

City of “and...and...and...”

Marc Angélil and Cary Siress



Fig. 1: Sketch by Le Corbusier, drawn while approaching the city of Buenos Aires, 1929.

Drawn, as with a fine camelhair brush, the line registers subtle oscillations of the horizon. Before us is the skyline of a magnificent city depicted with the swiftness of the architect’s hand – as in the famed sketch by Le Corbusier approaching that very city on a steamboat by night, possibly lured by sirens. Were this line to be redrawn today, it would waver and lose its clarity, for the edges of the city are blurred. Not merely an architect but a crusader of a vision for the modern metropolis, the self-appointed urbanist arrived in the city to peddle his urban wares – in a corner of the world, however, where a very different mentality reigns.

We are in foreign territory and are reminded of a sensibility so poignantly captured by Jorge Luis Borges, who made us aware that other than familiar landmarks of our thought exist. Laid out on a table in which animals are sorted according to unprecedented categories, the difference of this sensibility is made more than clear. Borges’s Chinese encyclopedia, so often cited by those spell-bound by the charm of exotic taxonomies, bears witness to another mode of thinking whereby the sequential ordering system of the list does not cohere with the unexpected associations set free by the individual items listed. It might be said that rationality and irrationality operate in close proximity to each other. Strange bedfellows intermingle in a struggle, where both vie for the upper hand. The laughter that ensues from unlikely juxtapositions shatters the ordered surface upon which the