

Unweaving Narrative Fabric: Bruno Taut, Walter Benjamin, and Paul Scheerbart's *The Gray Cloth*

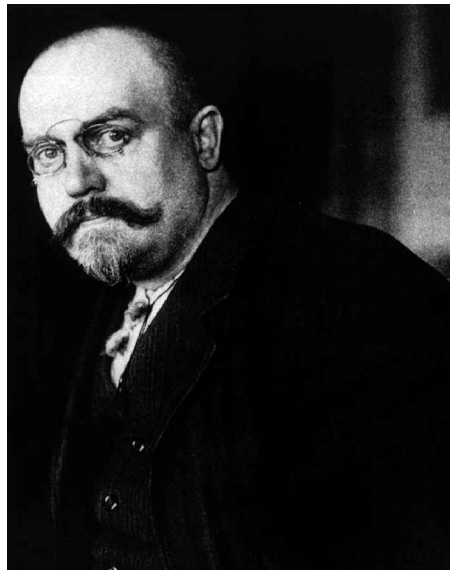
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German Expressionist writer Paul Scheerbart (1863–1914) articulated his convictions on the power of architectural construction and its relationship to the modern world in his final fictional narrative of 1914 entitled *Das graue Tuch und zehn Prozent Weiß. Ein Damenroman* [*The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White. A Ladies Novel*]. Scheerbart developed a nuanced vision of architecture and society that brought together issues of gender and fashion with utopian idealism and influenced many prominent architects and theorists of his time. This essay examines Scheerbart's commentaries on architecture, technology, and culture that have been lost in the wake of architectural modernism.

NARRATIVES, OR STORIES, HAVE FORMULATED architectural fiction, and on several occasions have been instrumental to the construction of architectural theory. Closely related to the Latin verb *gnoscere*, meaning “to know,” the term “to narrate” means the binding together of stories, myths, and fantasies through plot formation and characterization within fictional landscapes that reflect a knowledge of the culture producing them.¹ Narratives are formed by both expository statements and responses that combine to make fluid interchanges not only between intention and inhabitation within the fictional world, but between fiction and, in some cases, potential architectural production. Examples of a few eighteenth-through twentieth-century novels of particular importance to architecture include Jean-Francois Bastide's *Petite Maison*, William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, George Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead*, and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.² This essay attempts to untangle the various threads of interchange both contained within and surrounding narrative by focusing primarily on various responses to *The Gray Cloth*, a late example

of architectural fiction by Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915) (Figure 1). It considers the critical role of narration, or storytelling, in the creation of architecture.

Paul Scheerbart provided several significant examples of the relationship between fictional narratives and architectural vision in the past century. Scheerbart was educated in philosophy and theology and maintained his interest in architecture throughout his prolific career that included twenty-seven books and over three hundred articles. He is best known for his collaboration with Bruno Taut on the Glass House at the 1914 Cologne Werkbund Exhibition (Figure 2).³ After his death in 1915, Scheerbart was reconfigured into the spiritual “Glas papa” of the Crystal Chain letters between Bruno Taut and other German Expressionist architects in 1919–1921.⁴ Scheerbart most clearly articulated his long-held convictions on the importance of Modern architecture in the two years before the outbreak of World War I. While in close contact with Taut, the author completed



1. Paul Scheerbart (1911). Photograph by Filip Kester.

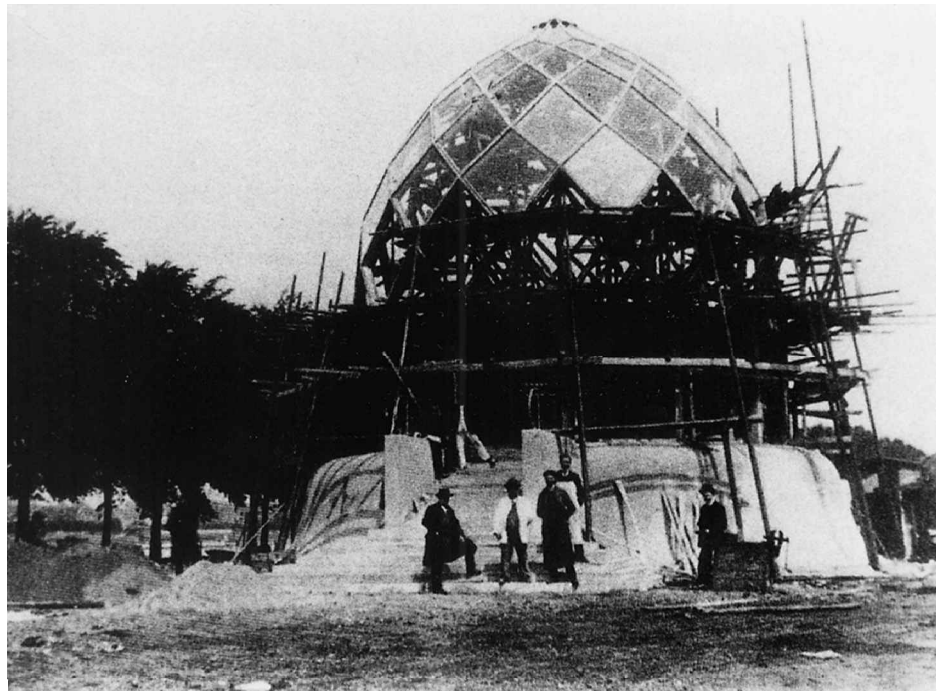
three works that are important to the history of glass architecture but that remain relatively obscure: a novel, *Lesabéndio. Ein Asteroïden-Roman* [*Lesabéndio. An Asteroid Novel*] (1913); a manifesto in 111 chapters, *Glass Architecture* (1914); and the novel of this focus, *Das graue Tuch und zehn Prozent Weiß. Ein Damenroman*. [*The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White. A Ladies Novel*] (1914).⁵

Although Scheerbart has received some attention as a literary figure in Germany, the short historiography of English works examining his architectural fictions begins only in 1959 with Reyner Banham's article entitled “The Glass Paradise.”⁶ As part of his efforts to “re-write the history of the Modern Movement,” Banham briefly lamented Scheerbart's absence from Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*.⁷ Banham described Scheerbart as an “author of fantasticated novels, mostly short and decorated by his own hand in Yellow Book style,” before concluding that “if one applies to him [Scheerbart] the normal test for missing pioneers, that of prophecy uttered in the right ears at the right time, he scores more heavily than many other writers of his day.”⁸ In 1975, Banham's call to investigate Scheerbart as part of an expansion of the canon of modern architecture was taken up by Rosemary Haag Bletter in her seminal essay, “Paul Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies.”⁹ In this work, Bletter introduced English-speaking audiences for the first time to *The Gray Cloth*.¹⁰ Nonetheless, *The Gray Cloth* has never been translated to English.

The Gray Cloth appeared shortly after Scheerbart released the last of his so-called asteroid novels, *Lesabéndio* [1913].¹¹ Both were published by Georg Müller.¹² *Lesabéndio* recounts life on Pallas, a fictional asteroid located in the asteroid belt and inhabited by peaceful Pallasianers. Without government or institutions, the Pallasianers have united to discover that which lies be-

yond a luminous cloud hovering over them. Lesabéndio, a Pallasian astronomer, has convinced the populace to construct a huge observation tower toward this end. The seven-mile-high tower is eventually constructed and Lesabéndio, upon climbing the tower, experiences a dramatic transformation into a celestial being, an asteroid in his own right. The process of transformation introduces the pain of knowledge to Lesabéndio and the other Pallasianers, reconfiguring the paradisiacal nature of life on the planet. Scheerbart's metaphor for the transcendent promises of a modernism that must completely break from the past through technological achievement were discussed later in the century by Walter Benjamin, who counted *Lesabéndio* among the most influential works he had studied.¹³

Scheerbart first looked beyond storytelling to convey the spirit of modernism upon Bruno Taut's commission to build the Glass House at the German Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne.¹⁴ The novelist wrote that learning of the commission was "the greatest event of my life," and his transformation from a fiction writer into a technical one occurred simultaneously.¹⁵ Scheerbart and Taut had met just a short time before Taut's commission.¹⁶ The author contributed epitaphs to Taut's structure and wrote at least one description of the pavilion in which he outlined the potential for glass and concrete construction.¹⁷ Taut dedicated the Glass House to Scheerbart, and Scheerbart, in turn, dedicated *Glass Architecture* to Taut. *Glass Architecture*, came to be Scheerbart's best known and one of his most unusual works.¹⁸ The manifesto was frequently read, not only by the German Expressionists shortly after World War I, but by architects and architectural critics well into the 1920s and '30s. *Glass Architecture* was initially rejected for publication by Scheerbart's literary pub-



2. The Glass House under construction. Bruno Taut (1914).

lisher, Georg Müller, a fact Scheerbart noted with consternation in a letter to his friend Richard Dehmel. Scheerbart wrote: "[My] book '*Glass Architecture*,' which I assumed he would certainly take, he rejected after 8 weeks in storage, at which time he maintained that the reader would not find it to be literature, but rather 'practical building suggestions!' Oh, sure!"¹⁹ Scheerbart's own perception of *Glass Architecture* as a continuation, in nonnarrative format, of his utopian ideals is clear both from his choice of a literary publisher in the first place and his response to the publisher's critique. Benjamin considered *Glass Architecture* within the context of Scheerbart's narrative work and concluded that it presented social constructions associated with the development of glass architecture "in utopian contexts."²⁰ In the past forty years, however, interpretations have largely focused on the reinsertion of *Glass Architecture* into the history of functionalism for its "sharp sense of the practicalities of using the new material."²¹

The impact of *Glass Architecture* has been frequently cited. However, *The Gray Cloth*, Scheerbart's last novel and the focus of this essay, is far more important to modern architectural theory than its historiography would suggest. It appears that Scheerbart

started writing *The Gray Cloth*, which he would ironically refer to as "Müller's Ladies Novel," immediately after *Glass Architecture* was rejected for publication.²² In desperate need of money, Scheerbart worked quickly and made very few corrections.²³ The novel is set in a murky and somewhat ill-defined, mid-twentieth century of international travel, weighty legal battles, and large-scale development. Scheerbart's protagonist, Edgar Krug, a Swiss archaeologist-turned-architect, circumnavigates the globe by airship in an effort to populate the planet with structures of prefabricated steel and brightly colored glass panels. Krug's wildly varied steel and glass projects include an elaborate high-rise and exhibition/concert hall in Chicago, a retirement complex for airline pilots on the Fiji Islands, the structure for an elevated train traversing a zoo in Northern India, a suspended residential villa on the Kuria Muria Islands off the coast of the Arabian Peninsula for a wealthy Chinese man, and a museum of oriental weapons.

In a dramatic moment near the beginning of the novel, Krug proposes that the plainly dressed organist in the Chicago concert hall, Clara Weber, marry him with the condition that she continue to wear outfits of gray and ten percent white, providing

the theme in the novel's title. Ironically underscoring the complexity of the situation with characteristic simplicity and directness, Scheerbart has Clara Weber agree to marry Edgar Krug rather spontaneously. After a lengthy and comical passage outlining the exact legal description of gray and ten percent white, to be added to the marriage contract by Krug's lawyer, Walter Löwe, the newlyweds embark on their "honeymoon" around the world.

Scheerbart used Clara's gray clothing as a trope for gender, fashion, advertising, sexuality, and the quality of modernism as an antitraditional force. While some have characterized Scheerbart's use of the gray cloth as "an ironic side swipe" at the "tyranny of style-crazed art nouveau architects," it should also be considered part of a complex dialectic that highlights the adventures of Clara Krug through Scheerbart's portrayal of utopian and real conditions.²⁴ It might also be suggested that the novel presents Scheerbart's attempt to negate any possibility of union between his utopian and real worlds. Whatever the case may be, an examination of the narrative, particularly that surrounding Clara Krug's gray clothing, provides insight into many of the ironies of life not only in the future, but in Wilhelmine Germany.²⁵ When Krug encounters difficulties convincing the English owner of the convalescent home for airship pilots that the architecture should be of colored glass, Clara's clothing quickly becomes part of the discussion. Krug states to his client, Mr. Webster: "You can see," said Herr Krug, "from my wife's outfit that I have a taste for simplicity. My wife always wears gray with ten percent white. The airship pilots will have nothing to complain of concerning me. They shall also have simplicity of color, just as they wish. I would be a bad architect if I did not consider the wishes of my clients. That is what every architect must understand

first and foremost. Without a doubt, the artistic and aesthetic only come second."²⁶

Scheerbart framed Clara's concern over the tyranny of her clothing around her dread that the formulaic outfit would bring her unwanted fame. Clara's friends worry that she will "be turned into an advertising lady [*Reklamedame*]," and Clara fears the knowledge the world already has about her marriage to the glass architect through the media of the newspapers, yet revels in the adventure of visiting new parts of the world.²⁷

From Antarctica she writes to her friend Amanda: Hair-raising nonsense must be published in the American newspapers. Telegraph me with news of what is going on. Of course, I do not say a word about the marriage contract. I am actually ashamed that my life is bound to such a contract. But the polar nights are wonderful. And the snow is dazzlingly beautiful."²⁸

Clara's disenchantment with her gray clothing peaks after the viewing of an American film entitled "The Wedding of the Famous Architect," a fictionalized version of the Krug's wedding "filmed especially for Europeans" who, the filmmaker feels, have a particular appreciation for sensationalist drama.²⁹ While both Clara and her husband are shocked by what they consider to be their new infamy, Clara seems to feel particularly disturbed by the effect of her clothes. She writes again to Amanda: "I would most prefer a divorce. Through renown, one comes to look like a fool in the most infamous way. I am tired. I have been laughed out of the entire world. I've had enough gray cloth."³⁰

Shortly after the film viewing, Edgar Krug leaves Clara on her own as he travels to Ceylon to construct special airports required by the "Center for Air Research." Meanwhile, Clara rejects her gray clothing and performs a series of concerts played on giant ten-, twenty-, and forty-tower organs

spread across the landscape for audiences hovering in airships above. Edgar learns of these concerts and writes: "Congratulations to you! Your forty-tower organ has now become a global event? . . . In any event, I am very happy that you are now also introduced to the curse of fame. Comrades in suffering become closer. Hopefully you will soon feel that fame is uncomfortable. Then we can console each other."³¹

Whether it is Clara's fame from her very unusual concerts that binds her more closely to her husband, or fame garnered from her formulaic clothing, she nevertheless decides that from this point in the novel she will again assume her gray and white fashions. She follows her husband to Ceylon, then the Aral Sea, and finally catches up with him at the home of the wealthy Chinese client Li-Tung on the Kuria Muria Islands. Scheerbart extends the mystery of Clara's decision even within the narrative as witnessed by the statement that Miss Amanda, Clara's friend from Chicago, "opened her eyes wide but did not say a thing" when she sees her friend again in gray and white.

Scheerbart effectively broadens the range of possibilities through the narrative by eliminating even the precise reason for the wedding clause in the first place. The paragraph in the wedding contract specifying that Clara Krug wear gray and white is eliminated while the couple visits ancient Babylon, which has been turned into a historic theme park, complete with costumes for the visitors. Clara, however, decides to continue wearing gray for reasons that do not seem clear either to her or the reader. Clara discusses this with her husband, stating: "And I also feel that your position is not always an easy one. People do not want color—it is too harsh, so they say. . . . And now you must always convince them to use even a couple of colors. You must seduce

people into using colors. I understand that this no small task. And, the gray cloth that I wear should help persuade the client toward this. I have gradually begun to suspect the significance of the gray cloth. Have I got it right? Or am I wrong?"³²

At this moment, Scheerbart is at the height of ironic richness. Krug simply responds: "I don't know," and the questions of the role of fashion as they related to style, marketing, and seduction in architecture remain unanswered. As the couple travels on to Malta and Sardinia, Clara attempts to find a rationale of her own for her gray outfits. In response to a telegram from her friend Kate Bandel in Antarctica, Clara replies: "It is better to have a colorful house than colorful clothing. The former makes all of life colorful while the latter only serves vanity and makes away with money which should be for building houses. Edgar was right about the gray cloth."³³

Edgar Krug's statement at the beginning of the novel that the gray cloth was intended to eliminate competition between women's fashion and colored glass architecture is revealed as a mask for contrasts between uncontrolled passion and bourgeois "refinement," men's and women's fashions, as well as utopian ideals and real-world constructs. As the two watch a beautiful sunset over Sardinia, Krug states: "I am, however, so taken in by color, as well as unrefined color—the so-called unrefined color—that I must hide my passion. You see, that is really the reason why I inserted the paragraph about the gray cloth. It has now been removed. But I thank you for still wearing gray. I seem less colorful that way, right? Besides, I also only wear gray clothes."³⁴

Issues of masking and identity again emerge toward the end of the novel when "air robbers" using airships as get-away vehicles steal "Oriental weapons" from Krug's building on Malta. The thieves wear gray with ten

percent white, thereby hiding their own identities and creating links to Clara herself. By employing the color and formula of Clara's clothing as a mask for illicit activity, Scheerbart established an ironic relationship between architecture, the standardized gray outfit, and the anonymity of fashion itself.³⁵ Through her signature attire, Clara resolves to reject the fashions of bourgeois culture for the higher goals of glass architecture. She does not, however, reject bourgeois life and longs for both "quiet domesticity" and the "gray room" with her harmonium waiting for her at their home on Lago Maggiore.

The novel ends on a transcendental note, focusing on the wonders of colored glass architecture. With the gray cloth far behind them, Edgar and Clara look up into the glass top of the "salon tower" in their home, and comment on the ultimate goal of glass architecture.

"Dragonfly wings!" he said quietly. "Birds of paradise, fireflies, lightfish, orchids, muscles, pearls, diamonds, etc. . . ."

"All that is beautiful on the face of the earth."

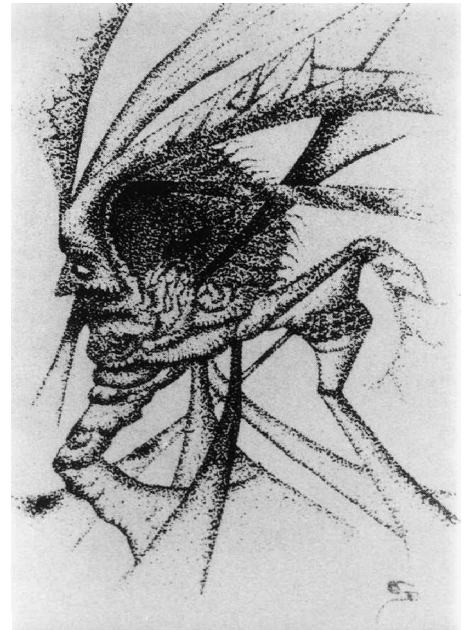
"And we find it all again in glass architecture. It is the culmination—a cultural peak!"

Then they ate roasted snails.

They drank fresh beer from nearby Brissago.

And then they both smoked good, clean cigars and again with their heads leaning back, looked up into the dome of the tower.³⁶

This paen to bourgeois culture at the end of his novel must be deemed ironic. For in *The Gray Cloth* Scheerbart ultimately aimed to unpack a modern, global, middle-class culture through the trope of fashion. This construct, moreover, served to pro-



3. Sketch by Paul Scheerbart (1907).

mote Scheerbart's larger vision of glass architecture, which he believed, without irony, to be capable of forming a "cultural peak."

Evidence of Scheerbart's seriousness may be gleaned from a note to a friend written in 1913 stating: "I have already been writing very very much about so-called glass architecture for the past twenty years; I wanted double walls with colored glass—thus the walls of architecture change. In the last three years I have written a lot—but mostly in the form of little novels."³⁷ In fact, between 1889 and 1915, Scheerbart had published nearly thirty individual pieces ranging from novels, theater works, and his more technical treatises, including *The Perpetual Motion Machine* [1910] and *Glass Architecture* [1914], as well as hundreds of sketches (Figure 3), and over three hundred articles for newspapers, magazines, and anthologies.

During his lifetime, Scheerbart was probably best known by his contemporaries

for his contributions of short articles to daily newspapers. Scheerbart began his career as a culture and arts writer in 1885 with the little-known *Berliner Börsen-Courier*.³⁸ He was, however, most prolific in this area between 1910 and 1911, when he focused on developing his ideas about glass architecture and he formulated many of the narrative components found in *The Gray Cloth*.³⁹ At this time, he was a regular contributor to the popular *Berliner Tageblatt*, and the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*.⁴⁰

Scheerbart's journalistic contributions frequently found their way into the feuilleton section of the German papers. Focusing on light news or feature articles, the feuilleton flowered in German press between 1890 and 1930 and has been described as "serving up an excess of details" in prose that "tends toward shorter and shorter fragments that pile up at a faster and faster pace . . . in an almost a telegraphic style."⁴¹ Scheerbart's well-developed style of episodic narratives, in which short stories are strung together (e.g., *Ich Liebe Dich!*), or longer stories are broken down into short chapters (e.g., *Lesabéndio*), provided the ruptures and humorous continuities that relate it both to the fantasy of the fairy tale and the ironies of modern life.⁴²

In a feuilleton piece of 1911, for example, entitled "Das Höhere. Eine Räubergeschichte" [The Higher Thing. A Robbery Story], Scheerbart explored the notion of an air heist.⁴³ He delved into the popularity of fables of faraway places whose truth or authenticity went unquestioned by Americans in an odd short story also from 1911 entitled "Tanzende Pflanzen—Tanzende Wälder. Amerikanische Sensationsgeschichte." [Dancing Plants—Dancing Forests. An American Sensational Story].⁴⁴ Perhaps the narrative closest to *The Gray Cloth* is his 1913 fable entitled "Der Architektenkongreß" [The Architects' Con-

gress], first published in the newspaper, *Berliner Tageblatt*, then reprinted by Bruno Taut in *Frühlicht*.⁴⁵ This futuristic story takes place in the second quarter of the twentieth century near the German town of Brandenburg. Glass architects from around the world convene by airship at an enormous glass convention hall to discuss measures they have been taking to encourage the use of glass architecture in their respective countries. While details of the story differ from those in *The Gray Cloth*, in "The Architects' Congress" Scheerbart explored how the architects will build colored glass and reinforced concrete structures in the future. It forms, perhaps, Scheerbart's first attempt at fusing the spiritual ideals of materiality to the process of architectural construction through narrative. Architects in the story confront the "primary importance" of engineers in human life over the past twenty years and state that they want "colorful, translucent, double glass walls," particularly in "public buildings."

Reviews of Scheerbart's work upon and in the decades following its publication reveal how his combination of architectural fantasy and theory was received as well as its impact on architecture culture. Despite Scheerbart's fictional critiques of glass architecture in his novels, very few contemporary responses to his work have been located. The few that are available, however, reveal the sharp divide not only between contemporary and later readers, but also between general, literary, and architectural readers.

The only known review of *The Gray Cloth* at the time of its publication was written by literary and cultural critic August Heinrich Kober, for the well-respected Berlin literary review *Das literarische Echo*.⁴⁶ Kober was effusive in his consideration of the book and was particularly appreciative of Scheerbart's desire to understand the mechanisms behind his poetic vision of colored glass. Kober wrote:

Technical utopia (or perhaps more appropriately, technical futurism, since it only concerns itself with anticipated realities) and pure artistic formations of free adventures are balanced here in poetic harmony. Technology provides the story line of the book: a glass architect marries under the condition that his wife always wear gray with ten percent white, in order to serve as a foil to his colored glass buildings. The comic element in the ensuing scenes is no longer, as it was earlier with Scheerbart, a grotesquely eccentric distortion, but ripe old humor. The enormity of the concept is contrasted with petty accidents. Scheerbart's style here is clear; epic simplicity, and the profusion of the plot are intimated by the continuous use of the conjunction 'and.' The plot—a few stages of a honeymoon—carried on at will, with the 'and'-technique used in an organic manner as in an old, naïve, common fairy tale.⁴⁷

A few lines later, Kober hailed the work as "a splendid color symphony" and considered that "after this book, Scheerbart would have perhaps become the poet of colors that touch modern man both emotionally and intellectually in equal measure." The review ended with Kober's placement of Scheerbart in the context of German literature by stating: "One is reminded of Goethe's stories with their colors combined by an old poet and scientist, or of the Romantics, whose color effects were as sacred as colorful chasubles."⁴⁸ The reviewer draws close parallels between *The Gray Cloth* and Goethe's bizarrely fantastic *Märchen* [Fairytale] (1795) and didactic *Farbenlehre* [Theory of Colors] (1810). This context would have been appreciated by Scheerbart,

who considered his own narrative roots to be connected to such writers as Clemens Brentano and to have “stronger threads tied to the eighteenth-century inhabitants of Europe” than to his own time.⁴⁹

Like Scheerbart’s own writing, critiques of his work on glass architecture seem to have been featured in the feuilleton section of the German newspapers. Ironically, Scheerbart’s reputation as a feuilletonist led reviewers of his work to respond in the feuilleton format to pieces that were neither satirical nor narrative in nature. In 1914, for example, Scheerbart wrote an article on Bruno Taut’s proposal for the Glass House at the German Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne. Entitled “Das Glashaus. Ein Vorbericht” [The Glass House, A Preliminary Report], the piece appeared prominently on page two of the newspaper.⁵⁰ The editors felt obliged to open the piece with an explanation of Scheerbart’s credentials to write about built architecture. They wrote: “Paul Scheerbart, the poet of cosmic fantasies and grotesque dreams, appears in the following statement on an unusual side. The interesting plan of a glass house that he himself had dreamt of in many of his works, should appear at the Cologne Werkbund Exhibition next year. To the realization of his dream, the greatest event of his life, as he calls it, he dedicates this ‘Preliminary Report,’ about whose technical details we do not want to argue with the poet. The Editors”⁵¹

In his article, Scheerbart recognized that “most people consider glass architecture a dream of the future” and he presented an uncharacteristically sober account of Bruno Taut’s previous experience with exhibition buildings and the form and materials of the new structure that he would use again in an article for the practical German engineering periodical *Technische Monatshefte*.⁵²

Sometime thereafter, Jessa Laam, however, reviewed Scheerbart’s article in the

feuilleton section of the *Berliner Tageblatt*.⁵³ Laam’s article entitled “Erwachen im Glashaus. Ein Zukunftsraum” [Awakening in a Glass House. A Dream of the Future] lampooned Scheerbart’s fictional style as a feuilletonist while poking gentle fun at the notion of living in a glass house. The article begins as the narrator falls asleep while reading the newspaper and dreams of waking up and running around the glass house in his pajamas. “I inspect my new house. The thing looks good. The dining room has glass everywhere. No cabinets. Everything between double glass walls, plates, glasses, silver. Buffet and credenza are missing; the whole room is a giant glass case. One press of an electric switch: the prismatic glass shines in beautiful colors.”⁵⁴

The narrator continues to inspect his house with a degree of awe until he suddenly finds himself in his music room, transformed into the famed Italian opera singer Enrico Caruso. The story becomes more fantastical as the narrator (now Caruso) stands in his glass shoes, singing notes determined by the changing colors of the glass to a crowd of female admirers. In their excitement, the women begin to clear items from the music room and Caruso departs to the bedroom where he is greeted by glass architects. In a pointed critique of glass architecture, Laam ended the piece with the following lines:

“Sir, we are the glass architects. How did you come to critique our idea, whose practicality is as transparent as glass? With these stones, the last of a subdued epoch, we will kill you.”

“Pardon me, sirs,” I said, “it is just a joke. Besides you are not allowed to throw stones in glass houses.”

At that point I fumbled for some object for protection.

Suddenly a clinking sound, streams of water trickled down on me. . . .

I awoke and find myself in my room, the carafe of water swinging in one hand, in the other the morning paper. In bright midday sunlight a feuilleton shines in front of me: “The Glass House, a Preliminary Report by Paul Scheerbart.”⁵⁵

Much of the success of this somewhat biting commentary on Scheerbart’s writing lies in the fact that the author assumes Scheerbart’s usual narrative style to respond, eschewing the factual style of Scheerbart’s original article, and ignoring the fact that Scheerbart’s original article did not appear in the feuilleton at all.

Criticized by Laam for his fragile connection as a writer to the real world of architecture, Scheerbart is taken to task for his belief that glass architecture will create a better world by the noted artist, humorist, and travel writer Philipp Berges in an article “Die gläserne Kulturwelt” [The Glass Cultural World].⁵⁶ Appearing in the feuilleton section of the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* in 1914, the article specifically deals with Scheerbart’s *Glass Architecture*. Berges wrote: “Far up north near the North Pole lives an unusual people, whose origin is unclear, the Eskimos or Innuits, as they call themselves. Whites, who they call Kabluna, seldom arrive, in their regions that are so cold that the thermometer falls down to more than 50 degrees below zero. . . . The most unusual thing in this fairy land is, however, the architecture [*Baukunst*] of the Eskimos, each of whom is an architect on his own.”⁵⁷

After describing the Innuits’ houses of ice, Berges wasted little space getting to the point of the article. Ignoring the fact that Scheerbart was describing cultural advancements on a spiritual plane made available through the relationship between the color of the glass and nature, he continued: “The Eskimo’s ice slab house shows once again

that there is nothing new under the sun. The idea-rich Paul Scheerbarth, who believes that with his glass architecture, something completely new and bewildering will appear in the world, probably without knowing it, in reality grasped back hold of the most primitive architecture of humankind.”⁵⁸

Berges then outlined Scheerbarth’s concepts from his “little book,” *Glass Architecture*. While not sympathetic to Scheerbarth’s ideas, Berges did his best to outline them fully. As he finished the article, Berges concluded: “To the reader who will become engrossed in all of these pictures of the future, it seems that finally he might become completely confused and maddened by these monstrosities of glass. If the glass house, the transparent dwelling, had the high cultural value that Scheerbarth ascribes, then the Eskimos must have long ago arrived at the highest level of culture. But unfortunately they continue to live, in spite of their glass and ice houses, in the most primitive conditions that one can find on the earth. In spite of this, Scheerbarth can take this as a consolation. For when his glass dreams are not realized in the cultural world, he is always free to go up to the Eskimos in the North Pole region, where he can find at least a small fraction of his powerful glass dream realized.”⁵⁹

Like Laam, Berges considered Scheerbarth’s grasp on reality tenuous at best. Together they provide important commentary on the reception to Scheerbarth’s work, that emphasizes the critical rift between the everyday realities of Wilhelmine life and the imaginary, or fantastic that Scheerbarth attempted to bridge at the end of his life. While fantasies of the future, as Laam pointed out, were considered equivalent to dreams by contemporary critics, Scheerbarth looked to cultures long past to provide surer ground. After *The Gray Cloth*, Scheerbarth intended to return to the subject of ancient

Asia Minor, which he referred to as “the so-called cradle of glass culture.”⁶⁰ Based on epistolary evidence, one of Scheerbarth’s next books was to be the unfinished (and now lost) anthology entitled *Der alte Orient. Kulturromanellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon*. [The Ancient Orient. Cultural Novellas from Assyria, Palmyra and Babylon].⁶¹

The critical tensions between Scheerbarth and the world in which he wrote did not render the author any less important for the generation of architects and theorists who thrived after his death. *The Gray Cloth* appears to have been read and considered to be both of literary and practical importance to a number of critics of German literature and architecture. In the four years following Scheerbarth’s death, Adolf Behne, for example, insisted that “Everyone who knows German literature loves Scheerbarth’s novel ‘The Gray Cloth’ and his poem ‘Glass Architecture.’”⁶² Similarly, Behne quoted lines from *The Gray Cloth*, writing: “In Gray Cloth (‘The Honeymoon of the Glass Architect’), is the classic sentence that we are never allowed to forget: ‘It is indeed too sad that people are not yet gripped by the higher desire to build!’”⁶³

Behne even quoted from Scheerbarth’s fictional character Clara Krug, when explaining how Bruno Taut had grasped Scheerbarth’s ideas fully. Behne suggested that Taut, in his Gartenstadt Falkenberg project near Berlin, had fulfilled Clara’s direction to “seduce” people into using colors.⁶⁴ Walter Gropius also acknowledging the novel’s value. He recommended *The Gray Cloth* to Hermann Finsterlin in 1919. Gropius wrote, “You absolutely must read Paul Scheerbarth [*sic*]: I name the following works: *Glasarchitektur . . . , Immer Mutig . . . , Mückhausen und Clarisse [sic] . . . , Lesabendia [sic] . . . , Graues Tuch und 10% Weiss [sic] . . . , Die grosse Revolution . . . , Cervantes . . . , in all of these works you will find much wisdom and beauty.”⁶⁵*

In Adolf Behne’s 1925 obituary for the author on the tenth anniversary of Scheerbarth, Behne focused in particular on *Lesabéndio*, which he believed to be evidence of Scheerbarth’s “highest mastery.”⁶⁶ He wrote, “So many ‘swiftly advancing literary currents’ come and go in Germany—Paul Scheerbarth would have been raised to heights by none. He remained apart. More than twenty-five books appeared; today, almost all are out of print and difficult to find (with the exception of ‘Glass Architecture’ that appeared in the ‘Sturm’ publisher) and he died ten years ago. Very few still know his great artistic meaning.”⁶⁷

Also in 1925 Scheerbarth’s *The Gray Cloth* was selected to appear in an anthology of Germany literature entitled *Humor of Nations*.⁶⁸ Scheerbarth was featured as one of twelve eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century satirists and ironists, including Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Jean Paul, and Heinrich von Kleist. This volume of German humor appeared with a companion volume published by the same press on English humor that focused on works by such authors as Jonathan Swift, Charles Dickens, and Oscar Wilde.⁶⁹

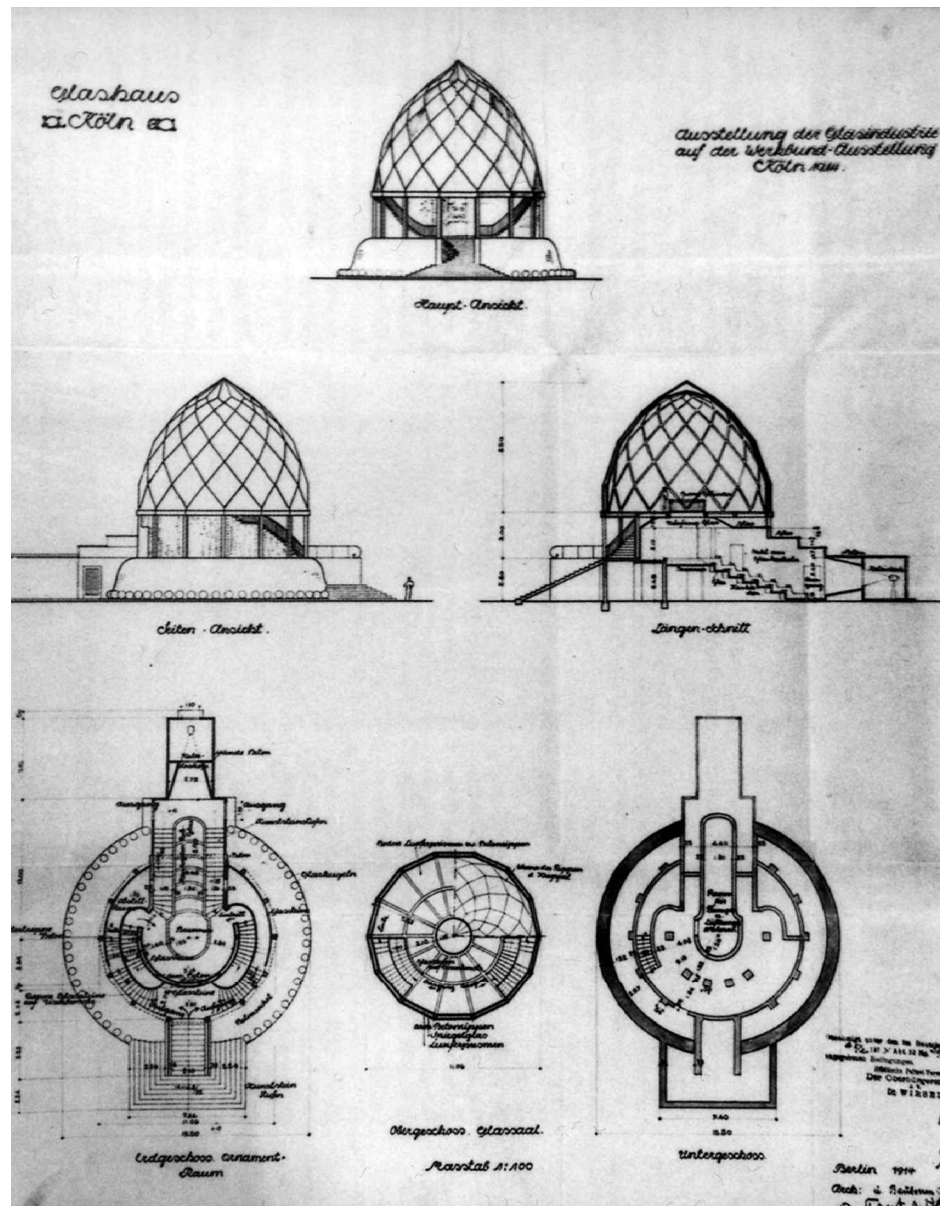
As Scheerbarth’s greatest and most consistent architectural apologist, Bruno Taut read and reread Scheerbarth’s complex literary history with glass architecture, forming it into what might be considered a series of fragments, far from their rich literary contexts. Convinced of Scheerbarth’s merits as a writer, Taut felt that “in 50 years time he will rank among the German classical writers.”⁷⁰ Scheerbarth’s first project together with Taut, however, was the writing of the pragmatic and ideal statements to be inscribed on the exterior of the Glass House (Figure 4). As fragments of larger ideas, Scheerbarth included such sayings as “Happiness in Color / Only in glass culture” and “Colored Glass / Destroys Hate,” “Burnable

materials / Are really a scandal,” and “It never catches fire in a glass house / One needs no fire department.”⁷¹ In 1920 Taut recognized his relationship with Scheerbart as one of providing a “middle road” between the author’s desire to free “buildings from the ordinary” and his own commitment to making such structures “viable.”⁷²

Taut, however, reinvented Scheerbart for several more years. He referred to Scheerbart as “the architect” of *Alpine Architecture* and quoted an extensive description from Scheerbart’s *Münchhausen und Clarissa* in his “Crystal Chain Letters.”⁷³ Taut looked to Scheerbart for a purity of thought and belief in a mystical pantheism with architecture at its center, which he blended briefly in the early 1920s with the work of the well-known French poet, playwright, and essayist Paul Claudel.⁷⁴

Taut reconfigured Scheerbart’s narratives into shortened digestible fragments reminiscent of the feuilletons and similar in many ways to the inscriptions on the Glass House. In *Die Weltbaumeister*, a theater piece he dedicated to Paul Scheerbart, Taut attempted a Scheerbartian narrative of cosmic growth development. Yet Taut’s work is far removed from either Scheerbart’s humor or processes of narration.⁷⁵ Reading like a flip book, the work presents a series of consecutive scenes conveying movement from an empty stage to the growth of a huge construction, the disintegration of the construction, and on into space until a glowing “Crystal House” appears heralding “architecture—night—the universe—a unity.”⁷⁶ Taut eliminated interaction or response from the construction of his narrative, thereby effectively abridging Scheerbart’s utopian ideals into a series of events unrelated to the real or technological.⁷⁷

In quite another way, Benjamin too, may be seen to have eliminated Scheerbart’s attempts to integrate “the practical” with



4. Construction drawings of the Glass House. Bruno Taut (1914).

“the most intensive idealism.” Through a process of selection, Walter Benjamin constructed Scheerbart’s character and writings as exemplified by a “starting from the new” or a fictional break from existing cultural conditions that could be considered the model for modernism.⁷⁸ As Detlef Mertins recently noted, Walter Benjamin was considerably influenced by Scheerbart’s writings on glass architecture and used “transformative extensions and rewritings” of Scheerbart’s texts in the development of his notions of architectural modernity.⁷⁹

Mertins commented that Benjamin was critical of Taut and Expressionists for their “organicist hubris he associated with fascism.”⁸⁰ That Benjamin was fully aware of the breadth of Scheerbart’s writings is clear. He first became familiar with Scheerbart’s writings when he received *Lesabéndio* as a wedding present from Gerhard Scholem on April 17, 1917.⁸¹ He purchased a used copy of *The Gray Cloth* along with several of Scheerbart’s other works in 1920.⁸² It is about this time that Benjamin expressed his interest in early Romanticism, “primarily

Friedrich Schlegel,” and it is possible in this context to understand his consideration of the anarchic asteroid culture on Pallas in *Lesabéndio* as “the best of all worlds.”⁸³ For very different reasons than Taut and the other Expressionists, Benjamin seemed partially to reject Scheerbart “the ironist” author of the *The Gray Cloth* who sought connections between technology and life through a comical distance from the world in which he lived, and he clearly favored Scheerbart, the author of fantastical humor whose spiritual life stood entirely outside the course of turn-of-the-century European existence. In other words, Benjamin’s model of modern architectural construction had no place for the types of interactions and negotiations between fantasy and reality in which Scheerbart was involved at the end of his life. Benjamin looked to Scheerbart for the widening gaps between the novelist’s utopian ideas of construction and the world in which he lived; precisely those gaps Scheerbart attempted to bridge with irony.⁸⁴ *Lesabéndio*, not *The Gray Cloth*, offered Benjamin a chance to reconcile Scheerbart’s life as an author in Wilhelmine Germany and Scheerbart’s narratives of utopian worlds.⁸⁵ Claiming much of the legitimacy of the work for Scheerbart’s “spiritual life of great purity and reflection,” Benjamin noted that Scheerbart’s “consciousness of the connectedness in any element of the ‘real’ and the ‘outside’ has won him that purity, that we call style.”⁸⁶ Benjamin understood Scheerbart’s construction of narrative fantasy in *Lesabéndio* to be “distinguished through the accomplishment of a strict law, and it is decided for its worth as for its limitations that this law has more to do with mythical forms than with art.”⁸⁷ To clarify, he stated: “The law is: the true interpretation grasps the outermost surface of the thing, its purest sensuality; interpretation is

the conquest of the senses.”⁸⁸ Far from Berges and Laam, contemporary critics who considered fiction to be impure and false, or even Kober, who expressed the importance of Scheerbart’s narratives as the combination of utopian and technological ideals, Benjamin considered the fictional alone to be pure. He wrote of this irreconcilability of the cultural productions of utopian vision and science in the following way: “The interweaving of love, the problems of science and art, indeed, the perspective of morality is completely out of action in order that the utopian vision of a spiritual star-world be able to unfold the purest, unequivocal appearance of technology.”⁸⁹

In conclusion, Scheerbart’s *The Gray Cloth* provides ample evidence of the importance of narrative as a mediator between utopian ideals and the constructed realities of gender, fashion, materials, human interaction, and architectural experience at the basis of twentieth-century modernity. Unlike Benjamin, Scheerbart seemed at home in the disharmonies of his fictional “color symphony,” or in the moments of ambiguity demarcated by architecture through the new perspectives of air travel, the mass marketing of film, and the global communications provided by the telegraph. In *The Gray Cloth*, Scheerbart daringly fragmented and reconstructed the modern world through the development of a narrative around a spiritualism that includes both modern building materials (namely glass) and the whims and fancies of a middle class caught in the vortex of middle-class consumption. Although Scheerbart’s irony brought both close together in *The Gray Cloth*, Bruno Taut and Walter Benjamin eliminated Scheerbart’s humor and with it the full richness of his narrative contexts. Many over the course of the century have tried to make connections between Scheerbart’s early architectural ideas of colored glass architecture

and constructed realities. Scheerbart’s primary contribution to architecture culture, however, does not lie in his predictions of technological advances. Rather, I would argue, Scheerbart wove a narrative fabric that was his way of examining what Robert Venturi would call at midcentury “a complex and contradictory architecture based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience.”⁹⁰ Moreover, in the process of unweaving this fabric, we gain knowledge not only of the culture that produced it, but through its interpretation, of the architecture culture of which we are a part today.

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Notes

1. Hayden White relates the origins of literary discourse to myth and separates literature from historical discourse “by virtue of its subject matter (‘real’ rather than ‘imaginary’ events).” Hayden White, *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

2. First published in 1758, Bastides's novella is considered by Anthony Vidler to be "among the first attempts at modern architectural criticism." Jean-Francois Bastides, *The Little House: An Architectural Seduction*, Rodolphe el-Khoury, trans. and ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), p. 9. William Morris, *New from Nowhere; or, An Epoch of Rest. Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890); Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara: In Three Acts* (London: A. Constable, 1909); Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* (Indianapolis: Charter Books, 1943); Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

3. For what little information there is on Scheerbart's early education, see Mechthild Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall. Paul Scheerbarts Anfangsjahre (1863–1895)* [From Danzig into the Universe. Paul Scheerbart's Beginning Years (1863–1895)] (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1997), pp. 52–57.

4. This paternal reference to Scheerbart is found in Bruno Taut, "Glasarchitektur," in Die Glocke (1921): 1376 and also in Angelika Thiekötter et al., eds., *Kristallisationen, Splitterungen. Bruno Tauts Glashaus* [Crystallization, Fragmentation. Bruno Taut's Glass House] (Basel, Berlin, and Boston: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1993), p. 91. For the Crystal Chain Letters, see Iain Boyd Whyte, *The Crystal Chain Letters. Architectural Fantasies by Bruno Taut and His Circle* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1985).

5. Paul Scheerbart, *Lesabéndio. Ein Asteroiden-Roman* [Lesabéndio. An Asteroid Novel] (Munich and Leipzig: Georg Müller Verlag, 1913). *Lesabéndio* was reprinted in Paul Scheerbart, *Dichterische Hauptwerke* [Standard Poetic Work], Else Harke, ed. (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts Verlag, 1962). Scheerbart's manifesto of glass was first published as Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur* [Glass Architecture] (Berlin: Verlag Der Sturm, 1914). It was reprinted and translated in English as *Glass Architecture*, by Paul Scheerbart, and *Alpine Architecture*, by Bruno Taut, ed., Dennis Sharp, James Palmes and Shirley Palmer, trans. (New York and Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1972). Iain Boyd Whyte considered *The Gray Cloth* to be Scheerbart's "most detailed account of the new glass architecture." Iain Boyd Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 32. The work was first published as Paul Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch und Zehn Prozent Weiss. Ein Damenroman* [The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White. A Ladies Novel] (München and Berlin: Georg Mueller Verlag, 1914). It was reprinted as Paul Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch und Zehn Prozent Weiss. Ein Damenroman* [The Gray Cloth and Ten

Percent White. A Ladies Novel], Mechthild Rausch, ed. (München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1986).

6. Reyner Banham, "The Glass Paradise," *The Architectural Review* 125 (Feb. 1959): 87–89. This article was reprinted in Reyner Banham, *A Critic Writes Essays by Reyner Banham*, Mary Banham, ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996). Scheerbart's work has most recently been championed by Mechthild Rausch, who, in addition to editing and providing an afterward to Scheerbart's *The Gray Cloth*, edited his letters in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüße. Paul Scheerbart. Eine Biographie in Briefen 1889–1915* [70 Trillion World Greetings. Paul Scheerbart. A Biography in Letters 1889–1915], Mechthild Rausch, ed. (Berlin: Argon, 1991). Most of Scheerbart's literary output appears in Paul Scheerbart, *Gesammelte Werke* [Collected Works], Thomas Bürk, Joachim Körber, and Uli Kohnle, eds., vols. 1–10.2 (Linkenheim: Edition Phantasia, 1986–1996).

7. Banham, *A Critic Writes*, p. 37. See Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture; The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941).

8. Banham, *A Critic Writes*, pp. 34, 38.

9. Rosemary Haag Bletter, "Paul Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 34 (May 1975): 83–97. Bletter first presented this research in her unpublished dissertation "Bruno Taut and Paul Scheerbart's Vision—Utopian Aspects of German Expressionist Architecture" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1973). See also Professor Bletter's excellent essay entitled "The Interpretation of the Glass Dream—Expressionist Architecture and the History of the Crystal Metaphor," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 40 (March 1981): 20–43. As a literary figure, Scheerbart was studied and published frequently in Germany before the first reprint of *Glasarchitektur* [Glass Architecture] in 1971 and its subsequent translation into English published as *Glass Architecture*, by Paul Scheerbart, and *Alpine Architecture*, by Bruno Taut, Dennis Sharpe, ed., James Palmes and Shirley Palmer, trans. (New York: Praeger, 1972).

10. Bletter, "Paul Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies," p. 86.

11. Scheerbart believed in the transcendence of human spirits into otherworldly bodies such as planets, asteroids, and stars. Mechthild Rausch associates this point of view with the popularity of the works of the nineteenth-century philosopher Gustav Theodor Fechner, the founder of the study of psychophysics. See Rausch's afterward in *Das Graue Tuch* [The Gray Cloth], p. 152. Other works by Scheerbart that exhibit his interest in asteroids and

human transformations into heavenly bodies include: Paul Scheerbart, *Na Prost! Phantastischer Königsroman* [Cheers! Fantastical Kings Novel] (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1898) in which the three protagonists turn into stars after a trip through the earth; Paul Scheerbart, *Liwüna und Kaidöh. Ein Seelenroman* [Liwüna and Kaidöh. A Souls Novel] (Leipzig: Insel, 1903) whose two principle characters provide their impressions of the universe as they fly through it; and *Astrale Novellen* [Little Astral Novellas], (Karlsruhe and Leipzig: Dreililien-Verlag, 1912), which contains a series of twelve short stories several of which take place in the distant future and involve advanced forms of planet-like life.

12. Founded in 1903, Georg Müller Verlag was considered to subscribe to "no stated literary current, but cultivated a retrospective tendency along side the modern." Helga Abret, *Albert Langen Ein europäischer Verleger* [Albert Langen, A European Publisher] (Munich: Langen Müller, 1993), p. 145. Scheerbart was published by the Georg Müller Press relatively late in the writer's career. Müller picked up the second edition of Scheerbart's *Astrale Novellen* [Little Astral Novellas]. Scheerbart publicly professed to have a "seemingly comfortable" relationship with Müller before he rejected *Glass Architecture* for publication. Paul Scheerbart, "Paul Scheerbart," *Schriftsteller Verleger und Publikum. Eine Rundfrage. Zehnjähriges Katalog* [Writer, Publisher and Public. An Inquiry. Ten-year Catalogue] (Leipzig: Georg Müller, 1913), pp. 107–108.

13. See Gershom Scholem and Theodor Adorno, eds., *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 153, n. 2, p. 155, n. 2.

14. While there have been many important discussions of this work, two outstanding publications of the Taut's Glass House and its context within the Cologne Exhibition have been Angelika Thiekötter, et al., eds., *Der westdeutsche Impuls 1900–1914. Kunst und Umwelgestaltung im Industriegebiet: Die Deutsche Werkbund-Ausstellung Cöln 1914* [The West German Impulse 1900–1914. Art and the Environment of Production in the Field of Industry. The German Werkbund Exhibition. Cologne, 1914.] (Cologne: Kölnischer Kunstverein, 1984). See especially Kristina Hartmann and Franziska Bollerey, "Das Glashaus von Bruno Taut," in Thiekötter, *Der westdeutsche Impuls*, p. 133. See also Angelika Thiekötter et al., eds., *Kristallisationen, Splitterungen. Bruno Tauts Glashaus* [Crystallization, Fragmentation. Bruno Taut's Glass House] (Basel, Berlin, and Boston: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1993).

15. Paul Scheerbart, "Das Glashaus. Ein Vorbericht" [The Glass House. A Preliminary Report]

Berliner Tageblatt und Handels Zeitung 537/42 (22 Oct. 1913): 2.

16. While it is generally agreed that Taut and Scheerbart had contact in the context of Herwarth Walden's magazine *Der Sturm*, there is some discrepancy as far as exactly how and when the two men met. The first recorded letter of Scheerbart to Taut, dated December 24, 1913, already reveals that the two are good friends through the use of the familiar "Du." See Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 458. Dennis Sharp suggests that their relationship "goes back to the early days of . . . *Der Sturm*." This indicates a date closer to 1910. Sharp, *Glass Architecture*, p. 10. Rosemary Bletter suggests that "Taut had met Scheerbart in the circles of *Der Sturm* around 1912." Bletter, "Paul Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies," p. 96. Iain Boyd Whyte states that "at the same time (1912), he (Taut) was an intimate of Herwarth Walden's *Sturm* circle. Taut's first contact with Walden was made through the poet and fantasist Paul Scheerbart. . . ." Whyte, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism*, p. 16.

17. Paul Scheerbart. "Glashäuser. Bruno Tauts Glaspalast auf der Werkbund-Ausstellung in Cöln." [Glass Houses. Bruno Taut's Glass Palace at the Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne] *Technische Monatshefte* 4 (1914): 8, 106–107.

18. See Bletter, "Paul Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies," p. 87.

19. In his letter to Richard Dehmel of January 9, 1914, Paul Scheerbart discusses his literary publisher, Georg Müller. Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 458.

20. Benjamin stated: "Even in Scheerbart's 'glass architecture' (1914) it (the social conditions for the intensified use of glass architecture) appears in utopian contexts." Walter Benjamin, "Paris Capital of the Nineteenth Century," Reflections, Edmund Jephcott, trans. (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 147.

21. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: The Architectural Press, 1960), p. 267.

22. Scheerbart commented on January 9, 1914 that *Glass Architecture* had already been rejected, in a letter to Richard Dehmel. By March 11, 1914, Scheerbart wrote to Bruno Taut that "Müller's 'Ladies Novel' is coming out in about three to four weeks." Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 468.

23. See Else Harke's "Nachwort," [afterward] to Scheerbart, *Dichterische Hauptwerke* (1962), reprinted in Berni Lörwald and Michael M. Schardt, eds., *Über Paul Scheerbart I* [About Paul Scheerbart I] (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1992), pp. 32–33.

24. Wolfgang Pehnt, "Paul Scheerbart, ein Dichter der Architekten" [Paul Scheerbart, an Architect's Poet], reprinted in Lörwald and Schardt, *Über Paul Scheerbart I*, p. 73. Also see Bletter, "Scheerbart's Architectural Fantasies," p. 84.

25. Unlike Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, and others, Scheerbart did not imagine the technologies of the near future to differ significantly from those he experienced in his own time. Air travel and wireless telegraph technology, as well as construction with steel and glass were familiar during his lifetime. Scheerbart, however, pointed to new uses for these existing technologies. For a somewhat simplistic correlation between Scheerbart's and later inventions, see Karl-Heinz Knupp, *Die Architekturphantasien Paul Scheerbarts: Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis von literarischer Fiktion und Architektur* [The Architectural Fantasies of Paul Scheerbart: A Contribution to the Relationship between Literary Fiction and Architecture] (Ph.D. diss., Universität Hamburg, 1980).

26. Page numbers in this essay refer specifically to Paul Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch und zehn Prozent Weiß. Ein Damenroman*, 3rd ed. (Munich and Berlin: Georg Müller, 1914), p. 40. Scheerbart seemed eager to take the client out of the construction process. See his "grin and bear it" ideology also in chapter 107 of Paul Scheerbart, *Glassarchitektur* (1914), p. 121. Note that this chapter has been switched with Chapter 108 in the English translation in Sharp, *Glass Architecture*, p. 73.

27. Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch*, p. 46.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 94. There are a number of sources on the popularity of film in Germany at this time. In support of Scheerbart's connection between film and air travel, for example, German critic Hans Schliepmann wrote: "After the conquest of the air nothing is more popular than the 'living photography,' the *Lichtspielhaus* [motion picture theater] or the "*Kintopp*," [cinema] for which its prophet Hans Heinz Ewers had coined these common words with pride. Film has taken over the world." Hans Schliepmann, *Lichtspieltheater. Eine Sammlung ausgeführter Kinohäuser in Gross-Berlin. 109 Abbildungen mit Text von Hans Schliepmann* [Motion Picture Theater. A Collection of Completed Cinemas in Greater Berlin. 109 Illustrations with Text by Hans Schliepmann] (Berlin: E. Wasmuth, 1914), p. 3.

30. Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch*, p. 98.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 118. Scheerbart combined music and the landscape in many of his writings, including in such early work as Paul Scheerbart, *Das Paradies. Die Heimat der Kunst* [Paradise. The Home of the Art] (Berlin: Commissionsverlag Georg und Fiedler, 1889)

through his later writings including Scheerbart, *Lesabéndio*. (1913).

32. Scheerbart, *Das graue Tuch*, p. 160.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

35. For a discussion of modernity and women's fashion, see Mary McLeod, "Undressing Architecture: Fashion, Gender, and Modernity," in Deborah Fausch et al., eds., *Architecture: In Fashion* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), pp. 39–123. For early modern attacks on fashion by Adolf Loos and others, see Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), p. 128ff.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 245–46.

37. Letter from Paul Scheerbart to Gottfried Heinersdorff dated July 11, 1913. Found in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 455.

38. Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall* [From Danzig into the Universe], p. 67.

39. The results of this research are outlined in Chapter 10 entitled "Lokalreporter beim *Danziger Courier*" [Local Reporter for the *Danziger Courier*] in Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall*, [From Danzig into the Universe], pp. 91–101.

40. It should be noted that Scheerbart also contributed regularly to several journals including *Die Gegenwart* [The Present], *Das Theater* [The Theater], *Die Aktion* [The Action], and *Der Sturm* [The Storm], to name a few.

41. See Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 44, 106.

42. Scheerbart wrote several works as a series of fragments. Perhaps the most notable of these are *Ich Liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahn-Roman mit 66 Intermezzos* [I Love You! A Railroad Train Novel with 66 Intermezzos] (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1897); *Na Prost! Phantastischer Königsroman* [Cheers! Fantastical Kings Novel] (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1898) with nineteen individual stories; and *Immer mutig! Ein phantastischer Nilpferderoman* [Always Daring! A Fantastical Hippopotamus Novel.] (Minden, Germany: J.C.C. Bruns, 1903) with 83 stories.

43. Paul Scheerbart, "Das Höhere: Eine Räubergeschichte von Paul Scheerbart" [The Higher Thing: A Robber Story by Paul Scheerbart], *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, no. 241, October 14, 1911.

44. Paul Scheerbart, "Tanzende Pflanzen—Tanzende Wälder. Amerikanische Sensationsgeschichte von Paul Scheerbart" [Dancing Plants—Dancing Forests. American Sensational Story by Paul Scheerbart], *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* (Sunday, 11.4.1911), p. 25.

At the end of this story, Scheerbart reveals a peculiar misogynistic streak when the male narrator of the story attempts to make up a story to tell people and is chased out of town. His conclusion, oddly, is that only women can tell such tales and be believed.

45. Paul Scheerbart, "Der Architektenkongress. Eine Parlamentsgeschichte" [The Architects' Congress. A Parliament Story], *Berliner Tageblatt* (Beilage: Der Zeitgeist) January 6, 1913. This was reprinted in Bruno Taut, ed., *Frühlicht*. 1 (fall 1921) (Magdenburg, Germany: Karl Peters): 26–27.

46. A. H. Kober, "Das graue Tuch und zehn Prozent Weiß. Ein Damenroman. Von Paul Scheerbart." [The Gray Cloth and Ten Percent White. A Ladies Novel. By Paul Scheerbart] (München and Berlin: Georg Müller, 1914), p. 246, in *Das literarische Echo*, 19/4 (1916/17), p. 247–248. Kober's later work seems to indicate a natural predilection toward Scheerbart's odd combination of theosophist and journalist. See A. H. Kober, *Geschichte der religiösen Dichtung in Deutschland: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der deutsche Seele* [History of Religious Writing in Germany: A Contribution to the Developmental History of the German Soul] (Essen: G. D. Baedeker, 1919); and A. H. Kober, *Die Seele des Journalisten; fünf Aufsätze zur Psychologie der Presse* [The Soul of the Journalist; Five Essays on the Psychology of the Press] (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1920).

47. Kober, "Das graue Tuch," pp. 247–248.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

49. From Paul Scheerbart's "Autobiographisches" written on July 6, 1904 and reprinted in Kurt Lubasch and Alfred Richard Meyer, eds., *Paul Scheerbart—Bibliographie mit einer Autobiographie des Dichters* [Paul Scheerbart—Bibliography with an Autobiography of the Writer] (Berlin: Private Printing, 1930), p. 14.

50. Scheerbart, "Das Glashaus. Ein Vorbericht" [The Glass House. A Preliminary Report], p. 2. I am deeply grateful to Laurie Stein, Curator of the Deutsche Werkbund Archiv for sleuthing out this article for me.

51. *Ibid.*

52. See Scheerbart, "Glashäuser" [Glass Houses], pp. 105–07.

53. I have to thank Mechthild Rausch for presenting me a Xerox copy of the critique. While its exact location has not yet been determined by this author, it seems to have appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, probably in late October or November 1913.

54. Jessa Laam, "Erwachen im Glashaus. Ein Zukunftsraum" [Awakening in a Glass House. A Dream of the Future], *Berliner Tageblatt—und Handels Zeitung* Oct. or Nov. 1913.

55. The article referred to by Laam is Scheerbart, "Das Glashaus. Ein Vorbericht." [The Glass House. A Preliminary Report]. Page number and exact date unknown.

56. I thank Angelika Thiekötter, Director of the Werkbund Archiv in Berlin, for bringing this article to my attention. The as yet incomplete citation is Philipp Berges, "Die gläserne Kulturwelt" [The Glazed World Culture], *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* (summer 1914). See Philipp Berges, *Bunte Bilder aus dem New York Leben* [Colorful Pictures from New York Life] (Leipzig: Reclam, 1892); Philipp Berges, *Eine Reise um die Erde: in Skizzen* [A Trip around the Earth: In Sketches] (Hamburg: Verlagsbuchhandel Broschek and Co., 1913); and Philipp Berges, *Rund um den Erdball: die letzte deutsche Weltreise vor dem Weltkrieg* [Around the Globe: The Last German World Trip before the World War] (Hamburg: J. L. Glogau, 1920).

57. Berges, "Die gläserne Kulturwelt" [The Glazed World Culture].

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. For the quotation see Scheerbart, *Glass-architektur* [Glass Architecture], p. 31.

61. See letter from Paul Scheerbart to Richard Dehmel dated Feb. 19, 1914 in Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüße* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 466.

62. Adolf Behne, "Gedanken über Kunst und Zweck, dem Glashause Gewidmet" [Thoughts on Art and Function, Dedicated to the Glass House] *Kunstgewerbeblatt* 27/1 (Oct. 1915/16): 4.

63. Adolf Behne, "Bruno Taut," *Neue Blätter für Kunst und Dichtung*. 2 (Apr. 1919–Mar. 1920): 14.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Walter Gropius in a letter to Hermann Finsterlin dated April 17, 1919 quoted in Marcel Franciscano, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar: The Ideas and Artistic Theories of Its Founding* (Urbana, Chicago, and London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. 124, n. 93.

66. Research in Behne's estate at the Bauhaus Archives in Berlin produced a postcard of the elevator shaft of the F. V. Grünfeld specialty store for linen products in Berlin to Behne dating from October 15, 1935, with a note to the effect of "a small fulfillment of a Scheerbartian dream" scrawled on the back.

67. Adolf Behne, "Paul Scheerbart. Zur zehnten Wiederkehr seines Todestages 15.10.15; geboren am 8. Januar 1863 in Danzig" [Paul Scheerbart. On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death 15.10.15, Born on January 8, 1863 in Danzig], *Ostdeutsche Monatshefte* 6/2 (Oct. 1925), pp. 735–737.

68. Walther Petry, ed., *Humor der Nationen. Ausgewählte Prosa. Deutschland* [Humor of Nations.

Selected Prose. Germany] (Berlin: Wertbuchhandel, 1925), pp. 273–291.

69. *Ibid.* Scheerbart's mastery of irony is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in *The Gray Cloth*. Ironic humor in this work, however, as in many others is difficult to pin down and understand. D. C. Muecke wrote: "Getting to grips with irony seems to have something in common with gathering the mist: there is plenty to take hold of if only one could." Douglas Colin Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen and Co., 1969), p. 3. There is a great deal of literature on the influence of German Romantic irony. A helpful introduction to a translation of Schlegel's work can be found in Peter Firchow, ed. and trans., *Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde" and the Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971). One of the ways Schlegel attempted to describe irony was as "the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art and virtue." Firchow, *Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde"*, p. 148. See also Ernst Behler, *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1990); and D. J. Enright, *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Scheerbart's special brand of irony—one that places a premium on the lofty goals of glass architecture within the context of a more or less realistic technological world—focused on the notion that, in Muecke's words, "the ideal can ironize the real, that is, man can express his spirit's independence of the world with disdainful or insouciant irony." *Ibid.*, p. 192. Scheerbart, like others, used irony "to see themselves and at the same time to stand back from themselves, to be at once objective and subjective." Christopher Riley, *Walter Kempowski's "Deutsche Chronik": A Study in Ironic Narration* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, and Vienna: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 18. Scheerbart's irony, in particular, helped to bridge the gap between the utopian and real, or fictional and factual, that was alluded to by the editors of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and taken on in both Berges's and Laam's criticisms. In fact, only Kober appeared to remain completely uncritical of Scheerbart's "technical utopia" in *The Gray Cloth*. He securely attached Scheerbart to the history of German literature and ignored the connections between narration and architecture that Scheerbart was intent on forming near the end of his career. In addition to his work with Bruno Taut, Scheerbart, however, was interested in joining the architectural community in several practical ways. For example he attempted to form a "Society for Glass Architecture." See letter from Paul Scheerbart to Gottfried Heinersdorf dated July 11, 1913 found in Rausch, *70*

Trillionen Weltgrüsse [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 455. Scheerbart wrote with absolute conviction in 1913 that: “I consider the practical completely compatible with the most intensive idealism.” Paul Scheerbart in a letter to Eberhard Buchner dated January 31, 1914 in Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], p. 459.

70. For this quotation see Sharp, *Glass Architecture and Alpine Architecture*, p. 15.

71. Paul Scheerbart in a letter to Bruno Taut dated February 10, 1914 in Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse* [70 Trillion World Greetings], pp. 461–462.

72. See Bruno Taut, “Glaserzeugung und Glasbau” [Glazing Generation and Glass Buildings], *Qualität* 1, no. 1/2 (Apr./May, 1920), p. 9.

73. For Taut’s introduction to *Alpine Architecture*, see Bruno Taut, “Vorwort des Herausgebers” [Editor’s Forward], *Alpine Architektur* (Hagen: Folkwang, 1919) reprinted in Manfred Speidel, ed., *Bruno Taut. Natur und Fantasie 1880–1938* (Berlin: Ernst and Sohn, 1995), p. 165. For Taut’s letter “VIVAT STELLA MDCCCXX” [The Star Lives 1919], see *ibid.*, p. 182.

74. Taut inserted an ode by Paul Claudel in Bruno Taut, “Farbenwirkungen aus meiner Praxis”

[Color Effects from my Practice], *Das hohe Ufer* 1, no. 11 (Nov. 1919): 267. Taut later related Scheerbart’s ideas of glass architecture to the gothic, and referred to Paul Claudel as the poet with a visionary comprehension of the German middle ages. See Bruno Taut, “Das Bauen mit Glas” [Building with Glass], *Qualität* 2, no. 3/4 (June/July 1921): 35.

75. Bruno Taut, *Der Weltbaumeister* [The Master World Builder] (Hagen: Folkwang, 1920).

76. Quotations taken from Taut, *Der Weltbaumeister* [The Master World Builder], pp. 24, 27.

77. Bruno Taut continued to use Scheerbart as a utopian foil to his practical building program as late as 1927. He used the Scheerbartian aphorism once inscribed on the Glass House: “Glass brings us a new age / Brick culture only hurts us” in Bruno Taut, *Ein Wohnhaus* [A Dwelling] (Stuttgart: Franckhische Verlagsbuchhandlung W. Keller & Co., 1927), p. 71.

78. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* II (I) [Collected Writings II (I)] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), p. 215.

79. Detlef Mertins, “The Enticing and Threatening Face of Prehistory: Walter Benjamin and the Utopia of Glass,” *Asemblage* (Apr., 1996): 6–23. See page 12.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

81. Scholem and Adorno, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 153, n. 2.

82. Walter Benjamin letter to Gerhard Scholem, April 17, 1920. In Scholem and Adorno *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 162.

83. For Benjamin’s interest in Friedrich Schlegel, see his letter to Gerhard Scholem (June 1917) in Scholem and Adorno, *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, p. 88, and for Pallas see letter to Gerhard Scholem (Nov. 23, 1919), *ibid.*, p. 151.

84. For Benjamin’s use of Scheerbart’s narratives as a model for “what might emerge from a salutary liquidation of traditional culture,” see John McCole, *Walter Benjamin and the Antinomies of Tradition* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 158.

85. Walter Benjamin, “Paul Scheerbart: Lesabéndio,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), 2/2, pp. 618–620.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 618.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. *Ibid.*, p. 619.

90. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), p. 16.