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## *Between Dream and Shadow: The Aesthetic Change Embodied by the Garden of Lion Grove*

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### Abstract

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese emperor Qianlong ordered the construction of the Garden of Lion Grove and the Western Garden within his garden complex of Yuanmingyuan in Beijing. His Garden of Lion Grove was an imitation of the original Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou, which was well known for its rockery labyrinth. Comparing the original Lion Grove and its replicas through poetry and architectural representation, Qianlong sought for truth of the cosmic world. My previous research has uncovered the cross-cultural history regarding the design of the Western Garden within the Yuanmingyuan. This essay translates and interprets the poems and garden records of the Lion Grove in Suzhou to reveal the aesthetic change of the garden from the original Buddhist Chan (Zen) idea of the Yuan dynasty to the secular labyrinthine ecstasy of the Qing dynasty. The labyrinthine theatricality of the Lion Groves, including the original one and its replicas, was well documented by Qianlong through his poems and his frequent reference to master painter Ni Zan's painting scroll of the Lion Grove in Suzhou. The essay draws a conclusion that the

aesthetic transition from Buddhist Chan (Zen) to labyrinthine ecstasy at the Lion Grove in Suzhou took place in a particularly historical age, namely the Ming dynasty, when the philosophical issues of dream and fantasy became trendy in Chinese gardens and garden literature.

The Qing emperor Qianlong (reign 1736-1795) was connected to three gardens all of which were named Lion Grove (Shizilin 狮子林). Like his grandfather Kangxi, Qianlong visited the Jiangnan area, home of the original Lion Grove, six times. Each time when he stopped by Suzhou in Jiangnan, he would visit the garden Lion Grove. The Lion Grove was originally established as part of a Buddhist temple during the late Yuan dynasty (14<sup>th</sup> century) and was well known for eccentric rocks and bamboo groves. During the Ming dynasty (c. 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries), the grove of rocks was developed into a rockery labyrinth, which was enjoyed by Qianlong and local scholars of the Qing dynasty (c. 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries). The Yuan painter Ni Zan 倪瓒 created a well-known painting of this garden. Qianlong personally owned Ni's scroll based on which he visited the Lion Grove in Suzhou and built two Lion Grove replicas respectively in his residential garden Yuanmingyuan in Beijing and the retreat garden Mountain Hamlet for Summer Coolness (Bishu shanzhuang) in Chengde. He wrote poems and committed paintings on the Lion Groves and recurrently compared them in his thoughts. Coincidentally, the Lion Grove garden of the Yuanmingyuan bordered the so-called Western Garden (Xiyanglou) designed by European Jesuits. The seemingly accidental co-presence of these two gardens provides a unique opportunity for studying Qianlong's view of labyrinth that shuttled back and forth in history and between East and West.

In 1342 of the Yuan dynasty, a monk Weize 维则, assumed name Tianru 天如, established a Buddhist temple in Suzhou to memorialize his master Ben Zhongfeng 本中峰. In the same year, Weize's students built a garden, named Lion Grove, near the temple for his dwelling. According to a garden record of the Yuan dynasty, there were ten thousand bamboo plants and many eccentric rocks in the Lion Grove. One huge rock peak looked like a lion, thus the garden was named Lion Grove. Furthermore, Weize's master Ben taught scriptures at the Lion Crag on the Tianmu Mountain in Zhejiang Province. The garden was thus named Lion Grove to indicate the specific Buddhist clan. Besides the Lion Peak, other rocks appeared to look like small lions. The name Grove indicated the dense bamboo grove as well as the large number of lion-like rocks. In Buddhism, the image of a lion expresses the "might and virtue" of Buddha. The primary intention for lion-like rocks as the core of this garden was to seek the situation where the division between object and subject was completely forgotten in the mind (*wuwo liangwang* 物我两忘) and the essence of a thing could be reached at its origin. In such a situation, "a lion will return to a lion; a rock will return to a rock; a grove will return to a grove; and Buddha will return to Buddha."<sup>1</sup>

Poetry of the Yuan dynasty on the Lion Grove emphasized the contrastive relationship between the monk's tranquil heart and the noisy images of rocks. A poem states:

Eccentric rocks came from Lake Tai, 怪石洞庭来，  
Desolate surfaces are full of rain scars. 荒苔洗雨痕。  
Scattered among ten thousand bamboos, 散落万竹里，  
They look like crouching bears and leopards. 劣若熊豹蹲。  
There is a bluish-green lion, 中有青狻猊，  
It is certainly most respected. 主当众峰尊。  
On the hill, ghosts and immortals meet, 凭陵鬼神会，  
Growling, wind and thunder rush by. 呀呷风雷奔。  
The monk just finished the meal by himself, 道人一饭已，  
He sat on crossed feet and made the pad warm. 趺坐蒲团温。<sup>2</sup>

The rocks held dynamic gestures and reached a great height. The direct comparison between clouds and rocks was confirmed by another Yuan poem, which described the bluish-green rocks as “roots of clouds” (*yungen* 云根).<sup>3</sup>

The monk Weize wrote fourteen poems on the garden. In one of the poems, he stated:

People usually say that I live in the city, 人道我居城市里，  
But I feel like living among ten thousand mountains. 我疑身在万山中。  
...  
I get up and carry a cane that is seven feet long, 坐起自携藤七丈，  
Meander through the grove as if inspecting classrooms. 穿林络绎似巡堂。  
...  
Stroll aimlessly into the winged pavilion within remote bamboo, 散入凤亭竹深处，  
The stone forest splits up to encircle the flying rainbow. 石林分坐绕飞虹。  
...  
The Pavilion for Reclining on Clouds is cold and wakes me up, 卧云室冷睡魔醒，  
The sound of remaining raindrops hastens the daybreak. 残漏声声促五更。  
After a dream it seems a life has passed, 一梦又如过一世，  
The eastern sunrise announces the next life. 东方日出是来生。<sup>4</sup>

The first two sentences bring out the impression of the rocks on his mind. While the numerous rocks appeared like mountains, the “stone forest” (*shilin* 石林) metaphorized the collective image of abundant rocks. Meandering in the stone forest is like studying Buddhism to search for the correct path towards the destination. Climbing to the top of the stone forest, which is metaphorized as clouds in the poem,

and waiting for sunrise at the Pavilion for Reclining on Clouds, is like experiencing the Buddhist cycle of rebirth towards nirvana (Figure 1). In a discussion with a painter, Weize explained that the grove was named Lion as a way to counteract the bustling and noisy world with tranquility of meditation. Seeking the soundless and formless from the lion was to be vigilant against internal restlessness.<sup>5</sup> In 1373, Weize invited the master painter Ni Zan to paint the garden. For the painting, Ni poetized:

In the dense bamboo, birds sing from the remote, 密竹鸟啼邃,  
 In the clear pool, reflected clouds appear idle. 清池云影闲。  
 Tea-smelling snow and circling smoke from a stove, 茗雪炉烟袅,  
 Pine rain falls on moss of stones. 松雨石苔斑。  
 With the tranquil heart, the world is in timeless silence, 心静境恒寂,  
 Why should we live in mountains anymore? 何必居在山?  
 A journey has its end, 穷途有行旅,  
 At twilight I forget to return home. 日暮不知还。<sup>6</sup>

Ni emphasized the relationship between the remote landscapes in the garden and the Buddhist tranquil heart. In a following poem, he declared that it was in the middle of the Lion Grove that the ancient Buddhist heart, which had neither beginning nor end, dwelled.<sup>7</sup> If strolling through the rock grove is a journey for enlightenment, this journey is infinite. This consistent movement among rocks leads nowhere but the invisible destination that is the tranquil Buddhist heart, Chan 禅 (Zen). Ni theorized his own landscape painting style as “[my] transcendental brush strokes appear rustic; they do not seek any form resemblance” (*yibi caocao, buqiu xingshi* 逸笔草草, 不求形似).<sup>8</sup> His rustic style of landscape painting seeks for the transcendental idea of Chan (Zen). Modern critiques on Chinese paintings tend to characterize Ni’s landscape painting style with the aesthetic concept of “blandness” (*pingdan* 平淡) and regard his simple and rustic painting style as the highest achievement of Yuan-dynasty paintings.<sup>9</sup>

In 1757 of the Qing dynasty, Qianlong toured Jiangnan for the second time but visited the Lion Grove in Suzhou for the first time. His poem on the garden states:

I have known the Lion Grove for a long time, 早知狮子林,  
 It is said Master Ni [Zan] created it. 传自倪高士。  
 I originally suspected it hid in a remote valley, 疑其藏幽谷,  
 Later realized it dwelled in a bustling city. 而宛居闹市。  
 ...  
 The artificial hill looks like a real mountain, 假山似真山,  
 Immortals and mortals are only a few feet apart. 仙凡异咫尺。<sup>10</sup>



The “artificial hill” (*jiashan*) indicates the hill of eccentric rocks. By strolling in the hill, a mortal could approach immortality. The artificiality of the rockery hill marks a change from the early image of the natural earth mound covered with rocks in the Yuan dynasty and indicates the existence of the rockery labyrinth prior to his first visit to the Lion Grove. During his second visit to the garden in 1762, Qianlong described that “a few bends and a few curves [among rocks] distance the heart from the dusty world” (*jiwan jiqu yuan chenxin* 几弯几曲远尘心).<sup>11</sup> The details of the body movement confirm that the rockery labyrinth already existed. In his third visit of the Lion Grove in 1765, he penned the board “True Delight” (*zhenqu* 真趣) for the garden. This year, he particularly brought with him Ni Zan’s original painting for touring the garden. As confirmed in his poem:

Whenever looking at Ni’s scroll, I feel pleasurable, 每阅倪图则悦目,  
As always, my great joy is in the painting. 重来图里更怡心。  
A stream or a valley all produces wonders, 曰溪曰壑皆臻趣,  
A path or a courtyard seems to be familiar. 若径若庭宛识寻。  
The original gorgeous view only remains on eccentric rocks, 足貌伊人惟怪石,  
The ancient idea must be sought after from this grove. 藉如古意是乔林。<sup>12</sup>

Although Qianlong emphasized the visual dominance of the rockery hill, he thought the true idea of the garden existed in Ni’s masterpiece. For Qianlong, the poetical representation of the garden was as meaningful as the garden itself.

Qianlong’s extreme attention to the rockery labyrinth and Ni’s painting in his understanding of the Lion Grove was well demonstrated by a special building, named Yunlin’s Studio among Rocks (Yunlin shishi 云林石室), in his Lion Grove replicas.<sup>13</sup> The title of the building indicates that Qianlong, in his Lion Grove replicas, desired to imitate master painter Ni Zan’s (art name, Ni Yunlin 倪云林) studio among eccentric rocks. Qianlong’s two Lion Grove replicas were built during the 1770s. In his 1773 poem on the Yunlin’s Studio among Rocks in the Garden of Lion Grove of the Yuanmingyuan, Qianlong poetized:

Rocks are summer clouds, rocks are forest, 石作夏云石作林,  
There is a hidden pavilion hard to locate. 其中有室费幽寻。  
Its minimum size allows one body to move about, 三间十笏惟容膝,  
But through an open window it gazes afar distant mountains. 却称开窗望远岑。<sup>14</sup>

In the poem, eccentric rocks are metaphorized as “clouds” (*yun*) and “forest” (*lin*) whose combined Chinese term indicates Ni Zan’s art name Yunlin. The studio room is very tiny but perfect for viewing the surrounding rocks which symbolize real mountains (for a historical comparison, refer to one of Ni’s paintings in Figure 2). In his fourth visit to the Lion Grove in Suzhou in 1780, Qianlong began to compare these three Lion Groves through poetry:

Although the [Lion Grove replicas in] Mountain Hamlet and the imperial garden look pleasant, 山庄御园虽图貌,

What forever stays in my heart is the Wang and Ni families' [Lion Grove in Suzhou]. 黄氏倪家久系心。

...

Each new garden appears like the original one, 各看似矣彼新构,

But they are just not as good as that ancient grove. 只觉输于此古林。<sup>15</sup>

In his final visit to the Lion Grove in Suzhou in 1784, Qianlong still sighed that his Lion Grove replicas could not catch the real idea of mountains and ancient trees as depicted in Ni's scroll.<sup>16</sup>

Many poems on the Lion Grove in Suzhou by Qing-dynasty scholars documented the visitor's perplexity in strolling in the rockery labyrinth. One rhapsody chants:

Pile up, dig down, and hack the crags, 合厥斩岩,

Build up these multi-layered caves. 成兹层岫。

Paths meander and circulate, 径曲折以萦纡,

Caves float and can be seen through. 穴嵌空而穿漏。

A stroller becomes exhausted in climbing up and down, 陟降者倦于跻攀,

An observer can easily feel perplexed and lost. 眺望者易于眩目。<sup>17</sup>

Although the existence of perplexity in the rockery labyrinth, joy resulted from that experience. Another poem states:

A pavilion stands on a hilltop, 高亭擅一丘,

Eccentric rocks dominate all sides. 怪石拥四面。

...

At the first glance, [the rockery hill] appears spacious and soaring, 初窥惟豁舒,

After a while, I realize it can be climbable. 渐历有登践。

Small and big valleys are differentiated, 区分峭壑成,

Curved paths change every a few feet. 径纡尺咫变。

Deep caves revolve into the ground, 深洞转地中,

The flying bridge strides out of eaves. 飞梁出檐畔。

Looking ahead, I see birds landing into a nest, 前行鸟投巢,

Turning back, I walk on a cliff road of monkeys. 后至狢缘栈。

Peaks and hills seem to be near my sleeves, 峰峦入衣袖,

Pine and cinnamon tree fragrances blow away frost. 松桂吹霜散。

The rocks are still covered with the moss of Yuan dynasty, 犹被元时苔,

But they are now taken for entertainment. 复充目前玩。<sup>18</sup>

The poem describes that perceiving and moving through the labyrinth required much consciousness. The labyrinth brought about happiness of entertainment, and the forms of the dynamic rocks stimulated involvement in a game.<sup>19</sup>

When the experience of the labyrinth was concentrated on the joy of perplexity, the mind's eye became enslaved by the complicated forms of rocks and could not transcend them for spiritual simplicity. People began to call this labyrinth "a wonder in the world."<sup>20</sup> The shift of attention from Ni's painting idea of Chan (Zen) to the physical details of the garden demonstrates the weakened spiritual hunt in the labyrinth. Qing-dynasty scholars tended to think that the memory of the Lion Grove could only be preserved by the present labyrinth rather than Ni's scroll.<sup>21</sup> Finding the way out in the labyrinth became entertainment and the mind was only impressed by the deceitful path and layout of rocks, which was called by visitors "a tricky formation" (*jiaokuai ju* 狡狴局)<sup>22</sup> or "the perplexing and remote path" (*miyou jing* 迷幽径).<sup>23</sup> But still for Qing-dynasty scholars, the playfulness of the labyrinth was the very embodiment of the humorous Daoist cosmological idea that "the old man in the pot [Hugong] occasionally plays a game (*youxi* 游戏); in his sleeve, there is the entire world."<sup>24</sup> Thus, finding the way out of the labyrinth meant an approach to the immortal world. The strife for not being lost in the labyrinth became a way of inhabiting the sacred world. As a poem states:

The path of the Lion Grove turns at multiple levels, 狮林之径折三层,  
Need to remember the varied lions before climbing. 记取群狮始可登。  
In this sacred field I do not make any mistaken detour, 灵境元无迂枉步,  
I am afraid to get lost and be growled by the lions. 只恐迷却貽狮嚙。  
I have been to the Lion Grove many times, 我来狮林今已再,  
Be familiar with the exquisite stances of the lions. 玲珑熟识群狮态。  
Walk through the lion bellies, cross over the lion backs, 穿狮腹, 跨狮背,  
Climb straight up to the lion tops. 直立而上狮子头。  
My dear lions, I have yet lost myself. 狮乎狮乎我不昧。<sup>25</sup>

The author attempted to memorize the form of each rock and gain freedom and ecstasy in passing through the labyrinth. Through engaging in memory, the perplexity of a labyrinth can be transformed into the great joy of correct judgment.

The Lion Grove in the Yuanmingyuan complex was near the seven-arch floodgate acting as the watercourse exit of the Garden of Eternal Spring (Changchunyuan), which was a part of the Yuanmingyuan. Furthermore, the entrance of this Lion Grove was a small water gate through which Qianlong usually took a boat to the inside of the garden. In a poem on the Lion Grove water gate, he wrote:

The exit to landscapes beyond the wall is a water gate, 墙外林园水作门,  
Paddling through here is as tasteful as the entrance of Wulin. 泛舟雅似武陵源。

Though it [Wulin] was recorded by [Tao] Yuanming, 赢他祇有渊明记,  
The record cannot match the old pedant Ni's scroll. 不及迂翁画卷存。<sup>26</sup>

The Lion Grove entrance was compared to the entrance of the East Jin (4<sup>th</sup> century) poet Tao Yuanming's 陶渊明 paradise at Wulin. According to Tao's record, the winding landscape leading to the Wulin entrance was beautiful but baffling<sup>27</sup> and like a labyrinthine journey prior to spiritual enlightenment. This historical allusion highlighted the overall labyrinth image of the Lion Grove. The overlap of the Lion Grove water gate and the water gate of the Garden of Eternal Spring supports a hypothesis that the Lion Grove might be intentionally located in the northeastern corner of the Garden of Eternal Spring to correspond to another labyrinth, the Western Garden designed by the Jesuits. It is interesting to note that Qianlong's Lion Grove denoted two most well-known historical cases of Chinese labyrinth: Tao Yuanming's paradise and the Lion Grove in Suzhou.<sup>28</sup>

Qianlong wrote poems regarding the Lion Grove in the Garden of Eternal Spring of the Yuanmingyuan. Most of his poems emphasized the relationship between the Lion Grove in Suzhou and the Lion Grove replica with the mediation of Ni Zan's painting scroll. Qianlong repeatedly stated that his Lion Grove was to replicate Ni's painting.<sup>29</sup> He understood the essential part of the Lion Grove was the rockery hill and specifically ordered the masters of rockery art from Suzhou to "try their best to replicate the original Lion Grove."<sup>30</sup> The activity of replicating a famous Jiangnan garden within an imperial garden in Beijing unavoidably raises the question of truth. In a poem on the Lion Grove in the Yuanmingyuan complex, Qianlong stated:

I think about the poetical environments of the Lion Groves, 试问狮林境,  
Which one is fictional, and which one is real. 孰为幻孰真。  
The She Garden is even an imitation [of Ni's painting], 涉园犹假借,  
The true origin is hidden in my Treasure Box [of Stone Ditch]. 宝笈实源津。<sup>31</sup>

The Lion Grove in Suzhou was also called She Garden (Sheyuan) when it was previously owned by the Huang family. The Treasure Box of Stone Ditch (Shiqu baoji 石渠宝笈) indicated the imperial gallery for storing ancient paintings. The poem demonstrates that the "intention" expressed by the pictorial representation of the garden was as important as the physical garden itself. As long as the pictorial intention was preserved, it did not matter if the garden was a replica as that was a secondary consideration. With such an understanding, Qianlong thought that his Lion Grove replica "was so vivid that you could walk around and might be even better than the original," but he immediately admitted that his garden replica could not grasp "the reason of Ni's painting."<sup>32</sup>

Emperor Qianlong's engagement in the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou through poetry, painting representation and garden replication established a significant dialogue between literati gardens in Jiangnan and the imperial gardens in Beijing during the 18<sup>th</sup> century of the Qing dynasty. In the history of

Chinese gardens, there remained a parallel development between imperial gardens and literati gardens. Accompanied with this double garden history is the aesthetic contrast between the cosmic embracement of imperial gardens and the individual humanity focus of literati gardens. What Qianlong was impressed and eager to imitate through his Garden of Lion Grove replicas is the “true delight” (*zhenqu*) which he named and calligraphed as a title board hung up in the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou. In Qianlong’s perception, the true delight is best preserved and embodied by the rockery labyrinth in the Lion Grove, which integrates the poetical mimesis of cosmic mountains and waters (*shanshui*) and the ecstasy of individual’s exploration and freedom. From his garden creations in his life, we can sense he never gave up his search for this true delight, especially so in his encounter with European Jesuit designers during the creation of the Baroque-like Western Garden in the Yuanmingyuan. In that historical garden encounter between East and West, his view of true delight from Chinese gardens was expanded towards a cross-cultural understanding, which he called “harmony, wonder and delight” (*xieqiqu* 谐奇趣),<sup>33</sup> brought by the Jesuits’ illusory perspective technique in garden design.

Qianlong’s search for true delight through labyrinthine ecstasy brings to light the issue of truth (*zhen* 真) in historicity. Although he enjoyed the playfulness of the rockery labyrinth in the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou and even tried to imitate it through his Lion Grove replicas, his desired true Lion Grove only existed as the Chan idea represented by master painter Ni Zan’s painting scroll. It can be said that Qianlong’s experience of true delight at the rockery labyrinth initiated his search for true Lion Grove through garden replication. But between Ni’s garden representation of the original Lion Grove and the rockery labyrinth as the focus of the existing Lion Grove, he was not sure which one was closer to truth. For him, the truth of the Lion Grove seems to be an intertwining of the Chan idea and the labyrinthine ecstasy. He might not realize that this intertwined truth of Lion Grove demonstrated exactly the historicity of truth, or in Heidegger’s words, the “ecstatico-horizontal temporality.”<sup>34</sup> If reading between the lines, we will realize that the documented poems and garden records of the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou have implied the gradual change of scenic views in the garden, especially regarding the rockery labyrinth. From the Yuan through Ming and Qing dynasties, the poetical literature of Lion Grove was obsessed with the “eccentric rocks” (*guaishi* 怪石) in the garden. In Yuan poems, only one such an eccentric rock was named as a titled scenic view, namely, the Lion Peak (Shizifeng 狮子峰). In Ming poems, three eccentric rocks were particularly named as titled scenic views, i.e., the Lion Peak, Effulgence Peak (Hanhui Feng 含晖峰), and Moon Peak (Tuyue Feng 吐月峰) as part of a group of twelve titled scenic views in the Lion Grove. The increased number of eccentric rocks as titled scenic views suggests that the rockery labyrinth might be in its preliminary shape during the 1370s of the early Ming dynasty. The poems and garden records of the Lion Grove in 1372 indicate that the eccentric rocks had been formulated into an entangled vertical network of caves and meandering paths for an aesthetic situation that “blandness entertains the heart” (*danran yu renxin* 淡然娱人心).<sup>35</sup> The concept of “blandness” (*dan* 淡), popular in Chan Buddhism, becomes an aesthetic ideal in Chinese poetry and painting, especially so in Ni Zan’s landscape paintings.<sup>36</sup>

The poems and garden records of the Yuan and early-Ming dynasties on the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou universally emphasized the Buddhist ideas of Chan (Zen) and nirvana embodied by the garden and its eccentric rocks; but the Qing-dynasty poems and garden records, including Qianlong's, of the garden focus on playful ecstasy in the rockery labyrinth. This aesthetic change documented by garden literature proves that the current rockery labyrinth in the Lion Grove in Suzhou did not exist when the garden was founded in the late Yuan dynasty, but rather was transformed and developed from the original eccentric rocks through the Ming dynasty prior to Qianlong's multiple visits to the garden.

While eccentric rocks in the Lion Gove in Suzhou are originally related to the aesthetic concept of blandness of the Chan (Zen) idea, the landscape change from a group of eccentric rocks piled on an earth hillock during the Yuan dynasty towards the vertically organized rockery labyrinth during the Qing dynasty highlights the aesthetic trend of the Ming dynasty (between the Yuan and Qing dynasties), which began to embrace the aesthetic concepts of dream and fantasy. One garden case in the Ming aesthetic context was the so-called Garden of Being-Almost-There (Jiangjiuyuan 将就园), *built* for four years by the late-Ming (17<sup>th</sup> century) scholar Huang Zhouxing 黄周星 in Jiangnan. In fact, this garden is a garden in fantasy and has never physically existed. In his essay "A Record of the Garden of Being-Almost-There" (Jiangjiuyuan ji 将就园记),<sup>37</sup> he stated that he devoted his entire life to searching for this garden and finally his dream came true after decades. In the garden record, he described in detail the garden layout and even included the garden plan drawings.<sup>38</sup> This unbuilt garden was *built* as an idealistic paradise through his dream and fantasy. From a comparative cultural perspective, Huang's fantasy garden reminds us of another fantasy project, the so-called Memory Theater which the Venetian Renaissance humanist Giulio Camillo (16<sup>th</sup> century) devoted his life to constructing but never built.<sup>39</sup> The aesthetic concepts of dream and fantasy embodied by Huang's garden was further explicated by his admirer and close friend Zhang Chao 张潮 whose book *You meng ying* 幽梦影 (Remote Dream and Shadow) stated in a preface: "Dream is what causes our consciousness, and shadow is what causes our form. Euphemism or enigma does not express directly good or bad, but its audience learns [how to be virtuous] from it by heart."<sup>40</sup> Zhang further stated in the postscript: "What is shadow? It is the moment when we strike a stone to make a fire, the moment when thunder flashes, the moment when we reflect on our individual life, the moment when we contemplate on history. It is said a mustard seed (infinitesimal) can contain the cosmos (infinity), but our fasting room of heart is built for grasping temporality."<sup>41</sup> It is clear that the quoted Daoist concept of "fasting room of heart" (*xinzhai* 心斋)<sup>42</sup> can be related to the Chan (Zen) Buddhist concept of blandness, and the quoted concepts of dream and shadow can be related to the labyrinthine ecstasy at the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou. The aesthetic change from Buddhist Chan of the Yuan dynasty to increasingly secular ecstasy of the Qing dynasty at the Lion Grove was fulfilled through dream and shadow developed in gardens and garden literature of the Ming dynasty.

Qianlong called the labyrinthine ecstasy which he experienced at the Lion Grove in Suzhou as “true delight” and tried to imitate it through his Lion Grove replicas as well as the “spectacular views” (*qiguan* 奇观)<sup>43</sup> of the Western Garden by the Jesuits. However, he still missed the transcendental Chan (Zen) embodied by the original Lion Grove and represented by Ni Zan’s painting scroll. The true delight of labyrinthine ecstasy in Ming-Qing dynasties was conceived by Chinese literati through fantasy gardens as a way for transcending the “earthly world,” the so-called *chenshi* 尘世 in Buddhism, towards heavenly paradise. This transcending process is called *chushi* 出世 (literally, “out of the earthly world”) in Buddhism. From the phenomenological perspective, the transcending process towards the *other* through ecstasy of gardens can be comparable to Husserl’s concept of *epochē*,<sup>44</sup> linked to Heidegger’s concept of historicity as “the ecstatic character of primordial temporality,”<sup>45</sup> and is more precisely defined by Sartre’s concept of nothingness which requires a human being’s “passing beyond the world” and “surpassing the self.”<sup>46</sup> Such a “being in non-being” in Sartre’s words<sup>47</sup> resonates with the emptiness and blandness of Chan (Zen) and finds its ultimate joy of the “strange light” in the interlocked caves of Lion Grove.<sup>48</sup>

## Images



Figure 1. A woodcut engraving of the Pavilion for Reclining on Clouds at the Garden of Lion Grove in Suzhou, from the *Shizilin jisheng ji* 狮子林纪胜集 (Anthology of the Garden of Lion Grove, 1857)





Figure 2. A landscape painting, entitled A Humble Hut (Rongxizhai 容膝齋), by the Yuan-dynasty painter Ni Zan in 1372. Collected by the National Palace Museum of Taipei. This painting reminds us of the Qing emperor Qianlong's 1773 poem on the Yunlin's (Ni Zan's) Studio among Eccentric Rocks in his Lion Grove replica in the Yuanmingyuan.



## Notes

- 1 Ouyang Xuan 欧阳玄, "Shizilin Puti zhengzongsi ji 狮子林菩提正宗寺记," in Shi Daoxun 释道忞 & Xu Lifang 徐立方 ed., *Shizilin jisheng ji* 狮子林纪胜集, v. 1 (1857. Rpt., Yangzhou: Guanglin shushe, 2007), juanshang 卷上: 1-3. Unless otherwise stated, all punctuations and translations of the quoted classical-Chinese literary works are my own.
- 2 Zhang Zhu 张翥, "Shiti Shizilin jian Tianru heshang 诗题狮子林简天如和尚," in *ibid.*, 8-9.
- 3 Chen Qian 陈谦, "Du Suichang Zheng xiansheng Shilin jiazuo liaofu erzhang 读遂昌郑先生师林佳作聊附二章," in *ibid.*, 19.
- 4 Shi Weize 释维则, "Shizilin jijing shisishou 狮子林即景十四首," in *ibid.*, 20-21.
- 5 Zhu Derun 朱德润, "Shizilin tu xu 狮子林图序," in *ibid.*, juanxia 卷下: 1-2.
- 6 Ni Zan 倪瓒, "[Untitled poem on the Painting of the Lion Grove]," in *ibid.*, 15.
- 7 Ni Zan, "[untitled poem]," in *ibid.*, 17.
- 8 Ni Zan, "Yunlin lun hua shanshui 云林论画山水," in Yu Jianhua 俞剑华 ed., *Zhongguo gudai hualun leibian* 中国古代画论类编, v. 2, revised edition (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 2000), 706.
- 9 Chen Chuanxi 陈传席, *Zhongguo shanshuihua shi* 中国山水画史 (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin meishu chubanshe, 2008), 300-302.
- 10 Qianlong 乾隆, "Yuzhi you Shizilin shi 御制游狮子林诗 [1]," in *Shizilin jisheng ji* 狮子林纪胜集, v. 2, juanshou 卷首: 1.
- 11 Qianlong, "Yuzhi you Shizilin shi 御制游狮子林诗 [2]," in *ibid.*, 2.
- 12 Qianlong, "Yuzhi Shizilin die jiuzuo yun 御制狮子林叠旧作韵," in *ibid.*, 3.
- 13 Zhou Weiquan 周维权, *Zhongguo gudian yuanlinshi* 中国古典园林史 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1999), 400.
- 14 Qianlong, "Yunlin shishi 云林石室," in "Zaiti Shizilin shiliujing die jiuyun 再题狮子林十六景叠旧韵," in "Qing wuchao yuzhiji zhong de Yuanmingyuan shi xuer 清五朝御制集中的圆明园诗续二," ed. Zhu Jiajin 朱家潜 and Li Yanqin 李艳琴, in *Yunmingyuan* 圆明园, ed. Zhongguo Yuanmingyuan xuehui 中国圆明园学会, v. 4 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1985), 68.
- 15 Qianlong, "Yuzhi Shizilin zaidie jiuzuo yun 御制狮子林再叠旧作韵," in *Shizilin jisheng ji* 狮子林纪胜集, v. 2, juanshou 卷首: 3.
- 16 Qianlong, "Yuzhi Shizilin sandie jiuzuo yun 御制狮子林三叠旧作韵," in *ibid.*, 4.
- 17 Gu Zongtai 顾宗泰, "Shizilin fu youxu 狮子林赋有序," in *ibid.*, juanzhong 卷中: 2.
- 18 Zhao Zhixin 赵执信, "Shizilin zeng zhuren Zhang yusan 狮子林赠主人张吁三," in *ibid.*, 5.
- 19 Li Guo 李果, "You Shizilin 游狮子林," in *ibid.*, 11.

- 20 Xiao Yun 萧云, "You Shilinsi 游狮林寺," in *ibid.*, 18.
- 21 Zhao Yi 赵翼, "Tong Rongxi Zhitang you Shizilin tibi 同蓉溪芷堂游狮子林题壁," in *ibid.*, juanxia 卷下: 3.
- 22 Xu, Xiongfei 徐熊飞, "Shizilin 狮子林," in *ibid.*, 12.
- 23 Guo Qing 郭青, "You Shizilin 游狮子林," in *ibid.*, 13.
- 24 Zhu Lanpo 朱兰坡, "Guan Shizilin jiashan 观狮子林假山," in *ibid.*, 18.
- 25 Hua Yi 华宜, "Shizilin 狮子林," in *ibid.*
- 26 Qianlong, "Shuimen 水门," in "Qing wuchao yuzhiji zhong de Yuanmingyuan shi xuer 清五朝御制集中的圆明园诗续二," 66.
- 27 Tao Yuanming 陶渊明, "Taohuayuan ji 桃花源记," in Wu Chucai 吴楚材 & Wu Diaohou 吴调侯 ed., *Guwen guanzhi 古文观止*, anno. Li Binhai 李炳海 et al., v. 1 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2004), 276.
- 28 Hui Zou, "The Idea of Labyrinth (*Migong*) in Chinese Building Tradition," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 46.4 (2012): 87-92.
- 29 Qianlong, "Shizilin 狮子林," in "Qing wuchao yuzhiji zhong de Yuanmingyuan shi xuer 清五朝御制集中的圆明园诗续二," 65.
- 30 Qianlong, "Jiashan 假山 [1]," in *ibid.*
- 31 Qianlong, "Tanzhen shuwu 探真书屋," in *ibid.*, 68.
- 32 Qianlong, "Jiashan 假山 [2]," in *ibid.*, 75-76.
- 33 Hui Zou, *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing and Early Modern Chinese Culture*, Comparative Cultural Studies Series (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011), 123.
- 34 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1962), 440.
- 35 Gao Qi 高启 et al., "Shizilin shier yong 狮子林十二咏"; Wang Yi 王彝, "Shizilin ji 狮子林记," in *Shizilin jisheng ji 狮子林纪胜集*, v. 1, juanxia 卷下.
- 36 Li Zehou, *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*, trans. Maija Bell Samei (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 177-179.
- 37 Huang Zhouxing 黄周星, "Jiangjiuyuan ji 将就园记," in Zhang Chao 张潮 ed., *Zhaodai congshu 昭代丛书*. A digital copy is available online at [ctext.org](http://ctext.org).
- 38 Zhao Xia 赵夏, "'Jiangjiuyuan' xunzong: guanyu Mingmo Qingchu yizuo dianxing wenren huanxiang zhi yuan de kaocha '将就园' 寻踪: 关于明末清初一座典型文人幻想之园的考察," *Qingshi yanjiu 清史研究*, n. 3 (August 2007): 28.
- 39 Francis A. Yates, "VI. Renaissance Memory: The Memory Theater of Giulio Camillo," *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966).

- 40 Sun Zhimi 孙致弥, “*Youmengying xiaoxu* 幽梦影小序,” in Zhang Chao 张潮 et al., *You meng ying, Weilu yehua* 幽梦影, 围炉夜话, anno. Shi Nianlin 史念林 & Li Zhujun 李竹君 (Beijing: Huaxia chubanshe, 2006), 5.
- 41 Zhang Chao 张潮, “*Youmengying ba* 幽梦影跋,” in *ibid.*, 65.
- 42 The concept of “fasting room of heart” (*xinzhai* 心斋) first appeared in Daoist saint Zhuangzi’s (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) scripture *Zhuangzi* in which he defined the “fasting room of heart” as “the empty chamber which enables things to become” and “gives birth to pure brightness.” See Zhuangzi, “*Renshijian* 人世间,” *Zhuangzi* 庄子, anno. Sun Tonghai 孙通海 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 72-73. An aesthetic analysis on *xinzhai* is in Li Zehou, 81.
- 43 Zou, *A Jesuit Garden in Beijing*, 127.
- 44 Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man,” *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 168.
- 45 Heidegger, 377.
- 46 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1956), 51.
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 The term of “strange light” (*guangguai* 光怪) comes from a poem on eccentric rocks of the Lion Grove in Suzhou. See Gao Qi et al., “*Hanhuifeng* 含晖峰,” in *Shizilin jisheng ji*, v. 1, juanxia: 4.

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## *Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin's 'Functionalism': A Reappraisal\**

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### Abstract

During the last five decades, Pugin's 'functionalism' has become a commonplace of scholarship which is constantly reproduced without further analysis or critical examination. This supposed 'functionalism' of Pugin's architectural theory is used as the basic argument for the construction of genealogies connecting the ideas of the protagonist of the Gothic Revival in the nineteenth century with the ideology of the Modern Movement in the twentieth. Nikolaus Pevsner is a classic example of this line of reasoning. Pugin is thus presented as a 'source of modern architecture and design'.

In the present essay I argue that statements such as the above may harbour possible misunderstandings of the complex nuances within the history of architectural ideas, often disregarding the cultural environment and conceptual context from which they spring. Based on a systematic reading of Pugin's two major treatises, namely *Contrasts* (1836) and *True Principles* (1841), I will try to show that Pevsner's interpretation is not very well founded, simplifying the real content of a sophisticated theory. Pugin never mentions the word 'function' to denote the use of a building; instead he speaks of its 'purpose', 'propriety', 'arrangement', 'destination' and 'meaning'.

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Consequently, his ‘rationalism’ seems to transcend the materialistic ‘functionalism’ of certain aspects of Modernism and encompass many social, cultural, ethical and aesthetic ‘roles’ of architecture. The aim of the present paper is to argue that the term ‘functionalism’ is probably inadequate to comprehend the different layers of meaning inherent in Pugin’s thought and to propose a reappraisal and a new interpretation of their possible theoretical sources.

*“In some respects, I am willing to grant, great and important inventions have been brought to perfection: but, it must be remembered, that these are purely of a mechanical nature; and I do not hesitate to say, that as works of this description progressed, works of art and productions of mental vigour have declined in a far greater ratio...Let us look around, and see whether the Architecture of this country is not entirely ruled by whim and caprice. Does locality, destination, or character of a building, form the basis of a design? No; surely not.”*

A.W.N. Pugin, *Contrasts*<sup>1</sup>

## Is Pugin a ‘Functionalist’?

The above timely indictment of the Industrial Age was written by A.W.N. Pugin, in 1836, in the conclusion to a book called *Contrasts*. Pugin, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau before him, juxtaposes the technical advancement of Western civilization with a corresponding lack of culture, or ‘mental vigour’. His ‘anti-utilitarian vocabulary’ is obvious, and Pugin’s scholars did not fail to notice it.<sup>2</sup> Yet there seems to exist a certain misunderstanding within Pugin scholarship. The same man who demands a new philosophy of architectural design based on the concept of ‘character’ and ‘destination’ is frequently termed a ‘functionalist’.

‘Functionalism’ is a word that immediately brings to mind twentieth-century Modernism, the dictum “form follows function” and a mechanistic rationalism of a “machine for living in”. Was Pugin a ‘functionalist’ in those terms? In the present paper I would like to argue that the word ‘functionalism’ is inadequate to describe the complexities and nuances of Pugin’s thought. My aim is to propose a different intellectual background and atmosphere for a better understanding of Pugin’s ideas in relation to the *role* and the destination of buildings. I will argue that his “*millenarian sense of urgency*”,<sup>3</sup> his religious bias,<sup>4</sup> and his attempt to create a “*Utopia of the spirit, the Church, and the arts*”<sup>5</sup> are quite foreign to any functionalist, utilitarian criteria. If he was a ‘rationalist’,<sup>6</sup> as Peter Collins suggests, his version of it surely transcends the materialistic functionalism of certain aspects of the Modern Movement: Pugin’s view of architecture is immersed in cultural, ethical and religious roles and ideas that have nothing or very little to do with practical solutions to questions of ‘function’, utility and mechanical efficiency.

## Pugin's 'Functionalism': The Construction of a Myth

Nevertheless, during the last six decades or so, Pugin's 'functionalism' has become a commonplace and an established view of scholarship that is taken for granted. With a surprising stability, the theme keeps recurring in almost all of Pugin's scholars. The interesting fact about such a persistence is its constant reproduction without further analysis or critical examination. I would like to furnish a brief genealogical report of this line of reasoning, in order to prove my assertions.

As every general, diffused and vague idea, it started off reluctantly, perhaps, as Michael Bright points out, in the work of Henry-Russell Hitchcock titled *Early Victorian Architecture in Britain*, dating from 1954.<sup>7</sup> Three years later, in 1957, Edward Robert de Zurko published a book called *Origins of Functional Theory*, where he unambiguously states:

Basically, Pugin's theory was what we of today would call functionalist... Fitness of form for function is the point he makes most insistently.<sup>8</sup>

And although Phoebe Stanton, the foremost Pugin scholar of this early period, is very cautious and heedful in drawing such far-ranging historical comparisons, she nevertheless shows a similar tendency to reconstruct within Pugin's Gothic Revivalism a pure nucleus of design principles that were ahead of their time.<sup>9</sup> And this tendency is further developed in her study, simply titled *Pugin*,<sup>10</sup> not accidentally appearing in a series of books called *Pioneers of Modern Architecture*. The book was prefaced by Nikolaus Pevsner. Pevsner was very keen on constructing genealogies connecting nineteenth-century ideas with the ideologies of the Modern Movement in the twentieth century. Perhaps Stanton, mildly presenting Pugin as an unnoticed precursor of Modern principles and theories of art and design, felt the influence of Pevsner's ground-breaking study called, expressively, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design*, published three years earlier. Surprisingly enough, Pugin was the first such source mentioned by Pevsner. He writes:

The plea for functionalism is the first of our sources. Augustus WelbyNorthmore Pugin, born in 1812, the English son of a French father, wrote on the first page of his most important book: '*There should be no features about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety...The smallest detail should...serve a purpose, and construction itself should vary with the material employed*'.<sup>11</sup>

Using a passage from Pugin's *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, Pevsner settles the issue for good: Pugin is a precursor of twentieth-century functionalism. The thrust and authoritative style of Pevsner's writing left no doubt whatsoever as to the truth of his assertion. No one seemed to notice, for example, that Pugin's passage from his book never mentioned the word 'function', the very word that makes the term 'functionalism' so powerful, effective and pervasive. Instead, Pugin speaks of convenience,

propriety and purpose. Another seemingly minor but important detail matters here: Pevsner omitted some small but crucial phrases from Pugin's citation. Pugin originally wrote:

In pure architecture the smallest detail should *have a meaning* or serve a purpose.<sup>12</sup>

Pevsner did not like the term 'pure architecture', and the phrase '*have a meaning*', and eliminated both of them from his citation. Was it accidental? Surely not. 'Meaning' obviously could not fit well with a Modern functionalist agenda, as Pevsner understood it. Despite those conceptual nuances, Pevsner's assertion was powerful and bold. And it was established as the standard interpretation of Pugin's cast of mind. John Wilton-Ely writes in 1977, echoing Pevsner's argument:

...the criteria laid down in the *Contrasts* and in his later work, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* of 1841, also anticipated much of the concern for functional planning, structural expression, and the nature of materials at the heart of Modern Movement theory.<sup>13</sup>

As Rosemary Hill has pointed out, "...the role of function and the nature of honesty in architecture" were "...those points most often cited by Pugin's supposed defenders".<sup>14</sup> And, I would add, not only by his defenders. David Watkin, for example, in his very negative consideration of Pugin's thought, published as part of his book named *Morality and Architecture*, contends that "...here, indeed, was pure function raised to the level of religious truth".<sup>15</sup> Michael Bright agrees with Pevsner, De Zurko and Watkin:

Pugin is very much a pragmatist, or functionalist, in his views on architecture.<sup>16</sup>

Chris Brooks, five years later, in 1984, takes the argument even further, claiming that:

Few twentieth-century architects would disagree with the functionalist philosophy of True Principles.<sup>17</sup>

Roderick O'Donnell seems to agree as well:

The paternity of the twentieth-century Modern Movement can be traced back to Pugin and to True Principles.<sup>18</sup>

And this is so because, according to O'Donnell, Pugin developed a 'functionalist' and 'rationalist' critique, which required that the construction and the materials of a building be revealed.<sup>19</sup> Even very attentive and meticulous scholars like Hanno-Walter Kruft, in his important *History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present* succumb to the myth of Pugin's 'functionalism'.<sup>20</sup>

I have tried to show how persistent this idea is.<sup>21</sup> But is it true? Or is it a misinterpretation, a misunderstanding of Pugin's thoughts? One common fault in the interpretation of written texts of the past is



the projection of present meanings, concepts and ideas of the scholar to its object of study: this practice is called *anachronism*. A similar fault is to misinterpret the purposes and intentions of the writer, confounding them with one's own: both usually happen when there is a lack of understanding of the whole spirit and intellectual atmosphere out of which a text emerges, through the isolation of a few written passages and phrases out of their general context.

I argue that those common faults have occurred more than once in the interpretation of Pugin's texts. Let us take a more attentive look at *Contrasts* and *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*", arguably his most famous and important books (written in 1836 and 1841, respectively), in order to check the possible misunderstandings that led to the construction of the myth of Pugin's 'functionalism'. Can this myth be supported by a closer examination of his writings?

## Contrasts: Or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste<sup>22</sup>

*Contrasts* is Pugin's first major articulation of arguments in favour of the Gothic Revival in England. As Margaret Belcher has shown, even during his own times, *Contrasts* was falsely interpreted as a historical essay on mediaeval architecture. Seen in this light, it contained numerous faults, inaccuracies and hasty observations. But this line of argument misses the real point, the intention and true nature of the work. Belcher rightly argues:

There is a case to be made for regarding *Contrasts* as an imaginative production: not one relying on facts, not one proceeding by rational analysis, not one to be read literally. The aim is to persuade, not to inform.<sup>23</sup>

According to Belcher's interpretation, Pugin was a "...writer dealing in the intangibles of the imagination" and his vision of the Middle Ages, its society and its architecture is "...a representation of an ideal".<sup>24</sup> In other words, the "contrasts" Pugin develops, both in word and image, between the "noble edifices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" and the buildings of nineteenth-century England, are not meant to constitute a historical essay but are an exercise in persuasion, a social criticism and a religious crusade. And Pugin was its prophet.

His aim is to juxtapose the materialism of the industrial society, its utilitarian, individualistic, mechanistic and economic drives, with the social unity, the devotion, the cohesion and the spirituality of the Middle Ages, or of his ideal of how the Middle Ages were.<sup>25</sup> In Pugin's text, which is a polemical manifesto, his idealized vision of the Middle Ages has an intimate relation to his views about how architecture

should be designed and built. To state my argument clearly, if we miss the connection between architecture, religion, morality and society, we simply lose the overall spirit of Pugin's text.<sup>26</sup> For Pugin, the quality of architectural creation goes hand in hand with the quality of societal values and relations, namely with the quality of psychical morals and feelings. Explaining why the present architecture is at a low ebb and how the excellence of the Middle Ages can be restored, he writes:

I feel thoroughly convinced, that it is only by similar glorious feelings that similar glorious results can be obtained.<sup>27</sup>

It is not therefore accidental that the title of the first chapter of the work is 'On the Feelings which Produced the Great Edifices of the Middle Ages'. In other words, great architecture is the visible outcome of inner feelings, of "religious ideas", of faith, zeal, devotion, noble motives, and excellence.<sup>28</sup> According to Pugin, the 'Modern' architecture of his day is in a degraded state, without unity and full of incongruities because the unity of *feeling* and the devotion to religious ideas, customs and rites have gone. This is the general context of Pugin's argument. So when we read, on the first page of *Contrasts* the famous phrase:

It will be readily admitted that the great test of Architectural beauty is the fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended, and that the style of a building should so correspond with its use that the spectator may at once perceive the purpose for which it was erected<sup>29</sup>

We have to be very careful not to isolate this thought from its overall context and think that it proves an endorsement of a certain 'functionalism' *avant la lettre*. Pugin here actually says that a design should fit to its *purpose*.<sup>30</sup> But what does Pugin *mean* by the 'purpose' of a building? Pugin, interestingly, does not mention any *user* but instead refers to a *spectator who perceives* this 'purpose'. The primary relationship between this man and the building is visual: the 'attentive observer' is *looking at* the building. When he looks at the edifices of the Middle Ages, Pugin writes:

Here every portion of the sacred fabric bespeaks its origin; the very plan of the edifice is the emblem of human redemption...well does the fabric bespeak its destined purpose: the eye is carried up and lost in the height of the vaulting and the intricacy of the ailes...– all alike conspire *to fill the mind* with veneration for the place and to make it feel the sublimity of Christian worship.<sup>31</sup>

Through this passage, the first paragraph can be read and seen in the correct light, within the overall context of Pugin's thought and intentions. The primary 'purpose' of an architectural edifice is not to fulfil a material function: its aim is to speak to the observer, to communicate a message regarding the symbolic meaning of a religious and moral universe and, finally, to create a feeling, an emotion within the mind. In other words, Pugin understands the word 'purpose' in relation to a correct articulation of the various

parts ('portions') of a building in order to "*excite wonder and admiration*"<sup>32</sup> and to influence the ideas of the spectator. For example, the 'purpose' of a Christian church is to create a feeling for the greatness of Christianity; as Pugin writes:

...such *effects* as these can only be produced on the mind by buildings, the composition of which has emanated from men who were thoroughly imbued [sic] with devotion...<sup>33</sup>

Feeling instigates and creates feeling. I argue that this ideology is very far from a 'functionalist' point of view. Indeed, it is almost the opposite. It is concerned with *effect* on the eye, in order to reach the mind. That is why Pugin is interested so much in the concept of 'ornament'. Ornament is a symbolic language, a vehicle for the architect to express feelings and excite appropriate visual and mental effects, a way of communicating an appropriate 'character'.<sup>34</sup> Pugin uses the words 'embellishment', 'beautification' and 'enrichment' to describe the above process.<sup>35</sup> Elsewhere he speaks of 'appearances', which announce the devotion to a higher cause, instead of merely thinking in terms of 'interest' and 'expediency'.<sup>36</sup> Pugin conceives the relationship between the final meaning and purpose of the building's visual language and its ornament as 'propriety'. And he juxtaposes 'propriety' to 'economy' as a far better way of designing meaningful and appropriate architecture.<sup>37</sup> 'Propriety' is achieved through the right 'features'<sup>38</sup> of a visual vocabulary,<sup>39</sup> which produce 'effects':<sup>40</sup> Pugin connects them with the concept of 'decorum'.<sup>41</sup> One consequence of those effects is to arouse "*historical recollections*".<sup>42</sup> Pugin adopts his theory about the absolute necessity of meaningful, 'characteristic features' within architecture, contrasting it again and again with 'modern' mechanical arrangements, facilities, contrivances, ease, comfort and 'usages'.<sup>43</sup> Can there be any clearer indication that his theory of architecture is not 'functionalist'? His difference from Modern functionalism is exactly his refusal to equate 'function' with economy, practical necessities and absence of ornament: for Pugin, it is the "*imposing and characteristic features*"<sup>44</sup> that make up the architectural quality and real purpose of an architectural design. The philosophy of architecture put forward in *Contrasts* can really help us interpret his next major work, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture*, and decide whether Pevsner's interpretation of Pugin as a functionalist really possesses a solid foundation.

## The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St Marie's, Oscott

Let us read again Pugin's first rule of design, which, according to Pevsner, is a source of Modern functionalism. Pugin writes in the first paragraph of "*The True Principles...*":

...there should be no *features* about a building which are not necessary for convenience, construction, or propriety.<sup>45</sup>

If we pay attention, we immediately become aware of the continuity in Pugin's thought between the philosophy of design formulated in *Contrasts* and the *True Principles*. Pugin, again, is not talking about functional arrangements of spatial uses, but about "features": "...*there should be no features about a building...*". In other words, he refers to those – previously mentioned – "characteristic features" that articulate the meaningful language of a building, its ornament and character. We could argue that *True Principles* is basically a treatise on the right application of ornament. This point is often forgotten by those who interpret Pugin's thought as a 'functionalist' one. That is why the concept of propriety is mentioned again. Propriety ensures the correspondence between the symbolic role of the building and its ornament.<sup>46</sup>

In pure architecture the smallest detail should *have a meaning* or serve a purpose.<sup>47</sup>

Once more, we become aware that Pugin lays emphasis on the universe of meaning, of ideas and intangible values. Surely, *True Principles* presents a different tone from *Contrasts*: it shows a new interest in construction. But Pugin never forgets his theoretical origins: while formulating new arguments for the right application of ornament based on constructional principles or the different properties of materials, he maintains the idea that a building primarily refers to the eye and should "...*produce a fine effect of light and shade*".<sup>48</sup>

The new 'constructional' argumentation of Pugin, as it is developed in the *True Principles*, could lead to a misinterpretation of this obvious 'turn' as a proto-functionalist attitude. Apparently, his 'ornamental rationalism' may seem to be based solely on constructional and utilitarian grounds.<sup>49</sup> But if we read more attentively and patiently, we gradually realize that Pugin is very far from such an attitude: for him, what is important is the fact that every constructional element should have or has a "mystical intention". For example, in the case of the pinnacle, its true role is "...*to represent an emblem of the Resurrection*".<sup>50</sup> Besides 'utility',<sup>51</sup> the ultimate criterion for judging architectural beauty and excellence remains the same throughout Pugin's writings. It is the basic premise developed in *Contrasts*: what really matters is the meaningful quality of the 'effect' of the building on the eye and the mind of the observer.<sup>52</sup>

A good example of this attitude is revealed when Pugin treats of iron as a new material. Here, his deeper ideological core surfaces again: he believes that iron cannot be used for ornamental purposes because it is

...deficient of that play of light and shade consequent on bold relief and deep sinkings, so essential to produce a good effect.<sup>53</sup>

I am convinced that if Pugin was a true or pure functionalist in the Modern sense, as Pevsner argues, he couldn't have written phrases like the above. Does a pure functionalist show an interest in the play of light and shade and in good mental effects of a building? Probably not. That is the reason why Andrew Saint rightly argued that 'vulgar functionalism' does not express Pugin's state of mind.<sup>54</sup> Saint believes that the 'true principles' of Pugin present an inherent ambiguity.<sup>55</sup> Harry-Francis Mallgrave agrees with him. He writes about Pugin's *True Principles*:

Its two opening rules have often been hailed as the precursors of functionalist theory, but such a judgment both belies the growing complexity of the debate and oversimplifies Pugin's position.<sup>56</sup>

This complexity and ambiguity is captured by Pugin's desire to endow every structural or morphological element with a "...*mystical and appropriate meaning*".<sup>57</sup> That is why the concept of 'propriety' is crucial to the articulation of the argument developed in the *True Principles*. According to Pugin, 'propriety' is the principle of design, ensuring

...that the external and internal appearance of an edifice should be illustrative of, and in accordance with, the purpose for which it is destined.<sup>58</sup>

Here, again, no 'function' is mentioned: instead, Pugin is talking about a destination<sup>59</sup> and the *appearance* of it. Pugin develops a theory of 'decorative propriety': according to the importance, scale and destination of a building, different ornamentation should apply: each building type should have its own appropriate *character*, related to the *intentions* of the builders.<sup>60</sup> In this context, Pugin attacks the 'utilitarian functionalism' of his present age. He writes:

Churches are now built without the least regard to tradition, to mystical reasons, or even common propriety. A room full of seats at the least possible cost is the present idea of a church<sup>61</sup>

The man who writes these words could never be a functionalist in the Modern sense of a design regulated by economy of materials, absence of ornament and minimum, practical arrangement of space. According to Pugin, a building should first of all "*impress the mind with feelings of reverent awe*", using ornaments with "*mystical signification*".<sup>62</sup> Buildings and their parts are 'emblems', not 'functions': Pugin looks for "*soul-stirring*" emblems that will be able to announce, through their features, "*distinguishing characters*".<sup>63</sup> For example, he writes of the collegiate buildings of William of Wykeham:

The whole character of these buildings is at once severe, elegant, and scholastic.<sup>64</sup>

‘Character’ is a key notion for Pugin’s philosophy of architecture. It denotes the ability of architecture to produce feelings and to announce intentions and meanings to its observers: those meanings may be ways of life, social moods and inclinations, psychic dispositions or qualities.<sup>65</sup> ‘Character’ is also connected with scale and size. Pugin writes:

Without vastness of dimensions it is impossible to produce a grand and imposing effect in architecture.<sup>66</sup>

Again, the principal object of Pugin’s focus is the effect of a building and not its function. Concluding our examination of the textual sources themselves, I argue that Pugin’s thinking *cannot* be characterized as a ‘functionalist’ one: this prevalent interpretation seriously misunderstands and hides other, more important dimensions and nuances of his theoretical outlook. If Pugin is not a functionalist, what is the background of his theories? Is there a possibility for a new, alternative interpretation?

## Possible Sources of Pugin’s Cast of Mind

Most of the various attempts to explain Pugin’s architectural thinking and its possible general intellectual background or sources relate, unfortunately, to the functionalist ‘myth’. In other words, they tend to explain the cast of his mind within the dominant avowal of his supposed ‘functionalism’. Some scholars relate this premise with a certain ‘rationalism’ in Pugin’s thought,<sup>67</sup> which appears to have as a background certain eighteenth-century French thinkers. An early example of this line of reasoning is formulated by Phoebe Stanton in 1954. She writes:

It should be noted in passing that Pugin was the son of a Frenchman, that he was bilingual, and that his father, A.C. Pugin, knew well and probably taught his son the theories of Marc-Antoine Laugier and Jacques-François Blondel.<sup>68</sup>

Stanton, while she has repeated her view that Blondel exerted a possible influence on Pugin,<sup>69</sup> never developed the argument further. Pevsner picked up this suggestion and had the opinion that Pugin’s thought “...is the direct continuation of the principle of French seventeenth and eighteenth century rationalism”.<sup>70</sup> But he did not elaborate on this idea either: he simply mentioned Cordemoy, Boffrand, Blondel and Batteux as exponents of this so-called ‘rationalism’.<sup>71</sup> David Watkin simply reiterates this line of thinking, mentioning Laugier and Blondel as the possible sources for Pugin’s theories.<sup>72</sup> Andrew Saint does not deviate from this ‘rationalist’ explanation either: he merely adds more names to this tradition: Perronet, Frézier, Soufflot, Durand and Rondelet.<sup>73</sup> Finally, Hill also points out that in his second major work, namely the

*True Principles*, “...the influence of French rationalist theory...becomes significant”.<sup>74</sup> But she does not develop this argument further. Are we not again faced with another Puginian myth? Many scholars formulated the hypothesis of his indebtedness to French ‘rationalism’ but none actually proved it. This line of argument still remains unaddressed.

Other hypotheses were also formulated regarding Pugin’s thought, its intellectual background, and the nature of certain key concepts of his theory, such as ‘propriety’. For example, elements of a certain ‘Vitruvian’ tradition have also been mentioned by Stanton and Hill, but with no further, substantial, or real explanations. More specifically, Hill thinks that Pugin’s “...remarks on ‘propriety’ are no more than the Vitruvian conventions of the drawing school”.<sup>75</sup> And Stanton argues that Pugin defined architectural excellence “...in the Vitruvian sense as fitness to and expression of purpose”.<sup>76</sup> I believe that the above interpretations, namely the supposed ‘rationalism’ or ‘Vitruvianism’ of Pugin are vague and somewhat general, and do not help us understand the distinctive tone and peculiarity of Pugin’s thinking regarding the relation between design, form and the role or purpose of a building. In order to unveil different layers of meaning inherent in Pugin’s thought we have to move away from terms such as ‘rationalism’ or ‘Vitruvianism’, which could mean almost anything: we should be more specific.

## Towards a New Interpretation and Hypothesis

A third, more interesting line of reasoning has recently been developed. Few scholars seem to agree that Pugin’s early cast of mind is forged within a distinct romantic sensibility, where the notion of the ‘picturesque’ plays a major role.<sup>77</sup> Hill argues that the ‘topographical artists’ and the Old Watercolour Society were a possible source for Pugin’s style and thinking, as developed in his first major work, *Contrasts*.<sup>78</sup> Within this picturesque tradition, as Hill writes:

...his text sets out the case for Gothic architecture entirely in terms of association, of the devout ‘feelings’ that certain visual effects will inevitably produce.<sup>79</sup>

If that is correct, Pugin is presented as a Romantic who transferred Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight’s concepts into the cause of the Gothic Revival. That is obviously one serious aspect of Pugin’s intellectual background.<sup>80</sup> But is it the only one? And can we explain Pugin’s thinking solely in terms of a picturesque ideology?

In that direction, I propose a new, fourth hypothesis, an alternative reading and interpretation, in order to ground Pugin’s thought within the intellectual space of the history of ideas of his era. Based on the previous interpretation of his major texts, I strongly suggest that Pugin’s conception of ‘purpose’,

‘propriety’ and ‘character’ share a common idea: his insistence on the necessity for architecture to express the ideological meaning, message, destination and role of a building, which transcend its practical function and use. In that direction, which Michael Bright calls “*the expressive theory*”,<sup>81</sup> I suggest that the intellectual milieu and atmosphere out of which some of his ideas about architectural symbolism could spring is the French tradition of the *theories of architectural character and expression*. This tradition has its roots mainly in the eighteenth century.<sup>82</sup> Peter Blundell Jones is one of the very few scholars of Pugin who has seen this possibility – without further analyzing it, however – when he wrote that the nineteenth-century advocate of the Gothic Revival:

...clearly shared an interest in the idea of “*architecture parlante*” with French architects such as Claude-Nicolas Ledoux.<sup>83</sup>

Harry Francis Mallgrave has also formulated a hint towards this hypothesis, without elaborating on it. He claimed that the principles of Pugin’s mature thought “...*come out of the French academic tradition, which Pugin knew well through readings from his French father’s library*”.<sup>84</sup>

This solution is not improbable. After all, as Clive Wainwright has amply demonstrated, Pugin and his father had close intellectual and working relationships with France. Pugin travelled there many times throughout his life and was kept well informed of the various antiquarian and intellectual currents of the Continent. It is of particular importance that he was in France travelling and sketching during the 1830s, many times.<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

For Pugin, a building is not meant primarily to satisfy material requirements of comfort and utilitarian demands of the body. Those are the external, superfluous, ‘mechanical’ parts of use. They concern practical ‘functions’. What he is really interested in is the building – that is, architecture – as a language that concerns the spirit. Here what becomes important are the feelings and the mental associations that the building arouses in a spectator. Pugin seems to believe that a building’s primary end, aim, vocation and mission is to create a symbolic meaning, a mental concept, an intellectual trace. The ‘purpose’ of a building is to instigate a kind of psychical development, a conceptual change, an internal transformation of the soul. It refers to the creation of mental representations that approximate the meaningful space of a building’s conceptual range and scope within the world of ideas.

Those representations concern a mystical, deeper level of symbolic articulations of collective memory, historical references, religious beliefs and social values. ‘Purpose’ and ‘propriety’ thus mainly



refer to the building as a vehicle for spiritual changes. I claim that in Pugin's thought, 'purpose' almost means 'character'.<sup>86</sup> A building's primary aim then is not to fulfil a material function but to attain and to accomplish an appropriate mental character. Appropriate in relation to the feelings, the ideas, the meanings and the emotions that its destinations should be expected to arouse in the mind and soul of its spectators. Character is thus related to 'propriety' as well. In Pugin's thought, form does not follow function. *Form follows ideas*. Form follows meaning, conceptual content. Pugin could not be a 'functionalist' in the Modern sense. Because his notion of 'purpose' transcended mere questions of utility and economy. His conception of purpose or propriety refers to architecture as a symbolic form: to the meaningful space that it communicates through its visible articulation. And this conceptual space belongs to the intellectual realm, not the material world. It is connected with honesty, religion, ethical values and the inner soul of an era, its cultural core. Architecture is a language<sup>87</sup> for the communication of the spirit. As Pugin himself wrote in the *Catholic Standard* in 1851:

I am a builder-up of men's minds and ideas, as well as of material edifices; and there is an immense work and a moral foundation yet required.<sup>88</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Augustus WelbyNorthmore Pugin, *Contrasts; Or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste* (London: At St. Marie's Grange, 1836), 30.
- 2 Rosemary Hill, "Reformation to Millenium. Pugin's Contrasts in the History of English Thought," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no.1 (1999): 39.
- 3 Hill, "Reformation to Millenium," 38.
- 4 Phoebe Stanton, "The Sources of Pugin's Contrasts," in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (Lane, London: Lane, 1968) 122.
- 5 Phoebe Stanton, *Pugin*, Preface by Nikolaus Pevsner, A Studio Book (New York: The Viking Press, 1972) 92.
- 6 Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750-1950* (1965), second edition, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal & Kingston: London: Ithaca, 1998) 107-108, 211-212.

- 7 Michael Bright, "A Reconsideration of A.W.N. Pugin's Architectural Theories," *Victorian Studies* 22 no. 2 (1979): 154.
- 8 Edward Robert de Zurko, *Origins of Functionalist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 126, 129.
- 9 Phoebe B. Stanton, "Pugin: Principles of Design versus Revivalism," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13, no. 3 (1954): 20–25.
- 10 Stanton, *Pugin*, 191.
- 11 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1968) 9.
- 12 Augustus Welby Pugin, *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture: Set Forth in Two Lectures Delivered at St. Marie's, Oscott* (London: John Weale, 1841), 1.
- 13 John Wilton-Ely, "The Rise of the Professional Architect in England," in *The Architect. Chapters in the History of the Profession*, ed. Spiro Kostof (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 195.
- 14 Rosemary Hill, "Ruskin and Pugin," in *Ruskin and Architecture*, eds. Rebecca Daniels and Geoff Brandwood (Reading: Spire Books, 2003), 223.
- 15 David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture. The Development of a Theme in Architectural History and Theory from the Gothic Revival to the Modern Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 20.
- 16 Bright, "A Reconsideration," 154.
- 17 Chris Brooks, *Signs for the Times, Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 154.
- 18 Roderick O' Donnell, "Introduction," in *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture and An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture*, Augustus Welby Pugin (Herefordshire: Gracewing Publishing, 2003), ix.
- 19 Roderick O' Donnell, "Introduction," viii–ix.
- 20 Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present*, trans. Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander and Antony Wood (New York: Zwemmer and Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 328.
- 21 Harry Francis Mallgrave (ed.), *Architectural Theory, Volume I, An Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 385.
- 22 For an almost exhaustive treatment of Pugin's intellectual sources during the preparation of *Contrasts* see Phoebe Stanton, "The Sources of Pugin's *Contrasts*", in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London: Lane, 1968), 120–139; Ashby Bland Crowder, "Pugin's *Contrasts*: Sources for its Technique," *Architectura* 13, no.1 (1983): 57–63, and, especially Rosemary Hill, "Reformation to Millenium," 26–41.

- 23 Margaret Belcher, "Pugin Writing," in *Pugin, A Gothic Passion*, Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright eds. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in association with The Victoria & Albert Museum, 1994), 106.
- 24 Belcher, "Pugin Writing," 107.
- 25 Belcher, "Pugin Writing," 107–110.
- 26 See the similar argument in Andrew Saint, "The Fate of Pugin's True Principles", in *Pugin, A Gothic Passion*, eds. Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with The Victoria & Albert Museum 1994), 274.
- 27 Pugin, *Contrasts*, iii.
- 28 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 2–3.
- 29 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 1.
- 30 He speaks of *purpose*, not of function. Actually, he never mentions the word 'function' in relation to architecture in his text.
- 31 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 2.
- 32 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 3.
- 33 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 2.
- 34 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 4, 7, 9, 11–13, 22–23, 35.
- 35 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 3, 9, 16.
- 36 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 14, 25.
- 37 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 15.
- 38 The emphasis on the 'features' of a building can be traced also to Pugin's text "*How Shall We Build Our Churches?*". See A.W.N. Pugin, "How Shall We Build our Churches?"[Letter to *The Builder*] (1850), in *Architectural Theory, Volume I, An Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870*, ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave(USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 484–485.
- 39 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 16.
- 40 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 19, 20, 25.
- 41 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 20.
- 42 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 22. On this subject see also: Augustus Welby Pugin, *An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England* (London: John Weale, 1843), 18, 29, 38.
- 43 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 22–24, 27, 33.
- 44 Pugin, *Contrasts*, 32, 34.
- 45 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 1.

- 46 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 1–2.
- 47 Pugin, *The True Principles*, p. 1.
- 48 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 4.
- 49 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 19–28.
- 50 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 9.
- 51 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 11.
- 52 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 12–13, 16–18, 40.
- 53 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 29.
- 54 Andrew Saint, “The Fate of Pugin’s True Principles,” in *Pugin, A Gothic Passion*, eds. Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with The Victoria & Albert Museum, 1994), 275.
- 55 Saint, “The Fate of Pugin’s True Principles,” 274.
- 56 Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory, A Historical Survey, 1673–1968*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 90.
- 57 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 34.
- 58 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 42.
- 59 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 42, 60.
- 60 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 43.
- 61 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 44.
- 62 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 45–46.
- 63 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 49–51.
- 64 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 52.
- 65 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 60–61.
- 66 Pugin, *The True Principles*, 63.
- 67 For Pugin’s ‘rationalism’ see Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture, 1750–1950* (1965), second edition (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, London: Ithaca, 1998), 107–108, 211–212.
- 68 Phoebe B. Stanton, “Pugin: Principles of Design versus Revivalism,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 13, no. 3 (1954): 21.
- 69 Phoebe Stanton, *Pugin*, Preface by Nikolaus Pevsner, A Studio Book (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), 192–193.

- 70 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1968), 9.
- 71 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Sources of Modern Architecture*, 9.
- 72 David Watkin, *Morality and Architecture. The Development of a Theme in Architectural History and Theory from the Gothic Revival to the Modern Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 19.
- 73 Saint, "The Fate of Pugin's True Principles," 277–278.
- 74 Hill, "Reformation to Millenium," 40.
- 75 Hill, "Reformation to Millenium," 40.
- 76 Stanton, *Pugin*, 26.
- 77 Ashby Bland Crowder, "Pugin's Contrasts: Sources for its Technique," *Architectura*, Vol. 13, no.1, 1983, p. 58.
- 78 Rosemary Hill, "Ruskin and Pugin", in *Ruskin and Architecture*, eds. Rebecca Daniels and Geoff Brandwood Reading: Spire Books, 2003), 227–229.
- 79 Hill, "Reformation to Millenium," 36.
- 80 Watkin, *Morality and Architecture*, 21.
- 81 Michael Bright, "A Reconsideration of A.W.N. Pugin's Architectural Theories," *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 2 (1979): 156–157.
- 82 For an overview of those theories see Harry Francis Mallgrave (ed.), *Architectural Theory, Volume I, An Anthology from Vitruvius to 1870* (USA: Blackwell Publishing, , 2006), 190–220.
- 83 Peter Blundell Jones, "A.W.N. Pugin's Concept of 'Propriety' – and What might Lie behind it," *True Principles: The Journal of the Pugin Society* III, no. 3 (2006): 6.
- 84 Mallgrave, *Architectural Theory*, 385.
- 85 Clive Wainwright, "A.W.N. Pugin and France", in *A.W.N. Pugin: Master of Gothic Revival*, ed. Paul Atterbury (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 1995), 71–73.
- 86 Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present*, trans. Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander and Antony Wood (New York: Zwemmer and Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 159.
- 87 Chris Brooks, *Signs for the Times, Symbolic Realism in the Mid-Victorian World*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 155.
- 88 Quoted in Margaret Belcher, "Pugin Writing," in *Pugin, A Gothic Passion*, eds. Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, in association with The Victoria & Albert Museum, 1994), 114.

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Nikolaos-Ion Terzoglou obtained a diploma in Architecture (2000), a Master's of Science (2001) and a PhD (2005) from the National Technical University of Athens. He also holds a degree in Painting from the Department of Fine Arts of the Athens School of Fine Arts (2009). His doctoral thesis was awarded the Second International ICAR-CORA Prize in 2007. He has co-edited (with Kyriaki Tsoukala and Charikleia Pantelidou) a collective volume titled *Intersections of Space and Ethos* (Routledge, 2015, 2017). He is an Assistant Professor on *Concepts and Theories for the Organization of Architectural Space* at the National Technical University of Athens.







Book Review:  
Angeliki Sioli & Yoonchun Jung (eds).  
*Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination  
and Architectural Experience*  
Routledge, 2018

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Upon the encounter with *Reading Architecture: Literary Imagination and Architectural Experience*, edited by Angeliki Sioli and Yoonchun Jung, one is left to wonder about which is more real—the fiction that is reality, or the reality of fiction? No doubt the insightful contributions that arise in the contemplation of this ambiguous condition originating from literary and architectural representation make their stand on this question, analyzing architecture from the view point of a visitor who is also a narrator, and a reader of architecture and the city, but is not quite an architect *per se*. While the centrality of fiction and narrative in architecture has long been discussed and acknowledged in scholarly writings, the editors of this work take a unique stand to look at literary writings by poets and authors that may have come to inspire city dwellers, but also significantly, the architect's own literary imagination. Referencing Paul Ricoeur's notion of hermeneutic phenomenology, the editors relate this mode of imagining to his claim that language may lead not just to form, but importantly to inform meaningful images.<sup>1</sup>

As the editors poignantly note in the introduction, the central motivation for this collection of essays comes from the belief that a literary reading of the city from the viewpoint of the allied literary arts offers an insightful introspective into the subjective view, that is the real virtual dimension of the city, which becomes a factual part of the collective imagination of its inhabitants. As the editors fittingly argue, the imaginative literary lenses possibly offer a more factual reading than the one provided by the so-called scientific production of knowledge aimed at the transformation of cities by the insights of sociologists or scientists. The edited book by Sioli and Jung is accompanied by an insightful foreword by Alberto Pérez-Gómez, and a preface by Elias Constantopoulos, both of which orient the reader to the wider historical context of what it means to read architecture.

This collection of timely writings developed after the gathering of the contributors in June 2015 at the Benaki Museum in Athens, Greece, where a Symposium on the topic of *Reading Architecture* was organized by the book editors, with the support of the History and Theory Program at McGill University, School of Architecture.<sup>2</sup> Through four well articulated sections devoted to the ‘Readings on (Un)Familiar Places’, ‘Readings on Architectural Research’, ‘Readings on Architectural Design and Pedagogy’, ‘Readings on Contemporary Architectural Reality and Practice’, this book asserts the primacy of the oral condition in architecture, and affirms the centrality of the stories that are firstly and foremost listened to, even before being written, or drawn.

The narrative fictions analyzed by the four contributors Christian Parreno, Angeliki Sioli, Mathilde Simonsen Dahl, and Yoonchun Jung in the first section of the book, recover meaning in four distinct metropolises. Christian Parreno unravels boredom in the Algerian city of Oran, where so-called “centers of waiting” place time at a standstill. The erotic nocturnal landscape of Paris emerges vividly in Angeliki Sioli’s reading of the literary writings of the surrealist poet Philippe Soupault (1897-1990), who created through a technique of metaphoric transfer the literary distance needed to perceive the sadness of the rue de Medicis. Hunger Mathilde Simonsen Dahl discusses the role of a nameless protagonist who crosses the city of Oslo “by foot and by thought” to find within it the traces of Kristiania, in Knut Hamsun’s novel *Hunger* (1890). Lastly, in this section of the book, an impersonal and detached city of Seoul emerges in Yoonchun Jung’s analysis of the stories emerging from apartment buildings.

The second section of the book will inspire architects and scholars to reconsider the methods of their architectural research and renew their language through exploring poetic alternatives that are beyond the dominant modes of scholarly production. Mari Lending’s cautionary tale on the fabrics of reality unveils the fact that literature may supersede reality, and it questions the possible limits of traditional scholarly discourses. Klaske Havik considers how rational modes of thinking are limited in comparison to poetic writings and poetic images, placing perception at the center of a reading of reality that precedes reflection. Rumiko Handa argues the role of architecture as a memento allowing for a Gadamerian “fusion of horizons” between the past and the present that shapes identity. Lisa Landrum opens up a reading into the literary

imagination of Edgar Allan Poe, so as to liberate and revive wonder, while also reminding readers about the limits of unlimited imagination. The closing essay in this section of the book, by Panos Leventis, moves back and forth between fiction and historiography in a narrative reading of the city of Montréal, exposing the methods of an objectifying history and the immediacy of a story(telling).

In the third section the contributors offer insightful reflections to reorient architectural pedagogy and design strategies by defining the role of literary language as a design tool. Jason Crow describes the nesting of words and images in narrative through an analysis of the imagery in Saint-Exupéry's novel, *The Little Prince* (1943), and warns educators about the perils of reducing drawings to illustrations of reality. Anca Matyiku reflects on the fictional space of the imagination that builds future reality, as it is manifested in the poetic constructs of drawing, and before drawing in the literary imagination. She couples this reading with a discussion of Paul Ricoeur's *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975). Sevil Enginsoy Ekinici speaks of an ambiguous story by Paul Scheerbart, *The Perpetual Motion Machine* (1910), which is a literary fiction about invention. As the contributor tellingly explains, this fiction has been interpreted by scholars as either an actual architectural design or a storytelling. This fruitful ambiguity sets the tale in motion, making apparent that perhaps both readings are justified. In his concluding remarks the author of the chapter suggests extending this ambiguous mode of reading and writing to other stories, or tales. With Marc Neveu's close-up reading of Douglas Darden's drawings inspired by Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), we find out about how a veritable novel can become an architectural site for bringing construction and meaning together in such a way that the "siting/setting", and the "building/thinking" are drawn together through "plot/lines". Writing the last chapter in this section, Paul Holmquist examines his experiences, when teaching a graduate-level theory seminar at McGill University School of Architecture. He discusses the role of self-reflective theory that is born from architectural concerns in tandem with architectural experience, arguing that both can be brought into question through literary and philosophical readings.

In the fourth and concluding section of the book the contributors address action and participation in architecture practice. Caroline Dionne takes on the question of spatial agency and its construction through actions and words, basing her interpretation of the role of the users in space-making on Ricoeur's concept of recognition, which she uses to explain the co-dependant relations between literary imagination and participation through action. David Spurr counters the branded architecture produced by market forces with the architecture that survives in literary representation, which arguably offers a form of critical resistance to the reduction of architectural phenomena to image production in "junkspace".<sup>3</sup> Lily Chi argues for the use of the tactical craft of storytelling as a re-imagining strategy for architects involved in the urban dimension of architecture. The concluding chapter in this section and in the book by Susana Oliveira makes readers reflect on the role of envisioning possible fictional futures, focusing on E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* (1909), and the possible consequences of reducing architecture to shelter, to imagine other possible futures that reconnect us with nature and each other.

The authors of this carefully edited and timely book unravel the threads of stories that have been alive in places through time, and that have come to capture the unique atmospheres and moods that run through the fabric of actual places and cities, and the lives of their inhabitants, to the point of coming to define, together with the places that they describe, an identity that may not be seen but is lived. It may well indeed be the case that in an age dominated by rational and functional architectural thinking, using Neveu's technique of close-up underlined readings by a readership of architecture students, scholars and architects, may place narrative at the center of architectural design, teaching and creativity as the proper antidote to imagine other possible futures for the urban condition. Our understanding of the reality of urban centers and metropolises becomes sharper through a reading of the fictions and narratives addressed in this book, underlying in turn the capacity of story(telling) and of narrators to infuse architectural imagination with what lies at its core, a literary imagination.

## Notes

- 1 Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, 2, 1997: 127.
- 2 <http://www.readingarchitecture.org>, accessed September 7, 2018.
- 3 Rem Koolhaas, "Junkspace", *October* 100, 2002: 175-190.

## About the author

Federica Goffi is Associate Professor (2007-present), and Co-Chair of the PhD program at Carleton University. She teaches drawing, studio, and a PhD colloquium, and she holds a PhD from WAAC, Virginia Tech. She published articles on the notion of built conservation (OBL/QUE, Scroope, AD, ARQ, In.Form, Interstices, Int.AR). Her 2013 book with Routledge is titled *Time Matter[s]: Invention and Re-imagination in Built Conservation. The Unfinished Drawing and Building of St. Peter's in the Vatican*. She edited *Marco Frascari's Dream House: A Theory of Imagination*, Routledge, 2017. She holds a 'Dottore in Architettura', University of Genoa and is a licensed architect in Italy.

