At first sight the link between nineteenth-century European travel books or accounts of mountaineering and modern Native American fiction is not obvious and yet one can find challenging coincidences between these different types of writing – coincidences that reveal a profound vision of the world and man’s quest in and questioning of the universe. Perhaps the perception of a direct link with nature may explain those correspondences. The modern city imagined in a natural place, or, more often, the ruins of the ancient city seen in the natural shapes of the world reveal man’s quest. The link between the broken space and invisibility may be the key to the questions that man reads in a natural landscape that he has metamorphosed into a city. For ruins contain invisible spaces the imagination can endlessly fill. The often-used image of ruins in the landscape is also a shattered image of oneness, the broken city becoming an invisible city. The broken mirror of the organized town can be reconstituted by means of literary cities scattered in texts that reveal other invisible cities, which are the constructed images of an inner world.

The invisible modern city
In Invisible Man Ralph Ellison defines the narrator’s invisibility as an image of the distorted vision of those who live in a white American town. According to the narrator, it is “a matter of construction of their inner eyes”.¹ He shows the transformation of man by his fellow citizens’ eyes into an invisible creature in terms of construction. This reveals the link between an invisible architecture and man’s inner eye. In the novel, New York becomes the shattered city depriving the black man of his existence; elsewhere, for Scott Momaday in House Made of Dawn, Los Angeles deprives the Indian of his essence. The visible city generates

the black man’s invisibility and the Indian’s inner dislocation. What becomes obvious for the man who has been deprived of his roots – the \textit{dis-location}, the estrangement from one’s place, conveyed by invisibility or material dislocation – may reveal to all men the relationship between the land and the city which has been built and then destroyed. Invisible or ruined cities become the sign of their memory recovered, of their belonging to a common space.

As Ralph Ellison’s phrase just quoted shows, language uses the architecture of the city to define a man’s life or thought.\footnote{The words \textit{to build up}, \textit{foundations}, \textit{ways}, \textit{crossroads}, \textit{construct}, \textit{deadlock}, \textit{stone wall}, \textit{monumental}, \textit{to buttress}, used to depict man’s life, inner world or thoughts, are borrowed from the lexical field of city space and of urban architecture.} Language signals that man tries to define his own existence in terms of construction. The numerous literary mappings of real cities\footnote{Let us take as examples Virginia Woolf’s \textit{Mrs Dalloway}, where the heroine’s thoughts follow her movements in London, Joyce’s painting of Dublin revealing Stephen’s inner mazes through his movements in the Irish city in \textit{A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man}, E.M. Forster’s vision of an Indian city, Chandrapore, as the image of the opposition between two worlds in \textit{A Passage to India}, Lawrence Durrell’s poetic image of Alexandria rebuilt by his own memories in \textit{The Alexandria Quartet}, and all the American cities depicted by American writers to show the characters’ inner worlds or journeys: Boston depicted by Henry James, Edith Wharton or Henry Miller, New York depicted by F.S. Fitzgerald, Ralph Ellison, Saul Bellow, Paul Auster and many others, Paterson, which is the core of William Carlos Williams’s poetry, Los Angeles opposed to Walatowa (Jemez Pueblo) in the Native American vision given by N. Scott Momaday in \textit{House Made of Dawn}, Paris painted by all the expatriate American writers or the Algerian city painted by Albert Camus. This is only a very small selection meant to show the essential role of the city in the writer’s definition of man’s inner world.} reveal man’s attempt at organizing his own self; his tendency to see the original, natural chaos as the image of an ancient city extends into his description of the modern visible city that is linked with his own experience and reveals his fear of dislocation. “The city has always sought to ward off the void”, Nathalie Cochoy writes.\footnote{“La ville a toujours tenté de conjurer le vide”; Nathalie Cochoy, “New York ou la cité invisible”, Colloquium about \textit{Images de la Ville}, 4 February, 1994, Université Toulouse Le Mirail, a paper published in \textit{Séminaires d’études doctorales 1992-1996}, Toulouse, Université Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1996, 95. The editor is grateful to Robert Druce for most of the translations. The original of three longer quotes are in an Appendix.} Perhaps the modern city seen in invisible landscapes or ruins full of empty spaces seen in natural chaos or any original landscape are the aesthetic expressions of man’s tendency to fill up the empty or invisible spaces of his own inner world, those empty spaces which are questions visually transformed into broken or invisible cities.

The metaphor of the industrial town is present in some nineteenth-century accounts of mountaineering. When Henry Russell-Killough (the famous French Irish mountain climber referred to by Jules Verne in \textit{Michel Strogoff}, who was probably his model for Phileas Fogg in \textit{Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours}) climbs the Pyrenean mountains, he compares the wild landscapes with...