

Strand 3. Les Fleurs du Mal: Style in a Troubled Age

Buildings of Flesh and Bone: Embodied Architecture in French Art Nouveau

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Parisian apartment building Castel Béranger by Hector Guimard and respective bodily attributions. In addition to that, it shall serve as one of the rare case studies, retracing the impact of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* on actual works of art. For the initial assumption, that the building was intended as a somewhat embodied architectural structure both eroticism and references to human anatomy play a crucial role. Considered against the backdrop of its decidedly embodied character, a firm connection to the flourishing fin-de-siècle psychophysiology is eminent. Based on the auto-projection of ones own bodily conditions even onto dead matter, the German-coined esthetics of empathy in particular are taken into account.

Keywords: Hector Guimard, Castel Béranger, Art Nouveau, Architecture, Embodiment, Physiology, Einfühlung, Empathy, Sexuality, Anthropomorphism

Introduction

“It’s the personal house, shaped by the character, philosophy of life, passions, needs, and dreams of its inhabitants. In the same manner as the body of the snail fills in the shell, whereas the shell emerged from within.”¹

Ludwig Havesi’s (1843-1910) merging of architectonic structure and its inhabitant is nothing short of astonishing: In his terms, the occupant fills the living space to the extent that he becomes a genuine part of it. Reciprocally, the house becomes a part of him or her, attaining human traits. Prima facie, this notion appears mainly metaphorical as character, passions, and dreams belong to psychology rather than to physiology. It is the zoological comparison that adds a physiological twist to this idea. In the case of the snail both the shell and the animal are not only in substance but also two parts of the same body consisting of different materials. The shell – in which the animal can seek shelter – grew from the snail itself. The German term for a snail’s shell, ‘Schneckenhaus’, literally the ‘snail’s house’, reflects this very instance. Its intense bodily quality thereby affects the humanized house: Similar to the interplay between the body of a painter and his work of art, as described by Émile Zola (1840-1902), the body of the inhabitant is extended to the ‘body’ of his housing.² The inhabited building is provided a body in its own right. Once again, this architectural embodiment is, until today, present in the German and French language: ‘Baukörper’ and ‘corps de bâtiment’ both signify the ‘body of the building’. Hence, Havesi blurs the borders between human and architectonic body and thus between subject and object.

As remarkable as this idea is, Havesi did not contribute to a general physiology of architecture. Instead, he tried to characterize a specific building in Paris, that is the *Castel*

¹ “Es ist das individuelle Haus, in dem der Charakter, die Lebensanschauungen, die Passionen, die Bedürfnisse und Träume des Inwohners sich ausdrücken, wie die Schnecke mit ihrem Körper das Gehäuse ausfüllt, das sie aus ihrem Innersten abgesondert hat.” Ludwig HAVESI: “Castel Béranger”, in Ludwig HAVESI (ed.): *Acht Jahre Sezession*, Vienna: Carl Konegen 1906 (1899), p. 125. All translations from German were done by the author, unless otherwise noted.

² See Émile ZOLA: “Édouard Manet. Étude biographique et critique”, in Émile ZOLA (ed.): *Mes haines – Mon salon – Édouard Manet*, Paris: G. Charpentier 1893 (1867), p. 327f. and 337.

Béranger by Hector Guimard (1867-1942). Given Havesi's anthropomorphization, this essay will take a look at the milestone building of Art Nouveau architecture and further investigate its assumed body. In the fin de siècle, the reconsideration of the constructed body took place in form of sexual and often erotic architectural vocabulary. The emergence of a scientific physiology in the second half of the 19th century raises the question whether the so called 'psychologic turn' did not only evoke a new understanding of the body of the beholder but also of the architectonic body as a subject in a physiological sense. It is against the background of esthetics, art criticism and literature that a physiological reading of both buildings as actual organic bodies – containing even genital organs, bones, and blood vessels – becomes evident. Eventually, the widespread impact of the psycho-physiologically vested concept of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* must be taken into consideration.

The Skeleton Dance

In 1894, the widow Fournier commissioned the young architect Hector Guimard to create an immeuble de rapport in the former Rue Lafontaine in the 16th arrondissement in Paris. The sources suggest that the wealthy patron granted Guimard's art nearly absolute freedom. Time and time again, the daring artistic program of the *Castel Béranger* is explained via this rare artistic liberty.³ Guimard's goal was nothing short of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*: From the façade and the decorum to the furniture, paperhanging, carpets and even the door handle, every single detail was designed by himself leaving nothing to chance. He even determined the prospective inhabitants by assigning every apartment to a particular profession. The result was described by Havesi as follows:

“It's called Castel Béranger, but instead of an ancient French castle, it is just a modern apartment building in Paris. Even the most modern one you could find. There is a world of difference between the Castel Béranger and our new apartment barracks in the much-loved style of construction

³ For a more detailed building history, see for instance Jo-Anne B. DANZKER (ed.): *Hector Guimard. Castel Béranger – Metropolitain Bolivar* (exhibition catalogue, Museum Villa Stuck, 8. Jul.- 22. Aug.1999), Munich (Germany), Museum Villa Stuck,1999 as well as L. HAVESI: “Castel...”.

companies. Lately, I caught a member of the Secession commenting on one of those shrugging: ‘The façade could be continued unto Trieste’.⁴

It goes without saying that the *Castel Béranger* was by no means to be continued to Trieste, as the building was initially reviewed rather ambivalently. Notably the vegetable motifs were criticized at that time as not being French. But, today, I’m not concerned with the entirety of this highly complex building. Instead, I’ll give special attention to the vestibule (Fig. 1).

Entering the vestibule, the longitudinal room points towards a windowed door painted in a color somewhere between alga green and sea blue. The floor is covered by a mosaic display in a mild watery blue on which the greyish floral elements in the corners almost seem to float. The mosaic per se is archeologically referring to an aquatic setting. In antiquity, mosaics were installed close to wet places such as wells, baths, and nymphaea.⁵ Altogether, the entire room is dominated by biomorphic shapes. Foremost, the decoration along the walls manufactured by pottery expert Alexandre Bigot (1862-1927) offers valuable clues on how to understand the vestibule. Supported by a mostly rectangular grid, the wall seems to consist of brown cave stones overgrown by deep green algae. Above that, the grid itself turns into biomorphic bars as if supporting the vault. Regarding the entrance, Guimard inserted a *serliana* as well as a light-transmissive gate made of iron (Fig. 2). Hence, the dim and gloomy atmosphere of the vestibule is intentional. Furthermore, the round shape of the *serliana* rather reminds of the entrance to a cave than to an immeuble de rapport. In a French TV documentary in 2014, Philippe Thiébaud associated the narrow vestibule of the *Castel Béranger* accordingly with a submarine grotto.⁶

⁴ “Es heißt Castel Béranger, ist aber keineswegs ein altes französisches Ritterschloß, sondern nur ein modernes Pariser Zinshaus. Sogar das modernste, das es irgendwo gibt. Es ist himmelweit verschieden von unseren neuen Zinskasernen im allbeliebten Baufirmenstil, vor deren einer ich kürzlich einen Herrn von der Sezession achselzuckend sagen hörte: ‘Diese Fassade kann man so bis Triest fortsetzen. [...]’” Ibid., p. 124.

⁵ See for example Edgar Waterman ANTHONY: *A history of mosaics*, Boston, Sargent, 1935 and Peter FISCHER: *Das Mosaik. Entwicklung, Technik, Eigenart*, Vienna and Munich, Schroll, 1969.

⁶ *Paris Belle Époque*, France 5, CinéTévé, 2014, [00:10:30] - [00:11:14].

Yet, there is also a considerable sexual dimension to the vestibule. First of all, the element water itself is linked to the female sex.⁷ During the Belle Époque, this liaison is appreciably omnipresent as a poem by André Fontainas (1865-1948) evidences profoundly:

“Sur le basalte, au portique des antres calmes,
Lourd de la mousse des fucus d'or et des algues
Parmi l'occulte et lent frémissement des vagues
S'ouvrent en floraisons hautaines dans les algues
Les coupes d'orgueil de glaïeuls grêles et calmes.

Le mystère où vient mourir le rythme des vagues
Exhale en lueurs de longues caresses calmes,
Et le rouge corail où se tordent des algues
Etend à la mer des bras sanglants des fleurs calmes –
Qui mirent leurs reflets sur le repos des vagues,

Et te voici parmi les jardins fleuris d'algues
En la nocturne et lointaine chanson des vagues,
Reine dont les regards pensifs en clartés calmes
Sont de glauques glaïeuls érigeant sur les vagues
Leurs vasques aux pleurs doux du corail et des algues.”⁸

Algae, waves and the ‘queen with calm eyes’ blend immediately into the décor of the *Castel Béranger* vestibule where all three are incorporated. Both water and woman are alike in that life emerges from within them.

In addition to that, the wildlife elements decorating the *serliana*, depicting lizards that twist around the pedestal area, resemble sexual symbols as well. Those are not just belonging to the amphibian theme of the vestibule, since the French term ‘lézard’ signified – besides the

⁷ See Inge STEPHAN: “ Weiblichkeit, Wasser und Tod. Undinen, Melusinen und Wasserfrauen bei Eichendorff und Fouqué”, in: Hartmut Böhme (ed.): *Kulturgeschichte des Wassers*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988, p. 234-262.

⁸ Remy de GOURMONT: *Le Ilme livre des masques. Les masques au nombre de XXIII*, Paris, Société du Mercure de France, 1898, p. 202f.

animal – also the male genital.⁹ Guymard indicates the sexual implications of the entrance area already before entering the *Castel Béranger*. The overarching grotto-motif is bearing this sensual eroticism likewise, as grottos and caves always carry a polyvalent imagery. Back in antiquity, grottos were places of birth and habitation of gods, nymphs and muses. Ever since, they were understood as places of origination: “It’s general interpretation derives from an analogy, equating grotto and womb.”¹⁰

The analogy of the grotto and female genitalia has already been object to a wide variety of studies.¹¹ In this respect, Marga Löwer-Hirsch’s 1994 psychoanalytic reflections are of utmost interest, for she relates the traditional association of the grotto with the vagina to the actual experience of growing and coming into being within the womb: “The grotto is an interior room, inherent to the female body.”¹² It lies exactly within this imminent connotation of the grotto, I’d argue, that Guimard executes the vestibule as a grotto: It signifies a vagina and, therefore, a proper female body. The portal already hints at a place of birth and origination. Behind the delicate gate, Guimard staged a submarine grotto, providing genitalia and gender to the building as a whole. Simultaneously, he calls upon aligned associations like the feeling of security, birth, gender, and the erotic.

It is hard not to notice this architectonic trend towards eroticized entrance areas. Even in Milano, examples can be found, such as the *Casa Campanini* (Fig. 3) by Alfredo Campanini (1873-1926). The façade finished in 1906 is not only referring to the close-by *Palazzo Castiglioni* but is also adding one allegorical figure on each side of the portal. Both female signifiers of

⁹ Georges VIGNES: *Hector Guimard et l’Art Nouveau*, Paris, 1990, p. 31 and Philippe Thiébaud: “Hector Guimard. Die Begeisterung für die Linie”, in *Art Nouveau. Symbolismus und Jugendstil in Frankreich* (exhibition catalogue, Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt, 24. Oct. 1999- 13. Feb. 2000), Darmstadt (Germany), Arnold, 1999, p. 206.

¹⁰ “[Sie] verdankt [ihre] universale Ausdeutung einem Analogieschluß, der die Erdhöhlen mit dem Mutterschoß gleichsetzt.” Fritz EMSLANDER: “Italia sotterranea. Höhlenbilder um 1800”, in *Reise ins unterirdische Italien. Grotten und Höhlen in der Goethezeit* (exhibition catalogue, Frankfurter Goethe-Museum, 21. Apr.- 23. Jun. 2002), Frankfurt am Main (Germany), Info-Verlag, 2002, p. 8-30: 13.

¹¹ Such as Horst BREDEKAMP: Die Erde als Mutterschoß, *Kritische Berichte*, 9, 1981, p. 5-37, Laurence des CARS: “Gustave Courbet. L’origine du monde”, in Henri LOYRETTE: *De l’Impressionnisme à l’Art Nouveau. Acquisitions du musée d’Orsay 1990-1996* (exhibition catalogue, Musée d’Orsay, 16. Oct. 1996- 5. Jan. 1997), Paris (France), Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1996, p. 25-35.

¹² “Die Höhle ist ein Innenraum, der dem weiblichen Körper eigen ist.” Marga LÖWER-HIRSCH: “Erinnerungen”, in Klaus LUTTRINGER: *Zeit der Höhlen*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1994, p. 121-134: 122.

fertility and plenty are entwined with vine and, thereby, addressing the Art Nouveau and Jugendstil on the other side of the Alps. Once again, a see-through gate made of wrought-iron generates a dim and gloomy, cave-like atmosphere in the vestibule obviously referencing the *Castel Béranger* in Paris. However, in the French capital, Guimard's gender-bodily architecture found followers.

In 1900, Jules Lavirotte (1864-1929) initiates the building of his so called *Immeuble d'Alexandre Bigot* (Fig. 4) in Paris, for which he was to be awarded by the city council in the year after. The spectacular Art Nouveau façade offers a whole conglomeration of sexual motifs, culminating in the entrance area. The plant-like ornament of flamed sandstone framing the actual entrance entangles a profane version of Adam and Eve. Notably, the female figure, executed by Jean-Baptiste Larrivé (1875-1928), states the overall theme: she is not only observing the passing beholder from above but also seems to pose flirtatiously, recalling Émile Zola's famous *Nana*. The metal fittings on the wooden door adorned with peacocks that are taken from the traditional iconography of Hera, and the somewhat secularized iconography of Adam and Eve initiate an erotic tension and are being mingled with the door pull that in turn resembles a highly plastic lizard. Its elegant shape invites to be touched and, thereby, to open the door. The coquetry of Lavirotte's employment of traditional iconography lies exactly within this haptic act. As already mentioned, the term 'lézard' signified not only the animal but also male genitalia. This door pull is unambiguously reflecting the equivocal connotation. The alienation of Eve and the oddly coy Adam point to a sexual direction in general, whereas the door itself and its frame become even more explicit: The slender door and the oval windows above depict an upside-down phallus. However, its framework, provided by the actual building draws upon the floral vocabulary of forms identified with female genitalia. In the case of the *Immeuble d'Alexandre Bigot*, the 'body' of the building is also constituted by its genitalia.

Regarding Guimard's *Castel Béranger*, an anthropomorphic reading of the building can be traced back even to its time of origin. Several times, Guimard's artistic vocabulary – borrowed from the famous Belgian architect Victor Horta – was compared to human anatomy. Victor

Champier (1851-1929) refers to the pervasive art nouveau elements as a “danse des tibias”¹³ and a general “art des osselets”¹⁴. Accordingly, Ludwig Havesi described the respective forms as being “rückgratartig”¹⁵ (spine-like) and the biomorphic elements as arteries, veins and lymphatic vessels.¹⁶

“Due to the excessive use of expressive form, one finds door handles, taps, cover plates etc. there, that were shaped like thighbones with actual round heads, or an ischium, accompanied by an acetabular notch. Others resemble heel and collar bones. [...] The ornament made of stone has something cartilage-like to it. Its blurry hollows recall auricles or something near it.”¹⁷

All in all, this ubiquitous anthropomorphism felt remarkably “anatomisch”¹⁸ (anatomical) to Havesi. No wonder, critical reviews based their criticism on this very characteristic. Émile Molinier (1857-1906), for instance, certified the Castel Béranger “nervures”¹⁹ and furniture that appeared to be made of bone.²⁰ Even though resembling a human body visually, it would lack a ‘healthy’ style whatsoever:

“Mais la vie et le développement en seraient incertains parce qu'il n'aurait pas de racine: mauvais condition pour vivre et prospérer. [...] Mais ce style est à un style vivant ce qu'est l'automate à un être en chair et en os.”²¹

¹³ Victor CHAMPIER: “Le Castel Béranger”, *Revue des arts décoratifs*, 19, 1899, p. 1-10: 10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ L. HAVESI: “Castel...”, p. 126.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁷ “Da gibt es Türklinken, Hähne, Deckelgriffe usf., die wirklich vor lauter Gefühlsform einem Schenkelknochen mit den richtigen Rollhügeln gleichen, oder an Sitzbeinhöcker nebst eirundem Hüftloch, an Fersenbeine und Schlüsselbeine erinnern. [...] Das Steinornament aber hat etwas eigentümlich Knorpelartiges, mit weichen verschwimmenden Höhlungen, die an Ohrmuscheln u. dergl. gemahnen.” Ibid., p. 126f.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁹ Émile MOLINIER: “Le Castel Béranger”, *Art et décoration*, 5, 1899, p. 76-81: 80.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 78f.

Even when criticizing Guimard's architecture, the human body serves as essential reference figure. Ultimately, the Castel Béranger was obviously noticed as resembling the canon of human anatomy. No matter whether this was appreciated or not, critics agreed on that point. Also, the anatomical associations transcend the domain of the saucy erotic and verify its intentional evocation of a human body to an even greater extent.

Mirror, Mirror

Whereas hitherto existing studies on the *Castel Béranger* tend to construe the sexual vocabulary of fin de siècle architecture as a mere sign of the ubiquitous obsession for vitalistic metaphors, I'd like to consider another influence, namely psychophysiology. It goes without saying that the widespread vitalism in Art Nouveau and Jugendstil culture is undoubtedly crucial to both the *Castel Béranger* and the *Immeuble d'Alexandre Bigot*. Eventually, psychophysiology and the vitalist paradigm in late 19th century are not completely separable from each other, even so offering a new perspective.

In the wake of physiology during the second half of the 19th century, sensual perception became of particular interest.²² Against the background of Johannes Müller's detachment of outer stimulus of the sensual organ and consequent inner sensual feeling, Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894) and his successors developed a whole new understanding of the working of the senses. As George Roque showed recently, the active physiological working of human vision was adapted by the French physiology rather quickly in the decades to come.²³ The disjunction of inner and outer sensuality and the consequent rethinking of vision had a massive impact on the field of esthetics and artistic practices as it introduced a possible scientific foundation for the idea of actual sensual feelings accompanying the sense of sight. Herein lies a major achievement of psycho-physiology dealing with the physiological dimension of psychological phenomena.

²² See Robert JÜTTE: *Die Geschichte der Sinne. Von der Antike bis zum Cyberspace*, München, Beck, 2000, notably p. 140-254.

²³ Georges ROQUE: "La sensation visuelle selon Hermann von Helmholtz et sa réception en France", in Jacqueline LICHTENSTEIN et al. (ed.): *Vers la science de l'art. L'esthétique scientifique en France. 1857-1937*, Paris: PUPS, 2013, p. 117-129. For instance, studies of Helmholtz, Lotze and later Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) were quickly translated into French.

In addition, the ‘physiological turn’ led to a new value of the human body. As perception was now dependent on the condition of the beholding subject, the idealistic autarky of perception was seriously called into question. In the case of esthetics, perception was more and more understood as subjective process in close relation to the perceiving subject. Accordingly, the body was soon considered the significant element in art and art appreciation. This shift was perpetuated by psycho-physiological esthetics around 1900 that moved away from questions regarding the characteristics of works of art in favor of esthetic perception.²⁴ Jacqueline Lichtenstein pointed out that this cognitive subjectivity played a constitutive role in the rise of late 19th century vitalism.²⁵ In contrast to Helmholtz and Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817-1881), in the fin de siècle, the work of art was not merely seen in relation to the mechanics of the body only. In lieu thereof, shape and posture of the human body become a key factor.

In the second half of the 19th century, a specific theory derives from the young field of psycho-physiologically infused esthetics. The German-coined term ‘Einfühlungsästhetik’, the esthetics of empathy, rely heavily on the mentioned bodily modes of perception. Then again, it was influenced by concepts of a rather romantic empathizing with nature, as famously described by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803):

“It’s the nature of the soul that shaped all remaining animus and mental forces after itself, affecting even the most trivial actions. In order to feel this very nature of the soul, you ought to go back to another age, to history, and to heavenly realms, feel and empathize with everything there is”.²⁶

²⁴ Wilhelm PERPEET: “Historisches und Systematisches zur Einfühlungsästhetik”, *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, 11, 1966, p. 193-216: 197f. and Simone WINKO, *Kodierte Gefühle. Zu einer Poetik der Emotionen in lyrischen und poetologischen Texten um 1900*, Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2003, p. 190.

²⁵ “Il devient par contre évident dans les années 1880-1920 qu’une sorte de réaction irrationaliste se déploie, l’esthétique scientifique se dépassant elle-même en une forme de vitalisme délirant.” Jacqueline LICHTENSTEIN: “Pour une aïsthesis”, in Jacqueline LICHTENSTEIN et al. (ed.): *Vers la science ...*, p. 7-17: 16.

²⁶ “Ganze Natur der Seele, die alle übrige Neigungen und Seelenkräfte nach sich modelt, noch auch die gleichgültigsten Handlungen färbet - um diese mitzufühlen [...], gehe in das Zeitalter, in die Himmelsgegend die ganze Geschichte, fühle dich in alles hinein”. Johann Gottfried HERDER: *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit. Beytrag zu vielen Beyträgen des Jahrhunderts*, Riga: Hartknoch, 1774, p. 46.

During the 1870s, the notion of empathizing with something and someone is provided with a scientific fundament by psycho-physiological ideas. Initiated primarily by Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-1887) and his son Robert (1847-1933), the *Einfühlungsästhetik* is a theory of human projection insofar as it links vision to a constant auto-projection of one's own body. In the case of another person this model is rather trivial: If contemplating on a depiction of the Crucifixion of Christ, one would experience a bodily sensation due the projection of my own body onto that one of Christ, consequently relating to his emotions and reproducing those inside oneself. The philosopher Theodor Lipps (1851-1914) pointed out the importance of movement and the reception of movement for empathetic experiences, transforming those into the so called 'Intersubjektivitätspsychologie' (intersubjective psychology).²⁷ However, Lipps insists that this type of communication is not actually taking place between two subjects:

“Therewith, the mere nature of esthetic empathy is identified [...]. It's the experience of a human being. However, this human being can necessarily be oneself only. Hence, I experience myself in the very gestalt in front of me.”²⁸

This results in a subject-centered self-involvement of empathy that renders another subject obsolete. Thus, non-human objects ought to be taken into account as well. Interestingly enough, this effect would not only occur regarding entities already suited with the shape of an actual human body:

“The eye absorbs the light waves, processing them to the brain. But then, the esthetical inside converts this physical stimulus into a mental one. In consequence, we confuse the exterior quality of the stimulus with the

²⁷ See Theodor LIPPS: *Aesthetik. Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*, vol. 1 and 2, Hamburg, Leopold Voss, 1903 and 1906.

²⁸ “Damit ist nun erst eigentlich das Wesen der ästhetischen Einfühlung bezeichnet [...] Sie ist in ihrem letzten Grunde allemal das Erleben eines Menschen. Dies ist aber das Erleben meiner selbst. Ich also fühle mich als Mensch in der Gestalt, die mir entgegen tritt.” T. LIPPS: *Aesthetik...* vol. 2, p. 49.

quality of our mental sensation. It's for that reason, that we came to speak of growling thunder, anxious chiaroscuro, and happy sky blue.”²⁹

Here, the main principle of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* becomes evident in terms of language: By projecting our bodily conditions onto nature, we came to describe nature in terms that ought to describe a human and not nature. Accordingly, anthropomorphisms were concurrently situated in an anthropological context, as they were similarly fueled by the constant equation of human bodies and practically every existing matter – foremost dead matter, that is art.

Art historian Heinrich Wölfflin's (1864-1945) 1886 dissertation premises the paradigm of *Einfühlung*. That is, because architecture is characterized via a repertoire borrowed from anatomy and human affectivity. His rhetorical anthropomorphization and every subsequent variation of empathy is once more bound to the constitution of the human body:

“One can understand only what one is capable of oneself. Solely because we're in possession of a body ourselves, bodily forms can be significant to us. Being exclusively optical creatures, we'd be unable to evaluate the bodily world in an esthetical manner.”³⁰

Karsten Stueber identified the underlying phenomenon as an analogy between human vision and the “expressive quality of human vitality in the body”³¹. It is only because we have a body of our own which we continuously project onto architectural structures, vital architectonic qualities such as weight, balance, and hardness would leave an impression on us.

²⁹ “Das Auge saugt dabei die Lichtwellen ein, die sich in seinem Instrument zum Hirn fortsetzen. Diese physische Reizung wird aber vom ästhetischen Innenleben zu einer seelischen umgesetzt, so daß wir ihre äußere Qualität mit der Qualität unseres seelischen Gefühls verwechseln; und daher kommt es, daß wir von zornigem Gewitterlicht, bangem Helldunkel, seligem Himmelsblau sprechen.” Robert VISCHER: *Ueber ästhetische Naturbetrachtung*, s.l., [1893], p. 196.

³⁰ “Man versteht nur, was man selbst kann. Körperliche Formen können charakteristisch sein, nur dadurch, dass wir selbst einen Körper besitzen. Wären wir bloß optisch auffassende Wesen, so müßte uns eine ästhetische Beurteilung der Körperwelt stets versagt bleiben. [...]“ We're dependent on our body, gathering a vast trove of experience “die uns erst die Zustände fremder Gestalten mitzuempfinden befähigen.” Heinrich WÖLFFLIN: *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, Berlin, Gebr. Mann, 1999 (1886), p. 9.

³¹ Karsten R. STUEBER: *Rediscovering empathy. Agency, folk psychology, and the human sciences*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2006, p. 7.

It would be tempting to apply the *Einfühlungsästhetik* to the *Castel Béranger* and the *Immeuble d'Alexandre Bigot*. While the history of science has productively worked on *Einfühlungsästhetik*, genuine art historical studies are few in numbers. Even though, it is a matter of esthetics. Yet, the more fruitful attempts to pin down artistic reflections on the theory suggest a tendency to evoke or at least indicate bodily shapes and closely related signs in order to promote and foster the incorporation of the beholder's body.³² Both buildings also fit into the fin-de-siècle mingling of floral, animal, and human reproduction as basic bodily conditioning as into the definite temporal bloom of the *Einfühlungsästhetik*. Just like the heretofore scientifically revolutionized idea of sexuality and reproductive instinct in the biomorphic vocabulary of both buildings, aspects of the psycho-physiological theories of the period are present in the embodied architecture. Nothing less than an oblique influence seems apparent, as Guimard's and Lavirotte's anthropomorphization goes so strikingly well with the paradigm of the body. A prime concert, though, could be the strong tie of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* to the German-speaking countries only.

The French reception of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* is yet to be systematically discovered, but a recent volume shed some first light on the topic.³³ As the profound German influence on French physiology is beyond doubt, a debate on psycho-physiological theories unfolded as well. The paradigmatic impact of these ideas in Europe brought Frank Büttner to its characterization as "psychological turn"³⁴.

³² See for instance Dario GAMBONI: *Potential Images. Ambiguity and indeterminacy in modern art*, London, Reaktion Books, 2002, Hubertus KOHLE: "Les hallucinations d'Arnold Böcklin. L'art à l'époque de la psychologie scientifique", in Claire BARBILLON (ed.): *Histoire de l'art du XIXe siècle. 1848-1914. Bilans et perspectives*, Paris: École du Louvre, 2012, p. 679-690 and Thomas MOSER: *Das Primat des Körpers. Eine Psychophysiologie der Schmerz erotiz im Fin de Siècle*, München, Open Access LMU, 2015 (<<https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/26093/>>. Consulted on 29.04.2018).

³³ See J. LICHTENSTEIN et al. (ed.) *Vers la science...* A few years earlier, Barbara Kontae inquired Van Gogh's implementation of the *Einfühlungsästhetik*, suggesting its *omnipresence* in late 19th century Europe. See Barbara KONTAE: *Lebendige Kunst. Psychologische Ansätze zur Van Gogh-Deutung*, München, Open Access LMU, 2010 (<<https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11790/>>. Consulted on 29.04.2018)

³⁴ Frank BÜTTNER: "Das Paradigma "Einfühlung" bei Robert Vischer, Heinrich Wölfflin und Wilhelm Worringer. Die problematische Karriere einer kunsttheoretischen Fragestellung", in Christian DRUDE/Hubertus KOHLE (ed.): *200 Jahre Kunstgeschichte in München. Positionen, Perspektiven, Polemik. 1780-1980*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003, S. 82.

In comparison to Germany, French esthetics were underdeveloped in the second half of the 19th century to such an extent, that even French philosophers started to lament.³⁵ In consequence, French philosophy, art and literature were significantly geared to the theories originating from the country neighboring in the northeast. For example, the immediate translations of German studies give further evidence to this assumption.³⁶ This development has been retraced by Jacqueline Lichtenstein in the field of esthetics.³⁷ Yet, an immediate reception of *Einfühlungästhetik* has not been undertaken exhaustively. Around 1900, pertinent journals like the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* published reviews of German studies on the subject on a regular basis. Lipps, for instance, is cited even in French essays.³⁸ It becomes substantive that French intellectuals were well aware of the branch of study, when the esthetics of empathy is referred to as „un sujet souvent étudié en ce siècle“³⁹. The corresponding expertise of French philosopher Lucien Arréat (1841-1922) hints at an even more far-reaching publicity:

„L'Einfühlung, c'est-à-dire à la fois l'acte d'imagination par lequel nous entrons dans l'objet même de notre vision artistique, et le transport de notre sentiment à cet objet, qui semble acquérir ainsi le caractère de la personnalité et devient le symbole de nos états internes: en somme, un

³⁵ See for example Charles BLANC: *Grammaire des arts du dessin. Architecture, sculpture, peinture*, Paris, H. Laurens, 1880 (1867), p. 2 and Michel ESPAGNE: “La science du beau de Charles Lévêque”, in J. LICHTENSTEIN et al. (ed.): *Vers la science...*, p. 33-45: 33.

³⁶ Patricia MATHEWS: *Passionate discontent. Creativity, gender, and French symbolist art*, Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 48. In the case of psychophysiological studies, Italian surveys, for instance those of Paolo Mantegazza and Giuseppe Sergi were translated just at the same pace.

³⁷ Jacqueline LICHTENSTEIN: “Victor Basch et l'esthétique expérimentale. Une histoire oubliée de l'esthétique française”, in J. LICHTENSTEIN et al. (ed.): *Vers la science...*, p. 87.

³⁸ See “Dr Paul Stern: Einfühlung und Association in der neueren Aesthetik. Ein Beitrag zur psychologischen Analyse der ästhetischen Anschauung”, *Revue Thomiste*, 6, 1898, p. 241-243: 242 and Lucien ARRÉAT: “Paul Stern. Einfühlung und Association in der neueren Aesthetik”, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 23, 1898, p. 183. Also, his own work was frequently reviewed in France: “Theodor Lipps. Einfühlung, innere Nachahmung und Organenempfindung”, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 28, 1903, p. 660f and M. KREBS: “Theodor Lipps. Aesthetik. Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst. 1. Teil. Grundlegung der Ästhetik”, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 29, 1904, p. 544.

³⁹ “Dr Paul Stern...”, p. 242.

double procédé d'identification avec les choses et d'anthropomorphisme.⁴⁰

In his critical volume on Kant from 1896, Victor Basch (1863-1944) elaborates on the *Einfühlungsästhetik* in extenso and reveals himself to be quite fond of the concept.⁴¹ Within his own work, Basch then refers to bodily empathy as “imitation intérieure”⁴².

With comprehensive studies in mind, like Clementina Anstruther-Thomson (1857-1921) and Vernon Lee's (1856-1935) *Beauty and Ugliness* from 1897, it becomes clear, that the esthetics of empathy were perceived as an originally German field, but nonetheless, necessarily known in France and Great Britain as well.⁴³ Around the turn of the century, it had become a phenomenon widely noticed and considered.⁴⁴ The circulation of familiar theories in France becomes verisimilar in consequence, demanding further investigation that would exceed the scope of this paper.

⁴⁰ L. ARRÉAT: “Paul Stern...”, p. 183.

⁴¹ Victor BASCH: *Essai critique sur l'esthétique de Kant*, Paris, Germer Bailliere, 1896, p. 285-299. There, Basch references Friedrich and Robert Vischer, Johannes Volkelt, Herman von Lotze, Helmholtz and Karl Groos by name. Basch must be considered a marvelous expert on the German discourse accompanying the *Einfühlungsästhetik*. Later on, he describes the process as follows: “‘Sich einfühlen’ veut dire se plonger dans les objets extérieurs, se projeter, s’infuser en eux. interpréter les Moi d’autrui d’après notre propre Moi, vivre leurs mouvements, leurs propres gestes, leurs sentiments et leur pensées; vivifier animer, personnifier les objets dépourvus de personnalité, depuis les éléments formels les plus simples jusqu’aux manifestations les plus sublimes de la nature et de l’art”. Victor Basch: “Les grands courants de l’esthétique allemande contemporaine”, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, 73, 1912, p. 22-43 and 167-190 : 34.

⁴² See J. LICHTENSTEIN “Victor Basch...”. In 1909, Edward Titchener introduced the term ‘empathy’ as the English equivalent to the German ‘Einführung’. Edward B. TITCHENER: *Lectures on the experimental psychology of thought-processes*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1909, p. 21.

⁴³ Clementia Astrunther/ Vernon Lee: “Beauty and ugliness”, in Clementia Astrunther/Vernon Lee (ed.): *Beauty and Ugliness. And other studies in psychological aesthetics*, London and New York: John Lane, 1912 (1897), p. 156-240.

⁴⁴ “Le représentant le plus remarqué de la tendance psychologique pure est Théodore Lipps [...], pour qui la seule raison d’être de l’Esthétique est l’analyse du sentiment du beau et de l’Einführung”. Maurice de WULF: “L’histoire de l’esthétique et ses grandes orientations”, *Revue néo-scolastique*, 16, 1909, p. 237-257: 257. Even in the 1910s still, Basch regards the *Einfühlungsästhetik* as a central theory for the contemporaneous esthetics. See again V. BASCH: “Les grands courants...”, p. 34.

Conclusion

The vestibule of Hector Guimard's *Castel Béranger* is dominated by the motif of the grotto. Due to the traditional analogy between grotto and womb, sexual implications come into play, consolidating anthropomorphism, the erotic, and aspects of embodiment within the framework of the Art Nouveau style. Providing the *Castel Béranger* with genitalia – as repeated by various buildings in the following years – adapts the architectural entity to a human body. As has been shown, the sources already suggest, that the building was viewed at as an anatomically human being. At the same time, the German-coined *Einfühlungsästhetik* reaches its apogee. It assumes, that relating of one's own body with esthetically appreciated objects designated the very core of art appreciation. Thereby, Guimard's anthropomorphization could be remarkably well constituted. At this point, it cannot be argued that the embodied architecture of both Guimard and Lavirotte is a realization of the *Einfühlungsästhetik* for direct reading. Nevertheless, *Einfühlungsästhetik* was known to French intellectuals. The underlying entanglement between spatial works of art and the bodily constitution of the beholding subject was a question of utmost importance to intellectuals in all fin-de-siècle Europe. Regarding the initial problem to find artistic output bearing traces of late 19th century body-projection theory, the embodied architecture discussed in Belle Époque Paris serves as a starting point for further investigations. If not immediate a mediated nexus between the two is manifest. They share the common premise that only the human body can substantiate adequate art appreciation. As recent studies have indicated, the consequent fin-de-siècle enthusiasm towards phenomena of embodiment will deserve much more art historical attention in the future.

Curriculum Vitae

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