

In Visions

Extra-cultural surprise and the status of utopia in Ann Lislegaard's work

By Lars Bang Larsen

Ursula K. Le Guin's classic sci-fi novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) describes the mission of an envoy to the planet Winter, to convince the rulers of its lands to accept membership in the Ekumen, a sort of interplanetary United Nations.ⁱ The main protagonist Genly Ai is the space agent whose brief it is to represent otherworldly life to the inhabitants on winter: "The First Envoy to a world always comes alone. One alien is a curiosity, two are an invasion," as he explains.ⁱⁱ Apart from the fact that there is only one season on Winter, the striking feature of the people here is that they only have a sex drive when they are in *kemmer*, during which they can choose and change their gender.

In his Essay "World Reduction in Le Guin" (1974), Frederic Jameson adds the technique of 'world reduction' to the variety of narrative experimentation in science fiction literature. Jameson's bullet-point poetics of science fiction includes extrapolation (developing a situation's inner logic that is pushed to its logical conclusions) and analogy (establishing alternative genealogies and realities that connect laterally to a reality principle). In contrast to these, Jameson writes about how Le Guin proceeds through elimination:

...Le Guin's experiment (...) is based on a principle of systematic exclusion, a kind of surgical excision of empirical reality, something like a process of ontological attenuation in which the sheer teeming multiplicity of what exists, of what we call reality, is deliberately thinned and weeded out through an operation of radical abstraction and simplification which I will henceforth term *world reduction*.ⁱⁱⁱ

On the narrative level this concerns how, on the planet Winter, other animal species than the androgynous humanoids are "conspicuously absent" in its hostile environment. To Jameson, this is propounded by the facts that in the feudal Gethenian society capitalism does not exist, even if this society is technologically developed:

It becomes difficult to escape the conclusion that this attempt to rethink Western history without capitalism is of a piece, structurally and in its general spirit, with the attempt to imagine human biology without desire (...); for it is essentially the inner dynamic of the market system which introduces into the chronicle-like and seasonal, cyclical, tempo of pre-capitalist societies the fever and ferment of what we used to

call progress. The underlying identification between sex as an intolerable, well-nigh gratuitous complication of existence, and capitalism as a disease of change and meaningless evolutionary momentum, is thus powerfully underscored by the very technique – world reduction – whose mission is the utopian exclusion of both phenomena.^{iv}

Thus Jameson detects a drive in Le Guin towards ‘an ultimate “no-place” of a collectivity untormented by sex or history’, but also notes that her strategy of world reduction ultimately goes beyond a discussion of how a utopian imagination can protect itself from a ‘fatal return to just those historical contradictions from which it was supposed to provide relief’.^v And he concludes that the book’s deepest subject ‘would not be utopia as such, but rather our own incapacity to conceive it in the first place.’^{vi}

This is a surprising conclusion in relation to the expectations we usually have to the sci-fi genre. Is it not sci-fi’s important role to allow for extravagant thinking, to enable us to see culture from the outside, rather than curtail and reduce the conception of new worlds? Moreover, it is unlikely if the different distribution of gender and organisation of sex in Le Guin can justify the conclusion that she eliminates sex and desire from her fictional universe. In fact, nothing in *The Left Hand of Darkness* seems to suggest that voluntary ambisexuality makes things any easier between partners. However, what is particularly strange about Jameson’s conclusion to the idea of world reduction in Le Guin, is the way he sees the impossibility of an operative utopian order *not* as being due to things being muddled up every time humankind has tried to institute the great ideas sketched out on the utopian drawing board, but due to our incapacity or refusal to imagine utopia, or due to utopia being lent an exclusionary function per se. In this way, Jameson’s argument teeters between imagination’s failure and history’s meaning. One can detect a messianic undertone in his argument: if, according to Jameson, Le Guin’s fiction throws the towel in the ring on the subject of solving ‘historical contradictions’, it would seem we are acting on the horizon of a loss of meaning, and that Le Guin’s effort solely consists in creating a fantasy of indifference and historical equilibrium.

It is no doubt true that Le Guin’s novel does not reflect capitalism and in this sense unfolds a world ‘untormented by history’. This can be seen as symptomatic of the late ‘60s appetite for strange worlds which turned into utopias of denial: just think of Tolkien and other symptomatic imaginaries of the era, when also anti-Oedipal idolisations of the child in some cases were reductive in its principled regression or infantilism. However the novel’s deconstruction of gender and sexual identity have exceedingly rich – visionary, in fact – consequences for the politics of subjectivation, and cannot be discarded as a denial of utopia.

Lislegaard’s digital animation *Left Hand of Darkness (After Ursula K. Le Guin)* (2008) is a spin-off of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which does not set out to illustrate the novel’s narrative. Rather, Le Guin’s ambisexual vision is here used as a structuring principle of organic disorder that

produces an imaginary between cinematic, architectural and conceptual space. In the black and white, multiple screen projection we see text from pages of Le Guin's book accumulating as if transparent pages, and spreading like some uncontrollable combinatory of new signification. This is suggestive of the envoy's technique of 'mindspeech'; an unmediated, extra-sensory communication form that enables mindspeakers to converse with each other without the use of spoken words. There are also screens with undulating patterns and spirals, not unlike Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*, that spin and rotate to dizzying effect; old anatomical drawings of male and female genitals overlay each other like Rohrschachs with inescapable connotations; and objects (a sledge, radar, skiing gear etc.), used by the protagonists Genly Ai and Lord Estraven in their month-long escape over the Gobrin ice-sheet, hover weightlessly in open space like prosaic celestial bodies. A computer randomises the screen constellations, and ensures that a repetition of images is months, even years apart. Dwarfed by the imposing wall of flickering projections, the viewer's body is pulled by a malstrom of spatial effects that re-code the relation of gender and desire to the worlds of objects, language and signs. Unlike Jameson's diagnosis of *Left Hand of Darkness* as an endgame of utopia that stills history's becoming, Lislegaard's installation is characterised by transformative modalities, and sometimes – depending on the screen constellations - almost frenetic activity between the unexpected juxtaposition of elements. Nietzsche said the 'physique is destiny': in Lislegaard's *Left Hand of Darkness*, the patchwork of digital images becomes a spinning roulette of chance, an entry-point for the viewer to get a new body in a new space.

Another question is what the status is of what has been imagined in the extra-literary utopias of modernism. Following Jameson's own line of argument in his essay, the utopian imagination - with the full historical and political implications of this notion vis-a-vis a transformation and reconstruction of the edifice of society as we know it – might in itself be a form of world reduction (or world abstraction, you might say). In the late 1960s the hippies were carrying button badges around that read "Reality is a crutch"; perhaps utopian is no less of a prosthesis? What happens when utopian imagination falls apart and we meet the world anew is, seen in this light, what we can learn from Ann Lislegaard's digital animation *Crystal World* (2006).

Lislegaard's work takes its title from JG Ballard's novel *The Crystal World* (1966). A viral crystal that petrifies all organic material is discovered in the Amazonian jungle from where it threatens to spread to the rest of the world. The narrative is trademark Ballard, with a storyline à la Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in which the fabric of civilisation comes undone. In Lislegaard's video crystals have been juxtaposed with elements from Brazilian modernism - such as architecture by Lina Bo Bardi - producing a new power balance in the crystal world that redresses Ballard's ethnocentric allegory of the historic and moral collapse of the British Empire, and establishes a new range of interpretive parameters.

Generated from a letter from Ballard's main protagonist Sanders and spaced out as a kind prose poem, these are the captions in Lislegaard's *Crystal World*:

what surprised me the most / is the extent to which / I have accepted the
transformation / everywhere the process of crystallization is advancing / trees are
covered in white frost / and the empty buildings form a labyrinth of crystal caves /
sealed off / as if the exterior world is losing its existence / already memories have
faded / progress has become pointless / white shadows are closing and unfolding /
even the light seems to be unable to make up its mind

true, to begin with / I was as startled as anyone / making the first journey up the
river M / but after the initial impact of the forest / I quickly came to understand / that
its hazards are a small price to pay / there are immense rewards to be found / in this
phantasmagoric place / as more and more time leaks away / everything gleams with
a spectral brightness / lit by some interior lantern / indeed, the rest of the world
seems drab and inert by contrast / a faded reflection of this bright image / forming a
grey penumbral zone / like some half-abandoned purgatory

The menacing world of crystal in Ballard's description also falls within the framework of world reduction, as defined by Jameson. It is hostile to difference, and a kind of lost paradise where immobilised figures are abandoned to eternity, the way the splendours of Pompeii were frozen in time. Hence Sanders speculates that the "...illuminated forest in some way reflects an earlier period of our lives, perhaps an archaic memory we are born with of some ancestral paradise where the unity of time and space is the signature of every leaf and flower."^{vii} Or, less ecstatically, the illuminated forest could be a pathological condition revisited upon the world: "...in our microscopes, examining the tissues of those poor lepers in our hospital, we were looking upon a miniscule replica of the world I was to meet later in the forest slopes..."^{viii}

Lislegaard's *Crystal World* is located on the brink of visibility, negating the way the crystal forest in Ballard "is more visual than anything else". In its mimetic yet pared-down and abstract universe of digital coordinates, her 3D animation produces a space without rainbows and luminous caverns, negotiating the retinal plethora in Ballard to settle in a strange shadow-imagery where light and built space contrast, overlap and lapse into abstract patterns. The images keep the beholder at bay by their silence and by the way they fade in and out of definition, opening up transformative vistas suggestive of leaps between dimensions. The captions flicker, black on white and white on black, like a sole and muted human voice in a desolate world.^{ix}

In other works of hers, however, colour reappears emphatically, which has the effect of a distribution of perceptual qualities between the different works in the exhibition. In her series *Gateway (colors and places of Bellona)* (2007) saturated, formless tonalities spread out over prints that are as big as a person, rectangular doors into warm, organic spaces defined by contiguity and tactility rather than separation and distance. They are glimpses of bigger presences beckoning you

to enter, reminiscent of the type of hyperbolic visuality in psychedelic art of the 1960s which aimed at exceeding sight to become tactile and spatial and hence disseminate visual information to other sensory realms.

The tropical jungle or the polar landscape – environments in which the European dissolves and loses physical and psychic autonomy – have in Lislegaard been reconfigured into a re-engagement with environments and spaces of a different order, shifting and multiplied perceptual and cognitive terrains. In both *Left Hand of Darkness* and *Crystal World*, ice and crystal have melted and time has started flowing again. Viewpoints and objects are set adrift, and codes and coordinates detained in the crystal grip of Ballard's petrified forest and Le Guin's medieval fantasy world have now been released. Spatio-temporal identities are seemingly about to be made available again, yet are still in a disembodied and chaotic form.

Lislegaard is clearly more interested in Ballard's story seen as a drama of time, space and (post-)utopian speculation, rather than as a moral tale. The most striking feature of the rampant crystal in Ballard is the way it stops movement and makes time its servant, similar to the way techno-rationalist master-plans of production and urban space in the 20th century wanted to chart movement and fix spatiality. However, Ballard ultimately psychologises the narrative and locates the crystal forest in the mind, through his descriptions of it as a "phantasmagoric" place, lit by "some interior lantern", in a kind of mad delirium; but it remains that the crystal forest represents a strange ecstasy which is not entropic in the way we usually understand this term, but rather a stopping of time that makes for a collapse into a mythical state.

The world reduction in Ballard can be said to reflect utopian imagination, if we thereby understand, in the words of David Harvey, "some kind of spatial construct (usually a bounded space and an internal spatial structure) [which serves] to control social processes in beneficial ways."^x This was the way that modernism tried to assure us that we can step down in the same river twice. The rationale of the utopianism of spatial form, then, is that it is perceived to be capable of redirecting the chaotic motions of historical change, "so as to maintain the social order in a state of preferably harmonious equilibrium. It often seems as if the aim is to use space to avoid historical changes, to still the dialectic of becoming in favour of maintaining a state of just being."^{xi} The utopianism of spatial form as a tyrannical 'no' to time.

After the spatial utopia has been instituted once and for all, 'progress has become pointless', to use the words of Ballard's protagonist Sander. The crystallised forest can be seen as the image of a static utopianism's perversion that has stilled the dialectic of becoming and imagines to have achieved a self-present and harmonious, if extremely rigid, equilibrium. In this Ballard's work is not just the British Empire's swan song, but can also be discussed in terms of the onslaught of a blind social constructivism.^{xii} We should not forget that *Crystal World* also appealed to Robert Smithson who created his mirror pieces strongly influenced by Ballard's novel. Smithson saw trans-historical possibilities in crystal. Ann Reynolds writes,

What is it about crystal structure that delivered Smithson from his “preoccupations with history”? Crystallography provided Smithson with a new understanding of time itself, one that resembled his earlier ideal of a timeless state but that suggested a way of incorporating and neutralizing history rather than attempting to evade it through spiritual appeals. In crystallography, Smithson found a way of placing history [...] “in suspension.” [...] “The Natural world is ruled by the temporal (dynamic history), whereas the crystalline world is ruled by the atemporal” (non-dynamic time).^{xiii}

The crystal in Smithson can in this way be seen as a trope that in different ways reflects utopian ideality, purity and balance. If, according to Foucault, the mirror exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy, by twinning the world in real and unreal, the virtuality of the crystal is of another order as its transparency promises a new and improved conclusion to the world, in a form that is capable of containing the noise of history. Indeed, it would seem that Lislegaard in her *Crystal World* has depicted not the crystal forest, but what Sanders describes as ‘the rest of the world’, that ‘seems drab and inert by contrast / a faded reflection of this bright image / forming a grey penumbral zone / like some half-abandoned purgatory’. It is not the *fata morgana* of ‘reflections reflecting reflections’ as in Ballard and Smithson, but quite literally the *rest* of the world, an afterimage of the fading away of the ‘immense rewards’ of a phantasmagoric utopia; a rest that at the same time is a new beginning of the world.

Also in 20th century architecture, crystal and glass became tropes that augured a new horizon for living environments. This holds true both for those architectural schemes that took the high road of a techno-rationalist order, (as in Le Corbusier’s attempt to locate the golden section of built space that could predetermine ideal and universal measures for harmonic edifices); or, in a more humanistic way, by emphasising the “small pleasures of life” as the architects Alison and Peter Smithson put it, by making buildings that would “allow for a glance through the window, a view of vegetation and sun streaming through the house.”^{xiv} Departing from a similar idea of allowing for a seemingly unmediated relationship between house and nature, Lina Bo Bardi designed her Glass House (1950), the source of the building inside which our gazes float in Lislegaard’s *Crystal World*. Poised on slender pillars on a hill above a forest outside of São Paulo, Glass House offers a stunning, rational material lightness that opens up to a dialogue between nature and artifice, public and private space, air and ground.

The expression ‘glass house’ was a key concept for the Soviet communal residence as conceived in the 1920s, the *Dom-Kommuna*. The historian of architecture Olivia de Oliveira writes that this

...comprised small individual cells and vast collective spaces for eating, relaxing, leisure and cultural activities. Among the ideas in force in Brazil in the 1950s were “art

as the organisation of life”, proposed by [Russian avant-garde poet] Mayakovsky, and the Trotskyist concept of “culture as a way of life.” ...Contemporary with the Glass House, Lina [Bo Bardi] prepared one of her first projects for mass housing, The Economical Houses, as transparent and crystalline as those found in Moscow in the 1920s, and designed to be communal. These single-family detached houses were identical, built in a group, and glass was the dominant element, exposing all the collective life of the house. However, as in her home [the Glass House], the private part of each house was kept behind walls, and it was visible only to an extent she considered to be suitable.^{xv}

Walter Benjamin considered living in a glass house as nothing less than "a revolutionary virtue par excellence," but also "an intoxication, a moral exhibitionism, that we badly need."^{xvi} To make a brief return to science fiction literature, the *Dom-Kommuna* of Soviet Russia and Bardi's Economical Houses were foretold in the Russian author Yevgenij Zamyatin's early, dystopic novel *We* (1920-21), which describes life in the totalitarian 26th century OneState and can be read as an early prediction of Stalinist totalitarianism. The inhabitants of OneState, ruled by the almighty Benefactor, are ensured “Mathematically infallible happiness”, through a rigidly regimented society that has eliminated private life, the architectural metaphor for which is the fact that all edifices in OneState are built entirely in glass – “our splendid, transparent, eternal glass”.^{xvii} However, D-503 begins to realize that “...even we haven't yet finished the process of hardening and crystallizing life. The ideal is still a long way off,” and subsequently joins the revolutionary underground movement.^{xviii}

For Lina Bo Bardi, however, the Glass House was no pristine and hygienic white cube but a place for the coexistence and unexpected juxtapositions between “personal items, handicrafts, sculpture, statues, pictures and furniture of various periods and origins”.^{xix} Shown alongside each other, these things may look “inconsistent and irrelevant” but they are what a human being needs because they are “full of life”. Oliveira links this filling up of modern space with inconsistent things to Peter Smithson's humanist idea of the *extra-cultural surprise* which describes “a kind of wide-eyed wonder of seeing the culturally disparate together and so happy with each other.”^{xx} In *Crystal World*, Lislegaard can be said to elaborate the heterogeneous logic of the extra-cultural surprise by confronting Bardi's own architecture with quotes from art history - in the 3D animation we catch glimpses of art works by Eva Hesse and Robert Smithson amidst domestic objects - but she also radicalises it beyond unexpected juxtapositions of cultural material. That is, under the same imagined roof she brings together the cultural as well as the natural world (liana, water, uprooted tree trunks). The vista out of the windows confronts massively dense vegetation that encroaches on the house, as if in an echo of the interior, mental space of Ballard's description of the crystal forest. No overview is available anymore. In *Left Hand of Darknes*, the element of

extra-cultural surprise is even more pronounced, as we seem to be travelling in the cultural and biological codes that make up our existence.

As everybody who has seen Lislegaard's works will know, the deconstruction of visuality is a recurring concern. Her strategies for this range from the hallucinatory blurring of perspective and localization in *Nothing But Space* (1997), to what is seen with the mind's eye in the series of drawings carried out under hypnosis *Untitled Drawings* (1994), in which rudimentary sketching betrays the unseen workings of the subconscious. If Lislegaard here plays with suspending artistic authority, in *Science Fiction_3112* and *Crystal World* she takes it upon herself to take the world apart as if she were an architect in reverse; an an-architect of "our own fates and fortunes." If all harmony has been exploded in her postdiluvian interiors and random combinatory of images, the binary codes that constitute the pieces seems to also tie together the shapes of dreams and the buoyancy of concepts, the visual as well as the cognitive - in order to re-engage with the ways we see the world. This makes the chaos and loss of coordinates - the transformative flows and webs of new correspondences - bearable, even enjoyable.

Ursula Le Guin points out that science fiction is descriptive (rather than predictive).^{xxi} This means that any engagement with empirical reality that wishes to take care of the world in order to promote and stimulate the resources and energies that live within it, must set aside control and teleology in order not to reduce it through representation. The type of description/re-construction we see in her video is not a mirroring of the world: it is a taking stock of the world from the inside in order to maintain the vibrations and free movements of its forms.^{xxii} This also becomes clear in Lislegaard's sound piece *Science Fiction_3112* (2008), in which she has speeded up, folded, stretched and compressed the soundtrack of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) to eight minutes and 41 seconds. The original soundtrack, with its distinctive absence of dialogue and use of existing recordings of classical music by composers such as Aram Khachaturian, György Ligeti and Johann Strauss II, has been speeded up to a whine of febrile molecular percussion, a hectic sound-image teeming with otherworldly energies. Again a reduction, as one might say with Jameson, that has taken place by way of condensing the film's soundtrack and taking away its visuals; but in that case a reduction that manipulates found material in order to re-visit the film as a renewed resource for future becomings – similar to the way the film was seen when it was made almost 40 years ago. In his classic study *Expanded Cinema* (1970), Gene Youngblood admits that *2001* is "a technical masterpiece" that "did create an impressive sense of space and time relationships practically without precedent in the cinema".^{xxiii} However he argues that the new, plotless experimental film – *synaesthetic film*, as he terms it – leaps over the historical threshold that Kubrick establishes with *2001*:

Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* was the last film in history forced to rely on synthetic images of heavenly bodies. (...) We've confronted a larger reality: there no longer is a need to represent cosmic consciousness through fiction. Just as

synaesthetic cinema renders fiction obsolete, so do the technologies that enable us to traverse the planets and to invent the future.^{xxiv}

Perhaps in Lislegaard's *Science Fiction_3112*, Youngblood would see the realisation of *2001*'s promise to redeem a consciousness beyond representational conventions. Interestingly, the work was first installed site specifically in a residential area in Copenhagen, where it was played from speakers hidden behind air vents in a wall bombed with tags and graffiti. As its frenetic and strangely intimate sound was heard by passers-by and reverberated off of familiar buildings, it established a parallel temporal and spatial frame, and a new speculative use value of this everyday space.

World reduction in Lislegaard, then, does something else than in Jameson's understanding of this notion. Her works challenge us to look at the world without the imaginary gratification of utopian certainty. This is a critical approach and an exercise in thinking that is not as easy as it sounds, seeing how utopian expectations - in a general sense - are woven into the way we in everyday life pass judgement about how we live and how things ought to be in the future. In this way, what is her works most fascinating stratagem is that they re-conceptualises the world without, or beyond, empirical fact. One could say that *Crystal World* is a counter-image in Ludwig Wittgenstein's sense of this term. When we are stuck in habitual conceptions, Wittgenstein says, 'ein Bild hielt uns gefangen' (an image holds us captured). When that is the case we must intervene with a counterimage:

Ich wollte dies Bild vor seine Augen stellen, und seine Anerkennung dieses Bildes besteht darin, dass er nur geneigt ist, einen gegebenen Fall anders zu betrachten (...). Ich habe seine Anschauungsweise geändert.^{xxv}

To Wittgenstein, the usefulness of the thought experiment as counter-image is not the way it may gain knowledge of something that has been unknown, but rather consists in the way that it brings about a loss of *idées fixes* and tired theoretical truths. The thought experiment is thus not about the object that we want to know something about, but rather about what we thought we knew about it. In this way, after a successful thought experiment we will usually know *less* about a given object than before, but we can now ask our questions about the object in a better way. It facilitates the asking of questions where we previously only had premature answers.

Ann Lislegaard's works take stock of the plenitude of things in the world and the way they interact and gain potential in time. Through their floating objects and liquid crystals, we can explore the settings of the world, while no existing representational regime is gratified... We remain un-captured. The vision is ours.

ⁱ An earlier version of this essay appeared in the catalogue of Ann Lislegaard's exhibition at the Astrup Fearnley Museum in 2007.

ⁱⁱ Ursula K. Le Guin: *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Ace Books, New York 2000 (1969). P. 209.

ⁱⁱⁱ Frederic Jameson: "World Reduction in Le Guin" (1974), p. 271, in: Frederic Jameson: *Archaeologies of the Future. The Desire Called utopia and Other Science Fictions*. Verso, London 2005.

^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 277.

^v *Ibid.*, p. 279.

^{vi} Jameson P. 280. The idea of world reduction is an interesting supplement or corrective to earlier and symptomatically breathless definitions of the literary sci-fi genre's syncretistic potential. For example Reginald Bretnor writes in 1952 in his critical anthology *Modern Science Fiction*: "In science fiction, man is the proper study of the writer – man, and everything man does and thinks and dreams and everything man builds, and everything of which he may become aware – his theories and his things, his quest into the universe, his search into himself, his music and his mathematics and his machines. (...) Science fiction's emergence as a genre is rooted in our failure to understand the scientific method and to define it adequately. (...) This new awareness (...) is growing, despite educational conventions which inhabit it, despite a literary convention which almost universally excludes it. (...) Eventually, we will again have an integrated literature. It will owe much, artistically, to non-science fiction. But its dominant attitudes and purposes (...) will have evolved from those of modern science fiction." (Quoted from Judith Merril (ed.): *SF12. New dimensions in science fiction, fantasy, and imaginative writing*, pp. 9-10. Dell Publishing, New York 1968). Where Jameson reads Le Guin in terms of a materialist dialectics, Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky arrives at a quite different conclusion in her gender-oriented reading of *The Left Hand of Darkness*; as opposed to Jameson's world reduction she defines the philosophical quest through foreign knowledge as a *Realitätsgewinn*, a gaining of reality. (Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky: "Planet der Geschlechtslosen. Über Ursula K. Le Guins phantastische Roman Winterplanet," in Thomas Macho and Annette Wunschel (eds.): *Science & Fiction. Über Gedankenexperimente in Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Literatur*. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt 2004.

vii 83

viii 84

^{ix} In other works, of course, Lislegaard has explored colour relationship to form, such as her digital animation *Bellona* (2005) and *Dahlgreen Images for Gateway (Colors and places of Bellona)* (2007), a series of iridescent prints that function as a kind of stage set elements in the white cube, slices of unknown spaces.

^x David Harvey: "Spaces of Insurgency," p. 53, in: *Subculture and Homogenization*. John Beverley, Phil Cohen, David Harvey. Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona 1998. Harvey contrasts the utopianism of spatial form with what he calls the utopianism of social processes, namely Adam Smith's idea of a purely functioning market place.

^{xi} Harvey, p. 53. As Harvey writes, the architect has been deeply enmeshed throughout history in the production and pursuit of utopian ideals. Harvey insists on the architect as a figure of self-empowerment, when this figure is understood as the imaginative planner of the future: "...we can all equally well see ourselves as architects of a sort. To construe ourselves as "architects of our own fates and fortunes," is to adopt the figure of the architect/planner as a metaphor for our own agency as we go about our daily practices and through them effectively preserve, construct, and re-construct our lifeworld" (pp.56-7). The architect's way of pursuing a progressive social order that does not ossify is to propose the construction of alternative possibilities. However, Harvey quotes Marx as saying that what "distinguishes the worst architect from the best... is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (p. 87). In this way, Harvey concludes, "We have no option except to explore ourselves through transforming our world" (p. 87), a conclusion that seems apt for the state of lurking potentiality the moment before a new process - and presence - of becoming in Lislegaard's *Crystal World*. It is in an environment that is transformed by ourselves that we can best recognise who we are.

^{xii} In this regard, an example of the crystalline relevant to a London writer such as Ballard would be Joseph Paxton's architectural sensation from 1851, the Crystal Palace, which was the invention of the glass house that followed in the wake of the industrial revolution. In *Crystal World* nature – and eventually human civilisation too – is suspended or sublimated into crystal, but the theme of utopianism vs. degeneration is perhaps most obvious in *Highrise* (1975), in which the inhabitants of a modernist tower block take the opposite direction of the route of spatial-utopianist enlightenment promoted by their environment, and collectively regress to an archaic stone-age micro-society inside the high rise.

^{xiii} Ann Reynolds: Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere, Massachusetts 2003, pp. 80-82. Ann Reynolds writes about the connection between Smithson and Ballard, "Smithson's model for his perceptual alchemy is the satellite. In the margins of a drawing entitled *Three Works in Metal and Plastic (...)*, Smithson notes that "it has been reported that the Mariner camera showed Mars to have surfaces like mirrors," and later, when again referring to the Mariner photographs in a letter, he concludes: "Sometimes I think the whole universe is a Hall of Mirrors. Reflections reflecting reflections. The New Jersey of "The Crystal Land" appears to be part of this hall of mirrors, but the way Smithson represents it has more in common with science fiction than science proper. More specifically, his description resembles the satellite's transforming eye of light in J.G.Ballard's contemporary novel, *The Crystal World*. Tracing the logic of Ballard's vision reveals the significance of this type of reflective vision for both authors."

^{xiv} Olivia de Oliveira: *Subtle Substances. The Architecture of Lina Bo Bardi*, p. 71. Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2006.

^{xv} *Ibid.*, p. 42.

^{xvi} Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', in *Selected Writings Vol. 2*, p. 209. Harvard University Press, Harvard 2003. Oksana Bulgakowa sums up the modernist fascination with crystal, "The symbolic vocabulary of transparency was developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and correlated with light, glass, crystal, water and nakedness in contrast to stone, veiling and deception. The transparency of nature was seen in contrast to the opacity of the social world; but it was unclear where to place a human being. Modernity was fascinated with the idea of transparency. According to German architect Bruno Taut, a glass building would establish other relationships between people and the universe, modifying their visual perception and habits. The Constructivists hoped a transparent building would help in the creation of transparent relationships and destroy the distinction between public and private." (quoted from Oksana Bulgakowa: "Eisenstein, the Glass House and the Spherical Book. From the Comedy of the Eye to a Drama of Enlightenment." I have quoted from an abridged and modified version of a chapter from her Sergej Eisenstein. *Drei Utopien – Architektorentwürfe zur Filmtheorie [Sergei Eisenstein – Three Utopias: Architectural Drafts for a Film Theory]* Berlin: PotemkinPress 1996, pp. 109-125).

^{xvii} Zamyatin, pp. 6 and 28.

^{xviii} *Ibid.*, p. 25.

^{xix} Oliveira p. 71.

^{xx} *Ibid.*

^{xxi} Introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, p. xii.

^{xxii} Andzrej Gasiorek notes that also Ballard denounces the prescriptive: “[Ballard’s] ‘inventions of imaginary landscapes’ are attempts to ‘place oneself, to find oneself, to give oneself a certain sense and a set of map references, so one knows where one is’, but this form of cartography is not prescriptive - it creates ‘road signs’ that ‘point to possible directions’, a way of thinking that aligns this process with the Deleuzian ‘map’ rather than with the ‘tracing’.” Andzrej Gasiorek: *JG Ballard*, p. 5. Manchester University Press, Glasgow 2005.

^{xxiii} Gene Youngblood: *Expanded Cinema*. Dutton paperback, New York 1970. P. 139.

^{xxiv} Ibid.

^{xxv} Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 2. ed., p. 147 (§265). Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1980.