Writing Architecture

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Foreword

The quill/pen and paper are the oldest known tools for artists the world over. From Leonardo da Vinci to Pablo Picasso, from Shakespeare to Virginia Woolf, from Andrea Palladio to Louis Kahn…all these notable people have resigned to the greatness of the everyday pen and paper. This research will focus on the wonders these two instruments have led to create in the field of Architecture and Literature (written word) and how there exists a strong interconnection between the two. The paper will try to draw out parallels between Literature and Architecture in an attempt to find an inner storyteller or poet in every architect, and similarly a master architect behind every great literary work. The focus will primarily be on the process of creating the respective art forms and whether interdisciplinary exchange i.e. applying literary techniques to architecture can open doors to boundless possibilities.

The creative art forms of Literature and Architecture appear to be distinguishable, one building a world on paper and the other creating the world in which we live. It is a conscious act when one picks up a book to read, but usually the effects of Architecture can pass by unheeded. Nonetheless, despite such stark dissimilarities, writers and architects have a shared dynamic with their readers and visitors which is unpredictably alike. In his essay Why Write? Jean Paul Sartre argued that writing is essentially a joint process requiring a minimum of two people, a writer and a reader. He sees the reader as an important component of the equation because a writer cannot write to satiate his whims alone, and thus cannot possibly read his own writing. The reader is required to absorb and interpret the writer’s intention, as in architecture…

"The results which we have obtained on canvas or paper never seem to us objective. We are too familiar with the processes of which they are effects," says Sartre. "In reading one foresees; one waits. One foresees the end of the sentence, the following sentence, the next page." ¹

With these observations, Sartre is suggesting that writing involves a dialogue between the author and the reader. Dialogues bring people together, allowing

them to equally contribute to any discussion without the dogmatic statements of right or wrong. The key focus is the exchange of ideas. Unique insights arise from the dialectic when topics don’t try to cohere but instead they meander in unknown ways.

The premise of the paper is how can dialogue and communication still occur even if the language is different or totally unrelated? While some languages are spoken, others are simply understood innately. Literature conveys meaning through the written and spoken language, architecture communicates through visuals and the experience it offers.

Architecture can stir emotions and even take control of them. It is a dream state where conventions can be questioned, the unthinkable is conceived and the unimaginable takes form. It is not the exercise of erecting walls. It is enchanting, just like a good book with its potential to become an instant page turner. Architecture can stimulate specific behavior in people. The implementation of an octagonal plan in funerary architecture that allows for circumambulation as in the case of the Tomb of Humayun in India can be taken as an example. The interconnectedness between the written word and Architecture works both ways. Lewis Carol’s classic Alice in Wonderland had significant amount of architectural imagery. *Wonderland* is no longer limited to French manicured gardens and an embittered Queen of Hearts in power. The same can be said for *Neverland* in J.M. Barrie’s play Peter Pan. The human mind can reach out far and wide. All it takes is the ability to see three dimensionally. From the simplest of designs to the most mind-boggling ones, architects have a way with words. And that too without actually writing…
Why pick up a Pen?

Much of the academic discourse in most fields has dealt with the question of why. Why do we write what we write? Why do we design what we design? The word ‘why’ calls out to the mental faculties that provide explanations and reasoning for our acts. Reasoning becomes the argument and justification supporting any cause. It establishes a rationale that overrides emotions, beliefs, faith, superstition and even authority. The word reason is often used as synonymous with logic which in this case is more mathematical than philosophical. It struggles to find a definitive and rational answer after deductive and inductive reasoning. If this is taken as the truth that appeals to one’s sensibility, than why do we have trouble justifying our writing or design? Or is there more to these two fields than just being logical?

George Orwell, in his 1946 mini-biographic essay titled Why I Write provided an account of his journey to becoming a writer having dabbled with poems, short stories and plays. He lists down four main reasons why he felt people get motivated to write. He believes that these motives are a part of every writer but in different proportions. Interestingly so, these reasons are also applicable to why architects choose to design.

1. **Sheer Egoism:** Orwell feels that many people write only to feel clever, be celebrated, talked about and be remembered in years after their death. He finds it to be a strong enough motive for young writers and to an extent in some serious writers. In an architectural context (text and projects), Peter Eisenmann’s name comes to mind. His design for the House VI (1975) attempted to revolutionize the traditional house based on his theory. Purely conceptual, the design meant the architecture is strictly plastic, bearing no relationship to construction techniques or ornament. He consciously ignored the function of the building to remain true to his conceptual exploration.

2. **Aesthetic Enthusiasm:** Orwell explains that all writer’s marvel at the strength of their prose, the rhythm of the narrative, the intricacy of their words and the impact their writing exerts. He believes it to be a motive present in all forms of writing. Architects also desire to pat their shoulders when it comes to using building devices creatively. Their solution, however, doesn’t just have to be
aesthetic but needs to fulfill the required function. Mies Van Der Rohe’s fascination with planes and the consummate beauty of the Barcelona Pavilion seems like an apt example. Being inspired by the De Stijl paintings, Mies proposed ultimate simplicity and abstraction by the use of vertical and horizontal planes composed to attain aesthetic balance.

3. **Historical Impulse:** This is the writer’s motivation to comment on things as they are at a particular time, sift out facts and preserve them in words for future generations. Orwell’s own book *Animal Farm* is an example of such an instinct. Much of post-modern architecture tries to respond to history both existing and that which once existed in an attempt to tie-up the design with the element of time and context.

“*Architecture is the shape of history therefore it has to portray the expectations, hopes and contradictions of its own time.* - Mario Botta”

Mario Botta’s characteristic respect for history, topographical conditions and regional sensibilities are evident in his design of the Santa Maria degli Angeli in Switzerland. His architecture takes possession of the undefined site atop the Alps making the church specific to the place and time. As in the past, Botta’s church design was driven by the wish and prestige of the client (in this case, the common man) and not the necessity of its purpose.

4. **Political/Social Purpose:** Orwell argues that no work of writing is free from political bias and that each writer tries to propagate a certain thought in his or her work. Orwell himself was a politically motivated writer and felt that his works that lacked political purpose were lifeless. Architecture is also rooted in socio-political purpose. Architecture is for the people and tries to engineer social systems for them. People dwell in the city which is run by some local or regional authority. Inevitably politics have a part to play. Architecture takes a stand either for or against something. The Berlin Wall is a classical example of an architectural device providing a political solution at a time of social and political unrest in Germany. Lebbeus Woods discusses the association of architecture and politics in his book ‘*Anarchitecture*’ that deals with his interest

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in the cultural regeneration of society in a changing political, social and urban landscape.

So it all boils down to purpose and motivation. Before and during one writes a single word on paper or draws a line, it is important to be aware of what the design or writing wishes to accomplish. And also, it is equally essential if not more, to know what it means to the author or the architect to tackle a particular issue. Architecture and literature are in context to human societies, the measure of time and place. They address issues and try to provide an understanding of them. Both have a purpose and users/readers. The needs of the people are fundamental to architecture and literature. The awareness of the users/readers and the purpose of the design or writing are intertwined. Without having satisfied both quarters, success is unachievable. Logic needs to be exercised to determine the requirements of the people, time and context. Coupled with the writer/architect’s own wants, the project sees daylight. The end result is a piece of communication that is clear in its purpose and content.
The human mind is a reservoir of ideas that are impatiently waiting to take birth into the world. How these ideas are channeled from concept to a physical form is a challenge for artists; painters, writers and designers alike. The success of what is presented to the world at the end of the day is a burden that solely rests on concepts. Concepts are, in essence, the constituents of thought. Some philosophers believe that concepts are psychological entities. They maintain beliefs are internal symbols on the basis of which a concept comes forth as a mental representation. Others contend concepts are abstract and indefinable. However, due to the influence from different branches of philosophy, there has occurred a great deal of inflection (change in meaning) in the word itself. Hence it becomes important at the beginning of this discussion, to lay out certain agreeable definitions regarding what is a concept especially in accordance with Architecture.

The word concept by definition means an abstract idea inferred or derived from specific instance\(^3\). It is beyond the ken of most to delve into the cognitive and philosophical meaning and beginning of concepts. That would mean to take a plunge into the prodigious minds of men like Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Therefore we move ahead with the understanding that concepts in general, are ideas - both; abstract and representative, clear and ambiguous, almost dichotomous that the artist tries to convey through his work.

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\(^3\) http://www.wordreference.com/definition/concept

**Fig. 1- Comparison Model**
Some philosophers hold claim that knowledge of language is necessary for having any concepts and that the close connection between the two can be established earlier on. Others suggest concepts are above and independent of natural language, and natural language is just a means for conveying thought (Fodor 1975, Pinker 1994). Another branch of philosophers hold claim that at least some types of thinking (and hence some concepts) occur in the internal system of representation (symbols) constituting our natural language aptitude (Carruthers 1996, 2002, Spelke 2003). It is important to understand that words play a vital role in conceptualization. For instance, when one is looking at an object, say a pen, one does not know what one is looking at. What one does know is a word, the concept of the pen. In that moment, one is seeing through the word. Words define concepts.

“In the process of conceptualizing and naming the world, we forget that these elements didn’t exist for us until we differentiated from them, separated them, isolated them, and named them. We don’t remember what happened before that, because there wasn’t enough conceptual capacity to remember things before that. What we remember is the notions we have developed. We cannot remember things that had no concepts associated with them.”

In the absence of words, conceptualization becomes a challenge. Novel and ground-breaking concepts may find the need to create new words to get the intention across. This is what gives birth to new words, a process known as neologism. Neologisms tend to occur more often in cultural settings which are constantly evolving, and also in situations where there is rapid and accessible broadcast of knowledge. The word neologism was itself coined in 1803. There are innumerable examples of neologism in literature, architecture and design. The adjective quixotic which means foolish and impractical in pursuit of ideals was a term created after the publication of the Spanish novel Don Quixote by Cervantes in the year 1605. The protagonist dreams up a romantic ideal world which he believes to be real, and acts in adherence to this idealism, which leads him to the famed fight with windmills which he considers to be giants.
In the realm of architecture and design, the word *blobject* and *blobitecture* come to mind. The word *blobject* has been in vogue since the 1990’s when the design critic and educator Steven Skov Holt gave it colloquial status. *Blobitecture* as a word came to the fore in 2002 when the American author William Safire mentioned it in the New York Times. Though it was intended to be derogative, the word caught on and has since been used to describe bulbous, curvilinear built forms. Peter Cook’s design of the Graz Art Museum in Austria is an example of such architecture. The gigantic building affectionately called the ‘Friendly Alien’ by its creator’s stands as a testament to the new age and technological advancement. With progress in computer-aided design, information, visualization, quick prototyping and so on, designers have the opportunity to literally go wild playing with both; technology, forms and materials.

In the light of these examples, the following can be concluded: there is a cyclical relationship between concepts and words. One leads to the other and the union of the two is what makes the visual stronger. That visual which might be in sketch form or diagram then leads to the creation of great art.

If concepts are the spine of works of art, then the successful execution of these forms the basis for judging all art forms from painting to literature and even architecture. This makes conceptual analysis the main determinant of exemplary art work. George Bealer (1998) refers to conceptual analysis as ‘a standard
justificatory procedure’. He believes that conceptual analysis is supposed to provide intuitions that help us get clarity about concepts especially at a philosophical level. The analysis opens the window into the creator's mind, his thinking and his perception of the world. Concepts and perception have a very strong relationship. Perception involves recognizing and acquiring awareness of sensory information from all around us. It is a relatively complex phenomenon which is directly linked to our consciousness.

Some philosophers like Descartes support the idea of passive perception which can be easily understood in the following sequence of events.

![Fig. 4 - Relationship Model 2](image)

Others believe that the perceptive process is more active and there is a dynamic relationship between the external stimuli and the human mind.

![Fig. 4 - Relationship Model 2](image)

This is a classic debate in the understanding of perception; the role of the stimulus versus experience. Many theorists argue our brain only recycles already known information from its deepest recesses and simply presents it as a new fangled idea. One position is that the stimulus array is primarily responsible for what and how we perceive. The other side of the argument by constructivists suggests all perception is influenced by our past experience and expectations. The process of perception regularly modifies what humans see. At the moment when we perceive and absorb what is around us, our mind grasps and interprets the sensory information, and supplies us with prebaked concepts that have specific tie ups and emotional bearing with an already experienced past. It is difficult for the human mind to separate preconceived ideas about something from actuality. This problem originates from the fact that humans are unable to comprehend new information without the inbuilt influence of their previous
knowledge. Since the human mind can only contemplate that which it has been exposed to, reality is only understood to the extent of our knowledge. Thus, what we perceive is what we know. Although perception encompasses the processing of information from all our senses, the major reliance is on the sense of sight. This automatically handicaps us to respond much strongly to visuals as opposed to sound or even smell.

“Our experience of what is happening is not of what is actually happening. Actually when you perceive, the impressions, sounds, sights, or sensations are new – they’re one hundred percent new as they happen. But we don’t see them in their newness; we see them through our concepts about the various kinds of impressions. Not only do we see them through those concepts, those concepts automatically evoke emotional associations and feeling tones. So our experience is not a pure perception, but the thoughts, feelings, and memories that our concepts bring in.”

The link between perception and conception is hard to define. Nothing is for sure whether perception precedes concepts or vice versa. What we do know is that the concept manifests itself as a perception of its visionary. Implying, the creator constructs a concept having felt a need to make some comment on perhaps a social, political or an economic issue. Having identified it, he abstracts the idea to whatever degree he believes is important and represents it through his instrument, be it a pen or a paintbrush. Camouflaged as the esoteric, the concept is put out there by the artist, woven as a series of emotional, spiritual and even poetic experiences. It is largely agreed upon that the perception of the artist is what formulations a concept; how he sees the world, what he wants to comment on and why he chooses to do so. The artwork will carry undertones of the creator’s perception of the world. The viewer or reader is at the other end. Their own perception will allow them to decode and extract as much understanding as their knowledge and exposure permits. This transmission is integral to all art forms and is eventually a goal all artists aim to achieve.

5 Diamond Heart Book 4, pg 281.
It should be noted that ‘art’ as a term is used rather carelessly especially in the academic setting. If we agree on the meaning of art as a reflection of human society and culture, then literature and architecture can easily be accommodated in the broader definition of ‘art’. Literature, alongside music, painting, performing arts and theatre has since time immemorial been considered a prime element of ‘high art’. Architecture holds a calm stand. It allows itself to not fall into one specific bracket. For some, it is not more than just a functional building. Others find it to be a response to societal and cultural needs, teaching us about a civilization’s past and present. While proponents of the belief that architecture is art, settle on it being nothing short of a sculpture in space. In essence, architecture achieves the same purpose that art strives for

The 20th century observed shifts in the traditional understanding of art. Simultaneously, architecture too witnessed a change with the advent of modernism. During this time we see the birth of conceptual art where the idea is far more significant than traditional aesthetics and material concerns. In traditional art like painting, there is a requirement of skill and physical craft but conceptual art breaks away from the norm. As Tony Godfrey states:

“Conceptual art is an art that questions the very nature of what is understood as art.”

Conceptual art holds within it hidden meanings, meanings that are to be deciphered. It activates thinking. Consider the example of the pioneer of conceptual art, the Frenchman Marcel Duchamp. His most renowned art work, The Fountain dating back to 1917 created a stir in the American artistic circles. He submitted a standard urinal signed with a pseudonym “R. Mutt” for the annual exhibition of the Society of Independent

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Artists in New York. His entry was rejected. In the traditional sense, a urinal is not a hand-crafted art piece. It is a mass produced object that is commonplace and bears no uniqueness whatsoever. The rejection of Duchamp’s entry led to his resignation from the board of the SIA. Till this day people haven’t quite been able to pin down the artist’s intention behind placing a urinal on display. Was it to disclose the close-mindedness of the Society of Independent Artists? Giving the urinal the purpose of a drinking fountain? Or was it even supposed to create all the hype that followed? All in all, till this day it is considered one of the most influential work of art belonging to the 20th century. It lays emphasis on the idea rather than the art work itself.

Applying the same logic to Literature, the crux is the message it conveys within its premise and storyline. The concept results in writing the story. What does the author want to say? What social, political, economic concern needs to be highlighted? How does the author wish to go about making his statement? Metaphors come into play. Metaphors allow for the greater use of the written word to meanings beyond what is literally being addressed. In Animal Farm, George Orwell adopts a metaphoric means to narrate his critically acclaimed satirical fable of Soviet Totalitarianism in the looming threat of a rebellion in Russia. He uses animals to play the role of revolutionaries who want to dislodge the humans from power. From the pivotal character of Napoleon (the boar) to that of the flock of mindless sheep, each and every character was modeled after someone. Since its publishing in 1945, the book has been used to compare new movements that overthrew corrupt head of states only to eventually become corrupt and oppressive with the acquisition of power. Such is the beauty of covert storytelling, to reveal allusively.

Architecture is not far behind in this run. Conceptual architecture involves an introduction of ideas from areas outside of architecture with the aim of expanding the discipline and its reach. The result is an inherently different kind of a building from conventional architecture, where the idea has far more primacy than the end-product. In the words of Louis Kahn:
“It doesn't work, it doesn't have to work. Wright had the shape conceived long before he knew what was going into it. I claim that is where architecture starts, with the concept”.

In the case of Architecture, symbolism is primal. Like how a metaphor works for a literary piece, symbols work for architecture. A concept defines the planning but symbols function as a manifestation of that planning. Alvar Aalto’s Church of the 3 Crosses in Finland has a concept of the Holy Trinity dictating its tripartite arrangement. The outcome is a fairly secular looking building but what makes it register as a church is the bell-tower that anchors the church complex. The bell-tower thus becomes a representational symbol.

*Symbolism may refer to a way of choosing representative symbols in line with abstract rather than literal properties.*

Symbolism allows for the broader interpretation of a carried meaning than a more literal one. It is an important aspect of most religions. Religion can be summarized as a concoction of concepts related to human spirituality. Consequently, religious architecture is grounded firmly in symbolism. Projects like religious institutions and perhaps even museums tend to make far more use of symbolism because these building types themselves are a physical representation and the focus of a common cultural agreement. But the question is: Is this how far architecture can go when it comes to the coming together of concepts and symbolism? Or can other building types apart from sacred structures have such profound elements in their composition?

The world over, specific buildings in a vast cityscape also play a symbolic role. Big Ben is seen as a symbol of London, a parliamentary stronghold in the capital. The Empire State Building is considered an icon that celebrates New York as a city that thrives on individual and collective success. The Badshahi Mosque in Lahore hints towards a rich historic past of the city. Frere Hall, a once flourishing cultural centre for Karachi reminds us daily of the potential the city had and how present day constraints have stifled its growth. Even specific

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elements of architecture serve as symbols triggering our memory. Spires and minaars are an immediate suggestion of a religious building type while crenellated parapets indicate a fortress.

More specifically, consider the example of Frank Lloyd Wright and his symbolic gesture of placing the hearth at the centre of the house. It provided for the family to come together and huddle by the fireplace whereas architecturally, the vertical presence of the chimney shaft grounded the house. Conceptually, Wright was aiming to propagate the American dream house which was deeply rooted in a strong and supportive family environment. It really depends on the storyteller or the architect to mould concepts and symbols to deliver a strong statement in a subtle manner. That is where the fun is. The subject is then open to an assortment of interpretations and opinions depending on how well the reader/user decodes the meaning. The concept is what inspires a great book or a marvelous design. The concept is thus, the muse. The following half of the research paper will examine the course of action a storyteller goes through when conceptualizing, designing/writing and culminating.
Methodology

For any great work of art, be it writing or perhaps the design of a building, there is intense thinking involved. The thinking process is imperative, since it gives birth to uninhibited ideas which form the backbone to the work of art in question. The ideas are then revised, distilled and polished before being structured into a literary work or architectural design. The intention of the author and the architect remains the underlying thread that assimilates all the ideas.

Ancient Greeks, the ultimate begetters of philosophy and literature mastered the art of story-telling. Their exemplary elocution and captivating writing wasn’t at all accidental but was instead formulaic. According to Aristotle, a clear understanding of Ethos, Logos and Pathos was a must to be effective as a writer. He rightly believed that a stronghold of these principles is what helps writers surmount the art of rhetoric, the ability to see the available means of persuasion.

**Ethos:** The Writer's Character or Image – According to Aristotle, if we believe that a speaker or commentator has "good sense, a good moral character, and goodwill," we are inclined to believe what that speaker has to say. Ethos is largely dependent on word choice and style.

**Logos:** Logical Arguments - Logic and rationality are supremely valued in human societies and this type of influential strategy is usually privileged over appeals to the character of the speaker or to the emotions of the subjects. Persuasion, to a great extent, involves convincing people to accept the assumptions being made as probably true.

**Pathos:** The Emotions of the Audience/Readers - Aristotle points out that emotions such as anger, pity and fear, as well as their opposites, powerfully manipulate our rational judgments. Due to this fact, much of today's political discourse and advertising we experience is directed towards moving our mindsets emotionally.  

A stirring example of these techniques is aptly captured in William Shakespeare’s tragedy Julius Caesar.

"Romans, countrymen, and lovers! Hear me for my cause, and be silent that you may hear. Believe me for mine honor,  

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* Dr. John R. Edlund, Writing Center Director, Cal Poly Pomona – Ethos. Logos Pathos.
and have respect to mine honor that you may believe. Censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses that you may be the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more.

Had you rather Caesar were living and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men? As Caesar loved me, I weep for him. As he was fortunate, I rejoice at it. As he was valiant, I honor him. But, as he was ambitious, I slew him. There is tears for his love, joy for his fortune, honor for his valor, and death for his ambition. Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak—for him have I offended. Who is here so rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak—for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak—for him have I offended. I pause for a reply."

Brutus, Act III, sc. 2. Julius Caesar

In this particular excerpt from Julius Caesar, Marcus Brutus addresses the Roman public having assassinated Caesar. In his oration, Brutus engages in the rhetorical styles of logos, ethos and some pathos. The logos element of his speech rings the same rationale that ignited the conspiracy to begin with – namely, that Caesar had become a threat to Rome. Brutus declares in his speech, “Not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more,” (3.2.21-22) and, “...as he was ambitious, I slew him” (3.2.26-27). Coupling the exercise in logic with an immense personal ethos, Brutus adds persuasion and credibility to his words. We even notice a certain degree of pathos as he appeals to the public under the assumption that their sovereignty was at stake with Caesar on the throne.

In modern literature, techniques have evolved and taken many forms. However, the rudiments still remain constant. These techniques or literary devices are a recognizable rule of thumb or convention that a story-teller establishes for himself. Literary devices are specific aspects of literature that express ideas through the use of language, which the readers can identify, interpret and/or analyze. They are the means by which authors create meaning, and by which readers gain an understanding of and appreciation for their works. They also provide a conceptual model through which comparisons can be drawn between
individual literary works across all genres. It is an important component of the writer’s style which along with character, plot, setting and theme constitutes the five elements of fiction. As stated by Janet Evanovich,

"Effective writing requires an understanding of the fundamental elements of storytelling, such as point of view, dialogue, and setting."

The five elements of story-telling that Evanovich chalks out are also applicable to architecture. Identifying these elements for architecture helps set up a basis for the design as it does for writing. Keying out the five components of fiction has been the point of departure for the thesis project. What this helps achieve is a clear direction in design. It allows for distinguishing the necessary pre-requisites that spark the process of design and/or writing.

**PLOT:** This involves setting up of the parameters. In architecture, the plot is the project brief. The plot for the design thesis is the Living History Museum for the Citizens Archive of Pakistan. The museum aims to provide free access to the digital stockpile of Pakistani culture, history and identity.

**SETTING:** Setting refers to the element of time and place. In architecture, the word context corresponds to setting. The site for the thesis project is The Duarte Mansion, located in Saddar Karachi. The choice of site is in response to CAP’s purpose of educating the masses about Pakistan’s history and Saddar is a living testament to the city’s past, present and future. The Duarte Mansion itself is a gutted building with nothing but the façade standing.
**THEME:** Theme literally implies the subject matter of the content. It is the single unifying idea that takes the writing and even the design forward. The theme for the Living History Museum is adaptive reuse, a dialogue between the old and new. Dialogue is fundamental to both architecture and literature. It can be between the reader and the author, the architect and the user, time and space, old and new and so on.

**STYLE:** Style is specific to different writers and architects alike. It suggests a way of characteristically expressing something. It is directly tied down to language, for both literature and architecture. Since the thesis project is primarily based on how the old façade communicates with a new inner architecture, the style tries to contrast the existing colonial language. It is minimal, cutting-edge and in response to technological advancement.

**CHARACTERS:** In literature, characters are usually fictional creations of the author that help propel the story. It can also be equated to the attributes of people. Architecturally, spaces can be personified as characters by assigning them certain human properties. The thesis project attempts to do just that. Three characters have been identified: the skin, the in-between and the new. The skin is rigid, formal, grounded, heavy and unchanging. The new strives to be everything the skin is not. It is light, informal, levitating and questioning. The in-between space is literally a mediator, the void that unites the two.

Having indentified the key elements, the writer employs a technique to help organize them into a coherent, intelligible read. The following section of the research paper will attempt to annotate some of the most prominent techniques that authors use while writing, some of which are quite pertinent to architects in their design process, both knowingly and unknowingly.
• **Back Story:** Back story refers to the history or past behind the main story. Back stories are usually revealed chronologically or otherwise, fully or partly, as the main narrative unravels. Back story may be given away by various means such as flashbacks, dialogues, summary, direct narration and recollection. It becomes the point of departure for the author. Applying the same logic to architecture, the works of Louis Kahn come to mind. His modern architecture always lent itself to references from the past such as castles, ruins, pylons, etc. in an attempt to derive inspiration from them. His designs were firmly rooted in this belief, as in the case of Kimbell Art Museum which is believed to be inspired by the ruins of ancient Rome.

• **Chekhov's Gun:** This is a literary technique whereby an object of apparent irrelevance is introduced earlier on in the storyline but its significance only becomes clear as the events unfold. This technique is often considered the same as foreshadowing i.e. hinting towards upcoming events. One of the most evident examples of Chekhov's Gun is present in "The Three Apples", a murder mystery narrated in the *Arabian Nights*. At the beginning of the story, a fisherman discovers a heavy chest alongside River Tigris and he sells it to the caliph who then has the chest broken open to see what’s inside. The tale describes multiple layers of shawls and carpets in specific detail until a woman’s corpse is found underneath. He then orders his functionary to investigate the crime. The shawls and carpets described in the beginning appear to play no part in the story until two men, one young and one old, claiming to be the murderer enter the story. The young man proves that he is the murderer by accurately describing the contents of the chest with intricate details of the carpets and shawls. In Ando’s Church of Light, the slit in the wall of the chapel primarily appears to be an aesthetic invention from the outside. It is only later when the visitor enters the main chapel; the intention of the slit becomes lucid. The cut in the concrete wall that extends vertically from floor to ceiling and horizontally from wall to wall (like a cross), is the only source of light in the chapel. The gesture is strictly attuned to Ando’s design philosophy of the divide between the secular and the sacred.

• **Defamiliarization:** In defamiliarization, the author forces the reader to perceive things of common knowledge in an unfamiliar or strange fashion aiming to enhance perception.
Defamiliarization of that which is or has become familiar or taken for granted, hence automatically perceived, is the basic function of all devices. And with defamiliarization come both the slowing down and the increased difficulty of the process of reading and comprehending.”

Defamiliarization can be equated with a very potent postmodern strategy employed by Robert Venturi, using conventions unconventionally. This idea has been seen in its entirety in the Vanna Venturi House where he uses the gable on the longer side to suggest the depth of the house.

- **Formal Patterning:** This is the stitching of events which constitute a narrative and shape the story. When executed well, formal patterning provides the audience with the pleasure of discerning, predicting and anticipating the structure of the plot as it unveils. Classical architectural planning principles are patterned similarly where buildings adhere to symmetry, axiality, hierarchy and so on.

- **Juxtaposition:** Juxtaposition is when the author places two or more opposing themes, characters or storyline side-by-side to allow for comparisons or contrast. This technique is a favorite of architects and is best witnessed in projects along lines of adaptive reuse where a dialogue between the new and old is unavoidable. It adds dynamism to the design and creates engaging spaces. An epitome of such a strategy is the Tate Modern in London.

- **Narrative:** Narrative is a story or component of a story. It may be spoken, written or imagined, and has one or more viewpoints representing some or all the participants of the plot. In stories told verbally, there is a narrator whom the audience can see and/or hear, and who adds layers of meaning to the text. The narrator may also be one of the characters in the story. A narrative is usually chronological and is one of the main constituent of literary works. However, when a narrative is disrupted, it becomes non-linear. This is often used to emulate the structure and recall of human memory for example through flashbacks. Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is an example of a non-linear narrative in which secondary characters relate the life of the two protagonists, the vengeful Mr. Heathcliff and his love interest Catherine. Promenade architecture such as Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier can be well-equated with a

11 en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defamiliarization
narrative. It is the kind of architecture that extends across time providing an intense spatial experience. Frequently, it is used to reveal the soul of the building or even the site; the natural, cultural and symbolic elements constituting the experience.

- **Story within a Story:** This is quite literally a case where a story is told within the parameters of another story. There is often some parallel between the two stories, and the fiction of the inner story is crafted to expose the truth in the outer story. In *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, there are many stories within the main story which influence the protagonist’s actions. This technique adds complexity in the plot that requires the reader to be both, attentive and retentive. Such an idea is not novel in architecture. Several design projects are a complex of various buildings that need to work not just in isolation but also as a unified whole. The Alhambra in Granada is one such example where the palatial complex consists of introverted courtyard spaces that are designed to function independently and yet together they make the entire palace.

- **Thematic Patterning:** In a skillfully written story, thematic patterning may be arranged so as to emphasize the unifying argument or prominent idea which is common to disparate events. The theme is different from the skin-deep layout of the text; it is normally the meaning of the text on a more abstract level. Thematic patterning is directly related to the subtext. The subtext is not announced explicitly by the characters (or author) but is implicit or becomes understood as the plot progresses. It is the underlying substance in a story. This idea is also applicable in architecture where layers in meaning tie building components together even when they appear incoherent.

- **Rhetorical Device:** Rhetorical device is a technique that an author uses to arouse an emotional response in the readers. These emotional responses are central to the meaning of the work and are directed to grab the reader’s attention. Usage of rhetorical devices can give an ancillary meaning, idea, or feeling to the literal or written. Robert Venturi is perhaps one of the strongest proponents of this technique in architecture. His use of rhetorical device is for the heightened induction of the sense of drama. For instance, in the Vanna Venturi house, He uses the broken arch alongside the lintel to emphasize the entrance. Traditionally, both these elements in isolation serve the purpose of spanning openings and portals. Venturi uses them together to reassert the notion of entering the house. In literature, rhetorical device is used for dramatic effects.
These are the most common strategies employed by writers when they decide to bring their concepts to life in the form of a literary work. The aim of this section was to establish a rationale, an understanding, a mutual ground and not move towards orthodox views of what is right and wrong, effective and futile. Architects, consciously and/or unconsciously make use of these techniques. However, if architects attempt to use these devices (one or more) as part of their design process, can it add to the richness of experience? Can architectural gestures turn out to be more potent? If nothing else, these techniques can provide a framework or a model for an organized development of the architect’s thought as they do for writers. They can make the goal seem reachable, not in the air, not something one stumbles upon. But of course, without compromising design exploration. Literary devices are, as mentioned earlier, a rule of thumb and not an authority. They help prevent the writing process from going haywire, taming far-fetched ideas and making them comprehensible. They enable writers to ascertain a direction. Architects can benefit from these strategies in a similar way. Architecture has several determinants that need to assimilate and produce a cohesive experience from the point of entering a building to exit. The design process has various foci. It is being pulled in different directions, a period of trial and error that eventually leads to a finished building. Employing a literary device in architecture design can help determine a course of action, a methodical path that can logically defend the process and design alike. Also, these strategies can provide a basis for analysis and critical appreciation of the architect’s work as design decisions can be decoded in the light of the technique applied.

The thesis endeavors to take this argument forward by exploring the use of the literary device ‘Defamiliarization’ and its application to architecture design i.e. the adaptive re-use of the Duarte Mansion located in Saddar Karachi. Defamiliarization is a Russian Formalist technique that draws attention to the use of common language in a way as to modify one’s perception of an easily understandable concept or object. In doing so, it forces the viewer to question conventions. In architecture, Deconstructivism comes to mind. Jacques Derrida, the influential French philosopher proposed this theory which is characterized by ideas of fragmentation, dislocation and distortion of architectural elements such as structure and skin. Deconstructivist thought aims at moving architecture
away from what the practitioners believe to be the constringing ‘rules’ of modern architecture such as ‘form follows function’, ‘remaining true to materials’ and ‘purity of forms’. Derrida holds claim that any architectural deconstruction requires the presence of a specific archetypal construction, a strongly established convention to play flexible against. Furthermore, he emphasizes on the importance of hidden meanings as the primary condition of thought and experience; for e.g. the absence of something hinting towards a former presence.

It is these aspects of Deconstructivism that directly relate to the notion of Defamiliarization in literature. For the design thesis, aspects of the three characters (the skin, the in-between and the new) are derived from deconstructivist thought. The skin can be considered the ‘archetypal construction’, a standard to ‘play flexible against’ as stated by Derrida. Defiance of conventions the skin stands on leads to the creation of the new. And the ‘absence of a presence’ is equated to the void or in-between. It hints towards the previous presence of stacked floors in the Duarte Mansion when it was first built in the early 1900’s for the Goan Christian community.

The next chapter will examine how differently or similarly architecture and literature have addressed an issue of common interest. The subject is the Holocaust; the literature analyzed is *The Diary of Anne Frank* and its architectural counterpart, *The Jewish Museum* by Daniel Libeskind. This section will discuss how and whether successfully or not the two disciplines stir emotions of compassion in readers and visitors, respectively.
This chapter is devoted to the analysis of how similar themes and concepts are tackled by Literature and Architecture and how much of an overlapping exists between the two mediums and their expression. The comparison is between The Diary of a Young Girl popularly known as Anne Frank’s Diary and Peter Eisenmann’s Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. The motivation behind the two works is the need to preserve history and evoke empathy in mankind. Accounts of the Holocaust, the most horrifying occurrence of the 20th century haunt the world till today. Several books have been written on this event consisting eerie details of Nazi oppression and massacre of the Jews during the Second World War. But none of these documentations capture the spine-chilling truth better than The Diary of Anne Frank. Comprising of a series of letters and diary excerpts, this young girl’s personal observances while hiding from the Nazi party are more moving than any statistics. In the words of J. F. Kennedy:

“Of the multitudes who throughout human history have spoken for human dignity in times of great suffering and loss, no voice is more compelling than that of Anne Frank.”

Since the first publication in 1947, Anne Frank and her diary have become a personification and symbol for the voice of tragic innocent victims of war and racism. The growing awareness of the notion to hear the voice of the oppressed is a continuing process in the history of human rights and civilization.

The Diary of Anne Frank as a literary construct can be analyzed in accordance with the themes it prominently upholds. These can be broken down as:

- **Coming of Age and Identity:** A serious point of concern about Anne Frank’s diary is it was written at a very fickle stage in Anne’s life that is, her adolescence. Throughout the book, we see her struggling to find who she is, trying to live up to expectations, showing discontent over her selfishness and aching over the fate of her loved ones. She is faced with typical teenage problems of sexuality, the need to escape from meddling adults and the quest of

12 [www.experiencefestival.com/the_diary_of_a_young_girl_-_investigation](http://www.experiencefestival.com/the_diary_of_a_young_girl_-_investigation)
self-identification. Again and again, we find her questioning her Jewish identity and German hatred towards her people, about virtue and goodwill, suffering and empathy. Although she finds no clear answers to these questions, they enable her to define who she is as a person.

- **Jewish Consciousness:** Although the theme comes up in passing with very little focus, it holds a strong undertone that marked the book’s success. We find Anne torn between whether her Jewish identity should be kept hidden or should she be proud of her religious identity and heritage. She adopts a nonchalant attitude towards the issue emphasizing that religious identity shouldn’t dictate one’s character.

- **Anti-Semitism:** Anne Frank’s personal account illuminates the political and social context of anti-Semitism in Germany and the Holocaust. She speaks of her Jewish identity only to reprimand the hostile attitude that drove her and several like her into hiding. Although the book does not focus on the concentration camps where Anne and her sister died, it does provide an altogether human portrayal of the anguish during the Holocaust.

- **War and Suffering:** War, inevitably is another focal theme of the book. Several passages in the book that concern adult conversations revolve around the optimistic belief of “after the war ends”. The hopeful excitement is reflected strongly towards the end of the book where Anne mentions every battle that the Allied Forces had against Germany. It was a sign of a long-time-coming escape. Also, there is a powerful surge of guilt throughout the book as Anne and many like her think of the Jews who got left behind. This feeling also hints towards their own fear of being left at the mercy of Nazis if they too get caught.

Where excerpts from a girl’s personal diary can cause eyes to well up, hearts to tremble and silence to prevail, similar sensations are aroused by manifesting the tragedy through architecture; Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. Several have dedicated memorials and museums in remembrance of the murdered Jews but none have stirred controversy like Peter Eisenman’s design for the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. It is composed of 4.7 acres of land with 2,711 concrete slabs or stele arranged on a grid along a sloping stretch of land. The heights of the slabs vary from 8” to up to 15’. According to the Peter Eisenmann’s project text:
“The steles are designed to produce an uneasy, confusing atmosphere, and the whole sculpture aims to represent a supposedly ordered system that has lost touch with human reason.”

The impact of walking down a pathway of anonymous concrete slabs which believably are representing graves of the departed is one that makes the visitor perturbed. The underlying theme of the Holocaust Memorial has some unmistakable similarities to the personalized account of Anne Frank. The task at hand for the architect was to address the unspeakable crime of the Nazis. Eisenmann’s design for the memorial builds itself on history representing the atrocities subtly. It further reinforces the idea of how the past cannot be forgotten and reconsiders the Nazi legacy. Since the beginning, contention in this case has remained that whether exemplifying the death of millions of Jews through architecture is necessary or not. The purpose behind the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin has been put to question: Is such a memorial about coming to terms with past mistakes or rather seeking salvation from them? Who is the memorial really for: the victims or the descendants of the culprits? Eisenmann claims that his design is the outcome of a rigorous process and it is the discoveries he made that he has chosen to share with the public. Eisenmann’s design is symbolic of changing trends in the German society, encouraging people to publicly confront the horrors of their past without seeking to erase, forget or repent for them. The myriad of concrete graves are a direct representation of the millions of lives that got lost. No names have been etched on the steles suggesting that statistics, identity and names are insignificant and it’s the sheer horror of the widespread killings that needs to be reckoned with. Anne did the same in her diary by not emphasizing her Jewish identity but

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_to_the_Murdered_Jews_of_Europe
narrating the pain only to appeal to humanity. Walking in between the labyrinthine arrangement, a sense of disarray and confusion sinks in. The architect wants people to feel lost and disoriented just as the Jews did. His design leaves the visitor standing on the edge of the abyss with no clear site demarcation. The gesture represents doubt and leaves the parameters of guilt undefined. It includes those who looked the other way, continued with their work and refused to bear witness. Again, another relevant comparison can be drawn from the book. War had left Anne and her people uncertain of their fate and they couldn’t quite shake off remorse for those left behind. The quiet abstraction of the memorial, its haunting silence and absolute physical presence memorializes past sufferings but also compels us to acknowledge that history’s significance today.

It is evident in this particular instance that both architecture and literature stem from the need to respond, to serve a purpose, in order to permeate a sense of awareness in society. Both are for the people. Where one puts together words to plea to human consciousness, the other puts together planes and volumes. In this case, the point of departure was the same and the end result also had extreme similarities. The impact either one has on people is dependent on how well the author and the architect communicate the idea. The fact that both are recognized in their respective fields as controversial and evocative is proof enough of their success.
This is the first stanza from Emily Dickinson’s poem of the title ‘The Brain is wider than the Sky’. Ironically, it is celebrated as the poet’s most easily understandable work even though it deals with the intricate relationship of the human mind with the outside world. The poem compares and contrasts the brain with three unquantifiable entities; the sky, the ocean and the concept of God. In this poem, Dickinson observes the mind’s capacity to absorb, interpret, perceive and experience the world. The brain is wider than the sky despite the vastness the sky boasts of. Also, the brain is able to integrate the universe into itself thereby it has the ability to soak up the oceans. In doing so the brain dares to stand parallel to the Almighty; she sees the human mind as giving birth to the idea of God, in essence.

If we take Dickinson’s poetic explanation regarding the competence of the human mind as a point of departure, it becomes fairly evident that the mind’s eye is at the core of all conceptualization. The human ability to visualize images in the mind is what we commonly refer to as imagination. Imagination is witnessed at its level best in story telling where the precision of words invokes images. Some psychologists prefer to describe this process as imagery. Imagery in literature is described as the use of chosen words to induce mental images and arouse a sensory experience. In the realm of visual arts, imagery refers to what the artist depicts in his work. Architectural imagery borrows from the two varied definitions of imagery. This is because the discipline attempts to continue beyond the visual and appeal to the senses.

In both architecture and literature, visuals become fundamental. They tend to precede drawing-writing and even play a part in reinforcing the drawing-writing. These images are captured first in the mind and then on paper. While the writer ceases the image through his words, architects do the same by sketching. Sketches become the preliminary exploration for architects where the aim is to
convey the concept. The physical detail of mark making within the sketch, hint towards the abstract cognitive process of the architects mind. Although sketches come across as haphazard and fragmented, they communicate the architect’s intention with unexampled clarity. Consider the example of I.M. Pei’s design for the Musée d’Art Moderne in Luxembourg. The design process and construction took over a decade for completion but what is interesting to see is the consistency from the first conceptual sketch to the final materialization. The following sketches are some of the first instinctive reactions that I. M. Pei had having had meetings with the client and paid site visits.

These sketches provide a rare opportunity to peek into the mind of the architect, his struggle with the unusual arrow-head shape of the site, the inflicted geometry and the application of his own design principles. It further offers a look into the trial and error process that dictates great design, shines a light on the architect’s triumph over the perplexing geometry that would serve as the mainstay of the final building design. The quick sketches of the architect as mental images put on paper are not mere whims but in fact tell a story of how lines become planes and how planes flex into volumes.

Architecture and images have an association that only becomes stronger from start to finish. In literature, imagery cannot be dictated. The description is penned down to the best of the writer’s ability but the imagery is determined by the reader’s perceptive and imaginative aptitude. In architecture, however, imagery becomes apparent as the architect’s design. The fact that architecture is 3 dimensional allows for the coming together of multiple images as one cohesive design. Unlike painting, architecture can be viewed from all the sides...
and not just from up front. Architecture is rarely viewed frontally. In fact, our experience of architecture constitutes a series of dynamic perspectives. This is where architectural imagery stands out from imagery in the visual art and literature

“The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the street, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.”

Italo Calvino’s book *Invisible Cities* succeeds in evoking architectural imagery through poetic description. The book is written as a narration by Marco Polo who describes 55 cities in both vivid and ambiguous ways as an attempt to test the stretches of imagination. Interspersed within the narrative are short dialogues between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan which are no less interesting than the main chapter. The book pushes readers to construct a world of their own, testing their imaginative potential. Similarly, in the book *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch addresses the interface between architecture and images. He says that images are the outcome of a two-way process between the observer and his environment where the observer absorbs from the surroundings and then adapts that information in the light of his own understanding, thus giving meaning to what he sees. This links back to the idea of perception discussed earlier. Furthermore, Lynch speaks of ‘imageability’, a word he describes as the quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in a given observer.

‘Imageability’ as a concept works for buildings that have been around in the city long enough for people to develop associations with them. They become a recognizable feature in the cityscape whereby people start using them as landmarks and orientation points since they conjure area-specific images. The Duarte Mansion on the famed Lucky Star chowk works in a similar way announcing the arrival to Saddar especially for commuters coming from Shahra e Faisal. But the question is can the Duarte Mansion do more than just remain a

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visual marker for Saddar? Aldo Ross, in his book *The Architecture of the City* goes on to saying:

“The dynamic process of the city tends more to evolution than preservation, and that in evolution monuments are not only preserved but continuously presented as propelling elements of development.”

Rossi claims monuments become propelling if they have survived overtime because of their form, and not the various functions that were accommodated in them. Similarly, he identifies pathological monuments as those that stand isolated in the city and add nothing to the urban fabric. The Duarte Mansion is one such monument. However, the site does have potential to transcend from being a pathological to a more potent entity in the urban landscape of Karachi by a change in its function. In this way, the building will not just be a visual artifact but a living part of the city that daily interacts with its people. The proposed function of a digital museum intends to accomplish that.
Towards a Poetic Architecture...

What makes poetry? Questions of this nature are an invitation for subjective points of view. On the surface, poetry comes across as the rhythmic arrangement of syllables to create lyrical symphony. The poet is the maestro orchestrating words but the beauty of it doesn’t just end there. There are perhaps as many definitions of poetry as there have been poets. Emily Dickinson said, “If I read a book and it makes my body so cold no fire ever can warm me, I know that is poetry”. William Wordsworth expressed his opinion on the matter saying “it is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. Shakespeare and John Milton had a much more dramatic take on what they considered poetry, giving our generation enough material to keep books and lecture rooms occupied. Thus, poetry is a lot of things to a lot of people but the characteristic central to all poetry is its reluctance to be placed in any mould. Poetry is language sculpted into a form, a form that is reflective of human societies. Words are the only tool of the poet which he uses miserly and with utter precision to address meaning beyond the literal. That is why a good poem lies somewhere outside mere words: it is the intangible, rejoicing in things not fully comprehended. Poems can’t be pulled out of a recipe book, or by molding words in an acceptable manner. Shape and content entwine to produce the final product, a process that continually questions the poet’s intention. They are a voyage of discovery requiring immense effort to write and an equally immense effort to be understood. Therefore, trying to define poetry is like grappling with air. Pointless.

It is important at this stage to develop some know-how of what elements constitute a good piece of poetry. This is what forms the basis of poetry analysis. Very briefly, they are:

- **Theme**: This is the central idea the poem revolves around. It can be a story, a thought or a description about someone, something or some event.
- **Symbolism**: Symbols are used for reference in an attempt to make the reader look at things differently from the conventional or preconceived manner.
- **Rhyme**: Rhyme is the use of similar sounding words to end each sentence with. A poem may or may not rhyme. Rhyme creates rhythm in the poem
which is best grasped when reading the poem aloud. It makes the poem musical and is largely dependent on the syllables used.

- **Comparison**: This is achieved through the use of similes and metaphors. It allows for a greater awareness of the content.

- **Alliteration**: The use of the same sounding consonant at the beginning of each important syllable. This is primarily for sound effects.

The phrase “poetic architecture” has been common in architectural discourse since at least the end of the eighteenth century when Sir John Soane used it to describe the ‘pictorial breaks of light and shade’ in the internal and external elements of a building. Since then, we have heard the use of this compound term on many an occasion but what does it actually imply and how does architecture aspire to become poetic? From the acquired understanding of poetry and applying the same logic to architecture, does is suggest the importance of the esoteric undertones? The minimal use of architectural elements and yet heightening spatial experience? The overall composition, rhythm, theme and style that determine planning? Do all these considerations lead to an architecture that’s poetic? The answer is far from simple but it lingers somewhere between Le Corbusier’s insistence on poetic effects and “poetic emotion” as defining characteristics of true architecture in *Vers une architecture*, and it can further be discerned in statements by architects such as Michael Stacey and Peter Zumthor, the former in his acceptance that “architecture is more akin to the creation of a work of literature than of reductive problem solving”\(^\text{16}\) and the latter in his belief that, although buildings are not poetic, they possess subtle qualities that, like the unexpected truth of poetry “permit us to understand something that we were never able to understand in quite this way before”\(^\text{17}\).

Tracing the origin of the word ‘poetry’; it is derived from *poesis*, a Greek work meaning to create. This makes the poet the creator; inventor, designer, planner, and poetic (*from poetica*) is the creation of beauty and the beauty of

\(^\text{17}\) Zumthor, Peter. Thinking Architecture (Basel: Birkhauser, 1999/2006) pg 34
creation. Poetry in architecture can be written without any conscious attempt or even human intervention. Time and its affects can create poetry. Ruins are never completely forgotten. Regardless of how fragmented they are, faint traces of their past still exist. Ruins are laden with memories of a time long gone. They allow us to fuse our vague knowledge of the time and culture they were built in with our own experience of life. It is a dialogue across time, a phenomenon that is undeniably poetic. Poetic architecture is in ways similar to the traditional narrative but it tries to achieve much more. It works not only in the physical location of the building but also its emotional, political and cultural setting. When standing in front of a building with a rich cultural past, one develops an awareness of self in relation to the time and context the architecture belongs to. This opening of a window into the days gone by or the prevailing times is the beginning of poetic architecture. It requires the observer to be perceptive in the truest sense of the word; understanding, discovering, examining, determining, interpreting and experiencing. Written poetry can also be viewed as a space demarcated by the poet. The reader visits this space learning of the environment it describes, a place from where one can look at things in ways not possible from any where else.

The intrinsic similarities of architecture and poetry cannot be ignored. The two art forms are similar because of their interest in form, their use of structure, and their stand toward their environments. Poets such as Wordsworth were drawn to nature for inspiration, and, likewise, architects are often inspired by the same. Poetic devices such as rhythm, simile and paradox are also the essence of great architecture allowing the building to communicate. Buildings or architectural elements are often made to resemble things of another kind. This is the architectural use of the concept of simile. Calatrava’s wing-like canopy at the Milwaukee Art Museum comes to mind. The figurative architectural device that shields the building from sun is derived from a bird in flight. It symbolizes ascent and has since become a symbol for the city. Rhythm is universally accepted as a principle of all art be it music, painting or even architecture. There is no doubt as to how repetition and rhythm create architecture that is sound. A typical elevation of a Renaissance palazzo is a testament to the beauty generated through the rhythmic arrangement of columns, windows and crenellations.
Direct clarity is often seen as beautiful but clarity suggests a rigidity that is not poetry. William Empson goes on to saying that imprecision of meaning is poetry’s greatest virtue. This is where paradoxes and juxtaposition in both, poetry and architecture become significant. The use of ambiguity and tension in poetry is not superficial or merely to create intrigue. What the poet is providing is insight beyond traditional experience, weaving a new pattern of perceiving things around us. Such complexity is what Venturi claims to be an integral part of architecture saying:

“Architecture is form and substance – abstract and concrete – and its meaning derives from its interior characteristics and its particular context.”\textsuperscript{18}

Even having established the determinants of poetic architecture, it is difficult to nail down what architecture is poetic. Poetry enlivens not just one aspect of life but encompasses a wide range of subjects. So poetic architecture cannot be one-dimensional and like its written-relative needs to be all-embracing. Thus, poetic architecture has to be one that never exhausts its ability to make the viewer see different things. Techniques, devices and concepts from written poetry can be transferred to the discipline of architecture for a deeper understanding but it should be known that no technique is ever enough and can supersede those magical accidents that create true poetry.

Understanding this correspondence between literature and architecture, the design for the Duarte Mansion in Saddar, Karachi aspires to give rise to a literary or poetic architecture. It is not just architects who strive to reinforce this connection but poets like William Wordsworth have resorted to architecture in explaining the structure and layout of their poems. In the Preface to the 1814 edition of \textit{The Excursion}, Wordsworth claims to have conceived the poem as having ‘the same kind of relation’ to another one of his poems titled \textit{The Recluse} as ‘the ante-chapel to the body of a gothic church’ and links his previously published short pieces to the ‘little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in the façade.’

The main propelling idea behind the thesis is to conceive architecture in a way that is consciously poetic. This is achieved by making use of literary and poetic devices as mentioned earlier. In the highly acclaimed *Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance* Kenneth Frampton argues that architecture must advocate “a place-conscious poetic – a form of filtration compounded out of an interaction between culture and nature, between art and light”¹⁹. Time and sense of place, again become the main determinants of evocative poetry and architecture. The design for the Duarte Mansion aims to link itself to the immediate context (skin) by juxtaposing the existing with the new in an attempt to address the notion of time; trying to make people rewind, pause and forward all the same.

The Closing

I reside in two worlds. One is a world of Literature. I have hunted the Moby Dick with Ishmael and his crew, rode a heartrending train with Anna Karenina, empathized with Emma Bovary as she battled the vices of human nature and followed the course of literary work that led to Henry Miller’s trial in 1961. It is a gratifying world. But my second world although quite similar, offers the doorway to even more limitless possibilities. I have found solace in words put into construction i.e. Architecture.

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day

-Emily Dickinson

This particular poem is actually what prompted the entire research. Dickinson, in her style, tries to examine the life of a word. At first she claims that having uttered a word, its importance is no longer necessary. That is, a word is only important in that “time” when it is said. As soon as the time element disappears, the word ceases to exist. It dies. It needs to be replenished with new life, in a new setting, at a new time.

It is fairly evident through the poem that words and architecture are in essence, the same. Both are important only for their time and setting. Consider the example of the Duarte Mansion. The style and language of the building reflects a time and context when it was pertinent; it held importance during the colonial era for the Goan Christians. However, in this day and age, the building has no greater function other than being part of heritage. Just like words, the building needs to be injected with a relevant purpose and hence, new meaning. Dickinson’s observation underpins the connection between the written word and architecture ever so clearly than any amount of research and analysis.
The purpose behind this research was to underline the intrinsic commonalities between Architecture and Literature and celebrate these similarities through interdisciplinary barter, where one field strengthens the other. In fact, such an exchange can only help push the potential of any idea and clarify it further as the process unfolds. As architects, I believe that it becomes difficult to narrow down and synthesize concepts as our thoughts are brimming over half the time. There is always a need for a method to cultivate unrestrained ideas. The ‘method’ eventually becomes an inherent part of the architect’s design process; projecting his beliefs, dictating his approach and ultimately establishing his style. Literary devices, especially since they are akin to architecture design strategies can be adopted as this ‘method’. The thesis project (adaptive re-use of Duarte Mansion) has tried to do just that; identifying what Evanovich calls the five elements of fiction and then applying the literary technique of ‘Defamiliarization’ to compose these elements into a unified design. Can this be dubbed as writing architecture? Can this be a means to literally design the narrative (promenade) that architecture strongly advocates? Can such a trade give new purpose to architecture? The possibilities are infinite. However, it is important to remember here that any work of art, be it literature or architecture is only half the equation. Everything hangs upon the needs and expectations of the user/reader; they complete it, they make something of it, they assign it a purpose and give it meaning.

Thank You
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  Self

- Figure 9. Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe by Peter Eisenmann.

- Figure 10. Musée d’Art Moderne in Luxembourg by I.M. Pei.
  http://www.arcspace.com/architects/freed/pei_sketches/pei_sketches.html