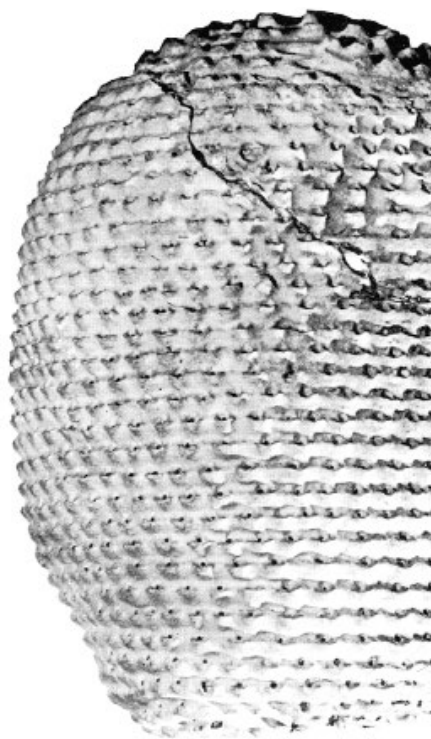
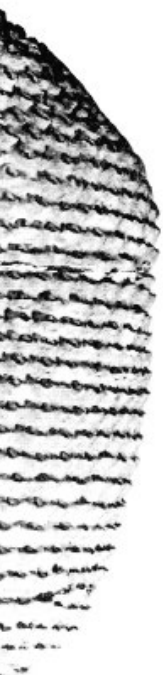


Publishing as a Way of Creating *Wirklichkeit*





I asked him what it was, in London, that had caused him to lose faith in his publishing house,



which he had only just launched and which indeed shortly afterwards – I had heard – was taken over by a large corporation, so that Paniotis was now a company editor rather than the director of his own enterprise. My reverence for all things English, he said after a silence, his sorrowful eyes brimming and rolling in their sockets, was not reciprocated. This was when things had started to get difficult here, he continued, though no one guessed then how much worse they would become. The publishing house was to be devoted exclusively to translating and printing English-language authors unheard of in Greece, writers the commercial publishers wouldn't touch, whose work Paniotis deeply admired and was determined to make available for his countrymen. But at a particular moment he was unable to provide the advance payments to these authors, many of whose books he had translated himself to cut costs. In London he found himself excoriated, even by the writers themselves, for non-payment of money that the books, strictly speaking, had not yet actually earned; he was treated with the greatest disdain by everyone, was threatened with legal action, and worst of all came away with the impression that these writers he had worshipped as the artists of our time were in fact cold and unempathetic people devoted to self-promotion and above all else, to money. He had

made it quite clear to them that if he was forced to pay, his publishing house would collapse before it had even begun, which indeed is what happened; those same writers are regularly rejected by the company he works for now, who are interested only in turning out best-sellers. And so I learned, he said, that it is impossible to improve things, and that good people are just as responsible for it as bad, and that improvement itself is perhaps a mere personal fantasy, as lonely in its way as Angeliki's lonely place. We are all addicted to it, he said, removing a single mussel from its shell with his trembling fingers and putting it in his mouth, the story of improvement, to the extent that it has commandeered our deepest sense of reality. It has even infected the novel, though perhaps now the novel is infecting us back again, so that we expect of our lives what we've come to expect of our books; but this sense of life as a progression is something I want no more of.

Wirklichkeit Books, founded in 2019 in Berlin, publishes books to find words, images and actions for a new actuality. The programme includes titles by young artists side by side with historic positions relating to poetry, play, language and art. Publishing is understood as an experimental and joyful act that engages with the travel of ideas and is seen as a way of creating *Wirklichkeit*.

*Rachel Cusk, *Outline*, London: Faber & Faber, 2018, p.97–99.

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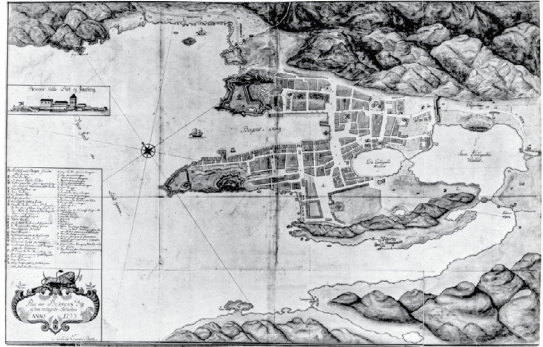
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The Bergen Prism, also called the Bergehedron, is an irregular heptahedron,¹ or seven-faced polyhedron invented in the early 1900s by Professor Mohamed ben Amed, a Berber mathematician and astronomer. Professor ben Amed dedicated his life to developing a new divination method mixing numerology, geometry and astrology. This method was based on a simplified seven-sign zodiac system, rather than twelve, that he associated with the seven irregular faces of his heptahedron. Each sign and its associate face has been named after various characters typical of the famous Jemaa el-Fna square in Marrakesh: the Professor, the Bonimenteur,² the Moped Rider, the Fortune Teller, the Acrobats, the Coalman and the Tourist.³ Ben Amed named his heptahedron after Bergen, Norway, following a journey to the city. While there, he noticed that each of the famous seven mountains surrounding the city⁴ offered a unique view to the seven astronomical constellations selected to define his revolutionary seven-sign zodiac system.

Ben Amed's theory became very popular in the world of Berber craftsmen and artisans and was used to create specific metaphysical patterns in the ornamentation of carpets, weaving and architecture. Surprisingly, he never published a treatise on his theory, and it has only survived through oral transmission. For this reason, the Bergen Prism has never been definitively



Map of Bergen, Norway, by Claudius Emanuel Barth, 1733

identified, and its exact shape is still unknown. Today, some Berber artisans still know how to decode his theory into ornamental patterns, but slowly, this knowledge is becoming extinct. There is a prophecy that says when it will be possible to decipher each face of the Bergen Prism and assemble it into a whole, a new harmony will arise. Then, the world will finally be accepted in its diversity, far from the binary oppositions that currently undermine our times.

After a research trip to Marrakesh in 2017, the artist Saâdane Afif tried to make a representation of the Bergen Prism based on a fable shared by a storyteller he met at the Jemaa el-Fna square. The small sculpture proposed by the artist takes the archetypal shape of a house but with distorted perspectives, similar to German expressionist film decor. In spite of the great care given to the execution of the sculpture, this artistic fantasy is likely far away from the reality of the Prism.

1. — An irregular polyhedron is formed by polygons of different shapes where all the components are not the same. This means that all the sides of an irregular polyhedron are not equal.

2. — The common English translation of *bonimenteur* is 'huckster', but this is a grossly limited rendering of its meaning in French. *Bonimenteur* comes from the word *boniment*, itself derived from the slang *bon(n)ir*, 'to tell (good stories)', to create an illusion. A good storyteller is thus a person who uses the craft of the spoken word, asserting qualities that are seductive and accentuating some to deceive the audience, usually to sell products or services, things or ideas. He or she gives illusions an authentic character and circumvents the possibilities of clarification by using deception. The illusionist Robert Houdin says about *boniment*: 'It is not a speech, much less a sermon, a narration, a description. It is simply the fable intended to give each trick the appearance of truth.'

3. — Coincidentally, the exact same suit of characters appeared in an unpublished theatre play from 2017 by French novelist Thomas Clerc titled 'The Heptahedron'. However, a link between the two stories is unable to be confirmed.

4. — '[Dano-Norwegian playwright] Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754) felt so inspired by the Seven hills [sic] of Rome, he decided his home town [of Bergen] must also be blessed with a corresponding seven mountains. Which mountains belong to the group is unclear, due to its origin (based on the mythical status of the number seven), and the fact that several of the mountains are part of the same mountain massif' (See Wikipedia: www.wikiwand.com/en/Seven_Mountains_Bergen)