take into account the emotional involvement that these things are supposed to awake in the observer, client or consumer. The atmosphere is in fact the

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[3] The concept of 'atmosphere' lies at the core of a new philosophical orientation, whose roots extend in the traditions of twentieth-century phenomenology and draw both from the line connecting Husserl to Merleau-Ponty and from the phenomenological anthropology of Rothacker, Klages and Hermann Schmitz. However, Böhme's new aesthetics of atmospheres is firmly connected to the theory of perception and the theory of the sentient body as well as with a retrieval of Alexander G. Baumgarten's aesthetics. A full overview of Böhme's theoretical assumptions is provided by Griffero (2016) together with a critical assessment.

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result of an 'aesthetic work,' which through natural elements (e.g. flowers, plants, water, air, light) or artificial ones (e.g. architecture, furnishing, music, lighting) is able to create different types of environments, from ordinary to ultimate luxury ones. The designer should be able to interpret the requests of the commissioner and to understand the needs of the client, designing spaces accordingly so as to generate the appropriate atmosphere. The same restaurant can, for instance, produce an elegant atmosphere – with classic furniture, refined tableware and *mise en place* (linen, crystal, silver, etc.), and an obsequious service – or a romantic one – with dim lighting, candles on the tables, background music – or even an informal atmosphere – with simple furnishing and easy-going service.

Nevertheless, food can be interpreted in the light of the aesthetics of atmospheres also independently of the contribution of architects. For instance, the atmosphere connected to street food is defined by the smell and sound of the open space, which merge together with the often-short tasting experience of food eaten while standing. Furthermore, one should not forget that atmospheres result from intersubjective relations. In each experience of food consumption, specific relational and emotional situations are developed, based on the occurring affective and interpersonal relations (e.g. current mood, a feeling with the staff, memories connected to the place, etc.). The whole set of interacting atmospheric qualities determines the emotional space in which the aesthetic appreciation of food is consumed.

4 The Extraordinary in the Ordinary

Whereas art categories (creativity, originality, cognitive, expressive or representational values) support a reading of food in the light of the extraordinary, positive repetitiveness and familiar atmospheres can help grasp the meaning of the aesthetic experience of food within the daily routine.[4] Is there any common ground between these two seemingly distant or even opposite realms? Although the most radical supporters of Everyday Aesthetics exclude special events from the daily aesthetic practices (Melchionne 2013; Naukkarinen 2013), an interpretation bridging the two dimensions has been put forward by Thomas Leddy (2012, 2015).

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[4] First introduced by Arto Haapala (2005), the notion of the familiar was later developed by Saito (2017).

The American philosopher is well aware that what is out of the ordinary cannot be separated from the ordinary without losing most of its meaning. Similarly, it would be misleading to tie Everyday Aesthetics to routine practices and exclude exceptional or rare events, since these are what enrich the value of life allowing us to go back to daily business feeling restored. The dialectics of ordinary and extraordinary is, in Leddy's view, the core of daily life and the main object of Everyday Aesthetics. Although he refers to special moments of a mundane kind – i.e. weddings, birthday celebrations, anniversaries, trips, special events, etc. – his account never excludes more general keys apt to encompass the dimension of the sacred (Leddy 2012, pp. 73-77).

As he maintains that ordinary life acquires aesthetic value when extraordinarily experienced, Leddy (2015) retrieves the notion of aura, but develops it differently from Benjamin, and claims namely that: "Something has aura or heightened significance if it seems more alive, more real, more present, or more connected to other things." Furthermore, Leddy connects aura to the notion of awe, which, despite originally stemming from the sacred sphere, stands for the feeling of wonder that also small things can trigger in everyday activities. According to anthropological studies, "awe motivates people to take part in community-building, such as 'collective rituals, celebration, music and dance, religious gatherings and worship'" (Leddy 2015), where food often has an essential symbolic function.

Going back to Benjamin's thinking, this symbolic function connected to the sacred allows us to apply the notion of aura to food, not in relation to 'exhibition values', but rather in relation to 'cult values' connected to rites and historical traditions. Two examples introduced by Carolyn Korsmeyer (2002, pp. 37-38) illustrate the aura springing out of ritual meals commemorating historical or religious events. In the United States, Thanksgiving celebrates the solidarity between the settlers in Massachusetts and the local native population, who, in the harsh winter of 1621, helped the settlers survive. The reference to this historical moment of peace and harmony among generally hostile groups is celebrated through the collective consumption of food, and entails a certain menu, mainly made of stuffed turkey and root vegetables, which aims to recreate the meal shared during the very first feast. Since it is based on tradition, innovation here is frowned upon. Especially the turkey bestows a symbolic value on this moment, and in turn in that very moment also acquires a special taste. According to Korsmeyer (2002, p. 138), "one reason why sometimes foods taste good only during their

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relevant festivals is that their meaning is restricted to that time." The rich taste and abundant portions of the Thanksgiving meal induce torpor and slow digestion. It is suitable for the winter season, which is felt as part of the eating experience. Thanks to its seasonal position, the fellow diners are indeed aware of experiencing a particular moment in the year and of "participating yet again in a cyclical celebration, one that is never quite the same as festivals of time past yet retains an enduring identity over time" (Korsmeyer 2002, p. 137). This typical feature of rituals – together with the collective consumption of food, which transforms eating companions into a community – lends a specific aura to the Thanksgiving holiday. Similar remarks can be made concerning Passover, which commemorates the exodus of Jewish people from the captivity in Egypt and, by extension, the freedom of all peoples from slavery. Also this ritual meal is rich in symbolic value, which comes through not only in the visual presentation of food, but also in its taste, as, for instance, bitter herbs stand for the bondage and sorrow endured in Egypt. Furthermore, eggs are a symbol of the renewal of life and the roasted shank bone of a lamb stands for the Paschal lamb prepared in commemoration of the event of Passover, that is, God passing over the houses of Jewish people and striking to death each firstborn of the Egyptian captors. The symbolic value of this ritual banquet is confirmed by the fact that some of the food (e.g. the lamb shank bone and the salty water) are only tasted and not actually consumed. The purpose of this food is accordingly not nutrition or sensory enjoyment. "Nevertheless they not only are part of the meal, they also have a significance that is manifest in the act of tasting" (Korsmeyer 2002, p. 138). Like Thanksgiving, also Passover entails types of food that are eaten principally on that occasion. Rigidly prescribed preparations methods even alter their taste, compared to when the same food is prepared for other convivial situations – for instance using unleavened Matzoh flour instead of normal wheat flour. The aura of this meal turns the people around the table into a community of faith, and refreshes the memory of a sacred event which repeats itself in the ritual, always the same despite all space-time contingencies.

These examples of cyclically repeated feasts are also useful to illustrate Ellen Dissanayake's (1992) theory, which, like Leddy's, supports the presence of the extraordinary in everyday life. According to the anthropologist Dissanayake (1992, p. 225), art is not the object of contemplation, but rather a behavioural inclination which amounts to 'making special' something, someone, or even actions themselves.

Focusing on the everyday rituals and on the value of taking care of what is special within a community, Dissanayake points out that the power of making the ordinary extraordinary is associated to ceremonies in which gestures, objects, and behaviours stand for some biologically or socially relevant states to the community: "Ritual ceremonies are meant to affect biologically-important states of affairs that humans necessarily care about – assuring food, safety, health, fertility, prosperity, and so forth" (Dissanayake 2009, p. 156). Collective ceremonies help people find relief from anxiety in the uncertainties and dangers of life, inasmuch as rituals shape the emotions of the participants, strengthening their social bonds.

Some convivial situations with family or friends turn into 'special moments' if intensively experienced together with our companions, by taking care of details or the mise-en-scène – for instance the mise en place and the presentation of food – or by paying attention to perceptive features, i.e. sound, smell, touch-related features, etc. Unlike the consumption of food in public places, domestic meals entail an affective relation between those who prepare the food and those who eat it, be them relatives, members of one's family or friends. In the absence of an economic transaction, the preparation of food at home looks like a gift establishing a connection between the cook and the other fellow diners. According to Mauss' (1990) theory,[5] in fact, those who are invited to share a meal feel obliged to return the invitation. In reference to the ethics of hospitality which regulated the relations with foreigners (hospes, in Latin) in the Ancient Greek and Roman world, the offer of food stands for social cohesion, thus establishing an emotional space where affective and relational bonds are established.

Within the framework of this anthropological understanding and specially in the line of Dissanayake's perspective, the choice, processing and mise en place of food consumed at home is a sort of 'artification', that means 'making things special' and taking care of those one loves.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, in line with the aestheticization of daily life, food today increasingly holds the representational and symbolic values pertaining to the realm of works of art. In truth also the ordinary experience of food

[5] "In Scandinavian civilization, and in a good number of others, exchanges and contracts take place in the form of presents; in theory these are voluntary, in reality they are given and reciprocated obligatorily" (Mauss 1990, p. 3).

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can be satisfying and endowed with aesthetic value if seen against the background of an 'art of living'. This means not only paying attention to mere appearance, but taking into account the corporeality-centred values, the repetitive actions, the quality of food, the conviviality and everything else can produce health and well-being.

Developing this line of thought, we can find a conciliatory synthesis, especially if we learn how to experience our 'ordinary' life in a 'special' way, following an anthropological perspective. The preparation and consumption of food are part of the daily rituals and can be 'artified' according to Dissanayake's theory. It does not mean transforming food in a 'work of art', but 'making it special', that is to take good care of our eating companions and pay attention to the details, as to transform them into an extraordinary event in everyday life.

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CHAPTER 12

Ritualization of Shopping and Artistic Interventions into the Temples of Consumption

Polona Tratnik

Abstract: The globalized world is still in the phase of late capitalism, signified by the establishment of multinational corporations, globalized markets and work, mass consumerism, and the fluid flow of capital. The question of the criticism of art towards the capitalist system, its ideology and consumerism is therefore still topical and is readdressed in this paper. To comprehend the logic of late capitalism, one needs to consider the means of consumption. In order to open space to examine contemporary art as being critical towards consumerism, one also needs to take into consideration the ontological changes that have occurred to art and pay attention to performative art. The author argues that if one is to seek critical or political art in late capitalism, one has to look for artistic interventions into the means of consumption.

Keywords: Late Capitalism, Contemporary Art, Means of Consumption, Consumer Culture, Shopping Mall, Ceremonial Centre, Art as Intervention, Performance Art

1 Introduction

The globalized world is still in the phase of late capitalism that has taken place from the 1960s onwards. This, as defined by Ernst Mandel (1972), is signified by the establishment of multinational corporations, globalized markets and work, mass consumerism and the fluid flow of capital. The aim of this chapter is to examine the functioning of the means of consumption, to borrow the term from Georg Ritzer (2005), and the critical potential of artistic intervention into these means. In order to do that, we need to consider the ontological changes through which art has gone and pay attention to performative art. By being

performative and also by setting out actions outside of spaces traditionally designed for art, one can assert that art has a much better chance of engaging in political action in the public space.

2 Cathedrals of Consumption

The passage of capitalism from the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century to contemporaneity is marked by what Zygmunt Bauman (2000) called the passage from the "heavy", Fordist-style capitalism, to the light, consumer-friendly capitalism. The latter is signified by the growth of temples of consumption. In his study of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism, the renowned American philosopher Fredric Jameson (1991) noted that it was from architectural debates that his own conception of postmodernism initially began to emerge (Jameson 1991, p. 2). In architecture, postmodernism stages itself as aesthetic populism, which has at least the merit to efface the high-modernist frontier between high culture and commercial culture (Ibid.). Although interested in consumerism as the central feature of late capitalism, Jameson, however, does not examine how the means of consumption seduce the consumer and how shopping malls organize people's behaviour. He is not interested in the consumer's experience of shopping, the milieu in which consumption takes place, consumers' psychology, their shopping addiction, or the ideology at work in the places of consumption. All these are the actual grounds that establish the cultural logic and the success of late capitalism. At about the same time that Jameson first published his theory of postmodernism (in 1984), the American theologian Ira G. Zepp analysed shopping malls as ceremonial centres (Zepp 1986). Zepp acknowledged that in the urban USA of that time, the 1980s, people continue to seek community, construct centred spaces and ritualize their lives, this time through shopping malls. These comprise mythic geometry, architectural rhetoric and offer a meaningful variety of human activities that take place there. Even earlier than Zepp, in 1980, the cultural anthropologist Alexander Moore analysed Walt Disney World as a ritual space and a playful pilgrimage centre. Moore ascertained that Walt Disney World organizes behaviour by combining play and ritual, which "comprise a metaprocess of expressive behaviour rooted in our mammalian past" (Moore 1980, p. 207). The ritualization of the lives of the majority of people in late capitalism has not only fundamentally evolved around consumerism. The means of consumption have become the "cathedrals of consumption", ascertained George Ritzer (2005) and he points out the "quasi-religious,

'enchanted' nature of such new settings" (Ritzer 2005, p. 10). He establishes that people make "pilgrimages" to these places, "in order to practice our consumer religion" (Ibid.). These means of consumption are structured to have enchanted, even sacred, religious character. For example, sociologist Peter Corrigan (1997, p. 56) acknowledged that "the Church and industry can draw upon the same awe-inspiring techniques" and recognized "department stores as similar to cathedrals." They are immense, vast gigantic, with huge galleries and staircases inside the buildings that enable one to look down into the vast and bustling throng. Corrigan (1997, p. 55) compares the effects of the architecture of the sites of consumption with the architecture of the church: "size is a characteristic of many buildings that are designed to awe small human creatures." The other relevant idea emphasized by Corrigan regarding shopping malls is that they provide everything. He links this idea to the "broader notions of power: rulers who really can provide everything will forever have people in their debt, and a department store may well borrow some of the same effect" (Ibid.). Suddenly such a place "almost magically abolishes all thought of deficits or shortages" (Ibid.).

Ritzer (2005, p. 8) further establishes that shopping malls have become "more than commercial and financial enterprises; they have much in common with the religious centres of traditional civilizations." People are enthusiastically part of consumer society and these settings offer the "greatest spectacle" (Ritzer 2005, p. 11). Because we can easily grow bored, the consumption settings compete to see "which one can put on the greatest show" (Ibid.). Not only shopping malls, but different types of settings "are rushing to emulate the cathedrals of consumption", such as universities, fast food restaurants, souvenir shops, video arcades (Ritzer 2005, p. 10), and even megachurches which offer aerobic classes, bowling alleys, counselling centres, and multimedia bible classes (Ritzer 2005, p. 23).

Zygmunt Bauman (2000) analysed shopping as a rite of exorcism. People, he writes, are "running after pleasurable – tactile, visual or olfactory – sensations, or after the delights of the palate, promised by colourful and glittering objects displayed on the supermarket shelves" or "sensations promised by a session with a counselling expert. But they are also trying to find an escape from the agony called insecurity" (Bauman 2000, p. 81). The crowds gather in the temples of consumption, but not in order to talk and socialize, points out Bauman. Encounters in a crowded space are brief and shallow. People do not establish deeper or more complex relationships. However, crowded as the place may be, it is

not collective, reflects Bauman. "To deploy Althusser's memorable phrase, whoever enters such spaces is 'interpellated' qua individual, called to suspend or tear up the bonds and shed loyalties or put them on a side burner" (Bauman 2000, p. 97). This fundamental link between the means of consumption and ideology is crucial to understanding the processes of subjectification and desubjectification taking place via the means of consumption, which is itself an apparatus. As demonstrated by Michel Foucault (1980, p. 194) and Giorgio Agamben (2009), apparatuses in a disciplinary society seize the bodies in the very process of their desubjectification. In order to produce new subjects, the apparatuses first split the subject through the negation and at the same time the assumption of the old. The apparatus of the prison, for instance, produces "the constitution of a subject and of a milieu of delinquents, who then become the subject of new – and, this time, perfectly calculated – techniques of governance" (Agamben 2009, p. 20). In a quite similar manner the means of consumption produce the constitution of a subject and a milieu of consumers who become the subject of the calculated technique of governance, altogether with the ultimate objective to accumulate capital and to increase the economic and political power of the social elite.

3 Art and Intervention

In 2003, Laibach, the founding art and musical group of the art collective Neue Slowenische Kunst, performed a visit to the shopping mall City Park in Ljubljana. As part of their outfits, the group wore a kind of military uniform particularly reminiscent of the Wehrmacht uniform. The group became known for provoking the public during the disintegration of the Eastern bloc with ambiguous performances with which they addressed the functioning of totalitarian systems. Their interventions were a torment for a society with collective memory of the German and Italian occupation.

Within the performance *Einkauf* (*Shopping*) they simply took a shopping cart and walked in a military style around the mall, doing their shopping in their uniforms with serious expressions on their faces. Their performance was uncomfortable for the people present in the given context. The consumers felt threatened and security guards were unsure whether or not to stop the intervention. The invisible envelope of the Arcadian environment designed for enjoyment and relaxation was suddenly broken. The action *unconcealed* the fact that the consumerist

space is clearly politically structured in a totalitarian manner, as it does not tolerate any penetration of other ideas, behaviours, rites, or ideologies. The performance showed the parallels between consumer ideology, as well as the functioning of its means of consumption, and political totalitarian systems. The seemingly non-political consumerism is proved to be fundamentally political. Art has, in this case, shocked the present public who was not expecting to come in contact with art in that context. Its function was to awaken consumers and to unveil the political structure of the temple of consumption.

Figure 1: Laibach, *Einkauf*, 2003. The group Laibach has performed shopping soon after the opening of shopping mall City park in Ljubljana.
Source: Photo by Sašo Podgoršek. Courtesy of Laibach

Temples of consumption offer "the comforting impression of belonging" (Bauman 2000, p. 99). Bauman pictured the places as a "floating boat", a "self-contained 'place without a place'", which is a "*purified* space." The place had been cleansed of variety and difference; the differences inside "are tamed, sanitized, guaranteed to come free of dangerous ingredients – and so be unthreatening", so that "what is left is pure, unalloyed and uncontaminated amusement" (Bauman 2000, p. 99). The isolative and the excluding character of the temples of consumption is complete:

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The place is well protected against those likely to break this rule – all sorts of intruders, meddlers, spoilsports and other busybodies who would interfere with the consumer's or shopper's splendid isolation. The well supervised, properly surveilled and guarded temple of consumption is an island of order, free from beggars, loiterers, stalkers and prowlers – or at least expected and assumed to be so (Bauman 2000, p. 98).

Consumption is related to the destruction of critical potential and moral indifference. In 2006 the artist Sašo Sedlaček hit on the core of this problem with his project *Beggar*.

Figure 2: Sašo Sedlaček, *Beggar*, 2006, Robot for the marginalized social groups. Source: Courtesy of the artist.

The *Beggar* is a robot made at home from recycled material, designed to help socially marginalized people. Sedlaček noticed that the huge places of consumption are exclusionary, as there are no homeless people to be found there, whereas poverty is an increasing social problem. Despite replacing historic city centres, these places have not fully assumed the function of an open public space for all (Tratnik 2009, p. 18). The *Beggar* was let into the City Centre in Ljubljana as a robot collecting money for the homeless. It collected much more than homeless people collect in the same time frame on the street, selling their newspaper *Street Kings* which is meant to be an alternative to direct begging. This says a lot about the

compassion people have toward the poor compared to the sympathies we have towards digital technology. If on the one hand people feel uncomfortable when confronted by poverty and homelessness, which invoke feelings of fear, on the other hand they are attracted to the mechanical or even more with the digital gadgets that they can play with.

The means of consumption rely on the mechanism of seduction. Bauman (2000) recognized that the heavy, Fordist-style capitalism, passed over to the light, consumer-friendly capitalism. If the first was the world of the rulers, law-givers, and supervisors who directed other people, the latter preserved authorities but now authorities coexist. The authorities of light capitalism no longer command, but they ingratiate themselves with the chooser; they tempt and seduce (Bauman 2000, p. 63). Yet in a consumer society everything is a matter of choice except the compulsion to choose. This compulsion grows to an addiction and is thus no longer perceived as a compulsion (Bauman 2000, p. 73).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former communist European countries started to join the European Union one after another, as an alliance of the European countries with a collective political governance and a foundation in capitalism. In the former communist countries, the shopping centres were quickly built during the transition to capitalism. The phenomenon of consumerism at once struck the population in these countries. People who experienced a shoretage of goods under the previous regime and used to smuggle them from other countries where they would go on shopping trips, were suddenly overwhelmed by the richness of the offer, the surplus of commodities that suddenly appeared near their homes. They were enchanted by the means of consumption and the complete experience that shopping at once became. The population, disappointed with the previous ideology, was subject to uncritically accept the arrival of the new capitalist ideology. The directors Vít Klusák and Filip Remunda showed how high the level of seduction and even addiction to shopping was for the Czech population in 2004, with their film project *The Czech Dream*. They studied the components required for the successful establishment of a shopping mall, apart from its construction, that would draw the consumers to the defined location. Klusák and Remunda built the whole promotion of the coming centre; they made out their own appearance, conducted the advertising campaign and even produced a theme song to emotionally attract the consumers. Finally, people arrived many hours before the expected opening of the mall, but the location was just a rural field and instead of wandering in the shopping mall they got a chance to take

a walk in the countryside. Many of the people who had arrived expecting to have a shopping experience felt angry. Afterwards, the project triggered rich public discussions as rarely seen regarding consumerism, the role of art and public financing of art, as well as on the political question of joining the European Union, which was current at the time.

In 2003 Sašo Sedlaček collected the advertising leaflets that he had been receiving from the shopping centres, and invited the public to build bricks out of this material in the gallery space (*Kapelica Gallery*). With a group of colleagues, he then conducted an action: with those bricks they built a wall with which they closed off the entrance of the City Park in Ljubljana. He accompanied the intervention, which he named *Just Do It!*, by stating that he was only giving back what he had received and had not asked for.
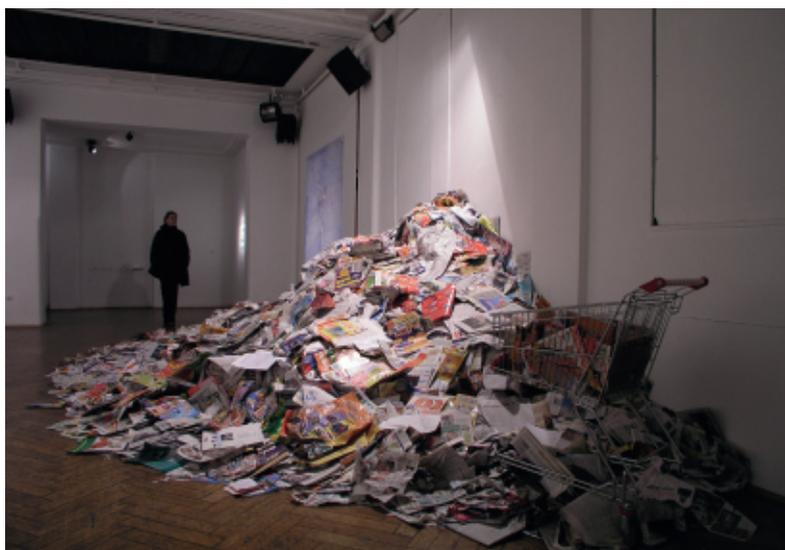
Figure 3: Sašo Sedlaček, *Just do it!*, 2003, Artistic intervention into the entrance of the shopping mall. The astist collected the advertising leaflets.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4: Sašo Sedlaček, *Just do it!*, 2003. The artist organized a production of the bricks out of the collected material in the gallery space.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

Figure 5: Sašo Sedlaček, *Just do it!*, 2003. Closing the entrance to the shopping mall with the bricks.
Source: Courtesy of the artist

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4 Conclusion

These cases of performative art unveil the truth of capitalism, its refined hidden mechanisms and ideology, as well as its (side) effects, such as the increase in poverty within the population, ecological pollution due to the hyper-production of goods, shopping centres, and promotional material. Art is, in this case, not experienced through the mechanism of contemplation. Its function is to stimulate critical thinking. This is possible with an intervention of art into the marrow of capitalism, into its means of consumption which is the capitalist means of enchantment. This is an intervention into the Church of capitalism, the sacred environment, where the consecrated ritual of seduction takes place.

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The Everyday at the Limits of Representation. Georges Perec's Things. A Story of the Sixties (1965)

David Ewing

Abstract: This essay argues that Georges Perec's novel, *Things. A Story of the Sixties* (1965) is an aesthetic artefact that helps us to think and experience everyday life. In dramatizing the effects of consumerist dreams and information overload on its protagonists' lives, the text suggests that everyday experience is opposed to mimesis. However, Perec's blanket use of the imperfect tense, together with the work of mirroring effects, prevents us from channelling the everyday into the negative space of representation. Rather, the novel speaks to Maurice Blanchot's suggestion that the everyday is defined by an intransitive escapism. The fabular design of the narrative gives the reader an ethical impetus for tracing the course of this escape, only to find herself ensnared in the text's economy of desires and representations. On shaky grounds for dismissing the false dreams of the characters, she is invited to reflect on the practical use of mimesis in making her own everyday experience.

Keywords: Things, Mimesis, Novel, Aesthetic Capitalism, Good Life

1 Introduction. Things: A Story of the Sixties, or, a History of the Present

Georges Perec's *Things. A Story of the Sixties* (first published in 1965 as *Les Choses. Une histoire des années soixante*) is a short novel in which a Parisian couple's dream of *la dolce vita slides* out of view. The plot follows two years in the lives of Jérôme and Sylvie, a pair of university dropouts who have taken up freelance work in the nascent field of market research. For a while, the couple manage to contain a sense of meaninglessness, allowing themselves to be consumed by the belief that the world will one day be theirs, an attitude fed by a move to

an apartment in the Latin Quarter. Living well is an activity they engage in the conditional: obsessing over designer furniture they might one day be able to afford while neglecting basic tasks of household maintenance. But as work dries up and visits from friends become an ever-rarer occurrence, the couple lose their taste for a luxury-bohemian lifestyle. On an impulse, they move to Tunisia, where, at the end of eight melancholic months in the town of Sfax, the story proper comes to an end. An epilogue projects the couple's return to Paris – their initial joy at rediscovering the city's delights soon evaporates into despair – and their ultimate capitulation to the salaried life, as they land jobs at the head of an advertising agency in Bordeaux.

Subtitled "A Story of the Sixties", *Things* registers the emergence of what Gernot Böhme (2017, p. 14) has called "aesthetic capitalism"; namely, the mode of production in which, following "the economic saturation of the private sphere," economic growth becomes possible "only through the enhancement of life, through the production of means for staging oneself, that is, through the production of aesthetic values." As Böhme's theatrical idiom suggests, aesthetic capitalism is closely bound up with the notion of mimesis. It is an alliance evident from the opening chapter of *Things*, a description of the world made in the protagonists' image:

> Sometimes it would seem to them that a whole life could be led harmoniously between these book-lined walls, amongst these objects so perfectly domesticated that they would have ended up believing these bright, soft, simple and beautiful things had only ever been made for their sole use (Perec 2011, p. 25).

Indeed, Perec's novel has a claim to historical significance vis-à-vis Böhme's project for a critique of aesthetic capitalism. Written in the early 1960s and published in 1965, *Things* anticipates by several years the theoretical works of Jean Baudrillard and Wolfgang Fritz Haug which, for Böhme, register the advent of aesthetic capitalism in western Europe (Böhme 2017, p. 67). Such a claim is perhaps unsurprising in view of the novel's purposive commitment to realist aesthetics: the subtitle might be translated as "a history of the 1960s", and Perec had taken direct inspiration for the novel from Lukács's theory of realism and Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* [1869] (Sheringham 2006, pp. 251-52). Moreover, just as Böhme's critique extends to the contemporary moment, so, too, does *Things* suggest a history of the present; one that is produced through a specific configuration of aesthetics, mimesis and everyday life.

2 Aesthetics, Everydayness, and Literary Realism

This essay will argue that it is precisely the status of *Things* as a mimetic artwork that helps us to conceive the relation between mimesis, aesthetics, and everydayness. Given, however, the reasonably assured status of *Things* as an aesthetic object, such a reading risks ignoring the counter-normativity of Yuriko Saito's project (2007) for an everyday aesthetics. Saito has pointed to the duplicity through which Anglophone aesthetics discourse has insisted that "there is no theoretical limit to what can become the object of an aesthetic experience," while simultaneously positing fine art, and particularly "paradigmatic Western Art", as its model for aesthetic experience (Saito 2007, pp. 13-15). "The content of our aesthetic life," Saito argues, "is even more diverse and multifaceted than what can be captured by art-centred aesthetics" (Saito 2007, p. 40). If writing about a French novel cannot but contribute to the discursive weight of an aesthetics centred on Western art, I nevertheless want to suggest that an account of the relationship between novel-reading and daily experience may find an accommodation with Saito's project. For it is not quite my objective to replace fine art with the novel as a paradigm of aesthetic experience *per se*; as Saito argues, "art, whatever its designation […] is necessarily characterized as an *exception to* or *commentary on* everyday objects and affairs," and as such is an unwieldy paradigm for thinking unexceptional aesthetic experience (Saito 2007, p. 40). Rather, my subject is the very nature of this exceptional and commentative status of mimetic art vis-à-vis the everyday. I want to highlight the affordances of this exceptionality for thinking and experiencing everydayness; a category including, but not limited to, aesthetic life.

If the French tradition of everyday life theory provides rich resources for thinking this category of everydayness, it has tended to cast literary realism in a negative light. Henri Lefebvre, for instance, cites Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* – the inspiration for *Things*, no less – as an example of its author's "denunciation of reality" and a cause of the putative denigration of everyday life in French literary history (Lefebvre 2014, p. 129). And in his seminal account of everyday life in twentieth-century French culture, the late Michael Sheringham (2006) associated realism with a distanciation of everyday life. Drawing on Roland Barthes' critique of realist discourse (Barthes 1990), Sheringham argues that "realist fiction excels […] at drawing our attention to a first-level everyday that can be accessed via the eye" (Sheringham 2006, p. 41), but that it tends to reduce the everyday – defined, following Lefebvre and

Maurice Blanchot, as a level of reality – to "an objectified background on which blanket judgements can be passed" (Lefebvre 2014, pp. 412-19; Blanchot 1987, p. 17; Sheringham 2006, p. 42). Sheringham's account of literary realism might thus be read as a local inflection of Saito's argument that art constitutes an "*exception to* and *commentary on*" everyday life. (Indeed, where Saito acknowledges that "various art objects help us attend to our everyday life aesthetically", she contends that Western mimetic artforms, such as Turner's paintings or the realist novel, are less effective than both contemporary experimental forms, such as assemblage art, and non-Western art practices such as the tea ceremony (Saito 2007, pp. 35-40). The present essay may, in turn, be conceived as an attempt to examine the ways in which a realist text seems to exit and comment on everyday life and to ask whether, in so doing, it might take us past "blanket judgements" on ordinary experience.

At this point, it will be helpful to consider some of the ways in which literary works have avoided falsifying everyday life. For Sheringham, "no genre can lay claim to the everyday, but practices that cut across generic divisions have often been productive" (Sheringham 2006, p. 45). Thus, if Perec himself is, for Sheringham, the "most resourceful explorer and indefatigable champion" of the everyday, the endorsement is owed to Perec's essayistic work and to his *Life: A User's Manual* [1978], which is cited alongside Joyce's *Ulysses* [1922] as a rare example of the successful apprehension of everyday life in fiction (Sheringham 2006, p. 47). (Indeed, Sheringham suggests that the relation between *Things* and everyday life is curtailed by the text's residual commitment to realism: although Perec's use of literary devices in the novel tends "to subvert representation, engendering […] circuitous connections between text and world," the novel "lacks a number of features that Perec's later everyday-oriented work […] will possess in abundance: the sense of a total field, direct involvement and experimentation that registers the interaction of subjective experience and objective structures, the need for open-ended questioning" (Sheringham 2006, p. 14). For Sheringham, "it is often where the artifice of fiction is made most manifest that an effective grasp on the everyday is seemingly achieved" (2006, p. 45), a claim which, taken alongside the example of Joyce, might point towards a modernist aesthetics. Although Sheringham avoids the term, it is notable that modernism has enjoyed favour in theoretical approaches to the everyday (Lefebvre 1971, pp. 2-7; Davis 2009) – although not always in its 'high modernist' incarnations (Highmore 2006) – and that several recent

studies have read modernist narrative through the lens of ordinary or everyday life (Randall 2007; Olson 2009; Sayeau 2013).

Nevertheless, it is possible to construct an archive of literary thought that has suggested a productive relationship between realism and the everyday. Accounts to have posited an affinity between the realist novel and ordinary life – including Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* [1946], Jacques Rancière's *Mute Speech* [1998], and Franco Moretti's *Serious Century* [2006] (Auerbach 2013; Ranciere 2011; Moretti 2006) – may not advance an explicit theorization of the everyday as a level of reality, but they nevertheless resonate with certain aspects of the reflexive apprehensions of everyday life in the French tradition, as constructed by Sheringham. Two of these points of convergence will provide a methodological orientation for the present essay. The first, evident in all three texts cited above, is to engage literature through the practice of close textual analysis. Such a practice is closely allied to the works that make up Sheringham's study, which "are as literary as they are theoretical, and vice versa" (Sheringham 2006, p. 398); indeed, it is methodologically central to the thought of Roland Barthes (Sheringham 2006, pp. 199-207) and Michel de Certeau (Freijomil 2009). Such a practice lays the ground for a second point of convergence, which is to blur any distinction between realism and modernism: just as Liesl Olson notes that "modernism is still generally committed to modes of realism and coherence that could be called an aesthetic order" (Olson 2009, p. 5), so, too, might we follow Rancière's rejection of what Gabriel Rockhill has called "the modernist doxa" by attending to reflexive or destabilizing narrative procedures in texts that otherwise seem to conform to the conventions of realist discourse (Rockhill 2011, p. 3; Rancière 2011, pp. 63-64). Indeed, it is just such an attention that Sheringham calls for when he locates the possibility for elucidating the everyday in "the dimension of the novel, linked to the act or art of narration, through which narrator's performance addresses the reader's own relationship to lived reality" (Sheringham 2006, p. 47). Together, these principles will be used to read *Things*, if not quite as a prototype for a realist aesthetics of the everyday, then as a troublesome case for an account that would place literary realism, or mimetic art more generally, at odds with everyday life.

3 The Art of Escapism

In an essay of 1962, Blanchot (1987, p. 15) offered the following dictum: "Despite massive development of the means of communication, the everyday escapes. This is its definition." In setting the intransitive

escapism of the everyday against "the massive development of the means of communication", Blanchot was glossing Lefebvre's elucidation of the resistance of everyday life to the technological ordering of the modern world and its correlate in the production of knowledge (Lefebvre 2014, pp. 368-370; 2014, pp. 318-19). *Things*, in turn, picks up on this notion of a gap between representational knowledge and one's experience of the world: in their capacity as market researchers, Jérôme and Sylvie are professional mimeticists. As the narrator has it:

> There was washing, drying, ironing. Gas, electricity and the telephone. Children. Clothes and underclothes. Mustard. Packet soups, tinned soups. Hair: how to wash it, how to dry it, how to make it hold a wave, how to make it shine. Students, fingernails, cough syrup, typewriters, fertilisers, tractors, leisure pursuits, presents, stationery, linen, politics, motorways, alcoholic drinks, mineral water, cheeses, jams, lamps and curtains, insurance and gardening. *Nil humani alienum*…Nothing that was human was outside their scope (Perec 2011, pp. 38-39).

The mere protraction of this list produces an ironic undercurrent, suggesting, on the part of the protagonists, not only a positivist naiveté, but a profound inability to come to grips with the world. Indeed, the occasion for an unpleasant aesthetic experience that could move the couple to ameliorative action is cause and symptom of a slide out of feeling altogether: "for three years", the reader learns, "an electric point remained unrepaired, without their making up their minds to call in an electrician" (Perec 2011, p. 30).

If this anaesthesia stems from the mimetic life of market research, it points us to the local contingencies of access to the everyday *qua* an experiential domain of practice and of the possibility for aesthetic experience, pleasant or otherwise. The escapism of the everyday in *Things* would, then, be a more unequal business than what is suggested in Blanchot's (1987, pp. 18-19) "definition", which hinges about an understanding of everydayness as a universally accessible – if, precisely, subjectless – experience of modernity. At the same time, however, Perec's total commitment to the imperfect tense (notwithstanding the introductory chapter, written in the conditional mood, and the epilogue, constructed in the future tense) shows what happens if one tries to grasp the everyday as the simple negative of the processes of discretization that characterize market research. While the tense of habit, duration, and iteration may be allied to the uneventful ebb and flow of everyday experience, to encounter the story in the imperfect

is, for the reader, to enter an experience in which the very rhythms of daily existence are black-boxed. The effect is compounded by a total absence of character delineation; the imperfect is always conjugated in the third person plural. So, on the one hand, a discretizing approach not only fails to represent the everyday but impedes one's very experience of it. And yet, if one tries to represent that failure in narrative form, to capture that negative space, one is left with a disembodied and teleological synthesis of day-to-day experience, a mere black box.

As a figure for the way everyday life is remaindered by representation, the black box is itself transformed by Perec's use of mirroring effects. As we have already seen, the couple's jobs as market researchers reproduce, at the level of the plot, the basic mimetic task of the novelist, and *vice versa*, although this mirroring is inflected by irony: "*nil humani alienum*" is not the axiom of a novelist whose début scarcely exceeds a hundred pages. We might add that the couple's practice, or increasing lack thereof, as home-builders, enters an analogous relation with Perec's task of producing aesthetic effects: in the first chapter, for example, Perec suggests to the reader the effects of the couple's dream home. While this suggestion is sometimes created through the simple reproduction of an effect – take, for instance, the sensuosity of the language in "you would glimpse thick bathrobes, swan-neck taps in solid brass," which, in David Bellos's translation, is just as indulgent as what it describes (Perec 2011, p. 23) – it does most of its work at a remove. The use of a language one might expect to find in magazines, such as the curtain which "would slide back at the merest touch" (Perec 2011, p. 21) suggests not only a readymade aesthetic ambience but, by metonymic extension, a lifeworld of glossy surfaces; palpable illusions which, like those peddled in the pages of the weekend supplements, will linger for only a matter of days.

The mirroring of the protagonists' representational endeavours and the mirroring-at-a-remove of their aesthetic pursuits are, in turn, complicated by the figure of the narrator, who is also in the business of building a picture of a world and of recreating or suggesting its aesthetic qualities. Complicated, because the vanishing point of the narration suggests the novel may in fact be a confession: the point at which the story proper, recounted in the imperfect tense, comes to an end, and from which the epilogue takes it up in the future tense, coincides with the summer before the couple are projected to move to Bordeaux. On this reading, for the narrator to recount the story in the imperfect is to re-inhabit an experience in which the very circadian rhythms of daily life

had been inaccessible, while, paradoxically, imitating the dynamics Blanchot (1987, p. 14) ascribes to everyday experience: "the everyday is what we never see for a first time, but only see again, having always already seen it by an illusion that is, as it happens, constitutive of the everyday." As the imperfect is also the means through which the narrator constructs a fabular subject position, its use intimates a desire to compensate for an absence of everyday experience; to engineer a temporal distance that would allow the everyday, in line with Blanchot's "illusion", to be seen again. Nevertheless, *Things* is no *roman à clef*: it is possible to read the text as a fable whose contents bear no necessary relation to the life of the narrator – or, indeed, of the author, who happened to be living a "studentlike life" on the Left Bank similar to that described in the novel (Bellos 1993, pp. 306-307). To return to the image of the black box: it is not quite the case that the characters' everyday life escapes from the systematizing clutches of professionalized or narrative representation into a clearly delimited negative space. It is rather as if the reader is chasing the 'black box' of everyday life through consecutive storeys of halls of mirrors; some inflected, some 'removed'. Suffice to say, Blanchot's paradox – a definition, or delimitation, to be found only in escape – is played out to a dizzying degree.

4 Things and the Good Life

Few readers will encounter *Things* with a view to contemplating the epistemological elusiveness of the everyday. But the invitation, produced by the 'black-boxing' effects of the imperfect tense, to consider *where* the life of this couple has gone is, in turn, given an ethical impetus – *how* and *why* did their life slide away? – by a fusion of fabular and novelistic conventions. In constructing a traditionally novelistic timeframe of two to three years, *Things* moves the reader to consider the causes of the sliding away of the protagonists' life, while its overall design focuses that enquiry at the level of the everyday. Thus, the conditional mood used in the opening chapter intimates the characters' indulgence in *projections* of practice and aesthesis, while the sustained use of the imperfect tense, vested with all the authority of novelistic hindsight, traces their slide into a space that is adjacent to those domains. The epilogue completes a structure which invites reflection on how far a good life might resemble that described in the novel. This scene, itself a projection, is quite the indictment of the life the characters have been living, and as such is the completion of a tale that would caution against the mimetic life:

They will sort out their flat, have it repainted, get rid of the piles of books, the bundles of linen, the stacks of crockery that had always cluttered it up and beneath which they had often felt they were suffocating. […] They will see it for the first time the way they had always wanted to see it […] with its low ceiling, its rustic courtyard, its admirable tree over which, very soon, just as they had in the past, the new owners will fall into raptures (Perec 2011, p. 124).

If the narrator is to be taken at their moralizing tone, the good life entails abandoning mimesis; living 'in the present tense', so to speak. There is, to be sure, good reason not to engage home-building that would have as its end the quasi-spectatorial aesthesis figured in the opening chapter: a life imagined to be "led harmoniously among these book-lined walls" is liable only to gather "piles of books."

Nevertheless, Perec's narrative machinery simultaneously works against such a moral. As we have seen, it is not entirely through choice that the couple have been unable to live: the effects of cognitive overload and unstable employment can frustrate one's access to the simple circadian rhythms of existence. And while the epilogue may project a moment of blissful freedom in a thingless home, all "sparkling light and clean", the vision is no more practicable, or, for that matter, desirable, than the dream of book-lined walls in the apartment of Eden. Still, a practical mimesis akin to that described in the quotation above – a mapping of the world, a "sort[ing] out" of their flat – could become part of the protagonists' everyday lives, without their having quite to prepare the apartment for sale. On this view, a cartography of the everyday would become a creative practice, and home-building itself an aesthetic and mimetic experience, but one that is non-spectatorial and open-ended. In such a context, the dream sequence, with its projection of aesthesis, could become useful, not as an object of contemplation, but as an aspiration, something to which one can flick back the pages in relief from the prosaic flow of everyday life. And if we pursue the reading that the narrator is speaking from experience, we might say that the simple existence of the story acknowledges that mimesis is useful as a component of practical activity, if not as its own end. Indeed, it would mean that the text, with all its mirroring effects, enacts that principle.

This invitation to an ethical investigation of the protagonists' plight is vested with an urgency by the reader's ensnarement in the text's economy of representations and desires. For the title and opening sequence have allowed the reader to indulge in just the same projection of *things* as that which seems to have paralysed Jérôme and Sylvie; the

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development of the story will leave her comparably disappointed. The effect is redoubled by the use of brand names, as in the evocation of "the great staircase of footwear leading from Churches to Westons, from Westons to Buntings and from Buntings to Lobbs" (Perec 2011, p. 39), among which the reader is invited to position herself (which can you afford?). By the epilogue, it will be difficult for her to rise above the "new owners" who are ready to "fall into raptures" over the glorious apartment. Knowing that the thingless life cannot last long, the reader is thus returned, on closing the book, to the projection of a dream apartment that opened the story. Having witnessed the dangers of the spectatorial-mimetic life, she is not quite condemned to repeat the story of the protagonists. But it is no more possible to leave the book satisfied that one needs only an awareness of the machinations of capitalism and, to that end, a handful of realist novels, to go on inhabiting the world of things. Counter to the pretensions of its subtitle, the text has inflicted sustained damage on the idea of redemption through mimesis. If this is what Sheringham (2006) points towards when he speaks of the novel's engendering "circuitous relations between text and world," it is also what makes it resistant to the "blanket judgements" associated with realism; insofar as the reader's judgement is called on, it is made processual and recursive. For the reader who would denounce the alienation of the characters finds herself in a glass house, and if she can figure the deleterious consequences of throwing stones in such a situation, she may also be moved to reflect on her own means of access to everyday life. Getting at it, then, will be an imperfect, if not quite imperfectible, business.

5 Conclusion: Mimetic Art and Everyday Experience

This essay has suggested that attending to aesthetic form may engender a productive relationship between mimetic art and everyday life. On this view, the achievement of *Things* is less to have granted a window onto the historical truth of aesthetic capitalism than to have caught the reader up in the projection of things, an economy of representations which, through the multiple layers of mirroring effects, constantly defers access to the rhythms of life. Thus, if mimetic art will always be a departure from the thick of everyday experience, this need not be considered a one-way route. *Things* puts in question how best to live under conditions of aesthetic capitalism but, contrary to a sociological critique or a self-help book, it does not fully step outside the everyday. The question is rather raised tangentially, as a product of following the plot.

Reading can therefore be seen as a displacement activity, both from being immersed in the everyday and from thinking about it head-on. Two further upshots follow from this insight. First, *Things* calls for an attention to the ways in which mimetic artforms are enmeshed in the everyday: it is possible to imagine, for example, its scenes rising to the surface of consciousness as one goes about tidying one's home or encountering advertisements for consumer goods. Considering how mimetic art can be embedded in everyday life alongside the dialogical nature of the text's exceptionality to everyday life, we arrive at a second upshot; namely, to think the everyday beyond the unexceptional. Ultimately, *Things* encourages us to consider that mimesis and commentary, displacement and digression, are part and parcel of the everyday, and to trace more attentively their relation to unexceptional experience.

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The Art of Living in a Double House. Everyday Aesthetics in the Space between (East and West)

Tordis Berstrand

Abstract: The relationship between art and the domestic setting is complicated. A perceived incompatibility between the critical gesture of autonomous art and the protective enclosure of home and house sets the two apart. For the modern architect, art cannot accommodate domestic life without the loss of potency or homely comfort. At the same time, artists in the twentieth century have continued to challenge the resilience of the dwelling house through radical spatial practices producing new spaces and concepts for living. The following looks at the work Merzbau (1927 – 1937) by the German artist Kurt Schwitters (1887 – 1948) as an example of a work of art transforming a seemingly ordinary house into an extraordinary architecture. It is argued that a certain kind of coexistence becomes possible when Schwitters's Merz building radically challenges the dichotomy of the familiar/unknown embedded in the Western house. Furthermore, it is suggested that the aesthetics of 'the uncanny' sheds light on the forces at play when the artist thereby brings something of a foreign nature to the surface of the living space. The thinking of Theodor W. Adorno and Martin Heidegger informs the enquiry into modern Western concepts of dwelling while links to traditional Chinese aesthetics and the more recent 'living aesthetics' are developed with a view to a trans-cultural conceptualisation of the inclusive living space.

Keywords: Living Aesthetics, Merzbau, The Uncanny, Dwelling, The Everyday

1 The Art of Living

"It is widely known that there is a deep-rooted tradition of aestheticizing everyday life in Chinese culture and art" Liu Yuedi (2014, p. 15). Everyday aesthetics, or the 'art of living', as a category in the philosophy of everyday life, has a history in China. By contrast, in the West,

a preference for extraordinary experiences of art outside the realm and domain of the everyday has informed aesthetic thinking in recent centuries. John Dewey's twentieth-century critique outlined in the influential *Art as Experience* (1934) is a break from this tradition. The continued relevance of Dewey's questioning of the status of art as an elevated object, commodity and primary source of aesthetic experience is evidence of the need to develop more inclusive aesthetic concepts. In traditional Chinese culture, art is embedded in life as a dimension of the everyday cultivated as something at the same time extra *and* ordinary. In the tradition of the Chinese literati scholar, for example, a highly refined lifestyle integrates aesthetic experience in everyday life practices.[1] While a scholar's life, by all means, was exclusive, and the traditional Chinese concept of art is of a unique nature, aesthetic practice and experience were cultivated as profound components of daily life in the house and garden. The orientation of traditional Chinese thinking towards relational alignment of complementary forces, in contrast to the Western tendency to operate according to oppositional pairs demarcating fields of contradiction and hierarchy, might well account for this propensity for a harmonious integration.[2]

The contemporary Chinese philosopher Liu Yuedi (2014) identifies the difference between the East and the West with regard to everyday aesthetics in that the Western approach is "reflexive" because it is a reaction against the historical focus on art as the primary source of aesthetic experience (Liu 2014, p. 15). On the other hand, in Chinese aesthetics, the focus on the everyday is "a reaction against 'the Other' (Ibid.), where the adversary signifies the influence from Western aesthetics. If this 'other' then ultimately also refers back to art, different lines of thinking have driven aesthetics in the East and West in the last century. Respectively, a preoccupation with nature has come to involve the environment more broadly and a focus on art has become a concern with life in a wider sense. Overall, the contours of an 'intercultural turn' towards a shared interest in the environment of humans, animals and things, as well as a preoccupation with everyday life in its various extra/ordinary manifestations, can be glimpsed. In this light, traditional

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[1] See for example Li Zehou (2010) for a detailed discussion of the literati scholar's 'art of living' in observance of Confucian and Taoist ideals.

[2] See for example the Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-Lan's history of Chinese philosophy (1997) as well as the writing of French sinologist François Jullien (2000) for further insights into differences and alignments between philosophical thinking in the East and West.

Chinese living aesthetics, according to Liu, provides a framework for a global aesthetics concerned with art and everyday life as complementary rather than opposing forces (Liu 2014, p. 17).

Living aesthetics is for Liu an attempt at reaching back to retrieve traditions at risk of disappearing because these might help reorient contemporary aesthetics towards a new agenda shared by the East and West. Living aesthetics thereby involves a wider critique of Western modernity as a disruptive 'other' suppressing the aesthetic potential of everyday life. If the art of living begins at home, then living aesthetics potentially resonates beyond the domestic setting and engages with the larger environment. In light of the planetary challenge beyond the lifeworlds of humans, this paper suggests that living aesthetics might extend to an aesthetics itself alive and open towards non-human life and things of all kinds as agents in a potentially unlimited collective setting.[3]

2 Double House

If, in the West, notions of art and living involve a split between the space of the artwork and the domestic setting, then how to conceive of a 'double house' encompassing both Eastern and Western values? How to conceive of an aesthetics beyond the divide? Is it possible to articulate a house for coexistence accommodating both aesthetic experience and practice, the extra and the ordinary, the familiar and the unknown, the self and the other? Must such a house be an artful rendering of an inhabitable structure in order to provide inclusive accommodation? In Western thinking, a perceived opposition between art and the domestic setting has historically set the two spheres apart. For the twentieth-century architectural Modern Movement, the autonomous work was qualified as art or architecture by the extent to which it represented non-domestic values (Reed 1996). Art was autonomous, could not be tamed or it would cease to be art, whereas, by contrast, the house as a structure for living when exercising its domesticating force would hold together

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[3] The German sinologist Karl-Heinz Pohl has elaborated on the notion of 'living rules' as opposed to 'dead rules' in Chinese aesthetics (2018, p. 332). The argument concerns the rules that artists adhere to in the creation of art which must involve both 'naturalness' (自然 zìrán) and 'regularity' (法 fǎ). Such a work embodies "a living, organic pattern, not dependent on rules derived from 'orthodox' models or periods but following the rules of nature. Such works come alive, creating their own rules, in each new period with each new poet-artist who is stirred by the world and its affairs," Pohl writes (pp. 333-334).

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the familiar and known. Western artists have repeatedly addressed this perceived antagonism with critical gestures reconfiguring the house for other ways of living, not least their own. Along the way, throughout the twentieth century, two Western philosophical positions have exerted a significant influence on the debate in architectural circles. On the one hand, Adorno's thinking on the critical gesture of modern, autonomous art has driven a negative dialectics in favour of dismantling the residential house.[4] On the other hand, Heidegger's thinking on the relationship between poetic dwelling, building and thinking has informed a phenomenological approach to the attempted restoration of the home, house and sense of belonging to a place perceived to be lost.[5] If the two positions would appear conflicting, they outline the schism between art and dwelling in modern Western thinking. In relation to Adorno's thinking, the architectural theorist Hilde Heynen (1992, p. 82) writes:

> Modernity evokes a 'crisis of experience' because it increasingly destroys living conditions that are favourable to real, intense experiences and profound interpersonal contacts […] Adorno sees contemporary art as a way of expressing this crisis. This is precisely why it is 'modern': the modernism of art consists in its relation to the crisis of experience.

A crisis of experience is evoked when disruptive modernity challenges the possibility of profound encounters in the everyday environment. Art is not only averse to the domestic setting because of being a stranger to domestication but, according to Adorno, expresses a crisis of extra/ordinary everyday experience in the modern house. Aesthetic experience is the experience of the negative, of loss and absence in a house devastated by war as well as the forces of modern development. How to reconfigure this house as a place for aesthetic experiences beyond the negative?

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[4] In exile in America during World War II, Adorno's concern with modernity's self-destructive nature led to a consideration of the tendency of rational progress to turn irrational. Adorno wrote, "The house is past. The bombings of European cities, as well as the labour and concentration camps, merely proceed as executors, with what the immanent development of technology had long decided was to be the fate of houses. These are now good only to be thrown away like old food cans" (1951/1978, p. 39).

[5] The two published lectures 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1954/2013) and '… Poetically Man Dwells…' ([1954] 2013) famously outlines Heidegger's philosophy of dwelling. Both have exerted a significant influence on architects in the West and continue to be studied in China.

3 The Problem of the House

The desire for the dwelling house – with its promise of enclosure, familiarity and shelter – remains strong in the twenty-first century. The longing for a certain place to settle down endures in the form of a house of one's own choice or perhaps handed down through generations. Yet, what if we cannot (all) have this house because most of us cannot afford it, there is not enough space, or the environment will collapse as a result of the building activity alone? What if the one-family house has become an exclusive, anti-social, even earth-destructive idea? Then the problem is not only the longing for a house grounded in a place of the past for the gathering of the ones who belong. It is not the desire for a house enclosing the relations and secrets, insights and achievements of the ones initiated through generations of accumulated things and memories. The dwelling house in the form of a grounded structure haunting contemporary dwellers becomes a *closed* house, a fortress enclosing the residents while keeping strangers outside. A *closure*, a dead-end, preventing communication, exchange and sharing with anyone and anything beyond the walls that frame and hold it.

The less than straightforward connotations of the term *dwelling* – noun and verb in one – contribute to the complexity of the issue. Famously, Heidegger (2013, p. 145) elucidated the meaning of the term's German equivalents through close readings of etymological dictionaries on the German language. Heidegger found that the German word for *building* – 'bauen' – can be demonstrated to originally mean 'to dwell'. This meaning has, however, fallen into oblivion or it has been concealed and Heidegger writes (2013, p. 146) "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*." Dwelling comes before building because, as human beings, we are foremost dwellers and how we choose to build this dwelling remains a challenge.[6]

While dictionary recordings are likely to throw new light on the meaning of terms, the notion that dwelling today could mean something else than what dictionary entries have recorded in the past is there. Is it possible to imagine a "place of residence; a dwelling-place, habitation, house" – the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of the term *dwelling*

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[6] Heidegger proceeds from the Old English/High German word for building, *buan*, which not only means 'to dwell' but also refers to 'being' itself via buan's relation to the German *bin* – ich bin = 'I am', and therefore, I am = I dwell. "The manner in which we humans are on the earth is *Buan*, dwelling," Heidegger writes (2013, p. 145).

(1989, p. 3) – with application in the twenty-first century? If the immediate answer is affirmative, then the question is what the nature of this dwelling-place-house would be. Where is a "place of residence" located in the migratory flux of the twenty-first century? What is "habitation" in an age characterised by movement and change? Does observable life conform to a shared set of values and practices that might be grounded in a "house"? Will a placeless contemporary life be contained in just one "dwelling-place"? Should the dictionary entry be revised? Should it be deleted or marked obsolete?

Figure 1: Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau* (Grosse Gruppe), Hannover, Germany, 1933. Source: Photo by Wilhelm Redemann. Copyright: bpk, Sprengel Museum Hannover

4 The Artist's House

In between the two World Wars, a family house in Hannover, Germany, becomes a work of art when the artist's studio located inside one of the apartments transforms into a new architecture. A highly personalised living space emerges, built in a bricolage fashion from material collected

from the war-torn streets of Hannover. Inside the structure, numerous hidden spaces hold objects and memorabilia, while larger inhabitable spaces serve functions such as a library and a living room. It is around 1918 that the emerging Dada-artist Kurt Schwitters initiates the sculptural columns that eventually merge with each other as well as with the walls of the square bedroom at the back of the house that becomes his studio in 1927. Over the course of ten years, before Schwitters is forced to flee Germany because of being persecuted by the National Socialists, the work *Merzbau* embodies the artist's attempt at making a space for himself as well as his family and friends. As such, the work can be seen as a refuge from political upheaval and persecution which, at the same time, gives form to an intuitive and expressive architecture.

Schwitters outlines his *Merz* philosophy and method in numerous texts that are published in avantgarde art journals and contribute to a lively discourse on the role of art in the twentieth century. One of these texts, written in December 1920 with the title 'Merz', outlines the agenda in terms of how material found on the street is recharged with meaning and purpose when entering one of Schwitters's *Merz* compositions. About his *Merz* pictures, Schwitters writes:

> Because the medium is unimportant, I take any material whatsoever if the picture demands it. When I adjust materials of different kinds to one another, I have taken a step in advance of mere oil painting, for in addition to playing off colour against colour, line against line, form against form etc., I play off material against material; for example, wood against sackcloth. I call the *Weltanschauung* from which this mode of artistic creation arose *Merz* (Lach 1981, p. 406).[7]

Schwitters's *Merz* method gives aesthetic form to everyday objects and materials, found in the streets of Hannover, when these are brought together in a composition on the shared image-plane or in a three-dimensional space. Within these confines, every object or piece of material is re-charged with value and meaning when integrated into a composition that marks a site of a non-hierarchical, harmonious coexistence. In the creation of the new living environment, the inclusivity of *Merz* appears to have no limit, and the relation between the work and the studio, inside which it is built, becomes one of attachment

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[7] The quote is from the English translation of the text 'Merz (Für den *Ararat* geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920)' published in vol. 5 of *Das literarische Werk* [The Literary Work] which is a collection of Kurt Schwitters's published writing (1981).

since Schwitters does not alter the walls of the room. The work rather doubles the walls to become itself a wall-structure and *Merzbau*, therefore, has no outer side or external façade. It is a three-winged, horseshoe-shaped, interior structure with a large window occupying the studio's fourth wall that overlooks the garden. *Merzbau* thereby faces an internal courtyard and the spatial relationships between work of art, house and site are intricate. The work's amalgamation of everyday materials and findings into an inhabitable, white-washed bricolage *Gesamtkunstwerk* embedded in a bourgeois residential building demonstrates Schwitters's ability to transcend the limit of the house in an inwards movement. In doing so, the work brings something unusual, perhaps un-domestic, to the inner surface of the house.

Figure 2: Kurt Schwitters, *Merzbau* (Blaues Fenster), Hannover, Germany, 1933.
Source: Photo by Wilhelm Redemann. Copyright: bpk, Sprengel Museum Hannover

5 The Un/homely

As is well known, Sigmund Freud begins the essay *Das Unheimliche* [The Uncanny] (1919) by explaining that the uncanny signifies an area of aesthetics that has so far been neglected in the specialist literature. It is an area involving the experience of something once familiar and known resurfacing from the depth of the unconscious mind to cause distress. As such, the uncanny signifies the return of the repressed, and Freud quotes the philosopher F. W. J. Schelling (2003, p. 132) who wrote, "Uncanny is what one calls everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open." Freud proceeds to scrutinise dictionaries on the German language for meanings of the German word *unheimlich*, which literally translated means 'unhomely'. The term signifies not only the experience of something unfamiliar and hidden that comes to light, but also the circumstance that the opposite term, *heimlich* or 'homely', historically, has carried the same meaning. In other words, what is homely coincides with what is unhomely, so that the meaning of the two terms slide and shift and cannot be distinguished. The un/homely signifies something strangely familiar which, as an aesthetic concept, defies binary thinking in the modern Western tradition. The ambiguous term thereby opens towards the acknowledgement of a form of otherness beyond and within the given; a kind of belonging in need of affirmation.

The work of art, in this light, builds on a critical, artistic gesture that brings something otherwise hidden, or suppressed, to the surface of the house. It expresses the 'crisis of experience,' to return to Heynen (1992, p. 82), by framing the house as 'other' to itself. Schwitters's *Merzbau* brings the 'other house' into the open by transforming the studio into a living space receptive to possibilities beyond the immediate limits of the domestic setting. The work thereby recalls the house as a creative environment open to transformation and change despite common ideas about what a dwelling house should be. Philosopher of the everyday Yuriko Saito (2017, p. 17) writes about estrangement as a prerequisite for everyday aesthetics:

> Because we take most things for granted in our everyday dealing with them, thus paying very little attention, wearing an artistic lens often renders the familiar things strange, and we experience them as if we have never experienced them before. Such experiences are refreshing, enlightening, and exciting. One could claim that many instances of art-making consist of rendering familiar things strange and encourage the audience to attend to familiar things in a different way.

Saito suggests that artistic framing makes an audience susceptible to estrangement so that something familiar while appearing unfamiliar opens new cognitive dimensions. To experience everyday phenomena aesthetically involves a cognitive shift that invites new conceptualisations of the experienced. Thus, Adorno's crisis of experience is both expressed and countered in an everyday environment open to aesthetic exploration, contemplation and experimentation. Such a space, while reinstating the notion of experience, offers an opportunity for reclaiming and taking charge of the everyday domestic setting.

Merzbau both builds on and becomes the everyday while producing an extraordinary living space inside of a seemingly ordinary house. The work relies on found material and everyday gestures as much as it draws on the language of art for the form that it takes. What is ordinary and extraordinary cannot easily be distinguished, and if one considers *Merzbau* a work of architecture, its functionality cannot be denied either. Schwitters's complex work practices a form of estrangement while, at the same time, constructing an inhabitable living space. Returning to the question of a trans-cultural living aesthetics encompassing everyday gestures and pleasures derived from experiences in the daily environment, one might argue that *Merzbau* is both more and less than a work of art when weaving a complex spatial narrative open for interpretation and inhabitation. It is an architecture of the everyday in all its complex, surprising, unspeakable confusion; strangely familiar, beyond recognition and alive. The work embodies a living aesthetics where something foreign but already there is invited to come to the surface.

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Tordis Berstrand

Aesthetics from the Interstices. The Making of a Home in a Palestinian Refugee Camp

Corine van Emmerik

Abstract: This essay focuses on the making of a home as a 'minor practice'. It focuses its attention on a family I met in a refugee camp in the West Bank and the ways in which they make space that acquires a certain permanence of home. How to make a home in a refugee camp suspended between different temporal and spatial worlds? Caught between the expulsion of Palestinians due to the 1948 Nakba or 'catastrophe', referring to the flight of Palestinian during the Arab-Israeli war, and the hope for the right of return, this essay aims to show how this refugee family, exiled in their own country, makes a home that, inspired by the Palestinian concept of *Sumud*, allows them to determine their own fate and joy despite the Occupation. I will take the reader on a tour through the house, in the same way as I was shown around in it, to demonstrate how the family generates their own space and home despite being haunted by trauma and memories of the Occupation, for example through the cultivation of a garden on their roof terrace. In this way, I will show how possibilities can be created from a liminal and marginal space such as the refugee camp and house in it through the 'minor practice' of home making, vectorising an everyday aesthetic-political quality that makes life *felt*.

Keywords: Aesthetic-politics, Palestine, Deleuze and Guattari, Sumud, Refugee camp

1 Introduction

After the 1948 Nakba, the year of the Arab-Israeli war that displaced and uprooted hundreds of thousand Palestinians from their homes, generations of refugees have been living in densely populated refugee camps in Palestine's neighbouring countries and Palestine itself. Many scholars have already pointed out the fact that these refugee camps are

spaces in limbo (Petti 2015); located in an Orwellian 'endless present' (Weizman 2007, p. 228); or between temporary and permanent (Abourahme 2015, p. 203). However, these refugees should not be regarded solely as victims stuck in the liminal as they are making their own opportunities. Indeed, these semi-autonomous spaces allow for re-inventing the social and political space through what I would call minor practices, after Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1986) formulation of the 'minor'. These are practices that open "many spaces of betweenness from which to imagine, act, and live things differently" (Katz 2017, p. 597) by producing their own terms within the major practices and thus generating new subjectivities and forms of life (O'Sullivan 2005, n. p.; Guattari 2006). The efficacy of these practices therefore lies in creating subtle shifts in life generating conditions for change (Manning 2016, p. 1) – able to "improve their everyday life without undermining the exceptionality of the camp" and that renders the camp in a constant state of becoming (Hilal and Petti 2018, p. 18).

This chapter gives an account of the family of Fatena and Omar – exiled in their own country – and the house they inhabit. I met them during my visits to the West Bank as part of my PhD project on the reconceptualization of aesthetics and politics in Palestine, and was welcomed into their home in Balata refugee camp, in the north of the West Bank, where we talked about their life and their history. The layers of memories and stories of three generations of refugees were reflected in the different rooms of the house, whose displacement moved beyond a temporary uprooting. Fatena – my main interlocutor – has been able to make a home there where it seemed impossible due to the transitory nature of the camp. By taking the house of Fatena and Omar as the main locus, I attempt to pay attention to the layers of meaning in, around, and on top of the house. In particular, I will relay the modes of meaning that populate the house and that were shown to me by the family, with specific care for the making of home and its everyday aesthetics through consideration of their rooftop garden especially. My overall aim is to contribute to research on aesthetics and the everyday by discussing what I shall refer to as a minor practice amid the many liminal spaces of the refugee camp, and the way this kind of practices 'improve everyday life'. In this regard, I will make reference to the Palestinian concept of sumud (translated as steadfastness and resilience) whose minor affects inform a particular art of life.

Importantly, the story I will describe is not a replication of some kind of visitor's gaze of a refugee house, but rather a way of telling the

story of displaced refugees and the ways in which they produce meaning from the cracks of inclusion and exclusion, a site of conversation by doing research *with* rather than *on* (see Al-Hardan 2014). I will start by providing a brief background to the spatial context in which the house is erected and introduce the main concepts I engage with in this chapter, such as *sumud* and the art of living. I will then attend to the house and its various rooms to understand what it means to live in limbo. This tour also includes the very upper level of the house, which is where Fatena's rooftop garden is located. Finally, I will attempt to show how "making a home" can become a minor practice with its own aesthetic-political dimension through which a new art of living is constituted.

2 From Land to Camp

As some scholars have already pointed out, the refugee camp constitutes an in-between place, "a 'space in suspension', a place in limbo, held within the 'normal' spatial and social order of a territory" (Petti 2013); between imaginary and real, "oscillating between two discrete, yet interconnected, temporal and spatial worlds" (Bshara 2014, p. 15); a contradictory place with sites of "terror as well as remarkable creativity" (Peteet 2005, p. 1). As urban geographer Nasser Abourahame (2015, p. 203) argued: "The camp constantly spills over into the 'symbolic-political' realm producing a set of irreducible paradoxes – between the temporary and the permanent, nation and refugeehood, the camp and the originary village, past and future – that are simultaneously created and (re)negotiated at the level of everyday life."

I would like to 'think with' this notion of the camp as 'a space in between', firstly because it resonates with my own observation in Balata camp and secondly, because it will allow me to understand creativity, aesthetics, and minor practices as grounded in everyday life. In this way, I can devote my attention to the ways in which they create meaning from the interstices of the camp.

The refugee camp is a liminal space on multiple levels. In the first place, the principle of the right of return traps the inhabitants of the camp between their status as refugees and the hope to return to the villages and cities they were once expelled from. Indeed, the very concept of a camp denotes a temporary form of shelter that is not supposed to last for decades. In the second place, the camp "excludes through inclusion" serving as a "space in suspension, within which to confine all those who do not belong" (Hilal and Petti 2018, p. 214). Refugees in the West Bank are not full citizens, as Abourahme (2015,

p. 211) explains: they do not participate in municipal politics, nor do they vote, pay tax or other service fees, which prompts them to create their own municipalities, decide "on their own terms" and a carve their own niche within the space of exclusion. Finally, the spilling over of public and private spaces forces the refugees to renegotiate their own living space in-between (Peteet 2005, p. 119) resulting in what architect and anthropologist Khaldun Bshara (2014, p. 26) defines the making of the camp as a "social space."

In an attempt to understand what happens between the cracks of the Occupation in the liminal and social space that is the refugee camp and to intensify the aesthetic-political dimension in everyday life, it seems useful to refer here to the Palestinian concept of *sumud*. As Marie, Hanning and Jones (2018, p. 20) explain: "It is […] a socio-political concept and refers to ways of surviving in the context of occupation, chronic adversity, lack of resources and limited infrastructure." I especially appreciate their description as it puts emphasis on ways of surviving rather than ways of resisting, as other scholarship has pointed out (see e.g., Johansson and Vinthagen 2015; Nasasra 2020; Ryan 2015), which seems particularly relevant since resistance in the context of Palestine has often been romanticized (Abu-Lughod 1990).

More precisely, I will employ the notion of *sumud* in its designation as the active pursuit of happiness, a way of living life to its fullest potential (see e.g., Richter-Devroe 2009; Ryan 2015; Marie Hannigan and Jones 2018). Attending this conception of *sumud* in minor practices can inform how we conceptualize everyday aesthetics in a way that might aid inhabitants of e.g. a refugee camp to "retain a sense of humanity, dignity, and resilience" (Saito 2017, p. 19). Allied with this notion of *sumud* is what I call the 'art of living.' Drawing on Alfred North Whitehead's (1971, p. 8) "art of life" striving forward towards an increasing satisfactory life, through John Dewey's (1980) postulation of the practice of living as an aesthetic practice, to Felix Guattari's (2006, pp. 20, 101) "new art of living in society" erected on the "aesthetic power of feeling" capable of promoting "new modalities of subjectivity," the art of living in this chapter is understood as a mode of existence nourished by everyday aesthetics that allows to inhabit the world – and thus the refugee camp – differently.

With the camp as a liminal space in mind, another significant notion to understand the importance of the domestic space and the role of the house in the life of the refugee is the notion of home. Abourahme (2015, p. 215) underlines the significance of this space and its "immense

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political - even existential – resonance", where violence and the house are inextricably bound together. Consequently, the demolition of a house not only signifies material destruction, but perhaps more significantly of the home and of the memories and affective relations it entails. The home itself and its domestic spaces, therefore, contain a multiplicity of meaning. With the thin and sometimes fluid borders between private and public within the camp, along with its dense and congested spaces, "the interior space of the refugee home has become the refugee's cosmos, and 'what really counts'" (Bshara 2012, p. 94). If the refugee home is its own cosmos, and if the home is the place where meaning can be found, then turning our attention to the home would make it possible to uncover the ways in which meaning is created. To look at the making of home where "home" is not possible, is indeed to look at the persistent composition of life in spite of its ongoing displacement and political negation.

3 Fatena's Home

In what follows, I will detail my visit to the camp and the house of Fatena's family in particular, in order to address and the ways of making in a minor mode that can be found in their home and the affective relations attached to it. After some strong Arabic coffees and home-made sweets, Fatena showed me around the house, which animated the stories, memories and hopes she disclosed to me. From the living room, she led me downstairs to another family room. The small sitting area looked cosy, but it turned out to be the backdrop of the Israeli military entering private spaces to terrorize and humiliate Palestinians into submission. Fatena described how, during the Second Intifada, the whole family was pushed into the room and held at gunpoint, while other soldiers searched the house. The younger children, Fatena said, are still affected by this intrusive invasion. In general, these "surprise visits" scar the inhabitants of the camp deeply. As architect Eyal Weizman emphasised (2007, p. 194), "[t]he unexpected penetration of war into the private domain of the home has been experienced by civilians in Palestine, just like in Iraq, as the most profound form of trauma and humiliation."

My attention was drawn to the embroidered pieces on the right-hand wall forming a symmetric composition of four rectangle frames with embroidered compositions. The juxtaposition of these "home"-themed pieces in relation to the map caused me to reflect on its significance, since, although the pieces are quite generic, it echoed the importance of home in their lives, in its multiple interpretations. Omar's sister pointed

at the map and indicated Haifa – where they are originally from – the outline of the West Bank, and what Palestine constitutes according to her. She indicated the borders of the whole map and said, 'but this is Palestine'. It became clear to me that this embroidered map was not just a decoration but contained deeper meanings. It seemed to me a memory of the past and future at once: a Palestine that was and a Palestine that might yet be otherwise still.

Figure 1: The composition of the embroidered pieces on the wall.
Source: Photo by the author

The map on the wall therefore represents its own temporality particular to refugees. In a study investigating the stitched narrative of embroidered Palestinian maps, Hagar Salamon (2016, p. 19) argues how "a lost past and utopian future, in which Palestine will replace Israel just as Israel replaced Palestine, appear together in the embroidered map." The map of Palestine thus functions as a relic of the past to not forget where Palestinians come from and as an artifact of the future that allows the viewer to connect, or remain connected, to the lost space that all the more highlights the positionality of the refugee family as stuck between those states.

Thus, what appeared to me to be a simple sitting room, in fact went beyond the mere presence of objects and memories. The space was actually haunted by spectres of the past, of the trauma and humiliation

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of the home invasion, of the memories of the homeland and the hope to return. The room felt heavy once in it, a saturated space of memories, emotions, trauma and hope, even though there was physically not much in it. What the space harboured then were the flows and forces of the lives that inhabited the space and rummages through the lives and souls of the family. But without succumbing to these powers, without being victimized by them, Fatena and her family have intensified these flows and forces and made them productive for the creation of their own space and place in their minor practice of the making of a home.

Figure 2: Omar's sister showing the outline of 'her' Palestine.
Source: Photo by the author

4 An Oasis amidst the Concrete

Fatena suggested enjoying the rest of the evening on the rooftop and showed me around the garden. We continued our way upstairs and ended up on the roof. I was blown away by the view and the warm orange sky. What I saw on the roof truly seemed like a different world, an oasis elevated from the refugee camp. All kinds of recycled materials, such as plastic buckets, tin cans of all sizes, broken kettles, teapots and even shoes were used as planters in which she sowed a wide variety of plants,

flowers, and vegetables. The vegetables she planted are used for feeding her family and, when she has enough, she offers the surplus for free on Facebook to the local community, because she knows that money is tight in the camp as well as the fluctuating food supply. The flowers are not only to be found on the roof, but they also decorate the outside walls of the house, hanging from windows all around the house, "to make the house beautiful." Flowers are more expensive to buy, she explains, and "need lots of love." But it is worth having them, "because I give them love and they will give me love back."

Figure 3: One of Fatena's ingenuities: broken kettles as plant pots.
Source: Photo by the author

Indeed, the rooftop garden seemed to constitute an oasis with lots of green, elevated from and in contrast to the grey concrete camp. The minor practice of Fatena's rooftop gardening therefore contains a spatial element that produces space within the camp, allowing her to inhabit the camp as an interstitial space with a new meaning. She created her "own dimensions" (Pignarre and Stengers 2011, p. 110) by activating the space as a rooftop garden, populating it with plants and flowers that at the same time secure a certain sense of self-reliance. Moreover, the very act of gardening and the existence of the garden on top of Fatena's roof,

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I ould argue, contain a, if not multiple, political dimension(s). As political geographer Adam Ramadan (2013, p. 67) argues: "spatialising the camp, understanding how it is constituted and functions spatially, is a way of grounding geopolitics in the everyday" and indicates how a spatial practice such as gardening is a way of implicating politics in the everyday life of the refugee. The spatial politics governing the area, with its built environment, rising prices of land, and overpopulation, effected a lack of land in the spatially-constrained camps where the only option to expand living spaces, is to build upwards (Woroniecka-Krzyzanowska 2017, p. 165). It is indeed the lack of land around the house and the spatial politics that have pushed the garden on the roof, which makes its very existence on the house political in nature. In her major study on space and mobility in Palestine, Julie Peteet (2017, p. 98) describes: "Israel expands the territory of the state, which, in effect, shrinks the territory vital to a contiguous Palestinian state. Yet Palestinians still produce place even in these confined spaces." It is thus from this minor position of the Palestinians described by Peteet (2017) that people like Fatena are nonetheless able to create space. In the case of Fatena, she employs her minor practice to evoke, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 27) write, a "creative line of escape." This minor position, "existing in a narrow space", a cramped camp encapsulated by military occupation, makes Fatena's practice "plugged into the political" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, p. 16).

The casting of this creative line of flight from the interstices resonates with the Palestinian philosophical and political concept of *sumud*. Through the making of life and space, by planting seeds and cultivating food, Fatena has created from the cracks of the camp despite the Occupation. The *sumud* contained in this minor practice thus means to act upon the possibilities available in the context of the Occupation, such as the use of recycled materials as planters or using her roof as a garden. Then, the cultivation of plants and herbs is a way of enacting *sumud* as it provides the family and community with food and promotes resilience from fluctuations in the import and prices of fruits and vegetables subject to Israeli interventions. When food or money is scarce, they can always fall back on their own produce and remain resilient.

It is not only the mere practicality of the garden that encourages *sumud*, but perhaps more so the joy and happiness it brings to the family. Looking over the roof to the valleys, Fatena told me with a smile: "we must celebrate every day, we must be happy." Indeed, what contributes to that celebration is the gardening and the plants and flowers that make

them happy and enjoy life when they sit on their roof. The making of a home through for example Fatena's cultivation of a garden, is what I call a minor practice that creates a subtle shift in the lives of Fatena and her family, a new subjectivity that is informed by *sumud*.

Figure 4: The garden as a contrast to the grey and cold concrete of the camp.
Source: Photo by the author

This shift bolsters joy and allows her to determine her *own* fate despite the ongoing political oppression and trauma and instead of letting the military or any other determine it for her (Ryan 2015, p. 312). It is not enough to live, but what Fatena aims for is to live *better*. When I asked her what kind of world she imagines her children to grow up in, she answered: "we hope to be better than now." An interesting intersection between the 'Western' and the Palestinian philosophy then occurs when we look at this lure of living better. As we will see in the next section, there is an overlapping between Whitehead's (1971, p. 8) notion of *an art of life*, meant as an aspiration to live, live well, and live *better*, and the notion of *sumud* understood as an 'art of living' directed at both surviving and thriving while under Occupation (Marie et al. 2018, p. 29). Fatena's minor practice can then be approached as an art of life that brings forth new ways of being and inhabiting the camp, rendering life worth living.

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Figure 5: Fatena on her rooftop garden looking over the valley.
Source: Photo by the author

5 Aesthetic-Political Implications

The aesthetic-political implications of Fatena's minor practice are manifold. Elevated above the camp, looking over the valley with the sunset in the background, I almost forgot I was in a refugee camp where trauma and memories are haunting the streets and houses. Fatena told me: "The garden makes us happy, because the camp area is so small." The garden is then aesthetic in the traditional sense that relates aesthetics to feelings of pleasure, which are not located in the realm of art, but in the realm of everyday practices and life. It was John Dewey (1980, p. 28), among others, that promoted the idea that aesthetics cannot be solely found in art, but perhaps more so in the natural environment, where it can also be "absorbed" in nature. However, this aesthetic feeling is not only experienced when perceiving nature, but also and prominently in the act of making, as Dewey (1980, p. 25) argues: "[…] man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life […]." Almost in a literal way, we can see how Fatena is using nature by means

of planting, sowing and cultivating to expand her life, that of her family, and even that of the camp community.

Following this, we can understand how gardening gives more space to people's existence, especially with the camp being such "a small space", allowing one to look beyond the reality of the camp. The rooftop garden therefore provides the family with a sense of freedom, especially since gardening can stimulate a sense of ownership of a space, as research on urban agriculture in refugee camps has argued (e.g. Perkins, Adam-Bradford and Tomkins 2017, p. 46). Owning a space stimulates a kind of "creative autonomy", as philosopher Isabelle Stengers and writer and activist Philippe Pignarre (2011, p. 125) describe, which "signifies the creation of spaces" opening up to the possibility to make people "think, imagine, object." On Fatena's roof, it is indeed the creative freedom in gardening and organizing the space according to *their* wishes that allow the family to have an aesthetic experience, to sit together with mint tea, to imagine other realities and object to the reality of the camp and the politics enmeshed in it.

Inherent in these implications is thus the creation of possibilities. Creating from the interstices resonates with what feminist scholar bell hooks (1990, p. 341) described as sites of marginality, or what critical theorist Homni Bhabha (1994) would roughly call a "third space", that can be a site of radical possibility (and creativity) such as the camp and the house in it. Following philosopher Brian Massumi (2014, p. 106) in his exploration of creative practices and aesthetics, Fatena and her family create their own spaces and their own politics in a way that is both creative and generative, both political and aesthetic. Taking ownership of the camp and of her house, Fatena creates what Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 177) would call a "universe", "that constructs its own limits" from the interstices, or, in other words, a universe of the possible. Within her universe of the possible, Fatena "invents" (Massumi 2011, p. 54) a new life of potentials, both human and non-human, the life of her and her family, community, and the life of nature.

It is thus the *making of life* that takes centre stage in Fatena's minor practice, from the cracks of the Occupation, despite the trauma and memories dwelling in the house, in which "life from the empty spaces" (Debaise 2013, p. 102) is given shape in an aesthetic-political manner. In a literal sense, she is making life through sowing and gardening and caring through which natural life can come into existence. In a figural sense, she is making it possible to *live* in the camp and in their house, despite the adversities that threaten their existence on a daily

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basis. However, it is not just the making of life that the minor practice brings forth, but, as I mentioned earlier, the making of a *better* life, one tapping into the philosophy of *sumud*; actively pursuing happiness despite the Occupation, the invasions and the lived reality of refugees, and thus articulating an aesthetic-political quality of the everyday.

Echoing the art of life, the making of a home seems to inaugurate a better life that diverges from some of the lived experiences dwelling in the house and camp, such as the home invasion. Grasping this metamorphosis of life that is felt through the very making of the minor practice is a direct and intimate experience that is an *aesthetic* experience: *feeling* the life-to-be-lived transforming into concrete existence, where making results directly in *feeling* a better life (Souriau 2015, p. 225) or as Dewey (1980) would say, in 'consuming' a better life. Aesthetics in this sense relates to feelings of happiness and enjoyment and is defined in an expanded way as an experience that is not something we possess, but more so an 'an object or a hope' (Souriau 2015, p. 220). The political quality in the practice, in turn, is mutually implicated in the aesthetic dimension insofar life is inherently political in Palestine. With *sumud* in mind, this generates the vivid creation of (a better) life where aesthetics is then a political end in itself. The aesthetic-political dimension should therefore be considered tightly interwoven in Fatena's minor practice and in the life-to-be-made it pursues in its art of living.

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Morally Provocative Art. Contemporary Ethical-Aesthetic Discourse and its Limits

Carolina Gomes

Abstract: Recently, there have been many protests against controversial art around the world that got massive media attention and provoked discussions among the public, members of the art community, and scholars. This paper aims to make a review of recent ethical-aesthetic theories that explore morally provocative art. We can characterize contemporary ethical and aesthetic thought by its movement from extreme forms of moralism (Plato, Hume, Tolstoy) and autonomy (Wilde, Beardsley) to the search for more moderate options, in which both moral and aesthetic domains are considered valuable. By reviewing such concepts as 'moderate moralism', 'ethicism', 'moderate autonomism', 'cognitive triviality', and 'cognitive immoralism', I claim that these concepts mainly focus on artworks that rarely or never stir the outrage among the public in real life, even though these theories accurately reveal themes that are often perceived as controversial. I then propose to go beyond the analysis of the artistic field since contemporary conflicts around art have already become factors of change for the socio-cultural landscape and function as a platform where diverse social and political forces test their values.

Keywords: Conflicts around Art, Morally Provocative Art, New Moralism, Cognitive Triviality, Cognitive Immoralism

1 Introduction

The phenomenon of public protests against controversial art is actively spreading in contemporary culture, accompanied by various forms of social tension and debates among the public, representatives of art institutions, experts of the intellectual community, and state authorities. Philosophical and theoretical reflections on these conflicts usually fall under two categories: the first tries to find an ethical stimulus in artworks themselves while the second mainly focuses on the offended recipient.

The main problem of both types of discourses is that they seem to overlook each other's findings.

In this paper, I first trace the evolution of views on the ratio of the aesthetic and ethical domains in art in the context of the development of the autonomy of the art world. I then consider the interest in the moral aspects of artistic culture in the philosophy of art and art criticism of the late 20th – early 21st century. Thirdly, I present the main arguments of 'new moralists' and their critics (immoral cognitivism and cognitive triviality), all of whom tried to conceptualize their views on the legitimacy of ethical judgments of art. In conclusion, I identify the limitations of the arguments put forward by the representatives of the 'new moralism', immoral cognitivism and cognitive triviality.

2 Moving Beyond the Strict Dichotomy Between Moralism and Autonomism

The debate on whether art is morally blameworthy is no new. Even though philosophical views on the moral universe of art have been transforming throughout history, moralism in art dominated for quite a long period. For many centuries, philosophers, artists, and critics categorically accepted the idea that art can morally influence its audience. The possibility of the positive influence of art on the state of morality mostly raised doubts. The idea that art has the power to morally harm us can be found way back in Plato's *Republic*. The central setting of Plato's moralism (to which Rousseau, Tolstoy, and Shaw adhered to one degree or another) was the idea of the danger of art and its aesthetic power to inspire people to change their behaviour and adopt some harmful attitudes. Yet such criticism has never had enough evidence to support its claims. In modern times, David Hume (1825, p. 243) in his *Of the Standard of Taste* claimed that works of art that express an ethically harmful idea and call for reconciliation with sin or emotional empathy for an immoral hero or act diminish considerably the merit of their noble performances.

In the era of the Enlightenment, aesthetics as a system of views began to separate itself from ethics, and inside the artistic field, morality started to lose its dominant position in evaluating a work of art as a carrier of artistic quality. Classical aesthetics, represented by Alexander Baumgarten (1758) and Immanuel Kant (1987), showed us that we can have disinterested judgments of aesthetic qualities of the fine arts. Then, the modernist movement in every possible way emphasized and

protected the autonomy of the art world. Even though such independence was frequently threatened from outside the artistic field by various authorities that condemned some artworks due to their immorality, the artistic community, up until the end of the 20th century, was quite cohesive on the issue of freedom of creativity and the need to abolish censorship.

In the second half of the 20th century, tendencies in the philosophical reflection on the ratio of ethics and aesthetics in arts changed. First, the cooperation of artists with totalitarian regimes added a new layer to the discussion of artists' responsibility and made scholars and artists pay attention to ethics a bit more than they used to at the beginning of the century. Secondly, the institutional theory of art deconstructed the romantic-modernist myth of art and suggested viewing the artistic sphere as any other social sphere, unable to escape the influence of other fields (e.g. politics and economics). Finally, art institutions themselves started to become more and more welcoming to the mass public. The ethical turn in philosophy of art and art criticism thus was largely the result of a general social turn in the cultural processes. These realities seriously influenced not only the artistic practice itself but also intellectual reflections on it. As a result, at the turn of the 20-21th centuries, there emerged several concepts of the so-called 'new moralism' (Macneill 2014, p. 167). These concepts were mainly interested in whether art can have moral value and, if so, whether such value is relevant to its aesthetic appreciation.

Let us start with 'moderate moralism'. Continuing the traditions of Hume's moralism, 'moderate moralists' believe that fictional actions in works can lead to some moral changes in a perceiving subject (Levinson 1998, p. 10). For instance, the American philosopher and art critic Noël Carroll (1996) notes that some works of art are simply created to attract us morally, thus it makes sense to subject them to ethical evaluation. Carroll (1996, p. 233) proposes that the ethical component is intrinsic to some artworks and that "moral presuppositions play a structural role in the design of many artworks." Therefore, the moral content should affect the aesthetic assessment of works.

The idea of moral development from art is also elaborated by Kendall Walton (1994), who adheres to Hume's moralism to some degree and claims that "If the work's obnoxious message does not destroy its aesthetic value, it nevertheless renders it morally inaccessible. That must count as an aesthetic as well as a moral defect" (Walton and Tanner 1994, p. 30). Walton suggests distinguishing between immoral and morally

dangerous art and invites a person to resist and refuse to perceive what is morally unacceptable since there is always a risk of changing their beliefs and "works of art may evoke imaginings which can affect one's orientation" (Walton and Tanner 1994, p. 34). In response to Walton's essay, Michael Tanner questions his confidence in "us" sharing similar moral beliefs (Walton and Tanner 1994, p. 52). This contention will become one of the key modes of criticism against 'new moralists' in the future.

Another author who proposes a moralistic approach in the evaluation of controversial and morally challenging art is Berys Gaut (1998). Gaut (1998, p. 182) proposes the concept of 'ethicism', asserting that ethical criticism of art is an aesthetic activity, and artworks that demonstrate a certain attitude towards fictional objects implicitly demonstrate the same attitude towards real objects of this kind. Gaut focuses on the manifestation of immorality, presented on behalf of the author when the author's approval of the immoral behaviour of the characters is obvious. As an example of such manifestation of immorality, Gaut uses novels by Marquis de Sade. According to Gaut, an imaginary reaction to immorality in art can be subject to ethical evaluation in the same way as real action, since it can deeply express the moral character of the one who is imagining. Gaut (1998, p. 199) concludes that "someone who actually enjoys imagined suffering can properly be condemned for this response."

Presented in the work of James C. Anderson and Jeffrey T. Dean (1998), 'moderate autonomism' admits the possibility of a conflict between moral and aesthetic domains in art. Unlike such aesthetes as Oscar Wilde, 'moderate autonomists' also admit that the division between moral and aesthetic domains is frequently unclear. Nevertheless, Anderson and Dean disagree with equating moral assessments of works of art with aesthetic ones. The only case when the moral content of artwork can affect its aesthetic assessment is when moral aspects make it difficult to get into the essence of artwork and provoke an inadequate reading of it. The immorality portrayed in artworks can subvert the possibility of uptake suitable for its genre,[1] which makes the work in question "aesthetically defective" (Anderson and Dean 1998, p. 156).

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[1] Though it is necessary to mention that this focus on genre is very disputable in postmodernist context. The argument that might challenge 'moderate autonomism' in this regard is that in modern artistic culture, the genre is no longer an absolute value, the boundaries of genres are actively redefined and replaced by other aesthetic markers.

Instead of focusing on concerns that exposure to obscenity in works of art is morally harmful to people, 'moderate autonomists' in cases when moral defects of art can affect its aesthetic qualities. One of the examples of such subversion is Leni Riefenstahl's propaganda documentary *Triumph of the Will* (1935), which endorses the Nazi regime but still is recognized for its innovative genre discoveries and is considered a masterpiece from a formal point of view. Anderson and Dean (1998, p. 164) agree with the 'new moralists' that corrupt moral vision is dominant in this case but state that in most cases "moral flaws can be overridden by the aesthetic virtues of the work." They conclude that the separation of the moral and aesthetic domains in the assessment of artworks is beneficial in cases when we are faced with controversial works of art.

3 Immoral Art and its Cognitive Power

'New moralists' share a typical moralist concern that exposure to immorality in works of art will, eventually, morally harm people. Daniel Jacobson interrogates this idea in his paper *In Praise of Immoral Art* (1997). Jacobson (1997, p. 162) proposes to reconcile moralism and autonomism and puts forward the statement that "what is properly deemed a moral defect in a work of art can contribute positively and ineliminably to its aesthetic value." According to Jacobson (1997, p. 167), the immoral content of a work of art is not a disadvantage, but the merit of the work, since it fulfils a certain ethical function and allows us to look at moral issues from different ethical perspectives. Immorality in Jacobson's conceptual framework acts as a cognitive function of art since morally shocking works can expand our moral understanding and enrich the variety of possible forms of experience.

The concept of immoral cognitivism was elaborated even more by Matthew Kieran (2003; 2009) who also proposes to pay attention to the cognitive and educational functions of morally problematic characters or storylines in works of art. In his *Forbidden Knowledge: The Challenge of Immoralism* Kieran (2003, p. 60) considers the idea that "morally defective cognitive-affective responses" provoked by art can have a positive effect on understanding the artwork and motivate the audience to reconsider their own beliefs. Moral provocations of art are important because they redefine the boundaries between what is morally acceptable and what is not. This works even in such extreme cases as Marquis de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. Kieran agrees with the 'new moralists' that such artwork is

morally transgressive and offers the enjoyment of described sufferings of others, but it still expands our perceptual and emotional capacities. We are "naturally interested in why people are bad, come to be so or come to do bad things" (Kieran 2009, p. 681). We admire immorality in art but condemn it in ordinary life. To understand this paradox more, Kieran (2009, p. 683) suggests taking a closer look at the complexities of inter-relations between the evaluation of what we imagine and our moral character. But since so far this complexity is poorly understood, we cannot claim that our emotional responses to morally problematic art do necessarily reveal anything condemnable or praisable about our moral character. Both Jacobson and Kieran warn art theorists about the dangers of ethical criticism of art because it encourages us to ignore the possibility of viewing the world from different ethical perspectives. Art is a useful platform for practicing ethically significant matters, it also allows us to go beyond normativity and imperativeness. The immorality portrayed in the art can make a person contribute to new moral knowledge without vulgar moral didacticism. Still, this method of getting moral knowledge through immorality is not accessible to everyone since some part of the public can be hypersensitive to the content in question. Richard Moran (1994) calls this phenomenon 'imaginative resistance' - a form of imagination in which the person who perceives art does not want to be involved in the ideas that it offers. In this case, it will be difficult for the viewer or reader to perceive the work with an immoral hero, and some works of art will simply be 'morally inaccessible' (Jacobson 1997, p. 190).

Finally, some philosophers of art, such as Jerome Stolnitz (1992), oppose any assumptions about the influence of art on actions and moral knowledge. The concept of 'cognitive triviality' proposed by Stolnitz says that art reflects only those moral attitudes, which people already know. That is, any immoral or virtuous narrative in art is a truism and therefore cannot be the cause of an individual's immoral or virtuous acts. This position does not claim that a person cannot perceive some moral aspects of a work as something new but notes that the act of influence occurs because the viewer, listener, or reader is already "morally sensitive" to a particular problem (Stolnitz 1992, p. 191). Art, of course, affects people, but there is no convincing empirical evidence that immorality portrayed in art and media leads to immoral behaviour in real life (Phillips 2017).

4 Morally Provocative Art and the Public Sphere

As can be seen from the review of the concepts of 'new moralism', 'moderate autonomism', 'immoral cognitivism' and 'cognitive triviality', there is no consensus on the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in art, as well as an answer to whether art can morally harm the perceiving subject and influence their behaviour in an ethical sense. Both 'new moralists' and their critics recognize that ethical and aesthetic domains can create a strong problematic tension, which ultimately affects the degree of its influence on the addressee. However, some of these concepts have disputable claims. First, 'new moralists' take as a basis the assumption that moral content can be perceived universally. This view is already disproved by public conflicts around controversial art and by polarized debates around the art pieces that provoked these conflicts. In this regard, the cognitive approach proposed by Jacobson (1997) and Kieran (2003) seems to be more productive in overcoming the contradictions of ethical and aesthetic domains since it considers that both are aiming to expand the moral universe of a person. Secondly, the concepts of 'new moralism', especially 'ethicism', are based on a view that a work a priori and unambiguously manifests an attitude towards its heroes and their actions. This view on the author and their supposed manifestations contradicts contemporary philosophical theories such as that of 'the death of the author'. Finally, 'new moralism' and its critics mainly focus on works of narrative art, practically ignoring other art forms (for example, music), even though today non-narrative artworks are much more likely to cause public conflicts on a moral basis. Considering such concepts as 'ethicism', 'moderate autonomism', 'moderate moralism', 'immoral cognitivism' and 'cognitive triviality', it is important to note the presence of a difference between the academic comprehension of controversial art and the public one. This can be seen both at the level of choices of objects of their critique and their categorical apparatus.

With the spread of democratic regimes in cultural production and consumption, the public has begun to express their views on artistic events more actively, resorting to strong, morally charged arguments. This process has accelerated with the development of mass communication, gaining a particularly serious scale in the era of the Internet. The public now actively engages in ethical-aesthetic debate. With all the diversity of approaches, philosophical polemics about the relevance of moral judgments about art do not effectively help with the

analysis of the recent rise of public censorship and public conflicts around art in general. For instance, artworks that became canonical for ethical criticism of art rarely or never sparked outrage among the public.[2] For example, Nabokov's novel *Lolita* is one of the most prototypical cases for ethical-aesthetic discourse among philosophers of art. The novel is indeed an illustrative example of a moral provocation, as the story is told from the perspective of a hero who is attracted to teenage girls. The novel caused a scandal in the 1950s, but the confrontation was between different publications and literary critics and took place within the artistic field. *Lolita* is still considered a scandalous and provocative work, but we do not see any public conflicts around the novel, although many works of the past are becoming objects of today's ethical revision and protest actions. That being said, several other artistic events were accused of the sexualisation of children. For instance, photographs of nude children by Jock Sturges drew protests in the late 90-s in the USA and then in 2016-2017 in Russia (ncac 1997; Kishkovsky 2017). This shows that the provocative content of the work and even its public access is not enough for the emergence of a conflict.

If philosophers of art study such categories as 'moral' and 'immoral', then in the rhetoric of the public, we are more likely to hear about offensive art. For instance, the research of the public protests around art in America revealed that the most common grievances of the public about art were "indecent or pornographic" and "harmful or offensive" (Tepper 2011, p. 42). The identical situation takes place in the Russian context where from 1997 one of the most common grievances in the rhetoric of the public about controversial art has been that it is offending religious believers' feelings.[3] As a result, ethical discourse around art and public discourse around offensive art are significantly distanced from each other and do not intersect even in the subjects of their discussions.

As a future direction for research in the study of the ethical-aesthetic problems of art, I suggest going beyond the analysis of the nature of art and the artistic field and taking a closer look at the public sphere. Contemporary conflicts around art have already become factors that change the socio-cultural landscape. Protests around art push art institutions toward rethinking their approaches to public engagement.

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[2] For the list of famous conflicts, see (ncac 2021).

[3] These grievances remain even in cases where in artwork's content there was no reference to the religious topics (artprotest 2015).

Previous instances of public conflicts around offensive art made institutions aware of the necessity of new strategies that can lead to fruitful discussions about sensitive topics. For example, in 2018 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts decided not to take down works by Chuck Close after the artist was accused of sexual harassment. Instead, the museum decided to supplement Close's paintings with several works by other artists, who focus on the problems of abusive power in art (pafa 2018). The feminist curator Maura Reilly (2018) proposes a strategy of 'curatorial activism' that helps dealing with morally sensitive artworks and contexts by constantly re-examining cultural objects and social practices. It is also helpful to view controversies sparked by morally provocative art as a chance for an ethical commitment to dialogue rather than a problem that needs to be immediately concealed (Jennstål and Öberg 2019; Dixon 2021).

New artistic practices themselves put the public in the position not so much of addressees receiving aesthetic pleasure, as of subjects of social action. Art institutions are now more open to the public than ever before. What was previously a matter of a private sphere of the art field (e. g. art practitioners, critics, specific audience) is now operating in the public sphere. Thus, the critique of morally provocative art made by members of the public often ends in affective arousal and even vandalism. For example, in Russia the lack of legal consequences for vandals who decided to attack the art that offended them created a stereotype of impunity and the legitimacy of violence in artistic spaces. Such transformations cannot be associated only with art's controversial content, but also with shifts in the political order and the technology of social protest. This is why several scholars view protests around morally provocative art not as a sincere expression of resentment but as a political strategy. Morally provocative art can provide a context in which diverse groups can test their values and unite over their views on what is permitted to show and discuss in the public sphere (Balme 2011; DiMaggio 2000; George 2016; Grishaeva and Romashko 2017; Tepper 2011; Yampolsky 2018). In this regard, protesting groups see the public sphere in artistic spaces much more clearly than members of the artistic field themselves, and, to some extent, even more effectively use them as platforms for broadcasting their own political beliefs and values through emotional arousal and affective activities.

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Part IV
Methodological Approaches
to the Everyday

CHAPTER 17

Aesthetic Acts.
From Distance to Engagement

Ancuta Mortu

Abstract: This paper will focus on articulating the notion of aesthetic act by tracing its development over these past few years. My main claim is that putting weight on acting in the aesthetic context is important for understanding practices that were originally denied an aesthetic status in systematic philosophical discourse. In the first part of the paper, I argue the concept of aesthetic act becomes highly significant in the context of the ongoing development of everyday aesthetics and environmental aesthetics. In order to address the problem of what is particular to acting in the aesthetic realm, in part two I examine several conceptions of acts that permeate recent work in analytic aesthetics. In part three and four I provide a contrastive account of aesthetic acts in terms of distance and engagement. Paying attention to contrasts between the models of distance and engagement will allow me to situate the concept of aesthetic act within an already established tradition of research and point to the changes that it brings about in the current understanding of aesthetic appreciation.

Keywords: Aesthetic Act, Psychical Distance, Aesthetic Engagement, Everyday Aesthetics

1 Aesthetics Beyond Art: Everyday Aesthetics and Environmental Aesthetics

The starting point of my consideration of aesthetic acts is noting that aesthetic inquiry is nowadays an ever-growing field, which has no clear boundaries. One of the consequences that flows from the extension of the realm of aesthetics beyond the confines of the artworld and the artistic discourse that supports it is the need to rework the received categories deemed adequate to encompass and describe the wide range of our aesthetic encounters. Giving more weight to aesthetic acts might

be a way to respond to this need. In what follows I will try and unpack this notion by drawing on pragmatic and analytic aesthetics. Understood broadly, along a Deweyan line and in contrast to mechanical, systematic philosophical discourse which takes as its object unsubstantial experience defined in a priori terms (Dewey 1930/1998, pp. 195, 197-198, 199-200, p. 204; Berleant 2010, pp. 92-93, 96; Lopes 2018b), aesthetic acts are regarded as an integral part of our everyday life, being directed at the way we qualitatively apprehend the immediate, lived world. On this experiential view, active engagement becomes constitutive of aesthetic appreciation, which can be resumed neither to a matter of receptive response, nor to inferential judgment and logical evaluation (i.e., formally valid, or invalid).

As early as 1930, John Dewey (Dewey 1934/2005, pp. 9-11) already proposed that one should take ordinary life as a point of departure if we are to seek to understand the roots of aesthetic appreciation. Here is a significant quote: "a primary task is imposed […] to restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience" (Dewey 1934/2005, pp. 2-3). Dewey sought therefore to restore the continuity between aesthetic experience and ordinary processes of existence. Apart from everyday affective experiences, such processes of existence may include, at a lower level, organic responses like visuo-motor activities, or sensory and motor actions that need to be brought to an optimal state (Dewey 1934/2005, pp. 22, 48-49; 1926/2008, 108; Steen 2006, pp. 62-63). To better understand where continuity could fail, we can think here of forms of disruption such as the various forms of sensory deprivation we all experienced during Covid-19, for instance the impossibility of enjoying a distant view under lockdown or the fear of taking a deep, clear breath in a crowded space. Other examples that stress the (dis)continuity between aesthetic experience and organic responses are singing one's way back to language after a stroke or dancing one's way back to locomotion, as beautifully documented in Valeria Bruni Tedeschi's documentary *Une Jeune Fille de 90 Ans* (2016). Furthermore, continuities are to be equally restored between organisms and their environment in what Berleant (2010, pp. 131-132) calls an "aesthetic ecology" – i.e. an interaction with the environment based on multisensory experience as well as on human interrelations and interdependence –; and finally, continuities need to be restored between art and marginal phenomena, which more often than not hold a non-contingent, non-random, bidirectional relationship –

i.e. mutually informative (Dewey 1934/2005, pp. 11-12; Lopes 2018a, p. 7) –, wherein art acts retroactively on the world.

According to recent philosophies of the everyday, by rooting art and aesthetic practices in the human world, the possibility is open for them to have a real effect on experience and broader consequences for the human condition at large, such as transforming or enhancing human life. Dewey (1926/1984, pp. 106-107) had already acknowledged this point first in talking about art and then by extending his argument to broader aesthetic practices: "Art also explicitly recognizes what it has taken so long to discover in science; the control exercised by emotion in re-shaping natural conditions, and the place of the imagination, under the influence of desire, in re-creating the world into a more orderly place." More recently, Bence Nanay (2018, pp. 79-80) has also developed this idea of affective and perceptual learning through art in a paper in which he focuses on the "experiential shifts in our perception of everyday scenes that result from engagement with artworks", such as enhanced sensitivity to occlusions or space alignment. Along the same lines, Yuriko Saito (2017, pp. 4, 199) has emphasized that "the power everyday aesthetics wields on humanity's ongoing project of world-making." Finally, Berleant (2010, p. 223) holds that "in the aesthetic we discover the human world, and in re-constituting the aesthetic we lay the groundwork for reconstructing a more humane world." The picture that emerges from the above-mentioned passages is that aesthetics is not disconnected from matters of life but is part of a broader, humanistic project, more specifically a project of "humanistic functionalism" (Berleant 1976, pp. 346-347), sensitive to human needs, including practical human needs.

Eventually, Dewey's (1930/1998, pp. 197-200) original willingness to make aesthetics take into account situations or larger, integrated environmental units which hypostatize a dominating affective quality, rather than objects or items taken in isolation, materialized in the second half of the 20th century with two developing subdisciplines of aesthetics, namely environmental aesthetics and everyday aesthetics, which focus on the pervasiveness of aesthetics as appreciation of the world at large (Carlson 2001, p. 423; Kvokačka 2020, pp. 271-273). These subdisciplines take as their object entities and situations as diverse as the experiential dimension of a given environment, utilitarian objects and human actions, cultural practices outside the Western tradition, aesthetics of daily lives and habitual interactions etc. (Berleant 2010, pp. 131-132; Saito 2017, p. 1). One defining trait, which stands in contrast to Dewey's

(1934/2005, p. 209) original argument, is dropping off the idea of an intense, unified, complete, and orderly character of experience, while foregrounding the sensory or multisensory engagement with the world, with a reinvestment and reinforcement of so-called lower physiological functions or proximal senses dealing with sounds, textures, or temperatures etc. (Dewey 1926/1984, p. 106; Saito 2017, pp. 3, 59).

2 Aesthetic Acts

In line with the continuist approach outlined above, aesthetic acts concern worldly interactions with a wide range of items such as functional artifacts requiring an understanding of their instrumental value (Parsons and Carlson 2009), natural environments, the scenic quality of a place, a dynamic urban environment (Galindo and Hidalgo 2005, p. 26; Seip 2010; Chenoweth and Gobster 1990; Berleant 1976, p. 347), a particular range of events, sequential or coexistent things and actions (e.g. a sequence of experience, such as experiencing the visual and spatial design of a urban landscape on one's way to work, Berleant 2010, p. 138), performances within various fields etc. (Schaeffer 2004; Berleant 2010, p. 13; 2017, p. 11).

Freed from constraints in terms of ontological categories, aesthetic acts are defined instead in terms of mental activation that is particular to a given situation, exemplifying a cognitive and affective relation to the world (Dewey 1930/1998; Schaeffer 2003, pp. 140-142; Berleant 2010). The stress is on the experience of acting and finding pleasure in this very experiencing (Saito 2017, pp. 2-3, 24).

A challenge that needs to be taken up is to clarify what kind of mental resources are demanded in such acts. What is particular to acting in the aesthetic realm? In the remainder of this paper, I will try and articulate several conceptions of acts that permeate aesthetic discourse such as distance, involvement, and engagement (Bullough 1912/1984; Lopes 2018b; Berleant 2010). Most are analytically informed act-centred approaches, which bring into focus aspects concerning the agency of the subjects who engage in aesthetic endeavours, such as motivational, volitional, or participatory aspects. The aim of this overview is to find elements of response to the question of determining to what extent the notion of act pushes forward the philosophical project regarding the continuity between aesthetic practices and life. Given that it is a notion involved in discussions about agency, a first question that arises is to know whose acts we are talking about and what forms of activity are

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into play. Whether, for instance, acts refer to the organism's causal action outside of one's control and will (what Yuriko Saito calls mechanical acts or acting on autopilot; Saito 2017, pp. 2-3, 24), or whether what matters are the acts of the conscious mind, of a cognitively informed agent, led by curiosity and prone to exploratory behaviour.

In contemporary debates enriching this discussion, there is a narrow sense in which the actions called for aim at the attribution of aesthetic value (which can be manifested, for instance, by belief-like judgments, making certain aesthetic choices, deciding on the order of display of certain items etc.). On this view, aesthetic acts appear as high-level act types, whose outcomes are aesthetic values (Lopes 2018b, pp. 29-30). Dominic Lopes, for instance, distinguishes between an appreciation model of aesthetic acts, coming with a hedonic flavour, according to which "all aesthetic acts are acts of aesthetic appreciation. The model says, first, that to appreciate is to act. […] the idea is to give acts of appreciation a monopoly on aesthetic agency" (Lopes 2018b, p. 33) and an evaluation model which requires that aesthetic values are mentally represented in the conscious mind of the appreciator. Lopes (2021, p. 210) has a normative understanding of acts, favouring this second model: aesthetic acts are motivated by aesthetic evaluation, i.e., by mentally representing an item or a situation as having aesthetic value; we act a certain way for reasons of aesthetic value, in complying with norms and conventions embedded in social practices, that may require learning and tiresome work. The worry is that there might be too much built into the notion of acting (and more specifically acting well) in compliance with norms within aesthetic communities; on this view, one must have already interiorized a number of norms before acting as an aesthetic agent.

Moreover, with respect to the conception of act as mental performance or mode of consciousness there is also a discussion about the need for exercising rational agency and responding to a distinct kind of reasons, more specifically to what Keren Gorodeisky (2018) calls "aesthetic rationality", or pleasure of mere reflection. According to Gorodeisky (2018, pp. 169-170, 171-172), aesthetic rationality is an active state in that one acts for a reason; furthermore, the active nature of aesthetics goes with self-reflexiveness, being an affective mode of self-consciousness.

While these last two models, the complexity of which I could not do justice here, might seem too demanding since they support a conception of acts which entails revealing aesthetic value by means of epistemic

higher-order processes, there is yet another sense of acting which gives more place to openness, playfulness, and aesthetic freedom (possibly in giving rise to aesthetic value rather than in revealing it). More specifically, on Thi Nguyen's (2019, pp. 1127-1128, p. 1137) view, although aesthetic acting is a cognitive practice aimed at correctness and subject to mistakes, a striving activity to get things right through the exercise of one's own faculties, the stress is on the very process of exercising or engaging in such an endeavour, not on the outcome of the endeavour (i.e., its failure or success). This is what Nguyen (2019, pp. 11-12), calls "the engagement account of aesthetic value" which states that we have an aesthetic experience of the actions we perform (e.g., perception, attention etc.) when engaging in an appreciative behaviour. While the model entails self-reflexiveness, it does so in a less restrictive sense in that there is no commitment as to revealing the reasons for acting a certain way.

Now, what comes into focus with environmental and everyday aesthetics is a broader, yet more encompassing sense of acting, considered this time "in the wild", which is oriented on doing things and acting upon the real world rather than aiming at mere judgment of contents difficult to access which might or might not have consequences in practical empirical life (Saito 2017, p. 58). Within this framework, as in the act-centred approaches briefly sketched above, the experiencing agent is more than a mere spectator who responds passively to an aesthetic object; instead, he actively creates his own experience. Here is a telling quote from Saito (2017, pp. 52-53): "Dewey's and Berleant's discussions are useful in reminding us that, even as a 'spectator' or 'receiver', we are never a sitting duck, so to speak, but rather an active agent of creative engagement with what we are perceiving. In short, we are never passive and inactive when it comes to aesthetic experience." While many philosophers would (and did indeed) side with the sitting duck rather than with the aesthetic agent, the problem of creative aesthetic engagement is certainly worth further investigation. The next two sections will be devoted to an assessment of engagement against what I take to be one of its main competitors, namely (psychical) distance.

3 From Distance…

In order to have a better grasp on aesthetic acts, it might be useful to think of them along a continuum, from an account in terms of distance

to an account in terms of engagement, which are seemingly mutually exclusive.

First of all, distance is construed as a cognitive notion describing a psychological phenomenon or event, something akin to mental detachment (Dickie 1961, p. 234; Dickie 1962, pp. 297-298), grounded in a specific type of consciousness. Edward Bullough (1912/1984), who will be my main reference here, presents distance, and more specifically, psychical distance, as a voluntary action of a special kind which helps recover aesthetic qualities, to be distinguished from a teleological mental act qualified by a distinctive motivation and prior intention to achieve a goal. Bullough (1912/1984, p. 461) claims that distance is obtained by "putting the object out of gear with practical needs"; in other words, psychical distance refers to a subjective orientation performed by a rational agent who is not goal oriented. Furthermore, distance would entail, but not be exhausted by, contemplation and disinterested attention (Dickie 1964, pp. 56-57; Dickie 1961, p. 234).

In Bullough's view, contemplation marks a distance from one's own self, who could not be, when immersed in an aesthetic act, an epistemically engaged self, concerned with the reality of the work, or holding an awareness of the world; a self-engaged in an aesthetic act is instead, according to Bullough (1912/1984, pp. 460, 461-462), a subject in "strange solitude and remoteness from the world", freed from every ordinary concern, from any mundane preoccupations. Though putting us "out of gear with our actual self" distance does not exclude all personal factor, leading to an impersonal relation between the self and the object, but preserves a filtered personal character in that it is emotionally coloured; more precisely, feelings are filtered or cleared of narrowly practical concerns. Distance would thus allow a split between our own self and its affections, felt mostly through an imaginative engagement (Dickie 1961, p. 234).

Now, if distance comes with a phenomenological tone, a felt affective quality, something like a feeling of being distanced, then it allows access to the qualitative processes of which world? In Bullough's (1912/1984, pp. 461-462) model of distance, the affective character accompanying practical activities are dismissed; the world considered is a virtual world (e.g., the world as a stage), whose primary nature is not ordinary, practical, functional etc., but fictional, based on the unreality of action: our aesthetic encounters experienced through distancing would be akin to witnessing a drama in an Elizabethan theatre.

As we can infer from the brief overview presented above, aesthetic acts connected to distancing would be those acts for which the history of fine art and eighteenth-century systematic aesthetics are highly relevant. It is a view that excludes experience outside these contexts, and more specifically, it excludes an intimate interaction with everyday objects and disregards the experience that such interaction might bring about. The functionality of the everyday, something that we relate to in our daily lives, would make it ineligible for giving rise to aesthetic experience. For this reason, a view on aesthetic acts from distance falls to the ground.

4 …to Engagement

We can now pursue the line of argument in the opposite direction and present a view from engagement. Engagement, as opposed to distance, is not confined to a psychological attitude but includes somatic and social dimensions of experience (Berleant 2010, p. 90). Being appreciatively engaged entails a multisensory involvement of an embodied actual self with his or her practical environment, an engagement with the ordinary, the mundane or the "humdrum" (Saito 2017, pp. 24-25). Furthermore, the model of engagement fosters no longer an inhibition of action but participatory response of aesthetic agents who count as behavioural entities, acting and responding in a human environment that is not "out of gear" with his or her actual self (Berleant 2017, p. 12). Berleant's (1970; 2017, p. 10) aesthetic of engagement thus pushes forward Dewey's idea of continuity between art and life, providing an alternative approach to understanding aesthetic value; it is not a cognitive approach, neither a sociological one, but an experiential approach, as we can read in the passage below: "aesthetic engagement is based on a phenomenological analysis of the direct experience of aesthetic appreciation, an experience commonly had of full participatory involvement in a situation that may include a work of art, a performance, an architectural or environmental location, or a social situation."

Moreover, aesthetic engagement is meant to contribute to a broader project of human self-understanding, aiming at reinforcing agency (Lopes 2018, p. 7), both individual human agency and social human agency. It thus seeks to provide both a personal and collective sense of identity. A new dimension added by this model is the aesthetic appreciation of human relations and the idea of aesthetic community. The implied objectives, even if not always stated as such, are to overcome formalism and disinterestedness, which rely on exclusive, close attention to distinctive perceptual features of an object.

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Let me end with two contrasting quotes that reinforce this idea and serve to better grasp the continuum from distance to engagement along which aesthetic acts could be understood:

> Imagine a fog at sea […] the experience may acquire, in its uncanny mingling of repose and terror, a flavour of such concentrated poignancy and delight as to contrast sharply with the blind and distempered anxiety of its other aspects. This contrast, often emerging with startling suddenness, is like […] the passing ray of a brighter light, illuminating the outlook upon perhaps the most ordinary and familiar objects - an impression which we experience […] when our practical interest snaps like a wire from sheer over-tension, and we watch the consummation of some impending catastrophe with the marvelling unconcern of a mere spectator [my emphasis] (Bullough 1984, pp. 459-460).

> Consider this: there is beauty in the tracks of missiles flying against a dark sky, and sublimity in the collapse of a glacier. While beauty is the only direct mark of value, it is also involved in an undeniable ambiguity in our contemporary civilization. I am convinced that the most real and important task of aesthetics is to speculate on this ambiguity on the horizon of our global civilization (Berleant 2010, p. 223).

5 Conclusion

This paper aimed at taking a broader look at contemporary accounts of aesthetic acts by situating them in an already established tradition from which we inherit and that can no longer be appropriate for describing the diversity of aesthetic practices. Some of the changes in the understanding of aesthetic appreciation that the notion of aesthetic act brings about are the following: aesthetic acts allow us to move away from an object-centered aesthetics to a situation-centred aesthetics; they favour an axiological approach wherein aesthetic values comprise more than pure perceptual values or beauty, serving as a trade-off (Lehtinen 2021) between affective and social values; they entail a view according to which remoteness from the world is no longer acceptable, proposing instead a humanistic functionalism that reinforces the continuity between aesthetic practices and everyday life.

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CHAPTER 18

Transformations of Everydayness
in the Pandemic Era

Michaela Paštéková

Abstract: Philosopher and aesthetician Arto Haapala (2005) claims that the routine gives us a feeling of homeyness and control. Brushing teeth, dressing or cleaning are tasks that we perform almost automatically every day and in their repetitiveness we find a balance against the unpredictability of reality outside our homes. But what if daily routine becomes a permanent condition? If the ruptures that disrupt it go away? The global pandemic has exposed us to a new model of existence. By accelerating the extraction of daily routine's monotonous cycle, it disrupted its basic function - to keep our lives within the limits of (apparent) normalcy. One way to restore the status of support to everyday rituals is to place them in an aesthetic dimension. For example, by making the dusting a performative act. What happens to a routine when we "infect" it with the language of a dance performance? In my paper, I will address the question of how the pandemic changed the perception of everyday rituals and how the dance or performative movement can be one of the effective tools to bring the safety and familiarity back to the routine.

Keywords: Routine, Performative Presence, Dance, Pandemic, Everydayness, Rupture

1 New Choreography of Our Reality

The COVID-19 pandemic is in many ways reminiscent of the plague pandemic described by Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). It also sectionalised the space, froze the movement. The plague, like coronavirus, required "multiple separations individualizing distributions, an organization in depth of surveillance and control, an intensification and a ramification of power" (Foucault 1977, p. 198).

Dance critic Gia Kourlas (2020) wrote in one of her texts for the New York Times that today we are all dancers. The pandemic prescribes choreography of our movement and we must follow it - to be at least two meters apart, to avoid any touch, to walk along the edges of the sidewalks so that others can pass around us safely. "The pandemic has created something fascinating: a new way of moving, a new way of dancing in the streets" (Ibid.). Shops, pharmacies and even banks use tape on the floors to specify the exact trajectories of our steps. They define boundaries, conduct the dynamics of our dance. The collective 'choreography' is dispersed into hundreds of solo performances.

The pandemic restrictions not only changed the way we move in public space but also significantly affected the experience of our everyday life in the privacy of our homes and flats. Millions of people have been required to work from their home offices, students have commenced distance education, parents have become teachers. We celebrate birthdays with our relatives through Skype, we participate in conferences, concerts, or yoga classes through Zoom. Hundreds of thousands of us found themselves in lockdown, in obligatory quarantine, or have been placed under curfew. Since the spring 2020, we do not only live in a new model of reality, but also in a new model of everyday life.

In the present study, I am particularly interested in how the pandemic has affected daily habituality and routines that traditionally give us the feeling of homeyness and control. Brushing teeth, dressing or cleaning are tasks that we perform almost automatically every day and in their repetitiveness we find a balance against the unpredictability of reality outside our homes. But what if everyday routine becomes a permanent condition? What if we are left with nothing but the routine?

2 Break the Routine!

Routines are originally considered to be the pillars of stability and security. Some of them are existentially necessary and almost unchanged (sleeping, eating), others, more variable, are defined by our social or work being or by our hobbies (morning running, dinner with friends, work meetings, Twitter scrolling) (Puolakka 2019, p. 136). But all of them "bring order and control to lives that may otherwise seem entirely determined by the contingencies of context" (Highmore 2004, p. 307). According to philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann (2010), a sign of everyday life is that we almost do not perceive it and its function is not to

make our life more interesting, but to allow us (in it) to exist. Philosopher and aesthetician Arto Haapala (2005, p. 52) claims that routine, as an activity that is performed on a regular basis, gives us a sense of control, something we can count on. Each of us does something regularly every day. "Everydayness is identified with such qualities as comfort, ease, safety, and cosiness," writes philosopher Kalle Puolakka with reference to Haapala and aesthetician Ossi Naukkarinen (Puolakka 2019, p. 136). Haapala and Naukkarinen argue that "the ordinariness, routines, and familiarity which constitute the 'everydayness' of our everyday lives are integral and fundamental aspects of human existence" (Kuisma, Lehtinen and Mäcklin 2019, p. 16). Environmental historian Jessica J. Lee (2010) goes even further when she says that it is about these repetitive activities and habits that make a house a *home*: "We do not necessarily clean the house for the sake of cleanliness itself, we clean for our own satisfaction and to make our homes more comforting for ourselves and others."

On the other hand, a routine can be also boring, monotonous, and dull. Naukkarinen (2017) emphasizes that ordinariness "has both positive and negative, plus rather neutral, aspects to it, depending on how we see it." Also Ben Highmore, a cultural studies scholar specializing in everyday studies, and philosopher Yuriko Saito remind us that everydayness cannot be associated only with concepts such as homey or warmth. Its character is ambiguous. Highmore (2004, p. 311) states that routine can be "simultaneously comforting and frustrating." Even according to Saito (2017, p. 2) "most people experience everyday life sometimes as a dreary and monotonous routine and some other times as a familiar safe haven." At the time of the pandemic curfew, it is precisely this annoying dimension of routine that is intensifying, and the feeling of frequent repetitiousness accelerates. The routine becomes only dreary drudgery for us. We can no longer rely on its aura of reassurance and settlement. Why is it happening? Why does domestic isolation make the routine a *burden*?

Usually, the routine is acceptable because it can be disrupted. Breaks are necessary to appreciate the ordinariness. But what if these breaks are eliminated? There could be at least two possible ruptures of the daily routine. The first is the interruption of the ordinary by some *extraordinary experience*. This experience is the exact opposite of the routine and is, therefore, unique, unrepeatable, unexpected, exciting - such as a vacation, a surprising visit or phone call, an accidental meeting, a celebration in a restaurant, and so on. We need a temporary departure from the

everyday to love it, to appreciate it even more. At the end of the holiday, we are looking forward to lying back in our bed, watching Netflix during breakfast, and ironing our shirts while listening to podcasts in the evening. The second disruption lies in the presence of a certain *conscious aesthetic dimension* in the routine which can make monotony colourful. I am not talking here about some external elements that infuse aesthetics into the routine but rather that we see routine filled with inner aesthetic potential. We can explain this through the example of Yuriko Saito (2017, p. 131):

> Many also talk about the 'art' of laundry hanging, such as creating an order by hanging similar kinds of things or items of the same colour together or by hanging objects in order of size. It also means that, when hanging socks, they should all face the same direction [...]. Furthermore, the reward of skilful laundry hanging is also aesthetic: the properly hung clothes retain their shape and carefully stretching clothes before hanging minimizes wrinkles. Finally, the fresh smell of sun-soaked clothes and linens cannot be duplicated by scented laundry detergent or softener.

The second distraction indicates that we normally see the aesthetics in everyday situations which make them bearable. However, the problem is that the pandemic eliminates both of these ruptures - the curfew significantly limits the possibilities of unusual experiences and also gradually weakens our ability to perceive the aesthetic potential of routine activities. The almost never-ending household isolation turns every possible extraordinary into the ordinary and aesthetic into the anaesthetic. It also creates routine from activities that we did not consider as a routine before. Originally sedative repetitiveness has suddenly become a reminder of isolation and an uncertain future. Consequently, if we do not want to completely reduce life to a set of anesthetized acts, we have to start looking for ways to return the routine to its original function.

3 The Performative Presence of the Body

During the lockdown, a rapid increase in the number of domestic videos on social networks in which people are doing daily chores in a performative way was identified. They started to show the removal of dishes from the dishwasher or the dusting as choreographic sets. Of course, the aestheticization of the banal is not a new phenomenon in the age of Instagram or TikTok; however, forced domestic isolation has

fundamentally contributed to its even more significant expansion. Why do people need *to perform* everyday routine? I will demonstrate that dance or performative movement can be our missing rupture that brings the safety and familiarity back to the routine.

The intertwining of dance and everyday life is nothing new; it already started in the 1960s. Especially Steve Paxton, who is considered the founder of contact improvisation, rebelled against the conventions of modern dance at that time by appropriating trivial activities such as eating, dressing, and smiling into his choreography. He was mostly fascinated by human walking that he observed at the markets in New York early in the morning. Dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham also used to declare that any move can be a material for dancing, any part of the body can create movement and it is possible to dance in any space (Banes 1987, p. 6). In one of Paxton's most famous works, *Satisfyin' Lover* (1967), dozens of people walk the stage seemingly ordinary and aimlessly, sometimes stopping or sitting down. Everyone, of course, moves in a unique and precisely defined way. When Paxton was given the task of creating a one-minute dance at Robert Dunn's composition class, there is a story that he sat down on a bench and ate a sandwich for sixty seconds (Rainer 2018). For him a non-artistic act became a source of a deeper knowledge of his body and himself.

Paxton generally claimed that dance brought us back to our nature and did not perceive it as the contradiction of everyday life. What was a revolution sixty years ago is a well-established, anticipated, and even required component of contemporary dance today. But what happens when the parasitism proceeds oppositely? What if it is no longer a dance that appropriates elements and gestures of everyday life, but it is everydayness that parasitizes on dance? What are the consequences of contamination of everyday life by dance movements?

Dance performance places the body in a state called performative presence. The performer's attention is at this moment completely focused on the action performed, he is fully aware of it. So when Gia Kourlas (2020) proclaims that "if this pandemic is teaching us anything, it is that we need to return to our bodies," performative movement can be one of the ways to do it.

Theoretician of theatre and performance Erika Fischer-Lichte in her book *The Transformative Power of Performance* (2008, p. 93) refers to the dichotomy of "having a body" and "being a body". In the context of this study, to *have a body* means doing a routine in a way, where the body serves only as a practical tool for doing some habitual activity. The body

is instrumentalized to achieve a goal. Of course, *we* move the hand to brush the teeth, or we press the button to turn the vacuum cleaner on, but we are not really *there*, we are not *present* in the action. The process of *becoming a body* starts in the moment we begin to do a routine consciously and that means, also, performatively. Performance forces us to be in the body, to be present in action *here* and *now*. "To experience the other and oneself as present means to experience them as embodied minds; thus, ordinary existence is experienced as extraordinary – as transformed and even transfigured," explains Fischer-Lichte (2008, pp. 99-100). The performative presence in this case does not mean to create something new, to let something extraordinary appear. "Instead, it marks the emergence of something very ordinary and develops it into an event" (Ibid.).

By placing the body in a performative presence, it turns it in the subject and an ephemeral object at once. Through the dance movement, the body determines that it is the performer of the routine. At the same time, converting the body into an object allows us to take an aesthetic distance from it and we are able to isolate the routine from its practical context. As Saito (2017, p. 22) states: "It is clear that the familiar and the ordinary can generate an aesthetic experience when we render them unfamiliar and extraordinary by isolating them from their everyday context and shedding a different light on them." Due to this act, we know that we can achieve dominance over the routine as both a performer and a choreographer, at once. We control the movement and we can recover (at least at that moment) the feeling of steadiness in the routine. This means that when we commence our daily activities performatively, firstly, the autopilot will turn off. Suddenly, we find ourselves to be fully occupied with the routine. As a result, we begin to feel our body differently (because we are a body) and also our perception of the space and time in which the routine is performed will change. "Dance refocuses our focusing mind on very basic existence, and time, space, gravity open up to creativity," Kourlas (2020) writes.

Dance movement allows us to perceive the size or the purpose of the space otherwise. Maybe thanks to dancing, we'll start vacuuming the bedroom in an unusual direction. Space seems more flexible to the performative body, the contact with objects in it can suddenly be completely surprising and unexpected. In some places we may suddenly feel cold or warm, the touch with the surfaces of shelves or upholstered sofas can be rougher than it used to be. In a performative presence, familiar things begin to change their identities and functions. Considering

the pandemic isolation, where the apartments sometimes resemble a prison, by transforming them into performative scenes we can free the space from the crampedness of the four walls. According to Fischer-Lichte (2008, p. 107), to consider some space performative means to see it as unstable and constantly changing, as something that is constituted only in the process of performance. This ability stands in opposition to any kind of routine. The routine knows in advance all the paths of its movement.

The standard routine clearly structures our day. We brush our teeth for three minutes, we have 30 minutes set aside for dinner, the washing machine will wash for two hours, we have to respond to emails between 8 and 10 a.m. Performativity can change the perception of time. It has the power to speed it up or slow it down, psychological time is about to dominate over objective time. Being *here* and *now* interrupts any relationship to the past or the future. We focus on the presence and allow ourselves to break free from the linear experience of time. As a performative body, we forget the depressing vision of endless pandemic custody.

A dance performance is a traditional live interaction of a performer and a spectator in the paradigm of the *here* and *now* (Korec 2018, p. 23). This relationship has, of course, a specific position in the case of domestic amateur performances. As the goal of these acts is not to create a work of art or an artistic performance, the recipient is essentially irrelevant in most cases. If the spectator enters this event at all, it happens mostly after the event is finished, via videos on social networks. So, there is no direct immediate response of the performer to the viewer. The interaction occurs in following likes or comments and does not retroactively affect the performative activity. Kevin Melchionne (1998, p. 198) likens the aestheticization of domestic process to a performance. But as Lee (2010) notes, "this performance, Melchionne argues, is not simply for the pleasure of the on-looker, but also for the homemaker, who takes pleasure in the process."

4 Conclusion

We cannot escape everyday life, Liessmann states in his book *The Universe of Things* (2010). According to him, life would not be possible to live if it were otherwise. We all are doomed to perform minor or bigger stereotypical tasks. And we feel comfortable in this regularity, as long as there is something to disturb it, to be its counterpoint.

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The COVID-19 pandemic was initially a major break, which utterly changed the way we act. But very quickly, this rupture has become the so-called new normal that consumes everything around us and transforms it into a routine. Some people have found a way to resist this never-ending sameness in performative movement. I have tried to suggest that by appropriating it into our everydayness, we give our pandemic habituality its necessary disruption and our routines can regain their function of the pillars of stability. Thanks to performative presence we can be aware of our bodies and replace anaesthetization with attentiveness, and paying attention is a prerequisite for any kind of aesthetic experience. Yuriko Saito (2017, p. 3) confirms that "we can capture the aesthetic texture of ordinariness experienced as such, as long as we pay attention to what we are experiencing rather than acting on autopilot." As I tried to suggest in my study, to place something into the conscious aesthetic dimension makes the monotony and repetitiveness bearable.

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CHAPTER 19

Speculating Everyday Beauty

Swantje Martach

Abstract: Everyday aesthetics inter alia claims: Also outside of art, there is beauty. The existence of such extra-artistic beauty is taken as a given in this branch of aesthetic research; yet the issue it faces is of a methodological kind: How would it be possible to research ordinary beauties without turning them into extraordinary beauties and thus re-aligning them to art? The present paper proposes the method of speculation as a possible solution. Speculation is argued to be of aid for everyday aesthetics, because taking a speculative stance on reality means to not intervene in it, but to rather take a step back and respectfully narrate the withdrawing from our human perception that certain aspects of reality undertake. As such, speculation is a possibility to master the paradox faced by everyday aesthetics, which consists in engaging without intruding on beauties hiding within the everyday, and hence of preserving while and whilst researching them.

Keywords: Everyday Aesthetics, Speculative Realism, Methodology, Beauty, Speculative Narration

1 Setting the Scene

This paper is a methodological one, the focus of which it is to set an impulse. Eventually, the aim is to strategically further two fields of aesthetic research, namely speculative aesthetics and everyday aesthetics. Yet one paper is not enough to rigorously elaborate both sides of the coin that here shall be thrown into the game. Since the volume for which this contribution is written is located in the realm of everyday aesthetics, it will focus exclusively on how the method of speculation can be of aid for everyday aesthetics. A continuative paper, published within the field of speculative aesthetics, might soon turn the coin around and focus on how everyday aesthetics can be of aid for speculative aesthetics.

To briefly introduce the latter field, up to today, speculative aesthetics is majorly concerned with what Meillassoux (2008, p. 7) famously titled "the great outdoors", which led it to produce approaches such as "nonhuman aesthetics" (Wilson 2019) or "eco-aesthetics" (Zepke 2008), that research beauties residing apart from human existence. I hold two objections to speculative aesthetics' research direction. On the one hand, and in a rather pragmatic vein, I wonder why we should care whether there is beauty in "zebras running through the savannah", as Latour's (1988, p. 193) famous realist dictum goes, or in the whirling of a cyclone over an uninhabited land (see Muecke 2016). What can we gain from this insight? How does it affect our database of philosophical knowledge?

On the other hand, and in a rather methodological vein, I claim that the beauty of realities that exist detached from humanity can often be speculated pretty smoothly. I think it is easy to imagine the beauty of a remote island, and that the beauty of this island lies precisely in its being-remote. The same is valid for a virgin forest scenery, that is beautiful precisely because no human ever stepped onto it. For this reason, I seek to argue that human-detached realities are not the real challenge that speculative thought is to face.

Instead, I shall suggest that speculative aesthetics rather focuses on the beauty that lies hidden within the human everyday, because, remaining within the latter's perspective, these beauties keep withdrawing also within, and thus constitute the proper challenge for speculative thought. The present paper will elicit (1) why it is not a shortcoming of the speculative method that beauties remain withdrawing also therein, and (2) how speculation can be of help for everyday aesthetics in its endeavour to research precisely such beauties.

Before starting, a last remark to everyday aesthetics needs to be made. This paper is written in the awareness that everyday aesthetics is a field that is concerned with many manifestations of what the term 'aesthetics' is used as overarching for, such as the humorous, the ugly, the playful, or the grotesque. Nonetheless, and for the sake of clarity, my concern here is exclusively the aesthetic as it manifests itself in beauty. As Didier Debaise (in Pihet 2017, p. 77) adequately claims: "each milieu requires us to work it out anew." By implication, a speculative research of e. g. the ugly as found in the everyday might afford other research means than are suggested here. This, however, remains to be researched still.

2 Everyday Aesthetics' Methodological Problem

So, what is the status quo of everyday aesthetics, and why is it claimed here that this field needs assistance? With regard to its concern with beauty, everyday aesthetics has set itself the goal of levelling beauty, that is, of widening the appreciation of beauty. A basic claim of everyday aesthetics therefore is: *Also outside of art, there is beauty.*

This claim identifies everyday aesthetics as a postmodern movement, which here is meant in the simplified sense of its being a reaction to modern academic thought. Medieval scholastic thought started to merge the concepts of beauty and art (as accessibly subsumed by the historian Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, see Tatarkiewicz 1974, p. 15), and this idea eventually became a mainstream conviction of later modernity. Beauty was said to reside primarily in art, and art was said to be primarily concerned with beauty. Eventually thus, modern thinkers held it as "impossible to dissociate" (Tatarkiewicz 1970a, p. 1) between beauty and art, and to study one of them without the other.

In this heritage of thinking, the scope of everyday aesthetics today is to extract the aesthetic from its bond to the artistic, and research it in the alternative realms in which it is capable of manifesting. This postmodern movement re-appreciates the excess of both phenomena to one another: "Beauty is not confined to art, while art is not solely the pursuit of beauty" (Ibid.). In other words, art exceeds beauty, hence it is not only concerned with beauty, and beauty exceeds art, hence cannot only be found in the arts. In the latter excess of beauty to art, everyday aesthetics is located.

It hence is everyday aesthetics' aspiration to re-enliven the claim that beauty exists *also* (an addition) aside from art, aside from any extraordinary practice potentially directed explicitly to its production. But according to the latter field of research, beauty exists as well in 'normal' practices, in practices concerned with other purposes, only a side-effect of which is beauty. In a Deweyan manner, we could also say that everyday aesthetics is not concerned with the beauty of "experiences" (such as constitute inter alia the experiences relevant for the present purposes, that are e.g. a visit in a museum or theatre, hence confrontations with art) which Dewey (2005, pp. 15, 18) described as events, units with clear boundaries that contrast sharply against the normal humdrum of life. But everyday aesthetics is rather concerned with the beauty of precisely this humdrum, this normal flux that makes up the quotidian.

For the present purposes, describing the difference between everyday and modern-artistic aesthetics in vein of Dewey's writing appears to be of higher assistance than the distinction of artistic as "contemplation-oriented" versus everyday as "action-oriented" aesthetics introduced by everyday aesthetics itself, namely by Yuriko Saito (see Saito 2008, p. 4). In writing so, Saito leads thought towards the aspect of how we react to different manifestations of beauty, that is, the differences of actions these diverse manifestations of beauty incite in us. However, my focus here are not the reactions these beauties incite; but rather the research approaches they afford. And precisely in this regard, in regard to its methodology, everyday aesthetics faces a problem.

Staying thus within the framework of Dewey's terminology, everyday aesthetics' methodological issue can be described as follows: By the very act of researching the beauty of the daily humdrum, the very action of pointing with the own researching finger onto it, the very statement "there is beauty, too", the focused-on beauty is extracted from the humdrum, and thus ceases to be a beauty *of* a humdrum, a humdrum beauty, but rather becomes a beauty of an experience. It becomes an event. It is extracted from the surroundings that define it and put into a new, 'non-natural', artificial surrounding comparable to a lab or a museum, whereby it crucially, and for everyday aesthetics' purposes detrimentally shifts from a beauty of the ordinary to a beauty of the special, and hence is realigned to the manifestation of beauty of which everyday aesthetics precisely seeks to discern it: artistic beauty.

In realizing this problem, everyday aestheticians today did not detect a newness. According to Tatarkiewicz, St. Augustine was the first thinker to distinguish sharply between beauty (see Tatarkiewicz 1970b, p. 51), which he defined in line with the ancient canon as an arrangement of parts that is complete within itself and therefore pleases, versus appropriateness or suitability, which pleases because of a thing fitting to something else. The everyday example the medieval thinker provides for the latter is the fitting of a shoe to a foot (see St. Augustine *Confessions*, IV, XIII, 20). But St. Augustine went even further. He not only discerned between two kinds of the aesthetic; but he also claimed them to stand in an antithetical relation to each other. As historian Tatarkiewicz (1970b, p. 52) aptly summarizes his notion: "As long as we regard things merely as useful, we will fail to see their beauty."

Crucially, St. Augustine by no means denied beauty to the everyday. We certainly encounter order and arrangement in the ordinary. But what he already steered the focus onto is the issue of our perception: Either

we appreciate a thing for its helpfulness to our purposes, or we appreciate it for its beauty. I see implied in this statement that an aesthetic appreciation of the ordinary *as ordinary* is impossible. As soon as we focus on the beauty of an ordinary object, we extract it from its original, natural surroundings and thereby alter its character, hence shifting it from everyday to extraordinary object, or, so one could even subsume, from tool to art. Whereas, in so stating, St. Augustine paved the way for the modern academic restriction of a research of beauty to art; everyday aesthetics today reclaims that an appreciation of something with which we interact is a form of aesthetic appreciation.

To clarify, everyday aestheticians do not see it problematic to claim that we can aesthetically appreciate e.g. the laundry in the action of hanging it, our clothes in the practice of wearing them, the plates in the action of arranging them on the kitchen's shelf, or the flowers in the action of picking them. To them (as well as to me), this is pretty plausible, thus, they infer, we can aesthetically experience beauty in the everyday.

The issue faced by everyday aesthetics hence is not of an ontological kind. The problem is not whether there is beauty in the everyday. There evidently is. Nor is the issue faced by everyday aesthetics of an epistemological kind. This branch of research does not state that we have difficulties in perceiving this beauty. We evidently can. But what makes the field of everyday aesthetics so exciting to think in and with, is that it faces a methodological question, a question *twice detached from reality*, so one could say, namely: How can everyday aesthetics research what we perceive without altering the reality perceived? Hence, *how can we philosophically capture the beauty of the ordinary while preserving it in its ordinary character?*

Everyday aesthetics strongly argues for the possibility to do so, but it is still debating the question: 'How to?' (see e.g. Haapala 2005, p. 50 or Saito 2008, p. 50), hence how to research the beauty of the everyday without losing "the everyday-ness of the everyday" (Saito 2008, p. 50), viz. without stripping the 'everyday' of what ought to be the 'everyday aesthetic'. Into the shark tank of attempts, I here shall throw a further suggestion and propose that speculation qualifies as a method gainful for everyday aesthetic research.

3 Introducing Speculation

Speculation is a method for doing inter alia philosophy, which reaches as far back as Antiquity, yet for long held the bad fame of being a style of

"thinking that was not put to the test", and hence was criticized as too "pie-in-the-sky" (Debaise in Pihet 2017, p. 67). However, in the 20th century, speculation sparked the interest of philosophers such as Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson or Gilles Deleuze, in the heritage of which these days various philosophers and research communities in different places are engaged in the "rehabilitation" (Ibid.) of this method, and in rethinking as its strength what was formerly held as its weakness. As Isabelle Stengers re-coins it, speculative philosophy is precisely not a critical (elsewhere the speculative is also described as a "pre-critical" method, see Bryant et al. 2011, p. 3), but a "constructivist" (Stengers as cited in Kouw and van Tuinen 2014, p. 128) manner of doing philosophy.

In its status quo today, I can count five schools of speculative philosophy: new materialism (for an accessible introduction to this eldest school of speculative thought see Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012), speculative realism (for an overview of the evolution of this school see especially Bryant et al. 2011), object-oriented ontology (abbreviated as OOO; the initiating work of which was Harman's Tool-Being, published in 2002), the Brussels school of speculative narration (accessible explanations of this undertaking can be found in the here cited interviews, see Pihet 2017 and Doucet 2018), and the most recent Portuguese school of "TTT" (see introductory video on YouTube, TTT Studio 2021), an abbreviation which is intended to represent nothing despite a mocking of the abbreviation OOO, and a re-thinking of the latter's entity-based ontological claims. Of these 'schools', speculative narration is the most methodologically concerned, and I will hence mainly rely upon it here.

3.1 Speculation's Concern

Of special interest for the present purposes is the fact that thinkers involved within the school of speculative narration have set out to retrace the history of the term 'speculation'. As Katrin Solhdju (Solhdju in Pihet 2017, pp. 69-70) writes:

> In Ancient Rome, a speculator was a scout, a lookout, either in a tower observing the surrounding area, or sent ahead of an army. […] Later on, the term came to denote the stargazers, people looking far into the distance, equipped with apparatuses to observe the stars. We can see very clearly how the term 'speculator' came gradually to represent someone who looks further and further afield, hence finally the pejorative meaning of someone

speaking of things whose existence escapes experience, an experience that cannot be proven.

However, continuing in the words of Solhdju (Solhdju in Pihet 2017, p. 69), what sparked the interest of these scholars is that in his original role, "the speculator has a practical function that is very embedded in the real, in experience: to be on guard against approaching danger, to warn his comrades if necessary to prepare the city to defend itself, to prepare the soldiers to get into position etc." In this framework, speculation results as not only "pie-in-the-sky" (see above), but rather as a hitherto downplayed and overlooked method that could be engaged with for "practical" (Ibid.), "pragmatic" (Debaise 2017, pp. 9-10), "empirical" (Debaise throughout 2017), and, as I am attempting to show here, even everyday philosophical concerns.

The general ontological scaffold speculative thinking is based upon is realism, viz. the claim that reality exceeds our perceptual capacities, so that involved in every situation are aspects of reality that withdraw from our grasp. Speculation is concerned with precisely these aspects of reality that for a normal look remain foreclosed - to stay in the scenery of Ancient Rome depicted by Solhdju, the look of the citizen who resides on the level of the town, or the look of the soldier who stands amidst the troop - and that only the speculator, viz. the method of speculation is able to witness.

In its postmodern rehabilitated version, speculation thus is not concerned with existences beyond reality, but with 'the beyond' existing within reality. Alternatively, one could claim that speculation does not focus on something that is beyond reality, but only on something that is beyond our modern-trained eyes, which remains a here and now in reality. I suggest calling these withdrawing aspects of reality 'minorities of perception' in order to explicitly restrict their existence as minorities to the role allocated to them by classical perceptual frameworks, that thus remain unable to account for whether the minorities they constitute might not even be 'majorities of reality'. If we accept the Heideggerian conception of *Zuhandenheit* as it was pulled into speculative philosophy by Graham Harman (see Harman 2002), the more a thing allows us to suppress it, hence the more it gives way to us suppressing it, the more powerful it is, because this subjugated role grants it the space to act on us without being traced.

Speculation draws our attention to the fact that any givenness, any acceptance of a status-quo presupposes a politics that subjugates certain

slices of reality. As Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 256) wrote: "politics precede being." Prior to any givenness there is always suppression. By implication, givenness is only a perceptual framework, an epistemology, but never a reality. Far from ever being given, for the realist ontologies in which speculation is undertaken, reality is always on the go (see e.g. Barad 2012, p. 7), and only ever temporally comes to a halt in 'givennesses' (in the plural). In a nutshell, the scope of speculation hence is to make us look differently onto and enrich our understanding of reality.

3.2 How Speculation Functions

Describing how the speculative method functions is especially problematic, as for fear of limitation, the relevant literature seems to prevent any attempt at a definition. Speculative methodological approaches repeatedly stress that the very concept of 'method' must not be mistaken as "a ready-made tool-box" (Solhdju in Pihet 2017, p. 76); but that it rather is to be understood as a manner of producing thinking trajectories. In this regard, Debaise (2017, p. 9) also defines 'method' as "an art of effects." Later on, he states: "The speculative method is dynamic, unable to stabilize itself once and for all" (Debaise 2017, p. 17). Fabrizio Terranova (Terranova in Pihet 2017, p. 76) even goes so far as to claim: "We cannot define what we are doing, because that is not desirable." One hence needs to find a balance between depicting the speculative method trustworthily, that is, as constitutively open, and conveying it in an accessible way to an audience of non-expert readers. In the following, this will be my attempt.

I opine that the method of speculation can be described as what new materialist meta/physician Karen Barad describes as "diffractive" in kind (this term is accurately introduced in Barad 2014 as well as 2007, pp. 71-96). It is a way of nagging on a situation, returning to it over and over again, for the sake of attending to the perceptual minorities engaged therein. As situations always manifest themselves differently in every new story that is told about them, there will never be 'the' narration, a singular manifestation that acquires the status of an objectivity. Speculation is aware thereof, and embraces the endlessness of narrative possibilities that reality bestows us with. It is responsive to and acts as responsible for the excess in which reality exists to every existent narration of it. Precisely for the sake of revealing this excess, speculation busies itself with alternatively narrating situations that might only be perceived as given, but that are never given.

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As conceptualized by Barad (2012, pp. 7, 9-10; 2014, p. 184), responsibility is not only an usurping of tasks, as it is also an allowing the other to respond and thus a conversation to manifest. In this light, speculation consists of a "sensitivity to the milieu hosting" (Debaise in Pihet 2017, p. 76). It consists of granting of narrative space, of giving precedence, of providing a voice to what Stengers defines as "possibles" in contrast to "probables" (Stengers as cited by Solhdju in Pihet 2017, p. 74), and what Benedikte Zitouni (Zitouni in Doucet 2018, p. 16) describes as "unforeseen and intriguing dimensions of reality."

Speculation then is less a narration of something, as it is rather a narration in which alternative subjectivities have the chance to manifest themselves. As Terranova (Terranova in Pihet 2017, p. 72; emphasis added) describes the didactic approach of speculative narration: "we want to shake up the idea of the personal project […]. The idea is not to tell one's own story, but *to narrate the world* on the basis of a local experience." It is a narration that in the beginning manifests itself as a narration of a human concerned with the world, and that during the course of its own manifestation becomes a narration of the world that manifests itself by means of a human.

However, and this is crucial for the present argumentation, what speculation does not aim at is the act of overthrowing the situational politics it confronts. It rather narrates minorities of perception without making them lose, but by, paradoxically yet deliberately maintaining them in their subjugated nature. Above, I have defined speculation as the method that is conceived as apt for constructing a realist worldview. It thus is the concern of speculation not to intervene in the world, but rather to get an insight into how the world is functioning in itself.

Speculation claims to be a way to master the paradox of witnessing minorities of perception without turning them into artificial majorities *for* perception. It is a respectful narrating, and not a brutal extracting of something from its natural status, because speculative philosophy knows that by doing so, it would not catch hold of what it seeks to research, 'realist realities', viz. realities as they happen in themselves; but it would only gain access to realities that in this act it is constituting.

Instead of attempting to pinpoint what resides in the corners of our eyes, speculation can be described as respectfully narrating these realities in their fleeting. Instead of bluntly disclosing them, it treasures these realities' treacheries (see Martach 2020). It does not stop withdrawing processes, but it appreciates events precisely in their withdrawal. For this reason, Zitouni's (Zitouni in Doucet 2018, p. 16) description of the

speculative action as an "unravelling" seems to me to be misleading. Speculation is not about bringing order into the chaos; it is exactly about cherishing and caring for the chaos that reality, the world, a situation is. As Kouw and van Tuinen (2014, p. 129) aptly conclude their paper: "But isn't speculative philosophy precisely the attempt to destabilize the world, to let in a bit of chaos, and to return existence to the consistency of the event?"

3.3   Why Should, and How Could Speculation Be of Help for Everyday Aesthetics?

To recall, everyday aesthetics seeks to research instances of (inter alia) beauty in the daily humdrum. Yet, as it has been outlined already, the paradox everyday aesthetics thereby confronts is that its research action, hence the very act of pointing such ordinary beauties out and drawing our attention onto them, distorts the reality of these beauties, so that they cease to be ordinary and rather become extraordinary, viz. cease to be what everyday aesthetics wishes to research. What everyday aesthetics affords is a method that allows it to more cunningly approach the realities it seeks to scrutinize, in order to be able to research them while preserving ordinary beauty in its ordinariness. My claim in this paper is that speculation is a method that allows us to do precisely this. To subsume, speculation is capable of realizing two actions simultaneously, and this combination is crucial for the purposes of everyday aesthetics: (1) Speculation grants access to perceptually subjugated aspects of reality. Yet in so doing (2) it does not extract but preserves and realistically narrates them in their 'subjugatedness'.

We tend to see the beauty of the everyday only in the beginning of our engagement with things, or in the phase of entering a situation. Growing accustomed to such beauties, we happen to lose sight of them. Whatever it is that we found beautiful when encountering it for the first time, when starting to engage with it - be that our house slippers, the way our dog walks, or even the face of our partner - with the course of habituation, the unfolding of the everyday, the beauty of these realities tend to slip through our grid of attention. Nonetheless, also drawing on the realist ontologies introduced here, I believe that these beauties remain there, are existent, just they lie dormant.

It is precisely in this regard that the methodological strength of speculation comes to the fore. Speculation can enable us to witness the beauties that lie dormant within the everyday, yet importantly without re-

awakening these beauties or pushing them back into the focus of our everyday eyes. This would imply a change in epistemology, whereby these beauties would become something different, would live through a change in their ontology - e.g. would turn from the habitual and worn-out house slippers to something similar to Van Gogh's farmer's shoes Heidegger famously philosophized about. Instead, a speculative look rather carefully and even tentatively observes these beauties in their dormancy, and cherishes them in their lying-dormant.

As it has been introduced here, speculation is not concerned with what is detached from reality. To propose a speculative approach to the beauties hidden in the everyday does not mean to suggest that the respective researcher should sit in her office and simply imagine or meditate about the beauty a laundry hanging activity could (potentially) have. This would just contribute to a further increase in the 'armchair attitude' philosophy in general is often criticized for (see e. g. Walton 2007, p. 152).

By contrast, speculation is rather supposed to imply an involved manner of doing research, as Barad (2007, p. 56) has it, a kind of research that is "not about intervening (from the outside) but about intra-acting from within." To be explicit here, a speculative research of the everyday affords the researcher to get engaged in the everyday. In the words of Barad (2007), it presupposes the entanglement of matter and meaning, of doing and thinking. This also means that the philosopher, who often remains today a white western male, gets preoccupied with activities that even today remain classically executed by (also but not only white/western, sometimes less but sometimes also equally educated) females. Indeed, such a side-effect corresponds all too well to the general feminist concerns of speculative (especially new materialist) thought.

Within this involvement, e.g. the activity of laundry hanging, washing the dirty dishes, stacking clothes in the own wardrobe, the speculative move consists in taking a step back and detaching the own thinking from "imbuing mankind with a particular function" (Debaise in Pihet 2017, p. 74), namely the one of being the actor upon an inert world, e. g. the one who is hanging the laundry; and crucially also observe how the laundry guides the own actions of hanging it. As a colleague and friend of mine, Hongwei Tang (Tang in Martach 2021, min. 12:50 – 12:58), recently described it: "To realize and dive into this being-determined […] is what for me means to take up a speculative position."

Speculation hence consists in *the movement of a detachment that is realized within the situation of an involvement*. It is the detachment, the action of

distancing one's perception from modern hierarchies, that grants us access to subjugated beauties, and hence makes us see many more beauties than an anthropocentric stance would hold as possible to exist. It is the situation of being involved in the everyday that enables us to research the laundry as beautiful in the act of hanging it, the clothes in the act of stacking them, or the dishes in the act of washing them, viz. to research everyday's ordinary beauties without stripping their ordinariness off them, but rather by preserving its beauties in and cherishing them for their dormancy.

4 Conclusion

Whereas modern aesthetic research reduced beauty to art; one of everyday aesthetics' aspirations is to reclaim that beauty exists also outside of art. However, everyday aesthetics confronts a methodological paradox: By the very act of researching the beauty in and of the everyday, it makes this beauty special, and thus distorts the reality it seeks to scrutinize. The present paper claims that the method of speculation can be of help in this regard. In its postmodern version, speculation can allow us to access hitherto dormant beauties without awakening them, but rather by appreciating them for and narrating them in their lying-dormant. It is capable of this by its peculiar combination of being an act of distancing within a situation of involvement. An implementation of the speculative approach into the field of everyday aesthetics remains, for now, desirable.

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Aesthetic Qualities and Aspects of Everyday Life. Notes on a Phenomenological Approach to Everyday Aesthetics

Małgorzata A. Szyszkowska

Abstract: This paper aims to discuss the aesthetic quality of everyday life considered from a phenomenological perspective. It is aimed at highlighting the way phenomenology is invested in every detail of the daily experiences and therefore also open to aesthetic qualities and values found in these experiences. The phenomenological perspective seems especially interested in the most detailed and full presentation of human experience complete with atmosphere and value judgments and thus also in portraying the emotional reactions towards the world-as-experienced. The paper also focuses on the category of listening-in understood as an attentive, open, and engaged relation to the world.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Aesthetic Experience, Aesthetic Consciousness, Aesthetic Qualities, Everydayness

1 Introduction

Arnold Berleant (2010, p. 17) remarks that "the aesthetic has a powerful and pervasive presence in the human world." We know this from first-hand experience. Observing and identifying the subtle changes in the sensual presentation of colours and sounds through their vibrant shades and timbres leads to an acknowledgment of the aesthetic qualities of things, beings, and events. Although not nearly as cherished as the aesthetic qualities in artworks and officially acknowledged art performances, everyday events and experiences carry many moments of aesthetic enjoyment, provided we care to listen and watch attentively. However strange or unexpected the change from attending to art to

attending to everyday happenings may seem, it is already a fact if not a comeback to the core of aesthetics. There is an acknowledged tendency of devoting "a significant part of its attention to the area that is beyond the boundaries of art, or, rather, what is nowadays presented as art" (Kvokačka 2018, p. 519). Some of this area and the tendencies surrounding it could be described as everyday aesthetics.

My goal in this paper is to describe the aesthetic character of the everyday experience while looking for the possible common ground between phenomenology and everyday aesthetics. In this task, I turn to John Dewey (1980, p. 10), who insists on to recovering *the continuity of aesthetic experience with normal processes of living* and to Arnold Berleant (Berleant 1999, 2005), whose observations on aesthetic aspects of everyday life have been most inspiring for me. I turn to phenomenological philosophers like Edmund Husserl, Roman Ingarden, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Mikel Dufrenne for their understanding of daily processes and experiences in the aesthetic light. Guided by their understanding of the bodily and sensual aspect of the experience, I shall turn to the concept of the *meeting* (or *encounter* and also *aesthetic situation*), and to Husserl's idea of the *aesthetic consciousness*, as well as the concept of *listening-in*, which seem particularly relevant in pointing towards the aesthetic aspects of everyday experience from the phenomenological perspective.

2 From Individual Experience to Aesthetic Encounter

During our daily activities, when we walk and observe, we sometimes notice certain elements in the environment that make us see it as aesthetically fuller, brighter, or prettier. Before something beautiful or sublime may be recognized through reflective and analytic experience by means of concepts and comparative weighing, one may react spontaneously to the environment because of its simplest aesthetic or *quasi*-aesthetic qualities. A distant shimmering sound or a patch of tall grass with its light colour and delicate waving movement against the birch trees might be a gratifying sight for someone. Roman Ingarden (1961, p. 867) mentions a random, yet aesthetically gratifying experience of that kind:

> May it not happen that we lift the window-blinds in our room someday in spring and catch the sight of the garden where the trees have opened into flower during the night? We are suddenly dazzled and fascinated by the sight of apple trees a bloom against the background of a fair sky?

In the quotation above, Ingarden's aim is not so much to present different and varied occasions that may result in an aesthetic experience, as it is to show the different sources and materials for art; imagination or reacting directly to nature rather than reflecting on the artwork presented in the gallery or a performance. However, the example is persuasive enough to give a sense of how simple experiences may greatly influence the observer. These situations although not immediately seen as worthy of aesthetic experience and far from entering the category of art, may have enough aesthetic appeal to win the heart of perceivers or change their perspective, since the environmental perception and thus the everyday perception "offers an especially rich opportunity for illuminating aesthetic experience" (Berleant 2005, p. 10). In these mundane situations, the aesthetic quality is not assumed but discovered. It is a process of realizing and unmasking rather than relying on established attitudes. Such unexpected situations, says Berleant elsewhere, are distinguished by *deliberate attention* and enlarged focus. "When we appreciate the environment […] there is a deliberate focus on the direct grasp of environmental features within a setting or field that we join with as participants" (Berleant 1992, p. 14).

Whatever is found in the environment, the qualities or aspects that are being discovered require an attentive response. For example, upon listening to a musical work recipient reacts with an immediate reply or resonance – in singing or in rhythmic bodily response. Even the inner response that does not manifest itself in bodily behaviour may become the aesthetic encounter between an aesthetic object, an author or performer, and a recipient (Ingarden 1975, p. 262; Berleant 2005, p. 34).

The aesthetic aspects of everyday experiences mean focusing on little nuances and details. Nothing is unimportant, *no detail is insignificant* (Merleau-Ponty 2004, p. 94). Sometimes these are the sun rays on the porch, the colourful flowers by the side of the road, or the softest sounds that greet us in the morning and surprise us at night. They are common and unusual at the same time. They command our attention even when we know and expect their presence. Pauline Oliveros (2005, p. 15) remembers the soundscape of her childhood, in which the sounds of *chirping, rasping crickets, frogs and melodic mockingbirds* engaged her attention and shaped her desire to become a composer. From a dense soundscape or passing gaze, engaging into receiving an environment may turn out into an aesthetic experience. Still, such a transition does not happen automatically. On the contrary, for such a change to occur, one must follow a certain path or allow oneself to attain a certain state of

mind. "Deep listening comes from noticing my listening or listening to my listening and discerning the effects on my bodymind continuum, from listening to others, to art and to life" (Oliveros 2005, p. 24).

3 The Aesthetic State of Mind

In speaking about everyday aesthetics it is sometimes assumed that noticing, qualifying, and reacting to certain qualities of everyday objects and situations is possible to everyone at any time. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are entry conditions for such behaviour. Ingarden acknowledged that for the aesthetic experience of the work of art to take place there are certain conditions and criteria that need to be fulfilled (Ingarden 1961, p. 292). I am certain that similar requirements apply in discovering aesthetic qualities during daily activities. There may be favourable or adverse conditions that affect the way something is perceived, for example, the acoustics in the given room or the noises in the surrounding space. Other conditions may have to do with the state of mind of the recipient, e.g. "emotional disturbances, the condition of our sense organ" (Ingarden 1961, p. 292). Perhaps the psychic conditions are even more important than the physical ones. Of course, these conditions might appear differently in different cultures or traditions, not to mention that certain individuals might be immune to certain states and therefore enter into the aesthetic state of mind more easily and quickly.

Looking at something freely and without considering its practical implications may not always be possible, but when it is, the qualities of a given object are all that matters. A piece of rock or a marble stone becomes weightless and subtle; it becomes a tall, strong woman or a bird soaring in the sky. The shape of the given thing becomes an inspiration for one's imagination; "…it is *given* to us not as a piece of marble, but as 'Venus', i.e. a woman or a goddess", concludes Ingarden (Ingarden 1961, p. 293). The reverse applies when responding to literature. All the things one reads about are treated as 'real' objects. They are *objectified*. In this process, the ontological status of an observed object is disregarded (Ingarden 1961, p. 300; Husserl 2005 p. 459). Consequently, the object's aesthetic or artistic qualities become 'real' in the sense that they dictate what this object is for the viewer. All these processes and observations being true about aesthetic experiences are also true in everyday experiences.

There is another aspect of reacting to the view or object, which is sometimes called aesthetic consciousness. Husserl talks about aesthetic consciousness as a certain state of mind that accompanies looking at art or admiring something aesthetically. In fact, for Husserl, the aesthetic state of mind may happen independently of art or any artistic activity. It is a state of mind in which one focuses on how things are being presented or represented and how they are given without trying to figure out how they are according to objective measurements. This (aesthetic) state of mind also marks indifference towards the existence of the object of the gaze:

> We are living in an aesthetic consciousness. In it we ask no questions about the being and nonbeing of what directly appears or appears in an image […] We can produce aesthetic consciousness on the basis of external perception. We contemplate aesthetically the objects we see and hear. We can produce such a consciousness on the basis of immediate phantasy (Husserl 2005, p. 459).

Everything that matters is the sensuous or imaginative presence of things, their feel, their visual and tactile presence: "The actual position takings, the synthetic or the simply thetic position takings that we thereby carry out on the basis of the one consciousness or the other, are not aesthetic position takings" (Husserl 2005, pp. 460-61). Husserl talks about aesthetic consciousness as an example of acting on by modifying and naturalizing the objects of experience. The aesthetic state of mind (aesthetic consciousness) applies to the situations in which one is imagining or experiencing something, not through the direct sensuous data but a modified gaze – an immanent perception (Ibid.). The aesthetic state of mind, it would seem, is a kind of image perception or imagining. Husserl describes the difference between focusing on the object remembered and focusing on the qualities and presentations given in the image:

> In normal contemplation of the picture, I live in the image consciousness. In that case, I focus my attention on something entirely different: I see the form of a sublime woman, of superhuman size, two powerful and large young angels, and so on (Husserl 2005, p. 113).

The aesthetic consciousness, therefore, is a type of immanent experience consciousness (image consciousness), during which one is not only referring to modified data/objects but is focusing on qualities and

appearances close to *imagining re-presentation* (Husserl 2005, p. 185). The symbolic, representational aspects of the presentation (object) are noticed and acknowledged. The question remains, whether in an everyday situation, fleeting and changing as it is, the same idea of Husserl, might apply. Does aesthetic consciousness apply to everyday experiences?

4 The Aesthetic Qualities of Nature

When we see a scene or a fragment of nature, to be able to see it aesthetically, to be able to attend to its colours and other aesthetic qualities, we need to be free from serious concerns, intellectual burdens, and also objectively ready to take on the task. In this respect, Ingarden talks about certain sensitivity and ability to attend to qualities. On the other hand, in comparison to an institution such as opera, concert hall, or art gallery, there are no objective constraints to consider, no right acoustics or light, yet there is also no ritual and no entrance to ease one into the focusing, attentive state of mind. Indeed, the outside area and random scenery are usually not ideally suited for contemplating aesthetic qualities, so when it occurs, that means that whatever is usually preventing one from seeing the surrounding area aesthetically – noises, traffic, random meetings – has disappeared or been disregarded. In this context Berleant (2005, p. 17) speaks about a participatory model, in which the "lived space must be complemented by recognizing the influences that environment exerts on the body", how it "contributes to shaping the body's spatial sense and mobility, and ultimately to the definition of its lived space." This happens, for example, when one smells the fresh scent of elder or grass and immediately feels more open to linger in the environment, or when the soft sounds of tweeting birds send an inviting message.

Dewey and Husserl have suggested that the natural environment is perceived as embedded with aesthetic qualities or emotional aspects (Dewey 1980, p. 16; Husserl 1983, p. 53). Husserl (1983, p. 53) describes simple experiences of looking at the sofa or house piano in terms of how these things appear as having a certain quality or character. The things in the lived world (*Lebens-Welt*) are experienced as possessing concrete characteristics, equipped with qualities and values. The immediacy of the experience of those characters tells us about the way in which one receives the world. Everything is given as such and such, everything appears already fully established.

> I simply find the physical things in front of me furnished not only with merely material determinations but also with value characteristics, as beautiful or ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable, and the like […] These value-characteristics and practical characteristics also belong *constitutively to the Objects* (Husserl 1983, p. 53).

This attention to details and openness to everything that is given reflects the primary postulate of getting back to the things themselves. It also means waking up the sensitivity to this, which is directly and sensually given in the experience and being deeply aware of what is given (Ingarden 1970, p. 296). The environmental experience suggested above, but also the bodily experience of everyday – as in an instrumentalist playing her instrument and sensing her body interacting with the instrument, or a gardener admiring his new additions to the garden – may suddenly be found filled with aesthetic qualities and lead to a deep, meaningful experience and aesthetic joy (Berleant 2005, p. 136).

5 Listening-in to the World

This openness to the qualities of the things experienced is also one of the main elements characterizing "listening-in." The category of listening-in is linked not only to actual listening but to any sensual attending that is open and focused at the same time. It seems that one needs to learn to listen and see clearly to be able to notice more than just the boldest expressions of the world. Some effort is crucial for realizing the presence of aesthetic qualities (Haapala 2005), as is a certain freedom and ability to let go.

Everyday experience is usually seen as the experience in the familiar environment or in situations that are directed towards achieving practical goals. But, just as the aesthetic experience requires changing the state of mind from neutral or practical into modified or aesthetic, so does simple and everyday interaction with the aesthetic. The qualities of the world may only be noticed by those who listen. The category of *listening-in* may be used to describe the change necessary to perceive the qualities and aspects of the world around us. For despite the fact of that some qualities are already and immediately given in the experience, as Husserl asserts, other qualities are recognized only through the process of *listening-in*. The latter means being attentive but also open, free, and focused on the environment. *Listening-in* requires engagement and attentiveness that changes the way one sees the environment. There are many potentially aesthetic situations, sights, or audio experiences, that

need to be noticed. Berleant (2005, pp. 135-136) describes such listening in terms of bodily engagement. "Musical listening thus is bodily engagement with sound in a setting […] body-sound-space." He further explains: "One senses the sound entering one's body; one can feel the sound vibrations going through to the feet."

Yet, the ability to *listen* is a rare skill today (Treasure 2011). As various kinds of noises cover the natural ambiance, one needs to start listening and be both focused and diffuse, spreading the attention as wide as possible, *expanding consciousness of sound* in many dimensions (Oliveros 2005, p. 21). The process of *listening-in* is an ability to be ready and welcoming to all the sounds and sights around. As Pauline Oliveros (2005, p. 57) remarks, the listening attentively changes the way one listens: "When I really listen in this way I hear differently, in the sense that merely being open to listening changes how I listen…" And elsewhere: "Listen to everything until it all belongs together and you are a part of it" (Oliveros 2010, p. 7).

When taking a walk or on a way to work, one may choose to look around, be attentive and discerning, and watch everything around in search of aesthetic qualities. This may result in hearing the polyphonic togetherness of the audio details of all kinds of sounds from the cries of the birds in the sky to crunching sounds of the sand under someone's feet. To perceive a sound as music requires a change of attitude. Usually, we undergo such change with a special ritual when going into the philharmonics or putting on a record, but sometimes, we simply let ourselves be attentive and engage during the listening situation. The sounds of the coffee machine or someone's tapping on the table, the coin dropping, as well as many other sounds might then surprise one as music. The range of hearing as inherited and developed during one's life, the culturally shaped expectations, and an individual readiness and openness to sounds are all part of the cognition of music. But from time to time, despite all the training and expectation, despite former experiences, one opens up and starts listening to the environment and hears the incoming everyday sounds as the music, or sees the shapes and colours around as aesthetically qualified.

6 Conclusion

Dewey (1980, p. 3) suggested the need to acknowledge qualities and moments in one's life that stand out and grasp people's attention, implying that the sheer presence of the aesthetics elements in daily

experience may be deeply affective and thus philosophically important as well. Dewey and Berleant both acknowledged the aesthetic character underlying human experience (Berleant 1992, p. 10). Husserl suggested that world-as-present (*Leben-Welt*) is filled with qualities and more importantly with aspects of value. Thus, the things we experience are not neutral, on the contrary, they are seen as sweet or sour – so to speak – right from the start, and with more perseverance, they become fully aesthetically charged. Yet to see these aesthetic aspects and elements of the environment and to react to them one needs to be attentive and open; one needs to listen, to let go of the practical concerns at least long enough to be able to recognize and acknowledge the qualitative character of the environment. Everyday experiences are considered to give occasions for the aesthetic experience less often than art galleries or art festivals, but the difference is primarily in the approach we use to evaluate them. What if, the listening-in attitude, that of attentiveness and openness, is the only thing needed to turn everyday simple walks into a discovery of aesthetic joy?

Acknowledgements

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Everydayness. Contemporary Aesthetic Approaches

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Everydayness. Contemporary Aesthetic Approaches

The notion of everydayness is currently gaining momentum in scientific discourses, in both philosophical and applied aesthetics. This volume aims to shed light on some of the key issues that are involved in discussions about the aesthetics and the philosophy of everyday life, taking into account the field's methodological background and intersections with cognate research areas, and providing examples of its contemporary application to specific case studies. The collection brings together twenty essays organised around four main thematic areas in the field of everyday aesthetics: (1) Environment, (2) The Body, (3) Art and Cultural Practices, and (4) Methodology. The covered topics include, but are not limited to, somaesthetics, aesthetic engagement, the performing arts, aesthetics of fashion and adornments, architecture, environmental and urban aesthetics.

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