

moment's notice

Kasper Andreasen

Before us, a blank or empty area.

There is no activity, there is silence. Nothingness. Space is empty, devoid of statements and ideas. Defining 'empty space', pronouncing the words, triggers a feeling of ambiguity. Emptiness can only be truly felt when being in the midst of it.

Space works on three spatial planes: height (a vertical plane), width (horizontal plane), and depth (sagittal plane) (NEB 1982: 378). The way we physically behave corresponds to these three spatial planes. The way we act and move correlates to our perception. This perception could be one of 'above or below' (horizontal plane), 'in front of or behind' (vertical plane), 'to the right' or 'to the left' (sagittal plane). Being aware of space and fully perceiving it implies seeing something that is small or large, disappearing and appearing, thus creating an interrelation between a near and a far, a 'here' and a 'there'. Thoughts and acts make up a space, they situate and activate it in time – a thought is a production of space in time. Georges Perec defined the space of the printed page in the following way: "I write: I inhabit my sheet of paper, I invest in it, I travel across it. I incite *blanks, spaces* (jumps in the meaning: discontinuities, transitions, changes of key)" (Perec 1997: 11).

Perec describes how space is materialized through writing, by way of moving across and describing movement on the page. The phrase 'think straight', which is an imperative, can define the relationship between writing and thinking. In this instance thought is self-instructional and denotes the urge for self-imposed clarity and lucidity. Ideas and conceptions are transcribed and become materialized units of meaning. Written material is a thinking space, a mental entity that has become physical. A mind's image is transformed into written space.

In what way does writing capture the relation between lived space and thinking space? Presenting experiences, thoughts or images through words, the way a person 'inhabits' thinking space creates an irregular pattern of reflection that rationally cannot be fully accounted for. An instinctive or intuitive reflex may cause a change in how a space is experienced, whereas a reflexive image is what gives back a notion or responsive image of that experience. Progressing in time and space, we generate and perform a number of significant actions without even consciously registering them.

This book is about recording lived space and thinking space. It contains a form of disjointed and fragmentary writing that continuously and reflexively refers to interchanges of meaning and shifts in thought, attitude or action.

‘Being there’. The phrase indicates a physical presence, produces a record in its own right. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau states: “Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of particular place: a written text, i.e. a place constituted by a system of signs” (de Certeau 1984: 117). De Certeau argues that the physical place becomes a space that movement – i.e. walking or writing – actualizes. When we think of the effect that the reading process has in the mind, sentences transform places into spaces and hint at ‘in-betweenness’. They make () into (). Places are turned into spaces and the brackets indicate the space in-between. The physical place of the paper becomes a continuous thinking space. The () where I think or the () where you write. In the previous sentence the words ‘space’ and ‘place’ have been removed, leaving a placeholder. Reading the sentence establishes communication and meaning. But there’s more to it: the act of remembering, too, constructs that sentence. Reading prompts memories: the words, however few, are the material that activates the origins of a past experience. Reading the words makes you remember having ‘been there’. Having experienced things allows you to transform a place into a space by drawing on fragments, impressions and stories. Writing is the act of physically mapping and reworking thoughts and mental spaces. Writing roots and routes a place. Reading engenders an intricate mental space.

“Letter by letter a text forms, affirms itself, is confirmed, is frozen, is fixed: a fairly strictly horizontal line is set down on the blank sheet of paper, blackens the virgin space, gives it a direction, vectorizes it: from left to right, from top to bottom. Before, there was nothing, or almost nothing; afterwards, there isn’t much, a few signs, but which are enough for there to be a top and a bottom, a beginning and an end, a right and a left, a recto and a verso” (Perec 1997: 9–10). Giving shape to the perspectives of space and place, *moment’s notice* inscribes presence and absence. It records this and not the other. The words steer the reader’s reading and thinking, their movement. ‘We went in the wrong direction’,

language wanders off course, as thoughts and actions are embodied as textual transcriptions. Words can provoke mental and physical wandering. The fragmented phrases establish a connection between here and there, move from a to b, from one • to the next •

'He walks crooked paths/she walks crooked paths'. A story of travelling develops, which "leads into a rhetoric of walking" (de Certeau 1984: 99). It is stated in the book that they have taken numerous paths, shortcuts and detours while traversing 'the quiet of the land' until they remember that 'faith has neither words nor letters'. As happens when taking walks, they have passed over the details and excluded the whole: 'they had met before' and later 'they met again'. Words are ordered and make up sentences, sentences make up stories, stories become journeys, journeys incite people to take walks, walking means taking steps. Words, like steps, take the form of a map and can be ordered so as to make up an itinerary, i.e. a story of fragmented steps. The acts of routing can be split into two types, either by way of *mapping* (seeing) or *touring* (going) (de Certeau 1984: 119). Seeing is affirming the knowledge you have about places whereas touring is ordering and organizing movements within them. Some mapping fragments are: 'in the apartment building', 'by the entrance', 'in the garden'. Touring fragments, then, would be 'I walk to find my way' or 'I walk from one place to the other'. The map presents us with the view of possibilities that are imprinted with our knowledge of that place. The map is a stage where textual elements that result from movements prompt knowledge. Having moved in a place results in a map. The map triggers memories in its turn. A tour, then, makes the reader picture the place he reads about. To go on a tour, we have to act upon the route that is drawn, creating an itinerary when heading for our destination. It means that writing is to 'speak' of traversed paths, or to 'speak' of the paths not yet taken.

"In winter, when it is snowing, the valley is black. The blackness of the asphalt between the mounds of snow pushed aside by the snowplow. The blackness of footprints in the wet snow as it thaws, of wet granite. Snow plops down from the wires; the wires are black. Snow in the wood, snow on the ground and on branches, but the trunks are black. There is also snow on the roofs; the chimneys are black. Only the mail bus remains yellow; it has chains on its wheels, the track they leave is black. Here and there a red willow, almost the color of a fox, the

bracken rusty, and when the streams are not frozen, the water black among snow-covered stones. The skies like ashes or lead; and the snow-covered mountains behind the black woods do not look white, just pale. All the birds black in flight. The undersides of the gutters are black with raindrops. The branches of the fir trees are green, but the fir cones look black against the snow. The crosses in the churchyard are mostly black. Even the sheep in the grounds are not white, but a dirty gray. A white snowman with a carrot for a nose, built for the grandchildren, stands on black moss. The shoes one afterwards places beside the radiator are black with wet" (Frisch 1981: 42). To me, this quote speaks of memory, of assimilation or internalization. Memory always contains a shade of black or grey that makes it difficult to fully penetrate. Details inevitably get lost in the passing of time, creating a coating of darkness. This layer of blackness is like a mental topographical feature. Depicting past things through memory is less than evident. To recollect experiences that once were prominent necessarily causes some degree of perplexity. It means to force a way through the black layer and be struck by the hues that suddenly appear – the yellow of the mail bus, the red willow, the bracken rusty. The trees are green, but the fir cones against the snow seem black. The images that are triggered are composite and complex. What was stored in the remote corridors of the mind is restored. Past images and thoughts become present again. We add and remake what has been removed. This gives both guidance and causes confusion. Remembering is an act of resisting the void, the darkness or the emptiness. We fill up darkness and cover empty space. We may at times lack awareness, lucidity. We may be lost, blind, surrounded by every shade of black, but gradually in the dark corridors of our minds tints appear that refer to images. These tints initiate images that in their turn bring about words and word images that set off stories of rooting and routing.

**The narrative of reconstructed belonging.
Pitting levity against gravity.**

by Petra Van der Jeught

**The problem with maps is they take imagination.
Our need for contour invents the curve, our demand
for straight lines will have measurement laid out in
bones. Direction rips the creel out of our hand.
– Thomas Shapcott, 'Maps'**

1.

Reading through this book a story by Karen Blixen comes to mind. In 'The Roads of Life' in *Out of Africa* Blixen recounts that when she was a child in Denmark she was often told a visual story, "a kind of moving picture" (Blixen [1937] 1987: 213). The telling of the story was accompanied by drawing. The story was told every time in the same words. In a little round house with a round window and a little triangular garden in front there lived a man. Not far from the house there was a pond with a lot of fish in it. One night the man was woken up by a terrible noise, and set out in the dark to find the cause of it. He took the road to the pond. He first ran to the south. Here he stumbled over a big stone in the middle of the road and a little farther he fell into a ditch, got up, fell into another ditch, got up, fell into a third ditch, and got out of that. Then he saw that he had been mistaken, and ran back to the north. But here again the noise seemed to him to come from the south and he again ran back there. Again he stumbled and fell into a ditch and got out of that. He now distinctly heard that the noise came from the end of the pond. He rushed to the place, and saw that a big leakage had been made in the dam, and the water was running out with all the fish in it. He set to work and stopped the hole and only when this had been done did he go back to bed. When now the next morning the man looked out of his little round window – what did he see? His footsteps had unknowingly traced the image of a stork (Blixen [1937] 1987: 214).

The man in the story apparently started off without a clear mission, "was cruelly deceived and had obstacles put in his way" (215). Yet, he kept a sense of purpose, he finished his course. "[He] kept his faith" and "had his reward" (215). In the morning he saw the stork, the visual reward for his nightly adventure. What the man sees is a composition, a figure, not random traces or confused marks. The gaps and fissures that seemed to make up his

nightly surroundings are transformed into a form of connection, into an ordered and ordering image. His journey has resulted in a pattern of beauty. The man has gained insight by groping his way. He has semantically encoded his little world, his surroundings. His labour and hardship have turned into a meaningful design. Blixen wonders: "The tight place, the dark pit in which I am now lying, of what bird is it the talon? When the design of my life is complete, shall I, shall other people see a stork" (ibid. 215)?

The man has undertaken a journey, a voyage that is actually the unfolding of a poetics. The man departs, he crosses over, he falls, he wanders, he discovers, he returns. And then a transformation takes place: he finds composition and composure. When the man looks through the window, the earth, the soil is no longer 'uninscribed', it is full of traces, spatial configurations. It has become a map. This map is not only the result of his desire for control. The map is also a seal of coherence, fullness, presence. The man sees things differently. In other words, he is able to 'un-see' what is straightforward, what is evidently palpable. This man walked crooked paths. He took a nightly walk and was in the dark. In the morning he inscribed that walk with rules and doubts. He was disoriented, but did not leave it at that. He took on another way of seeing and discovered meaning.

2.

The structure of space in any narrative can be principally divided into three modes. When we consider Blixen's short narrative we find that the story's protagonist is first absorbed in the atmosphere of his surrounding space, he then moves through space and finally detaches himself from lived space as the result of contemplation. In short, we are dealing here with atmospheric space, action space and contemplative space as Elizabeth Ströker defined them in *Philosophische Untersuchungen zum Raum* (1965).

When the man finds himself outdoors in the middle of the night in the midst of his ordeal, he experiences space as atmospheric space. The space envelops the man directly and intimately; it is permeated by his mood. The man, although at a loss about what is happening, is determined to solve the problem he is faced with. Yet, the space he moves in is detached from categories of measurement. The man is fully part of the world, there is no reflexive separation between him and the garden – as if it were impossible for him to determine where his body ends and the surroundings

begin. At this stage, the man lacks a central position and, consequently, lacks orientation. The space does not give firm direction. Without any form of reflection or perspective, non-intentionally, he treads in a space that seems inescapable. The space, imbued with his mood, only has a topological condition that is related to him as experiencing or perceiving subject. The place clearly exudes what he feels throughout the predicament.

In correlation with atmospheric space is action space. The man moves from 'here' to 'there'. In action space man achieves his goal. In this narrative the man's surroundings seem to hinder him. Nevertheless, the space constitutes the plot of the story. It is frontal space, dynamic. When the man goes to bed, he moves out of action space.

The following morning, the man takes up a distant position, both in space and time, thinks about his 'enspacement', becomes self-reflexive and finds the right perspective. He moves from action space into contemplative space. In contemplative space, seeing is the most important sense. The visual is dominant. Seeing allows the contemplative body to remain distant from itself. The body after all cannot visualize itself. The man looks from the window into the garden, the scene of his nightly endeavours. In its being-before-him space truly and deeply offers and reveals itself to the man. His looking is a way of 'on-looking', but it is also an act of 'un-seeing' what is easy to see. Casting his gaze the man transcends spatial restrictions. He overcomes his own spatiality and egocentric standpoint in favour of an ex-centric one that leads to transcendence and understanding. Through the protocol of 'un-seeing', he creates a mindscape that makes sense of the 'noise'. He feels a sense of liberation. He is ecstatic.

3.

Kasper Andreasen, too, sees and 'un-sees'. He shows himself to be a keen observer. More pertinently, he looks 'beyond' the obvious, the apparent, the easily understandable. He possesses a distinct spatial attitude that is the precondition for a form of writing or 'inscribing' – in the broader sense of leaving traces, of creating signs. In this artist's book Andreasen perceives lived space, along with the memory of lived spaces, from a contemplative and distanced position. It becomes reconceived as an image of past experiences. As such it is part of the meta-space of art. The fragments and phrases he puts down are perfect instances of writing the self through looking back, through translating past experiences and bearing

them across borders and limits. Having lived in so many places – the enumeration of assembled colours signalling ‘homelands’ testifies to this – he knows that appropriating space means dynamically dwelling in it.

The narrator in this book takes up a ‘centred’ and ‘decentred’ position, which enables him to recast actions and experiences in meaningful images. When he is taking a walk or is leaving for the airport on his way home, he does not experience space in a direct or functional way. Space is clearly a separate entity. It is mediated through his contemplative gaze and perspective. Seeing presupposes the decision to separate and to encounter an essence. Space is experienced as an image, an imaginary picture that unites past and present in a meaningful way. It takes on affective significance. It is aesthetically enjoyed and can be preserved in memory. In ex-centric existence he is in himself and beyond himself.

The reader is presented with a narrative of memory in which the artist has drawn himself into his surroundings, has drawn a sense of self. The drawing of the self is the tracing of his past along firm lines that show his being in the world. He has taken stock of interruptions, of wanderings in every which way. Being uprooted, it is essential for him to find a meaningful route. To achieve this he has added temporal tracing to spatial tracing.

In this narrative the author increasingly focuses on immaterial, contemplative space. As such he generates artistic production, a world of signs. These signs derive their meaning from an essence. In a careful, painstaking effort, he constructs belonging though moving between familiar – ‘happiness is a holiday in Denmark’ – and foreign spaces, moves between exterior and interior spaces as well as *within* these spaces. The decisive factor in exploring and appropriating surroundings is movement, not destination. Creativity for the artist is transgressing and dissolving boundaries, establishing a dialectics between moving through a space and the retreat from it. It is clear that at times the narrator does not achieve the spatial possession or anchorage he desires – ‘I walked in circles’ or ‘I was disoriented and without route’. Yet, he feels the power of surroundings poignantly – ‘I walk to set my mind’. He acquires an image, establishes significant exchange and discovers essential qualities of spatial experience. This lasting pictorial memory is represented in language, in signs that make up words.

Consciously or less than consciously, we look for diagrams and maps to make sense of our presence in the world. These diagrams are cartographic devices, but also embedded and embodied abstractions that are triggered by desire – ‘I need a map to tell me where my heart should go’. Desire propels thinking, but the nature of desire remains itself ungraspable. Andreasen scans and screens, but at the same time realizes that he can only know what is already past, what has ceased to be. This book, then, records a process of unfolding and becoming. Essential to his process of becoming is the exercise of framing and containing, of shedding and forgetting. He is made up of orientations, points of exit and entry, horizontal and vertical interrelational coordinates.

Crucial to the process of becoming is the question of memory, the power of remembrance. Remembering is an act of reinventing oneself along spatial and temporal axes and establishing connection and cohesion. The process of memory rests upon the understanding of time and the complex dual structure of *kairos* and *chronos*. *Kairos* (space of time) is the time of comings and goings, the moment of crisis. This is the time of becoming. *Chronos* (place of time) is the fixed time of being, of stasis and measure. *Kairos* is cyclical and repetitive, *chronos* is linear and teleological. *Kairos* is about in-depth transformation. *Chronos* is about historical change. In *The Sense of an Ending* Frank Kermode shows that time is sequence as well as boundary. In this book, too, the author measures change, between the *tick* of a beginning and the *tock* of an ending. What makes the rhythmic structures of the *tick* and the *tock* different, Kermode notes, is a special kind of middle, which the narrator wants charged with significant duration. It will enable us to find “what will suffice” (Kermode 1967: 45). In this book the artist is a maker of concords, of unity. And yet, the patterns of organisation and concord that he traces also show turbulence, confusion, and change. ‘Centredness’ and ‘decentredness’ interact in a plot that offers a sense of the unformed and unarticulated – at times the author is lost for words – but also of possibility. The stories do not ground him, but register his drift.

Kasper Andreasen’s freedom is the freedom of complex and complicated realities: it is so and it is not; ‘not going to be/going to be’. He gives evidence of the perplexity of living. It is a matter of optics that he decides to take a leap and displace dominant meaning, show the things that make the fabric of his life unravel. He offers restitution

by mapping spaces, by undertaking a process of form-giving. It is a metaphorical mapping that maps the unknown to the known. The phrases in this artist's book contain dynamic spatial and temporal coordinates. They are human geographies of identity and belonging. They are horizontal constructs, temporal and geographical itineraries and vertical constructs, layered. On both axes they aim at expansion but not necessarily completion. They do away with the narrow one-dimensionality of the straight line. What really matters is not even the harmonious figure, but the centrifugal force bursting out of it, pulling away from a centre.

These narratives, short as some may be, captivate and enthrall the reader because they show the author's double consciousness. On the one hand, the author states obvious things. He shows authority in that the narratives are sources of reliable information. He walks because it is healthy. He travels by train from Amsterdam to Gent-St. Pieters. Some of the narrative fragments create, cause, originate. On the other hand, they show, and this is what makes this text truly layered, the opposite of authority, what Edward Said calls "molestation" (in Hillis Miller 1971: 47). Andreasen hints at the infinity of the universe and at its smallness at the same time. He walks to remember the past. He walks to think. He walks to speculate. He says and 'unsays'. Things will not be. Things will be. He describes acts and contemplations, things of mind and matter. He keeps on walking. He offers the reader memorial maps that mark locations of habitation and passage, different modes of emplacement. He crosses borders in time and space – lived space and metaphorical, immaterial space – and borders in the self. Like the man in Blixen's story he traces his being and engages in a way of world-making that involves separating and combining. Unlike the man, his world-making incorporates the heard and the remembered and, more importantly, the learned-from-others, the performed-in-exchange. The image that appears is not fixed like the stork is, but is continuously being adjusted. Every story in this narrative is a portrait of restoration of which the traces reach back, across and through lives and weave a tissue of pastpresentfuture.

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