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**The transatlantic trajectories of Ada Louise Huxtable.
An architecture critic's narratives, 1949-1973**

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Abstract

This research investigates processes of cultural and disciplinary knowledge transfer across the Atlantic in the second half of the twentieth century, focusing on the activity of architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable (1921-2013).

Huxtable is known as the first full-time architecture critic ever appointed to a North American general-interest newspaper. Building upon the concept of “public architecture criticism” proposed by Suzanne Stephens to characterize her engagement at the *New York Times*, the research acknowledges the mediating nature of Huxtable’s role. Her work negotiates institutional, professional, and public responsibilities, standing at the crossroads between cultural and professional milieus, specialized and non-specialized discourses, interests, and narrative registers. However, what happens when Huxtable travels, and the boundary of her architectural criticism – rooted in Manhattan – extends beyond the United States? How, to what degree, and with what limitations does mobility affect the dissemination of knowledge, and what are its implications on her mediating activity?

The study delves into a series of overseas journeys Huxtable undertook between her first curatorial engagements at the New York Museum of Modern Art and her appointment to the editorial board of the *New York Times* (1949-1973). The first travels date back to the early Fifties, a formative phase in her early career. Huxtable visited England, France, Switzerland, and Italy, where she stayed as a Fulbright grantee. Upon her return, Huxtable curated a traveling exhibition on Italian post-war architecture, *The Modern Movement in Italy: Architecture and Design* (1953-1958), for MoMA’s International Circulating Exhibitions Program. Parallely, she started engaging in diverse fields, collaborating in the office of her husband, industrial designer L. Garth Huxtable, free-lancing for the specialized press, and ultimately publishing her first monograph on the works of Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi (1960). As air travel replaced transatlantic ocean liners, Huxtable traveled as the *New York Times* architecture critic in the second half of the Sixties, writing reportages on foreign architecture culture that appeared in different newspaper sections. Her overseas assignments included joining the *European Planned Community Tour* across the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and Western Germany in 1965, visiting the Soviet Union in 1967, and Israel in 1969.

The in-depth study of such travel experiences in Huxtable’s career aims at providing insights into how mobility, intended as a moment of knowledge

production, impacts the very practices of architectural criticism. The research does not propose these occasions and their outputs as exceptional. Neither is the aim to measure the sheer influence of travel experiences on the architectural debate or Huxtable's critical positioning, nor to assess the validity of the narratives she codifies and associates to specific contexts and figures.

Delving into different aspects of these journeys – the preparation, unfolding, and subsequent communication – becomes the starting point, but it is not its ultimate objective. Instead, uncovering the tensions between Huxtable's first-person travel experiences and their representation becomes instrumental for exploring how she tried to mediate the geographical and cultural divide through her criticism, albeit generating flawed and non-linear translation processes. Therefore, the research addresses the negotiations of the interferences generated by unfamiliarity, expectations, untranslatability, clichés, and stereotypes to question the non-linearity of architectural and urban knowledge transfer processes.

Moreover, this work is not her personal or intellectual biography. Its originality lies precisely in its deliberately in-between standpoint. It alternately dialogues with lines of inquiry that explore the transatlantic exchange of disciplinary culture between Europe and America in the 20th century – especially those that adopt a biographical lens, the works looking at the history of architectural criticism, the studies on the relationship between the Cold War and design culture, and it partially intercepts also cultural and gender studies.

This work's in-between nature is reflected by archival research, which started with the Ada Louise Huxtable Papers at the Getty Research Institute. Her documents and publications were then cross-referenced from other perspectives and standpoints and investigated through personal, professional, and institutional repositories between the United States and Europe. The first was her husband's archive, whose papers are also held at the Getty Research Institute. As the Huxtables always traveled together, Garth Huxtable's perspective becomes essential. His travel photographs and diaries offer a rich, insightful and complementary vantage point into the investigative experiences explored by this research.

While the institutional dimension was explored through the Museum of Modern Art and the New York Times Company archives, among others, the papers belonging to the architects, editors, and journalists involved in the production of her writings straddle the Atlantic Ocean, involving European and especially Italian professional archival funds, such as the Olivetti repositories or the papers belonging to figures as diverse as Bruno Zevi, Gio Ponti, Pier Luigi Nervi, Ignazio Gardella, and Giuseppe Samonà, among many others.

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Abbreviations

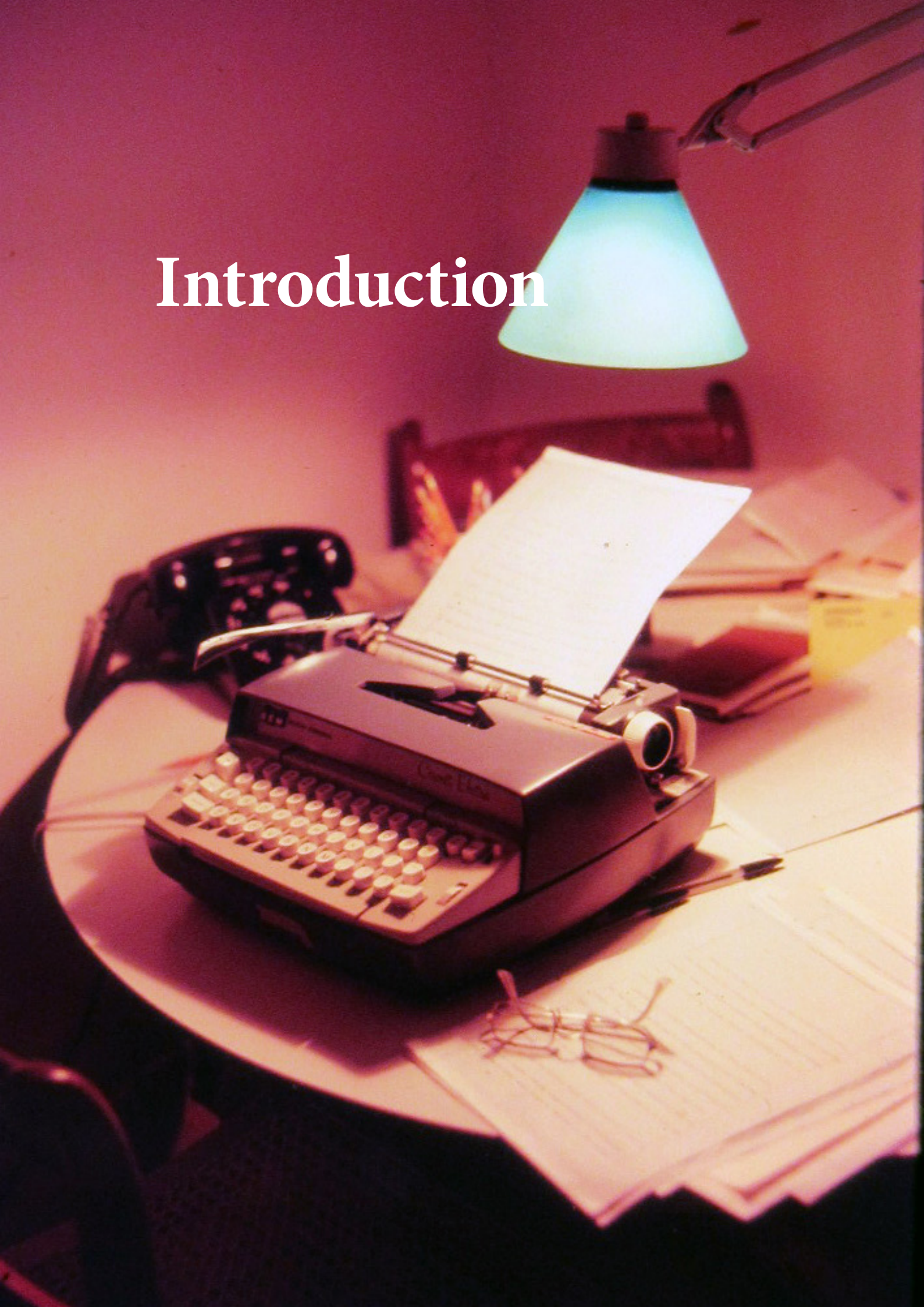
Archives

- NYPL** The New York Times Company Records, New York Public Library, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York City, NY
- GRI** Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA
- MoMA** The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York City, NY
- RAC** Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, NY
- RBML** Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, New York City, NY
- UCI** University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA
-
- AA** Archivio Franco Albini, Milan, Italy
- AG** Archivio Ignazio Gardella, Oleggio (Novara), Italy
- AP** Epistolario, Archivio Gio Ponti, Milan, Italy
- ASO** Archivio Storico Olivetti, Ivrea, Italy
- AZ** Archivio Storico Fondazione Bruno Zevi, Rome, Italy
- DA** Konstantinos A. Doxiadis Archives, Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece
- HNI** Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- IUAV** Archivio Progetti, IUAV, Venice, Italy
- MAXXI** Centro Archivi, Fondazione MAXXI, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome, Italy
- POLIMI** Archivio Storico Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy

Names

- ALH** Ada Louise Huxtable
- GH** L. Garth Huxtable
- ECD** E. Clifton Daniel
- HES** Harrison E. Salisbury
- PLN** Pier Luigi Nervi

Introduction



Ada Louise Huxtable: a profile

“Champion of livable architecture,” “dean of architecture critics,” “oracle in pearls,” “lover of cities,” “critic of the curb and corner,” or “intrepid crusader for better architecture and preservation” are only but some of the ways in which journalists, architecture critics, and scholars spoke of Ada Louise Huxtable (1921-2013).¹

Hers is remembered as a life of firsts. She was the first full-time architecture critic appointed to a national newspaper, the first to win a Pulitzer for distinguished criticism, one of the first MacArthur “Genius Grant” recipients, and the first female adjudicator in the Pritzker Prize jury.² Meredith Clausen writes of her voice as one of the most powerful in architecture in the second half of the 20th century.³ Suzanne Stephens defines her as a “pragmatic critic,” her name a “household word,” if not for the person on the street, for the people who decide what happens to that street.⁴ American journalist and historian Nan Robertson described her as “small, dainty, well-born, well-dressed, well-coiffed, ambitious, fiercely competitive [...] and no bride of *The New York Times*,” where she was “visible, powerful, admired, and feared.”⁵ Architecture critic Paul Goldberger, Huxtable’s successor at the newspaper, saw her “as something akin to Edith Wharton, if Edith Wharton had only dressed in Halston and worked in a newsroom. [...] A brilliant woman writer who seemed all-seeing, rather grand, and possessed of brilliant taste and total self-assurance. She

1 David W. Dunlap, “Ada Louise Huxtable, Champion of Livable Architecture, Dies at 91,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 2013, sec. Arts; Stephen Miller, “Lover of Cities Was Dean of Architecture Critics,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 8, 2013, sec. US; Stanley Abercrombie, “Oracle in Pearls: Ada Louise Huxtable, Able to Depict a Building in a Few Memorable Words, Set the Standard for Informed and Fearless Criticism.,” *American Scholar* 82, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 94–97; Michael Kimmelman, “A Critic of the Curb and Corner,” *The New York Times*, January 8, 2013, sec. Arts, and “How To Be An Optimist,” *Vogue* 165, no. 1 (January 1, 1975), 106.

2 Kate Wagner, “Reputations: Ada Louise Huxtable,” *The Architectural Review*, no. 1459 (2019): 32–35.

3 Meredith L. Clausen, “Ada Louise Huxtable,” *Pioneering Women of American Architecture*, <https://pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org/ada-louise-huxtable/>.

4 Suzanne Stephens, “Voices of Consequence: Four Architectural Critics,” in *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*, ed. Susana Torre (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977), 136–43.

5 Nan Robertson, *The Girls in the Balcony: Women, Men, and the New York Times* (New York: Random House, 2000), 124.

was in every way a lady, and she was tough as nails” (Figure 1).⁶ As many seem to put it, she changed how the general public cared for architecture and the built environment in the United States.

Admittedly, Huxtable is still a household name outside academic and professional circles. North American observers frequently mention a scene of the AMC television series *Mad Men*, where the show’s advertising agency copywriter and account manager meet the Madison Square Garden executives to discuss strategies to fight the opponents to their plan to raze McKim, Mead & White’s Pennsylvania railroad station. As the copywriter unexpectedly sides with the preservationists, he reads aloud a passage from “How to Kill a City,” a 1963 *New York Times* article on the scheme written by Huxtable. He is quickly interrupted by an executive, who retorts: “Ada Louise Huxtable is as green as that folder. People know she is an angry woman with a big mouth.”⁷

Former *LA Times* architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne maintained that Huxtable was “arguably somewhat green” when she started working for the *New York Times* in 1963, aged 42, with no previous experience in journalism.⁸ A native New Yorker, Ada Louise Landman came from an upper-middle-class Jewish family. She was born to Michael Louis Landman, a physician, and Leah Rosenthal in 1921.⁹ After attending the Wadleigh High School of Music and Art in Manhattan, she majored in fine arts at Hunter College. She landed a job at Bloomingdale’s, where she sold designer furniture and met the man who would become her husband in 1942, Leonard Garth Huxtable (1911-1989), an emerging industrial designer.¹⁰

6 Paul Goldberger, “Like Edith Wharton in Chanel, but Tough: Remembering Ada Louise Huxtable (1921–2013),” *Vanity Fair*, January 8, 2013.

7 Part of the passage quoted by the copywriter did not refer to the Madison Square Garden but to the Times Tower. The Madison Square Garden executives retorted that she was “trying to sell papers [...] making people miserable” and lamented how New York was “filled with crybabies.” *Mad Men*, ep. 3x02, “Love Among the Ruins,” (04’00”-06’45”), first aired on August 23, 2009, produced by AMC and created by Matthew Weiner. Huxtable’s article was “How to Kill a City,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1963.

8 Christopher Hawthorne, “*Mad Men* and Architectural Criticism,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 24, 2009.

9 “Huxtable, Ada Louise (Landman),” *Current Biography*, March 1973, 13. L. Garth Huxtable Papers, Getty Research Institute, Box 52, Folder 4. Hereafter cited as GH-GRI, followed by the relevant box and folder numbers.

10 Huxtable recalled, “He was furnishing his bachelor apartment, and I came along with the furniture.” Lynn Gilbert and Gaylen Moore, eds., “Ada Louise Huxtable,” in *Particular Passions: Talks with Women Who Shaped Our Times* (New York: C.N. Potter, 1981), 210.



Figure 1: Garth Huxtable, Portrait of Ada Louise Huxtable in front of their library. New York, undated (ca. 1970). GF-NYPL, 10-13.

Then, she started taking master's art and architecture history courses at New York University while working as a part-time assistant curator at the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Architecture and Design under Philip Johnson between 1946 and 1950.¹¹ Eventually, Huxtable would not graduate because her thesis proposal on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italian architecture was rejected.¹²

Even so, she pursued her independent research interests in alternative ways, venturing and embarking on different activities throughout the Fifties. First, Huxtable opted for research funding. She received a Fulbright scholarship to travel to Italy in 1950 and then a Guggenheim fellowship to research nineteenth-century U.S. industrial architecture in 1958.

After traveling to Italy multiple times between 1949 and 1952, she returned to the Museum of Modern Art. However, this time, she worked on architecture and design exhibitions intended for worldwide distribution and answered directly to Porter McCray, the director of MoMA's newly established International Program of Circulating Exhibitions.¹³ Among other activities, Huxtable curated a traveling show on modern Italian architecture for the domestic branch of the program. Entitled *The Modern Movement in Italy: Architecture and Design*, the exhibition traveled to smaller museums, colleges, and university galleries in the United States and Canada between 1953 and 1958.¹⁴

Besides independent research and curatorial engagements, in the Fifties

11 Huxtable and Peter Blake were hired at the Architecture Department under Johnson. Huxtable left for the Fulbright Fellowship in 1950, and around the same time, Blake too resigned to join *Architectural Forum*. Among other activities, at MoMA, Huxtable worked on the 1947 monographic exhibition on Mies van der Rohe and was head curator of a 1949 show entitled *Art Nouveau from the Museum Collection*, featuring the works of Hector Guimard. Russell Lynes, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), 275-27; Wagner, "Reputations."

12 The records of her graduate work at NYU are discontinuous, and her proposed thesis was "Modernism in Italian Postwar Architecture." Clausen, *Pioneering Women*, "Ada Louise Huxtable."

13 On the International Program and MoMA's engagement in the cultural cold war, see Ludovica Vacirca, "L'architettura e le frontiere della Guerra Fredda. L'U.S.I.A. e il MoMA nell'esportazione di una visione americana di modernità oltre la cortina di ferro (1945-1961)" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Torino, Politecnico di Torino, 2016); Helen M. Franc, "The Early Years of the International Program and Council," in *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*, ed. John Elderfield, Studies in Modern Art 4 (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 108-49.

14 The exhibition was part of my master's thesis research project, which partially converged in "The Modern Movement in Italy: Architecture and Design, 1953-1958," *Territorio*, no. 100 (November 2022): 142-51.



Figure 2: Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable working on the drawings for Sperry & Hutchinson's Green Stamp Town, circa 1959. GH-GRI, 07-08.

Huxtable collaborated on projects in her husband's industrial design office (Figure 2). Curricula, publicity, and articles in trade publications often presented them as a "Garth and Ada Louise Huxtable, a husband-wife industrial design team," a sort of East Coast take on the Eames format.¹⁵ Their best-known project was probably the glassware, serving equipment, china, and holloware for Johnson's Four Seasons restaurant at the Seagram Building. According to the publicity, while Garth Huxtable was doing the design work, she added "the woman's point of view to products for the feminine market."¹⁶ Her handwritten annotations suggest that in this phase of their respective careers, she was acting as her husband's publicist, writing captivating

15 "L. Garth Huxtable, ASID Industrial Design," Fact sheet, undated. GH-GRI, Box 49, Folder 4.

16 Her exchanges with Randy Roeder, a design historian working on the designs of her late husband for Millers Falls, confirmed their long-lasting reciprocal engagement in each other's work. Email thread between ALH and Randy Roeder, January 2002. GH-GRI, Box 51, Folder 4; Randy Roeder, "L. Garth Huxtable, Industrial Designer for Millers Falls," *The Gristmill. A Publication of the Mid-West Tool Collectors Association*, no. 107 (June 2002): 10–15.

descriptions of his design production and corresponding with trade magazines that could be interested in his work.¹⁷

Publicity often mentioned her involvement in other profession-related fields, stating that “in addition to her design activities, [she] is an architectural and design critic, historian and writer, and prepares design exhibitions.”¹⁸ In the same years, Huxtable also started free-lancing for professional periodicals and trade magazines, gaining access to the networks and resources of the New York editorial world. She worked as a regular contributing editor for *Progressive Architecture* and *Art in America* and published her writings in journals as diverse as *Interiors*, *Architectural Review*, *Industrial Design*, *Arts Digest*, and nonprofessional magazines like *Consumer Reports*, *Holiday*, *Horizon*, and *The Saturday Review*.¹⁹

In 1960, she published her first monograph, a book on the works of Italian engineer Pier Luigi Nervi for George Braziller’s *Masters of World Architecture* series.²⁰ This publication would be immediately followed by *Four Walking Tours of Modern Architecture in New York City* – four itineraries in Manhattan prepared for MoMA – and *Classic New York: Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance*, the first of an unfinished six-volume series.²¹ These early works would inaugurate a successful and prolific publishing activity, which included monographs like *The Unreal America* or *Frank Lloyd Wright* and anthologies of her newspaper articles, her latest being *On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change*.²²

17 “L. Garth Huxtable, ASID Industrial Design,” undated. GH-GRI, Box 49, Folder 4.

18 “Fact Sheet,” undated. GH-GRI, Box 49, Folder 4.

19 An initial census of Huxtable’s writings was attempted by Lawrence Wodehouse in 1981. Despite being endorsed by the critic, this early annotated biography has been criticized for inaccuracies and omissions. Also partial is the list of articles available in the finding aid at the Getty Research Institute. Lawrence Wodehouse, *Ada Louise Huxtable: An Annotated Bibliography*, Garland Bibliographies in Architecture and Planning, 1 (New York; London: Garland, 1981).

20 Ada Louise Huxtable, *Pier Luigi Nervi*, The Masters of World Architecture Series (New York: Braziller, 1960).

21 Ada Louise Huxtable, *Four Walking Tours of Modern Architecture in New York City* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Municipal Art Society, 1961); *Classic New York: Georgian Gentility to Greek Elegance*, Vol. 1, The Architecture of New York, a History and a Guide (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964).

22 Ada Louise Huxtable’s anthologies of newspaper articles include *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?* (New York: Macmillan, 1970); *Kicked a Building Lately?* (New York: Quadrangle; New York Times Books, 1976); *Architecture, Anyone? Cautionary Tales of the Building Art* (New York: Random House, 1986); *Goodbye History, Hello Hamburger: An Anthology of Architectural Delights and Disasters* (Washington: Preservation Press of the National Trust, 1986); *On Architecture: Collected Reflections on a Century of Change* (New York: Walker Books,

Her breakthrough came in 1957, when she started writing for Lester Markel's Sunday edition of the *New York Times*. By 1963, the newspaper officially appointed her as its first full-time architecture critic.²³ Initially, Huxtable refused when first offered the position because she claimed the job would "disrupt her private life." However, a confidential memorandum between her superiors states that "When Herzberg [the cultural news editor] told her that the *Times* was determined to hire an architecture critic, and that Peter Blake [who worked with her at MoMA] was one of the applicants we were considering, she changed her mind and joined the staff."²⁴ Therefore, even if Huxtable's profile was relatively eccentric in the journalistic framework, she was eventually the newspaper's choice.²⁵

Ten years of writing and a Pulitzer later – the first to be awarded for distinguished criticism in 1970 – she became part of the newspaper's editorial board in 1973, which she left in 1982 after winning a MacArthur Fellowship.²⁶ Then, Huxtable entirely dedicated herself to independent research activities, free from the constraints and deadlines of journalism, and often served in prizes and competition juries, such

2008). Apart from the volume on Nervi and the two above-mentioned books on New York, her monographs are *The Tall Building Artistically Reconsidered: The Search for a Skyscraper Style* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985); *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion* (New York: The New Press, 1997); *Frank Lloyd Wright, A Biography* in the Penguin Lives Series (New York: Viking Penguin, 2004). As her friend, architect Edward Nilsson, pointed out in a conversation during the 2023 SAH, Huxtable was also working on a book on the American ranch house in the last years of her life.

23 Huxtable's first contribution was a letter to the editor protesting the inadequacies of a photographic exhibition on Venezuelan architecture and its newspaper appraisal, "Dissenting View: Correspondent Questions Venezuelan Architectural Achievements," *The New York Times*, September 8, 1957.

24 Memorandum from Arthur Gelb to A.M. Rosenthal, July 21, 1971. AMR-NYPL, Box 20, Folder 1.

25 Among those who called for daily coverage of architecture were publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger and especially his wife, Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger. She had been extending the perimeter of the conversation on the weight, role, and character of architecture coverage beyond the boundaries of the newspaper rooms, soliciting architects' feedback. Her interlocutors voiced the hope of finding more criticism in the *New York Times*, which could provide readers with "a framework and a vocabulary for intelligently thinking about and evaluating architecture and planning in New York." Correspondence from ECD to AHS, May 14, 1963, and ECD to ALH, May 4, 1970. E. Clifton Daniel Papers, New York Public Library, Box 5, Folder 1. Hereafter cited as ECD-NYPL, followed by the relevant box and folder numbers; correspondence from Frederick J. Woodbridge to Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, June 8, 1962; and Leon Brand to Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, May 26, 1962. AHS-NYPL, Box 101, Folder 9.

26 "Mrs. Huxtable on Editorial Board." *The New York Times*, September 26, 1973. The New York Times Company General Files, New York Public Library, Box 10, Folder 13. Hereafter cited as GF-NYPL, followed by the relevant box and folder numbers.

as that for the Pritzker Prize (1987-2005) or the competitions for the Getty Center and Getty Villa. Nevertheless, she returned to work for newspapers in 1997, at 76, writing architecture criticism at *The Wall Street Journal*.²⁷

Position

The recent opening of Ada Louise Huxtable's archives at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, where a research project dedicated to her has been activated, has generated considerable interest among North American scholars, leading to the launching of several studies, including a biography by Christine Cipriani and a monograph on her work by Meredith Clausen.²⁸

As a female architecture critic, Huxtable's biography has been scrutinized in essay collections that have brought attention to a range of professionally engaged women in diverse fields of the public sphere and in the disciplinary and professional realms in North America in the wake of second-wave feminist movements, beginning with Susana Torre's 1977 seminal exhibition and publication *Women in American Architecture. A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*.²⁹ Huxtable was featured in the most recent Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation's *Pioneering Women of American Architecture* project, curated by Mary McLeod and Victoria Rosner. At

27 Huxtable had a "special agreement" with the *WSJ*. She had to write a minimum of six articles per year, whenever she wanted, on whatever she wanted. *What the Critic Sees: Ada Louise Huxtable and Her Legacy* (Museum Lecture Hall, The Getty Center, Los Angeles, 2013).

28 After her passing in 2013, Ada Louise Huxtable was the subject of numerous obituaries and memoirs signed by colleagues, collaborators, and friends, such as Paul Goldberger, Suzanne Stephens, and Michael Sorkin, among many others. In addition to the commemorative lecture by former *Los Angeles Times* architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne referenced in the previous footnote, Meredith Clausen chaired the session "Bet Huxtable won't like it: Ada Louise Huxtable and her legacy" at the 77th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians in 2014, with interventions by Alberto Bologna, Scott Murray, Adrian Scott Fine, Edward Nilsson, and Beverly Brandt. The Getty Research Institute has an ongoing research project enhancing Huxtable's archival holdings and unpublished writings aimed at exploring how she introduced architecture to new audiences (<https://www.getty.edu/projects/ada-louise-huxtable-formation-architecture-critic/>). Over the past decade, the Institute has overseen and collaborated on study workshops, online publications, lectures, and podcast episodes that delve into her critical and intellectual legacy.

29 Gilbert and Moore, "Ada Louise Huxtable"; Barbara Belford, "Ada Louise Huxtable," in *Brilliant bylines: a biographical anthology of notable newspaperwomen in America*, Gender and Culture. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 296–309. Stephens, "Voices of Consequence: Four Architectural Critics."

the same time, her work has been included in the digital annotated bibliography *Women Writing Architecture* (2021-ongoing). Both encyclopedic projects indicate how biographic micro-histories are, to this day, fundamental devices for counter-narratives mobilizing gender identity.³⁰

In parallel, transnational approaches have uncovered new perspectives on the circulation of people, models, and images, producing an incredibly vast and heterogeneous body of scholarship dealing with knowledge transfer phenomena. Various authors tackle different forms and modalities of knowledge displacement³¹ – as the result of educational exchanges, tourism, migrations, colonization, exile, or as a phenomenon linked to the globalization of the profession or the contamination with other disciplines.

Travel, in particular, has been understood as an engine for spatial practices when those who travel are designers, planners, and architects. Journeys have been at the center of attention for their transformative impact on the professional and cultural identity of architects,³² their role as individual and collective practices characterized by peculiar modes of recording experience and perception,³³ and for impacting travelers' identity as much as architectural and urban culture.³⁴ Moreover,

30 Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, *Designing Women: Gender and the Architectural Profession* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Lynne Walker and Elizabeth Darling, *AA Women in Architecture, 1917–2017* (London: AA Publications, 2017); Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia, 1900–1950* (Melbourne: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 2011). Other online mapping operations like *Arquitetas Invisíveis* or #WikiD complement these works. For the Italian context, see the recent volume edited by Chiara Baglione and Sergio Pace, *Al Femminile: L'architettura, Le Arti e La Storia*, *Architectural Design and History* 14 (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2023).

31 Robin Cohen, "Diasporas, Their Types and Their Future," in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997), 177–96.

32 Besides the many monographic studies on individual architects, see Craig Buckley and Pollyanna Rhee, eds., *Architects' Journeys: Building, Travelling, Thinking. Los Viajes de Los Arquitectos: Construir, Viajar, Pensar* (New York; Pamplona: GSAPP Books; T6 Ediciones, Universidad de Navarra, 2011); Davide Deriu, Edoardo Piccoli, and Belgin Turan Özkaya, eds., "Travels in Architectural History," *Architectural Histories* 4, no. 1 (November 23, 2016).

33 Pierre-Alain Croset, "Occhi Che Vedono," *Casabella* 51, no. 531-532 (January 1987), 4-7; "L'occhio dell'Architetto/The Eye of the Architect," *Lotus* 68 (1991); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, October Books (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Anne Hultzsch, *Architecture, Travellers and Writers: Constructing Histories of Perception 1640-1950*, *Studies in Comparative Literature* 26 (London: Legenda, 2014).

34 Jilly Traganou and Miodrag Mitrašinović, eds., *Travel, Space, Architecture* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Tom Avermaete, ed., *Crossing Boundaries: Transcultural Practices in Architecture and Urbanism*, OASE, #95

scholarship has questioned how architecture could travel in its mediated³⁵ and non-mediated forms.³⁶ However, what happens when those who travel are not practicing professionals or easily categorized figures, like Huxtable?

This thesis aims to provide insights into how mobility – intended as a moment of knowledge production – impacts the very practices of architectural criticism by questioning its situatedness through a transnational approach. While this research is not Huxtable’s biography, it still enjoys a solid biographical component. This introduction, too, began with a framing of her profile. It builds on that line of inquiry where knowledge displacement emerges as intrinsically linked to the construction of imaginaries and identities³⁷ and, more specifically, it partially aligns itself with those that adopt biographies as observation lenses.³⁸

Although biographical approaches are not traditional in historical research, they can become a valuable tool in constructing an intentional and selective crossing of time. In this case, a biographical premise is necessary to contextualize the travel experiences that are the starting point of this research. The time frame isolated in this work refers to a crucial moment in Huxtable’s professional trajectory (1949-1973). It covers her early years as a part-time assistant curator at MoMA, her

(Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2015); Medina Lasansky and Brian McLaren, eds., *Architecture and Tourism: Perception, Performance and Place* (New York Oxford: Berg, 2004); Joan Ockman and Salomon Frausto, eds., *Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular* (Munich; New York: Prestel, 2005); Laura Nenzi, *Excursions in Identity: Travel and the Intersection of Place, Gender, and Status in Edo Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2017); Tom Avermaete and Michelangelo Sabatino, *The Global Turn: Six Journeys of Architecture and the City, 1945-1989* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2023).

35 Thordis Arrhenius et al., eds., *Exhibiting Architecture: Place and Displacement* (Zürich: Lars Müller, 2014); Jorge Mejía Hernández and Cathelijne Nuijsink, eds., “The Architecture Competition as Contact Zone: Towards a Historiography of Cross-Cultural Exchanges,” *Footprint* 14, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2020).

36 Mari Lending, *Plaster Monuments: Architecture and the Power of Reproduction* (Princeton Oxford: Princeton Architectural Press, 2017); Giovanna Borasi, ed., *Journeys: How Travelling Fruit, Ideas and Buildings Rearrange Our Environment* (Montréal, Barcelona: Canadian Centre for Architecture, Actar, 2010).

37 Seminal works are Jean-Louis Cohen and Hubert Damisch, eds., *Américanisme et Modernité: L'idéal Américain Dans l'architecture*, Histoire et Théorie de l'art (Paris: Flammarion, 1993); Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scenes of the world to come: European architecture and the American challenge, 1893-1960*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1995); Jean-Louis Cohen, *La Coupure Entre Architectes et Intellectuels ou les Enseignements de l'italophilie* (Bruxelles: Mardaga, 2015).

38 Reto Geiser, *Giedion and America: Repositioning the History of Modern Architecture* (Zurich: GTA, 2018); Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America: Travels in the Land of the Timid* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Ellen Shoshkes, *Jacqueline Tyrwhitt: A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

freelance engagement in the press, and her time as the architecture critic until her appointment at the newspaper's editorial board. However, it also refers to a season characterized by a shift in travel modalities. Not coincidentally, one of her *New York Times* articles begins by stating that hers was a generation “caught between the automobile and the air age, [...] the survivors of the last luxury trains and trans-Atlantic liners” and that “experienced a revolution and, certainly, history.”³⁹

Choices were also prompted by the broader historical and geopolitical framework in which these journeys took place, dominated by ever-changing Cold War tensions and decolonization processes in a global travel scenario still untamed by the oil crisis. In this sense, this research also contributes to that line of inquiry that problematizes the canonical Cold War dichotomy between two monolithic blocks and includes a series of other expanded geographical, cultural, and material interactions.⁴⁰

Investigating her work from a transnational perspective and approaching her profile from an external, distanced – European – standpoint highlighted how most of the current appraisals of her work seem to adhere, to some extent, to a flattening narrative framework of success and prominence. Only a few voices outside the chorus explicitly address or problematize the limitations of Huxtable's activity, the most straightforward coming from one of her successors at the *New York Times*, Herbert Muschamp. He published a lengthy article in *The Design Book Review* arguing that Huxtable taught her public more “about what to save – the survival of the fittest – than what to make.” Moreover, he pointed out how the gradual institutionalization of her voice and the inevitable political implications linked to her admission to the

39 Ada Louise Huxtable, “Architecture: Washington Never Slept Here,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1973, retrieved among the clippings Garth Huxtable kept on his wife in GH-GRI, Box 52, Folder 4.

40 Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the home front: the soft power of midcentury design* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Ákos Moravánszky, and Judith Hopfengärtner, *Re-Humanizing Architecture. East West Central. Re-Building Europe, 1950-1990*, Vol. 1. East West Central (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017); Pedro Ignacio Alonso and Hugo Palmarola, eds., *Flying Panels. How Concrete Panels Changed the World* (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2019); Monika Platzer, *Cold War and Architecture: Contributions to Austria's Democratization after 1945* (Zurich: Park Books, 2020); Lukasz Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Jean-Louis Cohen, *Building a New New World: Amerikanizm in Russian Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020); Natalya Solopova, *La Préfabrication En URSS: Concepts Techniques et Dispositifs Architecturaux*, Grundlagen 109 (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2021); Christoph Bernhardt, Andreas Butter, and Monika Motylinska, eds., *Between Solidarity and Economic Constraints: Global Entanglements of Socialist Architecture and Planning in the Cold War Period* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023).

newspaper's editorial board in 1973 had "coarsened the grain of her thinking." In particular, Muschamp criticized Huxtable for remaining barricaded on the defense of modernism shared by the liberal commentators of her generation and dismissing, almost rejecting, theoretical discussions – and, in so doing, equating architecture to urban real estate.⁴¹

Would it not be interesting to mention these points when introducing Huxtable's profile? Or that Huxtable did not support the 1977 strikes at the *New York Times* to protest for fairness in wages for the newspaper's female employees? Or how her demands for seemingly minimal issues such as more office storage space and shelves⁴² at the *New York Times* would intertwine with vitriolic discussions about her lack of productivity⁴³ and other internal pressures related to labels and the division of roles with Paul Goldberger or even about her decision to leave the *Times* eventually? Alternatively, there could also be the fact that she had research assistants on whom she did not initially want to rely,⁴⁴ or even the mutual professional support between her and Garth Huxtable between the 1950s and 1960s.

All these considerations on contingent difficulties, compromises, and controversies – even if minute – would provide a perhaps more nuanced and less glorious picture of her figure and work. However, such a narrative would succeed in undermining the view of her work according to the traditional canon of individual success and prestige characteristic of mainstream architectural history and convey with a more profound sensitivity what it meant to be a woman professional in those

41 Herbert Muschamp, "The Good, The Bad and the Timeless Ada Louise," *Design Book Review*, no. 12 (Spring 1987): 37–41

42 Huxtable spoke of the tools of her trade while commenting on her need for extra office storage space. She did research through "at least a dozen international professional periodicals," which were her "news sources," "oversize brochures that cities issue," and "trade prints and working drawings at an architectural scale." Huxtable believed this material "has made all the difference" in doing her job. Memorandum from ALH to ECD, July 16, 1968. ECD-NYPL, Box 5, Folder 1.

43 In response to the 1968 critiques of her lack of productivity, Huxtable made Daniel notice she started writing a regular weekly Sunday piece, which earned the *Times* the attention of figures like Mayor John Lindsay. She also – vaguely- stated that she "retreated [...] to that column to such a degree" for the situation on the cultural news. She allusively added that, "if one 'retreats,' there is a reason. It has nothing to do with my having a place to work on another floor." Memorandum from ALH to ECD, July 16 and 19, 1968. ECD-NYPL, Box 5, Folder 1.

44 By 1968, Huxtable had research assistants: "Their aid is invaluable. When I am beleaguered by half a dozen topics at once I have learned to ask them for information and I get it promptly and intelligently." Memorandum from ALH to ECD, February 23, 1968. ECD-NYPL, Box 5, Folder 1.

years.⁴⁵

One of the dissertation's fundamental theses is that, as an architecture critic working for a national general-interest newspaper, Ada Louise Huxtable acted as a mediator between the institutional, technical, and sometimes theoretical discourses of her interlocutors – politicians as much as architects – and the ability of the generalist audience to understand and consume them. This work zeroes in on seemingly minor episodes with the purpose of demonstrating how mobility extends her mediating activity – geographically, culturally, and intellectually, negotiating and shortening the cultural distance between the subjects of her overseas investigations and her North American public through her work. Yet, as we will see, her narratives are analyzed as the outcomes of negotiations involving a set of seemingly peripheral actors, placing a spotlight on the non-linearity of knowledge transfer process.

45 In the field of science journalism, see Marcel C. LaFollette, *Writing for Their Lives: America's Pioneering Female Science Journalists* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2023).

The traveling architecture critic as a mediator

Public architectural criticism, Huxtable, and the *New York Times*

Critic and *Architectural Record*'s former editor Suzanne Stephens described the 20th-century forms of architectural criticism appearing in North American general circulation magazines and newspapers as “public architectural criticism.”⁴⁶ Public criticism differed from the debate hosted by professional platforms because it called for the general public’s attention to architecture and urban development. Stephens saw public architectural criticism almost as a genre and described its character as empirical and contingent in its evaluation methods, judgment criteria, production, and results. For her, it was also intrinsically linked to its platforms’ authority and intended readership. Ada Louise Huxtable’s writings fell into this category.

In 1963, Huxtable became the first architectural critic to hold a full-time position at a general-interest newspaper in the United States. Before her, the New York scene of public architecture criticism already included figures like Montgomery Schuyler (1843-1914) and Lewis Mumford (1895-1990). Schuyler was a newspaper journalist and contributed to publications as diverse as the *New York Times* and *Architectural Record*,⁴⁷ while architecture critic and public intellectual Lewis Mumford became known for his *Skyline* column in *The New Yorker* between 1931 and 1963.⁴⁸ At the *New York Times*, assistant art critic Aline Louchheim (1914-1972) frequently wrote about architecture before leaving the newspaper after marrying Eero Saarinen in 1954.⁴⁹

46 Suzanne Stephens, “La Critique Architecturale aux États-Unis entre 1930 et 2005: Lewis Mumford, Ada Louise Huxtable et Herbert Muschamp,” ed. Hélène Jannièrre and Kenneth Frampton, *Les Cahiers de La Recherche Architecturale et Urbaine*, no. 24/25 (December 1, 2009): 43–66.

47 Suzanne Stephens, “Pungent and Pithy. A Brief History of Architectural Criticism in *Record*,” *Architectural Record* 9 (September 2016): 132–35.

48 Stephens, “La Critique Architecturale aux États-Unis entre 1930 et 2005.”

49 Cathleen McGuigan, “Women of the Bauhaus: Aline Saarinen.” *Architectural Record*, June 1, 2019; Eva Hagberg, *When Eero Met His Match: Aline Louchheim Saarinen and the Making of an Architect* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022); Emily Pugh, “Aline Saarinen and Public Reception of Architecture in the Postwar US,” Ruskin Art Club, Ada Louise Huxtable Lectures on Architecture, March 23, 2023. Memorandum from Lester Markel to Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, March 27, 1962. Lester Markel Papers, New York Public Library,

Other publications like *The Village Voice* or *The Nation*, among others, would follow. On the East Coast, *The Washington Post*, for instance, hired Berlin-born art and architecture critic Wolf Von Eckardt (1918-1995) in 1963 and sometimes published articles by urban planner and historian Frederick Gutheim (1908-1993), who also contributed to the *New York Herald Tribune*.⁵⁰ Out West, Allan B. Temko (1924-2006) wrote art and architecture criticism for the *San Francisco Chronicle* between 1961 and 1993.⁵¹ Moreover, as the cases of Baltimore-based critic Phoebe Stanton (*The Sun*, 1971-1976) and David Dillon (*The Dallas Morning News*, 1981-2006) demonstrate, architectural criticism also found space in local newspapers.⁵²

Although Huxtable was not the first nor the only architecture critic around, her hiring as a full-time contributor to a daily national newspaper is generally considered a watershed in the profession's history.⁵³ Cultural historian Thomas Bender traced how architecture alternately intercepted New York intellectual journalism, and by the end of the Eighties, he diagnosed a detachment of architectural writing in general circulation magazines and newspapers from the popular cultural and political discourse.⁵⁴ In the same years, architecture critic Martin Filler instead linked the

Box 10, Folder 6, hereafter cited as LM-NYPL, followed by the relevant box and folder numbers; correspondence from Eero Saarinen to ALH, February 17, 1959, Ada Louise Huxtable Papers, Getty Research Institute, Box 114, Folder 1. Hereafter cited as ALH-GRI, followed by the relevant box and folder numbers.

50 Von Eckardt (1918-1995) was hired as the *Washington Post* art critic. In 1981, he left for *Time* magazine, where he would stay until 1985. "Wolf Von Eckardt, Art Critic, 77," *The New York Times*, August 30, 1995; Martin Weil, "Wolf Von Eckardt Dies at 77," *The Washington Post*, August 28, 1995.

51 John King, "Allan Temko – Architecture Watchdog," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 26, 2006.

52 Kathryn Holliday, "Advocacy and Action: Local Newspapers and Architectural Discourse" (Paper, EAHN 2022 Conference, Madrid, June 16, 2023).

53 Besides Huxtable, some of the main architecture critics on the newspaper scene in the 1970s were Paul Goldberger (*The New York Times*, 1972-1992), Robert Campbell (*The Boston Globe*, since 1973), and Paul Gapp (*Chicago Tribune*, 1972-1992). The 1980s saw the advent of Michael Sorkin (*Village Voice*, 1980-1989) and Martin Filler (*The New York Review of Books*, since 1985). In 1992, Blair Kamin succeeded Gapp as the architecture critic of the *Chicago Tribune* (1992-2021). After Goldberger, the *Times* hired Herbert Muschamp (1992-2004) and Nicolai Ouroussoff (2004-2011). Art critic Michael Kimmelman now writes architectural criticism in the *Times*. For an overview of architectural critics in the United States see András Szántó, Eric Fredricksen, and Ray Rinaldi, eds., *The Architecture Critic: A Survey of Newspaper Architecture Critics in America* (New York: National Arts Journalism Program, Columbia University, 2001).

54 Thomas Bender, "Architecture and the Journalism of Ideas," *Design Book Review*, no. 15 (Fall 1988): 47-49; Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

problematic diminishing autonomy of architectural criticism in metropolitan newspapers to the pressures of safeguarding revenues from real estate advertising.⁵⁵ This research dwells on an earlier chronological framework (1949-1973), which, as we have seen, corresponds to a formative period for Huxtable and, at the same time, a sort of “golden moment” for the profession.

Huxtable’s appointment was also part of a broader phenomenon that saw the unprecedented expansion and professionalization of mass media art and architecture coverage in national and local newspapers.⁵⁶ In the Sixties, the *New York Times* revolutionized its approach to cultural news, once considered ancillary.⁵⁷ According to managing editor Clifton Daniel, the culture page of the newspaper had to become part of readers’ “total cultural intake.”⁵⁸ He claimed that readers had no real intention of buying books, attending plays, or visiting exhibitions but just wanted “to be entertained or enlightened by the [cultural page] review itself.” Therefore, as the managing editor between 1964 and 1969, Daniel pushed for more sophisticated writing, promoted the use of photography, gave space to better coverage of “the life of the mind, the world of culture,” and suggested hiring less but better-educated people. In his words, the *Times* should have had “more Ada Louise Huxtables and fewer police court reporters.”⁵⁹

Especially at the beginning of her career, Huxtable’s editors were preoccupied with her relative disregard for the “very fine line between interpretation of the news, news analysis, criticism, comment, and editorializing.”⁶⁰ She was indeed primarily

55 Tod A. Marder, ed., *The Critical Edge: Controversy in Recent American Architecture* (Cambridge; London: MIT Press, 1985), 30.

56 This thesis also inevitably intercepts the history of media outlets. For an overview, see Margaret A. Blanchard, ed. *History of the Mass Media in the United States* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998); Asa Briggs and Peter Burke, *A Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005).

57 Jim Cook, “Our Margaret’s Prince Charming,” *New York Post*, March 23, 1956; Eric Pace, “Clifton Daniel, a Managing Editor Who Set a Writerly, Courtly Tone in Shaping the Times, dies at 87,” *The New York Times*, February 22, 2000, sec. Obituaries; “Editors Involved in Changes at *The New York Times*.” ECD-NYPL, Box 11, Folder 2.

58 Memorandum from ECD to the critics, January 15, 1965. ECD-NYPL, Box 13, Folder 10.

59 Memorandum from Turner Catledge to Lester Markel, April 11, 1963. ECD-NYPL, Box 5, Folder 1; from Theodore M. Bernstein to ECD, November 25, 1966; from ECD to Turner Catledge, September 25, 1964. ECD-NYPL, Box 28, Folder 7.

60 Initially, managing editor Turner Catledge seemed particularly concerned about her “lack of experience

and openly concerned with the educational underpinnings of her work – a standpoint in line with the informative premises that led to establishing her position in the first place.⁶¹

Her best-known early battles during her tenure at the *Times* concerned landmark preservation, deemed worthy of inclusion in the episode of *Mad Men* that cited the 1965 demolition of Penn Station. However, her commitment and support to the preservation movement were far from monolithic. In fact, when Sunday editor Lester Markel provocatively argued that “apparently the theory is anything old is good, and anything new is lousy”⁶² in response to an article she wrote on New York’s Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, her pungent rejoinder was, “I think you’ve got me mixed up with Aline [Louchheim]. She’s the blond; I’m the brunette. She’s the one who goes picketing to save Penn Station.” The same note expressed Huxtable’s regrets that “America’s second lousiest architect” was designing the new buildings on the Penn Station site,” and especially that the public could not “tell the difference between quality building and tin-can construction.”⁶³

These words emphasize her type of commitment, which almost always stood within the perimeter of the newspaper page. They also say a lot about her way of doing activism and how she saw her critical engagement as different from that of her contemporaries, like Aline Louchheim or Jane Jacobs.⁶⁴ In this regard, her agenda

on a daily newspaper and her apparent lack of experience in working in harness.” Memoranda from Turner Catledge to Lester Markel, April 11, 1963, and ECD to ALH, April 18 and May 14, 1963. ECD-NYPL, Box 5, Folder 1; GF-NYPL, Box 10, Folder 13.

61 She would describe her activity and ambitions as follows: “You start by saying ‘This building is good, and this is why. This is worth caring about.’ That basic understanding and appreciation is what criticism must carry above all. Then, what you do about it is next. I am trying to inform people about what the issues are and how to deal with them, and they’re very complicated issues. They include highly technical areas like zoning. They also include issues that are hard to get a handle on, like aesthetics, which people are always trying to understand and set standards for. I’m educating people. If you want to do it effectively, you must have credibility and you must also have reliability. Therefore, you must know yourself, you must analyze the issues in terms of all the options. Politics, economics, they all come into it. You’re going to give a very lopsided kind of education if you don’t try and lay out everything that’s involved in an issue that’s going to affect its ultimate resolution. It’s rough, it’s a lot of work, but it’s terribly interesting and it has results.” Gilbert and Moore, eds. “Ada Louise Huxtable,” 208.

62 Memorandum from Lester Markel to ALH, November 9, 1962. LM-NYPL, Box 3, Folder 51. On the U.S. attitude towards new construction, see Martin Filler, “American Architecture and Its Criticism: Reflections of the State of the Arts,” in Marder, ed., *The Critical Edge*, 35.

63 Memorandum from ALH to Lester Markel, November 11, 1962. LM-NYPL, Box 3, Folder 51.

64 On architectural criticism and activism, see Robert Campbell, Paul Goldberger, John King, and Nicolai

was well exemplified by her 1971 article, significantly entitled “Only You Can Help Yourselves,” which demonstrated how her activism passed through the education of her readers. The piece was a pragmatic step-by-step guide on the legal and procedural actions individuals could undertake to engage in a purposeful form of activism toward the preservation of historic buildings and districts. She addressed her public directly, answering their letters on unsaved landmarks collectively with a “kind of do-it-yourself little red book, or blue book, on how to deal with the preservation problem.”⁶⁵

And, in the Sixties, the number of *New York Times* readers was ever-growing. As one of the newspaper editors put it in 1966, the News Department was “the Tiffany’s of the news world – a very high-quality product being produced for an expanding mass (1 to 1.5 million) readership.”⁶⁶ Who was, then, Ada Louise Huxtable’s public?

The architecture critic and the public

Readers’ correspondence kept in the Ada Louise Huxtable papers allows us to question which public she engaged with. Mail increased exponentially as her role within the newspaper consolidated, perhaps reflecting the tacit implications of power relations on knowledge production. Huxtable claimed she received “more [mail] than any of the *Times*’ other critics” and that, most importantly, “none of it [was] crackpot.”⁶⁷ Individuals and civic associations often wanted her view on preserving specific buildings, while academics, intellectuals, and museum directors sometimes advised her on topics they thought could interest her. Technicians, architects, builders, politicians, administrators, and occasionally other critics reached out to

Ouroussoff, eds., *The Question of Activism: 2006 Temko Critics Panel* (New York: Forum for Urban Design, May 4, 2006). Huxtable described Jane Jacobs as “the articulate and able architectural journalist, [...] author of the new, acutely perceptive, but highly controversial book *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*” and her commitment as a “near-riot” and “the most disorderly and best-publicized battle” of the preservation movement in New York. Ada Louise Huxtable, “Preservation in New York,” *Architectural Review* 132, no. 786 (August 1962): 85.

65 Ada Louise Huxtable, “Only You Can Help Yourselves,” *Historic Preservation* 23, no. 2 (1971): 2–3.

66 Memorandum from HES to ECD, November 28, 1966. ECD-NYPL, Box 28, Folder 7.

67 Stephen Grover, “Heeded Words: Ada Louise Huxtable Has Formidable Power as Architecture Critic,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 7, 1972.



Figure 3: The vignettes drawn by Alan Dunn (1968) and Donald Reilly (1971) for *The New Yorker*. Republished in Stephen Grover, “Heeded Words: Ada Louise Huxtable Has Formidable Power As Architecture Critic,” *The Wall Street Journal*, November 7, 1972. GF-NYPL, 10-13.

endorse or counter her critiques. Feedback included praises, appreciation letters, and thank-you notes, many of which came from people working in other fields – or, as one put it, from “architectural buffs.”⁶⁸

As anticipated, Huxtable aspired to become a reference for the education of such a public, otherwise uninformed and peripheral – if not downright excluded – from discourses and decision-making processes concerning the built environment through her writings. Going back to her television cameos, it is not surprising that, in a later episode of the show *Mad Men*, one of the publicists comments on a new building in construction on Madison Avenue and remarks, while reading the newspaper, “Ada Louise Huxtable already doesn’t like it.”⁶⁹ This statement is testimony to the way in which public expectation was veering towards Huxtable’s opinions and explicitly refers to Alan Dunn’s famous 1968 *New Yorker* cartoon

68 Correspondence from Thomas Malim to ALH, May 16, 1968. ALH-GRI, Box 1, Folder 3.

69 Alan Dunn, cartoon, *The New Yorker*, June 15, 1968, 33.

(which would be followed by a second one in 1971, sketched by Donald Reilly, both visible in Figure 3).

In addition, in 1969, American cartoonist Roy Doty illustrated a lengthy report assessing the hotels Huxtable visited during one of her overseas assignments.⁷⁰ His humorous cartoons depict her standing with her husband in the middle of a cramped hotel hall in Istanbul, waiting for a meal at a table covered in spider webs in Dubrovnik, or in pain after bumping into some awkwardly designed piece of furniture at the Tel Aviv Hilton (Figure 4). These tragi-comic situations, described in the text of her article, include the critic's recognizable vignетted character – petite, chic even in a night-gown, with dark, well-coiffed hair. Moreover, by the early Seventies, she was “exported” and presented internationally as one of the trademarks of the North American architectural scene.⁷¹

What Doty's cartoons and the *New Yorker's* vignettes tell us that, by 1969, as the *New York Times* architecture critic, the public knew who Huxtable was, what she looked like, and, most importantly, what her byline stood for. She managed to build herself a public reputation through her writings.⁷² Combined with the authority of the platform the critic writes for, these elements grant one of the fundamental premises of journalism, trustability, and ensure the public's consideration – which, in this sense, becomes more relevant than the public's agreement.⁷³

These examples prompt reflection on the public role and position of the architecture critic. At the *New York Times*, Huxtable did not see herself as “the silent majority” but precisely as part of “the vocal minority that makes New York New York and not Middletown or anywhere else.”⁷⁴ In this regard, Thomas Bender

70 Ada Louise Huxtable, “A Personal Inquiry into the Nature of Some Hotel Rooms Overseas,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1969. Sec. Travel.

71 Huxtable was featured in the exhibition *Arhitectura in S.U.A.*, a little-known exhibition on U.S. architecture held in Romania around 1971. The exhibition catalog does not bear any further detail on the event. I thank Dana Vais for pointing at this material.

72 Boris Groys, “Self-Design, or Productive Narcissism,” in Nick Axel, Beatriz Colomina, Nikolaus Hirsch, et al., eds., *Superhumanity: Design of the Self*, E-Flux Architecture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 13-18.

73 Lisa Findley, “Reporter/Journalist/Critic,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 62, no. 3 (February 1, 2009): 12-96.

74 Ada Louise Huxtable, “In New York, a Losing Battle,” *The New York Times*, December 30, 1969, retrieved among the clippings Garth Huxtable kept on his wife in GH-GRI, Box 52, Folder 4.



Figure 4: One of Roy Doty's cartoons illustrating Ada Louise Huxtable's assessment of overseas hotels entitled "A Personal Inquiry Into the Nature Of Some Hotel Rooms Overseas," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1969.

described the history of the metropolitan culture of the city of New York precisely as the complex product of dynamic and oriented dialogues and exchanges between "speakers and hearers, writers and readers."⁷⁵ As straightforward as they can appear, Huxtable's writings are indeed the result of sometimes tacit negotiations between the critic and a multiplicity of different actors – interlocutors belonging to the disciplinary field, politicians, institutional representatives, and her public. In this framework, it must be noted that Huxtable's declared pedagogical ambition did not necessarily imply that anyone read her work. Although many claim an impact of her journalistic activity on the US-built environment, measuring the extent or success of her educational project on a sheer scale can be tricky, as there is a lack of evidence with a cause-effect link.

Even so, her strategies for communicating architecture to her public could

⁷⁵ Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 5.

be discussed. The approach of the current study is in line with those that place architectural criticism at their center as an object of research and analyze it historically, going beyond canonical reflections on its interest areas, tools, duties, and objectives by investigating types, criteria, and intellectual references in relation to its cultural context.⁷⁶ Drawing from the studies that reflect on a reception theory of architecture by moving from a line of inquiry conceptualized by Hans Robert Jauss in the field of literary theory, it is possible to observe how Huxtable's criticism negotiated the so-called "reception capacity" of her public.⁷⁷ This research then positions itself close to those hypotheses that look at the reception of architecture in the public debate, interpreting architectural criticism not as a mere passive "reflection" of the project or the critic's authorship but as an agent of the formation and development of public opinion.⁷⁸

Therefore, this work does not intend architectural criticism as an autonomous object but as a mediated product whose in-between nature has been characterized in different ways. Besides Suzanne Stephen's categorization mentioned above, Naomi Stead, for instance, used "semi-detached," just like the building type – two adjacent dwellings sharing a party wall – to describe the stance of different forms

76 Hélène Jannièrre, "La Critique Architecturale, Objet de Recherche," *Les Cahiers de La Recherche Architecturale et Urbaine*, no. 24/25 (December 1, 2009): 121–40; Hélène Jannièrre, *Critique et Architecture: Un État Des Lieux Contemporain*, Penser l'espace (Paris: Édition de la Villette, 2019).

77 Literary critic Hans Robert Jauss theorized the existence of reception histories in *Pour une Esthétique de la Réception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). In 2000 and 2002, the 6th and 7th International Docomomo Conferences held in Brasilia and Paris had as a theme "Image, use and heritage. The reception of architecture of the Modern Movement." In parallel, Richard Klein published *La réception de l'architecture*, vol. 2, *Cahiers thématiques – architecture, histoire, conception* (Paris, École d'architecture de Lille et des régions-Nord: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2002); Gérard Monnier, ed., *L'architecture: la réception immédiate et la réception différée. L'œuvre jugée, l'édifice habité, le monument célébré* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2014); Christophe van Gerrewey et al., eds., *Ups & Downs: Reception Histories in Architecture. Ups & Downs: Receptiegeschiedenissen in de Architectuur*, Oase 108 (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2021).

78 See, for instance, the essays featured in the special issue edited by Hélène Jannièrre and Paolo Scrivano, "Critique architecturale et débat public," *CLARA*, Éditions de la Faculté d'Architecture La Cambre Horta de l'Université libre de Bruxelles, n° 7, no. 1 (September 25, 2020). Other recent examples include Richard Wittman's *Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*, *The Classical Tradition in Architecture* (New York London: Routledge, 2007); Mari Hvattum and Anne Hultzsch, eds., *The Printed and the Built. Architecture, Print Culture and Public Debate in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018); Timothy Hyde, *Ugliness and Judgment: On Architecture in the Public Eye* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019).

of criticism and commentary in relation to architecture.⁷⁹ Alternatively, again, philosopher Daniel Payot discussed architectural judgment by framing criticism as a gestural linking activity that should not be considered exclusively in relation to the scrutinized object and the scrutinizing subjectivity of the author but also in terms of the resources that the critic mobilizes to legitimize his or her operations.⁸⁰ Or, according to Philip Ursprung, architecture criticism had become inoffensive by the beginning of the 2000s, and architecture critics were no stars but simple passive mediators between the architect and the public.⁸¹

However, as we have seen, Huxtable was far from being an anonymous mediator between the profession and the audience. The current study moves from the initial hypothesis that her position, byline, and reputation turned her – almost by definition – into a present, bold, active figure of mediation. The ambition of this work is then precisely to explore the nooks and crannies of this mediating activity. How does this mediating effort change when Huxtable travels, and the boundaries of her criticism shift, extend, and become inevitably blurred?

The traveling architecture critic

Ada Louise Huxtable described herself as “a Manhattanite [...]. Hooked on New York, like dope.”⁸² Most of her writings are indeed rooted in the history of 20th-century Manhattan. However, archival evidence at the Getty Research Institute documented a series of occasions that saw her traveling across the Atlantic and, upon her return, communicating the architectural cultures of these contexts through her writing and curatorial activities to her North American public.

What happens then when Huxtable, an architecture critic, free-lance author, and curator trained in art history, travels, and the boundary of her mediating activity

79 Naomi Stead, *Semi-Detached: Writing Representation and Criticism in Architecture* (Melbourne: Uro Media, 2012).

80 Daniel Payot, “Le jugement de l’architecture,” *Le Portique. Revue de philosophie et de sciences humaines*, no. 3 (January 1, 1999).

81 Philip Ursprung, “The End of Theory?,” *e-flux Architecture*, October 2017.

82 Huxtable, “In New York, a Losing Battle.”



Figure 5: Ada Louise and L. Garth Huxtable during the *European Planned Community Tour*. Although the sign is not legible, the photo was presumably taken in Finland. ALH-GRI, 408-01.

extends beyond the United States? How, to what degree, and with what limitations does mobility impact architectural and urban knowledge transfer across different geographical and cultural contexts, disciplines, and interlocutors?

In this regard, scholars alternately defined knowledge displacement as dialogue, relationship, transfer, interference, or exchange.⁸³ This research intends it as a multi-layered process of translation.⁸⁴ Rendering a written or oral text from one language to another presupposes the presence of someone who, knowing the specifics of the

83 For instance, see Paolo Scrivano, *Building Transatlantic Italy: Architectural Dialogues with Postwar America* (London: Routledge, 2013); Murray Fraser and Joe Kerr, *Architecture and the Special Relationship: The American Influence on Post-War British Architecture* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Jeffrey W. Cody, *Exporting American architecture, 1870-2000* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005); Joe Nasr and Mercedes Volait, eds., *Urbanism: Imported or Exported? Native Aspirations and Foreign Plans* (Chichester: Wiley Academy, 2003); Łukasz Stanek and Tom Avermaete, eds., "Cold War Transfer. Architecture and planning from socialist countries in the "Third World," thematic issue of *The Journal of Architecture* vol 17, no. 3 (June 2012).

84 Reto Geiser discusses different forms of translation phenomena in his work on Giedion (starting from a linguistic translation, his work also addresses disciplinary, generational, and cultural forms of translation). Geiser, *Giedion and America*, especially 72-135.

language and cultural context of origin, acts as a bridge and makes a text accessible. The presence of a public that relies on the translator's capacity is implied, too.⁸⁵ Knowing the subject becomes then as crucial as knowing for whom texts are written, whom they wish to target and convince, and how they will be popularized.

Studying the implications of knowledge transmission processes between different cultural spaces implies exploring the paths along which these spaces are connected in relationships of exchange. This research considers travel experiences that differed enormously in character, scope, outputs, and spirit. Huxtable's first journeys date back to the early 1950s, when she traveled overseas first for leisure with Garth Huxtable and then on a Fulbright fellowship to Italy. Airplanes replaced transatlantic ocean liners when, in the Sixties, she started traveling as a representative of the *New York Times*, accompanied again by her husband. During these journeys, she covered an institutional position that set her as a preferential, privileged, and often desired interlocutor for a series of foreign professional and institutional figures. More specifically, this dissertation delves into four episodes and contexts – the first trips to Italy between 1949 and 1952, the 1965 *European Planned Community Tour* to Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, and Western Europe (Figure 5), the 1967 journey to the Soviet Union, and a 1969 assignment to Israel.

Exploring different aspects of these journeys – their preparation, unfolding, and communication – constitutes the starting point of this research work, but it is not its ultimate objective. Moreover, it does not want to propose these occasions as exceptional or clothe them with value or meanings that do not belong to them. Huxtable participated in and benefited from the post-war global expansion of professional mobility and the intensifying circulation of knowledge through the media.⁸⁶ She was not the only traveler in those years – or even the first traveling *New York Times* critic.⁸⁷ The ambition here is neither to claim a special impact of her writings within the broader architectural debate, to measure the sheer influence of her travel experiences on her subsequent work, or to assess the validity of the

85 Italo Calvino, "Sul Tradurre," in *Mondo scritto e mondo non scritto* (Milan: Mondadori, 2011).

86 Emily S. Rosenberg, *A World Connecting: 1870–1945* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

87 Correspondence from Lester Markel to Arthur Hays Sulzberger, August 1, 1950. LM-NYPL, Box 10, Folder 7.

narratives she codifies and associates with such diverse specific contexts and figures.

When framed and understood as a translation operation, her mediating activity implies a conversion effort that selects, deconstructs, rephrases, and circulates narratives across different professional cultures, competencies, and interpretative and representative systems. However, in English, the term “translation” lends itself to describing the Euclidean transformation that involves displacement, shifting the origin of the coordinate system. As reference coordinate systems change, several issues emerge.

This thesis aims to uncover how Huxtable mediated the interferences generated by phenomena like unfamiliarity, biases, untranslatability, clichés, and stereotypes, bridging the geographical and cultural divide between the subjects of her work and her public, albeit generating flawed and non-linear translation processes. Therefore, it questions the tacit trade-offs behind her strategies of communication, looking at what lingers between the experienced and the narrated.

These cases become instrumental to explore how her narratives came to terms with multiple variables, including the limits representation techniques imposed by the medium or the competence of her North American public, especially its familiarity with certain subjects and interest in specific concepts and contexts. Moreover, they show how narratives entered a dialectic with the pervasiveness of biased interpretations and idealized perceptions that saturated the collective imagination associated with distant realities.

Methodology and archives

Ada Louise Huxtable's papers at the Getty Research Institute (GRI) were the starting point for this research work. This thesis largely depends upon correspondence, autobiographical testimonies, personal life stories, research documents, and newspaper articles. It espouses the approach of that line of inquiry that reconsiders sources previously perceived as illegitimate and condemned by architects for deferring to doctrines that were not constitutive of – if not in open opposition to – scholarly architectural thought.⁸⁸

Archival evidence is investigated according to historical research methodologies. Each learning and travel experience is reconstructed through Huxtable's background research material, correspondence, travel photographs, drafts, and annotations. This corpus of knowledge, free from institutionalized communicative flows, is then juxtaposed with her published articles and official narratives. This work looks at how her modes of traveling, learning, and knowing changed over time to understand the construction process behind her narratives.

Huxtable's journeys have been investigated by crossing archival evidence scattered between the Getty Research Institute and other repositories belonging to figures who facilitated and guided her explorations before, during, and after traveling. Among them was the architecture critic's husband, L. Garth Huxtable, whose papers are also held at the GRI. He traveled with her to Europe in 1949 and 1952, and as he was about to retire when his wife began traveling systematically in the second half of the Sixties, he always accompanied her on her *New York Times* overseas assignments. Not only would he be “the first critic of the critic” but often

88 Beatriz Colomina and Joan Ockman, eds., *Architectureproduction*, Revisions - Papers on Architectural Theory and Criticism (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988); Eve Blau, Edward Kaufman, and Robin Evans, eds., *Architecture and Its Image: Four Centuries of Architectural Representation: Works from the Collection of the Canadian Centre for Architecture* (Montreal; Cambridge: Centre Canadien d'Architecture; MIT Press, 1989); Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994); Kester Rattenbury, *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004); Léa-Catherine Szacka and Véronique Patteeuw, eds., *Mediated Messages: Periodicals, Exhibitions and the Shaping of Postmodern Architecture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018); Hvattum and Hultzs, eds., *The Printed and the Built*.

her assistant and support.⁸⁹

First, Garth Huxtable documented their travel experiences meticulously. In 1951, the industrial designer started taking notes in one-line-a-day diaries, journals where the owner writes a single sentence, thought, or short phrase daily for five years. He took notes of the tiniest details – from the weather to his state of health, from ongoing projects to business appointments, or names of restaurants, bars, friends, and relatives he met alone or with his wife, whose activities he often mentioned, too.⁹⁰ Therefore, his diaries record their quotidian travel reality. His notes describe spontaneous impressions on meetings, encounters, and visits, communicating a more prosaic dimension of material occurrences, incidents, problems, unforeseen events, and moods, going beyond the public and sometimes mystifying rendering of overseas journeys.⁹¹

Garth Huxtable also kept track of their travels through photography. His captures are not experimental, like those produced by other travelers in the same years, such as those taken by Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg during their journey to Europe and North Africa. Photographing seems, in this case, a strategy for recording, documenting, and accumulating memories. As cultural anthropologist Marco Aime writes, during a trip, taking photographs is not only documenting one's experience but is also a gesture through which the foreign eye takes possession

89 Shumon Basar, "Couple Format: The Identity Between Love and Work," in *Superhumanity: Design of the Self*, ed. Nick Axel et al. (New York: E-Flux Architecture; University of Minnesota Press; The Graham Foundation, 2021), 149–57; Maristella Casciato, *Pierre Jeanneret, oltre Le Corbusier*, Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona, 2011, <https://zonavideo.upc.edu/video/62bdd83c67483201525257ec>; Ivan Žaknic, *Klip and Corb on the Road. The Dual Diaries and Legacies of August Klipstein and Le Corbusier on Their Eastern Journey, 1911* (Zürich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2019); Almut Grunewald, *The Giedion World: Sigfried Giedion and Carola Giedion-Welcker in Dialogue* (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2019); Beatriz Colomina, "Collaborations: The Private Life of Modern Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 3 (September 1999): 462–71.

90 After 1969, they became traditional annual diaries. The habit of keeping detailed diaries must have been something very dear to Garth Huxtable. Even in his last weeks of life, hospitalized and unable to write, Ada Louise Huxtable would compile them for him. GH-GRI, Box 48, Folder 4-5.

91 Attilio Brilli, *Viaggi in corso: aspettative, imprevisti, avventure del viaggio in Italia*, Intersezioni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), 7.

92 Nicholas Cullinan, "Double Exposure: Robert Rauschenberg's and Cy Twombly's Roman Holiday," *The Burlington Magazine* 150, no. 1264 (2008): 460–70.

of its surroundings – a landscape, an object, a person. Huxtable's photos fix a sequence of routes, views, and details, often showing the travelers' point of view or portraying each other against the background of postcard views. Complemented by his insightful annotations, they form a visual atlas of their journeys, meetings, and itineraries.

Therefore, Garth Huxtable plays a fundamental role in this study, as his contribution enables a more rounded understanding of Ada Louise Huxtable's standing. The examination of their journeys would have been incomplete – if not downright impossible – without his records. In addition to his perspective, the premises and the behind-the-scenes of their journeys were framed through the repositories belonging to individuals ranging from curators or practicing architects and planners to journalists, public diplomats, and scholars. Huxtable's *New York Times* assignments were framed through the New York Times Company Records at the New York Public Library (especially the E. Clifton Daniel and A.M. Rosenthal Papers, among others)⁹⁴, the University of California Irvine Archives (Raymond L. Watson Papers), the Columbia Rare Books and Manuscript Library (Harrison E. Salisbury Papers), the Het Nieuwe Instituut (Jaap Bakema and Piet Tauber Papers), and Konstantinos Doxiadis' archive. In the Italian case, crossed archives referring to the journeys of the Fifties include the Museum of Modern Art (especially the Exhibition Files and International Program Files) and several other Italian repositories belonging to Huxtable's Italian interlocutors.

In this case, the approach to archival research was slightly different. The reconstruction of Huxtable's Italian network of contacts followed a relatively empirical procedure. Garth Huxtable's diary entries were the starting point for tracing this network. His hints integrated the list of professionals featured in *The Modern Movement in Italy* and those whose projects were documented in Ada Louise Huxtable's research folders dedicated to Italian architecture and design at the GRI. Italian repositories include archival funds belonging to Politecnico di Milano (Piero Bottoni, Carlo De Carli), Politecnico di Torino (Carlo Mollino), IUAV (Giorgio

93 Marco Aime, *L'incontro mancato: turisti, nativi, immagini*, Temi (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2005), 90–102.

94 Orvil Dryfoos (1912–1963) was Sulzberger's son-in-law and replaced him as the *New York Times* publisher in 1961 but passed away shortly after the 1962–1963 New York City newspaper strike. He was succeeded in 1963 by Arthur Ochs Sulzberger (1926–2012), also known as "Punch." His papers are still classified.

Casali, Enrico Peressutti, Giuseppe Samonà, Giancarlo De Carlo), MAXXI (Pier Luigi Nervi, Carlo Scarpa, Eugenio Montuori), Archivio Storico Olivetti (Annibale Focchi, Gian Antonio Bernasconi), Archivio del Moderno in Mendrisio (Marco Zanuso), and the personal archives of Franco Albini, Vito and Gustavo Latis, Ignazio Gardella, Gio Ponti, Pietro Lingeri, and Bruno Zevi.

Almost inevitably, investigations in Italy sometimes turned out to be holes in the water.⁹⁵ In other cases, evidence was found almost unexpectedly in those miscellaneous folders where loose documents that do not belong anywhere else end up. A good example was the discovery of Huxtable's resume in one of such folders in the papers of Giuseppe Samonà – whose name appears nowhere else, neither in the Museum of Modern Art records nor at the Getty Research Institute.⁹⁶

A comprehensive picture of this network of contacts finally emerged by combining these traces with the correspondence in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition files. Documents shed light onto the Italian professionals she met and those she could not meet but contacted afterward, as well as on her exchanges with US-based actors at the forefront of disseminating Italian architecture and design in the United States, such as historian and photographer Kidder Smith. Combining these records with the correspondence in the Museum of Modern Art exhibition files sometimes filled silences, confirmed specific meetings, and added profiles to the roster of Huxtable's network.⁹⁷

Therefore, this research's position, outlined in a previous section of this introduction, is reflected also in its approach to archival research. Huxtable's archive and writings have been brought into dialogue with the viewpoints of a series of

95 No evidence was found in the archives of Mollino, Scarpa, Montuori, Casali, Latis, Albini, Zanuso, and De Carlo, consulted between Politecnico di Torino, IUAV Archivio Progetti, MAXXI, Archivio del Moderno in Mendrisio, and individual repositories. The heirs of Paolo A. Chessa informed me that there is no archive of their father's work, and accessing the BBPR archive in Milan has not yet possible yet.

96 Conference Board of Associated Research Councils, Committee on International Exchange of Persons, "Biographical Data and General Information Concerning Ada L. Huxtable," 1950, Archivio Progetti, IUAV, Fondo Samonà, 2.fas/064. (Hereafter cited as "Curriculum, 1950, AS-IUAV").

97 Still, despite documented exchanges in U.S. funds, there was sometimes no trace of Huxtable's letters in her counterparts' repositories. For instance, there are many photographs of Franco Albini's works in her research folders on Italian architecture and design. Although Garth Huxtable also reported their meetings in his diaries, Huxtable is not in his files, as he used to eliminate the correspondence when he moved from one office to another.

“secondary characters” – Garth Huxtable, her colleagues at the *New York Times*, and her overseas interlocutors. In the popular movie *Koolhaas Houselife*, the narrator is not the house owner but the housekeeper, who explains the changes, transformations, and details of the house, revealing its secrets. Although this work does not adhere entirely to Garth Huxtable’s perspective or the outlooks of other actors belonging to her network, it acknowledges their importance and relevance without deferring everything to Huxtable’s authorship and authority. This narrative choice expands the field of representation.

Structure of the work

This research is divided into two parts. As previously stated, it isolates a series of episodes in Huxtable’s early career that saw her traveling overseas between the Fifties and the late Sixties.

Part One presents three episodes linked to Huxtable’s assignments for the *New York Times* in the late 1960s. The first three chapters then deal with the journeys and newspaper reportages related to her participation in the *European Planned Community Tour* in 1965, the newspaper’s investigative project to the Soviet Union in 1967, and the part of her 1969 assignment focusing on Israel.

Part Two examines Huxtable’s journeys to Italy between 1949 and 1952. These experiences are linked to her Fulbright fellowship, her writings for the specialized press, and the curatorship of MoMA’s traveling exhibition entitled *The Modern Movement in Italy: Architecture and Design*. Therefore, this manuscript does not follow a chronological order. Although this narrative choice generates apparent limitations in terms of integration between the two parts, it was determined by the underlying differences in these experiences, the sources taken into consideration, and the different approaches to archival research outlined in the previous section of this introduction. Each chapter examines her travel experiences and thematizes them to discuss issues related to their translation from one geographic and cultural context to another.

Chapter One works on the issue of **unfamiliarity**. Huxtable’s reportages

deal with contexts, figures, and themes that were sometimes unfamiliar or could sound new to the North American public. The chapter does so through her first overseas assignment, the *European Planned Community Tour*. The venture was a fifteen-day organized trip across new towns, planned communities, and new housing settlements in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, and West Germany in the fall of 1965. What was the *New York Times*' interest in sending her to study these experiences through an investigative journey of this kind? How did Huxtable turn these distant architectural and planning cases into newsworthy subjects for the newspaper and its public?

First, this chapter frames the *European Planned Community Tour*, outlining its program, promoters, and participants. Huxtable joined the tour in the fall of 1965 and traveled with other journalists, architects, and planners, but especially with a large group of North American private developers and builders active in the redevelopment of large portions of rural land, especially in California. Unlike most of them, she did not travel to inform her position in governmental think tanks, design groups, private developments, or institutions. Her first responsibility was the preparation of newspaper articles for her readers.

The chapter then links these writings to the tour's itinerary. However, her articles are not investigated as straightforward appraisals of experiences related to geographically, culturally, and politically different contexts. They are observed insofar as Huxtable treats them as proxies for placing specific aspects of the U.S. public debate on the real estate legislation and its actors at the center of her critique. Three specific examples are then scrutinized to understand how her overseas critique continuously intercepted and tackled issues internal to the North American context, such as the battle for preservation, President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society reforms and New Towns program, as well as the forms, actors, and policies of federal suburban expansion and urban renewal. These narrative choices captured the newspaper readership's interest, receptiveness, and curiosity. This chapter then highlights how the unfamiliarity with certain experiences can be negotiated by turning them into proxies for nurturing and layering meaning to a local critical discourse.

Chapter Two reflects on the role played by **bias** in the construction of Huxtable's

narratives. The term generally describes a settled subjective outlook or judgment – often prejudiced, sometimes unreasoned, and generally distorted, against or in favor of something or someone. The chapter delves into Huxtable’s 1967 trip to the Soviet Union. This assignment was part of a broader *New York Times* editorial initiative devised by former Moscow correspondent Harrison E. Salisbury for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. The investigative project involved fourteen different *New York Times* critics and journalists, and Huxtable was in charge of assessing Soviet architecture and planning. The newspaper anniversary project was set in a season that inherited the fruits of the peaceful coexistence and preceded Brezhnev’s authoritarian turn, culminating one year later with the 1968 Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia.⁹⁸ What did it mean and imply to be a U.S. journalist traveling to the Soviet Union and writing about it for a U.S. audience at that time? How did Huxtable negotiate her biased expectations and those of her readers?

While the aim of this part of the research is not to evaluate Huxtable’s actual understanding of the Soviet context, it proposes a reflection on how she negotiated the gap between her lived experience and its narration, ultimately exposing the opacity of both. Therefore, this chapter initially frames the more pragmatic dimension of Huxtable’s journey to the Soviet Union– including planning and networking processes, itineraries, and outputs – a lunge that reveals the unavoidable interferences of several figures and institutions. It introduces institutional actors like Cosmos travel agency, the Soviet tourism agency *Intourist*, Novosti Press Agency, and the *New York Times* editor and promoter of the project Harrison E. Salisbury, who set the geographic perimeter of her travel experience and the intellectual margins of her narrative.

The chapter then explores how her narrative on prefabrication applied to housing, Soviet planning, and buildings for leisure ambiguously flirted with ideologically charged images that already saturated the North American collective imagination. It shows how Huxtable offered her readers an appraisal that explicitly

98 Unlike in Western periodization, the season between Khrushchev’s Thaw and the *Perestroika* identifies different watersheds in internal and foreign politics, economy, and culture. Marc Elie and Isabelle Ohayon, “Introduction,” *Cahiers du monde russe. Russie - Empire russe - Union soviétique et États indépendants* 54, no. 54/1-2 (January 1, 2013): 11–28.

overturned existing biased narratives associated with the panorama of Soviet architecture culture, playing on her readers' expectations steeped in the cultural Cold War rhetoric and ideology. However, it demonstrates how Huxtable was not only confronting the expectations and prejudices of her readers. Garth Huxtable's unfiltered and unapologetic travel notes – written almost every day for two weeks as letters to his brother that he did not eventually mail – convey the difficulties and contrasting sensations that characterized their trip to the Soviet Union, revealing the behind-the-scenes negotiations of Huxtable's own biases.⁹⁹

Chapter three deals with the concept of **translatability**. It delves into the part of Huxtable's 1969 journey that unfolded throughout Israel. This journey and the resulting reportage are examined to understand how Huxtable bridged the distance that concerned the levels of expertise of her interlocutors and readers, questioning the untranslatability of certain experiences. What were the choices and narrative devices through which Huxtable constructed narratives that could be accessible to a daily newspaper's audience? How and to what extent did the medium and the public influence and shape her narrative?

This episode offers valuable insights into how specialized content can – or cannot – be translated for a wider audience. The chapter addresses the phenomenon of translation by questioning its components – what kind of knowledge is made accessible, its selection criteria, and Huxtable's communication choices to turn it into a product that her readers could consume. It delves into how she negotiated her representations within the perimeter allowed by the newspaper page and her public's reception capacity, acknowledging how translation can also sometimes imply a loss of meaning.

Besides framing the premises of this journey, this chapter presents the Israeli case to demonstrate how omissions become as relevant as inclusions. It first questions Huxtable's actions toward the inputs coming from her institutional and professional interlocutors, namely Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek and architect Arie Sharon. In

99 A short essay in *The Getty Research Journal* explores the subject of this chapter. Valeria Casali, "Building a Soviet 'Architectural Sputnik': Behind the Scenes in the Ada Louise Huxtable and L. Garth Huxtable Papers." *Getty Research Journal* 17 (February 2023): 173–88.

addition to linking her representations to the demands of her Israeli network and the narratives they wanted to promote, it questions how omissions can be investigated as actions informing the construction of a narrative. The chapter dwells on the role of textual descriptions and images crafted by Huxtable for Israeli cities like Jerusalem and Tel Aviv or single buildings like the Israel Museum or those designed by Alfred Neumann, Eldar Sharon, and Zvi Hecker to uncover how adaptation and the apparent untranslatability of certain concepts, objects, and experiences can bring about content simplification and dilution phenomena.

Chapters Four and Five delve into different aspects linked to Huxtable's experiences in Italy in the early Fifties. These two chapters could likely have been combined into one. Chapter Four, in fact, delves into their travel experiences in Italy in the early 1950s and the networks built during these occasions. It explores the implications of her travels as an upper-class member close to New York's cultural and artistic elite, and especially a Fulbright fellowship recipient who could not be pigeonholed in any specific professional label. Moreover, it investigates the extent of her network of interlocutors and the research process associated with her Fulbright project to reflect on the intellectual project behind her narrative of Italian architecture.

Chapter Four highlights the process of constructing a repertoire of sources and instrumental references for the narratives she circulated in the subsequent years presented in Chapter 5. Her representations not only evolved with time but also espoused, endorsed, rejected, or re-elaborated the mainstream attributes and popular interpretations of Italian architecture and design in the North American collective imagination and disciplinary discourse.

If, in the previous chapters, we have observed interferences generated by unfamiliarity, biases, and untranslatability, **Chapter Five** builds on Huxtable's Italian trajectories to reflect on the role of clichés in her representation of Italian postwar architecture culture and, more specifically, of Italian architects. Her sympathies can be identified as quickly as her dislikes and refer to an established disciplinary tradition that casts an extreme cultural relevance on the biographical approach. In his critique of her approach to architectural criticism, Herbert Muschamp claimed that Huxtable's "exalted" view of art was dominated "by individual works (or

masterpieces) created by gifted individuals (or geniuses) whose values have been pronounced timeless and eternal and whose achievements soar above the shifting sands of taste.”¹⁰⁰

Not coincidentally, in her collective and individual representations, Italian architects were never “just” architects: figures like Pier Luigi Nervi, Gio Ponti, Aldo Rossi, or Paolo Soleri, among others, became inventors, creators, master builders, poets, and prophets. Her portrayal of Italian architects resulted in dramatized masks of the modern professional, ultimately resulting in exportable stereotyped portraits that appropriated clichés and autonomous interpretive categories. Overall, the Italian case demonstrates how idealization generates solid yet empty, self-contained narratives that does not draw its strength from direct knowledge acquired during travel.

100 Muschamp, “The good, the bad and the timeless Ada Louise.”