

Construction

- 1: First, fold each sheet in half along the vertical axis.
- 2: Using a craft knife or scalpel, cut a horizontal slot along the centre dotted line of the first sheet. (pages 1/2/15/16)
- 3: Then cut along the dotted lines on all the other sheets. Make sure to cut to the very edges of the paper.
- 4: Stack the folded sheets in ascending order with the even numbers at the top. Curl the bottom half of the second page (pages 3/4/27/28).
- 5: Thread the curled page through the centre slot of the first page. Repeat this process with the third (pages 5/6/25/26), fourth (pages 7/8/23/24), fifth (pages 9/10/21/22), sixth (pages 11/12/19/20), and seventh sheet (pages 13/14/17/18) with the even pages in ascending order.
- 6: When all the pages have been threaded through, check the pagination. Finally, fold the booklets in half along the horizontal axis.



SPECIOUS SPACIOUS WILLIAM FIREBRACE

DIFFUSION *Species of Spaces*

returned home and also far away. The doubled space in the Russian film is nostalgic, longing for a lost love, a lost place, that in the American film intellectualised, longing for a cool rationality. In both the space that has been covered is as much within as without. Going further turns out to mean going further back.

Take down for a moment Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*

Another creator of space, the submarine Nautilus, under the control of the Captain Nemo. The submarine appears to be a machine with a smooth hull, exterior reduced to a minimum, the hull filled with nineteenth century dining rooms, libraries and galleries. The old world of the comfortable bourgeoisie contained in a machine. Outside the submarine is another kind of space, the unexplored undersea world. The one space travels through the other, between them lies a circular window through which the travellers in the interior space examine the exterior space they cannot occupy, which is for them uninhabitable. Occasionally and for short periods the men in the submarine venture out into underwater zone, wearing ponderous diving suits.

NEMO The world finished for me the day when my Nautilus plunged for the first time under the waves. That day I bought my last volumes, the first time under the waves. That day I bought my last papers, I like to think, my last magazines, my last papers, and since then, I like to think, humanity has thought no more, nor written. [20,000 Leagues Under the Sea]

Mobles in mobile. No problems with books on the shelves, no more books can come into existence. No worries about a confusion of spaces in 1960s space films because the changes are kept to the fluidity of space outside. The

MOTHER You see he understood, he's showing he understood.

FATHER Are you sure?

MOTHER Just look at him A mother can always understand her child. He's trying to show us something. He just can't say it yet with words, but he's using gestures. Or maybe it can't be said with words anyway, he's using the only means anyone has to express what he wants to say.

FATHER Yes, but what is it that he is expressing?

MOTHER He's expressing what needs to be expressed.

MOTHER looks cheerful. Father looks blank. Child looks puzzled.

PEREC Space dissolves as sand through my fingers. Time carries it away and leaves me only formless remnants.

Ah Perec.

MOTHER If only we knew what our child is thinking. Sometimes I talk to him and I think he understands, but I don't know, maybe I just want him to understand.

The child, a small boy, remains silent, stares vacantly, then begins to move his arms energetically and to reach out for something with his hands.

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MOTHER, father, child. A sunny afternoon. A family on an outing, pushing the pram through the park.



This publication is one of a series of essays commissioned by Probuscis for the series SPECIES OF SPACES – inspired by and in homage to Georges Perec's eponymous book. The series contemplates how we, in the contemporary world of the twenty-first century, occupy space – the virtual and physical, emotional and social – what Perec called the "infra-ordinary". SPECIES OF SPACES aims to radically question the trajectory of contemporary urban existence, intervening in current debates on how the virtual and the physical relate to each other, and how technological advances affect cultural and social structures.

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SPECIOUS SPACIOUS

SPECIES OF SPACES

PEREC I would like there to be stable places, immobile, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, rooted; places which would be references, points of departure, sources... [E d'E]

Ah, Perec. Ah yes, Georges Perec.

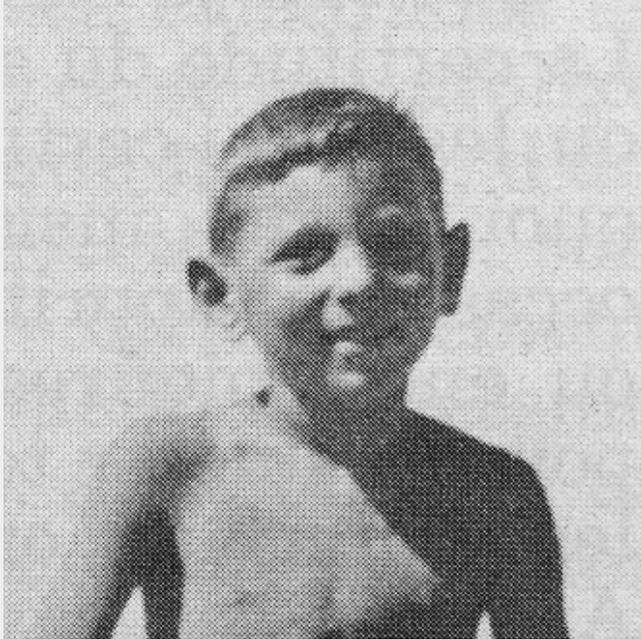
Breeze blowing the plants in the garden. The light a curious blue, becoming darker. There seems to be some kind of movement out there, and an unfamiliar noise. The garden seems no longer the same garden. Pleasant autumn evening. Already very shadowy.



Espaces d'Espaces is a list, one item following another. Sometimes, the list, being written by Perec, evolves into diversions puzzles and games, sometimes it becomes unsettling as when the category of the Uninhabitable becomes considered, but the basic order remains. There is something comforting in the sequence, it has a domestic quality, everything fitting together from the smallest to the largest, as if this is the way matters should be organised. The book works also as a series of concentric boxes, the one contained by the next, the bed is in the room is in the flat is in the house, and so on. Another way to consider these relationships would be to break away from the linear sequence and from the concentric boxes, to consider how spaces that far apart may be linked, and that those that lie close together may be separate. Very different spaces become cross-connected. For instance a room here in London may be connected to somewhere far away, say China, because the people in the room are in constant communication with other people in China, and have little to do with the rooms next door. Or a particular group of people may feel their emotional space is

PEREC: ...large living room, small living room, gentleman's study, lady's boudoir, smoking room, library, billiard room,...

Ah yes, Georges Perec. French writer, of Jewish Polish parentage. Author of, amongst many other books, *Espaces d'Espaces* – Species of Spaces. A book which describes everyday spaces by increasing size, from the piece of paper through the bed and the room to the country and the world. The book forms an elegant ordering system, each space placed after the next. It resembles the records of a zoologist ordering the natural world, placing every beast in its proper place, even allowing for the mythical and fabulous beasts which relate to no clear species.



VOICE OF CHEIKH RAYMOND:
 Cette melancholie m'est insupportable
 Moi, l'étranger, l'exilé
 Plus personne me demande de mes nouvelles
 Suis-je éternel oublié

MOTHER What strange music, exile music, as though coming from some-
 where far away. Maybe this music is connecting us to some other
 place or some other time.

Child happily waving arms to time of music and beating a plastic cup.
 Father contentedly tapping on keyboard.

MOTHER Curious how I am the only one of us to notice.

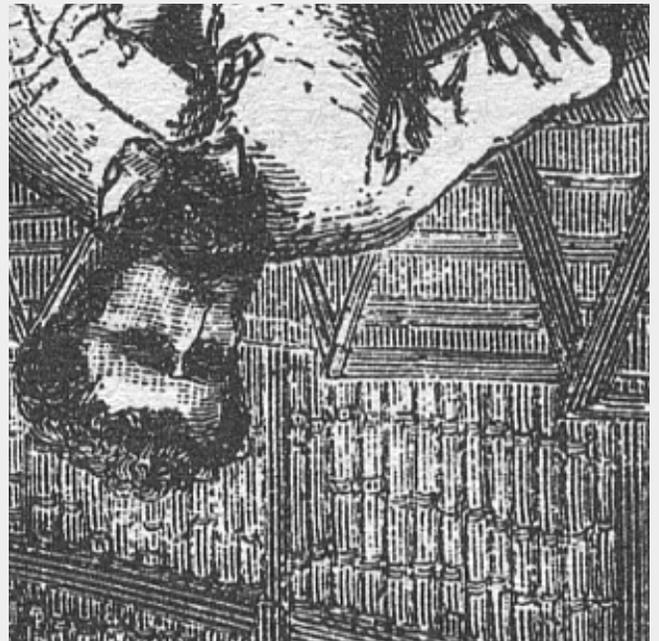
in another place, and not where they are at present living. Or very similar spaces, such as hotel rooms of a particular chain, may repeat in different places over the world, similar spaces existing independent of geographic location. These conditions may be nothing new, maybe things have always been so. But they have become more extreme due to the recent increase in communications systems, and the movement of peoples, which assume not just links between existing spaces, but also the development of these links, in the form for instance of routes, electronic networks or social systems, into new spaces in their own right. Just what kind of spaces these are is hard to define, they are not spaces in the old sense of having clearly recognised physical borders, they do not even keep the same form, but are amorphous, changing, ungraspable.

Can our spaces still be dimensioned and recorded? Did dimensions once hold things stable, because they allowed things to be measured, to be compared and fitted into one system? Traditional rooms and spaces can be measured and dimensioned. When spaces become fluid and unstable, we don't know quite how to assess them, to measure them. This does not mean they cannot be assessed, just that a new means of assessment has to be devised.

An upstairs room. Shelves full of books, some on their sides and crammed with notepaper. Desk with monitor, scanner, computer and other equipment.

FATHER [sitting at desk] At least this room is calm and the space is a ordinary kind of space, the kind of space that might exist anywhere. A room, two windows, a door. So long by so wide, by so high.

Looks up at the rows of books.



Mother, father, child, once again. A living room in a pleasant if rather cluttered house. Watching TV. Pictures of men with turbans crowded onto lorries, clouds of dust, men shouting. Another picture, several men in suits, speaking seriously, looking worried, in a room with flags. Another picture, view of sand and rocks and sky. The child stands by the TV, face pressed against the screen, burbles contentedly.

MOTHER Do think its good for the child to be so near the screen?
FATHER I am sure its quite safe.
MOTHER It seems he is pushing so hard he is almost falling through. He seems almost in the same space as those strange men.
FATHER Into the desert with the tribesmen?
MOTHER Into the desert with the tribesmen or into the room with the men in suits, both are equally disturbing. I don't want our child to disappear.

Mother pulls child away from TV.

MOTHER Let's listen to some music.

She puts on a CD, Cheikh Raymond's *Chants d'Exile*. French / Jewish / Tunisian. Symbol of the memory of *la convivencia*, the art of living together, as practiced by Jews, Christians and Muslims in Andalusia. A lost Art. A lost space. Sound of a stringed instrument and then a voice half chanting, half singing.



FATHER All those French writers, writing about space. Too many French writers turning out too many words, filling up too many pages, themselves taking up too much space. Each packed into his own cell, with his own name on it, safely confined with his own ideas. Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, with its lengthy discussions of social space, Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, Deleuze & Guatari's *Thousand Plateaus* with its stratified spaces, and then come Derrida and Foucault and Barthes and Virilio and all the others. So much written, and so little said. At least there are also some of Jules Verne's *Extraordinary Voyages*, with their journeys to the Moon and under the sea, and that fat volume of Alexander Dumas' *Three Musketeers*, those are books that start and never stop, never become lost in pointless contortions because the action has already moved on... All for one and one for all... Ride on through every question. But there's not enough space for them all on the shelf. Already the French are squeezing out the Spaniards on the shelf below, and the Spaniards in turn are having to nose their way into the Germans, and the Germans begin on the Poles or the Czechs, its always the same story, and they in turn are squeezed hard on the other side by the Japanese and the Africans. But if this goes on there will have to be more shelves built, and there is no more space for more shelves. In this house there isn't any more space for anything, the child has taken up all the space that there used to be, already the writing space is pushed between the bed and the shelves, and the table itself has no space because the computer equipment sits on it, keeping the cables out of the way of prying little hands. If only there were still the days of the pen and the piece of paper, materials which could be touched. If only these were still the days of Georges

Perce and his trusty Underwood typewriter, and not of this complicated shimmering electronics which is meant to save space, but only occupies it.
CHILD Waah
FATHER Ah, I didn't see you there. I didn't know you'd learnt to climb the stairs. And look you've already chewed off a whole corner of the Deleuze & Guatari. It's nasty and soggy now. Well, I suppose I was never really going to get to read it, like most of the books its being sitting up there with some declining hope of ever being opened. But here, try this Bachelard, it has nice Austrian paper, very ecological, its softer and easier for young stomachs to digest. Those familiar models of space, such as the scale model, the globe, the map, begin now to seem deficient, there appears to be no effective model of how spaces have changed and how they might now be understood. The older models are still comforting, because they offer a reassuring image in which space is still continuous and understandable, it is difficult to conceive of a model of something discontinuous or permanently mutating or with internal contradictions. Georges Perce's novels may offer models which are relevant, literary structures which may also be seen as models of spaces. Each piece Perce produced has a different structure, as though he was gradually exploring the various spaces might be considered. After *Espaces d'Espaces* the spaces he describes become more complex, no longer arranged as a linear sequence, but with many interconnections and overlappings. For instance in *La Boutique Obscure* he recounts his sleeping world, the barely remembered elements of dreams, which somehow connect to

just there, just beyond where we are, but somehow we cannot quite distinguish them. Sometimes we may stand in a room and feel an unease, as though somehow the space of the room is not quite as it seems, that only a certain kind of glance is necessary to perceive another space. Such concealed spaces often occur in books and films, unexpected spaces accessed through some kind of domestic object, a mirror, a wardrobe, a window, a TV or computer screen. These other spaces have their own rules and way of life. Maybe these descriptions are just a wish, that the dull domestic world will suddenly open out into some other world or maybe they are a memory of a time when such jumps were easier to achieve, when spaces were not considered so stable and defined. The desire to create a self-sufficient world, where all uncertainty and worry is pushed outside, exteriorised, develops into a condition where anything not internal is not recognised, cannot be acknowledged. Yet the barriers between the stable and the not stable may not be so clear, and may not be permanent.

Do these types of space exist not only in African folklore, but also beside our own domestic spaces? It feels sometimes that there may be other spaces

PEREC Living is passing from one space to another, while trying not to knock oneself. [E d'E]

In the stories of Amos Tutuola's book the spaces inhabited by the living are surrounded by the spaces of the dead. By mistake one may easily stray from one's accustomed world into the bush of ghosts, those who have disappeared. The way back to the world of the living is difficult to find. Those lost in the bush of ghosts become the servants of the dead.

TUTUOLA But as the noise of the enemies guns drove me very far until I entered the Bush of Ghosts unnoticed, because I was too young by any earthly person. [The Bush of Ghosts]

Take down Amos Tutuola's book *The Bush of Ghosts*.

magic which might render harmless the sense of disappearance. summoning things up, recalling them without comment, creating a kind of becomes emotive, because these lists have their own sense of poetry, rather domestic lists that Percé ceases to be so cool and classical and incantations, recitations, banal and yet exotic. It is even in these factual, deported and killed in Auschwitz. Read aloud these lists of Percé's sound like disappeared with the death of his parents, father killed in action, mother reasons of his own for this listing. As a child all that was important that they remember, to try to recall every detail. Percé had certain clear



where parts of the space are somehow opposition to other parts. continuous, but where there are other pieces that connect or disconnect, or but they seem to suggest a way of thinking about space not just as somehow the spaces we actually inhabit be considered according to these works of Percé, out of sight, having already worked out all the moves. It is not necessary that meditative. A private game is being played with Georges Percé sitting somewhere classicism that gives them their particular quality, rather detached and bizarre or distorted, they are always cool and classical. It is this coolness and in spite of this complexity Percé's spaces are not baroque, they are not willfully reveal itself to have many receding paths and zones, to be multi-dimensional. layer of a vast puzzle, which if the reader had enough time and patience would additional dimensions, as though reading the book is only entering the first not necessary for the ordinary reader to decipher, but which provide concealed which less a complex construction of word games, associations, and conundrums, one box to another. In several of these novels the text is only a surface, behind of scale of *Espaces d'Espaces*, elements of the whole narration moving from one another like Chinese boxes, stories within stories, without the ascending of his predicament. And in *53 Jours*, the novel he was still writing at the time of his death and which remains in part as notes and jottings, spaces lie inside infinity, the reader is possibly stuck in one of these repeating spaces, unaware *Cabinet d'Amateur*, the space of a picture repeats itself over and again to sequence, expose the interconnecting lives of the various inhabitants. In *baffling of Percé's constructions, the rooms of a house, examined in a particular imagination of the reader. In *La Vie Mode d'Emploi*, the most complex and island for athletes, the two spaces never directly relating except through the parallel spaces lie side by side, the space of a child and the space of a strange the waking world, through tenuous links. In *W ou le Souvenir d'Enfance* two*

Alongside the creation of new spaces continues the disappearance of existing spaces. Our spaces are gradually being reduced and vanishing, such as those of the separate peoples who are being merged, of cultures who are being exterminated, of languages which are vanishing, of parts of cities that are being pulled down, of whole cities that are removed by war, of those who no longer can occupy any type of space. The tribe reduced to one word, the book to one letter, many languages to one language. Like the critics of *La Disparition*, we hardly notice these disappearances because we become quickly used a world without the old spaces, even perhaps come to prefer it so because life is smoother, less complex.

PEREC a chalk-holder, a straight glass with a thick base partially filled with small glass marbles to which are attached ten pen-holders, a leaf of squared paper, format 21x29.7, almost entirely covered with a very close script, and a ball-point of gilded metal whose body and cap are decorated lengthways with fine fluting...
[*Still Life/Style Leaf*]

What was the point of Percec's endless lists of spaces, his extensive notations of the how the Parisian street he was born in changed over the years, his long and detailed descriptions of rooms, of food he had eaten, of items on his desk? These lists, like the equally endless lists of fishes and scientific data in Jules Verne, fill pages, the reader tends to skip through them to the next piece of action. But these lists and descriptions are there to hold things stable, to stop things from disappearing or even to bring them back somehow the things that have disappeared. If things are written down they will be preserved, if they remain unwritten they fade irrevocably, become part of the world of the dead. But who has the desire or energy to list everything



If we were to consider our space in this way, as something that cannot be reduced to one solution applicable everywhere, if we were to depart from those models which produce uniformity, then we might find it easier to produce models of space that are nearer to how we actually live.

If this type of model were to have a description, it might be as specious spacious. Spacious because it contains spaces, specious because these spaces are deceptive, their nature can never really be fixed.

A tea house surrounded by a small lawn. Plastic tables and chairs. Sound of screaming.

MOTHER Our child is trying to walk. Getting up, falling over, getting up, staggering a few paces, falling over.

SECOND MOTHER Well, our child is very advanced. He has been able to walk for a long time. And he can already turn on the computer. He can almost speak. I think he will say a whole sentence next.

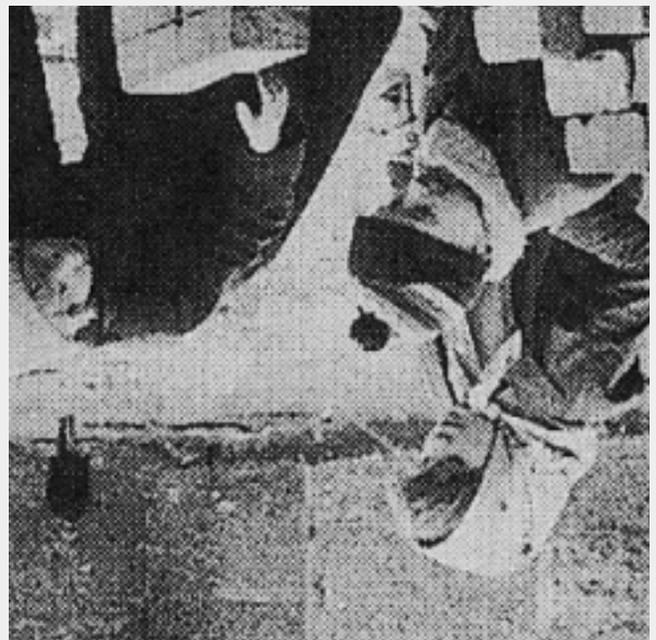
MOTHER What kind of sentence?

SECOND MOTHER A proper kind of sentence of course, with subject object and verb, his sentences are very grammatical. If it wasn't grammatical it wouldn't be proper talking.

The second mother looks pleased.

MOTHER At least walking, even proper walking, needs no grammar.

The second mother looks blank.



Sucks for a while on the nipple of the plastic bottle. Eyes closed in peaceful contemplation.

CHILD The advantage of being a child is that you don't have to put things together, just take them apart and leave them for someone else to put back together. Now I will return to chewing and dribbling, it is better for a child to chew and dribble than to consider abstract problems.

PEREC You forget what you have learnt to forget, what you have, one day, forced into forgetfulness. [*L'homme qui dort*]

Or alternatively.

PEREC Amongst the Papuans, language is very reduced; every tribe has its own language, and its language is reduced ceaselessly because after every death several words are suppressed as a sign of mourning. [quotation from E Baron's *Geographie*, at end of *La Disparition*]

In *La Disparition* Perec wrote a book without using the most common letter in the French language, the letter E. Many words in common use, such as *je* or *elle* or *est* vanished and needed to be replaced. A new version of French had to be evolved by Perec to cope with these self-imposed absences. When the book was first published many critics failed to notice the constraint used by Perec, and reviewed it as a normal book, seeming not to be bothered by the fact that a large part of the French language had been deleted.



space within will always be the same, always scientific and exact, the world without always differing, unmeasurable and unpredictable.
A small room with an undressed armchair and diminutive wooden table. A plastic bottle on the table. Lying in the floor, some brightly coloured plastic rings and cups.
CHILD Ah Perec. No, it's true I have never read Georges Perec. I am still on books printed on heavy cardboard, about animal noises, with pop-up pieces and fuzzy parts for touching. But that doesn't mean I have no understanding or feeling for space. Just because I can't speak doesn't mean I can't communicate, in fact all the time I am communicating and articulating and talking in my own way, it's just that in the world I find myself now, my meaning is continually misunderstood or discounted as babble. I know about different spaces that are suddenly connected, I know from experience all about jumps and overlaps. A while ago I was in that pleasant and comforting womb, where everything seemed easier and where there seemed no need to consider abstract problems, no need to consider any kind of problems, there was no need for understanding, just to feed and kick and turn over occasionally. And now I am out in this other world with no immediate expectations of return. Before everything was stable, nothing ever seemed to change. Now sometimes I sleep and wake elsewhere, in a completely different environment, with other people around me. I cry out in fright, but I then realise it doesn't matter, this is how the world will be from now on, always suddenly changing, always unexpected, always disjointed. It is really better to accept that things are this way, that nothing joins up properly, than to try to put it all together.

Take down the fat dictionary. Blow away the dust. Open the page with the entry on space.
The word space, it seems, has the same root as the German *spazieren*, to walk: the Latin *spatium*, to walk, to extend.
Were spaces then once considered to be created by movement? Those that remained still, that were settled, were without any extended notion of space, those who walked delineated a space as they moved. Travelling ever further as a way of creating ever more space. Walking around the city to create the space of the city. Driving the Mercedes around the ring road to mark out the space of the highway. Once created, the space will only stay in existence if the movement continues. Keep on moving, never stop for petrol, never slow down, or the space will begin to fade away.
Just keep moving. Go a little further out. Outer space.
PEREC Play with space. Create an eclipse of the sun by raising your little finger. [E d'E]
Creation of space by simple but extended movements. There are spaces that are doubled, somehow existing in two places at the same time. What kind of space was the astronaut inhabiting in Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*, simultaneously in the space ship over the mysterious sea and also looking down at his home in Russia, inhabiting a dual space partly physical, partly emotional? Or in Stanley Kubrick's *2001 - A Space Odyssey*, where the surviving character travels in his space module through the rings of Saturn only to find himself, now an old man, in an eighteenth century room, somehow