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"Just like eyeglasses, mirrors, and telescopes": the spaces of photography in J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise* and Stephen Willats' *Living with Practical Realities*

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Dissertação realizada no âmbito do Mestrado em Estudos Anglo-Americanos, orientada pela Professora Doutora Maria de Fátima de Sousa Basto Vieira

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto

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À minha família.

Photography can never grow up if it imitates some other medium.
It has to walk alone; it has to be itself.

Berenice Abbott

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Resumo

Esta dissertação tem por objetivo explorar a forma como a fotografia cria os seus próprios espaços mentais, físicos e sociais dentro de outros espaços, especialmente dentro dos espaços do ambiente construído moderno. Cada um de nós habita diferentes espaços em simultâneo e tem a capacidade de criar muitos outros através da fotografia. Ao explorar a intersecção entre os conceitos de espaço, performatividade e a natureza performativa da fotografia, a dissertação propõe um quadro teórico para o 'ato da fotografia'. Diferentes subjetividades, contextos e materialidades realçam o ato da fotografia e, consequentemente, a produção de espaços através dela.

O quadro teórico proposto é aplicado ao romance *High-Rise* (1975), de J.G. Ballard, e à instalação artística *Living with Practical Realities* (1978), de Stephen Willats, visando evidenciar os espaços da fotografia em oposição aos espaços dominantes dos arranha-céus. Esta abordagem comparativa intermedial tem por objetivo inquirir sobre o âmbito de aplicação da teorização proposta. Pretende ainda contribuir para um melhor entendimento do papel da fotografia na reconfiguração espacial do mundo à nossa volta.

Palavras-chave: espaço; fotografia; performatividade, Stephen Willats; J.G. Ballard

Abstract

This dissertation aims to explore the extent to which photography creates its own mental, physical, and social spaces inside other spaces, especially inside the spaces of modern built environment. Every one of us inhabits different spaces simultaneously and is also endowed with the ability to create many others through photography. By exploring the intersection of the concepts of space, performativity, and the performative nature of photography, this dissertation puts forth a theoretical framework for the 'act of photography'. Different subjectivities, contexts, and materialities underpin the act of photography, hence the production of photography-driven spaces.

The theoretical framework is then applied to J.G. Ballard's novel *High-Rise* (1975) and Stephen Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities* (1978) with the purpose of making apparent the spaces of photography in opposition to the overwhelming spaces of high-rise buildings. This intermedial comparative approach aims at surveying the scope of application of the theoretical framework. It further aspires to contribute to a better understanding of the role of photography in the shaping of the world around us in spatial terms.

Keywords: space; photography; performativity; Stephen Willats; J.G. Ballard

List of abbreviations

HR – High-Rise

Introduction

Photography has been enveloped in conflicting constructs since its inception. The very invention of photography, for example, has long been attributed to different people in different places. In France, its history begins with Louis Daguerre and the daguerreotype; in England, William Henry Fox Talbot is believed to have lost the title of founder of photography to Daguerre just barely. Both presented their photographic processes in 1839 with only a few weeks apart. However, attempts to create fixed images can be traced back to Aristotle, the medieval camera obscura, and even to Daguerre's fellow countryman Nicephore Nièpce, whose inventions in the 1820s became the basis for the daguerreotype. As such, there is no history of photography, but histories translated into stories (Price and Wells 2015:57). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the first one hundred years of photography after 1839 can be divided into three parts. In the first period, the focus was on who had invented the medium. The second period was devoted to the establishment of techniques and the potential uses for photography. The last period has emphasized the idea of photograph *qua* image, which in turn became the basis for the many histories of photography published since the Second World War (*ibidem* 30).

Photography's technological nature has raised its own set of ontological and epistemological issues. The relation between photography and realism, for instance, has always been a point of vivid debate. In 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image', André Bazin argues that "[p]hotography and the cinema […] are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism" (1960:7). His argument rests on the assumption that, unlike other arts, photography is the art that benefits from the absence of whoever engages with it. By this, he means that, even though the photographer is able to choose the subject of a photograph, photography is the "transference of reality from the thing to its reproduction" (*ibidem* 8), there is little human intervention in the final result. Besides, the mechanical lens not only faithfully reproduces the world but also grants objectivity to the photograph (*ibidem*). However, some have contested this stance by claiming that photography does not equal realism, hence it is not the medium of objectivity at all.

Many others have also dismissed photography as the medium of mere reproduction based on its lack of authenticity since, unlike painting and sculpture, which create their own subject matter, the subject matter of the photograph is often dismissed as a mere reproduction of some external reality achieved with the mechanical lens. It all comes down in fact to the age-old question of "original" *versus* "reproduction of the original", which has haunted the history of Western art.

Others, like Walter Benjamin, have campaigned for the acceptance of photography as art form. In his seminal "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility" (1936), Benjamin discussed how photography reshaped artistic production by aligning it, on the one hand, with ancient forms of artistic reproduction, such as founding and stamping; and, on the other hand, with the new modes of cultural (re)production in capitalist societies. He acknowledged that these new modes "neutralize a number of traditional concepts – such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery" especially because they are used by political forces to their advantage. Besides, they lack the uniqueness – the "aura" – of traditional works of art since they do not belong to a particular time and place nor do they have a traceable history. Instead, they can be found everywhere and mean different things to different people, who access them in different contexts. However, in the case of photography, he also posited that "photography freed the hand from the most important artistic tasks in the process of pictorial reproduction – tasks that now devolved upon the eye alone" (*ibidem* 20). This point of view, in turn, entails two positive outcomes: first, certain aspects of the subject matter are now made accessible to the eye because the lens can capture things closer or slower than traditional art forms; second, the original is now accessible in places where it could not have been before due to its reproducibility.

Benjamin also claimed that the rise of photography signals a shift in human perception. Instead of the real experiences imbued with uniqueness and permanence, such as the experience of seeing a natural landscape, the "masses" now seek closeness through reproductions to the detriment of the here and now. The rise of sameness entailed "[t]he alignment of reality with the masses and of the masses with reality", hence the transition in the modes of perception" (*ibidem* 24).

From this point of view, then, photography seems to bear the promise of a democratic medium through which human beings can create new spaces of self-expression and socialization. However, since the photographic medium has been mostly associated with time, its relation to the concept of 'space' may seem feeble at first. The thing is that space is much more than location and the physical existence of things. It concerns the interaction of people, everyday activities, institutions, and the physical world. In fact, during my research, I came across articles and books that somehow touched upon the spaces of the photographic image and photographs in general, but only a few dealt with the activity of photography – or rather the 'act of photography' – and space. Consequently, my dissertation should be read as a provisional attempt at making sense of the relation between photography and space.

From the many definitions of space that have been put forth in the last half century, I have found Henri Lefebvre's multidimensional approach to the production of space the most suitable to theorize about the idea of the spaces of photography. Lefebvre claimed that spaces come into being out of the intersection and clash of different spaces, which can be mental, physical, and social. Space is not a given, a place or a time to be filled, but is constantly in the making. Furthermore, social practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation are also not only generative but provide some insight into existing spaces. In short, for Lefebvre, all human activities produce space and are space. From my point of view, photography could be seen as social practice, representation of space or space of representation depending on who is engaging with it and what for. But, more importantly, in my dissertation I address the extent to which photography can create its own mental, physical, and social spaces inside other spaces.

My two objects of analysis, J.G. Ballard's novel *High-Rise* (1975) and Stephen Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities* (1978), although they could not be more similar in terms of setting and the use of photography, they are in fact very different in nature. J. G. Ballard (1930 – 2009) was a British novelist whose works centred around the effects of technological environments on social life and the human psyche. Ballard was not only a writer of fiction but also a cultural commentator: his essays and reviews on major publications, ranging from *The Guardian* to *Playboy*, attest the extent to which

he was attuned with the various facets of contemporaneity. Many readers and critics have noticed his ability to predict changes in contemporary culture, such as the rise of Ronald Reagan from actor to Presidency in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1970) or Salman Rushdie's comparison of Princess Diana's life and death in *Crash* (1973).

The very adjective "Ballardian" has become associated with the dystopic dimension of modernity. Ballardian fiction has come to be characterized by "a series of distinctive images and landscapes which capture the contemporary condition in all its violence and ambiguity: murdered celebrities, crashed cars, surveillance technologies, media politicians, gated communities […]" (Baxter 2008:1-2). Ballard himself once noted:

> All of my books deal with the fact that our human civilization is like the crust of the lava discharged from a volcano. It looks stable, but when you put your foot on it, you feel the fire. (*apud* Wood 2012: 199).

England – and London, in particular – came to embody that very civilization that Ballard was keen to expose and comment on. The physical, social, and psychological alienation provoked both by the postwar and post-Empire atmosphere and the transformations brought about by the spread of capitalism (Baxter 2008: 3) would lead him to assess, for instance, the impact of modern built environment. Gated communities, high-rises, and underpasses would provide Ballard's science fiction the perfect setting to explore the inner spaces that arise from the clash between humans and technology.

The importance of photography in Ballard's fiction is in fact undeniable. Fetishism, violence, and the spectacular society are some of the most prominent issues raised, while some critics have also noticed how chronophotography seems to shape the form and content of many of his writings (Depper 2008: 53-55). As Ema Whiting summarizes, "[h]is texts can be understood as multiple exposure chronograms, capturing all stages of the collisions between bodies, architecture, geometries and machines to reveal what he perceives to be the movement held within them towards one more remaining alterity" (2012: 99). *The Atrocity Exhibition* and *Crash* (1973), for instance, explore the relationship between visual technologies of the spectacle and the physical and psychological vulnerabilities of individuals (Hoa 2012: 73).

In his introduction to *Crash*, Ballard coined the expression that best encapsulates the reason behind the violence, extreme scopophilia, and society as spectacle in his fiction: 'the death of affect'. In one interview, Ballard also observed that the worst form of "war and terror" was "the subtle way that violence fascinates us" (*apud* Wood 2012: 199). He constantly denounced the lack of emotional reactions, like pity or horror, from viewers in the face of images of war or tragedy. Instead, spectators are more prone to fascination towards human suffering (Holliday 2017 n.p.), and many Ballardian characters suffer from psychopathologies that become apparent to the reader through photographic and mental images.

Stephen Willats (1943 –), on the other hand, is a prime example of how conceptual art has used photography as a form of emancipation from social and artistic constraints. In his Introduction to *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* (2016), Andrew Wilson outlines the rise and tenets of conceptual art in the 1960s and 1970s evincing that it took many different forms and that there are differences that should be highlighted between the two decades. According to Wilson, in the 1960s, conceptual art emerged not as a style or movement but as a new way of thinking about modern art, and started as a counter-response to modernism in particular. Instead of focussing on the material objectivity and the essentialist nature of the work of art, conceptual artists sought to use ideas and concepts as their starting point to a process. Art was understood as a "fluid, contingent and multivalent event", hence not being confined to a given time or space. Even the very idea of the unique and indisputable artwork was put into question: there was profuse use of everyday objects; objects would often give way to performance; and the involvement and even the participation of the viewer was key.

Conceptual art also implied theorisation to support it since the aim was not to create contemplative art but to demand an active role from the artist and the viewer alike. In the 1970s, on the other hand, there was a shift from philosophy toward semiotics, notably in the form of ideological reading of images, and the focus of conceptual art turned to social issues and direct engagement with the realities of society. In the case of Stephen Willats, the "total relationship" concept based on social action and interaction was greatly fostered by the rise of cybernetics. Underlying many of his works there was

the idea of networks of transmission and reception feedback between different participants (Wilson 2016: 9-11).

The relationship between conceptual art and photography was also central in both decades, especially as regards amateur photography in the form of black-and-white snapshots. In the 1960s, the photographic medium was used mainly to interrogate the artist's authoritative role in artistic creation and produce visual documentation of actions. The art object was gradually dematerialised to foreground the centrality of the idea or concept underlying it. In the 1970s, the questioning of the previous phase is replaced by the interrogation of that very questioning, which implied approaching art as theoretical practice. Photography was no longer just a depictive medium, a window to some external reality, nor a means of documentation, but it became self-reflexive too (Skrebowski 2016: 124-26).

Some artists, on the other hand, tried to go beyond this trend, which they thought had gone astray from social concerns underpinning conceptual art. This meant engaging with "the concrete, gendered, raced and classed empirical subject" instead of some "universalist transcendental philosophical subject". Consequently, conceptual art became a site of political activism and ideological debate (*ibidem* 130).

Stephen Willats' work from the 1960s onwards would centre around the dichotomic relationship between deterministic institutional urban planning and the living space of domestic settings. At first, his work focussed on large areas, such as in *West London Social Resource Project* (1972)[1], but later the individual tower block became the symbolic embodiment of the ideological struggle between buildings and people (Willats, 1996:22-25). Many of Willats' art installations have explored people's ability to transform their urban daily reality through the encoding of a symbolic world using their own words and photography (Willats, 2001:16)[2]. Concerning photography in particular, in his essay "The Camera as an Object of Determinism and as an Agent of Freedom", Willats points out that the camera can be an "authoritative icon" or a medium of social exchange. He also asserts that cognitive experience is encoded by the photographic

[1] The project covered Greenford, Osterley, Hanwell and Harrow in West London.
[2] See, for example, *Vertical Living* (1978) *and Brentford Towers* (1985).

image, which allows participants to gain some distance from their lives but still have the agency to question and self-organize themselves. Above all, it allows the formation of subjectivity (Willats 2010: 460-462).

The participatory nature of his art installations is also extended to viewers, who are invited to construct their own readings of the panels and are made aware of social problematics. In fact, social activism has been one of the most prominent features in Willats' body of work.

There are many critical studies on the relation between Ballard's fiction and photography, while Willats' own writings are perhaps one of the richest sources of insight into his artistic practices involving the photographic medium. However, even though they were contemporaries and photography plays a central role in many of their works, there has never been a comparative approach to both authors. Consequently, this dissertation aims to fill that gap by putting forth a theoretical framework to analyse the spaces of photography in Ballard's novel *High-Rise* and Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities*, in particular.

My research question focussed on how photography creates its own spaces inside other spaces. I found this question relevant in two ways: firstly and on a macro-level, in an ever-growing spatial conception of the world, it helped me redefine the human activity of photography as a space that simultaneously shapes and is shaped by the spaces it intersects; secondly and on a micro-level, it allowed me to interrogate and eventually bridge the theoretical gap between two authors that use photography in different artistic media, namely the novel and the art installation. Both levels are not isolated from each other and, from my point of view, the very idea of intermediality is intimately linked to the existence of intersecting artistic spaces.

In order to answer my research question, I developed my own theoretical framework for the analysis of the spaces of photography because there was no tool available that could be used to this end. My starting point in terms of methodology was Mieke Bal's idea of working with "travelling concepts"[3], that is to say, concepts that have been freed from their initial theories and theorizations to gain a theoretical weight of their

[3] See, for example, Bal's *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (2002).

own. For Bal, interdisciplinary endeavours can greatly profit from a concept-based approach since it allows us to look at the cultural object as arising from a unique combination of context, practice, and theory. The cultural object itself, then, will only be totally revealed at the end of any cultural analysis (Bal 2002: 5).

This in fact seemed the best possible 'journey' because I was going to deal with interdisciplinary and intermedial fields so to elaborate on a theoretical framework for the spaces of photography in a novel and an art installation, which could be applied to other cultural objects in the future. After careful research and consideration, I decided to work with the concepts of space, performativity, and photography as performative act so to build a frame of reference for the idea of photography as space. This led me to state that photography is space as long as it is seen as an *act*, hence the existence of an 'act of photography' as part of the vast network of spaces that provide the building blocks for social interaction.

This dissertation is divided in two main sections. In the first chapter, I focus especially on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991) as well as some of his other writings concerning urban life, and build my theoretical framework upon his concepts of social space, mental space, and the space of the body. I also consider some writings by Gaston Bachelard and François Lyotard to expand the scope of mental space. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's, on the other hand, helps me broaden the concept of physical space. I then connect the concepts of space and performativity to foreground that space is produced because of the performative nature of human behaviour. Even though Lefebvre touched upon performative behaviour in his considerations about rhythmanalysis, his approach has not been sufficiently explored. So, I resorted to J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Erving Goffman to determine some of the conditions under which people produce spaces. The relationship between the production of space and performative behaviour, in turn, cannot be understood outside Michel Foucault's assertion that there is network of power relations underlying all human interactions.

In the last part of the first chapter, I start by considering some classical theories of photography by Roland Barthes, John Tagg, Susan Sontag, and Victor Burgin, and use them as a springboard to reassess the performative nature of photography in light of some

recent theoretical reconsiderations. It is my aim to expand on some of their writings which in one way or another already deal with the performative nature of photography, but do not take it as a *performative act* able to create its own spaces.

I then set out to define how the 'act of photography' produces mental, physical, and social spaces of its own. I survey authors from different disciplines who have reflected upon the various performative facets of photography. From the world of history of art, Joanna Lowry and David Green help me establish that photography can go beyond the realm of representation and be a producer of reality through "conceptual indexicality". The relationship between the photographic medium, performativity, and indexicality is further expanded through philosopher of art Zsolt Bátori, who claims the existence of the photographic illocutionary act through which we can act upon the world.

These two theoretical foundations lead me to assess how we can observe and/or measure the spaces of photography in practical terms. This means thinking photography beyond the visual. For the spaces of the body and mental spaces, I start with Richard Shusterman's somaesthetic approach to the professional photographic session. Shusterman raises interesting points about the performances of the photographer's and the photographed's bodies implied in a photo shoot. He also stresses that it is important to take into account how they perceive themselves and one another. However, I elaborate on his considerations and argue that they can be applied to any type of photographic act.

The materiality of the body also implies thinking about its relationship with the materiality of photographs. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, both photographic historians, help me link the materiality of photographs to how we can physically shape their meanings and, thus, generate other spaces. It is in fact also worth looking at how the very change of use and purpose of a photograph bears the same result.

Understanding the role of the viewer is an important strategy for the definition of mental spaces in photography. I try to move away from conceptions that put her or him in a passive role, and assess to what extent meanings can be semiotically activated through narrative and memory. Literary scholars Emma Kafalenos and Marie-Laure Ryan provide the theoretical foundations for the idea that there is a narrative impulse underlying the viewer's encounter with pictures, which is inherently performative. Memory too is

closely connected to narrative and photography in that the three together help us stage the past – or our idea of the past – in the present.

Visual pleasure, on the other hand, is another topic that I found important to address in connection to mental spaces. I opt, however, to approach Apparatus Theory instead of dealing with the problematic of gender roles, because it provides a broader scope of application, especially its concept of "space of fantasy".

As for the social spaces of photography, they arise mainly from the intersection of mental and physical spaces, so, after careful thought, I came to the conclusion that they can be better analysed when we first assess those two spheres of space. Nevertheless, in broad terms, social spaces become visible in and through the material and immaterial relationships built around and because of the act of photography, such as the social biography of photographs, their social use, and human interactions brought about by the photographic medium.

I conclude the first chapter with an overview of my theoretical framework, which is only one of the many possible approaches to the study of the spaces of photography. I should also stress that its development was influenced by the two works I analysed, namely J. G. Ballard's novel *High-Rise* and Stephen Willats's art installation *Living with Practical Realities.*

In the second chapter, I contextualize Ballard's novel and Willats's installation by focussing on the overwhelming space of modern architecture, particularly in the form of high-rise towers, in order to set it as the space against which the spaces of photography may become apparent. This section also allows me to delineate Ballard's and Willats' standpoint concerning the influence of urban built environment and make some considerations about its utopian-turned-dystopian nature. The second section is devoted to the separate analyses of the spaces of photography in *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*. Each analysis focusses on the extent the act of photography can create mental, physical, and social spaces. In the last part, I bring both works together so to provide a comparative approach and systematize the extent to which the analysis of the 'act of photography' can reveal the spaces of photography and, consequently, new layers of meaning in both works.

Finally, in my concluding remarks I assess my theoretical framework and its application to *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*. I also briefly reflect on the scope of application of the 'act of photography' to other works in the future.

There were two major challenges in my dissertation. The first challenge was to research many fields of study in order to assess which concepts could be versatile enough to be worked upon and connected so that I could create a coherent theoretical framework. The other challenge lied on creating a framework that could be equally applied to literature and the visual arts. It required understanding the theoretical and artistic similarities and differences between both media, and then their intersection with the medium of photography. Both challenges lead me to resort to different fields of knowledge other than theory of photography, such as geography, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, or history of art, so that I could build a feasible analytical tool – the 'act of photography' – which could be applied to different media.

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1. Zooming Out: Theoretical Snapshots

I feel all things as dynamic events, being, changing,
and interacting with each other in space and time
even as I photograph them.

Wynn Bullock

1.1. What space is: a brief overview

Maps, common sense claims, are designed to signal our geographical position: 'You are here'. What 'here' means, though, has been a matter of vivid debate since the second half of the twentieth century. The 'spatial turn' in humanistic and scientific studies has brought into consideration the intrinsic interdependence between time and place. 'Here', then, goes beyond the coordinates of geographical location since it is impregnated with time. Hence, we may inhabit different times and places simultaneously, knowingly, or not.

Twentieth- and twenty-first century social theories have devoted much of their attention to the relational nature of human experience. For Foucault, for instance, human experience does not arise from the linear, hence temporal, occurrence of events, but from the nodes where the multitude of times and places we experience intersect (1984: 1). Thus, history is no longer perceived as the inexorable producer and bearer of human destinies. Instead, our understanding of the 'real' has comes to rely on the diverse and mostly unpredictable intersections of the elusive 'here' and 'now'. Notably, the idea of the inseparableness of time and place would eventually conflate into the concept of space. As social beings, we shape and are shaped by the spaces we inhabit. It has been the task of social, critical, and cultural theories to understand the conditions and processes involved in the creation of space(s).

This is not to say that the concept of space had been absent before such proliferation of interest, but, as Robert T. Tally Jr. shows, our previous paradigms founded on the "faith in the universal progress of history" were deeply shaken during the twentieth century (2013: 12). The devastating effects of the two world wars, especially the Second World

War, shattered all pretensions to a civilization in continuous motion towards something better and greater. In addition, the level of mobility increased as the number of displaced people, like émigrés, refugees, and exiles, to name only a few, also rose. Moreover, geopolitical changes brought about by decolonization and neocolonization proved that maps were not to be written on stone. Also, the rise or fall of industrialization across countries continuously reshaped societies into urban and rural, thus everyday life underwent massive changes (*ibidem* 13). As a result, time could no longer be the measure of civilizational progress or backwardness. Instead, there was an increasing demand for the re-mapping of places and, consequently, for the avowal of space as the new force to be acknowledged in the shaping of human relations.

The relation between space and time would be further accentuated by the technological advancements of the second half of the twentieth century – air travel and space travel, mobile phones, computers, the Internet – as well as by the market forces of capitalism. Spatial divisions like borders are now put to the test following what geographer David Harvey describes as the "time-space compression" of modernity and postmodernity. On the other hand, all this commotion eventually spread to the realm of art and literature giving rise to a new dominant aesthetic and intellectual movement known as postmodernism but also lead to the ascent of poststructuralism, a philosophical movement based on the anti-foundationalism and radical skepticism of Friedrich Nietzsche (*ibidem* 15).

One of the most prominent figures was Jean-François Lyotard (1924 – 1998), a French philosopher, sociologist, and literary critic, who defined the postmodern age 'as incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984: xxiv). He claimed that, up until the wake of the postindustrial age that had emerged after World War II, metanarratives (also grand narratives or master narratives) provided totalizing accounts of history underpinned by claims to universal truth and values. The purpose of such narratives would be to give some sense of meaning to different historical events as well as to cultural and social phenomena. For Lyotard, grand narratives such as Marxism, scientific discourses, and religious doctrines, played a dominant role in defining Western societies. Besides, he also stressed the importance of understanding postmodern societies as networks: "[a] *self* does

not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before" (*ibidem* 15).

Together, postmodernism and poststructuralism stimulated different ways and methods of approaching different disciplines, namely geography. Gradually, geographers like David Harvey or Edward Soja started engaging with the spatial dimensions and implications of critical social theory, leading to a wealth of innovative disciplinary intersections (Tally 2013:7).

1.2. "Spatial Architectonics"

1.2.1. Social space

The works of French Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901 – 1991) have been crucial to the critical study of geography. Around the same time Michel Foucault (1926 – 1984) was arguing about the relational dimension of human experience, Lefebvre was working on his groundbreaking claim that space is not an *a priori* category of experience or reality but a construction of everyday life. In other words, the spaces we inhabit are socially produced. Significantly, the production of space is supported by a "spatial architectonics" built upon social space, mental space, and the space of the body.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre adopted a phenomenological approach to social space by bringing forward the concepts of "perceived space", "conceived space", and "lived space", and argued that the three fields work dialectically and cannot be understood as separate phenomena. Perceived space entails all sensory interactions with the outside world, and it underscores the material dimension of our everyday experiences. Conceived space is logico-epistemological space of scientific knowledge, mostly produced by scientists, social engineers, and technocrats (*ibidem* 38). Lived space, on the other hand, arises from the lived experience of space in everyday life and is expressed by images and symbols (*ibidem* 12). Lefebvre pointed out that the triad is not an abstract model, but the key to access the concrete. Ideally, they would always be interconnected so that individuals could freely move from one to the other, however he decried the fact that it is not always the case (*ibidem* 40).

Lefebvre's intention, then, was not to perpetuate the distance between the different realms of space, but to offer a unifying theory of social space. Therefore, he put forth a second set of relationships that also work dialectically and which constitute the different dimensions of the production of social space: "social practice", "representations of space", and "spaces of representation". This second conceptual triad constituted the backbone of Lefebvre's work and, in spatial terms, perceived space is linked to spatial practice, conceived space to representations of space, and lived space to representational spaces (*ibidem* 40). Spatial practice is the material dimension of the production and reproduction of social activity, and promotes the continuity and cohesion of space in a given society. Representations of space, on the other hand, are constructed frameworks based on a mixture of understanding (*connaissance*) and ideology, which Lefebvre named knowledge (*savoir*) (*ibidem* 41). Representations of space entail scientific theories, codes, maps, information in pictures, among others, produced by specialized disciplines, such as the social sciences, architecture, and geography. Conversely, representational spaces belong to the symbolic dimension of space, and are formed by images and symbols, either in art or in everyday life. These spaces are the outcome of lived space but they are also subject to the imagination. In Lefebvre's own words, representational space "is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects". As a result, it is produced mainly through non-verbal symbols and signs (*ibidem* 39).

Various social spaces coexist and intersect which creates networks of social relationships. Lefebvre's conceptualization of space rests on the idea that space is not a given waiting to be found and utilized but that it is rather always on the making. His main concern was to understand how social space – 'real' space as opposed to the 'ideal' space of mental space – is produced.

There are no pure spaces, devoid of social interactions, waiting to be filled by human action. Instead, spaces create other spaces through intricate networks of socializing and socialized (inter)actions. Lefebvre exemplified his claim by analysing the space of work in capitalist societies: such societies are built upon the networks of production relations between businesses, farms, offices, and all the agents that govern

such interactions, thus the space of work can only exist in the "framework a global society"[4] (*ibidem* 191). He added that even leisure activities, such as walking or travelling, are social spaces. In short, Lefebvre's intention was to underscore that social space is a *field of action* and *a basis of action* as well as a "collection of *materials* (objects, things) and an ensemble of *matériel* (tools – and the procedures necessary to make efficient use of tools and of things in general)" (*ibidem* 191).

Notably, social space evolves in articulation with mental space and the space of the body and partitioning the three can prove itself artificial. However, it is worth looking at them individually in order to better clarify what is involved in the production of space and eventually expand their scope.

1.2.2. Mental space

According to Lefebvre, mental spaces have fostered the fragmentation of social space to the point of reducing it to mental space too. He asserted that mental space has been the "axis, pivot or central reference point of Knowledge" from Cartesian philosophy up to the present day (*ibidem* 6). Logico-epistemological knowledge has been constituted the very core of scientific practices which, in turn, have been appropriated by the dominant classes, who try to pass them off as natural, thus non-ideological. Mental spaces are, then, built from these theoretical practices, whose very nature lies in its separation from social space and physical space. Lefebvre claims that such theoretical practices came to dominate the representations of space (*ibidem* 6, 14).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre also outlined at least three dominant spaces that constitute the history of space. Absolute space was natural space taken up by political forces, both civil and religious, which was eventually superseded by historical space during the Renaissance (*ibidem* 48). Even though absolute space remained the basis of representational spaces in religion, magic and politics, the rise of the town and capitalism dictated the production of this new type of space. However, in the course of time, historical space was relegated to representational space and abstract space became the

[4] Lefebvre draws from Marx's materialist views, to whom capitalist societies and alienation of labour go hand in hand.

dominant space. The latter focusses on the accumulation of wealth and power, is characterized by homogeneity, and tends to erase differences such as age, gender, and race. Moreover, abstract space came to rely on the instrumentalization of conceived space to the detriment of perception and lived experience, leading to the fragmentation of everyday life (*ibidem* 49-51).

One of Lefebvre's major research topics was on the impact of the urban in everyday life. In *The Urban Revolution* (1973), he introduces the concept of 'urban fabric,' defining it as "all manifestations of the dominance of the city over the country" (*ibidem* 4). He also puts forth the idea of an *urban practice* constituted by several sets of signs and significations to be sold and consumed. These include not only objects and products from everyday life, but also the micro and macro-level structures of urban society, such as the particular characteristics of a city or systems of power and culture (*ibidem* 50). Urban practices depend on agents, namely urbanists such as architects or academics, to produce urbanized spaces which are largely based on fragmented knowledge (*savoir*).

Stefan Kipfer analyses how Lefebvre uses Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to introduce a new understanding of urban environments[5]. As already stated, Lefebvre claims that capitalism operates under abstract space, namely in the production of conceived and perceived spaces. However, the production of lived space is much more elusive. As Kipfer puts it, "[t]he production of urban space contributes to hegemony insofar as it fuses the contradictory immediate realm of lived space with processes and strategies of producing conceived and perceived space" (2008:200). These strategies include repetition, homogeneous abstraction, and alienation through the fragmentation of everyday life:

> [A]bstract space is hegemonic to the degree that it envelops and incorporates the daily aspirations, desires, and dreams of subaltern populations. Key examples of this are two spatial forms of neo-capitalism: the bungalow and the high-rise tower (*ibidem*).

[5] For Gramsci, social authority emanates equally from force and consent, and it is exercised over the subordinate social groups by a hegemonic bloc constituted through the alliance of ascendant social groups. This bloc may have different wills and ambitions, but they share the same ideology and worldviews. However, hegemony is temporary and must be constantly negotiated among social groups. This struggle over social power may open the way to counterhegemonic forces, which hold different discourses and practices from the previous hegemonic bloc. Concerning the production of urban space, there is a permanent conflict between the different realms of space.

Individual mental spaces are permeated by the processes and structures of urban fabric and its practices. Therefore, according to Lefebvre, the urban was to be acknowledged as the mediating level of analysis lying between the general level of social order and the private level of everyday life (*ibidem*).

Similarly, Lyotard too decried the fact that scientific knowledge (*connaissance*) has taken over from everyday knowledge (*savoir*) the power to define what is true and false. He pointed out that history has been filled with metanarratives about events that help us bring coherence to otherwise disparate phenomena. However, behind such metanarratives one will only find abstract entities embodied as collective beliefs since "narration is the quintessential form of customary knowledge" (Lyotard 1984: 19). In fact, narration is both a type of knowledge (*savoir*) and a way of legitimizing learning (*connaissance*). Nevertheless, Lyotard did not discard narrative on an individual level and goes on to add that "little narratives" of everyday life, which could be of political nature, coexist with the historical and scientific grand narratives. They are little since they do not offer totalizing accounts of history. Instead, the intricate and heterogeneous set of relations established between the narrator, the narrated, and the listener guarantee a multiplicity of stories grounded on the telling and its performative effects, not on their universal or truth value (Carroll 2006: 42).

On the other hand, our individual perception can also constitute mental spaces through memory, hallucinations, daydreaming, and even metaphysical experiences. The relationship between mental space and memory, in particular, is paradoxical. During Romanticism, memory was downgraded to the subjective recovery of a lost past, which meant splitting it from the scientific discourse on history. Memory became individual and subjective, whereas history was maintained collective and objective (Johnson 2004: 320). However, contemporary reassessments have underscored the dialectical relationship between memory and history, granting the former a legitimate role in historical understanding and interpretation of the past. Hence, the boundaries between objective and subjective as well as the local and the universal became blurred (*ibidem* 321).

Along with memory, there is the mental space of imagination. For example, the French philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard (1884 – 1962) put forth the idea of a

different kind of space, not geographical, but poetic, ruled by the imagination[6]. His phenomenological approach to the spaces of everyday life, especially one's home and its rooms and objects, tried to understand how the reader of poetry grasps the poetic image (Tally 2013:114). For Bachelard, rationality and psychology could not measure our experience of the domestic space, which is always half real and half imagined. Space is apprehended through the senses, it is lived through the body, but realized in images. Bachelard also noted that "[t]he imagination is ceaselessly imagining and enriching itself with new images" (*apud* Tally 2013:115).

Moreover, he posited that imagination and memory cannot be dissociated. Spaces like our house are not pure physical objects but are also constituted by memory. Concurrently, the plasticity of space and time is to be accounted for in the formation of memories. Besides, memories are physically anchored in our bodies, hence we experience our house through our body and its memories (Urry 1995: 24). As Tally summarizes, for Bachelard, "the experience of time is actually frozen in discrete moments in our memory, photographic or spatial arrangements, such that space assumes a greater importance than a temporality that is no longer understood in terms of a fluvial metaphor" (2013: 116).

1.2.3. Space of the body

We cannot escape our own body since it is the primary place where we live and die, love and feel pain. Not only is the body the medium through which individuals express their inner selves, but it is also the intersection of different spaces.

> Before *producing* effects in the material realm (tools and objects), before *producing itself* by drawing nourishment from that realm, and before *reproducing itself* by generating other bodies, each living body *is* space and *has* its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space (Lefebvre 1991: 170).

Lefebvre underscored the physical body as the privileged *locus* of the production of social space. The relationship between any member of a society, the 'subject', and social space is dialectical: whereas sensory organs interact with the outside world through perception, the body itself is deciphered, thus represented, according to scientific knowledge. Spatial

[6] See Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* ([1958] 1969).

practice, the material dimension of the production and reproduction of social activity, "presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs" both for work-related tasks and leisure activities (*ibidem* 40). However, the body has also been the object of scientific and ideological representations, which have constricted our understanding of its materiality as well as its relationship to nature and social environments (Butler 2012: 125).

The body is experienced through symbolisms, tradition, or even psychoanalysis, too (Lefebvre 1991: 40). Lefebvre's concept of "spatial body" aimed to bring the concept of body out of the varied discourses which tend to present it as an abstraction. For Lefebvre, all bodies and their energy are produced out of the oppositions, interactions, and actions of a particular space (*ibidem* 195). This tripartite understanding of the role of the human body underscores, on the one hand, its importance in the theory of space, and on the other, the materiality of social practices. However, materiality can only be conceived in relation to thought, feelings, and lived experience, otherwise it has no meaning. Likewise, there is no pure thought or experience since they can only exist along the materiality of the body. In sum, the human body functions as a synecdoche for the three moments of spatial production, namely material production, the production of knowledge, and the production of meaning (Schmid 2008: 40).

Moreover, Lefebvre deprecated the primacy of visuality in Western societies. Metaphysics and its images have emphasized the importance of the eye through the imagery of the eye of God, the Father, and the Master over the individual (Lefebvre 1991: 408). The eye is the organ that confines the space of the body and also the body in space, delimiting its boundaries and scope of (re)action. For instance, the concept of *le regard* or "the gaze" has played a prominent role in Foucault's writings. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he stated that the gaze refers to vision and the direct observation as well as to a vehicle to exercise power over individuals: "The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (Foucault 1991: 184).

At first, Foucault developed the concept after the medical practices of examination that emerged in the eighteenth century, but he further expanded it to encompass different types of institutional gazes. In perhaps one of his most cited texts, the chapter "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault presented Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century Panopticon as a general model for defining power relations in everyday life through visuality (*ibidem* 205). The Panopticon was a penitentiary consisting of a circular building and a tower at its centre, which had windows overlooking the inner side of the prison where the cells were. The watcher in the tower could see into all the cells and still remain invisible, whereas whoever was in the cell would remain completely visible. For Foucault, the Panopticon was "a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use" (*ibidem*).

The idea of a powerful look enabled by a panoptical system may, then, be applied to a multitude of power relations. The body is rationalized in the discourses of medicine, law, the media, among others, which, in turn, produce subjects and knowledge. If, on the one hand, the gaze quantifies, objectifies, and takes control of individuals, on the other hand, it is eventually internalized as the eye of conscience. Besides, all the different disciplines managing and regulating the body are themselves ways of spatializing it through segregation and exclusion (Philo 2011: 167).

In his concluding remarks to *The Production of Space*, however, Lefebvre claimed that "[t]oday the body is establishing itself firmly, as base and foundation, beyond philosophy, beyond discourse" since "[t]heoretical thought, carrying reflection on the subject and the object beyond the old concepts, has re-embraced the body along with space, in space, and as the generator (or producer) of space" (1991: 407). This allowed leeway in removing the body from abstraction and accepting it as potential producer of true knowledge instead of a source of non-formal knowledge, thus as true "lived space".

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 – 1961) is another name whose contributions to the relationship between body and lived experience cannot be overlooked. His statement "I am my body" advocated for the understanding of the indivisibility of mind and body. It is this indivisibility that makes human existence meaningful since we live in an embodied

state of being. This means that the body thinks and perceives, therefore it is not an object but a body-subject (Reynolds n.p.).

More recently, critics have also expanded on the material relationship between the senses – touch, smell, taste, sight, and hearing – and spatiality. It has been proposed that the senses are another way of knowing and experiencing spaces. Patricia Spyer posits that to "think of the body […] is not to think *the body* but, rather, to engage embodiment or the body in all its sensuous and visceral specificities commingled […], acting upon and being acted upon in material life worlds of differing character and composition" (2006: 125). In short, all these approaches underscore the indivisibility of body and mind in everyday life and, consequently, target the pervasive mind-body dualism in Western thought.

Furthermore, the reconnection of the body with its own materiality also foregrounds another elementary level of human behaviour, namely our interactions with the things around us. Objects have both a material and immaterial life of their own which coexist naturally with ours. In this sense, it can be argued that interactions produce bilateral effects: we give meaning to objects, but things also help us make sense of the world when we handle them. A Marxist approach would support the view that this relationship is one of production and consumption, whereas structuralism and semiotics have shown that things, its components, and the associations that we create around them influence our thought. What is more, objects "provide a fundamental non-discursive mode of communication" (Tilley 2006: 7). In a capitalist society, this goes both ways since the same interactions that help shape our identities can also be the agents of fetishization and oppression (Miller 2005: 2). Nevertheless, people and things are not just vehicles of meaning, together they also perform actions. And, in fact, spaces can be created or erased out of the performative force often attached to many of the interactions between human and non-human entities.

1.3. Performing Space

Lefebvre's spatial architectonics relied as much on doing something as on something being done. Michael R. Glass and Reuben Rose-Redwood point out that the concept of performativity underpins Lefebvre's conceptualization of the production of space, the body, and everyday life, especially his later writings on rhythmanalysis[7] (2014:3). For Lefebvre, spatio-temporal practices were based on repetition in time and space, yet "[w]hen it concerns the everyday, rites, ceremonies, fêtes, rules and laws, there is always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference" (2004:6). It could be argued, then, that space comes into existence through performative behaviour.

The idea that identity and social space originate in performative behaviour has been central to many other claims among social theorists. Identities and social spaces are not givens but things that come into existence when individuals do something, or rather "perform" something. Notably, the semantic variants of the verb 'to perform' have given rise to the concepts of 'performativity' and 'performance', which often appear entangled despite their different implications in various disciplines. Broadly speaking, performativity has come to mean the execution of an action or function as well as the act of completing something, whereas performance commonly often implies the presentation of a preexisting text, such as a theatrical production, before an audience (Velten 2012:250).

However, as Mieke Bal points out, in the last decades both concepts have been generalized to the point where they are now used not only in social theory but also in literary theory, the visual arts, geography, among others (2002: 178). In fact, both concepts have been used by various disciplines to various purposes, sometimes together, sometimes not. In studies about space, they often coexist since spaces are produced when individuals and institutions act upon each other. Performative behaviour effects social space, which, in turn, influences, and shapes social agents.

The concept of performative stemmed from J. L. Austin (1911 – 1969) and his linguistic model which questions the representationalism underlying positivist philosophy

[7] See *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life* (1992).

by asserting that language is performative. In his posthumous work *How to do Things with Words* (1962), Austin (1911 – 1969) started by drawing a distinction between two types of statements, namely constatives and performatives. A constative statement represents something, either true or false, through description, report, or constatation (Austin 1962: 5). Conversely, Austin evidenced that some utterances do not describe, report or constate something, but rather *do things*, which he then goes on to name "performatives". Getting married, baptizing, making bets, promises, or giving orders are some examples of performative utterances. For example, when uttered at a wedding ceremony and under accepted conventional procedures, namely before a person legally invested with the right to marry two people, the words 'I do' produce a marriage. Austin also noted that a performative can do an action either through words or gestures, such as when we insert a coin in a slot machine to bet (M. Green, "Speech Acts" n.p.). In short, performative force underscores that speech and language are a "form of social action" (Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014: 5).

Yet, performative force also encompasses the effects utterances may produce. In his broader conceptual framework, namely speech act theory, Austin posits that language does things when we produce a meaningful linguistic expression (locutionary act) which performs an act just because it is said (illocutionary act), but he also stressed the importance of its effects on thoughts and feelings (perlocutionary act). These effects can be intended or unintended as well as verbal or non-verbal (Austin 1962: 117). In sum, what is radical about the idea of performative sentences is that they act upon the world by changing social relationships (Green and Lowry 2003: 53).

On the other hand, Austin's approach to speech acts has undergone severe criticism. Critics like Jacques Derrida (1930 – 2004) and Judith Butler (1956 –) have asserted that it is only through reiteration that a speech act gains its performative force. For Derrida, a speech act is a citation because its performative force derives from the iterability of former speech acts. (*apud* Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014: 182). For her part, Butler makes use of the reiterative and citational nature of performative acts to understand how identities are gendered. Butler contends that (gender) identities are discursively produced through the constant re-enactment and actualization of ways of speaking. Also, subjects

are constituted in and through performative acts, which are themselves dependent on social conventions. Furthermore, the spatial reformulation of Butler's theorization on gender performativity has led to the concept of "performative space". The material-discursive effect of performative practices not only produce subjects, but also social space. Spaces do not pre-exist their performance, instead they arise from the network of reiterative performative behaviours themselves dependent on different power relations. Consequently, different social space may be produced whenever non-hegemonic social forces supersede hegemonic ones through disruptive performances (*ibidem* 16).

Nicky Gregson and Gillian Rose also propose another trend arising in the relationship between space and performativity: Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to social interaction. In a rather different way compared to the Butlerian framework, Erving Goffman (1922 – 1982) also postulates the performative dimension of everyday behaviour. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), Goffman drew a parallel between social interaction and performance as he defines performance as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants". Human interactions entail not only a participant but also co-participants, all of which are actors who play "pre-established pattern[s] of action", thus contributing to the formation of social relationships (Goffman 8). Performances allow individuals to establish their social identity, who, in turn, negotiate the impressions they create, either actively or passively, upon each other. This also suggests that the self recreates itself every time it needs to perform in a different environment.

Goffman posited that social interactions take place on the "front stage", where actors perform according to the impression they want to make on the audience. The "back stage", on the other hand, is where the individual is no longer performing for others and can presumably be herself or himself without a specific social identity. Goffman suggested that social actors have a multitude of pre-existing "scripts" ready to be performed, regardless of their level of awareness of them. Goffman's theatrical approach foregrounds intentionality and consciousness in everyday behaviour as well as the

existence of pre-existing spaces to be filled by social agents (Gregson and Rose 2014: 50)[8].

There are important differences between Butler's and Goffman's stances on performative behaviour. Yet, Gregson and Rose also argue that, regardless of the approach one chooses, performativity and performance cannot be understood separately since:

> Performance — what individual subjects do, say, "act out" — and performativity — the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances—are intrinsically connected, through the saturation of performers with power (*ibidem* 38).

On the one hand, power lies in each individual in a given society, and, on the other, it depends on repetition and must be 'done' in order to be (re)affirmed. Gregson and Rose go on to add that, since power is closely related to space, the latter arises from the convergence of performances and the "performative articulation of power". In addition, they stress that performances and performed spaces cannot be taken for granted since they are uncertain and complex (*ibidem*).

This framework around performativity and performance is important because it broadens its application to studies about space and the capillary-like forms of power that Foucault posited. Unlike Lefebvre's Marxist point of view, for instance, Foucault claims that the state is not the only agent of power within society, instead individuals too can exert power over others. Hence, since "each individual has at his disposal a certain power, and for that very reason can also act as the vehicle for transmitting a wider power" (Foucault 1980: 72), power needs to be understood as decentralized in nature.

[8] Another difference between these two regions of everyday life is what constitutes them: the front region, just like a theatrical performance, demands setting, appearance, and manner. Individuals perform according to specific locations and the objects that are part of it, which usually remain unchanged throughout the performance. Furthermore, the way one physically presents her or his "personal front" reveals their social status or temporary social role. Appearance, such as clothes or other props, signals to other participants the actor's engagement in social activities, work, or informal recreation. Similarly, manner "warn[s] us of the interaction role the performer will expect to play in the on-coming situation". For instance, an aggressive manner and a gentle manner entail different performances. In short, setting, appearance, and manner are the three parts of an individual's social "front", which he defines as the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance (Goffman 1956: 10-46).

Consequently, performative behaviour entails not only doing something anew but also acting upon preexisting power structures.

How space is performed does not end in the considerations above. The plethora of articles and books devoted to space and performative behaviour evince their scope of application in the various fields. However, many of them are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, in the following section, I explore issues of performativity and photography from the point of view of some traditional and contemporary theoretical considerations in order to build up a basis for the spaces of photography.

1.4. Space and Photography

1.4.1. Barthes and beyond

The majority of writings on photography has focussed on the photographic image to the detriment of its other aspects. In this sense, firstly, I briefly consider a few contributions made by some of the most influential critics on photography. Secondly, I survey some recent reappraisals which seek to expand the study of photography beyond the scope of the photographic image, and which help me assess to what extent photography can claim to be performative and hence create its own space inside other spaces.

Contemporary views of photography are indebted to Roland Barthes's semiotic approach to photography. For his part, Barthes owes much to Charles Sanders Peirce's linguistic model of the sign, which has proven fruitful in visual studies as well. Following Saussure's analytical distinction between signifier and signified[9], Peirce put forth a three-

[9] Saussure's two-part linguistic model takes the sign as the basic unit of language and splits it into *signifier,* a sound or an image attached to a concept or an object, the *signified*. Furthermore, Saussure also posits that there is no stable relationship between the two parts because every language uses different signifiers in the form of words to convey a similar signified. Two words may refer to the same object in the world, the *referent*, but their meaning is conventional rather than intrinsic (Rose 2001, p.74). In fact, Saussure's linguistic approach to the sign has not offered a satisfying paradigm to the understanding of visual media such as photography because this arbitrariness of the linguistic sign does not translate to images. Instead, the latter are to be acknowledged as 'motivated' since they often imply a choice of signifier (Iversen *apud* Rose 2001: 77).

fold understanding of the sign based on the relationship between the former and the latter: signs can be iconic, indexical, and symbolic[10]. Peirce proposed three categories of signs which come into being according to their relations with their objects. Whereas the icon bears a physical resemblance with its object, the index depends on the physical correlation between sign and object. The symbol, on the other hand, has an arbitrary relation with its object since its signification arises from the conventional linking of the two. Paradigmatically, then, a photograph can be an icon, an index, and/or a symbol: it bears a resemblance to the real object; its existence is directly influenced by that same object; and it is a symbol because it has to be decoded through conventions (Bal 2002: 47-48).

In "Rhetoric of the Image" (1977), Roland Barthes stated that "the word *image* should be linked to the root *imitari*" (1993: 32), hence his first approach to images deals with them as iconic signs, copies of something or someone in the world. In the case of photographs, Barthes went on to classify them as "message[s] without code" because, unlike in language, photographic representation does not require a third-party to mediate the real object (the signified) and the object in the photograph (the signifier) (*ibidem* 35-36). He also noted that both the likeness between signifier and signified and the mechanical nature of the photograph have perpetuated the myth of photographic naturalness and objectivity. However, a photograph is to be thought of on two levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the non-coded iconic message, the "Edenic state of the image" where cleared utopianically of its connotations, the image […] become[s] radically objective, or, in the last analysis, innocent". Conversely, connotation, its counterpart, is presented as the coded message, the man's cultural construct by means of "framing, distance, lighting, focus, speed" (*ibidem* 42-43).

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[10] According to Peirce, "[a]n *icon* is a sign which would possess the character which renders it significant, even though its object had no existence; such as a lead pencil streak as representing a geometrical line. An *index* is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign it its objects were removed, but would not lose that character if there were no interpretant. Such, for instance, is a piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as a sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not. A symbol is a sign which would lose the character which renders it a sign if there were no interpretant. Such is the utterance of speech which signifies what it does only by virtue of its being understood to have that signification (*apud* Bal 2002: 48)".

Moreover, in some of his other writings[11], denotation ceases to be a trace of the real to become "the range of ideologically determined connotations brought into play by the viewer" (Alvarado 2001:150). As such, a photograph is after all not just a moment in time, but it works on a double level: that of the events which depicts, either real or fictional; and as an iconic message inserted in a flow of cultural, political, and technological relations (*ibidem* 152). On the other hand, Barthes also drew an important opposition between photography and other media. He asserted that photography has created a space-time category of its own based on spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority: a photograph places its spectator in a position of *having-been-there*, in what he relates to "a pure spectatorial consciousness". Conversely, the spectator of other fictional media, such as film, is always on the verge of *being-there* (*ibidem* 44-45). However, despite Barthes' innovative and influential contributions to photography, other eminent critics, such as John Tagg (1949 –), have pointed out that he was still deeply indebted to the relation between the medium and realism (1988: 3).

John Tagg, for his part, contends that photographs are not the transference of some prior reality. In fact, one should be careful about assuming that a photograph is the translation of reality onto paper since photography is subject to the material apparatus available as well as to the social practices within which it occurs. Tagg focusses especially on the documental use of photographs in institutional spaces, yet his insights on the productive forces behind photography are important to demystify its relation to a given reality. He claims that the mechanical nature of the medium is the reason there is no transference of reality:

> At every stage, chance effects, purposeful interventions, choices, and variations produce meaning […] This is not the inflection of a prior (though irretrievable) reality […] but the production of a new and specific reality, the photograph, which becomes meaningful in certain transactions and has real effects […] (*ibidem*).

The photograph is a material product subject to the context of its production and to the technology available, but also to human action. Consequently, Tagg's materialist standpoint aims at foregrounding the idea that photography is not the art of imitation but of representation. Even if one accepts that a photograph bears witness to some event,

[11] See, for example, *S/Z* (1970).

evidential value too is dependent on the institutions and social relations under which it was produced. Consequently, any photograph has its history and is subject to relations of power. In addition, following on Michel Foucault's work, Tagg correlates the advent of photography to the rise of disciplinary technologies and the formation of social sciences such as criminology and psychiatry (*ibidem* 5).

Others have also expressed mixed feelings about the very act of photography. Susan Sontag (1933 – 2004), for example, agreed that photography is a way of capturing experience in which the camera provides the "ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood". Consequently, a photograph is not a copy of reality but a personal interpretation of it. However, to use the camera is also an act of aggression, a "tool of power": families memorialize their histories in order to reinstate the importance of family life; commercial and advertising photography idealize subjects and objects; tourists try to possess the past and the lands they have travelled to in order to overcome feelings of insecurity (Sontag 2005: 2-6). Moreover, the act of photography is an event in itself in which the camera mediates one's interaction with its surroundings. That is not to say that to photograph means to get oneself directly involved in a situation since, by keeping oneself at a distance while other events are taking place, implicates no intervention at all – and this too is aggression. Sontag compared the camera to a gun, and to photograph – to "shoot" – equals "sublimated murder" (*ibidem* 8-10).

For his part, artist and writer Victor Burgin (1941 –) forges an important link between photography and the social realm. In his essay "Looking at Photographs" in the influential *Thinking Photography* (1982), Burgin reminds the reader of the complex intertextuality of the "photographic text". Images do not exist per se but exist and have meaning because they intersect other texts, which are themselves the product of cultural and historical contexts (Burgin 1982: 144). Also, the viewer as reader underpins many of Burgin's writings in that photography is "invaded by language in the very moment it is looked at: in memory, in association, snatches of words and images continually intermingle and exchange for one another" (1986: 51). Yet, it has been argued that Burgin's "textual reductionism" falls short of its aspirations. By claiming that meaning in photography greatly depends on language, namely on the linguistic apparatus that often

accompany photographs, such as titles or captions, Burgin undermines the very possibility of thinking photography beyond the linguistic.

In fact, such views have been challenged by disciplines such as anthropology or ethnography, which have been claiming a place for photography beyond the semiotic, linguistic, and instrumental frameworks (Welch and Long 2009: 4). These disciplines claim that discussions on photography have long focussed almost solely on the image as social construction and rarely the materiality of photography. This means that it should not be understood only in terms of visual representation but also in relation to any meaning produced from its physical existence.

So far, I have focussed on a few major theorists of photography in order to build a theoretical basis for the next subchapter, which deals with photography as a type of performative behaviour able to create its own spaces. They have helped me establish that photography encompasses more than the photographs it produces. It involves an array of different stages where different subjectivities, contexts, and materialities intersect. Next, I look to other contemporary theorists to explore the performative nature of photography in order to build a theoretical framework around the 'act of photography'.

1.4.2. Photography and performative behaviour

Victor Burgin once asserted that the photographic image is "more like a complex utterance than it is like a word" (1982: 66). For Burgin, the word 'man' and the picture of a man are not the same inasmuch as the picture will always convey much more information about the man – physical appearance, clothing, etc. – than its linguistic counterpart. However, words and images perform differently (*ibidem*). As I have already discussed, performativity means that utterances not only state things but also draw things into existence. In this context, one should reflect on how the concept of performativity, itself grounded on language and the verbal, transposes into the visual field, namely to photography.

Despite the difference between verbal and visual media, other photographic theorists have suggested that photography can be performative. For instance, David Green and Joanna Lowry's reassessment of the indexical relationship of photography to the real

in light of the Conceptual Art Movement grants leeway to linking photography to performativity. As mentioned above, a photograph is an index so far as it simultaneously points to a source outside itself and depicts a past event. Green and Lowry, however, point out that Peirce underscores that the primary function of the indexical sign is to point to an event, therefore the causes of the sign are to remain of secondary importance (2003: 48). Hence, they propose a move from physical indexicality to performative indexicality when they assert that:

> The very act of photography, as a kind of performative gesture which points to an event in the world, as a form of designation that draws reality into the image field, is […] itself a form of indexicality (*ibidem*).

Performative indexicality evidences that indexicality is not confined to the photograph as sign but that it also encompasses the photographer's gesture towards an event.

To illustrate their point, they analyse how some conceptual artists in the 1960s and 1970s challenged and parodied the documental use of photography[12]. These artists used photography not as a means for documenting but as a space to perform actions[13]. Photographs were not used to denote or to point existence or absence, instead they aimed to foreground "the intended effect of the photographic statement" which consisted in producing a "belief in the existence of [an] invisible phenomenon, rather than to simply witness it being there" (*ibidem* 51). In short, what was denoted in their photographs was not what was actually recorded, yet the conjunction of photograph, caption, and the signature of the photographer attested the veracity of the event even though it could not actually be seen. This, in turn, implied that the photographer can use photography performatively if her or his intention is not to represent but actually designate some reality through the photographic image.

Moreover, recalling J. L. Austin's conditions for constative and performative statements, Green and Lowry argue that it is possible to draw a parallel with photographs. Just like constatives, they are commonly associated with truth, the real, and denotate events. However, in some instances, photographs are more like performative statements that declare, state, nominate, etc. This is so because, just like in speech acts, the act of

[12] See, for example, Ed Ruscha's *Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations* (1963).
[13] See, for example, Robert Barry's *Inert Gas Series* (1969).

photography arises out of a set of social relationships. In other words, a photograph can designate reality depending on the context of its production and reception. They also posit that the two forms of photographic indexicality – pure denotation and photography as performative gesture – juxtapose two temporalities. On the one hand, there is "the ever-receding past", and, on the other hand, the experience of "here and now" conveyed by photographs[14] (*ibidem* 56-57).

More recently, it has been suggested that speech act theory has a visual correlate in the theory of pictorial illocutionary acts, which rests upon the premise that images act upon the world too. In particular, Zsolt Bátori puts forward the possibility of photographic illocutionary acts since the photographic image has its own set of ontological and epistemological value in comparison to non-photographic images, such as painting and drawing. He goes on to argue that photographic illocutionary force originates in the indexical nature of a photograph. Whereas all types of pictures require visual recognition (locutionary act), the interpretation of photographic images (illocutionary act) is different because of photography's mechanical nature (Bátori 2015: 70-71). Bátori also stresses the importance of contextual information of photographic illocutionary acts since they can lead to perlocutionary acts. By context he means the production and use of photographic images. For instance, the photograph of a brutal murder is received differently according to its context of production and use: if it is a still photograph from a film, its fictional frame is not likely to arouse extreme feelings in the spectator; on the other hand, if it appears in a newspaper, it will most probably produce strong emotions, and may even lead the viewer to act in some way (*ibidem* 74).

On the other hand, it is often difficult to separate the performative force of the act of photography from the performances that accompany it. Richard Shusterman, for instance, points out that a photograph is only one of the threads of a wider and complex activity. By reducing photography to the photograph one risks reducing its performative potential to the object lying beyond the photograph. In fact, photography can be a performative process inasmuch as the somatic skills required by the act of photography are accounted for. The very act of positioning and controlling one's body before taking a

[14] As Peirce puts it: "The index has the being of present experience" (*apud* Green and Lowry 2003: 57).

photography is already a kind of performance. The pose is theatrical in nature since the body performs for the camera. Shusterman also argues that somatic skills and social skills are closely related since "[the] quality and interest, somesthetically projected by the photographer and perceived by the subject (often only implicitly by both parties), will be displayed in posture, gesture, and facial expression" (2012: 69).

What is more, the subject of the photograph will react differently when aware of being photographed. Here Shusterman brings forth the two paradoxes of photography explored by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1980): on the one hand, there is the subject's desire to have his or her true self represented according to one's own image; and, on the other hand, the objectification of oneself through forced poses to the camera, hence the feelings of inauthenticity which often arise from looking at our own photographs. In the end, according to Shusterman, photography as performative process is contingent on two subjectivities, the photographer and the photographed, who capitalize on the camera and a given scene or background (*ibidem* 70-71).

It should be pointed out that Shusterman is looking at the act of photography exclusively from the point of view of the professional photographic session, however it seems to me that his considerations can be generalized to other contexts. Such performances can be found both in professional and amateur settings. In fact, there are other performative instances implied in his conceptual framework which I would like to address.

In their introduction to *Photographs, Object, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (2004), Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart relate the materiality of an object to its social biography and go on to explain that "an object cannot be fully understood at any single point in its existence but should be understood as belonging in a continuing process of production, exchange, usage and meaning". This social biography of photographs can pertain to changes in material form, such as different prints or publication formats, as well as to a single photographic object seen over different times and places (Edwards and Hart 2004: 4). In another article, "Thinking Photography Beyond the Visual", Edwards also posits that photography produces objects, meanings, and social relationships. The performativity of the photograph lies in its multi-sensory dimensions, especially in

everyday social practices, since photographs are social objects that influence and are embedded in human interactions. Edwards points out several ways people interact with photographs other than through vision: they handle, caress, stroke, kiss, tear, weep over, lament over, talk to, talk about, and sing to them "in ways that blur the distinction between person, index, and thing" (2009: 33). It is Edwards' premise that, in the realm of the social use of photographs, "[b]odies literally perform images" since meaning is produced through the dialectical relationship between vision and the haptic (*ibidem* 46). A photograph, then, should be "understood as corpothetic[15], and sensory, as bearer of stories, and of meanings, in which sight, sound and touch merge" (*ibidem*). Despite Barthes' assertion that photography has created a space-time category of its own in which the viewer is placed in a position of *having-been-there*, the materiality of photographs actualizes their performative force by bringing them into the present and the future. Again, meaning is not fixed to the context in which the photograph was first taken, but fluid.

Anthropologist Lynn Meskell states that materiality both "represents a presence of power in realizing the world, crafting things from nothing, subjects from nonsubjects", and allows us to engage with the world, understand it and even physically shape it. In that sense, photographs have both a material and immaterial life of their own which should be accounted for (Meskell 2005: 51). The meaning of a photograph, though, differs over time and space as it arises from the interactions between people and things. Photographs can be in photo albums, art galleries, museums, advertising, among others. Or they can be damaged, stored or substituted along the way, and even become redundant. But, then again, they can be recovered and have their function changed. This never-ending flux may also suggest that boundaries between the private and the public in photography are easily crossed (Edwards and Hart 2004: 11).

Notwithstanding, some photographic theorists have also claimed that the fluidity of meaning can be stabilized through the act of looking (or seeing) since the look is not just a predetermined behavioural instinct but a key element in the semiotic activation of

[15] The word "corpothetic" was coined by Christopher Pinney and stands for a sensory and corporeal way of seeing images. See Pinney's "The Indian Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Or, What Happens When Peasants 'Get Hold' of Images" (2002: 355-369).

images. As Mieke Bal states, meaning in photography greatly depends on the subjectivity of the viewer, who grants it spatial and temporal dimension (2002: 49). In this sense, one may, then, speculate to what extent this sort of narrative encounter between viewer and photograph is performative. First, this requires that we accept photographs to be texts that, despite their intrinsic finiteness as systems of signs, have endless meanings, effects, and functions (Bal 2009: 5). Also, there are, of course, differences between the *telling* through words and the *showing* through images, and, indeed, the main point of divergence around pictorial narrativity has been the question of temporality or lack thereof (Schottler 2016: 161).

It could be argued that, in some instances, there is a narrative impulse underlying one's encounter with the photograph since the latter becomes meaningful when the viewer fills in for the gaps. Emma Kafalenos supports the view that a "photograph with narrative implications offers the perceiver an experience that is comparable to entering a narrative *in media res;* we ask ourselves what has happened, what is about to occur, and where we are in the sequence of a narrative" (*apud* Ryan 2004: 161)." In painting, for instance, this one moment with narrative contours came to be known as "pregnant or fruitful moment" (Schottler 2016: 170). This is also true when we talk about other types of still pictures like photographs. The single photograph can present one point in a narrative trajectory, which offers several possible readings to the viewer. It is the viewer's task to plot her or his own story and complete the gaps. The goal here is not only to access the real story, the facts that preceded and followed the recorded moment, but to allow the spectator to engage and *perform* the story (Ryan 2004: 140). Furthermore, in the case of picture series, which tend to present several moments of a given event, they ask for a different narrative strategy from the spectator. The concoction of different frames already carries within it some determinacy since it is composed of different moments on the narrative timeline. Subsequently, the eyes of the spectator are expected to go from picture to picture, from panel to panel, to construct the narrative. This movement is complex because it implies the interpretation of spatial relations and also the ability to understand the causal relations underlying any change of state or lack of in the story (*ibidem* 141).

The intersection of photography, narrative, and memory has also been another prolific topic. Contrary to what André Bazin famously asserted, that photography "embalms time" (1960: 8), a photograph can blur the past and the present. Anecdotally, the daguerreotype, precursor to the photograph, was also called the 'mirror with a memory'. I would argue that this idea has been passed on to the photograph. The paradox is striking: mirrors can only reflect what is in front of them, they demand the here and now; memory, on the other hand, forces the boundaries between the now and then, the here and there. However, a photograph of a long-forgotten family reunion, for instance, can stage the present moment through the image of a family member smiling back at us at this moment, yet, one knows that this is a smile from the past (Walton 2008: 26).

Photography, then, is the medium of both chronological and nonchronological time. It can produce snapshots of historical events and, thus, give us a sense of diachronic and synchronic continuity. Besides, a photograph can also be a tool for the production of personal stories. As we have shown, one way to do this is to let the mind provide the building blocks to form a coherent narrative around a photograph. Another way, though, is through the framing of photo albums. Glenn Willumson observes that the performance inherent to the creation of a photo album emphasizes the importance of its maker to the detriment of the photographer. The process of selecting, sequencing, gluing, and captioning personal photographs transforms meaning and memory into something personal. In sum, the interplay of photographs, memory and narrative actualizes meaning (Willumson 2004: 66).

The very act of taking photographs, of creating photographic objects that address viewers through memorialization, unleashes the incessant (re)telling of stories, sometimes privately, sometimes publicly. In his essay "Understanding a Photograph", John Berger stated that "[p]hotographs bear witness to a human choice being exercised in a given situation" (2013: 18). The purpose of a photograph is to reiterate human agency, and not the event depicted nor vision. Therefore, a photograph, regardless of its historical or mundane provenance, is a repository of beliefs, a "weapon" which can serve divergent purposes (*ibidem* 18-21). It follows that to photograph is not a way of recording or accessing objective reality, but it is rather a form of projecting subjectivities onto a

picture. Kendal L. Walton points out that critics have often taken advantage of this subjectivist point of view to make claims about the truthfulness and falseness of the visual experience created by photography. He counterargues that photography is only one of the many ways other people can influence what we see and the way we see, just like eyeglasses, mirrors, and telescopes (Walton 2008: 35). In the end, the photographer can create a new reality depending on her or his choices, which are more important than the compositional properties of the photograph.

The importance of "looking" and its implications run parallel to what is perceived in a photograph. David Bate states that the impulse behind the look of the photographer and the viewer is more than instinctual and, in fact, the image produced by the photographic apparatus and what the viewer actually sees or wants to see are often divergent. In fact, the instinct of looking often becomes a drive aiming at achieving visual pleasure (Bate 2016: 213). Visual pleasure, though, implies the pleasure in seeing (*scopophilia*) as well as in being seen. The conscious or unconscious pleasure in seeing and being seen conflates into what has come to be referred to as the scopic drive. Moreover, even though the scopic drive has been mostly associated with gender roles and the objectification of the individual in the photographic image (cinema, photography…), it can also concern the simultaneity of the identification of the viewer with the point-of-view of the camera. According to apparatus theory, the visual pleasure obtained from looking at the photographic image can create a "space of fantasy", where the viewer believes to be in or belong to. By detaching herself of himself from the real space around, the viewer can occupy these fictional spaces as a character, the disembodied eye of the camera or space itself. The viewer enjoys looking at photographs because it can be an act of release or disembodiment from oneself (*ibidem* 221).

Photography *does* because it can create subjects out of objects, and also be the bearer and demander of action. The photograph is undoubtedly central to any theorization around photography, however there is a larger semiotic and material purview to be accounted for. For that reason, I have surveyed the performative role of the photographer, the viewer/spectator and materiality as well as the influence of intention and agency. In

the next section, I briefly consider the theoretical frameworks concerning space, performativity, and photography in order to assess the existence of spaces of photography.

1.4.3. Spatializing photography: the act of photography

So far, I have analysed space and performative behaviour as well as the performative nature of photography. By foregrounding the idea that performative behaviour underlies both the production of space and the act of photography, I have tried to create a theoretical link between the two. I have also advanced that the creation of space through performative behaviour is bicipital since it can arise from reiterative and citational acts or performances in everyday life, and that it is sometimes difficult to neatly partition the two. However, within the scope of this dissertation, my aim is not to dissect performativity and performance or to tell one from the other during my analysis but to keep them as the backdrop against which I explore the spaces of photography. Spaces exist because people *do* things all the time; through acts of photography people also *do* things. I have established that this *doing* happens on a social, mental, and physical level.

Moreover, just as concepts are difficult to be used independently of each other, approaching social space, mental space, and the space of the body as separate entities even for the sake of critical analysis seems to go against the cornerstone of Spatiality Studies: the never-ending intersection of spaces is the origin and end of all social interactions. Yet, even if the division is not feasible in practice, I would like to look at them separately in order to understand to what extent photography can create its own spaces inside other spaces. If we accept that through photography we can encode, point to, and create some reality, then, we can represent space through photography, make it a space of representation, or take it as a form of social practice. The use of photography in advertising, political propaganda, art, documentation, and family albums, to name only a few, attest to the kaleidoscopic nature of the medium.

Bearing this in mind, I am able to build a theoretical framework for the spaces created by the act of photography. Through photography, we can map people, places, and events and hence give meaning to our experiences. It is my understanding that memories, spaces of fantasy, and the impulse to build narratives through photography can constitute

mental spaces. Furthermore, the performances, somatic skills, and sensuous[16] experiences implied in the act of photography produce the spaces of the body. Fetishized images of ourselves or others, for instance, may fall under the category of mental space or space of the body. Social space, on the other hand, is produced through the social relationships created because of or around photography. It also includes the social biography of photographs and the social use of photography. The desire to see someone's true self represented and any action taken towards that goal can be included in all three.

In the second chapter, I explore the intersection of space, performativity, and the act of photographic using that theoretical framework in order to assess if photography can create its own spaces inside other spaces in J. G. Ballard's novel *High Rise* and Stephen Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities*.

[16] Sensuous here means that we can experience things through the senses (taste, smell, touch, sight, and hearing) as opposed to experience through rationalization.

2. Zooming In: The Spaces of Photography

Photography, as a powerful medium of expression
and communications, offers an infinite variety of
perception, interpretation and execution.

Ansel Adams

2.1. Of one other space: the space of built environment in *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*

J.G. Ballard fictional novel *High-Rise* and Stephen Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities* were produced to address post-war urbanism, a controversial issue in British society. Both works were produced in the 1970s, a turning point in people's perception of the urbanistic, architectural, and social impact of what is considered one of its most iconic embodiments: the high-rise building.

J. G. Ballard's *High-Rise* is a dystopian novel which depicts life in a luxury high-rise building on the outskirts of London as its residents gradually resort to violence against each other and the building. In the span of three months, the level of violence escalates from petty crimes to murder and technological chaos. The events are told by three narrators, a doctor and medical school lecturer called Robert Laing, television producer Richard Wilder, and one of the architects behind the building, Anthony Royal. These three characters stand for the three layers of society inside the building: Wilder lives in the lower floors with the proles; Laing owns a flat in the 25th floor, where the middle class dwells; and Royal occupies the penthouse on the 40th floor. As in other Ballardian novels, character interaction is prompted by the need to survive, adapt, and finally control the surrounding environment (McGrath 2004 n.p.).

On the other hand, Stephen Willats' art installation *Living with Practical Realities* was a project that took place in an isolated tower block at Skeffington Court in Hayes, a suburb in West London. Willats set out to use a real setting of social housing to explore how people create their own strategies to deal with the social and physical limitations

imposed by built environment, specifically tower blocks. He chose Skeffington Court since, at the time, it was perceived as an exemplary representative of the success of that type of housing. The photographic tryptic was the outcome of a six-month collaboration between the artist and Mrs. Moran, one of the residents, and it focusses on the theme of isolation within the building. Mrs. Moran was an elderly lady living alone, which put her in an especially adverse position ("Living with Practical Realities", Tate).

Even though Ballard's and Willats' works are keen on denouncing the technological determinism of built environment, they also acknowledge that, at some point, this particular type of urban planning solution was not perceived as outright dystopian. Willats explains that, when he first started writing his artistic manifestos in the 1960s, he became aware of the impact of high-rise buildings in people's perception of the future, and that they were the "new symbols of the new world to come" (2001: 6). This optimism could be linked to the social climate of the nineteen-sixties when prevailing idealism informed people that they were moving towards a better future (Willats 2010: 443).

According to Willats, the planning of urban areas taking shape since the 1950s has given rise to a "new reality":

> The 'new reality' is specifically a product of planning: planning how people should live in urban society that is to be kept stable within the pre-fixed limits, norms and priorities of the higher authority that has been vested in institutions. […] For decision-making, responsibility has been put in the hands of the professional, the specialist, the planner, the architect, the social worker and associated experts who impress their social consciousness into the actuality of other people's physical and social reality (2001: 33).

In Lefebvrian terms, this equates with the role mental spaces and conceived space have taken over other aspects of everyday life. Urban societies have relied too much on institutional decisions to shape social and physical spaces, and handed over to a few people many decisions that affected whole communities.

J. G. Ballard, on the other hand, devoted many of his novels and short fiction to the exploration of the consequences of built environment: gated communities, buildings, and motorways are only some of the spaces that he uses to emphasize the technological landscape of late twentieth century. Much of his fiction questions the extent to which technology "suppresses and degrades, diverts and perverts our spiritual aspirations, our appetites for the sublime and the infinite" (Stephenson 1991: 68). Regarding urban built

environment, in an article for *The Guardian* in 2006, Ballard praised the utopian intent of building a better world underlying many modernist architectural endeavours, like housing schemes or office blocks, but he also asserted that architecture "camouflages" fears:

> Architecture is a stage set where we need to be at ease in order to perform. Fearing ourselves, we need our illusions to protect us, even if the protection takes the form of finials and cartouches, Corinthian columns and acanthus leaves (2006: n.p.).

Notwithstanding the role of institutional planning, Ballard noticed that urban dwellers too lack the ability to take a critical stance against modern built environments. In fact, in an interview to the *The Paris Review* almost two decades before, Ballard deprecated the "high-rise culture of the last fifteen years" (1984: n.p.). There is a set of totalizing and often contradictory qualities that lie hidden in built environments which Ballard's fiction tries to make resurface in order to question the relationship between humans and technology. Sebastian Groes points out that Ballard's work often relied on Master-Signifiers[17] that the latter perceived as the bearers of a set of qualities that best express that dichotomy. Whereas in his earlier fiction London is the Master-Signifier, in the 1970s the tower block replaces London and becomes a Master-Signifier as well (Groes 2008: 80).

On a more optimist tone, Tom Moylan argues that utopian practice can point to new ways of living and impel us to take part in the construction of a better future (2000: 83-84). However, Nathaniel Coleman posits that contemporary urban architecture has partly missed its own utopian ambitions. In his view, postwar high-rise housing in Britain, in particular, cannot be considered utopian in intent as some have posited since it does

[17] In his book *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as Political Factor* (1991), Slavoj Žižek offers an account of the three stages involved in the production of the Master-Signifier. In the first stage, a signifier (S1) is attributed several other signifiers (S2), which may come to represent it in a process of *abbreviation*. The second stage is the moment when *all* possible signifiers (S2) compete against each other to represent the first signifier (S1) and offer an *explication* of it. In Žižek's own words, the last phase is when "the proper *Master-Signifier* is produced". During this stage, only *one* signifier (S2) comes to represent the first signifier (S1) (Žižek 2002) in a simultaneous movement of abbreviation and explication. In one of his famous illustrations of this process, Žižek uses anti-Semitism as an example:

(1) (avaricious, profiteering, plotting, dirty…) *is called* Jewish;
(2) X is Jewish *because he is* (avaricious, profiteering, plotting, dirty…);
(3) X is (avaricious, profiteering, plotting, dirty…) because he is Jewish (Žižek 2005)

In short, by the end of the process, there is a set of totalizing qualities that will lie hidden in the very definition of 'Jew'.

not possess all the key factors linking utopian thought to architecture: optimism, future, rationality, renewal, and community (Coleman 2005: 9-23). The main reason is that they offer a fragmented environment which fosters (fear of) isolation and, therefore, it must be understood as dystopian right from its inception (Coleman, 2011: 6). What is more, Andreas Huyssen has also warned that buildings cannot fulfill modernist anxieties about "*creatio ex nihilo* and the desire of the purity of new beginnings" (*apud* Synenko 2013: 234). To posit that they can offer this may be seen as a form of engaging with grand architectural narratives, which, like other master narratives, are only a way of creating coherent yet totalizing accounts of history.

Kim Dovey, on the other hand, points out that architecture perpetuates social order despite the "optimistic belief implied in the creation of the new" (Dovey 199: 3). According to this author, unchanging relations of power depend on our inability to question the role of architecture in everyday life. She also stresses that "[s]patial practices construct subjects employing architecture as disciplinary technology", and puts forth a five-fold taxonomy of how power can be exercised over the subject: through force, coercion, manipulation, seduction, and authority (*ibidem*). There is, for example, a strong connection between architecture and the visual since the former not only houses people but also produces viewing subjects since it delimits what is to be seen or remain unseen, either inside and outside its premises (Colomina 1996: 250). Bearing this in mind, it is hard not to draw a parallel between high-rise buildings and Foucault's reading of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon[18]. For Foucault, the Panopticon is "a pure architectural and optical system" and stands as a general model of power relations in everyday life (1991: 205).

Built environment has been one the most analysed loci in the production of space because of its interdependence with many social processes (Coleman 2015: 8). From Lefebvre's Marxist point of view, built environment embodies relations of production and, subsequently, power relations. Even though architecture is not space *per se*, it is part

[18] The Panopticon was a penitentiary house designed by Bentham in the eighteenth century and it consisted of a circular building and a tower at its center, which had windows overlooking the inner side of the prison; in the inner side, there were cells all around the tower and along the width of the building; these cells had one window facing the tower, and another one opposite to let the light in. There was a supervisor in the tower, who could not be seen, while each cell harbored a madman, a patient, a convict, a worker, or a schoolboy (Foucault 1991: 200).

of space in the sense that it is a representation of space put forth by architects, planners, and other institutional forces alike. This is of particular importance for the analysis of (urban) spatial practices and the production of social space because of the disparity between what is externally represented – conceived and perceived space – and what is actually lived – lived space. In practical terms, this means that characteristics such as repetition and abstraction are superimposed upon a realm that does not abide by cohesive and consistent constructs of space. Consequently, the social is mostly shunned from architectural projects (*ibid* 62).

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to offer an analysis of spatial relations in architecture, but since the relationship between people and the high-rise tower is the driving force behind *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*, this framework can help us understand both works. The high-rise is the overwhelming presence against which the residents are impelled to resist or transgress, either through photography or other forms of action. Willats, for example, emphasizes the "internal conflict between the monumental outface of these buildings and the communication driven culture towards which they were supposed to be pointing the way" (2001: 7). On the other hand, at some point in *High-Rise*, the narrator observes that the "real opponent was not the hierarchy of residents in the heights far above them, but the image of the building in their own minds, the multiplying layers of concrete that anchored them to the floor" (*HR* 77).

In spite of the repetitive and uniform nature of many built environments, the performative nature of human behaviour can introduce disruptions and, thus, produce new spaces. As we have seen with Lefebvre, Derrida, Butler, Goffman and other social theorists, the possibility of doing something differently is an intrinsic part of everyday processes. Disruption can be achieved through words, everyday behaviour, artistic and literary production, among others. In addition, the repercussions brought about by perlocutionary force are also another important variant to consider in spatial relations. My research has been steered towards the hypothesis that photography is performative and can produce its own space(s) inside other spaces. This means understanding to what extent it can disrupt or transgress them. In the case of *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*, I use the theoretical frameworks of the first chapter to examine the working

hypothesis that the act of photography produces different spaces from the overpowering architectural spaces in Ballard's and Willats' high-rise buildings.

2.2. *High-Rise*

Performances, sensuous experiences, and somatic skills make the body an important vehicle for human engagement with the act of photography. In his article "Reading Posture and Gesture in Ballard's novels", Dan O'Hara puts forth the idea that the relationship between objects, postures, gestures, and contexts is as important as characters, narrative, and dialogue in Ballard's fiction. Even though some critics have supported the view that Ballardian characters are often deployed to somewhat play pre-established roles, body language and human interaction with objects can reveal other layers of the organization of the texts (O'Hara 2012: 105). As O'Hara states: "All that exists has a significance, no object is physically inert. Every movement and posture hold a priori level of significance (…); and all these movements, gestures and objects interact" (*ibid* 115). Consequently, based on the works of Gregory Bateson and R. D. Laing[19], he proposes looking at the 'double-bind act' as an alternative approach to Ballard's texts in order to unravel unconscious dispositions underlying human behaviour. The double bind occurs when, in power relations, the subject is often confronted with antithetical messages conveyed by another individual or thing. This psychological entrapment is achieved on a verbal and non-verbal level in the sense that what is said and the accompanying physical cues do not convey the same message. Consequently, the subject develops his own strategies to deal with this incongruous situation affecting his psyche and the environment in order to defend herself or himself. In short, the mental and the physical can hardly be separated.

In Ballard's fiction, non-verbal communication, such as posture, gesture or the use of technological objects often conveys the inversion of appearance and reality, as in the case of corpses that are seen through cameras or the characterization of characters through the activities they do, rather than their personality or dialogues. In addition, physical

[19] See Gregory Bateson (1956); R. D. Laing ([1961] 1990).

symbolism is often conveyed through objects which symbolically replace other objects or foreground motifs. In the end, there is a reversal of roles: even if the instigator has the upper hand at first, the literalizing strategies employed by the subject to deal with double binds are a way of assimilating and mimicking the double bind itself. It is this cycle that Ballard often conveys through his characters' psyche and environment (*ibidem* 118-119).

One of the strategies of the double bind is the inversion of appearance and reality through the inversion of the metaphorical and the literal. This is instigated by the subject's need to react defensively and often literally against entrapment, which, in Ballard, is commonly expressed through the "metacommunicational context" of humor, especially in the behaviour and dialogue of characters (*ibidem* 111). In the case of *High-Rise*, the building could be considered the residents' real opponent – the instigator – since what oppresses them is "not the hierarchy of residents in the heights far above them, but the image of the building in their own minds" (*HR* 77). The inversion occurs when cameras become instruments of attack and defense among the residents (Richon 2013: 32).

This idea of the camera as weapon is in consonance with the character that most embodies it at first, Richard Wilder, and the ends to what it can be used. According to Freud, the psyche is a tripartite structure that combines the super-ego, our moral conscience, the *id*, our instinctual side that contains hidden memories as well as sexual and aggressive drives, and the *ego*, the mediator of the two (McLeod par.2)[20]. Wilder, who has been associated with the id part of the high-rise (O'Hara 2012: 106), is described as a "thick-set, pugnacious man who had once been a professional rugby-league player..." (*HR* 11). He sets the violent tone and manner for the use of cameras as he is depicted leading the other residents with his "cine-camera[21] gripped like a battle standard in one hand" (*HR* 123). Consequently, the other residents start carrying cine-cameras and Polaroid cameras to record their acts of violence, degenerating into a world where "[e]very time someone gets beaten up about ten cameras are shooting away" (*HR* 125).

[20] Some critics, like Martin Amis, have claimed that the three main characters, Royal, Laing, and Wilder, are filling in for the "roles of the Freudian superego, ego and id of the high-rise itself", respectively, and stand for the mental battle occurring in the building (O'Hara 2012: 106).

[21] In Wilder's case, it is a cine-camera, a photographic device that takes sequences of photographs which, when viewed in quick succession, can create the illusion of movement ("cine-camera", www.thefreedictionary.com).

Wilder is a television producer that wants to gather visual information on the demise of the building and its residents in order to produce a documentary. Yet, while documentaries are usually produced to create a narrative of facts that inform or instruct an audience about a specific subject, Wilder's true aims and means of achieving it are soon revealed:

> To rally his neighbours Wilder needed something that would give them a strong feeling of identity. The television documentary would do this perfectly and in terms, moreover, which they could understand. The documentary would dramatize all their resentments, and expose the way in which the services and facilities were being abused by the upper-level tenants. It might even be necessary to foment trouble surreptitiously, to exaggerate the tensions present in the high-rise.
>
> However, as Wilder soon discovered, the shape of his documentary was already being determined (*HR* 71).

As Rick McGrath notices, Wilder's "desire to 'shoot" the building with his camera becomes part of a "calculated attempt to come to terms with the building, to meet the physical challenge and to dominate it" (McGrath 2004: par. 21).

However, despite his desire to go on with his original idea about the documentary, Wilder's camera rarely produces any images and, thus, he never succeeds at finishing the documentary. Instead, his camera, as well as the other cameras in the building, become tools for the desecration of the human body. As the *id* part of the mind in the building, it is Wilder who ignites the building's "seismic social shift" after drowning another resident's dog in the 10th floor swimming pool during a power outage (McGrath 2004 par.11). The camera as the tool for the factual telling of events becomes another technological weapon against the body. Bodies are not perceived or used as a vehicle of sensuous experiences and personal connections but are perceived through the twisted perception of the eye; there are no true performances associated with the act of photography since the main aim of photography in *High-Rise* is to reduce the body to images of sadistic violence against it.

The sense of a technologically-induced physical entrapment felt by the residents is expressed early in the novel in a dialogue between Wilder and his wife, Helen:

> She pointed to the cine-camera on the floor between Wilder's feet. 'What's that for?'
> 'I may shoot some footage - for the high-rise project.'
> 'Another prison documentary.' Helen smiled at Wilder without any show of humour. 'I can tell you where to start.' (*HR* 57)

The tower block is a technological prison and all electronic devices, including cameras, are mobilized to take part in the acts of (self-)destruction. The physical proximity between the camera and his feet foregrounds once more the unmediated physical violence that pervades his ascent from the lower to the upper floors as Wilder is often depicted raiding flats, kicking things around, and threatening the other residents with a camera that rarely "shoots". Yet, it also resonates a moment in chapter 16 when "Laing's feet crackled among the polaroid negatives scattered about the corridor floor, each recording a long-forgotten act of violence" (*HR* 213-214).

The use of photography in *High-Rise* is paradoxical because it raises issues on the scopophilic use of photography, which defines and metaphorically acts upon bodies, but it also subverts the panoptical nature of the building. Whereas panopticism concerns the "location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power" (Foucault 1991: 205), visual pleasure can provide a form of release and escape from the constraints of the panoptical view. Ballard's high-rise borrows from other panoptical structures: it is a self-sufficient vertical city which includes services such as a supermarket, a school, a projection room, and multiple swimming-pools all neatly organized; it is also a highly stratified environment since its residents are organized according to their social class, from bottom to top. Not surprisingly, it has been noticed that Ballard's high-rise resembles Le Corbusier's L'Unité d'Habitation de Grandeur Conforme, perhaps the most famous of the latter's utopian architectural projects (Luckhurst 2016: 63).

In his 1927 manifesto *Towards a New Architecture (Vers une Architecture)*, Le Corbusier states that "a house is a machine for living in" (1986: 4). In fact, Le Corbusier's statement is replicated in *High-Rise* when the high-rise is compared to "a huge machine designed to serve" (*HR* 6). However, by the end of the novel, as life inside the building has almost completely collapsed and all its technological apparatuses are out of service or destroyed, the cameras have become the building's only source of light, its own "internal sun" (*HR* 154). The residents are depicted carrying "cameras and flash equipment, ready to record any acts of hostility, any incursions into their territory" (*HR*

121). This implies that the residents can only literally see each other when someone pushes the shutter button and a flash of light illuminates the surroundings. If, on the one hand, the act of photography is a form of liberation from the technological determinism of the building, on the other hand, it gives rise to a new space of chaos and violence towards the body. The body is no more a space worthy of human dignity but a space to be looked at and abused through the visual record of its frailties.

To some extent, the attempt at social engineering is temporarily replaced by a sort of Bakhtinian carnivalesque environment. The degradation of the human body and the way it is pictured follows the celebration of anarchy underlying *High-Rise* since the act of photography is one of the many anti-authoritarian forces pushing for an alternative, even if temporary, *status quo*[22]. Yet, just like the building itself, it does not provide a space of freedom but only a different type of physical constraint which, nonetheless, the residents seem to take more pleasure from.

On the other hand, Ballardian characters' inner spaces often stage a "psychic battle against the fascism and imperialism of our minds" (Paddy 2015 Ch.3). In O'Hara's point of view, Ballard goes beyond Bateson's double bind in the sense that the former explores the "deep, intrinsic relation between technological contexts and the logic of the double bind, which results in a designed psychosphere in which the "death of affect" is one of the consequences of the psychological impasse in which our technological environments place us (2012: 118)". In other words, the characters' mental spaces, their 'psycospheres', arise from the intersection of inner space and technological world. In *High-Rise*, some of these mental spaces can be connected to the spaces of fantasy and the memories created by photography; however, the narrative impulse is confined to Royal's 'little narrative' around his architectural undertakings.

The identification of the viewer with the point of view of the camera and the visual pleasure obtained from it result in spaces of fantasy where, as in an act of disembodiment or release, she or he believes to be in or belong to. In *High-Rise*, the act of photography is not totally unwarranted, and its double purpose is to be an act of violence and to fuel

[22] For more on Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival and the carnivalesque see Bakhtin (1965) and Dentith (1995).

the residents' extreme scopic drive. In fact, spaces of fantasy are hardly separable from the space of the body. For example, at some point, the narrator notes that "[t]he true light of the high-rise was the metallic flash of the polaroid camera, that intermittent radiation which recorded a moment of hoped-for violence for some later voyeuristic pleasure" (*HR* 154). Photographs are not a way of showing or pointing to some truth or even represent some external reality.

Also, there is no interest in depicting one's true self since, as life inside the building gradually descends into barbarism, its residents start behaving like "beasts" roaming their zoo cages (*HR* 196). Photographs not only provide a visual record of the residents' descent into some primitive state of being but also help them to mentally reenact moments of violence against others, thus mimicking the influence of the building in their own minds. Just like mental images, photographic images mediate human and power relations. One of the psychopathologies is that the residents' perception of each other relies on a sadistic drive to represent and consequently relive images of violence against other human beings. The residents perpetrate a double act of violence as photographers and as viewers. In addition, the "intermittent radiation" emitted by the camera suggests the fragmentation of the individual, who is no longer apprehended as whole but as a collection of random images. The act of photography does not create subjects; instead, it objectifies people. On the one hand, this provides emotional detachment by acting as a barrier against the real; on the other, it is also a tool for the "aestheticisation" of the real (Gasiorek 2005: 72). However, the reader is always aware that these spaces of fantasy – and any power relations underpinning them – are as ephemeral as the discarded photographs crackling under Robert Laing's feet in the building's corridors later in the novel (*HR* 213).

Anthony Royal, one of the architects behind the conception of the tower block and a resident himself, is perhaps the only character that uses photographs to create a mental space where memories are more real than reality. Royal does not take part in the hostilities below for the most part of the novel and is often depicted gazing from his penthouse. His gaze is at once "all too aware of the built-in flaws" of the building and proud of his experiment" (*HR* 31). It has been suggested that Royal entertains fantasies of control and dominance (McGrath par.24) which he cannot fulfill. Needless to say that Royal stands

for the urban planners who decide over people's ways of living, as decried by Lefebvre and Ballard alike. However, he eventually tries – and fails – to abandon the high-rise, his own "private zoo" (*HR* 196):

> Royal returned to the studio and continued to take down the architectural drawings and design studies pinned to the walls. This small office in a converted bedroom he had used for his work on the development project, and the collection of books and blueprints, photographs and drawing-boards, originally intended to give a sense of purpose to his convalescence, had soon become a kind of private museum. The majority of the plans and design studies had been superseded by his colleagues after the accident, but in a strange way these old frontal elevations of the concert-hall and television studios, like the photograph of himself standing on the roof of the high-rise on hand-over day, described a more real world than the building which he was now about to abandon (*HR* 94-95).

The passage above shows how Royal resorts to photographs and blueprints as a way of making sense of his own failure. First of all, there is a stark contrast between the oppressive room and the freedom conveyed by Royal's own image on the rooftop. The changes in the use of the room itself – from bedroom to office and from office to private museum – evince Royal's redundancy as planner. The intimate atmosphere of a bedroom gives way to an unused cerebral office, which, in the end, results in a museum room. Just like buildings, museums are representations of space and the bearers of grand narratives as they freeze meaning in time and place. The unused blueprints and photographs depicting projects that were never finished foreground Royal's disconnection from reality: the room and its inanimate objects help him build his own mental space based on the irretrievable past.

Moreover, for Royal, photographs are a way of accessing a space where power relations have not been overturned yet. At some point, Robert Laing concedes that the high-rise had won its "attempt to colonize the sky" (*HR* 20), which can be further connected to Royal's colonizing mindscape conveyed by his photograph on the rooftop. Even if the panoptical view offered by the top floor reinforces his sense of entitlement, he projects his own colonizing aspirations onto it, which, in turn, devolves him "a more real world" because it shows a moment in time when he had the upper hand in the power relations underlying life in the high-rise. At the same time, in Royal's mind, keeping photographs and plans together is also a form of defense against the (un)reality of the

here-and-now. He will never truly accept his failure and, thus, will keep the same colonizing look and attitude until his demise later in the novel.

Royal eventually dies from a shot inflicted by Wilder, who finally trades the camera for a real gun (*HR* 237-8). Not only is Wilder his nemesis, but also the creator of a very different picture of the building. As Royal's wall surfaces, one of his most important contributions to the high-rise project, become full of slogans and obscenities written in graffiti, Wilder sees in them the epitome of the breakdown of life in the building. Even though he does not collect enough footage for his documentary, the one photographic image he chooses for the opening title sequence is a wall whose "military-style message in sober lettering pointed to the one safe staircase to be used during the early afternoon, and the obligatory curfew time, three o'clock" (*HR* 169). It is clear that the planner's and the residents' mental spaces could not be farther from each other. To the latter, the high-rise is a mental and physical war zone, whereas the former refuses to step down from his autocratic pedestal. It is interesting to notice, though, that there is a moment later in the novel when Royal visually reckons, even if briefly, the extension of the inhumanity of his creation. In one of his rare excursions outside his own apartment, he enters a disheveled room whose "even light, as dead as time exposure in a police photograph recording a crime" (*HR* 196) suggests the complete collapse of civilized society as well as of the building itself.

Bearing all this in mind, it is now time to assess what kind of social spaces are created by photography in *High-Rise*. It is worth remembering that social space is "real space", and it is constituted by social practice, representations of space and spaces of representation. If we take photography as a space of representation, then it follows that whoever engages in photographic practices is trying to give material expression to space as they live it. But one should not forget that this type of space has a relational tie to representations of space and social practices. In the case of Ballard's novel, the building stands for the overwhelming presence and influence of representation of space over its residents, who develop their own strategies to break loose from it. Conversely, photography as space of representation intersects several social practices either in the form of critique of the "society of the spectacle" or in the debasement of domestic culture.

The circulation and use of photographs, in particular, serve varied ends and parallel developments in the plot.

Ballard's fiction often deals with life in what Guy Debord dubbed "the society of the spectacle" in the sense that inner space is overpowered by (tele)visual technologies and consumer imagery (Paddy 2015: Ch.3). For Debord, post-war societies organized themselves around the saturation of images and commodities. In the case of images, including those produced by mass media, he states that "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" and, consequently, images become "the very heart of society's real unreality" (*apud* Paddy 2015: Ch.3). In fact, the motto for social space in the high-rise seems to be 'appearance over essence'.

It is not by chance that the only professional photographers in the novel are a fashion photographer and a society photographer, which, coupled with the use of Polaroid photographs and the home-made films the residents show in the projection theatre (*HR* 125), can be understood as tokens of the society of the spectacle. I would like to argue that the presence of both types of photographer, especially because they appear very early in the novel (*HR* 29,33), foregrounds the unreality and superficiality of human interactions in the high-rise, which will eventually lead to its breakdown. As discussed in the first chapter, the interaction between the photographer and the photographed, especially in professional photographic sessions, is influenced by the theatricality of performances, by what is projected and perceived, and by the struggle between the depiction of one's true self and the objectification of the self. Both society photography and fashion photography depend on the creation of idealized images and on capturing moments of fantasy which can be perceived as real. Underlying these images, we find the highly theatrical performances of the photographed as well as the fuzzy distinction between one's true self and the projected and unreal self. Needless to say that such glossed images of life are one of the many facets of what Debord would call the "visible negation of life" (*apud* Gasiorek 72). On a spatial level, since both photographers live on the top floors along with Anthony Royal, the architect, they too represent the top of the social ladder and its influence over whoever dwells below. Just as the high-rise embodies a

technological attempt to regulate human life, both types of photographer embody photographic practices that depend on its standardization as well.

The residents, on the other hand, resort to amateur practices in the form of snapshot photography. Unlike professional photography, the snapshot is usually used in domestic and social settings, and it is underpinned by visual simplicity and the formation of emotional ties between the photographer and the photographed, who share photographic power (Zuromskis 2009: 53-60). However, in *High Rise*, Polaroid cameras and their instantaneous photographs, the quintessential snapshot apparatuses, are used as weapons and bullets, respectively – and thus the very materiality of photography is subverted into metaphorical belligerency. As life in the high-rise gradually falls into chaos, its residents regress to a protolinguistic stage where relationships are mediated by "pre-verbal grunts, clicks, and cries" (Stephenson 1991: 83). Even though the act of photography takes places in a private environment, it fails to produce real bonds between people. Instead, it creates individual spaces of fantasy that exclude any creation of meaning except for what the residents obtain from voyeuristic pleasure. In spite of the fact that the social use of photography also entails the actualization of past events into the present and future in order to give rise to new meanings, the truth is that the residents only go back to their polaroids to wield power over others. In fact, seeing the photographs of violent acts inflicted on others is a form of actualization of the past in order to make it into a false present where they can constantly renew feelings of self-empowerment.

If we trace the social biography of photographs in *High-Rise*, this line of argument gets stronger. Recalling Edwards and Hart in my first chapter, photographs are perceived differently over time and place, and are to be understood as part of a process of production, exchange, usage and meaning. Earlier, I explained that Royal's photographs help him create his own space of fantasy, one that, nonetheless, keeps sending him back in time since he is unable to face his own failure as an architect. In fact, Royal's photographs were "originally intended to give a sense of purpose to his convalescence" (*HR* 94), to reassure him of his position of superiority in the network of power relations. Also, in conjunction with the blueprints and plans, they used to help him project himself into a purposeful future. Yet, as time progresses, they become artefacts in a converted

room that he dubs "private museum", and are, thus, part of an imagined past, his own 'little narrative'. To some degree, the fact that these photographs remain locked up all the time also suggests that they are repurposed in Royal's mind only. The life of these photographs mirrors Royal's own atavistic frame of mind: he is not able to adapt, hence the need to create a one-man museum where he is still in control of life in the high-rise.

Conversely, it is possible to sequence three stages in the life of the residents' photographs: at first, they are taken as a form of violence against other people; then, they are used mostly for scopophilic practices; lastly, they end up discarded and trampled upon in the corridors. In the first two stages, the different usages lead to the convergence of meanings attributed by the residents in the sense that they both represent different types of aggression against another human being, notably strip them of their dignity and even their own true self. On the other hand, as everyday life slowly resumes in the high rise, the "polaroid negatives scattered about the corridor floor, each recording a long-forgotten act of violence" (*HR* 213), stand as a signal that the "collective psychosis" (Stephenson 1991: 81) is starting to subside.

Nonetheless, photography could still be understood as a space – even if a perverse one – of social interaction among the residents. Maybe it is not the type of interaction that one would expect since it is neither associated with familial settings nor with forms of positive action upon the world. In a first instance, it could be seen as the inversion of the panoptical gaze since, through photography, it is no longer the urban planner who imposes the nature of social interactions; instead, the residents take into their own hands the chance to redefine them, and, thus, subvert power relations among them.

In light of these considerations, I would argue that photography fosters a type of social space inside the building equally characterized by isolation and the lack of a sense of community. Overall, very much like the spaces created by most built environment, it is a space in which residents use force, coercion, manipulation, seduction, and authority to influence and control others.

2.3. *Living with Practical Realities*[23]

In the Introduction, I noted that conceptual art emphasized the process of making an object of art as well as the final artwork. The idea or concept was often related to a kind of social activism on the part of artists, who would use the idea and its process of materialization to foster the direct engagement of the artist, other participants, and viewers alike. This is apparent in Stephen Willats' artistic practices involving the exploration of life in tower blocks through photography and interviews. It is my intention, then, to proceed with a spatial analysis of the three panels of *Living with Practical Realities* not only as self-contained artwork but also as a node in a wider process of theorization, production, and reception. I believe that this gives a better insight into what Willats was trying to achieve and also provide a more fruitful analysis.

But before I would like to provide some more details about the importance of photography in his artistic practices, particularly in his installations dealing with life in tower blocks. Willats' starting point is usually a question about a specific problem pointed out by the residents, who are led to reflect upon it through personal interviews and photographic documentation. They are also asked to take part in the production and final selection of photographs and text from the interviews in collaboration with the artist. The final artwork encodes the initial question and the residents' own answers and photographs into a symbolic world to making it both participatory and highly personal. The viewer is then given "a realm of meaning in which a question could stimulate a relative response, or a solution that was open, there being no correct interpretation" (Willats, 2001: 18).

The photographic camera is used as an "agent of freedom" in the sense that "there is no set position of 'framer' and 'framed', but a social interpersonal situation, in which there is a mutual influence on what is to be expressed". Photography is a form of creative expression that allows them to encode their own lives. The use of black-and-white photography suggests a focus on the subject and the somewhat documentary-like style of artworks. More importantly, the act of photography is a key strategy in the residents' self-

[23] The artwork can be found here http://stephenwillats.com/work/living-practical-realities/ or, in alternative, here http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/willats-living-with-practical-realities-t03296

organisation and it fosters a "counter-consciousness" to institutional urbanistic planning. (Willats 2010: 461).

In *Living with Practical Realities*, Stephen Willats set in opposition "the institutional reality of the tower block" and the daily reality of a tenant's life, Mrs. Moran. He developed a set of three panels around the economic, social, and physical constraints leading to Mrs. Moran's sense of isolation within the tower block. The panels were based on interviews and photographic documentation, and the aim was to represent the tenant's point of view, or rather, the way she perceived her own reality. Photographic images and the interviews were combined through a strict collaboration between the artist and the participant in order to create a symbolic world that would not only take the viewers to experience her isolation but also to reflect on their own cultural situation.

The panels should be read from top to bottom and the formal analysis of the panels reveals a horizontal division into three areas. The top consists of the title – "area of attention" – of the panel, followed by a photograph of Mrs. Moran (the subject of the work), and the question to be answered by viewers was placed below this photograph. The first concept frame also shows a photograph of the tower block in the middle and around it there are four photographs of objects with her own words superimposed. This is the "descriptive concept frame" and it conveys reality as perceived by the tenant. In the bottom part, there is the "prescriptive concept frame" pointing to a possible future. The image of Mrs. Moran in the background surrounded by photographs and text present some self-organising strategies to overcome everyday challenges within the tower block. This concept frame provides an idea of the future. Finally, it should be noticed that the panels were created to be displayed in art galleries in order to raise awareness about the role art may play in social change ("Living with Practical Realities", Tate).

The understanding of space of the body demands two levels of analysis: the performances inherent to the relationship between Willats, the photographer, and Mrs. Moran, the photographed; and the representation of the body in the art installation. As discussed in the first chapter, the relationship between the photographer and photographed implies interaction through posture, gesture, and facial expression. The paradox lies on the need to have the true self represented and feeling objectified at the

same time due to the performance itself. This paradox is especially evident in situations where the photographer is invested with an authoritative power over what is to be represented and how it is to be represented. However, instead of objectifying Mrs. Moran by attributing her certain preconceived ideas about her reality – maybe as a victim of the system or as someone who was not able to adapt to her new reality – Willats seeks to devolve Mrs. Moran her subjectivity by allowing her to use photography as a means to represent what she perceives as her true self. Consequently, the photographer's subjectivity is blurred by the subject's, who becomes an active agent in the construction of her own individuality: Mrs. Moran is no longer only a subject matter but a subject in her own right.

Yet Willats' intention is not only to foreground and enact Mrs. Moran's individual agency but also to represent her physical relation with the building, to explore her physical situation. From my point of view, this means that, on a spatial level, Willats' art installation goes further than subverting traditional somesthetic performances and actually aims at making physical space anew. The space of the body clearly changes throughout the panels. If we read them from top to bottom, we find a pattern of three photographs at the top of the panels depicting Mrs. Moran confined in her home and the large ones at the bottom showing her outside the building. Even though she is surrounded by built environment making us perceive the inescapable nature of urban landscapes, the photographs signal a metaphorical move against confinement.

The body inside the building is contrasted with the body outside: gesture and position, in particular, change. The top photographs show a medium shot of Mrs. Moran inside her flat and her body, just like the objects and furniture surrounding her, does not appear completely in the frame. She is sitting in Panel One and Three, while in Panel Two she has her back turned to the camera and is turning on the TV. From my point of view, these performances of everyday life caught on camera emphasize the idea that she is part of her environment but also trapped in it, which is attuned to her own perception of reality. The bottom photographs, on the other hand, depict the elderly lady outside in the precincts of the tower block. The long shots capturing her entire body walking somewhere stand in defiance of the confinement conveyed by the top photographs.

A top-to-bottom reading of the panels show Mrs. Moran's physical conquest of her environment. This is especially apparent in Panel One, whose thematic focus is her sense of confinement and possible strategies to overcome it. There is a visual progression from entrapment to physical emancipation accompanied by the cognitive transformation of her relationship with built environment expressed in the two bottom statements "Becoming independent from them thought out world" and "Informing myself about the ways around their physical barriers". Interestingly, the alternative "perception" offered by the aerial photograph and the different 'understanding' offered by the extreme long shot below the two statements further underscore the role of the camera: photography is in fact emphasized as agent of freedom since both images show perspectives that cannot be normally apprehended with the naked eye.

One cannot also overlook the fact that there is an image of the tower block at the centre of each panel. However, in formal terms this image belongs to the descriptive concept frame. Unlike what happens in the prescriptive concept frame, the six photographs of the first concept frame are not superimposed on each other in order to foreground the disconnection between lived space and conceived space. In other words, the clash between the two materialities – body and building – is represented on a visual level through the disjunctive placement of the photographic images. In addition, the triple repetition of the same image of the building contrasts with the varied images underpinning Mrs. Moran's physical emancipation. This process is enlightened by Lefebvre's assertion that architecture is greatly based on repetition and abstraction, hence the gap between what is lived, perceived, and conceived. The prescriptive unit, however, is structured differently. Instead of a disjunctive structure, the overlying photographs and text offering an alternative to reality on top of a large image of Mrs. Moran outdoors convey the idea of convergence and integration. The prescriptive conceptual frames visually represent Mrs. Moran in a new reality, one in where she does not allow herself to be physically confined to the building and, at the same time, accepts that it is part of her physical reality.

The change from entrapment to autonomy can also be seen in the mental spaces implied in the panels. Whereas the descriptive concepts frames focus on the past and present reality, the prescriptive concept frames deal with the movement from present to a

projected future. From my point of view, this spatial-temporal sequence should be understood as arising from a narrative impulse rather than being the outcome of a space of fantasy. The panels are not, in fact, a space of fantasy in the sense that they do not depict a fictional reality imagined by Mrs. Moran. That would go indeed against the social activism underlying Willats' artwork. The panels were not conceived as a place of disembodiment and release but to incite Mrs. Moran and the viewer, even if differently, to play an active role in social change. Instead of providing a form of detachment from reality, the panels are structured around the participatory role of the subject and the viewer.

As Willats put it, "[a] crucial part of my new strategy was to present the viewer of the work with a 'symbolic world', an encoded realm of photographic and text references, drawn from a particular context or environment associated with an identifiable polemic in contemporary life" (2001: 16)." The formal structure composed of a series of images depicting different moments unfolding over time and place prompt in point of fact the viewer to interpret spatial and causal relations from top to bottom. In the end, the goal is to reconstruct Mrs. Moran's life story, her 'little narrative', not a fictional story. It should be noted that, although there is always some implicit determinacy in the arrangement of the photographs (and text), there are some instances of greater indeterminacy in the panels that allow freer interpretations as I will show. Nevertheless, overall, each panel individually, as well as the set of three panels, are structured to prompt Mrs. Moran's and the viewer's narrative impulse.

The panels start off with a problem associated with living in the tower block: "Living in the confines of my new home" (Panel One); "Living with the present day limitations of a small income" (Panel Two); and "Living without certainty that I will see someone tomorrow" (Panel Three). In other words, they focus on Mrs. Moran's physical limitations, economic hardship, and lack of social interaction, respectively. The reader is, then, given a photograph of the tenant inside her flat, a sentence about reality as it exists for her, and a question that orientates the reading and the responses. The diagrammatic pattern also defines Mrs. Moran's "code", "intention", "behaviour", and "attitude" in relation to the area of attention of each panel. The captioned photographs in the

descriptive concept frames are key to understanding Mrs. Moran's initial worldview. A closer reading reveals that they encode the feeling of fear as well as the strains of financial and physical limitations. Noticeably, these mental spaces are encoded through the associations she makes between objects and captions, which not only focus on life inside but also outside the building. Instead of the "repetitive, reductive, unit based design that was the building's outface", there is the "individual richness" of its residents, mostly conveyed through the emotionally-invested objects present in the panels (*ibidem* 7).

These objects provide a psychological context, a reinforcement for their own feelings of certainty and stability about who they were, their personal identity. Furthermore, the use of the resident's own language about her reality brings another dimension of engagement between her and the viewers (*ibidem* 7, 14). Finally, as with the spaces of the body, a top-to-bottom reading reveals the movement from mental confinement to the search for alternative ways of thinking and hence coping with built environment. The second concept frame is structured around a different cognitive attitude towards the initial problem. Here the choice of photographs and text seeks to bring forward "another meaning", "another conclusion", "another perception", and "another understanding" for Mrs. Moran. Underlying this process is the creative ability to self-organise and transform one's life, i.e., to give new meanings and functions to life inside the tower block (*ibidem* 5).

A spatial reading of the mental spaces of the panels will provide us with a better understanding of Willats' trilogy. The first concept frame in Panel One ("Living within the confines of my new home"), for instance, focusses especially on Mrs. Moran's domestic setting and her current strategies to deal with physical confinement. Any organizational strategies are subdued by the "modern surroundings" which she finds difficult to adapt to. It is interesting to notice that, even though the scope of the captions is broad enough to make the viewer think of several universal strategies, the photographs of everyday objects anchor them to practical realities. The materiality of the quotidian conveyed through the close-ups of pots and pans, a radiator, a radio, and a pair of shoes ground Mrs. Moran's life on the particular. Along with the text, the photographic image simultaneously grants a personal dimension to the installation and conveys the tenant's

lonesomeness. The second conceptual frame aims at showing the tenant's self-reflexive attitudes concerning the future. Firstly, the photograph in the background depicts Mrs. Moran outside as physical dislocation from the flat to the street signals a mental shift. In addition, text and photographs are no longer superimposed since they do not reflect the elderly lady's predetermined associations of ideas and feelings but the lack thereof. Consequently, the second concept frame is a space of freedom and new perceptions about life in the tower block: the verbs 'informing' and 'becoming' suggest a mental process set in motion, while the long shots of the building and its environs at the bottom evoke an openness to change and adaptation. In the end, Mrs. Moran has created "another meaning", "another conclusion", "another perception", and "another understanding".

Panel Two follows the same structure but deals with a different question since it is organized around her current viewpoint on the "limitations of a small income". Here Mrs. Moran's concerns foreground the tension between her financial limitations and dependence on the outside. Worries about her weekly budget and physical limitations are associated with objects on the street which are themselves metonymically associated with places engendered by urban life. Just like the tower block, places such as the supermarket and the post office as well as the zebra crossing and the newspaper stand seem to belittle individuals in face of modern abstractions fostered by spatial relations. The second part of the panel offers two alternatives to present reality based on memory and cooperation. Cognitive readjustment uses the "memory of past conditions" – hence the link to a photograph of what appears to be urban wasteland – to transform insecurity into security. Cooperation, on the other hand, means building relationships with people who, despite the overwhelming influence of built environment, power relations and capitalism, could find new ways to provide for themselves. The photograph of the vegetable garden, perhaps belonging to the community, propounds another strategy of self-organisation.

Panel Three, on the other hand, problematizes social interaction in the tower block. The descriptive concept frame is structured around the idea of isolation. This is evinced by phrases such as "isolated tower", "fear of travelling", or "never feel safe". Here too the photographs reveal the tension between indoors and outdoors. The image of the flower vases with the text "Trying to brighten up the outside landing" tells the viewer of Mrs.

Moran's inability to go past her fears (and perhaps physical limitations), while suggesting that social interaction is reduced to fleeting encounters in the common areas. The other three images visually support the specific type of socially-induced fear conveyed by the written text. The strategies in the prescriptive frame focus on the possibility of building a "real community" through common resources and the existence of common space. Text in this conceptual frame creates a mental space of share and inclusion; in spite of that, the connection to the long shots at the bottom is not clear-cut. It may well be that they are meant to give the viewer clues to what type of places could be reconverted into spaces of (and for) the community or perhaps they are just meant to remain open to interpretation.

The processual nature of Willats' conceptual practices implies the emergence of varied social spaces. In fact, the impact of the space of representation called *Living with Practical Realities* started long before the installation was finished and ready to be exhibited in an art gallery. As discussed above, social spaces inside high-rises are often characterized by isolation, fragmentation, and unbalanced power relations. The tower block at the centre of each panel resonates Willats' claim that "[a] building is an outface of the institutional fabric of society, but within, it is also an expression of the self-organisation in people's lives" (1996: 7). Like in many other of his artworks, *Living with Practical Realities* revolved around the use of descriptive and prescriptive models since "these would articulate and externalize how residents could envisage making changes to the environment of the tower and to their lives within and around it" (*ibidem* 2001: 20). In other words, one of the main goals was to foster a different type of social space through new forms of social interaction inside the building.

The participatory nature of Willats' art installation also entails viewer participation in the sense that he or she is urged to take a stand through the act of interpreting and giving meaning to the photographic artwork. For the viewer, the call for participation comes in the form of a question to a specific problem raised by Mrs. Moran: "How do you think I can adapt myself to these modern surroundings"; "Can you find a solution that will help me change the economic realities I now face"; and "What do you propose is the way for me to from new relationships within this isolated tower". The encoding of photographs and text into a symbolic world "was designed to give the viewer a realm of

meaning in which a question could stimulate a relative response, or a solution that was open, there being no correct interpretation" (Willats 2001: 18). Not unlike many other conceptual artists, Willats' call for participation is also the call for a counter-consciousness and social activism. It is this network of participatory behaviour from Willats, the participants, and the viewers that give rise to a set of relationships that would not exist otherwise. Since the problematics of *Living with Practical Realities* is still relevant today, the photographic encoding of Mrs. Moran's particular experience inside the tower block will not cease to give rise to new meanings and, ideally, behaviours as long as there are viewers to decode it.

Almost forty years after the project was finished, *Living with Practical Realities* reappeared in last year's exhibition *Conceptual Art in Britain 1964-1979* at Tate Britain. Like many other artworks, it has been exhibited in different museums and art galleries as well as reproduced in exhibition catalogues, specialized magazines, and on the Internet. Looking at the social biography of the installation, i.e. changes in material form and its existence over time and place, one may question the extent of its scope of influence. It started as a project that aimed at representing the particular experience of an elderly lady living in a tower block. Despite Willats' social activism, one cannot overlook the fact that the act of photography must have been perceived differently by Mrs. Moran and the artist. Whereas Willats took the role of facilitator, Mrs. Moran's involvement in the choice and arrangement of the photographs certainly evoked a different kind of emotional bonds. From a material and immaterial point of view, since Willats' goal was to give rise to a counter-consciousness through self-organisation, the process of selecting the images that best represent one's self and life experience as well as of having one's hopes and fears transposed into photographic display is, on a cognitive level, somewhat similar to the rearrangement of a photo album. Yet, since the panels are divided in two – life until now and life from now on – they become much more than that. They are not a memory of the past and its long-forgotten memories, but a projection of a possible future. The prescriptive concept frames, in particular, offer an imagined yet realistic new social space inside the building, one based on community and social interaction.

This is not to say that the artist's involvement does not have a real impact. In fact,

it raises questions about the interaction between the art world and everyday life. Willats' photographic practices have created new social spaces in the sense that art ceases to be contemplative to become experienced. As he puts it:

> The divestment of my traditionally given authority position in the origination of a photographic image does not lessen its strength but rather, I have found, ensures its pertinence and meaning; for who are better able in the end to present themselves in the reality they inhabit than the subjects (Willats 2010: 462).

This space of a two-way exchange between the artist and Mrs. Moran also place the photographs out of the realm of the exclusively personal as well as the exclusively artistic. If, on the one hand, the subject produced them, on the other, they were produced to become part of artwork to be exhibited in the context of art, hence galleries and museums.

Consequently, the panels are no longer just a form of self-organisation but also the vehicle of communication with a wider audience. This installation is one of many in which "the artist was in an interpersonal network with the audience, and was in fact dependent upon it, and that within this network the audience was as important to it as the artist" (*ibidem* 2001: 6). The act of photography does not end in the finished photograph; instead, it is prolonged into what Ariella Azoulay calls the "citizenry of photography". Photography holds viewers accountable for what they are seeing, so they are held responsible for what the photographs show. Despite the unpredictability of responses, "the photo acts, thus making others act" (Azoulay 2008: 129). The idea of a community of citizens of photography is especially relevant for Willats' art installation since the social activism underpinning it is also informed by ethical concerns. On one level, the role of the viewer is to connect the references in the panels in order to create a personal perspective as well as new meanings. Yet, on another level, she or he is also asked to take an ethical stand regarding Mrs. Moran's life conditions but also on a broader problematic around built environment in contemporary urban landscapes. For instance, my own spatial analysis is one of many personal readings of *Living with Practical Realities*, while actually writing about it is one of the many possible ways of acting as a citizen of photography.

All in all, *Living with Practical Realities* and its process from production to reception have been able to create alternative spaces to the overwhelming spaces of built environment. Instead of perpetuating isolation and fragmentation, the act of photography

creates new spaces founded on values such as agency, autonomy, and community. Furthermore, since it is an art installation that demands participation, both in the creation of new meanings and in the actualization of its perlocutionary force, those spaces are fluid and produced according to viewer's own subjectivity.

2.4 The act of photography in *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities*

In *High-Rise*, I explored the residents' spaces of fantasy and Anthony Royal's memories and narrative impulse so to show that there are some mental spaces created through photography. Most of these spaces do not arise from any creative impetus, but rather expose other layers regarding the 'death of affect' in Ballard's technological environments. The act of photographing, as well as the photographs of violent acts against other the residents foreground that fetishism and aggression go hand in hand. Residents use photography to access spaces of fantasy where they strip their rivals of their true self and freely gloat over their misfortune. Anthony Royal, on the other hand, uses photographs as a space in which he not only accesses memories of better times but also re-engineers them. His personal museum composed of photographs and old blueprints attest his inability to cope with the present. This reconverted room is his way of visually rewriting his own life story but ironically it also keeps him far away from what it really was and came to be.

The mental spaces of *Living with Practical Realities*, however, reveal other mental spaces. Since Mrs. Moran was actively engaged in the selection and organization of the three panels, one may assume that they give us some insight into her mental spaces. As my reading tried to show, they present the cognitive process of someone who feels entrapped in the tower block to a new sense of autonomy. The panels too are a strategy to rewrite personal stories – Mrs. Moran was in fact rewriting her future.

The act of photography is a cognitive activity through which the artist, the participants, and the viewers engage in social activism. Willats' art installations aim to set in motion personal and social change through the change of perception. The mental spaces of the panels do not shun the technologies of modern urban life, but rather provide a space where participants and viewers can reorganize their perception of them. This

reorganization demands a narrative approach to the installation since the panels do not offer a matter-of-fact account of Mrs. Moran's life. Therefore, different viewers will provide different 'readings' of the tryptic.

As for the spaces of the body we find again two very different situations. Considering the space of the body in terms of performances, somatic skills, and sensuous experiences in *High-Rise*, it could be argued that the camera helps reiterate the space of the bodies created by life in the building: they are to be looked at, abused, battered, or even killed, and the camera is there to metaphorically do it or literally record it. In other words, the act of photography adds another layer to the already human-unfriendly physical spaces of the high-rise. Dan O'Hara's concept of the "double-bind act" described above foregrounded the extent to which the camera and the photographs are used to mirror and exacerbate the physical constraints imposed by built environment may be useful here. If we recall the comparison between panoptical structures, the high-rise itself, and the role of the camera lens in the novel, we will conclude that the three of them aim to exert power over others, control other people's bodies to the point that they define who they are, what they do, and how far they can go. This is particularly evident in the fact that the light of photographic cameras becomes the only source of light inside the building, which means that it controls the eye and also the (dis)location of bodies.

Conversely, the processes involved in Willats' artistic practices give leeway to alternative spaces of the body. *Living with Practical Realities* was based on the construction of a close artistic relationship between the photographer and the photographed, which implied relinquishing traditional roles in order to empower Mrs. Moran. The photographer ceased to control posture, gesture, and facial expressions, while the subject of the photograph was able to see herself represented according to her own will. As the reading of the panels from top to bottom evinced above, there is a strong connection between mental spaces and the spaces of the body since both represent the tenant's process of change from entrapment to autonomy. Unlike in *High-Rise*, the act of photography is self-reflexive and whoever engages in it is led to a process of self-reflexion as well. Noticeably, the body is represented in its relationships with the tower

block but also urban environments at large. There is a preoccupation with the body as a whole in space, instead of focussing on what is accessed only by the eye.

An analysis of the social spaces in both works also revealed that photography, as a site for socializing and bonding, can produce very different types of human relationships. In Ballard's novel, for instance, the social space of photography is characterized by the scarcity of human interactions. The presence of a fashion and society photographers could be understood as an allusion to Guy Debord's "society of the spectacle" since social life inside the building is mediated by images. The residents photograph and film one another instead of engaging directly with each other. The act of photography is not a vehicle to build close relationships; instead, it fosters an environment based on aggression and the breakdown of social life.

The residents' scopophilic practices add another layer of wickedness to social interactions, whose hollowness is finally laid bare in the image of the discarded photographs in the common corridors. In other words, the residents' use of photography as a means to subvert power relations based on class amounts to nothing. To a certain degree, the social biography of photographs foreshadows the novel's denouement as life in the building goes back to what it was before: the collective psychosis does not produce any change worth keeping, hence there is no change in the initial status quo.

Living with Practical Realities, though, has led me to assess other socializing practices and outcomes. In fact, it was produced under the idea that art contexts can be extended to accommodate people and topics that would not normally be part of it. As discussed above, due to the nature of the artwork itself, the relationship between the photographer, Willats himself, and the photographed, Mrs. Moran, led to a socializing space where the former yields his traditional authoritative role. In consequence, the subject of photography was invested with the right to (re)present herself and her reality according to what she saw as her true self. The panels, then, reflected her own processes of self-organisation inside the tower block, which culminated in a possible but yet to be realized new social space based on community. On the other hand, participation in the artwork and its meanings was extended to viewers too. This would be in the form of active spectatorship, one that could let itself be involved in Willats' own social activism. As

citizens of photography, the audience was not expected to enter into a contemplative mood but to engage with the perlocutionary force of photography and (re)act. In short, underlying this art installation is the belief that every one of us has the ability to introduce difference in society at large through everyday behaviour.

Conclusion

The central question in this dissertation is whether photography can create its spaces inside other spaces. In order to do that, since there was no other theory available, I have created my own theoretical framework for the analysis of the spaces of photography supported by the concepts of space, performativity, and photography as performative act.

Spaces are produced through the different sets of relationships established between people, institutions, and objects. According to Lefebvre, these spaces can be mental, physical, and social, and they encompass the spaces created by socialization, scientific knowledge, and the body as vehicle for true experience. In the case of social spaces, these pertain to any human activity that exists due to social interactions. These socializing practices hold society together and depend on their intersection with mental and physical spaces. Social spaces can arise from human relationships, everyday activities, and the functioning of institutions.

For Lefebvre, capitalism and modern urbanism have given rise to mental spaces based on the abstract. Scientific knowledge has become one the most important tools in the programming of everyday mental spaces. Urban built environment, in particular, has been one of the most important forms of abstraction and disconnection from what human beings really experience. Yet, I have looked at other cultural theorists in order to extend Lefebvre's standpoint. From the many other possibilities, I have explored the mental spaces of memory and the imagination since there is a strong theoretical link to the theory of photography. Regardless of being considered separately or together, both help us build other realities in and through the mind. We can even inhabit these spaces and believe them more real than reality because they are grounded on our subjectivity and affective ties.

The spaces of the body are also multifarious and include its representations, the primacy of the visual, the indivisibility of body and mind, the senses, and its interactions with objects. Both Lefebvre and Foucault claimed that the body had been subject to the discourses of scientific knowledge for a very long time, but also that the body is of capital importance to the understanding of human experiences in the world. In the case of

photography, sensorial information is closely connected to how we experience the photographic act on an individual level, as well as social interactions fostered through that medium.

Nothing exists outside the nodes were the three types of space intersect, and space is always on the making. There is an undeniable performative dimension in the production of space. Henri Lefebvre, J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, and Erving Goffman all share the idea that reality comes into being because people perform behaviours and, by performing, they create new realities. Change happens when we can introduce difference into the everyday and, thus, reshape the world around us. This, in turn, affects power relations between people and institutions. Performativity grants us the ability to participate in the network of power relations instead of being under the ineluctable influence of institutional authority.

In order to build my theoretical framework, I have also assessed some writings by some of the most influential voices on theory of photography, namely Roland Barthes, John Tagg, Susan Sontag, and Victor Burgin. They helped me introduce the idea that photography involves more than taking pictures. Their theorization around the medium touches upon a few critical points, such as its relationship to the real, as well as to cultural and political structures. There are issues of intention and agency to be accounted for, too.

Notwithstanding, if we want to understand photography as a performative act able to create its own spaces, we need to accept that its performative nature goes beyond the photographic image. Looking at the role of the viewer, for instance, he or she is simultaneously the activator and producer of meaning through the act of 'looking', on the one hand; on the other hand, though, the perlocutionary force of a photograph can actually provoke a reaction in the viewer and lead him or her to act upon the world on his or her behalf, as well as on behalf of others. Photography should, then, be understood as a means for personal narration and memorialization, and (social) activism, too.

Control over how we want to be represented is crucial both in professional photographic practices, according to Richard Shusterman, however I argued that this can be generalized to amateur settings too. That is to say that the spaces of the body created by photographic performances, the somatic skills involved in photographing, and the idea

of photography as a multisensorial experience are common to any type of photographic experience. In this sense, the spaces of the body and social space are deeply intertwined: performances simultaneously reflect the mental images of some ideal representation of the subject and the creation and/or reassertion of social ties.

The materiality of the body and that of photographs are also closely connected in that they can produce not only different spaces of the body but also new spaces of socialization. This is particularly evident in the different uses and places we engender for photographs and the act of photographing: in the private and the public spheres, we build relationships as well as personal and global histories through the photographic medium.

As stated above, mental images of one's true self, narrative impulse, and memory are some of the mental spaces we can find in the act of photography. I have equally considered the spaces of fantasy arising from visual pleasure taken from the act of looking at photographs. The viewer may identify with the camera to the point where she or he embodies the eye of the camera itself. Visual pleasure can also take the form of *scopophilia*, which is often associated with the objectification of the photographed. In both cases, whoever resorts to photography to fulfill her or his scopic drive often reconfigures one visible reality into an invisible one, which nonetheless seems more real or gratifying.

The reflection on the relation between space and performativity with which I started this dissertation, as well as the survey I offered of the performative nature of photography, allowed me to set the theoretical framework I needed to analyse the spatial dimensions of photography. As I have shown, being a human activity, photography is a performative act, which I named the 'act of photography'. Acts of photography imply mental, physical, and social dimensions that eventually become the spaces of photography. Consequently, I came to the conclusion that photography can create its own spaces if we see it as an activity dependent on different subjectivities, contexts, and materialities.

My theoretical framework for the 'act of photography' was, then, applied to J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise* and Stephen Willats' *Living with Practical Realities*. In the second chapter, I started by contextualizing both works and defined the space of the high-rise, one of the most emblematic spatial embodiments of built environment, as the background

against which to test to what extent the act of photography could produce alternative spaces. This contextual introduction aimed at foregrounding that the spaces of photography arise in and/or from the network of intersecting spaces of everyday life.

The first conclusion concerning my comparative approach to Ballard's novel and Willats' installation is that they share the same problematic – the dystopic nature of high-rise buildings – and, yet, the act of photography produces almost opposite mental, physical, and social spaces. I think that the differences are less about the comparison between different media than the very nature and purpose of the works. In spite of the common theme and the importance of the act of photography, Ballardian characters and Willats' participants are given different scopes in which to perform. Ballard uses photography to reinstate the "death of affect" generated by modern architectural technology. His novel depicts technology as pernicious and photography is not an exception to that rule. Very much like Susan Sontag, Ballard uses the camera, the photograph, and the photographer as aggressors preying on other people's subjectivities. Willats, on the other hand, uses photography to foster the rebirth of affect and hence devolve urban dwellers the power to redefine urban built environment. He perceives and uses the act of photography as a creative gesture towards freedom and alternative ways of perceiving and living life.

Performative behaviour is intrinsically susceptible to repetition and difference alike. This means that, in theory, one has the ability or the choice to behave in this or that way, a process which may produce new spaces. This is, in turn, underpinned by issues of intention and agency in the act of photography. In *High-Rise*, the residents could have used photography differently and, therefore, overcome the spaces of built environment, but Ballard did not choose to let them do it. *Living with Practical Realities,* however, was aimed at simultaneously helping Mrs. Moran to change her reality and promote a wider awareness of a specific urban problematic, which eventually happened to a certain extent.

Another interesting point raised was that, within the same work, we can find spaces of photography clashing against each other. This is apparent in *High-Rise* if we compare the residents' and Anthony Royal's uses of photography. To the former, despite the warlike mode, photography can still be considered a space for socialization, whereas the

latter uses it to withdraw to a highly individualistic experience of the real. In Willats' installation, that clash is perhaps more evident in Mrs. Moran's perception of what her reality is and what it can be, which is, in turn, shaped by the dichotomy between the indoors and the outdoors, as well as the present and the future. From my point of view, these discrepancies underscore that there is always tension between the private and the public to be accounted for in the act of photography.

My final thoughts on the spaces of photography will now lead me to make a brief assessment of my theoretical framework and its scope of application in the future. As I have already stated, my theoretical framework for the spaces of photography is based on the intersection of the concepts of space, performativity, and the performative nature of photography, on the one hand, and the particularities of my corpus of analysis, on the other. Due to lack of space and time, I could not test its application to other works by J.G. Ballard and Stephen Willats, even though they put great emphasis on the photographic medium. The analysis of the spaces of photography in Ballard's *The Atrocity Exhibition* and Willats' *Berlin Local* (2014), for instance, would allow me to apply the theoretical framework to two works that greatly differ from *High-Rise* and *Living with Practical Realities.* Consequently, my dissertation should be considered a first approach to the spaces of photography in both authors.

I think, nevertheless, that my theoretical framework for the 'act of photography' can be relevant to other novels and artworks in which photography is present, and to anyone interested in understanding its spatial dimension from the standpoint of Cultural Studies. I have used it for a comparative analysis, but it could be used in an individual work. Contemporary art and fiction, for example, provide us infinite possibilities for understanding the place of photography in the modern world. In addition, it would be interesting to apply my theoretical framework to other media, such as a film or a TV series. I am certain that this would lead us to assess, for instance, the spaces of photography in comparison to, say, the spaces of the moving image. In the end, since my theoretical framework can be easily adapted, it seems to me that it is as fluid as the spaces human beings inhabit.

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