Lyrical Space:
The Construction of Space in Contemporary Architecture, Art and Literature in Argentina

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I, Malca Mizrahi confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgements

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Abstract

This thesis proposes that since 1990 a significant part of contemporary Argentine literature, art and architecture has been characterized by an identifiable quality: spatial lyricism. This new quality manifests in the spatial the aesthetic values that identify the lyric principle, normally related to sound and the verbal.

The aim is to define 'lyrical space', and to show that space-making processes that validate introspective approaches in literature and visual arts can lead to the emergence of new form and content in architectural space, giving relevance to subjective experience and to the affective response induced in the user.

Framed in neo-baroque aesthetics, the evidence puts experience, emotion, memory and identity as the critical material for the construction of space, inducing an 'exceptional' state of mind in the user/reader/spectator that recaptures the subjective dimension of seventeenth-century Baroque. A selection of short stories by Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, several novellas by César Aira, and a lyrical essay by Alejandra Pizarnik, are read in relation to the visual work of Guillermo Kuitca, Fabián Marcaccio, Lucio Fontana, Leandro Erlich, Dino Bruzzone, Tomás Saraceno and my own.

The investigation explores the literary principles on lyricism, linking Hegel's *Aesthetics* to post-structuralist thinking, and the category of the figural. To support the analysis further, interviews conducted by myself and by others are also used.

Several aspects are unique about the project. The literary is located in the spatial, while the material is located between the spatial and the self. This collision of

reading literary work centred on the construction of space, with the reading of spatial qualities in the visual and the verbal in terms of their aesthetic affective response—the emotional effect it arouses—has not been attempted before. The aesthetic affinities that emerge from the interdisciplinary analysis are also new.

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Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, catching every air-borne particle in its tissue.

Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction'.

Every act of perception is to some degree an act of creation, and every act of memory is to some degree an act of imagination.

Gerald Edelman, 'Consciousness: The Remembered Present'.

Escucho resonar el agua que cae en mi sueño. Las palabras caen como el agua yo caigo. Dibujo en mis ojos la forma de mis ojos, nado en mis aguas, me digo mis silencios. Toda la noche espero que mi lenguaje logre configurarme … A mí me han dado un silencio pleno de formas y visiones (dices).

Alejandra Pizarnik, 'L´Obscurite des eaux', *Poesía Completa,* 385.

Introduction

Motives

1. Since Le Corbusier's visit to Buenos Aires in 1929 and his urban plan for the city, designed in collaboration with the then young Argentine architects Jorge Ferrari Hardoy and Juan Kurchan in 1938[1], the Buenos Aires modernist tradition has not been extinguished. It started with the work of a network of practices composed by Le Corbusier disciples, the Austral Group,[2] with the mandate to transform the city to reflect the modern, prosperous and growing nation it was then.[3] Today this tradition, which emerged more than 80 years ago, is not only alive but has gained new impetus and validity as a radical contestation to contemporary currents and explorations in the construction of space.[4]

Note: All references from books, articles and sources whose titles appear in Spanish are translated by me unless stated otherwise.

1   Jorge Francisco Liernur, 'The Tree in the Box: Abstraction and Nature in the Virrey del Pino Apartments', *Assemblage* (40; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 26–35.

2   Jorge Francisco Liernur and Pablo Pschepiurca, *La red austral: obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en la Argentina,1924–65* (Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2008).

3   'With [Le Corbusier's] collaboration, the proposals for Buenos Aires were transformed into a Plan, and as a result a CIAM group called "Austral" was founded in Buenos Aires with the participation of former disciple of Le Corbusier and Joseph Lluis Sert, [Catalan architect] Antonio Bonet. In 1948, the municipality of Buenos Aires created a special office to develop the Plan, and in the same year, Le Corbusier began the project for Dr. Curutchet's house in La Plata, 70 kilometers from the city. This and the Carpenter Center in Boston are Le Corbusier's only two buildings in the Americas.' Jorge Francisco Liernur, 'On Tact. Some Thoughts on the Architecture of Richter & Dahl Rocha', *The Architecture of Richter & Dahl Rocha* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2007), 39.

4   In April 2011 I attended a lunchtime seminar at the School of Architecture of Di Tella University in Buenos Aires when the then Dean of the school, Jorge Francisco Liernur, proclaimed to an audience composed of all the teachers of the school, that archaism is the only way forward.

Local architectural debate,[5] inclined to preserve the currency of Latin American Modernism, constitutes a structure that does not allow for change and the natural progression of the discipline. It cancels innovation, and thus the possibility of a break within the status quo and the 'irruption of the event' in Alain Badiou's terms.[6] This structure of permanence aspires to renew its legitimacy today through a radical anachronism: to present Modernism as a contemporary form.

In 'What is the Contemporary?'[7] Giorgio Agamben argues that those who are truly contemporary are those few who do not adjust or belong to their own time and, because of this detachment they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping the present. Thus, this being 'out of time', this disconnection and 'dys-chronism', results in the ability to respond innovatively to the present and marking it as *archaic*.[8] Consequently, only those who are able to read the present as archaic, 'who perceive the indices and signatures of the archaic in the most modern and recent,' are truly contemporary, he says. Argentine architectural debate, instead of aspiring to render as archaic the present with new propositions, aspires to make 'archaic' architecture by looking back to a recent past. Contrary to the avant-garde's

return to the origin in the early twentieth century which pursued the primitive and the archaic to reveal a new content and a new form, local academia promotes the archaic as a return to ideological and aesthetic traditionalism by revisiting the principles of modernist architecture.[9]

Moreover, a motion that proclaims a 'return to the archaic' reflects an ideology which has been developing for many years now, and is rooted in an extensive and consistent study of the influences of Le Corbusier and the realization of his ideas in twentieth-century Argentine architecture within the academia and the practice of the discipline.[10] But more importantly, it requires local architects and educators to practice architecture without invention. To revisit Modernism today contains a new radical mandate: if before it related to the manifestation of progress and the New, now archaism should manifest itself conceptually, aesthetically and technologically against the own 'death of Architecture' understood in a traditional and materialistic sense. It goes even further to proclaim that it projects the only expression that can confront the 'short-lived architectures of spectacle', which conceives buildings as 'productions of remarkable artifice and ingenious invention that conspire to elicit sensations that would be very much at home in an amusement park.'[11]

What this radical thinking is telling us is that the parameters within which we should teach, create and judge architecture today are still those that belong to principles set in the early twentieth century. Therefore, innovation and originality are suppressed in the name of preservation and conservation of the discipline against foreign trends ('the product of the articulation between new digital media, architects, and the marketplace'), that tend to be read as *ephemeral* and 'would lead

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5   When I say 'local architectural debate' I am referring to: the work produced, promoted and taught by private and public universities in Buenos Aires; some periodical publications; local professional associations and colleges (SCA and CPAU); the work of professional practices with the most significant workload, number of affiliated architects, size and complexity of the projects.

6   Alain Badiou defines in 'The Subject of Art' the artistic event as a change: 'What is an artistic event? What is the general formula for an artistic event? We can say that, generally speaking, an artistic event, a real artistic event is a change in the formula of the world … It's the emergence of a new possibility of formalization … It's the becoming form of something which was not a form. And so it's a new current in the chaotic sensibility.' Alain Badiou, 'The Subject of Art', *The Symptom* (6; Spring 2006).

7   Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary?' in Werner Hamacher (ed.), *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 39–55.

8   Ibid., 50.

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9   Liernur, 'On Tact.'

10   Vivian Acuña, 'Jorge Francisco Liernur: "El mundo esta para ser transformado"', *Revista de Arquitectura de la Sociedad Central de Arquitectos,* Conversaciones (234; Buenos Aires: SCA, 2009), 117–27.

11   Liernur, 'On Tact.'

toward a cataclysmic end … for architecture.' As a cure for its own 'tragic destiny',

radical conservatism proposes archaism.[12]

However, models of subjectivity change with time, we do not react to aesthetic

objects today as we did at the beginning of the last century, for example. In the same

way, we are not expected to create objects following the same methodologies and

logics the modernist avant-garde used. Jeffery Kipnis explains this by reminding us

how Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, today considered one of the most important cultural

events of the last century, was not only rejected but ridiculed by the audience in its

1913 premiere in Paris.[13] It is agreed today that it was too radical for the time and

the adequacy of the parameters within which it was judged then are not the ones

we use now. Today we are able to enjoy the piece described by musicians as 'driven

by pure feeling,' 'primitive,' 'wild,' 'savage,' 'provocative,' 'revolutionary,' and even

'erotic,' because our subjective perception of it has been taught to accept this new

sound. In 'Thinking between disciplines,' Jacques Rancière argues that 'aesthetics is

not the theory of the beautiful or of art; nor is it the theory of sensibility. Aesthetics

is a historically determined concept which designates a specific regime of visibility

and intelligibility of art, which is inscribed in a reconfiguration of the categories of

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12   Ibid.: The attributes of the 'sophisticated, coherent and profoundly archaic' architecture of Richter & Dahl Rocha (Ignacio Dahl Rocha is an Argentine architect who also teaches architecture and has offices in Lausanne and Buenos Aires) are examined and linked to Modernism by tracing those modernist influences that have marked each partner's background. The essay makes a positive reading of the aspects of restrain, sobriety and austerity that help to create a 'neutral' and 'tactful' architectural contestation to contemporary trends. I interpret those aspects that contribute to the archaic principle in Liernur's view as follows: *Legibility*, or a coherent accordance between the look of a building and the use of a building; *tangibility*, or the premise that buildings can only result from the assemblage of material technology available today (rejecting other practices of making space though images or words, for example); *human scale* restriction, or the obedience to the Modulor; and finally, *abstraction and contextualism*, or contesting the impulse to design a figural gesture emerging from the ground.

13   'Architecture & Politics: A Roundtable Discussion with Jeff Kipnis, Thom Mayne & Eric Owen Moss'. (SCI-Arc, 25 October 2011).

sensible experience and its interpretation.'[14] This means that the way we experience,

interpret and judge an aesthetic event evolves and is part of a historic process: it

changes with time.

Having been educated in the 1990s and having taught Architectural Design until

recently in Buenos Aires, I can affirm that the local academia and local educational

practices are still focused on approaches, led by the manifestos and principles

of post-war European architecture and modernist aesthetics, which strongly

suppress any incorporation of original thought and the exploration of new and

distinctive voices in Argentine architecture. This school of thought still conceives

spatial design through unquestionable universalistic formulas, based in the tabula

rasa concept of total erasure and replacement.[15] Moreover, because of the usual

rejection of thinking processes and conceptions for the construction of space other

than those predicted by the historians of Modernism, and in accordance with the

elimination of local differences that the modernist project sought, local schools of

architecture, ruled by the champions of Rationalism and followers of the legacy of

Le Corbusier, lack the spirit of technological innovation, linguistic transformation

and the pursuit of newness and progress in spatial design with which Modernism

transformed design almost a century ago. So one of the aspirations of this thesis is

to present an argument for the revision of local educational practices that suppress

original thought and the emergence of singular and distinctive voices in Argentine

architecture. Because young generations of local students of architecture are usually

taught spatial design through absolutist formulas, the objective here is to show

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14   Jacques Rancière, 'Thinking between disciplines: an aesthetics of knowledge', *Parrhesia,* (1; 2006). http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia01/parrhesia01_ranciere. pdf

15   The Voisin Plan pour Paris presented in 1925 in the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs exemplifies this. William J. R. Curtis, 'Typology for the New Industrial City: The Arrival of Urban Planning', *A&V,* 10 (Le Corbusier II; 1987), 8–24.

there are potent ways of conceiving space in the visual arts and in literature that can validate other approaches to design.

The progress of the discipline resides in unprecedented responses. Contrary to what it is believed by some in Argentina, 'archaism' endangers architecture's future because it asks both students and practitioners of architecture to produce space in a predictable way, cancelling the possibility of the exceptional and the irruption of the event.

To believe today that the consistency of an architectural practice resides in the use of the vocabulary of Modernism is not only an anachronism but also, more important to this thesis, cancels the emergence of the personal as the basis for new processes of design. This thesis proposes that a way to achieve 'singularity' resides in the personal, because in that inward exploration we make new associations and contributions to existing logics and methodologies that allow for those ephemeral disruptions—which Badiou calls 'artistic events'—to emerge and evolve into new bodies of work.

2. In 1993, Jeffrey Kipnis's essay 'Towards a New Architecture' presented a critique of the postmodern collage, the then prevailing practice in which history was understood as 'a shapeless well of recombinatorial material,' 'deep' and 'open,' in search of new architectural 'effects.' He aimed to explain the wider implications of postmodern collage because, he argued, it suggested that the possibilities of form (aesthetic, social and institutional) and the emergence of new content were exhausted.[16] His affirmation that the evolution of form and content cannot be reversed or interrupted is relevant again today.

To situate his position, he opened his essay with a provocative reading of the architectural debate of the time, describing the 'schema of attack' with which criticism used to obliterate all attempts to articulate any new conception of space: it could be either accused of 'destabilizing anarchism' and 'egotism' by the critics on the right, or called 'irresponsible, immoral and even corrupt' by the critics on the left. For him, all incipient trials of new ideas of space would not survive the then contemporary debate, and the only new architecture that could mature would be one that had the blessing of historians who had been proclaiming for more than twenty years that only the past could be praised.

Today, what is known as 'signature' architecture has been able to counter criticism from both right and left. Twenty years on, an immense number of built examples have been produced by those who were dismissed at the time as 'exotic', irreproducible singularities, with no relevance or possible contribution towards a New Architecture. From Peter Eisenman's formal experiments in the late 1990s to Zaha Hadid´s buildings and designs from 2004 onwards, the year she was awarded the Pritzker Prize,[17] signature architecture has proved Kipnis' reading right: MoMA's Decon Exhibition[18] gathered the brave personalities—Eisenman, Frank Gehry, Hadid, Coop Himmelblau, Rem Koolhaas, Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi—that

16   Jeffrey Kipnis, 'Towards a New Architecture', *Architectural Design: Folding in Architecture*, (63; London: Wiley, 1993), 40–50. 'Frankly, I cannot believe that in the short

span of our history we have experimented with and exhausted the possibilities of form. It seems to me that every indication today is to the contrary,' 42.

17   In 2004 I started working at Zaha Hadid Architects. In parallel to the task I was assigned by Patrik Schumacher, (to develop the design for the Glasgow Museum of Transport Competition, finished in June 2011 in striking accordance with the very first conceptual sketches I produced for the competition), I had to develop the style that would reflect the ZHA signature. This was as important as the development of the project itself, because many times the conversations with the director focused on the curvature and 'speed' of the lines of my drawings as they would produce a particular effect over the space we were proposing.

18   http://www.moma.org/docs/press_archives/6526/releases/MOMA_1988_0029_29.pdf?2010

would bring back invention to the practice of architecture. Until them, from Robert Venturi to Aldo Rossi, from Hans Hollein to Christian de Portzamparc, postmodern practises' emphasis on the provocative recombination of historic figures, devoid of their original content, proselytised upon the belief that no new form was necessary.[19]

Twenty years after Kipnis's essay, in the midst of what seems an endless political and financial crisis, western architectural criticism seems less virulent; positions have been relativized, and univocal and dominant discourses are looked on with suspicion. We can even find, in the back streets of east London, fresh examples of vernacular combinations of 'sectional figures' with which Charles Jencks likes to revive the old practice of collage, calling it this time 'Contextual Postmodernism'.[20]

So how do we continue today what started more than twenty years ago? How do we establish today new ways forward without resorting to recombinations of current and past forms and formulations, or go beyond the voluptuous and exuberant current digital stylisms, which have rightly managed to dismiss the old opposition between ornament and function set up by the 'white walls' of Modernism?[21]

The answer to these questions is, this thesis will suggest, 'looking back inside',[22] as Virginia Woolf once exhorted us, in the truer, innovative spirit of Modernism.

This thesis aims to show that there are potent ways of conceiving space in the visual arts and in literature that can lead to novelty in architectural space. The examples used in this analysis are led by approaches that put the subjective self and personal experience as the concept and content in the construction of space.

The examples situate the analysis in the present because the thesis aspires to contribute to the current debate on the processes of spatial design, and this is why I am looking into the work of contemporary architectural, visual and literary practitioners whose work have been produced since 1990.

3. In the pursuit of the new, some people choose to create systems or devices for reading the world with the intention to gather information and facts which would eventually be associated for a purpose: to produce a design, a text, an art installation or a drawing, for example. To increase its infallibility, some processes require a strict methodology, a reproducible account of the steps followed to collect data to produce an outcome. Each new process, which encompasses the device and

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19   Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, 'Architecture as Elemental Shelter, the City as Valid Decon', *Architectural Design: New Museums* (Profile 94; London; Academy Editions, 1991), 8–14: 'We have written elsewhere of the need, in our time of cultural and social diversity, for an architecture, or better, for architectures, of richness and ambiguity rather than clarity and purity, of variety rather than universality, and we have made a plea for an eclecticism of symbolic reference that accompanies a complexity and contradiction of form, and for the vernacular and the conventional over the progressive. We have stood against the "shock of the new" *throughout infinity,* and against Modernism as a universal and perpetual avant-garde. But we have also criticised the irrelevance of historic reference and the arbitrary employment of Neo-Classical and Art Deco symbolism in much Post-Modern architecture. We have written, too, of the validity of ornament.' 10.

20   Sean Griffiths, 'Virtual Corpses, Figural Sections and Resonant Fields' and Charles Jencks, 'Contextual Counterpoint' in: *Architectural Design: Radical Post-Modernism* (89; London: Wiley, 2011).

21   Patrik Schumacher, 'Parametric Patterns', *Architectural Design: The Patterns of Architecture,* (79; London: Wiley, 2009): '[T]he traditional concept of decoration did go

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beyond its current connotations of superficial and arbitrary beautification … decoration, in classical architectural theory, was linked to the twin concepts of character and expression. Decoration was seen as a necessary ingredient of architecture, as it was a necessary ingredient of all artifacts. A building without decoration was unfinished, unable to enter the social world, just as it was impossible to join society naked, or without sufficient behavioral decorum. Decoration, expressing the appropriate character of a space, was linked to propriety within a sophisticated system of social distinctions …. [Since Adolf Loos] ornament signified backwardness. According to Loos, the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament.' 32.

22   Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', *The Common Reader: First Series* (London: Hogarth Press, 1942), 184–96.

its output, the data and its associations, is an undeniably original approach to the problem of invention. However, the systems designed to collect objective data for their logical association are systems whose output remain within the descriptive mode of 'representation': they are devices that could be paired to the third person discourse, like a scientific paper or a novel told in the third person, where an *absent voice* tells us about the characters and their the actions. Consequently singularity becomes irrelevant, and in contrast, accuracy and communicability are measurable values in the appraisal of these systems.[23]

In the pursuit of genuine innovation, this thesis will explore other processes of invention. It will look at processes which would aim not only for originality, but also for uniqueness and singularity, which aspire to include the 'subjective judgement' both in their making and in the experiencing of their outcome. These processes are those that choose to 'look within'.

Woolf's essay 'Modern Fiction' asserts that by looking introspectively a new quality arises, and this distinguishes the work of writers like James Joyce, whose novels attempt to describe, unravel and reveal 'the atoms that fall upon the mind, in the order in which they fall'. For Woolf, the new and original was to be found inside the ordinary mind: 'the mind that receives a myriad of impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms.'[24] From her essay we learn that in contrast

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23   In a similar line of thought, Eric Owen Moss argued in a recent public presentation that Architecture is a two-stage process: the stage of invention and the stage of application. The former is personal and private, the latter is collective and public. 'Architecture, if performed correctly, originates in the personal conception of what is possible and, it includes both the personal explorations of the creative thinker and the collective effort for its realization.' Lecture: 'Architecture & Politics: A Roundtable Discussion with Jeff Kipnis, Thom Mayne & Eric Owen Moss'. (My transcription of the video). http://www.sciarc.edu/lectures.php?id=2010.

24   Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', 190.

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to what she defines as 'materialism'[25]—the attempt to record objectively what is out there and what happens—her emphasis lies in inventing a new method centred in self[26] that would *present* rather than *represent* that individual view. Moreover, the task of the modern writer is for Woolf to convey the 'varying, unknown and unsubscribed' interiority, whatever the complexity or darkness it may display; to trace 'the pattern, however disconnected … which each incident scores upon consciousness … If [the writer] could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention', she asserts, 'there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy.'[27] Almost forty years later, Ralph Freedman was to qualify her and Joyce's efforts to record the characters' 'innermost messages to the brain' as *lyrical*, and called their novels 'lyrical novels'.[28]

In *Built upon Love*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez says that twentieth-century architectural theory was sceptical about the architect's ability to generate products that were both ethical and beautiful. For Pérez-Gómez a building project could only survive the functional, economical and ecological rational imperative set since Modernism and then post-war architecture, by creating computer-based design processes that avoid subjective 'judgement' and which produce virtual novelty through mathematical

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25   Woolf's proposition came to oppose the dominant materialist approach at the time. In *Theory of the Subject* Badiou explains the exclusion of the subjective and the primacy of matter over an idea in the eighteenth century. Badiou, 'A Materialist Revearsal of Materialism', *Theory of the Subject*. Also in 'Eight Theses on the Universal', Badiou states: '[t]he universal is essentially "anobjective". It can be experienced only through the production (or reproduction) of a trajectory of thought, and this trajectory constitutes (or reconstitutes) a subjective disposition.' This understanding of the universal includes subjectivity.

26   Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', 191.

27   Ibid., 190. Also: David Berry (dir.), *In Their Own Words* (BBC Four, 2010).

28   Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

operations. For Pérez-Gómez, 'they create novelty without love'.[29] By the mid 1990s, Peter Zumthor responded to that trend, arguing that architecture is a sensuous and concrete matter, never abstract. For him, architecture has to be executed like music has to be performed. 'Then its body can come into being. And this body is always sensuous.'[30] Architecture starts from the premise of its physicality, of its objective sensuousness and its materials. 'To experience architecture in a concrete way means to touch, see, hear, and smell it.' Moreover, design for Zumthor starts with an inner image. At the beginning it may be incomplete, he says, and the process of discovering its qualities, those that emerge form the experience of architecture, from the mood of the light to the colour of a room, is the process of design itself. Similar to Woolf's words, to invent architecture, to go through the process that aims to complete, concretely and sensuously, that initial and inner image of architecture, Zumthor thinks, demands an introspective exploration.

In the same line of thought, Neil Spiller's article 'Surrealistic Exuberance - Dark Matters'[31] explains that spatial exuberance in much of avant-garde contemporary parametric design is a deceptive continuation of seventeenth-century Italian Baroque.[32] This revision, he says, lacks the subjective dimension that the baroque movement installed in the arts. It 'lacks of love', he says, quoting Pérez-Gómez who also believes that much of the current digital design 'has no concern for embodied

29   Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; 2006), 28.

30   Peter Zumthor, 'Teaching Architecture, Learning Architecture', *Thinking Architecture* (Berlin: Birkhäuser, 1999), 57–59.

31   Neil Spiller, 'Surrealistic Exuberance - Dark Matters', *Architectural Design: Exuberance: New Virtuosity in Contemporary Architecture* (80; London: Wiley, 2010), 64–69.

32   On the attributes of the Baroque, its contributions to the arts and its relevance in contemporary thought, Deleuze's *The Fold* features Mallarmé, one of the male writers acknowledged for practicing 'écriture féminine': 'The fold is probably Mallarmé's most important notion, and not only the *notion* but, rather, the operation, the operative act that makes him a great Baroque poet.' Deleuze, 'What Is Baroque?', *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Continuum, 2006), 34.

cultural experience, character and appropriateness.'[33] Spiller exemplifies this by contrasting it with the force of the 'exuberant dark eroticism' of Bernini's sculpture, the *Ecstasy of St Teresa*, at the Santa Maria della Vittoria church in Rome (1647–52), and the tension it creates inside the baroque chapel by introducing erotic desire into a holy space. He also regrets that new virtual technologies did not lead in the previous ten years' developments 'to an architectural world of individual liberation, unleashed creativity and empowerment, but to one of ubiquity and *a lack of self critical engagement in the process of design*.' (My emphasis). In *The Architect's Brain*, Harry Francis Mallgrave goes even further to suggest that many computerised projects depict 'a monotone environment, which degrades the human condition.'[34]

This thesis looks into processes that recapture the subjective dimension of seventeenth-century baroque: the works discussed here are manifestations of the current Argentine neo-baroque which do advocate the notion of experience, and, in my view, do include 'the human condition' and 'self critical engagement' as requirements of the construction of space, be it virtual or physical, architecture or art.

Unlike the method of perspective, the biographical linear novel (or the readerly text, to use Roland Barthes's distinction),[35] a CAD program or a parametric algorithm,

33   Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love,* 28.

34   Harry Francis Mallgrave, 'Epilogue: The Architect's Brain', *The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 207–09.

35   In Barthes's *S/Z* the readerly text is described as that in which meaning is fixed and predetermined. It is the 'classical' text. The essay argues that the goal of literary work is to make the reader no longer a consumer 'but a producer of the text': 'reading is not a parasitical act … it is a form of work.' In contrast, the writerly text is a practice. It is interpretation, it is what makes the text plural, and proposes the reader to be considered a performer, to be the writer: 'the writerly text is ourselves writing,' he says. In 'The Death of the Author,' Barthes argues that the modern writer (the scriptor) is born simultaneously with his text. 'This is because (or: it follows that) to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of observing, of representing, of "painting" (as the Classic writers put it), but rather what the linguisticians … call a performative, a rare

there are other processes which product, instead of giving a reproducible and expected representation of the world, present the world from a singular and unique point of view.[36] To continue my analogy with the literary, singular processes that 'present' their outcome—the writerly text in Barthes's terms—result from a subjective reading of what surrounds us and what happens; *they are first-person accounts*. One aspect of these devices is that the world of objective facts has almost completely vanished. In first-person accounts the emphasis is put in the interiority of experience: 'almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the unconscious of the dramatis personae.'[37]

Personal experience may be unique, private and individual, but also, as a first-person matter, it is objectively unaccountable. However, we can enjoy lyrical poetry as partial, relative to the author's own personal context and perhaps metaphorical. This is because we have the ability, as Gerald Edelman argues, both to report and to correlate experience collectively, while we can only have sensations and perceptions individually.[38] Since Descartes affirmation (I think, therefore I am), self is inseparable from our thought processes within our individual consciousness: in other words, self is defined by the way we think and reflect about what happens around us and in relation to us.

verbal form (exclusively given to the first person and to the present), in which utterance has no other content than the act by which it is uttered.' An example of a writerly text is James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image - Music - Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 142–49.

36   Owen Moss responded to the question of how originality comes out of influence, affirming that 'it is in the difference of how you make something that is not anticipatable, what gives it a new meaning and makes it original.' (My transcription.) If this can be accepted, the difference between presentation and representation lies in originality. What is 'presented' is not predictable, and it is not the result of the application of a formula. Lecture: 'Architecture & Politics.'

37   Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 534.

38   Gerald Edelman, 'Consciousness: The Remembered Present', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (929; 2006), 111–22.

I will draw further from a speculative proposition by neuroscientists Edelman and Giulio Tononi who attempt to define *thinking*—'what goes on when we have a thought'—as the process that involves the coupling of primary consciousness and a higher-order consciousness—the first-person view with the third-person view. This combines the material that describes perceptions, emotions, recollections, sensations and feelings, reachable by introspection (thoughts that carry sensation) with the material that encompasses the information that emerges and can be exchanged through language. They propose that self arises when these two forms of consciousness, primary consciousness and higher-order consciousness, overlap, coexist and feed each other. If this is true, no expression of thought is ever isolated: all thinking processes involve both conscious states: 'we can have imageless thoughts (abstractions) with or without words, but always in the background there is the parallel buzz of perception, mood and fleeting memories.'[39] They affirm that 'a true subjectivity emerges with narrative and metaphorical powers and concepts of self, with an interlacing of fabric of beliefs and desires [that] can be voiced and expressed'[40] through language. 'Driven by primary consciousness and the remembered present, we can, through symbolic exchange and higher order consciousness, create narratives, fictions and histories.'[41] This means both primary and higher-order (or internal and external) systems of thought are engaged to produce an outcome. Put simply: both the system that recollects and associates information (logically or selectively), and the system that collects and associates perceptions and sensations, are occupied in the thinking process. If this is true, the logical question that arises next is: can information be truly objective? And more specifically, can the content of the information relevant to produce a building or to

39   Gerald Edelman and Giulio Tononi, *Consciousness. How Matter Becomes Imagination* (London: Penguin, 2000).

40   Ibid., 205.

41   Ibid., 208.

conceive space, as a man–made product for man, be totally objective? If the thinking process involves both systems, some contents of the process—those that which carry sensation—cannot be disregarded and dismissed from the process of design.

In the search for singularity this thesis will base its exploration on the interiority of experience. Even though I have always been extremely concerned about the mannerisms of form and how things look the way they do, this thesis investigates the interiority of experience with the aspiration to set another question: *can subjective experience be the content of space?*

What is important here is not the look of things, but both the *affect* of experience upon the making of space and the *effects* of being in that space upon us. So I have to embark on an intellectual journey both into the content of the work in relation to the making of the work, and another physical journey into the experiencing of the work itself, because many of the works presented here I have had the opportunity to enjoy.

Terminology

The four chapters of the thesis encompass an attempt to expose the qualities of the lyrical through the visual, and more specifically, how the lyric principle manifests itself visually in the output of young Argentine practitioners engaged in the construction of space since 1990. It traces four relationships between four literary practitioners and the work of eight contemporary visual art and architectural practitioners produced between 1990 and 2013. The result of this analysis will allow me to propose what lyrical space is.

The study focuses around one main question: can the construction of space be driven by the contents of (subjective) experience? If yes, how are its elements/components affected? How can we define spatial constructions built upon the experiences of our private reading of the world around us?

1. The research focuses on visual practices where sensation, experience, emotion, identity and memory are used as means to let the lyrical emerge. I propose to call *lyrical* the quality which emerges through the content of the work discussed here. Furthermore, drawing from post-structuralist thinking, I will call *figural the work whose content is lyrical, and lyrical the quality that emerges when its subjective content is revealed visually or verbally*.

Thus this thesis will call lyrical the quality of space that reveals visually or verbally the contents of subjectivity: emotion, perceptual experience, memory, identity and place. This construction can be two-dimensional or pictorial, three-dimensional or spatial (i.e. art installations, architecture, digital 3D explorations), four-dimensional or narrative.[42] To exemplify this I have chosen to use the work of practices whose work can be pictorial, immersive or literary. The characteristic that links them all is their preoccupation with the construction of space. And this is the aspect on which I will ground the analysis.

If the category of the figural[43] is formed by aesthetic figures of lyrical content, the notion of the aesthetic figure needs clarification.

First, the figure can encompass three different types: concrete, iconic or metaphoric. The concrete figure is a visual figure and can be defined as composed by clear,

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42   Here narrative is understood as constituted by the sequence of events in a story which develops over a particular time.

43   I use the term figural in the sense defined in Jean-François Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gilli, 1979).

legible and distinctive shapes which have a delineable profile and can be clearly detached from the background. It is a visibly identifiable element which is not associated with a particular geometry or style; it can absorb anyone, even 'optical purity' or abstraction. It is defined by its legibility and recognisability. The iconic figure contains another attribute: universal communicability of a symbolic charge. However, this thesis does not deal with this type. The metaphoric figure, both visual and literary, is a distinctive device which acts by replacing content.[44] This replacement has a particular attribute: the power to elicit emotion. It is a power based on the disruptive ability of the poet/maker to *affect* the reader/viewer. In *Discourse, Figure*, Jean-François Lyotard calls these figures 'gestures'.[45]

It is also useful to mention here the distinction Lyotard makes between the figural and the figurative.[46] He sees the figurative as a particular case (a subset) of the figural because it persists in the analogy between the representation and what is represented. The figurative is then an *undisruptive* transfer between model and picture. In contrast, the figural *breaks* the model/picture resemblance/legibility and manipulates literal meaning. This notion of the figural, composed by metaphoric figures, is the one I will work with.

2. Though this project started as a search for influences of the verbal over the visual in the construction of space, I soon realised that it was an obsolete attempt to affirm that asymmetry still exists in local contemporary spatial imagination. The pre-eminence of the image already installed for some time in contemporary practices has eroded the old hierarchy of the word-image distinction.

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44   Julia Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible: Proust y la experiencia literaria* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2005), 279.

45   Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura*, 288.

46   Ibid., 219.

Several aspects are unique about the project. The literary is located in the spatial, while the material is located between the spatial and the self. This collision of reading literary work centred in the construction of space with reading of spatial qualities in the visual and the verbal in terms of the effects it produced upon the user/visitor/reader has not been attempted before. The interdisciplinary aesthetic affinities that emerge between the literary and the visual works that are discussed here are also new.

3. Why an exploration of lyricism in relation to space? To answer this question I first centred the study on what has been said about the lyric and what the lyric principle portrays. In this way, the focus is first put in the definition of the lyric, drawing from the principles set by the literary and aiming to reveal the aspects that lead to the construction of a subjective image of space: a singular and distinctive three-dimensional image which seeks exceptionality, even if that construction draws from trivial experience and the aesthetics of the everyday.

The qualities of the lyrical have usually been related to words, sound and song. The material for the communication of the lyrical was first sound and tone, and with the advent of literacy it evolved from song to the poem in the written form. Therefore if the manifestation of the lyrical quality has been thought from a literary perspective, as I will describe in Chapter 2, the next step is to clarify *what lyrical poetry is*.

According to Hegel, the lyrical portrays the momentary emergence of feeling and ideas. Poetic imagination gives us an inner vision of the thing it is representing. The subjective side of the poet is the predominant element of his or her illustrative production. 'Lyric is the complete utterance of the inner spirit', he says. On the general character of the lyric he states that 'the content of lyric work must be the

person's feelings and consciousness through experience'. In Hegel's *Aesthetics*, lyrical poetry's subject matter is the ideas themselves, and these ideas translate into moods, passions or reflections. *Its content is subjectivity*; 'the mind that considers and feels which remains in inwardness, and [whose] sole form and final aim is the self expression of subjective life'.[47] Detailing, particularization and individuality, are inherent to the lyric, he continued, and 'what is properly lyric is not objective fact and its plastic portrayal, but the echo of the external in the mind, the mood aroused by it, and the feelings of the heart in such surroundings …*We are conscious of the author in the lyric work.*'[48] (My emphasis). In the last chapter of the thesis, I propose to relate the content of the lyric as defined by Hegel's *Aesthetics* to the post-structuralist notion of the figural.

The poet Don Paterson asserts that emotional urgency and temporal limit are the material that originates poetry. Its aim is to remain in the memory of the reader, and for this, he says, brevity, originality and pattern are needed. This limitation of time and space, this constraint imposed to speech, generates the intensity that characterises the lyrical: 'we force ourselves towards a brevity of speech through limiting the time and space in which we have to speak; this constitutes the most basic definition of form, and without its resistance … there can be no art.'[49] In *The Lyrical Novel* Freedman says that 'lyricism objectifies experience … a lyrical poem objectifies personal experience.'[50] Conventionally, the lyric is distinct from epic or drama, and is seen as an instantaneous expression of a feeling. Moreover, 'the very notion of an image in lyrical poetry is defined as the rendering of an emotional

and intellectual complex in an instant of time.'[51] The progression of images within a poem building up its intensity has been called 'qualitative progression' and it exemplifies its lyrical objectivity.[52]

If the content of the lyrical quality as defined by Hegel is subjectivity, the next questions that arise are: what does the lyric articulate, what is the subjective matter? Antonio Damasio states in *The Feeling of What Happens* 'the brain's pervasive "aboutness" is rooted in the brain's storytelling attitude' and therefore, he says, 'storytelling is essential to the formation of the subjective self'.[53] From another perspective, David Lodge in *Consciousness and the Novel* discusses the problem of consciousness by analysing the role of characterization in the fictional and lyrical novel. He describes how qualia—the specific nature of our subjective experience of the world, i.e. the experiencing of redness, loudness, warmth and pain for example (Edelman-Tononi 2000)—is represented by Austen, James, Joyce, Lawrence and Woolf's literary characters, among other authors. He states that lyric poetry is the

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47   Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1038.

48   Ibid., 1134.

49   Don Paterson, 'The Lyric Principle. Part 1: The Sense of Sound', *Poetry Review* (97; London: The Poetry Society, 2007), 61.

50   Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel,* 1–2.

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51   It is important to mention here the *Lyrical Ballads'* Preface published in 1801, where William Wordsworth defines the lyrical as the result of the emotional and the intellectual: 'Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply … *For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings*; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.' (My emphasis). William Wordsworth, et al., *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Routledge, 1991), 6.

52   Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel.*

53   Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body, Emotion, and the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1999), 189.

most successful way to describe qualia.[54] This thesis applies this idea to the spatial by asking how the lyric can be articulated in the construction of space, and defines 'spatial lyricism' as the resulting quality.

In *Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination* Edelman and Tononi define metaphorical thinking as a result of the process of selection. They define consciousness as a physical process in which selection represents humans' ability to recognize patterns—intuition: 'It is selection—natural and somatic— that gave rise to language and metaphor, and it is selection, not logic, that underlines pattern recognition and thinking in metaphorical terms.'[55] They argue that the specific quality, or 'quale', of subjective experience—of colour, warmth, pain, a loud sound—can be experienced only if we have a body and a brain, and in no case can a theory or description substitute for an individual's experience of a quale, whether it is a sensation, an image, a thought, even a mood. Each quale happens within a multidimensional neural space.[56] In 'Consciousness: The Remembered Present', Edelman explains that 'qualia constitute the collection of personal or subjective experiences, feelings and sensations that accompany awareness. They are phenomenal states—"how things seem to us" as human beings. For example the redness of a red object is a quale … These sensations may be very precise when they accompany perceptual experiences; in the absence of perception, they maybe more or less diffuse, but nonetheless discernable as "visual," "auditory," and so on. In general, in the normal waking state, qualia are accompanied by a sense of spatiotemporal continuity. Often the phenomenal scene is accompanied by feelings

or emotions, however faint.'[57] Thus qualia—our private rendering of the world around us—is the subject matter portrayed by lyrical poetry.

This thesis will not deal with the nature or explanation of a quale, or the specific quality of subjective experience, nor will it deal with the study of consciousness as a scientific object or philosophical inquiry. And though I am not attempting to understand psychologically how different subjective states arise, like the feelings of melancholia, threat, the sublime, intensity, surprise and so on, I suggest that space can induce a particular state of mind as a result of a conscious decision of the author, artist or designer. This is essential to what I am calling Lyrical Space and the thesis will attempt to show how it is visualised and how diverse its image can be.

But how do we characterize a type of space whose content is the specific nature of our subjective experience of the world? How do we define a type of space conceived by subjectivity? The thesis will argue that this type of space induces a particular state of mind in the user. I will show through spatial constructions how, for example, the experience of the sublime feeling becomes content in speculative urbanism; how threat can affect digital spatial explorations; how nostalgia becomes matter in architectural photographs and paintings; how surprise and disorientation becomes the main drive in art ainstallations using 'standard' architectural elements; how intensity arises as a result of the excessive accumulation of details in 'passage-paintings'; and how melancholia guides the line in my own digital spatial drawings.

The thesis will argue that the lyrical is the quality that reveals the contents of subjectivity—emotion, experience, memory, identity and place—beyond distinctions between the visual and the verbal. Moreover, as memory, experience

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54   David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 10.

55   Edelman and Tononi, *Consciousness. How Matter Becomes Imagination*, 214.

56   Ibid., 157.

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57   Gerald Edelman, 'Consciousness: The Remembered Present', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (929; 2006), 114.

and emotion become content in the construction of space, the formal language with which they are visualized demands to be reinvented.[58]

If the lyrical quality reveals the content of subjective experience, can space be generated by the emotional effect it produces on the user? How space can induce a change in the user's state of mind? Is there a possibility of suggesting that architecture can be described by a tone, an emotional tone, and its material substance expressed by a subjective mood? (Like the collective optimism that 1970s Japanese architecture expressed through its contradictory heavy concrete overhangs, for example?) And finally, what is the relationship between the lyrical and the singular? What are the qualities of the lyrical that can contribute to newness in the construction of space?

Methodology and aims

To answer these questions my main evidence will be the work itself. The visual work gathered by this research, including part of my own digital explorations at the end of this thesis, seeks to arouse an aesthetic response, affect, in the viewer/user. The following chapters will show how these spatial constructions—art installations, sculptures, paintings and digital explorations in spatial design—are either driven by the contents of experience of the maker, or by the aspiration to affect the experience of the space they create. Chapters 1, 2 and 4 base this assertion on interviews with the artists done by others, and in Chapter 3 I interview the artists myself, letting them reveal this particular aspect of their work. Generally, the structure of the chapters follows the same pattern: they first show how the principles of the lyrical

are revealed in the literary and then how they are manifested as qualities of the visual.

By giving relevance to the subjective domain in the formulation of form and content, the thesis aims to explore how we can achieve diversity and variety and get away from dogmatic and repetitive approaches to spatial design.[59]

By focusing on Argentine practices I will try to show that there are recurrent modes and strategies shared by the literary and the visual which might also contribute to the local debate on cultural identity. The aim is not to reveal formal similarities, as the work described here is very dissimilar visually, but to dissect similar modes through the uncovering of shared aesthetic values between Julio Cortázar and Jorge Luis Borges's short stories, César Aira's short novels, Alejandra Pizarnik's lyrical poetry, and Guillermo Kuitca's and Fabián Marcaccio's paintings, Leandro Erlich's and Tomás Saraceno's art installations, Dino Bruzzone's models and photographs, and Hernán Díaz Alonso's and my digital explorations in spatial design.

Another aim is to reveal how language can attain richness or distinctiveness through the pursuit of the lyrical quality. The aim here is not to trace or suggest influences of one medium over the other, but to discuss how language becomes singular when the conceptual basis of the work turns subjectivity into content.

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58   Language, the tool that organizes experience to arouse an affective-aesthetic response through the figural, will be discussed in the last two chapters of the thesis.

59   For example, as will be shown in Chapter 3, for writer César Aira perception and sensation are valid leaders to cognition. The creation of an original language that produces distinctive images is driven by a positive attitude by the poet towards his sensations of the perceived reality. Aira´s approach sees Surrealism and the Baroque as an 'inspirational force which questions the status of the object as a quantifiable and unchangeable substance', allowing for the irruption of the exceptional in the reading of everyday reality. Similarly, the visual work of Erlich and Bruzzone use a variety of neo-baroque strategies (reflections, mirrors, repetition, disorientation, excess, decay and the ruin) to let the exceptional within the ordinary emerge.

To explore the relationship between language and spatial lyricism, Chapters 1, 2 and 4 discuss how lyrical content affects language, and assumes style as a particular and individual manifestation of affect. In contrast, Chapter 3 looks into practices that pursue realism and avoid formal manipulation, resorting instead to fantasy, the unexpected and surprise to arouse affect.

The final question this thesis poses is: can lyrical space become architecture? I think it can. I believe that processes that look introspectively and validate the relevance of experience, phenomenal states, memory and emotions, without excluding them from the process of design, can produce lyrical qualities in space. Even though buildings are the ultimate goal in architecture for many, I believe architecture includes all manifestations that contribute to the conception and construction of space, beyond their style or the degree of physicality those manifestations may carry (hand drawings, digital explorations, art installations, immersive oil paintings, texts on space and site-specific installations).[60] This means this thesis embraces a critical spatial thinking that affirms that architecture includes both the material and the immaterial aspects that define space,[61] maintaining, at the same time, the building as the aim of architecture in an idealistic sense.[62]

I think architecture's progress lies in the interdisciplinary conjunction of building technology and art. If this thesis extracts the lyrical content of works that are

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60   Jane Rendell's notion of 'critical spatial practice' is useful here. She explores site-specific art transgressing the limits of art and architecture in Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: IB Tauris, 2006).

61   Jonathan Hill expands the notion of space beyond material conditions like solidity and stability to incorporate use, experience, appropriation and perception in the definition of architectural space, in Jonathan Hill, *Immaterial Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2006).

62   Peter Cook, 'Architecture is Art' and 'The Hawley Effect', *Peter Cook: Six Conversations* (28; London: Academy Editions, 1993).

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normally situated outside the discipline (because they are not buildings), this is because the spaces they create are affected by the 'exceptional', or the quality that proposes that architecture can arouse *affect* in the user, rather than only letting us *be surrounded* by it.

This thesis will show that there is significance in the effects of a visceral geometry, in the shadows of a modernist ruin, in the depth and reflections of a salt lake, in the intensity and excessiveness of colour in a pictorial passage, in the height of a floating city, in the sound of a name of a distant place, in the emphatic gesture of a cut, or in the effects upon our memories of the detailed recreation of a long vanished place. There is significance in the qualities of space those works arise. These qualities are relevant to avert 'the banality' of the everyday. I believe architecture can do that as well; and if its content can be built upon experience, like the literary and visual works discussed here, then it can encompass the lyric principle.

Overview

Chapter 1 ('Pictorial Fictions: A Borgesian Reading of Kuitca's Sonorous Geographies and Opera Houses') concerns the role of memory, identity and experience in visual manifestations of the lyric. It discusses Guillermo Kuitca's bed-map paintings and installations of the 1990s and his architectural paintings of 2002–05. His *Acoustic Mass* series renders space as a pictorial composition of experience by creating a distinctive language that reflects the powerful emotional effect that the space filled by music produces in the audience. This intended reference to sonorous experience extends into the visual arts the notion of lyricism traditionally associated with music and poetry. The 'bed-map' series is also led by the sound and resonance of the names of distant and unknown places with which Kuitca creates a private and intimate cartography of conjectural and dysfunctional maps. By excluding his own known land from the repertoire named in the maps, the Argentine painter

avoids any place of familiarity or visual reference. These imaginary geographies painted over child-sized beds and guided only by sound, disorient and dislocate the viewer, proposing a visual interpretation of the Borgesian notion of national identity generated by displacement.

Kuitca's pictorial account of an intense audio-spatial experience and his bed map series is also discussed in relation to Borges's short stories 'El aleph' and 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' because of their shared interest in spatial paradoxes and their effects upon the reader/viewer. The chapter concludes that the painter borrows cartographic and architectural signs and symbols to invent a pictorial language which induces in the viewer that strong experience of spatial drama which characterizes Lyrical Space.

Chapter 2 (' The Lyrical and the Liminal in Neo-Baroque Painting: Spatial Matter in Julio Cortázar, Lucio Fontana and Fabián Marcaccio') defines the values of the lyrical in the literary and explores how lyrical content is manifested though the spatial in neo-baroque paintings. The chapter first exposes a line of continuity between lyrical poetry and the short story based in the comparison of shared aesthetic principles such as brevity, intensity, fragmentation, particularization, and the first-person account. Secondly, it draws from Cortázar's essays on the theory of the short story to explore liminal qualities in the visual work of painters Fontana and Marcaccio. In particular, Cortázar's short stories 'El otro cielo' [The Other Sky] and 'El río' [The River] are analysed in relation to Fontana's *Concetto spaziale* series and Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* series of 2001–05.

Specifically, this chapter shows how a spatial construct, in this case the passage, is used to carry lyrical content in Marcaccio's figural expressionism (defined by the turbulent movements of paint and matter, fragmentation, deformation and excess in the spatial unfolding of anatomical imagery), or by the gestural intensity

of Fontana's material cut over the canvas. The chapter illustrates that the literary principles which define the lyrical (intensity, fragmentation, particularization and experience) can translate into qualities of space in the visual work analysed in the second part.

Chapter 3 ('The Moment the Poet Speaks: Lyrical Digressions in Argentine Contemporary Realism') is also framed in the context of neo-baroque aesthetics but anchored in Realism. This chapter explores spatial constructions that allow the lyrical quality to reveal itself within the aesthetics of the everyday. To do this, the thinking system behind the examined work constructs an expandable conception of space by blending realistic representation and the exceptional.

This chapter shows that the lyrical within Realism appears as a digression, a drift in the familiar continuous territory in which our senses are commonly immersed or what our memories can recall. It represents today what was called parabasis in ancient Greek comedy: the moment when the epic is suspended for the irruption of the lyrical, or the moment when 'the poet speaks'. The surprising eruption of the unexpected within a familiar recognizable milieu and verisimilar backdrop elicits emotion by resorting to memory and experience.

Using the artists' interview as method, I discuss processes in which sensorial experience, memory and familiarity are used visually and verbally to provoke a new sensation of reality that includes self. Particularly, how sensorial perception, feelings and recollections (thoughts that carry sensation) contribute to define local Realism today by allowing thoughts only reachable by introspection to depict reality through a particularly plain, limpid and simple prose devoid of emotion or affect. César Aira's first-person short novels recapture the subjective dimension as an inspirational force questioning the status of the object as an unchangeable substance. He puts self and his subjective reading of reality at the centre, allowing the unexpected to appear

against a meticulous realist representation of the quotidian, so that his mutations,

transformations, and deformations become more effective. Similarly, the visual work

of Leandro Erlich and Dino Bruzzone create objects and installations of detailed

realistic fabrication, only to act upon them by a variety of neo-baroque strategies

(reflections, mirrors, repetition, disorientation and decay) to let the exceptional

within the ordinary emerge. In Argentine Realism, the chapter concludes, spatial

lyricism emerges without affect, avoiding formal excess, formal voluptuousness or

the gestural intensity discussed in the other chapters of the thesis; it argues that it

is aroused by the extraordinary event within the ordinary, inducing in the viewer

surprise and bewilderment.

Chapter 4 ('Lyrical Space: Alejandra Pizarnik's "Palais de Vocabulaire", the

Efflorescence Series and Tomás Saraceno's Speculative Urbanism') discusses the

notion of the figural and how the contents of subjectivity affect form in visual and

poetic language. Unlike in the previous chapter where the lyrical quality arises

through the effects of the event within a realistic representation devoid of emotion,

in this last chapter form becomes the event itself. The chapter's first part explores

lyrical qualities in Alejandra Pizarnik's s lyrical prose 'La condesa sangrienta'

[The Bloody Countess], and describes the figural as the formal embodiment or

'exteriorization' of subjectivity. Drawing from post-structuralist thinking, the

relationship between image, metaphor and qualia is discussed, and the concepts of

sensation, melancholy, memory and the sublime are reviewed as attributes of self to

explain how they affect form.

The second part looks into works closer to Surrealism. It searches for shared aesthetic

attributes in the work of Tomás Saraceno, Hernán Díaz Alonso and some of my own

drawings and digital explorations. The chapter shows how attributes of form such

as sensuousness, excess, exuberance, voluptuousness, darkness and exoticism are

used to elicit states of delight and aesthetic pleasure, or even horror and disgust to

describe spatial lyricism and its relation to the contemporary sublime.

1 Pictorial Fictions: A Borgesian Reading of Kuitca's Sonorous Geographies and Opera Houses

1.1   Introduction

How do imaginary cartographies convey narratives and reference memory excluding any allusion to the familiar? To address this question this chapter analyses Guillermo Kuitca's bed-map paintings and installations developed during the early 1990s and his series of architectural paintings of 2002–05.

Initially led by the sound and the resonance of the name of a distant and unknown place, Kuitca creates a private and intimate cartography by rearranging spatial relations of distant and unknown places over conjectural maps. By excluding his own known territory from the repertoire named in the maps, he avoids any place of familiarity or visual reference,[63] in this way, these imaginary geographies painted over child-sized beds and guided only by sound, disorient and dislocate the viewer, offering a visual interpretation of the Borgesian notion of national identity produced by displacement. They become an empty space filled only with sounds, concrete poems, as Kuitca suggests,[64] to be re-ordered by the viewer.

This chapter shows how the bed-map series subverts the 'world of cartography'[65] through a Borgesian deployment of space. This series, and his pictorial account of an intense audio-spatial experience—*Accoustic Mass*—are discussed in relation to Jorge

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63   Guillermo Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca', *Exhibition Catalogue* (Zurich: Daros-Latinamerica', 2006). And http://www.sper-onewestwater.com/cgi-bin/iowa/articles/record.html?record=507

64   Ibid.

65   Ibid.

Luis Borges's short stories 'El aleph' and 'Tlön, Uqbar Orbis Tertius'[66] because of their shared interest in spatial paradoxes and their effects upon the reader/viewer.

By looking at how his failed navigational instruments create a Borgesian itinerary, the relationship between unfamiliar geographies visually evoked, and the manifestation of the lyric, is explored both in the bed-map series and in his paintings of opera houses.

Influenced by Borges's fiction, the paintings produce itineraries that do not take us anywhere. Instead they present the map as an imaginary geography with no spatial or temporal continuity, like that of Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius'.

The bed-map series also triggers a process that contributes towards the affirmation of a de-territorialized pampeano identity. Borges's essay 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition,'[67] argues that Argentine literature is 'woven with the threads of all cultures'; it is not based on local references. This chapter discusses the process by which imagining cartographies of distant places, the memory of a place of private significance—excluded from Kuitca's spatiovisual configurations—is evoked.

Moreover, Kuitca's mattresses bring physicality and a tactile aspect to the paintings; they make them present both to the eye and to the touch. However, this comfort zone quickly vanishes when we approach them, as the result of a tension between the territory of the bed, private space, and the territory of the map, socio-political space or 'the space of others,'[68] colliding in the same piece. This chapter intends to examine this tension and reveal its cultural references.

66   Jorge Luis Borges, *Fictions* (London: Penguin, 1998).

67   Borges, *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

68   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

Fig. 1: Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled* (1992), Centro del Carmen, Valencia

Finally, the chapter looks at the change of scale that led to Kuitca's later series of opera houses, and at the strategies utilised in his previous works to refer to built space. The *Acoustic Mass* series renders space as a pictorial composition of experience by creating a distinctive language that reflects the powerful emotional effect that a space filled by music produces. This intended reference to sonorous experience extends into the visual arts the notion of lyricism traditionally associated with music and poetry. The chapter concludes that the painter borrows cartographic and architectural signs and symbols to invent a pictorial language that induces in the viewer a strong experience of spatial drama which characterizes lyrical space.

The chapter has three parts. The first explores Kuitca's bed-map paintings and installations, developed between 1990 and 2005, as explorations in space, place, memory and emotion. I analyse the way cartography is questioned in the bed-map series by transforming the street map and the road map into an imaginary collection of dysfunctional navigation tools. As Lynne Cooke describes in an epistolary conversation with Kuitca, there is a painting of the series where all the names of major cities are replaced by the name of a single town that belongs to another country; there is another where the names of the cities in one country are interpolated into a fragment representing a different nation,[69] and in the installation *Untitled* (1992), European road maps are painted onto the surfaces of mattresses,

69   Guillermo Kuitca and Lynne Cooke, 'Iterations: Letters Guillermo Kuitca – Lynne Cooke', *Burning Beds: A Survey 1982-1994* (Amsterdam: Contemporary Art Foundation, 1994), 14.

the body's place of rest. The mattresses become 'a metaphorical image of spatio-temporal voyaging',[70] Cooke says, a subtle image not constrained by the physical, but belonging to the realm of fiction and imagination.[71]

In Kuitca's maps, the territory is transformed, and thus is the space. Time, however, remains unspecified. Only when the viewer-voyager imagines a hypothetical journey, time and narrative are introduced. In this way, the map becomes an instrument to rethink the notions of place, experience and memory as manifestations of the self. Drawing from Doreen Massey's reading of the weather-map,[72] I will start here by looking at them as spatio-temporal tools, showing how their spatial aspect includes time.

The second part analyses Kuitca's paintings from a Borgesian perspective to contribute to the notion of an 'Argentine identity'. Although other art critics, writers and the painter himself, have traced and discussed Borgesian references in the paintings,[73] the chapter examines those connections to see if they have become persistent features of an Argentine identity. The analysed paintings are not read as illustrations of literary work, even though the painter makes multiple references to

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70   Ibid.

71   Ibid.

72   Doreen Massey, 'Some Times of Space', in Susan May (ed.), *Oliafur Eliasson: The Weather Project* (exhibition catalogue; London: Tate Publications, 2003), 107–18, and http://olafureliasson.net/publications/download_texts/Some_times_of_space.pdf

73   Claudio Canaparo, *Imaginación, mapas, escritura* (Buenos Aires: Zibaldone, 2000); Paulo Herkenhoff, 'La pintura de Guillermo Kuitca', *Guillermo Kuitca: Obras 1982–2002* (Exhibition Catalogue; Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2002), 28; and Guillermo Kuitca and Lynne Cooke, 'Iterations: Letters Guillermo Kuitca – Lynne Cooke', 15.

Borges's texts when interviewed,[74] but as spatial propositions that establish relations with the ideas and devices with which Borges imagines space and activates the fiction.

The third part suggests that a change of scale and the incorporation of architectural references into the paintings become tools of place making. The second and more recent series analysed, *Acoustic Mass*, focuses on the relationship between space, experience and language. In this series, space constitutes an event, the event of music taking place in the concert hall. The halls are transformed into images of resonance; they become a visual account of an audio-spatial experience. By

Fig. 2: Guillermo Kuitca, *Afghanistan* (1990). Fragment

Fig. 3: Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled* (1992). Fragment

inventing a pictorial language that borrows consciously and methodically signs and symbols from architectural codes, Kuitca's strategy is to depict the space through the objects that occupy it.[75] Although the spatial container itself is generally absent, the change of scale and the inclusion of the body act as place making tools.

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74   Kuitca and Cooke, 'Iterations', 15.

75   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

1.2 Sonorous Geographies: Maps, Trajectories, Spatial Imagination and Time

1.2.1 *Untitled*: the map as a representation of time and space in one

Massey's essay 'Some Times of Space'[76] invites us to imagine a quotidian journey from Manchester to Liverpool and to picture the active voyager travelling across space between two apparently fixed places on the map. This movement has a trajectory, she affirms, which is not only spatial but temporal. The journey takes time, has duration, but what Massey asks us to consider is the passing of time both at the place we left and at the place of destination. Certainly, Manchester itself has moved on, '[it] is no longer the same as when you left it', she says. Neither the place of origin or destination are passive places, they are 'an intertwining of ongoing trajectories'. 'To open up space to this kind of imagination is to think space and time together', she says; 'it is travelling not across space-as-surface but across a multitude of stories'[77]. The trajectory of this movement is understood by Massey in the wide Bergsonian sense[78], as a process of change.

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76   http://olafureliasson.net/publications/download_texts/Some_times_of_space.pdf.

77   Ibid.

78   Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (New York: MIT Press, 1988). According to Bergson, 'Real movement is rather the transference of a state than of a thing:' Movement is change for Bergson because he sees possible a progressive narrowing of the interval between two terms which is usual to oppose qualities—or sensations—and movements to each other. He says that even if at first distance appears 'impassable' between *qualities*, the heterogeneous and indivisible attributes of things perceived that take place in our consciousness, and *movements*, the homogeneous and measurable events that take place in space, this is only because our senses do not allow us to grasp and distinguish change at 'internal level'—at atom level—and *so motion is for our imagination only a change of relations rather than of qualities*. He proposes to consider the following: 'May not we conceive, for instance, that the irreducibility of two perceived colors is due mainly to the narrow duration into which are contracted the billions of vibrations which they execute in one of our moments? If we could stretch out this duration, that

Massey's essay suggests '"here" … is not a place on a map', but an 'intersection of trajectories', of stories of place. 'Every "here" is a here-and-now'. This means space is not static, it contains time; and movement, instead of being a change of position, is a dynamic process of change from which new things emerge. The map we imagined when we embarked on our journey is a representation of our trajectory, and captures time and space.

Fig. 4: Guillermo Kuitca, *Das Lied von der Erde* (1990). Fragment

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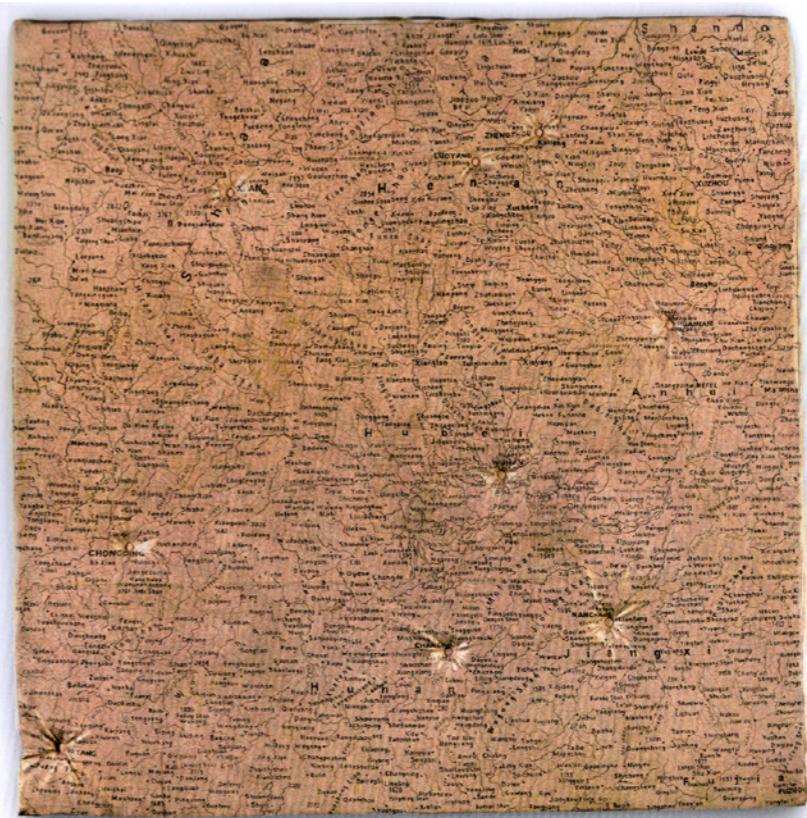
is to say, live in a slower rhythm, should we not, as the rhythm slowed down, see these colors pale and lengthen into successive impressions, still colored, no doubt, but nearer and nearer to coincidence with pure vibrations? In cases where the rhythm of movement is slow enough to tally with the habits of our consciousness—as in the case of the deep notes of the musical scale, for instance—do we not feel that the quality perceived analyzes itself into repeated and successive vibrations, bound together by an inner continuity?' 202–03.

Kuitca´s maps depict a territory which integrates time and space because they propose a dynamic multiplicity of stories and trajectories to be imagined by the viewer. Some of these trajectories may even lead to the same place once and again, presenting the map as a useless navigational tool through irrational juxtapositions and private associations that create new qualities of space.

1.2.2 *Das Lied von der Erde*: **sound, distance and the unknown**

> *I have always wanted to paint thinking that my painting was my voice.*[79]

From the idea of a map as an intersection of imagined spatio-temporal trajectories, I would like to propose another journey, an epic one through an unknown territory. I am travelling across space and I can see the line of the trajectory in Kuitca's painting *Afghanistan* (1991). The time of the journey is unknown as is the means, but it has a duration—dictated by sound. Unlike other paintings in the series, *Afghanistan* suggests a collection of coherent trajectories. It was painted before 9/11, and the place did not have at the time the connotations it has now: 'Afghanistan was not perceived as it is today, as a place of conflict where world politics are played out', the painter says.[80] Asked why he chose to paint distant places, he says that at the time he painted the bed-map series, including the maps of Europe and China, it was for him 'a kind of Orientalism, but in reverse'.[81] As a result, the series evokes the unknown, the distant and different: 'the places named in the maps didn't represent anything I knew, had seen in films, nor read in books; no here or there, just names. The names, and its sound and resonance.'[82]

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79   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

80   Ibid.

81   Ibid.

82   Kuitca and Cooke, 'Iterations', 17.

The bed-map series presents a sonorous geography which does not include anything familiar; they are places without any visual representation for the painter, 'the names in "Afghanistan" are just names, pure topography, pure geography',[83] he says. And he adds:

> I think that there is a power in the name. I often think that what was most important to me was the sound, that the quality that I sought in the map was not only visual, but also sonorous. For example, the last maps I did at that time were maps where the names of the cities are written in enormous letters. They were almost like concrete poems. And I think that was what I was looking for. As if I had been looking for a sound and not an image. Perhaps that's what led me towards music.[84]

By eroding any reference to a place of familiarity, the paintings *Afghanistan* or *Das Lied von der Erde* become a visual account of the act of reading aloud, of the sound of his voice uttering foreign and exotic sounds.

Fig. 5: Guillermo Kuitca,
San Juan de la Cruz (1992)

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83   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca.

84   Ibid.

1.2.3 *San Juan de la Cruz*, a pictorial fiction: the map as a failed navigational instrument

Fiction has the power to construct an order or a meaning in the face of a disorderly world, not only by interpreting reality … but by challenging its casual, spatial and temporal logic with a different type of pattern.[85]

'The map is one of the most fascinating forms of spatial representation',[86] Kuitca says, sharing with Borges an interest in cartography. Borges, in *A Universal History of Infamy*, originally published in 1935, tells of a map of a province that occupies a whole city, and the map of the empire that occupies the whole province:

In that Empire, the craft of cartography attained such perfection that the map of a single province covered the space of an entire city and the map of the empire itself an entire Province. In the course of time, these extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so a college of cartographers evolved a map of an empire that was of the same scale as the empire and that coincided with it point for point. Less attentive to the study of cartography, succeeding generations came to judge a map of such cumbersome magnitude, and, not without irreverence, they abandoned it to the rigours of sun and rain. In the western deserts, tattered fragments of the map are still to be found, sheltering an occasional beast or beggar; in the whole nation, no other relic is left of the discipline of Geography. From the *Travels of Praiseworthy Men* (1658) by J.A. Suarez Miranda.[87]

Inspired by the same preoccupation with the relationship between distance and visual representation—the distance between the painter/cartographer and the image of the map and scale—Kuitca's paintings also create a fictional cartography underlining an obsession with accuracy. This preoccupation started in earlier paintings like the apartments plans and theatre settings, where the scale became larger, the distance smaller, and the angle of vision oblique; this angle of the perspective gradually changed later to the aerial views of the maps. In an interview with Edward Shaw, Kuitca says that in the case of the maps there has been a progressive distancing from the bird-eye view of things. This process led him from the plans of apartments to the maps of cities, and then to the maps which started as contacts between cities, representing a process of gradual withdrawal that allowed for a change in the content of the object depicted: from the map as a reference of a private space to the map as a reference of sound.[88]

Another clear parallelism can be traced between Borges's fantastic and diverse fictional geography (that culminates with his book *Atlas,* published two years before his death), and Kuitca's preference for the depiction of the unfamiliar and distant. It links the creation of foreign geographies and the construction of a fictional spatio-temporal order. The ideas behind the painting *San Juan de la Cruz* and the spatial characteristic of some of Borges's stories explain this.

In *San Juan de la Cruz* the name of a city is inscribed again and again. 'I can see someone leaving a place and arriving at the same place and so on',[89] he says, like an obsessive vision. Here the map turns into the opposite of a navigational instrument.

85   Beatriz Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (New York: Verso, 1993), 80.

86   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

87   Borges, 'Of Exactitude in Science', *A Universal History of Infamy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 131.

88   Edward Shaw, 'Guillermo Kuitca: Mapping the Interstates of the Mind', *1920–1994: Art from Argentina,* David Elliot (ed.) (exhibition catalogue, Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 124–29.

89   Kuitca, Guillermo, *Burning Beds: A Survey 1982–1994* (Amsterdam: Contemporary Art Foundation, 1994), 15.

For Kuitca the map 'is the instrument for getting lost',[90] and its purpose is not to know where you are, 'but on the contrary: to know where you are not'.[91] This labyrinthine itinerary is also a recurrent spatial characteristic in Borges's stories.

Kuitca's paintings like *Afghanistan* or *Untitled* suggest a collection of coherent trajectories. In others, like *San Juan de la Cruz*, the trajectories are organised as if one place is all places,[92] a failed journey in which all roads return to different points which are the same place: the city of San Juan replaces all major cities of Poland.[93] The image of the map is subverted by a referential aberration. It is the representation of a world as organised and complete as Borges's plots, but also as nightmarish. The painting transforms the geography and subverts the principle of cartography; it becomes a failed navigational instrument which creates a Borgesian and labyrinthine itinerary. In Borges's short story 'Death and the Compass' (1944) a carefully designed urban labyrinth, imagined by the outlaw and revengeful murderer Red Scharlach, leads detective Erik Lönnrot to his death:

> At night, my delirium fed on a metaphor: I felt that the world was a labyrinth impossible to flee, because all roads, even if they pretend to go North or South were really going to Rome, which was also the quadrilateral prison where my brother was dying and the villa 'Triste-le-Roy'.[94]

Looking at the bed-map series as a whole, it can be suggested that they are a cartographic collection that deploys a mixture of fact and fiction. Led by sound,

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90   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

91   Ibid.

92   Kuitca and Cooke, 'Iterations', 15.

93   Robert Farris Thompson, 'Kuitca's Stagecraft', *Art in America*, (87; December 1999), 90-99. And http://www.speronewestwater.com/cgi-bin/iowa/articles/record. html?record=242.

94   Borges, *Ficciones* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999), 216.

Kuitca's collection of maps presents on one hand reality with accuracy, e.g. *Untitled*, *Afghanistan* or *Das Lied von der Erde*; on the other it subverts reality through images that combine different geographies into one. Thus the collection as a whole supports invention through a juxtaposition of reality and fiction.

Two more fictional devices are there in the painting that suggests a Borgesian influence. The first is the use of a Borgesian method of verisimilitude in the series. In the story 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' verisimilitude is achieved by combining false attributions to a mixture of existing and invented texts, and the introduction of many of his friends as characters in the plot.[95] Among those friends appearing in the

Fig. 6: Guillermo Kuitca, *Untitled (carreteras)* (1990)

text are the Argentine painter Xul Solar and the writers Adolfo Reyes and Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, but most interesting is the presence of Adolfo Bioy Casares, a writer too, with whom Borges co-edited, along with Silvina Ocampo, the *Antología de la literatura fantástica* [The Book of Fantasy], a collection of fantastic short stories and fragments that included 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', among works by Lewis Carroll, G. K. Chesterton, Macedonio Fernandez, Franz Kafka, Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Allan Poe, H. G. Wells and others; it was conceived one night in Buenos Aires in 1937 when,

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95   Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges*, 64.

according to Ursula K. Leguin, the three friends sat together to talk about fantastic literature.[96] It was published in 1940, one year before Borges published his third collection of short stories, 'The Garden of Forking Paths', that would make the story known across the world twenty years later. In the original Argentine publication of 1940 the introduction is written by Bioy Casares,[97] and there he describes the history and characteristics of the fantastic tale, an unprecedented exercise at the time; and in 'Tlön…' it is Bioy who tells the main character of the plot, Borges himself, about the fictional region of Uqbar. Thus the writer puts the editor of the book that includes the story, as the character who gives credibility to the story itself: it is Bioy who recalls one of heresiarchs of Uqbar that fascinates Borges: 'mirrors and copulation are abominable since they both multiply the number of man', and it is Bioy who finds Uqbar in an article at the back of the Volume XLVI of the *Anglo-American Cyclopaedia*, increasing the likelihood of its existence, intriguing Borges and leading him to search for the lost region in the National Library. Only after the two men have fruitlessly exhausted atlases, catalogues, yearbooks of geographical societies and memoirs of travellers and historians, does Borges conclude that nobody had ever been in Uqbar, and that the general index of Bioy's encyclopaedia did not show Uqbar's name. However, we are certain that Uqbar exists. The first sentence of the tale so affirms:

> I owe the discovery of Uqbar to the conjunction of a mirror and an encyclopaedia. The unnerving mirror hung at the end of the corridor in a villa on Calle Gaona, in Ramos Mejía; the misleading encyclopaedia that goes by the name of *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* (New York, 1917), and is a literal if inadequate reprint of the 1902 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The

whole affair happened some five years ago, Bioy Casares had dined with me that night.[98]

If in Borges maps, encyclopaedias and the names of real people and real places are the means to convince the reader of the verisimilitude of his stories, in Kuitca's paintings names are there to dislocate, to subvert the fictional character of the maps. By creating a mixture of real places and fictional geographies, the collection of painted maps supports invention through the juxtaposition of reality and fiction in the same way as Borges achieves verisimilitude through fictional intertextuality and false attributions to real people. Similarly, Kuitca's strategy for his cartographic collection of sounds presents reality with accuracy, and at the same time subverts it by condensing different geographies into one map.

'In a poetic composition we often allow sound to guide us to sense and vice versa', says Don Paterson in 'The Lyric Principle',[99] and in Kuitca's paintings sound is there to guide us across the landscape. However, this sound does not relate to a memory of place, the painter explains,[100] as it is neither referred to in the subjective process of selection that precedes the painting nor evoked by the painting itself when finished. If Kuitca chooses to use sound to navigate through those territories, the sound that guides him is not a memory of the sound of the place but the sound of his own voice naming the place. And if we can think of the painting *Das Lied von der Erde* as a depiction of the sound of his voice, of the grain of his own voice reading the map of China, that sound which chooses the fragment of the territory to depict and enables the painting to become a visual account of the reading, then those foreign sounds,

96   Ursula K. Leguin, 'Introduction', in Silvina Ocampo Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares (ed.), *The Book of Fantasy* (Bungay, Suffolk: Xanadu Publications, 1988).

97   Jorge Luis Borges, Silvina Ocampo and Adolfo Bioy Casares, *Antología de la literatura fantástica* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1940).

98   Borges, *Ficciones*, 15.

99   Don Paterson, 'The Lyric Principle. Part 1: The Sense of Sound', *Poetry Review* (97; London: The Poetry Society, 2007), 56–72.

100   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

empty sounds whose connotations are reduced to what is unfamiliar and distant, become the visual and aural texture of the work.

A 'word can be erotic', Barthes says, 'on two opposing conditions, both excessive: if it is extravagantly repeated, or on the contrary, if it is unexpected, succulent in its newness'.[101] Kuitca's paintings aspire to provoke pleasure in the way Barthes proposes reading aloud does: the painting *San Juan de la Cruz* brings the sound of excess through the repetition of the same name over and over again across a vast geographical territory and uncannily bringing us always to the same place; the
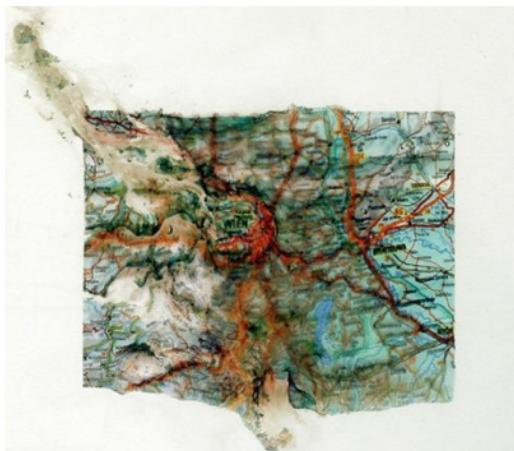
painting *Das Lied von der Erde*, the map of a fragment of China, through the total newness of those Chinese sounds, perhaps inspired, as the constant reference to music in his work suggests, by Mahler's song-symphony *Das Lied von der Erde*, a translation from Chinese poetry into music.

The second device is what Beatriz Sarlo calls *structure en abîme,*[102] a spatio-temporal pattern applied to both narrative and spatial design. Borges's structure en abîme establishes a paradoxical spatial order, Sarlo says, a baroque space. In her chapter

Figs. 7a and 7b: Guillermo Kuitca, *Zurich and Wien to Bratislava* (2002)

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101   Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 42.

102   Sarlo, 'Imaginary Constructions', *Jorge Luis Borges.* http://www.uiowa.edu/borges/bsol/bsi0.shtml. (Online version).

'Tropes of Fantastic Literature'[103] she describes how Borges's fiction allow us to experience spatial infinity:

> The *structure en abîme*, by means of a baroque organization of space, establishes an order that is in itself a visual paradox; it compels us to imagine spatial infinity in a non infinite space. According to the principle of endless inclusion, it modifies our belief in the truth of our perceptions and sets up a tension between what can be conceived logically and what can be concretely or materially or sensorially perceived.[104]

In 'Tlön, …' there is a passage that locates Uqbar in Asia. 'But', Borges says, 'its nebulous reference points were rivers, craters and mountains of that same region.'[105] For Sarlo and other literary critics, this is a clear spatial presentation of a logical paradox because the boundaries that should define the country of Uqbar are included in the space they delimit.[106]

Linking back to Massey's conception of space which includes time and change, Borges's Tlön fictionalizes this idea. 'Tlönian' space is discontinuous, and a place or an object in space is in constant change if considered from the point of view of time. 'Identity, according to this conception, is unimaginable, because no substance extends its being through time'.[107] This means that space is affected by time. Visually, Kuitca's painting *San Juan de la Cruz,* depicts an imaginary geography with no spatial or temporal continuity, proposing a pictorial presentation of a geography where space is discontinuous too because the same place can appear across a territory again and again, transgressing the concept of identity. In line with Massey's ideas, in

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103   Sarlo, 'Tropes of Fantastic Literature', *Jorge Luis Borges.*

104   Ibid., 57.

105   Borges, *Ficciones*, 18.

106   Sarlo, 'Imaginary Constructions', *Jorge Luis Borges.* http://www.uiowa.edu/borges/bsol/bsi0.shtml. (Online version).

107   Ibid.

the Tlönic world the identity of a place or of an object is suppressed by the constant

transformation of its substance imposed by time, and in the same way, the city of San

Juan left by the voyager is in constant change. Recursive objects and places are never

the same because the principle of identity does not prevail under this spatio-temporal

order. As objects and places multiply in Tlön, San Juan multiplies in Kuitca's map.

1.2.4 A motionless odyssey

In *Atlas of Emotion* Giuliana Bruno says that 'the art of mapping, with its spatial

rendering of sequences of affects, is a function of the fictional imagination.'[108]

She explains how in Kuitca's installation *Untitled* the layout of the 'map-inscribed

mattresses' invites us to travel through a private landscape. Because 'no one is lying

on the beds', she says, 'the space is suspended and frozen':[109]

> [T]he maps speak of a fiction—an arresting architectural tale. This is a
> story written on a bed, inscribed in the fabric of a room, layered on the
> geological strata of a used mattress ... The map haunts the mattress like a
> stained memory … it absorbed a story, some event … it recounts the tale
> of what was lived, or unlived on it … Like a film, the bedroom map retains
> and explores 'folds' of experience. It charts the private inner fabric of our
> mental landscape. The mattress-map is a complex narrative: a nocturnal
> chronicle, an erotic fantasy, an account of the flesh ... It belongs to the realm
> of dreams and their interpretations. Reproducing the immobility that allow
> us to travel the unconscious, it traces the very itinerary of our unconscious
> journeys. The mattress-map portrays the motion of the emotions.[110]

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108   Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007), 234.

109   Ibid., 239.

110   Ibid., 239–40.

Kuitca's own reading of his work proposes that there is no motion in his maps.
They produce itineraries that do not take us anywhere. For him, the bed-
maps transmit stillness. Moreover, he affirms that the bed is only present as
a territory, as physical space that you occupy, as a plane surface in the most
material sense of the term:[111]

> [P]ersonally I never imagined that there would be much movement in my
> works, I have difficulty imagining movement, but that's a personal matter.
> For others, it may imply a journey. For me, however, it's a more static
> image … That's why the relationship with these places had to give me the
> opportunity of representing a map without that map being the narrative of
> a place. Generally the places I used were not very familiar, places in which I
> hadn't been, for which I had very few references of any kind.[112]

Fig. 8: Guillermo Kuitca, *Everything* (2005)

In 'The Death of the Author' Barthes says that the author of a text imposes a limit
to it, whereas the reader is the only 'space' for a complete interpretation.[113] Bruno's
reading of the affective aspects suggested by the map-inscribed mattresses tells us
about the sequential and kinetic character of emotion. In contrast, Kuitca's words
describe stillness, a visual presentation of displacement and 'where we are not'.

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111   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca': 'I always tried to strip the bed of every psychological connotation of death, sex, dream, desire, birth, sleep. It's certain that sometimes that bed did appear charged with all that, but for me the bed was that physical space that was material in some way, as if it were a plot of territory.'

112   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

113   'A text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author … but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination'. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', *Image - Music - Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999), 148.

In Kuitca's premise, the emotive lies in the melancholic and nostalgic aspect of displacement, rooted in Argentina's migratory movements that mark the national identity. The paintings' depiction of physical displacement is one sign of de-territorialisation. The following paragraphs will show another.

1.3   A De-territorialized Pampeano Identity

1.3.1   Maps of voids: the Pampas' indeterminate territory

Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning.[114] Yi FuTuan

Kuitca's maps are not site-specific, and their unspecificity refers to the 'lack of place' in the Pampas landscape. In Manuel Puig's prologue to his book of film scripts *La cara del villano. Recuerdo de Tijuana,* he tells us that when he lived in General Villegas, a little town in the Pampas region, the cinema screen attracted him because it created another point of reference, a new place in a town surrounded by an uneventful desert.

> Living in a small town in the region of the arid Pampas was not the ideal condition for someone who just felt awkward with the reality in which fate had placed him. Other benchmarks were distant; fourteen hours of train to reach Buenos Aires, a full-day trip to get to the sea, nearly two days travelling to get to the mountains of Córdoba or Mendoza. My survival instinct led me to invent that there existed another point of reference, and very close: in the village's cinema screen was projected a parallel reality … Reality? For many years I believed so.[115]

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114   Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977).

115   Manuel Puig, *La cara del villano. Recuerdo de Tijuana* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1985), 7.

What is intriguing in Kuitca's cartographic account of displacement is its eventfulness. Any fragment of *Das Lied von der Erde* depicting an arbitrary fragment of China, the bed-map series of Europe's map, or even *Everything* (2005), reflects a constellation of things, places, stories to be imagined. By contrast, if we think of a map of the Pampas, the mental picture that arises is that of an empty and indeterminate space. The map series, because painted in Buenos Aires from cartographic publications, is a collection of images of distant landscapes, of spaces of foreign meaning; they tell us about displacement, about 'where we are not'. They project the unfulfilled Argentine romantic dream of colonization.

I need to go back to the nineteenth century to explain this. The Argentine romantic aspiration, expressed through the writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento or Esteban Echeverría, reflected a mental perception of the continent as a blank canvas to be conquered and colonised, 'a tabula rasa for the creation of the new nation'.[116] Two aspects of the landscape inspired the romantic ideals that shaped and recorded the social and political transition towards modernity. The first was the quality of the space that was to be transformed: the lack of a third dimension of the Pampas. No accidents in the landscape, no distinctions, no points of reference, what Ezequiel Martínez Estrada called in *Radiografía de la Pampa* (1933), 'the problem of the surface'. The second aspect that haunted the romantic mind and urged for transformation was the infinite character and the solitude of the territory. If the first problem refers to the physical condition of the space, the second refers to the lack of significant human intervention in the territory. Unlike other countries of Latin America, Argentina lacks ancient architecture; the territory, that before Independence comprised the Viceroyalty of the River Plate contained no ancient cities or monuments from where the romantic observation and ideals of human

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116   Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, 'A Highly Topical Utopia: Some Outstanding Features of the Avant-Garde', *Inverted utopias: Avant-garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 3.

expansion could depart. Situated between the endless Atlantic ocean and the vast Pampas, Buenos Aires's literature is a response to its territorial emptiness, to absence, the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes maintains.[117]

Thus Kuitca's statement 'I have almost never painted maps of Argentina'[118] should be read in the context of these characteristics of the Pampas territory. Any reference to what is familiar is the actual absence of place in the landscape. In conversation with Cooke he quotes Fuentes, who wonders if 'there [is] anything more Argentine than the need to fill verbally the empty places calling on all the libraries in the world to fill the blank book of Argentina.'[119] This makes again a clear reference to Borges's short stories.

1.3.2 *Má Vlast*

In the interview by Hans-Michael Herzog, Kuitca refers to a passage in Borges's essay 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition',[120] where he argues that Argentine literature is woven with the threads of all cultures; it is not based on local references. To be Argentine, Borges says, implies the possibility of trying all themes and what is truly native often lacks local colour. He gives us this example:

> I wrote a story called 'La muerte y la brújula' [Death and the Compass],
> which is a kind of nightmare, a nightmare in which there are elements of

Buenos Aires, deformed by the horror of the nightmare. There I think of the Paseo Colón and call it rue de Toulon; I think of the country houses of Adrogué and call them Triste-le-Roy; when this story was published, my friends told me that at last they had found in what I wrote the flavour of the outskirts of Buenos Aires. Precisely because I had not set out to find that flavour, because I had abandoned myself to a dream, I was able to accomplish, after so many years, what I had previously sought in vain.[121]

Fuentes maintains that the most poetic vision of Buenos Aires is found in 'Death and the Compass' where even the name of the city is absent. Interestingly, the map of Argentina is also eloquently absent from a series that can absorb any other geography except the painter's own, contributing towards the affirmation of a de-territorialized identity. It depicts an aspiration of cultural mixture rooted in Borges's

Fig. 9: Guillermo Kuitca, *Má Vlast* (1990)

text, where cross-cultural blending and the lack of devotion for local references are strategies to achieve originality.[122] The painting *Má Vlast* (1999), 'My Fatherland' in

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117   Carlos Fuentes, 'How I Became a Writer', *Myself with Others: Selected Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988), 16. Also: Fuentes, 'Jorge Luis Borges: La herida de Babel', *Geografía de la novela* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1993), 32–55.

118   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

119   Kuitca and Cooke, 'Iterations', 20.

120   Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970). Also: Borges 'El escritor argentino y la tradición', *Prosa Completa* (1; Madrid: Bruguera, 1980), 215–23.

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121   Ibid., 219.

122   Ibid., 223.

Czech, using the traditional yellow label of Deutsche Grammophon, does not give the name of the author,[123] clearly depicts a concept of identity that is not linked to the territory, and shows that it is a dynamic process. For Paulo Herkenhoff, the abscence of the author also suggests a 'fatherless fatherland,'[124] and affirms an idea of appropriation of material for pictorial transformation expanding beyond the specific borders of the painter's homeland.

1.3.3 Material tension

In the bed-map series the mattresses bring physicality and a tactile aspect to the paintings; they make them present both to the eye and to the touch. However, this comfort zone quickly vanishes when we approach them, as the result of a tension between the territory of the bed, private space, and the territory of the map, socio-political space or 'the space of others',[125] colliding in the same piece. On one hand, we have the mattresses incorporating proximity to the piece: the body making its presence through the stained, used beds. On the other hand we have the maps, accurately painted onto the

Fig. 10: Guillermo Kuitca, *Heaven (*1992)

123   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca': '[T]he name of the composer of "Má Vlast," the Czech Bedrich Smetana, does not appear here. At that moment I wanted to say something about my country, and it seemed that my country was this, a country without a composer, that nobody had written, or if some-body had composed it, he had escaped, that did not have a specific language but many foreign languages.'

124   Herkenhoff, 'La pintura de Guillermo Kuitca': [Kuitca's] creates a 'fatherless fatherland,' 262.

125   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

mattresses, bringing the notion of distance into the work and interpolating that distance between evoked places and an absent body. Thus proximity and distance juxtaposed creates a tension which is rooted in Argentine culture.

To explain this I will go back to Borges. In *A Writer on the Edge*, Sarlo describes a tension that runs through Borges's work. She defines it as 'a game on the edge of various cultures … in a space that Borges's would call *las orillas'*[126], marking his work as cosmopolitan and national at once.[127]

Argentina, a young nation without strong cultural traditions, bases its identity on the coexistence of opposites. Two nations in one: urban vs. agrarian, city vs. outskirts. Also in the influx of cultures: Indigenous, Asian, and several European nations. In this context, Borges places himself between the urban and the rural, and in the margins of Asian, European and American stories:

> In Borges, cosmopolitanism is a condition that allows him to invent a strategy for Argentine literature. Conversely, the reordering of national cultural traditions enables Borges to cut, select and reorder foreign literatures without preconceptions, asserting the liberty of those who are marginal to make free use of all cultures. By reinventing a national tradition, Borges also offers Argentine culture an oblique reading of Western literatures. From the edge of the west, Borges achieves a literature that is related to foreign literature but not in any subordinate way.[128]

126   Sarlo, 'Introduction', *Jorge Luis Borges.* http://www.borges.pitt.edu/bsol/bsii. php. (Online version).

127   Ibid.

128   Ibid.

This edge condition, which according to Sarlo facilitates invention without subordination, is what inspires its replication. Playing with opposites, as a strategy emerged from the Borgesian game to achieve originality, appears in Kuitca as a cultural recurrence.

Rooted in the condition of being 'from the edge of the west', Kuitca's *Untitled* results in a visual reinterpretation of the tension mentioned above. Here he uses space as pictorial material where the tension is in the juxtaposition between private and public realms, between close and remote distances, and a fictional cartography as the means to express it. In addition, by introducing a loaded object, the bed reduced in size—also the private space of dreams and nightmares, birth, sex and death, and placing it as the territory of mental and navigation across the unknown—the work also triggers a process of defamiliarization of the bed-object.

1.4 *Acoustic Mass*: Architectural Language as a Tool of Place Making

1.4.1 Painting as place

Acoustic Mass presents a very different approach to the practice of place making in painting. Three elements contribute to it: the body, a change in scale, and the reference to built space. The first element, the body, is not present as figure here, but as a sensory tool with which the paintings work to represent immersive expressions of experience.[129] Moreover, the body not only adds a dimensional reference of space,

but becomes theme. In *Acoustic Mass* the painter inhabits the space depicted. Unlike the bed-map series, in this series the body is listening to the concert, is experiencing space and sound, and space is only referred to through the arrangements of objects within it.

John Berger's essay 'Studio Talk' argues that 'ideally there should be as many places as there are paintings' and that the painter is continually trying to discover the place which will contain and surround his act of painting.[130] 'Painting-as-place begins with a practice,' he says, 'with something being done by the hands.'[131] He exemplifies this describing a drawing by Miquel Barceló of a mango and a knife: 'the place began when you laid the fruit in the curve of the knife's blade. The paper became its own place at that moment'.[132]

Figs. 11a and 11b: Guillermo Kuitca, *Covent Garden* (2005)

He defines place as an extension of a presence or the consequence of an action, and the words *presence* and *action* necessarily refer to the body, to the *experience* of the space the painter is depicting. The presence of the body and its actions create an

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129   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca': 'The pictorial experience is exhausted in [the] private encounter [between the painting and spectator]... For me it's there, in that space of privacy, and that's what I hope to achieve with the spectator. That a space is opened up, it may be very brief, very small, it may or may not be recognised as such, but that a space of intimacy is opened up. I think it's most like an amorous experience. Not because you fall in love with the painting, but

because it's almost like an affective space. I think that those are the situations that are given by painting.'

130   John Berger, *The Shape of a Pocket* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 29.

131   Ibid.

132   Ibid.

Fig. 12: Guillermo Kuitca, *Acoustic Mass* (2005)

event and painting becomes a visual translation of the experience.[133] Further in the text he says the renaissance notion of perspective is architectural and urban, and hides the reality of the 'view' which has nothing to do with distance. 'The painter has to inhabit the place', he says. The painter has to be inside. 'When it fails to become a place, a painting remains a representation … —a furnishing'.[134]

Figs. 13a and 13b: Guillermo Kuitca, *Acoustic Mass VII* and *Acoustic Mass I* (2005)

The conscious experience of inhabiting space is, according to Berger, what painting is about. Even an abstract painting like a late canvas by Rothko 'represents an illumination or a coloured glow which derived from the painter's experience of the visible.'[135] Painting, Berger continues, 'is an affirmation of the visible which surrounds us and which continually appears and disappears. Without the disappearing, there would perhaps be no impulse to paint'.[136] This impulse to paint exists to make permanent the experience of seeing, to express through form and colour the effect that the act of seeing had upon the painter. In a similar manner, Borges's 'The Aleph' is the story that tells the experience of seeing oneself inhabiting a paradoxical space. Both stories and paintings are a result of the necessity to express this experience, to make it permanent, to prevent them from disappearing.

The second element that contributes to the practice of place making is scale. The painter's preoccupation with scale had started before the appearance of the maps in his work:

> I started to become interested in the relation of scale between things. I think that once I'd recognised that interest, the next step was to represent space through architecture. So I started working with the plan of an apartment. And that plan was also connected with scale, because it stood in relation to the city. It was an apartment inside a building inside a city. Afterwards, the city appeared in the context of a larger map. I think that my work with space was to indicate a point or simply to bring about an interaction between

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133   Ibid., 28.

134   Ibid., 29.

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135   Ibid., 14.

136   Ibid.

something very small and something very large. Perhaps a map is, among
many other things, the location of a minute element within a larger context,
at some point, that small figure between gigantic walls had something to
do with the map.[137]

visualize the perception of sound. The paintings transform the concert hall into a
visual account of a private audio-spatial experience, and the rearrangement of the
architectural geometry of the space is used as the means to do it.

Fig. 15a: Zaha Hadid, *Al Wahbi* (1988), Abu Dhabi

Even though the spatial container in Kuitca's paintings is usually absent, built
space is presented as visual experience. This was first tested in his *Neufert Suites* of
1998–99, where he used the signs of the architectural code to suggest the content
of a space and deprived the painting of any reference to the container. By inventing
a pictorial language that consciously and methodically borrows signs and symbols
from architectural codes, the space is depicted through the objects that would
occupy it, whereas the container itself is absent. These symbols refer to use and
provide scale to the space in the paintings.

Tangentially, Zaha Hadid's early paintings are examples of the same exploration of
experience. Dynamism of form is not what I think she was after. Their singularity
comes not only from the manner in which the shapes were composed to inform a
particular visual language but also from the emotional effect that geometry, once
applied to a spatial object, would produce in the user. There are striking similarities
between Hadid's early paintings and Kuitca's *Acoustic Mass* series, and I suggest

In *Acoustic Mass* the distance between painter and space depicted is smaller. Kuitca's
change in scale in the series is there to include the body. The abstract and detached
bird-eye views of the maps evolve into an immersive experience of space and the
pictorial image emerges from a manipulation of architectural symbols. Space is there
to constitute an event: in his series *Acoustic Mass*, space is represented as the event
of music taking place in the concert hall, as an image of resonance. I argue here
that the new geometrical order the paintings imposed on the space of the concert
halls are not deconstructivist compositions, but ordered arrangements that aim to

Figs. 14a, 14b and 14c:
Guillermo Kuitca, *New York
State Theatre* (2005), *Opera
de Paris (Palais Garnier)*
(2005) and *Metropolitan
Curtain* (2004)

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137   Kuitca, 'Hans-Michael Herzog in Conversation with Guillermo Kuitca'.

this is because he invented a very similar strategy: his paintings render space as a pictorial composition of experience. The architectural language in Hadid's and Kuitcas's paintings develops geometrical patterns that do not suggest dynamism or drama per se; it is imagining the experience of the space that geometry suggests which induces the idea of spatial drama. Just like Borges's characters facing spatial paradoxes, or the space perceived when the concert hall is filled by music in Kuitca's paintings, it is their experiential account in visual or literary terms which attains lyricism.

Fig. 16a: Guillermo Kuitca and Julieta Ascar, *El telón del siglo* (2011). Detail of the pattern

Fig. 15a: Zaha Hadid, *The Dead Zone* (1990), Frankfurt
Fig. 15b: Zaha Hadid, *The Peak Club* (1983), Hong Kong

Fig. 16b: Guillermo Kuitca and Julieta Ascar, *El telón del siglo* (2011),Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires. Detail of finished curtain with the embroideried pattern.

1.4.2 Borges's Aleph and Berger's dream in Kuitca's sonorous account of the concert hall

In Berger's essay 'Steps Towards a Small Theory of the Visible' he describes a dream in which he was a 'strange dealer': a dealer in appearances. To become so he was able to enter inside whatever he was looking at, from a city to a bouquet of flowers, and rearrange their looks for the better. He briefly explains that 'the doing of it'

was not to make them more beautiful, typical or harmonious, but more unique,[138] and he stops there, saying no more. In his book of essays *Berger on Drawing*[139] a fragment called 'A Professional Secret', published originally by Granta in 1992, revealed the dream: 'image making', he says, 'starts with interrogating appearances

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138   Berger,*The Shape of a Pocket*, 13.

139   Berger, *Berger on Drawing* (Cork: Occasional Press, 2007).

and making marks'.[140] In another and previous essay in the book, 'Life Drawing', he says 'a drawing is an autobiographical record of one's discovery of an event—seen, remembered or imagined'.[141] The imaginary space of drawing is powerful because it is present to the eye and absent to the touch; the page is an empty space to be filled

with the potentiality of every proportion you have sensed or perceived, and the model, a reminder of experiences that can only be formulated by drawing. Drawing, for Berger, is the dream; it is the way to enter inside whatever we see to rearrange it.

Like Borges's vision in 'The Aleph', where the character is inside the object that contains all possible views of the infinite but also contains himself seeing the infinite, Berger's drawings also aspire to achieve the limitless number of other facets of a model:

> As I looked at the model I marvelled at the simple fact that he was solid, that
> he occupied a space, that he was more than the sum total of ten thousand

Figs. 16c: Guillermo Kuitca and Julieta Ascar, *El telón del siglo* (2011), Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires

Fig. 16d: Guillermo Kuitca and Julieta Ascar, *El telón del siglo* (2011), Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires. Photograph taken by me. The plan of a lyre has been juxtaposed on the plan of the theatre to compose the pattern to be embroidered to the curtain: 'From predetermined forms we built new ones. We started working with the architectural plan of the building. The plan of the concert hall. The hall as the heart [of the building]. There is where all takes place. There is where the artistic act happens. In that space is where music, dance, opera and all the tradition of the Colón Theatre takes place. In the hall the spectator vibrates. Discovers and

rediscovers. Feels … The plan of the concert hall is the symbol: We associated morphologically the plan with a lyre, icon of musical art…We seek to represent a musical concept through an image. This is how this image emerges. We established a visual relationship between the lyre and the plan to compose a pattern. A contemporary pattern that proposes a chromatic and morphologic dialogue with the circular space of the hall (Friso de Boca, Manto de Arlequin and the dome) The chosen technique is the traditional embroidery… and the colour palette that structures the ornamental intervention [includes] gold, carmine red, light blue and pink.' Description of the project by the authors. http://www.teatrocolon.org.ar/eltelondelsiglo/telon_teatro_colon_2011.pdf

visions of him from ten thousand different viewpoints. In my drawing, which was inevitably a vision from just one point of view, I hoped eventually to imply this limitless number of other facets.[142]

140   Ibid., 77.

141   Ibid., 3.

142   Ibid., 6.

Finally, the paintings in *Acoustic Mass* series can be read as drawings of a multifaceted auditory account of built space. The geometry is not related to the deconstruction of the elements that configure space, but as a phenomenological account of the space listened to.

1.5   Conclusion

This chapter has extended to the visual the notion of lyricism traditionally associated with sound and poetry. It explored two pictorial series by Kuitca, read as visual accounts of reading aloud and listening. It showed that by excluding his own known territory from the repertoire named in the bed-map series, he avoids any place of familiarity or visual reference. It proposed that these imaginary sound-guided geographies, painted over child-sized beds to disorient and dislocate the viewer, are a visual interpretation of the Borgesian notion of national identity. His cartographic account of displacement affirms a de-territorialized national identity by depicting a 'contradicting' eventful landscape. His bed-map paintings reflect a constellation of things, places and stories 'to be imagined'. By contrast, if we think of a map of the Pampas, the mental picture that arises is that of an empty and unspecified space. The map series, painted in Buenos Aires from cartographic publications, is a collection of images of distant landscapes, of spaces of foreign meaning, which tell us about displacement, about 'where we are not'. They project the unfulfilled Argentine romantic dream of colonization. This romantic aspiration reflected a mental perception of the continent as a blank canvas to be conquered and colonised, a tabula rasa for the creation of the new nation.

Thus Kuitca's statement 'I have almost never painted maps of Argentina' is read in the context of the characteristic of the Pampas. Any reference to what is familiar is the actual absence of place in the landscape. The map of Argentina is also eloquently absent from a series, absorbing any other geography except the painter's own, and

thus contributing towards the affirmation of a de-territorialized identity. It visually depicts a previous literary aspiration of cultural mixture defined in Borges's text, where cross-cultural blending and the lack of devotion for local references are strategies to achieve originality.

Rooted in the condition of being 'from the edge of the west', Kuitca uses space as pictorial material where the tension is produced by the juxtaposition of private and public realms, of close and remote distances. Then, by introducing a loaded object, a bed reduced in size—also the private space of dreams and nightmares, birth, sex and death—and placing it as the territory of mental navigation across the unknown, the work triggers yet another process: defamiliarization of the bed-object.

Acoustic Mass presents a very different approach to the practice of place making in painting. In *Acoustic Mass* the painter inhabits the space depicted. Unlike the bed-map series, it is the experience of sound in space which the painter reveals visually. Now, the body is listening, the event is created by its presence and the painting becomes the visual translation of the effects of the act of seeing and listening upon the painter. In *Acoustic Mass* the distance between the painter and the space depicted is smaller. The abstract and detached bird's-eye views of the maps evolves into an immersive experience and the pictorial image emerges from a manipulation of architectural symbols. In *Acoustic Mass* space is there to constitute an event: the event, music taking place in the concert hall, is an image of resonance.

The concert halls are presented under a new geometrical order, aiming to visualize the perception of sound inside. The paintings transform the concert hall into visual accounts of an audio-spatial experience, and the rearrangement of the architectural geometry of the space is used as the means to do it. This linguistic methodology defines this series' style. It visualizes the emotional effect that affects the user's experience of the space. The chapter suggest that there are striking similarities

between Zaha Hadid's early paintings and Kuitca's *Acoustic Mass* series because
they share a similar strategy: to render space as a pictorial composition of private
experience. The architectural language in Hadid's early paintings and Kuitcas's
concert halls develop geometrical patterns that do not suggest dynamism or drama
per se; but imagining the experience of the space that this geometry suggests
induces the idea of spatial drama. The geometry is not related to the deconstruction
of the elements that configure space, but to the phenomenological account of
the space perceived, and this experiential account is what presents spatial lyricism
through Kuitca's visual language.
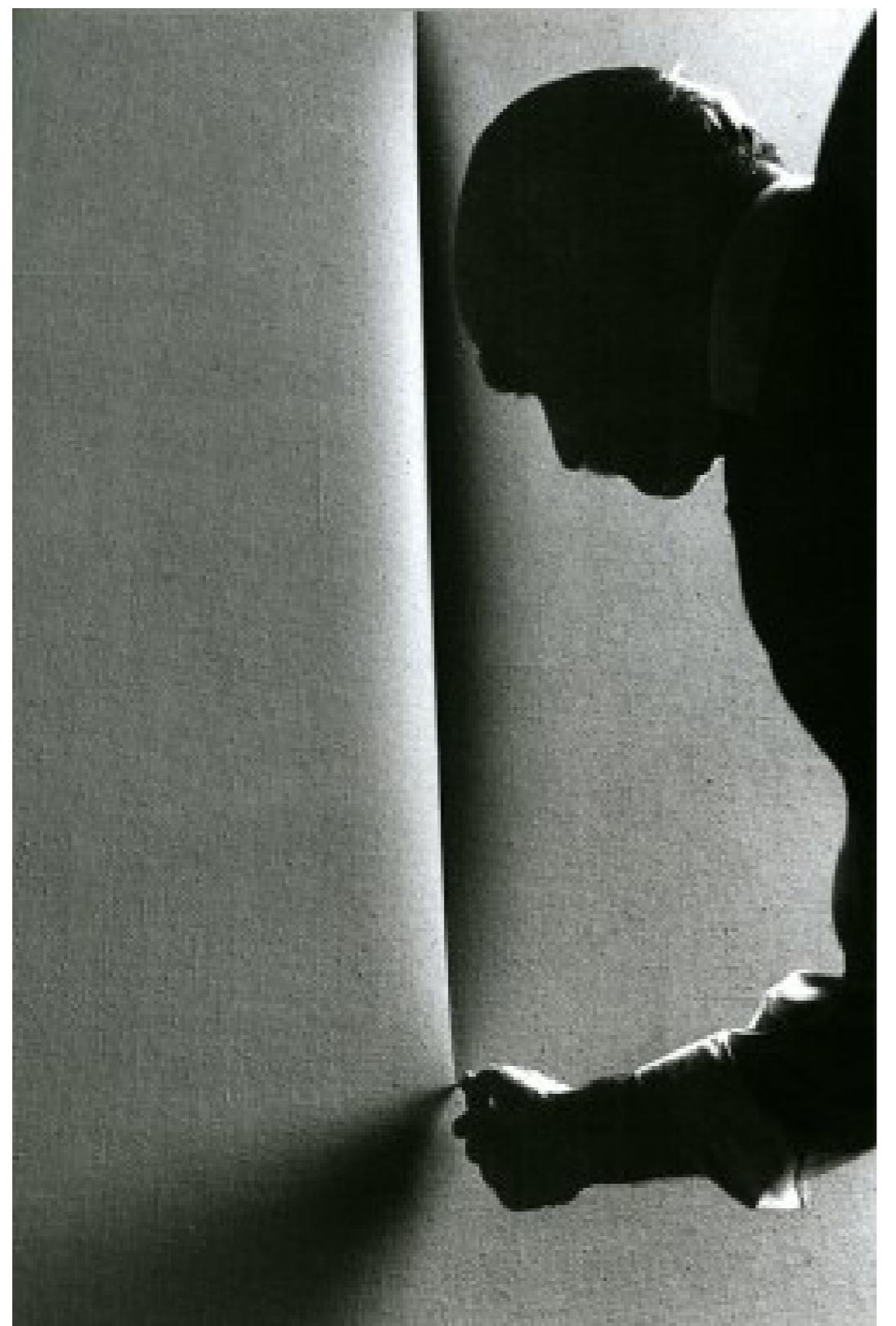
Fig. 17: Lucio Fontana,
Milan, 1964. Photo Shunk
Kender

2 The Lyrical and the Liminal in Neo-Baroque Painting: Spatial Matter in Julio Cortázar, Lucio Fontana and Fabián Marcaccio

2.1   Introduction

This chapter proposes a relationship between the spatial and material aspects of neo-baroque painting and the spatialization of the verbal. It analyses Lucio Fontana's *Concetto spaziale* series, Fabián Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* series, and a selection of short stories by Julio Cortázar. It explores the concept of liminality in painting and the short story, assuming the liminal as a place produced by a space of transition— the passage.

The liminal zone in a ritual constitutes a threshold in which the familiar is modified or suspended. This threshold is predominantly associated with instability and provisionality: what lies between the known and unknown or 'other'. Following Arnold Van Gennep[143], every rite of passage presents three stages: a preliminary stage in which 'passengers' are separated from their familiar world, a liminal stage in which they are subjected to ordeals, tests, unfamiliar experiences, and a postliminal stage in which they are reincorporated into their old world in a new capacity or status.[144] The first and third phases involve crossing thresholds, in and out of the liminal stage, whereas the liminal stage takes place on or across the threshold itself.[145] Through its tripartite form, the rite of passage shapes a dynamic process and

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143   Arnold Van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage: Étude systématique des rites* (Paris: Picard, 1981).

144   Van Gennep, 'The Territorial Passage', *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), 21–22.

145   Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1967) and *The Ritual Process* (Bungay, Suffolk: Pelican, 1974), 80–81.
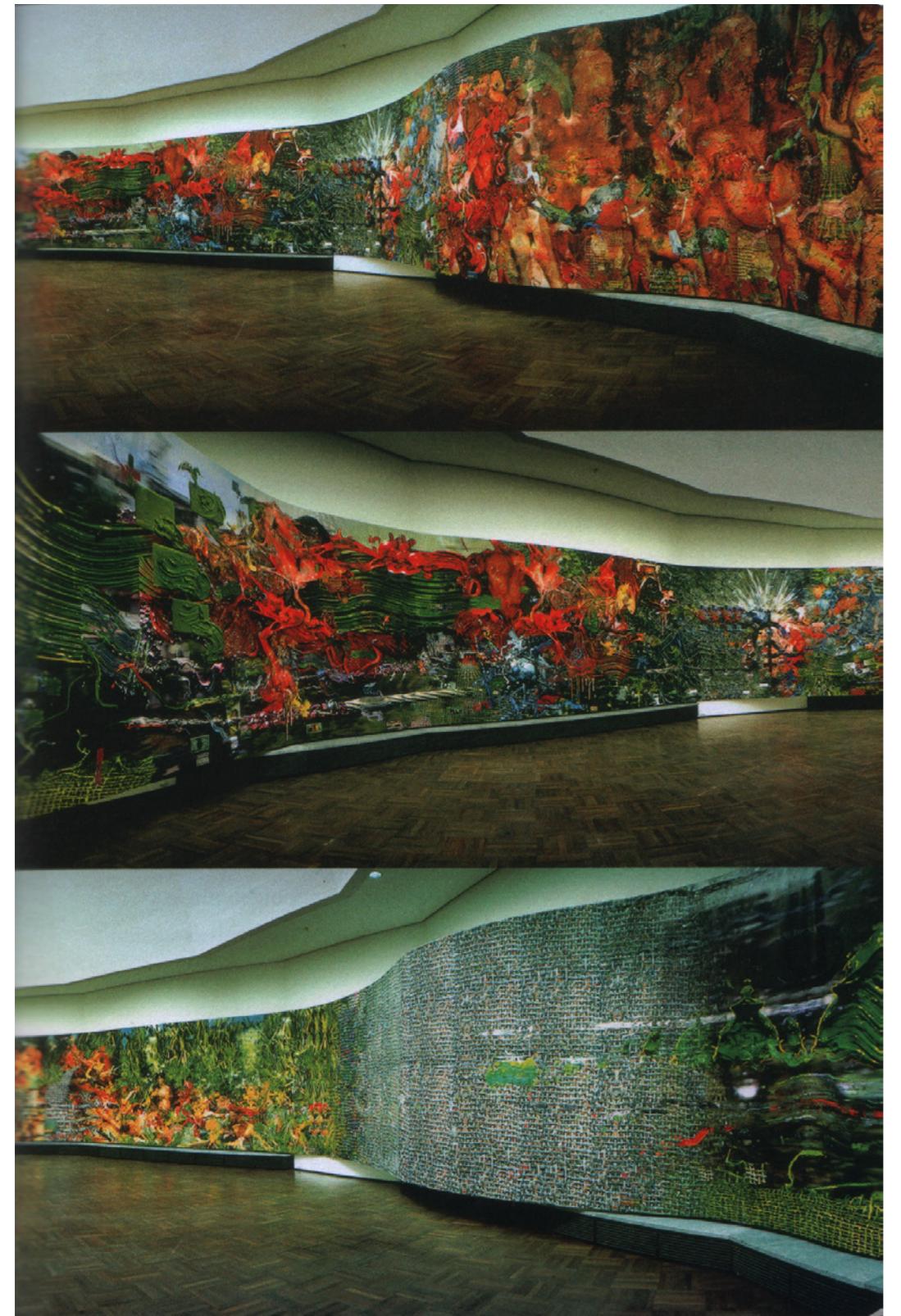
Fig. 18: Fabián Marcaccio,

Paintant Stories (2000),

Stuttgart, 4 x 100 metres

progresses from one state or condition into another. It advances in time and involves literal or metaphorical displacements in space. 'By means of a very Aristotelian structure of beginning, middles, and ends, rites of passage constitute themselves … as 'narratives' of an event which are also the event itself'.[146]

Analysis of the spatialization of Cortázar's neo-fantastic short stories,[147] developed between 1951 (the year he left Argentina for France) and 1970, and Fontana's 'spatialism' in painting, developed during the same period (between the publication of his 'Manifesto tecnico dello spazialismo' in 1951 and his death in 1968) will show how the lyrical is spatialised and presented in the figure of the passage. Within the literary realm, I will look in particular at Cortázar's short stories: 'El otro cielo' [The Other Sky], which first appeared in 'Todos los fuegos el fuego' [All Fires the Fire] (1966), 'Continuidad de los parques' [Continuity of Parks], and 'El río' [The River], gathered in the volume 'Pasajes' [Passages] from the book *Relatos* (1970).

I will propose that Cortázar's short stories describe metaphorical journeys ('passages') and use them to connote disturbing changes in the minds of the characters. Similarly, and within the visual realm, Fontana's *Concetto spaziale* series evokes passages by slashing the canvas, opening the surface into the third dimension. Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* series (developed between 2001 and 2005) also suggests liminality—the concept that symbolizes a change in the state of mind of the viewer—through the painting's spatial configuration in the form of long passages. Their spatial expansion is also linked to the metaphorical 'explosion' into three dimensions suggested by historical baroque sculpture and architecture, where

146   Manuel Aguirre, 'The Phasing of Form: A Liminalist Strategy in Fairytales ', in Philip C. Sutton (ed.), *Betwixt-And-Between: Essays in Liminal Geography* (Madrid: Gateway Press, 2002).

147   Concept introduced by Jaime Alazraki, 'Prólogo: puentes a la otredad', in Saúl Yurkievich and Jaime Alazraki (eds.), *Julio Cortázar. Obras completas* (I; Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2003).

both the formal and material density of Marcaccio's paintings aim to provoke an effect in the spectator.

Formal intensity is a quality of the neo-baroque expressed by the material gesture of the cut in Fontana and by the accumulation and spatial unfolding of endless details in Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* series—composed by fragments seen from a very close distance imprinted onto very long canvases across the gallery space and amalgamated to form a continuous long image that creates passages which take us to Cortázar's short stories. Intensity is also the character that relates Marcaccio's and Fontana's painting to lyrical poetry.

To show how both the spatial and formal components of the paintings relate to the lyrical, this chapter explores: firstly, the qualities that define the lyrical in poetry; secondly, how critical thinking explains the short story as a genre closer to lyrical poetry than to the novel; and finally, how the spatial ideas present in the short stories of Cortázar are visualized in the paintings of Fontana and Marcaccio, revealing to the eye the qualities of the lyrical.

Cortázar, Fontana and Marcaccio share the same preoccupation to produce space. They think spatially, and by exploring the neo-baroque qualities of form they use—instability, vagueness, exuberance, formal density, fragmentation, centrifugal impulse, multiplicity and the all-inclusiveness of the Baroque—I will attempt to illustrate spatial lyricism as the quality that arouses an emotional intensity in the reader/viewer that recaptures today the seventeenth-century subjective dimension of the baroque spirit.

The chapter has two parts. The first exposes a line of continuity between lyrical poetry and the short story. It starts by discussing what are the lyrical principles defined in Hegel's *Aesthetics*: *Lectures on Fine Art* and how sound establishes the

link to the contemporary analysis of the lyrical principle in poetry, defined by Don Paterson's essay in *Poetry Review*.[148] For Paterson, poetical lyricism emerges as an intensity deriving from the urgency of the expression of emotion and the pursuit of this expression in brief, from the constraint in time and space inherent in poetry. The short story, as I will show here, is also explained in a similar way. The reason for looking into the principles of the lyrical in poetry is not only because some aspects of lyrical poetry are shared by those of the short story (as has been argued by literary critics on the theory of the genre and in critical writings by writers of short fiction from Poe's review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, to Raymond Carver, Cortázar, and others), but also because it helps to show how the lyrical can be expressed by the visual.

Cortázar's essays 'Del cuento breve y sus alrededores' [On the Short Story and its Contexts] in *Último Round* (1969) and 'Algunos aspectos del cuento' [Some Aspects of the Short Story] in *Obra Crítica* Vol. 2 (1994) open the second part of this chapter. They give the theoretical background to Cortázar's spatial ideas that will be used to

Fig. 19: Fabián Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories* (2001), 4 x 100 metres

148   Don Paterson, 'The Lyric Principle. Part 1: The Sense of Sound', *Poetry Review*, (97; Summer 2007), 56–72.

explore the liminal and lyrical qualities in the visual work of Fontana and Marcaccio. The aim here is to show how the literary principles of the lyrical, summarised in the first part become qualities of the visual in the second part.

2.2 Lyricism: From Principle to Quality

2.2.1 The lyric principle

Poetry is the word in silence. Only a poem can consist on one word.[149]

Hegel's *Aesthetics* says that lyrical poetry's subject matter is the ideas themselves and these ideas translate into moods, passions or reflections. For Hegel the content of lyrical poetry is subjectivity: 'the mind that considers and feels which remains in inwardness, and [whose] sole form and final aim is the self expression of subjective life.[150] 'Poetic imagination *gives us an inner vision* of the thing it is representing and *the subjective side of the poet* is the predominant element of his illustrative production.'[151] (My emphasis). Lyric is then the expression of interiority, and 'while epic poetry ... must conceal the poet's own imaginative activity', as it' is concerned with the expression of the period is produced, '*in the lyric, the contents and its creation are subjective, and thus it is this subjectivity what has to be revealed* precisely as what it is'.[152] (My emphasis).

The contents of lyric must be made subjective to achieve individuality. Thus at the centre of lyric poetry, says Hegel, there must be placed the poetic concrete person, the poet:

> His sole expression and act is limited … to lending to his inner life words, which … reveal the spiritual sense of the person using them and are meant to arouse and keep alive in the *hearer* the same sense and spirit … and thought … What leads to epic poetry is the need to listen to something which unfolds as an independent and self-complete totality, objective over the subject; whereas in lyric what is satisfied is the opposite need, namely self expression. *The content of a lyric work must be the person's feelings and consciousness through experience* and owing to this principle of detailing, particularization and individuality, which is inherent to the lyric, its contents may be of extreme variety. We are conscious of the author in the lyric work.[153] (My emphasis).

Thus in a lyrical work of art 'the inner life of the poet' is what provides the unity. This interiority is described as 'fragmented' and 'dispersed into the most diversified particularization', containing a multiplicity of ideas, feelings, impressions and insights whose linkage 'consist solely in the fact that one and the same self carries them … as their mere vessel'. This description resembles Virginia Woolf's depiction of interiority in her essay 'Modern Fiction', discussed in my Introduction.

In the lyric it is feeling and reflection, as opposed to objective fact, which is portrayed, and only after an inward exploration, '[the world] is grasped and expressed in words.' 'In contrast to the epic, the lyric has concentration for its principle and must intend to make its effect principally by inner profundity of expression and not by extended descriptions or explanations.'[154] Here the concept

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149   Paterson, *The Book of Shadows* (London: Picador, 2004), 155.

150   Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 1038.

151   Ibid., 1111.

152   Ibid., 1127.

153   Ibid., 1129.

154   Ibid., 1133–34.

of *concentration,* I understand, relates to the idea of intensity that characterises both lyrical poetry and the short story, as I will show later.

The lyric also carries the need of sound, rhythm and tone for its communication:

> Whereas the epic places real phenomena in the past, and juxtaposes them or interweaves them in rather a spatial extension, the lyric portrays the momentary emergence of feeling and ideas in the temporal succession of their origin and development and therefore has to give proper artistic shape to the varied kinds of temporal movement. This implies the need of a rhythmical figuration, with short and long strophes, [and] the place for alliteration, rhyme and assonance … The spiritualization of language though the inner meaning of words, as well as the emphasis on sound is peculiarly appropriate to the lyric … for the material of its communication seizes mainly on sound and tone.[155]

Hegel's assertion of the necessity of sound to support the communication of the subjective has evolved from song to the sounds and silences of the voice uttering a poem. This is, according to Paterson a consequence of the advent of literacy and the new ability of the poem to be communicated in written form.[156] His essay 'The Lyric Principle' dissects the meaning of the lyrical in poetry starting by reaffirming the musical quality of words, as 'poetry is always highly conscious of the noise it makes'[157], he says, suggesting that words are a 'time-based event' like musical notes.[158]

But even though poetry was for a long time not distinguishable from song and that it is now transmitted and created by words, it remains linked to the performative aspect of the song.[159] Its musicality acts as a mnemonic device, and the act of remembering achieves significance because 'if you can remember a poem, you possess it wholly: remembering a poem *is* the poem',[160] Paterson says. This virtual ability of the lyrical to be attainable through its total recovery, a word by word repetition, contrasts with the impossibility of achieving a complete recovery of a symphony, film or novel.[161]

Thus lyrical poetry employs powerful mnemonic devices as strategies to allow for its complete recovery. These devices are, according to Paterson, brief speech, patterned speech and singular speech.[162] All of them arise from the compositional process: brevity, originality and patterning are interwoven in poetic composition as they are achieved through contraction, comparison, form, metre and sound respectively.[163]

'Emotional urgency' and 'temporal limit' are the material from which originates poetry.[164] Its aim is to remain in the memory of the reader. This limitation of time and space, this constraint imposed on speech, produces the intensity that characterises the lyrical.[165]

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155   Ibid., 1137.

156   Paterson, 'The Lyric Principle', 58.

157   Ibid., 59.

158   Ibid., 58.

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159   Ibid., 58–59.

160   Ibid., 59.

161   Ibid.

162   Ibid.

163   Ibid., 60.

164   Ibid.

165   Ibid., 61: 'we force ourselves towards a brevity of speech through limiting the time and space in which we have to speak; this constitutes the most basic definition of form, and without its resistance … there can be no art.'

'The poem is then shaped by a pressured silence',[166] Paterson says, the white space that surrounds a word on the page:

> The white space around the poem then becomes a potent symbol of the poem's significant intent. This white space is both literally and symbolically equivalent to silence.[167] Silence is then the poet's grounds … [Silence *marks* the poem]. This mark explicitly invites the reader to attend to the poem in such away it permits its full resonant potential, both acoustically and semantically, as a voice within an auditorium[168] … [Silence] is the acoustic space in which the poem makes its large echoes.[169]

Lyrical poetry requests the reader to enquire deeply into the meaning of its words and the sounds they make, because it operates in the understanding that 'it has more *significance* than a piece of prose'.[170] '*Sound and sense are aspects of the same thing*' in the poem's composition, as 'sound is allowed to guide us to sense and vice-versa', trusting the ear 'to think, and the mind to hear',[171] and constituting a 'phonosemantic' system where both the sound of the word and its meaning define its appropriateness, Paterson explains.[172] Language, he concludes, works by synaesthetic analogies and the patterning of sound—or its musicality—is a necessity

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166   Ibid.

167   Ibid., 62: 'Under this pressure we are immediately compelled towards original speech through simply being forced to choose our words with the outmost economy, since there is no room for redundant elaboration.'

168   Ibid.

169   Ibid., 63: 'Since it is silence what lends poems their significance look … [When] the ground of silence is stained (by extraneous chatter, inadvertent repetition, super-fluous qualifiers, unnecessary glosses and accidental noise) the sense of a word as a distinctive acoustic event is wrecked, and all subtle lyric patterning inaudible.'

170   Ibid., 62.

171   Ibid., 66.

172   Ibid.

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in any speech which seeks brevity and maximizing its resonant potential to make a musically coherent unity.[173]

2.2.2   The short story: a round entity made of fragments

Because the thesis looks into the spatial ideas by writers of short fiction like Borges and Cortázar, it is now necessary to say what a short story is and what aspects it shares with lyrical poetry. I will start discussing five major characteristics of the short story: oneness, intensity, brevity, tension and lyricism, as defined by Edgar Allan Poe.

Poe's critical comments on the form of the short story in the 1830s[174] are largely responsible for the birth of the short story as a genre, says Charles May in his book *The Short Story*[175]. In his bibliographic essay he explains how for Poe the pleasure in the short story results from the perception of oneness, uniqueness, and the overall unity of the work that constitutes a totality of interest or effect. In his review of Hawthorne's 'Twice-Told Tales' of 1842[176] Poe defines the aspects of unity and brevity for the short story and claims that 'unity is achieved only in work that the reader can hold in the mind all at once'. Like the poem, Poe says, the short story has the potential to achieve 'totality' and a powerful 'single effect':

> In almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed

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173   Ibid., 66–72.

174   Edgar Allan Poe, *The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe. With selections from his critical writings,* E. McKnight Kauffer, Edward Hayes O'Neill, and Arthur Hobson Quinn (eds.), 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946).

175   Charles May, *The Short Story: The Reality of Artifice* (New York: Twayne, 1995).

176   Poe, *The Complete Poems and Stories of Edgar Allan Poe.*

in one sitting. We continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. *Thus the long poem is a paradox*. And without unity of impression, the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of an imperfect sense of art and their reign is no more. A novel … as it cannot be read in one sitting, it deprives itself of the immense force derivable from totality … simple cessation in reading would of itself be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale … the soul of the reader is in the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences—resulting from weariness and interruption. A tale has to pursue a single affect … *Undue brevity is just as exceptional here as in the poem*.[177](My emphasis).

In Poe's essays 'The Poetic Principle' and 'Philosophy of Composition'[178] he goes further, asserting that the effect of the tale should be at the beginning of the story and establishing brevity as characteristic of poetry: '[In poetical composition] brevity must be in direct ratio of the intended effect … a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all'. A long poem is a contradiction in itself , he affirms, because 'a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement … [and this excitement] cannot be sustained by a composition of any great length.'[179] So the arousal of an aesthetic response in the reader, affect and brevity are interrelated aspects to preserve the unity of the poem—its totality of effect or impression.

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177   Ibid., 949–50.

178   Ibid., 980.

179   Ibid., 1022.

2.2.3   The lyrical short story

In the nineteenth century, the stories of Washington Irving, Hawthorne and Poe suggested that the new attitude of the teller towards his materials 'results from the romantic awareness that spiritual transcendence is not longer an absolute but a function of perspective and therefore a point of view,' says May. This is relevant to the analysis because it marks a new attention and aesthetic validity given to subjectivity in the genre, positioning the short story midway between the novel and the lyric poem. It also suggests an incipient romantic preference for the emotive and subjective over the positivism of Modernity, an opposition that will spread across other artistic manifestations in the twentieth century, confronting, within Modernism, the rational objectivism of modern architecture to the expressionistic and irrational products of Surrealism or Dada, for example.

As shown in the previous paragraphs, Poe himself placed the short story next to the lyric, as most critics later agreed.[180] By the 1950s, critics were increasingly noting the lyrical nature of the short story and its efforts to escape predefined formulas to build the plot. Walton Patrick in 'The Poetic Style in the Contemporary Short Story' argued that the poetic style appears more consistently in the short story than in the novel because 'metaphorical dilations of language' are essential to the writer who 'strives to pack the utmost meaning into a restrictive space.[181] In this way, brevity of form and constriction in space produce, according to Patrick, a lyrical result.

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180   May, *The Short Story*, 114: 'Indeed, except for the fact that the short story shares with the novel the medium of prose, most critics agree that there is a fundamental difference between these two forms. Although the short story is committed to a prose fictional presentation of an event, it makes use of the plural-signification of poetry—a metaphorically over-determined language, which results either from the basically subjective nature of the form or from its "much-in-little" necessity to use the most suggestive but economical means possible.'

181   Walton Patrick, 'Poetic Style in the Contemporary Short Story', *College Composition and Communication* (18; May 1967), 77.

John Gerlach, in his essay 'Narrative, Lyric and Plot in Chris Offutt's Out of the Woods', quotes May who affirms that 'the short story has always been more closely associated with lyric poetry than with ... the novel',[182] and it has always pursued to move 'away from the linearity of prose toward the spatiality of poetry.' Gerlach defines the concept of lyrical spatiality in the short story as a result of a non-linearity of time in the telling of the story's events. For him, stories that do not develop in a linear fashion generate a *lyrical spatiality*, and this concept means an *all-at-onceness*:

> When there is a significant disjunction [between the chronological
> sequence of events and the actual telling] or disjunction in frequency, the
> number of times an event is told, [the plot] generates a more paradigmatic
> perception. The increasing presence of embedded elements (flashbacks …
> or analepsis) can generate a more paradigmatic sense of all-at-onceness,
> of lyrical spatiality. Analepsis minimizes the effect of chronological time in
> favour of perceived time, time in human memory.[183]

Stories that he is inclined to classify as 'lyrical' show a less linear structure of the plot, and draws from Ralph Freedman's definition of the Lyrical Novel,[184] affirming that its ability to 'absorb' the action and to refashion it as a 'pattern of imagery' rather than as a timely coherent sequence of events, is also a characteristic that can be applied to the short story.[185]

Eileen Baldeshwiler argues that some stories which she calls 'lyric' have elements that are usually associated with poetry. Like Gerlach, she also notes the 'deviation from chronological sequence' as a sign of lyricism. The exploitation of verbal resources, such as tone and imagery, a focus upon an increased awareness of phenomenal states and 'a high degree of suggestiveness and emotional intensity' are the other aspects that bring the short story closer to lyric poetry.[186]

For Baldeshwiler the lyrical story first emerges as a distinctive form with Ivan Turgenev's tonal and impressionistic sketches in *A Sportsman's Notebook*. Episodic and unconventional, Turgenev's lyrical stories 'exhibit a supreme power of cloaking all in a dream-like incandescence of casting a gently melancholy ... over his own vision over objects and events',[187] she argues and suggests Chekhov works the lyric story differently because he concentrates all attention in *'reporting small, emotionally laden situations from the point of view of two or three characters. Turgenev and Chekhov consciously exploited language to express more sharply states of feeling and subtle changes of emotion,* freeing the short stories from the limitations of conventional plot'; with them, '*the locus of narrative art moved from external action to internal states of mind.'*[188] (My emphasis.) What this analysis is showing is that the third-person account of the novel shifts to the first-person account of poetry in the short story, to present emotion, memory and perception—the subjective material that defines the characters' minds and its changes—intertwined with a non-linear progression of the plot.

182   May, 'Chekhov and the Modern Short Story', *The New Short Story Theories* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), 214.

183   John Gerlach, 'Narrative, Lyric and Plot in Chris Offutt's Out of the Woods', in Per Winther, Jakob Lothe, and Hans H. Skei (eds.), *The Art of Brevity: Excursions in Short Fiction Theory and Analysis* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 50.

184   Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

185   John Gerlach, 'Narrative, Lyric and Plot in Chris Offutt's Out of the Woods', 50.

186   Eileen Baldeshwiler, 'The Lyric Short Story: The Sketch of a History', in *Studies in Short Fiction* (6; Newberry SC: Newberry College, Summer 1969), 443–54. And Charles E. May (ed.), *Short Story Theories* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), 202–14.

187   Ibid., 444.

188   Ibid., 446.

The difference between epic and lyrical narrative lies in that 'epic narrative is marked by external action developed "syllogistically" through characters created mainly to forward the plot, culminating in a decisive ending … [Whereas] lyrical stories concentrate on internal changes, moods and feelings, utilizing a variety of structured patterns depending on the shape of the emotion itself, relying for the most part on an open ending and expressed in the condensed, evocative and often figured language of the poem ... [Thus] the term "lyric" refers not so much to structure as to subject and tone.'[189] Short story writers like Frank O'Connor or William Faulkner also stress the lyrical and highly aesthetic nature of the short story. O'Connor says that the short story form is the nearest fictional form to lyrical poetry because it requires less knowledge of circumstances than a novel, whereas a short story can have the sort of detachment from circumstances that the lyrical poetry has; and for Faulkner, 'almost every word has to be exactly right', like in a poem.[190]

2.2.4 Metaphoric resolution

Two more characteristics define the short story: abrupt endings and the metaphoric resolution of the plot.[191]

Typically, the short story's form suggests strangeness, the unusual, and the unexpected as it focus on the mysteries of dreams, fears, and anxieties based on experiences or perceptions outside the realm of the familiar.[192] Its compactness, demands the transformation of mere objects and events into significance, which

generates its lyricism: '[whereas] in the novel the particular enhances the reality of the work, in the short story the detail is transformed into metaphoric significance.'[193]

Moreover, according to May, the 'metaphoric short story' can only achieve closure aesthetically rather than dramatically,[194] like Raymond Carver's minimalist and eventless endings, or those of Cortázar, where the meaning of the end is left to the reader in stories like 'The River', 'The Island at Midday' or 'The Other Sky'.

These eventless and abrupt endings focus again on tone and metaphor;[195] the form carries a tension which is a consequence of the confrontation between 'the mundane, real and the everyday, and … those strange eruptions of the metaphoric world'. This tension, between the real and the imagined, perceived or recalled, between the objective and subjective, is never resolved, 'and its only possible solution is aesthetic.'[196]

2.2.5 On brevity, intensity and exceptionality

As a natural result of brevity and narrative urgency, intensity, fragmentation and exceptionality develop as other aspects of the form.[197]

In his *Theory of the Novel* György Lukács suggests that the implication of its shortness relates to an idea of fragmentation, of the delimitation of a 'fragment of life' 'lifted

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189   Ibid., 444.

190   May, *The Short Story*, 122.

191   May, 'Why Short Stories Are Essential and Why They Are Seldom Read ', in Per Winther, Jakob Lothe and Hans Skei (eds.), *The Art of Brevity: Excursions in Short Fiction Theory and Analysis* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004).

192   Ibid., 17.

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193   Ibid., 18.

194   Ibid., 21.

195   Ibid.

196   Ibid., 21–22.

197   May, *The Short Story*, 11: 'the shortness of the form seems inevitably to require some sense of intensity or intensification of structure and emphasis on the end—a requirement that is absent in the novel.'

out of life's totality'. 'The form is inevitably lyrical', he says, because of the author's form-giving, structuring and delimiting act: a lyricism that lies in the 'pure section'.[198]

Yet for all this lyricism the short story must deal with events, and the kind of event that Lukács says it focuses on is one that 'pin-points the strangeness and ambiguity of life', its lyricism concealed behind 'the event'.[199]

According to Bliss Perry's *Study of Prose Short Fiction* (1902), the need to choose exceptional circumstances is also an aspect of the short story.[200] This view is also shared by Flannery O'Connor who claimed in her book of essays collected in *Mystery and Manners* that the form is one which the writer makes 'alive some experiences which we are not accustomed to observe everyday, or which the ordinary man might never experience in his ordinary life … Their fictional qualities lean away from typical patterns, toward mystery and the unexpected.'[201] The short story, she says, works by the accumulation of detail because it has to accomplish more in less space. Those details will accumulate meaning, become symbolic to the action, and bring depth to the work.[202]

Intensity does not derive solely from a chosen incident or a theme but also from the dramatic way in which the incident is expressed, Mays says,[203] and suggests Poe's major contribution is that he brought tension, a characteristic of poetry, to the short

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198   György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: a Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1971), 50–51.

199   Ibid., 51

200   Bliss Perry, *Study of Prose Short Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press,1920), 315–16.

201   May, *The Short Story*, 117.

202   Flannery O'Connor (ed.), *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1972), 70.

203   May, *The Short Story*, 119.

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story form.[204] 'The very shortness of the short story forces it to focus on the fragment, on a single experience lifted out of everyday life, rather than the whole of the experience'. He believes that this is because the short story does not depict reality, but 'a moment in which "reality" itself is challenged … as it does not merge, as the novel might do, the extraordinary with the ordinary'.[205] So, for May, the questionable verisimilitude of the short story re-elaborates the meaning of reality:

> If we assume that reality is what we experience every day, if it is our well-controlled and comfortable self, then the short story it is not "realistic" … however, if we have a sense of the liminal nature of existence, then the short story is more realistic than the novel can possibly be … and it is closer to a nature of reality as we experience it in those moments when we sense the inadequacy of our categories of perception.[206]

Raymond Carver and Cortázar, both writers of poetry and short stories, agree about intensity and tension as characteristics which structure their work. In his essay 'On Writing' Carver explains that he likes the feeling of threat or sense of menace that structure short stories because 'there has to be tension, a sense that something is imminent, that certain things are in relentless motion, or else, most often, there simply won't be a story'.[207] What creates tension in a piece of fiction is composed by 'the things that are left out, that are implied, the landscape just under the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things.'[208]

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204   Ibid.

205   May, 'Why Short Stories Are Essential and Why They Are Seldom Read ', 24.

206   Ibid.

207   Raymond Carver, 'On Writing', in *Call if You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Prose*, ed. William L. Stull (London: Harvill, 2000), 87–92. And in *Mississippi Review* (14; Winter 1985), 50.

208   Ibid.

My last paragraphs on the short story draw from Cortázar's essays on the genre. In 'Algunos aspectos del cuento' [Some Aspects of the Short Story][209] he too reflects on the aspects of intensity and tension in the short story. The aspect of fragmentation introduced by Lukács is illustrated by Cortázar by comparing the genre to photography. He suggests that a film is an 'open order' and relates to the novel, whereas the short story presupposes a limitation similar to that of photography. This limitation is imposed by the reduced field of the lens and by the way the photographer aesthetically uses that limitation; moreover, both photography and the short story capture a fragment of reality in such a way that the fragment acts as a threshold to a wider representation of that reality. Both the photographer and the short story writer are forced to choose an event or to limit an image that is significant and able to project a sensibility that goes beyond the visual or literary anecdote. By contrast, films and novels do so through the accumulation of details; they proceed to capture reality by partial movements. Thus if short fiction starts with the notion of limit, a physical limit that produces a condensation of time and space in the story, time is not its ally, he argues, and depth becomes its only resource. Intensity and tension are a result of this compression.

In 'Del cuento breve y sus alrededores' [On the Short Story and its Contexts] Cortázar says that the contemporary short story is an 'infallible machine whose narrative mission has to be fulfilled with the minimum elements'. He calls his short stories 'against the clock', spherical and closed cycles, which have to be written from inside to the outside. He draws from the principles set by another writer of short stories, Horacio Quiroga (Uruguay/Argentina 1878–1937) to explain this: the writer of short stories writes as if he or she is one of the characters of the story, and by situating the writer inside the story, narration and action turns into the same thing. For Cortázar writing a short story mimics the urgency of writing poetry defined by Paterson:

'There's no genetic difference between the short story and poetry as understood after Baudelaire. They both emerge from the same sudden estrangement'.[210]

In the previous paragraphs lyricism was defined by content. This is subjectivity, the material that defines self, composed of 'feelings and reflections' and the singular and unique point of view of the author. The lyrical carries the need of sound, rhythm and tone for its communication, as it evolved from song to the sounds and silences of the voice uttering the poem. Lyrical poetry, as opposed to epic poetry, is like song in that shares its condensed and urgent brevity, and is based on personal performance and the 'echo' in the audience's mind of the poet's bodily act of expression, his or her process of creation. Emotional intensity, brevity and linguistic singularity manifest, through details, fragments and particularization, the lyric.

Short stories are like lyric poetry in their compactness and their consequent frequent need to express ideas obliquely and metaphorically to focus on subjectivity, and to break free from the chronological order and causal logic typical of longer narratives, fictional and non-fictional. Short stories therefore structure their imaginary worlds, their playgrounds of emotion, less by time than by space, producing a 'lyrical spatiality'. The following paragraphs will develop the notion of the spatialization of the verbal in the short story to explore further the notion of spatial lyricism.

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209   Cortázar, 'Algunos aspectos del cuento', in Saúl Yurkievich, Jaime Alazraki, and Saúl Sosnowski (eds.), *Obra crítica* (2; Madrid: Alfaguara, 2006), 365–85.

210   Cortázar, 'Del cuento breve y sus alrededores', *Último Round* (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1969).

2.3 Marcaccio's and Fontana's Neo-Baroque Space

2.3.1 The spatialization of the neo-fantastic

To understand Cortázar's spatial thinking behind 'The Other Sky' it is necessary to identify the aspects of the neo-fantastic, the genre he helped to define according to Jaime Alazraki. In the prologue to the first volume of Cortázar's complete works, he says that although both Borges and Cortázar wrote fantastic stories, neither shared much with the North American writers who between 1820 and 1850 invented the genre and produced masterpieces. 'Nineteenth-century traditional fantastic literature derives from romanticism and proposed to terrify the reader, whereas the neo-fantastic looks for epistemological alternatives to the scientific knowledge of the world',[211] he suggests. Even if very much influenced by Poe, Cortázar says that '[a]lmost all the short stories that I have written belong to the genre of fantastic literature,'[212] he also tells us that he is not driven by the negative aspect,[213] 'the morbid climate that disorients the reader and conditions him or her to access obediently mystery and fear', intrinsic to the 'pure fantastic'. Neither he nor Borges, says Alazraki, are interested in striking the reader with fear and horror, the distinctive features of the traditional fantastic tale. The fantastic dimension in Cortázar's fiction is defined by an 'everyday' treatment of circumstances and characters that do not correspond to reality: 'within perfectly realist circumstances, those that we

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211   Alazraki, 'Prólogo: puentes a la otredad'.

212   Cortázar, 'Algunos aspectos del cuento'.

213   Cortázar, 'El estado actual de la narrativa en Hispanoamérica', in Ivan Ivask, Jaime Alazraki, and Joaquín Marco (eds.), *La isla final* (Madrid: Ultramar, 1983), 66–67: 'The traces of writers such E. A. Poe are undoubtedly at the deepest levels of many of my stories, and I believe that without "Ligeia", without "The Fall of the House of Usher" I would have not had such a inclination to the fantastic … that strikes me at times more unexpected and drives me to write as the only way to situate myself in the territory of the uncanny.'

recognize as our everyday world, our quotidian context is violated by an unusual and extraordinary event not aimed to provoke fear, but to reveal "another secret order", a "second reality" or the "marvellous", as André Breton calls it.'[214]

This 'marvellous' character might have been echoed by the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier in the prologue to *El reino de este mundo* [The Kingdom of this World, 1949] where he establishes the principles of the 'marvellously real':

> The marvellously real arises from an unexpected alteration of reality,
> from an unusual enlightenment of the unnoticed richness of reality, from
> an enlargement of the categories and scales of reality, perceived with
> particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit which leads to
> a way of 'estado limite'. To begin with, the sensation of the marvellous
> presupposes having a faith. The presence and validity of 'the marvellously
> real' is America's heritage … as in America, the unusual is the quotidian.[215]

Carpentier says that the uniqueness of Latin America is opposed to jaded, exhausted post-war Europe. He juxtaposes the reality and exuberance of tropical America, its geography and its history, to the pale, rational, European simulacra in his novels *The Lost Steps* and *The Kingdom of this World*. He thus inaugurates a baroque type of writing that 'incorporated everything' from popular belief to magic and legend, evaluating it as as valid as the imported art from Europe.[216]

Cortázar's fiction, developed between 1950 and 1980, looks for 'an alternative to the false realism that consists in believing that the world can only be described and

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214   Alazraki, 'Prólogo: puentes a la otredad'.

215   Alejo Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo* (Puerto Rico: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2006), 3.

216   Jason Wilson, 'Spanish American Narrative, 1920–1970', in John King (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 84–104.

explained by eighteenth-century positivist thinking',[217] by the logical categories of knowledge and by our dependency on the use of rational instruments to measure and grasp reality. Alazraki maintains that Cortázar's neo-fantastic fiction derives from a tension of two opposite forces which lie in the confrontation between time and its negation, and space defined geometrically and its transcendence, both within the same story.

In the neo-fantastic, the narrative is supported with equal legitimization in the realist dimension as in the fantastic dimension; both constitute the tracks over which the story travels. This happens in particular in three of his short stories: 'Continuity of Parks' where the reader of the novel becomes its protagonist; 'The Other Sky,' where the protagonist tells two intertwined stories while wandering alternately under two skies, one that hangs over Buenos Aires, agitated by the aftermath of the Second World War, and another sky under the artificial galleries and passages of nineteenth-century Paris; and 'The River', where there is triple fusion of voices, times and images: the end of a marriage told by the husband's voice is interwoven to the wife's point of view. This articulation is expressed in the voices and sounds of love from the matrimonial bed superimposed on the convulsions and spasms of death from the depths of the river, and the images perceived by the husband believing his wife peacefully sleeping by his side juxtaposed to the images of the woman's suicide in the river.[218]

'In contrast with nineteenth-century narrations, where the text moves from the familiar and known to the unfamiliar and supernatural inhabited by the terrifying, the neo-fantastic writer gives equal validity and verisimilitude to both orders, and moves freely between them.'[219] Beatriz Sarlo defines this movement from reality

to the 'other space' as called by Cortázar, a *passage*. She characterizes Cortázar's work as a 'Literature of Passages'.[220] In her article published in 1994, written after reading Cortázar's critical notes collected by Alfaguara Press, she re-reads his essay 'Recordación de Don Ezequiel'[221] which plays homage to Ezequiel Martínez Estrada. In the essay, Cortázar tells us about a Sunday afternoon encounter in the Pampas countryside between Martínez Estrada, himself and other writers. He explains how Martínez Estrada revealed to them his idea about the discontinuity of space which, according to Sarlo, describes Cortázar's own spatial game:

> There was a long walk by the countryside and at a given time we saw in the air one of these strange and beautiful dancing forms composed by millions of tiny insects, sciniphs are called or something like that, revolving in a hallucinative whirlwind without slipping out of the limits set by some mysterious code. In this case the figure was a double cone, or a funnel that barely moves in space, while its interior vibrated in a myriad of black spots spinning crazily. Then Martínez Estrada explained to us the mystery, which for him it was not such, although as always the explanation did not do more than create another even deeper mystery. His theory, in short, was that the space is not continuous as we believe, but full of holes, and that living organisms are born and develop within the limits of their corresponding hole, beyond which they cannot pass. The sciniphs were occupying a hole in the form of double cone, which they could not exceed in any way; the hole was moving very slowly in the air, and it was useless to try to scare the sciniphs off because the strange shape would be reconvened in its hole and the dance would continue as before.

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217   Cortázar, 'Algunos aspectos del cuento'.

218   Alazraki, 'Prólogo: puentes a la otredad'.

219   Ibid., 51.

220   Beatriz Sarlo, 'Una literatura de pasajes', *Espacios de Crítica y Producción,* (14; 1994), 16–18.

221   Cortázar, 'Recordación de Don Ezequiel', in Saúl Yurkievich, Jaime Alazraki, and Saul Sosnowski (eds.), *Obra crítica* (3; Madrid: Alfaguara, 1994).

The text was written in 1980, Sarlo tells us, and what Cortázar attributes to Martínez Estrada is the actual explanation of his own work: the juxtaposition of visible and virtual spaces exposed in the novels *Rayuela* [Hopscotch] (1963), and *62/Modelo para armar* [62: A Model Kit] (1968), or the short story 'El otro cielo'. *Rayuela* is not about the link between Paris and Buenos Aires, but about the virtual spaces and the paths that bring together those spaces. It is a novel about experiencing a spatial drift: 'what happens in the novel can only be understood if it is accepted that the journeys are the most significant motivator of the fiction … As the sciniphs seen by Martínez Estrada and Cortázar in the Buenos Aires countryside, the characters occupy virtual spaces, the passages from one to another, and the mishaps are what produce the fiction … Those spaces propose an aesthetic, a language and the limits where the character develops.'[222]

Cortázar's fiction thinks spatially—not in a realistic manner, but in a fantastic way. Sarlo sees in 'Continuity of Parks' another example of the invisible movement that takes the character from one space to another, as if the sciniphs broke the cone they are inscribed in, and form another cone somewhere else. In this transit, she says, operates the fantastic and 'the unknown lies in wait'. In trying to define his work, she asserts that Cortázar's fiction shows the consequences of the passages between spaces that normal perception keeps separate. It is the machine of the passage and the transgressions to the limits of those spaces: 'in these discontinuous spaces circulate letters, dead dialects, voices, idols, music, broken dolls … when they communicate they leave open the possibility of the uncanny … For Cortázar, as for the surrealists, literature has to open a passage, has to trace a tangential line from an ordinary and familiar place to an unknown space.'[223]

Fig. 20a: Galerie Vivienne (1823), Paris

Fig. 20b: Galerie Vivienne (1823), Paris

2.3.2 'The Other Sky'

The main character of 'The Other Sky' strolls around two cities pleasurably carried away by his favourite streets in two different times: Buenos Aires after the Second World War and nineteenth-century Paris. The ambiguous territory of arcades and galleries are the space where the story takes place; the passage is the space of the action in two cities and two different times but narrated and lived by one man (a 'South American' stockbroker) who aimlessly wanders around the gallery districts, going from the Güemes Arcade in Buenos Aires to the Galerie Vivienne or the Passage des Panoramas in Paris. The first paragraph already presents the movement that the character will experience through the story, travelling across time and space:

it would be enough to become one of those citizens who let themselves get carried away by their favourite streets, and almost always my walks ended in the gallery district, perhaps because arcades and galleries have always been my secret country. Here for example the Güemes Arcade, an ambiguous territory where, so many years ago, I went to strip off my childhood like a used suit. Around the 1928, the Güemes Arcade was the treasure cave in which a glimpse of sin and mint drops deliciously mixed… I specially remember smells and sounds … already then I was sensitive to that false sky of dirty stucco and skylights, to that artificial night which ignored the stupidity of day and the sun outside. With false indifference, I would peek into the doors of the arcade where the last mystery began, the vague elevators that would lead to the offices of VD doctors and also to the presumed paradises higher up, of prostitutes and perverts … with preferably green drinks … silk gowns and violet kimonos, and the apartments would have the same perfume that came out of stores, which I thought were so elegant … under the low light of the arcade … It's still hard for me to cross the Güemes Arcade without feeling ironically tender toward the memory of adolescence … the old fascination still persists, and

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222   Sarlo, 'Una literatura de pasajes'.

223   Ibid., 18.

that is why I liked to walk without a fixed destination, knowing that at any moment I would enter the region of the galleries, where any sordid, dusty shop would attract me more than the windows facing the insolence of the open streets. The Galerie Vivienne, for example, or the Passage des Panoramas with its branches, its short cuts which end in second hand book shops … that world which has chosen a nearer sky, of dirty windows and stucco with allegorical figures that extend their hands to offer garlands, that Galerie Vivienne, one step from the daily shame of the Rue Réaumur and of the Bourse (I work at the stock exchange).[224]

The galleries, or the 'nearer sky', configure a three-dimensional deep and baroque space that is not only populated by sculptural and allegorical figures, but also dusty shops and dubious offices, kiosks and skylights, cafes with multiplying mirrors and dark staircases where the murderer Laurent hides. These spaces within the passage form a punctured and permeable boundary, and the thresholds to enter these secondary spaces are 'the doors where mystery begins'. This is clearly emphasized when the character meets his muse, Josiane, not in Boulevard Poissonnière or on the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Victoires, but 'instead we looked at each other for the first time in deepest Galerie Vivienne, under the plaster figures which the gaslight would fill with tremors (the garlands moved back and forth between the fingers of the dusty muses)':
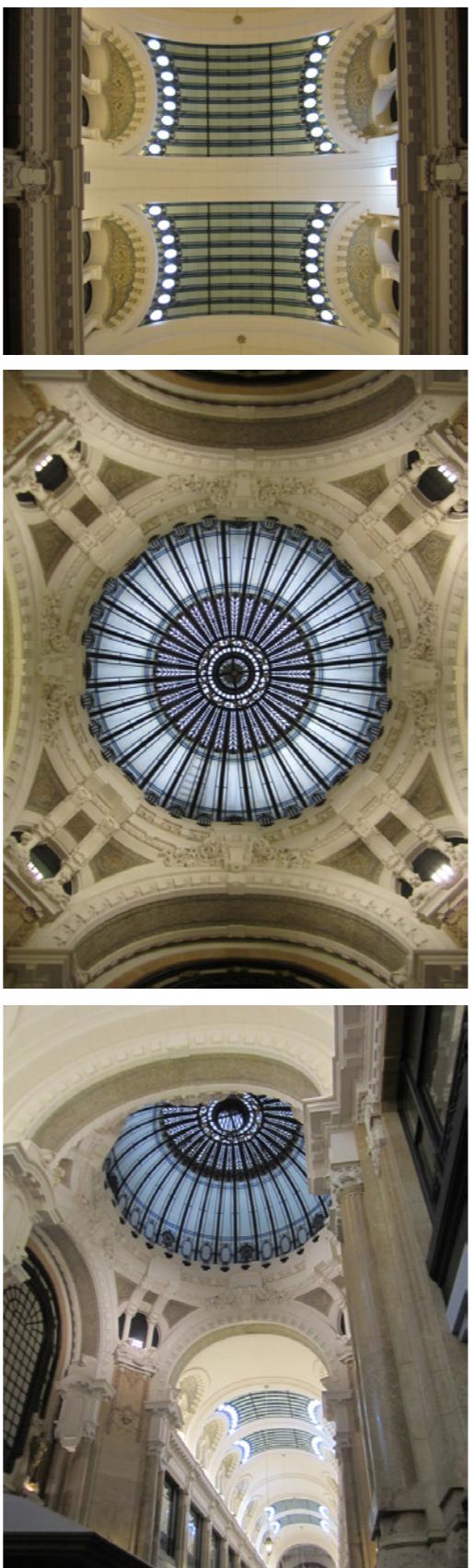
Fig 20c: Güemes Arcade (1915), Buenos Aires

Fig 20d: Güemes Arcade (1915), Buenos Aires

Fig. 20e: Güemes Arcade (1915) , Buenos Aires

I enjoyed having a drink here and another further on, leisurely watching for the moment when I'd spy Josiane's figure in some corner of the galleries or at some bar. If she had already company, a chosen signal would let me know when I would find her alone; other time she would simply smile and I would be left to devote my time to the galleries ; those were the explorer's hours, so I venture into the farthest regions of the neighbourhood, the Galerie Sainte-Foy, for example, and the remote Passage du Caire, but even though any of them attracted me more than the open streets (and they were so many, today it was the Passage des Princes, another time the Passage Verdeau, and so on to infinity) the end of a long tour which I myself wouldn't have been able to reconstruct always took me back to the Galerie Vivienne, not so much because of Josiane, although also for her, but for the protective gates, its ancients allegories, its shadows in the corner of the Passage des Petits-Pères, that different world where you didn't have to think about Irma and could live not by regular schedules, but by chance encounters and luck.[225]

Cortázar makes his character wander 'easily' from one time to another, from one country to another, and when this occurs within one sentence, says Alejandra Pizarnik,[226] the phrase acquires the quality of a 'rotating scene'. The sentence becomes a 'grammatical space in movement', where the present space and time of the narrator, his adventures of mental voyages from Paris to Buenos Aires, his happiness or deception at his arrival or departure, the descriptions of places and people, of his own feelings and impressions, respond to the structure of a passage. The spatialization of the sentence that Pizarnik refers to in her essay, originally written in 1966 and included in the first publication of *All Fires the Fire* where the story first appeared, is explained visually by the figure of a theatrical set, turning the reader into a spectator. Her

224   Julio Cortázar, *All Fires the Fire and Other Stories,* trans. Suzanne Jill Levine (London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1979), 128–30.

225   Ibid., 137.

226   Alejandra Pizarnik, 'Nota sobre un cuento de Julio Cortázar: *El otro cielo*', in Ana Becciu (ed.), *Prosa Completa* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2001), 245–51.

interpretation leads to thinking the sentence as a scene: a passage which the spectator cannot access but which rotates in front of us, to show us at each end two cities in two different times, where the character is the only one allowed to travel through it and the only one who experiences the space proposed by it.

2.3.3 Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories:* 'passages of thought and feeling'

Cortázar's literary spatio-temporal passages can be linked to the then contemporary visual explorations of Lucio Fontana, developed between 1946 and 1968, and trace a new line of continuity to now with the neo-baroque paintings by the Argentine artist Fabián Marcaccio (1963–). The passage and the notion of movement across space that Cortázar illustrates in the verbal, and allows us to experience through his character in 'The Other Sky', 'Continuity of Parks' or 'The River', are made physically present by Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories*.

The series of long baroque paintings *materially* unfold an abstract story that transforms the gallery space into a passage and the viewer into a voyager. I say 'materially' because the work includes digital images and physical elements made with moulds using sculpture techniques and direct painting. The materials that bring three-dimensionality to the work include polymers and silicones, creating a collage that, he says, goes beyond the *fresco* painting of natural pigments and plaster, or the modern and surrealist cut-out tradition: 'I am leaving that behind', he says, 'I am going beyond the collage or the Modernist cut-out. I am trying to create a new continuity, while maintaining the dispersion of difference'.[227]

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227   Marcaccio, Fabian *Paintant Stories*, ed. Hans-Michael Herzog (Zurich: Daros-Latinamerica, 2005), 93.

The sense of movement that is visually represented by the painting when the actual strokes of paint metamorphose continuously from object into body into surroundings (from the image of a body into exaggerated and enlarged images of animals and nature or the threads of the canvas) is also made actual and present in the relationship between painting, space and viewer. When the painter explains his works he says that *Paintant Stories* in Cologne is his favourite installation because it achieved a highly dynamic form of pictorial panorama: it creates a space that is connected with the social space of the street. In Cologne, Marcaccio's work creates its own doors, it 'goes in and out', readjusting the space already pre-set by the gallery's walls. Its physical boundaries are somehow reconfigured, paradoxically, by the own surface of the painting. He explains how the tradition of the mural, whose frame is the actual architecture, is subverted by *Paintant Stories*, which, while also a frameless painting, goes through the wall towards the exterior, returns inside to detach itself from the walls of the gallery, and re-engages with it later, forming a passage of 'sinuous boundaries'.

Fig. 21: Fabián Marcaccio, *Miami Paintant* (2004), Miami Art Museum, 4 x 30 metres

2.3.4   Movement, intensity and liminality

Paintant Stories is composed of an assemblage of fragments that together form a system that does not refer to a whole. In the long paintings an excessive number of details suffer a process of enlargement in which sheer size and number suppress the idea of entirety. According to Omar Calabrese,[228] one of the attributes of the neo-baroque is the pre-eminence of fragment, what he calls the *fall of totality*. To explain this Calabrese introduces Carlo Scarpa's architecture, who transformed the practice into a 'genuine style of reconstruction' by the decontextualization of fragments that 'makes us "lose sight" of our larger general frames of reference'.[229]

Following Calabrese's thinking the detail here is the picture itself, becoming a fragment or a singularity. The extraction of fragments from their original context, and in Marcaccio's case their recomposition within the frame of the painting, is based on the notion of multiplicity. 'New values are acquired from the *isolation* of fragments and from their re-situation in another context'.[230] Because the fragments tend to emphasize their breaking away from the whole, with no sign or any desire to recombine it, a pleasure arises from this practice of emptying and resignifying fragments. As in the short story, a new intensity arises.

Marcaccio's work in Ostend, Belgium, in 2003, *Confine Paintant* is a 300 metres long painting along the shore. The work is 'a kind of mapping' of the space the painting occupies, an abstraction inspired by the sea that presents a new horizon on the shore 'like a scroll that was unravelling a story about the sea'. Each painting is like a different conception of the sea, says Marcaccio. Asked about the notion

of time and space he explores with his work, he says that he conceives of time as discontinuous and of space porous: 'Like a passage… my conception is like a kind of temporality that says: "We go with the painting, we enter the painting, we leave the painting."'[231] This idea of a discontinuous temporality lies behind Cortázar's short stories discussed above. The idea of the passage first suggested by Sarlo (1994) is visually presented by Marcaccio in his collection of large paintings. He defines his work as a time-space composition because to see them 'it takes times, they make us walk across the space to unravel the story, they demand a vision in real time and

Fig. 22: Fabián Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories* (2001), Cologne

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228   Omar Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 71.

229   Ibid., 90.

230   Ibid., 89.

231   Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 100.

real motion', he explains: 'My works … flow in some way in real space and present a passage across that real space'.[232]

The following paragraphs link Marcaccio's pictorial 'spatialism', materialised by the passage, to Fontana's material gestures which emerged in 1946 with the publication

Fig. 23: Fabián Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories* (2001). Detail

Fig. 25a and 25b: Greg Lynn and Fabián Marcaccio, *Predator* (2001), Vienna, 6 x 10 x 3 metres

'[M]y work seems to be a kind of constant passage towards something else because I consider that the people who are experiencing my work already have this way of thinking, that they are connected with the work in a neuralgic way. Francis Bacon once said: "I want my work to go straight to the nervous system."'
Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 82

Fig. 24: Fabián Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories* (2001). Detail

of the 'White Manifesto' and the 'Spatialist Movement'. The Spatialists advocated a three-dimensional art and praised the baroque representation of space because it includes time and the 'figures seem to abandon the surface of the flat canvas and their movements seem to continue in space'.[233]

Fontana's Spatialism goes beyond perforations to incorporate space and create environments. One of the essential components of his art is the baroque, in the sense that forms are no longer restricted and closed in on themselves, but on the contrary, tend to open up into space. This desire to reach out into space is present also in his earlier work, before the foundation of Spatialism in 1946 with the 'White

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232   Ibid., 66.

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233   Rafael Cippolini, *Manifiestos argentinos: políticas de lo visual 1900–2000* (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2003).

Fig. 25c: Greg Lynn and Fabián Marcaccio, *Predator* (2001), Vienna. Details of vacu-formed plastic panels, digitally printed and painted

Manifesto', and was explored further in the 'Manifesto tecnico dello spazialismo' (1951) and 'Manifesto del movimento spaziale per la televisione' (1952).[234]

Fontana was much influenced by the idea of gestural signs which covered the canvases. In his work the surface of the painting is intended to be covered not only in colours, as with action painting, but also with signs that wound the canvas and penetrate space. By this act of perforation the signs become a link between the surface and the space, between the second and the third dimensions.[235] The series *Concetto spaziale* [Spatial Concept], where the picture's surface is transgressed by the action of cutting through it, has been many times described as a representation of a desire to open up a threshold of space. In 'The Optic of the Invisible. Wish for Space: Fontana/Brasil', Paulo Herkenhoff reaffirms this idea but also goes further in the analysis of its emergence in Argentina, and how

Fig. 25d: Greg Lynn and Fabián Marcaccio, *Predator* (2001), Vienna. Details assembled by the painter

Fontana's 'wish for space' was shared by other contemporary Brazilian artists and the Western art unfolding in South America. With the aim to reaffirm Fontana's Southamerican roots and its influence in his work, Herkenhoff suggests that the gesture of the cut and the puncture might evoke Gauchos duelling with knives. He says that Fontana saw knife duels between Gaucho peons during his childhood and that the primary gesture of opening space with a stabbing blade evokes that social ritual.[236] Contrary to what Paolo Campiglio suggests in his essay 'I Only Believe in Art,'[237] which claims that Fontana 'was not interested in Argentina',[238] Herkenhoff maintains that the artist attained the starting points for his original formulations of space while in the Argentine environment. He taught in Buenos Aires at the Altamira

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234   Renato Miracco, *Lucio Fontana: At the Roots of Spatialism* (Rome: Gangemi, 2006).

235   Lucio Fontana, *Reaching Out into Space* (videorecording; Phaidon, 1985), 50 minutes. (My transcription).

236   Paulo Herkenhoff, 'The Optic of the Invisible. Wish for Space: Fontana/Brasil', in *Brasil: Lucio Fontana* (Milan: Charta, 2001), 145–86.

237   Paolo Campiglio, 'I Only Believe in Art', in Luca Massimo Barbero (ed.), *Lucio Fontana : Venice/New York* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2006), 187–217.

238   Ibid., 193.

Fig. 26: Fabián Marcaccio,
The Fall (2006), New York

Fig. 27: Fabián Marcaccio,
Ezeiza - Paintant (2005),
Malba, Buenos Aires

Academy, from where the 'White Manifesto' emerged, says Herkenhoff, and saw the

works of the Madí Concreto-Invención movement and other groups there, some

of them formed by his own students. 'Many of these works built structures, split

forms and open spaces through windows and voids although often without formal

maturity and displaying inexperience in the use of materials'.[239] For Herkenhoff, he is

the first modern European artist, outside Surrealism, to be formed in Latin America

and to be marked by the progress of the region.[240] Fontana, the thinker of concrete

space, was stimulated by Buenos Aires artists like Enio Iommi and Gyula Kosice[241]

(the founder of Madí): 'The puncture and the incision that concretely cut the surface

in *Concetto spaziale* are not foreign to the void and the carvings found in the

open structures by the Madí artists. He seems to have transferred the experiential

intensity that he witnessed in America, to the post-war European environment.'[242]

In 1953 Fontana wrote to Kosice: 'Yesterday I received the publication of the Madí

movement, which is to me, the best of the world, I think the same of the Madí

movement—the most advanced in everything, without any complex.'[243] Fontana's

role was to introduce the crisis of subjectivity into the constructive stream of Latin

American art, along with other Argentine artists who formed the artistic scene in

1940s in Buenos Aires and influenced the Brazilian Neoconcretist movement. From

the 'periphery' Fontana launched his 'White Manifesto' which longed for modernity

without dominations.[244]

2.3.5   'Fontana thinks spatially'[245]

Neither painting nor sculpture, the works of the series *Concetto spaziale* embodied

the experience of reconceptualizing space, forging new dimensions through the

material gesture. But this gesture goes beyond the conceptual action, it is a 'fight

against the rationalism of modernity'.[246] The paintings of the *Concetto spaziale* series

are taken by subjectivity, they bring the subject back into concrete art.

With Fontana's Spatialism the frontier between painting and sculpture became fluid,

introducing the possibility of the infinite into the two-dimensional object through

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239   Herkenhoff, 'The Optic of the Invisible. Wish for Space: Fontana/Brasil', 145.

240   Ibid.

241   Gyula Kosice and the ideas set in his Madí Manifesto are also an inspiration for
Tomás Saraceno, as will be shown in Chapter 4.

242   Herkenhoff, 'The Optic of the Invisible. Wish for Space: Fontana/Brasil', 145.

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243   Ibid. (My translation).

244   Ibid., 146.

245   Ibid., 150.

246   Ibid.

the void. Here 'the void is neither nothingness nor absence, but the substance and the place of revelation', Herkenhoff says.[247]

Marcaccio's paintings seem to unfold the story opened by Fontana's cut. They embody a continuation of the gesture visually presented by Fontana which implied that something is to be revealed within the surface of the canvas: a deep space that can be inhabited by the forms of a dreamlike and infinite sequence of images and things, fused together by private associations, to produce an effect in the viewer and qualify the space the painting constructs.

This 'baroque' aperture was first proposed in the 'White Manifesto' inspired by Fontana and later called a 'new consciousness' in the 'Technical Manifesto of Spatialism', where Fontana said:

> The baroque pointed us towards this direction [of a new art], it
> represents art as a yet unparalleled grandiosity where plasticity is joined
> by the concept of time, figures appear to flee the flat surface to continue
> their painted movements in space … Movement is the basic state of
> matter, [and matter] exists in movement.[248]

Fig. 30: Lucio Fontana, Milan, 1962

These spatial concepts are purely visual. Rather than a concept as a rationalization of experience, it is an impulse, an intentionality operating in space, an action over the pictorial body, and 'a poetic act upon the world'. It is a pulse of space over the conceptual action. *'Space taken by the subjective I'*, as Fontana says in his manifesto, 'where on the other side, beyond, it is the unknown'. The 1951 Spatialist Manifesto denies figurative work but seeks to introduce the subject with one's own imagination. The spatialist artist does not impose a figurative topic, but makes it possible for him to create his own, using his imagination and feelings:

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247   Ibid., 161.

248   Miracco, *Lucio Fontana: At the Roots of Spatialism,* 33.

a new consciousness which induces spatial feelings in the viewer though the visual. The principle of the undefined, the suggested rather than the represented, which distinguished Fontana's from other movements of the time, is clearly stated in this manifesto: 'the Spatialist artist no longer imposes a figurative theme over the spectator, but allows them to create them through their own imagination and the emotions it arouses in them'.[249]

Fontana perceived in the Baroque the best fulfilment of the fusion of time and space notions.[250] Paradoxically, none of his manifestos reaches an ontological definition of space, achieves clarity, defines parameters for its aesthetics, or deeply understands its own phenomenology. However, this conceptual deficit in Spatialism did not impede the development of a potent art and a complex poetics, Herkenhoff argues.

Concetto spaziale is conceptually formed as a practice of spatial action. 'The gesture of Spatialism is an exercise in the science of spatiality, inscribing light into the canvas; of placing the question of possible infinitude into the picture, and fashioning the space-surface into the dimension of time'[251] As a continuation of the articulation of the two faces of the surface introduced by *Concetto spaziale's* puncture or cut into the plane, Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* takes the painting through the glass boundary of the gallery towards the outside, but instead of continuing the legacy of Fontana's persistent suppression of the image, his paintings act consistently in accordance

Figs. 31a and 31b: Lucio Fontana, *Concetto spaziale* (1958 and 1959)

Fig. 32: Lucio Fontana, *Concetto spaziale* (1967)

with the principles of the Baroque. His work is governed by the visualization of the imagined, fragmentation and figural suggestiveness. As Fontana's, Marcaccio's paintings also form a dense body but their intensity derives from the brutality of the image rather than the mute poetic gesture of reaching out into space through the cut.

Walking through the threshold opened by Fontana along Marcaccio's passages, the thickening of the surface proposed more than 50 years before is now evoked physically by an accumulation of matter and pictorial phrases configuring space. What was first insinuated now is materialised, perhaps too literally, and the mental journey proposed by the incorporation of the subjective into the piece in 1951, that opened a space to be filled by the spectator's imagination, has been taken by Marcaccio who acts upon it, filling it with an unfolding story of an intense and exuberant imagery.

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249   Ibid.

250   Herkenhoff, 'The Optic of the Invisible. Wish for Space: Fontana/Brasil', 238.

251   Ibid., 152–54.

2.3.6 Vague space

Finally, by situating the work of art 'between two extreme thresholds' *Paintant Stories* represents a physical manifestation of what Calabrese calls 'the pleasure of imprecision', and which he argues is a typical sign of neo-baroque thinking. Such pleasure is produced by the notion of the approximate (a pleasure that, as Georges Guilbaud suggests, transforms exactitude into 'the degree zero of approximation').[252] He associates our time and the neo-baroque taste with a new fascination by the vague and the indefinite, as opposed to the classical taste for order and exactitude. To explain this he resorts to the mathematical meaning of the notion of approximation in Guilbaud's book *Leçons d'à peu près,*[253] that in which an object is defined 'between two extreme thresholds'. This works by replacing a precise element with an interval. 'Many new mathematical discoveries have been made as a result of this last general rule, such as those dealing with aleatory functions, fractal dimensions, and even certain algorithms used by computers'.[254]

The relevance of the concept of approximation to my analysis is based in the assertion that it is possible to turn vagueness and imprecision into an aesthetic effect, according to Calabrese.[255] Approximation, as derived from mathematics,
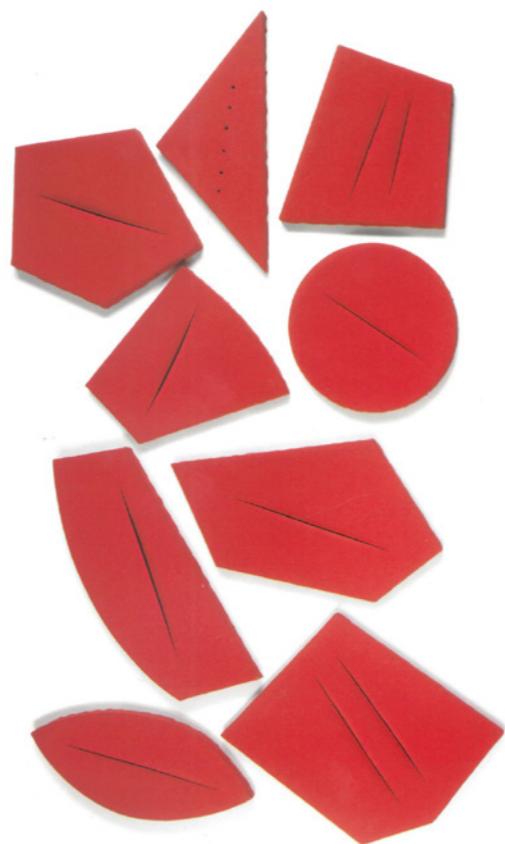
Fig. 33: Lucio Fontana,
Concetto spaziale / I Quanta
(1960)

Fig. 34: Lucio Fontana,
Attese (1964)

Fig. 35: Lucio Fontana,
Milan, 1964. Photo Shunk
Kender

instead of being a property of the object represented, depends strictly on the subject and the inaccuracy of his or her perceptions (seeing, listening, sensing distance, touching, etc.)[256] in the case of *Paintant Stories,* the complexity resulting from its exuberance, dynamism and metamorphosis; its 'excess' (as the embodiment of a 'liminal' act where the painting goes beyond the limits, crosses the threshold by making an opening, and escapes by breaking through the boundaries of the gallery); the distortion, resulting from stretching the limit of the canvas; and the intensity resulting from excessive accumulation of fragmentary imagery—are all attributes of a *language of imprecision* based on a neo-baroque taste for approximation.

These attributes deliberately expose the 'weakness' of our senses, to make us unable to 'grasp' the contours, borders, or limits of the painting and the space it is installed in; to make us unable to understand distance and scale within the image and between the image and our body (as sometimes it is too big and other times too small); they leave us incapable of defining a criterion of relevance of the parts or to establish hierarchies as a result of our inability to discriminate between too many things lacking distinctness; together they produce a type of aesthetic pleasure that comes from the indistinct, vague, and indefinite.

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252   Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque,* 154–56.

253   He refers to French mathematician Georges Guilbaud's book *Leçons d'à-peu-près* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986)

254   Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque,* 155.

255   Ibid., 158.

256   Ibid., 159.
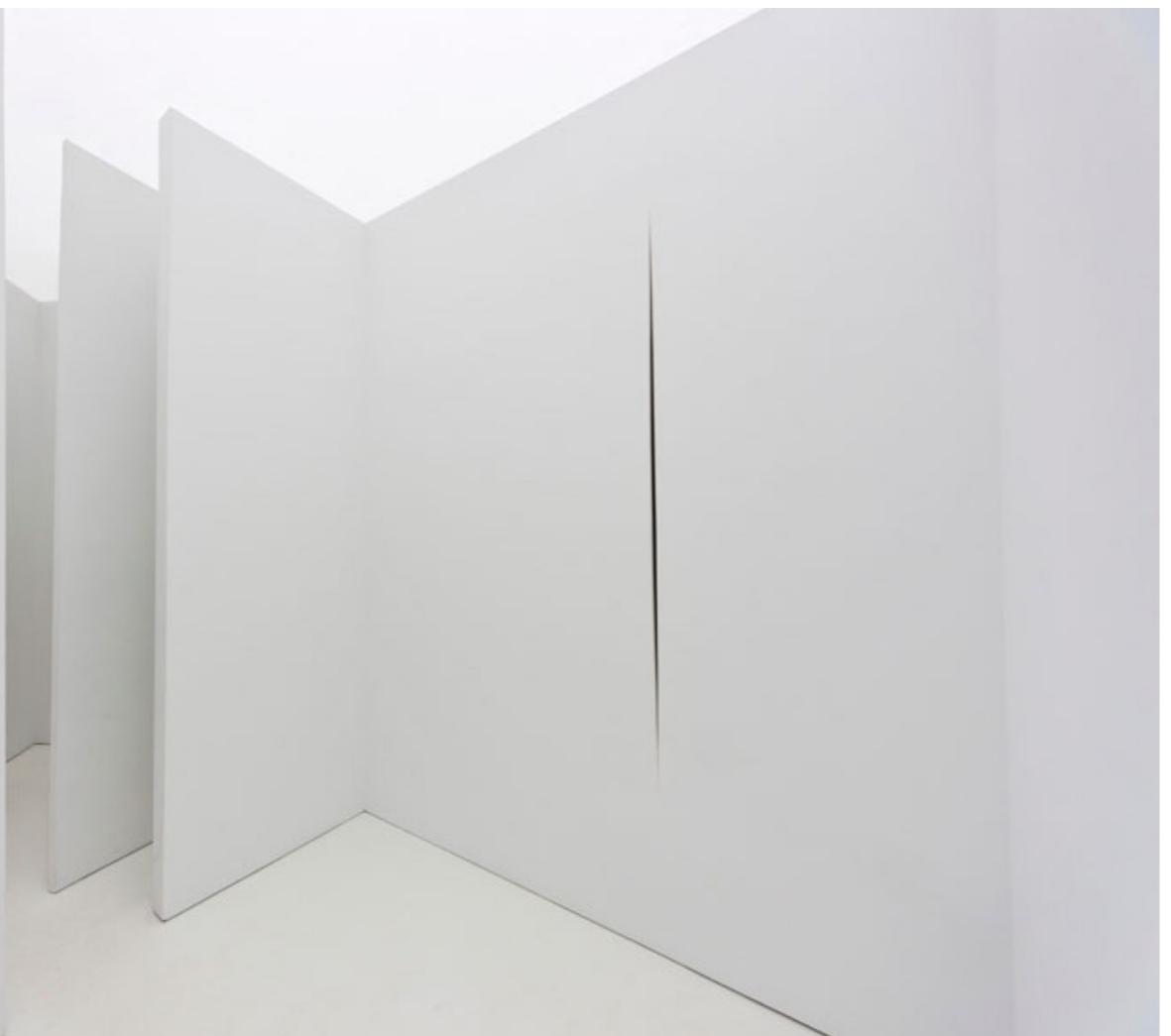
Fig. 36: Reconstruction
of Lucio Fontana's
Ambienti spaziali (2012).
In collaboration with
architect Annabelle
Selldorf. Photo by Robert
McKeever, Gagosian
Gallery, New York

2.4   Conclusion

Chapter 2 defined the values of the lyric principle in the literary to explore how lyrical content is manifested in neo-baroque spatial paintings. The chapter first exposed a line of continuity between lyrical poetry and the short story based on the comparison of shared aesthetic values such as brevity, intensity, fragmentation, particularization, and the first-person account. The aim has been to propose that those literary values can translate into qualities of space.

It drew from Julio Cortázar's essays on the theory of the short story to explore liminal qualities in the visual work of the painters Lucio Fontana and Fabián Marcaccio: specifically, how a spatial construct, in this case the passage, is used to carry lyrical content in the gestural intensity of Fontana's material cut into the canvas and in Marcaccio's figural expressionism—defined by the turbulent movements of paint and matter, fragmentation, deformation and excess in the spatial unfolding of anatomical imagery.

The chapter showed how lyricism, in both poetry and the short story, emerges as an intensity deriving from the urgency of the expression of emotion, and the pursuit of this expression in brief, resulting from the constraint in time and space inherent in both genres. The progression of images within a poem which builds up its intensity has been called 'qualitative progression' and exemplifies its lyrical objectivity. Intensity is also one of the main formal aspects that relate lyrical poetry to the neo-baroque character in the paintings explored. This quality is visualised in Fontana's gestural slash and in Marcaccio's baroque accumulation of figures, paint, fragments and objects.

The chapter first described Hegelian lyricism (what makes visible the content of poet's 'consciousness through experience', his or her 'subjectivity') and the five major characteristics of the short story that link them to lyrical poetry: oneness, intensity, brevity, tension and lyricism itself, because for Cortázar, writing a short story mimics the urgency of writing poetry because 'they both emerge from the same sudden estrangement'.

Chapter 2 started to explore the fantastic dimension within Realism because I have found that the relationship between realism and fantasy in Cortázar's fiction produces space, liminal space. In his short stories, our quotidian context is the perfect realist background to be transgressed by unusual and extraordinary events. These events reveal 'another secret order', 'a second reality', or the 'marvellous', as André Breton called it. With equal legitimization, Cortázar's narrative supports the realist and the fantastic realms, constituting both the tracks over which the story travels. By giving equal validity and verisimilitude to both orders, and moving freely between them, he defines a movement from reality to the 'other space' that opens a 'passage'. Like for the surrealists, literature has to open a 'space in-between', has to trace a tangential line from an ordinary and familiar place to an unknown space.

For Cortázar space is punctured and its boundaries are permeable. His fiction shows the transgressions to the limits of those discontinuous spaces and leaves open the possibility of the uncanny. This chapter showed how the passage and the notion of movement across space, illustrated in his short stories 'The Other Sky', 'Continuity of Parks' or 'The River', is also the content of Marcaccio's *Paintant Stories* series. Like them, *Paintant Stories* unfolds a story that transforms the gallery space into a passage and the viewer into a voyager. His paintings create passages composed by fragments seen from a very close distance, imprinted into very long canvases across the gallery, and amalgamated to form a long continuous image.

Like Cortázar, Marcaccio conceives of time as discontinuous and of space as porous. As he says, his work is a 'passage towards something else'. This idea of a discontinuous temporality also lies behind Cortázar's short stories. Marcaccio defines his work as a time-based spatial composition that makes the viewer 'walk across the space to unravel the story and demands a vision in real time and real motion.' His paintings 'flow' in real space and 'present a passage across that real space'. Moreover, by readjusting the space pre-set by the walls, going inside and out, the gallery's physical boundaries are reconfigured, paradoxically, by the surface of the painting. In this way, the tradition of the mural, where the frame is the actual architecture, is subverted, forming a route of sinuous boundaries that play with the limits of the exhibition gallery.

The chapter related Marcaccio's pictorial 'material spatialism' to Fontana's material gestures which emerged in 1946 with the publication of the White Manifesto and the Spatialist Movement. Fontana's Spatialism goes beyond the perforations to incorporate space into the canvas, where one of the essential components of his work is the Baroque, in the sense that form is no longer restricted but tends to open up into space. In Fontana the intensity of the gesture goes beyond 'action painting' to wound the canvas and penetrate space. With this act, the gesture becomes a link between the surface and three-dimensionality. Neither painting nor sculpture, the works of the series *Concetto spaziale* embodied the experience of reconceptualizing space, forging new dimensions through the material gesture.

Marcaccio's paintings embody a continuation of the gesture presented by *Concetto spaziale*, suggesting that something is to be visually revealed within the surface of the canvas: a deep space that can be inhabited by the forms of a dreamlike and infinite sequence of images fused together to materialize the passage. in *Paintant Stories* the painting is taken through the glazed boundary of the gallery towards the outside, but instead of continuing the legacy of Fontana's persistent suppression of

the image, acts consistently in accordance with the principles of the Baroque based on the figural visualization of the imagined.

Like Fontana's, Marcaccio's paintings also form a dense body, but their intensity derives from the violence of the image rather than the mute gesture of reaching out into space. Walking through the threshold opened by Fontana, Marcaccio's passages make visible that 'new' space. What was first insinuated is now materialised. The thickening of the space of the canvas, proposed more than 50 years before, is now evoked spatially by the physical accumulation of matter and pictorial phrases. Marcaccio acts upon Fontana's cut, filling with a story the space that was to be imagined by the spectator.

Paintant Stories also presents a physical manifestation of 'the pleasure of imprecision'. Neo-baroque fascination for the vague and the indefinite, as opposed to the classical taste for order and exactitude, defines an object 'between two extreme thresholds' and replaces a precise element with an interval. The relevance of this concept to my analysis is based in the assertion that it is possible to turn 'imprecision' into an aesthetic effect by means of language.

Approximation is an attribute of self, not of the object represented. It depends strictly on experience, on the subject, and on the inaccuracy of the spectator's perceptions. In *Paintant Stories* the formal attributes that defined a 'language of imprecision', based on a neo-baroque taste for approximation, are complexity, instability, excess, distortion and intensity. These attributes expose the 'weakness' of our senses, make us unable to 'grasp' the contours, borders, or limits of the painting and the space it is installed in; make us unable to understand distance and scale; unable to define a criterion of relevance of the parts or to establish hierarchies. Together, these attributes intensify the experience of seeing, arousing a type of aesthetic—pleasurable—response that comes from the indistinct, vague, and imprecise.
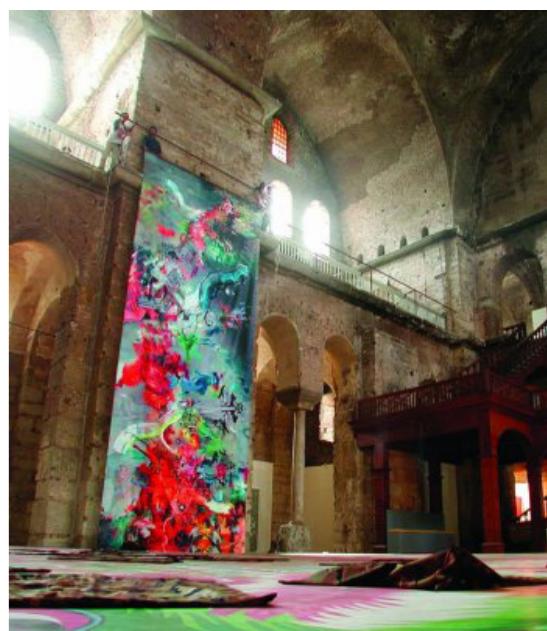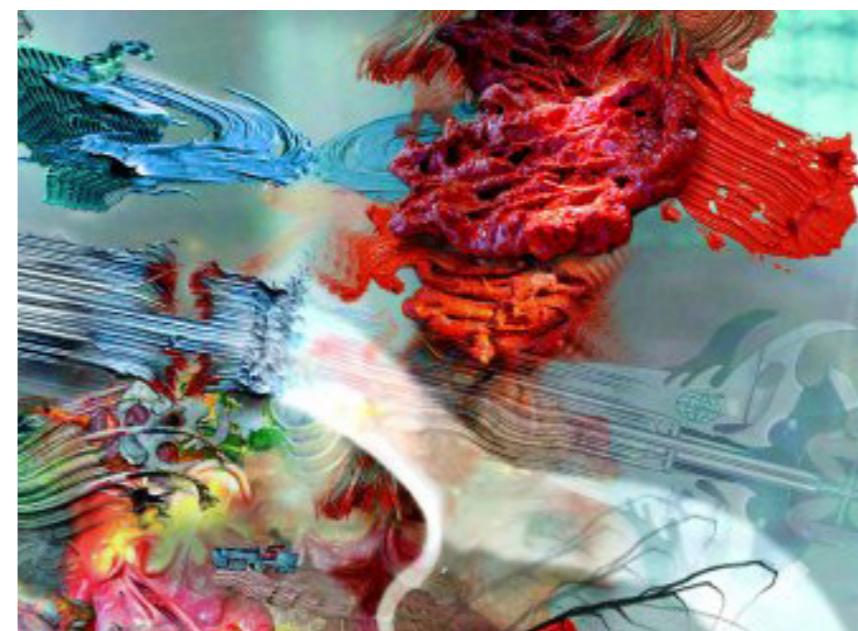
Fig. 37: Fabián Marcaccio, *IMF Paintant Mirror* (2001), Istanbul Biennial. Detail

Fig. 38: Fabián Marcaccio, *IMF Paintant Mirror* (2001), Istanbul Biennial

3 The Moment the Poet Speaks: Lyrical Digressions in Argentine Contemporary Realism

The leap outside of mimēsis is by no means the refusal of figurative representation.

Furthermore, its inaugural moment has often been called realism, which does not in any

way mean the valorization of resemblance but rather the destruction of the structures

within which it functioned.

Jacques Rancière,

The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible, 24.

1.1 Introduction

Framed in the context of neo-baroque aesthetics, this chapter explores spatial constructions that allow for the lyrical quality to reveal itself within the aesthetics of the everyday. To do this, the thinking system behind the examined work constructs an expandable conception of space by blending realistic representation and fantasy. This chapter proposes that the lyrical within Realism appears as a digression, a drift in the familiar continuous territory in which our senses are commonly immersed or what our memories can recall. It represents today what was called a parabasis[257] in Ancient Greek comedy: the moment when the epic is suspended for the irruption of the lyrical: the moment when 'the poet speaks'.[258]

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257   'Parabasis, an important choral ode in Greek Old Comedy delivered by the chorus at an intermission in the action while facing and moving toward the audience. It was used to express the author's views on political or religious topics of the day.' http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/442360/parabasis.

258   Robert Schumann, 'The Poet Speaks', *Scenes from Childhood*, Opus 15, No. 13 (1838). http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/42/Robert_Schumann_-_scenes_from_childhood%2C_op._15_-_xiii._the_poet_speaks.ogg

This chapter will explore how the irruption of the unexpected within a familiar and verisimilar backdrop elicits emotion by resorting to memory and experience. Using interviews with artists as method, I discuss processes in which sensorial experience, memory and familiarity are used visually and verbally to provoke a new sensation of reality that includes subjectivity. Particularly, how sensorial perception, feelings and recollections (thoughts that carry sensation) contribute to define today a local Realism by allowing thoughts only reachable by introspection to depict reality through a particularly plain, limpid and simple prose devoid of emotion or affect.[259] César Aira's first-person short novels recapture the subjective dimension as an inspirational force which questions the status of the object as an unchangeable substance. He puts self and his subjective reading of reality at the centre, allowing the unexpected to appear against a meticulously realist representation of the quotidian, so that his mutations, transformations and deformations become more effective.

Similarly, the visual work of Leandro Erlich and Dino Bruzzone creates objects and installations of detailed realistic fabrication, only to act upon them by a variety of neo-baroque strategies (reflections, mirrors, repetition, disorientation and decay) to let the exceptional within the ordinary emerge. In local Realism, the chapter concludes, spatial lyricism emerges without affect, avoiding formal excess, formal voluptuousness or the gestural intensity discussed in other chapters of the thesis;

it proposes that it is aroused by the extraordinary event within the ordinary,[260] inducing in the viewer surprise and bewilderment.

There are two aspects about the concept of parabasis that are useful to trace the link between the notion of lyricism and local realism. The first is that in Ancient Greek comedy it constituted a sonorous interlude, a detour which interrupted the action. Anciently it was performed by a chorus addressing the audience directly. Today, in Aira's novellas, it is performed by the author himself. Secondly, because it was used to introduce the author's views, it was the moment when he talked directly to his audience. So, if in ancient times sound and self composed the material that introduced lyricism to the play in the form of choral interventions, this chapter explores how lyricism emerges within Realism today by using fantasy, the personal and subjective to transgress the uneventful and mundane representation of the real.

The text will start by analyzing the process behind the contemporary realist short novel and then show a conceptual affinity between them and the visual work of the artists mentioned. Among Aira's prolific work I will look at four short novels and one short story published between 1999 and 2007: 'La costurera y el viento' (1999) [The Seamstress and the Wind], 'Cómo me hice monja' (1999) [How I Became a Nun], *Un sueño realizado* (2001) [A Dream Realized], *Fragmentos de un diario en los Alpes* (2002) [Fragments of a Diary in the Alps], and the short story 'El cerebro musical' (2005) [The Musical Brain]. I will also draw from three literary essays by Aira: *Alejandra Pizarnik* (1998), *Copi* (1991) and *Las tres fechas* (2003) [The Three Dates]. Pablo Katchadjian's short novel *Qué hacer* (2010) [What to Do], for whom Aira is mentor and reference, will also be used to illustrate neo-baroque affinities between the visual and the verbal that contribute to the notion of spatial lyricism.

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259   In a recent interview by Pablo Duarte, Aira says about his prose: 'Duarte: Despite your fixation with the visual, the language of your novels is quite clear and diaphanous. Aira: That I've done by intuition, but I realize that, because my imagination is so baroque, I could not possibly add a baroque language to it because it would be super-affectation. It takes a prose as plain and simple as possible to serve my somehow excessive imagination.' (My translation. Except where noted, all quotations from interviews and publications originally in Spanish are mine.) Pablo Duarte, 'El elogio de la inventiva. Entrevista con César Aira', *Las letras libres* (November 2009). Aira's translator, Chris Andrews, states about his style: 'his sentences do not have surprising shapes, but the stories do have extremely surprising turns, sometimes jumping from one genre to another.' Scott Bryan Wilson, 'The Chris Andrews Interview', *Quarterly Conversation,* (8; summer 2007).

260   The idea that anything can happen is discussed in Craig Epplin and Phillip Penix-Tadsen, 'Cualquier cosa: un encuentro con César Aira', *Ciberletras: Journal of Literary Criticism and Culture* (15; New York: Lehman College, 2006). http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v15/epplin.html.

Dierdra Reber argues that 'the definitional boundaries between metaphoric and realistic representation become permanently blurred in Aira's narrative, yet his narrators persist, even anchor their stories, in a recurrent quest to define, catalog and comprehend reality'.[261] The aim of the first part of this chapter is to dissect the logic behind the intriguing relationship between metaphorical representation and the persisting *sensation of realism* that characterizes experimental writing anchored in Realism. It is also to look into literary systems that blend logical structures of causation (which assure verisimilitude and maintain the action within Realism), with irrational content and fantasy that can make the characters mutate and transform, the scenarios mix and juxtapose, and at the same time maintain a line of continuity and logic in the plot.[262] For example, in Katchadjian's *Qué hacer* a system is maintained throughout the text: a circular progression of the action is constantly subverted by the most unexpected events: it consists of 50 one-page chapters starting always with the protagonist—a young Argentine writer—and his friend Alberto, teaching literature in a room of an English university when unforeseen and unpredicted events occur (a gigantic student swallows Alberto; they disappear and reappear in a boat with 800 singing drinkers; an old man turns into a pigeon trying to fly, a woman emits the most beautiful sound in the middle of a woodland, etc.).

Fig. 39: Pablo Katchadjian, *Qué hacer* (San José: Editorial Germinal, 2013). Illustration Takayuki Nakajima

These events are triggered by an impossible question delivered by the gigantic student which will detonate a series of options for the protagonists. 'What to do' when the paths diverge is what the writer-protagonist will continue to ask himself up to the end.[263]
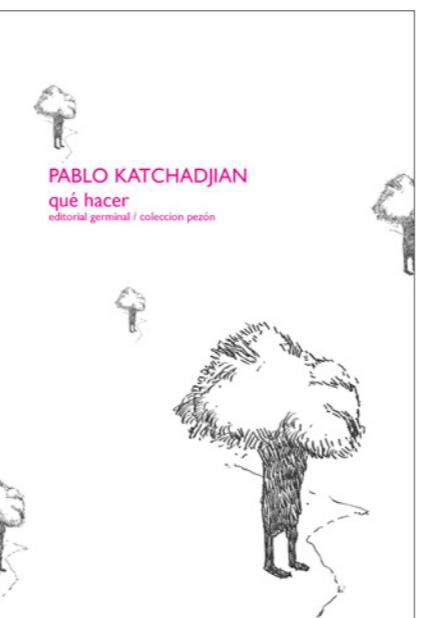
Why look into literary Realism to dissect current forms of lyricism in local contemporary culture? One of the main reasons is that Realism allows me to explore lyricism away from form: in the realist short story I have found that virtuosities of form are suppressed to make content the main carrier of lyricism. Fantasy is carefully woven into a realist plot and lets the story advance not linearly but convolutedly. The author of the realist short novel stresses that the interest lies in invention and in the process that allows the most irrational events—that 'we do not know where they come from'[264]—to transform things and characters and make the story unfold. Surprise is what is provoked and form is just a resulting factor to reveal new content.

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261   Dierdra Reber, 'Cure for the Capitalist Headache: Affect and Fantastic Consumption in César Aira's Argentine "Baghdad"', *MLN*, (122, Baltimore, 2007), 371–402.

262   In a recent interview, Katchadjian, asked if he uses Breton's surrealist method and pure automatic writing, replied: 'No, because I am not the starting point of everything that appears [in my stories]. I always try to give everything a cause: the last thing happened [in the story] must determine the next. And, at the same time, there must be an order resulting from the logic of the text. It would be a most vital principle, more like how life works, and more realistic in that sense, one does one thing, and because of that one has to do another, and then another. The trick is that each decision opens several options and overrides others. It's like deciding at all times, but trying to let the decision be taken almost by itself. This is often how everything works. One argues about what one does only afterwards, as I am doing now.' Augusto Munaro, 'Pablo Katchadjian: la escritura como ejercicio exploratorio', *Los Andes* (Mendoza, 18 December 2010).

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263   Pablo Katchadjian, *Qué hacer* (Buenos Aires: Bajo la Luna, 2010).

264   Ibid., 36: 'We are tracing a relationship between Juvenal and Persio with León Bloy. It is so obvious that the students of the English university do not understand. A student, a 2.5 metre-high one, asks in a threatening tone: are those contents irrational? Neither Alberto nor I understand the question, but, from somewhere, a voice within me answers: yes, the contents are irrational because they emerge from where we don't know (or because *we don't know where they come from*), but the system that organizes the content is the only rational thing that exists and we should trust in that. The student … insists: is the system really rational? We still do not understand the question, but I reply with a voice that seems to be mine, or at least, I feel as mine: yes, the system is really rational … the only truly rational thing is [the system's] logic and functioning … At that moment, it was heard on the boat (because we know we are and we have always been on the boat: this is a certainty) a beautiful music that comes from two sides: 800 drinkers and an old woman. When we think about the drinkers we are in a tavern, when we think about the woman we are in the forest: it all depends where we put our attention. What we do not understand is how this can occur if both are played at the same time, that is, if the music is the perfect fusion of those two places, the forest and the pub. When we understand this, we appear to be explaining it at an English university: they were 800 old women. Alberto, to avoid upsetting the students, tells them it is all a poetic construction.' (My emphasis.)

The second part of this chapter uses artists' interviews to examine visual forms of local contemporary realism. It will be illustrated by the work of installation artist Leandro Erlich, visual artist Dino Bruzzone and photographer Esteban Pastorino. The interviews are semi-structured and the explorative routes convey the same issues as those I used to discuss Aira's work: Realism, the Baroque, a plain and simple language—devoid of emotion and affect—and the creation of new content through the transformation of experience and intervention upon our memories. The questions will focus on:

-   How intensity is manifested in contemporary Neo-Baroque.

-   The role of the mundane, quotidian and familiar.

-   The elements extracted from reality used and the reinterpretation of the role of reproduction, the figure and figuration.

-   Sensation of reality and its relation to the hyperfake.

-   How form is affected when realism is what the artists are after.

-   The register and the document as sources for models and installations, the detail and the miniature.

-   The intended effects on the viewers.

-   The role of experience, memory, and the modernist ruin, to elicit emotion today.

The aim here is to show how in pursuit of the exceptional, local contemporary Realism works with very similar parameters in the visual and literary, and how it finds in memory and the transformation of personal experience the material to transmit lyrical content without the affectation of form.

3.2   A Contemporary Sensibility

3.2.1   Aira's dialogue between fantasy and the picturesque

I was delirious, I had plenty of time to elaborate the most baroque stories … they happened at a unique intensity of invention.[265]

Everything has to be invented; I impose on myself to invent it all.[266]

Aira, an experimental writer, was born in 1949 in the Pampas, in a small town on what is called Salamone's route: an itinerary made up by a modernist repertoire of slaughterhouses, cemetery gates and municipalities built between 1936 and 1940. The town where Aira grew up, Coronel Pringles, is where his stories frequently start to unravel.[267]

His universe is set by an intense rhythm of invention. The pace in which he publishes his books (up to 60 by 2013) parallels the speed in which Francisco Salamone's buildings were erected. The collection of inventive and intense architectural expressions standing alone in a vast and empty landscape must have had the

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265   Aira, *Cómo me hice monja. La costurera y el viento* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1999), 28.

266   Aira, *El congreso de literatura* (Mérida: Universidad de los Andes, 1997), 16.

267   In 'The Musical Brain', a short novel about an eventful night, the action starts: 'I was young, about four or five years old. It happened in my town, Coronel Pringles, at the beginning of the 1950s.' Aira, 'The Musical Brain', *The New Yorker* (5 December 2011), 75. 'Cómo me hice monja' also begins in Aira's hometown: 'My story, the story of how I became a nun, began very early in my life; I had just turned six. The beginning is marked by a vivid memory, which I can reconstruct down to the last detail.' *Cumplea-ños* (2001), 'La costurera y el viento' (1999), *La Cena* (2006) and many other of his short novels start, happen, or refer to his birthtown.

grandeur and extravagant splendour still intact during Aira's childhood.[268] His extraordinary capacity to imagine and tell new stories, the impulsive and frenetic pace in which new novels are published, up to three or four per year, 'always new and unique each time', mimics the frantic pace in which his stories unfold. The combination of the picturesque and surprise is what makes his Realism contemporary: 'his mutations, clonations, transformations, deformations and monstrosities are more effective when they happen after a meticulous realist presentation.'[269]

Current literary criticism agrees that his work is anchored in Realism; it is my view that his is a subverted take which includes invention, memory and self. I also move away from Aira's self-proclaimed position as a revisionist of early twentieth-century avant-garde movements, like Surrealism,[270] to propose a contemporary reading of his novellas as a dialogue between lived experience, memory and fantasy. Even if his stories usually make us think they are autobiographical—because he usually names the narrator 'César Aira', male or female, 50 years old like in *Cumpleaños* or just 6 in 'How I Became a Nun'—they are suddenly transformed by fantasy. For him, memory and self are inevitably part of his work. In 'La costurera y el viento' he accepts and admits that self, memory and his own personal experiences do affect imagination. In the first pages of the short novel his theory of literature is set out:

> To apprehend oblivion would be a gesture consistent with my theory
> of literature ⋯ consistent with my contempt for the use of memory as a
> writer's instrument. Oblivion is richer, freer; more powerful ⋯ Oblivion

is pure sensation ⋯ If I have become a writer it has only been to bring forgetfulness between my life and myself ⋯ In that I have been successful. When memory appears, it brings nothing, only the combination of its negative remains ⋯ and self. Somehow I would like 'The Seamstress and the Wind' ⋯ to be pure invention of my soul ⋯ But it is not at all, nor might it be, because reality, that is the past, contaminates invention. I raise formidable barriers to prevent the invasion [of memories], although I know it is a lost battle. I did not have an adventurous life so as not to be filled with its memories ⋯ It may be a purely personal point of view, but I feel an irrepressible distrust if I hear that imagination will take care of everything ⋯ If imagination, that wonderful faculty, is left unchecked, it does nothing else but rely on memory ⋯ Memory brings back things heard, felt or seen ⋯ but [they are] not digested nor transformed.[271]

Even if memories may restrain imagination and need the past to fall into oblivion to avoid contamination, the first-person account and biographical details are plenty in his novels.[272] In the third page of the novel he even exhorts himself not to go after adventures ('No saldré busca de la aventura')[273] because the memories they would elicit might restrict his imagination. As I will show in this chapter, Aira's literary method is based in rewriting experience because in the transformation of lived experience is where new content is to be found. Moreover, the fantastic and intense imaginative continuum created by him is always expressed through the familiar voice of characters easily recognizable within Argentine contemporary culture. The stories' tone is set by the voice of colloquial language and unravels in known and familiar places, because for him the challenge is to make the unexpected part of the

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268   Salamone's derelict remains are discussed in the second part of this chapter in the photographic inventory captured by Pastorino.

269   Mariano García, *Degeneraciones textuales. Los géneros en la obra de César Aira* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2006), 63.

270   Aira, 'La nueva escritura', *La Jornada Semanal* (4 April 1998).

271   Aira, *Cómo me hice monja. La costurera y el viento*, 121–24.

272   Aira, 'The Musical Brain', 75: 'In effect, the memories from my childhood bring me such varied nights in Pringles that it's like asking myself whether I gave up wealth for poverty. The night that I am describing here is a good example.'

273   Aira, *La costurera y el viento*, 122.

real: 'One has to take into account that realism is done through imagination, and the further imagination goes and the more unexpected are the paths it takes, the higher the realism.'[274]

'A sum of digressions': improvisation and cohesion. Rather than surrealist,[275] Aira's work follows a rational system based in causality. Everything has to be invented but it must also have a reason and follow a logic. In an interview by Craig Epplin and Phillip Penix-Tadsen, he vindicates the notion of 'process' and automatic writing over the outcome or 'finished piece', but also says coherence and cohesion must prevail. When asked about the surrealist legacy in his work, he replies that even though he professes fidelity to those principles, it is only in theory that they are applied. He reveals that he does not a have a 'recipe' to have the novels written without the intervention of his judgment. However, he does have a writing method and, in contrast to surrealist automatic writing, in his novels there must be cohesion:

> My literature is based in inspiration … I do not follow a process to let
> the novels be made by themselves … But I do have a writing method, [a
> method] to improvise, to go day by day, to get carried away by the whim of
> each day. My novels differ from surrealist automatic writing, I think, in that
> surrealism itself is a collection of strange, weird or incoherent events, but in
> my novels, even if there is such accumulation, it is chained, shackled as in
> the verisimilar nineteenth-century novel.[276]

The real and the fantastic are blended in succession to achieve continuity through the simple logic of cause-and-effect. 'When I am writing I defy myself … Suddenly

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274 Aira, *Edward Lear* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2004). Aira's critical book on the English picturesque painter and poet.

275 García, in *Degeneraciones textuales,* says that Aira's contemporaneity is based in a dialogue between Realism and Surrealism. 23.

276 Epplin and Penix-Tadsen, 'Cualquier cosa'.

something strange occurs, here and now … and then in the novel the same strange thing appears.' The challenge for Aira is to make sense of it: 'I have to find a cause to let what happens. And I usually find it. In my novels things do not occur just by chance … everything happens because a cause produces an effect.'[277] However masked in the logical succession of events, the author's voice is there. Causation is the key to intertwine surprising events, even if the action evolves into the most surreal and delirious. His novellas follow a sinuous line, he says, composed by a sum of digressions, the result of improvising day by day.[278]

Aira's work clearly aspires to provoke a sensation of verisimilitude which makes processes borrowed from Surrealism and other early twentieth-century avant-garde movements not a simple revision of the past. His revisionism is not postmodernist, because it does not aspire to dissolve the category of the new, but instead it affirms innovation and invention. In a previous newspaper article, 'La nueva escritura',[279] he proclaims the validity of the avant-garde movements, but only if they are understood as 'creators of processes' like Constructivism, automatic writing, readymades, twelve-tone music, collage, chance and indeterminacy. 'The great artists of the twentieth century are those who invented processes to let the work be done by itself.'[280]

Aira's fiction insists on style, innovation and the creation of a personal language: 'What distinguishes art from simulacrum is that art sets its own origins each time. It goes to the roots and invents again its own language … If a practice limits itself to

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277 Ibid.

278 Duarte, 'El elogio de la inventiva': 'Duarte: I get the impression that your novels are always a sum of digressions. Aira: Yes, there is something of that, by the way of writing, improvising day by day. I like that slightly sinuous line. I like it aesthetically, and I think despite that I still maintain a certain unity, coherence.'

279 Aira, 'La nueva escritura'.

280 Ibid.

an invented language, it is outside the strictest category of art: to create history ... and to create a language is to create a formula to organize experience.'[281] For Aira history abominates stable situations, and the avant-garde was the response to a dynamic evolution, because it set new myths of origin.[282] In his essay on the lyrical poet Alejandra Pizarnik, he says the writer's task is to create a process instead of an object, and only experimental art is able to set up processes of origin. The avant-garde movements intervened to reactivate methods of invention from scratch when automation had stopped innovation. The way to do this, he suggests, was to bring back the process where the outcome had been made central: '[avant-garde's] intention brought the idea that the work was the process itself, and the resulting outcome only a documentary appendix useful just to deduce the process which has created it. The quality of the outcome is irrelevant and it would only be given by the passage of time, not by the hand of the artist,' he concluded.[283] This means that the emphasis is put on the invention of a process. In his essay on Pizarnik he affirms:

> The key to the process of Surrealism was automatic writing, a process in its purest state as it is intended to be a free flow of the unconscious ⋯ free from consideration of the outcome, free from any critical judgment. The result is reabsorbed by the process; the process itself is already the result. The surrealist procedure requires the surrealist artist to be a perpetual Orpheus, who is forbidden to go back to see what she or he has done ⋯ The artwork, once finished, is no longer art: it is documentation, a record. Using the procedure of a dead school (from 1950, when Pizarnik starts writing) meant using the mechanics stripped of ideology to write good poetry.[284]

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281   Aira, 'Particularidades absolutas', *El Mercurio* (29 October 2000).

282   Aira, 'La nueva escritura'.

283   Ibid.

284   Aira, *Alejandra Pizarnik* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1998), 12–14

For Aira's main publisher and literary critic Sandra Contreras, the anachronism of Aira's revival of the historical avant-garde movements suggests that those new processes which appeared in the early twentieth century were there to preserve art from stagnation, as a means of survival; Aira reuses them to recover that impulse of invention.[285]

To conclude, even if for Aira Surrealism is invention and adventure,[286] his stories contradict the surrealist principle which banned critical judgment, by making it work along a rational system of causation that chains together the most unexpected events. The novelty lies also in that the surrealist method is used against a backdrop of normality and banality to increase the effect of surprise. Unlike surrealism, his experimental realist novels make the most delirious scenes seem very tangible by inundating the story with idiosyncratic details of local customs and picturesque descriptions of real people and scenes. In addition, a plain, limpid prose and colloquial dialogues tell the tales in the first person—and many times through the voice of Aira as if they were always real autobiographical stories—setting an intriguing reference to Pizarnik, whose main subject was her own biographical character.[287]

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285   Sandra Contreras, *Las vueltas de César Aira* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2008), 17.

286   Aira, *Copi* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2003), 30.

287   Aira, *Alejandra Pizarnik*, 18: 'In lyric poetry the subject is almost always a character. The biographical character created by Alejandra Pizarnik—fragmented into girls, somnambulists, shipwrecked women—allowed her to move forward without falling into the conventional sentimentality of lyric poetry.'

3.2.2 Aira's action-writing: a baroque fascination with storytelling

For Aira, art is action, and storytelling represents the materialization of this concept in literary terms. He reinterprets Jasper Johns's concept of pure action[288] to define his own narrative as an active exercise in continuity: a revalorization of the act of invention. His fiction constructs an uninterrupted sequence of fantasy and facts. In his talk *'Ars narrativa'*[289] Aira affirms that his way of writing responds to a perpetual forward thinking, and that the genre of the novel is the perfect means to experiment with this: 'it is all about continuing writing, not letting it end on the second or third page'.[290]

Moreover, he writes in his essay on Copi in 1991: a sequence must be overly full of details and there should not be voids within a situation, every literary world created must contain another one inside, a baroque strategy to represent reality.[291] Ten years later, in his novel *Cumpleaños*, an example of this conceptual aspiration is fictionalized: the character 'César Aira' is about to become 50 years old, and while reviewing his entire life, a preoccupation arises: he discovers 'holes' in his memory, voids in his accumulated knowledge and hollowed zones in the memories of his

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288   Aira, *Copi*, 31, quotes Johns: 'Art is to do one thing, then another thing, then another one.'

289   Talk entitled '*Ars narrativa'* delivered by Aira in September 1993 at the Segunda Bienal de Literatura Mariano Picón Salas held in Mérida. 'Ars narrativa', *Criterion* (8; Caracas, January 1994).

290   Another example of this attitude towards continuity is fictionalized in 'Diario de la hepatitis (febrero de 1992)', *Las Letras Libres* (December 2002). 16.

291   Aira, *Copi*, 29: 'Copi always operates with simultaneous inclusions ... Adventure, surprise, are parts of his daily happiness for a baroque reason: there cannot be voids in a situation. Hence the instability, and even the horror that lurks behind his happiness. The rule is that every [fictional] world must be a holder of another one, there can not be worlds devoid of other worlds within. Everything is representation, and that is baroque.'

lived experience. To seize every detail of everyday life and avoid oblivion he must annotate all his thoughts, impressions and experiences. He fantasizes about creating a notebook able to adapt to the speed of his hyperactive cerebral activity, 'so as to avoid holes and hiatus in the texts … it would be ideal to count with this, even though reality is hollowed … even if I am hollowed, and in that small white fog I found mystery.'[292]

This 'impossible' baroque aspiration creates a space: this 'white fog' is the lagoons of memory and the space to be filled by fantasy. 'Oblivion is pure sensation', he says in 'The Seamstress and the Wind': real experiences can be forgotten but sensations remain. As I will show next, for Aira literature is rewriting experience. But he admits 'reality is hollowed', (unlike Borges's Funes, we cannot remember it all) and if those recalled sensations can be provoked by any literary event, perhaps a more powerful and surprising one is there to make realism more intense, filling the lagoons of memory with fantastic events to create a hyperrealism.

The natural question that follows is how this fascination with storytelling ends, how this baroque impulse of invention stops. Abruptly, in his case. Brevity is natural to him, he says, 'a one hundred-page novel is what is natural to me, is the ideal format for the type of imagination I have, for the type of the stories I tell … My endings are not that good, and many times I have been much criticized, for a reason, because they are very abrupt … I have noticed I get tired, or I want to start something else, and I finish in any possible way. Sometimes I have to force myself … to make a good ending.'[293]

The concept of the novel without ending is a surrealist invention proposed by André Breton. However, Aira's open, abrupt and often irrelevant endings are

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292   Aira, *Cumpleaños* (Barcelona: Mondadori, 2001), 30–32.

293   Duarte, 'Elogio de la inventiva'.

consistent with his idea of a novel of the present time. He tries to portray in his novellas what is going on 'here and now' rather than what it is in the past.[294] This conception reaffirms a realist rather than a surrealist approach: by serving the reader with details and customs of the present time, the author sets the tone of the story within the parameters of the possible and real, even if his poetic swings between automatism—the free flow of the unconscious that ensures the impulse of writing and the development of the story—and an urge for coherence to induce a sensation of reality. His prose pursues the uniqueness of an original and singular voice within the inventive impulse that automatism supposes.[295] This deliberate way of working, imposed as method, is an artistic act itself. It pursues uniqueness through personal experience and memory to achieve the singularity of a distinctive voice.[296]

3.2.3   The realist short novel: experience and invention

My novels are a bit like diaries. I write them day by day and things from reality get in, but

I do not do it deliberately.[297]

Two singular aspects relate Aira's entire work to a long and undisrupted personal diary: one aspect is the first person account in the recurrent voice of the character 'César Aira', and the other is the date at the end of each of his short pieces.

His novellas, he confesses, are a bit like writing a diary,[298] so dates matter. Dates reveal the vertiginous rhythm with which new work is produced and published—mimicking the speed in which the stories themselves unfold—and seem to construct the fictional diary of his entire life. The obsession with the writer's diary, the daily record of personal experience, clearly shows how experience and memory are essential to his work. Moreover, the diary is considered by Aira a protonovel.[299]

To understand further the relationship between experience and invention, his short essay book *Las tres fechas* discusses the work of four authors who used experience as their main theme and source.[300] Here he relates the writers' life events with the events in their books and their publishing dates. As writers of experience, or autobiographical writers, he finds that they all shared a limited inclination to invention; the books express with precision a description of their own lived reality. The novels are structured upon facts, there is always a real/biographic subject that deserves to be told (for example, a trip to a remote country, homosexuality, the love for a dog, a relationship with a father) and so observation and description are central. There is no invention prior to writing in these examples: 'invention happens in the act of the experience itself. It is literally lived.'[301] They all shared, Aira says, the highest level of sincerity to the facts, and this was possible to know because all four writers kept diaries where the facts were first exposed and thematised. He concludes that invention is taboo for these authors because in the realistic novel—the hegemonic genre of the nineteenth century—what is told must happen first in reality, and only then, as the author becomes a character, can it be manipulated literarily. For some writers everything has to be registered in the diary. This

294   Aira states that the difference between the novel and the short story is simple: the novel is what is happening here and now, it is present; the short story is the past, what has happened already. Aira, *Copi*, 32.

295   Aira, 'Particularidades absolutas'.

296   Ibid.

297   Epplin and Penix-Tadsen, 'Cualquier cosa'.

298   Ibid.

299   Aira, *Las tres fechas* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2001), 89.

300   *Las tres fechas* focuses on the novels by Denton Welch (1915–48), Joe Randolph Ackerley (1896–1967), Edward M. Forster (1879–1970), and Paul Léautaud (1872–1956).

301   Ibid., 29.

obsession to register it all pushes them to the extreme of choosing what would be worth experiencing as a way of preselecting what could become a new entry in their personal diaries. These precautions end up shaping an extravagant way of life, Aira tells us, where the writer's experience becomes a secret record in a diary whose keys can then be found later in their books.[302]

> Paul Léautaud was one of the most dramatic examples of the autobiographical or 'writer of experience'. He is the type of writer who does not find another subject but himself, and who ends up imposing an inflexible veto to invention. The positive side of this taboo is sincerity. Fiction is identified with untruthfulness and dishonesty … and it is so excluded from the text because of both ethical and formal issues … it would produce a change in the verisimilar flow which would break the artistic unity.[303]

What the contemporary local realist novel does is to use lived experience and sensory perception as raw material available for transformation. Purity and adherence to the facts is not only dismissed but regarded as unnecessary and inartistic: the voice of the author must intervene to transform the action.[304] The record of lived experience is now the substance to be subverted by invention.

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302 Ibid., 80–84.

303 Ibid., 26–27.

304 Aira, *Fragmentos de un diario en los Alpes* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2004) was written a week after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. In Monday's entry, his second day in the house of 'contemporary-art loathers', and after a meticulous inventory of all the visual artifacts that populated his room (those visual-objects that Aira calls 'material images that function as signs and give character to the house': dolls, doll houses, a hanger in the form of a man, a lamp with the shape of a plant, a glass carved with flies, a Japanese garden on a tray, a glass cabinet filled with miniatures, and books, plenty of books about images that suggests the owner's taste 'is definitely inclined for a figurative literature, or one that is a genesis of images'), he says: 'in this house of enemies of art, and more than anywhere else I have been, my idea of art is realized: it is transformation', 18.

Because memories are essentially fragmented and imprecise (the 'holes in our memories of past experiences' that the character of *Cumpleaños* 'César Aira' struggles against), what we do not remember, those parentheses of time and space, are filled by fantasy. In Ancient Greek comedy subjective interventions in the form of choral interludes filled a space opened by the author, but now those unexpected and surprising turns of the action represent lyrical digressions woven tightly into a picturesque depiction of contemporary life in Buenos Aires.

3.2.4 Memories and Duchamp's readymade

What I wanted was a sensation of reality, the lived experience.[305]

Aira's *Las tres fechas* establishes a connection between the biographical and realistic novels based on factual experiences and a concept borrowed from the visual arts: the readymade, any object which becomes an art piece as a result of the decision of the artist, who he prefers to call 'the archivist'. He proposes that lived experience is a readymade, where any trivial and personal event becomes a literary theme in the realistic novel. For Aira, writers do not do anything else but manipulate their experience of reality: 'A writer always uses his/her own experience as raw material, as stimulus or as context, and it is almost natural for him/her to start practicing "an art of experience" to which the literary work will respond.'[306] In the same article, he asserts that if experience is left unwritten it remains as memory, available to conceal and cipher those unconscious developments that would encourage him to make art: 'An unwritten experience remains a lagoon, from which sooner or later

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305 Aira, *Un sueño realizado* (Buenos Aires: Alfaguara, 2001), 74.

306 Aira, 'Particularidades absolutas'.

strange mutant creatures will emerge.'[307] This means literature is for him a field of transformation and experimentation based on memory and experience,[308] and he concludes that writing means creating a singular language, a formula to transform and organize experience.[309]

Aira defines two interconnected approaches in literary practice, the quantitative and the qualitative. The first responds to the accumulation of relevant experience, like journeys, wars or even a restless love life; the second responds to the manipulation of the quality of that lived experience, which comprises, he explains, three basic attitudes: action, reflexion and perfection. This means: to live adventures, to explain to oneself what has happened, and finally to create exquisite and condensed sensations with the remains of those lived events. Novels, he concludes, are often born out of this combination: they tell events, these events get enhanced in the thoughtful process of writing, and finally the threads of their meaning are assembled in the 'sublimation of ecstasy or love.'[310] He goes further, asserting that literary practice serves history because 'what it is written is done within a timeframe, and it becomes a testimony of the historic consciousness'; writing organizes and gives meaning to experience by ordering and registering those time lapses. What happens to us in real life, he says, 'is a continuous improvisation within chaos', and initially lived experience is just 'meaningless confusion'; writing creates the occasion to organize it; it gives an order to those lived events. [311]

For the writer, only the written word presents the world as reality: the mere succession of perceptions and actions become real experience only when they cross the threshold of systematization, he asserts: this is when the lived events can be inscribed in the artistic framework of a literary practice, a didactic model of what has just happened.[312] For Aira, we need repetition to turn what it is perceived into reality; 'it is as if experience, even the most vivid and plentiful one, lacks something to become real … it always carries a *nostalgia of consummation'*, and this is pursued when writers turn it into a story. 'For us reality is itself repetition produced by our consciousness, which restlessly represents both what happens and what does not in its own private theatre.' (My emphasis). This circular method in which writing helps experience to become complete, and vivid and lived experiences help to write, is a recurrent loop which Aira defines as authentic experience, 'round and organized like a story'. In this way reality becomes legible and can be conceived as a book, making lived experience into a readymade and transformed into a literary object.

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307   Ibid.

308   Aira, *Las tres fechas*, 24.

309   Aira, 'Particularidades absolutas'.

310   Aira, *Las tres fechas*, 79–84.

311   Aira, 'Particularidades absolutas': 'In the midst of chaos, we improvise what happens in real life, that is in our own lives, almost always chaos remains, in confusion devoid of meaning.'

312   Ibid.

3.3 Baroque Curiosity

3.3.1 'Everything is exceptional' in Mr. Baroque's Pampas[313]

The question that arises here is in what way a writing process relates to visual culture, and more specifically how it contributes to the notion of spatial lyricism. The above paragraphs show that for Aira the invention of a new language is a creative act itself. The process starts with the organization of personal experience and then diverts into unknown territories traced by his imagination. The artistic impulse is driven by a necessity to apprehend experience through repetition; from his essays it can be understood that, both visually and verbally, experience is transformed into an event, and becomes a creative act only if it is presented through a singular language.[314]

Aira assumes and affirms the importance of the subjective self to develop a new language that could become a relevant addition to the historic process of art. Even if he states the outcome is less significant in the process of making novels, he still emphasizes its capacity to evoke emotion by assembling the meaning of those unorganized perceptions into something able to surprise the reader with 'the exceptional', the unexpected or even the 'sublimation of ecstasy or love', as he shows in 'Particularidades absolutas'.[315]

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313   The notion of 'Mr. Baroque', taken from José Lezama Lima's book *La expresión americana* (1957), will be explained in the following paragraphs.

314   For Aira, a lived experience is transformed into an event when it is revisited and used for visual or verbal representation. He defines this act of revisitation as a repetition of experience to achieve consummation.

315   A similar position but within the architectural debate was established recently by Yael Reisner: 'architectural poetics evolve from personal expression and personal interpretation of cultural manifestations which might evoke emotions in the observer'. She stresses that '[it] is our preoccupations—obsessions and passions—that lead us to our most original creative acts. It is an interesting and testing moment when personality, character and poetics take part in exuberant expression'. Yael Reisner, 'Diving into

Aira utilizes memory and experience in the making of his novellas. This preference to include self and personal experience is a strategy clearly supported and accepted by the cultural context in which his practice develops: his home country, Argentina. Moreover, it can be traced back to the origins of the Latin American mode of thought. If his sine qua non of writing is invention,[316] I will argue here that this creative impulse can be traced back to the Latin American rediscovery of seventeenth-century forms which borrowed from a baroque rationale, supporting invention and pursuing originality as an alternative to imported narratives and languages.

Monika Kaup argues that the New World Neo-Baroque constitutes a site-specific hybrid countermodernity. She affirms that the twentieth-century crisis of the Enlightenment opened the way for the rediscovery of an earlier *alternative* rational. She calls this mode of thought 'baroque reason', which during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had become obsolete and was subsequently vilified as decadent and irrational.[317] To support her statement, she looks at José Lezama Lima's *La expresión americana* (1957), a history and theory of Latin American identity which explains the strategy that the regional culture adopts when choosing the Baroque as a response to Eurocentric Modern Rationalism. 'In *La expresión americana* poetry is a form of knowledge' she says; 'in fact, because all deep knowledge is poetic, poetic "gnosis" takes precedence over rationality'. For Lezama Lima, she continues, human history is the history of 'imaginative eras' into which each culture makes its entry with the appearance of 'rebellious metaphorical subjects (poets and artists)

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the Depth-Space: Exuberance and Personalities', *Architectural Design: Exuberance: New Virtuosity in Contemporary Architecture* (80; London: Wiley, March-April 2010), 32–39.

316   Aira, *Copi*.

317   Monika Kaup, 'Becoming-Baroque: Folding European Forms into the New World Baroque with Alejo Carpentier', *The New Centennial Review*, (5; Michigan State University Press, Fall 2005), 107–49.

who create their culture's *image*.' In Latin America, the rebellious metaphorical subject appears with the forging of a hybrid Latin American fusion of European, indigenous and black contributions.[318] An earlier essay by literary critic Saúl Yurkievich went further, stating that the Baroque in Latin America is not a mode but a predestination.[319]

In the previous paragraphs I have discussed the salient aspects—hyperrealism, brevity, intensity of invention, lived experience and the Baroque—of a prolific and imaginative literary practice in contemporary Argentine culture. These aspects condense Aira's pursuit of a 'new myth of origin' through a new literary language. Lezama Lima's book explains the creation of a Latin American image through a positive reinterpretation of seventeenth-century baroque imported qualities. Of those present in Aira's work, invention and originality reflect Lezama Lima's positivism in the pursuit of the American image.

Lezama Lima's book starts with an attack on practices that believe art is a mere play of combinations of existing forms. Forty years later, Aira's essay 'La nueva escritura' proposes a revisitation of the early twentieth-century avant-garde as it pursued the same spirit of innovation and originality as that expressed by Lezama Lima in *La expresión americana* through the creation of a new language. 'The potential power of the possible and not yet created' defines what Lezama Lima would call *La curiosidad barroca* [Baroque Curiosity] stressing the possibility of emergence, of saying something new.[320] His Americanism is articulated in the figure of 'el señor barroco', the first American-born individual who 'emerges from all races, genders, and classes of colonial society': the Brazilian mulatto architect Aleijadinho,

the son of a Portuguese architect and a slave; the Mexican writer Sor Juana; the Mexican scholar Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora; or the Andean architect el Indio Kondori.[321] Yurkievich's analysis of *La expresión americana* proposes that it is due to the extent of its landscape and the excessiveness of its natural resources that America establishes a vast gnostic space where the synthesis of the invading spirit with original nature has occurred like in no other continent colonized by Europe. Like 'a great incorporative protoplasm,' America opened its space to any germinal influence. 'Hernández, Melville, Whitman, freed from historicism, reflect an era of original men.' He concludes that for Lezama Lima, America 'is intended to perform the great cultural synthesis. America's integrative strength, its ability to append and amalgamate … has a syncretic voracity, *a large stomach able to assimilate delicacies from all sources;*[322] all that incites its appetite America digests, eligible to participate

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318   Monika Kaup, 'Neo-Baroque: Latin America's Alternative Modernity', *Comparative Literature* (58; Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 128–52.

319   Saúl Yurkievich, 'La expresión americana o la fabulación autóctona', *Revista Iberoamericana* (57; Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh, January-March 1991), 43–50.

320   Kaup, 'Neo-Baroque'.

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321   Yurkievich, 'La expresión americana o la fabulación autóctona', 47: 'As examples of the Baroque apogee, as first achievements of its syncretism, Lezama Lima proposes two writers—Góngora Sigüenza and Sor Juana—and two sculptors: El Indiao Kondori and Aleijadinho. Kondori's *indiatid* [a permutation of the European word *caryatid*, to refer to the anthropomorphic columns fashioned in the likeness of indigenous—rather than European—women] in the façade of the church of San Lorenzo in Potosí, sculpts an Inca princess, with all her native attributes, and locates it between Christian imagery. Kondori inserts there those Incan icons equating American greenery with the charm of a trifoliated Corinthian capital. Just as Kondori achieves a synthesis between Spanish theocratic culture and Incan magnificence, Aleijandinho, the crippled leprous mulatto, son of a black mother and a Portuguese architect, incarnates African-Lusitanian integration.' On the term *Indiatid* see: Angel Guido, 'Americas's Relation to Europe in the Arts', in Lois Parkinson Zamora and Monika Kaup (eds.), *Baroque New Worlds: Representation, Transculturation, Counterconquest* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 181.

322   This conception is very close to the Brazilian visual and musical Tropicália movement (marked by Helio Oiticica's Tropicália installation in 1967, and also represented by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil's Bossa Nova music) that embodied the anthropophagic multi-identitarian cultural credo defined in 'Manifesto Antropófago' by Oswald de Andrade in 1928. 1960s–70s Tropicalism clearly rejected the notion of purity in the arts and aspired to reflect an exuberant third world *mestizo* aesthetic in the fusion of African, European and Indigenous identities, high art and popular culture, Brazilian modernist architecture, like that of Lina Bo Bardi, and its lush natural landscape.

in the feast of all cultures, the universal digestion, metamorphosed and endowed with the most assimilative power.'[323] (My emphasis).

The baroque rationale has been crucial in the construction of an alternative and distinctive American image.[324] The question that arises today is if the baroque principles are still valid in the contemporary construction of a local visual language. More specifically, what the possible links are between a literary practice—which in the pursuit of new content draws from 'dead schools' of modernity (like Surrealism), lived experience, memory and self—and visual practices occupied with the everyday. The second part of this chapter proposes that a baroque logic crosses disciplines tangentially, and explores the distinctive character of baroque space in realistic representation. To provoke surprise, the visual work of installation artist Leandro Erlich, visual artist Dino Bruzzone and photographer Esteban Pastorino, affect experience and intervene in our memories, producing (in an even more extreme manner than in the literary) a baroque hyperrealism through a particularly plain and simple language, devoid of emotion or affect.

The previous paragraphs have shown how Aira reinstalled the value of inspiration in contemporary debate. As a way to approach inventiveness today, he resorts to a baroque rationale—expressed in the convoluted and twisted turns in which the stories unfold and the speed of invention itself—and revisits some aspects of Surrealism for inspiration, adding causation and a sequential logic to the most

surprising events. A reason for this revision may be answered by Alberto Pérez-Gómez who states that '[t]he surrealist program placed inspiration at the centre of a world vision, substituting it for both reason and religion as a "form of knowledge".'[325] In his pursuit of placing Love and Desire as the forces that inspire creation, Pérez-Gómez says that the 'poet in love is the only one who is capable of revealing the truth. André Breton is able to perceive the true Paris only through his love for Nadja—not the invisible but the utterly visible, in a state that is not reducible to either dreams or a banal reality:'

> During the early twentieth century, surrealism articulated the 'problem' of inspired creation by responding to insights from existentialism and phenomenology. It was a radical attempt to overcome the reduction of reality to the subject-object antinomy. It questioned both the status of the subject as a thinking substance and the status of the object as a quantifiable and unchanging substance. There is no reflective ego at one end of the creative process, and no completed and immutable work at the other end. There is instead a poetic force, initially directed by the poet-maker (at random or guided by his or her life project), but necessarily re-created by the spectator-participant.[326]

This interpretation of the poetic force guided by the surrealist movement draws Lezama Lima's concept of poetic 'gnosis' (knowledge that derives from poetry) closer to Aira's conclusion that perception and sensation are valid leaders to cognition. The creation of an original language that produces distinctive images is driven by a positive attitude by the poet-maker towards his or her sensations of the perceived reality. Following Pérez-Gómez's thinking that puts Surrealism as an inspirational force which questions the status of the object as a quantifiable and

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323   Yurkievich, 'La expresión americana o la fabulación autóctona', 50.

324   Cuban novelist and literary critic Alejo Carpentier also proclaimed in his seminal 1975 essay 'The Baroque and the Marvellous Real' the emergence of the Neo-Baroque as the inherent *counterculture* of America: 'Why is Latin America the chosen territory of the Baroque? Because all symbiosis, all *mestizaje*, engenders the Baroque. The American Baroque develops along with *criollo* culture … with the self-awareness of the American man, be he the son of a white European, the son of a black African or an Indian born on the continent . . . : the awareness of being Other, of being new, of being symbiotic, of being a *criollo*; and the *criollo* spirit is itself a baroque spirit', 100.

325   Alberto Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love: Architectural Longing after Ethics and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 27.

326   Ibid., 260.

unchangeable substance, it can be said that this approach allows for the irruption of the extraordinary into the reading of everyday reality. *Built upon Love* affirms that European art in the nineteenth century struggled intensely to renounce inspiration. Moreover, 'positivism viewed delirium and inspiration with great suspicion, and artists often tried to avoid speculative contamination by working hard and efficiently.'[327] It can be said that the rediscovery of seventeenth-century baroque principles, as well as European Surrealism, were read in twentieth-century Latin America as a reaction to the negations of speculative contamination of the work of art that characterised the previous era of Romanticism.

3.3.2   Erlich's lost garden in the gardener's collection

To distinguish Latin America from European models, its visual artists and writers expand the concept of reality in a way that allows the unexpected, uncanny and surprising inside the frontiers of the possible. In the twenty-first century,

Fig. 40a Entrance courtyard of a house on a hill in San Isidro which contains a large collection of contemporary Argentine art. Photos by Takayuki Nakajima, 2010

Fig. 40b: View from the courtyard towards the corridor where the collection is on display

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327   Ibid., 28.

contemporary Realism is characterised by a similar attitude, but this time toward the experience of the everyday. Everyday life is viewed as a poetic force that can include the unknown. In this way, inspiration and invention are reinstalled in contemporary debate in Argentina. Leandro Erlich's work is an example of this in contemporary visual Realism. He is occupied with the expansion of the notion of the familiar and quotidian, and surprise is the distinctive element of his work. Erlich's work has been known to me since our school days, as we started art foundation course at IUNA's School of Visual Arts the same year. However, because his studio has been based in France until recently, I only had the opportunity to see a piece by him for first time in 2010 in a house in San Isidro, Buenos Aires, which contains one of the most impressive private collections of contemporary Argentine art, although I was shown only a fraction of the works of the collection.[328] Of the works discussed in this thesis, those by Kuitca, Erlich and Bruzzone were among those exhibited. The place for display was a long and wide corridor preceding the house. We entered it after crossing a courtyard which the house's owner planned as a new pavilion for his collection.

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328   The collector was not pleased with the display of the art pieces. He asked my partner and I to produce ideas for a pavilion to exhibit part of his collection at the entrance courtyard shown in Fig. 40a. This project was not built.

The garden behind the house was designed on a hill descending to the shore of the River Plate. The sloping terrain and lush vegetation reminded me of Parque de Serralves, the garden adjoining Alvaro Siza's Museum of Contemporary Art in Porto. However, the collector—who calls himself a gardener—stated that his inspirations for the garden were older, mentioning the Mannerist Villa Lante as one of the most significant inspirations of his design.[329] The end of the corridor where the collection was on display is marked by an enclosed space: Erlich's installation *Lost Garden* (2009).

The exuberant garden that houses Erlich's *Lost Garden* gathers both native trees like jacarandas, palos borrachos and lapachos (all species of great floral impact in early spring when their branches are dressed with white, yellow, pink and orange orchids) and tropical species like palms, ivy and bamboo. According to the collector, he conceived the garden as a sequence of enclosed spaces accessed through 'doors' built by the greenery and the sloping landscape; his aspiration was that those 'spaces would trigger sensations'.[330]

Fig. 41: View from the corridor, inside the collector's house towards the courtyard. It was taken the day I visited the house where the pavilion would be placed. It is the reverse of the image that documents the installation (Fig. 42), showing a spectator looking through the window panes inside

Figs. 42 and 43: Leandro Erlich, *Lost Garden* (2009)

Fig. 44: Leandro Erlich, *Carousel's* (2008) mundane and ordinary representation of the 'home' serves to surprise the viewer when it rotates and the objects start moving sideways and up and down. It makes visible Aira's words cited before: 'because my inventive way of working … I could not possibly add a baroque language, it would be a super-affectation. To serve this type of … imagination, a simple and straightforward prose is needed.'

To my knowledge, Erlich's piece was not commissioned by the collector but acquired later. However, the striking similarity of the fake materials to the house of the collector (the bricks and the paned windows in dark paint) suggests a connection and an intended inversion: the brick external walls that preside over the dense floral and green space outside, designed by the collector, get folded by the artist to encase the outside garden inside.

According to writer and literary critic Carlos Gamerro, there are two ways in which contemporary literary works in the region of the River Plate are baroque. One is related to excess and exuberance in linguistic terms, which is at sentence level and is achieved through lush ornamentation and an excess of the means in relation to the outcome; the other is the reuse of strategies invented by Cervantes: [331]

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329   Jimena Martignoni, 'La vida y la muerte en un jardín privado', *Barzón* (9; Buenos Aires: Donn, April 2009), 148–63.

330   Martignoni, 'La vida y la muerte en un jardín privado'.

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331   Carlos Gamerro, 'Ficciones Barrocas: Jorge Luis Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Silvina Ocampo y Julio Cortázar', seminar at the Museum of Latin American Art, Buenos Aires, January 2011: he argued that these baroque strategies are also present in Borges's short stories and in Cortázar's novels and short stories, some analyzed in previous chapters of this thesis. http://www.malba.org.ar/web/t1registro.php?id=1096.

The crossing and folding of different reality planes;

The simultaneous inclusion of the author, the translator and the reader;

The inversion and interweaving of hierarchies.[332]

I have mentioned Aira's preference for simple prose serving an 'excessive imagination.'[333] This strategic approach in which the baroque is manifested is vividly represented in Erlich's visual and spatial work. Whereas the visual language of his works tends to be concise, unaffected, even aspiring to reproduce the banal expression of the quotidian, complexity appears at a different level; the spectator, for example, is always included as a reformulation of the architectural concept of 'user' and the visual experience is thematized by dislocating the usual position of the observer. There is no 'user' in his installations but a spectator, constantly provoked to experience the exceptional. The role of the spectator, now a character in

332   He illustrated this with Calderon's *La vida es sueño* (1635) and Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (1656).

333   Duarte, 'El elogio de la inventiva'.

Figs. 45 and 46: Leandro Erlich, *The Swimming Pool* (1999). In the presentation of the installation at the MoMA PS1 (2008–10), the introduction states: 'Erlich has constructed a full-size pool, complete with all its trappings, including a deck and a ladder. When approached from the first floor, visitors are confronted with a surreal scene: people, fully clothed, can be seen standing, walking, and breathing beneath the surface of the water. It is only when visitors enter the Duplex gallery from the basement that they recognize that the pool is empty, its construction a visual trick fashioned by the artist. A large, continuous piece of acrylic spans the pool and suspends water above it, creating the illusion of a standard swimming pool that is both disorienting and humorous.' http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/207

the theatrical installation, is there to construct a narrative which blurs the distinction between what is real and what is not. His installation *The Swimming Pool* (1999) needs swimmers, and *Carousel* (2008) needs participants to let the illusion begin.

Erlich's deployment of the universal language of architecture and the elements of everyday life, both stripped of meaning and historical connotations, explores the idea that fiction can be found even in the most ordinary objects, allowing the piece to deceive reality by the use of scale and detail. *Carousel* (Fig. 44) strips of its external walls a detailed re-created home and puts private space on display, emphasizing the operation even further by rotating the piece. Figures 45 and 46 show one of the most famous pieces by the artist, *The Swimming Pool*—a realistic reproduction of a fake pool, where transparent acrylic spans the complete width to support a thin layer of water above. Here the inside-outside disorienting inversion that we saw in *Lost*

Figs. 47 and 48: Leandro Erlich, *Double Tea* (2010)

Garden is now vertical and the spectator is able to access the pool below the water. The two-level installation brings to the gallery space the experience of underwater rippling reflections of light and the surprise of finding fully-dressed visitors walking inside.

In works such as *Double Tea* (2010; Figs. 47 and 48), *Bâtiment* (2004; Figs. 49 and 50) and *Le Cabinet du Psy* (2005; Figs. 51 and 52), the use of perspective, special effects

Figs. 49: Leandro Erlich,
Bâtiment (2004)

Figs. 50: Leandro Erlich,
Fachada (2013), La Usina
del Arte, Buenos Aires.
Photo Takayuki Nakajima

and infinite space reveal baroque qualities of contrast, drama and tension that result in scepticism. The theatrical in Erlich's work is as much relevant as in the Baroque, where all elements, even fragmented and denaturalized ones, create one dynamic vision. *Bâtiment* invites the visitor to 'play' with the idea of hanging off a Parisian façade. A gigantic vertical mirror reflects the plane of a façade built horizontally, but including moving spectators suspended from balconies and mouldings. *Double Tea* stages a more subtle scene of illusory reflections, where, from one particular point of view,[334] the eye of the spectator 'reunites' in one space two persons drinking tea in different identical rooms.

In *Le Cabinet du Psy* the visitors also enter the room, but only virtually. By using a partially reflective mirror and placing the seats symmetrically outside the installation, the spectators see a shifting and phantom-like vision of themselves inside the therapy room.

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* Gilles Deleuze states that 'as a spectator, [he] experiences the sensation only by entering the painting, by reaching the unity of the

sensing and the sensed.'[335] Even though he refers to the two-dimensional space of a painting, he opens a conceptual link between immersive space and the stimulation of the senses. In Erlich's work the elements of architecture—door, window, room— once stripped from their original function, excel in surprise: Erlich's installations are

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334   Andrea Pozzo's *Glorification of Saint Ignatius,* the baroque ceiling fresco for Saint Ignatius's church in Rome (1691–94), also invites the viewer to stand on a specific spot marked with a brass disc on the floor to enjoy an illusionary and dynamic scene in perspective of spiritual characters moving 'infinitively' upwards. Also in Rome, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane (1638–41) reveals its complex geometrical structure, upon which Borromini designed the church by interconnecting triangular, circular and oval shapes, when we stand centrally under the white carved dome.

335   Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2003), 35.

seductive because of this quality that draws our curiosity deeper into it rather than simply observing from outside. Confronted by his installations, it is not enough to look inside: one desires to be part of the fictional game.

I opened Erlich's interview by asking him about the relationship between his deployment of architectural elements, the construction of a fictional architectural language, and the experience of the spectator put in the architectural role of the 'user'. He replied that he is interested in architecture as it traces a relationship between space and experience, and that the elements of architecture allowed him to construct his own language, which started with the piece *Obelisco* (1993):[336]

> When I speak of experience, I am interested in one that cuts tangentially through this idea of functionality because space in art or in an artistic installation ceases to be architecture to become a reference of that space. When I speak of experience, it has more to do with knowledge coming from the everyday, the experience, and the familiar, that becomes strange or creates a situation, even generating roles in the spectator. It has to do with the predictability of space: you can place a white, tiled box with a refrigerator, or a white box that looks like a refrigerator and a sink, and one says 'it's a kitchen', and from then on a narrative can be established and constructed.[337]

To my baroque reading of his works he replied that even if his installations have a scenographic and theatrical quality their meaning is completely different. 'The relationship with the temporal and cultural context is essential for the

Figs. 51 and 52: Leandro Erlich, *Le Cabinet du Psy* (2005), proposes another visualization of Julio Cortázar's notion of Realism: 'the frontiers between what is called fantasy and what is called realistic or real are not as clear as people would like. There is a continuing symbiosis, continuous interpenetrations. If I am categorized as a realist

[writer] ... a realist in the sense of a notion of reality greatly enlarged, highly enriched ... *The fantastic includes reality, it not only includes it, but also needs it ...* fantastic is that that arises, for example, between you and me, at this moment, in the so-called reality. Right now something can happen.' (My emphasis)

reinterpretation or resymbolization of these actions, and the construction of a hyperreal immersive space has a more vertiginous sense today than what it could have had in the Baroque.'

However, many other connections apart from the theatrical can be traced to the Baroque. In *Baroque! From St. Peter's to St. Paul's*, Borromini's seventeenth-century church, San Carlo, is used by Waldemar Januszczek[338] to introduce the idea that the baroque conception of architectural space 'speaks to the body, not only to the eyes'. The spatial qualities that this principle produced, being vivid, real, exuberant, dramatic and theatrical, speak directly to the body, mobilizing it to provoke a sensation that today leads to the concept of the hyperreal. This conception goes beyond the mimetic to reach a different level of sophistication of what is presented: 'it does not in any way mean the valorization of resemblance', as Jacques Rancière puts it in *The Politics of Aesthetics* [339], but rather the dislocation and restructuring of the elements that construct space. The aim here is to surprise, astonish and 'to review our possibilities of perception', as Erlich said in a previous interview[340]— through sensation, I add.

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336   Elena Oliveras, 'Leandro Erlich: Mirages in the Everyday', *Art Nexus*, (7; September-December 2008), 70–75.

337   Interview with Erlich by me in August 2010.

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338   Waldemar Januszczek (dir.), *Baroque! From St. Peter's to St. Paul's* (BBC4, 2009).

339   Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 24.

340   Oliveras, 'Leandro Erlich: Mirages in the Everyday'.

Hyperrealism in Erlich's works is achieved through the manipulation of detailed reconstruction of architectural elements devoid of their function. The elements that compose his installations enter the category of the *figural* in Deleuzian terms. The aim is to provoke a sensation of reality materialized by our experience:

> There are two ways of going beyond figuration (that is, beyond both the illustrative and the figurative): either toward the abstract form or toward the Figure. Cézanne gave a simple name to this way of the Figure: sensation. The Figure is the sensible form related to a sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is addressed to the head, and acts through the intermediary of the brain … Sensation is the opposite of the facile and the ready-made, the cliché, but also of the 'sensational,' the spontaneous, etc. Sensation has one face turned toward the subject (the nervous system, vital movements, 'instinct,' 'temperament' …) and one face turned toward the object (the 'fact,' the place, the event). Or rather, it has no faces at all, it is both things indissolubly.[341]

Deleuze says that the thread that links Cézanne's 'paint the sensation' with Bacon's 'to record a fact' is that both are transmitted directly to the body.

Rather than presenting the ordinary and familiar through the isolation of fragments of the everyday, Erlich's installations pursue the notion that 'everything is exceptional'. Jacopo Crivelli Visconti states that the theatrical and fantastic dimension of Erlich's work relates to the Baroque era in its fascination with mirrors, machines, illusions, and especially the construction of labyrinthine and apparently unending scenes, which accounts for the omnipresence of the metaphor of the

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341   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 39.

Figs. 53 and 54: Leandro Erlich, *The Staircase* (2005)

theatrical scene.[342] He argues that the apparently banal presentation of the everyday does not contradict the baroque character of his work because his 'insistence on the universe of the home', familiar and commonplace 'is justified from the standpoint of theatricalization', allowing him to construct 'an imaginary, fragmented and inapprehensible' space.[343] Following his reading, I argue here that the fragments of the everyday achieve the status of figures. It is a strategy similar to that described by Deleuze about Bacon's paintings, where the figure does not mimic or simulate reality; instead it is transformed to become more violent; it is extracted and decontextualized, to provoke sensation by isolation.

But Erlich operates through a language devoid of affect, closer to Aira's texts, taking the common elements of architecture to create a new figure with the pieces, aiming to provoke and disorient the spectator. Transformation is not applied to form, but to space and the relationship with the spectator. The fragments get strategically isolated and lose their familiarity. Their original function is also stripped and

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342   Jacopo Crivelli Visconti, 'La invención de Leandro'. http://www.leandroerlich. com.ar/files/la_invencion_de_leandro.pdf. And in *Leandro Erlich: Fragmentos de una casa,* (exhibition catalogue, São Paulo: Luciana Brito Galeria, 2009).

343   Erlich's introduction to his exhibition *Fragmentos de una casa* (2009) at Luciana Brito Galeria, São Paulo: 'In my work I have always sought to establish a relationship with the everyday. With the spaces in which we live and transit. Thinking these spaces as a décor in which runs a play. The relationship with them and the experiences we have in them have always intrigued me.' http://www.leandroerlich.com.ar/exhibitions. php. And http://www.lucianabritogaleria.com.br/exhibitions/4.

changed, creating a drift in the reading of the real that triggers estrangement in the viewer. Familiarity relates to continuity, predictability, stability and homogeneity, not to difference, change and variation. Erlich works with this tension as his installations combine the ordinary, homogeneous and predictable with the surprising and unexpected. By eroding the distinction between reality and fiction, his installations behave like neo-baroque machines which aspire to pursue the particularity of the moment and the notion that everything is exceptional. On this interpretation of his work, he says: 'because the elements of the everyday convey a sense of reality, and also construct an ideal of the real that is very strong. I think that it is a good place to question the real and the ordinary, like Freud's idea of the uncanny, a sensation that exists and from there can provoke or rather shoot and detonate a reflection, a new reading or an emotion'.[344]

3.3.3 'We desire the exceptional'

The above paragraph indicates in Erlich's work a desire to bring the exceptional to the reading of the everyday as a baroque strategy. I would like to contrast this to what is suggested as a failed neo-baroque practice in today's architectural design. Neil Spiller suggests that spatial exuberance in much of avant-garde contemporary parametric design is a deceptive continuation of seventeenth-century Italian Baroque but without the subjective dimension that the Baroque movement installed in the arts.[345] Pérez-Gómez also believes that much of 'algorithmic' processes of design 'creates novelty without love, resulting in short-lived seduction, typically without concern for embodied cultural experience,

character and appropriateness.'[346] I introduce these ideas here because, like this thesis, they advocate the notion of experience and include 'the human condition' and 'self-critical engagement' as requirements to the construction of space, whether virtual, physical, architecture or art. To exemplify this, the article contrasts current computational design to the force of the 'exuberant dark eroticism' of Bernini's sculpture, *The Ecstasy of St. Teresa*, at the Santa Maria della Vittoria church in Rome (1647–52) and the tension it creates inside the baroque chapel by introducing erotic desire into a holy space.

Continuing my analogy with the Baroque era, the architectural elements chosen to be thematised in Erlich's installations trace a striking equivalence to themes

Fig. 55: Leandro Erlich, *Rain* (2000)

recurrent in the seventeenth century. Of those rehearsed during the European Baroque, some of the elements most explored in the light of these notions include: the entrance; the gate; the tree; the vista; the fountain; the sculpture; the gazebo; the artist's studio; the site plan; the seasons; the temple of repose; the chapel; the laboratory and the shed.[347] In Erlich's installations the theme of the entrance relates to his *Bâtiment*; the laboratory to *Le Cabinet du Psy*; the fountain to *The*

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344   Interview with Erlich by me in August 2010.

345   Neil Spiller, 'Surrealist Exuberance - Dark Matters', *Architectural Design: Exuberance: New Virtuosity in Contemporary Architecture* (80; London: Wiley, March-April 2010), 64–69.

346   Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love,* 28.

347   Spiller, 'Surrealist Exuberance - Dark Matters', 69.

Swimming Pool; the gazebo to *The Living Room*[348]; and the baroque obsession with the seasons and the vista to his *Rain* (2000; Fig. 55) where he introduces anguish to his contemporary take on romantic melancholy with 'an endless storm with lightning and thunder'. This anxious feeling of unstoppable rain and darkness triggers a sensation of reality: not only is what I see presented (the rain itself though the window), but also what I feel is evoked with a purpose. Finally, other baroque themes such as the staircase and the garden are there in Erlich's work: *The Staircase* (2005; Figs. 53 and 54), whose changed plane of ascent breaks its function and dislocates the spectator allowing him/her to see down the central void of the staircase without vertigo, and *Lost Garden* which provokes a sensation of claustrophobia and tension by limiting lush vegetation to a small enclosed space. All these elicit emotions in us because they are spaces that often refer to lived experiences. The Baroque ambition lies in the aspiration to take those experiences into the realm of the exceptional by distorting the elements that constructed those spaces. Everything is exceptional in Erlich's world: a poetic construction that pursues the particularity of the moment. Optical illusions, endless reflections, misplacements, distortions and changes of planes between object and user, all characterize a type of space that allows for the unpredictable, uncanny and unstable, a type of space that is able to change unexpectedly the relationship with its user. This type of space is porous and able to expand its limits, including the real and the fantastic, again assuming a neo-baroque quality.

Omar Calabrese says that excess is endogenous to the Baroque era and that the act of crossing, punching, opening, stretching or conceptually expanding the limits of a structure is destabilizing. He defines 'border' as a notion that articulates and renders gradual relations between the interior and the exterior, between aperture and closure, acting as filter or membrane. The border-boundary is a limit and any

pressure placed on it assumes the value of a tension. The image of excess describes the overcoming of a limit, and the liminal or excessive act is a crossing by making an opening. Limit and excess are two types of cultural acts, he affirms. Stretching to the limit (experimenting with the elasticity of the border) and experimenting with excess are both characteristics of what he defines as neo-baroque.[349] 'Any excessive action, work of art, or individual *wants* to throw doubt upon an existing order, as well as possibly to destroy it or to construct a new order.'[350]

Many of Erlich's works discussed here are manifestations of this type of expanded space; unstable and unpredictable, with shifting spatial relationships, proposing a space filled with passages and holes through which reality drains, allowing the fantastic to happen. Surprise is vital for the familiar to be assaulted by the unexpected. Through optical illusions, changes of plane, dislocations, inside/outside and public/private inversions, he introduces a concept of unstable and expansive reality that includes the unknown. Deleuze in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* says that 'the essence of the Baroque entails neither falling into nor emerging from illusion but rather *realizing* something in illusion itself.'[351] This definition seems to support the idea that Erlich's work is in this category. Back in 1979, in an interview by Osvaldo Soriano and Norberto Colominas, Cortázar also established that the fantastic realm includes and needs reality to be completed.[352] Thirty years later Erlich rehearses this idea through installation art. He believes that the element of surprise is perceptual and ultimately the best tool to allow us to comprehend things. 'I believe that "surprise" is useful in two ways: on one hand it is very seductive because

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348   'The living room is the place for being and for social presentation, the room most oriented to the outside world', as Erlich explains in Oliveras, 'Leandro Erlich: Mirages in the Everyday', 72.

349   Omar Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the Times* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 50.

350   Ibid., 58.

351   Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (London: Continuum, 2006), 125.

352   Osvaldo Soriano and Norberto Colominas, 'Julio Cortázar: "Lo fantástico incluye y necesita la realidad"'.

surprise stimulates the curiosity to learn and understand; on the other hand it is concerned with the possibility of experiencing a porous type of space.' According to Erlich, surprise is the element that detonates our awareness of the experience and at the same time allows the experience to be reinterpreted to bring a new reading of the space the spectator is immersed in. He is not concerned with revealing the tricks behind the effect, he says, 'because in that way [the spectators] will find metaphors to reinterpret their experience. There is no better way of learning than through experience'. He said in a previous interview, 'It makes us go deeper into things, much more than simply being introduced to concepts.'[353] In our conversation he stated that pursuing surprise does not relate to a more satisfactory truth about what is represented, but surprise does stimulate our senses and thought as it opens the idea of an expandable reality that allows us to imagine new things. 'For me it is important to break predictability … it might not be something necessarily pleasurable at first, but then comes thought and understanding and sensation turns into something satisfactory.'[354] He continued:

> [The conception of] a porous reality, one that does not end where we believe, has a very positive value to me as it lets us expand the way we understand space through imagination. At the same time these impressions that my work generate are part of the aim of my work, that is being able to formulate this type of multiple readings and reflections. I have a very clear idea of what I am doing at the beginning, but there is a point when the possible future readings of the work may become very broad. I am interested in reflecting on this type of situations, about the subject of space and our idea of reality, questioning the meaning of things and the way in which the fictional takes part of the real … understanding what is real as merely fictional is a fiction in itself. However, the ordinary and commonplace

are good places to state this because you would never start from there; it does not seem to be a place for fiction within the ordinary … [the ordinary] seems to be an established known space with unique and unquestionable meaning … With regards to the relationship between the body and space, I believe that architecture is often taken over by security codes and health and safety regulations that set certain rules that for the large majority of practices

Fig. 56a and 56b: Leandro Erlich, *Monte-Meubles. L'ultime déménagement* (2012), Nantes

imply the end of imagination … In installation art one can construct a 60 cm wide hallway, which is absolutely claustrophobic, and trigger emotions that architecture is not part of. However, *architecture is beginning to contemplate experiential emotion, sometimes in a playful way; …* [but] art develops within a more privileged context, in the sense that one approaches art in search for reflection that may have to do with the existential or the philosophical. Architecture, without a doubt, has one side that is immensely artistic, but the functional aspect of space takes over according to the theme it is dealing with … The person that goes into an airport is a user not a spectator, and that is the difference, regardless of the aesthetic values that may exist. For me, functionality always takes over in architecture.[355] (My emphasis.)

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353   This statement establishes another link to Aira's idea of the role of experience as leader to cognition. Oliveras, 'Leandro Erlich: Mirages in the Everyday', 75.

354   Interview with Erlich by me in August 2010.

355   Ibid.

3.3.4   The inverted telescope, the miniature and the detail

Installation art allows the construction of penetrable spaces that surround us completely and lets the spectator sense a new type of space. In Erlich this sensation of reality happens through a detailed materialization of the spaces reproduced by keeping an extreme resemblance to the way they look in reality. They are hyperfake materializations of real spaces where immersiveness is the other aspect that contributes to sensation. According to Deleuze, Francis Bacon's contours of the figure were the elements that allowed for sensation. The rigour and vigour with which the figure was enclosed by the contour provoked the immersive experience; in Erlich's installations, Deleuze's contours[356] appear in the rigour of the details aimed to provoke a hyperreal sensation of the space delimited by the installation.

In short, Erlich's installations construct a type of space porous and hollowed, filled with thresholds to the unknown and unexpected. Through them a telescope finds its target, far and minuscule but hyper-detailed, a fantastic place where the real is reconstructed with absolute precision. In his installations one can read the effort to attain precision, to achieve the perfect solution to the every technical problem. This effort can derive from the lack of resources he may have available. Or it can be interpreted as a journey, an experience of learning though trial and error. I read this ambition of perfection as a journey through an unknown territory, a metaphor of the epic. Those detailed descriptions, or cuts through reality, become the conquest of a dense and detailed space. The more explicit the materialization of these frames and isolated pieces, the bigger is the surprise when the unexpected irrupts. He agreed with me that they manifest a collision between fragments of a familiar territory and the unknown.

Even though his installations are built at one-to-one scale, they represent a miniaturized world. A miniaturized world is a detailed world. To miniaturize means to present a familiar world as remote, exotic and unknown, even if its components are known to us. It also requires to be shown in extreme detail, dense and over-elaborated. Aira explains in his essay on Copi that the miniaturist is driven by one necessity: 'there cannot be voids within a situation.'[357] Detailed fragments and excess characterize Aira's construction of miniatures in his literary practice. They are also neo-baroque qualities.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the attributes of the Neo-Baroque is the pre-eminence of fragment. Calabrese explains the 'fall of totality' in the Neo-Baroque by introducing Carlo Scarpa's architecture, which transformed his practice into a 'genuine style of reconstruction' by a decontextualizing of fragments that 'make[s] us "lose sight" of our larger general frames of reference.'[358] Following Calabrese, the detail here becomes a fragment or a singularity. The extraction of fragments from their original context also introduces the notion of the multiple. Erlich's excessive preoccupation to reproduce in detail every spatial element of the composition and every object in it—even the clock's hands are reflected behind the mirror-window in *The Living Room*—relates to his ambition to achieve verisimilitude to make an impact on the spectator. More than miniaturization, he stresses the importance of detail:

> Reality is a sum of fragmented details … For me, the detail is very important to achieve verisimilitude, and the relationship with things that allow us to connect with something that looks real. There are many ways to represent things. Perhaps what I am trying to do is to find the most real presentation, the most verisimilar. At one-to-one scale a shattered door, for example, has to have the size of a real door but it is a representation, it was not fabricated

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356   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 104–10.

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357   Aira, *Copi*, 29.

358   Calabrese, *Neo-Baroque*, 90.

as a real one, it does not lead anywhere and does not open or shut. But scale is fundamental for the body to relate to the work, because reality manifests itself both intellectually through the brain and the body.[359]

3.3.5   New horizontal influences in the construction of space

At the end of Crivelli Visconti's essay he proposes a possible influence on Erlich of Argentine writer Adolfo Bioy Casares's *La invención de Morel*. I will argue here that twenty-first-century artworks distinguish themselves because they have inverted the supremacy of the verbal over the visual. Today, the current of influences within the arts has upturned this hierarchy or at least levelled it, creating horizontal relationships between disciplines. Writers like Aira[360] and Don DeLillo[361] have publicly stated being influenced and inspired by the visual arts, both by the images they produce and by the procedures that generate them.

In an interview Aira says: 'Sometimes I wonder if what I do is closer to drawing than to literature … as everything I do has a very important visual component. I am always concerned with the way what I am writing looks. In the end it seems I am

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359   From my interview with Erlich.

360   'I thought for many years that people of my generation turn to literature by discarding other disciplines, because I could not do what I really would have liked to do, which was film, music, or visual arts … In writing, in my novels, I try to film, to make music, visual arts and sculpture, and until recently, until two or three years ago, I continued to believe that literature was a minor art, one adopted by those who did not have the talent to make great art, and then I realized that I have been completely wrong, literature is the supreme art.' Epplin and Penix-Tadsen, 'Cualquier cosa'. (On-line source).

361   Robert McCrum, 'Don DeLillo: "I'm not trying to manipulate reality—this is what I see and hear"', *The Observer* (8 August 2010). DeLillo explains how he was inspired by Douglas Gordon's installation *24 Hour Psycho* for his recent novel *Point Omega* on Iraq War. Gordon's video slows down every frame of Hitchcock's thriller into a 24-hour cycle and immediately hooked the writer's imagination.

doing a drawing each day.'[362] Reinaldo Laddaga's essay on Latin American narrative of the last two decades argues that all recent literature aspires to the condition of contemporary visual art.[363]

Many of the characteristics of Aira's novels, such as his conception of contemporary Realism, detail, miniaturization, the *design of experiences* as a means to achieve verisimilitude, and the sensation of reality even if the most unexpected irrupts, are also found in Erlich's installations and align his visual work to the strong storytelling tradition of South America.[364] Erlich's machines of perception enrich reality in a way similar to the texts of Aira, Bioy Casares, Borges or Cortázar. However, he does not believe their work directly influences his. He accepts that he is part of the same cultural realm which has produced them, but thinks that having an architect father, for example, has been a lot more significant and influential in his work than any literary piece. Still, he admits an admiration for writers like Bioy Casares or Borges who, like Aira or Cortázar, have developed complex ideas and conceptions of what reality and space might be: 'What I like about Borges is the capacity of his texts to detonate new and complex thinking about themes outside his discipline in a poetic way.'[365]

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362   Duarte, 'Elogio de la inventiva'.

363   Reinaldo Laddaga, *Espectáculos de realidad. Ensayo sobre la narrativa latinoamericana de las últimas dos décadas'* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2007), 14.

364   On Erlich's *Bâtiment*: 'Erlich … in creating these spatial and psychological illusions he seems to align himself to the strong story telling traditions of South America where nothing is quite what it seems and the viewer is forced to suspend their sense of reality.' http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/cy/artesmundi2006/erlich/.

365   From my interview with Erlich.

3.3.6 Duchamp and Hyperrealism

Reality is a convention.[366] *(Leandro Erlich)*

In Jean Baudrillard's terms the real is 'that for which it is possible to provide an equivalent representation, preferably through another reproductive medium … From medium to medium, the real is volatized, becoming an allegory of death.'[367] Hyperrealism is 'a meticulous reduplication of the *real* through another media' and it 'represents a much more advanced stage [than Realism which had to redouble what it said with reality effects, or Surrealism in which remained the differentiation between what is real and what is imaginary] insofar *as it manages to efface even this contradiction between real and imaginary*. Unreality no longer resides in the dream or fantasy, or in the beyond, *but in the real's hallucinatory resemblance to itself.*'[368]

This means that in Hyperrealism the real and the imaginary are part of the same aesthetic realm. They form an *aesthetic operational totality* in which, he says, 'even the reproduction of everyday reality becomes aesthetic.'[369]

According to Baudrillard, Hyperrealism 'is beyond representation because it functions entirely within the realm of simulation.' The question that arises today lies in the role of the spectator when confronted with the hyperreal. If the contradiction between real and imaginary is surpassed, and the unreal no longer resides in fantasy or dream, the suspension of our sense of reality is no longer required: we have become today aware of the simulation; our sense of reality includes the unreal

and fake.[370] It can be argued that hyperfake manifestations are contemporary renditions of the hyperreal. By utilizing existing elements of a specific architectonic repertoire that offer an exalted resemblance to themselves, Erlich's works create a hyperfake realm. A priori, this operation could be related to early twentieth-century Conceptualism and the first reactions of artists to mass production. However, Erlich categorically denies this: 'Duchamp created not only the readymade, but conceptual art. No artistic expression can avoid dealing with it since then, even if you are a figurative painter today. Conceptual art is inclusive and expansive … Every artistic action today is supported by an idea or concept, even the most stylistically anachronistic.'[371]

[S]ome paint comes across directly onto the nervous system and other paint tells you the story in a long diatribe through the brain.[372]

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366   http://crane.tv/#video/v/1111036-ffcceb2f/Leandro-Erlich.

367   Jean Baudrillard, 'Symbolic Exchange and Death. The Hyperrealism of Simulation', in Mark Poster (ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 144–45.

368   Ibid., 145.

369   Ibid., 146.

370   'It is clear that such hyperreal simulations are per se "hyperfake". Simulation replaces the real with a fictitious and artistic self-representation, a reiteration of its own – digital – properties and characteristics.' Marjan Colletti, 'OrnaMental POrnamentation: The Abstract and the Exuberant Body of Ornamentation', *Architectural Design: Exuberance: New Virtuosity in Contemporary Architecture* (80; London: Wiley, March-April 2010), 60–64.

371   Interview with Erlich by me: 'Duchamp not only creates the readymade, but is the father of conceptual art. So I think that since the existence of conceptual art virtually no artistic expression escapes it. You can paint a still life, but there appears a concept of art that is new and that is comprehensive, inclusive and expansive … In my view, you can be an artist even if you do neo-expressionist painting today. Any artistic action returns to an idea or concept, any aesthetic expression is like a sieve. I am not saying that there is no art that is not conceptual, but all art more or less follows that line, even if what you do is not strictly conceptual art … Before, the readymade had another significance that had to do with the fabrication of the work of art … With the passage of time, the craftsmanship value of things has lost relevance … the idea of making a work of art from an industrial product was revolutionary. Today, there is something of the readymade in many artistic things, but the idea of this style is not what prevails. Today, we live in a world where you can you make a work of art with seven showers throwing water and what matters is not any more if you have done it or not. Before this mattered when people carved works, modelled and painted, so Duchamp makes a big break. Today, to discuss Duchamp in Argentina is not anachronistic, he was a big break that, in my view, remains currently valid.'

372   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 35.

Erlich's machines of perception provoke visual sensations which surpass the status of optical illusions—because illusions, when not set within an immersive space, are only tricks that act upon not the body but the brain. Sensation is an experience of the body, not abstract thought. His architectonic repertoire is composed of figures isolated and denaturalized which, recreated in precious and excessive detail, become mysteriously unfamiliar. The more extreme is this resemblance, the more powerful the sensation of reality acts upon our body, and the subsequent transformation of our reading of reality becomes. In both Aira's novels and Erlich's installations the subject's sensory perception is the most reliable means of acquiring knowledge and comprehending reality, which, in Baudrillard's terms, includes the unreal. This valorization of the reader/spectator's sensations, perceptions and personal experience as valid leaders to cognition, 'signals the emergence of a model of selfhood in which the thinking brain is located in the feeling body.'[373] It also marks the validation of the aesthetic-affective response that characterizes spatial lyricism as a quality of space.

3.3.7 Lyrical digression: the moment the poet speaks

Literary critic Mario Goloboff argues that Cortázar's fundamental idea of the fantastic is focused on a type of realism capable of expanding the limits of the real so as to incorporate within its borders all that it is unusual, exceptional and extraordinary. This, he says, 'is what happens in his short stories: everything starts in a trivial universe, concrete and familiar; however, imperceptibly, signs of restlessness slowly start to appear and end up messing everything up to create a new and unattainable reality.'[374] He shows how in Cortázar's work parabasis happens. He establishes that

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373   Reber, 'Cure for the Capitalist Headache', 5.

374   Mario Goloboff, 'Una literatura de puentes y pasajes: Julio Cortázar', in Noé Jitrik (ed.), *Historia crítica de la literatura argentina* (9; Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2004), 279.

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in *Rayuela* the narrative is displaced from the epic to the lyrical by allowing poetical transformations to enter the text in a provocative way.[375] Cortázar himself calls those cuts through which the unexpected emerges, 'interstitial spaces,'[376] defining a go-between[377] baroque Realism, inclusive and infinite. In the same way that lyricism emerges in Cortázar's epic novel, surprise irrupts among the familiar and homogeneous territory that Erlich's installations construct.

Erlich found this reading of his work interesting, but cautiously mentioned that art criticism is built upon a 'series of misunderstandings and misinterpretations that undoubtedly generate new ideas and knowledge.' He considered Fontana's spatial paintings and cuts, and doubted that they were an intellectual conception: 'he may have been in his studio, not knowing what to do and, unintentionally, slit the canvas. Furious, he turned the slit into a vigorous cut, then somebody saw it and got interested … Fontana might then have continued to work along that line because the public and art criticism recognized the gesture … Something like this may have happened to me as well, in the intuitive pursuit of a singular and unique language.'[378]

In the pursuit of the exceptional in architectural design and of a new poetical dimension in architectural discourse, the Baroque and Surrealism incorporated desire, ecstasy and thrill in the making and reading of sculptures, paintings and buildings. For some, the purpose of looking back at these movements, though apart

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375   Ibid., 300.

376   Julio Cortázar, 'El estado actual de la narrativa en Hispanoamérica', in Jaime Alazraki, Ivar Ivask and Joaquín Marco (eds.), *La isla final* (Madrid: Ultramar, 1983), 66–67.

377   Deleuze, *The Fold*, 122.

378   From my interview with Erlich.

in time, responds to the necessity to bring character, self and embodied culture back into contemporary spatial design.[379]

Excess, drama, exuberance and, most importantly to this second part of the chapter, contradiction, are some of the qualities resulting from bringing experience into the making of art and architecture. Viewing from the subjective perspective of the Baroque, religious and erotic ecstasy can coexist within the same piece. According to Robert Harbison, this thought-provoking contradiction 'lies at the heart of Bernini's bravura pieces like the *Ecstasy of St Teresa* (1652) or the *Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* (1674), where violent energy and peaceful dissolution are present simultaneously in the same bodies.'[380] In his article 'Baroque Exuberance: Frivolity or Disquiet' he says that exuberance in the Baroque 'is a by-product of the desire to overturn renaissance fixity, solidity and stable harmony': a subversive response that resorted to twists, turns and folds of the stone, defiance of gravity, illusory sensations of fragility and vulnerability in tectonic structures, ephemeral water forms and distorted reflections on fountains, mirrors and cascades and even fireworks. All this, he says, because of the '*baroque love of sudden and momentary artistic effects that take spectators by surprise and sweep them away in a rush of excitement.*'[381] (My emphasis).

3.3.8 The modernist ruin: a baroque fascination in Bruzzone and Pastorino

Dino Bruzzone and Esteban Pastorino are the other artists I interviewed for this chapter. Art criticism usually links their practices because of coincidences in many aspects of their work. They even had a joint exhibition in April 2010 called *Doble juego* [Double Play] at Buenos Aires's Alliance Française. Among the qualities that

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379   Pérez-Gómez, *Built upon Love,* 28–29.

380   Robert Harbison, 'Baroque Exuberance: Frivolity or Disquiet', in Colletti (ed.) *Exuberance,* 49.

381   Ibid., 47.

Fig. 57: Marcel Breuer, Parador Ariston (1946–47), Mar del Plata

Fig. 58: Dino Bruzzone, *Parador Ariston* (2010), part of the *Arquitectura escéptica* series. Bruzzone: 'When I made Casa del Puente, it was a shambles; it had been set alight, occupied by homeless people, and all the original fittings were stolen, an amazing thing, isn't it? Then it was bought by the National Art Fund. Now I believe they are restoring it. The same happened with the Bustillo House and the Hospital of San Isidro, they were all deteriorating ... Parador Ariston ... it is a seaside restaurant that nobody knows except for some architects who live in Mar del Plata, It was designed by ... Marcel Breuer! The student and then teacher at the Bauhaus! When he came to Argentina to give a guest lecture at the University of Buenos Aires he was invited to design something for Mar del Plata [a seaside resort 500 km from the capital] to put it back on the map, something iconic, a kind of restaurant-nightclub. So he designed the Parador Ariston. It is an incredible discovery because it represents quite well the rationalist utopia of modern architecture. It was designed in the shape of a four-leaf clover, very rational, with curves taken from the Bauhaus, from the figures they made with circles. It's all transparency, wood and glass, in a very pure and harmonious shape. I made the model and the photos of the model ... but the place is destroyed.' Extract from my conversation

connect them the main one is the end product: a photograph that defies our notion of what appears to be reality. But their processes are the reverse of each other's.

Bruzzone's method is lengthy. He first makes detailed models in minute size to bring back the illusion of a past, then photographs and prints the pictures in giant size to increase the realism of the situations and spaces recreated.[382] Pastorino, in contrast, invents and builds his own photographic cameras so that what he wants to capture looks like a scale model of reality, a maquette. In the *Aerial* series (an ongoing project started in 2001) this technique, Pastorino explains, 'consists of simulating shots with the same field of depth used in macro photography, thus I obtain sharpness of

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382   Extract from my conversation with Bruzzone, 2 September 2010.

focus within a blurred environment. I build my own cameras to obtain this kind of effect, so the one used here had the lens inclined toward the film. The maquette effect was achieved by capturing the images from a distance similar to that of a flying bird's view and this was done mounting the camera on a kite.'[383]

While Pastorino's ambition in the *Aerial* series is to miniaturize the real, Bruzzone recreates the past in miniature size to achieve hyperrealism. He works with memory, not as a historic recovery of a recent past, but to arouse in the spectator the sensations and emotions those spaces may have elicited before.[384] Bruzzone explained to me how he models objects and places that relate to his childhood

Figs. 59 and 60: Parador Ariston in 2012

and teenage years, like the cabaret (*Shaila* 2006), club (*Freedom* 2006 and *Nave Jungla* 2007), amusement park (*Italpark* 2001), and football stadium (*Hinchadas* 2005), all references to Buenos Aires during the 1980s and 1990s.

Another intriguing aspect of Bruzzone's and Pastorino's work which has not been discussed is their shared fascination with the ruin, the modernist ruin. A possible explanation is that Bruzzone, like me, had an architectural education at the University of Buenos Aires strongly focused on Modernism. According to Harbison, among many ramifications of the baroque motif, the most interesting is the taste for ruins, which, he explains, began as an intellectual 'pursuit in the Renaissance and became thoroughly aestheticised in the centuries that followed':

Figs. 61a and b: Amancio Williams, Casa del Puente (1943–45), Mar del Plata

The depiction of incompleteness [and] the curious focus on decay, to which Piranesi is the greatest contributor, was not mainly melancholic and death-haunted, but an extravagant prompting to sensuous indulgence, notably in the mock ruins that decorate English landscape gardens. Through this curious focus on decay one imbibes the idea of fragmentary ancient

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383   See videos of Pastorino showing how he built his own cameras in: http://blogs. lanacion.com.ar/merle/varios/esteban-pastorino-y-sus-camaras/

384   Interview of Bruzzone by María Daniela Yaccar, 'Cruce de realidad e ilusión', in *Página 12* (5 April 2010).

remains as almost alive, sharing many features of the life of creatures and therefore inviting an intensity of response one does not usually associate with the insensible stone of architecture.[385]

Pastorino's taste for ruins differs: discovering Francisco Salamone´s work by chance, he found in his architecture a compelling manifestation of local monumentality and architectural extravagance set in the almost culturally virgin landscape of the Argentine Pampas.

In contrast to that of the Baroque era defined by Harbison, the melancholic and

Fig. 62: Dino Bruzzone, *Casa del Puente* (2004), part of the *Arquitectura escéptica* series

thanatic pulse is actually present in Bruzzone´s revision of the past and 'splendid monuments' of local modernist architecture. He explained that the reason why Marcel Breuer's Parador Ariston (1946–47; Figs. 57, 59 and 60) and Amancio

Figs. 63a and 63b: Casa del Puente after the arson of 2002

Fig. 64: Casa del Puente in 2012, photograph taken by me

Williams's Casa del Puente (1943–45; Figs. 61, 63a, 63b and 64) are part of his 2010 series *Arquitectura escéptica* lies in their extreme state of decay.[386]

Though he modelled both buildings on the original drawings, the resulting blurred images[387] (Figs. 58 and 62) defy the universally flawless character of modernist architecture. Because the state of neglect of these buildings was widely known by local people (the fire at the Casa del Puente was extensively covered by the media), he agreed with me that, though abandonment and ruin are not shown in his pictures, the movement of the model while taking the shot provides an oneiric effect. The aim is to erode the image of decay, provoking instead one that confuses memory and dream: 'What happens is that the viewer makes that bridge [between

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385   Harbison, 'Baroque Exuberance', 47–49.

386   Extract from my conversation with Bruzzone.

387   He does not usually exhibit or sell his models. He says emphatically that the focus of his practice is the photographs and only they must be taken into account.

the photograph, the model and the real building] as a in a dream; we do not know if it is memory or a dream, if it could or not happen … it's as if the model wants to go to a real place, but ends up going to a dream place through the photograph.'[388]

Bruzzone's romantic taste for the modernist ruin defy the character of permanence, strength and invulnerability contradicting the principles of Modernism. His take on the Casa del Puente and Parador Ariston, both located between the Atlantic and the plains, conceals their state of decay and neglect, subtly suggesting a relative transience in works conceived as monumental examples of modernist solidity and durability.

His series *Arquitectura escéptica* reveals a fissure in the strong Modernist tradition of the local architecture. It is a contradiction that, despite the many that still adhere to its principles, two of its exemplary references are left to rot away.[389] On the other hand, the sheer resistance to collapse of these concrete structures, even when exposed to extreme deterioration, suggests a reason for the Argentine taste for massive concrete buildings. It also explains why the most original architect of the second half of the twentieth century's Rio de la Plata architecture, Clorindo Testa, has produced his most salient pieces, Banco de Londres (1959–66) and the National Library (1961–94), in a Brutalist fashion.

3.3.9 Drawing with the camera obscura: Pastorino's old form of notating the present

Pastorino's relationship with architecture, memory and decay is different. Between 1999 and 2001 he portrayed the architecture of Francisco Salamone (1898–1959), built between 1936 and 1939 in Buenos Aires Province. He was introduced to Salamone's work in 1997 at a photographic exhibition and was immediately struck by its symbolic qualities.[390] A short time later, he embarked on a 2000 km expedition with the ambition to photograph all his production. Having only a critical paper[391] and the information given at the exhibition as guides to trace the map across the Pampas, he started his journey intending to create a dreamlike inventory. He was compelled, he said, by the extravagant monumentality of these small buildings standing alone in a deserted landscape.[392]

According to Alberto Bellucci,[393] between 1937 and 1940, under the 'controversial' and conservative governorship of Manuel Fresco, railway and building works were carried out in 110 municipalities in the Province of Buenos Aires. Of those, all new building commissions of less political importance, or architectural significance, or simply because located in less populated rural areas, were given to the governor's friend, Salamone.[394] During the 1930s, called in Argentina the 'infamous years', these tiny frontier towns made up of a few square blocks were part of a network of mainly

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388   From my conversation with Bruzzone.

389   Casa del Puente's restoration would officially start in January 2013, according to the announcement on 30 December 2012 by Mar del Plata's Governor.

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390   Edward and Tom Shaw, *Francisco Salamone: Arquitecto de las Pampas,* photographic exhibition at Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires, 1997.

391   Alberto Bellucci, 'Monumental Deco in the Pampas: The Urban Art of Francisco Salamone', *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* (18; Miami, 1992), 90–121.

392   Extract from my conversation with Pastorino, 15 September 2010.

393   Bellucci, 'Monumental Deco in the Pampas.'

394   '[Architect Alejandro] Bustillo was given more diverse and important assignments as the Mar del Plata Casino or the town hall in the same city', ibid., 94.
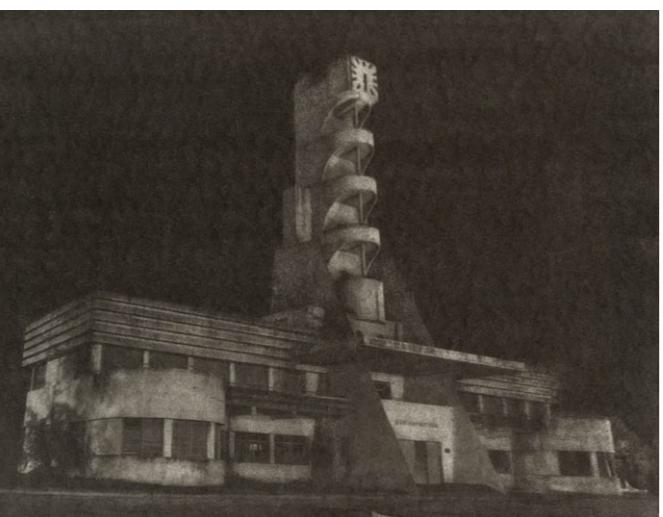
Fig. 65: Esteban Pastorino,
Municipalidad de Guamini
(1999)

Fig. 68: Slaughterhouse,
Azul (2006)

Fig. 69: Esteban Pastorino,
Matadero Azul (1998)
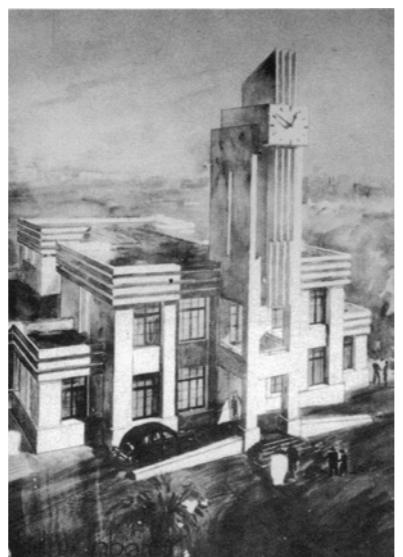
Fig. 66: Francisco
Salamone, *Municipalidad
de Lobería* (unbuilt). From
Bellucci, 'Monumental
Deco in the Pampas,' 97
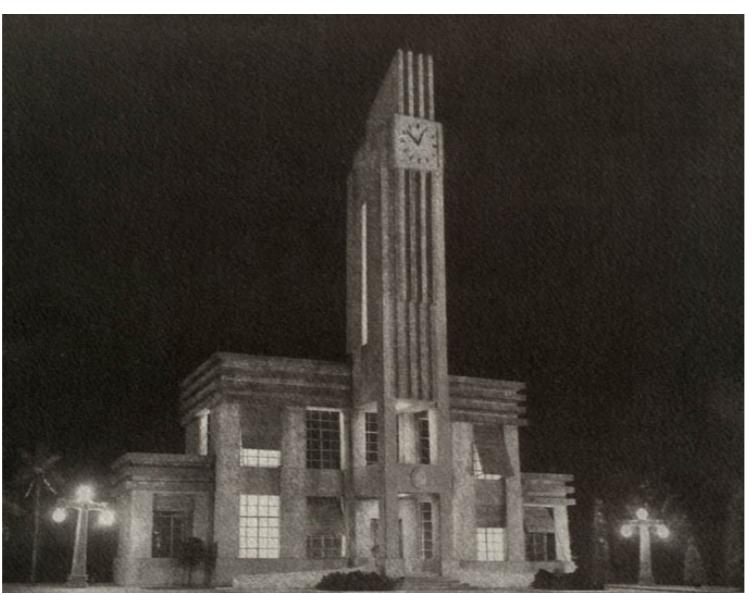
Fig. 67: Esteban Pastorino,
Municipalidad de Lobería
(2001), photograph taken
from model made by the
artist

Fig. 70:
Slaughterhouse, Balcarce
(2006)

Fig. 71: Esteban Pastorino,
Matadero Balcarce (2000)
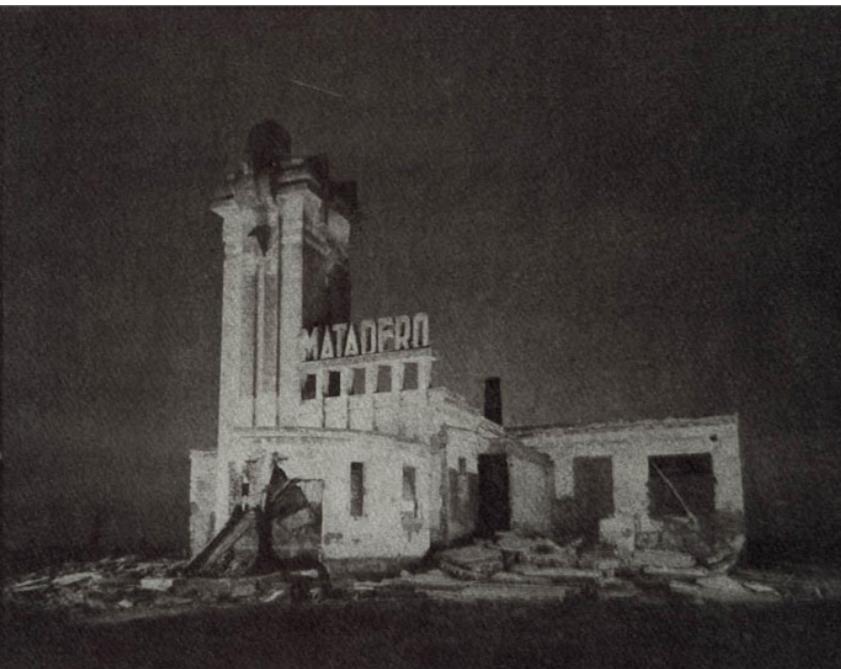
Fig. 72: Esteban Pastorino,
Matadero Carhué (2000)

Fig. 73: Slaughterhouse,
Carhué (2006)

Fig. 78: Slaughter House,
Saliquelló (2006)

Fig. 79: Esteban Pastorino,
*Matadero Saliquelló* (2000)
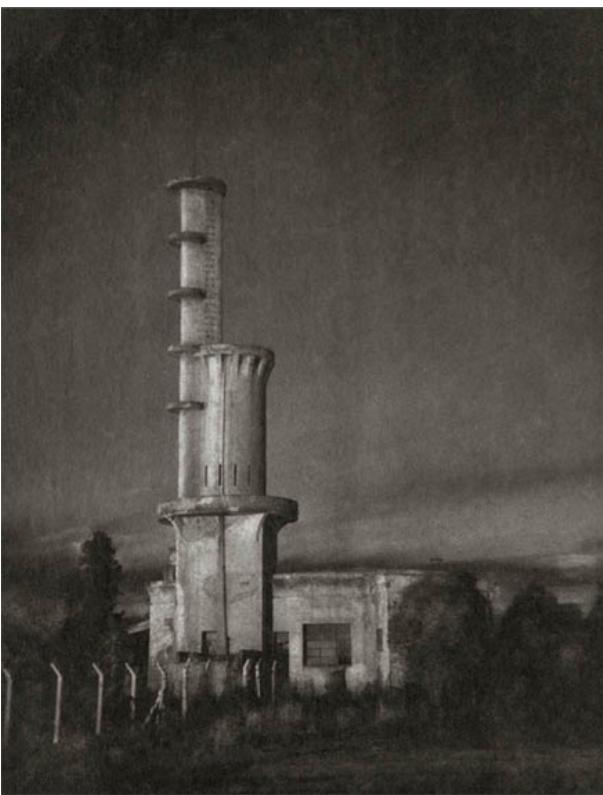
Fig. 74: Esteban Pastorino,
Matadero Guaminí (1999)

Fig. 75: Slaughterhouse,
Guaminí (2006)

Fig. 76: Slaughterhouse,
Coronel Pringles (2006)

Fig. 77: Esteban Pastorino,
Matadero Coronel Pringles
(1999)

cattle-raising and newly-established agriculture farms where it was important to ensure that produce would reach the capital's port by railway in good condition for export to the USA and Western Europe.[395] Because of this, the fascist idealism of the governor, and economic necessity, Salamone was commissioned to design the towns' slaughterhouses, town halls, cemeteries, public monuments and squares.

Fresco's hygienic programme can be read as a response to Esteban Echeverría's short story written in 1837, *The Slaughterhouse,* depicted as a place of barbarism and stagnation, and to Sarmiento's romantic dichotomy, civilization or barbarism, in his *Facundo* (1845). Fresco's programme was conceived from nineteenth-century romantic ideals of progress and used Salamone's rational expressionism to materialise it. According to Bellucci, reinforced concrete aesthetic, steel structures, the use of chromed metals, white walls, standardized carpentry and wide windows of plate glass are a result of the influence of the Bauhaus and Dutch architects.[396] I will add that, given that Antonio Sant'Elia's visit to Buenos Aires in 1926 was much published and discussed in the cultural magazine *Martin Fierro* (1924–27), Futurism was probably also an inspiration in his work.

Bellucci assumes that the little critical consideration that Salamone's architecture had until the end of the twentieth century may have been because of not only the lack of acceptance of these new intense architectural expressions in those small farming communities, but also the authoritarian connotations of its language. He says that the passage of time has allowed a new critical revision, surpassing any fascist symbolism which may have prompted their creation. I agree with him on this; however, the focus of this analysis is today's artistic readings of the work.

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395   Ibid., 92.

396   Ibid., 98.

Even though 'photography has the unappealing reputation of being the most realistic, therefore facile, of the mimetic arts,'[397] Pastorino's series on Salamone's architecture suggest mystery, loss and disappearance. An indecipherable architectural language, added to the deterioration of the buildings photographed, erode any historic reference that could give hints of the time they were built. In addition, the extensive landscape, devoid of any geographical features, where the buildings were erected eludes any geographical reference to their location. The result is mysterious and timeless. Also, choosing a hundred-year-old printing technique—the gum bichromate process—to depict almost forgotten architectural pieces which in many cases were in an advanced state of neglect, allowed Pastorino to achieve an inventory of drawing-like images inspired by Salamone's own perspective drawings. He told me that two drawings found in Bellucci's 1992 paper for the town hall and cemetery of Lobería were the reason for choosing this technique:

> They seemed to me very tactile … and with the bichromate gum process I would get a similar appearance to that of the texture of the paper and carbon pigment of an old drawing … I was not interested in photographic fidelity in this project ... when I saw [Salamone's] Azul cemetery, I was really impressed and it seemed to me that through photorealism I would never reach or get close to what the building really is … This is why I did not follow the idea of a photographic documentary, even though many may say it is because I did almost all the buildings on Salamone's route.

This technique also allowed the inclusion in the project of buildings that were not actually built. The town hall and the cemetery of Lobería were not erected, but Pastorino showed them anyway. He built models based on the drawings, then photographed them from same angle, reproducing the same light as in the pictures he took of the real buildings. 'Because this technique erases realistic details [when

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397   Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 51.

exhibited all together] the ones taken from the models look as if they were shots of real buildings.' In addition, the night shots not only help the pictures to look like a drawing, but isolate the context. 'I was not interested in the background or in its real scale,' he explained. In this way the monumental character increases by isolating the pieces and eroding any reference to its location.

Fig. 80: Dino Bruzzone, *Baba Yaga* (2010)

For Pastorino, his Salamone project aspires to show a failure: the aborted project of national progress. Unfinished buildings, abandoned structures and incomplete bridges, he says, can be found even today in his own neighbourhood in Buenos Aires. 'The intention was to show an aspect of the national idiosyncrasy,' he says.[398] This collection of images of ruins is a portrait of national neglect and intends to project an image of loss and failure. Though Pastorino did not agree with me on this, the prevailing mood in his pictures is sadness. They are a vision of loss, which at the same time prevents the past being absorbed by forgetfulness. Like a collector, his work is animated by 'a passion linked to the sense of past.'[399] His series on Salamone is an inventory of mortality and death which the space of the slaughterhouses represents in a powerful way. The slaughterhouses were the first

Fig. 81: Dino Bruzzone, *El rapto* (2010)

Fig. 82: Dino Bruzzone, *La casa* (2004), part of *Arquitectura escéptica* series

buildings among Fresco's programme to become obsolete and redundant: though conceived as hygienic machines for the future, they expose today, in a dramatic way, the failure of Rational Functionalism to negotiate the changes that progress brings. Their tight response to the functional necessities of the time made them inadaptable to changing sanitary and hygienic requirements. On this Pastorino said: 'there are certain buildings, like the cemeteries, or the town houses still being used in the same way that they were originally conceived. But, above all, I was interested in slaughterhouses … because there [obsolescence] has occurred more. I was interested in this [aspect of the buildings].'[400]

The contemporary artistic taste for abandoned emblematic pieces proposes a new reading of the local history of recent architecture. Bruzzone's series *Arquitectura escéptica* and Pastorino's work on Salamone's buildings question architectural solidity and permanence, beautifying their inherent fragility. It can be argued that the exploration of the relationship between beauty, fragility of the body and eroticism in Bruzzone's later work, such as *Shaila*, *Freedom*, *Baba Yaga* (Fig. 80) or *El rapto* (Fig. 81), proposes a connection between space and desire which can also be traced back to the emergence of baroque space: 'Yes … it may be correct to suggest

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398   Extract from my conversation with Pastorino.

399   Sontag, *On Photography*, 77.

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400   Extract from my conversation with Pastorino.

a relationship between vulnerability [of the body] and [architectural] decay exists. For example, *Arquitectura escéptica* shows the buildings after a dramatic devastation. They look fragile and as if they may be about to collapse. On the other hand, in the most erotically loaded models, the body also looks vulnerable to me.'[401] Thus the obvious linguistic proximity of Bruzzone's work to the imaginary of seventeenth-century Baroque goes beyond style to incorporate more complex baroque contradictions. These, in the twenty-first century, are transformed into scenes of tension between social acceptance and the concealment of the space for eroticism (*Shaila*, a cabaret of the 1980s), the space for homosexual encounter (*Freedom*, a gay club of the 1980s), and even the private space of psychosexual desire, where visceral—even dark—impulses emerge (*Baba Yaga* or *El rapto*).
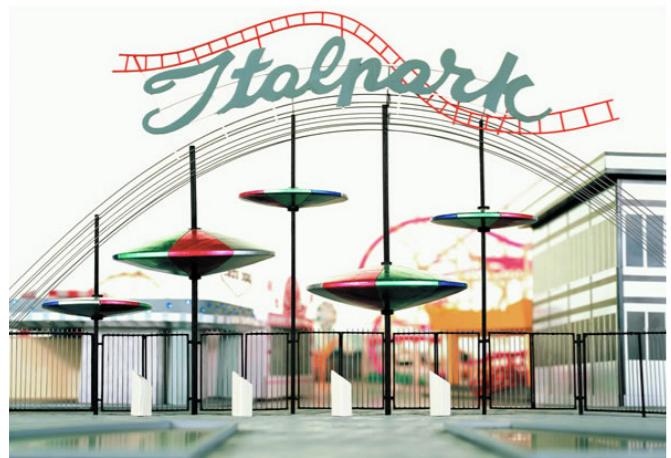
Figs. 83–86: Dino Bruzzone, *Italpark* (2001

Previous paragraphs showed how Bruzzone's *Arquitectura escéptica* uses movement to shift the focus from mimesis and detail to the disturbing image of uncertainty which a building about to collapse creates. By questioning the infallible matter of architecture, the blurry photographs create a pictorial effect of buildings surrendering to the forces of gravity. The last two projects that I will discuss here, Bruzzone's *Italpark* (2001; Figs. 83–86) and Pastorino's series *Aéreas* (2001–07; Figs. 87–89), take us back to the relationship between the miniature, detail, memory and emotion.

Bruzzone used 1980s movies and old childhood photographs[402] to build a small-scale replica of Buenos Aires's old Italpark. 'For my generation Italpark was like Disneyland,' he confessed in a previous interview.[403] His Italpark has transformed the memory of a space—which for those who like me grew up in the city remember as ordinary and trivial—into powerful painting-like images. The work of art in this process includes the archive—all documents that helped to reconstruct the park: newspaper articles, movies, old pictures—the models and the photographic portraits of them. But, he affirms, 'to evoke memory it is not necessary to show the model and the photos together.'[404] Bruzzone has an aptitude for discovering beauty in what collective memory neglects as too ordinary.[405] To trigger this, hyperrealism becomes fundamental to the simulation; detail becomes an obsession and, miniaturizing the experience means to build the most complete portrait of a childhood memory.

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402   My conversation with Bruzzone.

403   Gabriel Valansi, 'Entrevista de Gabriel Valansi a Dino Bruzzone', in Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (ed.), *Dino Bruzzone. Parque de Diversiones* (Buenos Aires: MAMBA, 2001), 7–8.

404   My conversation with Bruzzone.

405   'Photographic seeing meant an aptitude for discovering beauty in what everybody sees but neglects as too ordinary … Photographers … create a new interest by new visual decisions'. Sontag, *On Photography*, 89.

Unlike Bruzzone's, Pastorino's fascination with miniaturization is anchored in the portrayal of the real rather than memory. He is more interested in working with the codes of photography and its processes rather than the space evoked. For him, photography always operates within Realism, even though it constantly lies,

Fig. 87: Esteban Pastorino, *Nikko* (2007), part of the *Aéreas* series. 'When making a model, I always sought to be as detailed as possible … actually, the model is a resemblance of reality at small scale … The more realistic, the more detailed, the more value it has. I think a model's intrinsic value is realism.' From my conversation with Pastorino

Fig. 88: Esteban Pastorino, *Las Ventas 1* (2006), part of the *Aéreas* series

Fig. 89: Esteban Pastorino, *Yokohama* (2007), part of the *Aéreas* series. 'I try to work on areas that are relatively unknown … Or known to very few people, so that, the viewer who sees the photograph has no direct experience of that particular space, but only of a similar one. And I think that evoked familiarity is what triggers the game.' From my conversation with Pastorino

and its beauty resides in the fact that nobody really knows how the real must be represented:

> I believe that I portray the real … photography deals with that, otherwise we would be talking about digital imaging … In this project I was interested to work with certain codes of photography, beyond space itself or if you like, with space mediated by the very specific codes of photography … The model-like effect [of these photographs] is basically produced by [manipulating] the out-of-focus effect and the point of view. Even though in natural perception this rarely occurs—like when threading a needle the background goes out-of-focus and the needle in focus—things have to be very small and close the eye for that to happen … [Here] the depth of field is reduced. We [phographers] are used to reading hundreds of photographs of small objects and to knowing what goes on when shooting something that is tiny. Then, I wanted to work with this in real space. In the sense of what you said, [I was interested in] dealing with reality. Photography represents the real, but nobody says how reality has to be represented. It can be in a way as analogous as possible, or completely different. And so no one says that one-to-one space must be represented in one-to-one scale … To me photography always lies. In the sense that it never represents how [things] really are.[406]

Having been a model maker himself, he knows that the greater the detail of a model the higher the interest it provokes in the observer.[407] However, his *Aéreas* series is not about observation but experience. At the start of the project, the spaces he chose to photograph were always public, open and non-specific; easily replicable places, he explains, able to generate an immediate sense of familiarity in the spectator, like

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406   From my conversation with Pastorino.

407   Ibid.

a beach, housing complex, industrial park or airport.[408] They all trigger an evoked familiarity, not a real memory. He pays an extraordinary attention to non-specific sites to captivate the viewer and give a fictitious character to the image. Large-scale prints help deceive the spectator's perception by showing an extreme resemblance to reality, ending with the illusion of a toy-like scene.

3.4   Conclusion

This chapter has gone deeper into the limits of Realism. It showed how the local contemporary version portrays everyday life as a poetic force that can include the unknown. It took further the relationship set by Cortázar's fiction—simultaneity, interconnectivity and the exploration of surface depth—to propose new qualities in spatial imagination.

It showed that surprise and emotions, derived from the extraordinary, can be induced by Realism, creating a hyperrealist presentation of the everyday that includes both the ordinary and the exceptional. Fantasy is carefully woven into the realist plot and lets the story advance not linearly but convolutedly. The author of the realist short novel stresses that the interest lies in invention and in the process that allows for the most irrational events—'that we do not know where they come from'—to transform things and characters and make the story unfold. Surprise is what is provoked, and form is just a resulting factor to reveal new content.

In the realist short novel I have found that the virtuosities of form are suppressed to make content the main carrier of lyricism. Through a prose devoid of emotion or affect, sensorial perception, feelings and recollections contribute to define today local Realism by allowing thoughts only reachable by introspection to depict

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408   Ibid.

reality through a particularly plain, limpid and simple prose. Aira's first-person short novels recapture the subjective dimension as an inspirational force which questions the status of the object as an unchangeable substance. He puts self and his subjective reading of reality at the centre, allowing the unexpected to appear against a meticulous realist representation of the quotidian, so that his mutations, transformations, and deformations become more effective.

The contemporary realist novel reuses lived experience and sensory perception as raw material available for transformation. Purity and fidelity to the facts are not only dismissed but regarded as unnecessary and inartistic because the voice of the author must intervene to transform the action. The record of lived experience is now the substance to be subverted by invention. Since memories are essentially fragmented and imprecise, what we do not remember, those parentheses of time and space, are filled by fantasy. In Ancient Greek comedy subjective intervention in the form of choral interludes filled a space opened by the author; they constituted a sonorous space, a detour intended to interrupt the action. Now, unexpected and surprising turns of the action represent lyrical digressions woven tightly into a picturesque depiction of contemporary life in Buenos Aires.

The first part of the chapter aimed to dissect the logic behind the intriguing relationship between metaphorical representation and the persisting sensation of realism that characterizes experimental writing anchored in Realism. It looked into literary systems that blend logical structures of causation (which assures verisimilitude and maintains the action within Realism) with irrational content and fantasy, making the characters mutate and transform, the scenarios mix and juxtapose, at the same time maintaining a line of continuity and logic in the plot.

In pursuit of the exceptional, local contemporary Realism works within very similar parameters in the visual and the literary. Memory and the transformation of personal

experience are the material to transmit lyrical content without affecting form. Through a visual language devoted to a detailed reconstruction of the real, the visual work of Erlich and Bruzzone creates objects and installations of detailed realistic fabrication only to act upon them by a variety of neo-baroque strategies (reflections, mirrors, repetition, disorientation and decay) to let the exceptional within the ordinary emerge. In local Realism, the chapter concludes, spatial lyricism emerges without affect, avoiding formal excess, formal voluptuousness or the gestural intensity discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis; it proposes it is aroused by the extraordinary event within the ordinary, inducing in the viewer surprise and bewilderment.

The chapter also defined a local 'baroque curiosity' still pursuing new forms in the twenty-first century like the naturalization of Argentine Modernism as a persistent universal by creating figures out of its ruins, neglect and decay. Figures of the ordinary, of decay, and of vulnerability define lyrical constructions of space whose content is conceived in the subjective reading of reality, personal experience and memories enhanced by 'what we forget'.

In ancient times sound and self composed the material that introduced lyricism to the play in the form of choral interventions. Today lyricism emerges within contemporary Realism, in both the literary and the visual, by transforming thoughts that carry sensation (perceptions, memories and affects only reachable by introspection) to subvert an uneventful and mundane presentation of the real.

4 Lyrical Space and the Emergence of the Figural: Alejandra Pizarnik's 'Palais de Vocabulaire', the *Efflorescence* Series and Tomás Saraceno's Speculative Urbanism

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores some of the attributes of form and self induced by spatial lyricism. Alejandra Pizarnik's lyrical prose is read in relation to a selection of architectural drawings, digital spatial explorations and art installations produced by three young Argentine architects pursuing an aesthetic experience that arouses affect.

Tomás Saraceno's art installations, Hernán Díaz Alonso's project in the Patagonian Andes for the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, and my series of architectural drawings *Efflorescence* share several visual aesthetic values and induce similar dimensions of affect. The most salient are aesthetic exuberance and excess, melancholy and darkness, and the feeling of the sublime.

Drawing on Jean-François Lyotard's notion of the figural, Gilles Deleuze's concept of sensation, and Julia Kristeva's thinking on the relationship between language, memory and melancholy, this chapter links the visual work mentioned above and one of Pizarnik's last pieces, 'La condesa sangrienta',[409] an essay written in 1966 based on Valentine Penrose's *Erzsébet Báthory, La Comtesse sanglante* (1962).

Fig. 90: Malca Mizrahi,

Eflorescence 11 (2008).

Section

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409   Alejandra Pizarnik, 'La condesa sangrienta', *Prosa completa* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2003), 282-96.

Composed of eleven prose vignettes, 'La condesa sangrienta', the story of a sixteenth-century Hungarian noblewoman accused of torture and murder, is one of the few prose texts written by the Argentine poet. It exposes a baroque sensibility where the ambition of eternal beauty contrasts with a detailed description of rituals of darkness and pain. Pizarnik´s lyrical essay is read in relation to the visual work of Tomás Saraceno and my own, showing how melancholia, excess and the pursuit of sublime feeling—understood as a state of exaltation created by the disruption between the sensitive and the intelligible—guide a linguistic recombination of sonorous and visual signs that reclaims the figural character in both her poetry and contemporary spatial imagination.

The dissection of a contemporary neo-baroque sensibility leads to the emergence of the figural as an embodiment or 'exteriorization' of subjectivity. Unlike in the previous chapter—where the lyrical quality arises from the effects of the event in a realistic tone devoid of emotion—in this last chapter form becomes the event itself. It looks into visual and literary works close to Surrealism where, in both visual and poetic language, form is transformed by the contents of subjectivity.

The chapter has two parts. The first, The Lyrical Palace, uses Pizarnik's essay to explore the concepts of sensation, melancholy, memory and the sublime as attributes of self, showing how a spatial figure marked by melancholia and excess emerges from her text. Then, emotion, perception and experience—the contents of subjectivity—define spatial lyricism, a new quality discussed in relation to metaphoric thinking, qualia and the image, drawing from post-structuralist thinking.

The second part, The Emergence of the Figural, explores how attributes of form, such as sensuousness, excess, exuberance, voluptuousness and exoticism, are used to elicit positive and negative aesthetic-affective responses in the spectator/user,

arousing states of delight and pleasure, horror and disgust, offering an interpretation of the contemporary sublime.

Even though the visual examples are linguistically very different, space and the body are central to all. The chapter concludes that both Pizarnik's poetic 'Palais de Vocabulaire' and the visual examples shown build up a distinctive and precise linguistic methodology that contests universalist styles that are predicated on repetition, abstraction and homogeneity, pursuing, in contrast, singularity, sublimity and exceptionality to produce lyrical qualities in space.

4.2   The Lyrical Palace

Sensation, Melancholy, Memory and the Sublime (Attributes of Self)

4.2.1   Alejandra Pizarnik's 'La condesa sangrienta'

[My aspiration is] to write the whole day … to build the figure. Alejandra Pizarnik,

Diarios, 398

Pizarnik is a crucial figure in Latin American writing.[410] Born in Buenos Aires in 1936, she was the daughter of an immigrant Jewish family from Russia. She wrote mainly lyrical poetry, in both verse and poetic prose, and published only a few books during her lifetime: seven short poetry books, one piece of poetic prose, and a handful of poems and articles in literary magazines.[411] Her first book of poems, *La tierra mas ajena,* was published when she was twenty. Because she died prematurely at the age of 36 years old, the greatest part of her work was known posthumously.

Pizarnik's *Diarios*[412] reveals that she corrected her texts obsessively and compulsively, and that she had a fixation with perfection and brevity and an intense aspiration to write in prose.[413] *Diarios* also reveals a strong need to create a unique and singular language,[414] a desire that would persist until her death. Called 'Palais de Vocabulaire,' Pizarnik used her diary to build a distinctive 'palace of words' that would give form to her lyrical prose.

Most of her texts are extremely short: a handful of lines that put a great deal of attention on their spatial form, in both poetry and prose. Their scarcity of punctuation may at first suggest free verse but instead Pizarnik imposed a new poetic form by transgressing the rules of punctuation to generate new meaning.[415] César Aira's book *Alejandra Pizarnik* suggests that their brevity and intensity assured her the quality and purity she longed for, and that her obsession with perfection subverts any of the surrealist precepts with which her poetry is usually linked, as it re-established the importance of the result over the process.[416] The preoccupation with rhythm and musicality appears frequently in her diary too, and crucial importance is given to form, conceived as her own unattainable ideal.[417]

410   'There is a critical consensus that Pizarnik's poetry (both in traditional verse form and in the form of nonmetrical prose microtexts) is of indisputable importance.' David William Foster, 'The Representation of the Body in the Poetry of Alejandra Pizarnik', *Hispanic Review* (62; 1994), 322. During the early 1960s she lived in Paris where she met André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz and other leading twentieth-century European and Latin American artists and writers. She translated authors such as André Breton, Paul Eluard, Yves Bonnefoy, Marguerite Duras, Henri Michaux, and Leopold Senghor. In 1968 she was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and, a year before her death, a Fulbright Scholarship. During her whole life she battled with amphetamine addiction and suffered from depression. She was clinically certified schizophrenic and spent her last years institutionalized. In 1972, on a weekend leave from the psychiatric clinic where she was interned, she died of a self-induced overdose of seconal after having made-up her dolls and written her last poem on her blackboard. Pizarnik, *Poesía Completa,* 453.

411   *La tierra más ajena* (Buenos Aires: Botella al Mar, 1955); *La última inocencia* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Poesía Buenos Aires, 1956); *Las aventuras perdidas* (Buenos Aires: Altamar, 1958); *Árbol de Diana,* 'Preface' by Octavio Paz (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1962); *Los trabajos y las noches* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1968); *Extracción de la piedra de locura* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1968); *Nombres y figuras* (Barcelona: Colección La Esquina, 1969); *La condesa sangrienta* (Buenos Aires: López Crespo, 1971); *El infierno musical* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1971); *Los pequeños cantos* (Caracas: Árbol de Fuego, 1971).

412   Pizarnik, *Diarios,* ed. Ana Becciu (Buenos Aires: Lumen, 2010).

413   The urgency she felt to write in prose, 'a simple, good and robust prose,' and the necessity to say everything briefly, only with one word: 'what I wish is to write a very, very short book. Something beautiful and very short … I imagine it in a simple and clear prose.' Ibid., 370.

414   'Presiento un lenguaje que será mío, un estilo que no se dió nunca.' [I have a feeling about a language that will be mine, a style that never existed before.] Ibid., 139. Other references of her aspiration to create a new style: 10–11, 195, 359..

415   'Two or more sentences are frequently joined in the same poem or the same line without any indication of a beginning or an end … This lack of punctuation tends to generate not only rhythm, but also meaning.' Madeleine Stratford, 'Pizarnik through Levine's Looking Glass: How Subversive Is the Scribe?' *Erudit.org,* (19; 2006), 95.

416   Aira, *Alejandra Pizarnik,* 24.

417   'Siempre la Forma, mi imposible.' [Form, always, my impossible.] Pizarnik, *Diarios,* 359 and 368:

Some of the most important themes of her poetry were Surrealism, Space (or the notion of space and of one's own body) and the Poem in Prose.[418] She even suggested that poetry is only a preamble to her great piece in prose.[419] However, her 'excessive respect for prose'[420] meant she would never write a novel, her essay on *La Comtesse sanglante* being one of her longer pieces.

María Negroni's book of essays *El testigo lúcido* affirms that Pizarnik's language oscillates between lyricism and the baroque because the 'interest and aesthetic stress falls on the sonorous combinations of the signs.'[421] Following this claim and affirmed by Pizarnik's own words,[422] this chapter looks at 'La condesa sangrienta' to expose the aspects of an aesthetic sensibility that has affinities with those expressed in drawings and spatial works by Saraceno, Díaz Alonso and myself.
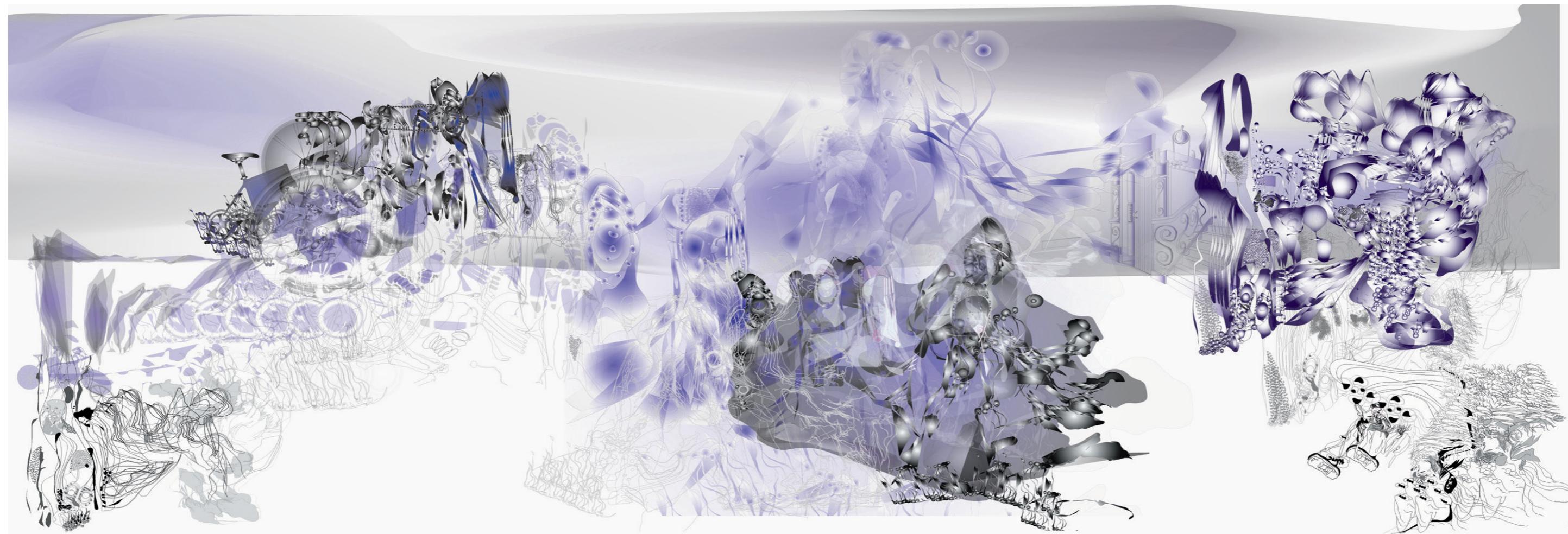
Fig. 91: Malca Mizrahi,
Efflorescence 01 (2002)

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418   Ibid., 442 and 489.

419   '"Doy" poemas para que me tengan paciencia. Para que me esperen. Para distraerlos hasta que escriba mi obra maestra en prosa.' [I 'give' poems so people are patient with me. So they wait for me. Just to distract them until I finish writing my masterpiece in prose.] Ibid., 367.

420   Ibid., 368.

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421   María Negroni, 'La obra de sombra de Alejandra Pizarnik', *El testigo lúcido* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2003), 19.

422   'Poetry is lyricism. Poetry is experience, as Rilke said. And I say: the experience of the word.' Pizarnik, *Diarios*, 153.

Pizarnik, named the 'heir to the forbidden garden of romance',[423] presents a

poetic thinking crucial to the analysis of contemporary sensibility. This chapter will

show how melancholia, excess and the pursuit of sublime feeling guide a linguistic

recombination of sonorous and visual signs that reclaims the figural character in

both her poetry and contemporary spatial imagination.

In 'La condesa sangrienta' lyricism and crime are connected, and a spatial figure

emerges from a text marked by melancholia and excess. It presents all aspects of the

gothic genre: the castle; the protagonist's sadness, cruelty and violence; scenes of

persecution and crime. The essay was based on the novel by Valentine Penrose,[424]

and chronicles the life of a Hungarian countess who tortured and killed hundreds of

young peasant women to bathe in their blood in the hope of defying the onset of

age. When her atrocities were discovered, she was walled up in her own castle where

she died in 1614. Critical readings of Penrose's novel suggest it weaves together

historical fact, personal interpretation and creative mythology, proposing it as a

feminist response to 'the male-dominated theatre of intellectual history and literary

criticism of the time.'[425]

4.2.2   Impure beauty, melancholy and excess in Pizarnik's prose

According to a mediaeval Balkan folk ballad, it was usual in sixteenth-century

Hungary to build castles over the corpse of a young woman. In *Oriental Tales*

by Marguerite Yourcenar, 'The Milk of Death'[426] recalls an Albanian legend that

tells about a woman all walled up except for her breasts to allow her to continue

breastfeeding. Her skeleton stayed forever cemented as the foundations for the

new construction and remained a 'nutritious support.' In Penrose's novel, Erzsébet's

corpse is the figure 'inside' the walls of the castle as the punishment for her crimes.

Negroni's essay introduces a relationship between the female body and what she

calls the 'tectonic-figures' of the text. She observes two lines in the narrative: the

ascendant line between the female body walled up during the foundations in the

legend, and the countess's body walled up in the tower.[427] This fictional ascendant

figure, says Negroni, is built upon crime. The building, erected upon the dead body

of a young girl, ends up enclosing that of the murderer at the top of her fortress.

Also, the ascent to the final punishment is opposed to the descending figure of the

countess presiding over the crimes in the underground cellars of the castle:

> The prison ascended around her. The doors and windows of her room were
>
> bricked up. On one wall, a tiny window was opened to pass her food. And
>
> when all was ready, four gallows were erected in the corners of the castle
>
> to mark that there lived a woman sentenced to death. She endured more
>
> than three years like this, nearly dying from cold and hunger. She
>
> never showed remorse. She never understood why she was sentenced.[428]

423   Negroni, 'La obra de sombra de Alejandra Pizarnik', 15–19.

424   Penrose (1898–1978) was part of the Parisian surrealist group between the
wars. Her books of poems were illustrated by Eileen Agar, Max Ernst, Miró, Wolfgang
Paalen, Picasso, Man Ray, and Antoni Tapiés. Her novel, *Erzsébet Báthory, La Comtesse
sanglante* was first published in 1962.

425   Karen Humphreys, 'The Poetics of Transgression in Valentine Penrose's "La
Comtesse sanglante"', *The French Review* (76; 2003), 741.

426   Marguerite Yourcenar, 'La leche de la muerte', *Cuentos completos* (Madrid: Alf-
aguara, 2010).

427   Negroni, 'La obra de sombra de Alejandra Pizarnik', 26.

428   Pizarnik, 'La condesa sangrienta', 295.

Negroni finds another crossing plane in the tale: the already described vertical one defined by crime and punishment coexists with a horizontal plane linked to the contemplation of mirrors and torture. The countess loved seeing herself in mirrors: 'she used to remain standing before her big and sombre mirror … which she had designed herself. So comfortable was it, that it showed some projecting supports where she could rest her arms to stay for hours in front of it without becoming tired. While thinking she was just designing her mirror, we can assume that Erzsébet traced the plans of her own abode.'[429] This horizontal line of infinite reflections happens underground. Her mirror, Negroni says, allows a baroque figure of infinite reflections to emerge, keeping the thanatic drive and perpetuating the ecstasy in the contemplation.

Pizarnik's essay also comprises a relationship between claustrophobia, the encasement of the body, and her obsession with space as a lyrical interiority. The text is, above all, an essay on interiority and melancholy: 'la silenciosa galería de ecos y espejos que es el alma melancólica' [the melancholic soul is a silent gallery of echoes and mirrors]. [430] Space is always interior space, 'yo no soy mas que un adentro' (Pizarnik) [I am nothing more than interiority], and the countess condenses the representation of a melancholic interiority:

> The countess suffered from a typical sixteenth-century illness: melancholy. An invariable colour rules the melancholic mind; inside a space of a mourning colour opens up; nothing happens there, nothing happens. It is an empty scene where a lifeless me is assisted by myself suffering from that inertia … But there are temporary remedies: sexual pleasure, for example, which for a short time can erase the silent gallery of mirrors and echoes that is the melancholy soul. Moreover, they can even

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429   Ibid., 289.

430   Ibid., 290.

> light up that mourning room and turn it into a sort of music box with figures of bright and cheerful colours that dance and sing delightfully. Then, when the music stops, we should return to immobility and silence. The music box is not a trivial comparison. I think melancholy is a musical problem.[431]

In *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholy* Julia Kristeva explains that melancholy implies, on one side, the refusal to assume the missing thing lost for ever—an insistence on its recovery—and on the other, a refusal to name it with words: 'Rather than seek the meaning of despair (it is either obvious or metaphysical) let us acknowledge that there is meaning only in despair. The child king becomes irredeemably sad before uttering his first words; this is because he has been irrevocably, desperately, separated from his mother; a loss that causes him to try to find her again, along with other objects of love, first with the imagination, then with words … this is the state of melancholia … there is no writing that is not amorous, there is no imagination that is not overtly and secretly, melancholia.'[432] In other words, in the melancholic state there is a double negative, a tenacious opposition to the loss of the object and a 'failure' of the signifier to ensure compensation. Thus language, according to Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory, is the recovery of lost love.

Negroni establishes a strong bond between melancholy and poetry that distinguishes it from narrative prose. She says that the poet perpetuates melancholy by refusing to use the corresponding sign as the recovery of the lost thing: 'the poem exalts the void left by the loss: the lost object, image, or sensation. It is in this tension, between the sadness of the lost sensation and the exaltation that language—the signifier—brings by attempting to recover it, where beauty

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431   Ibid.

432   Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 6.

appears.'[433] Following this line of thought, the metaphor is the device that brings the exaltation that Negroni suggests. In its attempt to recover that lost object, image or sensation, the metaphor's power to elicit emotion comes from the new content that a non-corresponding signifier produces.

Pizarnik's observations on melancholy also expose her aesthetic affinity with romanticism and a notion of beauty linked to sadness.[434] When Baudelaire says in his essay 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' 'I found my definition of beauty, my beauty. It's passionate and sad … I cannot imagine a kind of beauty where adversity does not to intervene,' he is really reaffirming an idea of beauty tainted and impure. The countess's excesses are part of this tradition of impurity and ecstasy.

The countess's castle closes itself to the world, becoming only an interiority: a space of desire. Its walls and towers are the defence mechanisms which do nothing but show a reclusive space conceived to stage an aberrant sensibility. Erzsébet's castle is also the image of Pizarnik's poetics comprised in the following poem: 'se cerró el sol, se cerró el sentido del sol, se iluminó el sentido de cerrarse.'[435] [The sun closed, the sun's sense closed, the sense of closing was illuminated]. The castle, a claustrophobic and labyrinthine world transformed into a territory where limitless freedom and armoured walls coexist, fuses seamlessly horror and ecstasy.

Pizarnik's essay builds a lyrical and melancholic castle embedded in an architectural figure that aims to express and not to protect. The essay creates a spatial figure where curved and convoluted forms prevail; where arabesque inventions, voluptuousness and a baroque intensity are in constant transformation towards

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433   Negroni, 'La obra de sombra de Alejandra Pizarnik', 37.

434   Negroni, '"La condesa sangrienta": notas sobre un problema musical', *His-pamérica*, (23; 1994), 105–6.

435   Pizarnik, *Poesía Completa*, 346.

decay; a spatial figure about which she 'dreamt every day. Something curvilinear, harmonious, warm … —Oh God! I hate sharp angles and straight lines.'[436]

4.2.3   'Spatializing memory': the baroque sensibility and melancholy

Drawing from post-structuralist thinking, the following subsections of The Lyrical Palace review the relationship between melancholy and spatial imagination, the figural category and the contemporary sentiment of the sublime. The purpose is to understand the *attributes of self* induced by an aesthetic experience that pursues singularity and the arousal of affect, and to define lyrical space and the characteristics of its content and form, which allow it to provoke a long-lasting transformative effect in the mind of the spectator/reader/user.

To explain the relationship between memory, experience and space, Susan Sontag's essay 'Under the Sign of Saturn' explores Walter Benjamin's melancholic temperament through his writings. She argues that, driven by melancholy and sadness, Benjamin's biographic books transform time into space following an old baroque strategy. 'For the baroque play writers chronological movement is captured and analyzed in a spatial image … *The seventeenth century's baroque sensibility is a melancholic one because it has a "panoramic" conception of the story. It is fused to the stage,* the baroque writer tries to escape history and restore paradise's timelessness.'[437] (My emphasis.) This means that memory puts the past in a particular space, and what is at stake in remembering one's past is the 'spatialization' of those events, that every act of recovery condenses experience into a spatial form.

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436   Pizarnik, *Diarios*, 395.

437   Susan Sontag, *Bajo el signo de saturno*, 124.

Pizarnik's strategy reflects a similar aspiration: it imprints melancholic emotions to the space where the action takes place. The castle is transformed into a figure that condenses the content of the protagonist's emotions and desires. Sontag's 'spatialized' memories contribute to the notion of lyrical space as an exteriorization of sensations imprinted in memory. In her essay, Benjamin's conception of memory is compared to a ruin waiting to be deciphered, as the figural character demands a melancholic temperament to capture and recover those sensory stimuli to transform them into spatial configurations. Spatial lyricsm is the quality resulting from the transformation of those sensations and memories into a discernible spatial form driven by a melancholic act of recovery.

4.2.4 'The imaginary experience'

> La metáfora es un movimiento hacia lo discernible, es un viaje hacia lo visible.[438]
>
> [The metaphor is movement towards the discernible, a journey towards the visible.]
>
> Poetry is experience … an investigation.[439]

Kristeva's analysis of Proust's method suggests that past sensations remain in us, and involuntary memory, induced by desire, recovers them when a present perception refers us to those sensations of the past.

In *Time and Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*, she says that writing captures sensation 'as it distills previous experience'. She supports this with Proust's affirmation that the purpose of fiction is to build a new world, and memory is the

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438   Julia Kristeva, 'De la identificación: Freud, Baudelaire, Stendhal', *El trabajo de la Metáfora* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1985), 50.

439   Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 89.

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only source to accomplish the task.[440] Proust's sensation is already imagination and reveals our intimate relationship to objects, because 'all objects in relation to us are sensation.'[441]

Kristeva interprets all experience of reality in Proust as imaginary. Through memories of past experiences an imaginary world can be conceived, she says, and this new experience of past memories becomes meaningful when organized by a particular syntax or grammar (in music, poetry or painting), unveiling metaphorically the sensations which triggered those lived memories.[442]

This can be linked to Jean-François Lyotard's notion of 'plastic space' where experience transforms vision into a plastic and libidinal event. In *Discourse, Figure*[443] he explains this by observing that in Cézanne's painting of Mont Sainte-Victoire Cézanne desires the mountain to become a visual event.[444] This visual event occurs when the mountain loses all familiar features and is transformed into something unrecognizable, a new landscape emerging from the site.[445]

Lyotard's interpretation of Cézanne's sensitive observation suggests that when sensations and perceptions 'get organized, a space is constructed.' He calls this space *figural*, and it encompasses those 'plastic and libidinal events'. The observed object turns into an event, the feature of figural space and its figure.[446]

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440   Julia Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible: Proust y la experiencia literaria* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2005), 251.

441   Ibid.

442   Ibid., 254–55.

443   Jean-François Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gilli, 1979), 32.

444   Ibid., 38.

445   Ibid., 40.

446   Ibid., 65.

Following the same line of thought, Kristeva invites us to interpret Proust's work as the pursuit of experience: 'the pursuit of pleasure, ecstatic, sensual, erotic, suffering or meditative experience.'[447] For Proust the perception of actual reality is disappointing, hence only imagination can provoke affect. From this idea, it can be said that imagination turns ordinary experience into an exceptional aesthetic experience, where sensation mediates between the real and the imaginary.[448]

Kristeva exemplifies the mutation of perception and memories into an imaginary sensed reality with Proust's description of aesthetic pleasure experienced by his character Jean Santeuil contemplating Lake Geneva. The hero experiences a pleasurable feeling because he remembers the sea: 'suddenly the lake reminds him of the sea at Beg-Mail, he perceives something beautiful and finds delight in the view of a sea which before seemed dried. This example shows us how the character is captured by his imagination, which is neither present reality nor past experience, for he is standing in front of a lake and his memories of the sea were not happy. The new figure of the sea which provokes an aesthetic pleasure in the character is only a sensation, an imaginary construct. Thus imagination is the tool to transform perceived reality, Kristeva argues. Proust's hero shows that the pleasurable sensation does not come from his senses but emerges from his imagination. This sensation is neither an image of the past nor present reality, and it destroys time in the realm of the imaginary, 'making it eternal'.[449]

Kristeva's reading of Proust's conception of memory, imagination and time, accords with Sontag's reading of Benjamin's biographic writings: in both cases it

447   Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible*, 258.

448   Ibid., 260: 'My imagination is my only organ to enjoy beauty … and my imagination cannot be applied to reality'.

449   Ibid., 263: 'Imagination is an organ that serves the eternal,' Proust says in *Jean Santeuil*.

is proposed the memories get spatialized by imagination and time ceases to be relevant. 'My imagination is the only organ which occupies a central place in the universe of sensations, feelings, perceptions, and ecstatic or melancholic memories,' Proust said.[450] Both the sensations and impressions that weave Proustian space are unknown and new, Kristeva affirms. There is a gap between perceptions, memories, and their descriptions, allowing for a transformation to occur. Memories can transform into an imaginary experience, an aesthetic event. Memories, sensations and perceptions are recovered from oblivion and transformed into an aesthetic event through visual or verbal signs. Kristeva defines this 'recovery' as a materialization of sensation.[451]

Chapter 3 discussed Aira's approach to writing: for him oblivion is the key to artistic transformation. In 'La costurera y el viento' he admits that self, memory and his own personal experiences do affect imagination. In the first pages of this short novel he writes about his theory of literature: 'To apprehend oblivion would be a gesture consistent with my theory of literature, [it would be] a gesture consistent with my contempt for the use of memory as a writer's instrument. Oblivion is richer, freer, more powerful … Oblivion is pure sensation … If I have become a writer it has been only to bring forgetfulness between my life and myself … I feel an irrepressible distrust if I hear that imagination will take care of everything … If imagination, that wonderful faculty, is left unchecked, it does nothing but rely on memory … Memory brings back things heard, felt or seen … but [they are] not digested nor transformed.[452]

Proust's strategy, according to Kristeva, is to dissociate the real from the imaginary to intensify the imaginary experience: 'Away from abstraction or naturalism, Proust's

450   Ibid., 264.

451   Ibid., 265.

452   Aira, *Cómo me hice monja. La costurera y el viento*, 121–24.

writing is a conjunction of objective perception and subjective sensation built

upon metaphors.'[453] Similarly, for Deleuze, Proust wanted neither an abstract nor a

a figurative literature. He wanted to bring the figural to the surface, devoid of any

illustrative or narrative function. The authenticity of those memories is irrelevant.

What matters is the resonance of past sensations forming a new body: the figure. As

an example, Proust's description of a piano sonata in the first volume of *In Search of

Lost Time* is, according to Deleuze, the figure: the resonance of the instruments, 'the

sensation of the violin', 'the sensation of the piano'. [454, 455]

Proust's sensory universe is complete. From sound to the skin, the range

of sensations includes them all: the sense of smell, sound, touch, sight and

taste. Hard and soft, broken and bound, homogeneous, aerial, velvety, silky,

plushy, mossy, marbling, swollen, rounded, volatile, branched, leafy, green,

marine, aquatic, solid, inconsistent, spongy, fruity, crystalline, mixed, soft, subtle,

juxtaposed, lined, fabric, iridescent, coated, focused, scattered—these are the

qualities of the sensory universe that emerges in each reading of Proust.[456] The

intensity of his perception serves to create a style that aims to recover lost sensations

through the metaphor.[457]

In poetry, the metaphor robs things of their names and reassigns them new ones.

This strategy implies recreating objects, ideas and scenes by renaming them through

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453   Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible,* 266.

454   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 68–69.

455   Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible,* 273: 'Memory is both the agent that restores sensa-
tion and the veil that keeps us away from it. Sensation, memory and consciousness are
the three discontinuous strata in the architecture of Proustian sensory experience and
the narrator is the agent who comes to recover and restore the relationship between the
three.'

456   Ibid., 267.

457   Ibid., 295.

Fig. 92: Tomás Saraceno,
Iceland Series (2008)
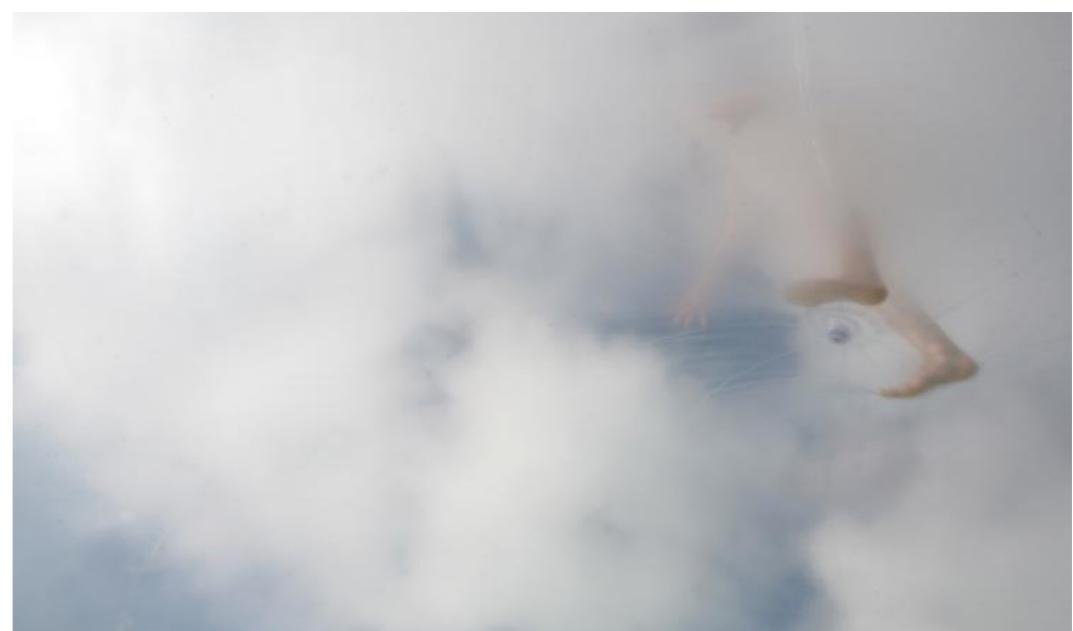
the metaphor. It creates new figures and relationships between dissimilar objects,

transforming their content.

4.2.5   Sensation and thought

Kristeva dissects Proust's method saying that past sensations remain in us,

and memory recovers them when a present perception refers us to them.[458]

Those past sensations trigger the act of recovery, and this transformation

opens up new qualities of form. Our ability to make metaphoric associations

links isolated impressions 'to form new ideas.' In these inward explorations, new

associations emerge.

Far from being a general abstraction, the composition of verbal, visual or auditory

signs leads to a greater degree of knowledge, Kristeva affirms. Thus, it can be said,

sensation leads to knowledge without losing its sensory origin. 'Words only have

value when they possess the capacity to evoke, when they express these ancient and

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458   Ibid., 323

mysterious affinities between our language and our sensibilities.'[459] Moreover, sensation is understood here as information leading to thought, affirming that all knowledge starts with sensation. In line with Lyotard's idea that every act of thinking is signalled by sensation,[460] Kristeva proposes that feelings and affects are what trigger our capacity to form judgments about objects, what makes knowledge of an object possible.

4.2.6   The figural category

My imagination is the only organ to enjoy beauty.

Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*

Eyes do listen; the visible is legible, audible, and intelligible.[461]

Many writers say that a novel, a poem, or even a theatre play is driven by the pursuit of a primary image[462] marked by a powerful and persistent sensation which reclaims a new visibility or, in my terms, its 'figural' representation. This initial sensory impression (visual, audible or tactile) seeks to be 'graspable', discernible and attainable: seeks to become a new figure.[463] The force of this primary sensation is measured by its ability to be transformed into a figure able, in Lyotard's terms, 'to induce a state of mind.'[464]

Past sensations, perceptions and emotions are the material to be transformed into a figural event. Those impressions are transformed, expressed, exteriorized, and 'made visible' as figures by the imagination. The figural event pursues an exceptional aesthetic experience—pleasurable or not—arousing a profoundly ecstatic or melancholic state of mind.

In *Discourse, Figure,* Lyotard says that the metaphor is the figure of poetic language. As mentioned, the metaphor is the device that allows us to transfer meaning from one thing to another. This translation of meaning is more related to the experiential, the sensory and the body, rather than the intellectual.[465] In the visual, it comes not from abstraction, but from the deformation of the figure. In the literary, metaphoric figures are grammatical and structural violations of the natural order of language. These 'semantic and syntactic transgressions', also called 'gestures', 'produce new effects on meaning' and 'act upon our bodies'. Poets introduce qualities 'coming from the sensitive', which make the discourse become 'opaque and difficult to penetrate' and act upon our bodies by inducing a certain attitude, a manner, a rhythm.[466]

Discourse, Figure is a defence of the sensory and experiential 'against the shadows thrown by speech' and methodological representation. He uses the method of perspective to explain the opposition between the figurative and the figural, between 'closed representation' and 'open presentation'. He says that quattrocento perspective is a method for 'compulsive representation', marking the victory of geometrical inscription over figural presentation. Brunelleschi's box, Antonio

459   Julia Kristeva, 'Proust Filósofo', *El tiempo sensible: Proust y la experiencia literaria* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2005), 322.

460   Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 12.

461   Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura*, 29–41.

462   My Introduction mentioned Peter Zumthor's reference to this. The Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro also mentioned this in my conversation with her in 1996.

463   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, 2: 'Isolated, the Figure becomes an Image'. Also: 'The Figure is the sensible form related to a sensation', 34.

464   Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura*, 292.

465   Ibid., 289: 'Breton's surrealist automatic writing, for example, is closer to the hallucinatory and the mental, rather than the experiential.'

466   Ibid., 288: 'the poet introduces in the speech new content coming from the sensory, '[discourse] becomes opaque … acts upon our body, words induce in our bodies, as if they were colours, certain states, postures, rythms.'

Manetti's geometry, Alberti's treatise on painting, and later perspective manuals had a precise and clear role: to teach how to inscribe the features we see upon transparent glass. According to Leonardo, perspective is no more than the vision of an object behind a machine-like glass, beyond which all things can be inscribed. 'Perspective represents the "brakes and reins" in painting … What perspective prescribes through regulation and method is the inscription of the exterior through a geometric transcription of spatial depth.' In contrast, Lyotard says, Cézanne's 'figural paintings' transform the object of observation into a visual event, into a new landscape.[467]

Cézanne's space has nothing to do with representation. It embodies the deconstruction of a personal field of vision, including the metaphoric and the symbolic: 'Mont Sainte-Victoire is presented as a landscape with its deformations, its intrusions, ambiguities and divergences'; it is not the space behind Leonardo's glass. 'Now the painter has located us in a different space', 'the space where the figural event takes place.'[468]

Furthermore, he says, this space is concerned with 'what can be recognized and what can not'. The figural is not opposed to the real, but has one essential aspect: it shocks our ability to recognize things.[469] The figural is the force able to fragment and deform what we normally call 'the visible'[470], creating discordance with what we see. The 'uncanny'—what is 'unrecognizable'—traces an affinity between the visual and the figural. Figural painting can induce a change in the viewer or reader; it has the capacity to induce affect.

4.2.7 Figures and style

If the figural character is composed by aesthetic figures of lyrical content, the notion of the aesthetic figure needs clarification.

The figure can be of three types: concrete, iconic or metaphoric. The concrete figure is a visual figure and can be defined as composed of clear, legible and distinctive shapes which have a delineable profile and can be clearly detached from the background. It is a visibly identifiable element which is not associated with a particular geometry or style but can absorb any, even 'optical purity' or abstraction. Yet it is defined by its legibility and recognisability. (The iconic figure contains another attribute: universal communicability of a symbolic charge, but this thesis does not deal with this type). The metaphoric figure, both visual and literary, is a distinctive device which acts by replacing content.[471] This replacement has a particular attribute: the power to elicit emotion, based on the disruptive ability of the poet/maker to affect the reader/viewer.

Lyotard distinguishes between the figural and the figurative.[472] He says that the figurative is a particular case (a subset) of the figural because it persists in the analogy between the representation and what is represented. The figurative is then an undisruptive transfer between model and picture. In contrast, the figural breaks the model/picture resemblance/legibility and manipulates literal meaning.[473] This notion of the figural, composed by metaphoric figures, is the one I work with.

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467   Ibid., 38–40.

468   Ibid., 202–04.

469   Ibid., 286–90.

470   Ibid., 287.

471   Kristeva, *El tiempo sensible,* 279.

472   Lyotard, *Discurso, Figura,* 219.

473   Deleuze, *Francis Bacon,* 158: 'new relations of broken tones produce a more profound resemblance, a nonfigurative resemblance for the same form; that is, a uniquely figural Image. Hence Bacon's program: to produce resemblance with nonresembling means.'

The system that unifies a figural discourse is style: those formal attributes that make the figures similar and, even if they carry subtle variations, show a recognizable 'will' to belong to the same family. This definition follows Lyotard's: 'style is a particular way of doing things, but a way that cannot be determined beforehand. It develops in the doing … It is individual, but not by being … unstructured.'[474]

Style is important because it defines the singular and unique way in which the poet/maker/designer embodies the lyrical content of the figure. It is his or her 'artistic agenda' consisting of methodological rules for space-making and a 'will to form'.[475] For Deleuze art is a process, and method and style are intrinsic to any artistic agenda.[476] The writer creates a syntax that makes 'perceptions, affections and opinions' pass into sensation, making 'the standard language stammer, tremble, cry, or even sing: *this is the style or tone*, the language of sensation.'[477] (My emphasis.) Thus for Deleuze the writer twists the language, makes it vibrate,[478] in order to extract new content and arouse affect. He or she has to create a style, based on the content of sensation, percepts and affects.

Inspired by Bacon's idea of the transformation of the figure,[479] Deleuze defines figural as the category that goes beyond abstraction or figuration and results from the transformation of subjective sensations, perceptions and memories into a new discernible form driven, as Kristeva has shown through Proust's prose, by a melancholic act of recovery.

Material passing into sensation is a passage, the process is a liminal act, and it transforms what we see into something new, an 'aesthetic figure'; the own style that creates them, he continues, have nothing to do with rhetoric.[480] Their purpose is to transcend ordinary experience he says.

For Deleuze, architecture is also conceived as a system driven by sensation. Like in visual, literary or musical art, the 'emergence of sensory qualities' is also inherent in the construction of inhabitable space, to architecture, and to the definition of the territory.[481]

Both Pizarnik's lyrical process to build a spatial figure and Proust's method of observation are centred on experience. They manifest the emergence of a new

474   Renée van de Vall, 'What Consciousness Forgets: Lyotard's Concept of the Sublime', in Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (eds.), *A Companion to Art Theory* (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 367.

475   Patrik Schumacher, 'Parametric Patterns', *Architectural Design: The Patterns of Architecture,* (79; London: Wiley, 2009), 36. And 'Paracentrism as Style – Parametricist Manifesto', (London, 2008). http://www.patrikschumacher.com/Texts/Parametricism%20as%20Style.htm.

476   Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 191–92: 'composition is the only definition of art, composition is aesthetic ... an aesthetic composition is the work of sensation.'

477   Ibid., 167 and 176.

478   Ibid., 167.

479   Bacon, interviewed by David Sylvester, said on the 'transformation of the image': 'the other day I painted the head of somebody, and what made the sockets of the eyes, the nose, the mouth were, when you analysed them, just forms which had nothing to do with eyes, nose or mouth; but the paint moving from one contour into another made a likeness of this person I was trying to paint. I stopped … I lost the image completely. Because this image is a kind of tightrope walk between what is called figurative painting and abstraction. It will go right out from abstraction, but will really have nothing to do with it. It's an attempt to bring the figurative thing up on to the nervous system more violently and more poignantly.' 'Francis Bacon. David Sylvester 1963, 1966, 1979', *Great Interviews of the 20th Century,* (6; London: *The Guardian*, 2007), 9–10.

480   Ibid., 177: '[these aesthetic figures] are sensations, percepts and affects, landscapes and faces, visions and becomings.'

481   Ibid., 183–85.

quality, spatial lyricism, one which provokes in the viewer/user a strong aesthetic experience that induces affect.

4.2.8   The figural and the sublime

The figural category is visualized and composed by metaphoric figures. Its language is as diverse, singular, and autonomous as that of poetry. Among the categories of affect that can be induced by an 'exceptional' aesthetic experience emerging from the figural, is sublimity.

The concept of sublimity (feelings of 'terrible joy' and 'delightful horror') was taken up by eighteenth-century romanticism as a quality of mind and experience 'to come to terms with writers such as Milton or Shakespeare, whose works did not meet the classicist standards of beauty.'[482] The sublime allowed extending the boundaries of aesthetic experience to the pleasurable and displeasurable,[483] encompassing the deformed, unknown, unrecognizable, unstable, uncertain, and even the formless, as attributes of the figure, whether musical, poetic or pictorial.

The contradictory nature of the sublime feeling analysed by Edmund Burke (1757),[484] in which pain is mixed with pleasure, terror with delight, was adapted in Lyotard's *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, which I discuss later.

Burke describes the sublime as the overwhelming feeling 'resulting from the subject's physiological and psychological reactions' before events like limitless

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482   Vall, 'What Consciousness Forgets', 362.

483   Ibid.

484   Edmund Burke, *Indagación filosófica sobre el origen de nuestras ideas acerca de lo sublime y de los bello* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1987).

landscapes of mountains, oceans and volcanoes, natural objects or artworks.[485] Vastness, infinity, uniform succession and magnitude—in the sense of 'melancholic grandeur'—are, according to Burke, attributes of the sublime.[486] He also introduced melancholia as an emotive response to exaltation, the extreme emotional state that the sublime feeling arouses.

For Burke, pain is a stronger emotion than pleasure: affirming 'all that is terrible, or is related to it, is a source of the sublime'. Thus fear and bewilderment, darkness and formlessness can also provoke sublimity.[487, 488] As in Pizarnik's literary construction of the countess's castle, darkness and a labyrinthine space are used to induce fear.

Another aspect of Burke's thinking still useful today is that he distinguished beauty from the aesthetic-affective response it arouses in the spectator. He said that people had defined beauty in terms of its figurative representation instead of by the capacity of things to provoke an emotional response like passion or love and suggested that it is the effect of things on the senses which determines beauty.[489] This crucial observation departed from classical conceptions of beauty and led to the idea that beauty cannot be measured, calculated or geometrized to achieve a pleasing effect, so proportion ceased to be an attribute of beauty. By defining beauty by its ability to produce affect, Burke enlarged the possibilities of form-making: 'it

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485   Vall, 'What Consciousness Forgets', 361.

486   Burke, *Indagación filosófica sobre el origen de nuestras ideas acerca de lo sublime y de los bello*, 63.

487   Ibid., 43-44: He used Milton's frightening description of Death enhanced by darkness and formlessness to support this: 'nobody seems to have understood better than Milton the secret of enhancing terrible things through darkness, his description of Death is admirably studied.'

488   Ibid., 61: 'Buildings seeking the sublime experience should be grim and dark, shocking the visitor when passing through the threshold from total light to maximum darkness.'

489   Ibid., 67.

can affect us both by its novelty as by its deformity'. 'Deformity', he claimed, 'is not opposed to beauty, for what is familiar to us ceases to be beautiful, beauty is only defined by its effect.'[490]

Lyotard develops these ideas, suggesting that 'in the sublime, form has no role at all.'[491] He understands sublimity as an attribute of self, independent of the object and resulting only from the aesthetic-affective response in the spectator/reader/user. Like Burke, he questions the 'natural' relationship between beauty and positive affective responses, contesting the conception that all beautiful form must induce a pleasurable and pleasing feeling in the person experiencing the object, landscape or space. Thus Burke's baroque thinking not only introduced new possibilities of form, like deformation, but also new dimensions of affect emerging from this new notion of aesthetic affect: like sadness and melancholy, the uncanny and surprising, tension and power, even fear and bewilderment.

4.2.9   The sublime sentiment and the arousal of affect

According to Lyotard,[492] Kant suggests the sublime arises when there is a discord between imagination and reason, creating a disruption in the continuum of consciousness.[493] This means the sublime feeling is understood as a state of exaltation created by the disruption between the sensitive and the intelligible. For example, something without form, like the idea of infinity, is incommensurable

by the synthesis of our imagination. Thus the sublime feeling is provoked by the exaltation caused by the suspension of reason.

Sensory experience presupposes a synthesis, a connection between what we are able to imagine and what we can actually perceive. Reason, and our ability to conceive ideas, restores the continuum between imagination and thought, broken, according to Kant, by the overwhelming sentiment of the sublime. Lyotard reinterprets this idea, suggesting the sublime is the feeling evoked by this awareness of a possible ontological void. He calls 'dramatic' the 'disruption' between 'what we can reflect and what we can give form to, between what we can conceive logically but we cannot imagine or present with a precise and limited form.' The sublime judgment, he concludes, is the emotive response not logical, that accompanies the presentation.[494]

4.2.10 Aesthetic judgment: from sensation to thought and universal validation

An aesthetic judgment validates subjective experience.[495] The emotive triggers our capacity to form judgements about things and makes knowledge of things possible, being every act of thinking signalled by sensation.[496] Moreover, reflection, as sensation, accompanies all acts of thinking; it guides them: reflection helps us to discover the subjective conditions under which we arrive at objective and universal concepts.[497] Even if an aesthetic judgment has no objective validity and may not be

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490   Ibid., 67–87.

491   Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, 78.

492   Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*.

493   Burke, *Indagación filosófica sobre el origen de nuestras ideas acerca de lo sublime y de los bello,*, Part 2: On the Passion Caused by the Sublime: 'The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature is surprising, this is capable of suspending judgment on all that is not object of this surprise.'

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494   Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, 58.

495   Ibid., 1.

496   Ibid., 12.

497   Ibid., 26.

universal, 'it immediately waits for a subjective universality in the name of universal validity.'[498]

Aesthetic analysis is, then, the examination of pure sensation.[499] This means subjective sensation is relevant in the building of thought and concepts, aiming to transform 'pure feeling' into universals and communicable constructs.

According to Kant, says Lyotard, the beautiful and the sublime are two aesthetic responses, or subjective judgments, which cannot accomplish legitimacy without the help of the categories of understanding.[500] This again means that rather than attributes of the object they are states of the self that can achieve universal legitimacy with the help of the categories of thought: 'Categories serve as "principles of discrimination" to orientate thought in the muteness of pure feeling.'[501] '[P]ure feeling' is not communicable by arguments and concepts—it cannot achieve the status of universality and objectivity—so categories are reflective places that 'reveal themselves in the beautiful and the sublime feeling.'[502] This thought is relevant to this thesis because it suggests that a subjective response leading to affect can then become the material to build an aesthetic judgement of broader validity.

The sad and melancholic tone of 'La condesa sangrienta' functioned as an introduction to my review of the notions of sensation, the category of the figural and the feeling of the sublime. Burke, Lyotard and Deleuze agree that the sublime is not an attribute of form but a state of the self, a psychological state of exaltation induced by certain attributes of the object we perceive or analyze—like a work of art

Figs. 93a, 93b, 93c: Tomás Saraceno, *Salar de Uyuni*, Bolivia, 2006

or a natural landscape. So what are these attributes? How do they define the figural? The second part of this chapter attempts to answer these questions.

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498   Ibid., 16.

499   Ibid., 43.

500   Ibid., 35.

501   Ibid., 46.

502   Ibid., 49.

4.3   The Emergence of the Figural and the Construction of Lyrical Space

Sensuousness, Excess, Exuberance, Voluptuousness, Darkness and Exoticism (Attributes of Form)

4.3.1   Perpetuating delight: sublimity and the Pampas and Patagonian plains

The tabula rasa condition of the Pampas—its unspecificity and abstraction—has always been seen as fertile soil for invention in Argentina. In the early twentieth

century, this characteristic was useful to both the literary and architectural modernist projects. Borges's essay on the Argentine writer and tradition, discussed in Chapter 1,[503] turned the character of the Pampas and Patagonian plains into a powerful terrain to create new form. A more recent reading of the landscape manifests sadness and melancholia through the visual work of Bruzzone and Pastorino, who pictured the modernist ruin in the desolate landscape of the Pampas.[504]

Vastness, loneliness, emptiness and silence describe a landscape that can induce sublimity in the sense of privation defined by Burke—the sensation of solitude and the excessive extension of a flat line with no incidents, no figures.[505] Today, the

Fig. 94: Tomás Saraceno,

Flying Garden / Airport City

(2005)

Fig.95: Malca Mizrahi,

Efflorescence 10 (2008)

503   Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Argentine Writer and Tradition', *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

504   Pastorino's journey across the Pampas to photograph Salamone's modernist ruins also relates to the romantic travels in Patagonia in the nineteenth century, like those of the landscape painter Mauricio Rugendas, the explorer Alessandro Malaspina and the naturalist Alexander von Humboldt.

505   Graciela Silvestri, in *El lugar común. Una historia de las figuras de paisaje en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2011), also related the Pampas's landscape to the sublime.

Argentine plains are again the space to rehearse new potent definitions of space, like the new spatial conceptions proposed by Tomás Saraceno's work.

Of the processes that look introspectively and validate the relevance of experience to produce lyrical qualities in space, Saraceno's is one of the best I have found. Contrary to what Inés Katzenstein argued in 'Tomás Saraceno. Contra la arquitectura,'[506] each of his installations is a contribution to architecture. The following paragraphs discuss how the experience of the sublime feeling becomes the content of his 'speculative urbanism'.

By the end of my architectural education in the mid-1990s in Buenos Aires, Saraceno and I were introduced to other approaches to the practice of architecture that invited us to look out for existing 'materials' that would poetically and metaphorically inform the design project.[507] Since then, critical and sensitive observation has been essential to the process of designing architectural space. But more significant to Saraceno's later work would be the development of an obsession: the materialization of a light and complex architecture, defiant of gravity that is not only inhabitable but 'transportable'. A flying city that would make its inhabitants post-national citizens of the world, aerial travellers across all geographies and landscapes, experiencing daily the sublime feeling of living among the clouds. His ongoing project, *Airport Cities* (Fig. 94) presents a floating nomadic urbanism

composed of inhabitable lightweight cells that can make up a city 1,500 metres above ground.

Airport Cities is inspired as much by Buckminster Fuller's structures as by the ideas of Argentine artist Gyula Kosice who, in 1971, designed 'La ciudad hidroespacial' (Figs. 96–98). Nomadic urbanism, flotation, and inhabitable lightweight cells that would make up a city 1,500 meters above ground, were all there in Kosice's Manifesto. Saraceno invited him to tell these ideas to architecture students at the University of Buenos Aires, where he was teaching Architecture Theory before leaving to attend the Enric Miralles - Peter Cook course in Frankfurt in 2000. Other influences on Saraceno's idea of urban living floating above ground are Archigram's architectural explorations—like the components shown at *Living City* exhibition (1963), whose brief was to 'express the vitality of city life'[508]; *Walking City* (1964); *Plug-in City* (1962–64); *Living Pod* (1965); the nomadic ideas behind *The Moment-Village* and the drawings part of the *Instant City* 'travelling metropolis' (1968–70). Also, the inflatable architecture of the 1960s, like David Greene's inflatable *Suit-Home* (1968).

In 2006, in the Bolivian Andes, Saraceno found a revealing depiction of the idea of living among the clouds and the sublime feeling it arouses. During the rain season, a salt lake, flooded with a thin layer of water, produces a disorientating phenomenon: the horizon disappears and the continuous reflections of the sky over the water create a vision of infinity.[509] This reflection, provoked by the extensive salt-lake 'mirror', gives the illusion of 'being inside the sky'. This image of the body in suspension, in limitless space, drives the spectacularly ambitious art installations he has been building, mainly in European galleries, since he left Argentina in 2000.

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506 Inés Katzenstein, 'Tomás Saraceno. Contra la arquitectura', *Otra Parte: Mundos Posibles* (26; Buenos Aires, Winter 2012), 35–41.

507 In 1996 I met Claudio Vekstein, Amancio Williams's disciple. He had just arrived from Spain where he had been working for Enric Miralles after attending his and Peter Cook's architecture course at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. He was back in Buenos Aires promoting his seminar, Open Workshop on Art and Architecture, at the National School of Fine Arts "Ernesto de la Carcova" (today part of IUNA), devoted to showing other approaches in the practice of architecture. The Buenos Aires course lasted two years, and Saraceno and I were in its first student cohort.

508 Peter Cook, Warren Chalk, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron and Mike Webb, *Archigram* (Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1991), 20.

509 Saraceno took three other photographers to the salt lake. Lucas Distéfano was one of them. In February 2013 Distéfano embarked on a journey towards the Argentine Base Marambio in Antartica to depict its landscape. (Figs. 99–101)

Salar de Uyuni (Figs. 90 and 93) focuses on achieving the sublime feeling that arises when the body experiences infinity. The materialization of this sensation, of lightness and 'being hung on air', is found in all his art projects. It represents the 'inner image' I described in the Introduction. It started with *Towards the Flying City*—a photomontage developed at the Frankfurt Städelschule—and developed into an obsession to achieve a floating inhabitable space where a new and parallel biosphere can develop.

4.3.2 Saraceno's 'speculative urbanism', experience and the body

Saraceno's architectural image carries the promise of achieving physicality, sensuousness and innovative materiality. To experience his 'architecture' means to touch, see, hear and to be inside it. It also demands rational investigation into the technology to make his ambition possible. His work offers us the complete process: from the initial conceptual 'incompleteness' in the Bolivian *Salar de Uyuni*—because it only shows us what we will see if we were suspended inside his floating cells—to the physical and material rehearsal of sophisticated inflatable structures that can be built inside galleries, or floating figures suspended outside gardened palaces.[510] *On Space Time Foam* (Figs. 102–05; 2012–13), is a 7,000 m³ air-sculpture accessible by the public and made of three layers of film. The light structure is suspended from a very high ceiling and allows visitors a floating-like experience. But because of its three levels it also shows the 'interdependency' of the visitors' movements positioned at different heights inside the inflatable space. When the visitors below move, Saraceno says, they generate internal 'destabilizing waves' that provoke unexpected shifts of the visitors above and viceversa.[511]


Fig. 96: Gyula Kosice, *La ciudad hidroespacial* exhibition at Buenos Aires Planetarium, 1979
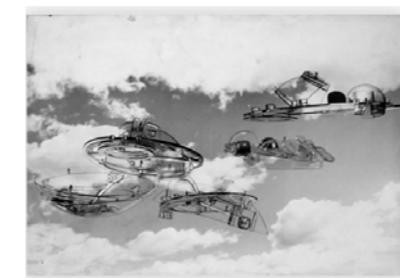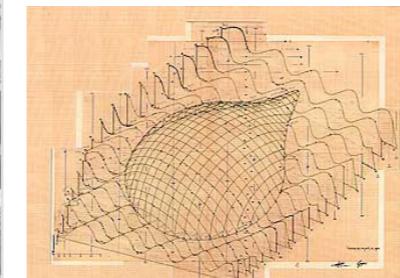
Figs. 97 and 98: Gyula Kocice, *La ciudad hidroespacial,* ongoing project. Its intuitive ideas were first stated in the 1946 in the Madí Manifesto that affirmed 'Madí Architecture' should be composed of 'rooms and shapes travelling in space'. Kosice (1971): '"Hydrospatial Architecture" is bound to be suspended in space indefinitely. The hydrospatial nomadic house deteriorates the course of the economy, based on the valuation of the land, and opens unforeseen sociological questions. It also aims to open up art, because our civilization enters the post-industrial stage. It is proposed therefore an "art of all" and not an "art for everyone" ... art tacitly integrates habitat ... is its presentation, its "modus Vivendi" ... Why, then, painting, sculpture, and ultimately the "object", if all that is already contained in the dwelling occupying the space, the internal sense of that space, its volume, colour, and movement?'

This experience of interconnectivity, provoked by movements by visitors at different levels of an installation, has been also explored by the Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto. In 2011, at the Faena Arts Centre in Buenos Aires (Figs. 106 and 107) he presented *O Bicho Suspenso na Paisajem,*[512] a walkable installation suspended from the ceiling of a huge and open gallery space. In both works we lose our capacity to refer to space and our sensory stimulus is enhanced by this loss.

As we are invited inside Saraceno's gardens, cities, airports, domes and giant webs, we become aware of a twenty-first-century baroque drama materializing: the body consciously embraced by an alien environment aspiring to become a natural sphere to live in.[513] In 'Some Experiments in Art and Politics' Bruno Latour says about Saraceno's work:

> Networks have no inside, only radiating connectors. They are all edges. They provide connections but no structure. One does not reside in a network, but rather moves to other points through the edges ... To think in these terms is to find a way to avoid Modernism—in which case the hierarchy moves from bigger to smaller elements from a central point—but to also avoid, if I dare say, Postmodernism—in which case there would be no local hierarchies and no *homogeneous* principle by which to establish the connections (in this case the elastic tensors that provide the language for the whole piece). For me, that is the beauty of Saraceno's work: it gives a sense of order, legibility, precision, and elegant engineering, and yet has no hierarchical structure. It is as if there were a vague possibility of retaining Modernism's feeling of

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510   For example, his *Poetic Cosmos of the Breath* (2007), Gunpowder Park,Essex.

511   Saraceno talking about *On Space Time Foam*: http://www.hangarbicocca.org/exhibitions/On-Space-Time-Foam-Tomas-Saraceno/. Chapter 2 used the literary work of

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Cortázar, the short story 'El otro cielo', to discuss the experience of 'interconnectivity' and how it affects space and the user.

512   Ernesto Neto's installation assemblage, *O Bicho Suspenso na Paisajem,* at the Faena Art Centre: http://vimeo.com/29996317#.

513   Saraceno talks about his installation *On Space Time Foam* (2013) in Hangar Bicocca, Milan. Online video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lCbrF4Diit8.

clarity and order, but freed from its ancient connection with hierarchy and verticality.[514]

Linguistically and technologically complex, Saraceno's floating spheres propose a new rationale, one that retains the baroque principles of visual intensity and sensuous immersiveness but merged with modernist ones of technological rigour and audacity.

His design process is one of discovering qualities that emerge from the experience of architecture—similar to Virginia Woolf's and Peter Zumthor's thinking described at the beginning of this thesis. It shows that to invent architecture, to go through the process that aims to complete, concretely and sensuously, that initial and inner image of architecture, demands an introspective exploration that probably started when we were students and continued with his European artistic development in Frankfurt and Venice.

His work is not concerned with simulation, scale models, digital manipulation or moving images. He allows us to experience the 'real thing', addressing all of our senses. His work aspires to show, experiment with and materialize the stimulation that an unusual and intense spatial situation induces in our senses like that experienced at Salar de Uyuni. His immense and immersive art installations can be interpreted as an act of recovery, a powerful act to conquer an image of space that embodies an intense sensory stimulation. His aerial, global and moving figures travel through a landscape conceived as a tabula rasa that communicates the limitlessness of the Pampas, whose desolation and solitude surrounds his inhabitable biospheres. They

Figs. 99, 100 and 101: Lucas Distéfano, *Antártida* (2013)

Figs. 102 and 103: Tomás Saraceno, *On Space Time Foam* (2012–13), Hangar Bicocca, Milan

514   Bruno Latour, 'Some Experiments in Art and Politics', *E-flux Online Journal*, 2011. http://www.e-flux.com/journal/some-experiments-in-art-and-politics/.

communicate a notion of space that addresses the body and, ultimately, aims to provoke a self-dissolving condition that allows the sublime sentiment to arise. *Salar de Uyuni* acts as the persistent image, almost the unattainable figure that drives Saraceno's conquest of a new inhabitable realm; an epic struggle against gravity to raise the entire population of a city to the sky.

Each new installation, like the recent *Cloud Cities* (Fig. 109; 2012) on the roof of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, contributes to his conception of inhabitation, experience and emotion as interrelated aspects of spatial and urban design. For Latour 'there is no overall container to [Saraceno's] work … every container or sphere is either inside another local one or "inside" the network of outside connections.'[515] This description recaptures another aspect of the baroque spirit but also defines a type of space that transcends borders. Linguistically, it illustrates the notion of baroque excess in Calabrese's sense. Ideologically, Saraceno's idea of trans-national living-voyaging marks a new interpretation of the modernist utopian principle of a universal home replicated across borders, only now addressing the body and the arousal of an aesthetic-affective response induced by a sensuous experience of space.

Figs. 104 and 105: Tomás Saraceno, *On Space Time Foam*, drawings

Figs. 106 and 107: Ernesto Neto, *O Bicho Suspenso na Paisajem* (2011-12), Faena Arts Centre, Buenos Aires

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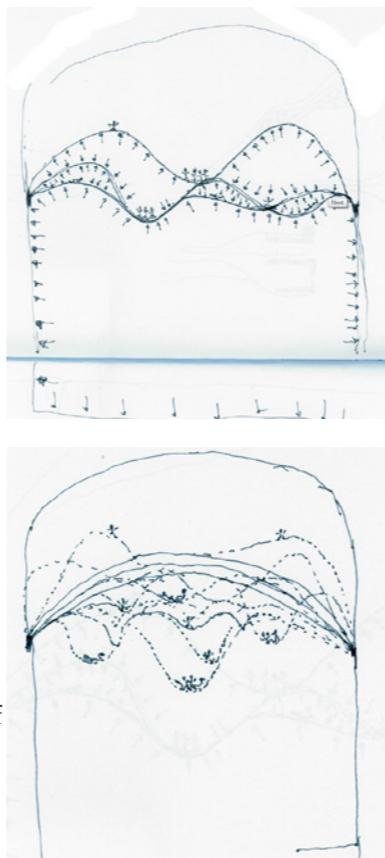
515   Latour, 'Some Experiments in Art and Politics'. These words are reminiscent of Aira's 1991 description of Copi's baroque style: every literary world created must contain another one inside, a baroque strategy to represent reality. 'Copi always operates with simultaneous inclusions … Adventure, surprise, are parts of his daily happiness for a baroque reason: there cannot be voids in a situation … The rule is that every [fictional] world must be a holder of another one, there can not be worlds devoid of other worlds within. Everything is representation, and that is baroque.' Aira, *Copi*, 29.

Fig.108: Tomás Saraceno, *On Space Time Foam*, drawing

Fig. 109: Tomás Saraceno, *Cloud Cities* (2012), Metropolitan Museum, New York

Figs. 110, 111 and 112: Tomás Saraceno, *Cloud Cities* (2011), Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
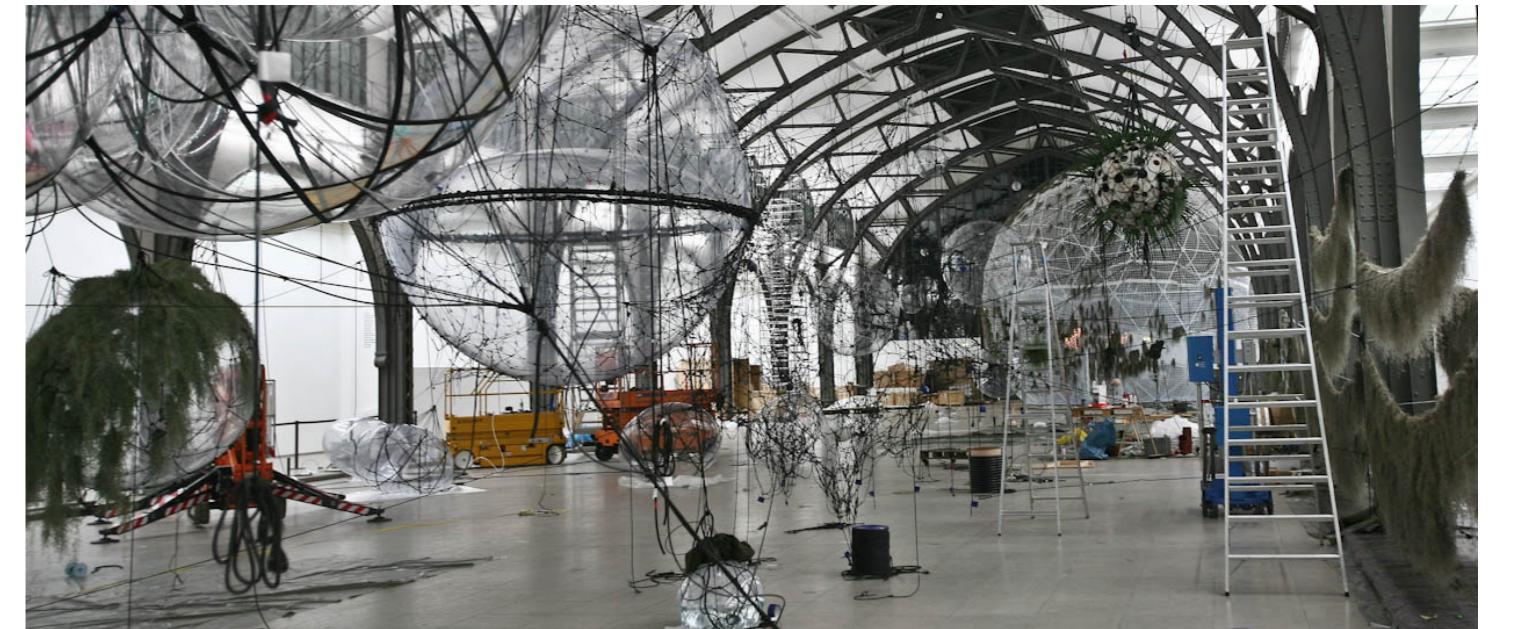
Fig. 113: Tomás Saraceno, *Airport City* (2008), London

Fig.116: Tomás Saraceno, *Poetic Cosmos of the Breath* (2007), Gunpowder Park, Essex
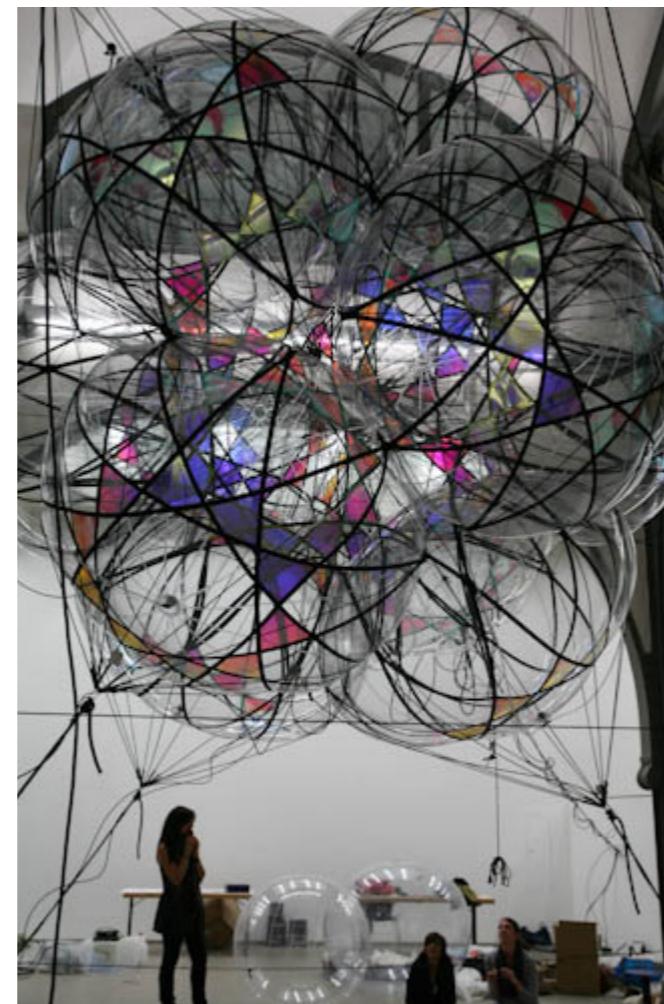
Figs. 114 and 115: Tomás Saraceno, *Cloud Cities* (2011), Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin
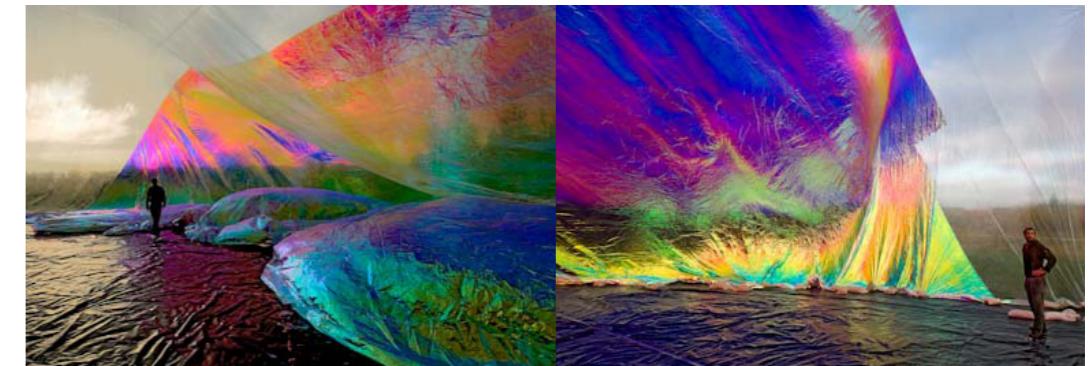
4.3.3   Spatial sensuousness

On the exploration of sensation and corporeality in architecture, Hernán Díaz Alonso's intriguing and singular approach is very different to Saraceno's. For Díaz Alonso, the conditions that define the beautiful today cease to be the sensuously pleasing, but are instead the shocking and unexpected. In his work I see a continuation of Bacon's paintings using digital configurations of a convoluted geometry. His architectural 'figures' use transformation aiming to affect the experience of the user.

His visceral geometry, composed by deformed figures, can sometimes remotely resemble a flower or a bone because, as he says, they are driven by the 'horrific and grotesque'. These unusual conditions of space, which include decay, mutation and even death, make the figure distinctive and allow a new beauty to emerge. The intense pursuit of sensuousness puts his work in the tradition of those who conceive beauty as affect, the response of the viewer/user:

> [T]he ugly and horrific are the necessary variations that allow for an escape towards a spatial model of shocking presence. Ultimately, this is an aesthetic problem. In fact, I do not aspire to inflicting a horrific feeling in people through my architecture as an end in itself. What is really interesting to me is the possibility of something horrific and grotesque revealing a different

kind of beauty and *creating a different kind of an effect and condition on the people that experience my work*. The result of the intensity of the horrific is the appearance of some rare, unlikely new beauty.[516] (My emphasis.)

His work's 'awkwardness' follows a strategy to induce an extreme aesthetic response. Like in Bacon's paintings, we can still reconstruct the primary human figure in our minds, even if the figure has mutated into something unrecognisable.

4.3.4   Díaz Alonso's architectural figures of change and decay

Díaz Alonso prefers to call 'mutation' the process of deformation that his digital explorations create. Thus, this 'becoming animal'—a condition of space achieved through mutations of similar parts—conveys an aesthetic statement pursuing a contemporary conception of beauty based on affect.

In his work it is clear where the process of an animated mutation starts, but there seems to be no concern with where it ends. It could be argued that the architectural final figure looks as it does because of an interruption in its process of deformation. However, he makes clear that 'the ugly and horrific' are the necessary variations that allow for an 'escape' towards a spatial model of shocking presence that can produce 'lust and arousal'.[517]

> This project will mutate the program of a museum/art pavilion and become a tool to study the shift towards a paradigm of Species, as opposed to the ubiquitous platform of Types. If Types are traditionally viewed as categories

of standardization and symbolic expressions of form, then Species are malleable entities that are in constant metamorphosis; adaptation and mutation are the main characteristics of Species.[518]

Díaz Alonso's work presents itself as a simulation, where the cinematic process informs the form. The videos of his work suggest that the very animation of the form informs the gestures of its own transformation, and this allows us to think that digital animation and morphogenesis has brought the possibility to think of spaces that carry the logic of their own mutation. Thus their form becomes autonomous. Transformation and deformation have brought to the architectural domain the conception that any figure carries a formal behaviour. This means it will transform, or mutate—to use his terms—in a particular way. Its distinctive style predicts its transformation. Moreover, he claims that digital programming has shifted static representation to animated simulation and thus the possibility to generate form.

Digital simulation of space links digital design to the baroque notion of the theatrical in architecture because it aims to let the body feel what is to be in the middle of a spatial ensemble of 'utter emergence,'[519] like in the Baroque era.

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516   Alonso, 'Exuberance, I Don't Know; Excess, I Like', *Architectural Design: Exuberance: New Virtuosity in Contemporary Architecture* (80; London: Wiley, 2010), 70-77.

517   Ibid.

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518   Díaz Alonso, Xefirotarch, 'T-B A21 Patagonia', http://www.tba21.org/pavilions/76/page_2?category=pavilions.

519   Jeff Kipnis, Lecture: 'Magic, Technique, and the Production of Architecture and its Effects', Taubman College of Archietcture + Urban Planning (12 November 2010). http://vimeo.com/16931565.

Figs. 117, 118, 119 and 120:

Hernán Diaz Alonso, *TB01*

(2010), Venice Biennale

4.3.5 *Efflorescence:* drawing darkness and romanticism

Díaz Alonso says that the pavilion commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Figs. 117–120) will be located at the base of the Andes in Argentina, itself a remote habitat. It will be a permanently occupied proto-museum 'acting as an augmented aesthetic environment within the otherwise barren landscape of the region.'[520] Resembling a floral arrangement of decaying petals, and to be clad in metal, it is not difficult to imagine it, in contrast to the model presented at the Venice Biennale in 2010, as a landscape of dead flowers scattered around the site.

Díaz Alonso sees architecture as a machine for intensifying our perception, an exuberant deep membrane, in which spatial sensuousness is configured by a personal image of desire and lust.[521] His work and the selection of my drawings shown here (Figs. 91, 95, 121, 124, 127, 132 and 133) have a dual and contradictory condition: sensuousness and horror, pleasantness and unpleasantness. Sometimes my drawings evoke a Pre-Raphaelite atmosphere of calm and wonder[522] and sometimes are strikingly tortuous, as they convey images of horror, pain and ultimately, as in the case of Díaz Alonso, perversion. In a similar way, 'La condesa sangrienta' presents the countess's castle as a space where the suppression of the darkest desires is abolished. The essay's spatial lyricism reveals a contradiction: the detailed description of the horrors she inflicts upon her victims—the space of excess, darkness and pain—is presented parallel to the eroticism and pleasure that a space of limitless power induces in the protagonist.

520   Xefirotarch, 'T-B A21 Patagonia'.

521   Alonso, 'Exuberance, I Don't Know; Excess, I Like'.

522   In conversation with me, Nigel Coates described in this way my drawing *Efflorescence 01* (Fig. 130; 2002) when exhibited at the Royal Academy, *Summer Exhibition*, London, in 2003.

Díaz Alonso's work and my *Efflorescence* drawings present a distinctive and precise architectural language precisely because there is a method in the configuration of the image: a manner or 'style' that engenders the parts and assembles the whole, each fragment resembling the rest to achieve unity. This linguistic methodology is also distinctive because it sets out from the start the impossibility of being replicated in the manner of a universal style.

Linguistic distinctiveness raises the possibility of taking the 'character of the line' (its style) into the 'character of art'. That is, of creating an aesthetic event. The 'character of the line' carries sensations, perceptions, emotions, and our reflections/ thoughts about them. The transference from a distinctive formal character into art is a passage, a liminal act that transforms what we normally see into something new, an 'aesthetic figure'.

My architectural drawings and Díaz Alonso's installations shown here are figural expressions that manifest spatial lyricism. From these drawings and installations a poetic realm emerges for melancholic contemplation, where curved and convoluted forms prevail, where ornamental voluptuousness and excess are in an unstable transformation towards decay and change. They demonstrate that when space is conceived for the 'intensification of perception', shock, wonder and affect are aroused. In contrast, a universalist style, predicated on repetition, abstraction and homogeneity, dismisses exceptionality or the emergence of an aesthetic event.
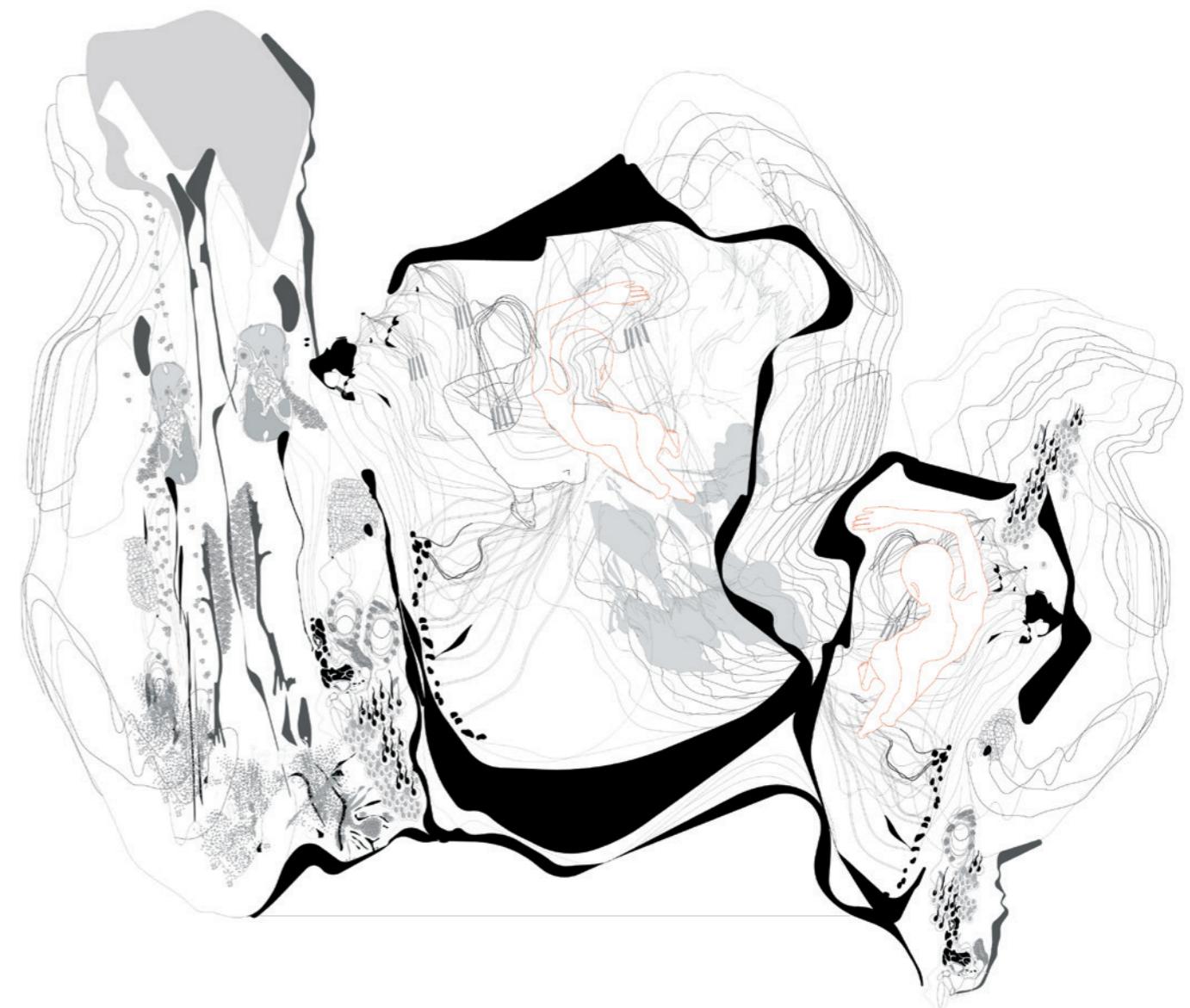
Fig. 121: Malca Mizrahi, *Efflorescence Plan* (2002)

4.4   Conclusion

In the sad and melancholic tone that characterizes Pizarnik's poetical prose, spatial lyricism is explored through the figure of the castle which condenses the formal attributes (darkness, a convoluted labyrinthine underground space and claustrophobia) that induce extreme psychological states. The character's drive is romantic but in this case the pursuit of beauty is unattainable, sad, forbidden and tainted by the horrific means the countess employs to fulfil her aspiration of eternal youth. The protagonist's aspiration of 'impure' beauty, previously defined

Figs. 122 and 123: Tomás Saraceno, *Galaxies Forming along Filaments, Like Droplets along the Strands of a Spider's Web* (2008), New York

by Baudelaire, results from the contradiction between the feelings of exaltation that follow the countess's sadistic crimes and the detailed description of pain she inflicts upon her victims. The ascending and descending lines led by crime and punishment and the horizontal reflections of the countess contemplating herself in the mirror designed by her, define the crossing planes of a melancholic interiority. The final spatial image of the essay is of claustrophobia, as the body of the countess is encased in the walls of the castle, fused and preserved forever as punishment in the space of horror and pain.

For Deleuze, inspired by Bacon's idea of deformation, the figural is the category that goes beyond abstraction or figuration and results from the transformation of the figure by subjective sensations, perceptions and memories into a new discernible form driven, as Kristeva has shown through Proust's prose, by a melancholic act of recovery. This definition of the figural is based on Lyotard's previous analysis of Cézanne's paintings and the metaphor in poetry. In the literary, the figural results from semantic and syntactic transgressions producing 'new effects' over meaning. In the visual, the figural image exteriorizes the contents of subjectivity, transforming memories, sensations, emotions and perceptions into visual 'events'. These are able to provoke our senses and induce a change in our state of mind. Lyotard distinguishes between the figural and the figurative, defining the figurative as a particular case (a subset) of the figural because it persists in the analogy between the representation and what is represented. The figurative is, then, an undisruptive

Fig. 124: Malca Mizrahi, *Interiority Plan 01* (2004). Fragment

transfer between model and picture. In contrast, the figural breaks the model/picture resemblance/legibility and manipulates literal meaning.

I have worked with the notion of the figural composed by metaphorical figures. The metaphorical figure, both visual and literary, is a distinctive device which acts by replacing content. This replacement has a particular attribute: the power to elicit emotion. It is a power based on the disrupting ability of the poet/maker to affect the reader/viewer. As I have shown, in the category of the figural, transformation is driven by emotions, sensations, perceptions, memory and experience—the material of primary consciousness.
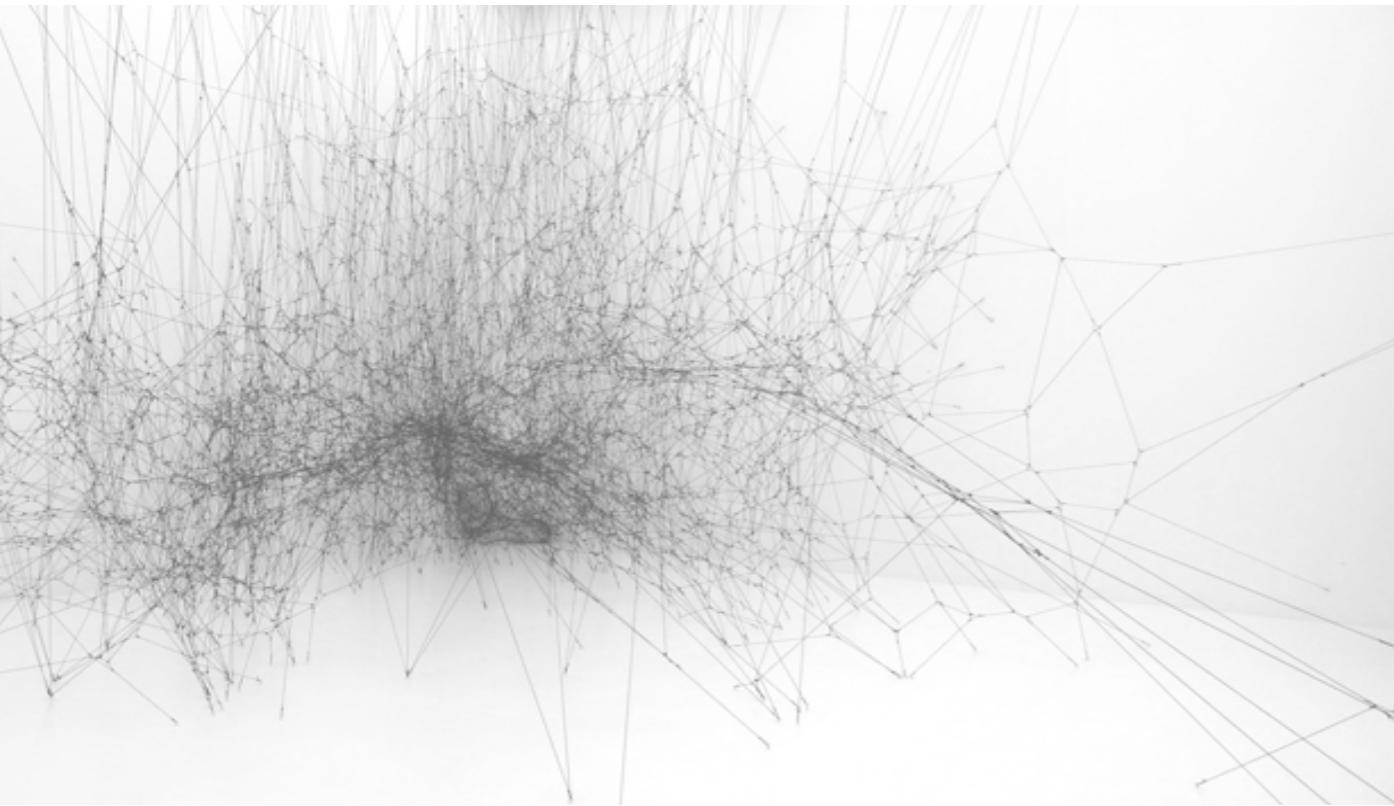
Figs. 125 and 126:
Tomás Saraceno, *14 Billions* (working title) (2010), Gateshead, Newcastle

Figs. 127a and 127b: Malca Mizrahi, *Efflorescence 05* (2002)

Figs. 128, 129, 130 and 131: Tomás Saraceno, *32SW Iridescent/ Flying Garden/ Airport City* (2007), Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Figs. 132 and 133: Malca Mizrahi, *Efflorescence 02 and 01* (2002)

Lyotard's definition of the figural (the category that reveals visually the contents of subjectivity and condenses psychological and emotional responses to turn the figure into an event by a semantic transgression) and Deleuze's philosophical analysis also of the figural (that suggests that the process of deformation of the figure, driven by sensation, carries the subjective, personal and unique response of the 'maker') include reflection and sensation as part of the linguistic process that turns images into figural manifestations.

Language allows us to remember, reflect and talk about our sensations to others. This means we can categorize, refine and discriminate our phenomenological experience, tying feelings to thoughts, experience to abstraction, and sensations to categories.[523] This reflective process is exteriorized by language, visual, verbal or musical; in art it composes 'figures' whose content expresses aesthetic judgments

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523   Edelman and Tononi, *Consciousness: How Matter Becomes Imagination*, 199: '[The] ability to describe and further elaborate various qualia [qualitative phenomenal experience] requires the simultaneous presence of both higher-order consciousness and primary consciousness'.

(culturally loaded and historically affected) and results from what we experience phenomenologically and what we think/remember of that experience.

Figures, as discussed before, can be figurative, or literally descriptive. They can be symbolic, maintaining no strict resemblance to the original experience but aspiring universal comprehension and replication like an icon. Or they can be metaphorical: an expression of the self, singular and unique. This last group composes the figural.

When sensations, affects and information take part in the process of transformation of the figure, leading to a change in the spectator/user's state of mind, provoke both reflection—our subjective-aesthetic judgment—and affect, the emotion that the aesthetic experience arouses.

This chapter also argued that the figural category requires form to be unified and ruled by a methodology that defines a unique and singular way of the figure. Thus, singularity is shown through the unique style of Pizarnik, Saraceno, Días Alonso and myself. Style was defined by a system of signs whose formal attributes make the figures similar, show a recognizable 'will' to belong to the same family, and only admit subtle variations of their type. Style also creates an 'artistic agenda' consisting of methodological rules for space-making and a 'will to form', defining the singular and unique way in which the maker/designer embodies the lyrical content of the figure. In this way, Díaz Alonso's voluptuous and visceral digital explorations, Pizarnik's 'Palais de Vocabulaire', Saraceno's 'spider-web cities', and my 'efflorescent' spatial compositions, are all the result of a distinctive visual or verbal linguistic style that communicates the reflections of our phenomenological experience. They result from a methodological thinking process that carries emotion.

Thus lyricism in the space-making process requires a 'singular' and consistent 'grammar', a visual communicable medium that can evolve into a singular body of

work which is relevant in the sense that it can bring a change, and be 'disruptively' useful to architecture. Metaphorical language works by a semantic replacement which follows associations and selections: it is a thinking process.[524] This means our ability to reflect upon what our senses perceive, language (our ability to visually, phonologically and semantically communicate those reflections) and the emergence of the self (the subject able to think metaphorically, imagine, and create new ideas by selective thinking) are interrelated in the construction of lyrical space.

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524   Ibid., 193–99: Language is already abstraction and requires higher-order consciousness to develop: 'Neural changes of the human brain that lead to language are behind the emergence of higher-order consciousness. Speech allows reference to inner states and objects or events by means of symbols, and then the construction of the self can develop from social and affective relationships'.

Conclusion

Retrospective

In the pursuit of singularity, this thesis based its exploration on the interiority of experience with the aim to address one main question: *can the construction of space be driven by the contents of (subjective) experience?*

As stated in the Introduction, personal experience may be unique, private, individual and, as a first-person matter, objectively unaccountable. However, we can enjoy lyrical poetry as subjective, relative to the author's own personal context, and as metaphorical as it may be. This is because, while we can only have sensations, recollections and perceptions individually, we can report and correlate experience collectively through language. By validating the product of experience, memory and identity as critical material for the construction of space, this thesis showed that a new quality emerges—spatial lyricism—suggesting that a new architecture can arise with it.

The thesis defined lyrical space, and showed how the lyric principle, normally related to sound and the verbal, manifests itself in the output of young Argentine practitioners engaged in the construction of space since about 1990. This exploration located the literary in the spatial, and the material, between the spatial and the self.

In four chapters, each with a different focus, it showed there are potent ways of conceiving space in the visual arts and in literature that validate inward explorations, presenting also an argument for a revision of local educational practices which, based on the principles of Modernism dogmatically applied, suppress original

thought and the emergence of singular and distinctive voices in Argentine architecture.

Chapter 1 extended into the visual the notion of lyricism traditionally associated with music and poetry. It explored two pictorial series by Guillermo Kuitca, read as visual accounts of the act of reading aloud and listening.

It showed how both series render space as a pictorial composition of sonorous experience: in the bed-map series by creating a private and intimate cartography of conjectural and dysfunctional maps led by the sound and the resonance of names of distant places, and in the series *Acoustic Mass* by creating a distinctive language that reflects the powerful emotional effect that a space filled by music provokes in the user. Their intended reference to sonorous experience was useful to show how lyricism can affect the construction of space. As in a poetic composition, where sound is often allowed to guide sense and vice versa, in Kuitca's paintings sound re-configures geography and the concert hall's architectural space.

In his bed-map series sound does not relate to a memory of place, but to the sound of his own voice naming unknown places. This sound selects the fragment of the territory to depict and enables the painting to become a visual account of the reading. Foreign names become the visual and aural texture of the work and turn into empty sounds whose content is reduced to what is unfamiliar and distant. The chapter also showed that the bed-map paintings depict an eventful geography that contrasts his own, absent from the series, and concludes that it manifests a de-territorialized identity by contradicting the character of the Argentine territory, vast, empty and predominantly flat.

In *Acoustic Mass* the concert halls are presented under a new geometrical order that aims to visualize the perception of sound inside. The paintings transform the concert hall into visual accounts of an audio-spatial experience and the rearrangement of the architectural geometry of the space visualizes the emotional effect that affects the user's experience of the space. Sound guides the new spatial configuration of the concert halls and defines a linguistic methodology that is driven by the experience of listening to music. It manipulates architectural signs and defines a new space.

Chapter 2 looked at the qualities and values that define the lyrical in the literary (such as brevity, intensity, fragmentation, particularization and the first-person account) to expose a line of continuity between lyrical poetry and the short story. It then used some of these qualities to explore Fabián Marcaccio's spatial paintings to show that the values of the lyrical can translate into qualities of space.

Lyricism, both in poetry and the short story, emerges as an intensity deriving from the urgency of the expression of emotion and the economy of this expression, resulting from the constraint in time and space inherent in both genres. The chapter indicated that intensity too is one of the main formal aspects that relate lyrical poetry to the neo-baroque character of the paintings explored, and showed it through Lucio Fontana's gestural slash and Marcaccio's figural expressionism—defined by the turbulent movements of paint and matter, fragmentation, deformation and excess in the spatial unfolding of anatomical imagery.

The chapter also explored visually the notion of liminality, drawing from Julio Cortázar's essays on the theory of the short story. Specifically, how a spatial construct, the passage, carries lyrical content in the gestural intensity of Fontana's cut into the canvas and in Marcaccio's baroque spatial-paintings. It proposed that Marcaccio's paintings unfold the story opened by Fontana's cut, a deep space that can be inhabited by the forms of a dreamlike and infinite sequence of images fused together to materialize the passage, embodying a continuation of the gesture presented by Fontana's *Concetto spaziale*.

It concluded that for Cortázar, Fontana and Marcaccio space is punctured and its boundaries are permeable. In the literary, the passage and the transgression of the limits of discontinuous space, illustrated by two of Cortázar's short stories, leaves open the possibility of the exceptional and uncanny. In the visual, the baroque notion of spatial transgression and permeability is the content of both the *Concetto spaziale* and the *Paintant Stories* series. The former transforms the gallery space into a passage; the latter suggests that a deeper space is to be visually revealed within the surface of the canvas.

Finally, the chapter proposed that *Paintant Stories* presents a neo-baroque fascination with vagueness, based on the assertion that it is possible to turn 'imprecision' into an aesthetic effect. The distortion, resulting from stretching the limit of the canvas, and the intensity resulting from excessive accumulation of fragmentary imagery, are both attributes of a 'language of imprecision' based on a neo-baroque taste for approximation. Together they intensify the experience of seeing, producing a type of aesthetic pleasure that comes from the indistinct, vague, and indefinite.

Chapter 3 showed how local contemporary Realism portrays everyday life as a poetic force that can contain the unknown, creating a hyperrealist presentation of the everyday that includes both the ordinary and the exceptional.

In the realist short novel, virtuosities of form are suppressed to make content the main carrier of lyricism. Through a prose devoid of affect, sensory perception, experience and recollections contribute to define contemporary Argentine Realism by allowing thoughts only reachable by introspection to depict reality through a particularly plain, limpid and simple prose. César Aira's first-person short novels recapture the subjective dimension as an inspirational force, stressing that the

interest lies in invention and in the process that allows for the most irrational events to transform things and characters and make the story unfold. He puts self and his subjective reading of reality at the centre, allowing the unexpected to appear against a meticulous realist representation of the quotidian, so that his mutations, transformations, and deformations become more effective.

The contemporary local realist novel reuses lived experience and sensory perception as raw material available for transformation. Since memories are essentially fragmented and imprecise, what we do not remember, those parentheses of time and space, are filled by fantasy. In Ancient Greek comedy subjective intervention in the form of choral interludes filled a space opened by the author; they constituted a sonorous space, a detour intended to interrupt the action. Now, unexpected and surprising turns of the action represent lyrical digressions woven tightly into a picturesque depiction of contemporary life in Buenos Aires.

Experimental writing anchored in Realism blends logical structures of causation (which assures verisimilitude and maintains the action within Realism) with irrational content and fantasy, making the characters mutate and transform, the scenarios mix and juxtapose, and at the same time, maintain a logic and, though convoluted, a line of continuity in the plot.

In the visual, local contemporary Realism works with very similar parameters. Memory and the transformation of personal experience are the material to transmit lyrical content without affecting form. Through a visual language devoted to a detailed reconstruction of the real, the visual work of Leandro Erlich and Dino Bruzzone creates objects and installations of detailed realistic fabrication only to act upon them by a variety of neo-baroque strategies (reflections, mirrors, repetition, disorientation and decay) to let the exceptional within the ordinary emerge.

Bruzzone's photographs show a renewed melancholic taste for the ruin. They defy the character of permanence, strength and invulnerability, contradicting the principles of local Modernism. His take on Amancio Williams's Casa del Puente and Marcel Breuer's Parador Ariston conceals their state of decay and neglect, subtly suggesting a relative transience in works conceived as monumental examples of modernist solidity and durability.

If, previously, sound and self composed the material that introduced lyricism to the play in the form of choral interventions, this chapter defined how today lyricism emerges in literary and visual realism by transforming thoughts that carry sensation (perceptions, memories and affects only reachable by introspection) to subvert an uneventful and mundane presentation of the real. It concludes that spatial lyricism within Realism emerges without affect, avoiding formal excess, formal voluptuousness or gestural intensity. It suggests that it is aroused by the extraordinary event within the ordinary, inducing in the viewer surprise and bewilderment.

Chapter 4 proposed the emergence of the figural as the formal embodiment or 'exteriorization' of subjectivity. Unlike in the previous chapter, where the lyrical quality arises through the effects of the event in a realistic tone devoid of affect, in this last chapter form becomes the event itself. It looks at visual and literary works closer to Surrealism where, in both visual and poetic language, form is affected by the contents of subjectivity: emotion, sensorial perception, experience and memory.

The chapter's first part discussed melancholy, sensation and the feeling of the sublime in Alejandra Pizarnik's essay on Valentine Penrose's book *La Comtesse sanglante*. In a sad and melancholic tone, spatial lyricism is explored through the figure of the castle condensing the formal attributes (darkness, depth, claustrophobia and labyrinthine underground space) that can induce those

psychological states. 'La condesa sangrienta' functions as an introduction to the review of the notions of sensation, the category of the figural, and the feeling of the sublime, understood not as an attribute of form but a state of the self—a psychological state of exaltation induced by certain formal attributes of the object.

The second part explored the formal attributes that condense the figural character and explored processes that look introspectively and validate the relevance of experience to produce lyrical qualities in space. Tomás Saraceno's process is one of the best illustrations of this because each new installation contributes to a conception of inhabitation, where experience and emotion are interrelated aspects of spatial and urban design. I proposed that his 'speculative urbanism' is driven by the pursuit of a sublime feeling. His aerial, global and inhabitable 'spider-web' biospheres are 'urban' figures that float, fly and travel across a landscape that carries the limitlessness of the Pampas, whose desolation, emptiness and vastness induce exaltation.

Saraceno's work was then put in relation to a very different approach in the exploration of sensation and corporeality in architecture. Hernán Díaz Alonso's conditions that define the sensuously pleasing now cease to be the beautiful, but become instead the shocking and unexpected. His work was read as a continuation of Francis Bacon's paintings, using digital configurations of a convoluted geometry that result in a 'visceral' geometry composed by deformed figures driven by the 'horrific and grotesque'. These unusual conditions of space, which include decay and even death, make the figure distinctive, and allow a new beauty to emerge. The stylistic distinctiveness of his work exposes a 'character of the line' that carries sensations, perceptions, emotions, and the makers' reflections/thoughts upon them. My drawings also contribute to illustrate a dual and contradictory condition: sensuousness and horror, similar to Díaz Alonso's and to the obscure world of the medieval castle of 'La condesa sangrienta', where the space of excess, darkness

and pain is presented parallel to the eroticism and pleasure that a space of limitless power induces in the protagonist.

Chapter 4 concluded that both Alonso's drawings and my *Efflorescence* series present an architectural language which is *distinctive*—because it sets out from the start the impossibility of being replicated in the manner of a universal style—and *precise*, because there is a method that engenders the parts, assembles the whole, and keeps the resemblance between the fragments to achieve unity. Like Pizarnik's poetic 'Palais de Vocabulaire', the visual examples shown in Chapter 4 build up a spatial language where curved and convoluted forms prevail, where ornamental voluptuousness and excess are there in an unstable transformation towards decay or change. They resort to a distinctive linguistic methodology that contests universalist styles that are predicated on repetition, abstraction and homogeneity, and in contrast pursues exceptionality and the emergence of a singular aesthetic event to produce lyrical space.

Thesis

This thesis showed that spatial lyricism is the quality of the content produced by space-making processes that transform the material of subjectivity—experience, memories, perceptions, emotions and sensations that define the self—into new form. The content of lyrical space is composed of 'metaphoric figures' which can provoke a long-lasting and transformative effect in the user. They are gathered under the figural, the category that goes beyond abstraction or figuration. These figures break the model/picture resemblance or legibility in the visual, and transgress literal meaning in the literary. They are distinctive devices that act by replacing content, a replacement with a particular attribute: the power to elicit emotion based on the *disrupting* ability of the poet/maker to *affect* the reader/viewer.

It also showed that spatial lyricism is not a quality of form, and that it does not arise as the 'natural' result of linguistic exuberance—even if some formal attributes that condense the figural character can produce lyrical effects. This is why I used examples that are linguistically diverse. What they all shared is the articulation of aesthetic content through a consistent grammar, showing that lyricism is not a formal attribute of the elements that configure space but an aesthetic quality revealed through the content that drives its configuration.

Spatial lyricism induces an 'exceptional' state of mind in the user/spectator aroused by an aesthetic experience, different from ordinary experience. This state manifests how the lyric principle is materialized in the spatial by inducing high-perceptual awareness—the immersive effect, a cognitive engagement—the symbolic appraisal, and an aesthetic-affective response—the emotional effect. It was illustrated by some of the following examples: a sonorous experience, affecting memory and identity, reconfiguring the landscape in Kuitca's bed-map series; intensity arising as result of excess and accumulation in Marcaccio's passage-paintings; surprise and disorientation subverting Erlich's realist installations; melancholy and sadness transforming and transgressing the immutable character of architectural Modernism in Bruzzone's photographs; the experience of the sublime, wonder and joy driving Saraceno's speculative urbanism; threat affecting Díaz Alonso's digital explorations; and nostalgia guiding the line in my own digital drawings. The thesis concluded that processes that validate introspective approaches to create new content and form, giving relevance to subjective experience and the affective response induced in the user, allow for the emergence of lyrical space.

Prospective

This thesis was based in the assertion that in the private exploration of experience we make new associations and contributions to current logics and methodologies, allowing 'ephemeral disruptions' to emerge as aesthetic 'singularities' that can evolve into new bodies of work.

The complexity of the practice of building excludes inward explorations in spatial design, as it requires the process to be broadly communicable, follow a rational logic and show a describable methodology, in both the design and construction phases. This may be because buildings are produced collaboratively, but also because, unlike art, they must attain a collective degree of social, financial, cultural, and sometimes political, acceptance in order to get built. For this reason, new explorations in architectural design generally remain in the speculative mode as academic research. Only a few make into the public realm, many times in the form of published or exhibited drawings, less frequently as small ephemeral constructions isolated from the urban context.

Since the end of the twentieth century, though not in Argentina, speculative propositions have successfully gained more relevance, attention and validity as possible precursors of new configurations of space. However, designs for buildings which try to explore the emotional and 'disruptive' potential of architecture tend to be built either not at all, or only as temporary art objects—the Serpentine Summer Pavilion series, MoMA's PS1 series or the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Pavilions come to mind. To build them as permanent constructions, and to achieve a better performance in terms of their use and robustness, greater public acceptance of the virtue of architecture's aesthetic-affective potential is needed to make it relevant to the design process. This will depend on discovering and publicising a coherent body of empirical knowledge which links the material and formal aspects

of spatial constructions to the emotions and disruptions they induce. The discovery of this body of knowledge might emerge from parallel investigations in the juncture of art, its aesthetic principles, and spatial critical research leading to new design theory.

Metaphorical language is a thinking process that works by replacing content, a semantic replacement that follows unique associations and selections. I have proposed that spatial lyricism (visual or verbal) is the result of a distinctive process that communicates through a language the reflections of our phenomenological experience. In other words, it results from a methodological thinking process whose content carries emotion. Thus, lyricism in the space-making process requires the author to build a singular and consistent 'grammar'—formally distinctive or not—that evolves dynamically into new forms. These can be useful to produce inhabitable space, comfortable enough to house people and stand for long periods of time, but also sensuous and significant, able to reveal a new quality that exceeds ordinary experience and avoids banality. If exposing a private and individual process may seem at first an irresolvable paradox, spatial critical research can explore further the interrelation of emotion and abstraction in the thinking process behind metaphorical thinking. By focusing specifically on the 'natural' interaction between logic and affect, thought and experience, it could be shown through examples how both conscious states—the rational and the emotional—are simultaneously present in the production of space. This may attract current digital approaches, which normally dismiss emotion and rely mainly on instruments built upon logical automatisms, to reconsider the relationship between the author and the project as one that involves affect, and enrich their digital or material outcome by including the user's aesthetic-affective response.

The investigation of the relationship between affect and architectural space might also continue to develop by phenomenologically-inclined designer-theorists, like

Juhani Pallasmaa who, almost 20 years ago, paired the emergence of ocularcentrism to the dominance of abstract thinking, pointing out that the shift from oral to written speech was essentially the shift from sound to visual space.[525] This theoretical thinking sustained then that an architecture measured only for the eye professes a 'hygienic' detachment from the body that lacks experiential purpose and emotional content. In response, this thesis argued, space-making processes founded on the lyric principle can produce a singular and sensuous architecture that strengthens the experience of self and perceptual experience, proposes a tension between form and content that speaks to the intellect but including the body, and induces the emotional participation of the user.

Finally, within Modernism, and parallel to the ideal perpetual re-questioning of the norm that started with Modernity and the evocation of the utopian, two opposing logics emerged across the arts and architecture. One was instrumental or practical reason, which abolished the subjective, and pursued the universal validity of content based on the replication of form—like Argentine Rationalism. The other was subjective reason that, based on the unrestrictive intervention of the self, pursued the emergence of the singular—like the British lyrical novel or Spanish surrealist painting—longing too for broad aesthetic interest, validity, even intelligibility.

The way in which the singular attains aesthetic validation, and avoids the irrelevance of the arbitrary, is through affect. The aesthetic-affective response and the individual critical judgment of the audience help the lyrical-singular to attain 'universal' significance. To achieve aesthetic interest, symbolic relevance and collective validity in architecture, affect is central too, so an architecture that pursues singularity requires rethinking individual and aesthetic responses.

To make new and singular architecture, one that carries the lyric principle, design theory needs to re-address affect. The significance of the power of architectural space to elicit emotion is reconfirmed when the subjectively felt emotive experience and more complex 'categories of affect', beyond the pleasantness/unpleasantness dichotomy—like joy, nostalgia, melancholy, sublimity, sadness, wonder, power, tension or peacefulness—continue to be explored.

In light of recent theories of the singular and new understandings of the baroque, this thesis has tried to show that spatial lyricism, the quality that re-affirms the significance of affect aroused by the aesthetic experience, has made its lyrical content relevant to the construction of space.

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525   Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (London: Academy Editions, 1996).

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