

PREFACE

Ever since the first writer plotted a story that unraveled through landscapes made up of buildings, villages and towns, and ever since the first architect began to draw the story of humankind in plan and section, stone and timber, literary and architectural narratives have been indelibly bound together.

Over recent years the study of the relationship between what we might loosely call ‘literature, fiction and text’ and all things ‘spatial, architectural and urban’ has become a fast expanding and richly fertile area of research and creativity. Back in 2009 we organised a conference in Glasgow called ‘Architexture’ out of which emerged the edited book, *Writing the Modern City* (2011) that explored the relationship between architecture, literature and the experience of modernity.¹ What was striking about the event was the amount of interest it generated from people of diverse backgrounds, all of whom had their own way of interrogating the field.

It was a similar multi-disciplinary atmosphere that characterised the Lisbon conference of 2010 that brought together, dramatists, architects, film and literary historians, the proceedings of which were published in “*Once Upon a Place: Architecture and Fiction*”(2012).² This was quickly followed by other events in Delft, and Athens that took the debate into new areas.³ Many of the individuals involved in organising these conferences are represented in this volume. Indeed one of the intentions of this book was to help reinforce what has become an international network.

I joked with the editors when I started this project in 2015 that I would prefer to do something devoted to crime novels and science fiction informed by a decidedly left field anti-capitalist critique. I still might do this, but in the spirit of what is, after all, a research companion, it was suggested, that it was important to represent a diversity of voices, approaches and subjects. It is impossible to cover everything and this particular volume should be seen in the context of what is now a growing bibliography devoted to the area. Nevertheless a great effort was made to encompass as many different locations and narrative themes as possible with contributions from architects, writers, poets, artists and literary critics. Collectively they take us on a

journey of discovery through buildings and cities around the world. We encounter the everyday life of a slave in Rio de Janeiro, visit underground Bombay, experience nightlife in Tokyo, glimpse inside a Singaporean housing scheme, build structures on the beach in Chile and shiver in dystopian Moscow. At the same time the volume explores the frontiers of language and method. It introduces the reader to ideas about the relationship between literature and ideology, the intersections between visual and textual narrative, to the value of oral history, the theory of creative intuition, and about how literary techniques can be used to evoke architectural mood and atmosphere.

Edited volumes like this are by their nature collaborative, and my particular gratitude goes to the editorial advisory team that I invited to come on board, and who have given their support throughout the process, suggesting authors, reviewing abstracts, synopses and manuscripts, and without whose help it would not have been possible to complete such a venture. My thanks to Alberto Pérez Gomez, David Spurr, Susana Oliveira, Jane Rendell, Sarah Edwards and Johnny Rodger. Lastly, it is customary and rightly so to thank my long-suffering family who have put up with another three years of strange mumblings.

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¹ Sarah Edwards and Jonathan Charley, (eds), *Writing the Modern City*, (London: Routledge, 2011)

² Pedro Gadanho and Susana Oliveira, (eds), *Once Upon a Place: Architecture and Fiction* (Lisbon: Caleidoscopio, 2013)

³ As a follow up to Lisbon the 2nd *International Conference on Architecture and Fiction* was held in Delft in 2013, and in 2015 the *Reading Architecture* symposium took place in Athens, which looked amongst other things at questions of phenomenology, poetic language and how literature can enrich architectural design and education.