

# Invisible Homes; Without Here and There

*Where never will come near and go away from anything, all the steps of the world \**

The thesis is a reflection on *home in exile* as a condition of *displacement* and not dislocation: An attempt to escape either nostalgia or amnesia without a physical *journey* back. The *writing* becomes a journey from *site* to site, each site constituting a collection of references that are the devices, the means and not the end of the exploration. The escape lies in the relations between each site where parallels of modern art/architecture with the condition of displacement arise.

## I INVISIBLE

A construct built by **de-struction**: a process of interruption in material continuity that in turn reveals that which is **invisible**.

The earthquake builds home through its very **loss**; when I am standing in the **ruins**, home leaves behind the physical bounds of the house, and stands stronger in their absence. Home is not a house.

In the absence of the house the landscape becomes prominent. Landscape, light, smells and sounds each in turn substitute one another only to reveal that what constitutes home is not **material**.

De-struction can create by other less dramatic means such as traversing space; within the space that home is **left behind**; for home almost did not exist before it was left behind.

In the space of the aeroplane above the clouds, home appears. As if once you **gain altitude**, memory and place become, and only can be retrieved there.

## II WITHOUT HERE AND THERE

'It is suicide to be abroad but what is it to be at home? (...) A lingering dissolution'.

The essence of home takes an extreme form in relation and tension with **exile**, not that they are opposites and negate one another and therefor can delineate the limits of each other, but because they both work towards an impossible impasse, side by side – **outside** by outside.

In the formation of home through this mutual relation, the space and time of the **border** are essential. Where is this border, this margin that **expands and thickens** in time and space?

**Distance** is no longer definite and cannot be measured but is relative to time and how one can relate to the place of either outside. 'When we relate ourselves to things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. We do not represent distance merely in our mind. Thinking gets through, and persists through the distance to that location.'

'Everything near becomes far'. Goethe refers to the evening twilight. It is true at nightfall, the things closest move away from my eyes and instead the furthest stars are in my grasp. Created by **night**, where the visible world has moved away from my eyes, perhaps forever, there is space for the invisible.

Near and far are not tied to location or the removal from it but what is at stake is an idea of **displacement**, that goes beyond being a mere **state of being** and can form a tool for the **exiled** not as something gone wrong but as a process with its own form and possibility. 'The only way he or she can cope with the heavy baggage of culture is to subject it to certain kinds of displacement, which lightens its burdensome weight. (...) In this effort (...) the exiled is engaged in a work akin to that of the modern artist whose energies have in the last century, been marshalled not so much to represent objects as to displace them'.

The exiled, the inhabitants of the thick expanded border, can subvert their displaced state of being into a device that can find home.

### III H O M E S

Once I have left, there is no return just constant departing from departure, from the past. What is left is a **trace**; the trace left in material and in space, that of arrangement; something of use and occupation; **mise en scene**.

'Mise en scene is a design made up of the disposition of the actors in relation to each other and to the setting. In real life we can be struck by the way an episode takes on a mise en scene, which makes for the utmost expressiveness. What is it that we find so arresting? The incongruity of the 'composition' in relation to what is happening. It is in fact the absurdity of the mise en scene that catches our imagination; but this absurdity is only apparent. It covers something of great significance, which gives the mise en scene that quality of absolute conviction, which makes us believe in the event.'

The incongruity that Tarkovsky talks about is similar to the displacement of the reflections in the mirror of the Manet painting where visual gestures trouble the eye and suggest a story, a story which might even take place outside the frame of the painting. Displacement holds a story.

In 'The finale of Dostoevsky's The Idiot, when Prince Myshkin comes into the room with Rogozhin, and through the doorway the murdered Nastasya is lying and, as Rogozhin says, already stinking. The two sit facing each other on chairs in the middle of the enormous room, so close that their knees are touching. When you picture this it's frightening. They astound us by the combination of an outwardly absurd and senseless mise en scene with the perfect veracity of their own inner state. The refusal to weigh the scene down with obtrusive thoughts is what makes it as compelling as life itself.'

For Tarkovsky mise en scene is form, it is not about meaning and definitely not a subtext to the event that would simplify it for the viewer. Not a cliché or a metaphor like the many barriers that run between lovers in so many films but that of form, something indispensable to event.

Some elements of the mise en scene remain further in time for objects de-struct at different paces, us, furniture, walls...

What remains is a trace, a space for speculation, for projection.

'-But what about the visitation? What do you think about the visitation?'

-(...) Imagine a picnic

-What did you say?

-A picnic. Picture a forest, a country road, a meadow. A car drives off the country road into the meadow, a group of young people get out of the car carrying bottles, baskets of food, transistor radios, and cameras. They light fires, pitch tents, turn on the music. In the morning they leave. The animals, birds and insects (...) creep out from their hiding places. And what do they see? Gas and oil spilled on the grass. Old spark plugs and old filters strewn around. Rags, burnt out bulbs, and a monkey wrench left behind. Oil slicks on the pond. And of course, the usual mess- apple cores, candy wrappers, charred remains of campfire, cans. Bottles, somebody's handkerchief, somebody's penknife, torn newspaper, coins, and faded flowers picked in another meadow.

-I see a roadside picnic.

-Precisely. A roadside picnic, on some road in the cosmos. And you ask if they will come back

(...)

-But your picnic doesn't explain the mysterious activity in the ruins of the factory

- Why doesn't it? One of the girls could have forgotten her favourite wind-up teddy bear in the meadow.'

The trace is 'the appearance of **nearness**, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be. (...) In the trace, we **gain possession** of the thing'. This is where the power in the ruins lies.

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Once you find home there is no need for return. Home is not decisive. Not a place but a mobile need. Displacing home to detect the trace and to leave ones trace to tell ones **story** such is the fate and revelation of Odysseus.