The Book of Stone: Architecture, Memory, and the Graphic Novel

by

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Abstract

The Book of Stone: Architecture, Memory, and the Graphic Novel
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This paper looks to explore the contemporary graphic novel as a platform to engage with the city and architectural space as an experiential, lived, site as well as an archive of personal and collective memories and histories. It looks at graphic novels that present architecture and the urban environment as an active character within the novel, and their portrayal of historical and psychological dimensions embedded within built space. The visual structure of the comic, with its forms of representations and unique temporalities are taken into consideration as this thesis explores how these works become a viable form of research into the urban environment, portraying how architecture and urban space is an active force in shaping and influencing the lives of its inhabitants.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor, Professor Keith Bresnahan, for his patience, enthusiasm, encouragement and immense knowledge. His guidance and support was tremendous throughout this process, and is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank the rest of my thesis committee, Professor Sarah McLean-Knapp, Professor Eric Nay and Professor Alex Link, for their encouragement, thoughtful comments and critical questions.

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Introduction

It was a premonition that human thought, in changing its outward form, was also about to change its outward mode of expression; that the dominant idea of each generation would, in future, be embodied in a new material, a new fashion; that the book of stone, so solid and so enduring, was to give way to the book of paper, more solid and more enduring still. In this respect the vague formula of the Archdeacon had a second meaning—that one Art would dethrone another Art: Printing will destroy Architecture.

> — Victor Hugo, "This Will Destroy That." *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831)

In this well-known passage, Victor Hugo lamented the loss of architecture's

traditional role as a record of human existence and progress, and its replacement

by print as the marker of cultural and historical significance. In Hugo's vision,

with the rise of the book in the middle ages we no longer regard the urban

landscape as a 'text' that documents our progress and archives our past. Despite

Hugo's haunting prediction of one art dethroning another, this thesis looks to

explore how the 'book of print,' in the form of the contemporary graphic novel,

has situated itself today as a new site of engagement with the 'book of stone,'

deploying graphic narrative as a means of exploring the historical and mnemonic

character of the urban environment. In a number of contemporary works, *Dropsie*

Avenue (Will Eisner, 1995), *Batman: Death by Design* (Chip Kidd and Dave

Taylor, 2012), Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*, (1989-1996); Chris

Ware's *Building Stories* (2012) and *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

(1995-2000), and Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng's *Relocating Mother* (2012),

the comics form is used both as a site of architectural criticism and engagement

with issues surrounding urbanism as a means of positing architecture as an active force in shaping people's lives. I posit that these specific graphic novels open up new avenues of engagement with the urban landscape, permitting us to regard it as a spatial text and a repository for personal and cultural meaning.

This thesis explores how contemporary graphic novels act as a vehicle to read the city and architectural space as both an experiential, lived site, and a repository or archive of personal and collective history and memory. I explore graphic novels that go beyond simply presenting the urban landscape as *setting*, and instead take as their subject the historical and psychological dimensions embedded in buildings and urban structures. The visual structure of the comic book, with its shifts between real and imaginary spaces, forms of representation (such as transitions between birds-eye views and street level perspectives), and unique and speculative temporalities, allows these works to present arguments about the city and lived space unavailable in other media, and to therefore become viable forms of research into the urban environment and experience.

In some respects, these works form a parallel to earlier, 'visionary' practices in architectural history—for example, in the work of Etienne- Louis Boullée, whose *Architecture, Essai sur l'art* (ca. 1793) proposed a number of fantastical projects for public monuments; although the works in *Architecture* were never realized, they reconfigured the understanding of monuments as

structures whose definition went beyond simply commemorative buildings.[1] Similarly, Claude-Nicholas Ledoux's utopian plans for the industrial city of Chaux, included in his *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des moeurs, et de la législation*, (1804), while never realized, served as a major influence on future utopian city plans (notably in the early 20th-century work of Le Corbusier).[2] The images proposed by Boullée and Ledoux although never built themselves, were thus important as projective visions in shaping the future direction of the city. Comics and graphic novels, I suggest, inherit this tradition of exploring urban possibilities within the realm of 'print', by tying the real with the fictional and the private with the public, combining historical narratives with images of experienced space. Rather than print *replacing* architecture as a mode of expression, then, I suggest that the contemporary graphic novel re-posits architecture as the "great book of the human race," by exploring the sedimentation of personal and collective cultural memory within the forms of the urban landscape, and portraying architecture as an active force in shaping our lives.

The first chapter of my thesis examines Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor's *Batman: Death by Design* (2012), which deals with historical and contemporary issues of modernization, historic preservation, and urban development through a focus on architectural monuments. The core of the book centers on debates

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[1] See Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2011), 142.

[2] For more on the visionary architecture of Boullée and Ledoux, see Emil Kaufmann, "Three Revolutionary Architects, Boullée, Ledoux and Lequeu" in *Transaction of the American Philisophical Society, vol. 42, no. 3* (1952) : 341–564.

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surrounding the modern practice of replacing architectural monuments representing a city's historical past, with spectacular and 'progressive' symbols of ahistorical modernity. Fictionalizing the 1963 demolition of New York City's Penn Station in the present, the book conflates two historical moments to launch a dual critique of architectural practice: firstly, of the historical redevelopment of New York's postwar urban landscape under the instruction of developmental figurehead Robert Moses, and secondly of contemporary 'starchitecture,' here embodied in the pseudonymic figure of 'Kem Roomhaus' (i.e., Rem Koolhaas).

Considering the writings of Marshall Berman, Jane Jacobs, and others, I will show how this comic presents the significance of architectural monuments as archives of history and memory in a rapidly changing urban environment. I consider how Kidd and Taylor's placement of architectural critique within the superhero comic genre allows them to highlight the significance of architectural practice on the urban landscape: heroes and villains standing here for opposing architectural practices, preservationists vs. starchitects. I also explore this dynamic in *Death by Design* through the framework of an earlier Batman story, *The Destroyer* (1992), whose plotline centers on a 'battle' between the soulless, corrupt architecture of modernity and Gotham City's traditional neo-gothic structures. Ultimately, I argue that Batman himself is a sign of the way in which the urban environment shapes its inhabitants, by exploring Batman's own existence as inextricably tied to the neo-gothic city.

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The city as urban palimpsest—the way that the urban fabric contains

layers of sedimented and hidden history—will be explored in the second chapter

of my thesis, through Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell: A*

Melodrama in Sixteen Parts (1989-1996). I examine how Moore and Campbell's

recreation of 1880s London through the textual and visual narration of the graphic

novel allows the different (and specifically hidden or repressed) dimensions of

London's history to come to light. Referencing the writings of Michel de Certeau,

Walter Benjamin, and Iain Sinclair, among others, I demonstrate how *From Hell*

depicts the experience of the 'flâneur' or urban 'traveler' as crucial to

understanding the complex web of fragments of the past that is London's history:

a history "not writ in words…a literature of stone, of place-names and

associations."[3]

The fragments of London's past are manifested as historic sites and

architecture of London, such as Nicholas Hawksmoor's churches, that become a

kind of spatial writing that simultaneously encloses and discloses the 'true'

meaning of London's cityscape.[4] I suggest that Moore and Campbell also engage

with two competing modes of 'experiencing' urban space, between the experience

of the city at street-level and the panoramic vision of the observer far above the

city; or rather, the experience of the lived city in contrast to the city as 'map' or

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[3] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell: A Melodrama in Sixteen Parts*
(Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 9.

[4] Eva Yin-I Chen, "Hawksmoor's Churches: Myth and Architecture in the Works of Iain Sinclair
and Peter Ackroyd," *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2012) : 6.

'plan' as designed by architects and planners. In *From Hell*, Moore and Campbell use the panoramic view to reveal the connections drawn by the characters' movements between various points in London's pagan architecture and historical sites, such as Hawksmoor's churches, shown to construct an image of the ultimate pagan symbol. The pagan symbol is presented here as the revelation of the city's 'true meaning,'- a dark spiritual vortex, rooted in pagan ritualistic behavior.

Following the first part of my thesis, which focuses on the role of urban monuments in shaping history and the character of cities, and exerting an active force in our lives, the second half of my thesis shifts to the way architectural space serves as a repository for both personal and collective memories while simultaneously shaping and influencing us through our interactions with it. The third chapter of my thesis looks to explore the role of architectural structures both public and private as a site for shaping individual histories. In this chapter, I analyze two works by Chris Ware: *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (1995-2000) and *Building Stories* (2012). The first portion of this chapter examines Ware's treatment of space through a phenomenological lens, specifically considering how the physical sites of personal experience shape individual history and memory, through the analysis of one of *Building Stories'* 14 books, which follows the lives of three tenants in a single apartment building over a span of 24 hours.

In this book, Ware has transformed the space of inhabitation into an actual being complete with thoughts and memories, to interrogate the inter-dependent

relationships between urban space and its users. In the case of *Building Stories*, the memories and experiences of the tenants, both previous and present, become embedded in the building's own consciousness and memory, as it in turn actively shapes the lives of its inhabitants. I explore how 'home' takes on a human persona—here, a maternal character—that in effect shapes the psychology of its inhabitants: the house's virtues of protection and resistance are transposed into human virtues that allow the house to acquire the physical and moral energy of a human body,[5] by taking up Gaston Bachelard's influential argument in *The Poetics of Space*. I also analyze Ware's alternation in his visual narrative between sequential narration and static presentation (i.e., views of the building in isometric view), which visually depict 'the Building' as a repository of memories while establishing a distinct visual 'voice' for the architecture that emphasizes its role as an active presence in the lives of its inhabitants.

Shifting from 'home' as a site of individual history, this chapter next turns to Ware's earlier *Jimmy Corrigan* book, where the 1893 Chicago World's Fair—a temporary and very public urban environment—is presented simultaneously as a significant symbol of collective and personal memory and fantasy. I explore how the World's Fair, an ephemeral site, embodies the collective memory of a city on the brink of modernization, capturing the hopes and fears of Chicagoans and the

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[5] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 46. Originally published in 1958.

nation[6] while holding personal significance in Jimmy's memory—it is at the Fair

that his turbulent relationship with his father reaches its dramatic climax. I look to

Maurice's Halbwachs' and Christine Boyer's writings on collective memory, to

explore how the Fair's temporal status makes it an 'extraordinary event' that

heightens the awareness of past and present for both Chicago and Jimmy

individually. Again analyzing the structure of Ware's visual narrative in this

work, I look at how his decision to juxtapose panels of fantasy with those of

reality allows for the understanding of the emotional impact of these spaces and

the events they house.

The final chapter of my thesis considers contemporary architects and

designers who are employing the graphic novel as a new medium for critical

engagement with issues of space, process and communication in the built

environment. Continuing with my exploration of questions of memory and 'home'

in the previous chapter, I will focus on the architect Mikkel Damsbo and poet

Gitte Broeng's comic *Relocating Mother* (2012), in which the protagonist goes

back to his childhood home before it is about to sell. In *Relocating Mother*,

Damsbo uses his character's inner struggles between a professional opinion and

personal attachment to his childhood home as a way to highlight what Melanie

van Hoorn calls the " architect's love-hate relationship with modernism."[7] I

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[6] Kevin Donnelly, " "Well Anyway": Learning from History with Chris Ware and Jimmy
Corrigan at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as
History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 93.
[7] Melanie Van Der Hoorn, *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (Rotterdam:
101 Publishers, 2012), 40.

analyze how Damsbo and Broeng, through rather simplistic images and text, portray architectonic space as intertwined with thoughts and memories of its users.[8] In this final chapter, I show how the potential of the graphic novel to foreground issues of personal and collective memory embedded within our built environments has found a place *within* architectural and design discourse, as a new site for spatial experiment and critique focused on the emotional relationships that form between people and architectural space.

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[8] Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng, Statement in Spring Exhibition, Charlottenborg Gallery, 2012.

<u>Literature Review</u>

In recent years, comic books and graphic novels have increasingly received
scholarly attention as contemporary media worthy of academic investigation.
Alongside acknowledging the growing literature of comics scholarship, this
literature review will briefly examine a particular graphic novel, Will Eisner's
Dropsie Avenue: The Neighbourhood (1995), by exploring the visual and textual
elements investigated within this body of comic academia, in order to introduce
my own thesis themes.

The comic book, with its collaborative visual and textual narratives, firstly
required an analysis and understanding of its form and structure before it could
become this object of investigation more broadly. Randy Duncan and Matthew J.
Smith's 2009 work *The Power of Comics*, (2009), which in the authors' words
seeks "to establish a coherent and comprehensive – but by no means definitive –
explanation of comic books; their history, their communication techniques, the
research into their meanings and effects, and the characteristics of the people who
make and consume them,"[9] is indicative of this trend in comics research. This
work builds on earlier, seminal inquiries into the nature of the comics form that
include Will Eisner's pioneering *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985), Scott
McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), and Thierry
Groensteen's *The System of Comics* (1999). In Eisner's *Comics and Sequential*

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[9] Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith. *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), vii.

Art, he attempts to investigate the unique structure of the graphic novel as a means of expression, regarding it as both a work of art and literature.[10] For Eisner, comics act as a set of images to become a language,[11] and in *Comics and Sequential Art*, he explores the elements of this language, such as panels, frames, and text, and how they work together to develop a sequential narrative.

In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, perhaps the best-known work of its kind, Scott McCloud explores the elements of the comic form towards a comprehensive understanding of how the medium functions. McCloud presents the work in the format of a comic, his chapters relying on the juxtaposition between text and image to clearly describe and enlighten specific elements of the medium, such as the importance of the gutter (the space in between panels), various types of panel sequences, and the concept of time captured within the medium.

Thierry Groensteen's *The System of Comics*, (French text 1999, translated into English in 2007), explores comic in a manner similar to McCloud's, although through a more traditional 'scholarly' approach. In *The System of Comics*, Groensteen looks to explore and decipher the physical structures of the comics by looking at what he calls the "spatio-topical system" of the comic, composed of the form of the panel, its area and its site. He then analyzes how panels work within a function of sequencing, where function (of a panel) is not determined by the

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10 Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (Tamarac: Poorhouse Press, 1985), 5.
11 Ibid., 8.

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preceding panel but by what he calls "the global economy of the sequence."[12] In his follow-up to this work, *Comics and Narration* (2013), Groensteen applies the analytic framework raised in *System of Comics*, to what he calls "abstract" comics, to explore how these types of works re-problematize the definition of comics. The four works mentioned above sought to explore the actual physical properties of comics and how they may be deciphered, in order to critically understand how the comic form works and what it is capable of as a medium.

The recent edited collections *Graphic Novels and/as History* (2012) and *Comics and the City: Urban Spaces in Print, Pictures and Sequence* (2010), explore how the medium of comics is not only serious literature, but how it is hybrid visual-text, a new form of narrative that is perhaps best suited to delve into issues of history and urbanization. This connection between the comics form and historical and architectural narration is further developed in Mélanie van Hoorn's *Bricks & Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (2012). These two works are key sources for my argument in this thesis, and require a closer examination of their material.

Graphic History: Graphic novels and/as History, (2012), edited by Richard Iadonisi, brings together 14 essays that explore graphic novels as vessels for historical engagement. Certain of the essays (such as Samantha Cutrara's "Drawn Out of History: The Representation of Women in Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography*,") criticize the exclusions and oversights of some

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[12] Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007) , 118.

historical graphic novels, while others analyze how the graphic novel—as a visual and textual medium—can portray and fill in gaps within historical narration: Barbara Uhlig's "Narrating the Unknown: The Construction of History in *El Cosmografo Sebastian Caboto*," for example, shows how the visual narrative of the graphic novel can 'tell' multiple versions and histories of the same story, on the one hand showing the contradictions, while simultaneously offering any of these histories as a possibility.

Two essays in this volume that were of particular interest to my thesis were Seamus O'Malley's "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell*," and Kevin Donnelly's " "Well, Anyway": Learning From History with Chris Ware and Jimmy Corrigan at the World's Columbian Exposition." O'Malley's essay shows *From Hell* as reconstructing our understanding of 'history' as a speculative act rooted in a process of imaginative reconstruction rather than in fact, and which can bring forth a sense of 'time' more accurately than other historical media, by making past and present exist simultaneously on the pages of the comic.[13] Donnelley's essay, looks at how Ware acts as a historian, both of an individual family history (of Jimmy Corrigan) and of the Chicago World's Fair, linking the key sites of the Fair to Jimmy's own personal experience. Ware's work has itself received much scholarly attention, including in the recent collection of essays *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is*

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[13] Seamus O'Malley, "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell" in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 171.

a Way of Thinking (2010), edited by David M. Ball and Barbara B. Kuhlman. This collection investigates the complexities within these novels, which appears initially hidden within a simplistic visual narrative. They investigate Ware's treatment of page layout, his method of '3D intervention' within the 2D structure of the comic (as seen with the numerous cut-out diagrams dispersed throughout *Jimmy Corrigan*), and the portrayal of architecture as an active character within the story.

My own thesis joins the growing number of essays and collections that investigate the comic book and its relation to urban space. Mélanie Van Der Hoorn's 2012 work *Bricks & Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* focuses specifically on graphic novels and comics that consciously engage with urban and architectural space, rather than presenting it as a backdrop to story plot lines; as does my own thesis, Van Der Hoorn's book shifts from graphic novels and comics that portray space as an active agent, to designers and architects who appropriate the graphic novel's hybrid structure to present their designs and engage with issues of space and process within the design profession. *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, (2010), edited by Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling, also looks specifically at how urban space is portrayed in comics and graphic novels, from the cities that serve as the home-base for superheroes and their relation to real urban space, to what Anthony Enns calls "the city as archive." Exploring Jason Lutes's *Berlin*, Enns suggests that the graphic novel is perhaps the medium best suited for depicting the urban

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environment, reflecting Walter Benjamin's call for a "hybrid medium" of montage to narrate the modern city – which *Berlin* presents as a space where "various different cultures intersect and interact."[14].

One iconic work discussed in *Comics and the City* is Will Eisner's *Dropsie Avenue: The Neighbourhood*, (1995), part of the *Contract with God Trilogy*—which is generally regarded as the first "graphic novel."[15] Greg M. Smith's essay 'Will Eisner, Vaudevillian of the Cityscape', explores how Eisner uses the dramatic gestures of American popular theatre to construct a theatrical structure in his work, correlating to Eisner's treatment of page layouts and transitions, where the 'natural' break between pages is used to transition to another scheme as if a curtain descends on one scene and rises upon another.[16]

As an introduction to my own approach in the rest of the thesis, and my key themes of history, memory, modernization, and the 'character' of urban space, I now turn to a brief examination of *Dropsie Avenue*.

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[14] Anthony Enns, "The City as Archive in Jason Lute's Berlin," in *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: Continuum, 2010), 51.

[15] Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith. *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 35.

[16] Greg M. Smith, "Will Eisner, Vaudevillian of the Cityscape," in *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 186.

Dropsie Avenue: The Death of a Neighbourhood

Will Eisner's *Dropsie Avenue: The Neighbourhood* (1995) portrays cycles of growth, decay, and regeneration within a single urban neighbourhood, over the course of the twentieth century. The visual structure of Eisner's comic captures the tensions of a neighbourhood—the central 'character' within the novel—caught in a constant juxtaposition between 'internal' development and the external effects of modernization, at the same time serving as a physical record of human progress and change.

Dropsie Avenue, the third volume in Eisner's *A Contract with God* trilogy (all set in a fictionalized version of Eisner's childhood South Bronx neighbourhood), follows the development of a New York City neighbourhood from its beginnings in the 1870s through to the 1980s. The story begins with the neighbourhood's first wave of immigrants, the Dutch, commenting on the invasion of English settlers on their land. This sets the tone for one of the key themes in *Dropsie Avenue*, the effects of each new wave of immigrants on the character and development of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood and the street are portrayed here as a vital character, one that—in the words of one of Eisner's human characters—"has a life-cycle — like people."[17]

Eisner's charting of Dropsie's transformation from a rich and vibrant

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[17] Will Eisner, *The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 465. *Dropsie Avenue* originally published in 1995.

neighbourhood into a 'slum,' and its subsequent death, mirrors the narrative of classic mid-century urbanist accounts such as Jane Jacob's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)—a work that, like Eisner's comic, focuses on the importance of neighbourhood 'character,' whose survival is rooted in the internal activity of its residents. Jacobs' analyses of New York City neighbourhoods in the 1950s made a conscious break with the abstract formulations of city planning, to focus on the lived experience of urban space: "[cities are] thoroughly physical places. In seeking understanding of their behavior, we get useful information by observing what occurs tangibly and physically, instead of sailing off on metaphysical fancies."[18]

Eisner's social history of Dropsie Avenue, like Jacobs' analyses, emphasizes such elements as the importance of sidewalks to community life, the role of tenement (or subsidized) housing, and the investment (both personal and financial) of residents into their neighbourhood, to examine how the lived, experiential dimension of city dwelling contributes to the success or failure of whole neighbourhoods. Eisner's comic is perhaps even better placed than Jacob's iconic text to portraying the experience of modern street life because of the collaborative visual and textual narratives within the comic medium that produce a modern street experience that words alone could not, and in which the neighbourhood emerges as a character—one that charts human success and

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[18] Alice Sparberg Alexiou, *Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers: 2006), 72.

failure, and echoes Hugo's sentiment to appear as the true book of the 20th century.

To regard Dropsie Avenue as a character means to understand it through its inhabitants. Dropsie Avenue is tied to the people who inhabit it; as each new wave of immigrants comes, we see the neighbourhood begin to change. Eisner creates an interdependent dynamic between the human characters and the neighbourhood itself: by following the lives of many different settlers, Eisner takes the focus away from casting a 'main character' in *Dropsie Avenue*; in place of this, the neighbourhood itself becomes the main character. The episodic structure of Eisner's narrative, whereby we see brief snippets of moments in the lives of various residents, is paralleled in the visual depictions of Dropsie: the neighbourhood is only depicted in its entirety a handful of times, seen from a distanced, aerial perspective. The majority of the images are shown from street level, inside buildings, through windows, etc. These images only show a fragmented view of the neighbourhood, a collage of images that then make up the totality of Dropsie.

This montaged approach illuminates what life is like on an urban street, by delivering a more experiential perspective of life in the neighbourhood. Our 'picture' of the street is thus built up out of a collection of fragmented experiences, and fragmentary pictures, rather than the distanced overview of a map, or city plan. Again, parallels with Jacobs' approach are clear: in *Death and*

Life…, she describes 24 hours in the life of her street via a collage of sounds, people and experiences—an approach that Marshall Berman describes as "working within an important genre in modern art: the urban montage."[19] Jacobs' "celebration of urban vitality, diversity and fullness"[20] is likewise fully present in the visual-narrative structure of *Dropsie Avenue*. As comics scholar Greg Smith points out, "Eisner's city is a city of fragments because that is how his characters perceive the urban landscape. His characters feel modernity not as an overall totalizing force but as a series of details and occurrences that have personal bearing on their lives."[21]

Eisner's work makes use of a theatrical narrative style and tools of sequential narrative (such as paneling and page-layouts) to create an impression of tension and constant urban change. If Eisner's use of a montage aesthetic, like Jacobs', communicates a sense of urban vitality in the neighbourhood, it also perpetuates the impression of constant historical change and development within the narrative. Similarly, historical transitions are made visible in Dropsie Avenue through Eisner's use of paneling structures: as Eisner discusses in *Comics and Sequential Art* (one of the earliest, and still most influential, discussions of the medium), the shape of the frame—or the absence of one—can become part of the

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[19] Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 315.
[20] Ibid., 316.
[21] Greg M. Smith, "Will Eisner, Vaudevillian of the Cityscape," in *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 196.

story itself.[22] In his study of *Dropsie Avenue*, Derek Royal describes Eisner's approach to panels as a method of controlling narrative: "instead of containing an event within a traditional straight-lined perimeter, he uses detail from the panel's background or elements from the adjacent segment to frame a portion of the page's story."[23] Two images, therefore, share a common element, that creates an impression of flow and transition throughout the story.

This is best described through an example from the beginning of *Dropsie Avenue*. At the beginning of the novel, Eisner shows the transition from the Dutch Settlers to the Irish within a single page. On the upper portion of the page we see "old man Dropsie" (the street's namesake) fall asleep in his chair, and the lit candle fall from his lap out of view. The page is divided up by a row of flames, merging into the sky of the corresponding image below, which depicts a couple and their relator looking at an empty lot. We understand that the lot they are regarding is that on which Dropsie's house (in the image above) formerly stood, before being destroyed by flames. This is intuited before we read the speech of the realtor, telling the couple: "Yes…"tis the old dropsie place…been untouched since it burned down in the spring of '90…the last of open lots in the good neighbourhoods!"[24]

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[22] Will Eisner, *Comics and Sequential Art* (Florida: Poorhouse Press, 1985), 46.

[23] Derek Parker Royal, "Dropsie Avenue: The Neighbourhood," in *Critical Survey of Graphic Novels: Heroes and Superheroes*, ed. Bart Beaty and Stephen Weiner (Hackensack: Salem Press, 2012), 214.

[24] Will Eisner, *The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 335. *Dropsie Avenue* originally published in 1995.

The absence of a conventional frame becomes part of the story, effecting a smooth transition from one period to the next. It also relates to the greater narrative of development as less centered on significant historical events (or signature architectural monuments) but rather a continuous cycle of small events (a fire, a marriage, a death, etc.). Eisner frequently uses images of smoke and fire to blend time periods throughout *Dropsie Avenue*, not merely in this example, but again when the next wave of immigrants—Germans—move in, and an image depicts councilmen smoking around a table at the bottom of the page, the smoke rising to form the new roads of Dropsie Avenue.[25] Visually, we are given in one complex image the ethnographic changes in the human composition of the neighbourhood, and their corresponding changes in its plan and physical structure. In Dropsie, it appears, the only constant is change.

Distanced perspectives are few, and strategically placed within the narrative, as when Eisner illustrates the introduction of tenement buildings in among the private homes on Dropsie Avenue via a remote aerial perspective. These perspectives can be understood as markers of time, allowing the reader to see the changes happening in Dropsie in their entirety—something the residents of Dropsie are unable to do. In one instance, Eisner depicts Dropsie Avenue in the 1920's with three panels that depict a close-up of the neighbourhood. In these panels, we see tenement housing and streets congested with cars. On the right

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[25] Ibid., 354.

hand side, two children try to set up a lemonade stand on the sidewalk, only to get drenched in water from a passing car driving through a puddle. Two men sit on a stool and watch the children pack up and walk away, their dialogue simple yet profound: "Traffic sure is growin' in the neighbourhood. Modern times is here!"[26]

This image of Dropsie's streets populated with cars, absent of playing children, signals the approaching modernization of the neighbourhood and a shift away from a more traditional kind of communal life on the sidewalks and streets—which Jane Jacobs call the city's "most vital organs", enabling free urban play and ensuring the safety of the neighbourhood through the continual presence/surveillance of its residents.[27] Towards the end of *Dropsie Avenue*, a resident remarks: "streets are too busy with cars…kids can't play in the streets no more!"…they got gangs now!"[28] Much as the character of Dropsie changes with each new wave of immigrants, the evolution in the street gangs' activities over the 20th century from petty crime to drug-trafficking changes Dropsie's *moral* character, and once again transforms the urban fabric of the neighbourhood.

Eisner's narrative of this fictional South Bronx neighbourhood engages only obliquely with one of the greatest changes that the (real) Bronx saw during the post-war era: the development of the Cross-Bronx Expressway. Jane Jacobs and Marshal Berman have singled out the Cross-Bronx Expressway and its chief

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[26] Ibid., 385.

[27] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 29.

[28] Will Eisner, *The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 410. *Dropsie Avenue* originally published in 1995.

developer, Robert Moses, as a detrimental attack on the organism that is a neighbourhood, whose destruction was regarded merely as a byproduct of modern progress and development.[29] While these critics pinpoint the highway as the major fatal factor that causes the South Bronx's urban decay, *Dropsie Avenue* approaches urban history through a different perspective; one that seems to present urban decay as an inevitable process, rather than the outcome of a single development.

The expressway is only obliquely referenced in *Dropsie Avenue*, in the form of a raised railroad platform running through the neighbourhood, and there is no emphasis given to any devastation the creation of this platform may have had on the neighbourhood. Rather than present Dropsie's decay as a straightforward or veridical historical narrative, Eisner employs the comic form to critique development and urbanization, evoking real events and real places while simultaneously altering historical facts within a fictional framework. The railroad platform in Dropsie thus stands as a marker of 'unsafe' building practices and 'shady businesses' within the Developmental Council of Dropsie, alluding more to the crooked politics done in the name of modernity than to the neighbourhood destruction and resident displacement associated with the Cross-Bronx

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[29] In Marshall Berman's view, Moses's attitude was one that regarded cities as obstructions to traffic, and as junkyards of substandard housing from which Americans should be given any chance to escape (Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin Books, 1982: 307). As Moses famously said of the project, which tore up much of the existing urban environment of the neighbourhoods through which it ran, "… when you operate in an overbuilt metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax." (Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air*. New York: Penguin Books, 1982: 293-294).

Expressway. In Berman's view, by destroying these neighbourhoods in advance of their actual decay, Moses left it forever unknown whether they would have collapsed or renewed themselves from within.[30]

In Eisner's work, where we are given a vision of life in the Bronx without Robert Moses and his expressway, Berman's rhetorical question is played out through the cyclical patterns of development and decay: this South-Bronx neighbourhood does very well collapse, but also renews itself, appearing to very much have a 'life-cycle': one motivated neither by natural forces nor the destructive decisions of chief city planners, but by the demographic, economic shifts and urban planning decisions of the residents of Dropsie Avenue themselves.

Here, we see that even without Moses's Expressway, this South Bronx neighbourhood internally destroys itself. As Dropsie morally deteriorates, it begins to physically deteriorate as well, notably through the many fires Eisner shows destroying its buildings. Towards the end of the novel, only one building remains, and it too is ultimately demolished: a crack-house, symbolizing the state of depravity to which Dropsie has fallen. From a now-empty lot, we are to understand that Dropsie Avenue is dead. And yet, in Eisner's cyclical understanding of the 'death and life' of cities, Dropsie is given another chance. At the end of the novel, the rich benefactor Rowena, a former Dropsie resident whose

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[30] Ibid., 325-326.

will gives Dropsie a new life upon her death-asks a very thought-provoking question: "who can mark the point at which a **neighbourhood starts to die**?"[31]

In *Dropsie Avenue*, we see that there is no real 'point' at which the neighbourhood starts to die. It was a number of things that cumulatively working together, in a cyclical fashion, led Dropsie towards slum hood. Dropsie's inability to pull itself from this slum led to its death. Eisner proposes something else altogether in Dropsie Avenue; maybe, a neighbourhood, likes its people, does indeed have a 'life-cycle', and that the death of a neighbourhood allows for rebirth. Rowena's words are symbolic of a new beginning: "Dropsie as we knew it is gone, only the memory of how it was for us remains. In the end buildings are only buildings but people make a neighbourhood."[32] Rather than re-create the neighbourhood as it was, she creates a new image of Dropsie, one filled with 'affordable modern homes' rather than tenement housing.

Despite this hopeful attempt at a new, better life of the neighbourhood, *Dropsie Avenue* ends the way it started; with neighbours discussing the newcomers whose cultural tastes and approach to property upkeep are seen as threatening 'the character' of the neighbourhood. In the last panel, a 'For Sale' sign appears on a lawn—foreshadowing the continuation of the cyclical pattern

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[31] Will Eisner, *The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 490. Dropsie Avenue originally published in 1995. Emphasis in original.
[32] Jbid., 493.

Dropsie is once again about to enter.[33] Like Jacobs' lament on the death of

neighbourhoods as a result of human and civic neglect, *Dropsie Avenue* presents

this death as the outcome of multiple internal, and external factors; modernization,

shifts in economic status, and resident neglect—but above all, of inexorable

processes of historical change and history itself. Through Eisner's vision, we

come to see how the physical fabric of an urban neighbourhood can become

Hugo's 'book of stone,' both a symptom and material record of progress and

change. At the same time, the comic works to heighten our awareness of how the

built environment of Dropsie Avenue—or any other urban neighbourhood—is not

only a record of historical change, but a character that shapes, and is shaped by,

the people whose lives play out in its streets.

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[33] See Derek Parker Royal, "There Goes the Neighbourhood: Cycling Ethnoracial Tensions in
Will Eisner's Dropsie Avenue," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* vol. 29, no.
2 (2011) on more about Eisner's use of symbols in *Dropsie Avenue*.

Chapter I

Against a 'Tradition of the New': Architectural Criticism in Chip Kidd and

Dave Taylor's _Batman: Death by Design_ (2012)

It's one of the city's – the country's! – greatest treasures of urban architecture. Of
course it's crumbling, no one's looked after it for close to twenty years. "
<div align="right">-Cyndia Syl Batman: Death by Design (2012)</div>

The urban fabric of a city faces constant alteration with the addition and

removal of every architectural structure. The role that significant public

buildings—as architectural monuments—play in the symbolization of the

historical past becomes exceedingly important in modernity, which saw many

significant monuments demolished and replaced by other, *modern* (and therefore,

at least in principle, *ahistorical*) designs that hailed progress. Significant public

monuments and buildings become sites of debate between opposing notions of

history in architecture (and their proponents), between those that aim to preserve

these pieces of urban history, and those that see their destruction as an inevitable

component of progress and change.

This chapter considers a recent graphic novel that explores these issues of

modernization, historic preservation, and monumentality through the lens of the

superhero comic: Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor's *Batman: Death by Design* (2012).

I analyze how Kidd and Taylor perform an effective critique of modern and

contemporary architectural practices that neglect the historical fabric and

character of the built environment. By placing these debates within the superhero comic genre, and more specifically within the Batman storyline, I argue that Kidd and Taylor analyze the significance of how urban changes affect not only the fabric of a city, but its inhabitants—as exemplified in the character of Batman himself, whose existence is tied to a certain conception of the city itself. The graphic novel's fictionalized conflict concerning the demolition or preservation of Wayne Central Station calls into question the role of urban monuments in a rapidly modernizing urban environment: its story is inspired by the real life demolition of Penn Station in 1963, which was a touchpoint for debates around historic preservation and modernization in the post-WWII decades. *Death by Design* presents the conflict between different approaches to urban development and urbanization through the human characters in the graphic novel, with Kidd and Taylor ultimately siding with the architecture practice of historical preservation.

The last part of this chapter will look at a Batman comic published 20 years earlier—1992's '*The Destroyer'*—which follows the storyline of a madman set out to destroy Gotham's modern buildings in order to preserve the city's 'virtue'. While this earlier comic is not directly referenced in *Death by Design*, both employ the genre conventions of the Batman comic to critique practices of architectural modernism, and to highlight the important role of a city's architectural 'character' in shaping the character of its inhabitants: a role which is disturbed by modernizing urban and architectural practices. This role of the built

environment in shaping the lives of its inhabitants is particularly clear in the case

of Batman himself: it is this 'character' of Gotham, as defined by its neo-gothic

architecture (prominent in both *Death by Design* and '*The Destroyer*'), that gives

birth to Batman, and on which he depends—a dependence that ultimately makes

him a force against progressive modern urbanism, and a defender of the city's

historical character.

   Batman: Death by Design takes place during a hybrid timeframe, melding

the elements of the 1930s (which Kidd calls the 'golden age' of Gotham), the

1960s, and the contemporary moment. The novel takes inspiration from the

historical debates around the destruction of Penn Station—a destruction that led to

a greater awareness of the importance of architectural monuments in preserving

cities' historical character—but situates it in the present to question the impact of

contemporary architectural practice on the urban character of cities. Penn Station

is not the only real-life element on which *Death by Design* draws; each character

in the novel seems to have a pseudonymic counter-part in contemporary

architecture.[34] Thus "Kem Roomhaus," the narcissistic but brilliant 'starchitect' in

Death by Design, is a none-too-subtle reference to Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas,

while the proposed design for the new Wayne station, "whose design was

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[34] See Martin Filler, "Batman vs. Koolhaus," *The New York Review of Books*, January 29, 2013, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/jan/29/batman-koolhaas-death-by-design/. Filler explores the other characters and their psyeudonyamic counterparts. He compares Cyndia Syl to C.Z. Guest, her ambition to save Penn Station paralleling Jackie Kennedy Onassis second career star turn as savior of Grand Central Station and Elliot Osbourne, an editor of the Gotham Gazette, is an inversion of Osborn Elliote-editor of Newswork during its Sixties and Seventies glory years.

conceived as a massive replica of the rib cage of the humpback whale"[35] is a "wicked lampoon"[36] of Santiago Calatrava's carcass-like $3.8 billion Transportation Hub, currently under construction at the former World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan.

Wayne Central Station, as mentioned earlier, not only architecturally reflects the character of NYC's Penn Station, but also the debates that surrounded its destruction in the 1960s. Perhaps the biggest pseudonym of all is that of Gotham City, which stands in the Batman corpus for New York City—or at least the city at night: as Frank Miller and others have noted, "Metropolis [Superman's adopted city] is New York in the daytime; Gotham is New York at night."[37] In fact, as William Urrichin points out, Batman made his home in New York City for the first two years of his existence, until Detective Comics 48 (1941), when he 'transitioned' to its fictional counterpart of Gotham: a cityscape modeled after the dark and brooding aspects of New York's architecture and atmosphere.[38]

The dynamic of superhero vs. villain in *Death by Design* is a complex one; the novel is filled with conflicts between characters that are either symbolic of larger debates, as such as opposing architectural practices, and character conflicts that are superficial but are used to 'move along' the narrative. Although the

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[35] Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 82.
[36] Martin Filler, "Batman vs. Koolhaus," *The New York Review of Books*, January 29, 2013, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2013/jan/29/batman-koolhaas-death-by-design/.

[37] William Uricchin, "The Batman's Gotham City: Story, Ideology, Performance" in *Comics and City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 121.
[38] Ibid.

graphic novel finds Batman and the Joker in yet another face-off, this conflict is merely a superficial one. The key conflict here is between Batman and a newly-created villain-cum-hero: Exacto; an architect-turned-masked opponent of Wayne Station's planned demolition, and the son of its original architect, whose actions mark him as a 'critic' of modern architecture and development. The struggle between the hero and villain here is staged for the purpose of allowing Kidd and Taylor—through the persona of Exacto, whose appearance is based on Kidd himself—to elucidate an architectural critique of modern development practices.

I would argue that Exacto is actually less a villain than a vigilante—like Batman himself—who fights against what he sees as criminal 'architectural' activity within Gotham, and who finds himself at odds with the caped crusader because Batman (although a vigilante as well), has now become the *law* in Gotham. In reality, the conflict is less between Exacto and Batman, than between Exacto and Kem Roomhaus—and ultimately, Batman's alter ego Bruce Wayne, who has planned to demolish Wayne Central Station and replace it with a new structure by Roomhaus. Exacto's role in the comic is to expose contemporary architecture's willing ignorance and rejection of the historical urban fabric, embodied in the figure of the starchitect, Kem Roomhaus.

While Roomhaus is neither a super-hero, nor super-villain, he gets cast as a villain because his architectural practice rejects the historical character of the city in favor of ahistorical odes to modernity and to his own genius in designs that are also shown to dangerously privilege appearance over structural integrity.

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Death by Design, I suggest, ultimately sides with the preservationists, in criticizing contemporary architectural practices that replace existing monuments without due consideration of how this eradication will change the urban 'character' of a city, and thereby the consciousness of those who live among these monuments. I argue that Batman takes the position in favour of preservationists: not in a conventional sense like Exacto, who openly fights against contemporary architectural practices, but stemming from his own personal ties to the urban fabric of the city. Batman himself is an extension of Gotham, as it is: Batman needs Gotham to remain a dark and frightening place, its dystopic character reflected in the imposing neo-gothic architecture that cloaks the city in shadow. Batman himself therefore becomes an anachronistic figure who depends on the preservation of the historical (neo-gothic) city—once itself a sign of the city's modern grandeur, but which has become stalled in time (the 1930s).

Taylor depicts this conflict between architectural styles (neo-Gothic vs. modern) through the visual narrative of *Death by Design*. The novel follows a traditional style of comic narration, with square panels arranged in a linear narrative sequence on the page, alternating between capturing narrative (i.e. conversations between characters) and images that focus on the architecture of Gotham City. Taylor's renderings of the cityscape capture a juxtaposition between the neo-Gothic buildings, pervaded by darkness and shadows of the 'traditional' Gotham, with the new, light, sleek lines of modernist architecture. These renderings are depicted through a monochromatic colour scheme that stylistically

works to give *Death by Design* a 1930s veneer. The visual component of the comic allows Kidd and Taylor the impossible act of weaving together multiple temporalities, which is a key component to the work.

The weaving together of multiple temporalities in *Death by Design* lends Gotham City a particularly unique urban fabric, and allows Kidd and Taylor to create a dialogue between key moments of debate about monumentality, modernization, and destruction, whether in the 1960s debates around Penn Station's demolition or in contemporary starchitecture. More strangely still, these historic debates are shown as taking place *within* the book's dominant timeframe of the 1930s.

The 1930s were a period of rapid change in NYC's urban landscape, dominated by the rise of art-deco skyscrapers such as the Empire state building and the Chrysler building, and by the rise to power of the urban planner/city-planning commissioner Robert Moses who largely reorganized the urban fabric of New York City by a system of tunnels and expressways. Marshall Berman, who was highly critical of Moses's impact on the city, nonetheless equated him with "modernity itself":

> To oppose his bridges, tunnels, expressways, housing developments, power dams, stadia, cultural centers, was – or so it seemed- to oppose modernity itself […] Moses struck a chord that has for more than a century been vital to the sensibility of New Yorkers: our identification with progress, with renewal and reform, with the perpetual transformation of our world and ourselves – Harold Rosenberg called it 'The tradition of the New.'[39]

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[39] Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 294-295.

Moses, among other devices of modernity, represented the primacy of the individual automobile (his Cross-Bronx Expressway was an extension of this, as it was meant to unify the city through personalized transportation). This new mode of travel diminished the impact of train travel in and out of NYC. Penn Station fell victim to this new sentiment that prioritized automobile travel over train travel, ultimately being demolished in 1963 amid protests both for and against its preservation. The destruction of the transportation hub of Penn Station, and the erection of Madison Square Gardens in its place, exemplified the idea that modern progress required that monuments and built heritage yield to new construction and new development as a sign of embracing the future, or 'the Tradition of the New'.

During the time of its creation some 50 years earlier, Penn Station was a monumental addition to New York's urban fabric. The architecture historian Jimmy Stamp has recently described the Station as "a testament to our technological prowess, craftsmanship, and artistry….a monument to our culture; a station scaled to the ambitions of a country at the peak of its power—a modern Rome."[40] Completed in 1910, Penn Station was literally inspired by the ruins of Rome, specifically the Roman Baths of Caracalla.[41] Created in the Beaux-Arts style by the architects McKim, Mead and White, the exterior of the station was

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[40] Jimmy Stamp, "Penn Station: How Nostalgia Plays into Our Love of Buildings Old and New." *Life Without Buildings*, October 2013, http://lifewithoutbuildings.net/2013/11/penn-station-how-nostalgia-plays-into-our-love-of-buildings-old-and-new.html.

[41] W. Symmes Richardson, "The Architectural Motif of the Pennsylvania Station," in *History of the engineering, construction and equipment of the Pennsylvania railroad company's New York Terminal and Approaches…*(New York: Issac H. Blanchard, 1912), 77. Also, America saw itself as the tantamount with the Great Roman civilization, and thus their architecture needed to reflect that of Roman times.

made entirely of granite, while its glass and structured steel roof demonstrated, in the words of one of its architects, a "dignified expression of design."[42]

In *Death by Design*, Wayne Central is to Gotham what Penn Station was to New York; a symbol of architectural and cultural progress. *Death by Design* uses the real-life case of Penn's demolition to rehearse mid-century architectural debates of monumentality (preservation vs. progress), and applies it towards a criticism of contemporary design practices that alter the urban fabric of cities. Like Eisner in the case of *Dropsie Avenue*, Kidd and Taylor also employ the comic form to critique development and urban history by using the appearance and disappearance of urban monuments and landmarks within a rapidly changing environment. *Death by Design* evokes real events within the fictional world of the super-hero comic, where the altering of historical facts—such as the melding of time periods, and the fate of Wayne Station, which is restored unlike its real-life counterpart—heightens the impact of these events and their significance to present-day issues in design practice. The fate of Penn Station is altered in *Death by Design*, in an 'alternative history' where restoration prevails over the 'Tradition of the New.'

Although Penn Station was in a state of decay at the time of its destruction, the resonating impact of its former glory made it a site that many saw as worth saving. AGBANY, the Action Group for Better Architecture in New York, formed from this debate; composed of architects and urban critics, the

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[42] Ibid.

group waged campaigns and held protests against the demolition of Penn station, which they saw as a key part of New York's heritage.[43] Among the protestors was Jane Jacobs, a leading figure in the grassroots campaigns during the '50s and '60s, who fought against the 'urban renewal' developments issuing from the desks of powerful officials like Moses. Jacobs believed that urban regeneration was an organic process that happened internally, rather than through government intervention. Her views starkly opposed the views of Moses, whose desire for development often resulted in the destruction of neighbourhoods and blocks (as with the South Bronx Expressway). Despite Moses's power, Jacobs did succeed in putting a stop to his plans to construct a Lower Manhattan Expressway in 1962, sparing what is now Soho, Little Italy and Chinatown from being spliced up by the intrusive strip of concrete.[44] Despite Jacobs' and AGBANY's efforts to preserve Penn Station, and to put a stop to what they considered 'wholesale vandalism' of New York's urban center, the station was ultimately destroyed to make room for Madison Square Garden.

Today's underground subway state of Penn station is starkly different from its past glory. Kidd himself is openly critical of the current state of Penn station, calling it a "fluorescent-lit, airless basement below Madison square

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[43] David W. Dunlap, "50 Years Ago, Sharply Dressed Protestors Stood Up for a Train Station They Revered," in *CityRoom*, July 2012, http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/50-years-ago-sharply-dressed-protesters-stood-up-for-a-train-station-they revered/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1.

[44] Alice Sparberg Alexiou, Jane Jacobs: Urban Visionary (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers: 2006), 108. Similarly, Jacobs was part of the Stop Spadina Save our City Coordinating Committee, formed in 1969, which stopped the building of the Spadina Expressway in Toronto.

Garden…it's just horrible."[45] This view echoes the well-known remark of the

architectural historian Vincent Scully: "One entered the city like a God. One

scuttles in now like a rat."[46] Scully's remark points to the symbolic importance of

the late-19th and early-20th century train station as a kind of imperial gateway for

the city, like the city gates of antiquity the monumental importance of entering

and existing the space of the city [47] This function is paralleled in *Death by Design*,

as Cyndia Syl, a society fixture who fights for the preservation of Wayne Central

Station, repeats to Bruce Wayne the words of his father regarding the creation of

the building:

> "When your father commissioned Gregor Greenside to design and build
> the station, his instructions were: 'remember, for anyone coming to
> Gotham, when they depart the train, this will be the first thing they see of
> the city. I want them to know they've come to the most remarkable place
> on earth. You must astonish them."[48]

In *Death by Design*, Syl's words are accompanied by an image of a

beautiful Wayne Central Station in its previous architectural glory, with sunlight

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[45] Chip Kidd, interview by Joey Esposito, *IGN*, May 24, 2012,
http://ca.ign.com/articles/2012/05/24/batman-death-by-design-brings-back-old-school-hollywood.

[46] Herbert Muschamp, "Architecture View; In This Dream Station Future and Past Collide," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1993, http://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/20/arts/architecture-view-in-this-dream-station-future-and-past-collide.html?src=pm.

[47] W. Symmes Richardson, "The Terminal: The Gate of the City," *Scriber's Magazine*, vol. 2, no. 4, October 1912, 409. Online pdf: http://library.brown.edu/pdfs/1258729777359375.pdf. As W. Symmes Richardson wrote in 1912:"In designing the Pennsylvania Station, an attempt has been made, not only to secure operating efficiency for one of the largest railway station in the world, but also to obtain an outward appearance expressive of its use, and of a monumental character [...] not only did the architects desire to give an adequate railway expression to the exterior, but they recognized the equal importance of giving the building the appearance of a monumental gateway and entrance to one of the great metropolitan cities of the world." in "The Architectural Motif of the Pennsylvania Station," in *History of the engineering, construction and equipment of the Pennsylvania railroad company's New York Terminal and Approaches…*(New York: Issac H. Blanchard, 1912), 77.

[48] Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 24.

shining through its arching steel and glass roof.[49] On the same page, depicted

below this image, is the rendering of the station in its current state of desolation,

abandoned and dark. By juxtaposing the images of the train station's past and

present, along with their corresponding textual descriptions, Taylor is able to

show two time periods simultaneously, and highlight the impact of the

deterioration of a once-beautiful monument.

In the book, Wayne Station's deterioration—unlike Penn's—is shown to

have been due to initially poor design and construction that led to a compromised

structural integrity. Bruce Wayne (aka. Batman) is adamant that "to properly

restore Wayne Central Station as it exists now would actually cost more than

simply tearing it down and starting all over again."[50] Cyndia Syl, however, is

determined to procure its preservation. I suggest that Syl echoes the sentiments of

Jacobs in her ideology against modern urban development, and is in some way a

stand-in for Jacobs in this debate. Wayne himself is ambivalent to the urban

environment as it exists, and is initially swayed by 'the new.' However, through

his engagement with Exacto (as Batman) he comes to realize the importance of

the station as a symbol of Gotham's architectural history and as a gateway that

reflects the character of the city; this dynamic between Bruce Wayne/Batman also

exemplifies a conflict between opposing views with respect to progress vs.

preservation of Gotham, which I will discuss further below.

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[49] The reference to Penn station is quite evident in these renderings, as they look like the old photographs of the interior of Penn Station.

[50] Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 25.

As Syl points out, money is no issue for the billionaire Bruce Wayne; his resistance to preservation leads to only one conclusion, namely that restoring Wayne station would not show progress, renewal or 'perpetual transformation', but instead a retrograde attachment to the past. For Bruce Wayne, the station's Beaux-Arts design, perceived as antiquated, is no longer in keeping with the changing modern urban landscape. For Syl, however, the station's historical contribution to the urban topology of Gotham makes it worth saving: "That's [the station] also the single best example of patri-monumental modernism in America. It's one of the city's-the country's!-greatest treasures of urban architecture. Of course it's crumbling, no one's looked after it for close to twenty years"[51]

I must point out that Cyndia Syl is actually fighting for the *restoration*, rather than preservation, of Wayne Station, and that a key difference exists between the two approaches towards (architectural) monuments. Miles Glendinning, in his essay "The Conservation Movement: a cult of the modern age," explains this difference by referring to Alois' Riegl's famous work *The Modern Cult of Monuments* (1903). Riegl emphasized that the monument is an idea of the modern age, which set out to replace religion with humanistic values[52]

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[51] Ibid., 24.

[52] Miles Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement: a cult of the modern age," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 13 (2003) : 365, accessed November 14, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679264.

To quote Reigl: "we modern viewers, rather than the works themselves by virtue of their original purpose, assign meaning and significance to a monument."[53]

The concept of the monument originated in Europe during the Renaissance, and literally meant to 'commemorate' usually in the form of a statue, its origin directly related to what Glendinning calls ' modern historical consciousness'; a method of looking at the past for inspiration for the future.[54] This image of the monument began to evolve to include whole buildings and environments, and human concepts such as nation and class replaced those of God.[55] The specifically *historic* value applied to monuments in the modern era, Riegl writes, is based on a "very specific yet individual stage the monument represents in the development of human creation in a particular field."[56] Wayne Station's value for the preservationist Cynthia Syl lies in its expression of "patri-

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[53] Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Development*"* in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (GCI Los Angelos, 1996), 72. Originally published in 1903.

[54] Miles Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement: a cult of the modern age," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 13 (2003) : 361, accessed November 14, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679264.

[55] Ibid. In his essay Glendinning brings up two different approaches to monuments, restoration and preservation, and explores each through ideologies posited by Viollet – de- Duc and John Ruskin.Viollet – de - Duc argues that the term restoration is itself a modern thing because it gives the 'monument' a condition of completeness which may never have existed at the given time. Ruskin, however, says that buildings are a testament to their first builder to later generations, and that key monuments are not religious artifacts but ordinary homes that create a nation's identity. Miles Glendinning, "The Conservation Movement: a cult of the modern age," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, vol. 13 (2003) : 363, accessed November 14, 2013, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3679264.

[56] Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Development*"* in *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, ed. Nicholas Stanley Price, Mansfield Kirby Talley, Alessandra Melucco Vaccaro (GCI Los Angelos, 1996), 75. Originally published in 1903.

monumental modernism"[57], an urban capsule of life at the turn of the 20th

century—it is thus also a monument to the period that also 'made' Batman: the

dark, brooding, neo-Gothic Gotham.

Andreas Huyssen, in his essay, *Monumental Seduction*, describes the

origins of our concept of the 'monumental' in the 19th-century search for

monuments in the works of classical antiquity. Huyssen points out how the

modern search for monuments among classical and prehistoric works of

architecture, stemmed from an emerging nationalism and desire for cultural roots;

monumental architecture also, he writes, "seemed to guarantee permanence and to

provide the desired bulwark against the speed-up of time, the shifting grounds of

urban space, and the transitoriness of modern life."[58] Monuments provide an

impression of permanence amidst a rapidly changing environment, counteracting

the 'tradition of the new' and conveying a sense of stability in an unstable world.

The preservation of Wayne Station in *Death by Design* is not only the

preservation of a piece of Gotham's past, but a symbol of stability amidst the

changing urban landscape of Gotham which seems to be threatened by new,

ahistorical, designs.

Death by Design is constantly reiterating the conflict between

contemporary and historical architectural practices, both by its textual narrative

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[57] Kidd discusses in an interview how 'patri-monumental modernism' is just a made-up
architectural style, meant to sound like fancy architecture speak. Chip Kidd, interview by Jeffery
Renaud, *Comic Book Resources*, May 25, 2012.
http://www.comicbookresources.com/?page=article&id=38859.
[58] Andreas Hussyen, "Monumental Seduction," in *Presents Past* (Stanford University Press,
2003), 41.

and the architecturally detailed drawings in which the narrative is situated. A particularly beautiful rendering is found in the double-paged depiction of 'The Ceiling', Gotham's newest nightclub, where "patrons can feel like they're dining and dancing on air."[59] The image depicts a large slab of glass suspended overtop of Gotham city, the only colour in the image a warm, yellow hue of the car headlights and street lights below that accentuate the transparency of the glass. This design is presented in the text as a new brand of architecture that its designer, Roomhaus, calls 'maxi-minimalism.'[60] On the next page, Bruce Wayne and Cyndia Syl are in conversation again on "The Ceiling," where she calls the work a 'site specific stunt' that is not a piece of lasting architecture. She goes to say: "Nightclubs come and go. So what does this become when the ceiling's passé? Condos? I don't think so. It's a slab of glass."[61] Her criticism of the work is in fact a criticism of the contemporary practice of 'starchitecture', which revolves around creating works that awe and inspire by their iconicity and sculptural form.

Designer Michael Ellis, in his article 'Sustainability and Starchitecture', writes of the "cult of personality" in contemporary design culture around "the visibility and notoriety of iconic buildings and …those select architects who have captured the collective imagination of clients, critics and ultimately, the public."[62] *Death by Design* proposes that the iconic buildings of starchitecture, despite their

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59 Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 28.
60 Once again, this style of architecture is one made-up by Kidd.
61 Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 31.
62 Michael Ellis, "Sustainability and Starchitecture," in *Contract* (2008) : 78. Some examples of contemporary starchitecture are Frank Gehry's Bilabo Guggenhiegm Museum, Zaha Hadid's Beko Building, and Rem Koolhaas' Beijing's China Central Television Headquarters.

notoriety, are simply passing trends. 'Maxi-minimalism' and its ilk, i.e. other fashionable 'brands' of postmodern/contemporary architecture are not producing lasting works, but are simply continuations of modernism's obsession with the tradition of the new.

'The Ceiling' is also where the reader becomes introduced to the book's supervillain-as-architectural critic, Exacto. In this scene Exacto points out another problem with the design of The Ceiling: its structural integrity. Much to the chagrin of Roomhaus, Exacto (rightly) declares that the stresses on the structure were improperly calculated, and that it cannot sustain the current weight of the people standing on it. In actuality, this is another criticism of modern (star)chitecture and its emphasis on 'effect before everything.' Bruce Wayne employs this phrase earlier in the comic, to describe Wayne Station's original architect Gregor Greenside, whose emphasis on effect took precedence over structural integrity, and led to the problems now allegedly preventing the restoration of the station.[63] *Death by Design* proposes that unlike Greenside, whose design was flawed due to the corruption of construction official Bart Loar, The Ceiling is a product of an architectural practice that privileges appearance over structural integrity, and more aptly echoes this sentiment. By revealing the flaws in the design, Exacto sets out to reveal the flaws in contemporary design practice.

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[63] Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 24.

Exacto next appears when he seeks revenge against Gotham's Union Head of Construction, Bart Loar, revealing Loar's part in deliberately poor construction methods that caused the collapse of built structures (and the cost of human lives), in order to keep his own business booming. Later on, Exacto appears again at the final meeting between Wayne and Roomhaus regarding the new design of Wayne Central, to once again reveal the failure of Roomhaus' awe-inspiring contemporary designs, which achieve appearance at the expense of functionality.[64] In *Death by Design*, Exacto's vigilantism is posited as being in service of the truth, and against 'architectural' crimes impacting Gotham City, both its residents and the city itself.

Underneath Kidd's architectural criticism, *Death by Design* re-iterates a notion that is implicit in all Batman storylines; the understanding of Gotham itself as a character. I want to turn briefly here from *Death by Design* to a Batman story published 20 years earlier, called 'The Destroyer', and whose story-line presents, like Kidd and Taylor's work, a criticism of modern architecture through the genre of the superhero comic. The focus of the plot depicts a former architecture student (and Navy Seal), Andre Sinclair, who undertakes a campaign of bombing Gotham's modern buildings, his self-stated mission being to rid Gotham of its "soulless concrete buildings."

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[64] Specifically, Exacto reveals how Roomhaus declaration that the new design for Wayne Central (based on a giant whale) can turn carbon monoxide emissions into pure oxygen- is, to quote, "one hell of a fish story"-and was attempted by the original architect of Wayne Central years prior, and it didn't work then either. Chip Kidd and Dave Taylor, *Batman: Death by Design* (New York: DC Comics, 2012), 82-83.

In this storyline, the reader becomes enlightened about the origins of Gotham's signature architectural style. We are told here that Bruce Wayne's ancestor, Judge Solomon Wayne, was responsible for commissioning the architect [Pinkey] who designed much of Gotham's neo-gothic architecture. Jimmy Stamp notes that in this story, Solomon Wayne's vision saw the city as a sanctuary that needed to defend itself from the evil spirits responsible for corrupting man.[65] While Solomon Wayne declared that Gotham's architecture would be known throughout the world, however, it was not in the way he thought. Newspaper headlines from architectural journals of the time read: "Dank and Oppressive…as though the structures of Hades itself burse through the Earth's crust."[66] The mad bomber (Andre Sinclair) shares Solomon's belief that architecture has the power give the city a virtuous character, which in turn can keep its people virtuous. In issue #27 of *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* the second comic in this series, the Dean of Sinclair's former architecture school explains the bomber's reasoning:

> [Sinclair] realized that buildings are what keep the demons at bay. The gargoyles Pinkey favoured, for instance, they serve to frighten people onto the path of righteousness and to scare away evil spirits. It's an idea he borrowed from the builders of the middle ages, of course. The rounded edges—they confuse these malevolent beings, the thick walls, the windowless facades, they lock in virtue.[67]

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[65] Jimmy Stamp, "Batman, Gotham City, and an Overzealous Architecture Historian with a Working Knowledge of Explosives." *Life Without Buildings*, June 2009, http://lifewithoutbuildings.net/2009/06/on-influence-batman-gotham-city-and-an-overzealous-architecture-historian-with-a-working-knowledge-of-explosives.html.

[66] Denny O'Neil, "The Destroyer: Part Two," in *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight issue #27* (New York: DC Comics, 1992),

[67] Ibid., 14.

Sinclair, like Solomon Wayne, believed that architecture was a divine

force, and that the design of a city gave the city a character that in turn shaped the

character of its inhabitants. Neo-gothic architecture was conceived of as rich with

history and meaning, as opposed to the soulless concrete buildings of modernism.

Sinclair remarks, of modern architecture: "live in a box. Shop in a box, die in a

box. Robots, that's what they want. Not people. Robots that consume. Straight

lines-sharp angles-square boxes-no wonder the city's gone mad."[68] Sinclair's

criticism of the modern architecture of Gotham is tied with his criticism of the

capitalist core of modernity itself. The (modern) architecture of the city is a

propagation of capitalist culture that he believes is destroying the citizen.

Both Sinclair, in 'The Destroyer' and Exacto in *Death by Design*, are

portrayed as 'villains' critical of modernist architecture. I would argue that

Sinclair and Exacto are actually an extreme kind of vigilante, who are both

fighting against the criminal actions of contemporary architects; Sinclair fights

against the development of modernist architecture because it means that it is no

longer able to ward off the evil spirits that threaten to corrupt the city's

inhabitants, while Exacto fights against contemporary architectural practices that

disregard history in favour of (ahistorical) progress, and privilege appearance over

safety or functionality.

Using the landmark moment of the much-lamented destruction of Penn

Station, Exacto (Kidd) echoes Sinclair's criticisms of putting profit over great

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[68] Alan Grant, "The Destroyer: Part One," in *Batman issue #474 (*New York: DC Comics, 1992),
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public spaces that build the character of the city, and replacing them with a kind

of soul-less modernism that not only changes the historical urban fabric of the city

but affects the consciousness of the inhabitants within this urban fabric. In both

Death by Design and 'The Destroyer', Batman's conflict with each of these

characters is not necessarily in opposition to their ideologies, but to the dangerous

execution of these ideologies: both Exacto and Sinclair are depicted willing to

take lives, something that Batman, in his role as a vigilante, is sworn against.

Of course, Gotham's status in Sinclair's mind as a sanctuary and defense

against evil is debatable; in much of the Batman corpus, its dark, haunting neo-

gothic architecture is instead presented as a reflection of the crime and evil that

takes place within it. This interpretation of the city's fabric is provided in the final

issue of 'The Destroyer' storyline, where Solomon Wayne on his death-bed fears

that 'instead of keeping evil out, he has locked it in.'[69] The dark aura of Gotham is

reflected in *Death by Design* through Taylor's charcoal renderings of large, dark,

imposing structures that fill the city's skyline. The overt examples of modernity

(i.e., Roomhaus's designs) starkly contrast the rest of Gotham and look almost out

of place amidst the environment. Perhaps one of the reasons that the modern

architecture of Kem Roomhaus is criticized is not only because it is an ahistorical

ode to modernity, but also because it is insensitive to the dark and frightening

dystopic character of Gotham city, which gave birth to—and in a sense

supports—Batman himself.

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[69] Alan Grant, "The Destroyer: A Dream is Forever" in *Detective Comics issue #641* (New York: DC Comics, 1992)

The character of Batman was born as a result of the dark conditions of

Gotham that saw Bruce Wayne witness the murder of his parents when he was a

boy. For William Urrichin, "the death of Bruce Wayne's parents takes place in the

Gotham that will serve as Batman's domain – a Gotham generally characterized

by darkness, debris, and physical dereliction, and a portion of the city inhabited

by the unruly and criminal underclass."[70] Gotham, Urrichin suggests, is not a

backdrop to Batman, but a condition under which he lives.[71] In 'The Destroyer'

storyline, during Sinclair's initial confrontation with Batman, Sinclair perceives

Batman as a demon. Sinclair's assumption is correct, except that Batman is a

demon birthed in the neo-Gothic city that Sinclair is trying to preserve. Stamp

aptly describes Batman as embodying Gotham City's architecture:

> Batman is a kind of expressionist demon; cloaked in shadows and violent
> movement of swirling of cape and cowl. But is he a demon, or is he a
> living manifestation of Gotham's gargoyles? Of its stone protectors? A
> man shaped, perhaps unconsciously, by the gothic vaults and flying
> buttresses and monstrous sculptures of Cyrus Pinkney. A man who, like
> the city he protects, frightens the citizens onto the path of righteousness.[72]

Inextricable from Gotham's neo-Gothic skyscrapers and gargoyles,

Batman himself is, I argue, actually a force against modernism. Unlike his alter

ego Bruce Wayne, who in *Death by Design* is depicted as viewing modern urban

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[70] William Uricchin, "The Batman's Gotham City: Story, Ideology, Performance" in *Comics and City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 125.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Jimmy Stamp, "Batman, Gotham City, and an Overzealous Architecture Historian with a Working Knowledge of Explosives." *Life Without Buildings*, June 2009, http://lifewithoutbuildings.net/2009/06/on-influence-batman-gotham-city-and-an-overzealous-architecture-historian-with-a-working-knowledge-of-explosives.html.

development as *progress*, Batman is very much at odds with the modern city and this narrative of development. This is because Batman's existence is tied to Gotham city as it is; Bruce Wayne can continue to exist without the dystopic character of Gotham city, but Batman cannot. The dark, neo-gothic architecture of Gotham must remain in order for it to continue to shape the lives of its inhabitants (as criminals and thieves) and to justify Batman's own existence in his role as a vigilante. As Urrichin points out: "This depiction of Gotham (as a dark, dystopia) helps Batman to work as a character by persuading the reader to empathize uncritically with the hero's actions."[73] Thus, the city must remain a dark place in order to continue to spawn criminals in order to give Batman purpose for his existence, and to keep him as a hero in the eyes of readers even though he technically 'breaks' the law in an attempt to preserve it.

In *Death by Design*, Wayne Central is ultimately demolished – not as a result of modern progress, but as an outcome of a battle that takes place between the Joker, Batman, and Exacto. At the end of the graphic novel, we see the blueprint plans for the new Wayne Station take shape. The new design is an adaptation of the original. Not only does preservation (or rather, *restoration*) win in the battle of architectural practices, but Wayne Station, with its newly adapted neo-gothic design, will once again become the monumental gateway to Gotham

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[73] William Uricchin, "The Batman's Gotham City: Story, Ideology, Performance" in *Comics and City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2010), 125.

that properly reflects the character of the city, and of its dark and brooding anti-hero.

Situating this architectural critique within the superhero comic genre, Chip and Kidd deploy the agonistic hero-and-villain conventions of this genre to comment on modern and contemporary practices of urban development, while elevating the importance of architectural monuments to the character of a city, and the power this character has over the lives of its residents. *Death by Design* proposes that the cost of destroying monumental architecture does not just come at the loss of one building, but the erasure of the city's past, and the loss of the symbolic character and metaphysical core of the city itself.

Chapter II

Urban Palimpsests of London in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell* (1989-1996)

> The greater part of London's story is not writ in words. It is instead a literature of stone, of place-names and associations. Where faint echoes answer back from off the distant ruined walls of bloody history.
> - William Gull, *From Hell,* Chapter IV

The modern city is a palimpsest of historical events, a cache of memories and histories embedded within its physical structure—its plans, streets, squares, public buildings and private homes. The architecture of the city embodies the past, preserving it, in Hugo's 'book of stone.' However, the history embodied within the urban environment is not a stable element of the past: its influence continues to shape contemporary urban life. For the individual who can 'read the text' of the city, uncovering and connecting these sites of histories and memories, the city takes on a new meaning—one that projects it as a living, vital force shaping present-day experience.

This chapter of my thesis looks at the depiction of London as an urban palimpsest in Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's graphic novel *From Hell: A Melodrama in Sixteen Parts* (1989-1996), in which the urban fabric of London is shown to contain layers of sedimented and hidden history. This chapter focuses on how *From Hell* disrupts history as a stable element of the past, and presents it instead as an active presence in the present that becomes embedded within the architecture and urban structure of the city. In *From Hell*, we see how history and

memories become active forces within the contemporary environment, as the past is inherited by the present, transforming the city into a living, vital force.

From Hell is a graphic interpretation of the story of Jack the Ripper; the work is a 'historical fiction,' based on historical facts both textual and visual concerning the Ripper murders and 1880s London,[74] at the same time as it disrupts the notion of history as a stable element by filling in the gaps of historical narrative with speculation. This speculation not only relates to the identity of the Ripper, but of the speculative fictional possibilities of time travel and spirit projection, which serve to re-enforce the theme of (violent) inheritance throughout the novel.

The work comes with a lengthy appendix that validates its historical authenticity while simultaneously revealing its historical re-construction. The critic Seamus O'Malley has argued that by being open about his own process of historical re-construction in *From Hell*, Moore promotes in the reader an awareness of the historiographical process—as speculative and fictional re-construction—as a site from which we can engage with history's place within our own present.[75] By merging speculative and factual history, *From Hell* explores how history, embedded within the urban environment, forms a spatial text that can be read to reveal the true meaning of the city, and a vital force influencing the present.

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[75] Seamus O'Malley, "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell" in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 163, 176.

As much as *From Hell* is a story about Jack the Ripper, it is also a story about London. In his review of the graphic novel for the *Village Voice*, Richard Gehr poignantly suggests that Campbell had reconstructed an 1880's London that no longer exists, yet becomes the book's primary character.[76] London in the 1880's, as a *character*, becomes manifest through its inheritance of past human suffering, a "compression and transformation of time into space."[77] Thus, Dr. William Gull's horrific acts become an extension of London's own dark nature. As Gull tells his driver, Netley, "Our Story's WRITTEN, Netley, inked in blood long dry…engraved in stone."[78]

Moore and Campbell's interpretation of 1880's London presents the city as not merely a backdrop to the Whitechapel murders, but as an active force rooted in histories of pagan ritualistic behavior that exerts an influence on the present and propels the book's events to their inevitable conclusion. This section of my thesis will analyze the portrayal of the city in *From Hell* (and particularly Chapter IV of this work) as a spatial text whose pagan past remains embedded within its urban topography. I will be looking at how this chapter works to construct our understanding of the city as an urban palimpsest, through its sequential and narrative structure, its emphasis on urban experience of traveling through the city as a form of psychogeographical mapping, and the role of

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[76] Richard Gehr, "London Kills Me," *New York Village Voice*, last modified February 29, 2000, http://www.villagevoice.com/2000-02-29/books/london-kills-me/.

[77] Sean Carney, "The Tides of History: Alan Moore's Historiographic Vision." *Image TexT: Interdisciplinary Comic Studies, vol. 2, no. 2.* (2006) url: http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v2_2/carney/.

[78] Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 37-38.

Hawksmoor's churches within the novel as sites of embedded historical pagan power.

Chapter IV of *From Hell* finds Royal Physician Dr. William Gull and his carriage driver, Netley, exploring the streets of London, as Gull acts as pilot and tour guide, directing their travels while enlightening Netley of the pagan roots of London's past. Although the rest of *From Hell* finds Campbell at times depicting different time periods (1880s/1980s) on a single page, Chapter IV deals specifically with Gull and Netley's present, in 1880s London. It is important to look at the visual and narrative structure of Chapter IV through its use of panel sequencing, to show how Campbell effectively creates an experience of traveling through London. Referencing Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics,* Seamus O'Malley notes that *From Hell* is mostly narrated through two main sequencing types, 'moment-to-moment' and 'aspect-to-aspect.'[79] Chapter IV alternates between three types of panel progressions: the previous two mentioned, as well as 'subject-to-subject.'

The moment-to-moment and aspect-to-aspect panel transitions are the most effective in creating an experience of linear progression that simulates the experience of traveling through the city. These transitions generally focus on the progression of a single subject. At times, however, Campbell disrupts this 'linear progression' with subject-to-subject panels depicting, for example, a close-up of

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[79] Seamus O'Malley, "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell" in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 164.

image of the carriage wheels against the cobblestones, followed by an image of the carriage moving through the street. These subject-to-subject images are portrayed through different ways, such as changes in perspective (going from ground-level to bird's-eye view) and close-ups of objects and buildings. These images 'disrupt' the linear progression of the narrative, but serve to portray many different views and details of the urban cityscape of 1880s London to give an impression of the city in its totality, through fragmented images. Campbell's changes in perspective not only alternate between aerial and ground level views, but at times depict the city from the perspective of Gull, literally allowing the reader to see the city from Gull's eyes. This creates an kind of experiential depiction of the city, and puts the reader in the position of Netley—who begins to view the history embedded within the city, yet is still unaware of its total significance, or rather, is unaware of the 'total picture' that Moore and Campbell (and Gull) are in the process of creating.

In actuality, these panels present only a fragment of the city, and the reader must perform a closure between the panels that link them together that creates an experience of traveling through the city. The gutters (the space between the panels) become an importance factor in this process. McCloud describes how in the gutters between two panels, the human imagination takes these two images and makes them part of a single idea: "the panels themselves fracture time and

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space, it's a staccato rhythm of unconnected moments, but closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality."[80]

To paraphrase Anthony Enns, the graphic novel is the ideal form to raise awareness and critique the archive of the modern urban experience, not only because of its juxtaposition of text and image, but because it embodies this experience; i.e., the fragmentation that has frequently been seen as the root of modern urban experience.[81] I argue that this fragmentation is experienced in the panels of the comic, which present only a fragment of the narrative at any given time. The images of the city are presented as fragments (in the panels of a comic), which correspond to Walter Benjamin's experience of the modern city, and his discussion of the flâneur as its characteristic figure. The structure of the comic parallels the fragmented experience of the flâneur in *From Hell*, yet it takes us one step further by allowing us to connect these fragments through a distanced perspective—something the flâneur, or traveler in the city, is unable to do, in order to gain an understanding of the city in its totality.

Moore and Campbell juxtapose two types of narrative within Chapter IV: a visual narrative that focuses solely on the image of the characters' present in 1880's London, and a textual narrative that is concerned with the historical past on which the modern metropolis is built and—as with Hawksmoor's churches—

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[80] Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 67.

[81] Anthony Enns, "The City as Archive in Jason Lute's Berlin," in *Comics and the City: Urban Space in Print, Picture and Sequence*, ed. Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: Continuum, 2010), 45.

within which it is hidden. As a reader of the urban text through his movement, I suggest that Gull is akin to the flâneur, whose movement in the city may be understood as a critical engagement with (and distance from) the present and past that are both embedded within the urban environment.

The flâneur, a character originally identified with the writings of Baudelaire, was a bourgeois leisurely stroller in the 19th-century Parisian urban landscape. For Walter Benjamin, the flâneur's constant presence on the streets allowed him to be the ideal observer of modern city life. His survival in a changing urban environment is rooted in his ability to evolve to forms suited to contemporary life, such as a rag-picker, stalker, and photographer.[82] In *From Hell*, the flâneur undergoes another adaptation; he is no longer a leisurely stroller with an eye on history, but instead takes on the active role of historian, relating the history of places as he travels through them, while also writing history through these same movements, by revealing the hidden connections in—and the meaning of—urban space. Gull, as this travelling historian, moves through the city and connects the points of modern London's urban landscape with the pagan history upon which it is built.

In the case of *From Hell*, the pagan past of London is a violent history of masonic influence, imperial spoils, ritualistic sacrifices and male dominance over female. One must immerse oneself in the city to begin to decipher the influence of

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[82] Kristen Seal, "Eye-Swiping London: Iain Sinclair, photography and the flâneur." *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the representation of London*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2005), url: http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2005/seale.html. Original source: Chris Jenks, 'Watching Your Step: The History and Practice of the Flaneur,' *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Routledge, 1995) 148.

this dark history on the present urban space. For Gull, "The greater part of London's story is not writ in words. It is instead a literature of stone, of place-names and associations. Where faint echoes answer back from off the distant ruined walls of bloody history."[83] Gull, true to his doctoral profession, performs an 'autopsy' of London to reveal the paganism that is embedded in its core.[84]

Through Gull's dissections, the architecture of London's modern metropolis is revealed as a complex web of urban spatial text that reveals the urban ties between locations, monuments and sites that work together to establish a narrative, or character, of the city.[85] Guiliana Bruno has described how architecture transforms into a narrative created by the traveler, who moves through urban space and produces relations between sites and points within the city. She writes that architecture thus understood becomes: " [the] product of transactions, it bears the traces of urban (e)motion and its fictional scriptings. A relation is established between places and events that forms and transforms the

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[83] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 9.

[84] Seamus O'Malley, "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell" in *Graphic History:Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 169.

[85] One of the most important symbols of this pagan past embedded in London's core, revealed by Gull's travels, is the history of the violent rampage of Queen Boadicea. Queen Boadicea burnt the city to the ground before her demise at Battle Bridge. The physical evidence of this burning, as explained by Moore in his appendix, can be seen in London Museum as a geological section of the ground beneath the city that has a strip of black about ½ inch thick running through it. The physical presence of this evidence signifies the past quite *literally* being the ground upon which modern London is built. Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 10.

narrative of a city: the city itself becomes imaged as narrative as sites are transformed by the sequence of movements of its traveler-dwellers.[86]

The act of drawing relations between sites within the urban environment is much like regarding the urban environment as a spatial text. To the average Londoner, even one like Netley whose profession has made him quite familiar with the city, city monuments are initially perceived as solitary symbols, each portraying a fragment of London's history but appearing as stand-alone works with no connection to one another. As Gull and Netley's travels through London progress, these monuments and historical facts are put into relation, and begin to form the complex web of London's urban palimpsest. An example of this is found in the symbols of the obelisk that looms over William Blake's grave in Bunhill Fields, seen again on the corresponding page on Hawksmoor's Saint Luke Church Steeple (see figure 1 and figure 2). As Netley remarks: "Why, Sir! I'd never noticed!-It's that thing from Bunhill Fields again! A proper steeple shouldn't look like that."[87] Netley's remark about a 'proper steeple' is unknowingly a comment about the symbols of paganism hiding in plain sight on London's streets. The symbol of the obelisk reappears throughout the city yet again in Hawksmoor's St. George, Bloomsbury, Cleopatra's Needle, and the Tower of London.

These hidden symbols can be perceived by walking, or rather 'traveling' through the city, and by drawing connections between them, can begin to bring to

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[86] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journey's in Art, Architecture and Film* (Chicago: Verso, 2002), 66.

[87] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 13.

the remnants of the past to the surface. Michel de Certeau echoes this method of

divulging the past through travel:

> travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open
> up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce
> if it is not, by a sort of reversal, 'an exploration of the deserted places
> of my memory', the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour
> through distant places, and the 'discovery' of relics and legends.[88]

In *From Hell*, the Londons of the past (or the dark history of the city) can only be

reached by traveling through the city, as a process of discovery: to travel is not

only to partake in a key method of physically experiencing the city, but to actively

work at understanding its 'text' by making connections between various parts of

the city into relation with each other.

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[88] Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven
Rendall (California: University of California Press, 2011), 107.

Figure 1. Obelisk at Blake's grave
From Hell © 1989, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004
and 2006 Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

Figure 2. Obelisk on St. Luke's Church
From Hell © 1989, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004
and 2006 Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

City as Text

In *From Hell*, Moore and Campbell create a graphic experience of the city

of London as traveled through; it is this experience that enables them to capture

the concept of the palimpsest by establishing the simultaneous presence of past

and present within the city. In this sense, I argue, this work shows how the

graphic novel is perhaps the best medium to bridge the passage between the past

and the present, exemplifying Walter Benjamin's call for a hybrid medium,

described in *The Author as Producer* (1934), where he sees the merging of the

visual and textual forms of expressions (by calling for writers to use photographs

with their texts) as key to achieving a new, more apt method, of portraying the city.[89] Anthony Enns, following Graeme Gilloch, argues that the comic is the embodiment of Benjamin's 'hybrid medium,' for it can not only effectively portray history in the form of a montage, rather than a narrative, by juxtaposing images of past and present, but it has the capacity to portray the city as a montage, which is an archive in itself (because of how the past and present co-exists simultaneously).[90]

I suggest that Chapter IV of *From Hell* portrays London through a montage; rather than juxtaposing images of past and present, Moore and Campbell juxtapose visual *narratives* of past and present. In Chapter IV, Campbell visually portrays a 1880s London (the characters' present) that appears in contrast to the textual narrative of Gull's tour, which focuses on London's pagan past. The juxtaposition of these two narratives (present and past, image and text) works to explore how the past, embedded within the urban environment, reconfigures the meaning of the city that is uncovered through the experience of the traveler as he/she connects these sites of histories and memories.

Although the street-level experience of the traveler/ flâneur is key to the discovery of these relics and legends, and making the connections of the hidden past within the present, *From Hell* implies that this activity alone does not give a

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[89] Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" in *Reflections*, ed. by Peter Demetz (Berlin: Schocken, 1986), 230. Originally published 1934.

[90] Anthony Enns, "The City as Archive in Jason Lutes *Berlin*," in Comics and the City" Urban Space in Print, Picture, and Sequence, ed. by Jorn Ahrens and Arno Meteling (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 45.

fully formulated understanding of London's true meaning. Gull and Netley's travels through London serve to uncover its historical, pagan roots via selected monuments or sites of significant events, which are marked as points on a map. The significance of this map is revealed to us (and Netley) at the end of the chapter.

After Gull has marked these sites—this "random scattering of points…this earthbound constellation"[91]—on his map of London, he urges Netley to connect the points of their travel, to reveal to Netley and the reader at the same moment, the pagan shape of the pentagram. The total weight of the significance of these pagan symbols and historical facts cannot be realized from Gull and Netley's immersion in the city as travelers. Rather, they must pull back and create distance between themselves and the city, from which distance they are able to form an understanding of the connection between these sites, monuments, events and their underlying meaning –through the panoramic view of a map of the city (see figure 3).

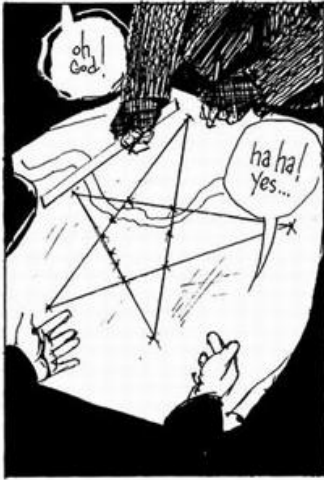[91] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 19.

Figure 3. Psychogeographic Map
From Hell © 1989, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2004 and 2006 Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

Roland Barthes, in his classic essay on the Eiffel Tower, describes how the panoramic view enabled by the Tower, in turn opens a platform for not only viewing the city, but also deciphering it: "…to the marvelous mitigation of altitude the panoramic vision added an incomparable power of *intellection*: the birds-eye view, which each visitor to the Tower can assume in an instant for his own—gives us the world to read and not only to perceive"[92] This essay pinpoints the difference between both experiences of the city we have seen in *From Hell*, that of the individual at street-level and that of the viewer from the Tower (or map)—one interpreted through sensation and the other through separation, both of which, together, are necessary to comprehend a full experience:

> To travel …[through the city]… was to be thrust into the midst of sensation, to perceive only a kind of a tidal wave of things: the bird's-eye view… permits us to transcend sensation and to see things *in their structure*. …every visitor to the Tower makes structuralism

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[92] Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies* (California: University of California Press, 1997), 9.

without knowing it…in Paris spread out beneath him, he spontaneously distinguishes separate–because known-points-and yet does not stop linking them, perceiving them within a great functional space-in short, he separates and groups."[93]

This describes well Gull's practice in Chapter IV, where he links the points of pagan history in the city, connecting these sites to organize London's urban and historical fabric.

The end of Chapter IV *From Hell* depicts a physical map onto which the psychogeographic map of London is superimposed. Gull, as the traveler or flâneur, uncovers points of pagan history within London, which are then organized and arranged to reveal the connections between them, and the true meaning of the city. Alongside the figure of the flâneur, we may understand Gull as another modernist walker in the city, the protagonist of the Situationist dérive. Gull's dérive, however, is not aimless strolling, but rather a pre-determined exploration of the hidden histories embedded within London's urban topography. Gull's travels through the city do not echo the Situationist method (of aimless wandering) so much as they echo the reaction that this exploration evokes, which is an activation of psychogeography. Chris Jenks, in his essay *Watching your Step*, discusses how psychogeography can uncover new possibilities and perceptions of the city: "[psychogeography] derives from subsequent 'mapping' of an unrouted route, which, like primitive cartography reveals not so much randomness and chance as spatial intentionality. It uncovers compulsive currents

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[93] Ibid.

within the city along with unprescribed boundaries of exclusion and unconstructed gateways of opportunity."[94]

  In *From Hell*, the 'spatial intentionality' of the urban landscape becomes clear in the form of a map offering a panoramic view. By linking these destinations and their relationship onto a map, Gull becomes a sort of cartographer, creating a psychogeographic map of London that shows the pentagram as the revelation of the city's true core. Elizabeth Ho argues that the graphic novel's 'deep map' of London unravels our understanding of touristic London; the city undergoes a reconstruction unlike that constructed by official historians, with their limited set of historical tourist landmarks.[95] Rather, this 'deep map' offers an alternative understanding of the city, a counter to the "supposedly stable version of Englishness such monuments offer."[96] The purpose of the map itself is to serve as the tool with which to make sense of the information that is divulged through the travelers' experience walking through the city. Gull makes this importance clear when he tells Netley, "Maps have a potency; may yield a wealth of knowledge past imagining if properly divined. Encoded within this city's stones are symbols thunderous enough to rouse the

[94] Chris Jenks, "Watching your Step: The History and Practice of the Flaneur," in *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (London: Routledge, 1995), 154.

[95] Elizabeth Ho, "Psychogeography and Englishness in Alan Moore's Graphic Novel From Hell: A Melodrama in Sixteen Parts," *Cultural Critique*, no. 63 (2006) : 111.

[96] Ibid. In her article, Ho focuses on how *From Hell* raises a new awareness of national identity that is achieved by exploring other, darker histories beyond the official reconstruction of the historical past.

sleeping gods."[97] In actuality, Gull is attempting to teach Netley to 'read' the city

and understand that its history still remains as an integral part of its topological

composition, through a knowledge of the city's pagan past embedded in those

monuments—such as Hawksmoor's churches—that are hidden in plain sight.

Hawksmoor's churches play a key role in Gull's psychogeographic

mapping of London. For Gull, the symbols in these churches reflect Hawksmoor's

own role as a historian writing in stone, documenting the pagan history of London

some 100 years earlier. Their obelisks, columns, and pagan icons are "merely a

part of the concealed design that Hawksmoor sought to stamp across this city's

face."[98] For Gull, the architect's decision to include pagan symbolism in his

churches was an intentional contribution to the 'spatialized text' of London's

topology. This significance of Hawksmoor's churches in Gull's psychogeography

of London, like that of the city as a text more generally, draws on the work of Iain

Sinclair, whose 1975 work *Lud Heat* presents London as a similarly 'spatialized

text' pervaded with secret symbols.

Eva Chen has shown how Sinclair portrays Hawksmoor's churches as a

kind of spatialized writing by creating a secret code within their design to reveal

the true meaning of London.[99] Sinclair, himself an obsessive walker through

London, saw traveling through the city as a psychogeographic method of

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[97] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 19.

[98] Ibid., 13.

[99] Eva Yin-I Chen, "Hawksmoor's Churches: Myth and Architecture in the Works of Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd," *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2012) : 9.

understanding of the urban environment and its 'text', by which he sought, Elizabeth Ho writes, to reveal a "grid of energies" mapped across London: an "occult mapping of the city" anchored by sites and icons of violence, mysticism or "ancient taint" that "still exercise…a powerful influence on any imagination that allows itself to float over the streets in a willed discrimination of archetypes"[100]

Through their symbolic reference to paganism, Hawksmoor's churches, both in Sinclair's writing and in *From Hell*, themselves accumulate a kind of power. Sinclair imagined them forming occult patterns between themselves through their distinct locations, creating mystical forms such as triangles and pentacle stars, symbols that in turn created invisible lives of sorcery that affected everything within them.[101] Whether or not Hawksmoor's intent in designing and erecting these churches was malignant, for Sinclair—and Gull—Hawksmoor's churches are a deliberate attempt at re-writing the city to form a force field of power within the existing geography of eastern London.[102] Explicitly following Sinclair's lead,[103] *From Hell* depicts all of Hawksmoor's London churches as part

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[100] Elizabeth Ho, "Psychogeography and Englishness in Alan Moore's Graphic Novel From Hell: A Melodrama in Sixteen Parts," *Cultural Critque*, no. 63 (2006) : 127.

[101] Paul Newland, "On an Eastern Arc: Reading Iain Sinclair's interest in Christ Church, Spitalfields and its uncanny territory through East End discourse," *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2005) : url: http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2005/newland.html

[102] Eva Yin-I Chen, "Hawksmoor's Churches: Myth and Architecture in the Works of Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd," *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2012) : 6.

[103] In 'Appendix I' of *From Hell*, Moore openly discusses Sinclair's *Lud Heat*, 1987, and how the work centered around the alignment of Hawksmoor's church with one another and other monuments of importance, which served as an influence for *From Hell*. Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 11.

of a historical narrative that 'reads' them as key sites within the pagan palimpsest that is, Moore suggests, the true story of London.

From Hell pays attention to three of Hawksmoor's churches in particular; St Luke's, St. George-in-the-East, and Christchurch. St. Luke's (discussed above), noted for its obelisk disguised as a steeple, is where Gull and Netley first begin to make visual connections between the pagan symbols in the city. While the inspiration for Hawksmoor's designs is generally understood to have come from the fourth century A.D., a period that saw Christianity become the official religion of the Roman Empire (including Roman Britain), and which was regarded by Hawksmoor as having the purest form of Christianity,[104] *From Hell* highlights instead the pagan side of fourth-century Britain (and its tensions with Christianity), and the attempted conversion of the country back to paganism following the rule of Constantine's successor. In Gull's interpretation, it was the symbols of ancient Paganism, rather than Christianity, to which Hawksmoor— unbeknownst to his sponsors—secretly looked in constructing the symbolism of his churches. *From Hell*, like *Lud Heat*, posits that the pagan symbolism secretly embedded within the design of each church is the source of its magickal power, enhanced by the spatial relation of the churches to one another to form a grid of dark energy.

Gull is both giving an architectural history lesson, as well as a lesson in history through architecture by exploring the role of Hawksmoor's church St.

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[104] Kerry Downes, *Hawksmoor*, (London: A. Zwemmer LTD., 1959), 163.

Georges-in-the-East and its place within a larger magickal system. Hawksmoor's St. Georges-in-the-East, Gull suggests, is 'flawed' in its design and alignment. The wrong alignment of the church to which Gull is referring refers to the south front of the church. Hawksmoor tried, unsuccessfully, to get the commission to demolish four houses on Ratcliffe Highway in order for the church to be open to the street for beauty and convenience.[105] "Years later, on that selfsame ground,"[106] Gull tells the reader, the first of the 1881 Ratcliffe murders took place. *From Hell* makes the connection between these murders and the pagan power of St.-George-in-the-East, despite its flawed design from its lack of south front access that disables it from aligning itself with other monuments.

This power of St. George-in-the-East can be also be translated to its actual physical design: despite having a geometrically simpler tower than the dramatic church of St. Anne's, Kerry Downes points out that its heavier form reveals more tension and more energy.[107] But where Downes' 'tension and energy' is a formal description appearing in a work of architectural history, for Gull, the tension and energy created by the architecture of Hawksmoor's church translates into an actual psychic tension and energy that emanates from the church, and is the root of the violent events that have taken place there.

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[105] This design feature of a south front for Hawksmoor's St. George-in-the-East church is in fact a point of similarity to Hawksmoor's drawing for 'The Basilica after the Primitive Christians.' Kerry Downes, *Hawksmoor*, (London: A. Zwemmer LTD., 1959), 175.

[106] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 29.

[107] Kerry Downes, *Hawksmoor*, (London: A. Zwemmer LTD., 1959), 175.

The most powerful and significant of Hawksmoor's churches in *From Hell*

is Christchurch, Spitalfields. Iain Sinclair also found phenomenological

significance in Christchurch, describing it as the centre around which the 1888

murders took place—and specifically the murder of Marie Kelly on the street

directly opposite the church. In *From Hell*, Gull pays special attention to

Christchurch not only for its pagan symbolism, but also for its element of the

uncanny. It is Hawksmoor's "most affecting church: his creed of terror and

magnificence most forcefully expressed."[108] Gull goes on to describe the church

and its effect on the surrounding area:

> its tyranny of line enslaves the nearby streets, forever in its shade. Its angles trick the eye, seem from a distance flat then swell upon approach…its tower about to topple forwards like some monstrous corpse…Its atmosphere envelopes Spitalfields, casts shadow-pictures on the minds of those whose lives are spent within its sight.[109]

This dark atmosphere of Christchurch that Gull describes can be said to

stem from the history of London's East End, which was a pre-roman burial site as

well as held sites of pagan rites and sacrifices: the excavation of Spitalfields in

1574 revealed it as built on one such burial site, as stone coffins, skulls and ashes

were unearthed. Invoking this fact, Eva Yin-I Chen argues that the location of

Christchurch on sites of death, bloodshed and sacrifice infused the very church

itself with dark energy and power that secretly worked against its stated goal of

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[108] Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, Chapter IV in *From Hell* (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions, 2006), 32.
[109] Ibid.

Christian enlightenment.[110] It was this 'dark' or violent history that Hawksmoor

paid tribute to in his churches, and which *From Hell* identifies as the real

knowledge— rather than that of the Reformationary church which had

commissioned his work—that they passed on to later generations.

The significance given to Hawksmoor's churches in *From Hell* clearly

relates to the notion of London as an urban palimpsest, as a field of history that is

hidden in the open as well as to the power of monuments working together within

urban space to create a 'character' of the city that in turn affects the consciousness

of those within its presence. The pagan symbolism embedded in the design of

Hawksmoor's churches exemplifies this notion of architecture capturing and

preserving the past within the city's present, but also its role as an active power

within the present. As Sean Carney suggests, "Hawksmoor's churches are a

malign presence looming over the narrative and presiding over the Rippers

murders. In architecture, necessity is compressed—human suffering as

experienced over time is transformed into space."[111] Past events, in this case

human suffering, continue to be manifest in space and affect the present.

In *From Hell*, East End London is itself a 'being' whose very core is

rooted in the violence and darkness of its past, and whose state of desolation in

the 1880s can be attributed to this past. Time is a central theme of *From Hell*;

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110 Eva Yin-I Chen, "Hawksmoor's Churches: Myth and Architecture in the Works of Iain
Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd," *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2012) : 7.
111 Sean Carney, "The Tides of History: Alan Moore's Historiographic Vision." *Image TexT:
Interdisciplinary Comic Studies, vol. 2, no. 2*. (2006) url:
http://www.english.ufl.edu/imagetext/archives/v2_2/carney/.

throughout the work, a stable notion of time is disrupted—as can be seen explicitly in Campbell's simultaneous renderings of past and present in the same image. We actually see, in Gull's hallucinations, the future of the city (the present time of the book's release, ca. 1989), where he stands before the very skyscraper that would later inhabit the site at which he stands in the 1880s; we look down, and see the Victorian city as Gull had when looking down at his map. In the novel, the reader experiences this fluidity of time just as Gull does; the reader is both in his own time (reading the novel) and in Gull's, just as Gull is simultaneously in *his* own time and *ours*.

Chapter IV of *From Hell* also deals with issues of time, but in a rather subtle manner. This is most notable when Gull looks at the map and sees the city, or route of travel from an aerial or panoramic view. In this image, we see a layering of time periods as Gull connects the points of pagan history on his map of the present to show Netley how the past is not a distant concept, but is inherited by the present. What we are given here is an understanding of time as a fluid entity rather than defined by specific beginnings and endings. An understanding of time is key to understanding the concept of an urban palimpsest. By understanding historical periods as successively building on one another, rather than entirely replaced by what follows, we can start to comprehend how this historical layering becomes documented within structures and the urban environment. As Seamus O'Malley writes, in the case of London, "the thing we

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have to remember is that the Age of Christianity has succeeded the age of antiquity, but has not replaced it."[112] The London of the present is the sum of all the Londons of the past.

This concept of inheritance of the past within the present is strongly paralleled in another fiction, roughly contemporaneous with *From Hell*: Peter Ackroyd's 1985 novel, *Hawksmoor*. In *Hawksmoor*, the boundaries between time and space, history and fiction collapse as the detective (residing in the 20th century) chases the ghost of the architect (residing in the 18th century), and the two merge into one.[113] Ackroyd's work was influenced by Sinclair's writing on dark pagan forces at work in Hawksmoor's churches, and strongly parallels Chapter IV in *From Hell* in its articulation of London 'inheriting' past violent events, and in its placement of Hawksmoor's churches as sites of magickal activity. Ackroyd's work, which draws upon Sinclair's writing about the intentional, malignant mysticism of Hawksmoor's churches, follows two narratives wherein 18th-century murders physically manifest themselves in the 20th century. This narrative structure disrupts the conventionally accepted notion of time as linear and progressive, and reconfigures it as "one long process of continuity, circularity and recurrence, with past and present fused into one."[114]

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[112] Seamus O'Malley, "Speculative History, Speculative Fiction: Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's From Hell" in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 173.

[113] Eva Yin-I Chen, "Hawksmoor's Churches: Myth and Architecture in the Works of Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd," *Wensham Review of Literature and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2012) : 14.

[114] Ibid. , 16.

Hawksmoor's theme of resonating temporality is similarly found in *From Hell*, through the traces of past violence and suffering manifesting in the present.

In *From Hell*, architecture is presented as a record of history, and through (historical) fiction, Moore engages with the urban environment to explore how architecture not only preserves memories and histories, but through this embodiment maintains these as lively forces that in turn covertly shape the present. *From Hell's* depiction of a fictional London may be understood, I suggest, through Jonathan Raban's notion of the "soft city." Raban argues that the soft city of "illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmares" is more real than the hard city of "maps, monographs on urban sociology, demography and architecture."[115] I would argue that *From Hell* points to a conjunction of the city of 'hard' architecture and 'soft' myth by showing how the myths are embedded, and animated, within architecture and urban space. The understanding of this conjunction is crucial to *From Hell*, as it explores alternative fictional possibilities permitting a critical engagement with issues of collective memory and history embedded within urban space, The mnemonic character of London becomes activated through fictional representations, reaffirming the palimpsest-topography of its very existence.[116]

Moore's adaptation of a historical fiction to a graphic novel relies on both the visual and textual narrative to simultaneously dissect and reconfigure our

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[115] Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Collins Harvill, 1988), 10.

[116] Tatiana Pogossian, "Dislocations and Ecologies: The Disruption of the Urban Experience of London in Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair and Gilbert & George." *Ecozon@:European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment, vol. 2, no 1* (2011) : 107.

understanding of the past within our present day. Moore and Campbell use the comics hybrid medium to creates a process of urban discovery by establishing an experience of 'traveling' through an 1880s London that places the reader, alongside and under the guidance of Gull, as the flâneur; discovering and connecting these points of pagan history in order to 'read' the text of the city. The experience of traveling through the city portrayed in this work, invokes a sense of London itself as a body of knowledge where the past and present are juxtaposed through a montage of co-existing of narratives of past and present, image and text, through which the city becomes a spatialized text written and re-written into the architectural environment over the course of its history.[117] The spatialized text of the city of London can be understood to reveal its "true" meaning: in *From Hell*, this is a dark spiritual vortex rooted in paganism. What *From Hell* offers us is a striking example of how graphic literature can not only uncover a city's history, it can also re-interpret this history and its relation to the present, disrupting the stable histories of official events, monuments and memories, to project an understanding of urban space as a palimpsest that creates a dialogue between past and present, and which is continually being rewritten.

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[117] Ibid., 109.

Chapter III

**<u>Memories in Architectural Space: Chris Ware's *Building Stories*
(2012) and *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (1995-2000)</u>**

So the building, accidentally catching a glimpse of itself in the glint of the
windows across the street, sighed. And sinking back into its morose self-
reflection spent the rest of the day with curtains drawn, not even bothering
to look up.

— Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (2012)

On the very first page of one of the 14 books that comprise Chris Ware's 2012

graphic novel *Building Stories*, we are introduced to the novel's unusual narrator

and one of its main characters: a three-story brownstone apartment building in

Chicago, built around the turn of the 20th century. By giving the building a voice,

Ware transforms it from a passive container to an active and conscious character,

and makes explicit the inter-dependent relationship between urban space and its

users.

This chapter considers two graphic novels by Ware: *Building Stories*

(2012) and *Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth* (1995-2000), and

analyzes how each of these works explores the significance of the built

environment in housing memories and dreams, and shaping our lives. The first

half of this chapter will focus on *Building Stories*, and in particular one book from

this collection, referred to by many critics as the Little Golden Book (because of

its intended resemblance to the Little Golden Books of children's literature).

Throughout *Building Stories*, and particularly in this 'chapter' of the work, Ware

presents 'the Building' not only as an active and conscious character, but also as an active force shaping and influencing the lives of its inhabitants. Focusing on the Little Golden Book, I examine the conjunction of architecture and memory in this work through a phenomenological lens, drawing on Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Throughout *Building Stories*, Ware continually presents the home as a significant site for housing memories, and reflecting the lives of its inhabitants. The Little Golden Book presents the collective memories of current and previous tenants as being inherited by 'the Building' as its own 'personal' memories; 'the Building' appears as both an architectural structure and a conscious and active character, whom simultaneously houses and preserves these memories.

Beyond the Little Golden Book, Ware presents the various homes in which the nameless female protagonist of *Building Stories* lives as sites that mirror her state of mind: her childhood home becomes for her a site of fear and loss, the cutting-down of its surrounding trees paralleling and embodying her own loss of a limb, and reflecting the essential kinship between herself and the home. The beautiful, suburban home in Oak Park where she lives with her husband and daughter is constantly interpreted by the protagonist as a symbol of her sacrifice of personal ambition for the sake of her marriage and family. And then there is 'the Building', her pre-marital residence, which mirrors her loneliness. And yet, if this apartment is a site of loneliness for the protagonist, Ware presents 'the Building' itself as striving to provide her with emotional as well as physical

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shelter. I suggest that Ware, through his personification of 'the Building',

emphasizes the role of the home as a *maternal* figure that strives to be nurturing

and psychologically protective of the female figures who reside within it.[118]

Shifting the focus from the relationship between home and its inhabitants,

the second half of this chapter will examine the role of temporary public

architecture as a force in shaping and housing memory, through Ware's 2000 work

Jimmy Corrigan: the Smartest Kid on Earth and its depiction of the 1893 Chicago

World's Fair (World's Columbian Exhibition) as a significant site of collective

and personal memory and fantasy. *Jimmy Corrigan* is a complex story of a

familial inheritance of abandonment and disappointment, told through two

simultaneous and parallel narrative lines (one in 1890s Chicago, the other in the

present). My analysis of Jimmy Corrigan focuses on the 19th-century narrative,

where I explore the Chicago World's Fair as a symbol of utopia.

Through an analysis of the Zoopraxigraphical Hall and the Manufacturers

and Liberal Arts Building—both structures representing the future-oriented vision

of that Fair, I argue that these utopic visions become embedded within the

collective memory of the fairgoers and in Jimmy's own personal mythologized

memory, establishing the Fair as a site of collective dreaming. I consider how

Ware's use of colour, scale and page layout, portrays the Fair not only as the

'theatrical spectacle' that it was, but as a theatrical backdrop onto which Jimmy

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[118] The Building, however, does not concern herself maternally with the male inhabitant, who happens to be the boyfriend of one of the female figures. In fact, 'the Building' appears to have a particular dislike towards her male inhabitants, because of their 'barbaric ways', as they are "always banging into things, breaking them…" Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (New York: Panetheon, 2012), 16.

could project his own *personal* utopian vision: a healthy, or at least 'tolerable,' relationship with his father.

Housing memory in *Building Stories*

The so-called Little Golden Book in *Building Stories* focuses on an interdependent relationship between a building and its inhabitants. The Little Golden Book follows the lives of the inhabitants of 'the Building', and of 'the Building' itself, over a span of a single day: September 23, 2000. From the beginning, Ware introduces the reader to 'the Building' as an active character within the novel, by literally giving it a voice whereby 'the Building' expresses its own self-aware, conscious perception of its environment and the lives of its residents. The voice of 'the Building' is presented in two ways: firstly, through third-person narration in cursive writing that "floats" on the page, and which establishes 'the Building' as the narrator of the book. Secondly, in first-person narration presented in 'thought bubbles' like the ones used for the other characters in the novel, which serves to establishes 'the Building' as an equal character amongst its human users, rather than as mere setting. Shortly after being introduced to 'the Building,' we meet its inhabitants: the landlady, an old woman who has lived in the building all her life; the unhappy couple who live on the second floor; and the protagonist of *Building Stories*, the lonely girl residing on the third floor, a newcomer to this space.

The structure of *Building Stories* defies the composition of typical graphic novels as works of visual literature within a book format. The 14 books that comprise *Building Stories* can each be considered self-contained works while simultaneously being part of a whole. [119] Due to this, *Building Stories* has no real beginning or end; each work depicts a certain period of time within the protagonist's life. These works are not meant to be read in a linear order with respect to the progression of time. Rather, the reader, with each new work read, builds upon the previous one in order to gain an understanding of the character's life. This fragmentary mode of narrative, whereby a life is built up out of discontinuous views and stories, echoes that already seen in Eisner's depiction of the street in *Dropsie Avenue*, and the urban experience of London in *From Hell*. Rather than achieving fragmentation through the treatment of panels and images, the stories in *Building Stories* are physically fragmented by their placement in separate books.

Within each work, Ware's approach to page layouts alternates between linear and holistic views, which alter the narrative styles of the story. Randy Duncan and Matthew Smith describe how, in typical comics structures, each panel in a comic is experienced as a single capsule of time while being simultaneously related to the panels it precedes and follows, thus becoming a part of the design of

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[119] I use the term 'books', but the works themselves are a collection that ranges from actual books to fold out boards, to newspaper-like-pages, and so forth.

the whole page.[120] Each page, therefore, is experienced both in a linear manner as a sequence of events and as a holistic, designed object.[121] Ware's treatment of page layout emphasizes the page as a designed object as much as it does its narrative structure by the strategic placement of images. In fact, certain works of *Building Stories* rely solely on visual narrative, where the importance of the design of the page layouts is emphasized further as only images narrate the story.

Because all pages in a comic, in a sense, are holistic design objects, when I refer to Ware's treatment of pages as 'holistic', I mean those instances when the linear narrative of panels is disrupted by a single (or multiple) images that encompass the entire page. This is specifically seen in The Little Golden Book, when Ware uses architectural renderings, such as isometric drawings, cross-sections, elevations and sections to depict 'the Building'. These pages almost 'pause' the visual linear progression of the story that depicts the lives of the inhabitants, and allows 'the Building' to provide its own comments and thoughts.

The significance of Ware's decision to employ this kind of drawing is realized on the third page of the book, where the reader is presented with the same isometric drawing as on the first page, only here the exterior has been removed and we are privy not only to all the rooms in 'the Building' simultaneously, but to a record of past events within it, narrated by 'the Building' itself. In this image, ' the Building' exposes the events that took place over the last century through a

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[120] Randy Duncand, Matthew J. Smith, *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 167.
[121] Ibid.

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record of everyday banalities; such as "28, 224 hugs, 231 drain clogs, 23 broken bones, etc." Jacob Brogan observes that these tallied events and remembered feelings are depicted in Ware's work as detached from particular bodies, or rather, of individual inhabitants, thus turning the problems of collective pasts to questions of personal memory.[122]

Both the former tenants and 'the Building' are sharing the same memories, where the collective memories of former tenants have become the individual memory of 'the Building,' even long after they have ceased to live there. Furthermore, from this image, we understand that these memories now belong to 'the Building' itself—a crucial aspect of understanding 'the Building' as a living character, and of spaces as repositories for housing and preserving memories. The architectural renderings of 'the Building' not only give insight into the past memories and experiences that 'the Building' shelters, but also emphasizes its presence as a distinctive character within the novel, and within the lives of the other characters (unlike the city and monuments in *Death by Design* and *From Hell*, whose presence as a character in the novel is depicted metaphorically rather than literally).

Although Ware uses the same textual style for each character, downplaying the differences between the human and architectural characters, in the case of 'the Building' I suggest that by employing an architectural language in his narration of the building's story, depicting 'the Building' in architectural

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[122] Jacob Brogan, "From Comics History to Personal Memory, " *The Comics Journal*, October 29, 2012, http://www.tcj.com/from-comics-history-to-personal-memory/.

renderings such as elevations, isometrics and sections, Ware gives 'the Building'

a distinct *visual* voice that serves to further define 'the Building' as a character.

Each character in this novel, including 'the Building,' is unhappy with his

or her current circumstances. The characters are united through a sense of longing

for whatever is missing in their lives—whether romance, a feeling of wholeness,

or a now-distant youth. This longing in each of the characters is portrayed through

the multiple and simultaneous episodic narratives of the book. 'The Building,'

like its elderly landlady, is tired and melancholic, longing for its glory days. This

is established at the beginning the book, where 'the Building' tries to attract a new

tenant. It says to her (and to itself) "You shoulda *seen* me in my heyday,

honey…new copper cornice, gleaming bright, jaunty awnings lazily half-lidded.

Sheltering my sculptured stone stairway, why, I would grabbed you by the legs

and *made* you live in me!"[123] This is paralleled by the landlady's reflection on the

missed opportunities of her youth, which led her to her current state as a lonely

old woman longing for companionship. The young couple, no longer in love,

resent one another, and long for a way to repair their relationship. Lastly, the

protagonist, whom 'the Building' affectionately calls 'lonely girl,' is exactly that:

lonely. She struggles through life both emotionally and physically (with her

prosthetic leg), and longs for something—or someone—to 'fill the void' in her

life.

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[123] Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (New York: Pantheon, 2012), 3.

Daniel Worden, in his essay "On Modernism's Ruins: The Architecture of 'Building Stories' and Lost Buildings," draws a comparison between the female protagonist and 'the Building,' wherein the ontological incompleteness of the former (ie., her missing limb), a metaphor for the missing element in her life, is offset by the building— which is *not* a void but is rather rich with secrets and knowledge.[124] Worden suggests that Ware presents 'the Building' as able to fill the 'void' of the protagonist's seemingly empty life, if only she could recognize the building as a stabilizing and grounding element.[125] In other words, if only she could understand 'the Building' as a *home.*

With reference to Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* (1958), I want to elaborate on this aspect of *Building Stories*, where 'the Building'—or 'home' more generally—appears as a symbol of stability and shelter that not only protects the physical body of its inhabitants, but also acts as a repository that shelters their metaphysical being, becoming a space of dreaming, memory, and personal histories. In this work, Bachelard explores the importance of the home as a space that both protects the individual and nurtures dreaming. For Bachelard, the sheltering of dreams is the main purpose of the house, allowing the individual to 'dream in peace.' "In the life of a man," Bachelard writes, "the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through

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[124] Daniel Worden, "On Modernism's Ruins: The Architecture of "Building Stories" and Lost Buildings, in *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking* (Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 111.
[125] Ibid.

those of his life."[126] In *Building Stories*, the characters do not regard the building

as a symbol of strength and protection, and are therefore unable to form a

relationship with their home that would ground them existentially.

Ware's personification of 'the Building,' depicting it with thoughts and

feelings, does not openly cast the Building as male or female. I suggest, however,

that 'the Building' is in fact female, taking on a maternal role in the novel.

Bachelard explores the way houses take on human virtues, particularly those of

maternal instinct, both in *Poetics of Space* and his earlier work *La Terre et les*

Reveries du Repos (1948), where he looks to examples of the home as a maternal

character throughout literature. He references Henri Bosco's novel *Malicrox,*:

> The house was fighting gallantly. At first it gave voice to its complaints:
> the most awful gusts were attacking it from every side at once, with
> evident hatred and such howls of rage that, at times, I trembled with fear.
> But it stood firm […] The already human being [the house] in whom I had
> sought shelter for my body yielded nothing to the storm. The house hung
> close to me, like a she-wolf, and at times, I could smell her odor
> penetrating maternally to my very heart. That night she was really my
> mother.[127]

Bachelard describes how the house in La Redousse, through its role as shelter,

becomes a symbol of human virtue. He writes: "…the house becomes the real

being of a pure humanity which defends itself without every being responsible for

an attack. La Redousse is man's Resistance: it is human virtue, man's

grandeur."[128]

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[126] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 7. Originally published in 1958.
[127] Ibid., 44-45. (Quote is originally from Henri Bosco's *Malicrox*, pg 115).
[128] Ibid., 44.

In Bachelard's description, the house's virtues of protection and resistance are transposed by the inhabitant into human virtues, giving the house the moral and physical energy of a human body.[129] These same virtues of motherly protection apply to 'the Building', most notably on the page that depicts an architectural section view of the building between the hours of 11 a.m. and 12 p.m. Reflecting on the individuals who reside (and have resided) in it, 'the Building' describes how she/it is so happy with female tenants, but can't stand the men, described as "little more than barbarians…always banging into things, breaking them."[130] 'The Building' is able to relate more with women, who it feels are, like itself, gentle in nature: "They're my three little birds, bathing, breakfasting, and planting their broad behinds wherever they please…Then of course, he has to come back and spoil it all, upsetting the balance, throwing a knife into the works…If only I could do something about this…"[131] 'The Building' wishes to protect its female inhabitants—in this particular case, the woman on the second floor. Unlike the house in Bosco's text, which protects its inhabitants from external threats (the threat of the storm), 'the Building' wishes to protect its inhabitants from largely internal threats, in this case those posed by the man.

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[129] Ibid., 46.
[130] Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (New York: Pantheon, 2012), 16.
[131] Ibid.

Although 'the Building's' traditional role is that of protecting against the dangers from outside its walls, as opposed to within them, its maternal characteristics are emphasized even further in this instance by forgoing these traditional roles, "forgetting itself and its place"[132] by physically calling out after the woman as she leaves. This is the only instance in this book where 'the Building' attempts to actively make contact with one of its inhabitants. The difference between 'The Building' in *Building Stories* and the house described in Bosco's text, is that the house in Malicrox is perceived as a site of motherly protection by its inhabitant, whereas in *Building Stories*, the two younger female inhabitants relate to their environment in a negative way. Only the reader is fully aware of 'the Building's' protective, motherly nature.

When 'the Building' calls out to the woman from the second floor, its words are no longer presented as thought bubbles but instead as a 'spoken text' bubble, showing how 'the Building' has attempted to overcome its physical materiality. While the woman momentarily stops and turns back to look at 'the Building' in wonder, she ultimately dismisses it and continues on her way. Ware leaves the reader questioning whether the woman's momentary look at 'the Building' right after it called out to her was a timely coincidence, or if she actually heard 'the Building' but has rationally dismissed the idea of speaking architecture.

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[132] Ibid., 17.

This interaction between 'the Building' and its inhabitant illuminates the limitations 'the Building' is faced with when attempting to create a positive relationship with its inhabitants. Firstly, it shows 'the Building's' consciousness of its own materiality; that as a creation of architecture, it cannot actually *talk*. Furthermore, it shows that 'the Building' is aware that it cannot force itself onto its inhabitants as a site of protection; they must come to regard 'the Building' this way themselves. The care of 'the Building' for its inhabitants is offset by the *lack* of care they have for it in return. This becomes part of a larger commentary that highlights the lack in the residents' understanding of 'the Building' as a caring *individual* who shelters them both physically and spiritually during their time of inhabitation, and eventually becomes a repository for their memories. It is this lack of understanding that makes it easy to tear down the building when it gets old, and with it purge the memories it shelters.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard discusses how a house "constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability."[133] By analyzing these images, we discover the soul of the house. Bachelard pinpoints the verticality of the house, achieved through the polarity of the attic and cellar, as a key aspect establishing this notion of stability and how these spaces have certain psychological resonances. He refers to Jung's work *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933), where Jung compares the images of attic and cellar to analyze fears of the conscious mind. He states that the consciousness acts like a man who,

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[133] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 17. Originally published in 1958.

hearing a suspicious noise in the cellar, goes to the attic for he dare not go down to the cellar, which represents the unconscious.[134] The attic is the place where fears are rationalized, whereas the cellar is the "dark entity" of irrationality.[135] For Bachelard, the psychological resonances of these spaces reinforce the image of the house as a site for sheltering aspects of the human psyche such as fears, dreams and memories.

Apartment buildings, however, typically lacking both cellar and attic, are considered by Bachelard to be "oneirically incomplete," and therefore as inadequate sites for sheltering dreams and memories. 'The Building' in *Building Stories* is depicted with images of both an attic and a cellar, or, basement. Although 'the Building' does not have an attic in reality, it does have one in the old lady's dreams: this dream attic is the storage place both for her old paintings and her dying mother. In the attic of the dream, confronted with her mother's death, the old lady both mourns and confronts her own sense of guilt stemming from her neglect of her mother. Afterwards, she takes 'rational' action and cuts off her mother's fingers to place them in a teacup!

Rather than looking to analyze the symbolism behind this dream, I want to consider how Ware's depiction of the attic as the 'location' where these dreams are housed serves to reinforce Bachelard's theory about the psychology of the house. The image of the 'dream attic' in *Building Stories* reinforces his reading of the attic as the space of dreams, storing both dreams and the things of memory

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[134] Ibid., 18.
[135] Ibid.

(i.e. the old woman's paintings, furniture, her mother); in the absence of a physical attic, this memorial storage occurs within the 'space' of a dream.

Again, as in Bachelard's text, the cellar or basement is depicted in *Building Stories* as the location of the characters' darkest fears, although the lonely girl experiences the cellar as an actual physical space as opposed to a dream. In the cellar, the protagonist loses her cat and confronts her worst fear, which is to be eternally alone. Her inner monologue runs: "She was the ***world*** to me [the cat]…God, there was no way I could bear losing her…not again…***not again!***"[136] The lonely girl's frightening experience in the basement of *Building Stories* parallels Bachelard's stress on the cellar as the space of the unconscious, where fears become less easily rationalized and more exaggerated. The duality of these images depicted in *Building Stories* emphasize 'the Building' as 'onerically' complete, and therefore capable of becoming a site that shelters dreams and stores memories, much like the traditional house in Bachelard's vision.

The correspondence of the attic with the old lady and the cellar with the lonely girl is telling of the relationship that each of these women has to 'the Building.' The lonely girl only relates to 'the Building' in a negative way, exemplified by her experience in the cellar. The old woman's relationship to 'the Building,' however, was formed in her childhood, and therefore the images and references to an attic that does not exist actually re-enforces her understanding of 'the Building' as a shelter for her memories. 'The Building' is the old woman's

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[136] Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (New York: Pantheon, 2012), 24.

childhood home, and essentially, her lifelong companion. Bachelard writes of the

importance of the childhood home throughout one's life. He writes: "The house

we were born in is physically inscribed in us. […] The house we were born in is

more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams."[137] In her

adolescence, the landlady forms this relationship by playing imaginative games on

'the Building's' staircases. As she gets older, she takes over the role of the

primary caretaker of 'the Building.'

I argue that through her care for 'the Building,' the old woman personifies

it as a living *being*. She says, in one of the other books of *Building Stories*, "No I

never wanted to have children…to have one's life completely taken over by the

needs of another person? I think not."[138] In actuality, the needs of 'the Building'

have taken over the old woman's life. Her relationship with 'the Building' has

taken precedence over other relationships, such as romantic or social. By

continuing to care for 'the Building,' the old woman allows it to continue 'living'

and serving as a physical shelter for her memories. A key difference in this

relationship from Bachelard's analysis of the house as a shelter for memories,

however, is that in Ware's book 'The Building' itself is aware of the old woman's

care, and shows its concern for her health and for a future without her. It 'says' to

itself: "The thought of such utter vacancy fills me with a dread un-like any

other."[139] Indeed, their fates appear to be linked. After the old woman's death,

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[137] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 14-15. Originally published in 1958.
[138] Chris Ware, *Building Stories* (New York: Pantheon, 2012)
[139] Ibid., 29.

'the Building,' located in, a rapidly gentrifying area of Chicago (Humboldt Park),

is soon demolished. Her relationship with 'the Building' expresses how, through

care, built structures come to take on the significance and meaning they have;

without this, Ware seems to suggest, buildings are easily destroyed, along with the

individual and collective memories they preserve within them.

The personification of 'the Building' as a living being that shelters these

memories makes its destruction seem all the more horrific, because its death is

understood as the death of a character, rather than the destruction of an object.

Matt Godbey argues that the intimate portrayal of 'the Building' in *Building*

Stories is actually a plea against the demolition of historic buildings, whose role is

to act as a cache of experiences within the urban environment.[140] By emphasizing

the social life of 'the Building,' Godbey writes, Ware shows both "the physical

and psychological destruction of urban spaces"[141] as these symbols of order and

structure within the urban environment disappear.

Unlike architectural monuments whose presence reflects a larger,

collective, memory of a different era, group identity, and so forth, 'the Building'

reflects the personal, intimate memories that are formed, and remain, within our

dwelling spaces. Robert Bevan, in his 2006 work *The Destruction of Memory*,

considered the targeted destruction of architecture during wartime as an attempt to

destroy the material reminders of a people's history and collective memory.

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[140] Matt Godbey, "Chris Ware's "Building Stories," Gentrification ad the Lives of/in Houses," in *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*, ed. David M. Ball and Martha B. Kuhlman (Jackson, University of Mississippi, 2009), 123.
[141] Ibid., 127.

Referencing Pierre's Nora's *Lieux de Mémoire*, which posited modern memory's reliance on the 'materiality of the trace,' Bevan shows that architecture *is* this 'materiality' or physical reminder of the past in the urban environment, and that its destruction targets less the material of buildings themselves than the collective identity and history that are embedded within them.[142]

The very presence of 'the Building' on its Chicago street evokes the memories of past dreaming. Through 'the Building,' we see how private dwellings become containers of memories and sites of stability, their roles as shelters going beyond physical protection to become spaces that protect memories during and after their time of inhabitation, and whose destruction marks the loss of those accumulated memories.

Personal and Collective Dreaming in *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

Whereas *Building Stories* focuses on the space of inhabitation as a site of local urban individual histories, *Jimmy Corrigan* takes an ephemeral urban environment as a site for collective and personal memory. *Jimmy Corrigan* focuses on two narratives, one in the late 19th century and one in the late 20th,

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[142] Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 16.

following the lives of Jimmy Corrigan and his grandfather, James Corrigan. The narratives are presented simultaneously, and the reader is led to draw comparisons between the two main characters. Through their juxtaposition, the reader sees the inheritance of lonesomeness that is passed along the Corrigan family: both "Jimmy's" are quiet and socially awkward, desperate to establish a connection with others but unable to do so. Their difficulty to connect with others can be seen to stem from the troubled relationship with their fathers, both having been abandoned by their paternal figures.

In the following pages, I focus on the 19th century narrative of Jimmy Corrigan, exploring the relationship of Jimmy (the grandfather) to his own father through the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (aka. the Chicago World's Fair) as a site of personal and collective dreaming. I consider the Fair as an illusion of Utopia, collectively for the city of Chicago as it represented the future of America, and personally for Jimmy, as it is there that he experiences a seemingly 'healthy' relationship with his father. In this analysis, I explore how Ware uses the Fair to express the impact of personal tragedy amidst a grand historical event,[143] by connecting the personal experience of Jimmy to the monuments of the Fair onto which he projects his hopes and dreams and retrospectively, his faltering memories.

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[143] See Shawn Gilmore, " Private and Public Histories in Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan," in *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*, ed. David M. Ball and Martha B. Kuhlman (Jackson, University of Mississippi, 2009), 150.

The impact of the World's Columbian Exposition, popularly known as the

Chicago World's Fair, can only really be understood when related to its context.

The Fair of 1893 marked 400 years since Columbus's expedition to America. The

1890s in America were witnessing sweeping social and economical changes, as

the American way of life was beginning to shift from a primarily agricultural

mode to one centered on industrialization. Kevin Donnelly writes that the Fair

captured this period's aura of impeding change as a projection of the hopes and

fears of a nation making its transition into modernization.[144] The Chicago World's

Fair was to show a perfect balance of civilization by bringing forth material and

industrial productivity and invention (electricity, moving pictures, steam), while

simultaneously showing that progress had not stifled the cultivation of art.[145]

The Fair was a symbol of the future of America, a future that appeared

within reach. It was ironic then, that the Fair's architecture used antique forms

that would showcase America as a growing imperial power equal to classical

Rome. The use of a neoclassical (Roman) architectural idiom appealed, one

historian of the Fair has written, "to expansionist Americans who viewed their

country as being on the verge of becoming itself an imperial power destined to

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[144] Kevin Donnelly, " "Well Anyway": Learning from History with Chris Ware and Jimmy
Corrigan at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as
History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 93.
[145] Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture at the Columbian Exposition," *The Century*, vol. 44, no. 1
(1892) : 89, accessed October 2, 2013, http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-
idx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0044-1;didno=cent0044-
1;view=image;seq=0091;node=cent0044-1%3A16.

fulfill its manifest destiny."[146] In the words of a contemporary commentator on

the Fair, if the architecture recalled an era of Augustus or Nero, it was not

"architecture in the highest sense" but rather "a scenic display of architecture-

composed (to use a theatrical term) of practicable models, executed on a colossal

stage and with a degree of apparent pomp and splendor."[147] The majority of the

buildings were covered in staff, which gave the effect of marble whiteness, and

from which the Fair became known as "the White City."[148]

The White City, with its clean, grandiose, appearance and modern,

futuristic exhibits, is the crucial setting for the 19th century narrative of *Jimmy*

Corrigan, in which Ware uses the utopian symbolism of the Fair and its

architecture to portray it as a space of dreaming, onto which Jimmy projects his

own personal utopian visions of a healthy relationship between himself and his

father. In Maurice Halbwachs' influential discussion of 'collective memory,' we

find that memory cannot exist without the frameworks used by people to

determine and retrieve their recollections.[149] Collective memory is always

embedded in a spatial framework; physical surroundings preserve our memories,

and we can only recapture the past by focusing on the space within which is

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[146] Jospeh Gustaits, *Chicago's Greatest Year: 1893, The White City and the Birth of a Modern Metropolis* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 15.
[147] Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture at the Columbian Exposition," *The Century*, vol. 44, no. 1 (1892) : 88, accessed October 2, 2013, http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0044-1;didno=cent0044-1;view=image;seq=0091;node=cent0044-1%3A16.
[148] Trumbull White and William Iglehart, *The World's Columbian Exposition. Chicago, 1893* (Philadelphia: WW. Houston&Co., 1893), 99.
[149] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

preserved.[150] The Fair was an ephemeral site, an illusion not meant to last; nonetheless, I argue that its ephemeral status defined it as what Halbwachs calls an 'extraordinary event,' one that helped to secure its symbolic function as an existing utopia, and a site for collective and personal dreaming.

As per Halbwachs' definition, extraordinary events fall within a spatial framework that allows people, who experience them to: "encompass a more intense awareness of its [the event's] past and present, the bonds attaching to its physical local gaining greater clarity in the very moment of their destruction".[151] In contrast to the destruction of memory in war, or the destruction of memories with the loss of the 'the Building' in *Building Stories*, a site whose very nature is ephemeral (or intended to be destroyed), such as the Fair in Jimmy Corrigan, can paradoxically more intensely house fantasies, dreams and memories.

The Fair encompassed a collective dream of a utopian future for the city of Chicago that remained impactful even after its destruction. The Poet Richard Watson Gilder, in his poem *The Vanishing City* (1893) describes the Fair as a 'City of Dream' whose beauty and grandeur propelled man to dream within its walls, and whose destruction was very much a part of its power and charm: "Though should be Lasting as thou art lovely; as immortal As through all time the matchless thought of thee! Yet would we miss then the sweet piercing pain of thy

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[150] Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994), 137. Original source: Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980), 140.
[151] Maurice Halbwachs, "Space and the Collective Memory," in *The Collective Memory,* trans. by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 131. Originally published in 1950.

inconsistency!"[152] The Fair was a dream city to begin with, and while its

destruction revealed its fictive nature, it simultaneously secured it as a utopian

vision of the future.

For Jimmy, the Fair's utopian symbolism is only comprehended on a

personal level, as it pertains to himself and his father. We see Jimmy's experience

at the Fair not in real-time, but as a memory told through the voice of adult

Jimmy. In this 're-telling', we see how memories and dreams become blurred. As

Halbwachs states, "there never appears in dream an event accompanied by all its

particularities, without a mixture of alien elements."[153] This sentiment is echoed

in Bachelard's writing as well, where memory and imagination merge together for

spaces to take on resonances and significance that they did not have before.

In this case, Jimmy's memories, like dreams, are filled with these anomalies that

appear illogical in reality.

Jimmy is always remembering himself in his nightshirt at the Fair, and

must consciously remind himself that he was dressed in his clothes. He says: "But

why was I always wearing this nightshirt? I couldn't have been dressed like this! I

have to continually remind myself to keep such details straight."[154] Whenever

Jimmy's memory lapses on details, he is portrayed wearing a nightshirt. These

lapses of memory are filled with utopic images, such as seeing the girl he likes

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[152] Richard Watson Gilder, "Vanishing City" in *The Century* vol 46. No. 6 (1983) : 569, accessed January 10, 2014, http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0046-6;didno=cent0046-6;view=image;seq=877;node=cent0046-6%3A10;page=root;size=100.

[153] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 41.

[154] Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), 283.

from school at the Fair, or the man selling figurine horses, greatly resembling his friend's father who had taught Jimmy to make a toy figurine earlier on in the story.

Even though he is part of the collective memory of the city, which regards the Fair as a national symbol, Jimmy only understands the Fair's national significance later in his (adult) life, because at the time it had only *personal* significance for him. Shawn Gilmore relates the relationship between Jimmy and the Fair as a contrast between private and public histories. Jimmy's private history operates within the larger, public history of the Fair, which frames and reveals the limitations of individual experience.[155] Thus the public history of the city of Chicago and the Fair is only accessible to the reader, who can understand the significance of the Fair by understanding history in its larger totality[156] (something that Jimmy is unable to do).

In *Jimmy Corrigan*, there is an emphasis on history and memory ever-present throughout the work that remains inaccessible to the characters. Only the reader can see the similarities of character traits and experiences between the 19th century Jimmy and his 20th century grandson. Both 'Jimmys' understand only their own private histories, and therefore are unable to understand the work as a

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[155] Shawn Gilmore, " Private and Public Histories in Chris Ware's Jimmy Corrigan," in *The Comics of Chris Ware: Drawing is a Way of Thinking*, ed. David M. Ball and Martha B. Kuhlman (Jackson, University of Mississippi, 2009), 151.
[156] Ibid.

whole. It is the reader who must follow the two narratives, separated by history, to draw thematic links in the work.[157]

In 1893, while the Fair was a kind of utopian vision for America's future, for Jimmy it represented a personal utopia, that of a future with his father. The Fair's collective cultural significance becomes clear only in retrospect, as the collective memory becomes wedded to the individual. Jimmy's individual experience within a collective framework is perhaps best understood in relation to Halbwachs' interpretation of historical and autobiographical memory, wherein the external framework of historical and national events does not play a role in childhood memory. Upon revisiting the 'history' of Europe during his first (8-10) years of life, Halbwachs re-examines this frame of which he was previously unaware, and—like Jimmy—begins as an adult to relocate his childhood within the history of his times.[158] Jimmy, upon revisiting these events in adulthood, can logically argue with his own memory that he would not wear his nightshirt to such an important event. Yet the nightshirt, a typical bed-time attire of the 19th century, is symbolic of how Jimmy blurs the lines between memories and dreams, and reinforces the notion of the Fair as a 'dream-space.'

Visually, the 'White City' of the Fair contrasted against the industrial, 'grey city' of Chicago, and this contradistinction served to further accentuate the Fair's utopic essence.   The name 'grey city' originated from the soft-coal burning

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157 Ibid., 149.
158 Maurice Halbwachs, "Historical Memory and Collective Memory," in *The Collective Memory*, trans. by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter. (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 55. Originally published in 1950.

that was happening in the city, releasing a 'permanent' cloud smoke into the air, whereas the White City was powered by oil, a modern method of energy which kept the city aesthetically pure.[159] Ware visually captures this contrast of the Chicago outside the walls of the Fair and that inside of it, through the use of colour. The 19th-century narrative depicts a monochromatic colour-tone of browns that parallels the feelings of oppression and depression in Jimmy's own life, stemming from his unhealthy relationship with his father and the ostracism from his classmates, while also having a resonance of old sepia-toned photographs. In contrast, the Fair is depicted in soft, pastel hues of whites, pinks, purples and blues that stand out brightly amidst the story. The images of the Fair in *Jimmy Corrigan* are picturesque, and these beautiful images seem at odds with the depressing visual depictions of the remainder of the 19th century narrative.

One of the spaces depicted in greatest detail in *Jimmy Corrigan* is the Fair's Zoopraxigraphical Hall, a space at the Fair that displayed Eadweard Muybridge's invention for capturing motion, the zoopraxiscope. This proto-cinematic device showcased a series of still stop-motion photographs depicting a horse in different positions of running. When the images moved quickly in sequence, it appeared as though the horse was animated, actually running before one's eyes. Kevin Donnelly has argued that Ware's style of comic narration is

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[159] Jospeh Gustaits, *Chicago's Greatest Year: 1893, The White City and the Birth of a Modern Metropolis* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 15.

reminiscent of Muybridge's stop-motion images.[160] I would like to expand further on this relationship, considering Ware's visual narrative in *Jimmy Corrigan* as similarly using comic panels as stop-motion frames to give the illusion of time passing. The pages of *Jimmy Corrigan* alternate between large panels that take up the whole page, with ones much smaller in size. This page layout emphasizes a sequential narrative (unlike Ware's use of 'holistic' pages in *Building Stories*), and serves—much like Muybridge's proto-cinematic device—to reinforce the illusion of action and 'life'. Ware himself describes how the comics strip "fools you into the illusion of theater by letting you think you're watching an event transpire, when you're actually reading it."[161]

The 'theatricality' of *Jimmy Corrigan* recalls the Fair itself as a theatrical spectacle. In Christine Boyer's description, this spectacle was a "theatrical apex unifying architectural splendor with industrial production, power machines turning the shores of Lake Michigan into a fairyland."[162] The Chicago World's Fair was designed to be a scene of visual splendor for the fair-goer. Buildings and halls were erected that housed various exhibits focusing on a new future for America: one based in industrialization. All of these aspects of the Fair were portrayed as 'realistic' performances to display the new nation of America to

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[160] Kevin Donnelly, " "Well Anyway": Learning from History with Chris Ware and Jimmy Corrigan at the World's Columbian Exposition," in *Graphic History: Graphic Novels and/as History*, ed. Richard Iadonisi (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 98.
[161] Gene Kannenberg, "The Comics of Chris Ware: Text, Image, and Visual Narrative Strategies," in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image*, ed. Robin Varnum, Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 176. Ware quoted in Roger Sabin, *Adult Comics: An Introduction* (New York: Routeledge, 1996), 42.
[162] Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1994), 268.

itself. The theatricality of the Fair functioned in actuality much like the historical performances of medieval towns that were arranged as visual spectacles of show pictures and show architecture for visiting royals on a processional tour.[163] Rather than a performance rooted in historicism, however, the Fair was a spectacle that promised the future.

Ware focuses on two buildings at the Fair as symbolic of progress towards modernization: the Zoopraxigraphical Hall and the Manufactures Building. The first of these, as mentioned above showcased Muybridge's zoopraxiscope; on the page depicting Jimmy's visit to the Hall, Ware organizes a series of panels depicting images from the zoopraxiscope, showing a horse running across the top of the page. Beneath this strip, on the left hand side, we see Jimmy sitting in the hall, oblivious to the truly significant moment to which he is privy: the birth of cinema.

This moment is also significant as an example of Ware's emphasis on the Fair's significance as a site of *personal* utopia and possibility for Jimmy, set against the backdrop of its larger utopian significance for the nation. This symbolism is expressed through Jimmy's association between the horses from the zoopraxiscope and the toy horse he holds in his hand. Unlike the deformed horse that Jimmy made earlier in the novel, which earned him the cruel taunts of the other children, this horse is perfectly shaped: it is a symbol of Jimmy's personal progress, and the Fair as a personal utopia, particularly with respect to his

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[163] Ibid., 206.

relationship with his father. The otherworldliness of the Fair, as a space of collective dreaming apart from the reality of the 'grey city', makes it possible for Jimmy to project a new relationship with his father onto it.

The Fair, like the zoopraxiscope, is a device for producing illusions. Yet even after the Fair's destruction, Jimmy is still projecting images of fantasy onto it — only now, when his abandonment by his father at the Fair itself shatters the illusion of their improving relationship, these projections are far from utopic. The Fair, as a site of dreaming, reconfigures memory and causes Jimmy to blur the lines between his dreams and memories. This plays out through one of *Jimmy Corrigan*'s most memorable dream sequences, which takes place atop the Manufacturer's Building.

While the Zoopraxigraphical Hall is depicted mainly by its interior, with only a small image of a rather plain-looking building on the corner of the page, the Manufactures Building is rendered from its exterior. The images of Jimmy and his father riding the elevator serve to emphasize the enormity of this building—at the time the largest in the world. Although in keeping with the architectural styles of Ancient Greece and Rome through its use of Corinthian columns and arches, the structure was not overly ornate, but was rather a structure whose massive scale and restrained decoration whose "sole motive," wrote contemporary observers, "was to impress upon the beholder solidity and grandeur."[164] It was the greatest

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[164] Ibid., 97.

architectural attraction of the fair, surpassing the size of the Eiffel Tower (constructed four years earlier, for the 1889 Paris Expo).

It is here that Ware locates one of the most emotional scenes of *Jimmy Corrigan's* 19th-century narrative. At the top of the world's largest building, Jimmy follows his father "like a loyal animal," only to be abandoned at the top. In the corresponding panels, we see two tiny figures standing stop the massive structure, and then the smaller figure (Jimmy), being thrown off of the building. It is quickly revealed that these images are in fact from Jimmy's own imagination, and that his father merely "mumbled something dull" to him and stepped aside, never returning as his son stood out watching the display before him. The 'dream' images of Jimmy's experience at the Manufacturer's Building serve to dramatize the psychological resonance of his abandonment in a highly theatrical manner.

Gene Kannenberg, discussing another of Ware's works, writes that Ware produces the psychological experience of a particular event on the page by juxtaposing the image *of* the event with a fantasy image that renders its emotional impact.[165] This point can clearly be seen in this passage of *Jimmy Corrigan*. The depiction of Jimmy's father throwing him off of the Manufacturers Building, in what Jimmy calls a "dramatic manner in which to terminate one's paternity,"[166] is followed by images of (remembered) reality, where Jimmy simply stands alone atop the building. By juxtaposing these images, Ware establishes the emotional

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[165] Gene Kannenberg, "The Comics of Chris Ware: Text, Image and Visual Narrative Strategies," in *The Language of Comics: Word and Image,* ed. Robin Varnum, Christina T. Gibbons (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 186.

[166] Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth* (New York: Pantheon, 2003), 283.

impact that Jimmy's abandonment by his father has on him; it *felt* as though he had thrown him off of the building.

In the emotional bearing of this moment, it is hard not to notice the drastic scale difference between Jimmy and the Manufactures Building. Jimmy is depicted as a mere spot, barely visible atop of the structure. The whole image looks like a picturesque postcard scene from the Fair, the building standing proud and beautiful against the setting sun turning it a lovely shade of lilac. The beauty of the image seems at odds with the awful scene that took place atop of it. Daniel Nadel, in his review of this book, writes: "What makes the grandfather's abandonment so heart-wrenching is that the emotional ugliness occurs in palatial physical beauty, and while that seems like an easy irony, the book-length repetition of abandonment and betrayal, from one generation to the other, builds the effect to a climax. [167]

Ware's decision to site Jimmy's abandonment atop the Manufactures Building is a choice of symbolic complexity. While atop the largest building in the world, symbolizing a progressive future, Jimmy's own hopes of a better future—spurred on by the illusion of the Fair—come to an abrupt end. The utopia of Jimmy's new relationship was, like the Fair, merely a deception. Yet when faced with the reality of the relationship with his father, Jimmy does not cease to project images of fantasy onto these memories, replacing the fantasy of a future

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[167] Daniel Nadel, "Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth" Review, *Graphis*, no 57 (2001): 13.

familial happiness with another, darker one; his father throwing him off of the building.

Jimmy Corrigan shows how the built environment, no matter how temporary, can become the stage onto which we project our hopes and fears, both individually and collectively. Although the Fair, like 'the Building' in *Building Stories*, is ultimately demolished, its destruction is not associated with a sense of loss. Rather, the destruction of the Fair in *Jimmy Corrigan* secures its status as a utopia; a vision of an idyllic future for America (and for Jimmy), whose physical disappearance ensures its persistence as a dream. Its utopian symbolism blurs the lines between personal and collective memories and dreams. The Fair echoes Hugo's sentiment of the 'book of stone', becoming an architectural marker of historical change as it symbolizes the transition of an era. In *Jimmy Corrigan*, we see how the Fair, a *temporal* 'book of stone', with its grand, emblematic architecture, becomes a site that secures dreams and memories on both a collective and individual level: housing the personal hopes of Jimmy against the backdrop of the nation's collective dream.

Chapter IV
Architects, Memory, and the Graphic Novel

So far, this thesis has focused on graphic novels that present architecture and the urban environment as an active force within our lives, as sites of embedded history, and as repositories of personal and collective memory. My previous chapters have explored how comic authors and artists have used visual and textual narrative techniques to engage with themes in architectural history, urban critique, and issues of development. In this final chapter of my thesis, I turn to a recent comic produced *by* an architect (and a poet), Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng's *Relocating Mother* (2012), to explore the comic form as an alternative venue for architects and designers today to critically engage with questions of the built environment, using this medium to do architectural theory by other means.

Like Ware's *Building Stories*, *Relocating Mother* centers on the home as a site sheltering personal memories, exploring how elements of the human psyche—our thoughts, memories, and sense of identity—become inextricably wrapped up in, and influenced by, our built environment. While building on the ideas discussed to this point in my thesis, this work also presents itself as something else: a comic that proposes a critical engagement with the built environment, from the professional perspective of an architect.

Over the past few years, the comic medium has gained in popularity as a choice for architects and designers: Peripheriques Architects, Andres Jaque Arquitectos, Loom Studio, and many others have used the hybrid medium of

comics to comment on existing projects, to propose new designs, and reach out to the public with issues concerning urban planning.[168] In 2009, Danish architects Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG) created an entire 'archi-comic'—or architectural comic—titled *Yes Is More: An Archicomic on Architectural Evolution*, which portrayed their process and all their projects, both conceptual and realized, to date. Jimenez Lai's recent *Citizens of No Place* (2012) is an archi-comic that questions the concept of narrative both in the architectural practice and in the comic genre. Employing a kind of 'paper architecture' that allows Lai to be playful and critical of the architectural practice of which he is himself a part, *Citizens of No Place* is a collection of short stories that explores issues of space through fictional, 'outer-space'-like scenarios.

In this chapter, I focus on another recent archi-comic, published in 2012 by the Danish architect Mikkel Damsbo, in collaboration with poet Gitte Broeng. *Relocating Mother* likewise uses the comic as a ground for staging a critique of contemporary design discourse, through a narrative that explores the relationship between our homes and our identities. In *Relocating Mother*, Damsbo and Broeng use the inner struggles of the main character about his childhood home, between professional opinion and personal attachment, as a way to highlight contemporary architecture's love-hate relationship with modernism.[169] The work also explores the idea of the significance of built space as a force that influences our lives, as

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[168] See Melanie Van Der Hoorn, *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (Rotterdam: 101 Publishers, 2012), 135-141.
[169] Ibid., 40.

the protagonist constantly interrogates the relationship between his home and his identity. I analyze how Damsbo and Broeng, through rather simplistic images and text, focus on the relationship between people and built space as a site of personal memory and identity-formation, where "architectonic spaces, thoughts and memory become intertwined."[170]

Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng, *Relocating Mother*, 2012.

Relocating Mother is a very short (7 page) comic book about a man named Anders Jacobsen, who visits his childhood home before it is about to sell. Architect Mikkel Damsbo and poet Gitte Broeng[171] create a story that takes a very personal approach to architecture, looking at the emotional relationship that exists between people and their homes, and the role the home plays in shaping and influencing personal identity. The visual narrative of *Relocating Mother* is illustrated through very simplistic images. In fact, the narrative of the story, told through a traditional, linear narrative, is misleadingly simple. On the surface, it is a story about a young man who will miss his childhood home after it sells; at the same time, this work functions in a broader sense as a critique of the architectural profession and of the legacy of modernist principles that continue to inform architectural ideas and practice today.

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[170] Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng, Statement in Spring Exhibition, Charlottenborn Gallery, 2012.

[171] Broeng is a writer who is interested in architectural space. She describes her collection of poetry, 'Interiør' (2006), as "poems about spaces: architectural, in paintings, some real some imagined." Gorana Tolja, email correspondence with Gitte Broeng, From February 15, 2014 to March 6, 2014.

At the outset of the book, we find the young man visiting his childhood home before it is about to sell. We are informed early on that this house is like other houses in his neighbourhood (later, we are told that it is a prototype house from the 1960s). The house is depicted in isometric view and a plan view before it takes a 3D perspective view that follows the protagonist as he moves through the space. The protagonist's name, Andres Jacobsen, is the Danish equivalent of 'John Johnson'—i.e., a stereotypically 'generic' name.[172] Neither the house nor the protagonist is thus presented as being very original; but we are given a sense very early on in the work that the relationship between Andres and his childhood home *is* unique, particularly because it is *his*.

In *Relocating Mother*, Damsbo and Broeng portray the relationship between the individual and the childhood home as crucial in the development of personal identity. In the beginning of the novel, the protagonist thinks to himself about how hard it would be to imagine life without his name and his childhood home—two facts over which he had no control—leading him to question what role these facts played in his identity.[173] The special role that *Relocating Mother* seems to assign to the childhood home and its relation to the influence on personal identity recalls Bachelard's writings about the childhood home (previously discussed as a place of daydreaming and memory) as holding significance throughout one's life.

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[172] Melanie Van Der Hoorn, *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (Rotterdam: 101 Publishers, 2012), 39.

[173] Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng, "Relocating Mother" in Kolor Klimax ed. Matthias Wivel (Salt Lake City: Fantagraphic Books, 2012). Note: This collection does not use page numbers.

In *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard describes the relationship to the

childhood home (or the house we were born in) as more than an embodiment of

home, but also an embodiment of dreams and a repository for memory: "each one

of its nooks and corners was a resting-place for daydreaming."[174] For Bachelard,

the house's main role is to become a site that nurtures dreaming, and later, the

memories we have formed in this space remain embedded within it. He writes: "It

[the house] is human being's first world. Before he is 'cast into the world,' as

claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house."[175]

The house, as the child's first world, does not only contain memories, but is an

active force in shaping and influencing its inhabitant. Gitte Broeng, as a writer

who is very much interested in the way structures have the power to influence us

when we are confronted with them, expresses the significance of the relationship

between a person and their childhood home. She writes:

> To many people, including myself, a childhood home is or was a
> 'constant' space, closely connected to your own body. You get to know it
> as you grow up and feel that it is a very special place although it might be
> a type house. In Denmark many people live in houses like that. They are
> called 'parcelhuse'. From an architectural point of view I find them
> boring. Yet, I liked my own childhood home ... as an exception from the
> rule.[176]

From the beginning of the story, as Anders moves through the house, he

attributes anthropomorphic properties to it; he remarks that maybe the house knew

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[174] Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 15. Originally published in
1958.
[175] Ibid., 7.
[176] Gorana Tolja, email correspondence with Gitte Broeng, From February 15, 2014 to March 6,
2014.

him better than he did himself, and that when visiting his mother there as an adult, he felt as though he was visiting the house as well: "it was about the same age as him. They were sharing the same memories."[177] Damsbo and Broeng establish a relationship between the house and Anders that rests on their mutual, shared 'memories' of Anders' childhood. The house acts as a material container for the memories that Anders has created there, and in turn these memories have become—as in *Building Stories*—the house's own personal memories. The house is not only portrayed as Anders' equal, but as having played a significant role in the development of his identity: "I suppose I wouldn't be me without my name or the house I grew up in."[178]

As Anders moves through his home, he begins to reminisce about past experiences in its spaces, in a way that is nostalgic yet critically reflective. Upon entering the living room, he thinks to himself (in the third person): "Had he not been growing up in this house he wouldn't have had any recollection of himself sitting in this room, practicing his signature on pieces of paper whenever he was bored."[179] Boredom, which seems to have provided an impetus for Anders' childhood explorations of identity— through the repetitive acts of practicing his signature for example—is likewise an important factor in Bachelard's writing about children and their experiences in the home.

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[177] Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng, "Relocating Mother" in *Kolor Klimax* ed. Matthias Wivel (Salt Lake City: Fantagraphic Books, 2012). Note: This collection does not use page numbers.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid. In *Relocating Mother*, whenever Anders was bored, he would practice his signature "as if he was trying to get to know himself better."

For Bachelard, boredom was a necessary experience of childhood, whereby children learned the "dialectics of exaggerated play and pure boredom"[180] He describes how children would leave the room of play, to voluntarily be bored in the attic upstairs. This boredom was not from a 'lack of playmates', but rather, as a solitude preferred by the child,[181] leading then to daydreaming, the sheltering of which Bachelard sees as the primary function of the childhood home, and on which our attachment to this home is centered: "It is on the plane of the daydream and not on facts that childhood remains alive and poetically useful within us… Centers of boredom, centers of solitude, centers of daydream group together to constitute the oneiric house which is more lasting that the scattered memories of our birthplace."[182] The house acts a site that promotes daydreaming, and continues to shelter the memories created in the childhood imagination after they have long passed.

As Anders reminisces about his childhood experiences within his childhood home, the panels depicting Anders' living room slowly begin to change. First, objects in the living room, such as the table and the sofa chair, become imbued with colour, standing out against the grey scale of the comic. As the panels progress, these objects start to lose their shape and morph into geometric shapes and prisms. Eventually, these prisms take over an entire panel, completely transforming the living until it is no longer recognizable, before

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[180] Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 16. Originally published in 1958.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Ibid., 17.

disappearing on the following panel (see figure 4). This sequence of transformation is mirrored on the corresponding page, where Anders, opening a box of prisms, begins to 'play' and builds houses and tent-like structures, that then seem to grow and change of their own accord. The changes in the house happen beyond Anders' control.

These prisms in *Relocating Mother* are ambiguous in their meaning. They occur at points when Anders is recalling past memories (such as practicing his signature) or performing past acts (like playing with his toys). I argue that the evolving of the house into these prisms in fact stems from the act of remembering, and they are the mnemonic aspects of the home overwriting its forms. Despite the title of the work (*Relocating Mother*), Anders' mother is absent from the story. Although it is never openly stated, from the images of moving boxes throughout the house, and Anders' own decision to sell the home, the readers gets the impression that his mother is no longer living there, and has perhaps passed away. While his mother is not physically present in the comic, I argue that her presence is depicted through the home itself, with which she is inextricably linked in his memory.
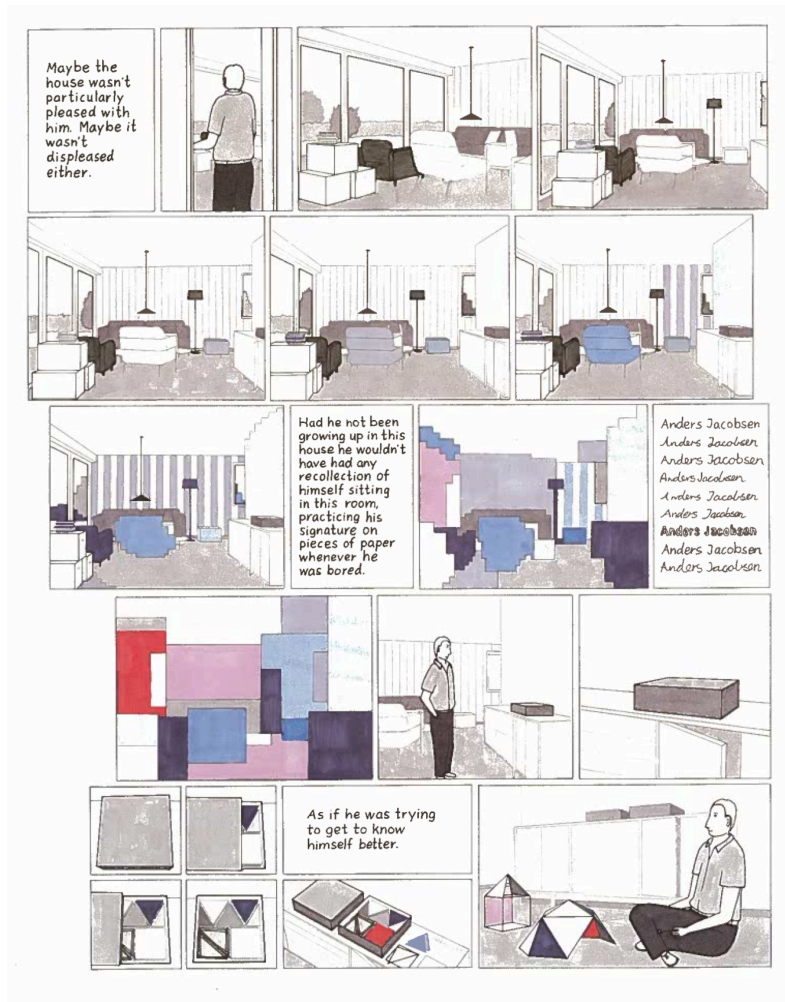
Figure 4. Memory Over-writing Forms
Relocating Mother © 2011 Mikkel Damsbo and Gitte Broeng,

Anders' childhood home shelters his childhood memories, including his memories

of his mother. Now, with the home about to sell, he is losing access to the built

repository that houses these memories, and thus the last trace of direct access to

his mother.

Writing about *Relocating Mother*, Melanie Van Der Hoorn describes how, as the objects that used to 'inhabit' the house disappear, Anders seems to be losing himself more and more. This points to another notion expressed in this comic, namely that identity is shaped and influenced not only by the built environment as physical, architectural structure, but via all that it contains, such as the furnishings and objects one finds in the home.[183] In fact, Damsbo, in his visual renderings, puts as much emphasis on the objects in the house as he does the house itself. He portrays a variety of objects, a lamp, a chair, a bookshelf, and so on, each of which are given their own individual panel, signaling their importance in Anders' life.[184]

Van der Hoorn describes how, according to Damsbo, the objects in the home are just as important as the design of the house, because "they embody the huge gap between what architects deem good or beautiful and what consumers believe."[185] In this sense, Damsbo and Broeng seem to suggest that the idealized, pure spaces of the architectural profession become irrelevant when it comes to the lived experience in the home by the users, and the emotional ties residents make with their dwellings, regardless of the architectural ideals that gave shape to these spaces.

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[183] Melanie Van Der Hoorn, *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (Rotterdam: 101 Publishers, 2012), 39.
[184] The side view of a book shelf Damsbo depicts in Relocating Mother, is very similar to one of his own designs in collaboration with designer Hiviid titled 'Angle (2011). http://translate.google.ca/translate?hl=en&sl=da&u=http://www.kevinhviid.dk/index.php%3F/kevinhviid/design/&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dmikkel%2Bdamsbo%26safe%3Doff%26biw%3D1064%26bih%3D618.
[185] Melanie Van Der Hoorn, *Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form* (Rotterdam: 101 Publishers, 2012), 40.

The personal objects in the home are presented here as sites of memory themselves, echoing Walter Benjamin's writings on the bourgeois interior, which sought to reflect identity through the furnishing of objects. In the work of the Belgian architect Henri van de Velde, who saw the interior as a space that expressed the individualism of the inhabitant, Benjamin writes, "the house becomes an expression of the personality. Ornament is to the house what signature is to a painting."[186] The interior of the home becomes a space that re-affirmed the identity of its inhabitant to himself, as well as to visitors, objects and furnishings securing identity in place. Anders' identity is similarly portrayed as tied directly with his house, and its objects: although he himself no longer lives there, the house has always been *his*, in the sense that he could physically go back to his childhood home whenever he wanted. Now, the house will no longer be accessible to him. He will only be able to visit it in his memories: to inhabit it in the future will mean, as Bachelard explains: "living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it."[187]

The spirit of Le Corbusier plays a significant role in *Relocating Mother*, where he embodies mainstream architectural practice. Damsbo and Broeng present Le Corbusier and Anders as opposing forces in their relationship to space. The canonical modernist architect looks at the house from a professional perspective, while Anders looks at it through a personal, emotional one. In his

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[186] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: President and Fellows of Harvard Collage, 1999), 9.
[187] Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 16. Originally published in 1958.

seminal work, *Towards A New Architecture* (1927), Le Corbusier described how the house is at once a machine designed to make daily work efficient and simple, and a place of meditation and beauty that brings repose of the spirit.[188] What this space is *not*, however, is a space that reflects traces of the self. Walter Benjamin explains how in contrast to the bourgeois interior, which became an expression and re-affirmation of the inhabitant's identity, the materials of 20th century modernism (such as glass and steel), were ones to which nothing like identity could be fixed.[189] Referencing the 20th century writer Paul Scheerbart, Benjamin describes the transition of space from housing identity, to space 'housing people' – becoming a functional container rather than an expression of self.[190]

Le Corbusier's appearance in the story can be seen as a manifestation of Anders' own inner conflicted feelings about his childhood. In the story, Anders believes Le Corbusier to be a prospective buyer, and shows him around the house. Le Corbusier's criticisms of the house are many, from the floor plan that is ultimately a waste of space, to the decorative wallpaper and the kitchen—which, to his dismay, has wooden surfaces rather than steel, and a decorative spice rack. To Le Corbusier, these are not suitable devices for modern people, who must eschew decoration and ornament (as well as 'natural' materials such as wood). 'Transparency, makes a house beautiful' he remarks in the story. It is through

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[188] Jean Jenger, *Le Corbusier: Architect, Painter, Poet* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 129.
[189] Walter Benjamin, "Experience and Poverty" in *Walter Benjamin*: *Selected Writings Volume 2 1927 – 1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, Ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 733-734. Online pdf: http://www.virginia.edu/humanities/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Walter-Benjamin-Experience-and-Poverty.pdf.
[190] Ibid.

transparency, the evidence of the nature of materials, that the individual achieves a kind of spiritual fulfillment.[191]

While Le Corbusier criticizes the house, Anders agrees with this professional opinion—and yet personally, cannot help but feel offended. The house is the location of his childhood memories, and as he remarks earlier in the novel, he wouldn't be who he is without the house he grew up in, as close to him as his own name. To Anders, his 'poorly designed' kitchen recalls warm memories of the home cooked meals he had eaten there. Van der Hoorn describes Anders' conflicting feelings as reflecting the love-hate relationship that many contemporary architects have with modernism,[192] and indeed Damsbo and Broeng use the figures of Anders and Le Corbusier to stage a critique of modernism. Damsbo's own profession as an architect is perhaps what makes this critique so interesting, as he ultimately seems to side with Anders in arguing that architectural ideals are secondary to the personal attachments one forms with a built structure or object.

Damsbo and Broeng, through the tension depicted between Le Corbusier and Anders, criticize the lack of the 'human factor' in modernist design, its lack of accounting for these emotional ties formed with space and objects, regardless of whether they are of 'good design.' Professionally, one can make such judgments, determining a space to be of poor design (as the figure of Le Corbusier

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[191] Jean Jenger, *Le Corbusier: Architect, Painter, Poet* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 129.
[192] Melanie Van Der Hoorn, Bricks and Balloons: Architecture in Comic-Strip Form (Rotterdam: 101 Publishers, 2012), 39.

does in *Relocating Mother*), but this does not keep the poorly designed house from gaining an elevated status for the individual, because of its role in housing childhood memories and shaping identity. As Bachelard writes, "our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word. If we look at it intimately, the humblest dwelling has beauty."[193] This sentiment expresses a special relationship to our homes, not because of their designs, but because they are 'our first universe.' Bachelard continues: "the house we were born in (or the childhood home), is physically inscribed in us […] it has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting."[194]

The childhood home, then, is always the home against which we measure all others; the action of moving through the space becoming a second-nature to us, that, were we to return to this home after a long absence, we would still recall the space through our bodies (and how they moved through it with ease, from habit): "We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme. The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget, with an unforgettable house."[195] The relationship between a home and its inhabitant is thus one of constant exchange: we, through the act of inhabiting,

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[193] Gaston Bachelard, Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 4.Originally published in 1958.
[194] Ibid., 14-15.
[195] Ibid., 15.

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leave our traces (through our presence, actions, memories) within the home, while the home inscribes itself in us.

The comic ends with Le Corbusier's criticisms of the garden, which is so lavishly designed that he sarcastically calls Anders 'Louis the 14th,' comparing the garden to that of Versailles. Le Corbusier finds the garden particularly offensive as a mockery of what a garden should be, i.e., a place of meditation and dreams. Jacques Sbrigilio notes how the characteristic roof gardens of Le Corbusier's modernist dwellings were conceived as "open air rooms," a "pausing place" to be savored before encountering the empty space of the interior.[196] These were places in which to lose oneself (rather than find oneself), to meditate and dream and to contemplate the continual battle between nature and urban machine.[197] Anders does not remember the garden being this extravagant and is perturbed by its change. The story ends with Le Corbusier disappearing, and Anders venturing into the garden, which begins to change into colourful geometric shapes and prisms, much as Anders' living room had earlier. The last panel of text reads: "Right now he can only think of two facts he knows for sure: his name is Anders Jacobsen. He grew up in this house." The garden visually reveals Anders' mental state as he is on the verge of losing his childhood home: his garden is no longer as he remembers it, it is no longer *his*, but is already someone else's, now extravagant, garden.

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[196] Jacques Sbrigilio, *Apartment Block 24 N C and Le Corbusier's Home* (Birkhauser: 1996), 62.
[197] Ibid.

Relocating Mother utilizes the comic's hybridity of text and image,

through a simplistic textual and visual narrative to explore the phenomenological

aspects of the built environment. Gitte Broeng highlights what makes the comic

an ideal platform for engaging with issues of architectural space:

> A comic frame looks like a room in a larger building. Mikkel Damsbo is
> an architect and I have this interest in architecture and spaces myself, so in
> general the medium allowed us both to work with built structures, but to
> express this interest in a different way, more playful perhaps. The dialogue
> between words and images/drawings and how they interact makes it
> possible to *show* a mental feeling ... for instance of being in a certain place
> in memory. Or to let a Frenchman looking like Le Corbusier turn up
> (maybe only in the main character's head). That is one of the things I love
> about comics.[198]

The 'dialogue' between words and images within the comic form allows the

medium to portray internal struggles (such as mental states, emotional responses)

as opposed to physical ones, becoming exceedingly important in the medium's

ability to investigate and portray the emotional relationships and psychological

influences between people and architectural space. *Relocating Mother* exemplifies

how the comics form, with its intimate and experiential narratives, and its visual

depiction of movement and time, can work to reveal the emotional relationships

that form between people and architectural space—bringing, via the book of print,

a new awareness of architecture's meaning as a repository for history and

memory, and a space for dreaming.

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[198] Gorana Tolja, email correspondence with Gitte Broeng, From February 15, 2014 to March 6, 2014.

Conclusion

The graphic novels and comics analyzed in this thesis present the potential of comics to constitute a rich form of research on architecture and the city, particularly as concerns of experience and lived space. Each of these works explores, in its own unique way, a relationship of mutual concessions and negotiation between built space and its inhabitants. The inhabitants of urban and architectural spaces leave their traces upon the built environment, while the environment in turn shapes and influences them. The works presented in this thesis investigate a unique experience between users and urban space, within the realms of both private and public spaces. The exceptional temporalities they present, which rest on a combination of fiction and reality, historical speculation and factual reconstitution, allow for the works to engage with issues of space through a critical lens and for themselves be open to investigation. The visual structure of the graphic novel makes possible for these temporalities, opening up new avenues of engaging with and understanding urban space unavailable within other mediums.

The theme of *history* pervades each of the works analyzed in this thesis, especially in relation to progress and development. Indeed, while the works themselves may all be seen as implicitly anti-modernist in their approach, their portrayal of the built environment and its experiental dimension constitutes a complex and negotiated relationship with modernism that goes beyond a simple

call for historical preservation. These comics argue that the historical form of the city is itself important for its function of recording historical traces—traces that actively influence the contemporary inhabitants of these sites—unlike the modern city of steel and glass, whose materials actively refute the leaving of such traces. Through their particular visual narratives, these comics interrogate the collective and individual histories embedded within architecture and urban sites, illustrating how an awareness of these mnemonic and historical dimensions is essential in reconfiguring our understanding of our buildings, neighbourhoods and cities as active forces within our lives.

Through their proposed engagement with the urban environment, these works raise the question of comics' place within contemporary design discourse, as a method of research into the city. The last chapter of my thesis sought to address this question directly, by analyzing a comic-strip produced by an architect. Rather than simply using the comic's hybridity of text and image to depict a space or a project, Damsbo and Broeng utilize the comic's ability to produce extraordinary temporalities by interweaving elements of fiction with reality, to delve into deeper issues concerning the phenomenology of architectural space. Like the works it discusses, this thesis is itself a proposal to acknowledge the graphic novel as a contemporary, viable source of research into the city. It positions itself as part of the larger conversation regarding tomorrow's design practices, and places the graphic novel as a key site for future architects and designers to engage with issues of history and memory in space. Through the

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medium of visual narrative, the works analyzed in this thesis present the graphic

novel as the book of print within which Hugo's book of stone might once more be

realized, deploying fantastical urban possibilities and speculative history to enable

an awareness of the historic and mnemonic dimensions embedded within urban

space.

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Appendix A

Copyright Permissions For Published Material

From Gorana Tolja to Chris Staros(Top Shelf Productions)   March 3, 2014.

Hi Mr. Staros,

I am completing a MA thesis at OCAD University entitled City in Print, which focuses on the experience of architectural and urban space in the graphic novel.

I would like permission to use the following images from Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, From Hell: Being A Melodrama in Sixteen Parts (Marietta: Top Shelf Productions,1989 - 2006), Chapter IV, pg 12, pg 13 and pg 36 panel 7.

Please note that I am the author of this work, and that this will be for non-commercial use.

I am also requesting that you grant irrevocable, nonexclusive license to the Ontario College of Art & Design [and to the Library & Archives Canada] to reproduce this material as part of the thesis. Proper acknowledgement of your copyright of the reprinted material will be given in the thesis.

I have attached the form for you to sign and return, should these arrangements meet with your approval.

Thank you very much for you time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

From Chris Staros to Gorana Tolja   March 3, 2014.

You have our permission to use the 3 referenced images of From Hell in your theses as stated below. Just please state that From Hell is copyright Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell.

Chris Staros, Publisher
Top Shelf Productions
PO Box 1282
Marietta GA 30061-1282
USA
:
chris@topshelfcomix.com
www.topshelfcomix.com

From Gorana Tolja to Fantagraphics Books

Message:

Hi, I am completing a MA thesis at OCAD University, Toronto, CANADA entitled City
in Print, which focuses graphic novels that present a experience of architectural and urban
space. I would like permission to use an image from Mikel Damsbo and Gitte
Broeng 'Relocating Mother' in KolorKlimax (Seattle: Fantagraphic Books, 2012),
pg 4. (of Relocating Mother) Please note that I am the author of this work, and that this
will be for non-commercial use. I am also requesting that you grant irrevocable,
nonexclusive license to the Ontario College of Art & Design [and to the Library
& Archives Canada] to reproduce this material as part of the thesis.
Proper acknowledgement of your copyright of the reprinted material will be given in the
thesis. Please get back to at your earliest convenience and let me know how to proceed
with this.
Sincerely, Gorana Tolja

From Fantagraphics to Gorana Tolja   March 19, 2014

Sure, that's fine!

Appendix B

Email Correspondence Between Myself and Gitte Broeng

From Gorana Tolja to Gitte Broeng   February 15, 2014.

Hi Ms. Broeng,

My name is Gorana Tolja, I have received your contact information from Mikkel Damsbo because of my interest in your work Relocating Mother.

I am a second year Master's student in the Contemporary Art, Design, and New Media Studies program at OCAD University in Toronto, Canada. I am currently doing my thesis, which focuses on the graphic novel as a platform for engaging with the urban landscape by presenting the built environment as lived site and archive of personal and collective history and memory.

One aspect of my thesis looks at your work Relocating Mother (2012), and the role homes and objects play in creating and sheltering our memories and identities. I was emailing to inquire if it would be possible to ask you a few questions regarding the work?

Thank you for your consideration,I look forward to hearing from you.
My email is gorana.tolja@gmail.com

Best,
Gorana Tolja

From Gitte Broeng to Gorana Tolja   February 16, 2014.

Hi Gorana,

thank you for your email. Your project sounds interesting, and I am glad to hear that 'Relocating Mother' has found its way into your thesis. You are very welcome to send me some questions regarding the work. Hopefully I can answer them.

Greetings from Copenhagen,
Gitte

From Gorana Tolja to Gitte Broeng   February 18, 2014.

Hi Ms. Broeng

Thank you so much for getting back to me. I would just like to ask you a couple of questions regarding Relocating Mother, and with your permission I'd like to include our correspondence in my thesis.

My Questions:

1. What was the work dynamic between you and Mr. Damsbo? (Did you write the story, and he illustrated the pictures, or did he write and you illustrated, or did you both work together on all aspects?)

2. What did the medium (comic strip) allow you to do? (in terms of how you express the

story, showing the influence of the built environment, etc)

3. Relocating Mother is a work about identity and memory tied in to architectural space. What are your thoughts about the power of our built structures and objects have in shaping and influencing us?

4. Can you say a little bit about as to why the title Relocating Mother was chosen for the work?

Please feel free to answer any (or all) of the questions that you feel comfortable with.

Thank you very much for your time and willingness, I very much appreciate it.

Look forward to hearing from you (at your earliest convenience)

From Gitte Broeng to Gorana Tolja   February 20, 2014.

Hi Gorana!

Thank you for your questions. I'll get back to you with some answers soon.

Best, Gitte

From Gitte Broeng to Gorana Tolja   March 6, 2014.

Hi Gorana,

sorry for not getting back to you before now! I have had a few deadlines in a row. Your questions are interesting. Please see my answers below and do feel free to ask me more questions if the answers are not clear or something is missing somehow ...

1. We developed the story together, not in details, but the setting, situation (a childhood home up for sale), the main character. We did the first 1-2 pages closely together. As far as I remember I then wrote some passages on my own and Mikkel Damsbo sketched out a few more drawings/pages, we put it together, I did some more text, he did more drawings, and little by little everything fell into place as a result of a dynamic process and constant dialogue between us. At the time we were both part of a shared office/studio space here in Copenhagen, so we saw each other on a daily basis and had the opportunity to work closely together.

2. For me as a writer/poet it was quite ideal to write for this medium, my first time. Like in poetry the language has to be exact, concentrated, but with a comic you also get a chance to tell a story closely linked to images. I find this brilliant and exciting in terms of transgressing 'normal' media boundaries. My first collection of poetry from 2006 is entitled 'Interiør' ('Interior' in English) and all the poems are about spaces: architectural, in paintings, some real some imagined. A comic frame looks like a room in a larger building. Mikkel Damsbo is an architect and I have this interest in architecture and spaces myself, so in general the medium allowed us both to work with built structures, but to express this interest in a different way, more playful perhaps. The dialogue between words and images/drawings and how they interact makes it possible to *show* a mental feeling ... for instance of being in a certain place in memory. Or to let a Frenchman looking like Le Corbusier turn up (maybe only in the main character's head). That is one of the things I love about comics.

3. I think they mean a lot. I am not sure if they are shaping us, but they are certainly capable of influencing us and the way we feel about ourselves while we are confronted with them. A physical environment or object will always evoke some kind of feeling inside us, good or bad, maybe pretty indifferent. The experience is bodily and mental at the same time. To many people, including myself, a childhood home is or was a 'constant' space, closely connected to your own body. You get to know it as you grow up and feel that it is a very special place although it might be a type house. In Denmark many people live in houses like that. They are called 'parcelhuse'. From an architectural point of view I find them boring. Yet, I liked my own childhood home ... as an exception from the rule. So I would say that our built structures definitely have power over us and our emotions. But they are not necessarily shaping us, it is rather the other way around or perhaps you can say that a bond is being created and gets stronger over time.

4. The main character, Anders Jacobsen is selling the house, packing down the belongings of his mother, we imagined, she is in another place ...

I will be happy to read your thesis or excerpts of it later on. Good luck!

Best wishes,
Gitte

From Gorana Tolja to Gitte Broeng   March 9, 2014.

Hi Gitte,

Thank you so much for you willingness to participate in this interview! I think your answers are great - if I think of anything else I may send over another email. This has been most beneficial to my thesis. I look forward to reading some of your other work.

Good luck with everything and thank you again,
Best,
Gorana