DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

MODERNITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SACRED SPACE

Edited by Aaron French and Katharina Waldner

SPATIOTEMPORALITY
RAUMZEITLICHKEIT

DE
G

Modernity and the Construction of Sacred Space

SpatioTemporality / RaumZeitlichkeit

Practices – Concepts – Media /
Praktiken – Konzepte – Medien

Edited by / Herausgegeben von
Sebastian Dorsch, Barbel Frischmann, Holt Meyer,
Susanne Rau, Sabine Schmolinsky,
Katharina Waldner

Editorial Board
Jean-Marc Besse (Centre national de la recherche scientifique de Paris), Petr Bilek (Univerzita Karlova v Praze), Fraya Frehse (Universidade de São Paulo), Harry Maier (Vancouver School of Theology), Elisabeth Millán (De-Paul University, Chicago), Simona Slanicka (Universität Bern), Jutta Vinzent (†) (University of Birmingham), Guillermo Zermeño (Colegio de México)

Volume / Band 15

Modernity and the Construction of Sacred Space

Edited by
Aaron French and Katharina Waldner

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

Free access to the e-book version of this publication was made possible by the 36 academic libraries and initiatives that supported the open access transformation project in History.

ISBN 978-3-11-106138-2
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-106262-4
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-106316-4
ISSN 2365-3221
DOI https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. For details go to https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024933121

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

© 2024 the author(s), editing © 2024 Aaron French and Katharina Waldner, published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston
The book is published open access at www.degruyter.com.

Cover image: Wenzel Hablik, Cyklus utopische Architekturen. Flugzeugtürme, Silos, Künstlerwohnungen, 1921, © Wenzel-Hablik-Stiftung, Itzehoe.
Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Open-Access-Transformation in History

Open Access for excellent academic publications in the field of history: Thanks to the support of 36 academic libraries and initiatives, 9 frontlist publications from 2023 can be published as gold open access, without any costs to the authors.

The following institutions and initiatives have contributed to the funding and thus promote the open access transformation in History and ensure free availability for everyone:

Dachinitiative “Hochschule.digital Niedersachsen” des Landes Niedersachsen
Universitätsbibliothek Bayreuth
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Universitätsbibliothek Bern
Universitätsbibliothek Bielefeld
Universitätsbibliothek Bochum
Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn
Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen
Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Darmstadt
Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Dresden (SLUB)
Universitätsbibliothek Duisburg-Essen
Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg – Universitätsbibliothek
Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen
Universitätsbibliothek der FernUniversität in Hagen
Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek – Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, Hannover
Technische Informationsbibliothek (TIB)
Universitätsbibliothek Hildesheim
Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Tirol, Innsbruck
Universitätsbibliothek Kassel – Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel
Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln
Zentral- und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern
Universitätsbibliothek Mainz
Bibliothek des Leibniz-Instituts für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz
Universitätsbibliothek Marburg
Universitätsbibliothek der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Münster
Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem (BIS) der Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg
Universitätsbibliothek Osnabrück
Universität Potsdam
Universitätsbibliothek Vechta
Universitätsbibliothek der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel
Universitätsbibliothek Wuppertal
Zentralbibliothek Zürich

Table of Contents

Constructing and Building Sacred Spaces

Aaron French and Katharina Waldner

Introduction

Modernity, Space and the Sacred

Not only language and ritual, but also spatiality, place, bodily experience, and built environments play a role in the creation of so-called "sacred" or "religious" spaces in various religious traditions and beyond. The *spatial turn* and *material turn* in the humanities led to a new perspective on this phenomenon in religious studies. One of the pioneers in this field, Kim Knott, describes space in terms of a constructive process, exploring the location of religion in its "active and passive modes, and its possibilities for dominance, resistance, and liberation."[1] At the same time, Knott's use of location analyzes positionality or standpoint as well as the spatial dimension of power, whereas contemporary phenomenological studies tend to focus on "built environments" in a more decontextualized way.[2] Historians of religion and space, who are also committed to the *spatial turn*, have dealt with this topic in pre-modern societies, e.g. the Middle Ages and early modern period,[3] as well as in ancient cultures of the Mediterranean and the Near East.[4]

Despite these examples, the concept of a constructed "sacred space" remains undertheorized in religious studies and the history of art and architecture more generally. In their introduction to a special volume of the *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft*, Peter Bräunlein and Sabrina Weiß state that the topic of "sacred architecture" (*Sakralarchitektur*) is still under-researched in religious studies.[5] How-

1 Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis* (London: Equinox Pub., 2005); cf. also Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method," *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005): 153–184, and Knott, "Religion, Space, Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion," *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 1 (2010): 29–43.

2 For example, James Dodd, *Phenomenology, Architecture, and the Built World: Exercises in Philosophical Anthropology* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

3 For example, Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, eds., *Topographien des Sakralen. Religion und Raumordnung in der Vormoderne* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2008); Sarah Hamilton, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2006).

4 For example, Thomas Galoppin, Elodie Guillon et al., eds., *Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022); Yves Lafond and Vincent Michel, eds., *Espaces sacrés dans la Méditerranée antique (*Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016), https://books.openedition.org/pur/45710.

5 Peter J. Bräunlein and Sabrina Weiß, "Forschungsthema Sakralarchitektur – zur Einleitung," *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 28, no. 1 (2020): 1–38.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-001

ever, there is currently an increased interest in the topic of "sacred space" across the social sciences and humanities.[6]

This volume therefore approaches the notion and practice of demarcating "sacred space" in modernity from an interdisciplinary perspective, focusing on religion, Western esotericism, spatial studies, and architecture during the emergence of the modern period until contemporary times. Revisiting the ways in which architects and artists have endeavored to create sacred spaces and buildings for the modern world addresses also the underlying question of how new religious ideas – especially those related to Western esotericism and modern currents of alternative religiosity – have transformed the way sacred spaces are constructed today.

The chapters emerged from an online workshop in March of 2021 organized by the editors of the volume at the Department of Religious Studies of the University of Erfurt in cooperation with the Erfurt SpatioTemporality Research Group (ERZ). The participants explored how ideas about religion in modernity – especially those related to "sacred" or "holy" sites – are transformed and transmitted across geographical and cultural boundaries, and how the real and imagined constructions of sacred sites and buildings are integrated into modern societies. The goal was to bring together not only scholars from different disciplines but architects and designers to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue beyond a theory/practice dichotomy. The result is a heterogeneous collection of diverse studies offering a wide variety of practical, historical, and theoretical approaches. The challenge of bringing together such a diverse group was important for communicating across disciplinary and even professional boundaries.

Modernity, space, and "the sacred" – these concepts are clearly entangled with each other in a highly complex way. It is therefore useful to consider at least the main lines of this entanglement and the practices associated with these notions in academic and cultural discourse mainly within the Western European and Anglo-American context, without claiming to be exhaustive. Let us proceed with the "sacred." If we observe contemporary discourses, obviously "sacred" and "the sacred" are a product of common sense. For example, it is expected that church buildings have an atmosphere that makes one experience "the sacred," and Ramadan is of course a "sacred time" – but also buildings of various religions like mosques, syn-

6 For example, the recent "Conceptualizing Sacred Space/s" conference at Universität Gießen (2018), the symposium "A Dialogue of the Arts: Concepts of Sacred Spaces in Architecture and its Description in Literature from Early Modern Times to the Present" at the University of Zürich (2021), and the special issue of *Religions* entitled "Sacred Spaces: Designing for the Transcendental" (2022), which brought together scholars of both religion and architecture to facilitate an interdisciplinary exchange. For the results of the Gießen conference cf. Doris Bachmann-Medick, Jens Kugele, and Katharina Storning, "Conceptualizing Sacred Space," *Saeculum* 71 no. 2 (2021): 155–166.

agogues, or Buddhist temples are thought to be expressions of "sacred architecture" (*Sakralarchitektur* in German).

However, from the historical perspective, it immediately becomes clear that this use of the term is a modern phenomenon.[7] Pre-modern societies were, of course, familiar with the basic human ability to demarcate spaces, times, and things and to endow them with special meanings and strong (mostly religious) values, through the practice of "sacralization": "Setting specific times and places apart as sacred is a fundamental structure in human cultures, without which no religion, nation-state or political ideology can insure the continuity of its power, hierarchy and authority."[8] On a deeper level, we may understand the sacralization of places and territory as a body-related, affect-driven, and cognitive human capacity that enables us to build social relations and cultural structures as such, including those we call "religious" today.[9] As a cultural and social practice, sacralization must therefore be analyzed in all its variations and contingencies in different epochs and cultures; it must also be linked to bodily experiences, affects and emotions, as well as to social relations and cultural performances (e.g. rituals, narratives, theological and academic discourses, art, etc.). In contrast to this, the above-mentioned contemporary commonsense (Western) notion of "the sacred" has its roots in typical modernist discourse, which might be called, in a rather paradox way, the sacralization of the sacred.[10] At its core, then, one comes to the re-

7 On differences between the typical modern way of speaking of the sacred and Christian traditions, see, for example, Horst Schwebel, "Kirchenbau, Heiliger Raum und architektonische Gestalt," *Magazin für Theologie und Ästhetik* 42 (2006) https://www.theomag.de/42/hs4.htm, originally published in *Kunst und Kirche* 3 (2005): 148–154; on the diversity of premodern practices and discourses related to space, place, and religion, and their difference from modern notions, cf. also Susanne Rau, "Raum und Religion. Eine Forschungsskizze," in Rau and Schwerhoff, *Topographien des Sakralen,* 10–33.

8 Veikko Anttonen, "Sacred," in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion*, (London and New York: Cassell, 2000): 271–282, 272.

9 Veikko Anttonen, "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion," *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005): 185–201; cf. also Knott, "Religion, Space, and Place," 37–38; Ann Taves, "Building Blocks of Sacralities: A New Basis for Compariston across Cultures and Religions," in Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, eds., *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2013), 138–164; Magnus Schlette and Volkhard Krech, "Sakralisierung," in Detlev Pollack, ed., *Handbuch Religionssoziologie* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018), 437–463.

10 This can be seen as part of the modern "scientification of religion," which has been taking place since 1800, a discourse analyzed by Kocku von Stuckrad in *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Change, 1800–2000* (Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015).

alization that "the sacred" – or "sacrality" or "holiness" – is "not only the hallmark of religion, but its very essence."[11]

This construction of the sacred as *a sui generis* ontological category was practiced in many different ways during the first half of the 20th century by representatives of historical and phenomenological religious studies such as Nathan Söderblöm, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach and, in particular, Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade. The latter, Eliade, brings us to the second important concept in this brief overview, namely, space. The enormously popular writings of this scholar, whose work "oscillates between research and literary imagination,"[12] stand not only for the essentialization of the category of the sacred, but also for its connection with differentiations of space.[13] According to Eliade, traditional cultures know sacred places; these enable the epiphany of the sacred through their special, spatial quality; as *axis mundi*, they form the center of the respective society. These sacred spaces differ significantly in their quality from non-sacred, that is, profane spaces and places.

According to Eliade, who represents an anti-modern position, the great deficit of modernity is precisely that it no longer recognizes the sacred and sacred spaces in this sense.[14] His popular writings are an effort to make the sacred visible and tangible again, at least in the context of what one scholar calls the "scientification of religion."[15] The most prominent critic of such an approach in religious studies was Jonathan Z. Smith, who insisted that the sacralization of spaces in religious traditions was related to ritual and performativity and permeated by structures of power. Furthermore, the social and symbolic function of imagined sacred places also had to be analyzed.[16] As a result, a diverse and differentiated approach to the relationship between space and religion developed in the discipline of religious

11 Anttonen, "Sacred," 272.

12 Cf. von Stuckrad, *Scientification*, 162, with further literature on Eliade.

13 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959).

14 On Eliade and Sacred Space from a contemporary critical perspective, see also, for example, Jürgen Mohn, "Heterotopien in der Religionsgeschichte: Anmerkungen zum ‚Heiligen Raum' nach Mircea Eliade," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 63, no. 4 (2007): 331–357; Christiane Barth, "In illo tempore, at the Center of the World: Mircea Eliade and Religious Studies' Concepts of Sacred Time and Space," *Historical Social Research* 38, no. 3 (2013): 59–75.

15 von Stuckrad, *Scientification*; see also Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: University Press, 1999).

16 Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Preiss, 1987).

studies.[17] A decisive factor in this development was the connection to what become known as the "spatial turn," which took the position that space should not primarily be read as a physically given phenomenon, but also as a socially constructed one.[18]

The developments described above are essential for the contributions in this volume, both in terms of the topics and the methodological approaches of the authors. The reflection on and practice of building "sacred spaces" by modernist architects is a genuine aspect of this discourse. For example, in his book *Vom Bau der Kirche* (1938) the German architect Rudolf Schwarz (1897–1961), who rebuilt many Catholic churches in Germany after their destruction during the Second World War, rejected the idea that architects of contemporary churches could return to traditional forms of church buildings. He argued instead that they should refer to "the sacred" (das Heilige): "Architecture has to correspond to the condition and the meaning of our time. It is only from the sacred that the architecture of a church can derive."[19] For Schwarz, this "sacred" lay in the artistic design of space according to certain basic spiritual principles, which he sought to develop and promulgate in his theoretical writings.[20] As Thomas Hasler puts it, Schwarz's aim was through the means of spatial design "to support the perceiving person in confronting the mystery of the world" ("den wahrnehmenden Menschen dabei [zu] unterstützen, dem Geheimnis der Welt entgegenzutreten").[21] Schwarz had studied Catholic theology and was friends with Romano Guiardini, the representative of

17 See the useful overview by Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Approaching Religious Space: An Overview of Theories, Methods, and Challenges in Religious Studies," Religion & Theology 20 (2013): 183–201.

18 This began in the mid-1970s with the French Marxist Philosopher and social theorist Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), and equally influential was the geographer Edward Soja (1940–2015), as well as the theologist and sociologist Michel de Certeau (1925–1986). Finally, of course, Michel de Foucault, but especially his short yet highly influential text on "Des Espaces Autres" ("Of Other Spaces"), a lecture given in 1967 and published by the French Journal *Architecture Mouvement Continuité* in 1984. In the English-speaking academic community, as well as in Germany, interest in a social and cultural study of space – as well as in the above-mentioned theorists more generally – started in the early 1990s. For their influence on religious studies, see Kilde, "Approaching Religious Space," 194–198; Knott, "Religion, Space, and Place." A detailed overview of theories of space in different disciplines can also be found in Susanne Rau, *Räume 2, aktualisierte Auflage* (Frankfurt a. Main: Campus, 2017).

19 Quoted in Anna Maria Wierzbicka, "Modernist Architecture and the Sacred – the change of contemporary architecture in the perspective of the early modernism sacred buildings," *Challenges of Modern Technology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 38–48, 42.

20 Thomas Hasler, "Sakralität und Architektur – Rudolf Schwarz," *Kunst und Kirche* 3 (2002): 152–158.

21 Thomas Hasler, "Sakralität und Architektur – Rudolf Schwarz," 152.

the liturgical movement in the Catholic Church, and his entire architectural output was devoted to church building.

Schwarz's contemporary Le Corbusier (1887–1965), on the other hand, built sacred buildings "on the side," so to speak, which are still admired today. Interestingly, Le Corbusier's thoughts on sacred buildings did not differ fundamentally from those of Schwarz: "I am not a churchgoer myself, but one thing I do know is that every man has the religious consciousness of belonging to a greater mankind, to a greater or lesser degree, but in the end he is part of it. Into my work I bring so much effusion and intense inner life that it becomes something almost religious."[22] The works of the architect, the artistic design of the space – and, in the case of Bruno Taut (1880–1938), even the architect himself – become (often ostentatious) mediators and builders of "the sacred." At the same time (as the related contributions in this volume show) in their hands the "sacred" is constantly reconceptualized and renegotiated as an aesthetic[23] but also social experience. Here again we are dealing with a process of sacralization, namely, of the architect and the architecture, but also of the space itself.

All this concerns nothing less than the question of how religiosity can be rethought and lived in the face of the impositions of European modernity and the secularization associated with it – as well as the role that space, design, and the construction of places for human beings should and can play in this, especially (but not only) in the city.[24] Thus, Le Corbusier's evocation of "something almost religious" resonates with many contributions in this volume, as the modern context frequently resists traditional religious orientations while simultaneously appropriating and reimagining their social, emotional, ethical and aesthetic dimensions.

---

22 Quoted in Martin Purdy and Russell Walden, "Le Corbusier and the Theological Program," in *The Open Hand*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.1162/a8667414.add39a6f. Originally appeared in Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même* (Geneva: Éditions Rousseau, 1970), 183.

23 On the history of the modern discourse on religious experience as aesthetic experience, see Katharina Waldner, "Die Ästhetisierung der 'religiösen Erfahrung' oder: Wie sinnlich ist Religion?" in *Annäherungen an das Unaussprechliche: Ästhetische Erfahrung in kollektiven religiösen Praktiken*, eds. Isabella Schwaderer and Katharina Waldner (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020), 17–54.

24 See the ongoing publications of the Research Group "Religion and Urbanity: Reciprocal Formations," https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/max-weber-kolleg/forschung/forschungsgruppen-und-stellen/research-groups/humanities-centre-for-advanced-studies-kolleg-forschungsgruppe-kfg-religion-and-urbanity-reciprocal-formations-for-2779 (11.04.2024); Susanne Rau and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Religion and Urbanity online* (Berlin: De Gruyter); Aaron French, "Co-Temporality," *Urbrel Blog*, 2023, https://urbrel.hypotheses.org/glossary/co-temporality; Philip Sheldrake, "Placing the sacred. Transcendence and the city," *Literature and Theology* 21, no. 3 (2007): 243–258.

This is where the discourses and practices of Western esotericism[25] come into play. The acknowledgment that esotericism was connected to modern architecture was identified as early as the 1970s by Gustav Pehnt, who referred to such ideas as "non-religious religiousness."[26] The esotericism of the Bauhaus and other modern architects was criticized and dismissed as irrational and illogical by the architectural historian Joseph Rykwert in his famous essay "The Dark Side of the Bauhaus."[27] More recently, however, Elizabeth Otto has demonstrated that esoteric connections were in fact crucial for the production of a free and open workspace (i.e. the Bauhaus), in which new ideas about spirituality, the self, and space were actively negotiated.[28] Art historian Paul Ivey has similarly explored how esotericism was incorporated into the temple designs of new religious movements in the United States, for example, The First Church of Christ, Scientist.[29] We are learning that it is not enough to speak of the "dark side" or "haunted side" of modern art and architecture; rather, we need to acknowledge the interconnectedness of modernism, modern architecture, and esotericism. This is something scholars of modern art and architecture have missed, namely, that esotericism and theories of modern architecture are often co-constitutive.

The contributions in this volume thus link the construction of sacred spaces with esotericism in two ways, both of which have received little attention in research to date. The contributions dealing with the modern practice of designing and constructing sacred spaces explore a modernist discourse, which revolves around the idea of "religion after religion,"[30] and is therefore co-constitutive of the development of Western esotericism during this period. The contributions that focus on the practices and narratives of Western esotericism from the learned

---

25 On the use of this term within the context of religious studies, see, for example, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Esotericism Theorized: Major Trends and Approaches to the Study of Esotericism," in *Religion: Secret Religion*, ed. April DeConick (Farmington Hills: Cengage Gale, 2016), 155–170.

26 Gustav Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (London: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973).

27 Joseph Rykwert, "The Dark Side of the Bauhaus," in *The Necessity of Artifice* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982).

28 Elizabeth Otto, *Haunted Bauhaus: Occult Spirituality, Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).

29 Paul Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999). See also Kate Jordan and Ayla Lepine, eds., *Modern Architecture and Religious Communities, 1850–1970: Building the Kingdom* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018); Ross Anderson and Maximilian Sternberg, eds., *Modern Architecture and the Sacred: Religious Legacies and Spiritual Renewal* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020); Renata Hejduk and Jim Williamson, eds., *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

30 Cf. the title of the book by Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*.

magic of the late Middle Ages to the contemporary phenomena of Chaos Magick and Occulture explore the role of concrete, imagined, and ritually constructed spaces in a way that has often been neglected in esotericism research.

Last but not least, the contribution from an empirical research perspective in the fields of urban planning and medicine draws our attention to a contemporary phenomenon of another, albeit related, dimension of our topic: the contemporary sacralization of so-called "nature," be it gardens and parks or landscapes. On the one hand, this phenomenon has its roots in European romanticism (and perhaps even the "greenery" found in early modern learned magic deserves mentioning); on the other hand, it is also linked to current discourses that attribute agency to the non-human environment, plants, animals and landscapes as such, e.g. mountains or rivers – a body of research that includes, *inter alia*, actor-network theory, philosophical posthumanism, new materialisms, agential realism, neo-animism, and process philosophy. While this "'opening' to the transhuman" can be interpreted within a theological framework,[31] it also reveals that a constructivist approach can be linked to a new and expanded relational dimension of sacralization, and not only in these cases. This is indeed a way of overcoming the dichotomy between a constructivist approach and the essentialization of space and the sacred. The contributions in this volume, through their sometimes unconventional subject matter and approach, hopefully make it possible to better understand modern and contemporary developments through their interdisciplinarity and rich diversity of methods. This should encourage scholars to further pursue the complex questions of the transformation of the religious and its relationship to the construction and experience of space in modern times.

Outline of Chapters

The book is divided into four sections. The first section addresses the topic of "sacred space" within the context of urbanity and cities. Section two looks at how sacred spaces are constructed in the periphery or within subversive zones (in the social and topographical sense), while section three comprises chapters that explore how modern and contemporary "sacred spaces" are designed and performed, often in particular subcultures and/or in connection with the natural environment. The final section engages the constructivism of space itself and how

31 Adrian Ivakhiv, "Orchestrating Sacred Space: Beyond the 'Social Construction' of Nature," *Ecotheology* 8, no. 1 (2003): 11–29.

modern architects have attempted to reconfigure space in line with their ideas of sacredness and divinity.

In the section "Urbanity and the Sacred," **Ansgar Martins** approaches the modern discourse about the legitimate place of religious experience in modernity, especially in the city, through the ideas of the modern German critic and film theorist Siegfried Kracauer (1898–1966). Krakauer argued that in modernity the sacred had to be encountered not in supposedly sacred spaces, such as the newly erected Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin or Rudolf Steiner's first Goetheanum building, but in mundane and liminal places in the city like waiting rooms and hotel lobbies. In contemporary Western cities, sacred spaces frequently have to be produced and reproduced, utilizing practical, ordinary, underground or even abandoned locations, especially in the occult and magical traditions. **William Redwood** shows that within the magical and spiritual currents associated with Western esotericism, everyday spaces such as the home become key sites of impromptu sacralization, which can be utilized for highly individualized ritual practice. **Shujuan Li, Alden Stoner, and Esther M. Sternberg et al**. introduce to us, at a practical level, how contemporary American urban planners and architects develop sacred spaces in conjunction with the natural world in urban environments. Such spaces provide physical and psychological healing influences, which can be qualitatively documented as to their efficacy.

Continuing the theme of esotericism and impromptu spaces, the "Non-Hegemonic Spaces" section explores how sacred space is imagined, constructed and used for magical practice and artistic creativity in media and popular culture. **Andrea Franchetto** describes how temporary and imaginal sacred spaces are constructed for ritual operations in magical handbooks from the 15th to the 20th centuries. His case study is the well-known anonymous grimoire manuscript *Operation of Abramelin*, which saw a revival during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Since the beginning of the 20th century, tropes of magic and the occult have increasingly found their way into popular culture, as well. This phenomenon continues until today and has been referred to as occulture.[32] **Andrej Kapcar**'s contribution examines how contemporary artists and creators draw on occult symbolism and occulture to create sacred spaces in the narratives and visual content of popular media, from film to video games, in order to blur the line between fiction and reality.

The section on "Performing and Designing Sacred Space" analyzes the ways in which sacred space and sacred architecture are designed and performed in a community and group setting. **Aikaterini-Iliana Rassia** raises the issue of the reuse of

32 On occulture, see Christopher H. Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture* (London: T & T Clark International, 2004).

sacred ancient sites in the modern context, in this case the Byzantine church of Panagia Mesosporitissa that stands atop the hill of the archaeological site of Eleusis with the remains of a sanctuary related to ancient mystery cults as well as to agricultural rituals. Rassia reveals how modern-day believers sometimes re-purpose spaces that are connected to the material remains of the past, as well as to the *long durée* of agricultural needs, and attribute religious significance to the rituals performed there, entangling past and present in a way that aligns with the idea of a place as palimpsest by Michel de Certeau.[33] **Anna Sokolina** examines the modernist architectural practice of the esoteric thinker Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who approached the construction of the famous first Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, during the First World War through an international cooperative endeavor, what Sokolina refers to as a practice of "in-building" – as opposed to a program of exclusionary building. Similar aspirations of expansion and collectivity are behind the popularity of psytrance and festival culture, a phenomenon **Tancredi Marrone** explores in his contribution. Marrone approaches the question of designing sacred settings through the aesthetic choices of the psychedelic subculture, in which the location, selection, and arrangement of aesthetic objects enables psychonauts to plumb the depths of the sacred through the use of psychoactive substances.[34] Sokolina's reconstruction of a social event called "in-building," as well as the importance of collective events in Marrone's case study, confirm the importance of the "social sacred," as introduced by Renata Hejduk, in the modernist discourse as well as in cultural practices of the 20th century.[35]

The final section, "Constructing Sacred Spaces," focuses on the material architecture and built environments and on how they are theorized by architects, providing examples of modern architects who tried to construct new sacred buildings. **Aurosa Alison** approaches this question through Le Corbusier's concept of "unspeakable space," an important aspect of the architect's desire to produce complex, intense, and spiritual atmospheres performed in his buildings, such as the *Cabanon de vacances*. She especially explores the impact of Le Corbusier's aesthetic ex-

33 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 200–202; cf. Knott, "Spatial Theory," 161.

34 Psychological states, health, and well-being have themselves become a research topic, for example, the effects of space and their arrangements in hospitals and other medical facilities. Cf., for example, Esther M. Sternberg, *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009); Esther M. Sternberg, Altaf Engineer, and Hester Oberman, "Trauma, Place, and Transformation," *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 41, no. 1 (2019): 26–32.

35 Renata Hejduk, "Step into liquid: Rites, transcendence and transgression in the modern construction of the social sacred," *Culture and Religion* 11 (2010): 277–293.

perience during his early journey to Southern and Eastern Europe and West Asia (*Voyage d'Orient*) in 1910/11. A contemporary of Le Corbusier, active in Germany but also in Japan and Turkey in the first half of the 20th century, was Bruno Taut. **Aaron French** argues that Taut was attempting to reimbue modern architects with a sense of spiritual purpose through developing a program to reconnect the sacred and profane, the natural and built environments, the outer and the inner parts of the city, and the international and local. Finally, to round off the volume, **Paul Ivey** presents a detailed account of how Emanuel Swedenborg's esoteric concept of the macrocosm and microcosm served as a template for the architects of the Church of the New Jerusalem, who constructed many impressive new church temples across the United States. He shows the importance of concrete building for the development of a modern form of religiosity and the negotiation processes that can be observed between architects, religious groups, and society.

Bibliography

Anderson, Ross and Maximilian Sternberg, eds. *Modern Architecture and the Sacred: Religious Legacies and Spiritual Renewal*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020.

Anttonen, Veikko. "Sacred." In *Guide to the Study of Religion*, edited by Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, 271–282. London: Cassell, 2000.

Anttonen, Veikko. "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Apporach to Religion." *Temenos* 41, no. 2 (2005), 185–201.

Bachmann-Medick, Doris, Jens Kugele, and Katharina Storning. "Conceptualizing Sacred Space." *Saeculum* 71, no. II (2021): 155–166.

Barrie, Thomas. *Architecture of the World's Major Religions: An Essay on Themes, Differences, and Similarities*. Leiden; Brill, 2020.

Barth, Christiane. "In illo tempore, at the Center of the World: Mircea Eliade and Religious Studies' Concepts of Sacred Time and Space." *Historical Social Research* 38, no. 3 (2013): 59–75.

Battista, Silvia, ed. *The Performances of Sacred Places: Crossing, Breathing, Resisting*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2021.

Bermudez, Julio. *Transcending Architecture: Contemporary Views on Sacred Space*. Catholic University of America Press, 2015.

Beyer, Franz-Heinrich. *Geheiligte Räume: Theologie, Geschichte und Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes*. 4th ed. Darmstadt: wbg Academic, 2014.

Bräunlein, Peter J. and Sabrina Weiß. "Forschungsthema Sakralarchitektur – zur Einleitung." *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 28, no. 1 (2020): 1–38, https://doi.org/10.1515/zfr-2018-0031.

Coomans, Thomas et al., eds. *Loci Sacri: Understanding Sacred Places. Vol. 9*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012.

Coster, Will, and Andrew Spicer. *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Dodd, James. *Phenomenology, Architecture, and the Built World: Exercises in Philosophical Anthropology.* Leiden: Brill, 2017.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959.

Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces (Des esapces autres)." *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27.

French, Aaron. "Co-Temporality." *Urbrel Blog*, 2023. https://urbrel.hypotheses.org/glossary/co-temporality.

Galoppin, Thomas, Elodie Guillon, Max, Luaces, Asuman Lätzer-Lasar, Sylvain Lebreton, Fabio Porzia, Jörg Rüpke, Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli and Corinne, Bonnet, eds. *Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.

George, Mark K. and Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati, eds. *Religious Representation in Place: Exploring Meaningful Spaces at the Intersection of the Humanities and Sciences*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Gerl-Falkovitz, Hanna-Barbara, eds. *Sakralität und Moderne*. Dorfen: Hawel Verl., 2010.

Geva, Anat. *Modernism and American Mid-20th Century Sacred Architecture*. Milton: Routledge, 2019.

Gieryn, Thomas F. *Truth-Spots: How Places Make People Believe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Hamilton, Sarah. *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. London: Routledge, 2006.

Hanegraaff, Wouter J. "Esotericism Theorized: Major Trends and Approaches to the Study of Esotericism." In *Religion: Secret Religion*, edited by April DeConick, 155–170. Farmington Hills: Cengage Gale, 2016.

Hasler, Thomas. "Sakralität und Architektur – Rudolf Schwarz." *Kunst und Kirche* 3 (2002): 152–158.

Hejduk, Renata. "Step into Liquid: Rites, Transcendence and Transgression in the Modern Construction of the Social Sacred." *Culture and Religion* 11, no. 3 (2010): 277–293.

Hejduk, Renata and Jim Williamson, eds. *The Religious Imagination in Modern and Contemporary Architecture: A Reader.* New York: Routledge, 2011.

Ivakhiv, Adrian. "Orchestrating Sacred Space: Beyond the 'Social Construction' of Nature." *Ecotheology* 8, no. 1 (2003): 11–29.

Ivey, Paul. *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Jones, Lindsay. *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison*. Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 2000.

Jordan, Kate, and Ayla Lepine, eds. *Modern Architecture and Religious Communities, 1850–1970: Building the Kingdom*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2018.

Kieckhefer, Richard. *Theology in Stone. Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley.* New York: Oxford University Press 2004.

Kilde, Jaenne Halgren. "Approaching Religious Space: An Overview of Theories, Methods, and Challenges in Religious Studies." *Religion & Theology* 20 (2013): 183–201.

Kilde, Jaenne Halgren. *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Kim Knott. "Religion, Space, Place: The Spatial Turn in Research on Religion." *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 1 (2010): 29–43.

Kim Knott. "Spatial Theory and the Study of Religion." Religion Compass 2. no. 6 (2008): 1102–1116.

Kim Knott. *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*. London: Equinox Pub., 2005.

Köhne, Werner. *Spirituelle Räume. Moderne Sakralarchitektur.* Arte Edition: Eikon Nord im Auftrag des ZDF, 2011.

Lafond, Yves, und Vincent Michel, ed. *Espaces sacrés dans la Méditerranée antique*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016. https://books.openedition.org/pur/45710.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991.

Löffler, Beate, and Dunja Sharbat Dar, eds. *Sakralität im Wandel: Religiöse Bauten im Stadtraum des 21. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*. Berlin: JOVIS Verlag GmbH, 2022.

Löw, Martina. *Soziologie der Städte*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2008.

Lynch, Gordon. *The Sacred in the Modern World. A Cultural Sociological Approach*. New York: Oxford 2012.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir.* Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979.

Meyer, Birgit. *Mediation and the Genesis of Presence. Towards a Material Approach of Religion*. University of Utrecht, 2012. https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/gw_meyer_birgit_oratie_definitief.pdf.

Metzger, Franziska and Elke Pahud de Mortanges, eds. *Orte und Räume des Religiösen Im 19.-21. Jahrhundert*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

Mohn, Jürgen. "Heterotopien in der Religionsgeschichte: Anmerkungen zum ‚Heiligen Raum' nach Mircea Eliade." *Theologische Zeitschrift* 63, no. 4 (2007): 331–357.

Otto, Elizabeth. *Haunted Bauhaus: Occult Spirituality, Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019.

Olk, Matthias. "Émile Durkheims Religionsverständnis: Kernelemente, Kritik, Rezeption Und Aktualisierbarkeit Für Die Junge Kritische Religionswissenschaft." *Zeitschrift für junge Religionswissenschaft*, no. 12 (2017). http://journals.openedition.org/zjr/875; DOI: https://doi.org/10.4000/zjr.875.

Partridge, Christopher H. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*. London: T & T Clark International, 2004.

Pehnt, Gustav. *Expressionist Architecture*. London: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Petit, Jean. *Le Corbusier lui-même*. Geneva: Éditions Rousseau, 1970.

Purdy, Martin and Russell Walden. "Le Corbusier and the Theological Program." In *The Open Hand*, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1162/a8667414.add39a6f.

Radermacher, Martin. "Religion und Atmosphäre. Überlegungen zum Potenzial sozial-räumlicher Arrangements in religiösen Situationen." In *Die Mach der Atmosphären*, edited by Barbara Wolf and Christian Juli, 240–259. Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 2020.

Rau, Susanne and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Religion and Urbanity online*. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://www.degruyter.com/database/urbrel/html.

Rau, Susanne, *Räume 2, aktualisierte Auflage*. campus Historische Einführungen. Frankfurt a. Main: Campus, 2017.

Rau, Susanne. "Raum und Religion. Eine Forschungsskizze." In *Topographien des Sakralen. Religion und Raumordnung in der Vormoderne*, edited by Susanne Rau and Gerd Schwerhoff, 10–37. München; Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2008.

Rüpke, Jörg. "Individual Appropriation of Sacred Space." In *Espaces sacrés dans la Méditerranée antique*, edited by Yves Lafond und Vincent Michel, 69–80. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

Rüpke, Jörg. "Gods in the City." In *Naming and Mapping the Gods in the Ancient Mediterranean: Spaces, Mobilities, Imaginaries*, edited by Corinne Bonnet, Thomas Galoppin, Elodie Guillon, Max Luaces, Asuman Lätzer-Lasar, Sylvain Lebreton, Fabio Porzia, Jörg Rüpke and Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli, 891–910. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110798432-046

Rykwert, Joseph. “The Dark Side of the Bauhaus.” In *The Necessity of Artifice*. New York: Rizzoli, 1982.
Sheldrake, Philip. “Placing the Sacred. Transcendence and the City.” *Literature and Theology* 21, no. 3, (2007): 243–258. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23927123
Schlette, Magnus and Volkhard Krech. “Sakralisierung.” In *Handbuch Religionssoziologie*, edited by Detlef Pollack, 437–463. Veröffentlichungen der Sektion Religionssoziologie der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2018.
Schroer, Markus. “Raum, Macht, Religion. Über den Wandel sakraler Architektur.” In *Viele Religionen ein Raum?! Analysen, Diskussionen und Konzepte*, edited by Bärbel Beinhauer Köher, Mirko Roth, and Bernadette Schwarz-Boenneke, 17–34. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2015.
Schwebel, Horst. “Kirchenbau, Heiliger Raum und architektonische Gestalt.” *Magazin für Theologie und Ästhetik* 42 (2006), https://www.theomag.de/42/hs4.htm.
Smith, Jonathan Z. *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.
Smith, Jonathan Z. *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.
Sternberg, Esther M. *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-Being*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
Sternberg, Esther M., Altaf Engineer, and Hester Oberman. “Trauma, Place, and Transformation.” *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 41, no. 1 (2019): 26–32.
Stuckrad, Kocku von. *The Scientification of Religion: An Historical Study of Discursive Change, 1800–2000*. Boston, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015.
Taves, Ann. “Building Blocks of Sacralities: A New Basis for Comparison across Cultures and Religions.” In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, 138–164. New York: The Guilford Press, 2013.
Verkaaik, Oskar, ed. *Religious Architecture – Anthropological Perspectives*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013.
Vinzent, Jutta. *From Space in Modern Art to a Spatial Art History: Reassessing Constructivism through the Publication “Circle” (1937)*. München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.
Waldner, Katharina. “Die Ästhetisierung der ‘religiösen Erfahrung’ oder: Wie sinnlich ist Religion?” In *Annäherungen an das Unaussprechliche: Ästhetische Erfahrung in kollektiven religiösen Praktiken*, edited by Isabella Schwaderer and Katharina Waldner, 17–54. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.
Wierzbicka, Anna Maria. “Modernist Architecture and the Sacred – the change of contemporary architecture in the perspective of the early modernism sacred buildings.” *Challenges of Modern Technology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 38–48.
Zahner, Walter, ed. *Baukunst aus Raum und Licht. Sakrale räume in der Architektur der Moderne*. Lindenberg: KunstverlagFink, 2012.

Urbanity and the Sacred

Ansgar Martins

Religious Encounters in Profane Spaces: Siegfried Kracauer's Reading of Spatial Images and His Critique of Modern Sacred Architecture

Abstract: The German-Jewish writer Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) developed, among other things, a critical sociology of space and architecture that continues to influence scholarship today. The following chapter explores the lesser-known implications he drew from this work for religious phenomena. Kracauer's theory of religion is not so much a descriptive study of religion as a normative theory of the legitimate place of religious experience in modernity. According to Kracauer, truth has migrated from the sacred to the "profane." This means that official religions, according to Kracauer, are merely empty shells; their former content must be found elsewhere. Churches are empty, and even the modern sacred buildings of new religious movements are at best "demonic" in character. Instead, Kracauer argues, religious experience can be found where it is least expected: In waiting rooms, hotel lobbies, and the twilight of nightlife.

Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to relate two aspects of Siegfried Kracauer's (1889–1966) philosophy that are usually interpreted without regard to their interrelationship: his philosophy of religion and his sociology of space. I begin by outlining how Kracauer read urban space from a sociological perspective, that is, as a reflection of ongoing social developments of which society is by and large unaware. I then apply his approach to three examples that Kracauer himself discussed: first, the old Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin (later destroyed in World War II), which he interpreted as an edifice radiating profane prestige in the guise of a Christian monument; second, Rudolf Steiner's First Goetheanum building, which Kracauer saw as a failed attempt to evade secularization by creating a modern form of sacred architecture; and finally, the hotel foyer as it appears in turn-of-the-century detective novels. For Kracauer, the hotel foyer had more to tell us about religious matters than did avowedly "sacred spaces." In all three examples,

Note: Text and quotations translated by Lars Fischer (The History Practice, Berlin)

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-002

Kracauer was concerned not with the straightforward description of specific sacred or not-so-sacred spaces but with the normative explication of his own theory of religion, culminating in the claim that the legitimacy of "theological" claims could only be tested in the realm of the profane. For Kracauer, the sacred was expressed not in supposedly sacred spaces but in seemingly irrelevant and banal details of the secular world. Conversely, the vagaries of the secular world were reflected in the forms its inhabitants gave to their sacred buildings.

The Social Hieroglyphics of Spatial Images

As Sherlock Holmes regularly reminded Dr. Watson, we see a great deal more than we actually notice. As a journalist with a strong interest in sociological questions, who was writing for Germany's foremost liberal daily in the 1920s, Siegfried Kracauer was particularly fascinated precisely with those phenomena and occurrences that transpire before our eyes yet are thought too ordinary or banal to merit attention.[1] Kracauer wrote about marginalized neo-religious movements, such as the Anthroposophical Society and Hermann Keyserling's School of Wisdom (Schule der Weisheit), and engaged in micro-sociological analyses of "ordinary" items such as braces, monocles, umbrellas and typewriters.[2] The less self-conscious society was about a particular product, he assumed, the more that product revealed, unintentionally, about the way in which society was organized.

He was particularly fascinated with cities and cityscapes, which he read as spatial images. There may be a biographical reason for this preoccupation: although he wanted to become a philosopher, he bowed to his father's pressure and studied architecture, working for a while for the Jewish architect Max Seckbach in Frankfurt. It is remarkable how little scholarly attention Kracauer's experience as an architect, and the impact of architectural notions and perceptions on his theoretical concepts more generally, has received.[3] As his pervasive references

1 On Kracauer more generally, see Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, translated by Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), and Jörg Später, *Siegfried Kracauer: A Biography*, translated by Daniel Steuer (Cambridge: Polity, 2020). For the current status of Kracauer research, see the results of the Siegfried Kracauer Conference 2022, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwKB3NO_99vFCPTOrr-t2srJNPNUoWHAm (last accessed August 15, 2023).

2 See Inka Mülder, *Siegfried Kracauer: Grenzgänger zwischen Theorie und Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985); Harry T. Craver, *Reluctant Skeptic: Siegfried Kracauer and the Crises of German Culture* (New York: Berghahn, 2017).

3 For a recent notable exception, see Carsten Ruhl, *Kracauer's Architecture: The Ornamental Nature of the New Capitalist Order* (Weimar: M Books, 2022); see also Gerwin Zohlen, "Schmuggler-

to spheres, levels, and, especially, "anterooms" in his final monograph indicated, he consistently maintained a keen interest in the architectural and spatial dimensions of his objects of study.[4] While he may have written his sociological observations of buildings and streets in cities such as Paris, Hamburg, New York, and Berlin as a journalist, these articles formed a systematic whole, and Kracauer conceived them in order to be integrated into future monographs. The best-known of these is *Streets in Berlin & Elsewhere.*[5]

"Any typical space," Kracauer wrote in June 1930, in one of the texts for the aforementioned book,

> is the product of typical social relations and reflects them in a way that is undistorted by conscious mediation. Everything that consciousness disavows, everything that is usually subject to studied oblivion, contributes to its construction. Spatial images are the dreams of society. The bedrock of social reality is revealed wherever the hieroglyphic of a spatial image is deciphered.[6]

Of course, if such spaces only *unintentionally* reflected the state of society at large, how they did so and what they revealed first needed to be decoded, hence Kracauer's reference to dreams and hieroglyphics.

The quoted passage comes from one of Kracauer's classics on the topic, "On Labour Exchanges: The Construction of a Space."[7] Assuming that spaces created for those on the margins of society had the most to say about its overall function, Kracauer approached labour exchanges as a prism through which to observe social reality. These were bleak places with precious little to offer the countless unemployed who assembled in them. They were obsolete spaces for individuals who were themselves deemed obsolete and therefore offered critical insights into the vagaries of an economic system predicated on wage labour.

---

pfad. Siegfried Kracauer, Architekt und Schriftsteller," in *Siegfried Kracauer. Neue Interpretationen*, eds. Michael Kessler and Thomas Y. Levin (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990), 325–344.

4 See Matthew Handelman, *The Mathematical Imagination: On the Origins and Promises of Critical Theory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 145–185; Ansgar Martins, "Um Himmels willen nicht vom Materiellen ablenken": Religion bei Siegfried Kracauer (PhD diss., University of Frankfurt, 2022), 323–333.

5 Siegfried Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964).

6 Siegfried Kracauer, "Über Arbeitsnachweise," in Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.3, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 249–257, 250.

7 See Jörg Döring, "Raumbilder 1930. Siegfried Kracauers spatiale Hermeneutik für die *Frankfurter Zeitung*," in *Das Raumbild. Bilder jenseits der Fläche*, ed. Jens Schröter, Gundolf Winter and Joanna Barck (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), 331–350; John Allen, "The Cultural Spaces of Siegfried Kracauer: The Many Surfaces of Berlin," *New Formations* 61 (2007): 20–33.

Kracauer did not simply want to describe what he observed, however. By shattering this learned and rehearsed ignorance, by showing how certain spaces embodied the principle of exclusion on which society was based, he hoped to contribute to the struggle against that principle. The ignorance reflected in so many spatial images demonstrated their dehumanising character. At this point, the Marxist-utopian and the theological-anthropological strands of Kracauer's thought merged to produce a distinctly materialist orientation. He called for new forms of architecture that were predicated not on social status, but on the actual needs of those who would inhabit the buildings and would create spaces that did justice to the dignity of human beings *as* human beings.[8]

Kracauer's deconstructive reading of spaces is still cited occasionally and can be applied to the analysis of the social significance of sacred spaces. Yet insofar as they reflect his own theological commitments and a specific historiosophical conceptualization of sacred and profane, the religio-philosophical observations that emerged from his own analyses of specific spaces function better as the object of research *on* religion, rather than as methodological guidelines *for* research on religion.

This historiosophical conceptualization of the distinction between sacred and profane as a modern phenomenon presupposed an original unity of society.[9] In premodern society, everything was sacred, everything was defined in relation to the divine. The process of modernization fractured this original unity, which had still existed "(more or less) at the time of the Reformation."[10] As various social processes became more complex and distinct, they increasingly eluded being subsumed under an all-encompassing unity. "Out of the shell of these theological categories have emerged interests that are now entirely secular in character: the communities of the extant religions are confronted with a society that has come into its

8 "Yet, not only does waiting in the labour exchange, but for the occasional indiscriminate whim of the production process, lead nowhere; elementary human existence is neither accommodated nor catered for here. Consciousness neither registers nor makes sense of it as it stares into the void. Apparently in an attempt to bring some warmth to proceedings, coloured prints occasionally adorn the walls. […] Nothing more clearly points to the character of this space than the fact that within it, even images of [work-related] accidents are transformed into postcards with greetings from the halcyon upper world of collectively agreed wages" (ibid., 256–257).

9 For an introduction to Kracauer's philosophy of religion, see Michael Kessler, "Entschleiern und Bewahren. Siegfried Kracauers Ansätze zu einer Philosophie und Theologie der Geschichte," in *Siegfried Kracauer. Neue Interpretationen*, eds. Michael Kessler and Thomas Y. Levin (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990), 105–128; and, for a more detailed account, Martins, "Um Himmels willen," 240–364.

10 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Bible in German," in Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 189–201, 192.

own."[11] Kracauer's is not a straightforward theory of secularization. His world is not devoid of the divine but one that the divine still seeks to penetrate, albeit no longer in the conventionally assumed ways.

Truth did not reside or express itself in only one place, it "wanders from point to point, from sphere to sphere," he wrote, and now found itself "compelled [...] to make incursions into the realm of the profane." The latter was now the "central site of its irruption" and, rather than seeking to transcend it simply by ignoring it, it was here that anyone genuinely interested in changing reality for the better needed to turn.[12] Kracauer's historiosophy ultimately implied an inversion of the sacred and profane. In modern societies, he concluded, avowedly sacred buildings were devoid of the sacred. Instead, traces of the sacred existed only in profane spaces. This can be illustrated by three examples that Kracauer himself discussed.

The Profane Context of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin

The old Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in Berlin was erected at the end of the nineteenth century.[13] As its name implies, it revealed more about imperial Germany and the Prussian state church than it did about the nature of the sacred. Describing its appearance at night, Kracauer suggested that the church radiated an inexplicable "gentle lustre," as though its walls were glowing. Needless to say, this glow was in fact a reflection of the brightly lit façades that turned night into day on the stretch between the Ufa Palace and the Capitol on the opposite side of the street, just north of the church. The source of the gentle lustre was not sacred in nature; it stemmed from the radiance of Berlin's night life, while the church itself merely served as a social and cultural prop. "The domed edifice that conjoins sword and altar," Kracauer concluded, "clearly serves only one goal: to impress with its exterior. It wears a Romanesque uniform, yet its interior is unusable. It might as well be made of solid stone. It invokes reminiscences of district field officers, court preachers and imperial parades."[14]

11 Ibid., 193.

12 Ibid., 199–200 (translation amended).

13 See Vera Frowein-Zieroff, *Die Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche: Entstehung und Bedeutung* (Berlin: Mann, 1982).

14 Siegfried Kracauer, "Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche bei Nacht," in Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.3, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 241–242.

Any rite performed in a space that amounted to no more than the social significance of its imposing external surface could only be meaningless. The "gentle lustre" of the church's walls, produced by the "darkly glowing embers" of Berlin's lewd night life, however, was another matter altogether. It was in the lights emanating from Berlin's entertainment industry, and from the colours it gently projected onto "barren walls," that Kracauer identified the utopian, even Messianic yearning that formed the backdrop to the life of often manic leisure exploits and partying.

> The detritus of the spectacle of lights, that which the [entertainment] industry excretes – barren walls preserve it. The exterior of the church that is no church becomes the refuge of the spilt and the forgotten and radiates a beauty as though it were nothing short of the holiest of holies. Secret tears thus find their memorial. It is not in the concealed interior but out on the street that the unobserved, the nondescript is gathered up and transformed until it begins to glow, offering some consolation to all.[15]

In this light, the church finally emerged as a memorial church after all, as a memorial to thwarted yearning. Kracauer encountered a sense of religious consolation equally as strong as the "darkly glowing embers" of Berlin's night life.

Daemonic, not Sacred: The Goetheanum in Dornach

Almost a decade earlier, in 1921, Kracauer discussed another supposedly sacred building: Rudolf Steiner's Goetheanum, the "Vatican" of the Anthroposophical Society.[16] The Goetheanum and the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church occupied opposing ends of the spectrum of German religiosity at the turn of the century. In one instance, we are dealing with a church at the heart of Berlin, in the other, with a spiritually aspirational temple that was refused planning permission in Munich and therefore had to be erected on the periphery, in the small Swiss town of

15 Ibid., 241.

16 See Siegfried Kracauer, "Anthroposophie und Wissenschaft," in Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.1, ed. Inka Mülder-Bach (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 256–265. On Kracauer's polemical encounter with anthroposophy, see Martins, "Um Himmels willen," 180–194.

Dornach. Its very location points to a society that would allow supposedly marginal religions to make their architectural impact felt only on the periphery.[17]

The anthroposophical prophet Rudolf Steiner would have agreed with Kracauer's critique of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. That a church might do no more than reflect social status was no news to him. His response to this problem was a new style that sought to transcend the vagaries of secularization from within by developing a novel, genuinely modern representation of the spiritual world based on a specific form of "spiritual science," which rendered a "higher" form of knowledge about spirits, angels and the supposedly supernatural aspects of human evolution.[18]

Kracauer opposed such an approach, maintaining that it was impossible simply to conjure a new architectural style. What Steiner had come up with was the caricature of a style, a caricature of art nouveau architecture. Steiner had wanted the architecture of the supposedly sacred edifice to render transparent correspondences between Goethe's morphological perception of nature and the laws of the intellect as Steiner understood them. In actuality, it tapped not, as Steiner hoped, into the sacred, but into the daemonic, Kracauer insisted.[19] This was a concept that greatly fascinated Goethe as he grappled with the boundaries of cognition as delineated by Kant, and Kracauer obviously invoked Goethe against Steiner because he was – as the name of the Goetheanum indicates – Steiner's supreme idol.

Reviewing his own religious and intellectual development towards the end of his autobiography, Goethe pointed to the daemonic as a force he had repeatedly encountered while trying to find his bearings. He characterized it as a profoundly ambivalent force:

> It was not godlike, for it seemed unreasonable; not human, for it had no understanding; nor satanic, for it was beneficent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance by showing no consequences and providence by implying correlation. It seemed able to transcend all that limits us and to juggle at will with all the necessary preconditions of our existence. It concentrated time and expanded space. Only in the impossible did it come into its own, dismissing the possible with contempt.[20]

---

17 On the historical contextualization of Steiner's eclectic but remarkable style of architecture, see Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung, gesellschaftliche Praxis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 1063–1180.

18 See Rudolf Steiner, *Gesamtausgabe* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1948 ff.), vols. 284–289; Rudolf Steiner, *Das architektonische Werk I: Das Goetheanum und seine Vorläufer* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2022).

19 Kracauer, "Anthroposophie," 262.

20 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Auto-Biography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life. The Concluding Books etc.*, translated by Alexander J. W. Morrison (London: George Bell & Sons, 1874), 157 (translation amended).

A similar paradoxicality can be found in Steiner's programmatic statement that the temple of the "future will have walls – and yet no walls."[21] For Goethe, the daemonic was both an impersonal force and a personality type. In this sense, the daemonic functions like a religio-philosophical equivalent of Max Weber's charisma, as a type of magic.[22] Daemonic individuals seem capable of extraordinary achievement and transgress the standards to which ordinary individuals are beholden. It was the profoundly ambivalent, transgressive character of the daemonic – specifically, its desire to straddle the sacred and the profane – that Kracauer had in mind when he classified Steiner's architecture as "daemonic." More akin to a university than a place of worship, the Goetheanum was certainly no sacred space in any literal sense of the word. Yet given the spiritual aspirations enshrined in the edifice, neither was it, by any conventional standards, a profane space. Insofar as "the daemon too is a divine tool,"[23] Kracauer stressed, the fact that Anthroposophy tapped into the daemonic did not make it a force of evil. It did, however, bestow upon the movement the ambivalence of the daemonic itself, creating an inextricable fusion of the true and the untrue, of both productive and misleading elements. The recourse to fairies and goblins did mark a form of rebellion against the strictures of traditional religion, to be sure, but it could only lead those yearning for the sacred astray.

Negative Theological Encounters in Profane Spaces

As we have seen, for Kracauer sacred spaces *qua* sacred spaces were obsolete. The sacred spaces of the establishment had been reduced to mere indicators of the re-

21 "What have we to build? […] With the powers that Spiritual Science can awaken in us, we must try to create an interior which in the effects produced by its colours, forms and other features, is a place set apart – and yet, at the same time, is not shut off, inasmuch as wherever we look a challenge seems to come to our eyes and our hearts to penetrate through the walls, so that in the seclusion as it were of a sanctuary, we are at the same time one with the weaving life of the Divine. The temple that belongs truly to the future will have walls – and yet no walls; its interior will have renounced every trace of egoism that may be associated with an enclosed space, and all its colours and forms will give expression to a selfless striving to receive the inpouring forces of the universe." Rudolf Steiner, "And the Temple Becomes Man: A Lecture, Berlin, December 12, 1911," trans. D. S. Osmond, https://wn.rudolfsteinerelib.org/Lectures/GA/GA0286/19111212a01.html, accessed March 18, 2023. For the German original, see Steiner, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 286, 24.

22 For Kracauer's concept of the daemonic, see Martins, "Um Himmels willen," 194–205.

23 Kracauer, "Anthroposophie," 263.

spective institution's social function and status. In esoteric edifices of the kind Steiner erected in Dornach there was still room for religion, but they were daemonic, not sacred spaces. What transpired in them were not miracles but merely various permutations of escapism.

For Kracauer, the sacred could be approached only by taking a detour via the realm of the profane. "One would need to encounter theology in the realm of the profane, highlighting its cracks and fissures into which the truth has sunk,"[24] he wrote on one occasion. The Latin term pro-fanum originally referred to the area immediately outside the temple. Over time, the meaning of the term has changed and came to denote, first, the unholy and then, in authors such as Hegel and Durkheim, in a less charged manner, simply the non-religious and extra-religious, as opposed to the sacred. All these meanings commingle in Kracauer. His realm of the profane is external to the sanctum, yet it is from there, and only from there, that one might catch a glimpse of the sacred.[25] At the same time, Kracauer's realm of the profane encompassed not only the secular but the realm of profanity, of that which is vulgar and not merely non-religious but offensive to, and typically remote from, religion.

Hence his interest in detective novels. Kracauer assumed that the bible had fallen silent and no longer offered access to what God had to say in the modern world, a world that was devoid of divine revelation in any conventional sense, and in which the struggle for right and justice revealed more about the limitations of bourgeois society than about divine law. From 1922 to 1925, Kracauer worked on a book with the title *The Detective Novel: An Interpretation.* With the exception of one chapter, "The Hotel Lobby," which was printed in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1922,[26] the book was published only posthumously. Given his insistence, time and again, in conversations with Dr. Watson, that we see a great deal that we do not notice, Sherlock Holmes, the most famous of modern detectives, makes for an excellent witness in support of Kracauer's philosophy. Truth was revealed by the all too obvious phenomena in profane spaces that we habitually overlook on our quest for meaning. One such space was the hotel foyer.[27]

---

24 Siegfried Kracauer, letter to Ernst Bloch, 27 May 1926, in Ernst Bloch, *Briefe*, vol. 1, ed. Karola Bloch (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 272–275, 274.

25 See Kessler, "Entschleiern und Bewahren," 106.

26 See Siegfried Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," in Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, 173–185.

27 For other aspects of Kracauer's philosophy of the hotel lobby, see Ulrike Vedder, "Die Hotelhalle als kritischer Topos in Kracauers Schriften und in der zeitgenössischen Literatur," in *"Doch ist das Wirkliche auch vergessen, so ist es darum noch nicht getilgt." Beiträge zum Werk Siegfried Kracauers*, eds. Jörn Ahrens, Paul Fleming, Susanne Martin and Ulrike Vedder (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 81–97.

The most original aspect of Kracauer's text on the hotel foyer is a coincidental sociological observation. Both in hotel foyers and in sacred spaces, he noted, those in attendance watch uniformed individuals undertaking highly specific tasks. The prize might differ – comfort and relaxation here, spiritual edification there – but both the uniformed hotel employees and the cassocked servants of the church performed complex rituals that pointed to something more substantive; they acted out an institutional philosophy by which the guests were readily seduced.

But these seemingly obscure parallels only concerned the performative aspect. Kracauer was more concerned with important differences between these two kinds of spaces. While both hosted highly stylised performances, in one case these were directed at God, while in the other they enveloped a void, lending an "indeterminate solemnity" to the neutral aspects of social relations. Kracauer suggested that the hotel foyer, by being utterly devoid of meaning and a kind of vacuum, made visible, *ex negativo*, what a sacred space should be like.

Kracauer's first distinction concerned the fact that the experience was communal in one case and individual in the other. While the church and the hotel foyer had in common that one spent a limited amount of time there as an anonymous and mostly silent guest, there was an important difference. A religious community formed a concentric circle around God; its members were equals before a higher being. By contrast, the guests in a hotel foyer were individual social atoms, unconnected to each other. Each guest sat alone, waiting to move on.

Kracauer's second distinction concerned the interior design. Kracauer contrasted the religious symbolism of sacred art with the purely decorative function of art in the hotel foyer. The latter reflected, albeit in caricature, Kant's characterization of art as "purposefulness without purpose." Religious art was designed to encourage concentration and reflection, the decoration of hotel foyers, by contrast, sought to facilitate diversion. In the hotel foyer, he wrote, "devotion congeals into erotic desire that roams about without an object."[28]

It is his analyses of sensory surface phenomena of this kind that offer access to Kracauer's own world of religious experience. The same holds true of his observation of the gentle lustre projected onto the walls of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church. For Kracauer, the transformation of the entertainment industry's "darkly glowing embers" into a glow of yearning spoke to an aesthetic of reconciliation that, in the Hegelian sense, sublated sorrow and consolation, desperation and hope. Just as the revelation of the divine necessarily transgresses boundaries and categories, his idiosyncratic, synaesthetic approach blurred the line between epistemic and empirical categories. From this transgression flowed not only the ex-

28 Kracauer, "The Hotel Lobby," 178.

perience of the demonic, but it was also central to religious experience as Kracauer understood it: revelation is what transcends the limits of our senses.[29] Hence, the divine is accessible only where we are not expecting it: in the realm of profanity and the profane.

Bibliography

Allen, John. "The Cultural Spaces of Siegfried Kracauer: The Many Surfaces of Berlin." *New Formations* 61 (2007): 20–33.

Bloch, Ernst. *Briefe*, vol. 1, edited by Karola Bloch. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985.

Craver, Harry T. *Reluctant Skeptic: Siegfried Kracauer and the Crises of German Culture.* New York: Berghahn, 2017.

Döring, Jörg. "Raumbilder 1930. Siegfried Kracauers spatiale Hermeneutik für die *Frankfurter Zeitung.*" In *Das Raumbild. Bilder jenseits ihrer Flächen*, edited by Jens Schröter, Gundolf Winter, and Joanna Barck, 331–350. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2009.

Frowein-Zieroff, Vera. *Die Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche: Entstehung und Bedeutung.* Berlin: Mann, 1982.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *The Auto-Biography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life. The Concluding Books etc.*, translated by Alexander J. W. Morrison. London: George Bell & Sons, 1874.

Handelman, Matthew. *The Mathematical Imagination: On the Origins and Promises of Critical Theory.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2019.

Kessler, Michael. "Entschleiern und Bewahren. Siegfried Kracauers Ansätze zu einer Philosophie und Theologie der Geschichte." In *Siegfried Kracauer. Neue Interpretationen*, edited by Michael Kessler and Thomas Y. Levin, 105–128. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990.

Koch, Gertrud. *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction.* Princeton: University Press, 2000.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Anthroposophie und Wissenschaft." In Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.1, edited by Inka Mülder-Bach, 256–265. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011.

Kracauer, Siegfried. "Kaiser Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche bei Nacht." In Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.3, edited by Inka Mülder-Bach, 241–242. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo.* Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964.

29 Kracauer discusses experiences of this kind again and again, primarily in the context of aesthetics. See, e.g., Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 165: "Does the spectator ever succeed in exhausting the objects he contemplates? There is no end to his wanderings. Sometimes, though, it may seem to him that, after having probed a thousand possibilities, he is listening, with all his senses strained, to a confused murmur. Images begin to sound, and the sounds are again images. When this indeterminate murmur – the murmur of existence – reaches him, he may be nearest to the unattainable goal." Kracauer's synaesthetic mode of experiencing film may have been idiosyncratic but his connecting synaesthesia and revelation was anything but original: it expressly features in the primal scene of the revelation at Mount Sinai: וְכָל־הָעָם֙ רֹאִ֣ים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹ֔ת, And all the people saw the voices (Exodus 20, 15).

Kracauer, Siegfried. “The Bible in German.” In Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays.* Translated by Thomas Y. Levin, 189–201. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Kracauer, Siegfried. “The Hotel Lobby.” In Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays.* Translated by Thomas Y. Levin, 173–185. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Kracauer, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.

Kracauer, Siegfried. “Über Arbeitsnachweise.” In Kracauer, *Werke*, vol. 5.3, edited by Inka Mülder-Bach, 249–257. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011.

Martins, Ansgar. “Um Himmels willen nicht vom Materiellen ablenken”: Religion bei Siegfried Kracauer (PhD diss., University of Frankfurt, 2022).

Mülder, Inka. *Siegfried Kracauer: Grenzgänger zwischen Theorie und Literatur.* Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985.

Ruhl, Carsten. *Kracauer’s Architecture: The Ornamental Nature of the New Capitalist Order.* Weimar: M Books, 2022.

Später, Jörg. *Siegfried Kracauer: Eine Biographie.* Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016.

Steiner, Rudolf. *Das architektonische Werk* I: *Das Goetheanum und seine Vorläufer.* Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 2022.

Steiner, Rudolf. *Gesamtausgabe.* Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1959–2025.

Steiner, Rudolf. “And the Temple Becomes Man: A Lecture, Berlin, December 12, 1911,” translated by D. S. Osmond, https://wn.rudolfsteinerelib.org/Lectures/GA/GA0286/19111212a01.html. Accessed March 18, 2023.

Vedder, Ulrike. “Die Hotelhalle als kritischer Topos in Kracauers Schriften und in der zeitgenössischen Literatur.” In *“Doch ist das Wirkliche auch vergessen, so ist es darum noch nicht getilgt.” Beiträge zum Werk Siegfried Kracauers*, edited by Jörn Ahrens, Paul Fleming, Susanne Martin, and Ulrike Vedder, 81–97. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016.

Zander, Helmut. *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung, gesellschaftliche Praxis.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.

Zohlen, Gerwin. “Schmugglerpfad. Siegfried Kracauer, Architekt und Schriftsteller.” In *Siegfried Kracauer. Neue Interpretationen*, edited by Michael Kessler and Thomas Y. Levin, 325–344. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1990.

William Redwood

Where the Magic Happens: Sacred Space within Western Esotericism

Abstract: This chapter begins by establishing its parameters: contemporary Western esoteric magic practised in "ordinary" settings in (sub)urbia. It then offers a definition of esotericism as a discreet set of ideas and practices. Section 1 commences with an examination of magic conducted within the home, a frequently used location for practical reasons. Section 2 turns to magic conducted in places with greater symbolic meaning, be these in the earthly realm or in more imaginary dimensions beyond. Section 3 focuses on magic which happens unexpectedly, in places which may not have previously been considered sacred, and which may or may not continue to be held significant subsequently. While the word "sacred" is entirely appropriate for esotericism, and is indeed commonly used by its practitioners, theirs is a rather unstable sacred. It is a fluid sacred which ebbs and flows according to its own geographical and chronological patterns. It is a sacred which is personal and psychological. It is a sacred which is capricious, revealing itself only on a partial and ongoing basis. In concluding remarks, this is related to late modernity: it is suggested that the nebulosity of the sacred within the esoteric cosmos can be linked logically to this socio-cultural context.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the "ordinary sacred" – a term which, at first, might seem like a paradox. Nevertheless, what will concern us here is that which happens in an everyday locality and is intended to be private rather than public. There is much that this chapter cannot and should not cover, such as those conspicuous sacred sites like Stonehenge or Sedona.[1] Sunrise through a stone circle at Midsummer may be aesthetically striking and rich in symbolism, but for many, it cannot dis-

1 Such places have been studied extensively, by scholars in various disciplines including: Barbara Bender, *Stonehenge: Making Space* (Oxford: Berg, 1999); Kevin Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Ivan Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001); Ruth Prince and David Riches, *The New Age in Glastonbury: The Construction of Religious Movements* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2000); Marion Bowman, "Learning from Experience: The Value of Analysing Avalon," *Religion* 39, no. 2 (2009): 161–168.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. CC BY This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-003

place the (sub)urban routine of "another day, another dollar." This research then seeks to highlight not the unusual, but the relatively regular; the "everyday" is not without anthropological interest, and nor is it without its magic, as we shall see.[2] This chapter will moreover not look at sacred architecture in its usual sense, but shift the focus of many previous studies to cities and (sub)urbia where the sacred places surveyed have to be constructed within pre-existing spaces. Such sacred places tend to be temporary and unstable, their "architecture" as likely to be imaginary as material. We will examine creations, re-creations, and re-appropriations brought into ephemeral existence amid the more mundane longitudes and latitudes of late modern, late capitalism.[3]

Definition

The word "esoteric" has an unfortunate usage in English simply to denote something which is "difficult to understand"; there is another general notion of "esoteric" as a quest to discover "hidden" or "inner" knowledge which is concealed within an outer body of ideas (this at least remains true to the ancient Greek root of the word). However, the contemporary Western esotericism which is the focus of this chapter is something more historically and culturally specific. Most often termed "magic" by those involved with it, it has been traced at least as far back as the Renaissance; as with anything *re*-naissance, it draws on older ideas, or at least claims to. As Gibbons has observed, its three major original inspirations were Gnosticism, Presocratic ancient Greek philosophy, and Christian Neoplatonism.[4] It will also be

2 Some people do relocate to be near to such sacred sites, but to do so requires lifestyle changes which not all are willing or able to make. One of the most obvious differences is that compared to more densely populated areas, employment prospects may be more limited and those who live near sacred sites tend to be either retired, able to work remotely, or simply not employed in any formal sense.

3 Examples of magic and late capitalism being theorized together include: Brian Moeran and Timothy de Waal Malefyt, *Magical Capitalism: Enchantment, Spells, and Occult Practices in Contemporary Economies* (New York: Springer International Publishing, 2018); Philippe Pignarre, Isabelle Stengers, and Andrew Goffey, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* (Houndmills, Basingstoke/London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *$elling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004).

4 Brian Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3–5.

helpful to enumerate the resultant principles which were originally outlined by Faivre.[5]

First is a "doctrine of correspondences" between the visible world and an invisible realm: "microcosm mirrors macrocosm" and vice versa; more simply put, this entails that the boundary between self and world is permeable, and empirical events hold personal spiritual meaning because they are worldly reflections of wider cosmic currents. Second, nature is viewed as alive: this ancient animism has found recent and fashionable expression in various versions of Lovelock's "Gaia Hypothesis," an influential idea within contemporary ecology.[6] Animism is also present in the variant notion that a mysterious energy is everywhere, in the earth, in the air and in all creatures and things, and it is this energy which provides the link between the empirical world and the invisible realm postulated previously. Third, the imagination is seen as vital, vital both in the sense of "important" and also in the sense of "alive"; this means that "dreams" are in some way "real" and that even "fiction" can be an oblique form of "fact." Fourth, is self-transformation: the esotericist is less interested in performing earthly miracles (for they are not delusional) than they are in seeking to transform their self through the knowledge acquired in the course of their spiritual experiences. This latter change ("inner growth," "spiritual awareness," "psychic development" or "gnosis") is considered to be just as important as change in the outside world, perhaps even more so. Such changes are generally sought through regular meditative and ritual practices, plus more intermittent ritual and divinatory activities. Ideally, such transmutation should be for the better, but the esoteric path is said to be a slippery one, and negative forces endanger the unwise or unready. An additional fifth facet of the esoteric worldview is, as Greenwood has expounded, an "otherworld" and this other dimension (or dimensions) intersect(s) with the material realm at certain times or places.[7] Much magical practice involves interactions with denizens of this otherworld and hence as Blain has stressed, there are markedly shamanistic elements to contemporary magic and a similar argument to Blain's has been advanced by Robert J. Wallis.[8] Sixth, my own research has highlighted a set of Romantic tendencies: a turn towards the East which takes the form of a positive (if

5 Antoine Faivre, "Introduction I," in *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, ed. Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman (Chestnut Ridge, Pennsylvania: Crossroad Publishing, 1995), xv; also, Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

6 James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1979]).

7 Susan Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

8 Jenny Blain, *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism* (London: Routledge, 2002); Robert J. Wallis, *Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans* (London: Routledge, 2003).

somewhat naïve) Orientalism (the "affirmative Orientalism" postulated by Fox), and a retrospection into the more distant past taking the form of a proactive primitivism, the animism mentioned previously entailing that nature provides a guiding spiritual direction.[9] As Hanegraaff has shown, much of that which is commonly referred to as "New Age" thought owes a great debt to esotericism.[10] Since the turn of the millennium, the term "New Age" has fallen from favour amongst both scholars and "spiritual seekers" (with some other preferred labels being "esotericism" and also "alternative spirituality").[11]

In its attempt to explain the "everyday sacred" of esotericism, this chapter starts from a simple premise: a significant proportion of people who do esoteric magic live in cities, suburbs or towns; there are no purpose-built places for them in which to practice (they do not have an equivalent of mosques, churches or temples); it can therefore be difficult for modern esotericists to find places to call sacred (set apart, special somehow); it can be especially challenging to establish these on any permanent basis; instead, such places must be regularly constructed and disassembled. Esotericists are an inventive set of individuals, and this chapter will outline various patterns to the ways in which they can make manifest their sacred, or it can make itself manifest.[12] Ultimately, different aspects of space, place and sacred will be seen to blend together and culminate in a magical universe wherein – to the mind of the esoteric thinker – almost everything is sacred or at least, somehow spiritually significant.[13]

---

9 Richard G. Fox, "East of Said," in *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, ed. Michael Sprinkler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 144–56.

10 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988); also, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

11 Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman, *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Steven Sutcliffe, *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices* (London: Routledge, 2003); Steven Sutcliffe and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion* (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2013).

12 For a similar approach to space and marginalized religious practice in Brazil, see Daniel Medeiros de Freitas et al., *Epistemic Ambivalence: Pentecostalism and Candomblé in a Brazilian City* (London: Routledge, 2023).

13 The data on which this chapter is based was obtained through participant observation, conducted mainly in London, as part of research for a PhD in social anthropology; secondary sources – usually books by esoteric practitioners – were also extensively consulted, as were websites and digital information.

Section 1: Magic in the Mundane

To return to "where the magic happens," in this first section we will explore where and how esotericists make everyday space into sacred place. Here "everyday space" can be taken to mean owned homes, or rented spaces over which individuals exercise some measure of control.[14] In the words of Beth: "I will write now about the casting of the magic circle. [… T]his is your temple. It is an ephemeral, transitory creation; not for us, expensive buildings, costly artefacts. Instead, there is the circle, cast anew wherever you may be. […F]or most of us, you will probably be in your own house."[15] The sheer practicality of using one's own living space for ritual suggests that much of what goes on in the name of esoteric practice takes place here. There are, however, cases when an indoor space other than a private home is used. Rituals can be conducted in esoteric bookstores or therapy rooms; the latter often being hired rooms in alternative medical or even mainstream medical clinics. Other, larger gatherings (perhaps for seasonal or life-cycle rituals, which tend to be quite popular events) can also take place in hired social venues. Even hotels can suffice; as one esotericist once explained, because his "flatmates aren't into magic, an' they think I'm weird enough as it is," he had felt the need to hire a hotel room in which to perform an initiation ritual.[16]

Even in their homes, many choose to avoid permanent altars for fear of social stigma: Basile writes of "keeping my altars or sacred spaces collapsible or undetectable so my roommates wouldn't notice."[17] John was particularly nervous of his prying landlord, and his precious magical books were hidden behind more innocuous-looking titles on one of his many bookshelves.[18] He and his esoteric group performed demonic evocation and invocation in his one-bedroom apartment, using his ironing board as a temporary altar. Many such small magical groups often meet in each other's homes, in this case, with frequent pleas from John "to keep

14 Some have argued, beyond mere practicality, for an inherently enchanted quality to the home-space: see Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994 [1958]).

15 Rae Beth, *Hedge Witch: A Guide to Solitary Witchcraft* (London: Robert Hale, 1990), 41.

16 There were just two participants, himself and another whom he had met through an online community. The television had served as the altar, its aerial lead unplugged, dancing static thus symbolising magical energy as well as providing eerie half-lighting for the rite.

17 Lisa Marie Basile, *City Witchery: Accessible Rituals, Practices and Prompts for Conjuring and Creating in a Magical Metropolis* (Bellevue: Quarto Publishing, 2021), 12.

18 Interconnections of secrecy, religion, and space are common yet complex: Hugh B. Urban and Paul C. Johnson, ed. *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Secrecy* (London: Routledge, 2022).

it [noise] down" because he was anxious not to "frighten the neighbours."[19] Even if people can freely express themselves at home by displaying their esoteric interests, they still face practical difficulties; many do not have the space for a permanent magical area.

Although statistics are scarce, just a handful of those esotericists with whom I have worked have rooms ("temples," usually with an "altar") in their homes exclusively set aside for ritual activity. That said, the temporary nature of many sacred places is not necessarily a problem, for as Pettis has stressed: "The making of the sacred space is as important, if not more important, than its use when complete. Indeed, building a sacred space [...] is a high form of meditation and the epitome of spiritual service."[20] Moreover, as Streep writes: "Altars don't 'make' sacred space, they work by showing us what has been there all along."[21] The passing nature of a sacred place is not then a disadvantage – if its construction is viewed as part of the rite. The most syncretic example of this "psychological" approach to the construction of a temporary sacred place is the suggestion by Draco that an Islamic prayer rug can be set down by a single esoteric practitioner.[22] This creates a situation whereby the sacred place is not only temporary, but ritual not always conducted in exactly the same empirical location each time.

When a permanent altar is located in a room other than a dedicated "temple," it seems usually to be in a bedroom, living room or study room.[23] Be they permanently *in situ* or not, altars are ideally the material focal point of much intentional

---

19 Although "the Sacred Ironing Board of Antioch" altar was the subject of some humour amongst the group members, it has to be said that in a candle-lit room filled with heady incense smoke, and when draped with a silken cloth and covered with esoteric paraphernalia, it looked suitably magical. On this ludic attitude often exhibited by some esotericists, see: Joseph Dumit, "Playing Truths: Logics of Seeking and the Persistence of the New Age," *Focaal* 37 (2001): 63–75.

20 Chuck Pettis, *Secrets of Sacred Space: Discover and Create Places of Power* (St Paul Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications 1999), 1.

21 Peg Streep, *Altars Made Easy: A Complete Guide to Creating Your Own Sacred Space* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 2.

22 Mélusine Draco, *Traditional Witchcraft for Urban Living* (Winchester: Moon Books, 2012), 59.

23 Where else *could* work? There are "green" areas of "nature" within some homes, but we will get to these later. It is not impossible for a bathroom to have some significance in terms of it being a place in which pre-ritual purification is achieved, and sometimes the bathroom medicine cabinet can be associated with alternative medicine and healing, but is this really sacred? The bathroom is best regarded as a liminal space (in that it is set-off, semi-private, and associated with "dirt" as much as with "purity"), so it is not neutral with regard to the sacred. However, it is not quite *sacred*, just as a *ḥammām* is not quite sacred in the Muslim world (even if traditionally, it was a key point in the cycle of purity/impurity). A kitchen, too, may contain herbs which have some magical significance, although it would not quite constitute a truly "sacred" part of the home.

esoteric practice.[24] Usually an approximately cuboid structure of variable height, upon an altar is typically a variety of objects likely to include natural items (feathers, branches and leaves, rocks, etc.), crystals (naturally occurring, but often cut or polished), and human-made artifacts such as candles (in holders), incense (in burners), books (of an esoteric nature, including the magical diary in which all esoterically significant events should be recorded), divinatory tools (tarot cards being amongst the most common), statuettes (of deities, angels or spirits), and beyond these, various personal paraphernalia (almost any material object can be imbued with magical meaning or memory for an individual practitioner).[25]

Permanent altars will always be sacred to some extent, but their significance increases greatly during rituals (magical "workings"). Here, there are factors of time, of preparation and purification, and of ritual action to consider. Timing can be important, for there are powerful seasonal points at which rituals can be conducted, and there are even astrologically auspicious hours of each day. However, practicality often wins out: most rituals are actually conducted when it is convenient for the person(s) concerned; it was a running joke amongst the esotericists with whom I worked that their timekeeping was rather loose, and that even if a ritual had been strictly scheduled, in practice it often took place somewhat later.

Preparations vary in complexity and importance. Some rituals are supposed to require preceding periods of sexual abstinence, but these may or may not be adhered to. Rituals may require preliminary washing, the act of bathing or showering prior to the ritual being seen as cleansing the spiritual "aura" as well as the physical body, but this is not always possible (that is, there may not always be time or resources). Some esoteric groups forbid drugs or alcohol to be taken for a certain period prior to rituals, whereas others allow or almost encourage their consumption in order to create appropriately altered states of consciousness. Some esotericists will ensure that their ritual space is freshly cleaned, while the abodes of others can be habitually musty and dusty. The burning of incense is common, but other than that, the only generalisation which can be drawn from this brief overview is that things "must be right" in order to set up the necessary preconditions of ritual space, but precisely what is "right" varies from one person or group to another. A further complexity has been created by the possibility of rituals being conducted online: whilst this has been happening since the earliest days of the internet, the Covid-19 pandemic quarantines helped to familiarise increasing numbers of people with synchronous esoteric interaction through various digital platforms.

---

24 It is possible to conduct ritual without an altar and conversely, the existence of an altar does not *always* imply ritual; generally, however, they go together.

25 Some altars are covered with expensive cloth and almost resemble high church Christian altars, while others are considerably more "primitive" in their aesthetic.

In order to "consecrate" any sacred space – be it one which includes a permanent altar or not – certain ritual procedures are conducted. The key ideas are "purification" and "protection" (the two separate ideas often seem to be conflated) and the basic shape through which these aims are achieved is the circle.[26] There is a sense of blocking ("banishing") bad things ("evil spirits" or "inimical energies," the terms are interchangeable) from the inside of the circle – and therefore, from the ritual participants. This is the case whatever the purpose of the ritual, and some rituals have *only* protection as their purpose.[27] If there is more than one person involved, participants may form a human circle (seated or standing, sometimes holding hands). If there is an altar, it will be either in the centre of, or at the "head" of, the circle, as available space allows. If a ritual is for healing and the person to be aided is present, they may sit or lie within the circle. Solitary ritualists occupy a circle which surrounds just them. The circle can be drawn or marked out on the floor with chalk, flour, thread, and candles or some combination thereof. However, this may not always be practical in a carpeted room or unfamiliar space, and so circles can be purely imaginary without material expression. Beyond this, once again the precise procedures are multiplex: there can feature deities from any of the world's polytheistic pantheons, angels, demons, spirits and even entities from ostensibly fictional sources; participants may wear ritual robes, or whatever clothing they arrived in (perhaps minus shoes), or be "skyclad" (naked); there can be chanting of languages local, or ancient, or exotic; there can be visualisations of a wide variety of images. Rituals do not usually have a set length of time, but generally do not go on for much more than one hour.

Beneath the surface variation, there is one absolutely consistent point. Contemporary esoteric magic is all about "energy," and it is this metaphor which constitutes an invariance which underlies both the practice of, and theory behind, any contemporary ritual "working." The "energy" is often likened to electricity, although there is awareness that this is a figurative description. This is what Davis has termed the "electromagnetic imaginary," the aesthetic and cultural impact electricity has had in the west, our plethora of "electromagnetic metaphors, of magnetic personalities and live wires, of bad vibes and tuning out, of getting

26 There are cases wherein more complex shapes are employed: any geometric shape can in theory be used, and there are some quite complex examples in the ethnographic literature. Here however, we will focus on the simplest and most common shape which (in my experience) one is likely to encounter; even the more complex shapes usually begin with a circle.

27 It is considered ideal by many esotericists to perform protections or "banishings" daily or twice daily, as well as at the start of any other more specific ritual; such regular rituals do not have a particular goal but are said to keep the individual psychically safe while also contributing to their ongoing spiritual development.

grounded and recharging batteries."[28] This "energy" is created, intensified or channelled into the ritual circle by the participants, and from the participants, yet also from beyond them. (Precisely where this "beyond" is depends on the kind of ritual: it can be from "nature" and "the earth," from "higher realms," or even from "infernal realms" and we will see in more detail below.) When this energy is visualised, the ritual circle becomes three-dimensional, with an ovoid, sphere, cylinder or cone of energy surrounding the participants, its base on (or in) the earth and its upper aspect skyward. Sometimes, the "energy" is conceived of as helical in shape, usually spiralling upwards in an ascendant direction. All this remains esoterically true even if the ritual is online and conducted by individuals in different parts of the globe; the energy is said to link them, even if they are physically separate from one another. (Even members of an existing group who are unable to participate in a particular ritual can say they have been affected by it in some way, perhaps by having a significant emotion at the time, or a meaningful dream afterwards.) The idiom of "energy" applies regardless of whether the ritual is a practical one with a "concrete" outcome desired, or more of a non-instrumental undertaking with a view to protection, marking a rite-of-passage or a seasonal change, or developing participants' psychic or spiritual awareness.

Franchetto has stressed that the ritual circle is both an imaginary and transient place, meaning that it is comprised of limited or no materiality, and it cannot be there permanently.[29] This may seem obvious – people cannot stand in a circle holding hands all night long, and chalk or flour will be washed or worn away eventually; however, the point is important because the impermanent nature of sacred place is key to this chapter. Contrarily though, unlike the medieval magical circle, which is the subject of Franchetto's work, the contemporary esoteric circle never *quite* goes away entirely, and an altar (if there is one) never ceases to have sacred significance. At the end of a contemporary ritual, the circle has to be "closed" or "shut down," but it does not completely cease to exist (it "remains unbroken" to use an esoteric phrase). The "energy" cannot entirely dissipate.[30] Indeed, if "spi-

28 Erik Davis, *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), 57. On how ideas of energy and electricity became part of modern esoteric practice, see Maria Tatar, *Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) and Nicholas Goodrich-Clarke, "The Esoteric Uses of Electricity: Theologies of Electricity from Swabian Pietism to Ariosophy," *Aries* 4, no. 1 (2004): 69–90.

29 Andrea Franchetto, "Imaginal Architectural Devices and the Ritual Space of Medieval Necromancy," *Endeavour* 44 (2020): accessed July 18 2023, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2021.100748. *See also the chapter in this book – Eds.*

30 This was something to which Luhrmann drew attention in the earliest ethnography of the esoteric: as one of her informants explained, "The forces are always with you [...] but I don't want to

rits" were invoked, they may remain whether they are wanted or not; there was some debate amongst esotericists as to whether non-human entities should be dismissed – and if so how – at the end of a ritual. Spirits are not now seen as servants to be shooed away, and a polite farewell is considered more appropriate. Enduring spirit presences are not always considered a good thing – even if they are benevolent spirits – and mundane mishaps could sometimes be explained by lingering otherworldly forces. A burst water tank, for example, was linked to a weather ritual carried out by one group. John experienced odd phone calls and an aggressive knocking on his door after a ritual involving Mercury (a deity related to communication) which, he surmised, must not have been properly concluded.

This situation presents an interesting complication to the classic Durkheimian dichotomy between *"sacré"* and *"profane."*[31] The esoteric sacred can never be "switched off" entirely. Outside of any ritual activity, an altar (or even just a shelf, windowsill or drawer) will always be a sacred place, but it is somehow *more* sacred during ritual activity, when it becomes the focus of magical attention and intention; in esoteric terms, energy is "intensified" and sacred significance increases. In the case of contemporary esotericism, the degree of sacredness is variable and nothing truly stops being sacred; this is because the "energy" which gives the animism a modern, scientistic spin is ubiquitous, and while it can certainly change, it can never completely go away. What we have is a mixture of a sacred based upon transcendent powers and a more imminent sacred (a tension between dualistic versus monistic, to invoke another familiar binary). The former sacred can be made manifest within the earthly realm after a certain quality and quantity of human effort; the latter sacred is one which is already inherent in the ontological nature of the world (to those who are "truly attuned"). Whether this cosmological inconsistency (an ambiguity between these two aspects of the sacred) was always there within Western esotericism, or whether it has emerged more recently (say, as a result of romantic nature religion, or the idea of universal energy, or from a not-quite-seamless syncretic integration of versions of ideas from eastern traditions) is beyond the scope of this chapter. The important idea to take from this is that there is less a binary than a spectrum: some degree of the "sacred" permeates all of the existence of the esotericist, and yet it also permutates according to circumstance. It varies in its intensity, according to the particular activities which are being carried out, or the times at which they are conducted. It is not something which the esotericist can *always* remain conscious of, especially

live in a temple atmosphere." Luhrmann, *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft, Ritual Magic in Contemporary England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 268; emphasis mine.

31 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968 [1915]), 37.

when they are caught up in mundane minutiae; however, it is theoretically omnipresent. (There may be talk of "low energy" and also "negative energy," but rarely do we hear of any place wherein there is no energy.) In esoteric thought moreover, the sacred is carried within the individual and in that sense, ever-present, too. As Streep writes, "we need [...] to make room for the spiritual part of ourselves. Once we have done that, each of us will, in time, create an abundance of sacred space."[32] The esoteric sacred then is somehow always already within the esotericist themselves, just waiting to be amplified.

Section 2: Searching High and Low

In his essay on heterotopia, Foucault described how the "space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud [...]."[33] Such a bifurcated view of things should be fairly familiar; indeed, there was a time when anthropologists working within the Structuralist paradigm would have happily claimed to have discerned a universal cognitive tendency for there to be a distinction between upper world and underworld in all cosmologies. Now seen as a rather sweeping claim, this will nevertheless serve as our starting point: in this section, we will look at place which has symbolic meaning within esoteric thought and practice. These are not spaces which – like those we saw in the previous section – have been "made" sacred places by virtue of objects or activities therein. Instead, they are imbued with an "inherent" sacrality to the esoteric mind, and the meaning of any activity carried out in them follows from this.

A positive and a negative valence is often (but not quite always) intrinsic to the "upper" and "lower" realms respectively. Within a Christian framework, it is familiar for heaven to be located "up above" the earthly realm and hell "down below" it. Esoteric spirituality does not (and probably will never) separate entirely from Christian thought; as stressed in the Introduction, it was originally the product of Christian cognition in a Christian society, and even while esotericism has now grown far from its roots, certain remnants endure. The binary between the celestial and infernal realms is one very prominent example of this. However, in

32 Streep, *Altars Made Easy*, 1.

33 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 26; see also Bachelard, *Poetics*, 19.

the case of contemporary esotericism, things are not quite so simple as "high" versus "low," because much practice centres on "nature" and "green" places. Thus, in the esoteric worldview we find a middle space, and it is in Romanticism rather than Christianity in which we find the origins of this zone between the upper and lower worlds.

Looking first at visits made to green places in the empirical world, it can certainly be said that *some* ritual takes place in natural spaces; the question is one of practicality and privacy. In some apartments, nature would be limited to window-boxes or balconies, but if a home has a garden, then this is an obvious location to use (so long as it is fairly private). Some wealthier individuals involved in esoteric practice may have larger stretches of their own land on which they and perhaps others may practice undisturbed, but these are privileged people and cannot be assumed to be typical. For a significant proportion of individuals, a public park or a "green space" within relatively easy reach and which affords some degree of potential for ritual practice is used. More likely than complex rituals involving altars and ceremonial paraphernalia however, given the privacy issue, is a more discreet acknowledgement of the "natural sacred" such as sitting and meditating or contemplating.[34] While sometimes bad weather prevents outdoor magical practice, there are eco-activists and so-called "New Age Travellers" who seem fairly hardened to the elements. True to stereotypical English weather, I have attended many outdoor rituals and gatherings in pouring rain (sometimes participants resigned themselves to getting soaked, while at other times I observed an incongruous image of ritualists in robes over which were worn garish modern waterproofs, awkwardly holding umbrellas over themselves or one another).

Nature is not for everyone: as Hanegraaff has shown, it can simply be too "red in tooth and claw" for those oriented towards the light and the transcendence of earth(l)y existence.[35] The next question posed then is how can anyone "visit celestial worlds" without undertaking a journey beyond this earth? Surely the upper, and lower, worlds are even less accessible than nature? In fact, creating a sense of spiritual ascension on this earthly plane can be done; an article entitled *Heaven Above* in a "newsstand" esoteric magazine gives readers an insight into how:[36]

---

34 Such spaces, of course, are rarely "natural" in a strict sense of the word, for nowadays little is; however, a space which is human made can still be viewed as natural enough within esoteric thought and practice.

35 Wouter Hanegraaff, "Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature," in *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, ed. Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 22–32.

36 "Heaven Above," in *Spirit and Destiny: For Women Who Want the Best Possible Future* magazine, February 2003 (Peterborough and London: Bauer Consumer Media/H. Bauer Publishing).

> [...] Donna Wilson needs a relaxing sanctuary at the end of a day. But with her home full of kids and clutter, she finds the only way is up. [...] After a demanding day as a TV researcher, and an hour's hellish train journey back to her home in North West London, she has a long way to go before sitting down to relax. [...] Donna found a solution in the loft. [...] Firstly, she cleared out the junk, sanded and varnished the floorboards and painted the walls a calming shade of white. The room is now simple and uncluttered, and arranged to the principles of *fēng-shuǐ.* Donna's desk faces the room but is screened off behind a bamboo screen, so that vibrations from her laptop cannot disrupt the flow of calming *qì* or energy, around the room. Plants and natural light from candles, and the use of big, soft cushions, also create a calming feel around the work space. Natural textures and shades, such as the hessian floor matting and the pebble water feature, give the room an earthy feel. The use of bamboo, rattan and cane furnishings, plus a few orientally influenced throws and artefacts, lend an exotic flavour [...]. Carefully chosen candles and pictures add the finishing touches, creating a strong feel of intimacy and the stamp of Donna's personality on the room.

The final subsection of the article, subtitled "Spirit in the sky," explains the positive effect this change has had on Donna's life. "Everyone's happy," she claims. "The kids can watch their noisy television and I escape into my little haven and just chill out to recharge my batteries. I'm sure it's actually made me a calmer, nicer person." The question, of course, is how many people can afford to make such a lofty conversion with a spiritual aesthetic? Many cannot, and so it seems that such a solution to the challenges of creating the esoteric sacred is a relatively privileged one. However, Luhrmann mentions that one of the groups she studied had a room specially (re)constructed for ritual.[37] Another of those groups also had a temple in an upstairs room:

> **Rebecca:** [A]ll life can be considered as a ritual. Everything we do. And therefore, I don't feel that one wants to make a distinction between so-called temple things and so-called mundane things. That temple up there is supposed to be symbolic of life, really.
>
> **Enoch:** But you can't *do* that, I mean really, because most people are not at that level.
>
> **Amy:** That's why we have a temple upstairs.[38]

For a complete book on the theme of esoteric interior design, see Vinny Lee and Ray Main, *The Spiritual Home* (London: Pavillion Books, 2002); again, this book is aimed at a relatively privileged demographic (although some of its ideas could perhaps be implemented in a more budget-conscious manner than depicted).

37 Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 138. This was "Simon" of the "Hornsey Group," who reportedly had the highest standards when it came to ritual and insisted upon the upper floor of the property being a "perfect cube."

38 Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 269; while nothing is specified by Luhrmann about the significance of the temple's location, it is (I think) implied in the informant's statement.

Assuming that such domestic conversions are not possible, elevating oneself to a higher location outside the home is not necessarily easy either. However, there are roofs which can be accessed, and Basile for example mentions using the tops of apartment buildings for some of her rituals.[39] Sometimes, when actual elevation itself is impossible, the lighting can be altered: I once co-habited with a number of esoterically minded individuals in a rather dark apartment, and one of my flatmates actually found that the low light level in the flat was a source of some discomfort. She simply purchased a special lightbulb for her bedroom, to increase the amount of light therein.[40]

Despite the practical challenges, we have seen evidence of spatio-directional metaphors of height and light. What of the converse? Do we ever find spaces of depth, and relatedly dark, amongst esoteric sacred places? We do indeed, for the idea of black magic exerts a lure for certain esotericists.[41] Rather than asceticism, it stresses antinomianism, offering spiritual transcendence via the low road, as it were. The question of whether any ritually sacred places are to be found down in the depths can be answered in the affirmative, but with the usual proviso: the problem is one of practicality. Unless one has a home with a basement, getting into an underground environment can be difficult. (Luhrmann mentions a basement temple, but for this, one would need to either own the property, or at least to have access to its cellar.)[42] One esoteric group with which I worked delighted in using the basement of an abandoned building for rituals: it perfectly symbolised their deep, dark location within the esoteric cosmology. The challenge was that ingress to that building required climbing, preferably under the cover of darkness. We were never caught, but that danger was always there, along with the numerous other health and safety risks that go with all urban exploration.

There is, however, another way: here we return to the idea with which we ended Section 1, the notion that the sacred resides within the individual. While statistics are impossible to provide, it can be said that going into a physical place which holds a cosmological meaning for esotericists – be it celestial, natural or infernal – is difficult and time-consuming, and many rituals do not happen in such places because it is just not practical. Therefore, another key aspect of esoteric thought and practice becomes highly convenient: within the esoteric cosmology

39 Basile, *City Witchery*, 11.

40 There is a medical condition known as SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) and it is entirely possible that (whether the individual knew it or not), this was a factor; however, the symbolism still remains.

41 William Redwood, "Absolute Beasts? Social Mechanics of Achieved Monstrosity," in *Disgust and Desire: The Paradox of the Monster*, ed. Kristen Wright (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 89–110.

42 Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 26.

are enfolded other realms, and these can be visited on imaginative journeys. In meditations and dreams ("pathworkings," "shamanic journeys," "active imagination" and "astral travel"), a seeker can go to heaven, hell or primordial nature without ever leaving the comfort of their own abode. A meditative mental state is sought; it is possible that substances legal or otherwise can be ingested to facilitate mental imagery, but this is by no means mandatory. An altar is not so important here, but a protective circle is. One can then quite simply sit or lie down, close one's eyes, and imagine. A voice ("live" or recorded, depending on who else is present) may describe the details of the "pathworking." It is also possible to carry out such a journey in bed, as one drops off to sleep, in which case the journey can take place in a partial dream state or even as a fully lucid dream. Such journeys invariably feature information carried back to the waking world to facilitate the spiritual development of the esoteric adept.[43]

The otherworlds of contemporary esotericism are unique in several important ways; they are social constructs, after all, products of their social and cultural backdrop. Thus, the underworld of contemporary esotericism can be subterranean and/or fiery but it can also be conceptualised in a modern industrial way, as a sewer, boiler room or subway system; as one might expect, in the darker realms of esoteric universe lurk monsters and demons. In the luminescent celestial realms dwell "celestial beings, angels, ascended masters and aliens."[44] Finally, the green "middle-ground" will be conceptualised like forest or moorland, and its visitors will relate more to nature spirits: dryads, elves, faeries and elementals. Perhaps because of the sheer variety of otherworldly beings they may encounter in the sacred inner realms, esotericists refer them by many different referents and ultimately, all are seen as being animated accumulations of "energy." Journeys or "pathworkings" may be set clearly in the upper, middle or lower worlds which we have seen, or they can be mixed: the adept may set off into a forest, but then climb a tree or hill to ascend upwards; they may commence in a boat on a lake, but then dive deep down into subaqueous depths. It is, as Robert J. Wallis expounds, an individualised and psychologised experience which, one, presumes, could be rather bemusing to any "traditional" person not familiar with Western psychology:

---

43 See Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Awakened Ones: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012) and, for the modern case, Itzhak Beery and John Perkins, *The Gift of Shamanism: Visionary Power, Ayahuasca Dreams, and Journeys to Other Realms* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 2015).

44 Christopher Penczak, *City Magick: Urban Rituals, Spells and Shamanism* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser Books, 2001), 85; in all probability, the word "masters" would not find favour with feminist esotericists. For another reference to a pathworking in higher realms, see Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 28.

"[r]ather than travelling into a 'real' spirit world, neo-Shamanic journeys are often perceived as being trips into oneself [...]."[45] As Greenwood reports, "[T]he otherworld is also the innerworld; it is both internal and external – a combination of personal and social experience that involves a paradox of going out of the self to find the self within – and is specifically different for everyone."[46] Heelas and Woodhead, meanwhile, use the term "subjectivisation" to denote this sort of inward turn taken by late modern spiritual seekers.[47]

Section 3: Magical Mystery Tours

We will now look at places which are sacred, but in a somewhat different sense to those we have hitherto seen. We need to introduce the idea that within the esoteric universe, the sacred place can be a somewhat unpredictable business: rather than static, the sacred can be motile and esotericists do not always know *where* is sacred, nor exactly *how* it is sacred, until something has happened in that place. Moreover, we need to introduce the idea that in esoteric thought, there is an opposite of sacred which is more than merely mundane: there is spiritual *pollution* as well as sacrality.

A degree of human agency in the previous two sections will have been obvious, but here in the third section it would seem to be social structure rather than individual agency (to use the familiar sociological binary) which holds the determinant force. By this, I mean that in the first section, the sacred was *made*, while in the second it was *found where expected* according to the esoteric worldview. In this section, rather than the esotericist finding the sacred, *it finds them;* in the esoteric universe, the sacred sometimes has an uncanny knack of confounding human agency and appearing where least expected. This aspect of the sacred is both capricious and nebulous, yet it is integral to understanding of the esoteric cosmos.

Moreover, while the argument so far has largely focused on space and place, now time becomes a more important factor. Anthropology and sociology have generally tended towards synchronic focus in their studies and as Massey noted, the tendency in human geography too has been to privilege space over time.[48] Histor-

45 Wallis, *Shamans/Neo-Shamans*, 59.

46 Greenwood, *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld*, 27.

47 Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead, *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).

48 Doreen Massey "Politics and Space/Time," in Michael Keith and Steve Pile ed. *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), 141–161. For more on the interconnection and spatiality

ians, on the other hand, have (by definition) been much more comfortable with diachrony and social change. The conclusion of this section will suggest that scholarship needs to be sensitive to different forms of, and different degrees of, intentionality in the esoteric sacred, and to the fact that these variable aspects of the sacred demonstrate marked diachronic instability.

To begin by returning to our hierarchy of celestial and infernal realms, these also present us with some examples of stochastic manifestations of the sacred. As a boy, poet William Blake famously looked into a tree in South London's Peckham, to see it "filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars."[49] We might interpret this as a sudden celestial manifestation; this is suggested by the "stars" simile, their appearing "above" Blake, and he himself – I infer – described them as "angels" to his biographer. Alternatively, esotericism might now see them as nature spirits, given their arboreal location, perhaps relating them to beings associated with a particular place: *genii locorum.* Whatever the case, esoteric entities do not always have to feature; in many cases, "ordinary" urban wildlife offers a semantic system of communication with sacred nature. "The city often seems lifeless and barren," writes Penczak, "but there are so many creatures living under its skin. Most of the wild things are forms of vermin, strays or insects."[50] That said, he continues on to list avian wildlife which teems above the tress and rooftops, and the significance of each bird species. All such incidents, events and signs in the (sub)urban environment occur largely beyond the control of the individual esotericist concerned. They do not choose either the time, location or nature of them; they merely interpret them.

Turning now towards the lower realms, commuting or travelling via subway can create a sense of subterranean sacred.[51] In the words of Rajchel:

> Commuter rails capture shadows of the city, literally and figuratively. [...] They go underneath the streets – literally speeding through seedy undergrounds. The underworld qualities alone

and temporality, see Nigel Thrift and Jon May, *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge, 2001).

49 Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake with Selections from his Poems and Other Writings* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1880), 7; on Blake's religious experiences, see Marsha Keith Schuchard, *Why Mrs Blake Cried: William Blake and the Erotic Imagination* (London: Penguin/Vintage Digital, 2013).

50 Penczak, *City Magick*, 47.

51 It should be qualified that not everyone who has been influenced by esoteric cosmology finds that every subway journey is sacred or even particularly significant; this would not be practical, and people would rarely arrive at work on time were every trip below ground level to entail a vivid initiatory journey from death to rebirth.

> can make a magician's head spin. Trains are especially good for two types of shadow work: the inner work of the dark self, and wider shadow work.[52]

Basile mentions a somewhat more uncomfortable experience of "riding a subway and drawing symbols of protection into my palm when the car broke down in a dark tunnel underground."[53] Here, perhaps due to a gendered experience of public space, the symbolism of the infernal, and the empirical risk of being in danger while riding the subway merge seamlessly within the esoteric worldview. While Rajchel's experience was (ultimately) positive, Basile's seems to have been more of an ordeal.

However, it is not just the three zones of the esoteric universe which matter; within the esoteric universe, almost everywhere is a potentially sacred place – or magically meaningful, in some sense. The following data give us an idea of how the sacred can manifest in locations which are neither subterranean, nor celestial nor natural. When inhabiting any given area (be it urban or suburban), the esotericist can find out certain local information, such as the history and also the folklore. Events will have happened here in the past, and at least some of these will have been recorded. As well as "official" history, esotericists consider folk tales, ghost lore and urban myth to be valid sources of information. To return to the electromagnetic imaginary, the past is also said to have left remnants or even revenants in the form of energies which linger long after events:

> [H]otspots include haunted areas and time loops. In some areas, you may feel a presence, especially if there is a strong historic element to a tragedy or death. [...] Astral sight reveals the spirits of those who have walked Earth, or other beings not in a human shape. Some hauntings are not even occupied by independent spirits. They are like time loops, in which an event was so strong that it was recorded into the energy patterns of the area. Every so often, like a bad record, the event gets played again.[54]

Also unspecific to any one the three realms of the esoteric cosmos, and separable (at least in theory) from energy in the form of historical echoes, is the ubiquitous idea of terrestrial energy. Patterns of mysterious force known variously as "ley lines," "earth lines," "dragon lines," "lines of force," or just "energy lines" are said to run throughout the land right across the planet. There are multiple "maps" of ley lines depending on which books one reads and to whom one

---

52 Diana Rajchel, *Urban Magick: A Guide for the City Witch* (Woodbury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2020), 208; the use of "shadow" here references the analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung.

53 Basile, *City Witchery*, 11.

54 Penczak, *City Magick*, 84.

talks. There is no agreement within esotericism as to whether they retain their "natural" patterns or are diverted or disrupted by modern development.[55] Almost always in these matters, esotericism stresses personal experience over positivism, and there is relatively little in the way of agreement and certainly no canon.[56]

Sometimes, a negative kind of energy can be perceived as present. One of the esotericists I knew, a male from the U.S. then living in London, had an old knee injury. The site of the damage, he said, persistently throbbed when his train commute carried him underneath certain overhead wires. This he understood to be electro-magnetic pollution, something very common in built-up areas and which Penczak warns can have a deleterious impact on both physical and spiritual health.[57] This is an example of what Davis terms "powerline paranoia," and it presents the paradox that, despite all the transcendental scientism inherent in the idea of otherworldly energies, in practice it becomes entangled with real and marked anxiety surrounding actual electro-magnetic energy.[58] (As mentioned above, there is little discussion of neutral energy – nor neutral place – within esotericism, and while it may theoretically exist, it is not what seems to interest and engage people either discursively or in practice.) Esoteric geography in the form of "earth energy," and esoteric history in the form of "past energy" are separate notions with distinct genealogies, but they merge more or less seamlessly in the experiential reality of contemporary practice.

In other cases, mysterious things can occur without any obvious geomantic or archaeological basis to them. Writer and magician Alan Moore recounts an incident wherein one of his characters simply appeared before him:

> … I was in Westminster in London … and I was sitting at a sandwich bar. All of a sudden, up the stairs came John Constantine. […] He looked at me, stared me straight in the eyes, smiled, nodded almost conspiratorially, and then just walked off around the corner to the other part of the snack bar. I sat there and thought, should I go around that corner and see if he is really there, or should I just eat my sandwich and leave? I opted for the latter;

55 Penczak, *City Magick*, 83.

56 The original idea can be traced back to English antiquarian Alfred Watkins during the 1920s: see Alfred Watkins, *The Old Straight Track: Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites and Mark Stones* (London: Penguin, 1988 [1925]); the notion was developed and made more mystical by John Michell during the 1960s and 70s: see John Michell, *The View Over Atlantis* (London: Abacus, 1973); added to these English ideas were certain interpretations of aspects of ancient Chinese thought and, as J.J. Clarke has noted, the practice of *fēng-shuǐ* has now been stretched far from its original concern with the location of graves to be combined with earth energy lines in both Europe and America: see J. J. Clark, *The Tao of the West: Western Transformations of Taoist Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000).

57 Christopher Penczak, *City Magick*, 83.

58 Davis, *TechGnosis*, 55.

> I thought it was the safest. I'm not making any claims to anything, I'm just saying that it happened. Strange little story.[59]

Moore had not been expecting such an archetypal apparition (for not even esotericists generally expect such phenomena) and the whole event seems to have come as a surprise. That café – or whatever now stands in its place – will have become a landmark in Moore's personal psychogeography of London. To anyone else however, even to other esoterically minded individuals, it is simply another building on another street in another city. This is important: unless Moore chooses to divulge the precise location, it cannot become sacred to anyone else and will remain his – and only his – sacred place. Anything else that may subsequently happen there will be known to him and him alone.

It is not always a matter of such mysterious manifestation: Draco mentions how the metropolis itself can sometimes suddenly become sacred-seeming: "[…] at dusk or dawn when natural light take[s] on an 'otherworldly' quality – casting a translucent sheen over the city-scape – changing plain, red-brick buildings into glowing terracotta temples, with grimy windows transformed into sparkling pools of light."[60] Here it would seem to be an unexpected twist of the twilight which performs the magic and thus this sacred is almost an aesthetic, linked to a certain way of seeing as much as to any particular place. Again, this is a personal experience, in the beholder's eye, and it reminds us of Wright and Sayre-Adams declaiming: "We are the sacred space: it lives in us, and is held all around us."[61]

These words from Penzcak raise another interesting quirk of the urban experience for the esotericist: "Certain messages or signs jump out at you as important. They may come in the form of street signs and billboards, where some words stick out as more important than the others […]."[62] The urban environment is of course full of potential communications. There are advertisements, signs, graffiti, overheard voices and conversations and these all combine in surreal cut-up collage to offer potential esoteric significance. Neither countryside nor wilderness can be said to brim with messages in quite the same way. As Moore poetically puts

---

59 Christensen, William A. and Mark Seifert, "The Unexplored Medium," in *Wizard* magazine 27, November 1993 (Los Angeles: Wizard Press/Wizard Entertainment), 42–49. John Constantine, perhaps best described in this context as an archetype or a tulpa, is a blue-collar occult detective and trickster who has featured in a number of graphic novels, television series, and Hollywood movies (played in the latter by Keanu Reeves).

60 Draco, *Traditional Witchcraft*, 130.

61 Stephen G. Wright and Jean Sayre-Adams, *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare* (London: Churchill Livingstone/Harcourt Publishers, 2000), 61.

62 Penczak, *City Magick*, 84.

it, the "peeling letters of the shopfronts are shapes borrowed from some angel lexicon."[63] Even when an esotericist consciously seeks out the sacred in their locality ("questing" or deliberate exploration, a practice I have covered elsewhere) they never know quite what they might discover.[64] Penczak simply advises them to "[b]e prepared for anything."[65]

Two important corollaries come with this. The first is that not everyone is having the same esoteric experience in the same esoteric place. This means that a diversity of reports and views inevitably exist; in simple terms, esotericists do not necessarily agree with one another on any one "map" of the sacred in their local area. Secondly, there is a diachronic dimension in play: energy is not simply static, but volatile; it exists in a state of flux. Its pulsations and indeed its very nature can be altered through human agency, and it also seems to be prone to changing "naturally." There is a common narrative pattern whereby esotericists report going to a once-familiar location but finding that it did not feel as it once had; its energy, it was said, had changed. Explanations for this range from transits and transitions of an astrological nature, to something that the esotericist themselves may have done, or to other human agency such as mundane urban development or even malign magic. Not always is any explanation found; sometimes, it is just seen as the result of an ineffable shift in the energy of the place or the person(s) concerned and taken as a sign that it is time to move on. Esotericists understand their quest for self-transformation as ongoing, as we have seen; as such, it makes sense that they should hear the call of the new from time to time. Compared then to the sacred places of many other religions, the esoteric sacred would seem to exhibit a relatively high degree of inconsistency. In the final analysis, coexisting with the empirical (sub)urban landscape is a shifting pattern of energies many and various. Rather than a static map, it is reminiscent more of a moving meteorological map, whereby a territory is superimposed by various volatile systems which each have their own dynamism and alter via their interactions with one another.

Conclusion

The subject of time has been mentioned intermittently throughout this chapter, and especially in Section 3. It can now be concluded that time always matters, be-

63 Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, *Snakes and Ladders* (Paddington, Queensland: 2001), 39.
64 William Redwood, "Urban Energy: Cartographies of the Esoteric City," in *Supernatural Cities: Enchantment, Anxiety and Spectrality*, ed. Karl Bell (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019).
65 Penczak, *City Magick*, 81.

cause a key point about esoteric sacred places is that they are not always diachronically stable; instead, sacred place is variable and, in some cases, spontaneous: it can never be known with absolute certainty, because esoteric energy will flow where it has to go and arrive precisely when it should do. Foucault suggested that "a space that can be flowing like sparkling water" as opposed to "space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal."[66] It is the former which we will need to acknowledge in more detail in order to elucidate the esoteric sacred, but how can space – sacred or otherwise – be "flowing?" That may not, on first examination, make a lot of sense; surely "space" and "place" are inherently linked to physical geography, and is not that the study of things which are materially solid and topographically fixed? Not always: tectonic plates drift, glaciers melt, rivers flow, and oceans have their tides and currents.[67] Similarly here, we have encountered an unstable topography, a quite self-conscious one – esotericists are rarely shocked by the fact that (as they wryly phrase it) "shift happens."[68]

As noted at the beginning of Section 1, there is a dearth of buildings dedicated to esotericism. It follows that there is an entirely pragmatic need to make non-sacred space sacred, even though these places may not necessarily remain sacred for very long. They may need to be shared, they may need to be occluded, they may need to be sacralised again and again, or they may only be sacralised and used once. These places are at least partly imaginary, even while they exist in empirical locations. In Section 2, we saw a more obviously symbolic, imaginary and cosmological system of sacred places. This was stratified, and "structure" might seem a valid word to use for the tripartite organisation of the otherworlds into lower, natural and upper realms. However, any strict structure is problematised by the fact that these different dimensions are not separate from the psyche individual seeker. There is a structural instability to this psychological-subjective aspect of the sacred, in that it cannot be considered to be quite the same from person to person; it cannot be entirely consistent for the same person over time, either, because both the individual unconscious and the collective unconscious are considered to be diachronically dynamic within esotericism. In Section 3, we looked at how some places and events therein are experienced as significant without the conscious inten-

66 Foucault, *Of Other Spaces*, 3.

67 There is no reason why the social sciences can only study things which are apparently "solid," conceptualised as such through metaphors taken from selective "hard" sciences; after all, oceanographers deal with currents and tides, meteorologists with weather patterns, wind circulation and cloud formations, and chemists and physicists have been dealing with liquids and gasses for some centuries now.

68 For religion and fluidity more generally, see Thomas A. Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).

tion of the individual: the potential for sacred significance within esotericism is very broad and everywhere in the material world is – potentially – sacred. Also, it is potentially polluted, because the idea of "negative energy" implies an opposite of sacred (rather than its mere absence) and presents the possibility of spiritual corruption of places or persons. Thus, while everywhere may be potentially enchanted and meaningful for the esotericist, it may sometimes be so in a negative, dark or even dangerous way. Sacred esoteric places are seen as palimpsests of the energy of any previous events which have (or are believed to have) taken place there, be they good or bad. Such palimpsests are protean in that we also have to consider esoteric energy flows which – be they geological, astrological, human-made or simply inexplicable – are precisely that: flows, nebulous forces in flux, which by definition cannot remain static. Furthermore, there is again the issue of subjectivisation: individuals have unique experiences of these energies, and one esotericist's sacred may not be quite like that of another or could even be contrary to it. Therefore, we have to acknowledge polysemy and polyvocality, disagreement, amicable or otherwise, which creates "noise" amid "signals," introducing "disorder" to the "discourse." As Serres put it: "the state of things consists of islands sown in archipelagos on the noisy, poorly understood disorder of the sea …."[69] This tendency has in all probability intensified in recent years, but it was noted by some of the earliest studies of esotericism undertaken during the previous century. Roy Wallis used the term "epistemological individualists" to characterise the persons involved.[70] Luhrmann noted their "surprising spiritual diversity" amid rhetorical claims that the only dogma was that "there is no dogma."[71]

Esoteric sacred places are unstable in all these different ways. They exhibit a "liquid" quality which is reminiscent of the diagnosis of the modern condition associated with Bauman.[72] Somewhat earlier, Toffler's work also focused on the dizzying speed of change which has come to characterise contemporary life, "the roaring current of change, a current so powerful today that it overturns institutions, shifts our values and shrivels our roots."[73] I would however temper this

69 Cited by Josue V. Harari and David F. Bell, "Introduction: Journal á Plusieurs Voies," in Michel Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science and Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) viii–xl; Serres' use of "noisy" may need clarifying: it is not so much that his metaphorical sea is not calm (though I am sure it is not) but "noise" here specifically relates to his idea of "noise" versus "signal"; in a technical understanding of communications, purity is hard to achieve and therefore any message will likely be corrupted by, or at least complicated by, additional "noise" in the channel.

70 Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (London, 1984), 100.

71 Tanya M. Luhrmann, *Persuasions*, 7.

72 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2000).

73 Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (London: Pan Books, 1970), 11.

somewhat apocalyptic observation by adding that rapid change – and a strong awareness thereof – may be positively reflected in late modern cultural practices such as contemporary esoteric magic. Change is not merely a destructive force but can be refracted through novel spiritual forms which are quite creative.

To sum up, esoteric sacred places are eclectic mixtures of elements past and present, transcendent and immanent, shared and personal. They are fleeting in their duration and fluid in their material and imaginary structures. The esoteric sacred presents more as spectrum than binary, and while sacred places may seem reified, they are considerably more continua than bounded "things." In the final analysis, the situation is dynamic and stochastic, and it seems necessary to write of multiplicities of sacred processes, rather than singular, static sacred place. It is for the reader to decide how unique this makes contemporary esoteric thought and practice, or to what degree a shifting sacred can be discerned in the ideas and activities of any other religion or spirituality.

Bibliography

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space.* Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994 (1958).

Basile, Lisa Marie. *City Witchery: Accessible Rituals, Practices and Prompts for Conjuring and Creating in a Magical Metropolis.* Bellevue: Quarto Publishing, 2021.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press 2000.

Beery, Itzhak and Perkins, John. *The Gift of Shamanism: Visionary Power, Ayahuasca Dreams, and Journeys to Other Realms.* Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 2015.

Bender, Barbara. *Stonehenge: Making Space.* Oxford: Berg, 1999.

Beth, Rae. *Hedge Witch: A Guide to Solitary Witchcraft.* London: Robert Hale, 1990.

Blain, Jenny. *Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic: Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism.* London: Routledge, 2002.

Bowman, Marion. "Learning from Experience: The Value of Analysing Avalon." *Religion* 39 Issue 2 (2009): 161–168.

Carrette, Jeremy and King, Richard. *$elling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion.*London: Routledge, 2004.

Clarke, J.J. *The Tao of the West: Western Transformations of Taoist Thought.* London: Routledge, 2000.

Davis, Erik. *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic and Mysticism in the Age of Information.* London: Serpent's Tail, 1999.

de Freitas, Daniel Medeiros, Lima, Carolina Maria Soares, Nawratek, Krzysztof and Pataro, Bernardo Miranda. *Epistemic Ambivalence: Pentecostalism and Candomblé in a Brazilian City.* London: Routledge, 2023.

Draco, Mélusine. *Traditional Witchcraft for Urban Living.* Winchester: Moon Books, 2012.

Dumit, Joseph. "Playing Truths: Logics of Seeking and the Persistence of the New Age." *Focaal* 37 (2001): 63–75.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968 (1915).
Faivre, Antoine. "Introduction I" to *Modern Esoteric Spirituality,* edited by Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman. Chestnut Ridge, Pennsylvania: Crossroad Publishing, 1995: xi–xxiii.
Faivre, Antoine. *Access to Western Esotericism.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16, 1 (1986): 22–27.
Fox, Richard G. "East of Said." In *Edward Said: A Critical Reader,* edited by Michael Sprinkler. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, 144–56.
Franchetto, Andrea. "Imaginal Architectural Devices and the Ritual Space of Medieval Necromancy." *Endeavour* 44 (2020). Accessed July 18 2023. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2021.100748
Gibbons, Brian. *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age.* London: Routledge, 2001.
Gilchrist, Alexander. *Life of William Blake with Selections from his Poems and Other Writings.* London and New York: Macmillan, 1880.
Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. "The Esoteric Uses of Electricity: Theologies of Electricity from Swabian Pietism to Ariosophy." *Aries* 4, 1 (2004): 69–90.
Greenwood, Susan. *Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology.* Oxford: Berg, 2000.
Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1988.
Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed.* London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
Hanegraaf, Wouter J. "Reflections on New Age and the Secularisation of Nature." In *Nature Religion Today: Paganism in the Modern World*, edited by Joanne Pearson, Richard H. Roberts and Geoffrey Samuel. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998, 22–32.
Harari Josue V. and Bell, David F. "Introduction: Journal á Plusieurs Voies." In Michel Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science and Philosophy.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, viii–xl.
Heelas, Paul and Woodhead, Linda. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality.* Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.
Hetherington, Kevin. *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics.* London: Sage Publications, 1998.
Ivakhiv, Ivan. *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona.* Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001.
Lovelock, James. *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 (1979).
Lee, Vinny and Main, Ray. *The Spiritual Home.* London: Pavilion Books, 2002.
Luhrmann, Tanya, M. *Persuasions of the Witch's Craft: Ritual Magic in Contemporary England.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989.
Massey, Doreen. "Politics and Space/Time." In *Place and the Politics of Identity,* edited by Michael Keith and Steve Pile. London: Routledge, 1993.
Michell, John. *The View Over Atlantis.* London: Abacus, 1973.
Moeran, Brian and de Waal Malefyt, Timothy. *Magical Capitalism: Enchantment, Spells, and Occult Practices in Contemporary Economies.* New York: Springer International Publishing, 2018.
Moore, Alan and Campbell, Eddie. *Snakes and Ladders.* Paddington, Queensland: 2001.
Obeyesekere, Gananath. *The Awakened Ones: Phenomenology of Visionary Experience.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
Penczak, Christopher. *City Magick: Urban Rituals, Spells, and Shamanism.* York Beach, Maine: Weiser Books, 2001.

Pettis, Chuck. *Secrets of Sacred Space: Discover and Create Places of Power.* St Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 1999.
Pignarre, Philippe, Stengers, Isabelle and Goffey, Andrew. *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell.* Houndmills, Basingstoke/London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Pike, Sarah M. *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
Prince, Ruth and Riches, David. *The New Age in Glastonbury: The Construction of Religious Movements.* Oxford: Berghahn, 2000.
Rajchel, Diana. *Urban Magick: A Guide for the City Witch.* Woodbury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2020.
Redwood, William. "Absolute Beasts? Social Mechanics of Achieved Monstrosity." In *Disgust and Desire: The Paradox of the Monster*, edited by Kristen Wright. Leiden: Brill, 2018, 89–110.
Redwood, William. "Urban Energy: Cartographies of the Esoteric City." In *Supernatural Cities: Enchantment, Anxiety and Spectrality*, edited by Karl Bell. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2019.
Schuchard, Marsha Keith. *Why Mrs Blake Cried: William Blake and the Erotic Imagination.* London: Penguin/Vintage Digital, 2013.
Streep, Peg. *Altars Made Easy: A Complete Guide to Creating Your Own Sacred Space.* London: HarperCollins, 1997.
Sutcliffe, Steven. *Children of the New Age: A History of Spiritual Practices.* London: Routledge, 2003.
Sutcliffe, Steven and Bowman, Marion. *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.
Sutcliffe, Steven and Gilhus, Ingvild Sælid. *New Age Spirituality: Rethinking Religion.* Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2013.
Tatar, Maria. *Spellbound: Studies on Mesmerism and Literature.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.
Thrift, Nigel and May, Jon. *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality.* London: Routledge, 2001.
Toffler, Alvin. *Future Shock.* London: Pan Books, 1970.
Tweed, Thomas A. *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006.
Urban, Hugh B. and Johnson, Paul C. *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Secrecy.* London: Routledge, 2022.
Wallis, Robert J. *Shamans/Neo-Shamans: Ecstasy, Alternative Archaeologies and Contemporary Pagans.* London: Routledge, 2003.
Wallis, Roy. *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life.* London, 1984.
Watkins, Alfred. *The Old Straight Track: Its Mounds, Beacons, Moats, Sites and Mark Stones.* London: Penguin, 1988 (1925).
Wright, Stephen G. and Sayre-Adams, Jean. *Sacred Space: Right Relationship and Spirituality in Healthcare.* London: Churchill Livingstone/Harcourt Publishers, 2000.

Shujuan Li, Alden Stoner, Esther M. Sternberg, Patricia A. Deuster, J. Ray Runyon, Bo Yang, Angela Walseng

Sacred Gardens as Healing Spaces

Abstract: This chapter argues that nearby contemplative green spaces can serve as healing spaces in modern urban environments through three separately conducted but highly related case studies. The first case study reviews the design and provides examples of Sacred Places stewarded by Nature Sacred and community leaders. There are over 100 Sacred Places across the United States intentionally designed as community-led green spaces for the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The design framework, process, design elements, management, and network collectively contribute to the success of Sacred Places in offering healing and hope to their communities. The second case study examines psychological, physiological, and molecular health impacts of a sacred green space on 20 healthy volunteers walking the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center's "Green Road" forest glen path and "Urban Road," using subjective questionnaires, wearable devices, and salivary molecular measures. The third case study evaluates the performance of urban parks in Tucson, Arizona, using big data. It supports the first case study by showing that small parks (e.g., mini parks) located within communities are the most successful type of park in attracting visits and serving residents. The three case studies support Nature Sacred's guiding principles of Sacred Places: open to all, nearby and/or within the community they serve, "sacred" or designed for reflection and wellbeing, and community-led.

Introduction

This chapter addresses nearby, contemplative green spaces – or "Sacred Places" – as healing spaces in modern urban environments and healthcare campuses. We

Note: The authors are members of the the following institutions: *College of Architecture, Planing & Landscape Architecture*, University of Arizona, Tucson AZ and *Joint Appointement College of Architecture, Planing and Landscape Architecture:* Shujuan Li, Esther M. Sternberg, Bo Yang. *Nature Sacred*, Annapolis MD: Angela Walseng, Alden Stoner; *Consortium for Health and Military Performance, Department of Military Emergency Medicine, F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University*, Bethesda, MD 20814: Patricia A. Deuster; *College of Medicine*, University of Arizona, Tucson AZ: Esther M. Sternberg, J. Ray Runyon; *Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine:* Esther M. Sterberg, J. Ray Runyon; *College of Agri-*

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. CC BY This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-004

present three case studies of urban gardens and parks with the first case study outlining key elements and processes needed to design such spaces. Our second case study describes a sacred healing forest glen on a military hospital base and approaches to measuring individual psychological, physiological and molecular responses to sacred spaces. Finally our third case study compares the performance of different sized gardens and parks in a city by using big data analytics. The different approaches adopted in this chapter illustrate a framework to measure the impact of these green spaces on physical health and emotional well-being at multiple scales. Whereas the second case shows the impacts of such green, urban spaces on stress reduction and enhanced well-being on an individual and population level, the third case proves the efficiency of small parks and green spaces serving urban residents from a park system level.

Section 1: The Power of Sacred Places – Nearby, Community-Led, Green Spaces

Sacred Places are green spaces intentionally designed to connect people with nature for the purpose of improving health and wellbeing of individuals and communities (Nature Sacred 2021). By 2023, over 100 Sacred Places across the United States can be counted among the actively stewarded Nature Sacred Firesoul Network by the TKF Foundation, today known as Nature Sacred, a living, growing community supported in multiple ways, including grant funding for programming and the improvement of Sacred Places.

Sacred Places are defined not only by their design elements and inclusion in a long-term stewardship program, but also by the method in which they are envisioned and ultimately articulated. This approach to green space design and stewardship, detailed below, was established and evolved over 25 years. The process of creating a Sacred Place begins long before the first design sketch is drawn and doesn't end once the site is completed. The purpose of the process and long-term engagement is to deliver on the primary goal of connecting people with nature so they may take advantage of the well-documented benefits, many of which we reference here.

culture, Life and Environmental Sciences University of Arizona, Tucson AZ: J. Ray Runyon. Corresponding author: Shujuan Li (shujuanli@arizona.edu).

Sacred Places are open

Sacred Places are open to all – i. e., they are not private gardens. Sacred Places may be found on healthcare campuses, universities, and within neighborhoods. A key characteristic is that they are physically open to the public and welcoming to everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, background or beliefs.

They comprise four design elements

Every Sacred Place includes four design elements: a portal, path, destination and surround. Although there are endless ways to interpret these elements, each serves a distinct purpose with the intent of creating a transportive, mindful experience. The purpose of *the portal* is to mark the transition of the visitor into a reflective space. Examples include archways, gates, trellises and overhanging trees. *A path* is integral to Sacred Place design as it is intended to serve as a means to allow visitors to focus their thoughts and encourage a sense of mindfulness about their surroundings. Paths in Sacred Places are sometimes straight, leading one through garden plantings; sometimes it's part of a labyrinth; and sometimes it is just winding. *The destination* is an appealing feature or end point that draws the visitor deeply into the space. It could consist of a picturesque view, a quiet spot away from the noisy city; simply a bench to rest and contemplate. *The surround* consists of design elements that define the boundary of the Sacred Place. The purpose of the surround is to encourage a sense of security and temporary separation from the outside world. Examples include a small fence, trees or shrubs, or other structures.

Sacred Place design is community-led

Sacred Places are designed by the community of primary users of the space through a charrette process, defined by the Oxford Dictionary, as a "a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions." This definition meets, in part, the practical definition of the charrette in a Sacred Place context, the purpose of which is to increase the community's sense of connection to this future shared nature space and to provide a means to connect the community members with one another. Nature Sacred tailored this process to the specific purpose of creating a Sacred Place. A key distinction is the fact that it is community-led versus community-informed. Over 25 years of this work, it is clear that people take care of that which they have helped to create, and establish long-term stewardship of their Sacred Places.

The charrette involves community canvassing and a series of structured community meetings through which residents are invited to express their ideas and vision for the future shared community green space. The community hears the feedback on how the space might reflect, honor and celebrate residents' shared culture and/or dreams – and how it could meet unmet community needs.

Nature Sacred provides the framework for gathering the community together and leading them through a visioning process to capture this vision in a way that allows a landscape architect, experienced in working with communities through this collective visioning process, to help interpret their vision into a viable green space design. The landscape architect's central objective is to help translate the community's vision into a viable green space, a Sacred Place. The end result of the charrette is a green space design for a Sacred Place that will reflect and resonate with the community.

The Firesoul

Firesoul is a term Nature Sacred coined when they first developed their approach to creating Sacred Places. The Firesoul is the community's core Sacred Place steward, a community leader who works actively to connect others to nature and understands nature's capacity to help foster healthy people and communities. They are their Sacred Place's representatives in the Nature Sacred Firesoul Network, which in part works to encourage the health and wellbeing of the Firesouls individually via a range of programs and educational offerings intended to help support them in their role.

> A Firesoul is someone who believes in peace and everything that is an example of peace in the natural and built environment. Someone who is positive and someone who believes that giving is more important than receiving. – *Nichole Battle, Firesoul of Thanksgiving Place, Baltimore, MD, and Nature Sacred Board Member*

Sacred Places are homes to the signature Nature Sacred bench and journal

A signature Nature Sacred bench is found in every Sacred Place. The bench's design is distinct and recognizable with a tall, curved back, made of upcycled wood, and includes a pocket beneath the seat. Tucked in the pocket is a yellow waterproof journal.

These journals are placed in every Nature Sacred bench. Although they are visible to anyone who approaches the bench, no signage accompanies them informing visitors of the journal's existence or inviting people to write. This too is a purposeful design element intended to create and offer an element of discovery and delight. As evidenced in the journal entries, it can be a joyful and/or deeply moving experience to suddenly and unexpectedly have an opportunity to connect so deeply and profoundly with strangers.

Thousands of journal entries have been collected over the past 25 years from Sacred Place visitors – from young children to older adults – and in a number of languages. The entries, some written and some expressed in sketch form, reflect a wide-range of sentiments, emotions and experiences – from light-hearted and whimsical to gratitude-filled to reflective and intensely revealing (Figure 1).

Whereas the act of journaling is typically a private, personal practice, the fact that journals found in Sacred Places are community journals for everyone to both read and write in has enabled a distinct practice to emerge. For decades, Nature Sacred has observed consistently in journals from across their network of Sacred Places what they refer to as "call and response" entries where one person leaves

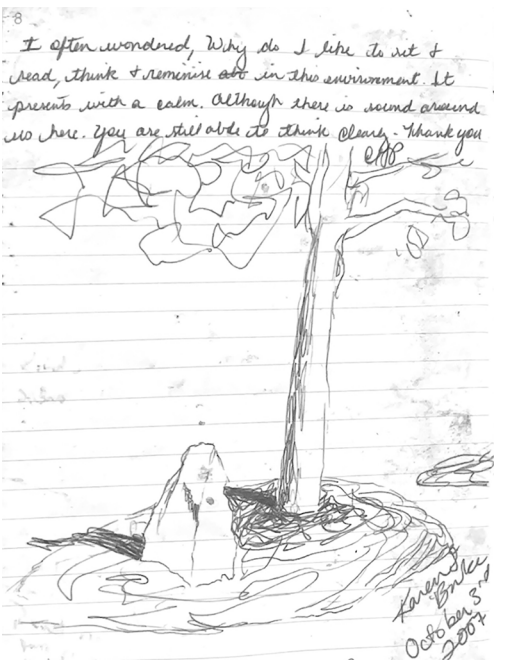

Fig. 1: An example of journal entry from a Nature Sacred bench journal. Photo courtesy of Nature Sacred.

an entry, and at a later date, someone else responds. In many cases, the theme of these paired entries involves some kind of struggle with the response/reply offering encouragement and hope.

It was these journals and what Nature Sacred observed in the entries that prompted the organization to initiate the National Nature Sacred Awards Program. This research program was a first in that it coupled the development of green spaces with research projects – each exploring a different aspect of nature's impact on health-related conditions and/or issues: from childbirth to disaster recovery. More than 30 studies (F. Foote et al 2018; MC Hunter et al 2019; O. Kardan et al 2015) have been published to date out of the program, including those affiliated with The Green Road at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, in Bethesda, Maryland.

Once each journal is filled with entries, they are shared with Nature Sacred for archiving. By using natural language processing, K. Tidball et al. found 11 themes expressed in these journals (K. Tidball et al 2011) including love, God, life, time, heart, someone in one's life – all consistent with the goals of encouraging the individual to engage in mindful connection with nature and their surroundings.

Sacred Places are supported by the Nature Sacred Firesoul Network

What Nature Sacred observed over time was that stewardship and longer-term investment in Sacred Places is necessary for the health and long-term vitality and use of a green space. The constantly evolving nature of communities, as residents move both in and out and age, often necessitates initiatives that re-engage and re-invite community members into the spaces over time. Like the gardens, these spaces and communities evolve and develop.

Every Sacred Place is automatically a member of the Nature Sacred Firesoul Network, a dynamic program that provides long-term stewardship to Sacred Places. This stewardship is delivered in the form of classes and programming, both for Sacred Place visitors and Firesouls; grants are given for community programming and Sacred Place improvements. Even small injections of support, from financial, in-kind, and leadership, over time can make an outsized impact.

In addition to the Green Road described below in this chapter, Sacred Places are found in a range of different settings across the country. For example, a formerly red-lined (race-restricted) neighborhood in Baltimore is today the site of Choose Life Memorial Garden (Nature Sacred 2022b). Another example is at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center where for over 20 years a labyrinth and garden welcomes the wider community as well as patients and their families (Na-

ture Sacred 2022c). During COVID, when hospital family visitation was suspended, the latter served as an outdoor waiting room for families eager to be near their sick loved ones. At Mt. Olivet Cemetery, one of Washington D.C.'s first racially integrated burial grounds, a Sacred Place was created in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (Nature Sacred 2022d). The site serves a dual purpose, complementing existing green infrastructure across the cemetery and capturing stormwater runoff. In Joplin, Missouri, the site of one of the deadliest tornadoes in recent history, the Butterfly Garden and Overlook was built to help residents of the city work through their pain and loss following the storm (Nature Sacred 2022a). Every Sacred Place is intended to offer healing and hope to its community; although these communities come in different shapes and forms, very often Sacred Places are created in areas where the need for hope and solace is particularly acute, as evidenced by journal entries from visitors to the Green Road at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (quotation below and Figure 2).

> Two days ago my husband [...] went to heaven. I miss him dearly. This day I decided to take a walk in remembrance of him. This place of solitude closes the chapter of the life I once knew [...] Thank you for creating a space for rejuvenation and renewal. This is a beautiful way to end my stay here at Walter Reed. – M

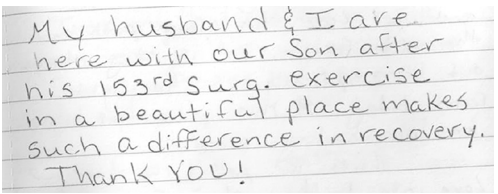

Fig. 2: An example of journal entry from a Nature Sacred bench journal from the Green Road. Photo courtesy of Nature Sacred.

Section 2: Measuring Stress Impacts of Green vs Urban Spaces: Case Study, Green Road Project, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD

The "Green Road," a joint project between the Uniformed Services University, the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the University of Maryland, the University of Arizona and Nature Sacred (formerly the TKF Foundation), is an example of a sacred green space, designed according to the key elements de-

scribed in Section 1. This case study sought to measure the impact of this green space by using quantitative and qualitative methods, and focusing on individual psychological, physiological, and molecular responses.

The Green Road is an intentionally designed woodland environment comprised of a retrofitted, reclaimed path in a forest glen along a branch of the Rock Creek, which flows through the WRNMMC military hospital base, in the Washington, D.C. suburb of Bethesda, Maryland. The goal in retrofitting this path was to provide an American Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible, healing, sacred nature space for wounded warriors living on base and being treated at the base's hospitals and clinics for conditions including Post Traumatic Stress, amputations, and other physical injuries. Prior to construction of the path, the only available route for the base's occupants to navigate between their residences and the hospital clinics where they were being treated, was along a busy urban road (Urban Road). The Green Road forest glen provides instead a place to walk quietly in nature, contemplate, and socialize with friends and family.

Like the sacred gardens described in Section 1, the Green Road includes a "portal" – timber pedestrian bridge across Stoney Creek (noted in map in Figure 3); a path (Figure 4); a surround – the creek and the adjacent road (noted in map in Figure 3); and a Nature Sacred bench with a waterproof journal (noted in map in Figure 3). It includes several destinations: communal spaces – the picnic area and the stone circle for singing and gathering (Figure 5) – and importantly, a commemorative space for quiet contemplation, prayer, or remembrance of lost comrades and loved ones (Figure 6). The Nature Sacred bench is at the center of the commemorative space and overlooks the forest glen as a whole.

The process of creating the Green Road also followed Nature Sacred's community-led design principles, with a "Firesoul" both of the community and passionate about that community's mission and goals. Retired Captain USN Dr. Fred Foote led many focus groups with patients, their families and hospital staff to determine what they most wanted to include in the space's design. These surveys revealed that they most wanted to be in nature, experience the flora and fauna of the natural woodland space, have gathering spaces for picnics, music and singing, and importantly to have a space for quiet contemplation and remembrance. Even before construction began, Dr. Foote worked with community members to clear the area of undergrowth, to give them all a sense of ownership of the space. The finished space provides the community with an open, sacred space for all who visit, live, and work on the base to enjoy.

Numerous studies have shown the health benefits of walking in forests, including studies of the Japanese tradition of Shinrin-Yoku, or forest bathing (Nabhan 2022; Antonelli 2020; Kotera 2022). These benefits are thought to derive from a combination of gentle exercise which encourages deep breathing, being immersed in

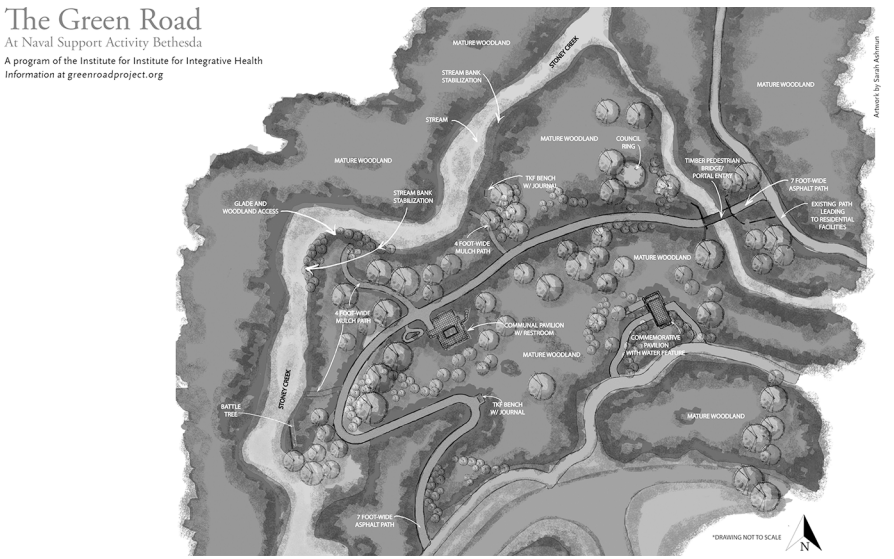

Fig. 3: Map of the "Green Road" sacred woodland garden glen, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Sarah Capps.

an environment rich in "biogenic volatile organic compounds" (BVOCs) (Nabhan 2022; Antonelli 2020; Kotera 2022), being bathed in diffuse green light (Ibrahim 2017), and/or immersed in the sounds of nature.

Indeed, hundreds of BVOCs are released from leaves, twigs, petals, bark and other parts of plants just before, during and after a rain. Studies have shown that there are many commonalities between the compounds released in the Korean and Japanese cedar forests and Sonoran Desert sanctuaries (Nabhan 2022), which are thought to confer some of these health benefits. Others have studied the impact of green light on reducing pain. Studies in rats in LED-lit green light cages fitted with green contact lenses have shown a substantial reduction in pain sensitivity in rats exposed to green light (Ibrahim 2017). Similarly, studies in humans with the pain syndromes of fibromyalgia and chronic migraines have shown that looking at green light for one to two hours daily for several weeks significantly reduces all types of pain as determined by the Short Form McGill Pain Questionnaire pain scale (Martin 2020; Cheng 2021). It is thought that receptors on the retina, which respond to green light, signal brain pain centers as well as the suprachiasmatic nucleus – the brain's clock center – thus reducing pain and also improving sleep. The sounds of nature – bird song, gentle breezes, even gentle rain – also reduce stress and can help people relax and sleep, both by masking jarring sounds and evoking positive memories (Yoon and Baek 2022). Like birdsong,

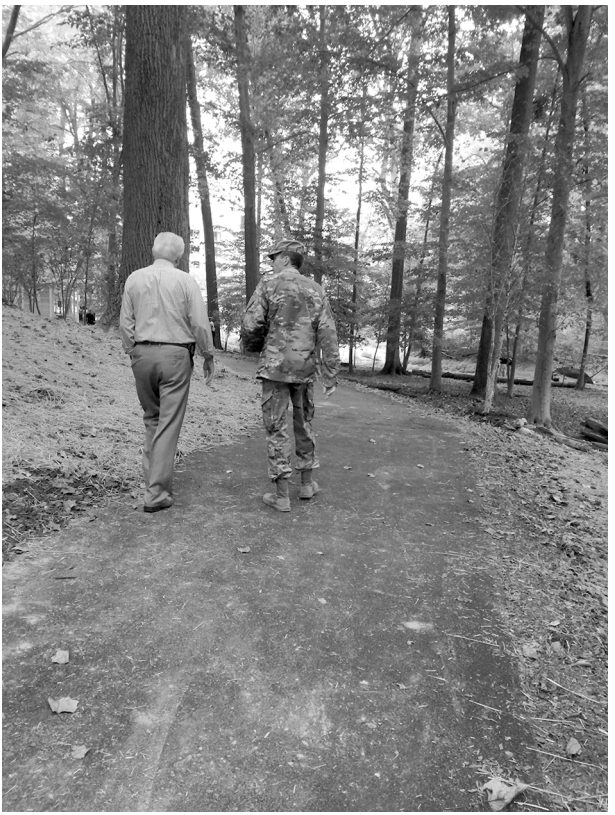

Fig. 4: Walking the "Green Road" path in the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center sacred woodland garden glen, Bethesda, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Esther Sternberg.

they are often at a decibel level that optimally reduces the stress response (Srinivasan et al. in review 2022). Other ways in which walking in a forest can improve health are related to the general beneficial effects of exercise and deep breathing, which reduce the stress response and activate the relaxation response; they can also induce a meditative state that activates anti-pain and dopamine-rich reward brain regions. Finally, brain imaging studies report that vistas of nature activate brain areas rich in endorphins, which suggests another mechanism for positive feelings and pain reduction (Yue, Vessel, and Biederman 2007).

In the Green Road study, 20 healthy volunteers were fitted with heart rate variability (HRV) monitors[1] for continuous HRV monitoring before, during, and after a

1 Draeger Bodyguard II, https://www.draeger.com/en_seeur/Products/Bodyguard-II.

Fig. 5: Council Ring gathering space in the "Green Road" sacred woodland garden glen, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Nature Sacred.

Fig. 6: Commemorative space in the "Green Road" sacred woodland garden glen, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. Photo courtesy of Nature Sacred.

20-minute walk along either the Green Road or the Urban Road; saliva samples were collected before and after the walk. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were also administered after each walk. The semi-structured interviews revealed mostly positive responses to the Green Road, including enjoyment, relaxation, and feelings of privacy and safety. Relevant to the theme of this volume, words used to describe the feelings evoked in the Green Road included those of appreciation and gratitude, thoughts of God and a Higher Power, and feeling centered and in the moment. In contrast, the Urban Road produced mostly negative responses, with concerns for safety, and distress over noise and noxious exposures, and feelings of stress and anxiety (Ameli et al. 2021). Mindfulness scales revealed that walking on the Green Road increased mindfulness and decreased distress as compared to walking on the Urban Road (Ameli et al. 2021). Consistent with the subjective reports of reduced distress, preliminary measurement of salivary biomarkers showed selective reductions in some salivary cortisol metabolites and increases in some salivary anti-inflammatory biomarkers, however there was considerable variability amongst different individuals (unpublished data). These findings are also consistent with previous studies of forest walkers, which show reductions in the stress response and improvement in mood (Antonelli, Barbieri and Donelli 2019), and with brain imaging studies showing that nature vistas activate brain areas rich in endorphins (Yue, Vessel and Biederman 2007).

Apart from the benefits of exercise and stress reduction on the Green Road, the retrofitted design also provides picnic areas and gathering spots for social interactions, music and singing, which are known to improve health (Cohen 2004). A space expressly designed for non-denominational contemplation, with a signature Nature Sacred bench overlooking the path and stream, also provides a spiritual place for wounded warriors to remember comrades lost in battle and departed loved ones. In this space they may write their thoughts in a waterproof book stored under the bench. Writing about stressful events is another activity that has been shown to reduce stress and help grieving persons heal (Pennebaker and Chung 2011).

Section 3: Small or Large Green Spaces: A Park System Investigation

Urban parks are an important type of green space in the built environment. In addition to the environmental benefits, urban parks provide essential services to urban residents with various recreational opportunities and places for social interactions (Santos et al. 2016; Yang and Li 2021; Wu et al. 2021). Park visits and park use

also present health and well-being benefits, including reduction in stress, lowered blood pressure, mental health, and perceived physical health (Bedimo-Rung et al. 2005; Lee and Maheswaran 2011; Canfield et al. 2018).

Previous studies of park visits and park use mainly employ surveys, observations, and interviews (Veitch et al. 2014; Evenson et al. 2016; Joseph and Maddock 2016; Chen et al. 2019). These methods are resource-intensive and time-consuming. As a result, previous studies have focused on limited park examples. Few studies have evaluated a city's park system's performance, especially from spatial planning and design perspectives. Recently, several studies have explored the use of social media data to assess urban park visits (Li and Yang 2021; Donahue et al. 2018). However, as user privacy becomes an increasing concern, park visits data extracted from social media platforms that have high spatial resolution are scarce and are becoming more difficult to obtain.

This case study complements the above case studies by investigating urban greenspace from the park system level. Today, the availability of mobile big data makes it possible to investigate urban park visits with greater granularity and at large scales by using aggregated anonymized mobile device data. SafeGraph, a data service company, provides an accurate database of daily global "points of interest" visit data (SafeGraph n.d.). According to SafeGraph, a point of interest (POI) is a place where people spend time or money. Various places are defined as POIs, such as restaurants, grocery stores, shopping malls, hospitals, museums, and parks (SafeGraph n.d.).

Using the SafeGraph dataset, we examined urban park visits in Tucson, Arizona. As a mid-sized city in the United States, Tucson has 155 parks managed by the city's Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, 76 parks are managed by the Natural Resources, Parks and Recreations of the Pima County where Tucson is located. However, not all parks are recognized as POIs in SafeGraph, especially small parks, and these parks were excluded from the analysis. We also excluded school parks because they are only available to the public after school hours. In total, we extracted 141 parks (103 Tucson parks and 38 Pima County parks) located within or bordering Tucson's city limit (therefore likely to be used by Tucson residents) from the SafeGraph dataset.

Tucson Parks and Recreation Department classifies parks into different categories based on park size, planned service radius, and facilities on site (Table 1). As Pima County's Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation does not have a similar categorization of the county parks, we classified the 38 parks managed by Pima County based on Tucson's classification criteria.

Tab. 1: City of Tucson's park type categories (Li et al. 2023).

Park type	Size (ha)	Service radius (km)	Typical amenities
Mini Park	0.03–0.3	0.4	Passive with no play equipment
Neighborhood Park	0.3–6.6	0.8	Play equipment, open turf area, and picnic tables
Community Park	6.2–15.8	2.4	Play equipment, lighted sports fields, aquatic centers, open turf area, picnic tables
Metro Park	18.2–47	4.8	Lighted sports field complexes, recreation centers, and aquatic centers
Regional Park	81.3–150.9	11.3	Diverse
River Park	28.5–130	0.8	Shared-use path with support amenities

In addition to tallying the daily park visits by using SafeGraph data, we calculated the number of people served by each park based on the park service radius. Population data at the Census block group level were retrieved from the American Community Survey 2018. Population data were then overlaid with residential parcel data, with the assumption that population is evenly distributed in residential parcels in each Census block group. For each park, residential parcels with their centroid located within a particular park's service radius were counted. Next, population within these residential parcels were considered as the population served by the park.

Different types of parks are designed to serve different areas of residents. For example, mini parks are designed to serve residents living within 0.4-km distance. Regional parks, in contrast, are designed to provide services to residents within a 11.3-km radius. As a result, small parks on average serve fewer people, and large parks serve more people. As shown in Table 2, in 2019, larger parks attracted more visits than small parks. On average, each mini park has 1320 visits annually, which is less than 10 % of metro parks or regional parks. River parks are the most attractive type. Each river park on average attracted 90,398 visits in 2019.

A park's performance can be measured in different ways. In this current study, the integration of SafeGraph and Census datasets enabled the calculation of two park performance indicators. The *first* indicator is the number of visits per 100 m^2 of park land. This indicator assesses the efficiency of park land in serving people. The *second* indicator is the ratio of visits against the number of residents served by each park as defined by the service radius, which reflects the attractiveness of a park to local residents.

Table 2 shows that smaller parks outperform larger parks measured by the first indicator, with mini parks being the most successful park type. Every 100 m^2 of mini parks attracted more than 50 visits in 2019, which is three times that of neighborhood parks. In comparison, regional parks on average attract only 0.52 visits per 100 m^2 of park land in 2019. The second indicator also reveals that small parks are more successful than large parks. Mini parks attract 1.15 visits for each person served, nearly 30 times of that of regional parks.

Although the two indicators show that small parks perform better than large parks, river parks are exceptions. River parks in Tucson are laid out along the major watercourses and connect other parks, schools, and employment centers across the city. The major facilities of river parks are shared pathways for biking and hiking with supporting amenities. River parks belong to the large park type with sizes similar to that of regional parks. But they are designed with a smaller service radius (0.8 km), same as that of neighborhood parks. The number of visits per 100 m^2 land area of river parks is smaller than those of mini parks and neighborhood parks, but larger than those of community parks, metro parks, and regional parks. The ratio of the number of visits over the number of people served by river parks is the highest among all park types.

Tab. 2: Annual park visits in Tucson in 2019.

	Count	2019 Visits	Visits %	Avg Visits/ Park	Served Population	Visits/ Area (100 m^2)	Visits/ Served People
Mini Park	17	22,441	2	1320	19,594	50.71	1.15
Neighborhood Park	77	250,107	23	3248	355,347	15.56	0.70
Community Park	19	155,453	14	8182	574,477	6.82	0.27
Metro Park	16	281,925	26	17620	163,5038	4.79	0.17
Regional Park	9	121,501	11	13500	282,6845	0.52	0.04
River Park	3	271,194	25	90398	118,909	9.79	2.28

Among the six types of parks, mini parks are the smallest. Mini parks, usually located within communities, are designed to serve people within a comfortable walking distance in the community. This study shows that mini parks are the most successful type of park in attracting visits and serving local residents. The success of mini parks revealed in this study echoes the call for developing more pocket parks (Liu and Wang 2021). There is a shortage of green spaces in urban areas and they are often unevenly distributed. Easy access and proximity to parks can encourage

visits, especially for vulnerable populations (Roberts et al. 2019). Investment in additional mini parks could be a viable solution to the shortage of green space in urban areas and the lack of accessible urban parks.

In addition, the excellent performance of river parks suggest that park shape can be an important planning and design variable that enhances park visitation. The meandering river parks follow Tucson's natural river courses and topographies to connect other parks, communities, and business locations, and support the city's popular outdoor lifestyles (biking, hiking, and running). The Chuck Huckleberry Loop, which is mainly composed of the river parks, was named the Best Recreation Trail in 2022 by USA Today's "10 Best Readers' Choice List" (USA Today 2022).

The two indicators developed in this study can be used to compare performance of parks of the same type. These two indicators can also be used to measure the performance of parks of different types in serving residents and attracting park visits. These performance assessments could not be done before but became possible through the SafeGraph big dataset from mobile devices. Although there are potential limitations (e. g., spatial accuracy, missing demographic information, and lack of inclusiveness of POIs), big data greatly facilitate the study of park system performance on a large scale.

Finally, this case study presents a method that enriches the investigation of how green spaces and sacred gardens impact health and well-being benefits at the individual person level. The investigation goes beyond individual places and searches for general characteristics of green spaces that are associated with positive space visits. For example, in this case study, small parks, in general, present better performance in attracting visitors. This result supports the action of the Nature Sacred Firesoul Network, with most of Sacred Places across the United States being small parks and gardens and close to the served communities.

Conclusion

This chapter provides examples of the design of healing, sacred green spaces and both objective and subjective ways to measure their attractiveness and impacts on health and wellbeing. As evidenced by the methods described in Section 3, such spaces can be small or large, but small parks perform better than large urban parks in terms of attracting visitors. They can also be stand-alone within a community, as illustrated by the Green Road. All fit Nature Sacred's guiding principles of Sacred Places: open to all, near-by and/or within the community they serve; "sacred" – i. e., designed to bring respite, encourage mindful reflection and engender peace; and community-led. Objective and subjective measures both at a system

level and individual level reveal that such spaces are beneficial to both physical health and emotional wellbeing.

Bibliography

Ameli, Rezvan, Perry Skeath, Preetha A. Abraham, Samin Panahi, Josh B. Kazman, Frederick Foote, Patricia A. Deuster, Niha Ahmad, and Ann Berger. "A nature-based health intervention at a military healthcare center: A randomized, controlled, cross-over study." *PeerJ* 9 (2021): e10519.

Antonelli, Michele, Davide Donelli, Grazia Barbieri, Marco Valussi, Valentina Maggini, and Fabio Firenzuoli. "Forest volatile organic compounds and their effects on human health: A state-of-the-art review." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 18 (2020): 6506.

Antonelli, Michele, Davide Donelli, Lucrezia Carlone, Valentina Maggini, Fabio Firenzuoli, and Emanuela Bedeschi. "Effects of forest bathing (shinrin-yoku) on individual well-being: an umbrella review." *International Journal of Environmental Health Research* 32, no. 8 (2022): 1842–1867.

Antonelli, Michele, Grazia Barbieri, and Davide Donelli. "Effects of forest bathing (shinrin-yoku) on levels of cortisol as a stress biomarker: A systematic review and meta-analysis." *International Journal of Biometeorology* 63, no. 8 (2019): 1117–1134.

Bedimo-Rung, Ariane L., Andrew J. Mowen, and Deborah A. Cohen. "The significance of parks to physical activity and public health: a conceptual model." *American Journal of preventive Medicine* 28, no. 2 (2005): 159–168.

Canfield, Jessica, Yang, Bo, and Whitlow, Heather. *Landscape Performance Guidebook: A Guide for Metric Selection.* Washington, DC: Landscape Architecture Foundation, 2018. Accessed August 14, 2022. https://www.landscapeperformance.org/sites/default/files/LAF-Evaluating-Performance-Guidebook.pdf.

Chen, Shuolei, Keith M. Christensen, and Shujuan Li. "A comparison of park access with park need for children: A case study in Cache County, Utah." *Landscape and Urban Planning*187 (2019): 119–128.

Cheng, Kevin, Laurent F. Martin, Marvin J. Slepian, Amol M. Patwardhan, and Mohab M. Ibrahim. "Mechanisms and pathways of pain photobiomodulation: a narrative review." *The Journal of Pain* 22, no. 7 (2021): 763–777.

Cohen, Sheldon. "Social relationships and health." *American psychologist* 59, no. 8 (2004): 676.

Donahue, Marie L., Bonnie L. Keeler, Spencer A. Wood, David M. Fisher, Zoé A. Hamstead, and Timon McPhearson. "Using social media to understand drivers of urban park visitation in the Twin Cities, MN." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 175 (2018): 1–10.

Evenson, Kelly R., Sydney A. Jones, Katelyn M. Holliday, Deborah A. Cohen, and Thomas L. McKenzie. "Park characteristics, use, and physical activity: A review of studies using SOPARC (System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities)." *Preventive Medicine* 86 (2016): 153–166.

Foote, Frederick O., Herbert Benson, Ann Berger, Brian Berman, James DeLeo, Patricia A. Deuster, David J. Lary, Marni N. Silverman, and Esther M. Sternberg. "Advanced Metrics for Assessing Holistic Care: The "Epidaurus 2" Project." *Global Advances in Health and Medicine* 7 (2018): 2164957X18755981.

Ibrahim, Mohab M., Amol Patwardhan, Kerry B. Gilbraith, Aubin Moutal, Xiaofang Yang, Lindsey A. Chew, Tally Largent-Milnes[b] et al. "Long-lasting antinociceptive effects of green light in acute and chronic pain in rats." *Pain* 158, no. 2 (2017): 347.

Joseph, Rodney P., and Jay E. Maddock. "Observational Park-based physical activity studies: A systematic review of the literature." *Preventive Medicine* 89 (2016): 257–277.

Kardan, Omid, Peter Gozdyra, Bratislav Misic, Faisal Moola, Lyle J. Palmer, Tomáš Paus, and Marc G. Berman. "Neighborhood greenspace and health in a large urban center." *Scientific reports* 5, no. 1 (2015): 1–14.

Kotera, Yasuhiro, Miles Richardson, and David Sheffield. "Effects of shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) and nature therapy on mental health: A systematic review and meta-analysis." *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 20, no. 1 (2022): 337–361.

Lee, Andrew CK, and Ravi Maheswaran. "The health benefits of urban green spaces: a review of the evidence." *Journal of Public Health* 33, no. 2 (2011): 212–222.

Li, Shujuan, and Bo Yang. "How important are the park size and shape to a park system's performance? An exploration with big data in Tucson, Arizona, USA." *Socio-Ecological Practice Research* 3, no. 3 (2021): 281–291.

Li, Shujuan, and Bo Yang. "Social media for landscape planning and design: a review and discussion." *Landscape Research* (2022): 1–16.

Li, Shujuan, Bo Yang, and Haiquan Li. "Using Big Data to Assess Park System Performance during the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Sustainability* 15, no. 22 (2023): 16056.

Liu, Shu, and Xinhao Wang. "Reexamine the value of urban pocket parks under the impact of the COVID-19." *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 64 (2021): 127294.

Martin, Laurent F., Amol M. Patwardhan, Sejal V. Jain, Michelle M. Salloum, Julia Freeman, Rajesh Khanna, Pooja Gannala et al. "Evaluation of green light exposure on headache frequency and quality of life in migraine patients: A preliminary one-way cross-over clinical trial." *Cephalalgia* 41, no. 2 (2021): 135–147.

Nabhan, Gary Paul, Eric Daugherty, and Tammi Hartung. "Health Benefits of the Diverse Volatile Oils in Native Plants of Ancient Ironwood-Giant Cactus Forests of the Sonoran Desert: An Adaptation to Climate Change?." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 19, no. 6 (2022): 3250.

Nature Sacred. *The Power of Sacred Places.*Accessed June 9, 2021. https://naturesacred.org/new-report-the-power-of-sacred-places/.

Nature Sacred. "Butterfly Garden & Overlook." Accessed August 15, 2022a. https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/landscapes-of-resilience-butterfly-garden-overlook/.

Nature Sacred. "Choose Life Memorial Garden." Accessed August 15, 2022b. https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/intersection-of-change/.

Nature Sacred. "Healing Garden and Labyrinth at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center." Accessed August 15, 2022c. https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/johns-hopkins-bayview-medical-center-2/.

Nature Sacred. "Mt. Olivet Cemetery, in partnership with the Nature Conservancy." Accessed August 15, 2022d. https://naturesacred.org/sacred_place/mt-olivete-tnc-tkf-site/.

Pennebaker, James W., and Cindy K. Chung. "Expressive writing: Connections to physical and mental health." In *The Oxford handbook of health psychology*, edited by H. S. Friedman, 417–437. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Roberts, Hannah, Ian Kellar, Mark Conner, Christopher Gidlow, Brian Kelly, Mark Nieuwenhuijsen, and Rosemary McEachan. "Associations between park features, park satisfaction and park use in a multi-ethnic deprived urban area." *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 46 (2019): 126485.

SafeGraph. "Guide to Points-of-Interest Data." Accessed August 14, 2022. https:// www.safegraph.com/ points-of-interest-poi-data-guide.

Santos, Teresa, R. Nogueira Mendes, and A. Vasco. "Recreational activities in urban parks: Spatial interactions among users." *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 15 (2016): 1–9.

Srinivasan, Karthik, Faiz Currim, Casey M. Lindberg, Javad Razjouyan, Brian Gilligan, Hyoki Lee, Kelli J. Canada et al. "Discovery of associative patterns between workplace sound level and physiological wellbeing using wearable devices and empirical Bayes modeling." *npj Digital Medicine* 6, no. 1 (2023): 5.

Tidball, Keith G., Erika S. Svendsen, Lindsay K. Campbell, Nancy Falxa-Raymond, and Kathy Wolf. "Preliminary Analysis of TKF "Book & Bench" texts using unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language with Leximancer concept mapping." *Civic Ecology Lab White Paper Series* 11 (2012).

USA Today. "Best Recreational Trail of 10 Best Readers' Choice List." Accessed August 14, 2022. https://www.10best.com/awards/travel/best-recreational-trail-2022/.

Veitch, Jenny, Jo Salmon, Alison Carver, Anna Timperio, David Crawford, Elly Fletcher, and Billie Giles-Corti. "A natural experiment to examine the impact of park renewal on park-use and park-based physical activity in a disadvantaged neighbourhood: the REVAMP study methods." *BMC Public health* 14, no. 1 (2014): 1–9.

Wu, Hong, Yizhao Yang, and Jie Hu. "Nurturing nature in a mega-city: a decadal assessment of the Beijing Olympic Forest Park." *Socio-Ecological Practice Research* 3, no. 2 (2021): 91–108.

Yoon, Heenam, and Hyun Jae Baek. "External Auditory Stimulation as a Non-Pharmacological Sleep Aid." *Sensors*22, no. 3 (2022): 1264.

Yue, Xiaomin, Edward A. Vessel, and Irving Biederman. "The neural basis of scene preferences." *Neuroreport* 18, no. 6 (2007): 525–529.

Imagining Non-Hegemonic Spaces

Andrea Franchetto

Temporary and Imaginal Sacred Space in the Textual Transmission of Modern Ritual Magic: The Temple of Abramelin (15th–20th century)

Abstract: This chapter examines how temporary and imaginal sacred space is constructed in handbooks of ritual magic. In particular, it focuses on the changing modalities of access to sacred space from the 15th to the 20th centuries in the *Operation of Abramelin*, one of the most influential ritual texts in the history of European magic. Presumably written in the 15th century, the earliest version is attested in 17th century German and Italian manuscripts, and it became popular among occultists in the 19th and 20th centuries. It teaches how to summon one's guardian angel and constrain ranks of spirits in a private temple. A quadrangular chamber with a side lodge should be erected in a forest or in one's own private house to host the angelic apparition. Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) adapted the temple of Abramelin to a new spatial practice. Using visualization techniques, he created a mental replica of the physical temple to summon his guardian angel. This chapter explores the entanglement of imagination and materiality in the making of sacred space, analyzing the shift of spatial practices in ritual magic from the material to the imaginal. Looking at these variations over five centuries, it explores how the changing procedures of access to ritual space have altered conceptions and constructions of sacred space.

Introduction

This chapter explores the dynamics between institutionalized sacred architectural typologies and spatial temporariness in handbooks of learned magic. In doing so, it analyses the complex relationship between sacrality and secrecy[1] and how 20th-century occultists' visualization techniques have modified the access to ritual space described in earlier magical handbooks.

1 Recent interest in religious studies has been shown on the topic. See Hugh B. Urban and Paul C. Johnson, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Secrecy*, Routledge Handbooks in Religion (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022).

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-005

The past thirty years have seen a substantial increase in the discovery and editing of magical handbooks stored in European libraries.[2] Handbooks for summoning intermediary beings (such as angels and demons) and attracting stellar influences have occupied historians, who have done the fundamental philological groundwork to offer us a glimpse of the dimensions of the phenomena and the continuities of this "ritual-textual tradition"[3] from antiquity until today. This tradition cannot be neglected in the historiographies of European cultural history.

At the same time, the practical ritual aspects of these traditions and their material, visual, and spatial features have received less attention. Only a few scholars have started to investigate those who might have experimented with such prescriptions and the potential effects of these technical-ritual procedures.[4] The role of the unique spatial arrangements that these handbooks teach one how to construct has remained out of sight.[5] Across different sources of ritual magic, a pattern of continuity is present in the creation of temporary, mobile, and portable sacred architectures for contact with intermediary beings.[6] This chapter offers the first attempt to uncover the motivations behind constructing such temporary and imaginal sacred spaces for contact with intermediary beings in magical handbooks by focusing on an exemplary case study: the *Operation of Abramelin.*

---

2 To give the reader a few examples: Benedek Láng, *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2008); Daniel Bellingradt and Bernd-Christian Otto, *Magical Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe. The Clandestine Trade In Illegal Book Collections* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), //www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783319595245.

3 Bernd-Christian Otto, "Historicising 'Western Learned Magic,'" *Aries* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 161–240, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700593-01602001.

4 Frank Klaassen, "Subjective Experience and the Practice of Medieval Ritual Magic," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7, no. 1 (2012): 19–51, https://doi.org/10.1353/mrw.2012.0011; Egil Asprem, "Esotericism and the Scholastic Imagination: The Origins of Esoteric Practice in Christian Kataphatic Spirituality," *Correspondences* 4 (2016): 3–36; Egil Asprem, "Explaining the Esoteric Imagination: Towards a Theory of Kataphatic Practice," *Aries* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 17–50, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700593-01701002; Egil Asprem, *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture* (SUNY Press, 2012).

5 For a previous spatial approach to late medieval and early modern ritual magic see Stephen Clucas, "Regimen Animarum et Corporum: The Body and Spatial Practice in Medieval and Renaissance Magic," in *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 113–30.

6 Andrea Franchetto, "Imaginal Architectural Devices and the Ritual Space of Medieval Necromancy," *Endeavour* 44, no. 4 (December 2020): 100748, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2021.100748.

The *Abramelin* is one of the most influential magical handbooks, especially among twentieth-century occultists.[7] It belongs to the long tradition of rituals in European grimoires,[8] including bodily and spatial techniques to sense the numinous presence of intermediary beings, which are believed to appear in perceptible forms in front of the ritualists. The *Abramelin* prescribes how to establish contact and communicate with one's guardian angel in a prayer room, who grants the operator power and knowledge to control malevolent and benevolent spirits in an attached courtyard.

More research is needed about its authorship and origin. Speculations attribute it to Abram von Worm (AvW), a Jewish Kabbalist who lived in Germany (between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). The prologue and structure of the text share similarities with other famous handbooks, such as the *Key of Solomon.*[9] A mythical figure, the Egyptian mage *Abramelin* passed the secret knowledge of magic down to Abram von Worms. AvW is then supposed to have written *Abramelin's* magical instructions into a book dedicated to his son Lamech. This literary strategy gives authority to the text and places the readers at the end of a chain

7 Its popularity grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries among the practitioners of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, thanks to the discovery and translation of an 18th-century French version of the *Abramelin*, kept in Paris at the Library of the Arsenal. It features only three books, omitting Book Two, which is present in the 17th-century versions. This book concerns general teachings about magic from *Abramelin.* The ritual is also shorter in the 18th-century version. The operation of *Abramelin* will require six months instead of eighteenth months. This manuscript has been edited in different non-critical printed editions: Robert Ambelain, *La Magie sacrée ou Le Livre d'Abramelin le mage* (Paris: Bussière, 1959); S. L. MacGregor Mathers, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage* (London: Jhon M. Watkins, 1956). For the seventeenth-century German manuscripts, see the non-critical edition: (GD) Abraham ben Simeon of Worms, *The Book of Abramelin: A New Translation*, ed. Georg Dehn, trans. Steven Guth (Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2015). See also the earliest printed edition: (PH) Abraham BenSimeon, *Die egyptischen grossen Offenbarungen, in sich begreifend die aufgefundenen Geheimnissbücher Mosis; oder des Juden Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik in der uralten göttlichen Magie und in Erstaunlichen Dingen, wie sie durch die heilige Kabbala und durch Elohym mitgetheilt worden: Samt der Geister- und Wunder-Herrschaft, welches Moses in der Wüste aus dem feurigen Busch erlernet, alle Verborgenheiten der Kabbala umfassend* (Köln am Rhein: Bei Peter Hammer, 1725). See also (JRB) Johann Richard Beecken, *Die Heilige Magie Des Abramelin. Die Überlieferrung Des Abraham von Worms. Nach Dem Hebräischen Text Aus Dem Jahre 1458* (Berlin: Verlag Richard Schikowski, 1957). (JI) Abraham von Worms, *Das Buch der wahren Praktik in der göttlichen Magie: vergleichende Textausgabe mit Kommentar*, ed. Jürg von Ins (München: Diederichs, 1988).

8 Owen Davies, *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

9 For more information on Solomonic magic, see Julien Véronèse, "Solomonic Magic," in *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, eds. Sophie Page and Catherine Rider (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 187–200; Gal Sofer, "Solomonic Magic: Texts, History, and Reception" (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2002).

of transmission of magical knowledge.[10] The earliest manuscript we know of is a German copy written in 1608 and kept at the Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel, the Cod. Guelf. 47.13.[11]

Few know of the existence of an Italian manuscript from the second half of the seventeenth century.[12] This manuscript, which could be a translation of a lost Latin codex,[13] widens potential transmission paths. It belonged to Leopardo Martinengo da Barco (1637–1729) and is kept in the Queriniana Library in Brescia. Leopardo was the son of Francesco Leopardo Martinengo (1615–1689), a nobleman from Brescia interested in the occult arts who collected in his library more than one hundred texts about magic, alchemy, and occult philosophy.[14]

The *Abramelin* is one of the most detailed grimoires regarding site selection and ritual space arrangements. It provides instructions on the social conditions one should have. Secrecy and privacy are vital. Therefore, far off in a forest or hidden in a private villa, one should make an oratorium for establishing contact with the guardian angel, who will appear after long devotions. An open courtyard attached to the prayer room will be appointed for the appearance of benevolent and malevolent spirits. Sacrality is constructed and dismissed throughout the phases of the ritual, with the ritual space being ultimately dismissed at the end of the ritual to release the spirits.

Interestingly, the well-known modern magus Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) transformed the operation into an imaginal performance within an astral copy of the physical temple. Crowley was traveling across China and did not have physical access to the temple he had constructed in his villa at Boleskine in Scotland.[15]

---

10 See Andreas B. Kilcher, ed., *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*, Aries Book Series, v. 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

11 At the same library, another seventeenth century German exemplar contains the operation of Abramelin, the Cod. Guelf. 10.1.

12 (Br) "La Vera et Real Magia Sacra" (Brescia, second half 17th century), I.V.13, Biblioteca Queriniana. See Maria Elena Loda, "La Magia Sacra di Abramelin," *MISINTA* 31 (2008): 37–46; Giuseppe Fusari, "La 'Libreria Magica' dei Martinenego Da Barco," in *Medici, Alchimisti, Astrologi. Inquietudini e Ricerche del Cinquecento*, ed. Ennio Ferraglio (Brescia: Marco Serra Tarantola, 2005), 126; Ennio Ferraglio, "Biblioteca Magica. Libri di alchimia e magia nelle collezioni antiche della Biblioteca Queriniana," 2018, 17.

13 Loda, "La Magia Sacra di Abramelin," 45.

14 Maria Elena Loda, "Scire, Audere, Potere, Tacere. La Raccolta Occulta Dei Martinengo Da Barco," *Charta* 101 (2009): 28–29.

15 On the experiential account of Crowley's attempts to perform the operation of Abramelin in the context of the Order of the Golden Dawn's teachings, see Henrik Bogdan, "Ars Congressus Cum Daemone: Aleister Crowley and the Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel," *Entangled Religions* 14, no. 3 (April 14, 2023), https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10265.

He therefore decided to move the astral form of the temple to where he was and continue the operation visualizing it in his mind.

The study of ritual locations, like the temple of *Abramelin*, and their role in sensing sacrality and the presence of culturally postulated superhuman agents (CPSA)[16] has not yet been attempted systematically. In what follows, I argue that the typological analysis of these locations is essential to understanding the practice and experience of ritual magic in society, tackling the relationship between sacred space, imagination, and secrecy.

Sacred Space and Ritual Space

Sacred space is one of the most vexed categories in studying religious beliefs and practices. A central notion in the history of religions,[17] its definition is far from stable. Notwithstanding the rejection of old essentialist designations of the sacred that attributed intrinsic sacrality to objects and places, which gifted individuals could apprehend,[18] scholars have pointed out the universal socio-cognitive constraints in *constructing* sacrality by setting things apart.[19] Therefore, sacrality is not an intrinsic property of objects but a natural feature of the mind to make things non-ordinary. Humans carve out from the topography of human settlements portions of territory by constructing boundaries of sacrality for the foundation of non-ordinary locations.

---

16 I refer to spirits, angels, demons, and other ambiguous intermediaries in learned magic as culturally postulated superhuman agents (CPSAs). The notion of CPSAs is constructed within ritual theory, which frames rituals as organized sequences of actions. See E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley, *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5–7; Jesper Sørensen, "Acts That Work: A Cognitive Approach to Ritual Agency," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 19, no. 3–4 (2007): 281–300, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006807X240118. The representation of superhuman agents and their modalities of interactions are dependent by the cultural context.

17 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995), 36–37.

18 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion. The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual Within Life and Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987).

19 Ann Taves, "Building Blocks of Sacralities: A New Basis for Comparison across Cultures and Religions," in *Handbook of The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: The Guilford Press, 2013), 138–64; Veikko Anttonen, "Rethinking 'Religious' Cognition: The Eliadean Notion of the Sacred in the Light of the Legacy of Uno Harva," *Temenos – Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2007), https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4606.

The question is whether every non-ordinary location is a sacred space and if visitors of non-ordinary spaces and architectures would call them sacred. The subjectiveness of the experience of the sacrality of architecture depends on the actions performed and the functions that religious buildings host.[20] I argue that the ritual actions that manipulate sensory perception in order for the individual to sense the presence of something not there (a surplus of value) are what constructs sacred space.[21]

In light of these assumptions, I call sacred spaces non-ordinary locations related to body representation and its modification. For example, the body could enter and exit through certain procedures, like vestments and cleansings. In this sense, sacred space is always relational[22] and presupposes a perceptual qualitative difference between ordinary and non-ordinary spaces. Sacral boundaries signal places where non-ordinary behaviors, actions, and prohibitions occur. In other words, sacral spatial boundaries signal the ritual space, and I consider ritual space and sacred space complementary.

In what follows, I will analyze what happens when sacred space becomes temporary, when its construction and dismantling happen outside religious institutional buildings. I will look at how certain ritual operations entangle ritual time, space, and the role of imagination in setting up sacral boundaries. More specifically, the study will analyze the transformation of the ritual space in the reception history of the *Operation of Abramelin.*

Medieval Antecedents

The guardian angel and its role in modern ritual magic has its background in medieval theurgy, which has a specific Christian cultural matrix. In particular, the Majorcan hermit Pelagius (d.1480) deserves attention.[23] In Pelagius' *Peri Anacri-*

20 Lindsay Jones, *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison. Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

21 For a theoretical discussion on the role of materiality in ritual practices and the generation of a sense of presence, see Birgit Meyer, "Mediation and the Genesis of Presence. Towards a Material Approach to Religion" (Lecture; University of Utrecht, 2012).

22 Veikko K. Anttonen, "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion," *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 41, no. 2 (2005): 191.

23 As suggested by Marco Pasi, "Varieties of Magical Experience: Aleister Crowley's Views on Occult Practice," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 6, no. 2 (October 4, 2018): 154. Pelagius's narrative choices echo those in the *Abramelin.* First, he does not hide himself behind pseudo-epigraphic

seôn, known as *Anacrisis* (Interrogation) of the guardian angel while sleeping, Pelagius stresses the importance of a period of preparation in which the adept should adjust their life, clothing, and words according to the Christian dogmas and restrict social relationships.[24] In another handbook, *Libellus de proprio angelo* (*Little book about one's personal angel*), Pelagius describes the procedures for obtaining a "hypnotic anacrisis,"[25] a revelation in dreams mediated by the guardian angel. After confession, the adept wears clean clothing and prays in front of the altar. Then, in secrecy, they move to their bedroom, sprinkle it with holy water, and incense it. Finally, they make new devotions at the foot of their bed and sleep. The ritualist should repeat the procedure for twenty-seven days. The operation reaches its climax in the next three days after the first phase of twenty-seven days. At this occasion fasting increases. Then, the adept enters their room (or a secret chapel), washes their body, prays, wears new clothes, and draws two concentric circles around their bed, which is placed at the center of the circles.[26]

Circles traced on the ground are typical of necromantic operation, like in the *Clavicula Salomonis* and the *Liber Iuratus Honorii.* Circles are cosmographical diagrams; they are miniaturizations of cosmological topographies. They establish a new center in the geographical coordinates of the operator, who, placing themselves in its center, relocates themselves to a place of power. Circles are often traced with sacred knives and swords, mimicking foundational ritual acts. The sign on the ground marks a space of containment and protection.

From the point of view of ritual procedures, there are many commonalities with the *Abramelin.* First, the *Abramelin* describes a ritual with a long preparation procedure, eighteen months (GD and Br), in which the practitioner prays in front

---

mythical authorities, as is common of medieval and Renaissance magic to attribute authorship to Solomon or Hermes. Second, Libanius – his disciple – mentions that Pelagius wrote a book on how to invoke both good and bad spirits. Thirdly, the topos of a journey in search of knowledge, landing in remote places, and affiliation with a wise teacher – Libanius visited Mallorca, where he met Pelagius and became his disciple – is similar to the story of AvW, who found Abramelin in Egypt and became his disciple. On Pelagius as first magician author see Julien Véronèse, "La notion d'" auteur-magicien " à la fin du Moyen Âge: Le cas de l'ermite Pelagius de Majorque († v. 1480)," *Médiévales. Langues, Textes, Histoire*, no. 51 (December 1, 2006): 2–5, https://doi.org/10.4000/medievales.1476.

24 Pelagius, *L'Anacrise*, ed. Robert Amadou (Paris: Cariscript, 1988), xix–xx; Julien Véronèse, "Le rêve sollicité : un thème de la magie rituelle médiévale," *Sociétés & Représentations*, no. 23 (2007): n. 62, https://doi.org/10.3917/sr.023.0083.

25 Véronèse, "Le rêve sollicité," 97–98.

26 Jean Dupèbe, "L'écriture Chez l'ermite Pelagius. Un Cas de Théurgie Chrétienne Au Xve Siècle," in *Le Texte et Son Inscription*, ed. R. Laufer (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1989), 134–37. Cf. Véronèse, "Le rêve sollicité," 97–98.

of the altar, incenses their room, washes their body, and dresses adequately; this process entails a shorter culmination phase (six days), which increases fasting and devotional acts. Second, the *Abramelin* stresses the importance of regulating one's life, social affairs, words, and other activities according to religious life, like in Pelagius's operations. Lastly, AvW, like Pelagius, transforms a private chamber into a sacred place for the encounter with the angel.

Innovative Sacred Architectural Typologies

However, sacred space typology in the *Abramelin* is unique in the context of medieval and early modern ceremonial magic. AvW uses the architectural typology of the temple to erect sacral boundaries, expressed in the disposition of the ritual space's plan, which is divided into two parts: a portico and an inner cell. To my knowledge, the *Abramelin* is the earliest known ritual handbook to mention a temple-like structure. In what follows, I argue that the *Abramelin* witnesses a transformation of the spaces for contact with CPSA that has to do with the mainstream diffusion of new architectural typologies of sacrality in the late-fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries, thanks to the printing and circulation of architectural treaties.

The handbook prescribes that if one wants to operate outdoors, one should erect a hut in a forest, surrounded by a hedge "made of flowers, herbs, and shrubbery."[27] The area so composed is divided into an inner part, the altar with the hut as the temple chamber, and an outer part, extending from the altar seven steps to the verdant hedge, like a temple portico:

> One can choose a place that is a beautiful plain, in the middle of which he should erect and build an altar, and he should erect a hut over it made of beautiful fronds and branches so that rain does not fall upon it, and he should spread incense around. A hedge, all around the altar and distanced by about seven steps on each side, should be planted of two beautiful and odoriferous flowers, plants, herbs, tender saplings, and greens so that they can divide this piazza into two parts: the interior, containing the altar and the hut, will be like a temple and an oratorium, and the rest of the piazza will be like a portico or courtyard.[28]

This architectural typology signals two degrees of sacrality. The quadrangular perimeter of the hut signals the boundaries of the innermost sacred space, the ora-

27 Abraham ben Simeon of Worms, *The Book of Abramelin*, 132; "La Vera et Real Magia Sacra," fols. 228v–229r.

28 My translation from Br, fol. 228v-229r.

torium or temple cella.[29] It is where contact and appearance of the guardian angel will happen. The odoriferous floral hedge signals the outermost boundary of sacrality, and it will contain the apparition of the spirits.

I also want to highlight the importance of smell in sensing presence throughout the operation of *Abramelin* in order to stress that the construction of sacrality encompasses all the bodily sensory modalities of spatial perception. In fact, at the time the angelic apparition appears, the ritualist will recognize the presence as they enter the room and cross the chamber's threshold, when they will perceive "supernatural clarity throughout the room and sense a delightful aroma around."[30]

In the case of indoor practice, the same typology regulates the selection of a prayer room attached to a lodge facing north. Two windows and a door must open to the lodge of the spirits, allowing the practitioner to see and control the spirits from within the oratorium. The room should be quadrangular, and the lodge should be "unroofed or roofed but open."[31] A uniform layer of sand "two or three fingers deep"[32] should cover the lodge floor, and the chamber should have a wooden floor. In the middle of the room, the four sides of a squared altar signal the four cardinal directions.

The Hut

Erecting a hut must have had a profound symbolic meaning. Erecting a hut is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths, and the ritual phases of the operation of *Abramelin* follow this liturgical time. The ritual time is eighteen months and six days, starting and concluding after eighteen months following the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the Sukkot, a re-enactment of the shelters under which the people of Israel took refuge. They had a roof of leaves and straw,[33] exhibiting crucial parallels with prescriptions in *Abramelin* ("a hut of beautiful fronds and branches"). At the same

29 The hut has a quadrangular plan, delimited by four pillars at its corners. Chapter 12 of Book Three (GD and Br) mentions that the practitioner should touch "the four corner posts" that hold up the roof; Cf. '*tocherai con l'oglio Santo le 4 stanghe alumi e portici che portano la Capana, o coperta sopra l'Altare.*' Br, fol. 238v.

30 GD, 141.

31 Br, fol. 229r.

32 GD, 132; Br, fol. 229r.

33 Ernst Kutch, Louis Jacobs, and Abram Kanof, "Sukkot," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), Gale Virtual Reference Library.

time, in Exodus, we find the description of the construction of the ark of the covenant that is meant to be kept in the Tabernacle, a portable tent. In the early modern context, the hut symbolized the Tabernacle housing the ark of the covenant in the wilderness. Later on, German theosophists and anthroposophists will take up the typology and discuss erecting an astral hut in the spiritual world. In the masonic context, the word used is *Bauhütte*, the plural form of masonic or occult lodges.[34]

To complete the picture, we should look at this typological space in the mind of Renaissance humanists, particularly in what we find in architectural treaties. The myth of the hut indeed originated when Marcus Vitruvius Pollio's architectural treatise *De Architectura* (ca. 80–70 BCE until sometime after 15 BCE) was discovered and published in the 15th century.[35] In the Renaissance, the Vitruvian hut gained biblical connotations. Filarete (ca. 1400–after 1465), the great urbanist and architect, represents Adam after the expulsion from paradise in his *Trattato d'architettura*, building a shelter out of branches and foliage.[36] The myth of the primordial hut also reverberated in paintings and later architectural treatises.[37] Between 1500 and 1505, the famous Florentine painter Piero di Cosimo (1461–1521) depicted a scene entitled *Vulcano ed Eolo maestri dell'umanità* (*Vulcan and Aeolus, Masters of Humanity*).[38] It is an open-air scene that depicts a man sitting in the center on a white horse, intently listening to instructions from the elders Vulcan and Aeolus on how to forge metals. In the background, four men erect a hut from "unsquared tree trunks,"[39] a representation of the earliest "technological phase" of human civilization.[40] Eleonora Guzzo contends that in earlier paintings and sculp-

34 I thank Aaron French for directing me to this later reception history of the typology.

35 The first printed edition is attributed to Giovanni Sulpizio da Veroli's *Vitruvius.* Mario Carpo says that it was "probably printed in Rome in the summer of 1486," contemporaneous of Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* "printed in January 1485 according to the old Florentine calendar, which may correspond to January 1486 on our modern calendar." Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing: Orality, Writing, Typography, and Printed Images in the History of Architectural Theory* (Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 2001), 152.

36 *Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale, ms II.I.140,* fol. 5. See printed reproductions in Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 1972), fig. 21 (Plate XI); Tommaso Carrafiello, "Trattati e Teorie Dell'architettura Nel Rinascimento: Da Alberti a Palladio," *Il Tardo Cinquecento* 10 (2006): 59.

37 Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History*, The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture 2 (New York: Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn, 1972).

38 Piero di Cosimo, *Vulcano ed Eolo maestri dell'umanità,* ca. 1500–1505, oil on canvas, 155.5×166.4 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

39 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 44.

40 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 44.

tures, the simple and modest hut echoes that of the Holy Family and should be distinguished from the Jewish tradition of the Temple of Solomon, which was made of stones.[41]

The Temple

As I have shown, in the *Abramelin* the hut is part of a precise system of boundaries. Around the hut, the magician plants a hedge of fragrant plants about seven feet from each side of the altar. Thus, the area is divided into two: the internal chamber and the outdoor courtyard. At first glance, this spatial organization recalls that of the Tabernacle, a portable tent for religious liturgies,[42] divided into an inner sanctuary and a rectangular open courtyard, used at the time of the exodus from Egypt as a mobile sacred architecture.[43] Its structure was, in part, a tent and, in part, a wooden enclosure. Its appearance was that of a flat booth comprised of ten curtains of violet, purple, and scarlet fabric with woven ("embroidered") figures of cherubim.[44]

The materials correspond only partially with those of the *Abramelin.* For example, the *Abramelin* does not mention acacia wood and curtains of various colors, typical of the tabernacle. Besides, AvW prohibits using dead animals, while the Tabernacle materials comprise goat hair, goatskins, and tanned rams' skins.[45]

The Italian version of the *Abramelin* (Br) dwells more on the description of how to outline the ritual space, and the typology that emerges is better compared with that of the temple described in Leon Battista Alberti's *Book Seven* of *De Re Aedificatoria*, which deals with '*i sacri luoghi*'[46] ('sacred places'), and in particular, Chapter 4 is about the parts, forms, and figures of temples.[47] In the first lines, Al-

41 Eleonora Guzzo, *Il tempio nel tempio: il monumento ligneo a Jean-Jacques Rousseau nel Panthéon di Parigi, dalla capanna vitruviana ai lumi francesi*, Premio tesi di dottorato 52 (Firenze, Italy: Firenze University Press, 2015), 404.

42 Israel Abrahams and Aaron Rothkoff, "Tabernacle," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 418, Gale Virtual Reference Library.

43 Exodus 25–31 and 35–40.

44 Abrahams and Rothkoff, "Tabernacle," 419.

45 Abrahams and Rothkoff, "Tabernacle," 419.

46 Leon Battista Alberti, *I Dieci Libri de l'Architettura di Leon Battista degli Alberti, … Novamente de la latina ne la volgar lingua …*, trans. Pietro Lauro (Venice: Vincenzo Vaugris, 1546), 138.

47 Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Architettura Della Pittura e Della Statua*, trans. Cosimo Bartoli (Bologna: Instituto delle Scienze, 1782), 161; Alberti, *I Dieci Libri*, 143v.

berti explains that the temple has two parts: a portico and an inner cell.[48] The author of the *Abramelin* similarly conceived the space: "The location should be divided into two. First, the altar with its temple and living room, and second, the entrance area."[49] The words used in Br match Alberti's even more closely. The text indicates that the inner part (the hut) is "*like*[50] a temple,"[51] and the hedge makes the exterior area "*like*[52] a portico."[53] I have emphasized the adverb "like" (*come*) to highlight that the author was imitating an architectural typology they had in their mind – perhaps one that shares the same sources of *I sacri luoghi* in Alberti's treatise. Furthermore, Br is the only manuscript that mentions that the hedge around the hut should be circular.[54] Alberti says that the circle is the ideal shape for "everything that in the universe endures, is generated, or transformed," such as "the terraqueous globe, the stars, the trees, the animals and their burrows."[55]

The arrangements of the domestic spaces hosting the operation of *Abramelin* imitate the temple typology. One should find a quadrangular room appointed to be the inner cell, the oratorium. The altar, which is the focal point, stands at the center. Attached to one side of the room, there should be a lodge or a terrace where spirits will appear,[56] and it should be open or at least widely windowed. Abraham von Worms adds that his lodge faced north; it didn't surround the chamber, as in the case of the circular hedge around the hut, but it was like a portico. Alberti concludes that "The portico by its nature is composed on one side of a single full and entire wall, on all the others it is pierced by openings."[57] Additionally, Alberti tells us that in the case of quadrangular temples, the portico can be attached just to the front facade,[58] as is the case of the *Abramelin:* "One side of this room [oratorium] is

48 "*Templi partes sunt porticus et cella interior*;" Leon Battista Alberti, *L'architettura*, ed. Paolo Portoghesi, trans. Giovanni Orlandi (Il Polifilo, 1966), 549. "*Sono parti del tempio il portico, e la cella piu addentro.*" Alberti, *I Dieci Libri*, 143v. "*Le parti del tempio sono due, il portico, & la parte di dentro.*" Alberti, *Della Architettura Della Pittura e Della Statua*, 161.

49 '*partir tutta qtta piazza in 2 parti*', Br, fol. 228v. Cf. GD, 132;

50 Emphasis added.

51 '*come un tempio*' Br, 228v. '*Eine Art von Tempel*' in JRB, 36.

52 Emphasis added.

53 '*come un portico*' Br, 228v. 'comme un <<portique>>' in RA, 109. In the case of JRB, it is not mentioned at which distance from the altar a border that separates an inside and an outside should be placed. The limit, in this case, should be traced by a path (*Weg*) lined with trees and shrubs, JRB, 36.

54 'piantato una siepe di cerchio tondo,' Br, 228r.

55 Alberti, *L'architettura*, 549.

56 GD, 132. Br, reads '*logia*', a typical space of Renaissance Florentine houses.

57 Alberti, *L'architettura*, 560.

58 Alberti, *I Dieci Libri*, 145v; Alberti, *Della Architettura Della Pittura e Della Statua*, 163.

attached to another place, which is unroofed or roofed but open so that you can look at it in its entirety."[59]

Another similarity lies in the shape of the room. AvW says that it is important that the room should not have "additional corners."[60]Alberti furthered his argument: "In the quadrilateral plan [of temples], the worst defect in the shape will occur when not all the angles are straight,"[61] and he describes temple altars according to Jewish tradition: "You will have a principle and sacred city, in which you will build only one temple, and an altar of uncut stones, gathered, white and clean."[62] The *Abramelin* says the altar "should be built of uncut stones."[63]

From the discussion above, it is possible to draw some preliminary conclusions. The author of the *Abramelin* might have been a late 15th-to-16th-century person who took inspiration from heterogeneous sources and adapted to their needs. They might have been familiar with the architectural typologies of sacred location, thanks also to architectural treatises reaching great diffusion in circles of humanists starting from the late fifteenth century. It is important to mention that architectural treatises like Alberti's *De Re Aedificatoria* use ekphrasis to describe the outline of the temple, allowing a degree of freedom in expressing the typology. Therefore, the articulation of the spaces of the temple (cell and portico) could be imitated in private dwellings, using rooms that have some features similar to the respective cell and portico. Imitating the sacred power of the architectural typology allows the operators to erect secret and illicit sacred space for performing deviant ritual operations (I will return to this point shortly) far away from the social gaze, a paramount instruction in all operations of ritual magic.

Illicit Sacred Spaces in Early-Modern Villas

The description of the house's architectural features that should host the operation shows that the author of the *Abramelin* might have had in mind fourteenth- to six-

59 Br, 229v.

60 GD, 132.

61 '*In quadrangulis areis maximum erit vitium deformitatis, si anguli aderunt non omnes recti.*' Alberti, *L'architettura*, 551.

62 Alberti, *I Dieci Libri*, 145v.

63 Interestingly there is an incongruence between the German and Italian version. In the Italian one the altar should be made out of stones if the practice is conducted outside, while in the case of an indoor (prayer room) practice the altar should be made of wood. The German text instead gives the opposite instruction: as long as the altar outside should be 'moved about as occasion requires,' it should be made of wood. Cf. Br, fol. 230v; GD, 132.

teenth-century upper-class residential buildings, such as Renaissance family houses, which usually hosted large families and their servants.[64] AvW claims he needed to split his family to have the required privacy. His first intention was to conduct the operation in the wilderness, but he needed to change his plans because of his household. He subsequently rented a house to accommodate his relatives and business, while his wife and a few servants stayed in the house during the ritual.[65]

In early modern times, wealthy houses were usually organized on three levels with a courtyard or a lodge on the ground floor.[66] Usually the bedroom, the study, and the *anticamera*, an appendage of the bedroom hosting a smaller bed and works of art, faced the inner courtyard.

In the *Abramelin*, one side of the prayer room opens to an uncovered "*logia*" (lodge),[67] appointed for spirit convocation, which the operator can see from the prayer room through its windows. The loggia was typical of houses that hosted more than one couple, generally located around an inner courtyard or garden. A loggia was open on multiple sides and supported by columns. In the 14th–16th centuries, outdoor dining and entertainment usually took place in *logge*. In a cross section (c. 1560) of the Gaddi family house in Florence, we can see that the loggia is located at the center of the ground floor between a camera and a *cortile* (inner courtyard).

Renaissance family houses hosted also private chapels and prayer rooms, and their use and features were problematic. The issue was the administration of sacred space outside the church buildings. Philip Mattox addresses the topic in the Florentine context, showing that the phenomenon of domestic chapels was widespread in Europe.[68] The function of domestic chapels "was to create as much as possible, a powerful center of sacrality in one's dwelling, which in furnishings and rituals, if not in canonical status, functioned as a church."[69] However, the consecration ritual of such places was not the same as that of churches. Long rites of consecration granted the status of a permanent church. In contrast, chapels received a "a lesser rite of benediction."[70]

---

64 See Elizabeth Currie, *Inside the Renaissance House* (London; New York: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2006), 11; Brenda Preyer, "The Florentine Casa," in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, Flora Dennis, and Elizabeth Miller (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2006), 34.

65 GD, 29.

66 Currie, *Inside the Renaissance House*, 11.

67 "*una logia tutta scoperta*," Br, 229r–v.

68 Philip Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space in the Florentine Renaissance Palace," *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 5 (2006): 658, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-4658.2006.00367.x.

69 Mattox, 666.

70 Mattox, 664.

Domestic chapels were often called *oratoria*, a word employed in the *Abramelin* to name the innermost room of the ritual space.[71] Johannes Baptista Gatticus (1704–1754) wrote a history of the uncontrolled diffusion of domestic chapels in his *De oratoriis domesticis et de usu altaris portatilis* (On Domestic Chapels and On the Use of Portable Altars). Canon law stipulated who could own these private chapels and how they should be furnished and used. A house could host both private and semi-public domestic chapels. The latter were usually located on the ground floor of private villas and used for mass celebrations. Alberti in *De Re Aedificatoria* (1450) explains that in noble villas, the chapel with its altar must be visible from the entrance vestibule and used primarily by the head of the family to welcome foreigners, host friendly meetings, and invoke peace and serenity for the family.[72]

Before the Council of Trent (1545–1563), the only requirement for private chapels was a consecrated stone (*pietra sagrada*) used during the mass to support the Eucharist bread and wine. Portable altars carried the consecrated stones. Therefore, portable altars guaranteed, by extension, the sacrality of private chapels. The authority of bishops and the Pope gave the altar right to privileged people (*privilegiatus*), who were usually wealthy "conjugal couples."[73]

The Council of Trent limited the people who could have private chapels and the freedom in architectural design and furniture. Portable altars were banned because their "moveability permitted the laity to control and even to create unsupervised sacral space."[74] Private chapels became almost banned; none of the social conditions – "nobility, traditions of rule, and political connections"[75] – guaranteed the privilege of private chapels after Trent. The council declared that chapels should be closed rooms, separated from living rooms, and approved by the religious authority. The altar should be made of masonry or stones to prevent it from being moved. Incense burners were banned, and celebrating any rite other than mass was forbidden.[76]

The revocation of the altar in the 1560s is an important moment to analyze the social context of the *Abramelin.* Most notably, if we observe the methods of construction, consecration and furnishing of AvW's oratorium in light of Tridentine dogmas, it is certainly a heretical sacred location. The practitioner autonomously chooses the appointed space for the cult of the guardian angel without the inter-

71 In Chapter 11 the word '*oratorio*' is used 10 times, Br, 228v-30r, 232v-233r.
72 Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space," 664.
73 Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space," 665.
74 Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space," 665.
75 Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space," 672.
76 Mattox, "Domestic Sacral Space," 372.

vention of any clerical authority. The paraphernalia of *Abramelin* includes forbidden items such as incense, a lamp, garments, and a portable altar.[77] Therefore, those who owned the *Abramelin* (the earliest manuscript dates to 1608) and attempted to perform the ritual effectively broke the dogma and illicitly erected unauthorized sacred spaces. Additionally, for contextualizing the social implications of the practice of the *Abramelin*, we should not forget that the Council of Trent regulated the cult of the guardian angel by attempting to control autonomous relationships, in devotional form and unmediated by traditional liturgy and religious authority, with the supernatural.[78]

Sacralization and Dismissal of the Ritual Space

The operation takes place along four ritual phases and the sacrality of the ritual space is constructed and augmented throughout the timing of the ritual. Prohibitions, cleansings, and consecrations increase through the ritual phases. Body cleansing and vestments occur before crossing the prayer room's thresholds. The practitioner's movements and social relations are delimited by the perimeters of the private dwelling and restricted to the people who live with them for the entire period of the ritual. The first three stages each last half a year, and the fourth lasts six days. In total, the ritual time is eighteen months and six days.

The practitioner's life should adjust to this timing, and they should slightly abandon their routine of daily activities. During the first three periods, the practitioner obtains the guardian angel's guidance, consecrating themselves and the location for the final stage, the conjuration of spirits. During the first six months, the operator banishes any presence that can corrupt the purity of the ritual. No children or animals are allowed in the entire house. Fasting and sexual abstinence are required, and the prayer room is routinely cleaned and incensed. During the second six months, the repetition of ritual actions increases, with additional purification of the body every time the operator enters the prayer room. In the third six months, the frequency of ritual actions reaches a climax, accompanied by more structured isolation and the wearing of a new special garment, a snow-white dress made of linen or wool to be worn only in the prayer room. The most complex procedure is the final consecration of the room. From this moment on, none of the

77 Br, fol. 230r-v.

78 On the topic see Antoine Mazurek, "The Guardian Angel: From the Natural to the Supernatural," in *Everyday Magic in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Dr Kathryn A. Edwards (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 51–69.

consecrated objects can leave the room, and the practitioner should enter only with bare feet.

After the end of the third period, the practitioner should have established a relationship with his guardian angel, transforming his intellectual and spiritual state. As a result, the "sense of place" also changes and from the prayer room they will control the spirits that will appear in the lodge.

When the operator wants to conclude the ritual and interrupt the communication with the spirits, their location is dismissed by incensing the lodge and pouring the sand that covered the courtyard floor into a river.

Moving to the Astral Plane. Late Modern Variations

The *Abramelin* became popular across the ranks of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn thanks to the publication of S. L. MacGregor Mather's translation of the 18th-century manuscript at the Arsenal Library in Paris, the *Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (1898).[79] Aleister Crowley drew on Mathers's edition to craft his initiation into the "Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel."[80] In August 1899[81] he bought the manor of Boleskine and Abertarff, a long, one-story villa in Scotland, south-east side of Loch Ness,[82] adapting the southwestern part[83] of the villa according to the official instructions. He chose a

79 On the modification of the operation of Abramelin and its hybridization with Graeco-Egyptian sources by the members of the Golden Dawn, see Bogdan, "Ars Congressus Cum Daemone," secs. 7–21.

80 Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, ed. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1974), 158.

81 The ritual started in an apartment in London at 67 and 69 Chancery Lane, and the ritual continued in 1899 in an apartment on Victoria Street that he shared with his friend Allan Bennet. Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant, 5th edition (Penguin, 1989), 178, 183; Patricia Fanthorpe and Lionel Fanthorpe, *The World's Most Mysterious People* (Toronto, Oxford: Hounslow Press, 1998), 15. On Crowley's reported experiences with the operations of Abramelin, see Henrik Bogdan, "Ars Congressus Cum Daemone: Aleister Crowley and the Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel," *Entangled Religions* 14, no. 3 (April 14, 2023), https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10265.

82 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 184.

83 Christopher McIntosh says "one of the north-facing rooms." Christopher McIntosh, *The Devil's Bookshelf: A History of the Written Word in Western Magic from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day* (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1988), 117.

room with a bow window,[84] through which he made a door to the outside, where he built the terrace and the lodge for the spirits.[85]

During his time at Boleskine, he had to interrupt the ritual, but he continued it while he was in China riding across the desert.[86] However, he could not find a house with the right features, nor could he erect a tent surrounded by a hedge of plants. So he decided, using his concentration and visualization skills,[87] to move the operation to the astral plane.

> My plan was to transpose the astral form of my temple at Boleskine to where I was, so as to perform the invocation in it. It was not necessary for me to stay in one place during the ceremony; I frequently carried it out while riding or walking. As the work became familiar to me it became easier. I was able to withdraw my attention from the actual words and gestures, and concentrate on the intention. On the surface, there seems little relation between Magick and chess, but my ability to play three games simultaneously blindfold was now very useful. I had no difficulty in visualizing the astral temple by an effort of will, and of course I was perfectly able to watch the results of the invocations with my astral eyes.[88]

---

84 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 184.

85 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 184. Crowley organized the space in three different areas: the oratorium, the terrace, and the lodge (at the end of the terrace). This tripartite spatial system is a variation on the early-modern typology. It corresponds to the one represented by Duke Charles of Södermanland in *Magia Divina*, fol. 25. It is a variation since Br indicates that there are two areas, the oratorium and the lodge; lodge and terrace mean the same place, a semi-covered outdoor space adjacent to the oratorium. At the same time, in Boleskine, Crowley did not respect the indication of having a room perfectly squared without additional angles, as he chose a room with a bow-window. He created a door through the bow window linked to the outdoor terrace. Br reads that the room needs to have at least two windows facing east and west, but Crowley's structure only had a door toward the north. Br, fol. 228v–29v.

86 The ritual was revised and adjusted by Crowley and called ritual of the *Augoeides.* See Marco Pasi, "La notion de magie dans le courant occultiste en Angleterre: 1875–1947" (Paris, École pratique des hautes études, 2014), 259.

87 Crowley was strongly interested in acquiring visualization skills. Indeed, before reaching China, he was in Mexico doing mountaineering with one of his mentors, Oscar Eckenstein (1859–1921) – a passionate mountain climber and engineer – who taught him to focus his attention on images and bodily sensations. See Crowley, *The Confessions*, 213–14; Crowley, 'John St. John,' 94; Djurdjevic, *India and the Occult*, 35. In cognitive science, this practice is called "interoception" and its control can "trigger profound alterations to the experience of the self, including sense of presence and out-of-body experiences," Asprem, "Explaining the Esoteric Imagination," 37. Crowley presents two astral techniques to inhabit the temple. One was traveling at Boleskine with his astral body, the other was bringing the temple there to where he was: "I did not need an aeroplane: I had a magical carpet. I could travel in my astral body to my temple and perform the Operation, perhaps even more conveniently than in the flesh. Per contra, I could construct my own temple about me and perform the Operation in my physical body. For various reasons, I preferred the latter method." Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, 517.

88 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 518.

Astral projections and astral travels were part of the curriculum of the adepts of the Golden Dawn.[89] Accordingly, the astral body can move, "ascend," vertically to other planes.[90] Literally, through astral projection, the astral body is "raising on the planes."[91] However, Crowley offers a novel approach to techniques of astral projection and astral space's features. First, from his *Confessions* above, we understand that the physical temple at Boleskine had an astral form. In *Magick* (1929) – his theoretical and practical summa – Crowley stated that the astral plane is located between the material plane and the spiritual plane and that the astral plane has the same extensions and variety as the material one.[92] Once one is familiar with their astral body, they don't need to move it far from the physical one. They can tune their astral eyes and ears while remaining in the material body.[93] At this stage, one can see the astral aspects of material things.

Second, the astral form of architecture could be "transposed"[94] to Crowley's location even while he was moving through the physical space. Therefore, the astral form, although a sort of replica of the physical one, is nevertheless free from any geometrical – Euclidian – constraints. Geographical distances and the immobility of physical architecture are not features of the astral space. According to Crowley, moving astral forms requires enormous strength, as the material form anchors the astral one.[95]

Geographical coordinates in three-dimensional space do not affect the boundaries of the astral temple. The temple is the mind of the magician, eventually a mobile secret ritual space, and the thresholds of this modern sacred space become imaginal.

Crowley wrote in his *Confessions* that he lacked an appropriate social context. He didn't have the privacy and isolation that every magical practice required. The problem of practicing magic in social spaces is something Crowley would later discuss. In 1908, Crowley was in the busy quarter of Montparnasse and attempted "a complete Magical Operation of the most important kind," proving that it was pos-

---

89 Pasi shows that earlier than Golden Dawn astral projections, the astral plane was already present in the ideas of Bulwer Lytton and Emma Hardinge Britten in the context of the Theosophical Society. Pasi, "La notion de magie," 236.

90 See the argument on vertical ascension in Aleister Crowley, *Magick*, ed. J. Symonds and K. Grant, trans. Alfredo Pollini (Roma: Astrolabio Ubaldini, 1978), 327.

91 S. L. MacGregor Mathers et al., *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy: Golden Dawn Material by S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Others; Edited and Introduced by Francis King; Additional Material by R.A. Gilbert* (Destiny Books, 1987), 72.

92 Crowley, *Magick*, 1978, 151.

93 Crowley, *Magick*, 1978, 322.

94 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 518.

95 Crowley, *Magick*, 1978, 322.

sible to do so while being immersed in "ordinary business or social life."[96] The astral plane offers practitioners new modalities of access to deviant sacred space in modern society, allowing them to have secrecy to conduct ritual magic operations *anywhere*.

Discussion and Conclusions

Jonathan Z. Smith's social-spatial approach to late antique religions defines spatial categories based on three different social groups: the family and its immediate social context (*here*), the priestly caste and the larger political formations (*there*), and the religious entrepreneurs or wandering religious experts (*anywhere*). These three different localities (here, there, anywhere) reflect three different access modalities to sacred space. Religion *here* pertains to the domestic family cult and the clan's lineage of living and dead members, which regulates the liminality of "domestic sacrality."[97] Religion *there* is the public cult binding communities together in the public space. Religion *there* is expressed in the temple, where architectural structure orchestrates the separation between sacred and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden.[98] Religions *anywhere*, instead, "is in the strict sense 'neither here nor there'."[99] Its ritual experts do not have institutionalized locations; sacrality is mobile and wandering.

Smith concludes that magic is a form of religion anywhere and a "creative combination and re-formation of elements characteristic of the religion of 'here' and the religion of 'there'."[100] Smith points out that new religious entrepreneurs (such as the ritualists of the *Greek magical papyri*) bring the old form of divinations and rituals of apparitions, now illicit and marginal, outside the temple, and not having institutionalized architecture, the ritual space becomes mobile and temporary.[101]

---

96 Crowley, *The Confessions*, 518.

97 Jonathan Z. Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars*, ed. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 26.

98 Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 28.

99 Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 30.

100 Smith, "Here, There, Anywhere," 35.

101 See Smith's theory on the portability of sacred space in magical gems in Jonathan Z. Smith, "Constructing a Small Place," in *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*, ed. Benjamin Z. Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 18–31, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1349-14084-8_2.

The *Abramelin* reflects the combination of institutionalized sacred architectural typologies and ritual space temporariness for keeping secrecy and seclusion, which are paramount social conditions for magical operations.[102] However, the ritual space's rurality, segregation, and domesticity require the operator to modify their perception of non-ordinariness through ritual actions that signal the boundaries of sacrality to found a novel space of contact with CPSA in non-qualified locations. With the progress of the ritual phases, the operator increases the number and complexity of the ritual actions that modify sensory perception at the threshold of the oratory, augmenting the non-ordinariness of the internal space and the "generation of a sense of presence" within it. The repetitive crossing of the sacred threshold following ritual-time cycles structures and sustains the expectation of angelic presence through a progressive attuning of the senses. The sacrality of the ritual space is augmented through bodily modifications and sensory attuning until the climax of the ritual, with angelic and spirit apparitions, and it dissipates through ritual acts of iconoclasm.

In conclusion, the ritual space of *Abramelin* represents an innovative spatial approach to how contact with CPSA is conceptualized in late medieval and early modern ritual magic. Key differences emerge if we compare it with the magic circle (the most common sacred space in ritual magic to establish contact with intermediary beings). The magic circle erects sacral boundaries and power through miniaturizations of cosmographical topographies.[103] In the *Abramelin*, sacrality is obtained through the imitation of the architectural typology of the temple that became popular among Renaissance humanists. In the 20th-century, when visualization techniques offered an impenetrable secret (astral) space to modern occultists, the temple of *Abramelin* became erratic and mobile in the mind of the ritualist. The temple is replicable anywhere because it is a *type*, an operation of descriptive abstraction that can be imitated *anywhere*, in the secrecy of a forest, in the privacy of one's dwelling, or in the seclusion of one's mind.

Bibliography

Abraham ben Simeon of Worms. *The Book of Abramelin: A New Translation.* Edited by Georg Dehn. Translated by Steven Guth. Lake Worth, FL: Ibis Press, 2015.

Abraham BenSimeon. *Die egyptischen grossen Offenbarungen, in sich begreifend die aufgefundenen Geheimnissbücher Mosis ; oder des Juden Abraham von Worms Buch der wahren Praktik in der*

102 Jean-Patrice Boudet and Julien Véronèse, "Le Secret Dans La Magie Rituelle Médiévale," *Micrologus*, January 2006.

103 Franchetto, "Imaginal Architectural Devices and the Ritual Space of Medieval Necromancy."

uralten göttlichen Magie und in Erstaunlichen Dingen, wie sie durch die heilige Kabbala und durch Elohym mitgetheilt worden: Samt der Geister- und Wunder-Herrschaft, welches Moses in der Wüste aus dem feurigen Busch erlernet, alle Verborgenheiten der Kabbala umfassend. Köln am Rhein: Bei Peter Hammer, 1725.

Abraham von Worms. *Das Buch der wahren Praktik in der göttlichen Magie: vergleichende Textausgabe mit Kommentar.* Edited by Jürg von Ins. München: Diederichs, 1988.

Abrahams, Israel, and Aaron Rothkoff. "Tabernacle." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 19:418–24. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *Della Architettura Della Pittura e Della Statua.* Translated by Cosimo Bartoli. Bologna: Instituto delle Scienze, 1782.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *I Dieci Libri de l'Architettura di Leon Battista degli Alberti, ... Novamente de la latina ne la volgar lingua ...* Translated by Pietro Lauro. Venice: Vincenzo Vaugris, 1546.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *L'architettura.* Edited by Paolo Portoghesi. Translated by Giovanni Orlandi. Il Polifilo, 1966.

Ambelain, Robert. *La Magie sacrée ou Le Livre d'Abramelin le mage.* Paris: Bussière, 1959.

Anttonen, Veikko. "Rethinking 'Religious' Cognition: The Eliadean Notion of the Sacred in the Light of the Legacy of Uno Harva." *Temenos – Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 43, no. 1 (January 1, 2007). https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4606.

Anttonen, Veikko K. "Space, Body, and the Notion of Boundary: A Category-Theoretical Approach to Religion." *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 41, no. 2 (2005): 185–201.

Asprem, Egil. *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture.* SUNY Press, 2012.

Asprem, Egil. "Esotericism and the Scholastic Imagination: The Origins of Esoteric Practice in Christian Kataphatic Spirituality." *Correspondences* 4 (2016): 3–36.

Asprem, Egil. "Explaining the Esoteric Imagination: Towards a Theory of Kataphatic Practice." *Aries* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 17–50. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700593-01701002.

Beecken, Johann Richard. *Die Heilige Magie Des Abramelin. Die Überlieferrung Des Abraham von Worms. Nach Dem Hebräischen Text Aus Dem Jahre 1458.* Berlin: Verlag Richard Schikowski, 1957.

Bellingradt, Daniel, and Bernd-Christian Otto. *Magical Manuscripts in Early Modern Europe. The Clandestine Trade In Illegal Book Collections.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. //www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783319595245.

Bogdan, Henrik. "Ars Congressus Cum Daemone: Aleister Crowley and the Knowledge and Conversation with the Holy Guardian Angel." *Entangled Religions* 14, no. 3 (April 14, 2023). https://doi.org/10.46586/er.14.2023.10265.

Boudet, Jean-Patrice, and Julien Véronèse. "Le Secret Dans La Magie Rituelle Médiévale." *Micrologus*, January 2006.

Carpo, Mario. *Architecture in the Age of Printing: Orality, Writing, Typography, and Printed Images in the History of Architectural Theory.* Cambridge, London: The MIT Press, 2001.

Carrafiello, Tommaso. "Trattati e Teorie Dell'architettura Nel Rinascimento: Da Alberti a Palladio." *Il Tardo Cinquecento* 10 (2006): 52–71.

Clucas, Stephen. "Regimen Animarum et Corporum: The Body and Spatial Practice in Medieval and Renaissance Magic." In *The Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, edited by Darryll Grantley and Nina Taunton, 113–30. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.

Crowley, Aleister. *Magick.* Edited by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1974.

Crowley, Aleister. *Magick.* Edited by J. Symonds and K. Grant. Translated by Alfredo Pollini. Roma: Astrolabio Ubaldini, 1978.

Crowley, Aleister. *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography.* Edited by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant. New York: Hill & Wang, 1970.

Currie, Elizabeth. *Inside the Renaissance House.* London; New York: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2006.

Davies, Owen. *Grimoires: A History of Magic Books.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Dupèbe, Jean. "L'écriture Chez l'ermite Pelagius. Un Cas de Théurgie Chrétienne Au Xve Siècle." In *Le Texte et Son Inscription*, edited by R. Laufer, 113–53. Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1989.

Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.* Translated by Karen E. Fields. New York: Free Press, 1995.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion. The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism, and Ritual Within Life and Culture.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.

Fanthorpe, Patricia, and Lionel Fanthorpe. *The World's Most Mysterious People.* Toronto, Oxford: Hounslow Press, 1998.

Ferraglio, Ennio. "Biblioteca Magica. Libri di alchimia e magia nelle collezioni antiche della Biblioteca Queriniana," 2018. https://www.abibook.it/images/promozione/Catalogo-Biblioteca-Magica.pdf.

Franchetto, Andrea. "Imaginal Architectural Devices and the Ritual Space of Medieval Necromancy." *Endeavour* 44, no. 4 (December 2020): 100748. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.endeavour.2021.100748.

Fusari, Giuseppe. "La 'Libreria Magica' Dei Martinenego Da Barco." In *Medici, Alchimisti, Astrologi. Inquietudini e Ricerche Del Cinquecento*, edited by Ennio Ferraglio. Brescia: Marco Serra Tarantola, 2005.

Guzzo, Eleonora. *Il tempio nel tempio: il monumento ligneo a Jean-Jacques Rousseau nel Panthéon di Parigi, dalla capanna vitruviana ai lumi francesi.* Premio tesi di dottorato 52. Firenze, Italy: Firenze University Press, 2015.

Jones, Lindsay. *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison. Monumental Occasions: Reflections on the Eventfulness of Religious Architecture.* Vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Kieckhefer, Richard. *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Kilcher, Andreas B., ed. *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism.* Aries Book Series, v. 11. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2010.

Klaassen, Frank. "Subjective Experience and the Practice of Medieval Ritual Magic." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7, no. 1 (2012): 19–51. https://doi.org/10.1353/mrw.2012.0011.

Kutch, Ernst, Louis Jacobs, and Abram Kanof. "Sukkot." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, edited by Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, 19:299–302. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. Gale Virtual Reference Library.

"La Vera et Real Magia Sacra." Brescia, second half 17th century. I.V.13. Biblioteca Queriniana.

Láng, Benedek. *Unlocked Books: Manuscripts of Learned Magic in the Medieval Libraries of Central Europe.* University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 2008.

Lawson, E. Thomas, and Robert N. McCauley. *Rethinking Religion: Connecting Cognition and Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Loda, Maria Elena. "La Magia Sacra Di Abramelin." *MISINTA* 31 (2008): 37–46.

Loda, Maria Elena. "Scire, Audere, Potere, Tacere. La Raccolta Occulta Dei Martinengo Da Barco." *Charta* 101 (2009): 28–33.

Mathers, S. L. MacGregor. *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage.* London: Jhon M. Watkins, 1956.

Mathers, S. L. MacGregor, Francis King, R. A. Gilbert, and Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. *Astral Projection, Ritual Magic, and Alchemy : Golden Dawn Material by S.L. MacGregor Mathers and Others ; Edited and Introduced by Francis King ; Additional Material by R.A. Gilbert.* Destiny Books, 1987.

Mattox, Philip. "Domestic Sacral Space in the Florentine Renaissance Palace." *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 5 (2006): 658–73. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-4658.2006.00367.x.

Mazurek, Antoine. "The Guardian Angel: From the Natural to the Supernatural." In *Everyday Magic in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Dr Kathryn A. Edwards, 51–69. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.

McIntosh, Christopher. *The Devil's Bookshelf: A History of the Written Word in Western Magic from Ancient Egypt to the Present Day.* San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1988.

Meyer, Birgit. "Mediation and the Genesis of Presence. Towards a Material Approach to Religion." University of Utrecht, 2012.

Otto, Bernd-Christian. "Historicising 'Western Learned Magic.'" *Aries* 16, no. 2 (January 1, 2016): 161–240. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700593-01602001.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance.* New York: Routledge, 1972.

Pasi, Marco. "La notion de magie dans le courant occultiste en Angleterre: 1875–1947." École pratique des hautes études, 2014.

Pasi, Marco. "Varieties of Magical Experience: Aleister Crowley's Views on Occult Practice." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 6, no. 2 (October 4, 2018): 123–62.

Pelagius. *L'Anacrise.* Edited by Robert Amadou. Paris: Cariscript, 1988.

Preyer, Brenda. "The Florentine Casa." In *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, Flora Dennis, and Elizabeth Miller, 34–48. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2006.

Rykwert, Joseph. *On Adam's House in Paradise: The Idea of the Primitive Hut in Architectural History.* The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture 2. New York: Museum of Modern Art; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Greenwich, Conn, 1972.

Smith, Jonathan Z. "Constructing a Small Place." In *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land*, edited by Benjamin Z. Kedar and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, 18–31. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14084-8_2.

Smith, Jonathan Z. "Here, There, Anywhere." In *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars*, edited by Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler, 21–36. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

Sofer, Gal. "Solomonic Magic: Texts, History, and Reception." Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2022.

Sørensen, Jesper. "Acts That Work: A Cognitive Approach to Ritual Agency." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 19, no. 3–4 (2007): 281–300. https://doi.org/10.1163/157006807X240118.

Taves, Ann. "Building Blocks of Sacralities: A New Basis for Comparison across Cultures and Religions." In *Handbook of The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, 138–64. New York: The Guilford Press, 2013.

Urban, Hugh B., and Paul C. Johnson, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Secrecy.* Routledge Handbooks in Religion. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2022.

Véronèse, Julien. "La notion d'" auteur-magicien " à la fin du Moyen Âge: Le cas de l'ermite Pelagius de Majorque († v. 1480)." *Médiévales. Langues, Textes, Histoire*, no. 51 (December 1, 2006): 119–38. https://doi.org/10.4000/medievales.1476.

Véronèse, Julien. "Le rêve sollicité : un thème de la magie rituelle médiévale." *Sociétés & Représentations*, no. 23 (2007): 83–103. https://doi.org/10.3917/sr.023.0083.

Véronèse, Julien. “Solomonic Magic.” In *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*, edited by Sophie Page and Catherine Rider, 187–200. London and New York: Routledge, 2019.

Andrej Kapcar

Spatial Occultism: Placement and Spaces of Occult Ritual Practice Within Pop Culture

Abstract: Occult topics, often connected with paranormal and supernatural phenomena, have been resonating through pop-cultural visual depictions for some time. A noteworthy feature is the imagination of the spaces in which occult activities are conducted or play a significant role within the story – this ranges from dark basements, forests, and cemeteries to hospitals and schools. While often varying in their location, a closer analysis reveals common features which artists and writers tend to associate with the occult. Some creators are indeed influenced by the history of occultism, but on many occasions the artist simply amplifies certain "occult" features to increase aesthetic appeal. This appeal has a strong effect on the non-fictional world, where such features are likely to be integrated into contemporary occult practice. Especially in the branch of magic known as Chaos Magick, the line between fiction and non-fiction is consciously blurred. Here the circle of art imitating life and life imitating art is completed. This chapter examines these features, creating categories of ritual spaces depicted in popular culture, and comparing them with those of modern occultists, in an attempt to analyze how they mutually interact.

Introduction

The expression "occult," originating from the Latin word *occultus*, means "clandestine, hidden, or secret."[1] In contemporary society, it is usually associated with the practice of occultism, the category of the esoteric, and supernatural beliefs that exist outside the scope of authorized religion and science. To talk of occult spaces is to designate certain areas and places related to occult ritual practices (e. g., shrines, forests, temples), places of the supernatural, or magical occurrences (e. g., transitional spaces, liminal zones, magical gates), and places combining the two (e. g., a cemetery).

1 George Crabb, *English Synonyms Explained in Alphabetical Order with Copious Illustrations and Examples Drawn from the Best Writers* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1927), 698.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-006

While the subject of religious spaces has enjoyed a long-lasting academic interest,[2] most of this research focuses on organized or institutional religions. On the other hand, studies of occult spaces connected with magic[3] and occult ritual are comparatively less represented.[4] And research on the connection of occult spaces and their depiction in popular culture is, to the best of my knowledge, practically non-existent.

Why Pop-Culture and Occultism?

The idea of occult science, developed already in the 16th century, usually consists of astrology, alchemy, divination, and natural magic.[5] During the late 17th and early 18th century, polemics about the validity of the occult sciences – in comparison to the mainstream sciences – accelerated; however, these sciences nevertheless survived in one form or another into modern times.[6] Yet while past esoteric and occult teachings were bound by anonymity, required levels of initiation, or were secluded in remote libraries, the relationship between occult teachings and contemporary society is drastically different.

What was hidden from common sight and practiced in secret is now used in mainstream media as a form of entertainment. This process can be traced to the 1970s with the emergence of the parody religion Discordianism,[7] and it continued

2 Shampa Mazumdar and Sanjoy Mazumdar, "Sacred Space and Place Attachment," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 13, no. 3 (1993): 231–242; Alexei Vranich, "Interpreting the Meaning of Ritual Space: The Temple Complex of Pumapunku, Tiwanaku, Bolivia" (University of Pennsylvania, 1999); Sara Alem, Vahid Vaziri, and Ali Rezaei Sharif, "Designing Ritual Spaces by Considering Social Bonds," *Journal of Social Issues & Humanities* 2, no. 5 (2014): 12–19; Donna Kacmar, "Ritual Spaces," in *Art of Death & Dying Symposium Proceedings*, ed. Katie Buehner et al., 2013, 57–63 (Houston: University of Houston Libraries, 2013); Pamela Sachant et al., *Introduction to Art – Design, Context, and Meaning* (California: University System of Georgia, 2022); Benjamin R. Meagher, "Perceiving Sacred Space: Religious Orientation Moderates Impressions of Religious Settings," *Environment and Behavior* 48, no. 8 (2016): 1030–1048.

3 Aleister Crowley introduced the expression magick, with the terminal -k, as a way of differentiating it from stage magic, or illusion. In his work *Magick: Libera ABA*, he describes magick as a method of science aimed at causing change to occur in conformity with the will. See Aleister Crowley, *Magick: Liber ABA: Book 4* (London: Weiser & 93 Publications, 1994), Part III.

4 Robert David Sack, "Magic and Space," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66, no. 2 (1976): 309–322.

5 Wouter J. Hanegraaf, ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 887.

6 Hanegraaf, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 887.

7 Discordianism is a parody religion centered around the goddess of chaos, Eris, or Discordia, founded in 1963 after the publication of the "holy book" *Principia Discordia* by Greg Hill and

with Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth[8] and the Illuminates of Thanateros,[9] both appearing almost simultaneously in the 1980s.[10] All three of these organizations were actively, in one way or another, supporting their members with information on magic, elevating this age-old practice from the shadows of obscurity and into the public for everyone to engage with as they pleased. New forms of magical practice were invented and implemented, leading to a syncretic approach to magic (often described as post-modern magic), which culminated in the establishment of a new magical branch currently known as Chaos Magick.[11] Chaos Magick is sometimes described as DIY (do it yourself) magic, aimed at tangible goals for the practitioner. This trend was further accelerated through the advent of the internet, as it served as a public access point for literary sources, instructions, advice, and discussions regarding magical practice and traditions. The focus was shifted from whether the sources were readily accessible to whether the practices were believed to bring concrete results.

One of the expressions connected with the modernization of magic is occulture, introduced into the academic literature by Christopher Partridge.[12] In Partridge's own words, *occulture is ordinary*.[13] What is to be understood by this statement? It means that what was previously considered deviant, hidden, and maybe

---

Kerry Wendell Thornley. See Robert Anton Wilson, *Cosmic Trigger I: Final Secret of the Illuminati* (Scottsdale: New Falcon Publications, 1977), 65.

8 Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, or TOPY, was a British magical organization founded in 1981 by Genesis P-Orridge. Serving as an experimental artistic collective, the members were practicing sigil magic and sex magic as a way of altering reality through artistic means. See David Keenan, *England's Hidden Reverse* (London: SAF Publishing, 2003), 315.

9 Illuminates of Thanateros, or IOT, is an international occult or neo-shamanic organization formed in 1978, focusing on the practical work in chaos magick. It had one of the most important influences on modern occultism. See Bernd-Christian Otto, "The Illuminates of Thanateros and the Institutionalisation of Religious Individualisation," in *Religious Individualisation*, ed. Martin Fuchs (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 761.

10 For more information see Erik Davis, "High Weirdness: Visionary Experience in the Senventies Counterculture" (Houston: Rice University, 2015), 315. Phil Hine, *Condensed Chaos: An Introduction to Chaos Magic* (Tempe: The Original Falcon Press, 2010), 11. Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: A Book of Sin, Devil Worship and Rock'n'Roll* (London: Plexus Publishing, 2010), 156.

11 Chaos Magick is a contemporary magical practice, initially originating in 1970s England as part of the neopagan and magical subcultures. Drawing heavily on the work of British painter and occultist Austin Osman Spare, chaos magick assumes that perceptions are conditioned by beliefs. By changing these beliefs, reality can be adapted to the will. See George D. Chryssides, *Historical Dictionary of New Religious Movements (2 Ed.)* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 78. Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut* (New York: Weiser Book, 1987), 30.

12 Christopher Partridge, ed., *The Occult World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 10.

13 Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm, *Contemporary Esotericism* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2013), 113.

even "perverted," is now increasingly becoming ordinary and accessible to everyone. According to Carl Abrahamsson, a popular writer who has written on this theme, occulture is the liminal space, blending art and magic together.[14] Occulture can be seen all around us; it is part of everyday experience, often represented to us through audiovisual and popular culture. Mainstream movies, series, books, graphical novels, and videogames are extensively working with these themes, symbols, characters, and narratives originating in the primary esoteric sources. Typically, the audience is not even aware that their favorite action movie is filled with esoteric symbolism, or that the character they are playing in their favorite videogame is a reference to a magical practitioner of the past.

This relates to occult spaces in popular audiovisual media, as well, which is most obvious in movies/series (live action and animated) and video games. Both of these examples provide intensive audiovisual and narrative stimuli and actively include the spectator, even while differing in their forms of participation and immersion.

What Makes a Ritual/Sacred Space?

To define sacred space, we must return to Émile Durkheim's definition, namely, the regarding of certain beliefs, persons, institutions, and places with great respect and admiration, while at the same time keeping devotees at a distance.[15] For defining ritual spaces, the concept of heterotopias, introduced by Michel Foucault,[16] plays an especially important role. Heterotopia can be understood as a space – cultural, institutional, or discursive – that is perceived as "other" in contrast to the surrounding environment, be it disturbing, contradictory, incompatible, or transforming. Of particular interest are what Foucault defines as heterotopias of ritual or purification – spaces that are somehow isolated and not as freely accessible as public spaces. Entrance to such a heterotopic space is obligatory for a certain population or group (members, devotees) and requires a certain ritual (be it a gesture, clothing, phrase, or other symbol of belonging) to be permitted.[17] The creation of such spaces, including the requirements and restrictions connected with the proc-

14 Carl Abrahamsson, *Occulture. The Unseen Forces That Drive Culture Forward* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 2018), 2.

15 Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, ed. Mark Sydney Cladis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 44.

16 Michel Foucault, "Des Espace Autres (Conférence Au Cercle d'études Architecturales, 14 March 1967)," *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49.

17 Foucault, "Des Espace Autres," 49.

ess, is often described through a mythological story or historical event, which forms the narrative aspect. While acknowledging the theoretical difference between a sacred and a ritual space, for the needs of this chapter we'll be using the term sacred space for religious inclinations, as well as the social exclusivity. The sacred space is thus defined as any space that is considered sacred by practitioners of magic, and used for and/or accessed through ritual means. Although this might complicate any classification because it attributes to any space the potentiality of sanctification, it nevertheless unshackles the traditional definition, freeing it from the necessity of quantifiable attributes and shifts attention to the narrative of the practitioner.

In this view, a sacred space can be anything that fulfills the requirements for acting as such a space, for example, rituals of cleansing, preparation, or separation from "non-sacred" or profane spaces. After the fulfilment of the ritual, the space can become non-sacred again – that is, be dissolved – but it can also remain sacred. The narrative aspect in the formation of a sacred space is of particular importance in the analysis of pop-cultural media, for it reflects the way in which the author has envisioned the emergence of such a space, and whether it correlates with the actual non-fictional occult practice.

The interdependence of the artistic depiction (i. e., depictions in popular culture) and the real-life practice (occult/ritual practice outside the realm of pop-cultural media) is established through the mutual interaction between the concepts of mimesis and anti-mimesis. Mimesis,[18] which has been discussed by a plethora of scholars from antiquity until today, is usually expressed as "art imitates life," a representation of nature – even human nature – in the artistic performances of the time; anti-mimesis,[19] as proposed by Oscar Wilde,[20] suggests the direct opposite, that is, "life imitating art."

In the artistic, audiovisual depictions of magical practices and rituals, especially in the modernist approach to magic, the metaphorical circle of tradition, representation, reimagination and imitation is often blurry, with no identifiable steps.

---

18 The representation of nature as reflected in the dramas of antiquity. The concept of mimesis was discussed both by Plato and Aristotle. See Plato, *Dialogues* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1891), 532c, 540c.

19 A philosophical position in opposition to mimesis. Oscar Wilde claims that what is found in nature and life is not really there but a representation of what the artists have taught people to find. An example he mentions is the fog in London, which has been there for centuries, but its beauty has been observed only because poets and painters have shown the appeal of weather condition. See Francis Charles McGrath, *Brian Friel's (Post)Colonial Drama: Language, Illusion, and Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 19–21.

20 Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying – An Observation," in *Intentions*, 1891, 8.

Movies and video games are inspired by "traditional" occult rituals that are adapted to fit the aesthetic idea of the author, or aesthetic societal norms of the time, which again are perceived by the practitioners and implemented into their magical practice.

Additionally, the sacred has a normative function in religious behavior,[21] and this does not differ in magical praxis. The sacred dictates a certain form of behavior for the magician, represented by ritual steps, clothing, paraphernalia and taboos. In the case of chaos magick, the dos and donts are much more varied and difficult to classify, for examples, ritual purity, the variety of allowed and forbidden artifacts or symbolic gestures, which is due to the syncretic nature of this branch of magic. The attention to these normative details in the depiction of occult practice in popular culture usually signifies more complex levels of the author's understanding of the topic. Even when the depictions are pure imaginations of the author and do not adhere to any known magical tradition, as long as the steps of the spell-casting process (e. g., preparation, cleansing the space, succession of gestures) are not arbitrary but logical to a certain established practice, this could indicate the author's own understanding of given magical traditions, or the folklore surrounding such traditions.

Origins of Occultism in Popular Entertainment

The creation of liminal spaces through means of entertainment goes back to the 19th century.[22] The Ouija board, a favorite pastime still popular today, was produced and marketed during the 1890s[23] in Baltimore, Maryland, by Charles Kannard, Elijah Bond, and later William Fuld, within the Kannard Novelty Company.[24] This wooden board displays letters of the alphabet arranged in two semi-circles placed above numbers from 1–0, the words "yes" and "no" in the upper corners,

21 Carl Brusse and Kim Sterelny, "Religion and Its Evolution: Signals, Norms, and Secret Histories," *Religion, Brain and Behavior* 10, no. 3 (2020): 217.

22 Origins of automatic writing, or spirit writing (sometimes called Fuji or planchette writing), can be traced to the Song dynasty in China (960–1279). In the 19th century spirit writing was directly responsible for the creation of several salvationist religions in China. See Wang Chien-ch'uan, "Spirit Writing Groups in Modern China (1840–1937): Textual Production, Public Teachings, and Charity," in *In Modern Chinese Religion II 1850–2015*, ed. Vincent Goossaert, Jan Kiely, and John Lagerwey (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 651.

23 The practice of talking to spirits through different means was popular within the spiritualist movement also prior to the invention of the Ouija board.

24 Jan Harold Brunvand, *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 1118.

and the word "goodbye" at the bottom, and it comes with a wood-and-glass teardrop shaped device called a planchette. On February 10, 1891, the Ouija board was awarded a patent as a "toy or game."[25] Initially marketed as an innocent parlor game, with little to do with the occult, it was during the First World War that it attracted the attention of spiritualists and started to be used as a divination tool.[26]

The relation of the Ouija board to occult spaces is probably self-evident – through the use of letters, numbers and short phrases, the practitioner or player aims to communicate with spirits, who direct the planchette across the board and form answers. The board itself is a liminal space to the underworld, a communication portal with the deceased. In keeping with other necromantic practices aimed at establishing direct or indirect communication with the dead, the Ouija board, though marketed and sold as a toy, was perceived as the transitional space between worlds.

The 2014 supernatural horror film *Ouija*, directed by Stiles White,[27] and its 2016 prequel, *Ouija: Origin of Evil*, directed by Mike Flanagan, explored the idea of contacting the afterlife through the Ouija board.[28] In the films, the talking board is presented as a portal through which the deceased can cross over into our world, often with malicious intent. The idea is thus expanded from transmitting messages to transferring entities as a way of narratively emphasizing the abilities of the artifact. This trend becomes noticeable in the pop-cultural reimagination of many other magical practices.

The example of the Ouija board, as well as its cinematographic dramatization, shows one of the more typical aspects of sacred spaces in occultism. The occult space does not necessarily need to be bound to a particular location (although it can be) but rather works at establishing a transition, or a passage, between different worlds. In comparison to churches, temples, or sacred groves, designed as places of gathering and worship, sacred spaces in occultism are often connected with traversing, summoning, or banishing supernatural entities or energies, and on many occasions they serve only a one-time purpose. As demonstrated by the

25 Brunvand, *American Folklore,* 1118.

26 Brunvand, *American Folklore,* 1118. The current scientific discourse argues that the movement on the Ouija board is the result of the ideomotor response – the planchette is guided by an unconscious muscular exertion of the practitioner, similar to the moving tables in spiritualist seances. The unconscious state is called a dissociative state – one in which the consciousness is in some form split from other cognitive functions of the individual. Since the movement is unconscious, the illusion of the object moving on its own is persuasive. See Terence Hines, *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 2003), 47.

27 Stiles White, *Ouija* (United States: Universal Pictures, 2014).

28 Mike Flanagan, *Ouija: Origin of Evil* (United States: Universal Pictures, 2016).

Ouija board example, they are often portable, creating the liminal space in different locations based on their placement.

Occult Spaces in Popular Culture

Two main points of interest emerge when seeking to understand how sacred occult spaces are represented in pop-cultural iterations: the visual depiction and the narrative, both of which represent aesthetic experience. While each is important on its own, combined they present an important object for further analysis. The visual element can be representative of the author's imagination, but without the narrative component, its meaning remains unclear.

For example, a stone has little meaning outside the narrative aside from it being part of the environment, but based on the narrative it can take on the form of an altar and become associated with the ritual practice. On the other hand, a complex, ominous symbol might be associated with a magical ritual by the audience, but without the narrative explanation there is no way of determining its purpose.

The case studies of this chapter utilize both the visual depiction and the narrative. Three main categories have been identified: (1) place-bound instances (permanent or semi-permanent/transportable); (2) temporary places (cease to exist after the ritual); and (3) transitional spaces (subcategory of both previous ones – spaces intended for transition between at least two realms).

Place-bound instances

This category consists of the most commonly depicted elements. Although we have suggested that occult spaces don't necessarily need to be bound to a particular place, that doesn't mean such occurrences do not exist. On the contrary, they are plentifully described in magical practice as well as in pop-cultural depictions. Their form and function here are similar to those of any other ritual place, including that of organized religions, and they range from small-scale altars to temples, shrines, forests, meadows, or caves, including their combinations.

Similar depictions are to be found in movies and video games. Altars intended for ritual use, sacrifice, or worship are presented in a variety of forms, often connected with a task the protagonist needs to fulfill. This could be an interaction with a specific item to unlock further progress, as in the case of pouring blood on an

altar in the horror game *Silent Hill 3*,[29] or simply paying one's respects as in the adventure game *Ghost of Tsushima.*[30] An interesting case of implementing occult narratives is found in the urban survival game *Hobo: Tough Life.*[31] Playing as a homeless person trying to survive in an urban environment, the player encounters satanic altars placed throughout the city, decorated with a cow skull and a 5-pointed star. These can be either consecrated with holy water and thus destroyed, or new ones can be constructed to worship Satan in exchange for gifts and benefits.

But altars are not the only place-bound instances used in popular culture. Larger spaces of ritual practice are present as well, such as open forest areas, as in the psychological horror movie *Kill List* (2011, directed by Ben Wheatley),[32] or caves, as in *The Empty Man* (2020, directed by David Prior),[33] or houses, such as in *Aterrados* (2017, directed by Demián Rugna).[34]

The common denominator is that in all cases there is a relatively straightforward representation in the aesthetics – visuals and narrative alike. Altars are always depicted as a place containing ritual paraphernalia, separating it from the rest of the environment.[35] Large areas are decorated with similar artifacts or symbols (e. g., torches, effigies, statues, candles), creating a liminal space of supernatural interactions. This correlates with the recent research on the design of sacred spaces and their relation to the motivation of a community.[36] Motivations are related to the perceptual appreciation of the environment, reflecting the balance between functionality and aestheticism. As a place of devotion and worship, the design of a sacred space must incorporate the practical orientation, as well as the feeling of mystery, enhancing personal attachment with the object of worship.[37]

In the case of fictional depictions in popular culture, the pragmatic design is often omitted at the expense of mystery. Even if the author has to make the place "practical" within the storyline, the focus is on the feeling of mystery and supernatural suspense. As such, the attributes enhance the emotional response of the

29 Team Silent, "Silent Hill 3" (Tokyo: Konami, 2003).

30 Sucker Punch Productions, "Ghost of Tsushima" (San Mateo: Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2020).

31 S.r.o. Perun Creative, "Hobo: Tough Life" (Ostava: Perun Creative s.r.o., 2021).

32 Ben Wheatley, *Kill List* (United Kingdom: Optimum Releasing, 2011).

33 David Prior, *The Empty Man* (United States: 20th Century Studios, 2020).

34 Demián Rugna, *Aterrados* (Argentina: Aura Films, 2017).

35 John Sutherland and Thomas Kelly, *Encyclopaedia Biblica: A Critical Dictionary of the Literary, Political and Religious History, the Archaeology, Geography, and Natural History of the Bible* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), 124.

36 Meagher, "Perceiving Sacred Space: Religious Orientation Moderates Impressions of Religious Settings," 15.

37 Mazumdar and Mazumdart, "Sacred Space and Place Attachment," 233.

mystery, such as using extended shadows, candlelight, and a worn-out appearance. This can be explained with Stan Godlovitch's model of mystery,[38] originally applied to nature. Godlovitch assumes that the feeling of mystery is created not by awe or sublimity but rather by creating a sense of "being outside of a place, and not belonging."[39] By exaggerating the aspects that are alien to the general idea of comfortability, while at the same time presenting the occult as an abnormal element contrasting with everyday "normality" (a ritual space within a forest, cave, or a house), the place-bound instances of occult spaces are presented as an abnormal version of a recognizable space.

Temporary spaces

Temporary spaces are based on the idea that any space can become an occult space for a certain period of time, after which it loses its magical function and becomes mundane again. The most common examples of this are the so-called magical circles – usually banishing, protective, or invocation circles.

The magic circle is a geometric pattern used by magic practitioners as a space for containing energy or temporarily separating the chosen area from the rest of the "outside" world, which often provides magical protection during the operation. They might be created physically with chalk, salt, or paint, but also as the result of visualization. This magical shape is believed to form a protective barrier between the magician and the entity to be evoked, or energy the magician is working with.[40]

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a secret esoteric organization with one of the most significant influences on the formation of contemporary esoteric practices, included the so-called Lesser Banishing Ritual of the Pentagram (or LBRP), together with the Opening by Watchtower. LBRP (together with the invocation of the four cardinal points, i. e., the Watchtowers) consists of a combination of dynamic gestures, visualizations, and vocalizations within a magical circle as a way of purification and preparing the space.[41] A similar practice was used by John Dee

38 Stan Godlovitch, "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* II (1994): 26.

39 Allen Carlson, "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2015): 394.

40 Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide, 2009), 191.

41 Donald Michael Kraig, *Modern Magick: Eleven Lessons in the High Magickal Arts (2nd Ed.)* (Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide, 1998), 165.

and Edward Kelly when practicing Enochian magic in an attempt to summon angels and spirits.

Due to the popularity of this practice among esoteric practitioners, it has not escaped the attention of visual artists and designers, who have reimagined the practice in creative ways. Among the most noticeable examples is the 2021 animated series *Trese*[42] based on Filipino folklore and magical practices set in contemporary society, or the graphic novel and animated series *Fullmetal Alchemist*[43] based on the idea of alchemical transmutations. In both examples the magic circles play a significant role visually and narratively. Similar to the practices of John Dee or the Golden Dawn, here the circles are created to separate the practitioner from harmful supernatural elements. In both cases, the circles serve for banishing (capturing or restricting the actions of the supernatural entity or elements within the circle) or protection (the area within the circle is regarded as a safe zone, where no harm can befall the practitioner).

Further examples can be found in the live-action horror movie *A Dark Song* (2016, directed by Liam Gavin)[44] and *Anything for Jackson* (2020, directed by Justin G. Dyck).[45] These films deal with the loss of a child and an attempt to contact them by supernatural means. In both cases the protagonists create a magical circle either for protection or to summon supernatural forces.

While the design of the magical circles differs, there is a strong inclination toward geometric shapes. The magical circles of John Dee or the Golden Dawn were, among others, decorated with the names of the 4 archangels (Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, and Auriel), five-pointed stars, or protective sigils. Here there is a noticeable deviation in the fictional depictions, where the authors took a greater liberty in their re-imaginings. The obvious attractiveness of geometrical shapes is still evident, but due to the placement within the environment, or due to the aesthetical preferences of the creators, the magic circles are more often filled with Latin phrases and astrological or alchemical symbols.

Transitional spaces

The category of transitional spaces can be partially understood as a combination of the previous two. On the one hand, they are often depicted as physical spaces, such as tunnels, caves, or gates, but on the other, instead of marking a ritual location on

42 Budjette Tan and Kajo Baldisimo, *Trese* (Singapore: Netflix, 2021).
43 Hiromu Arakawa, *Fullmetal Alchemist* (Japan: Bones, Inc., 2003).
44 Liam Gavin, *A Dark Song* (Ireland: IFC Midnight, 2016).
45 Justin G. Dyck, *Anything for Jackson* (Canada: Shudder, 2020).

its own, they serve as a transitional space leading to a supernatural realm. The belief in different spiritual realms is influenced by the esoteric teaching of the "planes of existence," a popular ingredient in most esoteric systems. Returning to the writings of the esoteric practitioners of the 19th and 20th centuries, geometric terms like "plane," "sphere," or "dimension" were used in descriptions of the hierarchically ordered stratifications of esoteric cosmologies.[46] Following the Neoplatonic and Hermetic traditions of antiquity, the doctrine of cosmological spheres[47] directly influenced the idea of soul journey and ascension through different realms. This idea even crops up in Dante Alighieri's work,[48] which follows Plato's and Cicero's concept of celestial spheres that can be traversed by the ascending soul. The concept was picked up by other esoteric groups, as well, from the Swedenborgians to the theosophists, and by the time Charles Webster Leadbeater published his "The Astral Plane" (1895) and "The Devachanic Plane (1896),[49] a "plane" had become a standard expression for describing any metaphysical, hierarchical region in esoteric discourse.[50]

The idea of transcending these planes, in a spiritual or even in the physical sense, has fascinated not only occultists, but artists as well. It is no surprise that it has become prevalent in a diverse array of pop-cultural representations.

The video game series *Silent Hill* (1999–2012, published by Konami) features a nightmarish, hellscape called the Otherworld (occasionally referred to as Otherside, Alternate World, Nightmare World or Reverse Side), a vaguely defined plane of existence parallel or nonparallel to the real world. In its various interpretations, this reality is understood as a disease slowly infecting and devouring the real world, a manifestation of Hell created through the combined tormented experiences of people caught in it, or else as a different, hostile dimension. The transitional space in this case has multiple forms, ranging from the so-called Fog World – a misty, gloomy intermediate space between our reality and the hell-reality, expressed through a thick fog inhabited by people as well as nightmarish creatures (e. g., *Silent Hill 1*, *2*) and through mirrors, which reveal the distorted reality that awaits on the other side (*Silent Hill 3*) – to physical places such as tunnels or holes in walls (*Silent Hill 4: The Room*).

---

46 Christopher A. Plaisance, "Occult Spheres, Planes, and Dimensions: Geometric Terminology and Analogy in Modern Esoteric Discourse," *Journal of Religious History* 40, no. 3 (2016): 385.

47 Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 882.

48 Plaisance, "Occult Spheres, Planes, and Dimensions: Geometric Terminology and Analogy in Modern Esoteric Discourse," 393.

49 Plaisance, 397.

50 Plaisance, 397.

Similar to esoteric teachings, the transition here is usually conditioned by a certain ritual practice or knowledge, although it can happen more autonomously as the result of emotionally exhausting, stressful, and dangerous situations.

Another example of transitional spaces is provided in the Lovecraftian[51] horror movie *The Void* (2016, directed by Steven Kostanski and Jeremy Gillespie).[52] Here the plot deals with death and resurrection, and the protagonists find themselves face to face with a mysterious triangular shape serving as a dimensional gate to a different plane of existence. As with the other examples, this space was opened through an occult ritual connecting the supernatural realm and the physical one.

In contrast to the previous category, transitional space isn't necessarily bound to a geometrical shape or symbol. The place becomes "activated" through a specific action or becomes visible through the acquisition of special knowledge, but in all cases it is merged with the real world, with no precise borders. As such, we could argue that the category of transitional spaces consists of two additional subcategories:

– *Places of gradual transition* – places where the visitor realizes only gradually that they have entered a different plane of existence, typically combining elements of both worlds.
– *Transitional gates* – usually geometrically bordered spaces that provide a strict differentiation between both transitioning planes.

One element mentioned in this category, which often plays a pivotal role in uncovering a sacred space and thus has far-reaching importance for esoteric practice, is knowledge. The capability to understand the presence of a different plane of existence and the ability to traverse it is dependent on the appropriate accumulated knowledge.

Knowledge and Spatial Changes

While many pop-cultural depictions deal with occult spaces as a way of expanding the element of mystery in the narrative, some of them go one step further and con-

51 The American gothic-horror author H.P. Lovecraft is one of the most influential figures of modern horror fiction. His stories about ancient supernatural entities and forbidden knowledge have been absorbed into the magical practice of the Typhonian Order, under the leadership of the British occultist Kenneth Grant.

52 Steven Kostanski and Jeremy Gillespie, *The Void* (Canada: D Films, 2016).

nect the perception of space with the attainment of esoteric knowledge. These are likely inspired by elements of Gnosticism and Neoplatonism.[53]

The Gnostics, so far as we are able to understand them, believed that every human being contains a piece of a Divine Being, a divine spark, that has been transmitted from the immaterial world into the material one. All physical matter, due to it being created by an inferior being (the Demiurge), is subject to decay and death. Being ignorant of their divine origin, humans are destined to remain trapped in this material prison, while the only way of ascending toward the immaterial world lies in attaining the pieces of knowledge (gnosis).[54] Neoplatonism, on the other hand, takes a rather mystical approach to the philosophy of Plato and incorporates both pagan and Christian elements. The core idea of Neoplatonism is centered around the concept of a supreme source of goodness (The One, or The Good), from which all other things are descended. With every iteration the form becomes less perfect. In contrast to Gnosticism, Neoplatonism did not accept the independent existence of evil. Rather than existing on its own, they compared evil to darkness, which exists only as an absence of light. Evil is only the absence of good. Things are good so far as they exist; they are evil only when they are imperfect, lacking the good that should befit them. This perfection, or goodness, is attainable in this world, without the necessity of waiting for the afterlife. Perfection and happiness are considered synonyms, both of which can be achieved through philosophical contemplation, leading to reunification with the One.[55]

---

53 Although Gnosticism and Neoplatonism are often addressed as similar teachings, in the 3rd century CE Neoplatonists turned against the Gnostics under the guidance of Neoplatonists such as Amelius, Porphyry and Plotinus. Among other disputes, of importance was the question of materiality, corporeality and evil. Plotinus himself used the following analogy as a way of describing the differences between these two teachings: "*There are two people occupying the identical house, a beautiful house, where one of them censures its construction and its builder but nevertheless keeps living in it, and the other does not censure him and says rather that the builder made it most proficiently, and yet he is waiting for the time to come when he will be released from the house and will no longer require it. It is possible, then, not to be lovers of the body, and to become pure, and to disdain death, and to know the higher beings and pursue them.*" Plotinus, *The Enneads* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 18.

54 Ilaria L.E Ramelli, "Gnosis/Knowledge," Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online, 2018, 1, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589–7993_EECO_SIM_00001440.

55 David G. Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy: The Historical Impact* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), 5–6. Jens Halfwassen, "The Metaphysics of the One," in *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, ed. Pauliina Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2014), 182–99. Lucas Siorvanes, "Plotinus and Neoplatonism: The Creation of a New Synthesis," in *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, ed. Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 847–868; D. Turner and Louvain Paris, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition By* (Quebec: Les Presses De L'Universite Laval, 2001).

For emanationist currents of thought, such as these, the idea of decline from a perfect state of existence and ascension toward the original state via knowledge is a dominant theme. The following case studies deal with a similar idea and were chosen from the category of video games. In contrast to movies and series, video games have a higher level of personal interaction and immersion. As the scholar is forced to study and search for new ways of obtaining knowledge, so the player is forced to explore the virtual world, searching for hidden clues and information, often cryptic and vague, open for interpretation and philosophical discourse.

Bloodborne,[56] an action role-playing video game, is already notorious among players for its cryptic world-building and narrative, in which new players are either forced to read long texts explaining the world's lore or rely on more experienced players for interpretations. Within the story the player is able to collect a resource called "insight," esoteric, non-human knowledge gathered either by observing the grotesque enemies or by consuming specific in-game items. The more insight the character attains, the more the surrounding world changes and distorts, revealing areas previously inaccessible, as well as massive elder-god-like beings constantly watching their progress.[57] Within the cosmology of the game, this knowledge is considered both valuable and dangerous. Gathering too much and perceiving the true form of the world can subsequently lead to madness.

The idea that knowledge can also cause insanity is explored in the game *Cultist Simulator*.[58] A unique blend of an esoteric card game and social simulation, *Cultist Simulator* introduces the dream world Mansus or the House of the Sun. Progressing in the story the player unlocks esoteric knowledge that first grants him access to the Mansus and subsequently helps him ascend the steps of this dream world toward The Glory, the highest reachable point. After the initial entry into Mansus, the player sees that up until now he's been lost in the dark woods of existence, a metaphorical comparison to the ignorance of the divine spark in Gnosticism.

56 FromSoftware, "Bloodborne" (San Mateo: Sony Computer Entertainment, 2015).

57 The beings within the game are called Lesser Amygdala, referencing the amygdala within the brain – a organ responsible for processing memory, emotional response and decision-making. K. Amunts et al., "Cytoarchitectonic Mapping of the Human Amygdala, Hippocampal Region and Entorhinal Cortex: Intersubject Variability and Probability Maps," *Anatomy and Embryology* 210, no. 5–6 (2005): 350.

58 Weather Factory, "Cultist Simulator" (San Francisco: Humble Bundle, 2018).

The ascension through steps is also reminiscent of the alchemical engravings of the 17th century and esoteric thinkers like Robert Fludd.[59] The steps would, in this case, represent the alchemical stages necessary for the creation of the Philosopher's Stone, or as a representation of Jacob's Ladder, a symbol often interpreted as a metaphor for evolutionary process.[60]

Similar themes exist in the video game *Pyre.*[61] The player character here, named "Reader," is caught in a purgatory-style world and longs to return to his native plane of existence. His name refers to the ability to read and understand hidden knowledge, which is dangerous and forbidden in the game lore. The aim of the game is to progress to the Ascension, a process of physical and spiritual liberation.

In addition to the symbolism described in the games, the behavior of the players is similarly noteworthy. Discussion boards and internet forums were gradually filled with interpretations, reinterpretations, explanations, and guides of narratives of each game. Experienced in the vague, cryptic, and mysterious lore, the experienced players were "initiating" new players based on how far into the game story they had progressed and how deep their understanding was of the esoteric cosmology. Often, they came up with their own interpretations, which were indirectly supported by the game developers themselves. This process was somehow mirroring the initiation phases of esoteric orders, where reaching the next hierarchical stage is conditioned by acquiring sufficient practice and knowledge beforehand. The phrase "you are not there yet, you wouldn't understand" surfaced on multiple occasions in these conversations.[62] Such secretive behavior of keeping acquired knowledge to oneself, in order not to interfere with another's knowledge gain – whether for the sake of exclusivity, self-worth, or entitlement – is common in esoteric orders.[63] The underlying psychological mechanism lies in a feeling of self-satisfaction, where knowledge sharing is equivalent to ownership transfer. The prevention of knowledge sharing, or partial knowledge sharing, can be caused either by overvaluation of given information or by fear of losing control over the knowledge,[64] often combined with a feeling of superiority and/or seniority.

---

59 Robert Fludd, *De Naturae Simia Seu Technica Macrocosmi Historia* (Rome: sumptibus haeredum Johannis Theodori de Bry, 1624).

60 Julio Michael Stern, "Jacob's Ladder and Scientific Ontologies," 2013, 5.

61 Supergiant Games, "Pyre" (San Francisco: Supergiant Games, 2017).

62 This is based on the ongoing research of the author, 2022.

63 Christian Bernard, *So Mote It Be!. Chapter 10. Mystical Initiation (Definition)* (San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge Of The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, 2015).

64 Junqi Wen and Ruijun Ma, "Antecedents of Knowledge Hiding and Their Impact on Organizational Performance," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12, (2021): 4.

If we can recognize these mechanisms in the gameplay as mirroring behavior associated with esoteric knowledge, it leads to the question of whether this mechanism works vice versa – that is, if magical practice is influenced by popular culture.

Popular Culture and Magical Practice

This chapter has, until now, focused on the visual representations of occult spaces in the mediums of popular culture; however, popular culture is indeed influenced by spatial magical practice, as well. The syncretic nature of Chaos Magick provides one of the biggest opportunities for exploring these pop-cultural implementations. The so-called sigilization process (creating a sigil), pioneered by occultist and magician Austin Osman Spare,[65] is the idea of a magical intention represented through graphical means, which is released into the world through ritual behavior and thus changes the reality accordingly. It is a central practice in chaos magick.

A further example is the process of building an astral temple. The theory behind this practice is that the astral plane (a celestial sphere accessible by non-material means) is a dangerous place for a magician and therefore requires a protected space. This safe space is the astral temple, a guarded area where the magician is not in danger of being attacked by hostile entities or energies. The astral temple should be constructed according to the personal requirements of the practitioner – functional and aesthetic alike – and it is here that popular culture plays a significant role. Andrieh Vitimus suggests that everyone builds the astral temple in accordance with what he or she finds most appealing.[66] As pop-cultural aesthetics are one of the most intensive elements influencing personal perception, and aesthetic value,[67] it is no surprise that many practitioners envision their astral temple with pop-cultural visuals. Favorite elements belong to characters and places from Japanese animation (anime), action video games, or contemporary music. These

65 Austin Osman Spare, *The Book of Pleasure: The Psychology of Ecstasy* (London: I-H-O Books, 2005).

66 Andrieh Vitimus, *Hands-on Chaos Magic: Reality Manipulation Through the Ovayki Current* (Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications, 2009), 343.

67 Andrijana Kos-Lajtman and Kristina Slunjski, "Influence of Popular Culture on Character Formation in the Contemporary Croatian Children's Novel / Utjecaj Popularne Kulture Na Oblikovanje Likova u Suvremenom Hrvatskom Dječjem Romanu," *Croatian Journal of Education – Hrvatski Časopis Za Odgoj i Obrazovanje* 19, no. 0 (2017): 73–94; Eric Lott, "Pleasure, Pop Culture, and the Middle Passage by Eric Lott," *Callaloo* 17, no. 2 (2008): 545–555; Wei Sun et al., "The Cultural Art Aesthetic Behavior of Entrepreneurship Education for College Students in the Characteristics of Film and Television Media," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (2022): 1–11.

pop-cultural references are easily accessible and recalled through imagination, while at the same time the narrative helps anchor the required moral values associated with each individual element. The practicing mages visualize heroic characters from movies or videogames, who guard their astral temple, as well as powerful artifacts from similar sources can empower the nonphysical temple.

This evokes the famous tradition of the memory palace. This mnemonic device, originating in antiquity (also known as method of loci, or memory journey), uses visualization of familiar spatial environments to enhance the capabilities of memory and the ability to recall memorized information.[68] The first step in using a memory palace is choosing a familiar place, where every noticeable spot is associated with an element we wish to memorize. After walking through the chosen space, the correct succession of elements gradually emerges from memory.[69] This method is used in magical practice to memorize the correct succession of ritual steps aimed at activating a spell. As a spell can consist of a large number of steps, several practitioners have applied the use of modern technology to build their own memory palace in a virtual environment. The medium chosen to do this was the sandbox video game *Minecraft* (2009, developed by Mojang Studios), where players can construct any kind of 3-dimensional object. Through lots of time and effort, whole buildings, consisting of dozens of detailed and meticulously designed rooms, were constructed for the practitioners to use and share among their peers.

These are just two examples of how popular culture is fused with modern magical practice. New subcategories of chaos magick, such as pop magick,[70] are emerging and with the seemingly unstoppable aesthetic appeal of pop culture, it can be expected they will influence the modern occult milieu even more. Ritual spaces are but one category in which popular culture and magical practice are interacting and mutually influencing each other.

Conclusion

In today's world, popular culture and occult practice are two elements of modern society that have become mutually dependent. With the reevaluation of esoteric practices, deviating from clandestine practices of the past, ritual has found a

68 John O'Keefe and Lynn Nadel, *The Hippocampus as a Cognitive Map* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 390.

69 Neil R. Carlson, *Psychology the Science of Behaviour* (Toronto: Pearson Canada Inc, 2010), 245.

70 Grant Morrison, "Pop Magic!," in *The Book of Lies: The Disinformation Guide to Magick and the Occult*, ed. Richard Metzger and Grant Morrison (New York: The Desinformation Company, 2003), 16–25.

new and thriving audience of practitioners and enthusiasts. Following the spread of information through digital media and the internet, occult teachings are no longer bound to private libraries but released for public consumption. Especially among younger people, partially as a form of re-enchantment, practicing magick has become a lifestyle, helping them establish a new individual personality, while separating this practice from the usual religious dogmas and hierarchies. Where popularity is on the rise, popular culture is not far behind in its attempt to exploit current trends and interests. As such, the mutual connection between magical practice and pop cultural depictions has increased. On the aesthetical level, pop-culture has implemented several magical practices into its channels and changed the aesthetic perception of practitioners. Sacred or ritual spaces are but one instance in which this interaction can be observed. Drawing from old esoteric teachings and practices, several modern movies, series, books, animations, or videogames have implemented elements of esotericism into their narratives. By analyzing pop-cultural depictions and their "real-life" counterparts, we have identified three categories of analysis: place-bound instances, temporary spaces, and transitional spaces. Each of these categories represents a different level of immersion and application of esoteric knowledge, from aesthetical appeal to symbolic and philosophical underlying knowledge required to understand them in the appropriate way. Visual genres such as movies and video games are currently working extensively with the concept of sacred spaces, and the audience can either passively observe or actively search for hidden meanings cryptically hidden throughout their lore and cosmology. Mirroring the occult practices of semi-shared knowledge, the interpretations of hidden meanings are exchanged between inexperienced and experienced players as a way of virtual initiation. The possibilities of modern media have also not escaped the attention of magical practitioners, who are slowly but gradually implementing pop-cultural elements into their practice, as well.

Bibliography

Abrahamsson, Carl. *Occulture. The Unseen Forces That Drive Culture Forward.* Rochester: Park Street Press, 2018.

Agrippa, Heinrich Cornelius. *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy.* Edited by Donald Tyson. Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide, 2009.

Alem, Sara, Vahid Vaziri, and Ali Rezaei Sharif. "Designing Ritual Spaces by Considering Social Bonds." *Journal of Social Issues & Humanities* 2, no. 5 (2014): 12–19.

Amunts, K., O. Kedo, M. Kindler, P. Pieperhoff, H. Mohlberg, N. J. Shah, U. Habel, F. Schneider, and K. Zilles. "Cytoarchitectonic Mapping of the Human Amygdala, Hippocampal Region and

Entorhinal Cortex: Intersubject Variability and Probability Maps." *Anatomy and Embryology* 210, no. 5–6 (2005): 343–52.
Arakawa, Hiromu. *Fullmetal Alchemist.* Japan: Bones, Inc., 2003.
Aristotle. "Metaphysics." In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited by Richard McKeon. New York: The Modern Library, 2001.
Asprem, Egil, and Kennet Granholm. *Contemporary Esotericism.* Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2013.
Baddeley, Gavin. *Lucifer Rising: A Book of Sin, Devil Worship and Rock'n'Roll.* London: Plexus Publishing, 2010.
Bernard, Christian. *So Mote It Be!. Chapter 10. Mystical Initiation (Definition).* San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge Of The Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis, 2015.
Brunvand, Jan Harold. *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia.* New York: Taylor & Francis, 1998.
Brusse, Carl, and Kim Sterelny. "Religion and Its Evolution: Signals, Norms, and Secret Histories." *Religion, Brain and Behavior* 10, no. 3 (2020): 217–22.
Carlson, Allen. "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 4 (2015): 393–400.
Carlson, Neil R. *Psychology the Science of Behaviour.* Toronto: Pearson Canada Inc, 2010.
Carroll, Peter J. *Liber Null & Psychonaut.* New York: Weiser Book, 1987.
Chien-ch'uan, Wang. "Spirit Writing Groups in Modern China (1840–1937): Textual Production, Public Teachings, and Charity." In *In Modern Chinese Religion II 1850–2015*, edited by Vincent Goossaert, Jan Kiely, and John Lagerwey, 651–684. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
Chryssides, George D. *Historical Dictionary of New Religious Movements (2 Ed.).* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield., 2012.
Crabb, George. *English Synonyms Explained in Alphabetical Order with Copious Illustrations and Examples Drawn from the Best Writers.* New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1927.
Crowley, Aleister. *Magick: Liber ABA: Book 4.* London: Weiser & 93 Publications, 1994.
Davis, Erik. "High Weirdness: Visionary Experience in the Senventies Counterculture." Rice University, 2015.
Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life.* Edited by Mark Sydney Cladis. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
Dyck, Justin G. *Anything for Jackson.* Canada: Shudder, 2020.
Factory, Weather. "Cultist Simulator." San Francisco: Humble Bundle, 2018.
Flanagan, Mike. *Ouija: Origin of Evil.* United States: Universal Pictures, 2016.
Fludd, Robert. *De Naturae Simia Seu Technica Macrocosmi Historia.* Rome: sumptibus haeredum Johannis Theodori de Bry, 1624.
Foucault, Michel. "Des Espace Autres (Conférence Au Cercle d'études Architecturales, 14 March 1967)." *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5 (1984): 46–49.
FromSoftware. "Bloodborne." San Mateo: Sony Computer Entertainment, 2015.
Games, Supergiant. "Pyre." San Francisco: Supergiant Games, 2017.
Godlovitch, Stan. "Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* II (1994): 15–30.
Halfwassen, Jens. "The Metaphysics of the One." In *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, edited by Pauliina; Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, 182–99. New York: Routledge, 2014.
Hanegraaf, Wouter J. *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism.* Edited by Wouter J. Hanegraaf. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Hine, Phil. *Condensed Chaos: An Introduction to Chaos Magic.* Tempe: The Original Falcon Press, 2010.
Hines, Terence. *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal.* Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 2003.
Kacmar, Donna. "Ritual Spaces." In *Art of Death & Dying Symposium Proceedings*, edited by Katie Buehner, Kerry Creelman, Catherine Essinger, and Andrea Malone, 57–63. Houston: University of Houston Libraries, 2013.
Keenan, David. *England's Hidden Reverse.* London: SAF Publishing, 2003.
Kos-Lajtman, Andrijana, and Kristina Slunjski. "Influence of Popular Culture on Character Formation in the Contemporary Croatian Children's Novel / Utjecaj Popularne Kulture Na Oblikovanje Likova u Suvremenom Hrvatskom Dječjem Romanu." *Croatian Journal of Education – Hrvatski Časopis Za Odgoj i Obrazovanje* 19, no. 0 (2017): 73–94.
Kostanski, Steven, and Jeremy Gillespie. *The Void.* Canada: D Films, 2016.
Kraig, Donald Michael. *Modern Magick: Eleven Lessons in the High Magickal Arts (2nd Ed.).* Woodbury: Llewellyn Worldwide, 1998.
Leahy, David G. *Faith and Philosophy: The Historical Impact.* Farnham: Ashgate, 2003.
Liam Gavin. *A Dark Song.* Ireland: IFC Midnight, 2016.
Lott, Eric. "Pleasure , Pop Culture , and the Middle Passage by Eric Lott." *Callaloo* 17, no. 2 (2008): 545–55.
Mazumdar, Shampa Sanjoy Shampa Sanjoy, and Sanjoy Mazumdart. "Sacred Space and Place Attachment." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 13, no. 3 (1993): 231–42.
McGrath, Francis Charles. *Brian Friel's (Post)Colonial Drama: Language, Illusion, and Politics.* New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999.
Meagher, Benjamin R. "Perceiving Sacred Space: Religious Orientation Moderates Impressions of Religious Settings." *Environment and Behavior* 48, no. 8 (2016): 1030–48.
Morrison, Grant. "Pop Magic!" In *The Book of Lies: The Disinformation Guide to Magick and the Occult*, edited by Richard Metzger and Grant Morrison, 16–25. New York: The Desinformation Company, 2003.
O'Keefe, John, and Lynn Nadel. *The Hippocampus as a Cognitive Map.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
Otto, Bernd-Christian. "The Illuminates of Thanateros and the Institutionalisation of Religious Individualisation." In *Religious Individualisation*, edited by Martin Fuchs, 759–96. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020.
Pamela Sachant, Peggy Blood, Jeffery LeMieux, and Rita Tekippe. *Introduction to Art – Design, Context, and Meaning.* California: University System of Georgia, 2022.
Partridge, Christopher. *The Occult World.* Edited by Christopher Partridge. New York: Routledge, 2015.
Perun Creative, S.r.o. "Hobo: Tough Life." Ostava: Perun Creative s.r.o., 2021.
Plaisance, Christopher A. "Occult Spheres, Planes, and Dimensions: Geometric Terminology and Analogy in Modern Esoteric Discourse." *Journal of Religious History* 40, no. 3 (2016): 385–404.
Plato. *Dialogues.* Oxford: University of Oxford, 1891.
Plotinus. *The Enneads.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
Prior, David. *The Empty Man.* United States: 20th Century Studios, 2020.
Productions, Sucker Punch. "Ghost of Tsushima." San Mateo: Sony Interactive Entertainment, 2020.
Ramelli, Ilaria L.E. "Gnosis/Knowledge." Brill Encyclopedia of Early Christianity Online, 2018. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2589–7993_EECO_SIM_00001440.
Rugna, Demián. *Aterrados.* Argentina: Aura Films, 2017.
Sack, Robert David. "Magic and Space." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66, no. 2 (1976): 309–22.

Silent, Team. “Silent Hill 3.” Tokyo: Konami, 2003.
Siorvanes, Lucas. “Plotinus and Neoplatonism: The Creation of a New Synthesis.” In *Oxford Handbook of Science and Medicine in the Classical World*, edited by Paul T. Keyser and John Scarborough, 847–868. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
Spare, Austin Osman. *The Book of Pleasure: The Psychology of Ecstasy.* London: I-H-O Books, 2005.
Stern, Julio Michael. “Jacob’s Ladder and Scientific Ontologies,” 2013, 109–18.
Sun, Wei, Hongkai Wang, Li Wang, Lele Ye, and Peiyao Chen. “The Cultural Art Aesthetic Behavior of Entrepreneurship Education for College Students in the Characteristics of Film and Television Media.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, no. July (2022): 1–11.
Sutherland, John, and Thomas Kelly. *Encyclopaedia Biblica: A Critical Dictionary of the Literary, Political and Religious History, the Archaeology, Geography, and Natural History of the Bible.* London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903.
Tan, Budjette, and Kajo Baldisimo. *Trese.* Singapore: Netflix, 2021.
Turner, D, and Louvain Paris. *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition By.* Quebec: Les Presses De L’Universite Laval, 2001.
Vitimus, Andrieh. *Hands-on Chaos Magic: Reality Manipulation Through the Ovayki Current.* Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications, 2009.
Vranich, Alexei. “Interpreting the Meaning of Ritual Space: The Temple Complex of Pumapunku, Tiwanaku, Bolivia.” University of Pennsylvania, 1999.
Wen, Junqi, and Ruijun Ma. “Antecedents of Knowledge Hiding and Their Impact on Organizational Performance.” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12, no. December (2021): 1–12.
Wheatley, Ben. *Kill List.* United Kingdom: Optimum Releasing, 2011.
White, Stiles. *Ouija.* United States: Universal Pictures, 2014.
Wilde, Oscar. “The Decay of Lying – An Observation.” In *Intentions*, 1891.
Wilson, Robert Anton. *Cosmic Trigger I: Final Secret of the Illuminati.* Scottsdale: New Falcon Publications, 1977.

Performing and Designing Sacred Space

Aikaterini-Iliana Rassia

The Adaptive Reuse of Sacred Space and Ritual Customs at Eleusis: The Case of Panagia Mesosporitissa

Abstract: This chapter argues that a richer understanding of the adaptive reuse of the ancient sacred space of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis can be achieved if we examine the inter-connectivity between ancient and modern ritual customs in the same space. My argument is that despite the millennia, the reuse of the architectural elements of the ancient sacred space, combined with modern ritual practices associated with land fertility, become actively involved in the revision of ritual experiences. This results in the formation of new religious identities experienced in the same sacred space.

Introduction

The subject-matter of this contribution is the adaptive reuse of the ancient sacred space of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis in the modern period. The reuse of the sacred site of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis and the weight that modern believers place upon ritual customs which had their roots in the ancient past is a matter of great interest for historians of religion. The effects of such a reflexive and diachronic relationship between space and ritual behaviour are best exhibited in the Byzantine church of Panagia Mesosporitissa, which lies at the top of the hill of the archaeological site of Eleusis. I shall argue that, according to the available evidence, the ritual custom of *polyspori* observed in this church each year on the 21st of November reveals significant ritual associations between antiquity

Acknowledgements: I would like to express my gratitude to Aaron French and Katharina Waldner for inviting me to participate in the international workshop (4–5 March 2022) at Erfurt – and their ensuing patience in the editorial process. I would like also to express my thanks to Vassiliki Kolocotroni for discussing with me the subject of my chapter in March 2023 at the Gennadeios library (Athens); her thoughtful comments have inspired and refined my thinking. Finally, I am thankful to Mrs Pantelitsa Tsalimopoulou on behalf of the Folklore Association of Eleusis "Adrachti" for the generous permission to reproduce the images from the revival of the ancient custom of "polyspori" at modern Eleusis. Please also note the following *caveat:* The copyrights of the photos reproduced in this chapter belong to the Folklore Association of Eleusis "Adrachti" and it is forbidden to republish them without their prior approval.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-007

and modernity. Important cultural and religious meanings were invested in this sacred space from the beginning of the 19th century.

The discussion will be centred around the following research questions:

(i) Is there any evidence for identifying the invisible semantic threads that run throughout the modern sacred space of Panagia Mesosporitissa with the archaeological space of the Eleusinian Mysteries? (ii) What are the motives of modern believers to revive this old ritual custom? (iii) How can spatial investigation be useful for the study of the rationalisation and appropriation of an ancient myth within a modern ritual? My aim is to demonstrate the relative conceptual uniformity in the meaning ascribed to the modern spatial re-use of the sacred site at Eleusis. The observance of a ritual custom associated with the survival of humankind that was rooted in antiquity and re-invested with meaning in modern times was reinforced through the circulation of myths and local stories. These stories appear to have been associated in antiquity with the Telesterion and its adjacent area, whereas in modern times they have been connected with the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa. My discussion will emphasise the powerful relationship between the sustained re-use of a sacred space and the performance of a ritual custom which rests on the need of people to have direct engagement with their own sacred topography and their collective cultural and religious memories.

The Adaptive Reuse of a Sacred Space: Panagia Mesosporitissa at Eleusis

In the past few decades, the growth of spatiotemporal studies has increased historians' sensitivity to the re-occurrence of spatial connections in modernity. The research group on "SpatioTemporality" at the University of Erfurt is a fine example of burgeoning activity in this area.[1] In the words of the editors, the current volume seeks to revisit "how were religious ideas – especially those related to sacred space – transformed and transmitted across geographical and cultural boundaries, and how they were integrated into our modern societies." From this perspective, spatial-temporal theory provides a significant methodological framework in helping to explore and reconstruct the motives behind the adaptive reuse of the ancient sacred space of the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis in modernity. As Harry O. Maier and Katharina Waldner have emphasised in a previous volume, the application of spatio-temporal theory "rejects the idea that space or time are inert back-

1 https://www.uni-erfurt.de/en/philosophische-fakultaet/forschung/forschungsgruppen/studies-for-spatiotemporality-erfurt.

drops or empty containers, and rather considers them as expressions and outcomes of a processual reality."[2] The Mysteries at Eleusis which took place in honour of Demeter and Kore were the oldest and most revered of all mystery cults in antiquity.[3] The large deme of Eleusis, where the Mysteries took place, is situated 21 km west of Athens.[4] The Great Eleusinian Mysteries were held annually in the ancient month of Boedromion (late September/October) in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. In the modern period, on the hill of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, remains ranging from prehistoric to Christian times coexist, and inside the archaeological site at Eleusis, one can still see today (Fig. 1) the post-Byzantine church that the locals called 'Panagitsa' and that is devoted to the Presentation/Entrance of Virgin Mary (ἡ ἐν τῷ ναῷ εἴσοδος τῆς Ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου), which is celebrated annually on the 21st of November.[5] The celebration is probably connected with "the jewel of Byzantine Jerusalem," the basilica of St. Mary, the so-called New Church dedicated to the Virgin Mary which was built next to the ruins of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem and dedicated on the 20th of November 543 AD by the Byzantine emperor Justinian.[6]

As a sacred landmark, the little church dedicated to Panagia Mesosporitissa is situated inside the archaeological site where the Eleusinian Mysteries were observed in antiquity.[7] In front of the chapel there is an early Christian building of which structural remains are preserved coinciding with the north-eastern wall of the acropolis, which has partly collapsed.[8] In a letter dated to 1794, we find the first known written reference to the church of Panagia Mesosporitissa by Xavier Scrofani, a Sicilian economist and archaeophile: "As soon as I went down to the beach, I stood at the pier … Fifty huts of poor fishermen and the mis-

2 Maier, H. and Waldner K. *Desiring Martyrs: Locating Martyrs in Space and Time.* SpatioTemporality/RaumZeitlichkeit 10, De Gruyter, 2021, 6.

3 On the antiquity of the Eleusinian Mysteries, see Nielsen, I. *Collective mysteries and Greek pilgrimage: The cases of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania*, in T. Myrup Kristensen and Wiebke Friese (eds), *Excavating Pilgrimage: Archaeological Approaches to Sacred Travel and Movement in the Ancient World*, Routledge, 2017, 28–46, esp. 29.

4 Fachard, S. "Asty and Chora: City and Countryside," in J. Neils and D. K. Rogers (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2021, 21–34, esp. 26.

5 Μερκούρη, Χ., Αμπάτη, Μ. και Ανέστη Ε. "Ιερό Δήμητρας και Κόρης στην Ελευσίνα", *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες* 134 (2020): 112–144, esp. 138.

6 Trampedach, K. "A New Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem? The Construction of the Nea Church (531–543) by Emperor Justinian," (2022): 161–184, esp. 172.

7 Håland E. *Competing Ideologies in Greek Culture, Ancient and Modern*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019, 73.

8 Lippolis, E. *Mysteria*, Bruno Mondadori (2006): 299–300.

Fig. 1: The chapel of Panagia Mesosporitissa today [Copyright: Adrachti Folklore Association of Eleusis]

guided name of Λεψίνα instead of the ancient one. That's all that's left of Eleusis. Albanian bandits who have settled in the neighbouring countryside prevent this population from growing. High on the hill is the church of Panagia and beyond it the remains of the temple of Demeter."[9] The chapel is visible in the drawings of the 19th century (Fig.2) when Eleusis was called Λεψίνα (Lepsina).[10] It is also recorded that, during that period, Eleusis was inhabited by Albanians working in the adjoining plain, which was owned by Achmet Aga, who survived through the cultivation of the Thracian plain; "although of an arid soil, produced abundant har-

9 Scrofani (1801), *Voyage en Grèce fait en 1794 et 1795*, 148.

10 Kourouniotes, K. "Παλαιοχριστιανική Ελευσίς," *Ημερολόγιον της Μεγάλης Ελλάδος* (1934b: 525) believes that an Early Christian church existed on the same spot.

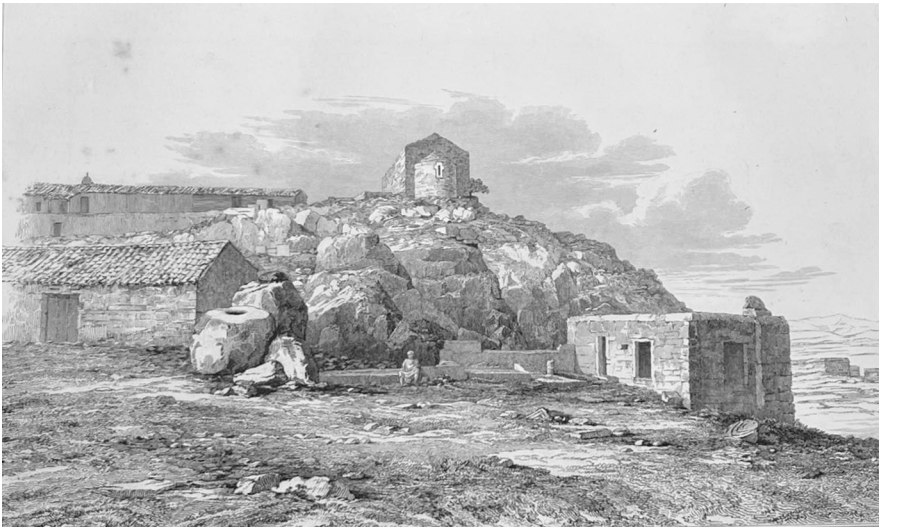

Fig. 2: Panagia Mesosporitissa above the hill in the centre of the village. Drawing of William Gell, engraving G. Cooke [Copyright: Dilettanti (1817) *The Unedited Antiquities of Attica*, plate VI]

vests."[11] Now, with reference to the cultic epithet Mesosporitissa (*mesos:* 'middle,' 'half'; *sporos, spora:* 'seed,' 'sowing'), it signifies the agricultural period that corresponds to the "half-way through the sowing."[12] The belief that Demeter was the goddess of agriculture, vegetation and fertility and the founder of the mystery rites at Eleusis is also clearly testified in Isocrates' *Panegyricus* (4.28):[13]

> When Demeter came to our land on her wanderings after the rape of Kore, she became well-disposed towards our ancestors ... and she gave them two gifts, the greatest there are – the fruits of the earth, which are the reason why we do not live like beasts, and the mystic rite (*telete*), which leads its participants to have more agreeable expectations about the ending of their lives and all eternity.

Returning to the modern period, it is a custom even today that the religious festival of the presentation of the Virgin Mary, which takes place on the 21st of November, coincides with the middle of the sowing period in the agricultural calendar. This

11 Lippolis, E. *Mysteria*, Bruno Mondadori (2006): 39; Kachrilas-Argyriadis, M. *Edward Dodwell, Views and Landscapes of Greece,* Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, Athens, 2019, 100.
12 Håland, *Competing Ideologies in Greek Culture, Ancient and Modern*, 73.
13 Translation after Waldner, K. "Dimensions of Individuality in Ancient Mystery Cults: Religious Practice and Philosophical Discourse," in Rüpke J. (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, 222–223.

feast is called Panagia Mesosporitissa, who is the patron saint of sowing and is associated with the fertility of the earth and a good harvest.[14] The sowing of the fields had to be finished by the 21st of November (as of Panagia) because, by then, the weather was good and they could sow. Often the germination process of the seeds is a lengthy one, since it can take about forty days for the seeds to fully germinate and take roots. Therefore, from the beginning of sowing (around the beginning of October, depending on the early rains and other weather conditions) to the middle of the sowing period (21st of November) the seed sown will have germinated and taken root. Therefore, by the 21st of November, the sowing of the wheat must be stopped.[15] Normally by this day a proactive farmer must have sown at least half of the seeds. That is why the popular name of the feast is Panagia Mesosporitissa. This epithet captures the belief that the Virgin Mary was responsible for blessing the beginning of the agricultural period and the upcoming crop. In many areas this ancient custom still exists today.

As we can see, the chapel (Fig. 1) standing on the hill overlooks the archaeological site of Eleusis. More specifically, it stands right above a natural cave, known as Plutoneion, which may have been the core of the most ancient cult. At the site of the cave it was believed that there was a point of communication between the Upper and the Lower Worlds, and that through this passage Persephone was allowed to pass from Hades. Its spatial form, comprising steps leading down to an underground passage, was what prompted some scholars to regard this cave-structure as a symbolic entrance to Hades.[16] In the cave, a *naiskos* (a small temple) was already built in ancient times (6th century BCE) in honour of Pluto. This ancient building was succeeded by another temple dated to the 4th century BCE.[17] From a spatial-symbolic perspective, it was thus associated with the abduction of Persephone by Pluto in the autumn and her ascent to earth again in the spring.[18] The Plutoneion is among the earliest sacred structures at Eleusis, and it remained a religious monument throughout antiquity. However, in terms of its ritual use, it is not known whether or not it was abandoned after the edict of Theodosius I (391–2

14 Ζέρβας, Γ., *Τελετουργικά έθιμα στο χωριό Στύρφακα της Δυτικής Φθιώτιδας*, Αθήνα (2016): 55.
15 Ζέρβας, Γ., *Τελετουργικά έθιμα στο χωριό Στύρφακα της Δυτικής Φθιώτιδας*, 116.
16 Malteso G. *Eleusis and the Mysteries*, translated from the German edition by Mary Grieve, Rhodis Bros, Athens, 1964, 23.
17 Παπαγγελή, *Ελευσίνα, Ο Αρχαιολογικός Χώρος και το Μουσείο*, 2002, 120.
18 Kourouniotes, K. *Ελευσίς, Οδηγός των ανασκαφών & του μουσείου*, Εκδοτικός οίκος: Εστία, Αθήνα, (1934a), 37.

CE) which closed the pagan sanctuaries and prohibited the ancient worshippers to visit and perform any ritual customs in their spaces.[19]

This prohibition, combined with the invasion of the Goths in 395 CE, resulted in the termination of the observance of the Eleusinian mysteries. It seems, however, that for several centuries after the destruction of 395 AD, with the advent of Christianity, a small community of Christians survived amidst the ruins of the past,[20] and while "crosses and other Christian symbols were engraved on the pagan art-monuments to drive away evil spirits, the cult was transferred to the new temples and new populations began to move there, especially with the decline of the Byzantine Empire."[21] Keeping these historical perspectives in mind, we can next turn our investigation to the earliest narratives of the European travellers, where Eleusis became an attractive place for visit.

Descriptions of Panagia Mesosporitissa by Early Travellers

The ancient site of Eleusis, which was called Λεψίνα (Lepsina) during the Ottoman occupation of Greece, was thus (1453–1820) known to European travellers at least from the 17th century.[22] On the 15th of February 1676, the so-called "founders of modern Greek travel-literature," George Wheler, an amateur botanist, and Jacques Spon, a doctor from Lyons, visited Eleusis, or what was at that time Λεψίνα (Lepsina).[23] The writings which they made on the region are the first historical record of the place and contain a few drawings of the remnants of marble architectural fragments, a few inscriptions related to autopsy and the "statue of Demeter," referring to one of the two Caryatid busts that supported the Little Propylaia.[24] In the following century, Eleusis became an attractive tourist location. This is clear from

19 Nuffelen, P. "Religious Violence in Late Antiquity" in G. Fagan, L. Fibiger, M. Hudson, & M. Trundle (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Violence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2020, 512–530, esp. 515.

20 Παπαγγελή, Κ. & Μηλιαρέση-Βαρβιτσιώτη Ο. *Ελευσίνα: το βλέμμα του επισκέπτη*, Δήμος Ελευσίνας, Ελευσίνα, 2008.

21 Σφυρόερας, Β. *Ιστορία της Ελευσίνας από το Βυζάντιο μέχρι σήμερα*, Δήμος Ελευσίνας, Αθήνα, 2005.

22 Μεθενίτης, Α. *Το Χρονικό της Λεψίνας, Από την κατάργηση της αρχαίας λατρείας ως το 1925*, Αθήνα (1971): 17.

23 Wheler, G. A *Journey into Greece in the Company of Dr. Spon of Lyons*, Cademan, Kettlewell, and Churchill, London, Vol.VI, (1682): 429–430.

24 Παπαγγελή, *Ελευσίνα, Ο Αρχαιολογικός Χώρος και το Μουσείο*, 47.

the travel narratives of Sadwitch (1738) and Pococke (1739), where Eleusis is described as a small village inhabited by 50 poor families, who sustained themselves through the cultivation of olives, vines, and cereals in the hinterland. The village was situated close to the ancient ruins. This is best observed, for instance, in the book *Unedited Antiquities* produced by *The Society of Dilettanti* which includes two accurate and comprehensive drawings, both of which were made by William Gell. The first one is a combination of the drawing of Gell and an engraving by G. Cooke (Fig. 3) of the Panagia Mesosporitissa chapel, which stood fully visible in the centre of the village at Lepsina (the once ancient city of Eleusis).[25]

Meanwhile, the second drawing, which was again made in 1801 by William Gell (Fig. 3), is a vivid testimony of the chapel situated among the ancient ruins. This drawing depicts a very important statue in which strong semantic connotations are embedded. The bust of a monumental female statue, the Caryatid *kistophoros* (carrier of the sacred basket) dated to the 1st century BCE, had been a desirable commodity since it was first spotted by European travellers, at least as far back as the 17th century. Initially, the Caryatid statue was an architectural element. In particular, in the 1st century BCE, Appius Claudius Pulcher (c. 129 BCE–76 BCE), a Roman general and politician, decided to sponsor the construction of the Lesser Propylaia in the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleusis. The facade of the Propylaia was supported by two Caryatid statues. This is one of the two Caryatids that replaced the two pillars that stood on the right and left of the main entrance of the Lesser Propylaia.[26] In 1865, the statue (Fig. 3) in the drawing is the upper part of a caryatid, which is often known under the name of "Demeter from Eleusis" and is not well preserved, which was given to the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.[27] The second Caryatid, which is better preserved, is now housed in the Archaeological Museum of Eleusis (Figs. 4a, b).[28] What is interesting to observe is that the Caryatids are carrying on the top of their heads a *cista mystica*, that is, a cylindrical basket concealing the sacred objects used in the mysteries.

However, its exterior carved decoration is quite revealing, as it depicts the symbols of the Eleusinian Mysteries: the *kernos*, the sprouts and ears of wheat,

25 Society of Dilettanti. *The Unedited Antiquities of Attica: comprising the architectural remains of Eleusis, Rhamnus, Sunium, and Thoricus*, London, 1817.

26 Lippolis, *Mysteria*, 39.

27 Object Number: GR.1.1865; Clair, W. *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1998, 106.

28 Buddle, L., and Nicholls, R. *A Catalogue of the Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, 1994, plates 24–25.

the rosettes and poppies.[29] Grain is a visual referent which lies at the heart of the secret rituals of the Mysteries.[30] But the visual presence of grain is not simply symbolic. Rather, it has a cognitive ritual power. To elaborate this point further, it is worth considering the following narrative which will help us analyse the power of the adaptive re-use of the ancient sacred space of Demeter at Eleusis in modernity. In 1801, E. D. Clarke, a British scholar, traveller and antiquarian, described how he found, removed and transferred the colossal Roman bust of a Caryatid which he had bought in Eleusis.[31] More specifically, he describes that the statue of the Caryatid was found on a pile of manure intended for fertilizing the fields. For the villagers of 19th century Eleusis, which had been built on the ruins of ancient Eleusis, the statue was sacred, and the locals ascribed to it supernatural powers.[32] To quote Clarke's descriptive account:[33]

> ... The inhabitants of the small village which is now situated among the ruins of Eleusis still regard this statue with a high degree of superstitious veneration. They attribute to its presence the fertility of their land; and it was for this reason that they heaped around it the manure intended for their fields. They believed that the loss of it would be followed by no less a calamity than the failure of their annual harvests; and they pointed to the ears of bearded wheat among the sculpted ornaments upon the head of the figure, as a never-failing indication of the produce of the soil ...

To the statue they attributed the fertility of their land. Thus, they used to light candles on festival days until the 19th century, as they believed that the statue had the capacity to ensure their land's fertility.[34] The local citizens refused to collaborate in

---

29 Kerenyi, C. *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, 75; Kanta, K. *Eleusis*, translated by W. W. Phelps, Athens, 1979, 103–104; Preka-Alexandri K. *Eleusis*, Ministry of Culture Archaeological Receipts Fund, Athens, 1991, 18.

30 Influenced by Walter Burkert, Jan Bremmer has argued that "the actual performance of the Mysteries points only to agricultural fertility." See Bremmer, J. *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World. Münchner Vorlesungen zu antiken Welten,* Bd 1. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014, 18.

31 Tsigakou, F.-M. *Athens through the eyes of artists-travellers: 16th–19th centuries*, Istros Art Publications, Athens, 2007, 56.

32 *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. Part II: Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land*, section II, London: Cadell and Davies, 1814, 601. On the "cult" of Agia Demeter, see also, Ζωγραφίδης, Γ. (1994) "Επιβιώσεις της λατρείας της Δήμητρας στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα," *Λαογραφική Κύπρος* 44: 147–158. Σιμόπουλος, Κ. *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα, 1800–1810. Δημόσιος και ιδιωτικός βίος, λαϊκός πολιτισμός, Εκκλησία και οικονομική ζωή από τα περιηγητικά χρονικά*, τομ. Γ1. Αθήνα, (1973): 73–77, esp. 73–74.

33 Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa.*

34 Hamilakis, Y. *The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece*, Cambridge, 2007, 71.

Dieses Bild steht aus rechtlichen Gründen in der digitalen Ausgabe nicht zur Verfügung.

Fig. 3: The upper part of the colossal marble Caryatid in situ (in the foreground) and Panagia Mesosporitissa (in the background) at the archaeological site of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis. Drawing by Sir William Gell (19th century) – © *Trustees of the British Museum*

Figs. 4a, b: The making of "polyspori" [Copyright: Adrachti Folklore Association of Eleusis]

its removal, and they believed that the arm of any person who dared to touch the marble or disturb its position would trigger some form of disaster.[35] Another telling example of the local tradition is provided by how, after the removal of the statue by the Franks, the Caryatid miraculously returned to its initial place at Eleusis.[36] It was thanks to this devotion of the inhabitants, Clarke wrote, that the statue was saved. All attempts to move it from that time were hindered due to the frustration of the locals who opposed it.[37] Clarke managed to secure a permit to visit the site from the local Ottoman governor. But the main obstacle remained the resistance of local people, who, in Clarke's words, were "respecting an idol which they all regarded as the protectress of their fields," and in front of which they used to place a burning lamp during Christian festival days, as they did with Christian icons around it and made a pledge for a good harvest. For this reason, the local inhabitants had to be persuaded that the statue should be removed. On the night before its removal, however, an accident happened that threatened the removal of the statue. Clarke's description of this event provides vital information of the villagers' enduring beliefs in the supernatural power of the statue:[38]

> While the inhabitants were conversing with the *Tchohodar* (Turkish officer who brought the official permission of the removal of the statue), as to the means of its removal, an ox, loosed from its yoke, came and placed itself before the Statue; and after butting with its horns for some time against the marble, ran off with considerable speed, bellowing, into the Plain of Eleusis.

At the sight, the Eleusinians shouted and were convinced that the fertility of their fields would be threatened if the statue would be taken away from their land.[39] In the end, it was the local priest who intervened and secured its removal.[40] In the fall of 1805, the Italian painter Simone Pomardi arrived in Elefsina, accompanying the English traveller Dodwell. The inhabitants of the town said that, since the time

35 Clair, W. *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1998, 105, n. 33.

36 Chandler, R. *Travels in Greece; or an Account of a Tour Made at the Expense of the Society of Dilettanti*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1776, 237; Dodwell, A. *A classical and topographical tour through Greece, during the years 1801, 1805, and 1806*, vol. I, Rodwell and Martin, London, 1819, 583; Πολίτης, *Παραδόσεις*, 74; Πούχνερ, Β. *Ιστορική Λαογραφία, Η διαχρονικότητα των φαινομένων*, εκδόσεις Αρμός, Athens, 2010, 49.

37 Σιμόπουλος, *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα, 1800–1810*, 74.

38 Personal adaptations (within parentheses) after Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa*, 787.

39 Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, 106.

40 Σιμόπουλος, *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα, 1800–1810*, 76.

of the rapture of the statue, they had not even seen a good harvest.[41] The ways in which modern people at Eleusis appropriated the remains of earlier ages, and the use that they made of their past relics, underline their firm belief that the Caryatid statue was the divine embodiment of the fertility of their land. As a matter of fact, later travellers such as the English traveller Dodwell, who revisited Eleusis, observed that the locals still lamented the loss of the Kistophoros that was carried off by Clarke in 1802. They believed that several poor harvests would naturally follow.[42] In the first year, the crop was good and the Eleusinians believed that their goddess would return. In the next year, it was not so good, and they feared that their goddess of fertility must have deserted them.[43] On the basis of these local beliefs, both Lawson and Hamilakis pointed out that the locals had created their own distinctive religion around the Caryatid statue. Their observations are worth citing in full:[44]

> But at Eleusis, the old home of Demeter's most sacred rites, the people, it seems … yielded to ecclesiastical influence only so far as to create for themselves a saint Demetra (ἡ ἁγία Δήμητρα) entirely unknown elsewhere and never canonised. Further, in open defiance of an iconoclastic Church, they retained an old statue of Demeter, and merely prefixing the title 'saint' to the name of their cherished goddess, continued to worship her as before. The statue was regularly crowned with garlands of flowers in the avowed hope of obtaining good harvests, and without doubt prayer was made before it as now before the pictures of canonical saints. This state of things continued to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Then, in 1801, two Englishmen, named Clarks and Cripps, armed by the Turkish authorities with a license to plunder, perpetrated an act unenviably like that of Verres at Enna, and in spite of a riot among the peasants of Eleusis removed by force the venerable marble; and that which was the visible form of the great goddess on whose presence and good will had depended from immemorial ages the fertility of the Thriasian plain is now a little-regarded object catalogued as "No.XIV, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, (much mutilated)."

In a similar vein, Hamilakis aptly remarked that the conflict around the Caryatid statue:[45]

---

41 Σιμόπουλος, *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα*, 77.

42 Frazer, J. G. *The Golden Bough*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1951, 460.

43 Clarke, E.D. *Greek Marbles brought from the shores of the Euxine Archipelago and Mediterranean and deposited in the vestibule of the Public Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge, 1809, 34 ff.

44 Lawson, J. C. *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion. A Study in Survivals*, with a foreword by A. N. Oikonomides, NY, University Books, 1964, 80.

45 Hamilakis, Y. *Archaeologies and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 37–38.

> … represents a clash of archaeologies: a modernist one represented by Clarke, and an indigenous one represented by the local people of Eleusis. Both venerated an ancient artefact, and had produced discourses about its nature and meaning. The local people of Eleusis had noticed the sculptural details, such as the 'ears of bearded wheat' and on that basis, they attributed to the object protective properties and the ability to guarantee good harvests. They exhibited it but not in a separate institution, such as a museum, nor divorced from the spaces of daily routines, but in the open air, in the countryside, amongst their fields … Unlike them, however, Clarke knew better: he deemed it more appropriate for such an object … to be housed in a museum, where it can be admired by the connoisseurs of high art.

The preceding modern testimonies raise important issues about the relationship between the local and collective memories and beliefs of modern villagers, as well as the memory of the statue as an embodiment of human fertility tied to a particular space and place (i. e. the sacred site at Eleusis) through an ancient myth and a similar but different food ritual. In modernity, as in antiquity, the survival of the community depended on the vicissitudes of natural events beyond the farmer's control.[46] In our investigation, three theoretical models go hand in hand: (i) the science of folklore, (ii) the fertility model of religion and (iii) the spatiotemporality of the fertility rituals at Eleusis. The seeds of the first model are identified in the influential book *Primitive Culture* published in 1871 by E. Tylor. This was the first scholarly work to endorse the idea that "lost mythology and ancient religious beliefs could be regained through the study of modern customs and folklore of the rural populations which he (Tylor) believed had remained basically unchanged through the centuries."[47]

The second model was influential after the release of Frazer's *magnum opus*, *The Golden Bough*, in 1890, which demonstrated the cross-cultural affinities in fertility rituals through the collection of comparative "fertility rites." More specifically in relation to our subject, Frazer aptly remarks that "as the people of Eleusis in the nineteenth century attributed the diminution of their harvests to the loss of the image of Demeter, so in antiquity, the Sicilians, a corn-growing people devoted to the worship of the two Corn Goddesses, lamented that the crops of many towns had perished because the unscrupulous Roman governor Verres had impiously carried off the image of Demeter from her famous temple at Henna."[48] As far as the spatiotemporal function of the ritual behaviour of people at Eleusis, as expressed through the ritual of the offering of crops, despite the large gap in chronology, the aim of the worshippers remained the same: to ensure the fertility of

46 Håland, *Competing Ideologies in Greek Culture, Ancient and Modern, 74.*

47 See Oikonomides' foreword in Lawson, *Modern Greek Folklore*, x–xi.

48 Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 460–461.

their land. In modernity, we have seen that, despite the spatial removal of the Caryatid statue, its considered "ritual" power was not forgotten by the villagers. Yet, the ancient custom of *aparchai* and kin-food ritual offerings (e.g. *proerosia*) survived in a similar form but under a new name, the so-called *polyspori.* In a way, the inhabitants of Eleusis created a spatial and ritual dialogue between the past, the near-past (the 19th century: the belief in the supernatural power of the Caryatid statue) and the present (modern days: *polyspori).*

From Antiquity (*proerosia* and *aparchai*) to Modernity (*polyspori*)

Grain was the most sacred symbol of Demeter. The Eleusinian tradition considered wheat and barley as the goddess' most precious gift. A telling reference comes from the sixth hymn of Callimachus in which women initiates plead with Demeter to bring prosperity and grain to their city (vv.134–137):[49]

> χαῖρε θεά, καὶ τάνδε σάω πόλιν ἔν θ᾽ ὁμονοίᾳ ἔν τ᾽ εὐηπελίᾳ, φέρε δ᾽ ἀγρόθι νόστιμα πάντα·
> φέρβε βόας, φέρε μᾶλα, φέρε στάχυν, οἶσε θερισμόν· φέρβε καὶ εἰράναν, ἵν᾽ ὃς ἄροσε τῆνος ἀμάσῃ.
>
> Hail, Goddess, and preserve this city in harmony and in prosperity. And bring everything wholesome from the field. Feed the cows, bring fruit, bring corn, bring the harvest. Especially nurture peace, so that whoever sows may also reap.

This and the following mythical narrative were inextricably tied to the decree of *aparchai* (first fruit of grain) at Eleusis and the festival or Proerosia which took place there. The reason behind the establishment of this festival by the Athenians was based on the following mythical narrative of the distant past, that a terrible famine had afflicted all of Greece. As a remedy to this problem, an oracle urged the Athenians to sacrifice to Demeter on behalf of all Greeks. The commemoration of this ancestral sacrifice is thought to be identified in the festival of Proerosia (i.e. a pre-ploughing sacrifice) which was celebrated in some demes of Attica, from which the celebration of Proerosia at Eleusis was the most illustrious and since the fifth century BCE was identified in a First-Fruits decree (*IG* I^3 78a, dated c. early/mid 430–419/18 BCE).[50] This decree was established in order to ensure that

49 After Clayman, D.L. *Callimachus, Hymn 6. To Demeter*, Loeb Classical Library, LCL 129, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2022, 370–371.

50 Robertson, N. "New Light on Demeter's Mysteries: The Festival Proerosia," *GRBS* 37 (1996), 319–379; Parker, R. *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, 330.

a tribute of offerings of *aparchai*, the first fruits of grain from both the Athenians and their allies, would be offered to the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.[51] There was also a practical need for this: to ensure that there would be enough grain for the offering of the traditional sacrifices to the two goddesses, who were considered the divine progenitors of Greek agriculture.[53]

To attract more worshippers, the inscribed decree promises that each contributor (person or city) will receive "good and plentiful harvests, as long as they are righteous to the Athenians or to the city of the Athenians or to the two Goddesses" [*IG* I^3 78a, 44–6).[52] The *aparchai* might also have served as a public grain reserve to compensate for a shortage in a given year, as seems to have been the case in 329/8 BC when this grain was sold below market price to counter a crisis in supply (see *IG* II^2 1672, esp. 263–96).[53] Fourth-century bronze coins from Eleusis depict Triptolemos holding grain ears on the one side, and on the other a piglet, the sacrificial offering for Demeter, on top of a mystic staff, connecting mystic initiation to grain provision via a means of payment.[54]

Even in the Roman period, Eleusis continued to be a (agri-)cultural symbol, since its "two goddesses gave wheat to the city of Athens and the city in turn gave it to all the Greeks and barbarians" (Aelius Aristides *Or.* 22.4). In the *epopteia*, the central ritual of the mystery cults, the sight of "grain" was a fundamental part of the initiation in the Mysteries. Hippolytus of Rome, one of the Church Fathers writing in the early 3rd century CE, wrote in *Refutation of All Heresies* that "the Athenians, while initiating people into the Eleusinian rites, likewise display to those who are being admitted to the highest grade at these mysteries, the mighty, and marvellous, and most perfect secret suitable for one initiated into the highest mystic truths: a reaped ear of grain in silence." This was not an accidental act. Eleusis was according to mythology the first place where crops were cultivated. In the time of Pausanias, the ancient Eleusinians followed the custom of making cakes from barley as sacrificial offerings (1.38.6):[55]

---

51 On the ritual function of *aparchai* as a means of ensuring the annual harvest, see Burkert, *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche*, 115–119.

52 It is now kept in the Epigraphic Museum (Athens, Epigraphic Museum, no. EM 6817). Translation slightly adapted from S. Lambert and R. Osborne, AIO website.

53 Kowalzig, B. "Festivals, Fairs and Foreigners: Towards an Economics of Religion in the Mediterranean longue durée," in A. Collar, T. Myrup Kristensen, eds., *Pilgrimage and Economy*, Vol. 192, Leiden: Brill, 2020, 287–328, esp. 307.

54 Psoma, S.E. "Profitable Networks: Coinages, Panegyris and Dionysiac Artists," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22 (2007): 237–255, esp. 229.

55 After Jones, W.H.S. *Pausanias. Description of Greece, Volume I: Books 1–2 (Attica and Corinth)*, Loeb Classical Library 93, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918.

> τὸ δὲ πεδίον τὸ Ῥάριον σπαρῆναι πρῶτον λέγουσι καὶ πρῶτον αὐξῆσαι καρπούς, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐλαῖς ἐξ αὐτοῦ χρῆσθαί σφισι καὶ ποιεῖσθαι πέμματα ἐς τὰς θυσίας καθέστηκεν
>
> They say that the plain called Rharium was the first to be sown and the first to grow crops, and for this reason it is the custom to use sacrificial barley and to make cakes for the sacrifices from its produce.

What is most significant, however, for the modern revival of this ancient custom is that there is a close connection between the ancient and modern sacrificial food-offerings. Remarkably, if one visits the chapel of Mesosporitissa on the evening of the 21st of November today, before the vesper of the festival of Mesosporitissa, one encounters the *Polysporia* [a boiled food offering of many seeds, including wheat, corn, lentils, chickpeas, and rice] as an offering of the first-fruits to ensure the success of the following harvest.[56] All these items are boiled together in a pot. To boil them well, they are left overnight next to the charcoal in the corner to simmer until the morning and then they become like porridge. The mix is sweetened with watered honey or diluted sugar and taken to the church to bless and fertilize the sown fields.[57] The ritual custom of Panagia Mesosporitissa is an agricultural custom associated with the presentation of the Virgin Mary and in which boiled cereals, mainly corn, were prepared, consumed and offered for a good sowing and harvest. The custom has its roots in antiquity, as do many other customs that passed into the Christian calendar and were adapted, extending to the present day.[58] The Polysporia is the oldest custom, which has its roots in ancient Greece. It consists in making an offering to the goddess Demeter and the other gods for the prosperity of the land. Of these, offerings were also made to the dead on the days when they paid honours to departed souls.[59]

The folklore association of Eleusis *Adrachti* places the preparation and food offering of *polyspori* on the evening of the festival of Panagia Mesosporitissa (21st of November). Local women at Eleusis prepare the boiling of legumes (such as chickpeas, beans, and lentils), but also wheat in their homes, reviving the ancient tradition to cook what they were producing and to boil all of it together. Then, by adding pomegranates and raisins to the final product, after the Vespers the *polysporia* (Figs. 5a, b) is distributed to the people who have gone to the church to attend the service. The preparation of *polysporia* (a word which means "variety of seeds") follows on from the ancient ritual tradition of *panspermia* and repre-

56 Ζωγραφίδης, "Επιβιώσεις της λατρείας της Δήμητρας στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα," 145.
57 Υφαντής, Ν. *Αγροτική-Γεωργική Ζωή στο Πωγώνι, Λαογραφία-Παράδοση*, εκδόσεις Ελίκρανον, Αθήνα, 2020, 116.
58 Ζέρβας, Γ. *Τελετουργικά έθιμα στο χωριό Στύρφακα της Δυτικής Φθιώτιδας*, Αθήνα, 2016, 79.
59 Υφαντής, *Αγροτική-Γεωργική Ζωή στο Πωγώνι, Λαογραφία-Παράδοση*, 117.

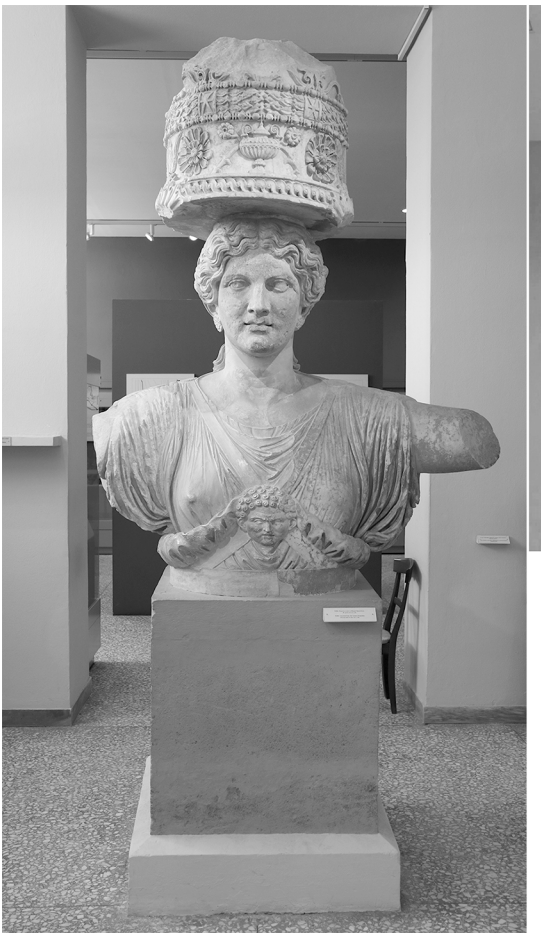

Fig. 5a: Caryatid from the Lesser Propylaea. Second half of the 1st century BCE
[Copyright: Archaeological Museum of Eleusis, Accession number: 5105 – Reproduced here under a Creative Commons License]
Fig. 5b: Caryatid from the Lesser Propylaea. Second half of the 1st century BCE
[Copyright: Archaeological Museum of Eleusis, Accession number: 5105 – Reproduced here under a Creative Commons License]

sents a thanksgiving offering for the good that preceded; also, it reflects a worshipper's wish for a good outcome that will come in the future.[60] If we want to understand better the reasons behind the continuity of this old ritual, we need to look into the following comparative evidence. There is a connecting thread between antiquity and modernity in the sense that, in the ancient period, people used to celebrate the festival of Proerosia[61] or prepare boiled pots of mixed seeds.

In some regions, the locals call this custom after its ancient name, *panspermia.*[62] Thus, we know for instance that in Classical Athens, on the final day of the Anthesteria, pots of mixed seeds (πανσπερμία) were offered to Demeter and Hermes Chthonios. Martin Nilsson has also described the custom of modern *polysporia* with the ancient one (*panspermia*) as one of the most characteristic examples of the continuity over the centuries of a cultic custom belonging to the layer of popular religion. In this light one may wonder, what are the motives of the modern inhabitants of Eleusis to revive an old ritual custom? From a comparative perspective, there is a conceptual transition of worship from Demeter to the Virgin Mary. This is a timely reminder of the long coexistence of deities in the same place from religions of different periods, but who are called upon to stand by the people of the countryside at a critical time of the year. In the autumn, when the first rains have prepared the land to receive the seed, it is the best time to start growing cereals in Attica. There are many risks for the young plants, which will soon make their appearance; early frost or the absence of rain can easily kill them. Both ancient and 19th century farmers, when faced with the uncontrollable weather, would often seek refuge in the performance of certain rituals, such as the worship of the Caryatid Kistophoros or the preparation of the food offering (*polyspori*), in the hope of safeguarding the future harvest and ensuring the survival of their home.

Conclusion

To put these threads together, this chapter has argued that there are two strongly interconnected reasons for the adaptive reuse of an ancient sacred space in the modern archaeological site of Eleusis and the revival of an old ritual in modern times. In antiquity, the memory of the terrible wheat famine caused by the goddess when she mourned the loss of Persephone was indelibly engraved in the collective

60 On *paspermia*, see Παχής, Π. *Δήμητρος Δωρεαί. Θρησκεία, εύρεση, Οικονομία στην Αρχαία Ελλάδα*, Εκδόσεις Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεσσαλονίκη (2018): 70, 90.

61 Jameson, M. *Cults and Rites in Ancient Greece*, Stallsmith, A. and Cartledge P. eds., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 16. For *proerosia*, see Παχής, *Δήμητρος Δωρεαί*, 80–82.

62 Ζωγραφίδης, "Επιβιώσεις της λατρείας της Δήμητρας στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα," 145.

memory and handed down to later generations by the circulation of oral stories. Conversely, in modernity, the fear of a potential seed germination led the modern Eleusinians to worship an ancient statue bust as a Christian icon attributing to it the supernatural power of prosperity.

The departure of Demeter from Eleusis, after the prevalence of Christianity, did not eliminate the farmers' need for divine help. As the ancient gods could no longer meet their obligations, people turned to the Virgin Mary and linked the agricultural calendar to the life of Theotokos. Now it is believed by the modern worshippers that it is the Virgin Mary who takes on the task of feeding mortals and provides the antechamber for the salvation of humanity as the sacred vessel through which Christ was the supreme bread of life (John 6:35). It appears that ancient rituals acquired Christian symbolic connotations without, however, losing their basic function.

Thus, the modern worship of Panagia Mesosporitissa (St. Mary of the Seeds) celebrated on the November 21st, which overlooks the ancient sacred space where certain mystery rituals took place in the distant past, not only reflects a special contemporary religious celebration in an agricultural area, but directly resonates with the ancient worship of Demeter and its cognitive association: that Demeter, as the goddess of agriculture, will ensure the prosperity of the land. As this chapter has demonstrated, the relation between modernity and antiquity is registered and facilitated through the shared use of a sacred space which still today preserves its sacred energy and power, albeit under a transformation of a new divinity, that is Panagia Mesosporitissa.

Bibliography

Buddle and Nicholls. *A Catalogue of the Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, 1994.

Bremmer, J. *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World. Münchner Vorlesungen zu antiken Welten*, Bd 1. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014.

Burkert, W. *Griechische Religion der archaischen und klassischen Epoche* (Religionen der Menschheit, 15), Stuttgart-Berlin- Köln, 1977.

Chandler, R. *Travels in Greece; or an Account of a Tour Made at the Expense of the Society of Dilettanti*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1776.

Clair, W. *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1998.

Clarke, E.D. (1809) *Greek Marbles brought from the shores of the Euxine Archipelago and Mediterranean and deposited in the vestibule of the Public Library of the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge.

Clarke, E.D. *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. Part II: Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Land*, section II, London: Cadell and Davies, 1814.

Clarke, M. *Greek Studies in England 1700–1830.* Cambridge University Press. Cockerell, S.P. (ed) (1903) *Travels in southern Europe and the Levant, 1810–1817. The Journal of C.R. Cockerell*, Longmans, R.A. London, 1945.

Clayman, D.L. *Callimachus, Hymn 6. To Demeter.* Loeb Classical Library, LCL 129, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2022.

Dodwell, A. *A classical and topographical tour through Greece, during the years 1801, 1805, and 1806*, vol. I, Rodwell and Martin, London, 1819

Fachard, S. "Asty and Chora: City and Countryside," in J. Neils and D. K. Rogers (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*, The Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 21–34.

Fol, V. (2004) "The Rock Antiquity of Eleusis," in V. Nikolov, K. Bǎčvarov (eds, *Von Domical is Drama. Gedenkshrift fur Jan Lichardus*, Arhäologisches Institut mit Museum der Bulgarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Sofia (2021): 171–180.

Frazer, J. G. *The Golden Bough*, The Macmillan Company, NY, 1951.

Garland, R. *Religion and the Greeks*, Bristol Classical Press, 2003.

Håland E. *Competing Ideologies in Greek Culture, Ancient and Modern*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019.

Hamilakis, Y. *The Nation and its Ruins: Antiquity, Archaeology, and National Imagination in Greece*, Cambridge, 2007.

Hamilakis, Y. "Decolonizing Greek archaeology: indigenous archaeologies, modernist archaeology, and the post-colonial critique" in Plantzos, D. and Damaskos, D. (eds), *A Singular Antiquity*, The Benaki Museum, Athens (2008): 273–284.

Hamilakis, Y. *Archaeologies and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Jameson, M., *Cults and Rites in Ancient Greece*, Stallsmith, A. and Cartledge P. eds. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Jones, W.H.S., Pausanias. *Description of Greece, Volume I: Books 1–2 (Attica and Corinth).* Loeb Classical Library 93. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918.

Jung, C. & Kerényi, C. *Essays on a Science of Mythology: The Myth of the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.

Kachrilas-Argyriadis, M. *Edward Dodwell, Views and Landscapes of Greece*, Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece, Athens, 2019.

Kanta, K. *Eleusis*, translated by W. W. Phelps, Athens, 1979.

Kerenyi, C. *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967.

Kourouniotes, K. *Ελευσίς, Οδηγός των ανασκαφών & του μουσείου.* Εκδοτικός οίκος: Εστία, Αθήνα, 1934a.

Kourouniotes, K. "Παλαιοχριστιανική Ελευσίς," *Ημερολόγιον της Μεγάλης Ελλάδος*, (1934b): 519–530.

Kowalzig, B. "Festivals, Fairs and Foreigners: Towards an Economics of Religion in the Mediterranean longue durée," in A. Collar, T. Myrup Kristensen, eds., *Pilgrimage and Economy*, Vol.192, Leiden: Brill (2020): 287–328.

Lawson, J. C. *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion. A Study in survivals*, with a foreword by A. N. Oikonomides, NY, University Books, 1964.

Lippolis, E. *Mysteria*, Bruno Mondadori, 2006.

Maier, H. and Waldner K. *Desiring Martyrs: Locating Martyrs in Space and Time.* SpatioTemporality/RaumZeitlichkeit 10, De Gruyter, 2021.

Malteso G. *Eleusis and the Mysteries*, translated from the German edition by Mary Grieve, Rhodis Bros, Athens, 1964.

Μεθενίτης, Α. *Το Χρονικό της Λεψίνας, Από την κατάργηση της αρχαίας λατρείας ως το 1925*, Αθήνα, 1971.

Μερκούρη, Χ., Αμπάτη, Μ. και Ανέστη Ε. "Ιερό Δήμητρας και Κόρης στην Ελευσίνα", *Αρχαιολογία και Τέχνες* 134 (2020): 112–144.

Nielsen, I. *Collective mysteries and Greek pilgrimage: The cases of Eleusis, Thebes and Andania*, in T. Myrup Kristensen and Wiebke Friese (eds), *Excavating Pilgrimage: Archaeological Approaches to Sacred Travel and Movement in the Ancient World*, Routledge, (2017): 28–46.

Nuffelen, P. "Religious Violence in Late Antiquity." In G. Fagan, L. Fibiger, M. Hudson, & M. Trundle (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Violence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2020): 512–530.

Otter W. *The life and remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke, The Life and Remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke, LL.D. Professor of Mineralogy at the University of Cambridge.* Printed for George Cowie and Co., London, 1824.

Παπαγγελή, Κ. *Ελευσίνα, Ο Αρχαιολογικός Χώρος και το Μουσείο*, φωτογραφίες Σωκράτης Μαυρομμάτης, Αθήνα, 2002.

Παπαγγελή, Κ. & Μηλιαρέση-Βαρβιτσιώτη Ο. *Ελευσίνα: το βλέμμα του επισκέπτη*, Δήμος Ελευσίνας, Ελευσίνα, 2008.

Παπαγγελή, Κ. & Χλέπα, Ε.–Α. *Οι μεταμορφώσεις του ελευσινιακού τοπίου: αρχαιότητες και σύγχρονη πόλη*. Αθήνα, 2011.

Παπαϊωάννου, Β. "Τα εκκλησάκια της Ελευσίνας," Αύγουστος (2012).

Parker, R. *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

Παχής, Π. *Δήμητρος Δωρεαί. Θρησκεία, εύρεση, Οικονομία στην Αρχαία Ελλάδα*, Εκδόσεις Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2018.

Πολίτης, Γ.Ν. *Παραδόσεις*, τόμος 1 και 2, εκδόσεις Σακελλαρίου, Αθήνα, 1904.

Πούχνερ, Β. *Ιστορική Λαογραφία, Η διαχρονικότητα των φαινομένων*, εκδόσεις Αρμός, Athens, 2010.

Preka-Alexandri K. *Eleusis*, Ministry of Culture Archaeological Receipts Fund, Athens, 1991.

Psoma, S. E. "Profitable Networks: Coinages, Panegyris and Dionysiac Artists," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 22 (2007): 237–255.

Robertson, N. "New Light on Demeter's Mysteries: The Festival Proerosia," *GRBS* 37 (1996): 319–379.

Schmidt, E. *Geschichte* der *Karyatide.* Funktion und Bedeutung der menschlichen Träger- und Stützfigur in der Baukunst, Beiträge zur Archäologie 13, (1982).

Scrofani *Voyage en Gréce fait en 1794 et 1795*, Paris et Strassburg, 1801.

Σιμόπουλος, Κ. *Ξένοι Ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα, 1800–1810. Δημόσιος και ιδιωτικός βίος, λαϊκός πολιτισμός, Εκκλησία και οικονομική ζωή από τα περιηγητικά χρονικά*, τομ. Γ1. Αθήνα, (1973): 73–77.

Society of Dilettanti *The unedited antiquities of Attica: comprising the architectural remains of Eleusis, Rhamnus, Sunium, and Thoricus*, London, 1817.

Suter, A. *The Narcissus and the Pomegranate, An Archaeology of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, The University of Michigan Press, 2002.

Σφυρόερας, Β. *Ιστορία της Ελευσίνας από το Βυζάντιο μέχρι σήμερα*, Δήμος Ελευσίνας, Αθήνα, 2005.

Trampedach, K. "A New Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem? The Construction of the Nea Church (531–543) by Emperor Justinian" in Klein, Konstantin M. and Wienand, Johannes. *City of Caesar, City of God: Constantinople and Jerusalem in Late Antiquity*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, (2022): 161–182.

Tsigakou, F.-M. *Athens through the eyes of artists-travellers: 16th-19th centuries*, Istros Art Publications, Athens, 2007.

Tylor, E. B. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, John Murray, London, 1871.

Waldner, K. "Dimensions of Individuality in Ancient Mystery Cults: Religious Practice and Philosophical Discourse." In Rüpke J. (ed.), *The Individual in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, (2013): 215–242.

Anna Sokolina

Modernist Topologies: The Goetheanum In-Building

Abstract: The Goetheanum is a physical manifestation of anthroposophical science, an agent of innovation, which in the early twentieth century pioneered new technologies, materials, and methods. Routinely marginalized and placed in opposition to the canon, the Goetheanum is still reduced to a stereotype, either by focusing on the esoteric occult narrative or by speculating on the morphologies of stylistic dispositions. As a material formation subject to internal and external socio-political hostilities and ideological rivalries, and as a process that defined a trajectory for collaborative work-in-progress, this *Gesamtkunstwerk* represents a holistic branch on the tree of modern architecture, fusing social topology, creative individualism, and spiritual awareness into a construct of integral anthropomorphism. The anatomy of the Goetheanum is informed by Eastern and Western formative parallels, and by the Byzantine mystical construct of *total design.* The genesis of the structural disposition of the First Goetheanum and the contested nature of the Second Goetheanum reveal a complex appeal to humanity "in-building." This study seeks to expand architectural networks, explore the boundaries of historical contexts, deconstruct simplistic binaries, and reimagine readings of creative design and construction efforts that have contributed to the advancement of human habitats.

The Vision of the Goetheanum

The Goetheanum was built on the idea of integral anthropomorphism, a vision of the spiritual evolution of material life in holistic balance. It combined collective materiality, creative individualism and spiritual awareness. A physical manifestation of the anthroposophical science developed by the Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), and based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's theory of natural life cycles, it represents an organic strain in the modernist context. Erected in the Swiss highlands at the beginning of the twentieth century, this public structure embodied Steiner's understanding of global harmony through humanist worldbuilding.

Routinely marginalized and placed in opposition to the modernist canon, the Goetheanum as an agent of innovation is still commonly reduced to a stereotype, either by focusing on its esoteric narrative or by speculating on the morphologies of its verbal stylistic dispositions. This study seeks to expand goetheanistic architec-

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. CC BY This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-008

Figure 1: Contemporary view of the Goetheanum and its surroundings, the Anthroposophical Center in Dornach, Switzerland. Image Credit: ETH-Bibliothek, Creative Commons, Free Use: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ETH-BIB-Dornach,_Goetheanum-LBS_H1-015964.tif.

tural networks, explore the boundaries of collective historical contexts, and recast the creative design effort of the Goetheanum as a contribution to the advancement of human habitats.

The term "topologies" refers to continuity and connectedness, as spatial properties of the material and non-physical universal geometries of two Goetheanum structures and their growing community. The term underscores the aim to examine transformative morphologies and verbalization within modern and modernist realities from a perspective of spatio-temporality informed by interdisciplinary theoretical approaches.[1]

Through its tectonic articulation, the First Goetheanum – a striking *Gesamtkunstwerk* – signaled Steiner's architectural optimism, which animated and enliv-

1 De Gruyter *SpatioTemporality* book series, accessed January 30, 2023, www.degruyter.com/serial/spatio-b/html; insights on objectives, frameworks, and terminology: *SpatioTemporality / RaumZeitlichkeit*, ed. Sebastian Dorsch, Bärbel Frischmann, Holt Meyer, Susanne Rau, Sabine Schmolinsky and Katharina Waldner (Berlin and Basel: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020).

ened the building and adjoining dwellings.[2] Given Steiner's lack of formal architectural training, it is remarkable that the First Goetheanum (commenced following the Johannesbau precursor in Munich) immediately fascinated a vibrant and diverse global community. The concept of the Goetheanum represented a transformation of the ideas of the Western Enlightenment, namely, the embrace of science as a source of knowledge and limitless progress, creative individualism, and democracy. These ideas were combined with occultism, a category of supernatural beliefs and practices generally outside the realm of religion.

In contrast to the utilitarian strands of modernism, Steiner emphasized the origins of humanity "in-building," as intertwined with the essence of anthroposophy. The idiom "in-building" signifies an international community engaged in an infinite design-build process, a natural progression of space-time construction: the search for a transformative organic synthesis of matter, mind and spirit; a sense of connectedness: from microcosm to macrocosm.

Steiner adopted the term "anthroposophy" from the Bohemian-Austrian philosopher Robert von Zimmermann (1824–1898) and recognized it as a "path of knowledge which aims to lead the spiritual element in the human being to the spiritual in the universe."[3] Design from this perspective is rooted in a theory of the organic genesis of architecture, of global metamorphoses and an innate perception of the rays of light and color that shape place and time as pathways to the divine. The structural disposition of the Goetheanum, conceived as an evolving secular center for collective meetings and celebrations, reveals a resonance with the Byzantine mystical construct of *total design*, conveyed in the dome of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.

As a generative force producing and disseminating new complex forms of spatial communication, the Goetheanum empowered philosophies opposed to established academic schemata. As a material formation subject to internal and external socio-political hostilities and ideological rivalries, and as a process that defined

2 On "Gesamtkunstwerk" see: David Roberts, *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011). On the Goetheanum, its environment and chronologies: Anna Sokolina, ed., *Architecture and Anthroposophy* (M.: KMK, 2001; 2nd ed. 2010; e/a BDN, 2019), contents accessed January 30, 2023, www.iartforum.com.

3 Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts* (New York: Steiner Press, 2007), 12. On the origins of the term "Anthroposophy": Robert von Zimmermann, *Anthroposophie im Umriss. Entwurf eines Systems idealer Weltansicht auf realistischer Grundlage* (Wien: Braumüller, 1882), and in: Rudolf Steiner, "The Anthroposophic Movement, Lecture Two, The Unveiling of Spiritual Truths," Dornach, June 11, 1923 (RSA, Schmidt Number: S-5310), accessed January 30, 2023, http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA258.

a trajectory for collaborative work-in-progress, it pioneered a new holistic branch on the tree of modern architecture.

The First Goetheanum: Structural Disposition

The evolution of the Goetheanum has been analyzed by the German historian and theologian Helmut Zander, who has investigated the initiation of the anthroposophical impulse and carefully outlined the events that led to the creation of the site.[4] In anthroposophical circles, Zander is considered a critical outsider.[5] In the present study, however, it is instructive to note the chronological details as documented by this scholar:

> From 1908 the German Adyar Theosophists built their own lodge buildings: in 1908 [in Malsch – A.S.] near Karlsruhe, and in 1911 in Stuttgart. The theosophical world was a secret and public one at the same time [...] In 1910 they began to plan a large complex of houses in Munich, intended as the center of the German Section. This included also the Johannesbau. Due to conflicts with the municipal council of Munich and with a Protestant parish in the neighborhood, the building license was refused. Steiner decided to erect the Johannesbau in Dornach, where a selected group of German Adyar Theosophists laid the foundation stone in a secret ceremony on 20 September 1913.[6]

---

4 Helmut Zander, "Understanding the Functions of an Occult Space," *Theosophy Forward*, published May 27, 2011, accessed June 3, 2023, www.theosophyforward.com/theosophy-and-the-society-in-the-public-eye/47-articles/theosophy-and-the-society-in-the-public-eye/382-understanding-the-functions-of-an-occult-space. To quote Zander: "The name of the Johannesbau probably refers to a Masonic context. Steiner officially derived the name in 1924 from Johannes Thomasius, a figure of his Mystery Plays [...] But the name 'Johannes' (John) may also refer to the notion of 'Johannis-Maurerei' (in English rarely called 'St. John's Lodges' or 'St. John's degrees'; normally: 'Craft lodges'). When Steiner renamed the Johannesbau [as the Goetheanum] in 1918, he wanted to divert attention away from this connection, as he had already admitted indirectly in 1917." With reference to the quote from Rudolf Steiner: "eine grosse Anzahl von Menschen [denkt] bei dem Namen 'Johannes-Bau' an die *Johannes-Freimaurerei*," in *Johannesbauverein Dornach*, *Protokoll zur* 5. *Ordentlichen Generalversammlung, am Sonntag, den 21. Oktober 1917* (Archive of the Anthroposophical Society, Goetheanum, Dornach). For the Zander quote, see Helmut Zander, "Rudolf Steiner and the Johannesbau in Dornach (1913–1922). Understanding the Function of an Occult Space," in *Masonic and Esoteric Heritage: New Perspectives for Art and Heritage Policies. Proceedings of the First International Conference of the OVN, Foundation for the Advancement of Academic Research into the History of Freemasonry in the Netherlands, October 20–21, 2005*, eds. A. Kroon, M. Bax, and J. Snoek (The Hague, Netherlands: OVN Foundation, 2005), 69–78.

5 See Peter Staudenmaier, "Review of Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung and Gesellschaftliche Praxis, 1884–1945*, 2 vols., Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007," *Aries* 10, no. 1 (2010): 107–139.

6 Zander, "Understanding the Functions."

In Zander's studies of the Goetheanum, I have yet to find any reflection on the striking Byzantine spatial and design properties inherent in the form and construction of the First Goetheanum (1913–1922). This Byzantine likeness evolved into the Second Goetheanum (1923–1928), which was designed and built on the expanded foundation of the first building that was destroyed by fire on New Year's Eve 1922/23.

The structural disposition of the First Goetheanum bears a resemblance to the Byzantine mystical construct of *total design* characteristic of the dome of Hagia Sophia. Taking its name from the Greek Ἁγία Σοφία, or holy wisdom, the Hagia Sophia was built in Constantinople in 532–537 CE by the designs of the Greek architects Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles.[7] The largest religious edifice of the Eastern Roman Empire, it is dominated by a magnificent dome that rises to the height of a fifteen-story building.[8]

The philosophical initiation, as well as the material-spatial formalities intertwined and manifested in Steiner's spiritual functionalism, were not concerned with the differences between sacred and secular space, but rather followed the integral perception of the world in-building, of humanity in-building – that is, the Goetheanum in-building represents a community of people coming together in and through building.[9] The double-domed space of the First Goetheanum, a transcendence of the microcosm through and into the macrocosm, reflects the morphologies of ecclesiastical architecture of the Byzantine dome and the structural disposition of the interior spaces, walls, vaults, and canopies of the Hagia Sophia.

In recognizing the geomorphic nature of structural integration of the Goetheanum into the Swiss landscape, the sacred Eastern protoforms and the relevance of theosophy and its imaginations of "Eastern wisdom" become tangible. Theosophy played a major role in bringing awareness of South Asian religions to the West. Founded in New York City in 1875 by Russian immigrant Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), in collaboration with the Americans Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and William Quan Judge (1851–1896), the Theosophical Society exerted a powerful influence on an impressive community of international writers and artists. Drawing on European philosophies such as Neoplatonism, as well as Hindu traditions

7 Ken Dark and Jan Kostenec, *Hagia Sophia in Context: An Archaeological Re-examination of the Cathedral of Byzantine Constantinople* (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2019).

8 For circa one thousand years, until the completion of the Seville Cathedral (Spain, 1507), this structure was recognized as the world's largest cathedral.

9 The pioneering term "spiritual functionalism" was introduced in Gary Coates and Susanne Siepl-Coates, "Spiritual Functionalism in the Architecture of Eric Asmussen," in *Architecture and Anthroposophy*, ed. Anna Sokolina (M.: KMK, 2010); see also: Gary Coates, Max Plunger, Susanne Siepl-Coates, *Eric Asmussen, Architect* (Stockholm: Byggförlagte, 1997).

and Tibetan Buddhism, theosophical ideas influenced a wide range of esoteric movements and philosophies.

The concept of the goetheanistic Bauimpuls is often viewed through the prism of such esotericism and occultism rather than as a vision of community in-building. Steiner, a literary scholar and philosopher, not a religious activist, referred to this phenomenon during his lifetime as a misleading approach to his intention of worldbuilding, irrelevant in terms of religious aspirations. Steiner insisted that "the reason why Blavatsky's theosophy went astray was that from the outset the interests of one portion of humanity [...] were placed above the interests of humanity as a whole."[10]

This intention includes a range of architectural styles that Steiner would have been aware of, for example, *Art Nouveau*, Reform Style, *Jugendstil* or *Secession*, which represented opposing trends and reactions to academism, eclecticism and historicist revivals in the nineteenth century. These influences, often inspired by non-European cultures, shaped the development of the *International Style* and modernism in general, for example, the Japanese influences on Frank Lloyd Wright's organicist constructs.[11] Such connections cannot be ignored in reconstructing the genesis of the Goetheanum.

Following this rational, it is fascinating to consider the formbuilding of religious edifices such as the Buddhist stupa, a dome-shaped monument first adopted in India as a memorial site associated with the storage of sacred relics of the Buddha. According to Sylvia Somerville, the term *stupa* means in Sanskrit "to heap, or to pile up" appearing "counter to Buddhist tradition, which maintains that because the stupa conveys enlightened qualities, it could only have been revealed by the mind of enlightenment."[12] The stupa developed as an archetype in the third century BCE, a common object of worship before the establishment of Buddha images, sculpture and painting.[13] The functions of Buddhist stupas were diffuse, and their

10 Rudolf Steiner, "The Building at Dornach: Lecture III (October 19, 1914)," trans. Dorothy S. Osmond in 1958, *Rudolf Steiner Archive*, published January 25, 1920, accessed January 30, 2023, https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/BuiDor_index.html.

11 Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company [1922, 1951, 1966], 1995).

12 Sylvia Somerville, "Stupas: Symbols of Enlightened Mind," in *Tibetan Buddhist Encyclopedia*, accessed January 30, 2023, http://tibetanbuddhistencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Stupas_symbols_of_enlightened_mind.

13 Uday Dokras, "Borobudur Temple of Indonesia: Indian Design Influences of Borobudur," section "History of Stupas" (Indo Nordic Authors Collective, 2020), accessed June 3, 2023, www.academia.edu/42640366/Indian_design_in_Borobudur_Temple. Also: William R. Chapman, *Ancient Sites of Southeast Asia: A Traveler's Guide through History, Ruins, and Landscapes* (Honolulu: University

forms introduced a variety of styles.[14] In particular, the Great Stupa at Sanchi, the oldest known stone structure in India, was built to facilitate worship around it.[15] Uday Dokras, an Indian scholar with advanced degrees from universities in Canada, Sweden and the USA, describes stupas as "generally solid, bell-shaped structures that contain a holy relic [...] or remains of eminent Buddhist figures, or a sacred Buddhist scripture. They are modeled on ancient Indian burial mounds."[16]

Another illuminating parallel emerges in the history of community planning, including the ideas of the *Garden City* movement outlined by British urban planner Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928) in *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898).[17] Structured approaches to the planning of spatial contexts are remarkably attuned to the development of social utopias and utopian environments, most notably with the example of the biblical paradise and with a particular focus on the creation of the idiom of *heaven on earth.*

The Goetheanum and Zenitism

An illuminating way to understand the Goetheanum in a modernist context is to address the essential but less recognized strain of Zenitism, as pointed out in the writings of the scholar of Byzantine architecture and modernism, Jelena Bogdanović.[18] Bogdanović "considers references to Byzantium in the architecture and philosophy of Zenitism, an Eastern European avant-garde movement founded by

---

of Hawaii Press, 2018); William R. Chapman, *A Heritage of Ruins: The Ancient Sites of Southeast Asia and Their Conservation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013).

14 Takashi Sakai, "The Diffusion of Buddhist Stupas in Ancient Times: Concerning the Relationship of Borobudur with Zuto and Nara," *Nihon Kôkogaku* 25 (2008): 23–45, accessed January 30, 2023, http://archaeology.jp/journal/con25abs.html#A2.

15 Dokras, "Borobudur Temple," 8–9.

16 Dokras, "Borobudur Temple," 6.

17 Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd, 1898). In simplified terms, Howard proposed the founding of "garden cities" as self-sufficient settlements. During his lifetime two garden cities were founded: Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn Garden City (1920). Remarkably, after World War Two they served as prototypes for the new towns organized by the British government. Other international versions followed, such as die Gardenstadt Hellerau founded in 1909 in Germany near Dresden by Karl Schmidt-Hellerau. His idea to create a planned organic community attracted cultural visionaries and well-known German architects, including Kurt Frick (1884–1963), Wilhelm Kreis (1873–1955), Georg Metzendorf (1874–1934), Hermann Muthesius (1861–1927), Bruno Paul (1874–1968), Richard Riemerschmid (1868–1957), and Heinrich Tessenow (1876–1950).

18 Publications by Jelena Bogdanović, last retrieved January 30, 2023, www.researchgate.net/profile/Jelena-Bogdanovic.

Ljubomir Micić in 1921," and "analyzes the visionary projects for the Zeniteum, designed by the architect Jo Klek (Josip Seissel), as a singular example of Byzantine-modernist architecture."[19] Her research offers a secular spatiotemporal parallel in the Eastern European *Zeitgeist*, emphasizing aspects of Byzantine *total design*, spirituality, and aesthetics of dematerialization through fragmented physical manifestations. Bogdanović outlines this narrative as follows:

> Zenitist theories and visionary drawings privileged the "Byzantine" dichotomy of a dome and a wall over Western European trabeated architecture while also deviating from the historicist, neo-Byzantine architectural style popular in Eastern Europe. Zenitism used indirect evocations of the Byzantine to create a dynamic Byzantine-modernist architecture, the study of which enriches discourse on tradition and the avant-garde in architecture.[20]

Bogdanović's research focuses on the emancipation of the visionary construct from the meaning of the heavenly temple achieved through the formalization of both architectural and painterly elements. This approach is also present in anthroposophical science through the goetheanistic vernacular and spatiotemporal similarities.

In his lecture "Behind the Scenes of External Events," given on November 6, 1917, Steiner asserted that "The age of materialism is striving, through the work of certain circles, to paralyze, to eliminate all spiritual development of humanity, to bring human beings to a point where simply by temperament and character they reject everything that is spiritual and regard it as folly."[21] Steiner's ideas evolved to a greater intensity in architecture – as in Zenitism, which Bogdanović effectively examines – and further into mid-twentieth-century modernisms, socio-cultural philosophies and utopias, and diverse materialist identities that are revealed through the spatial fabric of twenty-first-century human habitats.

---

19 From the abstract on ResearchGate. Jelena Bogdanović, "Evocations of Byzantium in Zenitist Avant-Garde Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 3 (2016): 299–317, accessed January 30, 2023, www.researchgate.net/publication/308091429.

20 From the abstract on ResearchGate. Bogdanović, "Evocations of Byzantium in Zenitist Avant-Garde Architecture."

21 Rudolf Steiner, *Secret Brotherhoods and the Mystery of the Human Double* (Hillside: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004), accessed January 30, 2023, https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/19171106p01.html.

Constructing the Goetheanum: Formative Parallels

Construction of the Goetheanum began in Dornach near Basel in 1913 and was completed in 1920, the result of creative efforts of a large international community.[22]

The building was conceived as a public center for community meetings and celebrations, as well as theatrical performances. The edifice consisted of two cylindrical volumes of different diameters, domed by interpenetrating cupolas. The scale of the double-domed structure was unprecedented in its remarkable dimensions. The larger dome, with an internal diameter of 110 feet (33.5 meters), surpassed the dome of Saint Paul's Cathedral in London (102 feet, or 31 meters) and the dome of Hagia Sophia (105 feet, or 32 meters). Steiner's designs resonate with the logic of Hagia Sophia's footprint and living walls – almost a square that appears to be rectangular from within, "for the great semidomes at east and west prolong the effect of the roof"; furthermore, the curtain walls "above the galleries and the base of the dome are pierced by windows, which in the glare of daylight obscure the supports and give the impression that the canopy floats on air."[23]

Yet for Steiner the experience of living architecture was more important than numerical symbolism. The origins of this bio-spiritual bond with the life of the

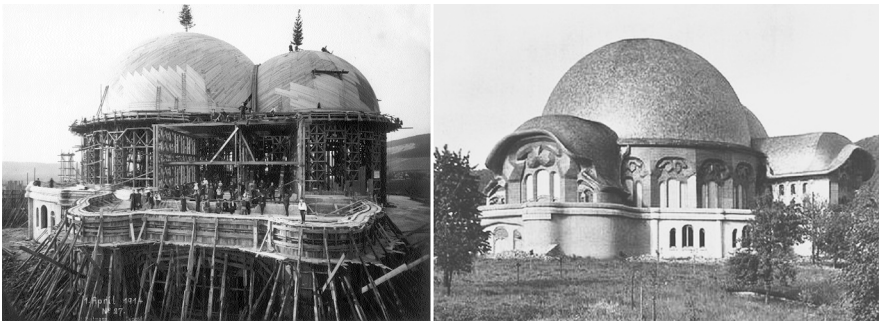

Figure 2: The Goetheanum with builders' community: Construction in progress, 1914 (Fig. 2a); S-W view, circa 1917 (Fig. 2b). Image Credit: Fig. 2a, public domain, Fig. 2b, Anna Sokolina personal archive.

22 Also: "Great Buildings," accessed January 30, 2023, www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Goetheanum_I.html.

23 In: "Hagia Sophia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

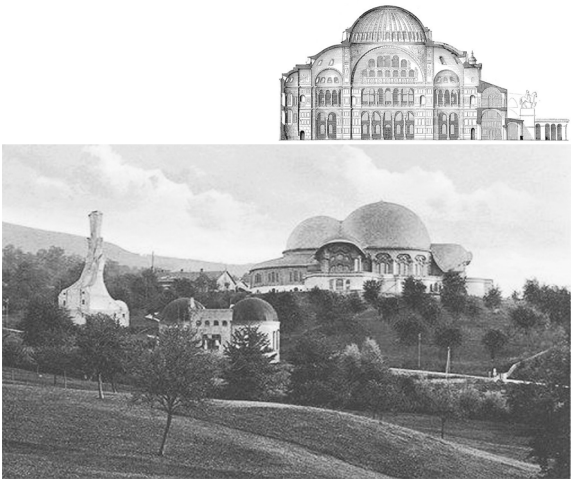

Figure 3: The Goetheanum in Dornach, north view, circa 1921 (Fig. 3b), compared on similar scale to Hagia Sophia Cathedral, 537 CE, cross-section from north (Fig. 3a). Image Credit (3a): Reconstruction drawing in: Wilhelm Lübke und Max Semrau, *Grundriß der Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: Neff Verlag, 1908), http://scihi.org/hagia-sophia-constantinople, open access; (3b): Anna Sokolina personal archive.

Goetheanum are evident in its structural disposition. There is a similarity in the interconnected roof structure of the First Goetheanum with the vaulting of Hagia Sophia, where the massive central dome is flanked by two smaller semi-domes along the east-west axis. Bogdanović relates the bio-structural narrative of the Goetheanum to the Romanesque-Byzantine earth-centered idiom of *total design* – as opposed to the celestial Gothic weightlessness – representing an unconventional mode of "creative expression, often lacking historical accuracy, and structural and aesthetic qualities useful for the development of modern architecture."[24]

Steiner was likely familiar with the reconstruction drawing of the Hagia Sophia presented in the monograph by Lübke and Semrau, *Grundriß der Kunstgeschichte* (1901).[25] The move to Berlin in 1903 changed Steiner's outlook, as he "was embraced by the theosophists and this gave him a platform to discover his life mission. [...] Steiner lived in Berlin at Motzstrasse for two of the most impor-

24 Bogdanović, "Evocations of Byzantium in Zenitist Avant-Garde Architecture," 3. See also Jelena Bogdanović, *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

25 Wilhelm Lübke and Max Semrau, *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte II. Die Kunst des Mittelalters. Mit 5 farbigen Tafeln und 436 Abildungen im Text* (Stuttgart: Paul Neff Verlag, 1901).

tant decades of his life."[26] From 1902 to 1912, he gave annual public lectures at the Haus des Architektenvereins, such as "Metamorphoses of the Soul" and "Answers of Spiritual Science to the Great Questions of Existence." There he met like-minded intellectuals, including Vasilij Kandinskij and Andrej Belyj, and was most certainly aware of Lübke and Semrau's volume.

A second structurally compelling connection is to read the First Goetheanum alongside the twelfth-century Monastery of Christ Pantocrator, with its axial setting of two domes of unequal size. Color examples of stained glass from the monastery, discovered by archaeologists, provide a thoughtful parallel to the creative approach in the stained glass windows of the Goetheanum.[27]

The wooden domes of the Goetheanum, clad in Norwegian silver slate that reflects light with a vibrant radiance, resembled the shining metal domes of Byzantine architecture, comparable to the wooden shingles "lemekh" that covered the domes of ancient churches in the Russian North.[28]

Painted images in domes, arched corridors, and hand-carved columns conveyed the idea of Byzantine origins. These elements were intended to reveal a concerted aesthetic message.

Contested Nature: The Second Goetheanum

A further parallel emerges in the applied techniques and imagery of Marc Chagall (1887–1985), for example, his "Orpheus" or "Artist over Vitebsk," and his stained glass windows installed in buildings on many continents. The idealistic pursuit of light, of a shining glass utopia, transformed and dematerialized the architectural form, bridging the gap between the European avant-gardes of the early twentieth century.[29] The stained glass windows of the First Goetheanum with their color-

26 John Paull, "Rudolf Steiner: At Home in Berlin," *Journal of Bio-Dynamics Tasmania* 132 (2019): 26–29. accessed January 30, 2023, www.researchgate.net/publication/339813510_Rudolf_Steiner_At_Home_in_Berlin.

27 From: Arthur H.S. Megaw, "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (published by Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1963): 333–371, in "Stained Glass and Opus Sectile Floor of the Pantokrator Katholikon," accessed January 30, 2023, www.pallasweb.com/deesis/pantokrator-zeyrek-constantinople-istanbul-1.html; and www.thebyzantinelegacy.com/pantokrator-monastery. Compare: Georg Hartmann, "The Goetheanum Windows," in Sokolina, *Architecture and Anthroposophy*, 97–103.

28 For instance, Arthur Voyce, "National Elements in Russian Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* XVI, 2 (1957): 6–16.

29 Adolf Behne, *Architekturkritik in der Zeit und über die Zeit hinaus: Texte 1913–1946*, ed. Haila Ochs (Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhäuser-Architektur-Bibliothek, 1994); Timothy O. Benson, Edward

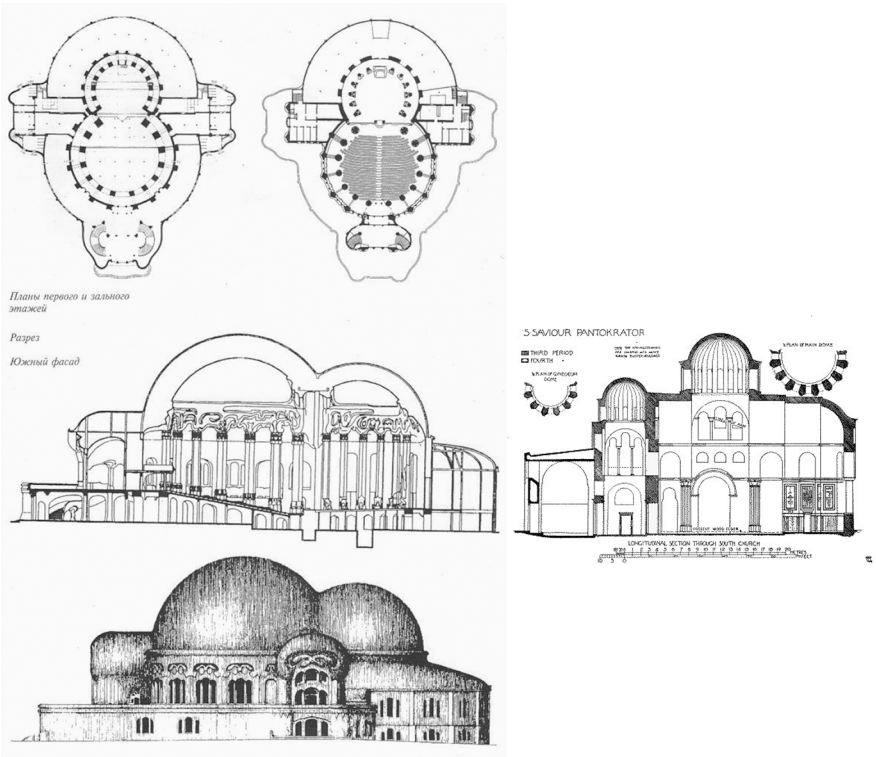

Figure 4: Plans, W–E section, and south view of the Goetheanum (Fig. 4a), compared on a similar scale to Pantocrator Monastery (Fig. 4b). Image Credit: Reconstruction drawings by Rex Raab, Anna Sokolina personal archive.

ful opaque translucence and figurative imagery – hand-carved by Asya Turgenev, preserved after the fire, and installed in the Second Goetheanum – were attuned to the exploratory performative energy of the bio-spiritual impulse of the structure. The idea of a "living wall" as an organic part of the body of the building, in reference to the natural origins of the edifice and the community in-building, per-

Dimendberg, David Frisby, Reinhold Heller, and Anton Kaes, *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001); Wolfgang Pehnt, "On the Architecture of Expressionism," in Sokolina, *Architecture and Anthroposophy*, Part I, Chapter 4. On the Glass Pavilion by Bruno Taut at the Werkbund exhibition in Cologne, Germany, 1914, see Paul Kaltefleiter, Berni Lörwald, and Michael M. Schardt, eds., *Über Paul Scheerbart. 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption*, 3 vols. (Paderborn: Igel-Verlag, 1998).

Figure 5: Norway slate of the First Goetheanum (Fig. 5a), domes of Hagia Sophia (Fig. 5b), and the Church of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Kizhi, 1714, layered with wooden shingles (Fig. 5c). Image Credit (5a): The Goetheanum Archive, Dornach, Switzerland, courtesy with support by Marianne Schubert, 1992; (5b): NGM, June 27, 2022, open access, photo: James L. Stanfield, clipped; (5c): Anna Sokolina personal archive.

formed the vision of Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture, with its massive hand-carved stone walls, vibrant spiritual imagery, and colorful frescoes.

Steiner considered debates about the stylistic attribution of the building to be superficial and irrelevant to the true nature of architecture, and he regarded production-based modernist environments as dead ends, a misleading artificial movement; instead, he claimed that those motivated by "amateurish negligence," "conscious dishonesty" and arrogance were violating the evolutionary balance of life, interrupting the continuity of the spiritual world.

While developing the designs for the Second Goetheanum (after the First Goetheanum burned down), Steiner created his clay model as a living entity.

In the First Goetheanum the structural skeleton, elevations, and interiors cast in wood were resting on a sculpturally formed concrete ground floor. For the first time in the history of architecture, this approach to a public structure explored the infinite formability and elastic materiality of concrete. In the Second Goetheanum,

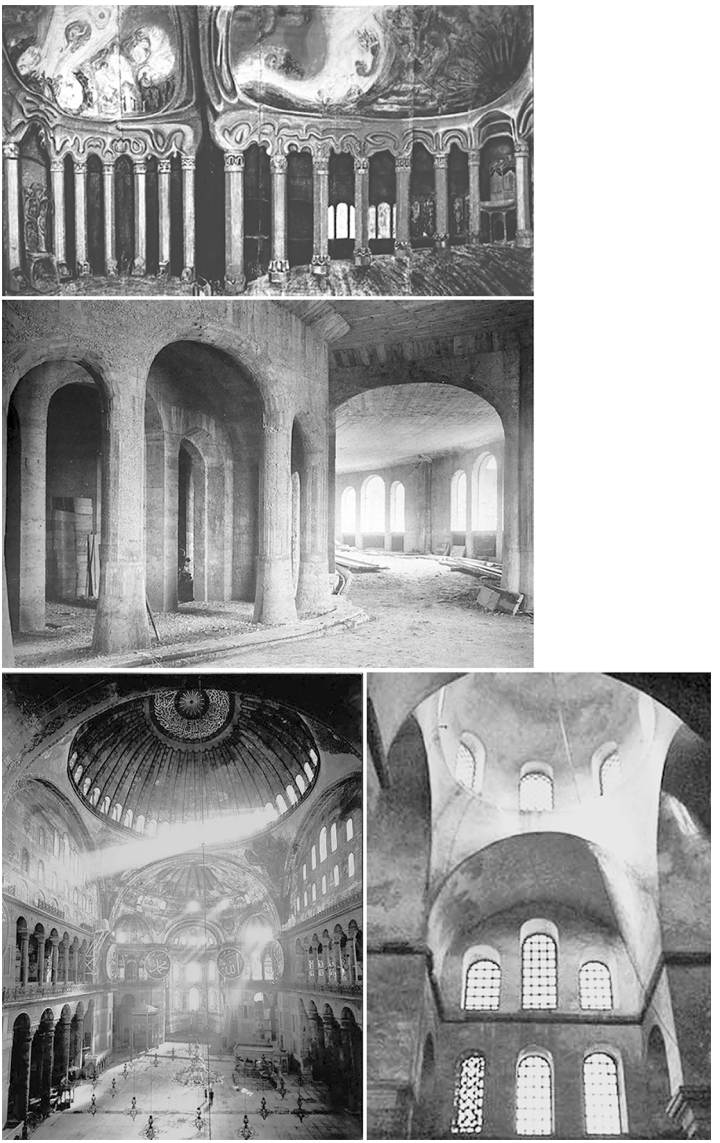

Figure 6: The Goetheanum model of a section of the Great Hall (Fig. 6a) and a view of the interior under construction (Fig. 6b), comparable to the interiors of Hagia Sophia (Fig. 6c), and the Church of the Archangel Michael of the Pantocrator Monastery (Fig. 6d). Image Credit (6a): https://anthrowiki.at/images/a/a8/Goetheanum1-Querschnitt.jpg, open access; (6b): Anna Sokolina personal archive; (6c): www.researchgate.net/figure/Hagia-Sophia-532-37-and-562-interior-C-Erich-Lessing-Art-Resource-NY_fig1_367574864, CC by 4.0 Deed International; (6d): WMF, 1999, www.wmf.org/project/church-monastery-christ-pantokrator-zeyrek-camii.

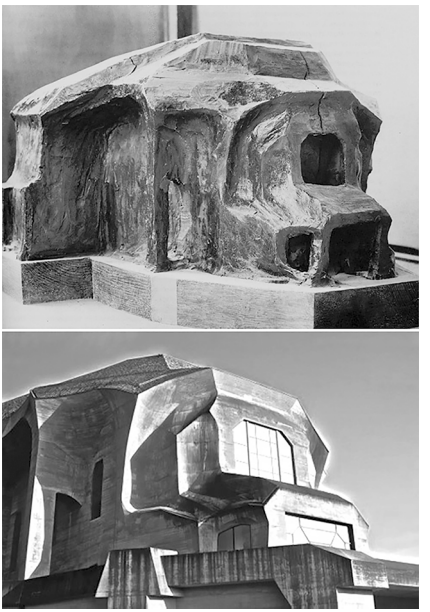

Figure 7: Steiner's clay model as a living entity 1923 (Fig. 7a), and similar fragment of contemporary N–W view (Fig. 7b). Image Credit (7a): The Goetheanum Archive, Dornach, Switzerland, courtesy with support by Marianne Schubert, 1992; (7b): Anna Sokolina personal archive.

novel construction methods were used to sculpt the building in flexible reinforced concrete, opening up unlimited possibilities for spatial metamorphosis. Distinctive color design and tinted glazing were combined with theatrical performances to the musical compositions of Beethoven, Debussy, Stravinsky, Glazunov and Rachmaninov. Daylight revealed the depth of the engravings on glass, with shades ranging from dark to light.

However, in the 1920s and 30s European and global societies became profoundly altered by the conflicts of war, economic crises, and the tyranny of ruling political regimes. The building work in Dornach experienced dramatic bottlenecks. It was not until the 1960s that further development on the site was resumed.

Goetheanum Modernities

The Goetheanum possesses an empowering potential for sustainable architecture. Presented in two successive physical manifestations, it is an affirmation of the spirit of the early twentieth century and an agent of new construction technologies, materials, and methods. These included the use of reinforced concrete in a public building and the dynamic collaboration of remarkable men and women from seventeen different nations who worked as volunteers alongside the Swiss foremen.

The culture of the Goetheanum provides a strong impulse for global design initiatives. The aesthetics informed by human materiality and spiritual awareness, the theory of organic transformations responding to the biocycles of natural life, and the concept of harmony of light and color revealing the universal mysteries of mind and spirit invite a cross-cultural debate on the influence of organicism in contemporary architecture.

Through the rediscovery of global chronologies that reveal the design of the Goetheanum as a holistic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the influence of Steiner's anthroposophical modernism is becoming recognized.[30] For example, after visiting the Goetheanum in Dornach, Le Corbusier famously revised his designs to create the Notre-Dame du Haut, a Roman Catholic chapel in Ronchamp, France (1950–1955). The extension and redefinition of an existing railway station in the heart of Zurich, Switzerland, on Stadelhofenplatz (1983–1990) by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava (b. 1951), in collaboration with Swiss architects Arnold Amsler and Werner K. Rüegger, was another powerful testimony to the goetheanistic impulse.[31] The structure of Calatrava's World Trade Center Transportation Hub in New York City (2010–2016), which rises up between the skyscrapers of downtown Manhattan and overlooks the 9/11 Memorial, evidently recalls the structural dispositions of the staircase of the First (1913–1915) and Second (1923–1927) Goetheanum.

The Goetheanum inspires many responses in the alignment of its formative material substance as the unity of body, mind and spirit. In its remarkable resonance with the Byzantine construct of *total design* – manifested in the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and other examples – the Goetheanum transcends simplistic modernist interpretations.

As a generative force producing and disseminating new, complex forms of spatial communication, the Goetheanum contributed to architectural histories, broadened modernist attitudes, and empowered philosophies in opposition to established academic schemata. As a power structure and material formation subject to internal and external socio-political hostilities and ideological rivalries, and as a process that defined a trajectory for communal work-in-progress, it represents a holistic branch on the glorious tree of modern architecture.

30 See: "Part Two: New Impulses," in Sokolina, *Architecture and Anthroposophy.* Also, Anna P. Sokolina, "Biology in Architecture: The Goetheanum Case Study," in *The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture*, ed. Charissa Terranova and Meredith Tromble, 52–70 (New York: Routledge, 2016; 2019).

31 "Santiago Calatrava," official website, accessed January 30, 2023, https://calatrava.com.

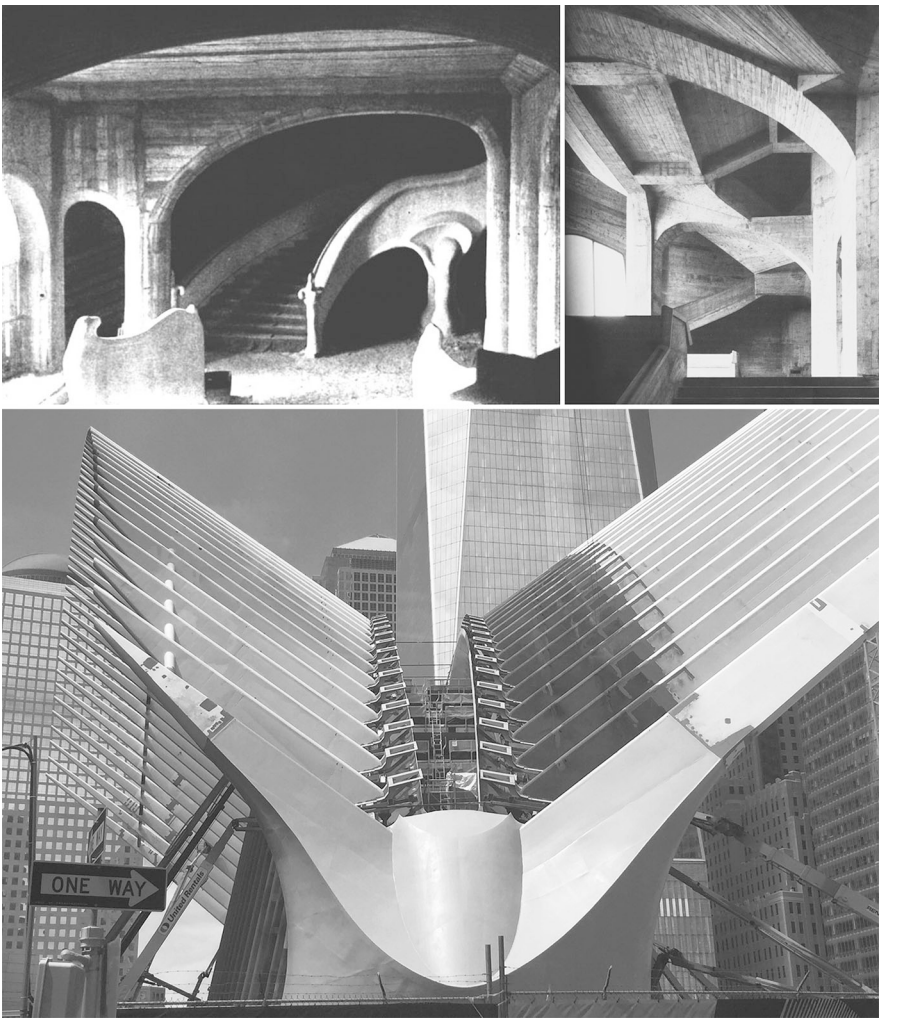

Figure 8: Remarkable similarities: The staircase of the First (Fig. 8a) and the Second Goetheanum (Fig. 8b), and structural dispositions of the World Trade Center Transportation Hub in New York City, architect Santiago Calatrava (Fig. 8c). Image Credit (8a, b): The Goetheanum Archive, Dornach, Switzerland, courtesy with support by Marianne Schubert, 1992; (8c): Anna Sokolina personal archive, courtesy imagespaceconsulting.

Bibliography

Adams, David. "Rudolf Steiner's First Goetheanum as an Illustration of Organic Functionalism." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51, 2 (June 1992): 182–204.

Asprem, Egil, and Kennet Granholm, ed. *Contemporary Esotericism.* Durham: Acumen, 2013.

Bayes, Kenneth. *Living Architecture.* Rudolf Steiner's Ideas in Practice Series. Hudson, NY: SteinerBooks, 1994.

Beltle, Erika, and Kurt Vierl, ed. *Erinnerungen an Rudolf Steiner.* Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1979.

Behne, Adolf. *Architekturkritik in der Zeit und über die Zeit hinaus: Texte 1913–1946.* Edited by Haila Ochs. Basel, Boston, Berlin: Birkhäuser-Architektur-Bibliothek, 1994.

Benson, Timothy O., Edward Dimendberg, David Frisby, Reinhold Heller, and Anton Kaes. *Expressionist Utopias: Paradise, Metropolis, Architectural Fantasy.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001.

Bogdanović, Jelena. "Evocations of Byzantium in Zenitist Avant-Garde Architecture." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75, no. 3 (September 2016): 299–317.

Bogdanović, Jelena. *The Framing of Sacred Space: The Canopy and the Byzantine Church.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Carlgren, Frans. *Rudolf Steiner und die Anthroposophie.* Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1990.

Chapman, William R. *Ancient Sites of Southeast Asia: A Traveler's Guide through History, Ruins, and Landscapes.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2018.

Chapman, William R. *A Heritage of Ruins: The Ancient Sites of Southeast Asia and Their Conservation.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013.

Coates, Gary, Max Plunger, and Susanne Siepl-Coates. *Eric Asmussen, Architect.* Stockholm: Byggförlagte, 1997.

Coates, Gary and Susanne Siepl-Coates. "Spiritual Functionalism in the Architecture of Eric Asmussen," in *Architecture and Anthroposophy,* edited by Anna Sokolina, 145–158. M.: KMK, 2010.

Cohen, Jean-Louis, and G. Martin Moeller, ed. *Liquid Stone: New Architecture in Concrete.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006.

Day, Christopher. *Places of the Soul: Architecture and Environmental Design as a Healing Art.* London: Routledge, 2014.

Dokras, Uday. "Borobudur Temple of Indonesia: Indian Design Influences of Borobudur." *Indo Nordic Authors Collective*, 2020. www.academia.edu/42640366/Indian_design_in_Borobudur_Temple.

Dark, Ken and Jan Kostenec. *Hagia Sophia in Context: An Archaeological Re-examination of the Cathedral of Byzantine Constantinople.* Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2019.

Halle, Judith von, and John Wilkes. *The Representative of Humanity. Between Lucifer and Ahriman: The Wooden Model at the Goetheanum.* London: Rudolph Steiner Press, 2011.

Hartmann, Georg. "The Goetheanum Windows." In *Architecture and Anthroposophy*, edited by Anna Sokolina, 97–103. M.: KMK, 2010.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and Philip Johnson. *The International Style.* New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company [1922, 1951, 1966], 1995.

Howard, Ebenezer. *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform.* London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Ltd, 1898.

Kaltefleiter, Paul, Berni Lörwald, and Michael M. Schardt, eds. *Über Paul Scheerbart. 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption, 3 vols.* Paderborn: Igel-Verlag, 1998.

Lübke, Wilhelm and Max Semrau. *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte II. Die Kunst des Mittelalters. Mit 5 farbigen Tafeln und 436 Abildungen im Text.* Stuttgart: Paul Neff Verlag, 1901.

Megaw, Arthur H.S. "Notes on Recent Work of the Byzantine Institute in Istanbul," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (published by Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard University, 1963): 333–371. In "Stained Glass and Opus Sectile Floor of the Pantokrator Katholikon." www.pallasweb.com/deesis/pantokrator-zeyrek-constantinople-istanbul-1.html; and www.thebyzantinelegacy.com/pantokrator-monastery.

Paull, John. "Rudolf Steiner: At Home in Berlin." *Journal of Bio-Dynamics Tasmania* 132 (2019): 26–29.

Pearson, David. *Earth to Spirit. In Search of Natural Architecture.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995.

Pehnt, Wolfgang. *Die Architektur des Expressionismus.* Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1973.

Raab, Rex, Arne Klingborg, and Åke Fant. *Sprechender Beton. Wie Rudolf Steiner den Stahlbeton Verwendete.* Dornach: Verlag am Goetheanum, 1972.

Roberts, David. *The Total Work of Art in European Modernism.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Sakai, Takashi. "The Diffusion of Buddhist Stupas in Ancient Times: Concerning the Relationship of Borobudur with Zuto and Nara." *Nihon Kôkogaku* 25 (2008): 23–45.

Sharp, Dennis. "Rudolf Steiner and the Way to a New Style in Architecture." *Architectural Association Journal* (1963).

Sokolina, Anna, ed. *Architecture and Anthroposophy.* M.: KMK, 2001; 2010; e/a BDN, 2019. http://bdn-steiner.ru/modules/Books/files/arhitektura-i-antroposofiia-opt.pdf.

Sokolina, Anna. "Biology in Architecture: The Goetheanum Case Study." In *The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture*, ed. Charissa Terranova and Meredith Tromble, 52–70. New York: Routledge, 2016; 2019.

Sokolina, Anna. "The Goetheanum Culture in Modern Architecture." [Kultura Geteanuma v sovremennoi architecture.] In *Science, Education and Experimental Design* [Nauka, obrazovaniie i eksperimental'noie proiektirovaniie], ed. D.O. Shvidkovsky, G.V. Yesaulov, et al., 157–159. M.: MARKHI, 2014.

Somerville, Sylvia. "Stupas: Symbols of Enlightened Mind." In *Tibetan Buddhist Encyclopedia.* http://tibetanbuddhistencyclopedia.com/en/index.php/Stupas_symbols_of_enlightened_mind.

Staudenmaier, Peter. "Review of Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung and Gesellschaftliche Praxis, 1884–1945*, 2 vols., Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007." *Aries* 10, no. 1 (2010): 107–139.

Steiner, Rudolf. *Anthroposophical Leading Thoughts.* New York: Steiner Press, 2007.

Steiner, Rudolf. *Johannesbauverein Dornach, Protokoll zur* 5. *Ordentlichen Generalversammlung, am Sonntag, den 21. Oktober 1917.* Archive of the Anthroposophical Society, Goetheanum, Dornach.

Steiner, Rudolf. "The Anthroposophic Movement, Lecture Two, The Unveiling of Spiritual Truths." Dornach, June 11, 1923 (RSA, Schmidt Number: S-5310). http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA258.

Steiner, Rudolf. "The Building at Dornach: Lecture III (October 19, 1914)." *Rudolf Steiner Archive*, published January 25, 1920. https://rsarchive.org/Lectures/BuiDor_index.html.

Steiner, Rudolf. *Secret Brotherhoods and the Mystery of the Human Double.* Hillside: Rudolf Steiner Press, 2004.

Voyce, Arthur. "National Elements in Russian Architecture." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* XVI, 2 (1957): 6–16.

Wölfflin, Heinrich. *Principles of Art History.* New York: Dover Publications, 1950.

Zander, Helmut. *Anthroposophie in Deutschland. Theosophische Weltanschauung und Gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945.* 2 vols. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht Verlag, 2007.

Zander, Helmut. “Rudolf Steiner and the Johannesbau in Dornach (1913–1922). Understanding the Function of an Occult Space. “ In *Masonic and Esoteric Heritage: New Perspectives for Art and Heritage Policies. Proceedings of the First International Conference of the OVN, Foundation for the Advancement of Academic Research into the History of Freemasonry in the Netherlands, October 20–21, 2005*, edited by A. Kroon, M. Bax, and J. Snoek, The Hague, Netherlands: OVN Foundation, 2005, 69–78.

Zander, Helmut. “Understanding the Functions of an Occult Space.” *Theosophy Forward*, May 27, 2011. www.theosophyforward.com/theosophy-and-the-society-in-the-public-eye/47-articles/theosophy-and-the-society-in-the-public-eye/382-understanding-the-functions-of-an-occult-space.

Zimmermann, Robert von. *Anthroposophie im Umriß: Entwurf eines Systems Idealer Weltansicht auf Readlistischer Grundlage.* Wien: Braumüller, 1882.

Tancredi Marrone

Sacred Settings: The Aesthetics of Psychedelic Sacred Spaces

Abstract: Drawing from a combination of direct observation and literature on the recreational and sacred use of psychedelic substances, this chapter will discuss the various aesthetic styles that are used in constructing a setting for psychedelic usage. The objective is to make a location enchanting to the psychedelic user. The purpose is to establish a location which combines a controlled environment with sensorially engaging features. A ritual setting will present features that will contextualize the psychedelic consumption within a religious framework. Subcultural movements founded on the spiritualization of chemistry draw inspiration both ritualistically and stylistically from many traditional or tribal systems of belief that centre around psychedelic substances or entheogens. This hybridization has given rise to a specific set of symbols and environments which are often found in psychedelic settings. Music and other artforms have also become part of the psychedelic setting, further enhancing the spiritual and religious overtones perceived in psychedelic-inspired festivals but also with the more solitary psychonaut.

Introduction

As is well known, environmental factors play an influential role in mental and emotional states. Some places are evocative, some are dreary, while others are banal to the extreme, boring, dry, and sterile. Within many religious contexts sacred spaces occupy those locations that are said to generate a sense of elevation and closeness to the divine, and which manifest as a sense of uncommon awe or as fear, humbleness and introspection.[1] In general, they are described as having essential meaningful qualities that elicit emotional responses. Within a sacred space, behavior changes as much as the value of certain actions and symbols. They become places that acquire special evocative meaning and require corresponding ritualistic behavior, which would not occur in an ordinary place.[2]

1 Calian Florin George, "Editorial RES 2/2021," *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 13, no. 2 (2021): 139–144.

2 Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions – Revised Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 138–169.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-009

Their function is dedicated to establishing a space to interact with the supernal, creating a suspension from the mundane, a connection to the realm of higher existence.

The sacred can be found in buildings, temples and palaces, any location edified by the various religious movements scattered across the world. But they can also be found in forests, jungles, lakes, and rivers. Nature-based religions and animism conceptualize the world as animated, where all kinds of objects, locations, plants, animals, and minerals have a distinct aliveness that expands the sacred to reality itself.[3] Landmarks where religious, spiritual and mystical events took place can also be holy. The quality of sacrality in relation to one's system of belief or one's interests has even been extended to basements, houses, stadiums, museums, art galleries and laboratories. Rock stars and actors have ascended to a status comparable to that of saints or religious figures, their charisma able to change the atmosphere of a room. High performance athletes and their places of rest or birth are locations for pilgrimage, or sports monuments are erected in their name. The language used by pilgrims for such places also reflects this sense of the holy and enchantment.[4]

These features have been carefully interpreted and employed by artists, architects and musicians throughout history to invoke specific moods and atmospheres, produced in the way light falls or reflects, how smells and geometries evoke spiritual narratives in order to generate the adequate atmosphere or vibe.[5]

Execution of ritual is also an integral part of such environments. Gestures, clothing, tools, and instruments become symbolic elements, through which the participants can immerse themselves in the ceremonial atmosphere. Finally, preparation of the location and the ritual is part of the experience, culminating in the execution of the ritual and ending with the disbanding of the event. This final stage establishes a return to ordinary life.[6]

This chapter will analyze the aesthetic features of ritual "setting," which in this case designates the location in which psychedelic substances are ritually consumed by psychonauts, a subculture dedicated to the chemical exploration of con-

3 On animism, see Graham Harvey, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

4 Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992): 1–2.

5 Alexei Lidov, "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia,* ed. Alexei Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006): 32–58.

6 Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions – Revised Edition*, 156–157.

sciousness.[7] The organization or selection of the setting is considered of primary importance.[8] I will discuss how the sacred is constructed and perceived by psychonauts, who select, design and prepare these spaces for consumption. Drawing on primary and secondary literature, as well as first-hand experience, I will analyze the aesthetics of the psychonautic setting from the perspective of creative sacrality and functionality. The following questions will be addressed: Where do the aesthetics of psychonauts come from? And what is their purpose in relation to use of psychedelics?

Psychonauts

To better frame sacred spaces in relation to the contemporary use of psychedelics it is necessary to give an introductory overview of the creators of these particular settings. Psychonaut is a term designating a movement which utilizes various psychedelic substances, often termed entheogens, to achieve altered states of consciousness with spiritual qualities. Although intertwined and overlapping with the recreational drug user, the psychonaut overall can be distinguished by a combination of interest in various mind-altering substances and their historical background.[9] Becoming further involved in psychedelic culture means participating in a global movement that revolves around a positive or optimistic approach to the use of psychedelic substances, especially for therapeutic purposes.[10] The dissolution of the ego, otherwise known as ego death, is one of the consequences or objectives of participating in the use of psychedelic substances. This phenomenon is classified in terms of "peak experiences" and in the words of the psychonauts similar to many mystical experiences found in religious literature around the world.[11]

---

7 Stanislav Grof, *The Way of the Psychonaut: Encyklopedia for Inner Journeys, Volume 1* (Santa Cruz: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, 2019): 1–10.

8 David Shewan, Phil Dalgarno and Gerda Reith, "Perceived risk and risk reduction among ecstasy users: the role of drug, set, and setting," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 10, no. 6 (January 2000): 431–453.

9 Julian Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony* (London: Psychedelic Press, 2017): 3–5. On the history of the Psychonauts, see Mike Jay, *Psychonauts: Drugs and the Making of the Modern Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023).

10 For example, see Shannon Duncan, *Coming Full Circle Healing Trauma Using Psychedelics* (San Diego: Present Moment Press, 2023); David Nutt and David Castle, eds., *Psychedelics as Psychiatric Medications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

11 Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert, *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (London: Penguin Books, 2008.): 11–12. See also William A. Ri-

The use of psychedelics is often combined with controlled breathing or meditative techniques that are supposed to deepen or influence the emotional state of the experience.[12]

Psychonaut spirituality or sense of the divine and sacred rests one of its pillars on direct experience. The strong phenomenological component given by the psychedelic experience is often the persuasive factor that attracts new members. Psychedelics can alter a person's reality framework permanently but also psychologically damage an individual. Trip reports, a particular form of information exchange in the psychonautic subculture that forms an insider literature, are detailed accounts of experimentation with psychedelic substances. These are easily accessible online. They describe the substance dosage, visual or hallucinatory effects, self-reflections, and general interactions with the surrounding reality. They also include description of the setting, the background history that led to the experimental context and the time and duration of the experience starting from consumption, the peak and the coming down and after effect.[13]

Both primary and secondary literature confirm the intensity of the ritual psychedelic experience including the possible psychological and physical risks connected to it. Trip reports and interview accounts which describe the effects of using MDMA, LSD and Psylocibin often employ the language of mysticism, describing the world as more alive, or a sense of oneness with the totality of reality, a unification with all living beings.[14] Other peak effects include descriptions of telepathic abilities, a sense of having obtained the truth, and dissolution of the ego.[15]

In the consumption of psychotropic substances many if not all senses are involved and enhanced and often result in synesthesia, the mixing of multiple signal inputs into one. One example is the capacity to perceive music through colors or listen to smells. In some cases, this is associated with the expansion of consciousness, meaning the expansion of one's own perceptual capacities. This is not neces-

---

chards, *Sacred Knowledge : Psychedelics and Religious Experiences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

12 Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony*, 102–109. See also Christine Hauskeller and Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, *Philosophy and Psychedelics: Frameworks for Exceptional Experience* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).

13 Tehseen Noorani, "Sciencing the mystical: the trickery of the psychedelic trip report," *New Writing* 16, no. 4 (2019): 440–443.

14 Roland R. Griffiths *et al.*, "Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance," *Psychopharmacology* 187, no. 3 (July 2006): 268–292.

15 Petter G. Johnstad, "Psychedelic Telepathy: An Interview Study," *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 34, no. 3 (2020). See also Marc Aixalà and Jose Carlos Bouso, *Psychedelic Integration: Psychotherapy for Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness* (Santa Fe: Synergetic Press, 2022).

sarily limited to the conventional five senses but is often extended to descriptions of extrasensory perception.[16] Psychedelic users are proficient in substance dosage, harm reduction, and setting organization. These are necessary for directing the effects of the psychedelic experience, especially at high dosages or when using particularly potent substances. It must be noted that this has nothing to do with good or bad in purely hedonistic or essentialist terms, as bad trips or traumatic experiences in drug use can also be a desired outcome or context depending on the objective of the drugs.[17] Some drug experiences are necessarily painful and likened to narratives of shamanic journeys that require the overcoming of an obstacle or confronting one's fears. Such narrative patterns are recurring and were already reported and documented by the first Western explorers of psychedelic medicine.[18]

The combination of the right substance and corresponding setting is not something new: already the first ethnobotanic explorers of psychedelic medicine and the first anthropologists who came into contact with tribes using psychedelic substances in their ritual could testify to the importance of the setting, but also the ritual connected to that substance.[19] The term setting, popularized by Timothy Leary in his book *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead,* describes the relevance of the location in which the trip occurs. This is considered a determining factor in the success of the psychedelic trip, as Leary considered the use of the substance almost of secondary importance to the quality of the experience. If a psychedelic substance were to be used in an unfavorable environment, this could put the psychonaut in an uncomfortable situation, both mentally and physically, if not aided by a trip "sitter." The sitter is a guide experienced in the use of psychedelic substances and ideally able to recognize the effects in others and intervene when needed. Their job is to support the psychonaut in the case of emotional crises derived from the experience but also to make sure they are provided with any form of assistance they might require.[20]

---

16 Peter Stafford, *Psychedelics Encyclopedia* (Oakland: Ronin Publishing, Inc., 1992).

17 Dan Merkur, *The Ecstatic Imagination: Psychedelic Experiences and the Psychoanalysis of Self-Actualization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

18 Jay H. Ellens, *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances: Chemical Paths to Spirituality and to God. Volume 1 History and Practices* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014).

19 Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception, and Heaven and Hell* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009); Daniel Pinchbeck, *Breaking Open the Head: A Psychedelic Journey into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003).

20 Ellens, *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances: Chemical Paths to Spirituality and to God. Volume 1 History and Practices,* 227.

Inspired by the first pioneers of psychedelic exploration such as Aldous Huxley, William Burroughs and Timothy Leary – but also Terence Mckenna, just to name a few – psychonauts produced extensive research in the area of setting construction, which is connected to responsible psychedelic consumption together with optimization of the experience. It is in this period that the aesthetic features of the psychonaut culture and consequentially of the setting emerged.

The era of the first psychedelic wave coincides with the spread of the Hippie counterculture, an anarchic philosophy-based movement that proposed a universalistic inclusivity of spiritual traditions from a pluralistic perspective.[21] This marked the emergence of numerous experimentations with religious movements. These incorporated the most diverse ideas drawn from what were perceived to be more spiritually oriented cultures such as India, China, Tibet or the indigenous peoples of South America. They were moreover incorporated into traditional and post-modern Western esoteric traditions and neo-pagan revival movements. Finally, conspiracy theories and UFO narratives completed the general influences, which form the culture as it stands today.[22]

The contemporary psytrance culture, the heir to the countercultural movements of the past, has continued to evolve, introducing technological features to experiment with electronic music, and forming a particular festival music scene that is a focal point for psychedelic culture. These festivals are defined by the use of particular aesthetic features such as colors, statues, lights, clothing, and works of art or music, which are often inspired by cultures traditionally associated with the use of psychedelic substances for ritual purposes. The intent is, through artistic and decorative exploration, to both reproduce and invite ecstatic experiences. Other forms of practice can be more introspective, where the location is simply a room which is comfortably fitted with cushions, dim lights and music, and the objective is to have a more peaceful and immersive experience. In either case the use of psychedelics is to enhance one's perceptive faculties, rendering the experience strongly and emotionally sensorial.[23]

---

21 See, for example, Erik Davis, "Superconsciousness: The EcstaticReligions of the Counterculture," *Religion: Super Religion* (2017): 357–374, and Nicholas Knowles Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

22 Christopher Partridge, *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 322–333; Erik Davis, *High Weirdness: Drugs, Esoterica, and Visionary Experience in the Seventies* (London: Attractor Press and the MIT Press, 2019).

23 Robin Sylvan, *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005): 129–156.

Psychonaut Setting Literature

A setting within the context of this chapter designates a location selected for the consumption of psychedelic substances. In the field of psychonautics, many texts provide information on the safe use of psychedelics and how to construct a setting. There are various manuals describing what can become a setting written by psychonauts and dedicated to experimenters who wish to engage on this path and have a safe and fulfilling trip. Some examples include *Liber Null and Psychonaut* by Peter J. Carroll, *Psychedelic Shamanism: The Cultivation, Preparation and Shamanic use of Psychotropic Plants* by Jim DeKorne, *Getting Higher: The Manual Of Psychedelic Ceremony* by Julian Vayne, *Psychedelic Anthropology: The Study of Man Through the Manifestation of the Mind* by Allan D. Couldt, and *The Way of the Psychonaut*, the encyclopaedic work by Stanislav Grof.[24] There are, moreover, academic texts that detail the relevance of setting and their history. Examples here include Christopher Partridge's *High Culture* and Erik Davis's *High Weirdness.* Another notable text is *Drug Set and Setting: The Basis for Controlled Intoxicant Use* by Norman Earl Zinberg. Finally, Carlos Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan,*[25] an academically controversial book that rose to fame in the 1970s and 80s detailing the alleged encounter between the author and a Yaqui shaman who introduced him to the use of plants of power that have hallucinogenic properties.

Additionally, there is a plethora of data found on webpages such as DMT-Nexus and the Vaults of Erowid; information of this kind can also be found on Reddit. Psychonautic Wiki provides further information in the format of the Wikipedia page, where much information can be found on the formation of setting or directing the reader to relevant resources.[26]

A recurring theme in these examples details the construction of a location engineered for the use of psychedelic substances, including its use in opposition to a laboratory setting, which is considered too cold. The emphasis on emotional warmth and safety is a recurring theme found in multiple trip reports. A harsh environment, which is hostile or among people who are not trustworthy, can for example lead to a so-called "bad trip," a psychedelic experience characterized

24 Allan D. Coult, *Psychedelic Anhropology: The Study of Man Through the Manifestation of the Mind* (Pittsburgh: Dorrance and Company, 1977).

25 Carlos Castaneda, *The Teaching of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

26 "Psychonaut Wiki," accessed June 24, 2023, https://psychonautwiki.org/wiki/Main_Page; "Erowid," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.erowid.org/; "Welcome to the DMT-Nexus," accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.dmt-nexus.me/forum/default.aspx?g=login&chat=https://chat.dmt-nexus.me/login.aspx.

by fear and paranoia that can precipitate psychotic break downs.[27] A good setting in general would be characterized by a safe environment that allows for free movement and away from things considered harmful in an altered state of consciousness. Primary and secondary literature often report casual settings such as parties, holiday settings, or a friend's home. Such spaces sometimes constitute the first experience of the unsuspecting future psychonaut. The case of the party is the more recreationally oriented context, where the objective is to increase socialization skills and immersion into the emotions of the people. Other examples of home-oriented settings include backyards; usually this occurs on summer days when the weather allows one to be outside for long periods of time and observe nature.[28] In this case, the setting acquires an enchanted appearance, or the sacrality of it is revealed not so much in the construction but rather in the selection of a relaxed environment. The objective is primarily to create or find an environment that is psychologically relaxing or well equipped for the experience. This can be obtained by sitting or lying on a bed, a floor scattered with soft cushions, possibly with some distracting activity like the possibility to stare at something engaging such as a picture or playing a videogame.

For the more artistically or mystically oriented practitioner, the setting can include various themed decorations, seating, covers, perfumes, etc., to enrich the experience and induce a relaxed and favorable atmosphere. Even taking a walk or going to a museum can be chosen as a location for a psychedelic trip.[29]

Lab Setting

Settings for psychonauts have also included laboratories. There is in fact a whole branch of research that seeks to use psychedelics for psychotherapeutic purposes and which adheres to empirical scientific methods. This tradition of research dates back to the first periods of experimentation with mescaline for mentally ill patients. The objective in that period was to use psychedelic substances to gain a first-person perspective into the mind of the schizophrenic patient, which is the effect mescaline was thought to produce. This was intended for doctors and nurses so they could better understand their patients.[30] However, it was exactly this kind

27 Ellens, *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances: Chemical Paths to Spirituality and to God. Volume 1 History and Practice.*

28 Jim DeKorne, *Psychedelic Shamanisms: The Cultivation, Preparation, and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants, Updated Edition* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2011): 76–84.

29 Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony,* 28–32.

30 Partridge, *High Culture*, 50–70.

of experimentation, compared to that of the shamanic experience, that gave the initial impulse to leave the coldness of the laboratory for a more welcoming and relaxing atmosphere. The was named the "Hubbard Room" after Al Hubbard, the first person to understand and propose a room which felt more comfortable than a hospital.[31]

Boston University would later develop a historically significant experiment that testified to the importance of evocative settings. This was called the Good Friday Experiment (also the Marsh Chapel Experiment). The event, designed by Walter N. Pahnke and supervised by Timothy Leary, involved the administration of synthesized psylocibin capsules in a double-blind experiment to see whether religiously predisposed students would have a mystical experience under the effects of psylocibin in a setting, such as a church. The effects on the participants who took the drug were extraordinary. Subjects reported an intense mystical experience that eventually persisted over decades. The chapel location, which was found on the Boston University grounds, had effectively influenced the effects of the psychedelic substance use.[32] The religious effects of psychedelic substances were further confirmed decades later by Roland R. Griffiths in his paper "Psilocybin can Occasion Mystical Type Experiences Having Substantial and Sustained Personal Meaning and Significance."

Ritual Setting

Drawing on the history of the counterculture and its absorption of universalist and pluralistic religious ideologies, psychonauts have created a tradition of organizing sacred spaces as a way to evoke the traditions which formed the foundation of the movement. The aesthetics and philosophy blend elements of chemistry, technology, Orientalist interpretations of Eastern religions, forms of neo-shamanism, and postmodern versions of Western magical traditions, employed based on the taste of the psychonaut.[33] This hybridization is typical of the occulture phenomenon, meaning

31 Michael Pollan, *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018).

32 Partridge, *High Culture*, 78–90.

33 Graham St John, *Rave Culture and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004): 17–44. On the history of modern occult experimentation, see also Hugh B. Urban, *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); John Bramble, *Modernism and the Occult* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Alison Butler, *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011).

the popularization of ideas that derive from various spiritual and esoteric traditions, which are often in opposition to mainstream society. Occulture also encompasses the spiritualization of topics that are not conventionally associated with the occult such as chemistry and technology. Manifestation of this phenomenon can be found in various art forms and pop culture, as well.[34]

The melting pot that was formed out of the spiritual and religious experimentations of the 60s and 70s allowed for the development of today's conceptions of psychedelic spiritual subculture and the strategies to optimize that experience. The practice of experimenting with substances and combining them with magical practices was also becoming popular at the beginning of the 20th century. This was an earlier phase of exploration of diverse exotic spiritual systems, the formation of esoteric organizations, spiritualism, and an attempt to fuse Western positivism with perceived Eastern spiritual authenticity.[35]

A ritual setting in this case can have various appearances. They can be more or less elaborate depending on the style and taste of the psychonaut. They can be performed alone or in a group. Usually, a ritual setting will incorporate a point of focus that can be in the middle of a circle, or there can be a small altar or statue, or a combination of these. The ritual can be performed indoors or outdoors depending on the weather, the location, and the preference of the psychonaut. Shamanic-themed rituals could, for example, include the use of drums, used to establish the beginning and end of the ritual. Meditative rituals can instead be very simple with only a cloth and a cushion to sit on.[36] Sometimes an area can be established as a means to close the space. This can be done with ropes, salt, it can be simply imagined, or it can be established with rocks, branches or other materials. Fumigations are sometimes used to purify or cleanse the space of negative influences. Fabrics with various patterns are used to decorate the surrounding area, a practice derived from various tribal cultures.[37]

There is no particular way one needs to create a ritual according to this system. The guidelines are more related to a combination of personal knowledge and personal feeling, to do what one intuitively believes to be appropriate. To evoke or symbolically manifest the presence of particular forces, the practitioner will surround themselves with elements that correspond to that particular element. Instructional guides talk about surrounding oneself with the right colors and smells

34 Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West, 62–68.*

35 Graham St. John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2012): 101–120.

36 Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony*, 10–12.

37 DeKorne, *Psychedelic Shamanisms: The Cultivation, Preparation, and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants, Updated Edition.*

as much as the right foods and tastes.[38] Dieting can also be included so as not to interfere with the effects of substances. Psylocibin and ayahuasca in particular are among the substances that can cause feelings of sickness and nausea, including vomiting, and are also disagreeable with the presence of other foods and liquids.[39]

Festival Setting

Electronic music festivals form part of the psychedelic movement, as well, and manage to create a whole separate reality for the duration of approximately a week. They are a real carnival of evasion and abandonment of normativity, in which psytrancers can escape the mundaneness of their lives and live in a magical atmosphere. This festival is a giant collective ritual and preparation for the event can be just as important, a tradition dating back to the 70s.[40]

Camping is one ingredient of the event atmosphere, as it is connected to the Hippie countercultural movement. The idea is to be more in touch with nature and willing to undergo some discomfort for the sake of the festival. Such festivals are dedicated to finding liberation through dancing, often integrated with psychedelics, and the vision includes values of inclusivity, diversity, eco-friendliness, and pursuit of spiritual development or personal growth.[41]

One event in which I participated was the Ozora festival which took place in Hungary.[42] The mood of this festival is established from the entrance into the open space, where above the gates there is written "Welcome to Paradise." The purpose is obviously not only to be a dancing area. There are plenty of workshops teaching various practices such as yoga, meditation, chakra alignment and various creativity classes. Other infrastructure includes collective cooking areas, multiple art galleries, and exhibitions dedicated to the visual representation of altered states of consciousness. The architecture of this location in the countryside incorporates aesthetics of statues built with salvaged wood, decorative domes where music is almost always playing, representations of stars, stargates and wormholes. Aetheric colors, ample use of blues and purples, blend well with the neon or luminescent lights. For the duration of the event, the Ozora festival will house up to 30000 peo-

38 Peter J. Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut: An Introduction to Chaos Magic* (Boston: Weiser Books, 1987): 50–70.

39 Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony*, 40–45.

40 John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*, 1–18.

41 Sylvan, *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture*, 157–177.

42 "O.Z.O.R.A. Festival" accessed June 24, 2023, https://ozorafestival.eu/.

ple, a community of participants from all over the globe. The objective is to create a place outside of space and time, where participants are allowed to have a week of ecstatic enjoyment or introspective contemplation. The more experienced or passionate participants will spend the summer travelling from festival to festival. Events that welcome psychedelic subcultures are a testament to the formation of ideal contexts for psychedelic consumption, presenting all the ideal features of a proper sacred setting.

The case of the psytrance festival is, however, extreme in the extent of the territory and resources employed. This does not make it the standard setting. Psychonauts are not necessarily participating in festivals, but they can share the same aesthetics.

The Aesthetics of Psychonauts

In this final section I will describe the religious aesthetic connected to psychonauts, illustrating the predominant features that I have encountered in various contexts ranging from electronic music festivals to personal ritual. This aesthetic combines plants, shamanism and science fiction, all of which enjoy a vast presence in psychonautic primary literature.

The first one is the imagery and reproduction of nature and its visual and environmental aesthetics. The symbolism will, for example, see various interpretations of the "Tree of Life." This does not have to be the Kabalistic version, which is more stylized and symbolic in its interpretation. Much of the imagery is associated with the idea of the universal tree of life in Nordic mythology, perhaps visually more inherently representative of the tree imagery.[43] Symbols of perceived traditional shamanism and neo-shamanism are presented in the form of posters, banners, t-shirts, dream catchers, and clothing alongside ritual implements that include similar symbolic elements like bones and feathers, possibly all handmade. These can include masks and staffs, wands and other ceremonial or magical instruments. These implements are handmade, which makes them rather expensive, and people who are deep into this form of festival require substantial amounts of money.[44]

The aesthetics depicting the plant kingdom do not stop there. Many plants with psychedelic properties are used as repeated patterns on clothing, works of art, banners and so forth. The mescaline cactus is one such example, as well as

43 John, *Rave Culture and Religion*, 17–20.

44 John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*, 25–50.

the ayahuasca vine, but perhaps the most recognizable plant medicine which offers inspiration for aesthetic production is the mushroom, more specifically the fly agaric, a classic white-spotted red mushroom. Their representation, meaning the full-grown cap and stem, as a portrait or as repeated patterns are encountered often. Artistic representation has also focused on the features of mushrooms with anthropomorphic elements or xenomorphic ones, more precisely the classic extraterrestrial green or gray entity (grays), the classic image of the small humanoid with a big head and big black eyes.[45]

The connection to science fiction and UFO subculture is elaborated by mathematical aesthetics and esoteric numerology, patterns of entropy generated by algorithmic processing software. An aesthetic connection is sometimes made between the Fibonacci code and the perceived natural patterns in plants and nature. The incorporation of mathematics can find one of its significant sources in the hybridization of the Western esoteric tradition of numerology, shamanism, and the universalist philosophy investigated by ethnobotanist and psychedelic guru Terence Mckenna. As a consequence of his experimentation with psychedelics and his idea of the evolutionary value of psylocibin, DMT, and other substances, Mckenna envisioned a cosmological knowledge that could be derived from psychedelic experiences and benefit the development of humanity.[46]

The picture of the ape eating a mushroom, often found in psychedelic culture, derives from Mckenna's "Stoned Ape Theory," which posits that human consciousness evolution can find its roots in the psylocibin consumption of our human ancestors. He agreed with shamanic traditions that there is an entity that can be defined as a teacher in psylocibin mushrooms and, moreover, he found that other substances had this kind of teacher or associated entity, as well, such as DMT. These he called the "Machine Elves," benign creatures which were interested in sharing knowledge with humanity about higher realms. Alien contacts appear under the influence of LSD and ayahuasca, where the entity commonly manifests some aesthetic feature of its compound. The theory of reality as a simulation shares philosophical similarities with the *Matrix* film franchise, an aspect that connects technological interpretations and virtual reality to similar concepts found in many mystical and religious belief systems.[47]

---

45 Sylvan, *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture*, 63–97.
46 Terrence McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge A Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution* (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 1993): 10–20.
47 McKenna, *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge A Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution*, 29–34.

Finally, settings often adopt patterns and symbols derived from Hindu, Taoist and Buddhist traditions. Symbols such as the Sri Yantra, formed by overlapping concentric triangles that form more triangular shapes as a consequence, appear frequently in reference to the pixelated nature of reality, a reminder of the illusory nature of the world described in the aforementioned traditions. Effigies of the Buddha, sometimes reimagined as holding mushrooms or achieving enlightenment through psylocibin and multicolored or fluorescent versions of the Yin Yang symbol are scattered on clothing and jewelry. Sashes and cloths from these same cultural backgrounds are worn frequently, as much as dreadlocks and haircuts inspired by Sadhus. Body paint is also used frequently in fluorescent colors.[48]

These shapes and symbols become animated under the effects of the psychedelic substance, as do the other paraphernalia in the setting. Thus, the setting serves to provide the launching point or focal point, enhancing the visual and auditory enhancements of substances. The statues and the clothing with the altars and banners come alive.[49]

Another approach of psychonauts is the more personal and ceremonial type. This would be closer to the idea of a mystery tradition and uses psychedelic substances while still maintaining an unstructured framework. This approach is often linked to the Chaos Magick post-modern esoteric current. This current holds that reality can be influenced through controlled altered states of consciousness and focused intention, but the way in which this is achieved is, however, distinctly personal. Anything that one is inspired by can be used in this particular kind of setting, any combination of belief systems alongside the invention of one's own religious ideas are considered suitable for the task. Psychedelics are seen as excellent tools to achieve this altered state of consciousness.[50]

Conclusion

As illustrated in this chapter, the sacred setting for psychonauts is varied and reflects of the bringing together of multiple religious and spiritual traditions. The function of the organization of the setting is both practical and appeals to a certain range of aesthetics. The combination with various psychedelic substances contributes to a sense of enchantment or aliveness and significance. This "coming to life"

48 John, *Rave Culture and Religion*, 196–200.
49 Vayne, *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony*, 36–44.
50 Carroll, *Liber Null & Psychonaut: An Introduction to Chaos Magic.*

seems to embody the emotions psychonauts wish to transmit and the creative spirit that emerges from it.

The settings try to engage or stimulate all the senses at the same time or provide inspiration for such an experience. Rituals feature the formation of shapes considered sacred or related to the sacred using various colors and sheets, scarves and other symbols which are connected to nature-based traditions, Hindu religion, shamanism, tantra and the like. The predominant (neo)shamanic aesthetic features that I witnessed in the case of the Ozora festival included South and North American but also Tibetan and Mongolian.

The celebration of life is another fundamental aspect as much as the confrontation of death that is represented by this form of ecstasy or abandoning of the limitedness of the body in favor of a hyper potentiality that extends the body beyond its boundaries.[51] The presence or use of technology is sublimated for spiritual purposes: they become technologies of transcendence or ecstasy, means to channel energies that lead to elevation and embodiment. This "becoming alive" is what contributes to the feeling of enchantment. In the case of forests, these are perceived as being more alive and this living perception is what makes the whole experience more enchanted, more vitalist. The idea of the playground is not too far-fetched as there is a desire here to invoke the inner child, who is interested in the world and sees it for the first time, the experimentation with the body and the exploration of its functions, what feelings it gives us and what possibilities can be achieved with it. Projected lights form images like glasswork on the ground. They trace spiraling patterns of various colors, which brighten the long summer nights. Neon light domes evoke otherworldly spaces far across the stars, circuitries of fluorescent acid green and bright orange, blues and purples.

The philosophy of psychonauts is reflected in the sacred settings they construct, also with their concept of the spiritualization of the body, in which enjoyment and ecstasy are seen as the path to higher states of consciousness and spiritual evolution. This theme formed a reaction to the institutionalized religion in the West, perceived as more focused on sterile moralizations and dogma.[52] In reconciling the chemical and the spiritual, the direction of the sacred is found in the integration of mind, body and the surrounding reality. Expressions of such pursuits emerge in religious and spiritual expressions of contemporary shamanism and paganism that, inspired by hybrid and modernist interpretations of these cultures,

51 Christopher Timmermann et al., "DMT Models the Near-Death Experience," *Frontiers in Psychology* 9, 1424 (August 2018). Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01424.

52 Peter G. Johnstad, "Entheogenic Spirituality: Exploring Spiritually Motivated Entheogen Use among Modern Westerners." *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research* 12, no. 4 (2018): 244–260.

creates a hedonistic spirituality in which the body and sensory immersion become the vehicle of the sacred. The artistic expression connected to psychonautic settings emphasizes freedom of expression and personal creativity while maintaining psychedelic cultural standards.[53]

In the context of psytrance culture, my observations of psychonautic aesthetics are limited by the absence of perceived conservative symbols that would evoke modernity, homologation, or the representation of corporate oppression and capitalism. The emphasis is on the idea of global communities and there is limited representation of individualism and national affiliation. In the field, I also noticed a lack of aesthetics that evoke aggressiveness, such as weapons or fighting or combat of any kind. The discourse around conflict is more focused on overcoming one's limitations, which is more represented by the concept of healing or cleansing from negative influences and forces. The aesthetic structures are geared toward evoking optimism, positive thinking, growth, and potentiality, which is directed at the reconfiguration of the social ego-centrism that is bound to conventional norms and moralities.[54]

Bibliography

Aixalà, Marc, and Jose Carlos Bouso. *Psychedelic Integration: Psychotherapy for Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness.* Santa Fe: Synergetic Press, 2022.

Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions – Revised Edition.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Bramble, John. *Modernism and the Occult.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Butler, Alison. *Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic: Invoking Tradition.* London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011.

Carroll, Peter James. *Liber Null & Psychonaut: An Introduction to Chaos Magic.* Boston: Weiser Books, 1987.

Castaneda, Carlos. The *Teaching of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968.

Coult, Allan Donald. *Psychedelic Anhropology: The Study of Man Through the Manifestation of the Mind.* Pittsburgh: Dorrance and Company, 1977.

Davis, Erik "Superconsciousness: The Ecstatic Religions of the Counterculture." *Religion: Super Religion* (2017).

Davis, Erik. *High Weirdness: Drugs, Esoterica, and Visionary Experience in the Seventies.* London: Attractor Press and the MIT Press, 2019.

53 Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Volume 1 Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture* (New York: T and T Clark International, 2004).

54 John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*, 233–240.

DeKorne, Jim. *Psychedelic Shamanisms: The Cultivation, Preparation, and Shamanic Use of Psychotropic Plants, Updated Edition.* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2011.

Duncan, Shannon. *Coming Full Circle Healing Trauma Using Psychedelics.* San Diego: Present Moment Press, 2023.

Ellens, Jay Harold. *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Substances: Chemical Paths to Spirituality and to God. Volume 1 History and Practices.* Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014.

"Erowid", accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.erowid.org/

George, Calian Florin, "Editorial RES 2/2021," *Review of Ecumenical Studies Sibiu* 13, no. 2 (August 2021): 139–144, https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2021-0017.

Griffiths Roland R., William. A. Richards, Una McCann, and Robert Jesse. "Psilocybin can occasion mystical-type experiences having substantial and sustained personal meaning and spiritual significance." *Psychopharmacology* l87, no. 3 (July 2006): 268–92. doi: 10.1007/s00213-006-0457-5.

Grof, Stanislav. *The Way of the Psychonaut: Encyklopedia for Inner Journeys, Volume 1.* Santa Cruz: Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, 2019.

Halbertal, Moshe, and Avishai Margalit. *Idolatry.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Harvey, Graham. *Animism: Respecting the Living World.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Hauskeller, Christine, and Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes, *Philosophy and Psychedelics: Frameworks for Exceptional Experience.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022.

Huxley, Aldous. *The Doors of Perception, and Heaven and Hell.* New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

Jay, Mike. *Psychonauts: Drugs and the Making of the Modern Mind.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023.

John, Graham St. *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance.* Bristol, CT: Equinox Pub, 2012.

John, Graham St, *Rave Culture and Religion.* London: Routledge, 2004.

Johnstad, Petter G. "Psychedelic Telepathy: An Interview Study." Journal *of Scientific Exploration* 34, no. 3 (September 2020): 493–512. https://doi.org/10.31275/20201747.

Johnstad, Peter G. "Entheogenic Spirituality: Exploring Spiritually Motivated Entheogen Use among Modern Westerners." *Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research* 12, no. 4 (2018): 244–260.

Knowles Bromell, Nicholas. Tomorrow *NeverKnows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Leary, Timothy, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert. *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead.* London: Penguin Books, 2008.

Lidov, Alexe. "Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacred Spaces as a Form of Creativity and Subject of Cultural History." In *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, edited by Alexei Lidov, 32–58. Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2006.

McKenna, Terrence. *Food of the Gods: The Search for the Original Tree of Knowledge A Radical History of Plants, Drugs, and Human Evolution.* New York: Bantam, 1993.

Merkur, Dan. *The Ecstatic Imagination: Psychedelic Experiences and the Psychoanalysis of Self-Actualization.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Noorani, Tehseen. "Sciencing the mystical: the trickery of the psychedelic trip report." *New Writing* 16, no. 4 (April 2019): 440–443. doi: 10.1080/14790726.2019.1566375.

Nutt, David, and David Castle, editors. *Psychedelics as Psychiatric Medications.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

"O.Z.O.R.A. Festival" accessed June 24, 2023, https://ozorafestival.eu/.

Partridge, Christopher. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Volume 1 Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture.* New York: T and T Clark International, 2004.

Partridge, Christopher. *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Pinchbeck, Daniel. *Breaking Open the Head: A Psychedelic Journey into the Heart of Contemporary Shamanism.* New York: Crown, 2003.

Pollan, Michael. *How to Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence.* New York: Penguin Press, 2018.

"Psychonaut Wiki", accessed June 24, 2023, https://psychonautwiki.org/wiki/Main_Page

Richards, William. *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Shewan, David, Phil Dalgarno, and Gerda Reith, "Perceived risk and risk reduction among ecstasy users: the role of drug, set, and setting", *International Journal of Drug Policy* 10, no. 6 (January 2000): 431–453. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0955-3959(99)00038-9.

Stafford, Peter. *Psychedelics Encyclopedia.* Berkeley: Ronin Publishing, 1992.

Sylvan, Robin. *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture.* New York: Routledge, 2013.

Timmermann, Christopher, Leor Roseman, Luke Williams, David Erritzoe, Charlotte Martial, Héléna Cassol, Steven Laureys, David Nutt, and Robin Carhart-Harris. "DMT Models the Near-Death Experience." Frontiers in psychology 9(August 2018): 1424. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01424.

Urban, Hugh Bayard. *Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Vayne, Julian. *Getting Higher: The Manual of Psychedelic Ceremony.* London: Psychedelic Press, 2017.

"Welcome to the DMT-Nexus", accessed June 24, 2023, https://www.dmt-nexus.me/forum/default.aspx?g=login&chat=https://chat.dmt-nexus.me/login.aspx.

Constructing and Building Sacred Spaces

Aaron French

Bruno Taut: Architect as Modern Spiritual Builder

Abstract: This chapter investigates how the architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) developed a new religiosity for modern times and reconceptualized the notion of "sacred space" for European modernity in terms of reconnecting human beings with each other and the local environment. Taut attributed the problems of his time to the chaos and breakdown accompanying Europe's transition to modernity, which he described in terms of an overreliance on narrow technical knowledge and the rise of a faith in nationalist politics. Instead of rushing toward either of these extremes – whether toward a nationalistic conservatism that idealized tradition or toward a purely functionalist, materialist, technocratic future – he worked to bridge this polarity by striving for a middle path. He reimagined modern cities and their dwellings as representing a new society in which human beings could participate with nature and the natural processes and aggregate around a local unified center, a spiritual core of the city-state he referred to as the "city crown." This vision was not unique to Europe, as Taut engaged with non-European ideas of design and architectural practice and lived in Japan and Turkey, designing buildings there that he believed were in harmony with local traditions and practices. Such experiences informed his overarching idea of a climate-based form of cosmopolitan architecture, which at the same time remained local and traditional, universal and rational, and in his view had the potential to restore the fractures and breakages tearing apart modern Europe.

Introduction

This chapter investigates how the architect Bruno Taut offered a new conception of religious space, which, while avoiding the largely Christian connotations of "the sacred," resulted in a reimagining of sacred spaces for the modern world. Like many of his generation, Taut was responding to a sense of crisis pervading his time and the chaos and breakdown that accompanied Europe's transition to modernity. This transition was perceived, *inter alia*, as a historical process that ruptured the communal bonds of society and the relationship between human beings and the natural environment.[1] Taut worked to establish a type of holistic harmony in the mod-

1 Among many examples, see Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture* (London: Rout-

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. CC BY This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-010

ern world through newly imagined built environments and urban designs, which he hoped would reintegrate the sacred in a new form into modern life and restore the connection between the spiritual and material realms. Taut was partly inspired by the modern currents of alternative spirituality popular during his lifetime, such as theosophy, anthroposophy, and the fascination with "Eastern wisdom." Through his social networks and experiences, he worked to sacralize the present in a new way, namely, through a modern religiosity focused on space and design. He preformed this religiosity in his architectural creations by envisioning modern sacred spaces.

Taut was born in Königsberg in 1880, then part of East Prussia. In the years prior to the First World War, he worked as an architect and urban planner in a number of German cities and became involved with artistic and avant-garde groups. For a time, he worked with the architects Bruno Möhring (1863–1929) and Theodor Fischer (1862–1938). Fischer was joint founder of the Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen), which Taut would also join. Taut became active in the Bauhaus milieu and the Arts and Crafts Movement, and he had many connections not only with architects but also writers and painters. During the war and after, he worked in Magdeburg, where he implemented some of his urban designs and continued to participate in experimental artistic and expressionist architectural networks, such as *Der Ring.* He also initiated his own correspondence group, the Crystal Chain (Gläserne Kette), which was devoted to visualizing future utopic societies and buildings.[2]

The years surrounding the First World War were an important time for Taut. New methods of construction were being developed that broke from classical and historicist traditions and resulted in fantastical, futuristic designs. These creations emphasized the modern spirit and a modern spirituality, expressing the individualistic vision of the architect as opposed to previously accepted styles.[3] Up to this

ledge & Paul, 1956); Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (London: Penguin, 1968); Kevin Repp, *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); John A. Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900–1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007). Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004) and *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture, and Environment, C.1870 to 2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Hannu Salmi, *Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture* (New York: Viking, 2007).

2 On the Crystal Chain, see Iain Boyd Whyte and Bruno Taut, *The Crystal Chain Letters: Architectural Fantasies by Bruno Taut and His Circle* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985).

3 Gustav Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (London: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973); Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire*

point, traditional styles together with institutionalized religion had dictated what constituted a "sacred" building and what did not. By revolutionizing architectural practices and theories, Taut belonged to a broader movement that broke with traditional methods of construction and design and turned to the arts and to alternative forms of spirituality and religiosity to replace the dying dogmas of Europe. In other words, the sacred was being transformed in connection with a new form of religiosity, and Taut approached this in his own way, which represented a religio-spatial aesthetics.

Through Taut's willingness to challenge traditional notions of sacredness and design, he also engaged with non-European styles, designing sites and accepting commissions outside of Europe, in a process of intercultural exchange that bypassed national boundaries and contexts.[4] The role that non-European religious ideas played for Taut is crucial for highlighting the intercultural context of European modernity in which Taut lived and worked, and for showing how the "occident" and "orient" shaped Taut's designs for a modern sacred space. Ultimately, Taut's ideas were not so much a reinterpretation of sacred space as a new conception of religious space itself. At the center of his vision was the restoration of balance and holistic harmony, a reconnection of the fragmented and disjointed to a greater and meaningful whole, a negotiation between traditional and avant-garde, regional and trans-regional through the construction of spiritually inflected space.[5] Modern sacredness, for Taut, had less to do with religion and more to do with purity of form, simplicity, a connection to local climate and nature, and the expression of the spiritual vision of the artist performed in a material structure, a kind of spiritually inflected urban design.[6]

---

to the Rise of National Socialism (New York: G.K. Hall, 1993); Kathleen James Chakraborty, *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Colin Davies, *A New History of Modern Architecture: Art Nouveau, the Beaux-Arts, Expressionism, Modernism, Constructivism, Art Deco, Classicism, Brutalism, Postmodernism, Neo-Rationalism, High Tech, Deconstructivism, Digital Futures* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2017).

4 See, for example, Manfred Speidel, ed., *Bruno Taut. Kunstgewerbe und Möbel für Japan* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2023), and Esra Akcan, *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey, and the Modern House* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

5 See Bruno Taut and Winfried Nerdinger, *Bruno Taut, 1880–1938: Architekt zwischen Tradition und Avantgarde* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001).

6 This idea of architecture as performance is inspired by recent insights that constructed environments can also be read as moments of cultural performativity. See Mitra Kanaani, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Paradigms of Performativity in Design and Architecture: Using Time to Craft an Enduring, Resilient and Relevant Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2020); María José and Martínez Sánchez, *Dynamic Cartography: Body, Architecture, and Performative Space* (London: Routledge, 2021).

One of Taut's key texts, *The City Crown*, has recently been translated, revealing to English speaking audiences for the first time the depth of Taut's spirituality. Similarly, the publication of Matthias Schirren's *Bruno Taut: Alpine Architektur* in German provides a further illustration of Taut's theories about creating modern sacred buildings.[7] Regine Prange has demonstrated the importance of crystal as a symbol for Taut and has pointed out that Taut was inspired by the concept "eros" and utilized a symbolic gender binary in his designs.[8] Building on such scholarship, this chapter seeks to frame Taut as someone who remained deeply concerned throughout his career with transforming the category of the sacred into a new form of religiosity for modern times that was framed around a spatial aesthetics. How, asks Taut, is holistic harmony and unity to be constructed in this configuration of sociocultural urban life, with its distrust of tradition and rejection of ornamentation? Taut sought to construct a modern religiosity that was spatial in orientation, redrawing the bounds of sacredness without limiting it to its Christian and/or religious foundations. What he had in mind was a new form of religiosity prompted by modernity in the early 20th century.

Sacred Space, Spiritual Space

The case of Bruno Taut offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between spirituality and spatiality in modern times. In claiming that the construction of sacred space was a combination of urbanity and modern religiosity, Taut sought to establish balance and harmony for the modern citizenry.[9] The utilitarian modern buildings constructed around the turn of the 20th century had, according to Taut, failed to accomplish this balance and had, in fact, further severed the inhabitants of the area from their immediate environment, producing a profane space that was disconnected from the forces of history and the immediate present. Consequently, Taut made it his task to perform this modern religiosity in his material creations, such as his "city crown," a special building designed to strengthen the bonds of the community physically and spiritually, and which was to be surrounded by other special buildings intended for cultural purposes. This modern religiosity was inspired by modern currents of alternative spirituality and esotericism, such as the-

7 Matthias Schirren, *Bruno Taut, Alpine Architektur. Eine Utopie* (München: Prestel, 2004).

8 Regine Prange, "Der kosmogonische Eros: Zur Geschlechtersymbolik in Bruno Tauts Architekturphantasien," in *Die weibliche und die männliche Linie. Das imaginäre Geschlecht der modernen Kunst von Klimt bis Mondrian*, ed. Susanne Deicher (Reimer, Berlin 1993), 113–140.

9 On the idea of religion and urbanity, see Susanne Rau and Jörg Rüpke, eds., *Religion and Urbanity Online* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter), https://www.degruyter.com/database/urbrel/html.

osophy and anthroposophy, which were heavily circulated in the artistic circles that Taut moved in. For example, there are two major connections between Taut and the German esotericist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925).

The first is the expressionist artist Paul Goesch (1885–1940), who met Steiner through the *Friedrichshagener Kreis* (a literary group of bohemian poets and writers) while studying architecture in Berlin in the early 1900s. Goesch became interested in Steiner's version of theosophy, which Steiner called anthroposophy after the Greek words *anthropos* and *sophia* or human wisdom, and later helped to construct the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, in the years 1913–14. Goesch was a friend and collaborator of Taut's and they corresponded regularly through the Crystal Chain. As a diagnosed schizophrenic, Goesch was later euthanized by the Nazis during the 1930s as part of their *Aktion T4* program, a program that granted certain doctors permission to involuntarily euthanize individuals who had been diagnosed as incurably sick. Goesch was so important for Taut that when the former published a text on sexuality that was highly disapproved of by critics, Taut defended his friend in print.

The second connection is the speculative fiction author Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915), who was close friends with Taut and collaborated with him on the Glass Pavilion at the Werkbund Exhibition (1914) and in joint publications. Steiner was friends with Scheerbart and through this social network the three were connected through certain modernist ideas of visionary art and design. Taut's built environments and creations were intended to "perform" this modern religiosity, that is, his architectural designs did not merely represent an aesthetic space, but rather a new form of sacred space especially designed to meet the challenges of the modern age – a project he shared with many of his contemporaries, who were equally as inspired by the popularization of esotericism and alternative spirituality.

Garden Cities and the City Crown

Along with other members of the Crystal Chain, as well as the Bauhaus movement, Taut became interested in reshaping and renewing modern culture and modern architecture. Inspired by the English urban planner Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928), Taut embraced the Garden City Movement, a method to develop local communities that were surrounded by swaths of gardens and nature, referred to as "greenbelts." He turned this idea into his own concept of *Siedlungen* (or settlements), self-contained communities that were to be situated in close proximity to the natural environment with accompanying "garden houses," where the residents could live.

In 1909, Taut visited some of the garden cities that had been established in England, and after returning to Germany he was able to lead two garden city projects of his own in Falkenberg near Berlin and in Magdeburg. These consisted of rows of low-rise terrace houses surrounded by gardens and angled toward the sunlight, painted in bright and vibrant colors as opposed to the grayish mechanical/technical colors common to modern German housing buildings.[10] This was Taut's attempt to reestablish a holistic harmony with nature, to heal the disconnection between human beings and their immediate environment; it was, in a certain sense, a way to redeem the present and reconnect it with the past – that is, the natural world as a given, before human beings began to usurp the mechanisms of evolution through modern capitalism, science, and technology. Taut referred to this as creating "green zones" in the city, which were intended to have a restorative effect on the population:

> a large sector-shaped park brings good air into the city from the woods and fields. This park connects the heart of the city to the open countryside like a major artery and should function like a true people's park with playgrounds, grass play areas, water basins, a botanical garden, flower beds, rose gardens, a vast grove and forest stretching out into the open countryside.[11]

Taut also focused his attention on developing a utopic vision of future cities. "Architecture is so deeply degraded," he wrote, "that it means almost nothing if any one of the many things being built is especially good. It gets lost in the mass of the meaningless, the cold and the dry. It is not an architectural epoch today, but at best one in which a later architectural epoch is being prepared."[12] Taut's new form of spatial sacredness was cross-cultural and focused on holism, unity, and harmony, as opposed to the fragmentation and meaninglessness of the modern world, and he envisioned this using ideas of utopia and socialism. His future epoch of architecture was conceived as a socialist society concentrated around a peculiar structure he referred to as the city crown. Taut designed a prototype of this structure and displayed it as the "Glashaus-Pavillon" at the Kölner Werkbundausstellung in 1914. Along with Taut's plans for "garden cities," the city crown was meant to replace the medieval gothic cathedral as the spiritually connective tissue between humans and spirit. This represented a modern sacred space that was con-

10 Matthew Mindrup and Ulrike Altenmüller-Lewis, eds., *The City Crown by Bruno Taut* (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2015), 8.

11 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 158.

12 Quoted in Manfred Speidel, "Was ist Architektur: Bruno Tauts ‚Architekturlehre'", in *Taut – Architekturlehre / Architekturüberlegungen* (ARCH+ Verlag GmbH, 2017), 160–165, 160.

nected to the infinite and to personal revelation, as opposed to the strictly religious orientation of such spaces in the past.

Made predominantly of glass, Taut's "Glashaus-Pavillon" was a model for the concept of the *Kristallhaus* (also called the *Haus des Himmels),* a prototype of the city crown that represented the spiritual center of the social body. This building was central to Taut's concept of a modern sacred space, which was inspired by the European medieval cathedral and Indian temple, yet at the same time surpassed them:

> Throughout every great cultural epoch, the constructive will of the time was directed at one transcendent building type. The narrow concept of building construction applied today is a complete inversion of what it was in the past. A minster, a cathedral above a historic city; a pagoda above the huts of Indians; the enormous temple district in the square of the Chinese city; and the Acropolis above the simple houses of an ancient city; these all show that the pinnacle, the highest point, is the crystallized religious conception – both the starting point and the final goal for all architecture. This spiritual light, radiating onto each building, down to the simplest hut, demonstrates that buildings can fulfill the simplest practical needs and still express a shimmer of brilliance. The depth and power of this philosophy of life is not limited to large buildings alone. Their intensity and passion creates beauty in the small as well. Embedded within the task of the architect, this alone achieves the correct valuation of scale and prevents the blurring of boundaries of which our times suffer between the big and the small, the sacred and the profane.[13]

Through the use of concentric circles, Taut based his design of the garden city on the medieval city, surrounded by trees instead of walls, and he called on architects to divert the focus of the modern city away from materialism and to recenter it on this spiritual form of socialism energized in the city center by means of a *Kristallhaus* infused with light. In this sense, Taut described the modern architect as a "*geistige Schöpfer* [spiritual creator]," whose architecture is the "direct carrier of the spiritual forces ...." The *Kristallhaus* as city-crown represented the all-embracing epitome of this creative power.[14] Taut's design of the "Glashaus-Pavillon" for the Werkbundausstellung was reminiscent of a large crystal and had no purpose other than to be a glass center, an open space that dissolves itself through the use of glass and light, concentrating and channeling the collective energy of the souls of any particular city.[15] Taut therefore referred to the role of the architect or *Welt-*

13 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 75–76.

14 Bruno Taut, "Ein Architektur-Programm," in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (1918; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975), 41.

15 There were many ongoing debates about architecture and space at the time, which included the idea of a container space versus an open space, the latter constructed predominantly of glass and creating a space that gets rid of itself. On this history, see Jutta Vinzent, *From Space in Modern Art*

baumeister (world master-builder) as constructing "a garment for the soul."[16] The pavilion's interior contained a vibrant array of colors, which interacted with light streaming in through the glass dome, creating a multisensory experience that gave the impression of a living, active space, transforming the walls into a kind "vibrant matter," to speak with Jane Bennett.[17]

"Light wants to pass through the universe and is alive in the crystal," remarked Taut's friend and collaborator, Paul Scheerbart, concerning the Glass House in Cologne.[18] Similarly, Taut wrote:

> Emanating from the infinite, it is captured in the highest point of the city. It scatters and shines on the colored panels, edges, surfaces and concavities of the crystal house. This house becomes the carrier of cosmic feelings, a religiousness that reverently remains silent. It does not stand isolated, but is supported by buildings that serve the noble emotions of the people. [...] The ultimate is always quiet and empty. Meister Eckhart said: "I never want to ask God that he should sacrifice himself to me; I want to ask him to make me empty and pure. Because if I was empty and pure then God would have to sacrifice himself to me by his own nature and be determined by me." The cathedral was the container of all the souls that prayed in this way; and it always remains empty and pure – it is "dead." The ultimate task of architecture is to be quite and absolutely turned away from all daily rituals for all times. Here the scale of practical demands becomes silent, similar to the cathedral tower.[19]

Here we see Taut reinscribing the sacred, with its formally religious connotations, with the new spatial religiosity of modern times, which is infinite, shimmering, silent. It is both individual and external, involving the material construction and its spatiality, as well as the phenomenological dimension of the one experiencing the space. In other words, Taut's sacred space is spiritually inflected with the modern currents of alternative spirituality and esotericism that animated the avant-garde artistic circles in which he was active, channeled through architecture and urban design. A soul-channeling space calls to mind something like the well of souls beneath the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem. This is a particularly important sacred space meant to serve as the concentration point of non-physical yet temporal and locatable forces – that is to say, the energy of

---

to a Spatial Art History: Reassessing Constructivism through the Publication "Circle" (1937) (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

16 Bruno Taut, "Glaserzeugung und Glasbau," *Qualität: Wirtschaftliche Bildung und Qualitätsproduktion* 1, no. 12 (1920): 9–14, 14.

17 Jane Bennett. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

18 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 91.

19 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 91.

souls is located there, in that identified space, the souls who are waiting for the last days and the final judgement.[20]

In Taut's view, the old town sections of the European cities were built with the highest human ideals and intentions in mind, and therefore radiate a positive and almost spiritual energy throughout the immediate area. But the mass-housing buildings that were springing up around the old town, which extended further and further away from the center, lacked this positive energy and soul-quality, as these buildings were built for entirely functional purposes. He speaks of this problem in terms of sacred and profane: the old town is sacred, the outskirts are profane.[21] He therefore seeks for a way to make sacred the housing buildings in the outskirts; hence his ideas for garden houses and green spaces, with the city crown reenergizing the center and reconnecting it to the outskirts, forming one holistic unity. Furthermore, with the emergence of greater economic development, the old town struggled to retain its harmony and coherency, as new buildings with more economic and state power-related functions invaded the area. This resulted in a type of chaos, an unconscious blurring of sacred and profane in the cities. A new model of the city was needed and a new philosophy of urban planning and architecture to inform it.

This is why, for Taut, the focal point, the edifying location of this well-ordered garden city, is the city crown, supported in theory by four communal and cultural buildings to either side in the shape of a cross. Facing in the direction of the sun, these four structures included an opera house, theater, a large community center and a small meeting hall.[22] In the center stands the giant and beautiful building made of glass, most importantly with no function at all and dissolving space through its construction, a beautiful structure emanating inspiration and positive energy, channeling the soul or spirit of the city and endlessly reminding the citizens of their own potential as fellow human beings: a modern sacred space. The pure practice of architecture itself, the art of building, served as a form of spatial religiosity for the modern Western world and anchored it in the historical process of progressive evolution.

20 See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700* (5th edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 96–97.

21 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 75–77.

22 Mindrup and Altenmüller-Lewis, *The City Crown*, 87.

Time in Japan

Taut spent time in the Soviet Union, where he doubtless encountered a secularism that was nevertheless interested in forms of transcendence (e. g., large-scale rituals), but when the Nazis came to power he was forced to leave Germany in 1933, fleeing to Japan and taking his idea of a modern religiosity and new conception of religious space with him. At this time, he began a complex reevaluation of his ideas, refining former theories and developing them in new and surprising directions, especially in view of his status as a foreigner embedded in a non-European culture. Japanese culture fascinated Taut. He deeply respected it and was influenced by it, delivering lectures and writing texts on the Japanese style of architecture and on Japanese culture more generally. Taut had long been interested in Asia or the "East" as possessing the powers and ideas to save a collapsing and faltering modern Europe. The salvific power of Eastern wisdom was also a central motif in modern esotericism.[23] In his writings during the First World War, Taut stated this quite clearly:

> Kill the European, kill him, kill him, kill him off! Sings St. Paulus [Scheerbart] [...] Each tiny part of the great culture from the fourth to the sixteenth century in Upper India, Ceylon, Cambodia, Amman, Siam and on Indulines – what melting of form, what fruitful maturity, what restraint and strength and what unbelievable fusion with plastic art! [...] Bow down in humility, you Europeans!
>
> Humility will redeem you. It will give you love, love for the divinity of the earth and for the spirit of the world. You will no longer torment your earth with dynamite and grenades, you will have the will to adorn her, to cultivate and care for her – culture![24]

Esra Akcan has argued that Taut saw in the East not only an alternative power to save Europe during the war, but a decontextualized validation of his own theories.[25] While he presented non-European architecture in a positive light, there remained an element of orientalism and decontextualization, though this changed following his exile during the Nazi period, when he lived in Japan and later in Turkey. During his time in Japan, for example, he became aware of the problems inherent in the Japanese context, the tension between simply modeling after the

23 See, for example, Hans Martin Krämer and Julian Strube, eds., *Theosophy across Boundaries: Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Modern Esoteric Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020); Erik Reenberg Sand and Tim Rudbøg, eds., *Imagining the East: The Early Theosophical Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

24 Quoted in Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*, 250.

25 Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*, 251.

West and finding a traditional, local solution.[26] Taut was keenly interested in the relationship between traditionalism and modernization in the non-European context, and, as Akcan points out, he used his reflections on these cultures to criticize what he saw as the shortcomings of the modern West.

In fact, it was while studying the houses and temples in Japan that Taut developed his idea for a totally new form of architecture, which would be published in book form later in Turkey. Taut paid special attention to the shrines of the indigenous Shinto religion, which he described as "wealth in simplicity." Shinto means "way of the gods" and is commonly practiced through a form of ancestor or nature worship. Taut saw in Shinto a kind of simplicity and integral connectivity of the parts to the whole, which he described as still "connecting humans and their order with nature and its forces," which, in his opinion, had shaped Japanese culture up to the present (unlike the modern West, which had become disconnected and alienated).[27] This simple or "primitive" style can be seen in the shrines, a style that was partly built into the house he designed for himself in Turkey. The shrines, like the house, appear in hillsides, forests, or by the sea, and owing to this simplistic style they are adaptable to the land on which they appear and are therefore given to endless variation.

In Shinto architecture, the most important space within the shrine is the *honden*, where the kami or spirits of the ancestors and forces of nature dwell, which Taut compared to the Greek Parthenon.[28] Through such experiences, for example, he further established the idea of architecture as being the "spirit of a place," which can be seen as a direct development of his earlier ideas about the city crown embodying the soul-energies of the local people. He therefore believed the Shinto religion and its architecture expressed the identity of Japanese culture. He wrote:

> The shrines of Ise are Japan's greatest and completely original creation in general world architecture. We encounter here something entirely different from the most beautiful cathedrals, mosques, the Indian and Siamese temples or pagodas, and even from the temples of China. The Parthenon on the Acropolis is to the present day a visible sign of the beautiful gifts that the men of Athens bestowed on their symbol of wisdom and intelligence, Athena. It is the greatest and most aesthetically sublime building in stone as are the Ise shrines in wood. [...] The fresh green of the high cedars, in the midst of which the shrine stands, frames

26 Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*, 255.

27 Bruno Taut, *Ich liebe die japanische Kultur. Kleine Schriften über Japan* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2003), 79.

28 Jonathan M. Reynolds, "Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition," *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 2 (2001): 316–341.

> this dwelling house of the Japanese national spirit which ever renews itself like eternal living nature.[29]

Crucially, in contrast to previous orientalist interpretations Taut claimed that the spirit of Japanese culture embodied the ideals of simplicity and rationality.[30] In the words of one scholar, the simplistic form and structure of the Shinto shrine temples were reinterpreted by Taut "through the tenets of modernism as examples of functionalist beauty."[31] In the Western imagination, Taut reintroduced Japan into the course of world history by connecting the ancient religion of Shinto to the style of European modernism. In fact, the religious aspect itself had little to do with it; what made the Shinto temple significant and sacred – in the sense of spiritually inflected – was that it combined the traditional and modern in one space, a space that was in harmony with the local climate and natural environment and around which the energy of the people could concentrate.[32]

Taut's ideas would exert a major influence on the discourse of architectural theory in Japan and the movement of Japanese modernism.[33] And while some in Japan later picked up Taut to support a kind of Japanese nationalism, it is important to remember that Taut had downplayed the strictly theological elements of Shinto temples and at the same time maintained that "all nationalist architecture is bad, but all good architecture is national."[34] But what exactly is meant by this, and how does this balancing or harmonizing activity restore a sacred meaningfulness in the so-called modern context? Taut emphasized a sympathetic relationship between architecture, local culture, and the natural landscape. This means not incorporating classical elements for tradition's sake alone, while at the same time not incorporating functionalist elements purely for the sake of international style. What was required was a proportional balance. As Taut remarked of the Katsura Palace:

> this Palace is one of the soundest examples of complete and perfect realization of function; indeed, in the functions of beauty and spirituality as well as that of utility. The extent to which

---

29 Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido), 139.

30 Bruno Taut, *Nihonbi no saihakken* [The Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty], trans. Shinoda Hideo (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939), 14–15.

31 Jordan Sand, "Japan's Monument Problem: Ise Shrine as Metaphor," *Past and Present*, Supplement 10 (2015): 126–152, 137.

32 Sand, "Japan's Monument Problem," 138.

33 See Jaccqueline Eve Kestenbaum, "Modernism and Tradition in Japanese Architectural Ideology, 1931–1955" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1996), 91–92.

34 Burak Erdim, "From Germany, to Japan and Turkey: Modernity, Locality and Bruno Taut's Transnational Details from 1933–38," *Lunch* 2 (2007): 97–109, 97.

> every detail has been brought into perfect proportion with every other is worthy of great admiration. This has been so well done that although even the smallest details have their own individuality, one of them predominates to the detriment of their unity as a whole.[35]

Instead of focusing on the idealistic harmonizing proportions of Classical Greece and Italian Renaissance geometry, Taut redrew these proportions to match the proportions of the people of the local culture in which the buildings were to be designed and erected. This was the approach that could restore a holism and sacredness to space in modern urban cities. Such ideas, which formed part of Taut's modern religiosity and were often grounded in his reading of the cosmopolitan ethics of Kant, culminated in his emigrating to Turkey, where he would spend the remainder of his life.

Turkey

At the time, Turkey was actively courting foreign architects to help modernize the country. In a speech at the Great National Assembly of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said that "regarding construction, building, establishment and maintenance in public works, we will have a great advantage if we can make use of foreign capital and of foreign experts as needed, specifically in areas which require investments surpassing our present financial power. This will provide our country with the advantage and opportunity for construction to support the well being and prosperity of our people in a short period."[36] In 1936 Taut was offered the professorship for architecture at the Academy of Arts in Istanbul. Here he was engaged in teaching as well as writing, developing the seeds of his ideas from Japan into a new theory of architecture, which would be published in Turkish after his death but would not be translated into German until the 1970s. He was also able to design buildings again, creating plans for university buildings, other schools, as well as his own home. In this new theory of architecture, which he referred to as his "great work," Taut crystalized his thoughts about how to balance between local and natural conditions and functional elements:

> The world is increasingly getting uniform and homogenous, just like the soldiers who carry uniform weapons in uniform clothes.

---

35 Bruno Taut, *Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture* (Tokyo: The Society for International Cultural Relations, 1937), 34.

36 Quoted in Yüksel Pöğün Zander, "A Comparative Study on the Works of German Expatriate Architects in their Homeland and in Turkey during the Period of 1927–1950" (PhD Thesis, Izmir Institute of Technology, 2007), 107.

> When technology dominates the house, machines, equipments, mechanical utilities, and the like that can be used anywhere in the world conquer the environment. [...] This brings a situation where buildings all around the world look like machines that can be used without changing its shape in relation to place. This results in commonplace architecture, that is, the numberless modern buildings whose pictures we see in all magazines. [...] Architecture is thus confronted with such devastation that it will take too long to recover. If this was just an aesthetic delusion, it would not be too wrong. However, nature, in our case climate, will take its revenge on this terrifying negligence: it will soon be understood that a building that is convenient for one country is not so for another.[37]

But perhaps the culmination of Taut's ideas about design and spiritually inflected space came toward the end of his life when he was given the opportunity to design the catafalque and viewing area for Ataturk. This represents the construction of a space that must, above all, generate an ultimate sense of sacredness, one in which the local people need to and must feel totally connected, while at the same time such a space must encapsule history, as the death of a leader is nothing short of the recognition of all that came before and the prospect of a new future, one that is still in the making.

All the elements that occupied Taut throughout his life are therefore captured in this moment, in this creation of a space that is connected to local culture and natural climate, connected with the souls of the citizens, and yet the space retains the fantastical and utopic elements of his city crown and avant-garde modernism. Taut died the same year as Ataturk and is currently the first and only non-Muslim buried in the Edirnekapı Martyr's Cemetery.

Conclusion

Taut's ideas and designs contributed to a new approach to spatial aesthetics combined with the formulation of modern religiosities. Through his architectural theories, as well as in his concrete constructions in Europe and beyond, Taut remained invested in the idea that certain spatial configurations in the modern world could become harmonious and utopic, free of the oppressive intellectual and materialized power structures of the past. The result was a distinctly modern form of religiosity that was spatial in its orientation and combined urbanity and nature and was attached to the city. Taut was receptive to non-European ideas and lived and worked outside of Europe, displaying an openness to other cultures,

37 Taut quoted in Esra Akcan, "Toward a Cosmopolitan Ethics in Architecture: Bruno Taut's Translations out of Germany," *New German Critique* 99, vol. 33, no. 3 (2006): 7–39, 29–30.

which many others at the time resisted. This chapter therefore hopes to contribute to the recent scholarship that has recontextualized modernity as a moment of intense cultural entanglement, as opposed to the culmination of European supremacy. In short, Taut participated in the reformulation of the entanglement processes of European and non-European cultures, processes that are now synonymous with the idea of "modernity." He began from a traditional approach, drawing on the historical currents of his time, but the result of his efforts was to develop something new, a modern form of religiosity related to architecture and space.

Bibliography

Akcan, Esra. *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Türkiye, and the Modern House.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Akcan, Esra. "Toward a Cosmopolitan Ethics in Architecture: Bruno Taut's Translations out of Germany," *New German Critique* 99, vol. 33, no. 3 (2006): 7–39.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Chakraborty, Kathleen James. *Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Davies, Colin. *A New History of Modern Architecture: Art Nouveau, the Beaux-Arts, Expressionism, Modernism, Constructivism, Art Deco, Classicism, Brutalism, Postmodernism, Neo-Rationalism, High Tech, Deconstructivism, Digital Futures.* London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd, 2017.

Erdim, Burak. "From Germany, to Japan and Turkey: Modernity, Locality and Bruno Taut's Transnational Details from 1933–38." *Lunch 2* (2007): 97–109.

Gay, Peter. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider.* London: Penguin, 1968.

José, María and Martínez Sánchez. *Dynamic Cartography: Body, Architecture, and Performative Space.* London: Routledge, 2021.

Kanaani, Mitra, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Paradigms of Performativity in Design and Architecture: Using Time to Craft an Enduring, Resilient and Relevant Architecture.* New York: Routledge, 2020.

Kestenbaum, Jaccqueline Eve. "Modernism and Tradition in Japanese Architectural Ideology, 1931–1955. PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1996.

Krämer, Hans Martin and Julian Strube, eds. *Theosophy Across Boundaries: Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on a Modern Esoteric Movement.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020.

Long, Rose-Carol Washton, ed. *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism.* New York: G.K. Hall, 1993.

Mannheim, Karl. *Essays on the Sociology of Culture.* London: Routledge & Paul, 1956.

Mindrup, Matthew and Ulrike Altenmüller-Lewis, eds. *The City Crown by Bruno Taut.* Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2015.

Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Pehnt, Gustav. *Expressionist Architecture.* London: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Prange, Regine. “Der kosmogonische Eros. Zur Geschlechtersymbolik in Bruno Tauts Architekturphantasien.” In *Die weibliche und die männliche Linie. Das imaginäre Geschlecht der modernen Kunst von Klimt bis Mondrian*, edited Susanne Deicher, 113–140. Reimer, Berlin 1993.

Rau, Susanne and Jörg Rüpke, eds. *Religion and Urbanity Online.* Berlin: De Gruyter. https://www.degruyter.com/database/urbrel/html.

Repp, Kevin. *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890–1914.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Reynolds, Jonathan M. “Ise Shrine and a Modernist Construction of Japanese Tradition.” *The Art Bulletin* 83, no. 2 (2001): 316–341.

Salmi, Hannu. *Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Cultural History.* Cambridge: Polity, 2008.

Sand, Erik Reenberg and Tim Rudbøg, eds. *Imagining the East: The Early Theosophical Society.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Sand, Jordan. “Japan’s Monument Problem: Ise Shrine as Metaphor.” *Past and Present*, Supplement 10 (2015): 126–152.

Savage, Jon. *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture.* New York: Viking, 2007.

Schirren, Matthias. *Bruno Taut, Alpine Architektur: Eine Utopie.* München: Prestel, 2004.

Speidel, Manfred, ed. *Bruno Taut. Kunstgewerbe und Möbel für Japan.* Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2023.

Speidel, Manfred. “Was ist Architektur: Bruno Tauts ‚Architekturlehre.‘” In *Taut – Architekturlehre/Architekturüberlegungen*, 160–165. ARCH+ Verlag GmbH, 2017.

Taut, Bruno. “Ein Architektur-Programm.” In *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture*, edited by Ulrich Conrads. 1918; Cambridge: MIT Press, 1975.

Speidel, Manfred. *Fundamentals of Japanese Architecture.* Tokyo: The Society for International Cultural Relations, 1937.

Speidel, Manfred. “Glaserzeugung und Glasbau.” *Qualität: Wirtschaftliche Bildung und Qualitätsproduktion* 1, no. 12 (1920): 9–14.

Speidel, Manfred. *Houses and People of Japan.* Tokyo: Sanseido.

Speidel, Manfred. *Ich liebe die japanische Kultur. Kleine Schriften über Japan.* Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2003.

Speidel, Manfred. *Nihonbi no saihakken* [The Rediscovery of Japanese Beauty], translated by Shinoda Hideo. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1939.

Taut, Bruno, and Manfred Speidel. *Ex Oriente Lux: die Wirklichkeit einer Idee: eine Sammlung von Schriften 1904–1938.* Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2007.

Taut, Bruno and Winfried Nerdinger. *Bruno Taut, 1880–1938: Architekt zwischen Tradition und Avantgarde.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001.

Treitel, Corinna. *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Treitel, Corinna. *Eating Nature in Modern Germany: Food, Agriculture, and Environment, C.1870 to 2000.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Vinzent, Jutta. *From Space in Modern Art to a Spatial Art History: Reassessing Constructivism through the Publication “Circle” (1937).* München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019.

Whyte, Iain Boyd and Bruno Taut. *The Crystal Chain Letters: Architectural Fantasies by Bruno Taut and His Circle.* Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985.

Williams, John A. *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900–1940.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Zander, Yüksel Pöğün. “A Comparative Study on the Works of German Expatriate Architects in their Homeland and in Turkey during the Period of 1927–1950.” PhD Thesis, Izmir Institute of Technology, 2007.

Aurosa Alison

The Ineffable – Unspeakable Space in Le Corbusier: Catharsis, Aesthetics, Atmosphere

Abstract: In this chapter I will analyze three concepts related to what Le Corbusier means by "Espace indicible." In this regard, I would like to emphasize how my chapter aims to introduce a philosophical-aesthetic reading of his way of doing architecture, especially in the liturgical and/or sacred context. The first concept is that of "catharsis," understood from an "aesthetic" point of view, that is, from that of sensitive experience: this is developed not only through the empathy of space, but through the concept of "journey," especially in the case of *Le Voyage d'Orient*. A second concept I would like to illustrate is that of Le Corbusier's "aesthetics," which intensified during his youthful experiences and with his first approaches to the study of classical architecture. A third and final concept, "atmosphere," reappears in the most essential and minimalist architecture, such as the Cabanon. In this context, it should not be forgotten that for Le Corbusier, architecture is an act of love, aroused by the truest feelings of perception.

"Architecture is an act of love"

For Le Corbusier, the maximum intensity of an architectural work is reflected in the combination of two main factors: the harmony of the elements and the sensitive perception of the latter. Indeed, for Le Corbusier, architecture corresponds to the achievement of harmony, understood as the supreme value of design. In this context, I have introduced the concepts of catharsis, aesthetics and atmosphere. From an etymological point of view, these three concepts have in common the "aural" aspect that Le Corbusier translated into architecture from his youthful experiences during *Le Voyage d'Orient*. The authenticity of architecture is reflected in the proportions of nature, in which form, mass, and substance converse with our way of perceiving. Similarly, the concept of *Stimmung*[1] is one of the fundamental principles of design:

1 The notion of *Stimmung*, Eng. trans. *Mood*, was introduced in the environmental context for the first time by Georg Simmel in his essay *Philosophy of Landscape*, "Die Philosophie der Landschaft," in *Die Gueldenkammer*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Bremen), 1913; Georg Simmel, "The Philosophy of Landscape," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 24 (7–8), 2007, pp. 20–29, accessed June 15, 2023, 21, doi: https://doi.org/

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-011

> I discovered architecture related to its natural site. More than that, the architecture expressed its site … What a potential for poetry. All this is your element, fellow architects. Your plans, heretofore confined to the few square feet of a room, can now be extended until they form an empire stretching to the outer limits of horizons. Revealed to you, you can conquer them. The master you serve with your plans and your drafts sees everything; his eyes, beyond their brilliant surfaces, are endowed with perception, intelligence, and heart. From the outside, your architectural work will add to the site; from the inside, it must integrate it.[2]

This perception is an integral part of Le Corbusier's idea of architectural design; he often wonders how architecture can be inhabited as well as designed. A futuristic vision of the inhabited space remains key to his design environment: "Architecture is a mission demanding dedication of its servants, dedication to dwelling (for a dwelling shelters work, possessions, institutions, and the thoughts of man, as well). *Architecture is an act of love …*"[3]

As far as the perception of sensitive participation is concerned, I would reject the liturgical sense that Le Corbusier used in some of his works, in particular in Sainte Marie de La Tourette. The liturgical sense is expressed through a phenomenology of recollection in which the inexpressible space corresponds to a sensitive and human symbiosis with the surrounding space.

Le Corbusier, who defined himself as an architect at the service of humanity, fully embraced the etymological meaning of the Greek word "λειτουργία," that is, acting for the people. In fact, the design process of Sainte Marie de La Tourette brings back this meaning of a community that feels symbiotic with its *home*.

In this chapter, I would like to outline three aspects of Le Corbusier's approach to sacred places: 1) the catharsis: that is, the temporal and emblematic aspect of the sublimation of space; 2) the aesthetics: the sensitive knowledge and approach through which Le Corbusier expresses his experience of space; 3) the atmosphere: the *ambiance* or environment that Le Corbusier felt through his initial experience during his *Voyage d'Orient* and then reproduced in his architecture.

In this way, I introduce the notion of *unspeakable space* as the main keyword of his work, namely the connection between the temporal and instantaneous aspect of the sensitive perception of architectural space and the architect's intention to reproduce it.

10.1177/0263276407084465: "As far as landscape is concerned, however, a boundary, a way of being encompassed by a momentary or permanent field of vision, is quite essential. Its material foundation or its individual pieces may simply be regarded as nature. But conceived of as a 'landscape,' it demands a status for itself, which may be optical, aesthetic or *mood-centered*."

2 Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Talks with Students* (United States: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), 41–42.

3 Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Talks with Students*, 34.

Catharsis

To take possession of space is the first gesture of the living: men and beasts, plants and clouds, the fundamental manifestation of equilibrium and permanence. The first proof of existence is to occupy space. The flower, the plant, the tree, the mountain, all these are upright, living in an environment. If the true greatness of their aspect draws attention to itself, it is because they seem contained in themselves, yet producing resonances all around. We stop short, conscious of so much natural harmony; and we look, moved by so much unity commanding so much space; and then we measure what we see.[4]

Le Corbusier leaves us with a great lesson in harmony. Unlike the Vitruvian connection, in which all parts of a form must collide to create continuity, Le Corbusier's contextualization of space stands out: the harmony we create by experiencing the environment around us. Space in Le Corbusier is shaped by our lived experience. Our existential resonance is linked to our perception of reality, which is part of the Modulor.[5] Through the Modulor, we already have an idea of how human measurement, through a real sense of embodiment, presupposes not just incorporating the importance of proxemics into architectural design.[6]

In this reading of catharsis, I seek to emphasize the aesthetic experience Le Corbusier had through the *Voyage d'Orient* or journey to the East. I would like to emphasize the cathartic meaning of a true "revelation" that Le Corbusier had through his first journey of study and research. During this journey, Le Corbusier "liberated" himself from the rules of the fine arts in order to devote himself entirely to the design of living spaces. This is based on the fact that aesthetic experience

4 Le Corbusier, *The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale Universally Applicable to Architecture and Mechanics*, trans. Peter de Francia and Anna Bostock, (Basel, Boston and Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2000), 30.

5 The concept of Modulor was introduced by Le Corbusier as an effective unit of measurement that is based on the upright arrangement of the human figure with one arm raised. *Le Modulor* is the result of "patient research" in which Le Corbusier was interested in introducing the human dimension, considered rationally harmonious and beautiful. For a first approach to the subject, I refer to the official website of the Le Corbusier Foundation: http://fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=7837&sysLanguage=fr-fr&itemPos=83&itemCount=216&sysParentName=&sysParentId=65.

6 To better understand the relationship between the question of embodiment and our architectural experience, see: Vittorio Gallese and Alessandro Gattara, "Embodied Simulation, Aesthetic, and Architecture: An Experimental Approach in Mind in Architecture," in *Neuroscience, Embodiment and the Future of Design* ed. Sarah Robinson and Juhani Pallasmaa (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 161–180.

belongs to a sphere that, as John Dewey reminds us, is fundamental to knowing and interpreting art, and, of course, architecture:

> Even to readers who are adversely inclined to what has been said, the implications of the statements that have been made may be useful in defining the nature of the problem: that of recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living. The understanding of art and of its role in civilization is not furthered by setting out with eulogies of it nor by occupying ourselves exclusively at the outset with great works of art recognized as such.[7]

> Architectural structures provide, I should imagine, the perfect reductio ad absurdum of the separation of space and time in works of art. If anything exists in the mode of "space-occupancy," it is a building. But even a small hut cannot be the matter of esthetic perception save as temporal qualities enter in. A cathedral, no matter how large, makes an instantaneous impression. A total qualitative impression emanates from it as soon as it interacts with the organism through the visual apparatus. But this is only the substratum and framework within which a continuous process of interactions introduces enriching and defining elements. The hasty sightseer no more has an esthetic vision of Saint Sophia or the Cathedral of Rouen than the motorist traveling at sixty miles an hour sees the fitting landscape. One must move about, within and without, and through repeated visits let the structure gradually yield itself to him in various lights and in connection with changing moods. I may appear to have dwelt at unnecessary length upon a not very important statement. But the implication of the passage quoted affects the whole problem of art as experience. An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically. An experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world.[8]

As Dewey suggests, the *journey* as the key to interpretation is the best way to understand aesthetic experience with "the normal process of living." That is, the ability to rediscover the roots of architecture not only through the contemplation of works and landscapes, but above all through personal experience. Le Corbusier long sought textual and architectural feedback on the relationship between the human and space. In 1911, Le Corbusier left his position as a draftsman in the Berlin studio of architect Peter Behrens to embark on a cathartic journey for his human and scientific education. In the introduction to the Italian translation of *Voyages d'Orient*,[9] editors Giuliano Gresleri and José Oubrerie refer to the Voyage to the Orient as a *true baptism of fire for architecture.*

> From reading this text, broken, confused, fragmentary, deeply emotional and anxious, almost untranslatable, it becomes clearer than ever that we need to have the widest possible casuistry on the formation of the Masters, collecting and systematizing their first experiences, let-

7 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 1980), 10.

8 John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 220.

9 Giuliano Gresleri and José Oubrerie, *Il Viaggio D'Oriente* (Faenza Editrice: Firenze, 1974).

> ters and diaries. We would then understand better and better how vital it is to relativize the pragmatic origins of the Modern Movement, having exhausted all formal references to its exponents, revising "from the beginning" everything that has been taken for granted with the sole result of helping to block architectural research on dogmatism invented by the critics for its own necessity of survival and systematization; whose only result on short times, as on long ones, has been, always and only, that of the re-foundation of the academies.[10]

Gresleri and Oubrerie highlight the aspect of personal experience of space in Le Corbusier, and thus the phenomenological principle of *recherche patiente.* This raises the question of a relationship with the surrounding space that is not limited to the fleeting theories of a superficial post-humanism, but is characterized by an intimate and heartfelt *journey.* In this way, we can emphasize the importance of *lived experience in architecture.*

The experience of space is central to the relationship between human beings and space, which I would like to introduce as a topology of being.[11] In fact, the relationship between matter and the human form derives from the relationship between the individual and space. In art, the manipulation of matter corresponds to an awareness of the pre-existence of the body in space. In order for the sculptor, as well as the architect, to achieve intimacy with the plastic, they must become aware of the space they occupy and experience. The body occupies space through its own existence. Heidegger[12] analyzes this question in depth, starting with the primary concept of what space is in the history of Western philosophy: "Place is not located in a pre-given space, after the manner of physical-technological space. The latter unfolds itself only through the reigning of places of a region. The interplay of art and space would have to be thought from out of the experience of place and region. Art as sculpture: no occupying of space. Sculpture would not deal with space."[13]

Similarly, architecture is inseparable from our relationship to space. According to Heidegger, space makes space. The expression "to make space" means to make free, that is, to liberate. The human being in space is not only considered as a body, but since space is a phenomenon or an event in which something happens, the human being in space disposes of space. By being-in-space, by journeying there, the human being enters into a relationship with other humans and with things.

---

10 Giuliano Gresleri and José Oubrerie, *Il Viaggio D'Oriente.* Introduction for the Italian edition by Giuliano Gresleri and José Oubrerie, XX–XXI.

11 Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (New York: MIT Press, 2012).

12 Martin Heidegger, *Art and Space*, reprinted in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. Günter Figal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

13 Heidegger, *Art and Space,* 309.

Surveying the experience of space in the *Carnets* of Le Corbusier's *Voyage d'Orient* is significant for how he understands the object of architecture. In this regard, it is worth remembering that for Le Corbusier, it is *man who makes space*; consequently, Le Corbusier's anthropocentrism, as in the examples of the *Couvent of Sainte-Marie La Tourette* and the *Cabanon,* is represented by a seemingly bare architecture, which is only revealed the moment one inhabits it. From the monolithic exterior structure to the interior à *réaction poétique*, the contradictory aspect is always proposed in a dialectical relationship between forms. This dualism is resolved in relation to the fulcrum of architecture, which illustrates everything that happens in space in relation to a primal sense of belonging to one's habitat. Le Corbusier leaves the human free to experience space, offering infinite possibilities of dwelling. In doing so, the architect hopes for numerous suggestions of recollection, revealed through a path forged – even before it is concretized – by the senses and the spirit.

> Travelling for long months in new countries, two beautiful compatriots were asking me the other day in Berlin, are you not in danger of dulling your faculties of understanding, of dulling the freshness of your emotions, of not seeing things except with a somewhat disenchanted eye. Sometimes, during our last meetings, your judgments were so drastic and amazed us. Now departed for the East, we are sure you do not intend to miss anything the trip may offer you. Right and left like this. So many impressions, the most varied and manifold. Our question is motivated, and we don't have any.[14]

The disenchanted eye is what underscores the *flâneur*[15] aspect that Le Corbusier employs during his travels. The important object of my argument is this tendency to suspend judgment and to be carried away by the impact of aesthetic experience:

> The encounter with the architecture of Ancient Rome at the beginning of the century, when the city and the ruins were still intact, the possibility of being able to take it in, therefore, in the relationship between volumes and landscape and in the integration of the two scales, the architectural and the urbanistic scales proper to the great ruins, is the first revelation (as Le Corbusier himself would later call it) of something that for the moment he calls *unspeakable* consonance of "volumes assembled under light."[16]

The concept of unspeakable space was born in the vision Le Corbusier received during his *Voyage d'Orient:* passing through the ruins of Rome, he recognized a

14 Le Corbusier, *Il Viaggio D'Oriente*, 1.

15 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Harvard: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002).

16 Gresleri and Oubrerie, *Il Viaggio D'Oriente*, IX.

harmony of volume and light that he would not only carry with him forever, but use as a key concept in his later work.

Aesthetics

In the *Carnets* of the *Voyage d'Orient*, Le Corbusier illustrates the main stages of arriving at an awareness of the free arrangement of space. This freedom coincides with the architectural distribution of the meanings that a place can elicit in its entirety. Freedom becomes, then, a fundamental pivot of recollection. Recollection, in fact, is suggested by the form that the individual is free to give any architectural construct. Moreover, the concept of freedom is perfectly combined with the deepest sense of the human being, unencumbered by the superficiality of everyday life. In silence, in poverty, as well as in purity, humans are *free* to experience space. Spatial freedom is linked to the element of purity, which should not be confused with the concept of "absence."

On the contrary, purity and simplicity in Le Corbusier's architecture turn out to be motifs of *silence*, *elaboration*, *recollection.* Simplicity, as extolled by Le Corbusier, is the basis of all his architecture. The entire *Voyage d'Orient* is charged with humble imagery, with a moved admiration for the *simple*, *clean* home of the poor. The Journey of the Orient is an itinerary for mapping distant forms and meanings. It is an experience to which Le Corbusier gives a special meaning: a canvas, an inexhaustible source of notes and images. In fact, the book has no reference to previous experiences. An initiatory path especially for those spatial or architectural manifestations that contain the *spirit*, understood in the most secular way.

Liturgy, λειτουργία, literally means "action for the people." In Le Corbusier's long research on the human being in relation to community life, the concept of the church is introduced as a true "prolongement de l'habitat." The theme of the sacred is repeatedly challenged by him given its absolute lack of religious life, but this does not take away from the very strong attachment to essential spirituality. For Le Corbusier, the church is the home par excellence of the human being, especially for its spiritual and structural upliftment. In fact, he forges a very strong bond with Father Couturier, one of the men who provoked the revival of sacred art in France in the mid-twentieth century. Every man, according to the architect, is the bearer of a religious sense through which he gives meaning to the universe. Everything in the church, as well as in the place dedicated to religion, brings harmony, from the light to the colors. The space becomes sacred because it is separated from every other kind of space. Different, above all, because of a particular color scheme that is not used in the everyday environment.

During the *Voyage d'Orient*, visits to the monastery on Mount Athos in Greece and the Carthusian monastery of Ema in Florence were crucial to Le Corbusier's exploration of the existence of spiritual speculation. Both complexes have the ideal community organization: common spaces for services and social life and isolated, intimate lodgings, each with a garden opening onto the valley. In both cases, the very strong impression reported by Le Corbusier remains the basis of all his housing concepts: even the Housing Units are conceived as convents, on the principle of integrating the individual into the community, while fully preserving private spaces. Mount Athos had a profound influence on the architect's future choices of interior design in terms of the concept of *recollection*, understood as a *modus vivendi*.

The decision to visit the Holy Mountain Athos became for Le Corbusier a kind of pilgrimage, desired and determined by the request for the *Diamonitirion* to visit the monastery, which was obtained with great difficulty through diplomatic means. Here we can grasp some interesting details to connect the experience of Mount Athos with the itinerary of the sacred in which Le Corbusier finds himself since 1945. Mount Athos is a collection of monastic communities; the twenty main monasteries are places of strong spatial compression and architectural concentration. Those who live there are also "contained" and "compressed." Another characteristic of the place is the relationship between architecture and painting.

> Here, now, are memories of paintings deciphered in the darkness of the walls and loved, for the most part, too late, after the disappointing recognition of infamous retouching had diluted over time and the soul regained the clarity of vigorous religiosity. In pink apparition, in the corner between the windows, stands a young and white man, the prince of a country, servant or Bulgarian vision. His attitude is composed: toes together, hesitant and eager not to move. Against the black background of the fresco, the two arms thrust forward offer the maquette of a shrine, an image of this same church all painted red, with blue domes.[17]

Painting and color play a key role in Le Corbusier's polychromatic experience. The use of color invokes light and vice versa, these becoming two fundamental pivots of spatial organization. Countless frescoes cover the Mount Athos buildings, which light enhances by penetrating from above. The mystique of the place enraptures Le Corbusier to the point of requesting the blessing of the Holy Mountain, without forgetting the pure sense that drove him there: the architecture. The divine returns in mathematics, measurement, and harmony. Mount Athos left in Le Corbusier's soul the fullness of what spiritual space is, understood outside any kind of imposed religiosity – the growth of the spirit is universal and involves soul and body.

---

17 Gresleri and Oubrerie, *Il Viaggio D'Oriente*, 127.

The Tourette Convent is an early example of *recollection*, understood as the integration of the individual into the community and the full preservation of his or her private space. The history of the convent began in the mid-1950s, when Father Couturier, already a proponent of the Ronchamp Cathedral project, asked Le Corbusier to design a space intended for prayer but above all for training young Dominican monks. A place devoted to silence and speculation. The architect did not immediately accept the commission. Le Corbusier describes himself as a house builder: "My job is to house men, to give them the concrete shell that will enable them to lead a human life. How to build a church for men to whom I have not given housing? Someday, I may be asked to build a church for a Dwelling Unit. This will make sense to me."[18] The conviction came at the moment when the architect was asked to create *a strong aesthetic intensity.* A sense of the beautiful and the sacred come together at this point in the design of a space where one can find oneself; a place where one has the freedom to indulge faith as well as spirit. "In their silence, they put study: I make them a library and study rooms. In their silence, they put prayer: I make them a church, and this church, for me, makes sense."[19]

Le Corbusier remained marked by his experience on Mount Athos and, before that, by the Certosa di Ema complex in Galluzzo. Le Corbusier was fascinated by the *collected life*; he himself led an almost monastic life, as Valerio Casali points out,[20] organizing the living space into a single organism of speculation. "Le Corbusier himself lives his life in a monk-like attitude: his Cabanon at Cap Martin, which measures m. 3.66x3.66 and even more so the *'baraque de travail*,' a construction shack erected a few meters from the Cabanon, where Corbu, in a space of 2.00x4.00 works seated on a crate from whiskey bottles, recovered at sea – these are spaces akin – for dimensional exiguity and for nudity – to the cell of a monk."[21]

"Friar Corbu" conceives the dimensions of the rooms like monk cells: the boys' rooms of the Dwelling Units measure m. 1.83x9.00, the cells of the Tourette, including the washroom space are 1.83x5.92; and the hotel rooms of the Unités de Marseille m. 1.83x9.00, and of the Hotel Orsay, bathroom included, m. 1.83x8.20.

---

18 Father A. Belaud, *Pourquoi Le Corbusier?* in *Un couvent de Le Corbusier* (Paris: Forces Vives, 1961), 17–18.

19 Le Corbusier, *Letter to parents, September 15, 1907 (Faenza)*, in Father Couturier, *La vérité blesse* (Paris: Omnibus, 1984), 162.

20 Valerio Casali, *Santa Maria de La Tourette e il "Convento Radioso,"* in *Le Corbusier Il programma liturgico*, eds. Giuliano Gresleri and Glauco Gresleri (Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2001), 122–146.

21 Valerio Casali, *Santa Maria de La Tourette e il "Convento Radioso,"* 122–123.

Atmosphere

Le Corbusier, the architect, the social man, restored to architecture the power to construct space for all types of people, totally detaching himself from all social but especially political interpretations. "*L'homme heureux, est l'homme qui réalise toutes les fonctions d'une vie domestique, où il lit, où il étudie, où il reçoits les amis dans 15 métres carrés* (The happy man is the man who performs all the functions of a domestic life, where he reads, where he studies, where he receives friends in 15 square meters)."[22] The strong human resonance of the Cabanon[23] reconnects us to the importance of the relationship between the human organism and space, which turns out to be a given and not a construction. Every architecture must come to terms with the body – an individual relationship and a resulting *phenomenology.* The harmony of colors and sensations of the external landscape, in which we find this "nest," are repeated and echoed in a disarming richness found within. Looking at the landscape of the Mediterranean that protects and *envelops* (χώρα) the Cabanon, one perceives the phenomena of complex compositions, which relate back to the solutions illustrated by Le Corbusier. Plastic matter corresponds solely to a formalization of the spirit and knowledge of simple everyday gestures taking us back to a strong spatial existentialism. Here we can distinguish three elements of the Cabanon, emphasized by Claude Prelorenzo,[24] which may be related to the pre-establishment and pre-existence of a real atmosphere.[25]

1. The summer lounge in the shade of the carob tree. The carob tree protects a living room office, bordered by the recess of a dry stone wall, a place provided with chairs and a small table where one can stop to rest or write in the warmth of the air. The domestic importance of the carob tree is evident. We can formulate the hypothesis that the pleasures of outdoor life are possible because of this tree, which in nature is mathematically contained in the seed, forms the perfect unit of measurement.
2. Etoile de Mer kitchen and dining room. For some time Le Corbusier and his wife had been side by side. Not surprisingly, Le Corbusier creates direct access to the restaurant by opening a door next to the Etoile de Mer.

---

22 Le Corbusier, *Le Modulor* (Paris: Editions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1983), 9.

23 Filippo Alison, *Interior of the Cabanon* (Milano: Triennale Electa), 2006).

24 Claude Prelorenzo, *The Interior of the Cabanon*, in *The Interior of the Cabanon,* ed. Filippo Alison (Milano: Triennale Electa, 2006), 47–53.

25 By Atmosphere here I mean the concept introduced by contemporary philosophy (Böhme) within a broader discourse of aesthetics. Not only that, I would also emphasize the importance of atmospheres in the concept of architecture. See: Aurosa Alison, "Atmospheres and Environments: Prolegomena to Inhabiting Sensitively" in *Aesthetica Preprint* 115 (2020): 97–121.

3. The Atelier in the construction shack. Inside the Cabanon, Le Corbusier creates an office corner consisting of a magnificent work surface, on the side of which rests a low shelving unit leaning against the sea-side wall. After a short time, the space begins to lengthen, initially the master moves outside to work, after which he creates a *chambre de travail* by having a standard prefabricated construction shack installed, fitted with a window and furnished with a shelving unit, a chair, and a wooden crate.

Beyond these examples, there is the conception of a *prolongement de l'habitat*, which suggests a functionalism even of the outdoor space that is incorporated into the indoor space. That is to say, the very *need of* the architect accentuates the use of spaces not designed or predetermined for a specific activity.

Conclusion

The harmony of colours and sensations of the landscape outside, where we find this "nest," are repeated and echoed in the overwhelming richness of the interior. Looking at the Mediterranean landscape that shelters and envelops (*χώρᾳ*) the Cabanon, the observer perceives the phenomena of complex compositions that are related to the solutions defined by Le Corbusier. The spirit and knowledge of simple everyday gestures are the products of an initial sensory perception. In Le Corbusier's examples, we find a strong spatial existentialism in which space acquires its absolute poetic nature. It is also worth noting the role played by the characteristics of a sensitive memory or recollection in the interpretation of architecture. For Le Corbusier, *sacred* architecture is not only linked to the liturgical element, but also to an aesthetic system based on the concept of *Einfühlung*, and therefore on sensitive empathy and experience.

Bibliography

Alison, Aurosa. "La Natura Poetica Dello Spazio: Modelli Di Memoria Sensibile / The Poetics Of Space: Aesthetic Remembrance In Architecture". *ABITARE LA TERRA* 59 (2022).

Alison, Aurosa. "Aesthetics of Architecture in Le Corbusier: From sensory knowledge to Design". *LC. Revue de recherches sur Le Corbusier,* n°4 (2021): 100, accessed March 28, 2023. doi: https://doi.org/10.4995/lc.2021.14597.

Alison, Aurosa. "La naturaleza poetica del espacio: un modelo de memoria sensible," in *Memoria del Espacio Interiores*, edited by Aguirre Escarcega F., Guzman Guerra G.R, 17–29. Ciudad de Juarez: Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, 2021.

Alison, Aurosa. “Atmospheres and Environments: Prolegomena to Inhabiting Sensitively”. *Aesthetica Preprint*, n°115, (2020): 97, accessed March 28, 2023.

Alison, Aurosa. “Aesthetics & Architecture: Living is the Answer,” *Scenari* 12 (2020): 9–27.

Alison, Aurosa and Gioconda Cafiero, “L’Esprit du Sacré : Le Corbusier and the necessary Utopia of Sainte Maire La Tourette,” *Proceedings of Science and Technology*, IEREK PRESS, (2019).

Alison, Aurosa. “La Méditerranée di Le Corbusier : una lezione sull’armonia”. *Civiltà del Mediterraneo* 27 (2017): 111.

Alison, Filippo. *L’interno del Cabanon.* Milano: Electa, 2006.

Belaud, Pierre. “Pourquoi Le Corbusier?”. In *Un couvent de Le Corbusier*, edited by Le Corbusier, 17–18. Paris: Forces Vives, 1961.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project.* Harvard: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002

Böhme Gernot. *Atmospheric Architectures. The Aesthetic of Felt Spaces*, transl. By A. C. Engels-Schwarzpaul, London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*, New York: Perigee Books, 1980.

Gallese, Vittorio, Gattara Alessandro. (2015). “Embodied Simulation, Aesthetic, and Architecture: an Experimental Approach in Mind in Architecture”. In *Neuroscience, Embodiment and the Future of Design* Edited by Juhani Pallasmaa and Sarah Robinson: 161–180. Cambridge: MIT Press, (2015)

Gresleri, Giuliano, and Glauco, Gresleri. *Le Corbusier. Il programma liturgico.* Bologna: Editrice Compositori, 2001.

Heidegger, Martin. *Art and Space*, reprinted in *The Heidegger Reader*, edited by Günter Figal. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Le Corbusier. *Manière de penser l’urbanisme.* Paris: Éditions de l’architecture d’aujourd’hui, 1946.

Le Corbusier. *Il Viaggio d’Oriente.* Gresleri, G., Oubrerie, J. (Ed.) Firenze: Faenza Editrice S.p.A, 1974.

Le Corbusier. “Letter to parents, September 15, 1907 (Faenza)”. In Marie-Alain Couturier. *Father Couturier, La vérité blessée*, : 162. Paris: Omnibus, 1984.

Le Corbusier. *Le Corbusier Talks with Students.* United States: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999.

Le Corbusier. *The Modulor: A Harmonious Measure to the Human Scale Universally Applicable to Architecture and Mechanics*, Translated by Peter de Francia, and Anna Bostock. Basel, Boston and Berlin: Birkhäuser, 2000.

Malpas Jeff. *Place and experience. A philosophical topography.* London: Routledge, 1999.

Malpas, Jeff. *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being.* New York: MIT Press, 2012.

Simmel Georg. (2007). “Philosophy of landscape”. In *Theory, Culture & Society* 24 (2007): 20–29.

Paul Eli Ivey

The Architecture of the Church of the New Jerusalem: Correspondences and Debates on Sacred Space

Abstract: To Emanuel Swedenborg, the macrocosm and microcosm, though dissimilar in form, are analogous in interpretation. His theology of correspondences between the world of the spiritual and material reality became on organizational template for architects of the Church of the New Jerusalem in the United States. From the middle of the nineteenth century through the twentieth century, Swedenborgians built church edifices they believed reflected the tenets of their faith. Early examples include Gothic-revival churches as well as a few important classical edifices. Proceeding from the interest in the Gothic was an embracing of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, found in the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco opened in 1895 and designed by a distinguished group of architects, including the celebrated Bernard Maybeck. More recent innovative examples that radicalized these ideas include Lloyd Wright's organicist 1951 Wayfarer's Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, a redwood and glass structure integrated with trees and panoramic views. To Swedenborg, in heaven all things existed in a state of spiritual perfection, "immensely exceeding" those things that are natural. The holy city, or New Jerusalem, as a spiritual framework, became the preoccupation of important architect and urban planner Daniel Burnham. The symbolic correspondences within individual churches found a larger structural and spatial articulation in the geometries of his influential City Beautiful movement. Swedenborg's theory allowed for the spiritual to be recognized in the organic, within larger structures and spaces such as the idealized urban environment. He created a framework within which the Absolute and Divine corresponds to the individual and expressive, on different levels of articulation, sacralizing humankind in their relationship to nature.

> A temple, suitable for the New Church, should be such as will answer all her wants. Every [useful] part ... would have a spiritual correspondence to it; thus each architectural member, as well as the whole building, would necessarily represent the church, and being thus a recipient of her life, would be, as Swedenborg expresses it, "*alive.*"[1]

1 Joseph Andrews, "On Architecture," *The New Jerusalem Magazine* 13 (1841), 122.

Open Access. © 2024 the author(s), published by De Gruyter. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111062624-012

The Church of the New Jerusalem, whose General Convention was formed in Philadelphia in 1817, produced their ideas of sacred space through building significant churches that, through their siting, scale, and often symbolic architectural styles, created an outward-facing aesthetic impact that expressed a desire for legitimacy and respectability from the public. The spatial configurations and worship dynamics in the interiors of their churches were often organized as symbolic hierarchical zones of the sacred derived from the writings of Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, through his Doctrine of Correspondences and concept of the Three Heavens: the celestial, spiritual, and natural. The architectural styles of the New Church became markers of their community's theological, social, and religious identity.

These churches structured the sacred in interior spaces that symbolized the process of the regeneration of the soul from earthly to heavenly and signified the church's place in that process. Spaces in these buildings became frameworks within which symbolic resonances of architectural elements, sacred objects, art, and other visual representations became sacralized through ritual uses and correspondences. This created what Richard Kieckhefer calls "transcendence-in-immanence" where "consciousness of divine immanence is the transformation that releases mind and soul from ordinariness."[2] Rather than juxtapose the sacred and profane, the New Church attempted to see correspondences between the common natural things in the world and the immensity of the divine, manifested in sacred spaces.

The church's ideas of sacred space derived from their emerging interpretations of Swedenborg's Doctrine of Correspondence, which encouraged church members to see spiritual reality through signs and symbols in the natural world. These analogies between the worlds of spiritual and material reality became an important organizational template for the architects of New Church congregations in the United States as they began to build their unique edifices for worship. The objective of this chapter is to understand and study the signs and symbols that produced multivalent meanings members believed were demonstrated in their church architecture and interior worship spaces, bringing the transcendent into immanent relationship with believers, approximating a language of form and space that could be read as object lessons. What roles did these churches have in creating an understanding of sacred space that caused members to project notions of spirituality into the built and natural environments of their times through architecture and gardens, and attempt to bring them into relationship in their interiors of worship?

---

2 Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 116.

From the middle of the nineteenth century into the twenty-first century, Swedenborgians built churches that not only manifested the tenets of their faith but were demonstrations of important correspondences that would magnify and instantiate that faith. Moreover, Swedenborg's theory of correspondence allowed and even encouraged the ideal of the spiritual to be recognized in Nature. As one early church tract put it, "This heavenly science unfolds and explains the relations which exist between the spiritual and the natural world; showing how all things which exist in the natural world are *effects* from *causes* existing and operating in the spiritual world."[3] These "effects" could be expressed through church architecture and even articulated in idealized urban spaces, such as those inspired by Daniel Burnham's City Beautiful, culminating in his 1909 *Plan of Chicago*, where notions of sacred space were projected into an ideal cityscape.

In addressing the history of New Church architecture, as visual and built demonstrations of each congregation's interpretation of Swedenborg's theology, changing and historically specific ideas of appropriate architectures to represent sacred space come into focus. Church periodicals reveal a wealth of information on debates that emerged concerning the appropriate architectures and interior arrangements for the developing forms of New Church worship. Even beyond theological intentions, the erection of an attractive church was also recognized as bringing respectability to the new denomination often misunderstood and criticized by its Christian neighbors. As one English member stated upon the completion of the Newcastle church in 1861, "it is an edifice that is a real addition to the outward respectability of the New Church. May it … be the means of adding extensively to the true members of the Church."[4]

---

3 "The Science of Correspondences," *The New Jerusalem. New Church Tracts*, The Ohio Series, no. 6, published by New Church Brethren in Ohio, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1850. The tract continued: "The spiritual world is a world of affections and thoughts, and of living, substantial forces, which sustain the relation of causes to the things which exist in the natural world. Each of these worlds has its own peculiar laws. The things in either world are *essentially* unlike those of the other; so much so as to have nothing whatever in common. And yet there is a very intimate relation between the world of causes and the world of effects. The Science of Correspondences unfolds and explains this relation. It shows how internal and spiritual things are mirrored forth and represented in external and natural forms. It shows the connection between the infinitely varied and perfect works of creative skill and energy in the spiritual world, and their ultimate effects in the natural world. It connects revelation with reason, religion with philosophy, and God with man. It is to the Word of God, what mathematical science is to the phenomena of the material universe. It reveals order, harmony, and perfection, in the midst of what had before seemed to be disorder, confusion, and uncertainty."

4 Robert Hindmarsh, *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church in England and America* (London: Hodson & Son, 1861), 388.

Swedenborg's "science" of correspondence created an active way to perceive spiritual realities. The idea that an individual or congregation could see beyond the mere material form to a spiritual idea, analogy, or symbol energized Swedenborgians to look to Nature in order to see God. The idea of order itself also underpinned this interpretive practice through the Doctrine of Uses, implying a self-actualization in the building of the perfect society, as revealed in Swedenborg's revelation of three heavens. As one New Church theologian put it: "Man at his best is ever seeking the beauty of order, in himself, in his family, and in government. He would not persist in this effort if he were not aware that in himself are the possibilities of a corresponding order."[5]

In organizing and building the New Church, members were left with many of Swedenborg's descriptions that led them to consider correspondences in architectural styles and spaces. Some examples are stones signifying the "truths of faith;" that churches in the spiritual kingdom are built of stone, and churches in the celestial kingdom are built of wood, which signifies good.[6] Architect Cass Gilbert's Shingle-style Virginia Street Church, erected in St. Paul in 1886, is an excellent example of these meditations on correspondences. The fieldstone foundation, a unique feature of this church, symbolizes the endurance of "God's Divine Truths … upon which we as humans are to build our framework of belief and understanding."[7]

Was there an architectural style most appropriate for the New Church? Many examples in the nineteenth century were Gothic, such as the small Brandywine blue granite church in Wilmington, Delaware, completed in 1858, or the church in Philadelphia, an elaborate high-style Gothic design by Theophilus Parson Chandler Jr., built in 1881. By 1873 the *New-Church Magazine* defended Gothic architecture "as a connecting link between the artistic taste of a past and present age. … It has above all things the appearance of a natural and spontaneous growth, harmonizing with the aspect of the place and with the feelings of the people." But the magazine also defended the classical style: "So with the wonderful products of Greek art and architecture. They are models of perfection for all time on their

5 F. Sidney Mayer, *Why Two Worlds? The Relation of Physical to Spiritual Realities* (Philadelphia: L. B. Lippincott Company, 1934), 37.

6 Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, 566. Some examples: stones signify truths of faith (n. 188 note); signify divine truth (n. 534); houses of *stone* signify what relates to truth (n. 186 note); churches in the spiritual kingdom are built of *stone* (n. 223); precious *stones* in heaven (n. 489). *Heaven and Hell*, 572. Wood signifies good; churches in the celestial kingdom are built of *wood* (n. 223).

7 http://www.virginiastchurch.org/about-1/ and http://www.cassgilbertsociety.org/works/virginia-street-church/

plane."[8] Growth and nature were associated with the Gothic, order and perfection with the Classical.[9] So emerged a fundamental ambivalence to the question of style, with only a few congregations choosing classicism, such as the 1859 New York church in Murray Hill designed by James Hoe. The newspapers reported that it was planned as a Gothic church, but it opened as a Renaissance classical building, with pilasters and pedimented windows, and was later expanded by Gambrill and Post's harmonious addition in 1866.[10]

In terms of a particular style defining sacred space, certainly the most superb example of Greek classicism in the early American church is in Bath, Maine, designed and built by Zina Hyde, originally erected in 1844 and rebuilt after being crushed by snow in 1920. The original church was erected during the rise of fashionable Greek revival architecture and was inspired by Hyde's travels in Italy. He was particularly inspired by the Church of Saint Francis of Paola's façade in Naples, Italy. But classicism also was thought to manifest a divine order of perfection. Hyde wanted the new structure to be "one of the most elegant buildings that adorn the banks of the broad and beautiful Kennebec," and to "correspond to the orderly nature of the Divine as described by Swedenborg: 'God is order itself.'"[11] So order in the church building expressed an ideal notion of society itself, corresponding to other civic structures that represented order, permanence, and authority.

But the Gothic style was believed to imitate the living forms of Nature, therefore it was an *essentially* beautiful style because of this closeness to Nature itself. Nature was also central to influential Romanticism, and Swedenborg had written that, "The ancients worshipped in groves, because groves of trees signify heavenly wisdom and intelligence," reminding us of William Cullen Bryant's pop-

---

8 *New-Church Magazine* 2, no. 2 (December 1873), 106; *New-Church Magazine* 1, no. 5 (March 1873), 250.

9 "The human mind is value-seeking; it strives for unity and coherence, for harmony and beauty, for worth and goodness … [however] Truth, beauty and goodness do not exist outside of Him [God], and when the spiritual mind reacts to these forces it is responding to the divine inspiration, and expressing something inherent in the Creative Source." F. Sidney Mayer, *Why Two Worlds?* 174.

10 The cornerstone was laid on July 2, 1858. See "City Items," *New York Times*, July 2, 1858. http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/2013/10/the-new-york-new-church-114-east-35th.html, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/realestate/07scap.html

11 Robert H. Kirven, *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology* (San Francisco: J. Appleseed & Co., 2003), "Order is a characteristic of everything that is good, and often is used by Swedenborg as a synonym for good. Furthermore, order is a characteristic of everything that is divine, for God is 'order itself,' or pure, abstract, perfect order." On Zina Hyde, see Rob Lawson, "Zina Hyde, Builder of the Bath Church," *New Messenger* 235, no. 6 (June 2013); "Divine Influx Save the Day, Zina Hyde and the Bath Church, *New Messenger* 235, no. 10 (December 2013); and "An Indefatigable Spirit, Zina Hyde and the Bath Church, *The Messenger* 236, no. 1 (January 2014).

ular poem, in which he stated that "The groves were God's first temples."[12] In 1792, Sir James Hall, using ash posts and supple willow poles, demonstrated his notion of the origins of Gothic architectural forms from trees.[13]

Out of the Gothic, American Arts and Crafts was embraced for its more direct application of natural forms. Arts and Crafts inherited the ideals of Johan Wolfgang von Goethe and John Ruskin, particularly the notion that art and architecture related directly to nature and morals, producing spiritual uplift. Here correspondence was not just a causal or functional relation, but a "mode of Influx." This is demonstrated in the most unique church in the movement, the Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco, completed in 1895. The chapel and garden, planned by minister Joseph Worcester, together with architects A. C. Schweinfurth, A. Page Brown, and Bernard Maybeck, with artistic contributions by Bruce Porter and William Keith, was designed as an Arts and Crafts collaboration. The compound is entered through a gated portico which moves one into the planned Japanese-style garden, featuring trees from all over the world, meant to indicate "the interpenetrations of the spirit and nature, of the seen with the unseen."[14] Here the sacred precinct is a space defined and framed by nature, causing many to call it a "garden church." This is also reflected in the homelike interior of the church, which attempts to bring nature indoors.

Worcester was, among many other things, a great lover of Nature, friend of John Muir, and Nature was, most clearly, a revelation of the divine Mind. In the garden, correspondences abound and were outlined in 1940 by the Reverend Othmar Tobisch.[15] Helen Throop Purdy's 1912 guidebook to San Francisco summed up

---

12 Quoted in Devin Zuber, "For the Beauty of the Earth, Message for the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church," 06/11/2011: http://geewhizlabs.com/swedenborg/Sermons/LaySermons/20110612-DZ-ForTheBeautyOfTheEarth.pdf. William Cullen Bryant, "A Forest Hymn," 1852.

13 Sir James Hall, *Essays on the Origins, History and Principles of Gothic Architecture* (London, 1813). See Joseph Rykwert, *On Adam's House in Paradise* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), 85–87.

14 "Quoted in Christine Scriabine, "Bruce Porter: San Francisco Society's Artful Player," *California History* 85, no. 3 (2008): 51, from Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 188. Thanks to San Francisco church members John Robert Gwynn and Carolyn Obrien for showing me the church and allowing access to church historical files. Richard Cabot wrote his sister in 1901 that "the transition from glaring, chalky streets to the green lawn of the little garden is only a step through the black iron gate, round a corner, but when you are in there the world is changed as much as by the whole journey from Boston to Waltham." Quoted in Adrienne Kopa, *The Garden Church of San Francisco*, unpublished essay, n.d., San Francisco Swedenborgian Church Files, 4.

15 Othmar Tobisch, "A diagrammatic lesson in two spiritual meanings of trees found in the garden of the New Jerusalem Church," typescript, San Francisco church archives.

her thoughts about the relationship of the architecture of the chapel to its natural surroundings, where "the noises of the city are shut out:"

> First in the hearts of those who love San Francisco for her unique artistic spots is the little Swedenborgian church. ... But it is to something deeper than the artistic sense that the quiet loveliness of this church appeals; an island of simple beauty in a sea of artificiality, it sheds its benign influence over all who enter its gates. No one of whatever creed or denomination can leave that spot unblessed; no troubled spirit can fail to be soothed by its sweet serenity.[16]

The inspiration for the chapel, what one writer called an "ideal village church," was Spanish Mission architecture but based on an Italian church in the Po Valley near Verona, with reference to the Franciscans who had brought Mediterranean architecture to California. The exterior is brick, with a small tower on the southern side wall, crowned by a wrought-iron Franciscan cross with two bells on either side of a column of Carrara marble.[17]

The interior is completely natural Arts and Crafts, with a large brick fireplace, offset in the nave, and beautiful wood tones of Oregon pine. As a visitor put it: "Before one is seated there is the consciousness of a friendly feeling extended by the warmth that comes from a generous supply of pine knots blazing upon an ample hearth ... [that] make one feel that the forest is near."[18]

The distinctive wood beams are local madrone with the bark intact, a Gothic and California touch: the congregation worships in an old-growth forest seated on 80 hand-woven rush-bottomed seats. An early visitor noted, "It tranquilized and satisfied, as nature in the deep woods satisfied."[19] A screen of natural wood fronts the room, above is a "branch of a native oak."[20] Historian Kevin Starr called it, "an incipiently utopian memorialization of religion and nature made whole through

---

16 Helen Throop Purdy, *San Francisco, As It Was, As It Is, and How to See It* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1912), 109–110.

17 A Stranger, "Swedenborgian Church Near the Gold Gate San Francisco California, An Ideal Country Church Set Down in Her own Garden," typescript pamphlet, San Francisco. "A House That Teaches, The Roof Supported by Madrone Trees, Just as They Left the Forest, The Rev. Mr. Worcester's Church, Going to a Service Through a Garden and Hearing a Sermon While Resting on Rush Bottomed Chairs," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 30, 1895.

18 "A Stranger," typescript pamphlet. Another commented that the "scintillating flames [of] fragrant native wood ... gives a faint out-of-doors perfume to the whole place." "The Most Picturesque Church in the Country," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 7, 1901, 35.

19 Quoted in Adrienne Kopa, *The Garden Church of San Francisco*, 5.

20 As the *San Francisco Chronicle* put it, this is "formed like the complete tree and veiled in Spanish moss." Raymond Wong and Jim Lawrence, "A Brief History of the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church," local pamphlet.

art."[21] A *San Francisco Chronicle* article concluded that the church was "Low-toned, still, comforting, quiet as the peace of God; everything with all its beauty, is so quiet that even the beauty does not obtrude. … [expressing] the doctrines of Swedenborg interpreted by his modern disciples: revolt against materialism, correspondence between nature and revelation." Another reported that "the building is itself a lesson, it teaches truth and honesty," and called it "a sermon in church building."[22]

Between the years 1915 and 1921, during the building of the grand Bryn Athyn cathedral, dedicated in 1919, there was much talk in Swedenborgian circles about church architecture. Reverend Frank Sewall, minister of the Washington, D. C. church from 1899, settled just after its edifice was destroyed by fire, contributed to the debates concerning appropriate styles and symbolism of certain church plans.

Sewall was well placed to contribute to the architecture of the church: he had grown up in the Bath church, he had been pastor of both the Urbana, Ohio and the Glasgow, Scotland societies while their new churches were being built, and he was now poised to help build the National Church. When in Glasgow for three years, he persuaded the congregation to build a new edifice in the early English Gothic style.[23]

In 1899, Sewall wrote to the Washington, D. C. church, believing they should "build anew," and recommended that "whatever was built … should be distinguished at first glance by its elegance, its beauty, its perfect adaptation to its sacred and high use as an external representation and habitation of the Lord's New Church."[24] Sewall proposed H. Langford Warren for the job as architect, probably based on the success of his English Gothic Swedenborgian chapel in Cambridge, completed in 1901, with its 75 foot long nave, noble archway, and the raised chancel, contain-

21 Kevin Starr, "Consider It Poetry of Architecture," local pamphlet. Leslie Freudenheim, *Building with Nature: Inspiration for the Arts and Crafts Home* (Gibbs Smith, 2005). See also https://css.gtu.edu/icon-of-simplicity/.

22 "A House That Teaches," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 30, 1895; Mabel Clare Craft, "A Sermon in Church Building," *The House Beautiful* 9, no. 3 (February 1901): 125–132. See Sarah Burt, *The Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco: Art and Antimodernism in California, 1890–1915* (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1996).

23 Archibald McWhirter, *The Church of the New Jerusalem in Scotland*, date unknown; https://archive.org/stream/rschsv012p3macwhirter/rschsv012p3macwhirter_djvu.txt. Upon his death in 1916, Sewall was remembered for "[making] a thorough study of church architecture," and "making significant the three church buildings of our communion which are the most significant from the New-Church point of view." *New-Church Messenger* 110, no. 3 (January 19, 1916): 47.

24 Memorial Volume, *New-Church Messenger* 15, no. 3 (January 19, 1916): 43.

ing the altar and the elaborate repository of the Word. This church later inspired the 1929 Pittsburgh Church, by Bryn Athyn architect Harold Thorpe Carswell.[25]

Sewall undoubtedly "gave [Warren] many ideas relating to the kind of church to build." But only in 1915, do we understand what those ideas were: Sewall hoped they would be helpful to the readers of the *New-Church Messenger* in the "erection of churches in the future." Many of the features of his "ideal New-Church" were already realized in the Washington, D. C. edifice, dedicated in 1896, and described as "gothic architecture, built of stone, extremely chaste and simple in general effect, while solid and true, without high color in interior finish, and with a deep chancel and altar of stone, as repository for the Word."[26]

Besides defending the applicability of historical styles for the New Church, questions emerged concerning the spatial and hierarchical arrangements of church interiors in creating a sacred space worthy and expressive of the church's theology. Sewall's notions were based on ideas published much earlier in 1841, by English artist Joseph Andrews, who claimed "every great change in religious faith has manifested itself by a corresponding change in architecture. It is reasonable to think that the New Church must soon manifest herself in this form. … As the new spiritual man is formed from the understanding and the conscience, with the consent of the will, so will the New Church build the new architectural creature which is to be her express image." So, Andrews reasoned, "the architect of the New Church is not restricted in the matter of style." More importantly, however, was the idea that the internal and external aspects of the church architecture "must correspond to each other, as the spiritual and natural body of man." Andrews suggested that since the human is governed by the law of correspondence, there should be three parts to every church building – "the lower or basement to contain rooms for instruction on a natural plane" (scientific, civil, moral lectures and daily instruction for children), through to the main floor – corresponding "to the spiritual degree … [as] a place of worship, instruction in the Word, prayer and praise," and the higher floor, corresponding to the "inmost in man," where the Lord's Supper should be celebrated.[27] This was prescient of debates to come.

When Sewall echoed this line of thinking in his ideal New Church plan, he defined it theologically: "the baptismal font [is] at the front of the sanctuary, at the 'secular level,' while the altar is located several steps above, in the 'sacred realm.'" More generally he asked if there could be a "distinctively New-church tem-

25 When I visited the church in 2017, a member referred to it as their "mini cathedral."

26 *The New-Church Review* 15, no. 2 (April 1908), 200.

27 Andrews, "On Architecture," 124. Quoted and discussed in Richard Kenneth Silver, "The Spiritual Kingdom in America: The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on American Society and Culture: 1815–1860 (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983), 250–251.

ple," that avoided the "danger of a crude tampering with good architecture under the plea of representing the 'correspondences.'"[28] He suggested, after Swedenborg's description of a double temple in *True Christian Religion*, that a hierarchical approach to the two sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Supper would be best served through a spatial separation or progress leading through three levels: from the natural (nave for Baptism and instruction), spiritual (for preaching, praying, and singing), up to the celestial, or the upper room, for the altar. "From the pavement without" Sewall wrote, "a vista may be seen through the entire building leading up to the Word reposing in light upon the altar in the 'Upper Room.'"

For the Washington, D. C. church, Sewall suggested the Byzantine basilica as model, with a rectangular nave giving way to a semi-circular domed chancel. As examples he cited San Miniato in Florence, and Westminster Cathedral in London. The rather dramatic four-foot separation between these zones, and the thirty-foot wide staircase up to the upper room in Sewall's chancel plan, was reduced in Warren's church to three steps or platforms of access to the altar, "representative of the three states of man's regeneration, – the natural, spiritual and celestial." Sewall noted that the Byzantine style he desired "was abandoned by the architect for the Gothic" but still it was "a very beautiful example of this favorite ecclesiastical style."[29]

By 1916, Chicago minister L. Eric Wethey more fully elaborated what he saw as Sewall's contribution with correspondences to the ancient Jewish Tabernacle: "Let us suppose we have a church building with three divisions, divided into an entrance [Outer] court, an inner part, equivalent to the customary nave [or Holy Place], and an innermost part, forming the Holy of Holies. … [it would] be possible

28 Frank Sewall, "An Ideal Plan for a New-Church House of Worship; a Page of New-Church History," *The New-Church Review,* April 1915, 198–209.

29 As Sewall described it, "the baptismal font [is] at the front of the sanctuary, at the 'secular level,' while the altar is located several steps above, in the 'sacred realm,' and the Bible is prominently displayed in the center." Sewall, "An Ideal Plan for a New-Church House of Worship, A Page of New-Church History," *The New Church Review* April 1915, 198–209. In a later article he described passing through the "great chancel arch known anciently as the triumphant arch into the presence of the Lord in Glory, with the New Church, The Lord in His Divine Human, as the one Lord of heaven and earth forever present with His Church in His Word," and comparing the repository of the Word as the ark of the Covenant, "the immediate symbol of the Lord's presence." He enumerated again the symbolism: "Here at the 'east end' or chancel are the appointments in their several planes or spaces for the several functions of worship: the celestial or the Holy Supper, marriage, benediction and confirmation, as the gate to the Holy Communication: the spiritual, including the preaching, the leading in prayer or song: and, thirdly, the natural, the reading of the Word in the letter and the sacrament of baptism. (See how they are described in the account of the double temple in T. C. R. 669)." Frank Sewall, "Symbolism of the National Church," *The New-Church League Journal* 15, no. 5 (May 1915): 134–135.

to behold the Word shining in its 'innermost recess' corresponding to the Ark of the Covenant ... People could not but be struck by the similarity of such a church to the Jewish tabernacle, and would perceive the Christian interpretation of that tabernacle as it applies to the two sacraments which have taken the place of the peculiar Jewish forms." He suggested putting the Baptismal font in the entrance court, like the Anglicans did.[30]

Earlier at Urbana, Sewall inspired the congregation to build a new church in 1880 and drew the plans. "Its details of architecture have a meaning," the *New-Church Messenger* reported at a memorial service for Sewall in 1916: "As you look at it you see God's Word set up on its high altar. ... Its three main divisions, first the altar, the place of the Word; second, its lectern and pulpit, its place of instruction; and this, its pews and choir stalls, that is, its place for its worshipers ... represent, for one thing, any human life ... we need to be instructed first in the things of this world, then in the things of heaven. ... Three great planes of human life are represented here in this church."[31]

The Episcopal Seat of the General Church also built these ideas into its plan. The church was initially designed by famous gothicist Ralph Adams Cram, who had designed the English Perpendicular style Church of the Open Word, in Newtonville, Massachusetts in 1893. Raymond Pitcairn, who wanted to create a unique organic structure built through communal effort, supervised the church building. The chancel is divided into three receding sections, each rising from three steps. A guide states that, "The major divisions of the cathedral ... are symbolic of the degrees of life in man. The inmost mind is represented by the sanctuary; the internal mind by the chancel; and the external mind by the nave."[32] The Gothic style was

---

30 L. Eric Wethey, "New Design for Church Architecture," *New-Church Messenger* 15, no. 9 (March 1, 1916): 177. He continued: "It has been said ... that it was a strange thing that the New Church had never evolved any distinctive type of architecture. Perhaps that is natural, but perhaps the distinctiveness would be more likely to appear in the *use* the New Church makes of old things. The Gothic design will doubtless remain as an unusually beautiful style for churches, as well as the Corinthian and others. ..."

31 "Dr. Sewall's Work at Urbana," *New-Church Messenger* 110 (January 19, 1916): 57. "His interest was in all that made for the organic unity and beauty of the visible church; all that would make us think of her as our mother, not merely as a spiritual principle, our knowledge and worship of her Lord, but as the outward form of that devotion in all its parts, the personal mouthpiece, interpreter, and adapter of his divine will to our earthly needs." "Notes on Dr. Sewall's Service to the Liturgics of the Church," *New-Church Messenger* 110, no. 3 (January 19, 1916): 47. He would also be remembered for "his enthusiastic care for every architectural detail of the three churches he designed or built, one for each of his pastorates."

32 Federal Writers' Project (Pa.), *Philadelphia, a guide to the nation's birthplace* (Philadelphia: William Penn Association of Philadelphia, 1937), 653.

also applauded as a "fulfillment" of a new Christianity. Its organic functionalism "enabled the builders of the Bryn Athyn Cathedral to use an old form while adapting it to a new belief."[33]

In 1921, Bryn Athyn architect D. Donald Robb wrote, "From an artistic point of view, [the doctrine of correspondence] ... is the most precious possession of the New Church. It is not difficult to imagine a school of ecclesiastical architecture ... superior to that of the Middle Ages. ... A modest beginning has been made in several of our churches, notably at Bryn Athyn. ... It is not too much to expect that the New Christianity, once fully established in the world, will clothe itself with a new architecture, grafted on the Gothic of the old Christianity; and that this style ... will give full and free expression to the New Doctrines, and be a thing more beautiful than the world has ever seen."[34] An Australian churchman disagreed outrightly and thought that the Bryn Athyn church was an anticlimax: "Is the Gothic scheme of architecture, its nave, chancel, and rows of pillars, the best adapted for teaching and hearing? ... Some of us, perhaps, would have preferred a building that should more nearly accede to that Divine ideal: 'Behold, I make all things new'(Apoc. 21:5)."[35]

By midcentury, congregations and architects began to produce new visions of the relationships between Nature and spirituality.[36] With the Wayfarers Chapel in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, we discover a church completely new in its vision and interpretation. Lloyd Wright's chapel was completed and dedicated in 1951 as a memorial to Emanuel Swedenborg. At first a "Glass Church," now it is a "Tree Chapel," – transparent glass brings the majestic redwoods planted near the edifice into close proximity. As Reverend Doctor Jim Lawrence put it, in contemplating the Wayfarers Chapel in 2022, "Sitting here right now in this sanctuary we see through the walls to a surrounding reality that holds us in our contemplation of the divine immensity. This Swedenborgian architecture teaches that the spiritual dimension is both vast and right here in our personal contemplation. God is in us even more than we ourselves are in us, and so we sit in a sacred space right now

33 E. Bruce Glenn, *Bryn Athyn Cathedral, The Building of a Church* (Bryn Athyn Church of the New Jerusalem, 1971), 25.

34 E. Donald Robb, "Symbolism in the Middle Ages," *New-Church Review* 28, no. 2 (April 1921): 145.

35 Review, "The Bryn Athyn Church," *The New Age (Sydney)*, April 1918. Quoted in *New Church Life,* Editorial Department, 1918 (exact date unknown).

36 For an excellent look at how religion, space, and nature interact, see S. Bergmann, P. M. Scott, and H. Bedford-Strohm, eds. *Nature, Space and the Sacred: Transdisciplinary Persp*ectives (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016).

that evokes the spiritual knowledge that 'God's circumference is nowhere, but God's center is everywhere.'"[37]

Geometries in the church are also correspondences. For example, round windows "remind us of the oneness of God, the ongoing of life and our striving towards wholeness. … The trees surrounding us represent our lives as we strive to live and grow Godward." As the church-issued brochure assures us: "The harmony of glass, wood and stone, combined with the beauty of natural surroundings, symbolizes the integral relationship of our inner world of mind and spirit with God's universe."[38] The "Tree Chapel" might remind us of descriptions by Swedenborg from his 1758 treatise *Other Planets.* On one of the planets, spirits showed him "sacred gathering places. … made from trees that have not been cut down but are still growing in their native soil. … They plant these in patterns right from the beginning to become covered walkways, and while their branches are still pliable, well in advance they trim and prune them so that as they grow they will intertwine and join together" to form floors, walls and eventually "arches overhead to form the roof."[39] The Wayfarer's Chapel really did become something of a New-Church form: It was the featured centerpiece of the 1964 World's Fair in New York, and inspired other churches, such as the 1958 Church of the Open Word Garden Chapel in St. Louis, designed by Leslie Black and Erwin Carl Schmidt.

More contemporary examples followed, such as the New Church of Boulder Valley, Lafayette, Colorado, first designed by George Watt of Barrett Studio Architects, and completed by Davis Partnership Architects in 2002. Following the Boulder Valley congregation's desire to reveal correspondences between nature and spiritual forces, the firm juxtaposed "light, water, rock and trees" to "hold a specific meaning – 'all of nature is a theatre to find the divine.'"[40] The altar itself is a large rough boulder, punctuated by candles and holding the Word. Other contemporary churches have also used large boulders as altars, such as the Westville, South Africa church (built 1970), and the Sunrise Chapel in Tucson, Arizona (built 1987), whose rock altar is symbolic of the words in Psalms 18:2, "The Lord is my rock." Other symbolic boulder altars are found in the church at Boynton Beach, Florida (built 1989), and the Oak Arbor church in Rochester, Michigan (built 2002).

---

37 Jim Lawrence, "Take Only a Staff for the Journey," *The Messenger*, 246: 6, July/August, 2022), 99.
38 *Through the Garden and Sanctuary of Wayfarers Chapel*, Visitors Self-Guiding Walk (Wayfarers Chapel, date unknown).
39 Emanuel Swedenborg, "Other Planets"(1758), translated by George F. Dole and Jonathan S. Rose (West Chester, Pennsylvania: Swedenborg Foundation, 2018), 82.
40 https://davispartnership.com/projects/new-church-boulder-valley/; http://watt-arch.com/new-church-of-boulder-valley/.

Within the broader area of urban planning, the symbolic correspondences moved from the sacred precincts of individual churches into a sacred conception of the cityscape, which found articulation in larger geometric structures in visionary architect Daniel Burnham's plans. As historian Irving D. Fischer argues, "Burnham devised a plan for Chicago whose contours he deliberately based upon the Heavenly City described in … Swedenborg's *Heaven and Hell.*" He believes that the Doctrine of Correspondence figures prominently in Burnham's plan, through three distinct circuits that correspond to Swedenborg's three heavens. Swedenborg revealed the divine structure of heaven to be concentrically organized around a radiant center. In Burnham's scheme, the outermost "circle" corresponds to the first heaven, outside major centers of government and culture as the "natural" heaven; the inner city corresponds to the spiritual or middle heaven and contains "a threefold grouping of monumental buildings devoted to literature, science, and art," as well as other intellectual institutions, sited in well-organized parks. The center plan corresponds to the celestial heaven and as the "heart of Chicago" is given over to financial, corporate and governmental functions, manifestations of authority, permanence, and legitimacy. It is from this Civic Center that the series of radial arterials diverge, from which functionality, benevolence and order radiate throughout the city, producing the city as a sacred space.[41]

The overall interest in the meanings of church architectural styles, and the importance of tripartite groupings in church interiors, based on Swedenborg's notions of heaven, the three degrees of Life, and the Word, seem to ultimately correspond: in the larger cityscape in its potential to articulate the Heavenly City, and in the individual church as a symbolic microcosm of advancing, regenerating spiritu-

41 Irving D. Fisher, "An Iconology of City Planning – The Plan of Chicago," in *Swedenborg and His Influence*, ed. Erland J. Brock (Bryn Athyn, PA: The Academy of the New Church, 1988), 449–462. Architectural historian Kristen Schaffer adds the Doctrine of Uses to Burnham's scheme, revealing his involvement in urban reform. Burnham wrote to his mother describing architecture as the "striving after the beautiful and useful laws God has created to govern his material universe," and Schaffer concludes that "Burnham's view of the city is a remarkably holistic one," which "integrates physical aspects with important social services," since Burnham "understood that both were requisite for the dignity of human life in the city." So, she concludes, the *Chicago Plan* is "both the plan of heaven and the map to get there." See Kristen Schaffer, "'The beautiful and useful laws of God': Burnham's Swedenborgianism and the Plan of Chicago," *Planning Perspectives*, 25, 2 (April 2010), 245. "The organization of the Kingdom [of Heaven] can be classified in systems, and these again subdivided into societies, very much like the organism of the human body …. each individual functions in an orderly way to maintain the united government. The motive which holds each individual to his society is the love of being useful, and this one motive permeates the entire government, fixing the position of each society to its system, and then each of these to the complete unit of the Kingdom." F. Sidney Mayer, 227.

al knowledge.[42] New Church members believed that architecture could embody spiritual concepts in a symbolic and even concrete way. This led them to create sacred spaces that, to them, expressed the full and free expression of the New Doctrines, and encouraged an active recognition and engagement with spiritual realities here and now in architecture and worship.

Bibliography

Albanese, Catherine L. *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

Barnard, Job. "History of the Church of the New Jerusalem in the City of Washington," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D. C.* 24, 1922, 23–42.

Bergmann, S., Scott, P. M., Bedford-Strohm, H., eds. *Nature, Space and the Sacred: Transdisciplinary Perspectives.* New York: Taylor and Francis, 2016.

Buggeln, Gretchen. *The Suburban Church, Modernism and Community in Postwar America.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Burt, Sarah. "The Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco: Art and Anti-modernism in California, 1890–1915." PhD diss., University of Kansas, 1996.

Fisher, Irving D. "An Iconology of City Planning – The Plan of Chicago," in *Swedenborg and His Influence*, ed. Erland J. Brock, 449–64. Bryn Athyn, PA: The Academy of the New Church, 1988.

Freudenheim, Leslie M. *Building with Nature, Inspiration for the Arts and Crafts Home.* Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2005.

Glenn, E. Bruce. *Bryn Athyn Cathedral, The Building of a Church.* Bryn Athyn, PA: Church of the New Jerusalem, 1971.

Hindmarsh, Robert. *Rise and Progress of the New Jerusalem Church in England and America.* London: Hodson & Son, 1861.

Hines, Thomas S. *Burnham of Chicago, Architect and Planner.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Ivey, Paul. *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Kieckhefer, Richard. *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Kirven, Robert H. *A Concise Overview of Swedenborg's Theology.* San Francisco: J. Appleseed & Co., 2003.

Longstreth, Richard. *On the Edge of the World: Four Architects in San Francisco at the Turn of the Century.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1983.

42 On tripartite man in Swedenborgian thought, see "On the Tripartite Nature of Man," *New Jerusalem Magazine and Theological Inspector*, December 1828, 385–386. "There is a Trinity in the Lord, but a Trinity like that of the spirit, the body, and the actions of an individual (*The Lord*, 46). One person includes the three aspects known as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." *Scribe of Heaven, Swedenborg's Life, Work, and Impact*, eds. Jonathan S. Rose, Stuart Shotwell, Mary Lou Bertucci (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005), 69.

Mayer, Sidney F. *Why Two Worlds? The Relation of Physical to Spiritual Realities.* Philadelphia: L. B. Lippincott Company, 1934.

Purdy, Helen Throop. *San Francisco, As It Was, As It Is, and How to See It.* San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1912.

Rose, Jonathan S., Shotwell, Stuart, Bertucci, Mary Lou eds. *Scribe of Heaven, Swedenborg's Life, Work, and Impact.* West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2005.

Rykwert, Joseph. *On Adam's House in Paradise.* New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972.

Schaffer, Kristen. "'The beautiful and useful laws of God': Burnham's Swedenborgianism and the Plan of Chicago," *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 2 (April 2010), 243–52.

Silver, Richard Kenneth. "The Spiritual Kingdom in America: The Influence of Emanuel Swedenborg on American Society and Culture: 1815–1860." PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983.

Smith, Carl. *The Plan of Chicago, Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Starr, Kevin. *Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Heaven and Hell.* Translated by George F. Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2001.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place, The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Winter, Robert, ed. *A Simpler Way of Life: The Arts & Crafts Architects of California.* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.

Zuber, Devin P. *A Language of Things: Emanuel Swedenborg and the American Environmental Imagination.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2020.

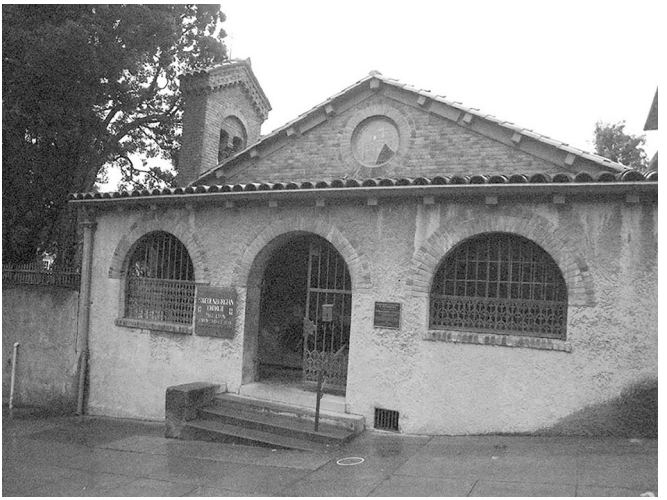

Fig. 1: Swedenborgian Church of San Francisco, 1895
All images courtesy of Paul Ivey

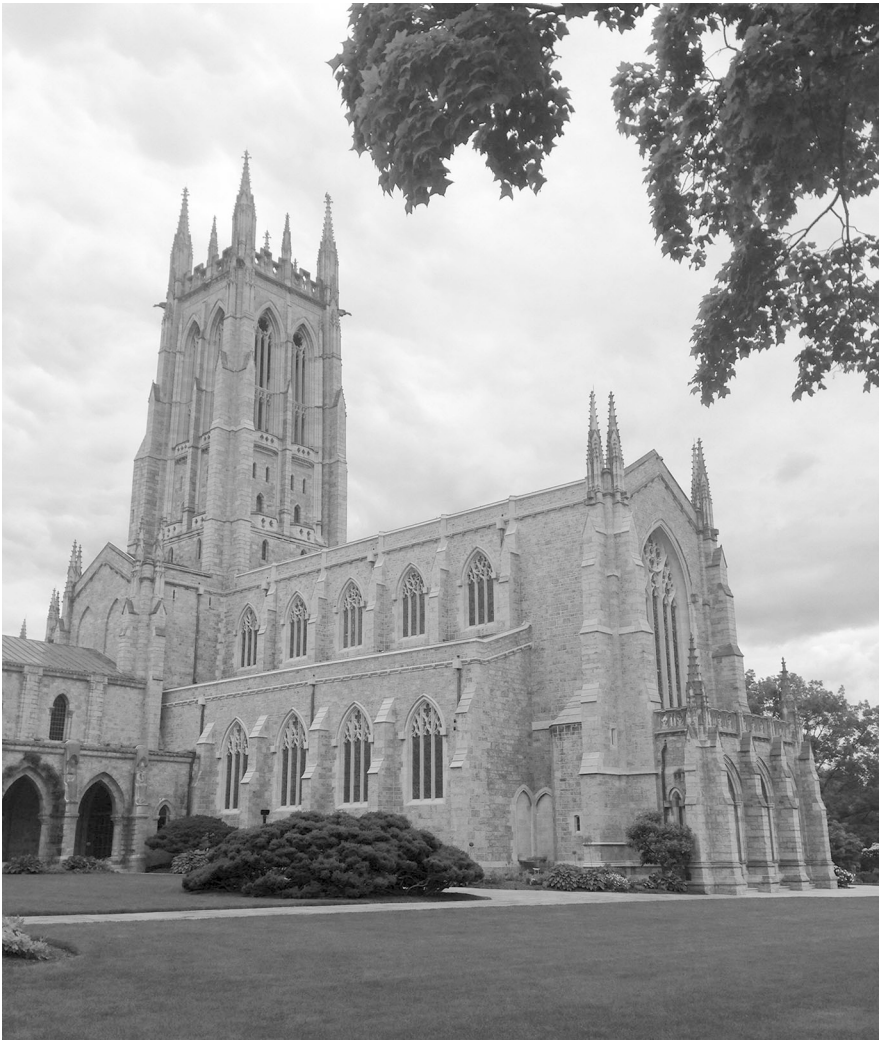

Fig. 2: Bryn Athyn Cathedral, 1913–1928

Fig. 3: The Pittsburgh New Church, 1929

Fig. 4: Wayfarer's Chapel, Rancho Palos Verde, postcard, 1951

About the authors

Alison Aurosa. PhD (2014) is currently a Fellow Professor in Landscape Aesthetics at Politecnico di Milano and in Digital Aesthetics at the University of Naples, Federico II. Since 2015, she is an associated researcher of GERPHAU Research Laboratory (Paris La Villette) and since 2021 of the IMU Research Laboratory (Lyon3). Since 2019 she is Editor in Chief of the international journal Bachelard Studies. From 2006 she worked on Gaston Bachelard philosophy. Her research interests are developed through the aesthetic analysis of the different forms of inhabiting, starting from architecture, design, atmospheres and gender studies.

Andrea Franchetto is a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Religions at Stockholm University under the supervision of Prof. Egil Asprem and Prof. Henrik Bogdan. He is currently developing a spatial approach to prescriptive ritual texts, visual sources, and manuscripts. In particular, he focuses on conceptualizations and constructions of ritual spaces and the interaction with spirits, angels, and demons in medieval magical handbooks from the 13th to the 15th century. He obtained a Master of Science in Architecture from Politecnico di Milano in 2016 and a research Master of Arts in Religious Studies from the University of Amsterdam in 2019. His research interests encompass material religion, phenomenology, spatial approaches, embodied cognition, and paleography. From 2021 he is developing and teaching the course "Magic in the European History of Religions: Text and Traditions." Besides his research and teaching duties, he is supervising undergraduate students, and he has chaired the Doctoral Council at the Institution of Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies at Stockholm University.

Dr. Aaron French is a postdoctoral researcher and an Instructor in the Religious Studies Master's Program at the University of Erfurt, Germany. He specializes in the study of esotericism, history of science, modernity, German Romanticism, and science and technology studies. His first published monograph, based on his dissertation, will appear with Routledge in late 2024. His current research focuses on how three architects in Central Europe during the first half of the 20th century—Bruno Taut, Rudolf Steiner, and Le Corbusier—sought to redefine and reimagine "sacredness" and "sacred spaces" for the modern world.

Dr. Paul Eli Ivey is Professor of Art History at the University of Arizona, Tucson, where he teaches Modern and Contemporary Art and their relationship to notions of spirituality, cognitive and social agency, and museology. His research engages the built environments and compounds of alternative and esoteric American religions and communal groups. He is author of Radiance from Halcyon, A Utopian Experiment in Religion and Science (Minnesota, 2013), concerning a turn of the twentieth century theosophical intentional community on California's Central Coast, and Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930 (Illinois, 1999).

Andrej Kapcar is currently pursuing a PhD in Masaryk University in Brno at the Department for the Study of Religions. His academic background includes a BA in Archaeology, MAs in Economics, Archaeology and Comparative religions and a PhD in Archaeology. Within his research he focuses on contemporary esotericism, occultism, and Chaos Magick in relation to the aesthetics of modern popular culture. He is one of the founding members of RASWE – the Research Association for the study of Western Esotericism. Among his other interests are philosophy, psychology, art (modern and clas-

sical alike) or cognitive studies. Outside of his academic endeavours, he also works as a graphic designer, specializing in occult inspired designs and art.

Shujuan Li is an Associate Professor in the School of Landscape Architecture and Planning at the University of Arizona. Her research interests include the integration of spatial analysis and modeling with GIS for urban and environmental studies, environmental consequences of rapid urbanization, landscape ecology, and land-use and land-cover dynamics.

Tancredi Marrone is pursuing a Ph.D in the study of psychedelics and religious movmements at Masaryk University Brno. He has a Batchelor in Foreign Languages and Cultures a Masters in Audiovisual Translation and a second masters in the Study of Religions, specialzied in Western Esotericism. His interests are focused in the anthropological reseach of psychedelics and altered states of consciousness through both emic and etic perspectives. He Is also interested in conspiracy theories, esotericism and sexuality, and the overlap between technologies and magical practices.

Dr. Ansgar Martins is currently a research associate at the Franz Rosenzweig Minerva Research Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He studied philosophy of religion, sociology and history in Frankfurt am Main. His areas of research include the transformations of religion in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in Judaism and Esotericism.

Aikaterini-Iliana Rassia is an ancient historian & Classical archaeologist working on the social and cultural history of Greece from the Classical to the Roman Imperial periods. She received her BA in Archaeology & History of Art from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Afterwards, she moved to London, where she conducted graduate studies in Classical Art & Archaeology at the University of London and in Ancient History at King's College London. She has held postdoctoral fellowships at the University of Erfurt (Germany) and U.S.A. She is currently an Early Career Fellow at the Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard University).

William Redwood completed his PhD on modern magic at University College London. He still works and writes in the city, and his research focuses on the cosmology of the esoteric universe.

Anna Sokolina, PhD is a trained architect, curator, scholar, Routledge featured author, founding chair of SAH Women in Architecture Affiliate Group, board honorary advisor of the International Archive of Women in Architecture, Advisory Board member of The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopaedia of Women in Architecture and of H-SHERA Network. Research focus: holistic genealogies and trajectories of global transitions in architecture; alternative identities and women's contribution to the integral field of the built environment. She published over 100 papers, presented and chaired sessions at 86 academic conferences, and received 17 grants and recognitions. Her artwork is housed in 23 public and private collections; among recent publications are *The Routledge Companion to Women in Architecture* (ed, 2021), "Breaking the Silence" (2021), *SAH Women in Architecture Bibliography* (co-ed, 2021), "Biology in Architecture" (2016, 2019), *Architecture and Anthroposophy* (ed, 2001, 2010, 2019). In-progress are: monograph *The Utopia Code: Architecture of the GDR*, five entries for *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopaedia*, and edits of the volume by Milka Bliznakov, *The Great Experiment in Architecture 1917–1932.*

Sokolina holds a PhD in Theory/History of Architecture, Landmarks Restoration and Preservation from VNIITAG, Moscow, and a Certificate in Arts Administration from New York University SPS. She interned at Guggenheim Museum New York, Cooper-Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, and Pub-

lic Design Commission of New York City at The Mayor's Office, contributed at The Morgan Library and Museum NYC, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Education Department. Invited by the European Academy of the Urban Environment EA.UE Berlin in the UNESCO Program "Sustainable Settlements" she lectured and curated itinerant Paper Architecture exhibitions with support by Senate Berlin, Grün Berlin GMBh, École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Strasbourg ENSAS, Bürgerhaus Gröbenzell, and was interviewed in direct broadcast by RIAS Berlin. During her t-track as member of architecture faculty at Miami University SFA she curated the Cage Gallery, served on Council on Diversity and Inclusion, REEE Curriculum Committee, Havighurst Advisory Committee and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Selection Committee.

Dr. Esther Sternberg is internationally recognized for her discoveries in the science of the mind-body interaction in illness and healing, and the role of place in wellbeing. She is a pioneer and major force in collaborative initiatives on mind-body-stress-wellness and environment interrelationships. A dynamic speaker, she engages her audience with passion for her subject and compassion as a physician. Through stories, she provides listeners with many take-home tips to help them cope with stress and thrive, and to create wellbeing spaces wherever they work or live.

Dr. Sternberg's three popular highly readable, informative, and scientifically based books are inspirations for lay persons and professionals alike, seeking answers to the complexities and 21st century frontiers of stress, place, healing, and wellness. Her award-winning book, *WELL at WORK: Creating Wellbeing in Any Workspace* (Little, Brown Spark, 2023) was named a Top Ten Lifestyle Book for Fall 2023 by Publishers Weekly and received the OWL (Outstanding Works of Literature) Longlist Award. Her two previous science-for-the-lay public books, *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place* and *Well-Being and The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions*, are landmarks in their fields. *Healing Spaces* was recognized by the President of the American Institute of Architects as an inspiration for launching the AIA's Design and Health Initiative and has inspired implementation of healing spaces in hospitals across the country and around the world.

Currently Research Director, Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine and Founding Director of the University of Arizona Institute on Place, Wellbeing & Performance, she holds the Inaugural Andrew Weil Chair for Research in Integrative Medicine and is Research Professor of Medicine with joint appointments as Professor in Psychology, Architecture, and Planning & Landscape Architecture, and in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness. As Senior Scientist and Section Chief, National Institutes of Health (1986–2012), she directed the NIH Integrative Neural Immune Program, Co-Chaired the NIH Intramural Program on Research on Women's Health, and chaired a sub-committee of the NIH Central Tenure Committee.

Dr. Sternberg has advised the World Health Organization; the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine; the International WELL Building Institute; the Royal Society, London; the Vatican, where she was presented to Pope Benedict XVI; and has briefed high level U.S. Federal Government officials including the Surgeon General, National Institutes of Health leadership, and the Department of Defense. Her two decades-long research with the U.S. General Services Administration, using wearable devices to track health and wellbeing in the built office environment, is informing healthy design standards and COVID re-entry across the federal government and the private sector.

Among other honors, she moderated a panel with the Dalai Lama, was recognized by the National Library of Medicine as one of the women who "Changed the Face of Medicine," served as member and Chair of NLM's Board of Regents, and received an Honorary Doctorate in Medicine from Trinity College, Dublin on its 300th Anniversary. She has authored over 240 scholarly articles, edited 10 technical books on the topic of brain-immune connections and design and health, and

writes a monthly blog for *Psychology Today*, which has garnered tens of thousands of readers on subjects including stress and illness, gratitude and wellness, and place and wellbeing. She co-created and hosted the PBS Television Special, *The Science of Healing with Dr. Esther Sternberg*, and is frequently interviewed in the lay press and media, including NPR, BBC, CBC radio; PBS, ABC, CBS 60 Minutes Overtime television; the Washington Post, LA Times, U.S. News and World Report, Reader's Digest, Prevention Magazine, The Oprah Magazine, and numerous podcasts, among others. She received her M.D. from McGill University, and trained in rheumatology at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Montreal, Canada.

Alden Stoner is the CEO of Nature Sacred a US-based non-profit. Under her leadership, Nature Sacred transformed from a grant-giving organization to an operating foundation to improve individual and community wellness by expanding its existing 100+ community-led, contemplative green spaces – Sacred Places – across the US. She is the producer of the book, BenchTalk: Wisdoms Inspired in Nature, a collection of journal entries from the first 25 years of visitors to Sacred Places. Alden previously served as a member of the Board for a decade-and-a-half and co-directed and produced several short films about select Sacred Places supported by the organization. For 20 years prior to joining Nature Sacred, Alden mobilized organizations and the public around social issues, films, Fortune 500 brands, and start-ups. Alden graduated with a B.A from the University of Southern California, Phi Beta Kappa, and holds a dual Masters in Global Media and Communication from USC and the London School of Economics. She gets her 20 minutes a day of nature by paddle-boarding on the Chesapeake Bay, forest walks with her kiddo, and Japanese wood carving.

Katharina Waldner (Dr phil.) is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Erfurt. She works on the history of religion in the ancient Mediterranean, in particular early Christian martyrdom. She also focuses on gender and religion and other current topics in religious studies. She is a member of the Erfurt Research Group on Spatiotemporality and an affiliate fellow at the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Social and Cultural Studies at the University of Erfurt.