



**CP Reader's Union at Housmans Bookshop  
Developing and Contact –  
*Revisiting the Bonaventure Hotel* by Jaspar Joseph-Lester**



**'... the truly philosophical element in every work, be it called literature, art or science (or whatever) is its capacity to be developed. This capacity in a work arises precisely when a reader steps in and, as it were, picks something up to take it further.'**

**Copy Press invites you to join  
Adam Kaasa  
James O'Leary  
Helen Kaplinsky  
developing *Revisiting the Bonaventure Hotel***

**Friday, 10 April  
6.30 – 8.00pm  
Housmans Bookshop  
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***Revisiting the Bonaventure Hotel* by Jaspar Joseph-Lester: isbn 978-0-9553792-5-3  
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## **A perspective on windows**

Adam Kaasa

10-4-2015

Looking through these images of the Bonaventure Hotel is like looking at something strangely familiar and yet always out of reach.

I remember seeing Clint Eastwood's *In the Line of Fire* with its dramatic fall sequence – whose four-page rhythm we flip through in the second section of Joseph-Lester's book aptly called 'Vertical Section'. I remember reading about the Bonaventure in Frederic Jameson and in Edward Soja. This thing, this object, this character in the Los Angeles (and then Los Angeles was the future of every city) city-cum-movie lot.

And then two years ago I remember going to it, the Bonaventure Hotel – and half forgetting what it was I was going to. The banality of the conference I was attending in beige on beige ballrooms, and media rooms, sub-levels and mezzanines. And I wondered why it felt so different from what I'd remembered, or created as a memory through reading about it. Even driving through Los Angeles towards downtown on the 110 you don't see it anymore – so many towers have erupted around it.

But strangely (or perhaps not, given that this is what one might notionally think the function of the Bonaventure is) I couldn't stop thinking about the giddiness of entering a hotel room. That moment where you put in a key or a card, turn the handle and enter that dreamscape. Because hotel rooms are like lived fantasy. We become slightly different there, they are an escape, they are performative, they are charged with the layers and layers and layers of lived experience in that same, simulacrum of a towel folded double bed and birch desk room. But one of the first

things I always do whenever I get the chance to be in a hotel room is to look out the window.

I never got to stay at the Bonaventure Hotel, I stayed at a much more affordable AirBnB in Silver Lake. But the architecture of the hotel invites that 'view' even from the outside. What would it be like to look out, what would it be like to see from the hotel's perspective?

I have been asked to reflect on a theme and I have chosen to touch on the question or idea of 'perspective'. I want to do so in at least three broad senses.

The first sense is that Renaissance idea of perspective as the spatial representation of objects in relationship to each other based on a singular sight point in space, a singular view. Here I tend to think of the legacy of this turn in terms of perspective drawings in architecture, and the tradition to this day of perspectives from humanly impossible vantage points. There are always perspectives 'from the ground' but more often the perspective is from a position of flying, hovering, floating, just out of human reach.

The second sense would be the definition that Albrecht Dürer gave to perspective (made famous in the opening lines of Erwin Panofsky's essay 'Perspective as Symbolic Form' [1927]) turning to the Latin *perspectiva* or 'seeing through'. As Panofsky writes:

We shall speak of a fully 'perspectival' view of space not when mere isolated objects, such as houses or furniture, are represented in 'foreshortening', but rather only when the entire picture has been transformed ... into a 'window', and when we are meant to believe we are looking through this window into a space.

Here, of course, Panofsky is thinking about drawing and a 'drawerly' tradition of creating the frame-like entry point to a view 'as if' through a window. However, as the architectural theorist Beatriz Colomina made famous, it goes both ways. If we were to draw aligned with Renaissance rules of perspective, we draw as if we are

meant to believe we are looking through a window, but we make windows as if we are looking at a painting or, as Colomina relates to the modernist turn, with particular reference to Le Corbusier and the development of the long horizontal window, or ribbon window, ubiquitous in modernist housing – as if we are looking at cinema.

The third sense is that of a mental state – both in terms of our opinions on things (I can have a perspective on the NHS, on austerity, on photography, or denim and LA, on anything, actually), but also our ability to hold these ideas in relationship to each other and their relative priority in a world of ideas – ‘to keep things in perspective’. The analogic shift from visual to cognitive isn’t particularly strange or new in terms of the language we usually give to such processes (we say ‘I see what you mean’ or ‘in the mind’s eye’).

But what I’m particularly interested in is where the first two notions – the spatial order, and the materiality of the window as that architectural gesture that frames the object of view, in this case LA, meets the mental/cognitive processes of having a perspective on something. How does our perspective out the window, created as a perspectival view, change our perspectives on the world? How are these co-constituted and co-constituting?

Coming back to the Bonaventure Hotel, and Joseph-Lester’s careful selection of his own photography and still-images from cinema featuring the famous landmark, I was struck by the amount of glass. The glass elevators, the glass atrium ceiling, the envelope of windows that one looks out of, but also that reflects the city – a mirrored trick of ‘seeing through’, since in a mirror, we can’t ‘see through’ – the roof top restaurant as a circular 360 ribbon of windows onto the landscape, the architectural directions and misdirections, vistas, and foreshortened views.

And so to close, *Revisiting the Bonaventure Hotel* made me think about what happens when we look out a window. What windows do we get to look out of? How are

windows unequally distributed among populations? What does that mean for our thinking about perspective in all its senses?

## Enclosure

Helen Kaplinsky

10-4-2015

My response will look at enclosure, riffing off Frederick Jameson's mention of 'new category of closure governing'. I'm going to refer to three moments of enclosure towards and beyond hotel Bonaventure. Admittedly missing out a lot on the way, my examples are within an English, rather than American, history of property.

### 1.

Often the beginning of capitalism is marked in Britain with the enclosure acts and the introduction of landlords. I'm sure many of you are familiar with this, but to give a brief history:

'Common' is land owned and worked in common. Historically it provided a minimum welfare for the poorest, enabling them to sustain for *pasterage* (grazing livestock), *piscary* (fishing), *tubury* (burning turf), *estover* (burning or building with wood) and the right to glean after harvest. During the Saxon age all village land was assumed to be commonly owned and worked with the exception of few enclosed areas. After 1066, following the Norman Conquest by William the Conqueror, land became associated with a local manor and therefore owned by its lord who bestowed Common Rights to the commoners. From the fifteenth and throughout the sixteenth centuries, land previously granted as 'common' by the landlords was gradually enclosed and put to more economically efficient use. During the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the industrial revolution in full swing, enclosure became a centrally led government policy.

The enclosure acts were a structural shift in the management of the landscape, from a right of common usage to a lease. This was manifested in very physical form: fences and hedges were erected to delineate the ownership of land. These fences existed in places; localities and each enclosure act had to be negotiated with the Parish and submitted for review centrally, with each act providing a specific justification relating to the particular landscape and industry.

For an exhibition last year at Whitechapel Gallery and MIMA, I looked at a particular case of Kett's Rebellion including paintings by Cotman of Kett's Castle. This is the romantic local name for the ruins of St Michael's Chapel, named following the rebellion of 1549 led by Robert Kett against private landowners who began to erect fences to delineate property on common land. Robert Kett was a landowner who took the side of the peasants and led the rebellion against the enclosure of land, which left the peasants with nowhere to graze their livestock freely or collect firewood as they had for centuries. The rebellion's headquarters at the ruined chapel became known as Kett's Castle. Suppressed by government forces, the rebels were defeated and Kett imprisoned at the Tower of London and later hung from the gallows at Norwich Castle (now Norwich Castle Museum, which holds the paintings of Cotman). The museum bears a plaque dedicated to Robert Kett, commemorating him as a hero who fought for access to common usage of land by the citizens of Norwich.

I'm interested in the fact that enclosure began with building fences and hedges to delineate clear tangible borders between public and private space, and that, in this context, the rebellion itself is said to have started with the peasants contesting borders and pulling down the fences Kett has erected as a landlord. Kett apparently began a conversation with the peasant over the fence and who convinced him of their need for common resource. Whether or not the story is historically accurate, the narrative provides a clear site for contestation, since dissolved into a fiction by the reflective surfaces and no clear entrance or indeed exit of the Bonaventure hotel.

## 2.

According to Jameson, Bonaventure represents a new type of space — a postmodern (or hypermodern) hyperspace. This can be seen as a category and strategy for enclosure based upon glass, reflection and fiction. These are less literal and more slippery enclosures that cannot be met with the same resistance as the enclosure acts. The glass skin repels the city outside and this erasure of context comes to decentre the subject and the possibility for resistance and the reclaiming of public space. In the place of context, the building has produced its own fiction. Bonaventure can be seen as a contained example of a strategy that is now being rolled out across infrastructure to decentre the subject in a labyrinth of enclosure.

When considering the internet as a landscape, an enclosure of online commons, Josephine Berry Slater says of internet artist Heath Bunting that his work alludes to a 'dissolution of site as single entity'. And Karen Archey talking about Oliver Laric and a more recent generation of artists working online says 'there is no site specificity in post-internet art'. As with the Bonaventure hotel, one might need to find a new way of thinking about enclosure, without the prerequisite of a defined site.

## 3.

I have just started reading Keller Eastling's *Extrastatecraft* and it's useful for thinking about the Jameson's provocation of Bonaventure as a fiction, decentring the subject, with the design as a kind of charm offensive labyrinth. For Eastling, enclosure today exists beyond a single site or building, instead permeating across global infrastructures via extra-state bodies such as ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and NGOs (Non-Governmental Orgs).

These non-state bodies form an invisible yet pervasive infrastructure that relies upon a fictional visioning beyond the modernist frameworks of nation states, utopic architecture and screens with defined edges.



Contemporary non-state infrastructures are an extension of Jameson's decentred subject in public/private space, forming an ultimate collapse of resistance to democratic (otherwise) governance. It talks about a new form of non-state governance in high modernist cities such as Dubai. Many ports have historically employed commercially zoned governance and Eastling discusses this zoning of the contemporary urban fabric of cities apparently designed from zero. For Eastling, not only are these 'new' zoned cities fictions, but (of course) privately owned infrastructures flowing globally as forms of non-state governance and enclosure.

It's interesting to also consider Eastling's *Extrastatecraft* in relation to the quote from Ed Soja concerning the obtrude entranceways into the Bonaventure hotel: 'Once inside ... it becomes daunting to get out without bureaucratic assistance.' Perhaps this could be aligned with the invisibility of borders utilised across extra state governance: we have found ourselves subject to infrastructures that have no defined entrances; we are within them without understanding how exactly we entered and the exit requires a complex set of claims on human rights and opaque processes in order to find our way out.

**LA Tapped**

James O'Leary

10-4-2015

<https://vimeo.com/124932933>