

The Memory of Place and Ruins

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1. Place and Space

Ruins, whether remains of ancient cities and buildings or sights of historical interest, are places in which memories have been accumulated and condensed. To understand the aesthetic phenomenon of ruins, we must ask: what places really are; what kind of act it is to step into and stand still at a place; and what is the memory haunting the place as a ghost, i. e., ‘a genius loci’.

Since the 1970’s the concept of ‘place’ has attracted attention anew, especially in the fields of geography, environmentalism, and architecture. In the 1980’s, history, sociology, and cultural studies got interested in it, according as the place of everyday life and its haunted memories, personal or collective, had increasingly become a focus of their studies. So it is with aesthetics in the recent projects of environmental aesthetics as well as the aesthetics of everyday life.

Let us look at some meanings that have been given to the concept ‘place’. Yi-Fu Tuan, a phenomenological geographer, says in his *“Space and Place”* (1977): “‘Space’ is more abstract than ‘place’. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value”¹, and so he thinks that a space as an abstract extent changes into a concrete lived-in place. Yet in ontogeny, he recognizes the development from children attached to their own places to adults acting freely in space. Place has security and stability while space has the openness, freedom, and the threat of space. And “human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom”, consequently between extensive abstract space and stable concrete place. Humans, Tuan also says, experience the places of street corners or buildings “as time made visible” by giving them names, which is one of the human ways of acquiring “the stability of objects and places”. And furthermore he then makes the claim that history books based on the collective memories “helped to transform the nation-state into place—and indeed into person.”² Then, ‘place’ seems to be reduced to covering such abstract concepts and representations as nation or national boundary and to lose the distinction from the concept of ‘space’.

Edward Relph, a geographer too, tried in his *“Place and Placelessness”* (1976) to define phenomenologically the concept ‘place’ that had been ambiguous in geography. For him as well, “space provides the context for places”³, and “through particular encounters and experiences perceptual space is richly differentiated into places, or centres of special personal significance.” Yet here, as Relph says, “experience of place can range in scale from part of a room to an entire continent”; place is expanded to such an abstract idea or representation as ‘continent’ that is far beyond our perception, while it is also found as a phenomenon immediately perceived and experienced by us. Moreover, Relph recognizes in our days a tendency that authentic place (“as corner-

¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, University of Minnesota Press, 1977, p. 6.

² Ibid., p. 177.

³ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, London: Pion, 1976, p. 2.

stones of human existence and individual identity”) is getting corrupted to inauthentic “placelessness” in the case of functional networks like highways, railways, and airlines, and through “disneyfication” and “museumisation” of environment by tourist industry. Skeletons of the dead “have been stripped of their original meanings and become little more than objects of casual and uncommitted observation for tourists and passers-by and other outsiders. Such withering away and modification are prevented by ritual and tradition that reinforce the sense of permanence of place.”⁴

In these phenomenological geographers the influence of Heidegger’s late philosophy of place is very clear to see. So it is with Christian Norberg-Schulz who professes a phenomenology of architecture. In his “*Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*” (1980), Norberg-Schulz confesses that the philosophy of Heidegger, the theme of which is ‘das Geviert’ consisting of heaven, the earth, the divine, and the mortal, and the cultivation of the world by ‘Bauen’ and ‘Wohnen’, “has been the catalyst which has made the present book possible and determined its approach”⁵. He says that “the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.” The fact, he says too, that places are referred to by nouns like island, promontory, bay, forest, square, street, courtyard, implies that places “are considered real ‘things that exist’, which is the original meaning of the word ‘substantive’, while space, as a system of relations, is denoted by *prepositions*” like ‘up’, ‘down’, ‘to’, ‘from’. Yet, Norberg-Schulz, too, extends the sense of places (as “the concrete things of our everyday lifeworld” referred to by nouns) to such abstract ideas as ‘countries’ and ‘regions’⁶. And Augustin Berque, inspired by Watsuji’s concept of ‘Fuudo (region and climate)’, presents a new concept “the place of *écoumène*”⁷ in his “*Écoumène: Introduction à l’étude des milieux humains*” (2000). This ‘écumène’ as “the oikos of human being” owes much also to Heidegger’s late philosophy of place that focuses on ‘Da’ of Dasein and the world as ‘das Geviert’.

All of these arguments pay attention to ‘place’ filled with personal lives, characters, atmospheres, and memories in distinction from abstract ‘space’ as empty expanse or a system of geometric relations. Yet with Tuan and Relph, a space is presupposed as “a blank sheet on which meaning may be imposed”⁸ or ‘the context for places’, and seems to be ontologically precedent to places. If so, places would be modes in which a space shows itself under particular circumstances. In opposition, with Norberg-Schulz and Berque, the concept of place is supported by Heidegger’s claim: space is “each time admitted (*gestattet*) and so ordered (*gefügt*), i. e. gathered by a place (*einen Ort*) that is a sort of thing like a bridge. Therefore, spaces accept their ‘essence=existence’ (*Wesen*) from places and not from «the» space”⁹. Yet the space gathered and cleared by places is a sort of primeval and cosmological region and eventually reduced to ‘Nature=Being’ itself, named ‘Physis’, which dissolves the human meaning of the concept of place into a vast and vague

⁴ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli, 1980, p. 5.

⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

⁷ Augustin Berque, *Écoumène: Introduction à l’étude des milieux humains*, Éditions Belin, 2000, p. 20.

⁸ Tuan, op. cit., p. 54.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken* (1951), in: *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 7, Vorträge und Aufsätze, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt a. M., 2000, S. 156.

idea of 'Physis' or 'das Geviert'. In each case of these theories, place and space are essentially one and the same, the modal differences of which are absorbed into the ideas or representations beyond our perceptions and experiences like border, nation, das Geviert or cosmos, and we are left still confronting the enigma: what place really is.

Our concerns now are the meanings of the facts: that the places we live everyday are real 'things that exist'; that we 'acquire the stability of objects and places' by naming these 'things' with substantives; that the individual identity and the memories supporting it depend on "his belonging to places"¹⁰; and that the memory of place is 'time made visible'.

2. The Persistence of Place

For Michel de Certeau, a historian, place and space are not essentially one and the same, but two components of the world of our everyday life each of which has a totally different principle. "A *place (lieu)* is", he says, "the order....in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence". As opposed to it, "A *space (espace)* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements....In short, *space is a practiced place (un lieu pratiqué)*."¹¹ While for Tuan "places and objects define space, giving it a geometric personality"¹², such geometric and perspective character suits the efficient organization by city planners and architects of a space as a 'practiced place', but not the order of place for de Certeau. Once "historical subjects" move and act on their proper place with stability, this "movement always seems to condition the production of a space and to associate it with a history."¹³

This conception of 'place', distinguished from geometric and perspective space, seems to be very close to Gibson's 'ground theory' of the perception of space. The traditional visual theory, assuming that what our eyes perceive is a picture projected on the screen of our retina, Gibson calls 'the air theory' of space perception which presupposes that the world consists of bodies in empty air. According to this theory, the third dimension of space is lost in the two-dimensional retinal image, and there must be "*cues* for depth" that the brain infers and constructs from the retinal image. One of those cues is linear perspective. But in this theory, we cannot see immediately "distance as such". As opposed to it, Gibson proposes 'a ground theory' of space perception. Environment refers to the surroundings of us who stand on the ground, move within it, and perceive it as 'place'. What we really and immediately see is not empty depth as such, but "recessing along the ground"¹⁴ of the place and the surface of an object on the ground behind that of the another. To perceive this "*layout* of surfaces"¹⁵ is not mere passive reception. It means that "active

¹⁰ Norberg-Schulz, op. cit., p. 6.

¹¹ Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien, I. Arts de faire*, nouvelle édition, Gallimard, 1990, p. 173.

¹² Tuan, op. cit., p. 17.

¹³ de Certeau, op. cit., p. 174.

¹⁴ James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1986, p. 160.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

perceptual systems” use it as “stimulus information” about the environment. The patterns of texture, layout, and superposition change with the locomotion of an observer and with the shift of the point of observation. An observer needs to pick up a stable structure of the environment as an “invariant” from stimulus information. True is that “the persisting surfaces of the environment are what provide the framework of reality”, not that there originally exists empty space that objects fill, and in the real world distance is thought of “as extending along the ground instead of through the air.”¹⁶

The environment we really perceive is not the depth and distance of an empty space but the extension and place recessing along the ground on which we are standing. At the same time, we catch in our eyes one more important component of the world. When watching the outside world, the head of an observer hides the background, and part of the field of view is also hidden by “the occluding edges” of the nose, the body, the limbs, and the extremities. When moving, we see our own feet walking on the ground, and when looking around, we feel our heads turning. One controls one’s action of locomotion and manipulation “not by the brain but by information, that is, by seeing oneself in the world”¹⁷. Gibson calls this sensitivity to the self “self-perception.” Important here is the fact that the perception of place accompanies the self-perception, and so “the dualism of observer and environment is unnecessary.” The change of perception that occurs with our locomotion within the environment refers to the perception of our own bodies, not to the environment. Meanwhile, part of the environment that goes out of sight as we move our heads comes into sight as we move back. So we are “aware of the *persistence* of the environment” part of which is momentarily hidden behind our heads, and we also perceive that the events at separated places are “concurrent.”¹⁸

“Self-perception and environment perception go together”¹⁹, and perception is the experience of “both change and nonchange.” Change (what we see now) refers to the self-perception of one’s body moving about the place, and nonchange (the invariants) refers to the awareness of the persistence of the place surrounding our bodies. This new approach to perception, “admitting the copercption of the self to equal status with the perception of the environment, suggests that the latter is timeless and that present-past-future distinctions are relevant only to the awareness of the self”²⁰ «here and now», which is based on the perception of the self moving about the place. A perception, Gibson says, “does not become a memory after a certain length of time. A perception, in fact, does not *have* an end. Perceiving goes on.”²¹ Perception in itself has nothing to do with memory and knows no distinction between the past and the present but just the persistence of place and the simultaneity of concurrent events. Awareness of these invariants does not postulate “the effect of past experience on present experience.” It needs “learning, that is, the improvement of perceiving with practice and the education of attention.” Then, what is memory? “One kind of re-

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 195.

²¹ Ibid., p. 253.

membering”, according to Gibson, “would be an awareness of surfaces that have ceased to exist or events that will not recur”, and to expect, anticipate, or plan is “to be aware of surfaces that do not exist or events that do not occur but that could arise or be fabricated within what we call the limits of possibility.” They are, therefore, not perception but “nonperceptual awareness.”²² This nonperceptual awareness of memory or expectation is a mental process based on the perception of the reality of the world that consists of the persistence of places and the simultaneity of events.

Seeing itself goes on without any articulation of the past and the present, and we perceive both the change of self-perception and the invariant structure of the world at the same time. And once, at the moment when the change and the invariant cross each other, the nonperceptual awareness of memory or expectation intervenes, self-perception is transformed into the awareness of the self as standing at the given «here and now», therefore into the awareness of the present. From this starting point of the present «here and now» (of the awareness of the self based on self-perception), the categories of the past and the future are articulated, and before it there exists nothing divided in the way of present-past-future. According to this theory of Gibson, we should not admit space and time as empty extensions claimed by the traditional theories of perception; nor space and time as Kant’s forms a priori of constituting the world, but place and its persistence as the real structure of the world that underlies those abstract concepts about space and time.

Gibson’s perception of the persistence of place and the simultaneity of events is different from Bergson’s ‘pure duration’ and its intuition. We cannot “prolong our attention indefinitely”, as Bergson claims, and what our perception captures cannot be the duration of “a perpetual present.”²³ What Bergson’s intuition lacks is self-perception concurrent with the perception of the persistence of place, the perception of one’s body occluding a part of the world. Gibson’s viewpoint is rather close to the phenomenology of late Merleau-Ponty who criticizes Bergson and asks: “Could there be duration unless there were no distance between us and Being?”²⁴ Saying that “any landscape in which I live is.....a piece of the durable flesh of the world”, and mentioning “the literal simultaneity in space and the figurative one in time”²⁵, he would have in mind an experience analogous to that of the persistence of place and the simultaneity of events through perceiving that Gibson thinks goes on. In fact, here too, such occlusion of the world by one’s body does matter, as Merleau-Ponty says: “above it [the table before me] there is the dim mass of my forehead, and below, the more indecisive outline of my cheeks.”²⁶ And the point is “not a frontier but a surface of contact” of one’s body with the world, which “renounces the thinking by planes and perspectives.”²⁷

Now, once memory and expectation bring about the regret about the past or the hope for the future projected by a subject who is aware of the present «here and now», the place is organized into the ‘practiced space’, and events are arranged successively in time and narrated as a history.

²² Ibid., p. 257.

²³ Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le mouvant*, in: *Oeuvres*, Presses universitaires de France, 1970, p. 1387.

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La nature*, Édition du Seuil, 1995, p. 100f.

²⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible*, Gallimard, 1964, p. 157.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 21f.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 182.

3. The Memory of Place

An orthodox narrative of the past memory is a history. Yet, memory in itself is not history. According to Pierre Nora, memory and history are, far from being synonymous, in fundamental opposition. Memory is “a perpetually actual phenomenon” and “borne by living societies”, while history is “the reconstruction...of what is no longer” and “belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority.”²⁸ So Nora proposes, as opposed to “the history of national development” that is familiar to us and reconstructs “great events” on the basis of “historicized memory” like archives and documents, a new history in terms of “places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*)” in which the remains and traces of “lived” memory, eliminated and neglected from that authoritative history, have taken refuge.

Nora says that “memory attaches itself to places, whereas history attaches itself to events”²⁹, and he enumerates as ‘places of memory’ “museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders”. So, ‘places of memory’, although including the literal places like cemeteries, ruins, and historic sites, is a far broader concept for historical study. It is, as the receptacle of ideas, images, representations, or symbols, much closer to the traditional rhetorical concept of ‘*topos*’ for narrating history or mythology. The “true memory” Nora claims is the memory precedent to “memory transformed through its passage into history”, that of “the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins, and myth”. It is “a lived bond tying us to the eternal present”, and therefore places of memory are “illusions of eternity.”³⁰ Then, as Joe Moran criticizes, the narration in terms of this true lived memory is reduced to the resurrection of the sacred past and to “returning to an ‘eternal present’” in terms of collective memory that fulfils intentionally ‘commemorative’ purposes by symbolization or mythification. It is, even if not a universal history of nation, yet a narrative of mythical heroes. But what we suppose with the concept ‘the memory of place’ is just a place in which our ordinary life is practiced. The routines, feelings, and thoughts repeated in daily life remain at best as fragments of individual memory, never impressed on the mythology or the history of national identity through collective commemoration.

It is certain that the memories deposited and accumulated in places are in fact people’s own memories who live daily lives there, or memories that they have by learning history, literature, legend or hearsay and recall on an occasional visit to the places. Yet, we can call them ‘the memories of the place’, i. e., the memories the place has. Insofar as the reality of self-perception is concurrent with that of the persistence of place, and as events simultaneously perceived are grasped in successive order of present-past-future and transformed into history by the intervening of memory and expectation into the «here and now» in which the change of self-perception and the invariant of environment perception cross each other, the presence of the memory I recall at the place (Augustine’s ‘the present of the past’) touches the persistence of the place where I am

²⁸ Pierre Nora, *Entre mémoire et histoire*, in: *Les lieux de mémoire*, sous la direction de Pierre Nora, I, La république, Gallimard, 1984, p. XIXf.

²⁹ Ibid., p. XXXIX.

³⁰ Ibid., p. XXIV.

standing now. It could be, at least ontologically, called the memory of place. When de Certeau asks: “what constitutes the *implantation of the memory in a place* that already forms an ensemble?”, and says: daily practice “consists in seizing the occasion and making memory the means of transforming places”³¹, what he has in mind with the ‘occasion’ on which the memory is implanted into the place might be resonant with such a moment in which memory intervenes in the perception of the persistence of place as we have recognized in Gibson’s ‘ecological approach to perception’. It is also the moment in which the past reconstructed as history might be brought back, occasionally in daily life where the persistence of place remains overlooked and forgotten, to the persistence of place underlying it.

4. Ruins and Narratives

The narrative of the memory of place is not always personal. On the contrary, monuments and ceremonies for commemorating historical great events, historical buildings and streets preserved as heritage are the places about which the narratives of nation, tourist industry, and the mass media are retold by organizing collective memory systematically. There exist, however, places that resist being assimilated into those ‘grand narratives’, and the most remarkable are ruins. Ruins “testify”, de Certeau says, “a history that, different from the history of museums or books, has no language any more”. They are “as if returned to their savage, delinquent existence”, and “the retreat of them [the «spirits» of the place (les «esprits» du lieu)] makes people talk—it generates stories (récits).”³²

In our days when everything is changing so quickly, ruins are not necessarily the ancient remains of hundreds of years ago. What Tim Edensor finds as ruins of our days are industrial ruins recently abandoned in the city. The “ghostly presences” of collapsed factories and deserted houses left behind and abandoned by time progressing restlessly to the future “invite us to fill in the blanks.”³³ And “one conception of walking around a ruin might be to construe it as a walk through memory, a walk which also produces a compulsion to attempt to narrate that which is remembered.” For Edensor, just as for de Certeau, the significance of ruins consists in “a politics” of refusing the dominant ‘grand narrative’ of the city and telling another story about the past, and therefore “implies an ethics about confronting and understanding otherness.”³⁴

It is sure that a ruin in which the fragments of other people’s memories are dispersed and accumulated compels us to narrate when we step by chance into and stand still at it. A person might, occasionally responding to the compulsion, try to narrate a story in his or her own way. But most of those stories are the reminiscence of well-known epics and history, or the repetition of the stories told by tour-guides. Although these stories are not necessarily absorbed into the ‘grand narratives’ of nation, industrial capital, and the mass media, we are outside the self-sufficient nar-

³¹ de Certeau, op. cit., p. 130.

³² de Certeau, *Les revenants de la ville*, in: M. de Certeau, Luce Giard, Pierre Mayol, *L’invention du quotidien, II. Habiter, cuisiner* (1980), Nouvelle édition, Gallimard, 1994, p. 193.

³³ Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins. Space, Aesthetics and Materiality*, Oxford: Berg, 2005, p. 162.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 164.

rative world that is definitely separated and closed from our present by the narrative tense of 'aorist'; we remain mere sympathetic readers and audiences. There could be narratives one tells about the ruins of one's own life. In this case too, the present self as a narrator can never identify itself with and relive the past self, and what the self entertains would be either some desperate projection to the past such as regret and remorse or a sweet reminiscence as a sympathy with its own past. Yet the regret or reminiscence as well as nostalgia, we can have in a foreign land far distant from the actual place where we once lived. The manner of those who step into ruins, whether other people's or their own, and stand still there must be different from the sympathy of readers and audiences as well as from their own personal regret or reminiscence.

Edensor also recognizes "the real impossibility of narrating the past" at a ruin, "particularly insofar as this relates to the infinitude of mundane daily experiences."³⁵ "Here the fragments and traces map the erasure of memory, but also evoke 'what in memory is lost when language intervenes—the sensation left by the unfindable'³⁶, revealing the limitation of narrating memories."³⁷ For Edensor, this sensation evoked by ruins, i. e., 'the pleasure of ruins' is the sensation deviant from the "normative aesthetic ordering" of the city illuminated brightly and cleared of strong smells, disruptive noises and rough textures. When stepping into ruined factories, we 're-enact' that which was accomplished habitually by previous inhabitants of the work stations, relying on "the sensual affordance" that is given by the remnants of clocking-in stations, dockets, scheduled programmes of work and delivery, and timetables, by the smells mixed of machine oil, molds, and dusts and by the disordered roughness of the broken walls and the floor of linoleum. It is "an embodied empathy"³⁸ that consists in re-enacting the memory materialized in others' bodies with the mobilization of our own five senses and imagination, through which memory is "lived in the present". So, Edensor says that "ruins can throw up the utterly strange and the very familiar," and he calls it "the uncanniness," according to Freud's usage. "To confront such things is to encounter a radical otherness which is also part of ourselves."

It is certainly a very interesting description as an aesthetics of ruined factories and deserted houses. Yet, Edensor's ruined factories are too talkative. They might be rather similar to what Simmel calls, apart from true "vacant ruins", "city ruins" that are still inhabited. Their once newest facilities, now abandoned, exposed to wind and rain, and decayed, appear to be "sad", but not "tragic". These places that are robbed of life "yet have some effects on us as a framework of life"³⁹, and therefore continue to talk to us in their sad appearances about the ambitious stories of wealth and fame that were dreamed of in the not so distant past but have now come to nothing. Here we are dealing with the aesthetics of ruined factories, which is in fashion today. But that is not the same as the aesthetics and pleasure experienced when standing at the vacant ruins of more ancient times; as "cosmic tragedy" Simmel finds in a shadow of melancholy haunting every ruin,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁶ N. Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Pleasure of Memory*, London: Verso, 1997, p. 10.

³⁷ Edensor, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 158.

³⁹ Georg Simmel, *Philosophische Kultur*, zweite Auflage, Leipzig, 1919, S. 127.

nor as that “deep serenity that surrounds the ruin as if it were a sanctuary.”⁴⁰

When standing at debris caused by recent war we repent its stupidity, regret what is lost, or attempt to restore and reconstruct in remorse; our gaze at the past and far into the future is a present one of project (*‘Entwurf’*), and its sight is the horizon of historical space as *‘the practiced place’*. But when stepping into vacant ruins of ancient war, we do not repent the past and regret the lost, nor wish the reconstruction. If our manner in a ruin is neither reduced to the *‘ethics’* and *‘politics’* of criticizing the *‘grand narrative’* of the city, nor absorbed into sympathy, regret or reminiscence by telling another *‘small narrative’* of other people’s or our own stories, what then is the aesthetics of ruins, the pleasure of ruins we experience in standing and walking about there?

5. The Poetics of Ruins

Let us recap again: place is the dimension of persistence that comes to the awareness in concurrency with self-perception, while space is the practiced place established by the intervention of memory and expectation that makes the articulation of present-past-future possible; and memory in itself is not history. Statues or monuments to the dead, as *‘the places of memory’*, serve first of all history, if, as Nora says, “even though their location is far from arbitrary, one could justify relocating them without altering their meaning.”⁴¹ When remains excavated from ruins are exhibited in museums, even when a monument is erected at the ruined place and the ceremony takes place there, important here is not *‘the memory of place’*, thereby not stepping into the place, but epigraphs impressed on the monument, the speech at the ceremony, the discourse in history books or museums: in short, *‘the narrative of history’*. On the contrary, ruins are the sites in which the order of daily life and historical space is collapsed into disorder, and the place itself, persisting as the basis of space but forgotten, is exposed through the gaps between fragments of memories dispersed and accumulated.

Going astray from the space of ordinary life and stepping into a ruin, we intensely perceive, above all, the persistence of the place. We come to the awareness of the continuity between the place we perceive *«here and now»* concurrently with self-perception, i. e., the ground on which we have been standing since our birth and the place in which others, with their self-perception, lived in the old days. The dispersed remains of past practices and the fragments of memory show that their history was completely over and is impossible to recover, yet make us all the more definitely experience the stable persistence of the place that enables us to meet their past in our *«here and now»*.

Since there is no place without history any more than there is empty space in general, there is no exposure of the persistence of place without narrative, but the memory of a ruined place is not at the service of the narrative of history. Just as distance is perceived as the extension of the ground, the extension of the persistence is measured by the distance of memory, which is probably what Edensor has in mind, saying that the durability and existence of a ruin “is largely shaped by

⁴⁰ Ibid., S. 131.

⁴¹ Nora, op. cit., p. XL.

the rate at which it decays.”⁴² “The common root”⁴³ between human spirit and nature that Simmel thinks ruins touch should not be reduced to ‘Physis’ or ‘pure duration’ that is synonymous with Being, insofar as Simmel tries to describe by it the aesthetic experience of ruins. The ambience of a ‘cosmic tragedy’ or a ‘metaphysical calmness’ we feel when stepping into a ruin would be an aesthetic enjoyment of the persistence of the place which “the life once here inhabited with its richness and with its ups and downs.”⁴⁴

It is certain that ruins request people who are standing there to narrate. But the manner of the narration in which they try to meet the request, the poetics of ruins, does not consist even in telling a ‘small narrative’, not to mention a ‘grand narrative’. The narrative of ruins is a sort of murmuring that we dare to begin but never accomplish. And the memory of ruins is like the name of a place “whose capacity to signify survives its first determination”⁴⁵ even after its meaning has been forgotten. There are a lot of ruins only the name of which remains. Yet more essential for the signification of proper nouns is their role of reference rather than their sources and intensions. Here we could mention Kripke’s thesis⁴⁶. In order for a proper noun to refer to a particular individual, its meaning and reference intended at the first ritual of baptizing must be taken over from the people attending the ritual to those that did not, from generation to generation. Even if the name lost its original value in the history of taking it over, its capacity to refer to anything survives. And so, the name of a place handed down from ancient times could be a privileged ‘occasion’ that links the «here and now» of the people stepping into the place with its persistence and admits of their transforming it by means of memory.

In most cases, the use of ‘utamakura (歌枕)’ (the names of places of scenic and historic interest that are well-known and often mentioned in ‘waka’, a classical Japanese poem of thirty-one syllables), is rhetorical, a collective topos with which poets do not really step into the place but just imaginarily. Kisen-Housi (喜撰法師), for example, composed a waka in the ninth century: “My hut is at the place located in the southeast of the capital, inhabited by deer, which is called Uji-yama.” Responding to it, after four hundreds years, Hougen-Keiyuu (法眼慶融) composed a waka: “When visiting the old site of that hut in Uji-yama, in the southeast of the capital, only the name has aged.” In this waka is expressed not only the simple fact that nothing but the name remains, but what only the people standing themselves at the place can experience, that is the persistence of so aged a place referred to by the name. In the eighteenth century in Europe, paintings of ruins were one of the collective topoi. Mentioning the ruin paintings Hubert Robert exhibited in the Salon of 1767, Diderot says: when looking at a ruin painting, “our glance lingers over the debris of a triumphal arch, a portico, a pyramid, a temple, a palace, and we retreat into ourselves; we contemplate the ravages of time, and in our imagination we scatter the rubble of the very buildings in which we live over the ground; in that moment solitude and silence prevail around us, we are the sole survivors of an entire nation that is no more. Such is the first tenet of the poetics of

⁴² Edensor, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴³ Simmel, op. cit., S. 127.

⁴⁴ Ibid., S. 132.

⁴⁵ de Certeau, I., p. 157.

⁴⁶ Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Basil Blackwell and Harvard U. P., 1980.

ruins.”⁴⁷ What Diderot suggests here is that the poetics of ruins consists not in the narrative of historical painting but in the solitude and silence of people contemplating there, and in “a sweet melancholy”⁴⁸ effected by their absorption in the persistence of the place.

The poetics of ruins is different from the rhetoric of nation, history or epic that commemorates the narrative of the great acts of heroes. De Certeau, with the sentences contrasting place with space we first quoted, follows: “the opposition between «place» and «space» will rather refer to two sorts of determinations in stories.” The first is a determination “through objects that would be ultimately reducible to the *being-there* (*l’être-là*) of something dead, the law (*loi*) of a «place»”; the second is a determination “through *operations* thatspecify «spaces» by the actions of historical *subjects*”⁴⁹ and associate a space with a history. Between these two determinations, there are passages back and forth, such as the putting to death of heroes who transgress frontiers and who, guilty of an offence against the law of the place, best provide its restoration with their tombs. Or again, on the contrary, in the case of awakening inert objects, they emerge from their stability and transform the place where they have lain motionless into the foreignness of their proper space. “Stories thus”, de Certeau says, “carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places.”⁵⁰ What de Certeau here calls ‘two sorts of determinations’ in stories might seem as having parallels with two sorts of sentence types in classical rhetoric such as ‘descriptio’ and ‘narratio’. A place is, as the ground on which the actions in stories are developed and the inert objects like pebbles or dead bodies are distributed in the relation of coexistence, first of all the object of description. And the stability of the law of place is, certainly, the persistence of place and the simultaneity of events. By the intervention of memory and expectation and through the actions of historical subjects, the story is narrated and developed in the historical space. To tell a story is always to go back and forth between the ‘narration’ of actions in the historical space and the ‘description’ of the place where the actions and events take place. In “*King Oedipus*”, the past acts of the king are narrated uncovered and exiled into the wilderness on a charge of his transgression of frontiers, while in “*Oedipus in Kolonos*” the point is to describe the place of his burial at Kolonos that is determined as the destination of his wandering and his eternal rest by the prophecy of Apollo, and the theme is the restoration of the law of place.

While listening to the official stories about ruins and historical sites narrated by history books or tour-guides, we feel the traces of the erosion by rain and wind on the remains, pay attention to grasses, trees, and insects that have propagated amongst these artifacts, and re-enact, with our own sensual memory and imagination, the gestures, desires, and emotions people once made and had in the far past. These manners are at the service of the description of the place and the life lived in it, not of the narration of the story in the historical space. They are, too, not only the mere sympathy of readers and audience but ‘an embodied empathy’ of re-enacting the gestures and emotions of those who lived here in the old days. It is now clear that the poetics of ruins and the pleas-

⁴⁷ *Diderot Salons*, vol. III, 1767, text établi et présenté par J. Sezec et J. Adhémar, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1963, p. 227.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁴⁹ de Certeau, I., p. 174.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

ures of ruins are backed up by the experience of the persistence and stability of place that are exposed through the gaps in the fragments of memory, which makes us confident of the continuity and linkage between our «here and now» and the far past of the people living here once. For the reality of the world is concurrent with the reality of the place, and therefore also with the reality of self-perception.