# The Political Unconscious of Architecture

## Re-opening Jameson's Narrative

**Edited by Nadir Lahiji**

THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS OF ARCHITECTURE

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*Edited by*
Nadir Lahiji

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*… In Memory of my Mother*

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# Notes on Contributors

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**Kojin Karatani** is a Japanese philosopher and the founder of the New Associationist Movement (NAM). Among dozens of his books, the following are translated into English: *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Duke University Press, 1993), *Architecture as Metaphor, Language, Number, Money* (MIT Press, 1995) and *Transcritique: on Kant and Marx* (MIT Press, 2003). His *History and Repetition* will be published by Columbia University Press.

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**Robin Wilson** originally studied fine art and is now a writer, curator and lecturer on art, architecture and landscape. He has contributed to the *Architects' Journal*, the *Architectural Review* and *Blueprint*. He teaches history and theory of art and architecture at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL and Chelsea School of Art.

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# Acknowledgments

# Introduction

This anthology was initially conceived as a *return* to the abandoned project of radical critical thought, and in its defence. In this return, the figure of the prominent American cultural critic Fredric Jameson, to whom this volume is a tribute, stands out. This return is no simple repetition. It is, rather, a return to the repressed content of repeated past failed attempts and their lost causes. For the title of this volume we have invoked the novel concept that Jameson used for one of his early seminal works, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*.[1] In this book Jameson never discussed architecture – and in fact he never applied the doctrine of 'political unconscious' in a direct fashion to any of his critical writings on architecture – and therefore, our return to it after three decades and the attempt to link it to architecture demands an explanation. Significantly, the appearance of the aforementioned book slightly predates the period when Jameson began his intervention into the discourse of architecture. It was actually in 1982 that he marked his entry into the field when he presented a talk on 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. That talk was later published in *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* in 1985,[2] and was subsequently reprinted in the second volume of his collected essays, *The Ideologies of Theory* in 1988.[3] It is with this essay that Jameson inaugurated his dialogue with architects, writers, historians and critics in the discipline, which he sustained over a period of three decades.  During this period, he influenced a generation of critics and writers in the field, albeit an exclusive progressive circle, among which we can count a few architects, but mainly those who felt the force and intelligence of his radical cultural and political theory. He was not always followed with firm political conviction or intellectual commitment – save for a few notable exceptions – which might have failed him and caused him a fatigue within the community by half-serious critics paying only lip service to him, not to mention his dismissal by reactionary intellectuals. This may be witnessed by the fact that the discussion of architecture is noticeably absent in his recent prolific publication activity, with a large volume of books coming out at a dizzying speed. It was only in *The Cultural Turn*, a book of his collected essays published in 1998, that the latest important essay, 'The

Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation' (1997), that he had delivered as a lecture at one of the ANY conferences, appeared.[4] Perry Anderson in his foreword to this book begins with these words which may aptly sum up for us the intellectual stature of Jameson: 'Exploding like so many magnesium flares in a night sky, Frederic Jameson's writings have lit up the shrouded landscape of the postmodern, suddenly transforming its shadows and obscurities into an eerie, refulgent tableau.'[5]

In *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson begins by citing the grand Marxian political theory of 'class struggle' – a term dismissed by many, today – as the methodological category for his literary history and criticism which he then linked to the discourse of psychoanalysis from which the complex concept of the 'political unconscious' derives. In the opening chapter of the book Jameson wrote: 'The assertion of a political unconscious proposes that we understand just such a final analysis and explore the multiple paths that lead to the unmasking of cultural artifact as socially symbolic act'.[6] To drive home his point, he cited the famous passage in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848, which begins with the statement that 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle'.[7] Taking 'class struggle' as a fundamental 'uninterrupted' historical narrative of the society, Jameson claimed: 'It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.'[8] The entry of this doctrine in Jameson's work can be traced back to the historical conjuncture in the political and intellectual fermentation of the Left in Europe – mainly in France – that marked the rapprochement between Marxian theory and psychoanalysis, mainly in the ground-breaking works of Louis Althusser through his master, Jacques Lacan, with a complex, intricate intellectual history in the 1960s and early 1970s that need not be repeated here. As is well known, the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory had attempted this rapprochement previously – albeit problematically, with only a partial success. In fact, Jameson must be credited as having been among the first to take up Lacanian psychoanalytical theory – and the famous triad of Imaginary, Symbolic and Real – early on and bring it into his Marxian theory for the discipline of literary and cultural theory and criticism in the American intellectual scene well before the whole generation of Lacanian critics arrived on the scene. The term 'political unconscious' thus must only be understood within a return to psychoanalytical theory after the teaching of Jacques Lacan, and his famous 'return' to Freud in the early twentieth century. This theory has firmly and effectively entered the discipline of radical political critique in our time.

Frankly, Jameson never brought this concept explicitly into his architectural criticism. This fact explains the reason for our returning to his earlier *The Political Unconscious* in the search for a political concept to underline the original intent for the present anthology. We launched this project believing that it is now an opportune time for us to allow this concept to enter the discourse and provide us with a theoretical reference in renewing the *project of*

*critique* in architecture within the contemporary culture – against the current ideological complacency – with no apology. At the same time, we are aware that after Jameson's first use of this term, few other contemporary writers and philosophers on the radical Left have elevated this concept to a higher level in the field of political theory.[9] Yet, we are indebted to Jameson and his sophisticated writings for being the first to pave the way and showing us the itinerary along this road. It is, therefore, in deep *fidelity* to him that we have conceived this volume, mainly in two respects: Firstly, in dedication to him for his productive intervention in the field of architectural criticism over decades, and secondly, with a call to *return* to his original insights in order to open a space for a past failed project of *radical* critique in architecture. And, as the saying goes, *in every act of genuine fidelity there resides a betrayal*. It is in this spirit that various essays collected in this volume, either directly taking up his writing, or, for that matter, taking him to task, or otherwise indirectly addressing his work, have paid tribute to him with the belief that perhaps there are unfulfilled promises in his writings yet to be exhausted for a committed radical critique in the discipline. In our contemporary culture, every fashionable academic 'liberal-left' critic, camouflaged as 'radical', jumps on the garden variety of postmodern theory, only to find out soon that he or she has already been co-opted by the prevailing cultural logic of the capitalist system which promotes and rewards 'transgression' to benefit from its market value. It is the teaching of Fredric Jameson, we believe, that may prove to be a sure *inoculation* against this current of the 'culturalization of the market economy'. It is against the *theoretical regression* characterizing the present state of the project of critique in our discipline that we present this volume. We conceived this project with the full conviction that it is more urgent than ever to go back to Jameson in the current environment of 'post-political' and 'post-history', and the diatribe against *theory* circulating in academia. In this condition, we are led to believe that contemporary society is a 'harmonious-corporate-organic-conflict-free' society, or otherwise, we have found that we have suddenly become the faithful followers of Francis Fukuyama, turning into his fools without knowing it, in (non-)thinking that we have reached 'the end of history'.[10] And this idea, by the way, is not exactly that famous Hegelian 'end of history' that Jameson just recently devoted a fine book to, challenging Fukuyama's interpretation and his defence of contemporary neoliberal utopia.[11] We are told ad nauseam that liberal capitalism is the only alternative game in town, the only political order available to us in contemporary society; and this amounts to an injunction against thought perpetuated by academia in disguise. This, we believe, demands a firm and resolute resistance against the *disorder* it causes in thought, corollary to the rampant *disorder* in the global capitalist system.  But, as Mao Zedong is quoted to have once said: 'There is a great disorder under heaven, the situation is excellent.'[12]

At the inception of this project we asked: What would be the implications of the thesis of 'political unconscious' for architecture and its function in contemporary society? If it is correct to say that architecture as a social

institution, and as a discourse, is *also* an arena in which the 'uninterrupted narrative' of the history of class struggle at the level of theory is staged – as has been argued by Slavoj Žižek – then it surely must be an answer to a problem that is ultimately *socio-political and ethical.* Žižek, in an exemplary manner, links Jameson's 'political unconscious' to architecture and remarks that 'there is a coded message in an architectural formal play, and the message delivered by a building often functions as the "return of the repressed" of the official ideology'.[13] We came to this project with the concern that the recent debate surrounding the so-called 'criticality' in the discipline has served to avoid, if not to fraudulently escape from, the fundamental question of architecture's *social* and *ethical* responsibility. It is no accident that the word 'capitalism' and its critique have found no place in the recent discourse of 'criticality', let alone the liberal-left 'discontent' with the latter term. Is not the dropping of the word 'capitalism' a sure sign of the unconscious domination of capitalist ideology itself over the 'criticality' discourse and its opponents?[14] The excessively rhetorical and faddish language used by some of those who have followed Jameson in recent past is the sign of avoiding the real issue that must be in the center of the contemporary critique on the Left: the return to the Critique of Political Economy.[15] Let it be known that no critical project can be articulated without a radical *social theory.* The alternative is political *conformism* with a complacency currently prevailing in the cultural order of the academia. In the original conception of this anthology put to the contributors, it was stated that in order to renew the project of a *political* critique in the discipline, we must reconfigure the discourse of theory and history; we must re-examine the 'lost causes' of political modernity and the failure of the modern project that has led to postmodern pan-aestheticism; it was moreover stated that we must confront the de-politicization and anti-critical trend, which wittingly or unwittingly takes the 'liberal-democratic-capitalist' narrative as its goal, and within an institutionally entrenched position dictating its imperatives. This entrenched tendency has come about as a result of the general defeat of the radical political Left in our time, which has emboldened the liberal-left of academia to assume a dominating position from which to assault the tradition of the genuine critical thought. But, as has recently been proclaimed, 'The long night of the left is drawing to a close'.[16] If it is true that this long night of defeat is about to come to a close, it has yet to confront the reactionary Right which has come back to take its revenge on the tradition of the Left's emancipatory project with an assault on the radical thought that in our recent history we inherited from the failed revolutionary attempt of the 1960s period. As Walter Benjamin, with whom Jameson has a deep affinity, once said, and I freely quote, 'in every historical epoch there is a utopian element nesting within the defeated failed attempt that remains to be *redeemed*'.

Fredric Jameson occupies a unique position in coming to architecture from the *outside.* His role has been to constantly *suture* architecture to its *social exchange,* through the political discourse of aesthetics, but without a closure. He has thus put the internal discourse of architecture under *sociality,*

mediating the transition between the architectural *ideology* – another term dismissed by many, today – and the aesthetico-political cultural theory. He has shown us that the *critical* act of suturing internal discourse of architecture to its outside from the side of the *other* will never leave the recovery ward. This is a valuable lesson to be learnt from him. Yet, consider the current position of architecture from another angle: contemporary 'new architecture' has emerged as 'superstructure', which has played its function for the emergence of the 'infrastructure' of the late capitalism and its 'new spirit'. And, ironically, our 'radical' critics are busying themselves in euphorically showering aesthetic praises on the same 'new architecture'. Couldn't this be another perfect case in the Marxist affirmation of the functioning role of an architectural superstructure as the contemporary 'religion' to facilitate the triumphal emergence of an infrastructure, that is, the digital capitalism with its image industry?

Jameson's role in all of this can be exemplified by the many invitations he has received in the last couple of decades to participate in a dialogue with critics and architects. For example, the interdisciplinary and ambitious ANY conferences, which were held annually for ten years around the world, at which he was supposedly asked to participate as the one who could demystify architecture's own 'mirror image' of itself. Numerous other approaches have been made to invite him to analyse and critique certain architectural projects by 'signature' architects, and many interviews have been published in the prestigious journals inside and outside of the discipline – not to mention his early analysis of architecture within the contemporary postmodern culture in his landmark *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. In this latter text we can read the by now classic analysis of Frank Gehry's own house in Santa Monica. Jameson puts the 'aesthetics' of this house under erasure in his masterful discourse on the political economy, and under the cultural imperatives of postmodern capitalism. Let us recall what he wrote at the end of the chapter entitled 'Spatial Equivalent in the World System':

> And if it is observed that the cube is not the only novel spatial intervention here, and that we have not yet made any interpretative allowance for the wall or fence of corrugated metal, then I will observe that the two features do indeed characterize the problem of thinking about contemporary America. The corrugated aluminum, the chain-linked balcony above, are, one would think, the junk or Third World side of American life today – the production of poverty and misery, people not only out of work but without a place to live, bag people, waste and industrial pollution, squalor, garbage, and obsolescent machinery.[17]

In other words, what Jameson said is that this house represents a dialectics between the advanced technological state of contemporary American capitalism and the base materials of the 'American wasteland'.[18] Or, take the long chapter in his *The Seeds of Time,* titled 'The Constraints of Postmodernism', in which he extensively discusses the architectural aesthetics of Peter Eisenman's and Rem Koolhaas' works – while paying his respect to them – by linking

them to the discourse of contemporary radical political theorists (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe), dialectically mediating between two seemingly incompatible theories, in order to test the larger socio-political implications of their architectural designs within the contemporary culture. These cases are only a few samples of his serious intervention in the criticism of contemporary architecture, which have been tackled by some contributors in this anthology.

Architectural *ideology* – against those who distrust this term – systematically mediates the extraction of the 'surplus value' by the capitalist dynamics, at least since the advent of secular capitalist modernity. This surplus value, which mysteriously disappears from view is not given directly to *experience*, and therefore, as Kojin Karatani has argued, needs a 'transcendental critique' in the Kantian sense of the term.[19] Jameson has on occasions appeared on the fashionable and dazzling architectural stages (ANY conferences mentioned above as a case in point), where this ideology is glaringly displayed to the eyes, only to demystify its 'surplus value' by exposing the underlying aesthetic ideology underpinning the so-called 'Architectural Idea' to the imperatives of the logic of the market economy and its 'cultural capital', albeit not always at the level of *economics* in the larger sense that this term demands. As one review article of Jameson's recent book, *Valences of the Dialectic*, has critically put it:

> Still, the weak point, it seems to me, in Jameson's strongly Marxist account of recent culture has been his relatively thin description of the economy, the mode of production. It is too easy to read much of his work and conclude that a given film, say, could indeed be read as a blind allegory of 'late capitalism', without late capitalism meaning anything much more distinct than 'the economy' or 'the system'. In such cases it has been far easier to accept his Marxism in an axiomatic sense – a product of late capitalism will necessarily be *about* late capitalism too – than to see how the axiom could be embodied in persuasive local analyses of this or that cultural artefact or tendency.[20]

The same critique is perhaps valid for his architectural criticism, notwithstanding his 'The Brick and Balloon' essay mentioned above.

Whenever the discipline immerses itself in *fundamental ideological fantasy* (with the use of this psychoanalytical term here we are already beyond Jameson's still traditional approach to the problem of 'ideology critique' in architecture), the Jamesonian 'political unconscious' can arrive to not only unmask it, but rather, to *traverse* it from the empty place left by the critics inside the discipline. So, Jameson's role in the architectural discourse has been, at least, to unsettle, while at the same time to pay respect, sometimes excessively, to the 'Intellectual' architects. But his role has been more than just to inject a radical critical theory into the field, often facing non-committal complacency in the discipline. In order to better understand Jameson's term of the 'political unconscious' we have to refer to the psychoanalytical theory from which it originates, and within which it must be understood. But the space of this short introduction does not allow tackling this concept in its totality and doing justice to its complexity.

It is significant to point out here that 30 years into the exercise of poststructuralist theory and the variety of post-Marxisms in the field of social and cultural theory, and those in the discipline who have claimed to have combined both in their critical project, following Jameson's lead, have largely failed to offer a coherent and rigorous theoretical framework, beyond their rhetorical language, to advance a new mode of radical critical discourse addressing this 'fundamental fantasy' that constantly creeps into the architectural ideology.

This fact underscores the attempt made in the present anthology to return to Jameson's original framing of the question of 'class struggle', a concept still in need of theoretical extension to the 'practice of theory', as the ultimate reference point for the concept of the 'political unconscious'. It is for this underlying reason that we remain indebted to Fredric Jameson. This volume is the letter of our *return* to his teaching.

The contributors to this volume have variously decided on their own how to return to the radical thought in architectural analysis and criticism. Inspired by Jameson's thought, some have chosen to indirectly 'apply' the Jamesonian idea of 'cognitive mapping' without mentioning him, while others have directly addressed his cultural-political analyses, subjecting them to critical scrutiny. Bechir Kenzari implicitly argues that 'class struggle' over space has shifted from the metropolis to its outskirts, and discuses the different manifestations of social conflict and urban violence happening in *banlieues* in France. David Cunningham, while critically interrogating Jameson, discusses the idea of abstraction of 'money' and shows Jameson's singular contribution to the architectural reading of contemporary cultural form. Donald Kunze begins with Jameson's idea of the 'master signifier' as primarily ideological and radically historical and explores it in terms of the 'architecture of films', mainly in Akira Kurosawa's *High and Low.* He first argues that in this film the master signifier is a 'house' and then shows how the film triangulates the servant on to the political unconscious of the master. Gevork Hartoonian argues that one reason why architecture has occupied the centre stage of contemporary theoretical debate is its close ties with the reproductive cycles of capitalism. He points out that no one diagnosed the social conflict in architecture's entry into the bourgeois ideology better than Manfredo Tafuri. He then takes up Jameson's encounter with Tafuri and discusses the historicity of Jameson's take on the Italian historian. Hal Foster argues that we are in the midst of another stage of modernity, the so-called 'second modernity'. He then discusses the works of two prominent contemporary architects as representative examples of this stage of modernity, which he argues are the result of the corporate energy of neoliberalism in the last three decades. Jane Rendell, for her part, explores the 'political unconscious' in architecture by examining 'the setting' – a psychoanalytic clinical term. In this approach she considers how the main activities at work in the psychoanalytic setting, such as association, attention, construction, conjecture, interpretation

and invention, may be adopted in criticism as writing devices through which to address architecture's unconscious. Taking Jameson's 'cognitive mapping' as the main guiding principle, Joan Ockman examines the 'architecture' of Main Street and Wall Street and explores the class conflict underlying the dialectical relation between the two within the larger socio-political struggle in the American capitalist system, especially after the recent financial meltdown. Kojin Karatani writes that if the deconstructive critique of modernist architecture and city planning had all good intentions, so did the deconstructive critique of the socialist project. But, he argues that with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of globalization after 1990, it ironically resulted in affirming the deconstructive power of capitalism. His conclusion is that what we need is to rethink the possibility of architecture and city planning against this trend. Louis Martin takes up the recent shift away from the discourse of 'criticality' and comprehensively examines the writing of the critics in the discipline of architecture who have adopted Jameson for their own critical writings. In his analysis of the impact of Jameson's work on architectural discourse, Martin concludes that Jameson's critical ideas have been only partially integrated in the works of architectural theorists and critics. What is the state of the discourse of 'ideology critique' of architecture within contemporary culture and in today's radical critical thought after Jameson? Nadir Lahiji addresses this question and argues that we need a new conceptual and theoretical approach to the problem of the 'ideology critique' of architecture in the light of the recent development of the theory of ideology in radical thought. Robin Wilson has taken up the question of 'architectural photography' to explore its critical implications in Jameson's writings. He specifically discusses this issue as it relates to Jameson's 'Spatial Equivalents in the World System' and examines the utopian impulse and the political unconscious in the analysis of architectural imagery. Slavoj Žižek has taken Jameson's doctrine of the 'political unconscious' more seriously than any other contemporary radical critic. In his fundamental contribution to this volume, he has discussed the above doctrine within the theory of 'class struggle'. He secures the importance of both concepts for architectural discourse and renews the question of ideology critique in architecture in the most novel way by going beyond Jameson's original idea. Terry Smith foregrounds the idea of the 'base' and 'superstructure' in Jameson's architectural writings and investigates Jameson's engagement with the works of contemporary architects. In particular, he discusses Jameson's best-known evocation of architecture from his famous description of the disorienting effects of the interior of the Bonaventura Hotel in Los Angeles, which Jameson wrote about as definitive of the experience of postmodernity. Finally, Xavier Costa focuses on Jameson's early essay on 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' and discusses it in relation to Henri Lefebvre's concept of production of space and Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia*.

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## Notes

1   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981).

2   See Joan Ockman, et al. (eds), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (New York, 1985).

3   Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, Volume 2, Syntax of History* (Minneapolis, 1988). The essay was reprinted in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

4   See Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London and New York, 1998).

5   Jameson, *The Cultural Turn*, p. xi.

6   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 20.

7   Quoted by Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*, p. 20.

8   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 20.

9   See Slavoj Žižek's 'The Architectural Parallax' in this volume.

10   Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

11   See Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York and London, 2010).

12   Quoted in Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London and New York, 2010), p. xii.

13   Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax', in this volume.

14   This is exemplified by an anecdote told by Slavoj Žižek in his 'How to Begin From the Beginning'. He writes: 'Consider what happened recently to Marco Cicala, an Italian journalist: when, in an article, he used the word "capitalism," the editor asked him if this was really necessary – could he not replace the word with a synonymous, such as "economy"?' Žižek aptly comments on this story: 'What better proof of the total triumph of capitalism than the virtual disappearance of the very term in the last two or three decades?', see Costa Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek (eds), *The Idea of  Communism* (London and New York, 2010): p. 211.

15   For an example, see chapter 3 in Žižek's *Living in the End Times*, 'Bargaining: The Return to the Critique of Political Economy'.

16   See 'Introduction: The Idea of Communism', in *The Idea of Communism*. The editors in this introduction write: 'The long night of the left is drawing to a close. The defeat, denunciations and despair of the 1980s and the 1990s, the triumphalist "end of history," the unipolar world of American hegemony – all are fast becoming old news', p. vii. Noticing that the 2008 'bail-out' of banks to the 'tune of over one trillion dollars socialized the losses of neo-liberal casino capitalism …' the editors further remark: 'At the beginning of the second decade of the new century, the Post Cold War complacency is over. The economic crisis has matured into full-fledged political crisis which is delegitimizing political systems and distancing people from capitalist ideology', p. xii.

17   Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, 1991): pp.  127-128.

18   For further reflections on this point see Žižek's 'The Architectural Parallax', in this volume.

19   See Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique, On Kant and Marx* (Cambridge, MA, 2003). Also see Kojin Karatani, *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).

20   See Benjamin Kunkel, 'Into the Big Tent', in *London Review of Books* (3)8, (22 April 2010).

# Ban-lieues

*Bechir Kenzari*

## Introduction

> Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental
> biopolitical paradigm of the West…. [This thesis] throws a sinister light
> on the models by which social sciences, sociology, urban studies, and
> architecture today are trying to conceive and organize the public space of
> the world's cities without any clear awareness that at their very center lies
> the same bare life (even if it has been transformed and rendered apparently
> more human) that defined the biopolitics of the great totalitarian states of
> the twentieth century.[1]

For three long weeks in the fall of 2005, angry groups of unemployed
youngsters had vandalized property, burned cars and scorched schools in
several French towns and suburbia. Triggered by the death by electrocution
of two boys fleeing the police in the Parisian *banlieue* of Clichy-sous-Bois, these
*émeutes* (riots) quickly engulfed other impoverished suburbs throughout the
whole country. In reacting to this 'profound malaise', as the former French
President called it, the government was forced to reactivate the law of the
state of emergency for the first time since the Algerian war in 1955. The French
public learned, at last, that colonial legislation had never been abrogated and
that there has never been a renegotiating of a new social and political project
for postcolonial France. Measures to put off the riots were taken but, crucially,
no serious long-term solutions were envisaged. Two years later, in the fall of
2007, the same *émeutes* surfaced again, mostly in the Parisian region, when two
teenagers from Villiers-le-Bel, riding on a mini-bike, died after they collided
with a police car. Commenting on these events, the French Prime Minister
told Parliament that the clashes were incomprehensible.[2]

While the scale of the 2007 unrest did not compare with the 2005 agitations, it
reinforced the thesis that violence in the French suburbs is not a passing event,
but a polymorphous phenomenon that constitutes the most visible aspect
of the condition of violence in which live the populations of the ghettoized
*cités*.[3] Structural factors – such as the accelerated deterioration of the urban

environment and public services, massive long-term unemployment and ethnic and geographical stigmatization – appear to underlie this phenomenon which, in its diverse manifestations, mirrors the functioning of a political system where the members of one specific category of French society (mainly of Arab and African origins) have found themselves living as refugees in segregated, dilapidated high-rise housing, routinely stopped by the police for identity checks.

The perception among these unemployed, undereducated youths of being stigmatized and abandoned by the very same State that is supposed to protect and defend them has emphasized the need among scholars to examine suburban violence beyond the arguments *of immigration control, delinquency, illegalism* and *public security*. One specific view that needs to be considered first here is the relation between rioting and postcolonial culture. As Rada Iveković has noted, the suburban riots meet the current phenomena in the making of Europe through the refusal to face historic and colonial responsibilities. Whether in the *banlieues*, or in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, or on the shores of the island of Lampedusa, extra-constitutional exceptions are being made on a large scale. The endless repression and stigmatization of those who live in the poor outskirts of Paris cannot be isolated from the policies of *refoulements* (forcing back) and the invisible detention centres for the undocumented, the main purpose of which is the exportation of European borders into neighboring countries, which now function as buffer zones policing for Europe by proxy.[4]

Achille Mbembe draws a similar correlation between state racism at home and French neocolonial policy in African countries. With the complicity of corrupt bourgeoisies and military castes in Africa, there seems to be a near-resurrection of the *Code de l'Indigénat* (Natives' Code) that once governed the subjection of colonial peoples. The 'laws of exception', the development of a 'penal state' and of the quasi-military methods applied by the police and public administration, in those *banlieues* populated by the descendants of the formerly colonized, are methods that reenact the 'race war' and inscribe it within the global context of clashes between the civilizations of the North and the South on the basis of the French colonial tradition whose administrative habits have never been eradicated.[5] Achille Mbembe calls this phenomenon: the geography of infamy.

Such a new experience of borders and identity is, in truth, engaging a subtle mechanism whereby the postcolonial and post-democratic State tends to monopolize legitimate violence through an included exclusion of some of its subjects. One particular elaboration of this new interpretation sees in the rioting the resurgence (in the post-political, post-democratic, postcolonial, post-national age) of the archaic figure of the *bandit*, regarded as characteristic of pre-political times. As defended by Kacem Belhaj, the *banlieue* has become the *ban-lieu*, that is the space that embodies the fundamental structure of the *ban* in all its topological and political dimensions.[6] In the short but interesting

book titled *La psychose française* (French Psychosis), Kacem maintains that to be at the ban 'does not mean to be outside, excluded from the community as it were; it means to be both inside and outside'.[7] As a space where a particular class of French society has found itself literally a-ban-donned, like waste in the outskirts of the city, the *banlieue* has turned into the ultimate ground of the modern pariah.[8]

The metaphor of waste here is significant enough, especially if we remember that the sociology of these difficult neighborhoods, like that of the ghetto, points to the sovereign's desire to portray poor ethnic groups living in the *banlieues* as both contaminating and contaminated. Economic exclusion goes hand in hand here with the social ostracization of particular defamed social categories. The declarations of the former Minister of Interior, who derogatorily referred to the young rioters as *racailles* ('scum' or 'rabble'), suggested that many of the suburbs needed some 'industrial cleaning'.[9] The State representative's urge to 'cleanse' these suburbs not only appeals to the sentiments of the poor whites but points to the extent to which the conduct of the police in the *banlieues* bears a mimetic dimension. As E. Balibar has pointed out, 'police squads act like gangs fighting other gangs in an escalation of virile exhibitionism – the difference being that they are armed, sent by the state into "hostile territory," and that their own disproportionate violence (insults, beatings, shootings, arrests, detentions, threats) is inscribed within a more general process of intimidation, profiling, and harassment of legal and illegal immigrants.'[10]

Through this continuous relationship with a power that has banished and rendered him/her at every instant exposed to an unconditioned threat, the suburban dweller has become, according to Kacem, an updated version of the ancient figure of *homo sacer* who is continuously excluded from the community and who could be killed at any time without legal redress. Drawing on the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, Kacem argues that the structure of the ban means that the sovereign throughout history – even when the sovereign is the 'people' – needs this sort of borderline character, or *homo sacer*, to frame (set up) the order of the State. All this reveals the 'obscure association binding together sovereign and bandit … It is this specter, Derrida would say, that haunts every political-state system, even a democratic one.'[11] Kacem also stresses that the most extreme arrangement of this double structure, binding the sovereign and the *homo sacer*, is Nazism and the concentration camp.[12] This last point leads us to look at the suburban reality from new angles.[13]

## Agamben and the *Homo Sacer*

> The farther we emerge from the inner city, the more political the atmosphere becomes. We reach the docks, the inland harbors, the warehouses, the quarters of poverty, the scattered refuges of wretchedness: the outskirts. Outskirts are the state of emergency of a city.[14]

The repositioning in which the suburb echoes the reality of the camp is a specific application of Agamben's philosophy, to which we now turn. Interrogating the foundations of Western political metaphysics, Agamben starts, in *Homo Sacer*, by making a distinction between bare life (*bios*) and political life (*zoē*).[15] The Greeks, we are told, had no single term to express what we mean by the word 'life'. Instead, they used two distinct terms: *zoē*, which expressed the simple fact of living common to all living beings (animals, men or gods), and *bios*, which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group. Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, in particular, would not have used the term *zoē*, since what was at issue for both thinkers was not simple natural life (*zoē*) but rather a qualified life, a particular way of life (*bios.*) To speak, for example, of the *zoē politikē* of the citizens of Athens would have made no sense. In the classical world, simple natural life is excluded from the *polis* in the strict sense, and remains confined – as merely reproductive life – to the sphere of *oikos*, or home.[16]

But this distinction, Agamben argues, would later disappear, especially at the threshold of the modern era, as stressed by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*, when natural life began to be included in the mechanisms and calculations of State power, that is when *politics* turned to *biopolitics*. Agamben also refers to a later lecture by Foucault at the College de France titled 'Society Must be Defended' (1977), where the French thinker stresses that what followed this shift 'is a kind of bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political techniques. For the first time in history, the possibilities of the social sciences are made known, and at once it becomes possible both to protect life and to authorize a holocaust.'[17] Agamben concludes that in any case the entry of *zoē* into the sphere of the *polis* – the politization of bare life as such – constitutes the decisive event of modernity and signals a radical transformation of the political-philosophical categories of classical thought.[18]

In trying to dig deeper into the nature of sovereignty and the code of political power in Western thought, Agamben then refers to the ancient figure of the *homo sacer* who, in accordance with Roman law, is a person who may be killed and yet not sacrificed. Agamben remarks that under both divine and human law, the human life of *homo sacer* is included in the juridical order solely in the form of an exclusion based on *homo sacer*'s capacity to be killed without legal redress.[19] For the *homo sacer* is excluded from the religious community and from all political life. He cannot participate in the rites of his *gens*, nor can he perform any juridically valid act. His entire existence is reduced to a bare life stripped of every right by virtue of the fact that anyone can kill him without committing homicide. As a consequence, he is in a continuous relationship with the power that banished him precisely insofar as he is at every instant exposed to an unconditioned threat of death. He is pure *zoē*, but his *zoē* is caught in the sovereign ban and must reckon with it at every moment. 'In this sense, no life, as exiles and bandits know well, is more "political" than his.'[20]

This process (of exclusion) constitutes the concealed foundation of sovereignty which comes to fruition in the modern political state via a

process whereby the exception becomes the rule. Drawing on Alain Badiou's topological research, Agamben writes, 'what cannot be included in any way is included in the form of the exception … *The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included.*'[21] In set theory, where a distinction is made between membership and inclusion, a term is included when it is part of a set in the sense that all of its elements are elements of that set (one then says that $b$ is a subset of $a$, and one writes it $a \subset b$ ). But a term may be a member of a set without being included in it (membership is, after all, the primitive notion of set theory, which one writes $b \in a$ ), or conversely, a term may be included in a set without being one of its members.

### Abandonment and the Camp

Just as with the exception that is included only through its exclusion, the subject of the ban is not simply excluded from the realm of the law, set outside and untouched by it, but is given to the law in its withdrawal. Taking up Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of 'abandoned being', Agamben applies the name *ban* (from the old Germanic term that designates both exclusion from the community and the command and insignia of the sovereign) to this potentiality (in the proper sense of the Aristotelian *dynamis*, which is always also *dynamis mē energein*, the potentiality not to pass into actuality) of the law to maintain itself in its own privation, to apply in no longer applying.[22] For, according to Jean-Luc Nancy, the origin of abandon is to put to *bandon*. 'The *bandon* (*bandum*, *band*, *bannen*), is an order, a prescription, a decree, a permission and the power that holds these freely at his disposal. *To abandon* is to remit, entrust, or turn over to such a sovereign power, and to remit, entrust, or turn over to its *ban*, that is, to its proclaiming, to its convening, and to its sentencing. … The law of abandonment requires that the law be applied through its withdrawal. The law of abandonment is the other of the law, the one which makes the law. The abandoned being finds itself forsaken to the point that it finds itself remitted, entrusted, or thrown to this law which makes the law.'[23] Agamben then comments that 'The relation of exception is a relation of ban. He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather *abandoned* by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable.'[24]

Despite the apparent archaic character of the *homo sacer*, Agamben traces the various metamorphoses it has been exposed to in historical terms. During the medieval age, for example, *homo sacer* is manifest in the form of the *wargus*, or the wolf-man.[25] Agamben first cites the research of Rodolphe Jhering who, in *L'esprit du droit romain*, establishes an etymological link between the concepts of bandit (*wargus*), outlaw (*vargr*) and sacred wolf (*vargr y veum*) common to the Anglo-Saxon tongue. He also refers to the work of Wihelm Eduard Wilda who discerns a similar train of concepts within Germanic law,

where peace (*Frieden*) is contrasted with the wrongdoer as 'the man without peace' (*friedlos*), and whom anyone was permitted to kill without committing homicide. Under the legal code of Edward the Confessor (1030-35), the bandit is referred to as the wolf's head (*wulfesheud*), the were-wolf who is banned from the city and condemned to live at the threshold between man and beast, between the city and the forest.[26]

The argument then takes on another resonance. When, in our own age, the exception has become the rule and the unlocalizable has become localized, Agamben warns, the direct outcome is the concentration camp. In this zone of absolute exclusion, first realized under a defined state of siege or emergency, it is martial rather than penal law that is exercised.[27] Agamben cautions that the camp, which he views as the 'paradigm' of modern power, is topologically distinct from the spaces of confinement so eloquently described by Michel Foucault in his books on discipline, madness and the clinic. The camp and not the prison is the space that corresponds to this originary structure of the *nomos.* 'This is shown, among other things, by the fact that while prison law only constitutes a particular sphere of penal law and is not outside the normal order, the juridical constellation that guides the camp is (as we shall see) martial law and the state of the siege. This is why it is not possible to inscribe the analysis of the camp in the trail opened by the works of Foucault, from *Madness and Civilization* to *Discipline and Punish*. As the absolute space of exception, the camp is topologically different from a simple space of confinement.'[28]

If the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception, and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction, then we must admit that we are virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independently of the kinds of crime that are committed.[29] Agamben mentions a few cases of this condition: the stadium in Bari into which the Italian police in 1991 provisionally herded all illegal Albanian immigrants before sending them back to their country, the winter cycle-racing track in which the Vichy authorities gathered the Jews before consigning them to the Germans, the *Konzentrationslager für Ausländer* in CottbusSielow in which the Weimar government gathered Jewish refugees from the East, and finally the *zones d'attente* in French international airports where foreigners asking for refuge status are routinely detained. These spaces should equally be regarded as camps. In all these cases, an apparently innocuous space (for example, the Hôtel Arcades in Roissy) actually delimits a space in which the normal order is de facto suspended and in which whether or not atrocities are committed depends not on law but on the civility and ethical sense of the police who temporarily act as sovereign. The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical rules in a determinate space, but instead contains at its very center a dislocating localization that exceeds it and into which every form of life and every rule can be virtually taken. The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this

structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the *zones d'attente* of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities.[30]

This clearly has implications for a consideration of rights within contemporary politics, though this topic is not something that can be discussed here in any detail. Suffice to say that Agamben rejects recourse to rights as a limitation on the violence of sovereign power. Since the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as an originary political element and as a threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoē* and *bios*, 'every attempt to found political liberties in the rights of the citizen is, therefore, in vain'.[31] If anything characterizes modern democracy, as opposed to classical democracy, it is the fact that modern democracy presents itself as a vindication and liberation of *zoē*, and that it is constantly trying to transform its own bare life into a way of life and to find, so to speak, the *bios* of *zoē*. 'Hence, too, modern democracy's specific aporia: it wants to put the freedom and happiness of men into play in the very place – "bare life"– that marked their subjection. … Modern democracy's decadence and gradual convergence with totalitarian states in post-democratic spectacular societies may well be rooted in this aporia, which makes the beginning of modern democracy and forces it into complicity with its most implacable enemy.'[32]

## The Ban and Resistance

Bearing in mind the above caution, what does all this imply at the level of political changes? The remaking of the ban-lieu in the image of the camp points, according to Kacem, to an old truth, namely that fundamental things in the history of mankind are to be found in the ban. From the ancient *homo sacer* to modern times, the real pioneers of change and the real nemesis of the established order have been those whose rights were revoked.[33]

We encounter here an echo of Agamben's identification of the refugees with the avant-garde. Commenting on Arendt's short but important article titled 'We Refugees' (1943), Agamben has written that Arendt overturned the condition of refugee in order to propose this condition as the paradigm of a new historical consciousness. The refugee who has lost all rights, yet stops wanting to be assimilated at any cost to a new national identity so as to contemplate his condition lucidly, receives, in exchange for certain unpopularity, an inestimable advantage. Quoting Arendt, Agamben stresses that for the refugee, 'history is no longer a closed book, and politics ceases to be the privilege of the Gentiles. He knows that the banishment of the Jewish people in Europe was followed immediately by that of the majority of the European peoples. Refugees expelled from one country to the next represent the avant-garde of their people.'[34]

Agamben then goes on to suggest that our political survival depends on the recognition that we are all, in one way or another, refugees in the sense that the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure of our time and the

only category in which we may see today the forms and limits of a coming political community.[35] Bringing politics face-to-face with its own failures of consciousness and consequence, Agamben frames his analysis in terms of clear contemporary relevance and proposes a politics of gesture, or a politics of means without end. The refugee, accordingly, breaks the bond between the human and the citizen and moves from marginal status to the center of the crisis of the modern nation-state, that is to the sphere of pure means or gestures (those gestures that, remaining nothing more than means, liberate themselves from any relation to ends) as the proper sphere of politics. It is only in the direction of the camp and the figure of the refugee (rather than the nation-state and the figure of the citizen) that we must begin to imagine a community to come. Such a stand alone will make it possible to clear the way for the new politics, which remains largely to be invented.[36]

In a similar vein, Kacem articulates the notion that in paganism and monotheism, for example, the heroic and messianic destiny often overlap with a circumstance of abandonment. The paradigm of monotheistic religions, in particular, is in this sense significant: a people of slaves had successfully invented, out of a historical necessity, an original egalitarian subversion that made their emancipation and departure from Egypt possible. These men of the ban, abandoned by pagan gods, discovered Being itself, that is God, as a faceless and egalitarian deity.[37] Throughout history, this scenario has been repeated: those who live on the margins of society can indeed turn their own exclusion into an affirmation. The intellectuals of the 1968 generation – thinkers Bourdieu, Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault for example – became rivals of the political right because they assigned to the mad and to the delinquent, that is to these 'figures of the outside', a place in history. To the '68 generation, the fate of the pariah throughout history cannot be detached from the fate of the intellectual himself/herself as an excluded figure.[38] To be a pariah, in this sense, is not a hindrance but a mission that begins with the negation of the very logic of exclusion. In the language of Kacem, 'être un paria, ça se mérite' (a pariah is something to be deserved).[39]

**The Inoperative Community**

But is it possible to construct a politics around this reality of creative abandonment? In an interview that appeared in *L'Humanité*, Kacem acknowledged that he hasn't elaborated a clear idea on how to build a politics around the theme of the ban, but he sees a potential in promoting the concept of *désoeuvrement* (or inoperativeness), a concept that has been recently associated with the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy.[40]

The question we must ask now is in what sense this category could be appropriated, if at all, to promote the prospects of a community to come. Let us first recall here that in *La communauté desoeuvrée (The Inoperative Community)*, Jean-Luc Nancy argues for an understanding of community founded not

on the immanence of individuals being-in-common, but on an 'unworking' (*désoeuvrement*) of togetherness brought about by that which presents a limit to community – such as death, work and love.

Although the origins of the current debate on the notion of community are embedded in a long philosophical tradition, one can identify the starting point for an updated discussion in this complex text where Nancy relies on Maurice Blanchot's central notion of *désouvrement* (inoperativeness) in order to reinterpret the oeuvre of Georges Bataille's treatment of this same question.[41] According to Nancy, the traditional concept of community rests on an assumption of commonality (in race, religion, outlook, goal or normative framework) in which individuals are sublated and fused into an organic whole, that is into a unified political body founded on consensus and commonality. This notion of (mythic) community can be exemplified in all kinds of ways and by all kinds of paradigms, including the natural family, the Athenian city, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, corporations, communes or brotherhoods. What revolves around these conceptions is always a notion of a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious bonds and in which, above all, it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals and its symbols, the representation of its own immanent unity, intimacy and autonomy.[42] The infrangible bonds of this original, mythic community have vanished, however, and there has surfaced a nostalgia and a retrospective consciousness, the identity of which is based upon no more than false premises. Nancy argues that this lost community never existed and, therefore, the nostalgia for its loss must be treated as no more than mere nostalgia.[43]

Within the frame of this type of immanent conception of community, Nancy argues, the individual is sublated through the intertwined ideals of death and work. Under these two promises, generations of citizens and militants, of workers and servants of the State have imagined their death reabsorbed or sublated in a community yet to come. But by now we have nothing more than the bitter consciousness of the increasing remoteness of such a community, be it the people, the nation or the society of producers. In truth, Nancy argues, death is not and cannot be sublated.[44] For death irremediably exceeds the resources of a metaphysics of the subject. This death, upon which community is calibrated, does not operate the dead being's passage into some communal intimacy, nor does community for its part, operate the transfiguration of its dead into some substance or subject – be this homeland, native soil or blood, nation, a delivered or fulfilled humanity, absolute phalanstery, family or mystical body. Death is an experience that a collectivity cannot make its work or its property, in the sense of something that would find its meaning in a value or cause transcending the individual. A society may well use it (in the celebrations of heroes or sacrificial victims), but there is a point at which death exposes a radical meaninglessness that cannot be subsumed. And when death presents itself as *not ours*, the very impossibility of representing its meaning suspends or breaches the possibility of self-presentation and exposes us to our finitude. Nancy argues with Bataille (and as a *tragic* intuition this is profoundly

Nietzschean too) that 'this exposure is also an opening to community: outside ourselves, we first encounter the other'.[45]

To conceive an alternative conception of community, Nancy turns to Bataille's notion of community as a kind of withdrawal from work and production, where the modern experience of community is neither a work to be produced nor a lost communion, but rather a spacing of the experience of the outside-itself.[46] In Bataille, according to Nancy, we encounter an opening of the thought of community through a resistance to the unitary conception of community which underpins fascism and, disturbingly enough, which continues to dominate the thought of community (even in some of the most 'democratic' or 'progressive' paradigms of community). Along these lines, Nancy proposes a new conception of community based not on the immanence of individuals being-in-common, but on an 'unworking' (*désoeuvrement*) of togetherness. Community should be the existence of a 'being-in-common', where the concept of 'common' does not denote a uniform substance that binds separate individuals but rather a 'shared experience'. In this shared experience of finitude there is no communion, or unity, but an alterity. Community, for Nancy, is this shared and constant exposure to finitude, this simple mode of exposition in common, this being-in-common. Thus the classical 'individual' is replaced with a singular being. This singular being is not given meaning by the community, or by its own subjectivity, but is instead the residue of the experience of the dissolution of community. As an inclination and as an inkling from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other, community is the clinamen of the individual.[47]

Sharing comes down to the fact that community reveals (to the individual) existence outside the individual self, but it is an existence outside the schemes of reinvesting this truth in or by community. Under this formulation, finitude is not sublated. It is the community of finite beings, and as such it is itself a finite community. Community means, consequently, that there is no singular being without another singular being, and that there is, therefore, 'what might be called, in a rather inappropriate idiom, an originary or ontological "sociality" that in its principle extends far beyond the simple theme of man as a social being (the *zoon politikon* is secondary to this community.)'[48] In order to designate this singular mode of appearing and this specific phenomenality, we would need to be able to say that finitude *co-appears* or *compears* (*com-paraît.*) Finitude always presents itself in being-in-common, and as this being itself, and it always presents itself at a hearing and before the judgment. Communication consists before all else in this sharing and in this compearance (*com-parution*) of finitude.[49]

This is why, according to Nancy, community cannot arise from the domain of *work*. Relying on Blanchot's notion of 'unworking', he argues that community cannot be produced or is producible (in sites, persons, buildings, discourses, institutions, symbols: in short, in subjects). Products derived from operations of this type, notwithstanding their size and significance, 'have no more communitarian existence than the plaster busts

of Marianne'.[50] Community necessarily takes place in 'unworking', that is in that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension.[51]

This unworking of community also takes place around what Bataille once called the 'sacred'. But Nancy would not unconditionally follow Bataille in equating the sacred with the 'unleashing of passions'. If the inoperative community is to be located in the neighborhood of the sacred, it is only inasmuch as the 'unleashing of passions' is not the free doing of a subjectivity and freedom is not self-sufficiency.[52] What is communicated and what is unleashed should be only the passion of singularity as such and no more. The presence of the other does not constitute a boundary that would be limited by the unleashing of my passions. On the contrary, Nancy stresses, only the exposition to the other unleashes my passions. Whereas the individual can know another individual, juxtaposed to him both as identical to him and as a thing – as the identity of a thing – the singular being does not know, but rather experiences his *like* (*son semblable*). This is passion.[53]

In a similar fashion, always proceeding in this quasi-negative mode of defining community, Nancy tries to dissociate love from any experience of communion. He shows that within the limits of Bataille's thesis of community as the community of lovers, love is presented in many respects as communion, where the lovers themselves represent the despair of the community and of the political. Nancy stresses that love does not expose and capture the entire community, and that lovers neither form a society, nor its negative, nor its assumption. Love does not in particular offer a refuge or substitute for lost community but an ecstasy of the instant. Love does not produce a union (it is NOTHING) but this nothing itself is also, in its consummation, a communion.[54] Lovers, in their communal aspect and intimacy, expose above all the unworking of the community which already shares their intimacy. For the community, lovers are on the limit, they are inside and outside, and at this limit they have no meaning without the community. Reciprocally, it is the community that presents to them, in their very love, their singularities, their births and their deaths.[55]

This way of defining the community undermines any practical political appropriation of Nancy's thought. As Christopher Fynsk has noted in his foreword to *The Inoperative Community*, it is difficult to define, for example, how one might move from this definition of a nonorganic, differential articulation of social existence to any currently existing politics. And this may easily turn into a frustrating exercise. 'There is a point at which this move becomes properly unthinkable in the terms of any traditional conception of the relation between theory and practice: one cannot work to institute or realize this thought of community.'[56]

But how do Agamben and Kacem read all this? The first (Agamben) understands *désoeuvrement* or inoperativeness as the figure of the fullness of man at the end of history (a theme that first appeared in Kojève's review

of Queneau and was later taken up by Blanchot, and eventually by Nancy). Agamben notes in this respect that everything depends on what is meant by 'inoperativeness'. It can be neither the simple absence of work (as in Bataille) nor a sovereign and useless form of negativity. The only coherent way to understand inoperativeness is to think of it as a generic mode of potentiality that is not exhausted (like an individual action or collective action understood as the sum of individual actions).[57] And thus, from this point of view, community becomes an open project.

It is the actualization of this potentiality that the rioting pariah seeks to undertake. This is Kacem's reading, based on the realization that despite the fact that the spontaneous nature of the riots and the self-generated rebellion have no clear political structuring, they still point, potentially at least, toward a community to come.[58] One must, therefore, think of a strategy that provides suburban youngsters with the theoretical and political means needed to develop a clear vision of their aspirations (the conviction being that beyond its apparent nihilism, rioting could, in the long term, trigger the emergence of a first-rank political actor). To that end, the necessary work has to be done at the level of promoting a process of education among the marginalized suburban dwellers, a process that should give these populations the political consciousness needed for the possibility of a collective political action.

## Rancière and 'Those Who Have no Part'

Insofar as suburban rioting involves a wrong and an incompatibility, it necessarily seeks a new distribution of social bodies and roles based on the fundamental notion of equality. In this way, the consciousness and constitution of specific (excluded) subjects that take the wrong themselves, give it shape, formulate new forms and names for it, and handle its processing in a specific montage of proofs, giving rise to the possibility of the political itself. This reading coincides with Rancière's political thought, as expounded in *Dis-agreement*, to which we now turn.[59]

In Rancière's work, there is a link between equality and politics. As defined at the beginning of *Dis-agreement*, politics is the activity which turns on equality as its principle. Politics thus begins with a major wrong, which is not some flaw calling for reparation, but 'the introduction of an incommensurable at the heart of the distribution of speaking bodies'.[60] And for political philosophy to exist, it must arise from a count of community parts, which is always a false, count, a double count, a miscount.[61]

But politics is not the police. The police is essentially the law, and not the petty police, the truncheon blows of the forces of law and order and the inquisitions of the secret police. 'The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task;

it is an order of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise. … Policing is not so much the 'disciplining' of bodies as a rule governing their appearing, a configuration of *occupations* and the properties of the spaces where these occupations are distributed'.[62] Whereas police is the law that defines the allocation of ways of doing and of being, politics is reserved for an extremely determined activity opposite to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration – that of the part of those who have no part. 'This break is manifest in a series of actions that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined. Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise.'[63] Politics occurs when there is a place and a way for two heterogeneous processes to meet. The first is the police process as defined earlier. The second is the process of equality. 'For the moment let's agree that this term means the open set of practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality.'[64]

This formulation leads to a characterization of the political itself. What makes a given action political is not its object or the place where it is carried out, but solely its form, the form in which substantiation of equality is written in the setting up of a dispute, of a community existing uniquely through being divided. 'For a thing to be political, it must give rise to a meeting of police logic and egalitarian logic that is never set up in advance. … So nothing is political in itself. But anything may become political if it gives rise to a meeting of these two logics. The same thing – an election, a strike, a demonstration – can give rise to politics or not give rise to politics. A strike is not political when it calls for reforms rather than a better deal or when it attacks the relationships of authority rather than the inadequacy of wages.'[65] In this sense, politics occurs through specific subjects or mechanism of subjectification. By *subjectification*, Rancière understands 'the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the filed of experience. Descartes's *ego sum, ego existo* is the prototype of such indissoluble subjects of a series of operations implying the production of a new field of experience.'[66] Any subjectification is a disidentification, that is a removal from the naturalness of a place, the 'opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part'.[67] Politics in general is made up of such *miscounts*; it is the work of classes that are not classes that, in the particular name of a specific part or of

the whole of the community (the poor, the proletariat, the people), inscribe the wrong that separates and reunites two heterogonous logics of community.

Finally, wrong is simply the mode of subjectifcation in which the assertion of equality takes its political shape. Politics occurs by reason of a single universal that takes the specific shape of a wrong. Wrong institutes a singular universal, a polemical universal, by tying the presentation of equity, as the part of those who have no part, to the conflict between parts of society'.[68] 'The persistence of the wrong is infinite because verification of equality and the resistance of any police order to such verification is a matter of principle. But though the wrong cannot be regulated, this does not mean that it cannot be processed. It is not the same as inexpiable war or irredeemable debt. Political wrong cannot be settled – through the objectivity of the lawsuit as a compromise between the parties. But it can be processed – through the mechanisms of subjectification that give it substance as an alterable relationship between the parties, indeed as a shift in the playing field.'[69]

The political position of the suburban pariah could be read from this new angle, whereby incompatibility is linked to a mechanism of shifting one's position. What is incompatible could be processed, but not necessarily through a dialogue involving respective interests as well as any reciprocity of rights and duties; 'it passes through the constitution of specific subjects that take the wrong themselves, give it shape, invent new forms and names for it, and conduct its processing in a specific montage of proofs'.[70] This is the ultimate meaning of how politics could occur by reason of a single universal that takes the specific shape of a wrong.

### Rap, Resistance and Violence

> One of the striking things about the scenes from France is how thoroughly the rioters have assimilated hip-hop and rap culture.[71]

If political subjectivity implies the development of an ability to produce polemical scenes that bring out the contradiction between the logics of existence and nonexistence, then suburban consciousness is political at the outset. The migration of positions that occurs by reason of a single universal that takes the shape of a wrong is the main maneuvering that characterizes the experience violent manifestations of the ban.

Within the experience of the ban, both in its violent and nonviolent manifestations, the pariah is often depicted by official media as violent, vandalizing property, burning cars and scorching schools. In an immediate sense, this reading fails to acknowledge that the aggressiveness associated with the suburban rioter should also be seen as a natural reproduction of a previous wrong, an aggression that was committed by the sovereign power itself. The ban is in a way a replica of empirical life itself, from which it is always different but never entirely detached. In this sense, violence reveals itself as a migrant phenomenon.

The migration of violence from sovereign to pariah, and the reverse, is clear in the appropriation of the other's main mode of expression. The pariah, as a destructive demonstrator who willingly identifies with the capitalist bandit, likes both the destruction and the appropriation of capitalist symbols, and knows well that goods cannot be accessed by legal means (including symbols that are present in his neighborhood.) The suburban pariah, like the hero in Brian de Palma's *Scarface* takes a shortcut to capitalist affirmation by trying to violate the established rules of ownership. But this is not a matter of psychology; rather, it is a consequence of the mercantile form of social organization which has reached its climax in capitalism. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the realm of the bandit, as represented in many rap songs and movies for example, can meaningfully become a field where capitalist profits are cultivated and where dissidence can turn into a form of profitable affirmation. It is no secret that hip-hop culture has been attracting the youngest members in almost every society, including the well-to-do youngsters who appropriate the rappers' dress code: old baggy jeans, oversize sunglasses, Adidas sweaters, classic basketball jersey, cool hat and bandana (the bandana on the head and the hat over the top of it), a gold or platinum chain, some rings or caps for the teeth, some appropriate shoes, such as: Nike, Reebok, Adidas or Timberland. Rap has transformed fashion with its sneakers, boots, loose-fitting clothes and 'whacked' colors and designs in the same way the 'writing' (graffiti) of hip-hop practitioners has sparked a renewed interest in street art.

The mechanism of appropriating and exporting aggressiveness is, of course, complex in more than one way. What is remarkable in the unfolding of violence in the *banlieues* is a paradoxical blend of contradictory manifestations embodying opposite notions. As carefully noted by Balibar, this violence often appears in part as *self-destructive*, especially if we note that rioters tend to burn 'their' own cars, 'their' parents' cars, 'their' schools, 'their' sports facilities, and 'their' means of transportation.[72] The notions of exclusion and despair are here mixed with those of nihilism and depersonalization. The object of destruction is in large part a 'thing' from which the young rioters are contradictorily *excluded* as non-citizens. This 'thing', to which the rioters only have limited and illegitimate access, is part of *themselves*; it constitutes in a way one dimension of their identity. Rather than being a pursuit of nothingness or the dissolution of any political objective that can be represented or expressed in a 'rational' way, the riots appear as a form of violence *in search of* targets and adversaries. On the basis of this deep ambivalence, Balibar argues that other telling aspects of the violence of November 2005 could be highlighted, such as its relatively narrow *limits*. Compared to other, often invoked, historical episodes (the Brixton riots in London in 1981 and above all the riots in Watts and South Central Los Angeles in 1965 and 1992), and contrary to what television coverage suggested, the *highly spectacular* violence of 2005 remained relatively limited in terms of its destruction and victims. There were only three dead (including the two youths whose indirect murder by the police

lit the powder), but very few attacks on persons. What was targeted were consumer items and symbolic places. This spectacular character, however, was in no way marginal, as it underlies the advent of a new age in which the means of mass communication acquire the role of *passive organizers* of social movements. Balibar here notes that, very shortly after the first episodes, a 'national competition' arose between *cités*, towns and regions to appear on French and even international television with the most spectacular scenes of 'civil war'. It is very hard to say 'who is using whom', but what should be taken from this 'virtual violence' is that it *transforms* real, endemic social violence, to which it responds, *into spectacle*, thereby at once making it *visible* in its intensity.[73]

This leads us to the next point. As a spectacle, rioting does not seem to constitute the only form of visible resistance in the *banlieues*, or, more precisely, the *banlieue* creates other forms of spectacular struggle against sovereign violence than pure rioting. One of the areas where the ban has secreted these other forms of resistance is militant feminism. When the movement known as 'Ni putes ni soumises' ('Neither whores, nor doormats') started in 2002, the demands of the demonstrators were both general and specific. The general demands included the usual call to improve the situation inside the ghettoized *cités*. The specific demands had to do with women's struggle to put an end to bullying, gang rapes and humiliations inside the *banlieues* themselves. Within this context of racial and cultural tensions, the 'other' is not only the sovereign, but also the 'brother,' the 'father', and the 'community.'[74]

The other area where the ban has engendered alternative forms of resistance is rap music. In France, a country second only to the America in the consumption and production of rap songs, the type of rap music associated with the *banlieues* is often seen as an expression of a new form of life to come, that is as the ground of a coming politics over and against the nexus of sovereign violence.[75] As an expression of this future life, rap music has imposed itself as a subversive and pertinent medium to disseminate and voice suburban resistance, despite the controversial nature of its aggressive lyrics and the 'bad attitudes' of its actors. By refusing to play by the rules of the sovereign culture, rap necessarily has put itself in a fragile and defensive position and is constantly discredited on the grounds of sexism, misogyny, glamorizing violence, materialism and associations with criminality, which explains the numerous lawsuits, parliamentary condemnations and public condemnations of rap and rappers that took place.

Commenting on the relation between rap music and the 2005 riots, Kacem weighs in against the tendency to devalue the significance of suburban expressions, or to speak of them with depreciatory reserve.[76] He notes that during the 2005 events, a respectable intellectual initiated a public debate in response to some rap lyrics that spoke derogatively about France and the police. At the end of the debate, the same intellectual went so far as to claim that freedom of speech should be restricted. Two days later, a deputy resumed the same line of argumentation in Parliament, arguing that rap lyrics

were both scandalous and influential in encouraging the rioters.[77] In reacting to this thesis, Kacem has used the term *psychosis* to depict the inability of some public figures to distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary. The tendency to draw a parallel between urban rap and rioting, and the effort to picture this comparison alongside other historic associations between words and aggression, is judged by Kacem to be purely grotesque.[78]

Against parliamentary accusations, rap artists and their defenders articulate the view that their music congruously represents both a harsh reality, and an attempt to provide a comfort that is lacking in the *banlieues*.[79] Rap is here judged in a more positive sense, as a display of cultural values, a vehicle for self-expression, an educational tool, a vehicle for social control (within the hip-hop community) and a political forum.[80] Rap artists deny that the primary intention of their lyrics is to inculcate violence in their listeners, although they acknowledge that rap remains a reflection of the (violent) economic and social reality of the suburbs where an alienated underclass has been, to quote French rapper Mino, 'Knocked out by the welfare check, sitting on a bench, paid to do nothing.'[81] What constitutes the abandonment of the suburban dweller according to rap artists is not an irrational tendency toward delinquency, but a violent reality imposed on the life of suburbia by objective forces, resulting in hunger, fear and suffering. In one of Marseille-based IAM's songs 'Demain, c'est loin' (Tomorrow, is Far) the lyrics highlight this resentment in a more detailed way:

> Ink flows, blood is spilled, and the blotting paper absorbs. Absorbs the emotion, a bag of images inside my memory. I talk about the way my relatives live and about what I see. Guys seized by despair heading to the dérive. Here kids dream of a Golf GTI, women, and a Tacchini jogging suit. I am like *Scarface* who, at the end, lost his life. Thank God I'm still alive; wicked I'm no more…The end and hunger justify the means. Four to five bad hits, enough for a day or two. Then we'll take it from there. In the shadow of danger we walk from eve to dawn … a rag in the corner, a knife in the hand. Big time bandit. Evade, evade, imagination, then we all fade away. Here all is gray: walls, minds, rats and the night. We want to escape from this prison. A needle shot, then off we go, into action we pass. In the hood, oriental clichés and spicy food. … Beautiful tree names are given to buildings, in this forest of concrete layers. No entertainment. A need for some action. Continuous laughter, impromptu arrests, corrupt mayors.[82]

## Epilogue

If the consciousness and actions of the suburban pariah should bring effective reactions, not just mere visible forms of political violence, some precise guidelines are needed to actualize this potential and to make it move toward the possibility of an effective political finality. To address such a scenario, it is necessary to highlight an aporia: the capacity to transform the sense conferred on the rioting class by the dominant system is resisted by this same system – so

much so that the fate of suburban resistance seems to endlessly dwell outside the bounds of politics itself, endlessly remaining politically unrecognized.

Notwithstanding the objections of immanence highlighted earlier, and the consequent reservations regarding the definitions of the community-to-come and the limits of an inoperative community, the main question one has to perhaps address is the nature of the political conditions under which an excluded community could step beyond stigmatization, and the reality of its own exclusion, in order to carve out a place for itself within the political spectrum, that is to be recognized not as a threatening and superfluous phenomenon but as a legitimate form of refusal. Much will depend on how this refusal is to be appropriated (or not), of course, but in the absence of political representation, the articulation with other rights, claims or protests against injustice could hardly become constitutive of a possible citizenship within a democratic framework.

The interest in the topics of homelessness, shanty towns, *bidonvilles*, *banlieues* and paperless migrants is dwindling these days, and it is even taken for granted that all the talk about these topics is somehow over. There is also a trend in France, and perhaps everywhere in Europe, to consider any kind of workers/immigrants/suburban protest, or any category of rioting and gathering, as simply a sign of a disease that nobody wishes to contract. These are all aspects depicting the suspension of the political, and of the reduction of the state to a mere police agent servicing the consensually established needs of the market forces. And so, one may say that since the mechanism of political subjectification doesn't seem to be presently favorably engaged, at least in France, the fate of urban resistance is to keep seeking a new distribution of social bodies and roles based on the fundamental notion of equality. Because politics implies a major wrong, as Rancière has argued, and because this wrong is infinite and cannot be regulated, the persistence of the belief into a community to come could eventually turn into a perpetual, formal process of shifting one's position in the playing field. What is left to operate here is a series of interminable actions aimed at reconfiguring the space where the parties that have previously been excluded can be defined and counted. The concept of the (suburban) community to come can be debated only once the possibility of this reconfiguration is revealed to be feasible.

This reconfiguring does not seem to apply to architecture in the same terms, however. Because of its inherent contingency, architecture seems to always come too late to play any defiant role. In lines with Hegel's famous observation that the owl of Minerva takes flight only at dusk, one is led to repeat one more time that the political remains a perquisite for any respective reshaping of the spatial realm. The empirical requirement that underlies the possibility of the structuring of space aborts, at the outset, the possibility for architecture to turn into an effective expression of refusal. As a consequence, the extent to which any reflection on a ban-lieue architecture could be meaningfully initiated, especially if one wishes to go beyond both the sheer analyzing of the spatially

existent and the naïve glorification of architectural fantasizing, will mainly depend on the outcomes of the political articulation assumed above.

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## Notes

1    Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, 1998): pp. 181-182.

2    Elaine Sciolino, 'In French Suburbs, Same Rage, but New Tactics,' in *New York Times* [Online, 28 November 2007]. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/28/world/europe/28france.html [accessed: 17 October, 2010].

3    Etienne Balibar, 'Uprisings in the Banlieues', in *Constellations* 14 (1), (2007): pp. 47-71.

4    Rada Iveković, 'French Suburbia: the Return of the Political Unrecognized,' *Women's World* (Online 2005). Available at: http://www.wworld.org/crisis/crisis.asp?ID=512 [accessed: 17 October 2010].

5    Achille Mbembe, 'La république et sa bête: à propos des émeutes dans les banlieues de France', *Multitudes* [Online 2005]. Available at: http://multitudes.samizdat.net/La-republique-et-sa-bete [accessed: 17 October, 2010]. On the massive exclusion of homeless people from participating in the democratic life of States, the expulsion and deportation of so many exiled, country-less and immigrants outside the so-called national territory thus announce a new experience of frontiers and identity, at the national as well as the civil level, see also Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Paris, 1993).

6    See Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française: Les banlieues: le ban de la République* (Paris, 2006). Also see the interview with Belhaj by Rosa Moussaoui, 'Des banlieues émergera une figure politique', in *L'Humanité* [Online, 8 June 2006]. Available at: http://www.wmaker.net/droledecoco/Les-banlieux-sont-le-sel-de-la-colere_a17.html. [Accessed 17 October 2010.] Balibar notes that the etymological origin of *banlieue* in *ban-lieu* – place of the ban – is substantiated by Jean-Marc Stébé in *La crise des banlieues* (Paris, 1999). See Etienne Balibar, 'Uprisings in the Banlieues', in *Constellations* 14 (1), (2007): pp. 47-71.

7    'Être «au ban», ca ne veut pas dire être dehors, exclu de la communauté. … Ça signifie: être à la fois à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur. Comme le dit une expression consacrée des banlieues, «on est enfermés dehors.»' *La psychose française*, pp.17-18. To depict the gruesome reality of these *quartiers sensibles* (difficult neighborhoods), Kacem compares the suburban rioters, in the night of the smoke bombs, to dead creatures coming back to life from their tombs to terrorize the city that has banned them (think of Michael Jackson's video clip 'Thriller'.) While being alive, the angry rioters were in fact 'already dead.' *La psychose française*, pp. 22-23.

8    Belhaj Kacem suggests a parallel concept to describe these violent uprisings: *désœuvrement*, standing for inoccupation/inoperativeness and depicting the idle immigrant as an orphaned, unemployed subject of the political project. See *La psychose française*, p. 26. Also, see the interview with Belhaj titled, 'Des banlieues émergera une figure politique majeure', by Rosa Moussaoui. We'll come back to this point later.

9    See, for example, Sciolino, 'In French Suburbs, Same Rage, but New Tactics'.

10   Balibar, 'Uprisings in the Banlieues', p. 50.

11   Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, 'On Giorgio Agamben's Profanations', *Lacanian Ink* 27 (2006): p. 102.

12  Belhaj Kacem, 'On Giorgio Agamben's Profanations', pp. 98-99.

13  It is worth stressing at this point that Kacem's argument in La *psychose française* is here reconstructed in a form that may initially seem at odds with the fragmented and incomplete nature of his work. For one of the hurdles that Kacem's work presents for clear interpretation lies in the fragmentary and brief style, which means that its reduction to a summary is a particularly demanding assignment that can too easily give the impression of a greater consistency than there is in the original work. And yet, while Kacem's work is interwoven in fragments, there is nevertheless an intrinsic coherence of argumentation, and it is this aspect that we are stressing here. Hence, the reconstruction of Kacem's argument does not attempt to either replicate or to simply obscure his stylistics but instead attends to the rigorous conceptuality that gives such a style its critical theoretical force. In doing so, a reliance on other sources on which Kacem bases his argument (Agambem, Jean-Luc Nancy, Badiou, Freud) will be undertaken to complement the often dense and quick claims made in the *La psychose française*.

14  Walter Benjamin, 'Marseille', in *Reflections* (New York, 1986): p. 135.

15  Citing Aristotle (*Politics*: 1278b, 23-31), Agamben writes: 'This [life according to the good] is the greatest end both in common for all men and for each man separately. But men also come together and maintain the political community in view of simple living, because there is probably some kind of good in the mere fact of living itself [*kata to zēn auto monon*]. If there is no great difficulty as to the way of life [*kata ton bion*], clearly men will tolerate much suffering and hold on to life [*zoē*] as if it were a kind of serenity [*euēmaneria*, beautiful day] and a natural sweetness.' See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 2.

16  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 1-2.

17  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 3.

18  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 1-5. Also, see J. Juniper, 'Homo Sacer and Biopower: Defending Foucault against Agamben's "Oscillating" Critique' [Online, 2006]. [Availabale at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Schools/Economics%20 Politics%20and%20Tourism/APSA%202006/POLSOCTHEORY/Juniper,%20 James%20(Agamben).pdf] [accessed: 29 October, 2010].

19  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8.

20  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 183-184.

21  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 24-25.

22  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 28.

23  Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'impératif catégorique* (Paris, 1983): p. 149. ['L'origine de l'"abandon" c'est la mise à *bandon*. Le bandon (*bandum, band, bannen*), c'est l'ordre, la prescription, le décret, la permission, et le pouvoir qui en détient la libre disposition. *Abandonner*, c'est remettre, confier ou livrer à un tel pouvoir souverain, et remettre, confier ou livrer à son *ban*, c'est-à-dire à sa proclamation, à sa convocation et à sa sentence. … La loi de l'abandon veut que la loi s'applique en se retirant. La loi de l'abandon est l'autre de la loi, qui fait la loi. L'être abandonné se trouve délaissé dans la mesure où il se trouve remis, confié ou jeté à cette loi qui fait la loi.']

24  Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 28.

25    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 104.

26    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 105. Instancing the political thinking of Hobbes, Agamben also argues that the state of nature effectively survives in the violence of the sovereign. See Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 35.

27    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 20.

28    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 20.

29    The theoretical point of inspiration for this view comes from the eighth fragment of Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, where he writes that: 'The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism.' Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York, 1969): p. 257.

30    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 174-175. On this point see also Achille Mbembe, 'La république et sa bête: à propos des émeutes dans les banlieues de France', *Multitudes* [Online, 2005]. Available at: http://multitudes.samizdat.net/La-republique-et-sa-bete [accessed: 17 October 2010].

31    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 181.

32    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 9-10.

33    Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française*, pp. 16-22.

34    Giorgio Agamben, 'We Refugees', in *Symposium* 49 (2), 1995: pp. 114-120. Available at: http://www.egs.edu/faculty/agamben/agamben-we-refugees.html [accessed: 29 October 2010].

35    Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis, 2000).

36    Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 10-11

37    See Kacem's discussion of Freud's Moses and Monotheism, in Kacem Belhaj, 'On Giorgio Agamben's Profanations', pp. 108-110.

38    Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française*, p. 19.

39    Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française*, pp. 18-19.

40    Rosa Moussaoui, 'Des banlieues émergera une figure politique', in *L'Humanité*, 2006 [Online, 8 June 2006]. Available at: http://www.wmaker.net/droledecoco/Les-banlieux-sont-le-sel-de-la-colere_a17.html [accessed 17 October, 2010].

41    Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (New York, 1998).

42    Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis, 1991): p. 9.

43    Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 10.

44    Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 13.

45    Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xvi.

46   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 19. While Bataille does not reduce community to a work to be produced, he also resists the idea of the 'labor of the negative,' which is at work in Hegel, Marx and Kojève.

47   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 3-4.

48   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 28.

49   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 28-29.

50   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 31.

51   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 31.

52   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 32.

53   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 32-33.

54   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 36-37.

55   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 40.

56   Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, pp. x-xi. The impossibility of immediately translating this thought into a political program does not entail political paralysis. On the contrary, the experience of the political, as Nancy defines it, *demands* political response – both because it provides a sharp sense of the abstraction of the reigning political ideologies and because it entails the experience of something like an imperative**.**

57   Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 61-62.

58   On the spontaneous character of the 2005 riots in France, see also: Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The French Riots: Rebellion of the Underclass' [Online, 2005]. Available at: http://www.binghamton.edu/fbc/174en.htm [accessed: 29 October, 2010 .] Also, see Iveković, 'French Suburbia: The Return of the Political Unrecognized', in *Women's World* [Online, 2005]. Available at: http://www. wworld.org/crisis/crisis.asp?ID=512 [accessed: 17 October 2010].

59   Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis, 1999).

60   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 19.

61   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 6.

62   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, pp. 28-29.

63   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, pp. 29-30.

64   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 30.

65   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 32.

66   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 35.

67   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, pp. 35-36.

68   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 39.

69   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, p. 39.

70   Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, pp. 39-40.

71   David Brooks, 'Gangsta, in French', in *New York Times* (10 November 2005).

72   Balibar, 'Uprisings in the Banlieues', pp. 50-51.

73   Balibar, 'Uprisings in the Banlieues', pp. 51-52.

74   See the following three references: (1) Iveković, ' French Suburbia 2005'; (2)
     Amara Fadela and Sylvia Zappi, *Breaking the Silence: French Women's Voices
     from the Ghetto* (Berkeley, 2006); and (3) Houria Bouteldja, 'De la cérémonie
     du dévoilement à Alger (1958) à Ni Putes Ni Soumises: l'instrumentalisation
     coloniale et néo-coloniale de la cause des femmes' [Online, 2007]. Available at:
     http://lmsi.net/De-la-ceremonie-du-devoilement-a [accessed: 29 October 2010].
     Bouteldja depicts the ban on the veil and the appropriation of the feminist
     movement 'Ni putes ni soumises' as nothing but a continuum which constitutes
     a specific type of racial segregation reminiscent of the former colonial order.
     Another point. When demonstrations started to gain some sympathy from
     the general public throughout France, from the press and even the National
     Assembly, criticism of the movement started to materialize. The main accusation
     being that the 'Ni putes ni soumises' movement was appropriated and
     recuperated by the political parties, on both sides, left and right. The ultimate
     decision of the president of 'Ni putes ni soumises' to become a Secretary of State
     in the current government had reinforced this criticism.

75   Most French hip-hop artists come from poor urban areas outside of Paris known
     as the *banlieues* (including Lunatic, Mafia K1 Fry, La Brigade, Secteur Ä), Lyon,
     Lille, Le Havre (La Boussole), Strasbourg, Toulouse (KDD) or Marseille (IAM,
     Fonky Family, Psy 4 De La Rime, 3ème Oeil, and others). Many French rappers
     are products of the HLM (habitation à loyer modéré) and use their tough
     upbringing.

76   Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française*, pp. 14-15.

77   Refer for example to NTM's impressive song 'What Are We Waiting for?'
     ('Qu'est ce qu'on attend'). The lyrics include 'What are we waiting for … to set
     everything on fire'. Joey Starr finishes the song with his lion-like voice delivering
     the now famous line 'Dorénavant la rue ne pardonne plus', meaning 'from now
     on the street doesn't want to forgive anymore'. This song was seen by some
     politicians as the one that unleashed the 2005 riots.

78   Belhaj Kacem, *La psychose française*, pp. 14-15. Compare this also to the
     prosecution of rap musicians throughout the US congressional hearings of 1994,
     entitled *Shaping Our Responses to Violent and Demeaning Imagery in Popular Music*.
     Testimony was heard from members of Congress, members of the recording
     industry, public health professionals and various advocate groups.

79   See Bourdieu's link between taste and social classes, where aesthetic judgments
     are seen as connected to positions in the social sphere. Some examples of
     his empirical results include: (1) showing that despite the apparent freedom
     of choice in the arts, people's artistic preferences (e.g. classical music, rock,
     traditional music) strongly correlate with their social position; (2) showing that
     subtleties of language such as accent, grammar, spelling and style – all part
     of cultural capital – are a major factor in social mobility (e.g. getting a higher-
     paid, higher-status job). See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the
     Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).

80   For an illuminating analysis of the criticism cited against rap music, see for
     example, Cheryl L. Keyes, *Rap Music and Street Consciousness* (Urbana, 2002).

81  Sylvia Poggioli, 'French Rap Musicians Blamed for Violence' [Online, 2005]. Available at: http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5052650 [accessed: 29 October 2010].

82  See the IAM lyrics 'Tomorrow, is Far' ('Demain, c'est loin') [Online]. Available at: http://www.frmusique.ru/texts/i/iam/demaincestloin.htm [accessed: 29 October 2010].

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# The Architecture of Money: Jameson, Abstraction and Form

*David Cunningham*

In the chapter 'The Case for Georg Lukács' included in the 1971 book *Marxism and Form*, Fredric Jameson suggests that it is the 'conceptual opposition' between 'the concrete and the abstract' which frames the entirety of Lukács's 'examination of literature'.[1] If one is tempted to say that much the same conceptual opposition has long shaped the work of Jameson himself, it is not least because, for all the promiscuous intellectual debts to the likes of Adorno, Althusser, Lefebvre, Baudrillard and (before all the others) Sartre, it is still perhaps Lukács who has most consistently provided a kind of theoretical lodestar for all of Jameson's subsequent development as a Marxist intellectual. This is most obvious (sometimes explicitly so) in the fact that the notion with which Jameson's work has been most persistently associated since the early 1980s, and to which indeed its ultimate fate has apparently been irrevocably yoked – that of 'postmodernism' – is evidently intended, in part, as an addition, a third historical or 'generic-periodizing' term, to Lukács's own division of realism and modernism (while reversing, up to a point, Lukács's unremittingly negative judgement on the latter, partially substituted instead for Adorno's more nuanced account).[2] But it also marks a debt to the special centrality that an account of the *commodity* has to Lukács's thought among early twentieth-century Marxist thinkers: not merely as an economic form, but as precisely that specific social form which, in capitalism, overdetermines and shapes all of the rest (from science to the legal system to art and culture). As Terry Eagleton has argued:

> If one wished to isolate from the supermarket shelves a single source of Jameson's whole oeuvre, one supreme, overriding text which governs his whole work, it would surely be Lukács's great chapter on German Idealism in *History and Class Consciousness*. For Jameson, one can imagine, Lukács's breathtakingly audacious gesture there, rewriting as he does the whole of that philosophical history in terms of the commodity, has the status of a moment of revelation, an intellectual apocalypse one can never go back beyond.[3]

To the degree that it is the peculiar form of the commodity that (following *History and Class Consciousness*) underpins Jameson's own 'conceptual opposition' between 'the concrete and the abstract' then, it is because *as* a commodity – that is, as pure exchange value – the commodity is itself distinguished by its absolute *abstraction*: 'Not an atom of matter,' writes Marx, 'enters into the objectivity of commodities as values.'[4] Nonetheless, simultaneously, as that which *really does* determine much of the social character and organization of the world we live in, the value form constitutes what Marx calls a *real* abstraction – which means that its condition as itself actual, under the specific historical circumstances of capitalism, requires that it takes on ever-changing, paradoxically sensuous and concrete forms once embedded and embodied within the whole range of experiences of contemporary metropolitan culture.[5] Much of the later twentieth-century Marxist (or post-Marxist) work most influential upon Jamesonian 'postmodernism', from Guy Debord to Jean Baudrillard, turns on how to understand this paradoxical reality *of* abstraction itself.

On the terrain of culture, it follows therefore that if, as Jameson writes in 1971, 'this means that society is conceived of at any given moment as that pre-existent and indeed preformed raw material which ultimately determines the abstractness or concreteness of the works of art created within it', then, for all its undeniable 'aesthetic' sensuousness in one regard, as the product of a society dominated by the commodity, the modern artwork must also be irrevocably abstract at some level too:[6]

> In the art works of a preindustrialized, agricultural or tribal society, the artist's raw material is on a human scale, it has an immediate meaning, requiring no preliminary explanation or justification on the part of the writer. […] The works of art characteristic of such societies may be called concrete in that their elements are all meaningful from the outset. The writer uses them, but he does not need to demonstrate their meaning beforehand: in the language of Hegel, this raw material needs no *mediation*.[7]

By contrast, Jameson writes, in 'the literature of the industrial era, everything changes', as it comes to be marked, unavoidably, by a 'loss of immediate comprehensibility'. 'Our world, our works of art, are henceforth *abstract*.'[8]

In the essay that follows, I want then to try to get to grips with something of what this might mean for architecture and urban theory in particular. It is probably not unfair to say that, indebted to the later Lukács, *Marxism and Form* itself maintains a rather too simple, even crude opposition between the concrete and the abstract, understood in terms of different 'lived experiences and life forms themselves' – and in which a distinction between some true 'feeling of concreteness, of filled density of being' may be straightforwardly counterposed to that of an 'abstractness and impoverishment of experience' in an evidently evaluative way.[9] (As Jameson puts it: 'our inability to realize the Hegelian vision of totality … is *a judgement on us* and on the moment of history in which we live, and in which such a vision of the totality of things is no longer possible.'[10]) However, it is not so obvious, I think, in the wake of Derrida (for

one), and in a context of increasing global interconnectedness (what form, after all, could such an interconnectedness take *without* some measure of abstraction?), that this kind of simple Lukácsian opposition between 'filled density' and 'impoverishment' – what Jameson has described, more recently, as 'an older Left-moralizing emphasis on the evils of commodification and a nostalgia for precapitalist and pre-commodity-producing societies'[11] – will any longer suffice. As such, I want to take as my starting point not the more orthodox Lukácsianism of *Marxism and Form*, but rather the account of such a 'conceptual opposition' to be found in a later essay: 'The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation', first published in 1998 in one of the ANY collections, and re-printed as the final chapter of the book *The Cultural Turn*. Taking its title from Charles Jencks's distinction between the 'weight or embodiment' of the brick and the apparent 'dematerialization' of architectural heft in the contemporary 'balloon', as what may therefore be read as a kind of analogue of the conceptual opposition of concretion and abstraction, the main body of the essay is, primarily, an account of the role of ground rent and real estate speculation in the twentieth-century development of the capitalist metropolis that moves from Robert Fitch's conspiratorial *The Assassination of New York* to the divergent interpretations of Raymond Hood's Manhattan Rockefeller Center to be found in Giedeon, Tafuri and Koolhaas.[12] In this it continues to extend – with evident architectural relevance – a specific *spatialization* of the problem of abstraction already present in *Marxism and Form*, where it is articulated via a still largely Lukácsian contrast between the 'wholeness' of village life (or the ancient city-state), in which 'life and experience' can be 'felt as a totality', and that of the 'great industrial city' or metropolis (like Koolhaas's Manhattan), in which they cannot.[13] Noticeably, however, by contrast to the 1971 text, what is termed in 'The Brick and the Balloon' a broad 'dynamics of abstraction' at work in modern cultural production generally, and architectural production specifically, would seem to be no longer so straightforwardly *negatively* encoded by Jameson as it is in the earlier, more directly Lukácsian work. My intention is, hence, not to offer anything like an exegesis of the essay itself, but rather to trace something of this shift as a means of beginning to rethink the architectural and urbanist problematic of abstraction as such: not as loss or impoverishment, a tearing away from the real or the mythically concrete, but, in its relation to new forms of *real abstraction*, as that which, increasingly, 'develops under its own momentum like a new dimension'.[14]

## Architecture and Abstraction

'Abstraction' must surely be considered as one of *the* most formative, as well as complex and internally variegated, concepts in the entire modern architectural lexicon. Indeed, as Anthony Vidler has put it, in elaborating a new sense of the 'modern', around the first decades of the twentieth century,

it was, arguably, through its alliance, above all, with 'an emerging sense of "abstraction" and "form" given by new structural imperatives' that the very newness of such modernity was most often articulated.[15] At the same time, of course, it has also been, for later theorists, from Venturi to Frampton to Jencks, a supposed tendency to some process, or even 'style', of abstraction – most frequently associated with the so-called International Style – that has frequently been thought to be intrinsic to the problems, indeed 'failures' of modern(ist) architecture in general – whether this is articulated via the populist historicism of a certain postmodernist theory, the phenomenological perspectives of critical regionalism and neo-Heideggerian returns to 'place', or via the broader left-leaning social and cultural critiques of Henri Lefebvre, the Situationists, Michel de Certeau and others (and to which Jameson's comments in 1971 would seem largely to belong). As Vidler puts it in the conclusion to his recent *Histories of the Immediate Present*:

> Modernism, as the story goes, refused history in favour of abstraction; its functional promises and technological fetishism were nothing but failed utopias of progress; its ideology was out of touch with the people, if not antihumanistic. Its formal vocabularies were sterile and uncommunicative. … In the myth of the postmodernists, history was welcomed back as a counter to abstraction.[16]

Such a 'myth' can seem rather distant now, at least insofar as (Jameson's own best efforts notwithstanding) the idea of 'postmodernism' itself is increasingly consigned to the status of historical curiosity and obsolescence; reduced to the mere *name* for a now largely exhausted architectural language or style. (And not before time for many of us.) Nonetheless, if nothing else, there can be little doubt that the very waning of the term postmodernism's discursive popularity and plausibility also brings with it opportunities for a reconsideration of certain hegemonic accounts of the architecturally modern as such. And it is in such terms that I want both then to consider some of the internal tensions apparent within uses of the term 'abstraction' in architectural and urbanist theory of the last few decades, and, ultimately, to argue for a re-thinking of the architectural problem of abstraction as itself *historical* in a strong sense: not as a 'refusal' of history, that is – as, significantly, Lukács already thought of 'modernist' literature in the 1950s (a key reference point, as we have seen, for Jameson himself) – but as that which is, on the contrary, deeply linked into the developing *social* forms of modernity as a whole.

While, then, this is in part a question of the relationship between buildings and the concepts through which they are thought, it is also, more profoundly, a historical question of the relationship between, first, what might be termed architectural and social *form* (though the meaning of 'form' here is itself part of what is at stake), and, second, between our understandings of the spatiality of the modern architectural object and what (following Hegel and Lukács) Jameson calls the *totality* of some larger social space through which the full significance of the form taken by any such individual building must

be grasped (specifically, the space of the metropolis and, ultimately, of that 'greater global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects'[17]). Finally, and most importantly, I want to explore Jameson's suggestion that it is, above all, in the peculiarities of the *money form*, as that form of progressively universal social relationality dominant within capitalist societies – and, hence, as what he terms, in 'The Brick and the Balloon', the 'fundamental source of all abstraction'[18] – that the key to the relationship between certain architectural and social problems of abstraction might be located and thought.

On the terrain of architectural history itself, one cue can be taken here from what is a frequent reference point for Jameson himself (although, as far as I am aware, he never actually cites it directly in this regard): the work of the Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri, and, in particular, the latter's conjunction, in his writings of the late 1960s and 1970s, of an account of the early twentieth-century avant-gardes with a reading of Georg Simmel's writings on the metropolis, as that specifically modern urban space which is the 'seat of', and is 'dominated by', the money economy, defined by its 'multiplicity and concentration of economic exchange'.[19] Simmel's considerations, argues Tafuri in his best-known book *Architecture and Utopia*, 'contained *in nuce* the problems that were to be at the centre of the historical avant-garde movements … how to "utilize" to the limit the anguish which "indifference to value" continually provokes and nourishes in the metropolitan experience.'[20] And if this has a more general applicability to problems of modern cultural form, it is because, so 'The Brick and the Balloon' implies, Simmel's writings on the metropolis are 'fundamentally an account of the increasing abstraction of modern life, and most particularly of urban life'; a conjunction between the cultural and the economic that, I want to suggest, provides us with the outline of a rather different understanding of abstraction to that prevalent within most mainstream architectural discourse. As Jameson continues, 'Simmel's essay places us on the threshold of a theory of modern aesthetic forms and of their abstraction from older logics of perception and production'.[21] And the key to such a theory would, quite simply, be the abstract 'logics' of capital and the money form itself.

## Mediating Architecture

If one were looking for a way to encapsulate Jameson's project as a whole since the beginning of the 1970s, one could do worse than to characterize it, then, as an ongoing attempt to find an adequate means of grasping the relation between culture and economics – a means that would both take up and extend a 'classical' Marxist account of base and superstructure, while, in the spirit of the opening section of Benjamin's 'The Work of Art' essay, undoing the cruder reductions of culture to its economic 'determinations' to be found within much of the Marxist tradition.[22]

Whether or not we favour the term (and, as is already clear, I do not), it is in this sense also that the centrality of 'postmodernism' to Jameson's work of the last three decades maps its own procedures onto what it claims to be the distinctive historical nature of its developing object: that is, a situation ('late capitalism') in which the cultural is, according to Jameson, becoming economic and the economic becoming more intensely cultural.[23] Hence, one might note that, for an architectural theory itself, what is at stake here entails a far wider question of what Jameson terms those forms of *mediation* appropriate to any historical 'theory of modern aesthetic forms'. As he puts it in a passage now well known in architectural criticism, by virtue of its citation in the introduction to K. Michael Hays's study of Hilberseimer and Meyer:

> Mediation is the classical dialectical [that is, Hegelian] term for the establishment of relationships between, say, the formal analyses of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base. … The concept of mediation has traditionally been the way in which dialectical philosophy and Marxism itself have formulated their vocation to break out of the specialized compartments of the (bourgeois) disciplines and to make connections among the seemingly disparate phenomenon of social life generally. … [It is] a process of *transcoding*: the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyse and articulate two distinct types of objects or 'texts', or two very different structural levels of reality.[24]

Methodologically, it is evident that any adequate re-thinking of the problem of abstraction – as, *at once*, an aesthetic, social and economic form – entails the establishing of just such a relationship between 'different structural levels of reality': a correlation between 'distinct semiautonomous fields', as Jameson puts it in an interview from 1987 (and for which he suggests, alongside the Hegelian-Marxist concept of mediation, the possible models of Sartre's *analogon* or Pierce's *interpretant*).[25] Simply put, then, it is as a function of a 'regulative idea' of some 'connecting together' of different processes and levels[26] that the oft-remarked breadth of Jameson's concerns needs also to be understood: not, that is, as the mark of some facile 'interdisciplinarity', but as intrinsic to his commitment to the dialectical attempt to think *totality* itself. Suffice it to say, moreover, that if Jameson is indeed, as has often been said (not least by himself), very much a Hegelian Marxist, it is in this, above all, that his 'Hegelianism' resides.[27]

As such, the model of 'what a totalising grasp of the transdisciplinary object or the social totality would be' in this case *already* entails a question of abstraction. First, because the problem of abstraction is, in this regard, far from simply one problem among others, insofar as a certain process of abstraction is inherent to the necessity of mediation *per se*. (And, as we have seen, by contrast to the modern work, the preindustrial artwork, according to *Marxism and Form*, is made of 'raw material [that] needs no *mediation*', and emerges in relation to a social totality that can be more or less immediately

imagined and 'felt'.) Second, and most importantly for my purposes, because any attempt at 'connecting everything together and seeing all those things as part of one enormous process' – what Jameson explores elsewhere under the rubric of a 'cognitive mapping' – thus relates, in direct fashion, to the developing nature of 'the transdisciplinary object or the social totality' with which it is engaged.[28] 'One of the most basic lessons of the Frankfurt School,' Jameson reminds us, 'was indeed that the social totality today is more total than it was – that is to say, that the very logic of late capitalism is an absolutely totalising one which wishes to penetrate everywhere and to make links with everything'.[29] To which one might only add, as Adorno crucially does, that if the later Marx himself places an apparently Hegelian emphasis precisely on totality, on 'the ether that permeates the whole of society', for Marx this ether is precisely 'anything but ethereal; it is rather the *ens realissimum*'. As Adorno continues, if such a totality 'seems abstract, this is the fault not of fantastic, wilful thinking, hostile to the facts, but of the *objective* abstraction to which the social process of life is subject – the exchange relation'.[30]

It is this objective abstraction – the real abstraction of that 'self-moving substance which is Subject' in the 'shape of money', as Marx puts it in *Capital*,[31] which *actually* 'connect[s] everything together … as part of one enormous process' in the contemporary world (far more, say, than 'class consiousness') – and what it might mean for our understandings of cultural as well as social form, that is thus ultimately, I would want to argue, at issue in all of Jameson's well-known writings on the problem of 'cognitive mapping', for example. Hence, too, from the perspective of anything like a trans-disciplinary significance, the degree to which the importance of architecture *today*, for Jameson, lies in the fact that if 'the outer limit of the individual building is the material city, then the outer limit of some expanded conception of the architectural vocation … is the economic itself, or capitalism in the most overt and naked expression of its implacable power'.[32]

To get some further idea of what this might entail, particularly as it relates to the problem of abstraction in architectural *form*, let us take a far-from-contingent example at this point. Around halfway through the fourth chapter of his best-known book, *Architecture and Utopia*, Tafuri remarks: 'The objects all floating on the same plane, with the same specific gravity, in the constant movement of the money economy: does it not seem that we are reading here a literary comment on the [Kurt Schwitters] *Merzbild*?'[33] The first part of this sentence is a direct citation: one taken from Simmel's 1903 essay, which thus comes to function here as a very direct way of mediating Schwitter's work. Thereby transcoding 'two distinct types of objects', Tafuri opens up a certain kind of trans-disciplinary field, establishing an exemplary correlation, via Simmel's analysis of the money economy, between, first, the forms of modern art (in this instance, collage) and the hegemonic forms taken by a culture of urban modernity in general, and, second, between the spatiality of such a culture of the image and some larger social space (the metropolis) of which it is a part.

One reason, then, why such questions as have already been raised might matter, of course, is because of the ways in which – much like the modern novel, we might note, for Lukács – what is construed here in terms of abstraction at the level of the individual architectural object, and of its form, may be thought to 'mirror', or to itself reciprocally mediate, what unfolds within the much larger spatiality of the urban as such, and hence provide a privileged means of 'grasping' it. It is certainly this sense of modern architecture's constitutively *metropolitan* condition – the inherent 'tension [or relation] between the urban fabric or totality and the individual building' – which must thereby underlie the conception of mediation apparent in, for example, the famous reading of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel, in which a new form of 'postmodern space' at the level of the individual building functions also as a mediation of the far greater space of the contemporary metropolis – a 'symptom' of it, as Jameson describes it in a 1990 interview[34] – and of its 'projection outward' onto ever larger 'global spaces' today: a means of grasping (or, rather, of grasping one's inability to grasp) this 'vaster and properly unrepresentable totality'. 'The newer architecture', Jameson continues, 'stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs', because the 'latest mutation in space … has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual body to locate itself … and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world.' In this, he famously writes, the relation of architecture to the metropolis stands, above all, as 'the *symbol and analogon* of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the greater global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects'.[35]

### The Possibility of Phenomenology?

While Lukács's account of the novel, which this so clearly echoes, focuses however on the problem of *representing* or *narrating* an increasingly inaccessible social totality, Jameson's assertion that the 'newer architecture stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs' ultimately entails something rather different: the architectural work or object does not so much (impossibly) 'narrate' totality as it (equally impossibly) gives material-spatial form to some synecdochic *embodiment* of the progressively vertiginous character of our (imaginary) relation to such a totality in the process of *experiencing* the individual space of the building itself. (Hence, I think, the limitations of the visual and representational metaphor of the 'map' in Jameson's own formulations, as he acknowledges.[36]) Above all, as such, it raises the question of how, via an account of changing architectural form, we are to think about, say, the *existential* or *bodily* subjective dimensions of the contemporary transformations of individual and collective human socio-spatial life within an increasingly globalized metropolitan modernity in general, as they take place on a precisely 'everyday' level.

Addressing such a question is however difficult, if only because there is a perhaps understandable wariness, among much of the contemporary Left (including Jameson), with regard to what would appear to be certain ineliminable dimensions of such a project itself. For if phenomenological thought is not quite declared impossible *tout court* in relation to such new forms of social being, at the very least it is often regarded as impossible as anything other than an essentially *conservative* discourse: the theoretical framework for what will always be a reactive plea for the restitution of a properly 'human significance' (as Christian Norberg-Schulz, for instance, calls it) as against the so-called alienation of metropolitan (and, today, 'global') existence. Jameson's own opening discussion in his 1982 essay, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', is doubtless exemplary, beginning with the broadly Marxian question of how 'space can be "ideological"'. Jameson writes:

> This question has … tended to be absorbed by naturalistic or anthropological perspectives, predominantly based on conceptions of the human body itself. … The body's limits but also its needs are then appealed to as ultimate standards against which to measure the relative alienation either of older commercial or industrial space of the overweening sculptural monuments of the International Style or of the postmodernist 'megastructure'. Yet arguments based on the human body are fundamentally ahistorical and involve premises about some eternal 'human nature' concealed within the seemingly 'verifiable' and scientific data of physiological analysis. If the body is in reality a social body, if therefore there exists no pregiven human body as such, but rather the whole historical range of social experiences of the body … then the 'return' to some more 'natural' vision of the body in space projected by phenomenology comes to seem ideological, if not nostalgic.[37]

I quote this at some length because it has the merit both of indicating the distance already travelled here from the Lukácsian account of abstraction to be found in *Marxism and Form*, and of drawing out, at one and the same time, a number of presuppositions that would define a generalized suspicion – that the phenomenological is thus *always* implicitly naturalizing, an ideological elision of the historical, social and technical conditions that actually determine the 'body in space'.

Such a view would have its roots in a response to two separate, if often overlapping, twentieth-century theoretical discourses of spatial alienation or distanciation. (And it is worth recalling that in *Marxism and Form*, Jameson still presents 'alienation' and 'abstraction' as naming 'the same object'.[38]) The first, which would run through the likes of the Chicago School, Lewis Mumford, Kevin Lynch and Richard Sennett, would be a specific response to the modern formation of the metropolis as against hitherto existing urban forms. At stake in this would be a broadly existential analysis of lived experience and urban form that finds in the apparent destruction of a bodily 'human scale' in the latter, the explanation for a thoroughgoing alienation of a genuinely 'human' *experience* itself in the former. If this is implicitly phenomenological in its philosophical bearings, the second discourse is far more explicitly so

– the reception within architectural theory of Heidegger's thought and its thematics of building and dwelling, most famously set out in two lectures from 1951. At times these two discourses are combined, as is the case in Kenneth Frampton's work. Besides 'invoking Heidegger's conception of the relationship of dwelling to building', Frampton too, Jameson notes, relies 'heavily on the more problematical (or "humanist") notion of "experience"' as resistance to 'spectacle and commodity'.[39] And humanism in architecture and urbanism in general, Jameson writes elsewhere, is 'phenomenology itself, as that has made itself felt in the area of space'.[40]

However, if what is at stake here is thus a displacement of a false *naturalization* of the bodily and of its 'limits' and 'needs', in favour of a properly Marxian attention to the historically changeable range of social experiences – marking again, it might be observed, something of a break with certain aspects of the more Lukácsian account of the limits of 'individual human experience' to be found in *Marxism and Form*[41] – the problem is that it is unclear how exactly such *experience* is itself to be understood, if not, in some sense, phenomenologically. How can one *not* understand 'modern urban space', including architectural space – from the monuments of the International Style to the 'postmodernist megastructure' – in 'experiential terms'? For a fundamentally phenomenological procedure would appear ineliminable in any philosophical task of seeking to 'cognize', at 'the existential level', what Jameson (following Lefebvre) calls 'new modes of life' that would 'demand new kinds of [abstract] space.'[42]

It is at this point then, I think, that we can usefully go back, by way of Tafuri and 'The Brick and the Balloon', to what remains the classic account of the metropolis itself – that is, to Simmel. Arguably, the conceptual and historical specificity of the metropolis is, for the latter, precisely formed by its tendential elimination or transcendence of the 'specific values' of *places* – of the type that Frampton's so-called 'critical regionalism' seeks to preserve – and of what he terms their 'incomparability'. (Frampton's desire for 'place-creation' would then be contrasted, architecturally, to the specifically *metropolitan* negation of 'incomparability' to be found in the grid system and the Miesian 'free plan', and in what Jameson calls a contemporary architecture's opening out into a 'delirious equivalence', in which 'not only the contents but also the frames are now freed to endless metamorphosis'.[43]) Yet, moving outwards from this essential insight, Simmel himself could well be read, precisely, as pioneering 'what we [would] today call a *phenomenological* analysis of this peculiar reality' of such a new urban world itself – as Jameson himself approvingly observes (paradoxically, given his apparent general antipathy to such a conception).[44] Certainly, it is in this that the most familiar elements of Simmel's essay reside: in an emphasis on what he terms the 'psychic' and 'physiological' construction of the metropolitan subject *per se*. To quote a famous passage:

> The psychological basis of the metropolitan type … consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli … the rapid crowding

of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions. These are the psychological conditions which the metropolis creates. With each crossing of the road, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life, the metropolis sets up a deep contrast with small town and rural life with reference to the *sensory foundations* of psychic life.[45]

Read first and foremost as 'a phenomenological analysis of this peculiar reality', 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' has often been reduced, in architectural discourse as elsewhere, to little more than a kind of fragmentary and impressionistic typology of discrete and concrete urban phenomena – the blasé type, urbane intellectualism and so on. Yet to do so is to occlude what is, precisely, the essential *totality* (in Jameson's terms) of the specific social and spatial dynamics that underlie such phenomena in Simmel's text: that is, their intrinsic connection, above all, to the money form. Not least among the merits of 'The Brick and the Balloon' is its reminder of this. For it is specifically *money*, Simmel writes, 'with all its colourlessness and indifference, [which] becomes the common denominator of all values' in the metropolis; 'irreparably it hollows out the core of things, their individuality, their specific value, and their incomparability'. In the metropolis, '[a]ll things float with equal specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money'.[46]

Now it is this relation of the 'constantly moving stream of money' to concrete architectural 'things' that is then, I think, fairly uniquely grasped in Tafuri's work, in which, drawing explicitly upon Simmel, the former identifies a pivotal role for avant-garde forms of abstraction, at the level of such 'things' themselves, in acculturating the 'mass' of the population to new conditions of general equivalence within the capitalist economy: to render something of this *reality* of abstraction 'perceptible by a mass that had completely absorbed the universe without quality of the money economy'.[47] (In this sense, the spatial form of something like the Westin Bonaventure Hotel should be understood as more than just a mere *symptom* of 'late capitalism', or an architectural 'mirroring' of it. It also a more or less crucial part of such a capitalism's own spatial production and reproduction, and of the production of new forms of subjectivity appropriate to it: a kind of education or training, so to speak, in how 'to live' in an emergent world constituted through ever-more-transitory and fugitive flows of capital and commodities.) As such, in the development of something like an *aesthetic* expression of abstraction, the avant-garde of the early twentieth century, according to Tafuri, underwent a fundamental shift from its nostalgic and antagonistic negations, characteristic of Expressionism (comparable to Lukács in this regard), to one of positive affirmation, within both the Soviet avant-gardes of Constructivism and Productivism, and the Bauhaus and De Stijl, from which, in turn, modern industrial design and architecture would go on to derive their dominant formal language.

If Tafuri's account is thereby an attempt to identify the ways in which the role played by 'abstraction' in early twentieth-century architecture had a more than merely 'stylistic' significance, but was itself a means of mediating new

*social* forms, it has, still, too often been read (not least by Jameson himself) as a simple *condemnation* of modern architecture's complicity with capitalist development[48] – against the logic, in fact, of Tafuri's own notorious rejection of 'operative criticism' – when it should more plausibly be read as, first and foremost, a critical *analysis* of a kind of paradoxical 'realism' inherent within such a turn to abstraction itself; an abstraction which is, as Adorno says of Beckett, realist to the degree that it is no more abstract than the forms of social *actuality* which it engages. To put it another way: architectural abstraction is, from this perspective, less an escape *from* and more an index *of* the social forms of experience of the very real abstraction constitutive of capitalist modernity itself.

### Space, Experience and Money

If the metropolis is therefore, to cite Massimo Cacciari (recalling both Heidegger *and* Benjamin), that which constitutes 'an uprooting from the place as a place of *dwelling*'[49], then it is, for Simmel, above all, because of the degree to which it tendentially replaces hitherto existing social relations with fundamentally *abstract* social relations of exchange; relations that as 'colourless' and 'indifferent' – 'without qualities', in Musil's famous phrase – would seem by definition *suprasensible*, but which must nonetheless, so as to be 'liveable', be in some way embodied 'concretely' in architectural form. Yet, two points are worth stressing here:

First, if the historical specificity of the metropolis is to be defined primarily in terms of its status as that which is 'dominated' by 'the money economy', it is thus crucial to recognize that this is not only a question of it providing something like the necessary primary space 'in' which a concrete monetary exchange takes place. More than this, the metropolis must also be understood to designate the processes by which both built architectural and social spaces are themselves *produced* by universal exchange. This thus relates not only to what Jameson describes as the translation of the 'money form … back on to space itself', via capitalism's unique power to 'seize upon a landscape and flatten it out, reorganize it in a grid of identical parcels, and expose it to the dynamic of a market that now reorganizes space in terms of an identical value'.[50] It also means that a certain abstract form of social relationality and experience itself would, in this sense, simply *be* abstract space's real 'content' – the condition of a *new* (increasingly global) urban logic of social connectivity and being-in-the-world rooted in the universalization of the value form – a 'common content' that is not pre-given (a simple abstraction *out of* what is already concretely there), but which is rather itself a kind of productive instantiation of this abstract form.[51]

Second, however, in these terms, the space of the metropolis cannot therefore be reduced to a merely abstract *negation* of 'place' – with its concomitant architectural ideology of a negation of history, representation or the *genius loci*

– as, for example, Jameson's earlier spatialization of the Lukácsian account of the 'conceptual opposition' between concrete and abstract societies might still be taken to suggest. For if the metropolis, on Simmel's account, re-places the hitherto existing spaces of place with *new* spatial forms of being-in-the-world, these spaces nonetheless require various forms of the embodiment and embedding of economic transactions – paradoxical embodiments *of* abstraction, that is – in precisely *material* processes of production, consumption and exchange, which are no less 'real' than those they displace.

Part of the problem, then, with dominant accounts of the significance of abstraction in modern architecture, on both Right and Left, has been a tendency to rely still (as Vidler's account suggests) on a presumption that, in its supposed turn to abstraction, architecture itself – whether at the level of design or actual built form – thereby somehow 'draws away' or removes itself from the density of 'history' or what is *really* 'beneath' the abstractions of metropolitan relations at the level of so-called 'everyday life' (or, say, aesthetic experience), where 'we' always still remain embodied in more 'real', essentially concrete ways – ways that are then merely *distorted* by abstract forms. In fact, from another perspective, it might be precisely in its engagement with abstraction that architecture most forcefully engages contemporary social reality itself. If nothing else, I want to argue then, modern urban developments demand that the very received opposition between the 'abstract' and 'concrete', the 'abstract' and the 'existential', needs rethinking at this point, as does a certain set of still hegemonic cultural and political discourses that rest upon it. For, in actuality, what Jameson terms a 'dynamics of abstraction' at work in modern cultural production is itself a *positive* 'site' of the production of socio-spatial experience, constitutive of new and very 'real' forms under capitalism. Which means that the humanist or vitalist search for some more sensuously 'real' and 'concrete' praxis buried beneath such forms – and which, say, architectural practice must henceforth seek to 'preserve' or 'revive' – must always risk occluding the historical specificity of those forms themselves that derive social cohesion from the reality of abstraction and its modes of connectivity. To put it another way: at stake, one might say, for architecture specifically, is thus the degree to which forms of abstraction must themselves come to be precisely sensuously encounterable, and indeed 'inhabitable', as 'objects' of experience – a mediation of the irreducible phenomenological *actuality of abstraction* in metropolitan life as a whole, and of its historical formation of new social-spatial forms.

## Concrete Abstractions

In lieu of any proper conclusion, I want to suggest, finally, that one way in which we might approach this, following the logic of 'The Brick and the Balloon', would then be through a re-thinking of the complex relations between the phenomenological dimensions of modern architectural form

(as, say, an experience of space), the *aesthetic* – in its original philosophical meaning, as something like a cognitive discourse of 'the whole corporeal sensorium' rooted in (individual and collective) physiology[52] – and the exemplary social form of *money*. Certainly it is worth nothing that Tafuri, again, suggests something very like this of, for example, Erich Mendelsohn's 'Advertising Architecture' of the 1920s, which 'gaze squarely and without any deforming optic' or nostalgia upon 'the abstract ocean' at the heart of 'commercial exploitation', and in which 'losing that anguished aspect attributed to [the metropolis] by Expressionism … propose [themselves] anew as a dynamic force to the public', becoming, in the process, a kind of paradoxical expressionism *of* commodity abstraction itself.[53] In this regard, it is important also that Tafuri's analysis here is not the standard or simple (Lukácsian, as it were) reproach of abstraction that it might easily be taken to be. Rather, *contra* Worringer's famous distinction, this does not so much oppose forms of aesthetic empathy *to* abstraction, but, under the specifically metropolitan conditions of capitalist modernity, suggests that it is precisely an empathy *with* or *of* abstraction – abstraction 'become flesh', to use a phrase of Kracauer's from the 'Mass Ornament' essay[54] – which might constitute the *Weltanschauungen* of metropolitan cultural (including architectural) form.

'The predominance of the abstract in modern art accompanies the extension of … the unlimited power of money and capital, very abstract and terribly concrete at one and the same time', writes Henri Lefebvre.[55] This paradoxical formulation – the *simultaneously* very abstract and terribly concrete (and I find it hard not to think of the equally paradoxical reception of something like post-war Brutalism in this regard) – is thus both the very paradoxical form of Mendelsohn's expressionism of the abstract but also, and crucially, of money itself as a form of sociality. For architecture more generally, this is, as such, manifested as a corresponding function both of its intrinsically metropolitan condition *and* of its own contradictory relations to the aesthetic in its original philosophical sense – that is, paradoxically, its necessary attempt to give aesthetic (and hence sensible) *form* to the experience of abstraction itself. There is indeed a contradiction here, but it is a *real* one.

Such is a good description, at any rate, I think, of what is at stake, say, in that sequence which might join together, from the 1960s to the late 70s, the likes of Archigram, Archizoom, Superstudio and the early Koolhaas[56] – all 'programmes' 'become abstract' today, Koolhaas writes, 'inasmuch as now they are no longer tied to a specific place or city, but fluctuate and gravitate opportunistically around the point offering the highest number of connections'[57] – just as much as Hilbersheimer or the Berlin Mies, or indeed Mendelsohn, at an earlier moment. But it is also in more contemporary terms, certainly, that one might therefore read Jameson's own emphasis, for example, (borrowing from Jencks) on the formal prevalence in recent architecture of something like 'extreme isometric space' – the 'very element of delirious equivalence itself' – and 'not just the glass skin but its "enclosed skin volumes"':

> The 'enclosed skin volumes' … illustrate another aspect of late capitalist abstraction, the way in which it dematerialises without signifying in any traditional way spiritually. … Weight or embodiment [the brick] along with its progressive attenuation [the balloon] no longer posits the non-body or the spirit as an opposite; in the same way, where the [Miesian] free plan posited an older bourgeois space to be cancelled, the infinite new isometric kind cancels nothing, but simply develops under its own momentum like a new dimension.[58]

Against an 'older Left-moralizing' understanding of abstraction as 'impoverishment' and loss, here the aim is then to try and grasp the distinctive nature of this 'new dimension' itself in architectural form, in all its own 'productivity of spirit' (as Lukács once referred to the 'created reality' of the novel). As such, the point is not, first of all, to show that this (surely irrevocable) relation to the money form is either intrinsically critical or affirmative with regard to the forms of contemporary capitalism – that would indeed be variable, and dependent on the analysis of individual works or designs – but to suggest that, knowingly or otherwise, at least one role played by forms of abstraction in modern architecture lies in their capacity both to respond to the tasks set for it by capitalism's changing social forms – to provide new 'codes' for new principles of dynamic development – *and* to extract abstraction from its social sites and hence also to reflect upon it *as* form.[59] 'Our world, our works of art, are henceforth *abstract*', writes Jameson in *Marxism and Form*.[60] In this correlation of 'world and 'artwork', there remains, still, a whole history of modern architecture to be written.

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## Notes

1   Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, 1971): p. 163.

2   Although I won't belabour the point here, my own profound misgivings with regard to the notion of the postmodern are set out at length elsewhere. See, for example: David Cunningham, 'The Anxiety of Returns', in *Radical Philosophy* 120, (2003): pp. 41-43. For the sake of clarity, I accept it here as a (finally inadequate) name for a historical period in Jameson's work, but which, to borrow an old phrase from Derrida, I place myself *sous rature*.

3   Terry Eagleton, 'Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style', *Diacritics* 12(3), (1982): pp. 17-18. It is of course this supposed *over*-emphasis on the commodity – as opposed to class struggle – that Eagleton objects to in Jameson's work. See Terry Eagleton, 'The Idealism of American Criticism', *New Left Review* 127, (1981): pp. 53-65.

4    Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, trans. B. Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979): p. 163.

5    See David Cunningham, 'The Concept of Metropolis: Philosophy and Urban Form', *Radical Philosophy* 133, (2005): pp. 13-25.

6    Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 164.

7    Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 165.

8    Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, pp. 166-169.

9    Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, pp. 163-164.

10   Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 47 [emphasis added].

11   Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London and New York, 2009): p. 266.

12   Fredric Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon: Architecture, Idealism and Land Speculation', in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998* (London and New York, 1998): pp. 162-189.

13   Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, pp. 169-167.

14   Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', p. 187. In doing so, it should be said, I largely bracket here Jameson's specific account of finance capital in 'The Brick and the Balloon', which is, characteristically, used as a means of marking a supposedly radical break between the modern and postmodern. Without denying the specificity of finance capital, or the ways in which its role in capital accumulation has come to be intensified over the last 30 or 40 years, for myself, I have to say, Jameson vastly exaggerates the qualitative character of the increase in abstraction to be found in the recent stage of 'finance capital', particularly in relation to money in general. This is not to negate the difference between money as embodied in coin or paper and as embodied in digital data. However, to write of, say, 'the emergence of abstraction within money itself, namely what we now call finance capital' (166), as representing some dramatically new stage in capitalist development, is at the very least misleading to the degree that it severely underplays the extent to which, in its 'essence', money is *always already* utterly abstract in form (as well as the ways in which finance capital was crucial to the functioning of capitalism as a system from the outset). Suffice it to say, then, that if 'our' world is not the same as that of the nineteenth century analysed by Marx himself, to be sure, its difference here is not, finally, one of radical breaks – certainly not of any break with the 'modern' (which has always made precious little sense, conceptually) – but rather of *intensification*. For a comparable point – 'the postmodern is just one more step along a route traced long ago' – see Moretti's juxtaposition of Jameson's analysis of the Bonaventura with Simmel and Zola, in Franco Moretti, *The Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, trans. Q. Hoare (London and New York, 1996): p. 127.

15   Anthony Vidler, *Histories of the Immediate Present* (Cambridge, MA, 2008): p. 4.

16   Vidler, *Histories*, p. 2.

17   Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *The Cultural Turn*, p. 16.

18   Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', p. 162.

19   Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 176.

20   Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. B. Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA, 1976): p. 88.

21   Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', pp. 165-166.

22   See the account of this in Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', pp. 163-165.

23   See Fredric Jameson, 'Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue', in
     F. Jameson and M. Miyoshi, (eds), *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, 1998):
     p. 60.

24   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, cited in K. Michael Hays, *Modernism
     and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig
     Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA, 1995): p. 19.

25   Fredric Jameson, *Conversations on Cultural Marxism*, I. Buchanan (ed.), (Durham,
     2007): p. 62.

26   Jameson, *Conversations*, pp. 105-106.

27   For Jameson, as he puts it at one point in *Marxism and Form*, 'Marx *includes*
     Hegel'. See Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. xvi [emphasis added].

28   Jameson, *Conversations*, pp. 105-106.

29   Jameson, *Conversations*, p. 105.

30   Theodor W. Adorno, 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?', trans.
     R. Livingstone, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford,
     2003): p. 120; translation modified.

31   Marx, *Capital, Volume One*, pp. 255-256.

32   Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' [1982], in K. Michael
     Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA, 1988): p. 449.

33   Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, pp. 88-89.

34   Jameson, *Conversations*, p. 129.

35   Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London
     and New York, 1991): p. 44.

36   See Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 416.

37   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 442.

38   Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 164.

39   Jameson, 'The Constraints of Postmodernism', in Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking
     Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London and New York, 1997): p. 251.

40   Jameson, 'Is Space Political?', in *Rethinking Architecture*, p. 266.

41   See, for example, Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 169.

42   Jameson, 'Is Space Political?', p. 260.

43   Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', p. 186.

44   Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', p. 165.

45   Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 175.

46   Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', p. 178.

47   Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 89.

48  See, for example, the reading of Tafuri as simultaneously 'anti-modernist' and 'anti-postmodernist' in Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 60-61.

49  Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. S. Sartarelli (New Haven & London, 1993): p. 200.

50  Jameson, 'The Antinomies of Postmodernism', in *The Cultural Turn*, p. 66.

51  See Cunningham, 'The Concept of Metropolis', pp. 13-24.

52  See Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA, 2000): pp. 101-102.

53  See Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture 1*, trans. R.E. Wolf (London, 1986): p. 144.

54  See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. T.Y. Levin (Cambridge, MA, 1995): pp. 75-86.

55  Henri Lefebvre, 'The End of Modernity?', in *Key Writings* (London and New York, 2003): p. 94.

56  See Jameson's comments on Koolhaas, for example, in his interview with Michael Speaks in *Conversations*, pp. 123-134.

57  Rem Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL.* (Köln, 1997): p. 234.

58  Jameson, 'The Brick and the Balloon', pp. 186-187.

59  I take this idea of an extraction of abstraction from its social sites so as to reflect upon it as form from Peter Osborne, 'Non-Places and the Spaces of Art', *The Journal of Architecture* 6(2), (2001): p. 184.

60  Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, p. 169.

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# The Master's House

*Donald Kunze*

By a definition that may seem terse and arbitrary at this point …

> … the 'master' is *whoever* has a 'house', meaning an architecture that facilitates – but later explicates and undermines – mastery. The architecture of this 'house' positions the master and his house with respect to space around it, both in material and ideological terms. Thus, this architecture is similar to the topology of the 'houses' of planets, whose spheres align in specific ways to create variable conditions of influence based on adjacency.

On the side of materiality, the master's house is one that is frequently easy to identify on account of its prominence in the landscape, its conspicuous display of wealth or control, its symbols, its grandeur. Clichés come to mind: the castles or manor houses that are the staple of British National Trust properties filled with fawning tourists; the plantation houses of the American Deep South, set like jewels in fields of agricultural wealth; the less grand contemporary McMansions set behind gates and electronic security systems; the parts of any house where occupants display their status through possessions, trophies or precious objects.

Mastery is exercised through architecture in ways that are not always obvious. Mastery is not simply quantitative superiority. It is not the 'successful solution' of a functional, climatic, resource or sustainability problem, although it can be the way rhetoric situates a building project within these anxieties. Mastery, here, is meant in three senses in addition to the usual one:

1. The Vichian and, later, Hegelian and Marxist sense of radical historicism, in which formation of the idea of a master, and a master metaphor, is key to various economies of exchange, including the exchange of metaphors and metonymies to create autonomous 'mentalities';

2. The Lacanian sense of 'false' mastery employed by the ego, following the mirror stage, in retroactively creating a contrasting 'body in pieces' (*le corps*

*morcelé*, objective subjectivity) as well as objects that resist mastery ('partial objects,' subjective objectivity); and

3. The reconfiguration of agencies and actions to modify spaces and times into 'Möbius-band-like' topographies creating 'symptom structures' that include a variety of discourses and perceptual frameworks.

'The master's house' thus comes to stand for both the variety of architectural strategies taken to symbolize and culturally sustain the idea of mastery as well as the ideological and psychological structures that alternatively create and then undermine/explicate mastery. Because mastery involves a large range of topics in what might be called 'the Freudian-Lacanian field', the psychoanalytic framework – where linguistics, rhetoric, optics and topology interact closely – constitutes a laboratory for positioning the role of the unconscious in the process of constructing and construing mastery. But, because the Vichian-Hegelian-Marxian projects on the subject of mastery involve the creation of stable domains of political/ideological order, this unconscious repeats the insistent conclusion of Fredric Jameson, that the unconscious is *inherently* a political matter, and that its analysis requires a Marxist analysis. I concur but promote Vico's perspective into first place over Marx's. Giambattista Vico's *New Science*, according to some scholars, constitutes a prototype for Hegel's and, later, Marx's economic analyses. Because Vico involved the configuration of metaphor and metonymy in acts of perception and collective memory, he is also a qualified forerunner of, to some extent, Freud and, to a greater extent, Lacan.[1] Since the phrase 'political unconscious' originates from Fredric Jameson's groundbreaking study of 1981, it seems only fair to make some specific adjustments to the question of architecture's political unconscious.[2]

This study is, therefore, presented as a kind of thesis about what a comprehensive answer to the question, 'what is the political unconscious of architecture?' might look like. A thesis aggressively pursues the old Positivist ideal of falsifiability. Even the classic formulation of the scientific thesis appears in negative form: the famous 'null hypothesis'. Any position involving such diverse and historically-philosophically separate sources as Vico, Marx and Lacan has to construct fragile bridges over deep water. My strategy will be to face the inevitability of error in advance, to disavow mastery as a goal of study, knowing that error will be an inevitable component of any account. Does this mean accepting defeat in advance? Yes. But, in the spirit of Lacan's promise, in the face of the Gödelian paradox, to choose between incompleteness over inconsistency, inconsistency is the choice of the comedian and the politician. Incompleteness offers the advantage of treating the limits of mastery in a material way – as a boundary characterizing both the object of study as well as study itself. Also, the renunciation of mastery engages the issue of double negation, a key component in the issue of mastery, particularly in its relations to Hegel's famous master-slave parable. As Iris Murdoch would call it, this aims to be a 'fairly honorable defeat'.[3]

This recursion, this reciprocity between the objects and methods of study, leads in the direction of a style of inquiry famously polished by Slavoj Žižek, for whom popular culture is both a laboratory and stage-set for psychoanalysis. In particular, film, which is experienced 'authentically' in all of its copies, so to speak, provides the best field for discourse. In this study, Akiro Kurosawa's 1960s' crime thriller, *High and Low*, provides multiple angles on the case of the master's house.[4] An industrialist set to take over his company is interrupted by a kidnapping. His chauffeur's son is taken by mistake (the two boys were in costume, playing 'cowboys and Indians'), but the industrialist is persuaded to accept full responsibility, not only spoiling his chances for closing the deal but ruining him financially. The issue of double negation looms prominently, and here we can identify the relation of negation to the role played by metonymy as well as the differentiation of two types of metonymy, one accomplishing privation and the other prohibition. The background logic of *High and Low*'s plot is based on a plus-minus system of privation: the ransom equals exactly the amount of money the industrialist needed for his take-over; the chauffeur's son played the role of an 'exact copy' of the industrialist's; the industrialist's prominently visible house reciprocally metonymizes and is metonymized by the low docklands of Yokohama, where it, in the latter case, 'stands (up) for' Yokohama because its 'highest citizen' has come from the low class[5]; and, in the former case, the unknown location of the kidnapper necessitates a process of interpolating synesthetic qualities of the city and landscape (the urban version of the Lacanian 'body in pieces').

Prohibition involves the dropped-out metonymy of wealth and its reciprocal force, the evil eye that enviously and literally holds the master's house in its gaze. The kidnapper's telescope casts a shadow that inverts the house's interior space, forcing police assisting with negotiations to crawl beneath the sight line. The X-structure of surveillance is optical but also rational, setting up the inversion that finally brings the victim and victimizer together in a final scene where reflections on the glass separating the two men anamorphically blends their faces. At this point it may be possible to speculate about how the components of the master's house constitute a 'cipher' that combines perceptual data with the logical order of consciousness. Unlike theories of the unconscious that romanticize it as an inaccessible repository, this interactive model inverts the usual inside-outside relationship that plants the unconscious at the interior of the subject's 'point of view'. Rather, this analysis relocates the unconscious at the antipode of the point of view, the perspectival 'vanishing point', released from its obligation to sit at the horizon line to play a wider role as the subjective object, the 'extimate', the unlocatable gaze. The phrase 'unconscious of architecture' can be read 'the role of the unconscious that is played by architecture'. Architecture plays the role of one of the primary terms identified by Ernst Jentsch as a component of the uncanny: the dead thing that nonetheless contains an element of life, an element that resists pure objectivity, DA.[6] The corresponding subjective term is the AD, the living subject who is haunted by a surviving element of

the dead, a zombie, or (more conventionally) the subject and her unconscious, an automaton lodged in the center of the subject's being. The connection between AD and DA is structural but also metaphoric: the two poles define a circulation of metonymies along a Möbius-band-style circuit analogous to the linguistic trope of the anacoluthon: a temporal series that is (re)defined by an 'ungrammatical' concluding term that retroactively redefines the sequence of significations chiastically and anamorphically.

According to Lacan, the master signifier is not simply a paradigm but rather a defect in causality itself that differentiates the human concept from universals such as the 'laws of physics' that play out tautological relationships without creating remainders. An example of this latter would be F=MA, or 'force equals mass times acceleration', Newton's second law of motion. The terms are exchangeable according to the standard laws of algebraic equations. Force *is* mass times acceleration; acceleration is force *divided by* mass, etc. Causality, however, is defective in that the effect can retroactively determine the cause. Such is the case with obvious fallacies such as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, a commonplace error illustrated with high art in *Tristram Shandy*'s episode of the warm chestnut that mistakenly fell into the aperture of Phutatorious's breeches, conceived to have been a trick played by Yorick. Alas! Lacan argues that the defect is more general. By an 'impossible' topology not unrelated to the Mirror Stage's retroactive creation of the body in pieces, which falls short of the mastery indicated by its very own spectral image in the mirror, one effect standing out of a contingent series can be accelerated into becoming what Deleuze has labeled a 'demark', a non-mark, an index that becomes its own indicated. In the Steven Spielberg film, *Jaws*, the shark 'stands out' from the order of nature to become a center of meaning, through which the greed of businessmen keen to keep the beaches open even in the face of danger, the moral degeneracy of teenagers having sex in the water, and the incursion of human activities on the domain of nature all funnel. Fredric Jameson summarizes:

> [T]he vocation of the symbol – the killer shark – lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together. As a symbolic vehicle, then, the shark must be understood in terms of its essentially polysemous function rather than any particular content attributable to it by this or that spectator. Yet it is precisely this polysemousness which is profoundly ideological, insofar as it allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently 'natural' ones, both to express and to be recontained in what looks like a conflict with other forms of biological existence.[7]

The master signifier works, therefore, not as a system of mechanical idealizations of the principle of substitution (permitted cases of mistaken identity, so to speak) but as a reversal of 'antonomasia', the process by which a person or thing is given a name based on an epithet or attributes ('Old Hickory' for Andrew Jackson; 'The Little Corporal' for Napoleon; 'Stalin' – steel – for Ioseb Besarionis dze Jughashvili) to the identification of a condition

or situation with the qualities of a proper name. Reversed antonomasia elevates a literal proper name to a condition of mind or experience. Hitchcock's story about the origin of the McGuffin is key:

> It might be a Scottish name, taken from a story about two men in a train. One man says, 'What's that package up there in the baggage rack?' And the other answers, 'Oh that's a McGuffin.' The first one asks, 'What's a McGuffin?' 'Well', the other man says, 'It's an apparatus for trapping lions in the Scottish Highlands.' The first man says, 'But there are no lions in the Scottish Highlands', and the other one answers 'Well, then that's no McGuffin!' So you see, a McGuffin is nothing at all.[8]

The McGuffin's emptiness and meaninglessness captures the essence of the master signifier, whose very power and pervasiveness is based on the fact that it has no logical relationship to any referent. Andrea Battistini has argued that the logic of reversed antonomasia was, in fact, what Giambattista Vico described as the 'master key' to the mentality of the first humans, who perceived in a clap of thunder a 'word of Jove' that meant to tell them something (but they knew not what). The key is that, in a series of signifiers, a final one is pulled out of place: a metonymy 'set higher' than the rest, which back-projects a point of origin that 'must have been' the causal energy behind the previous series.[9] Vico accounted for the origin of human culture and mind in terms of a metaphor about thunder. The first humans perhaps already vocalized and used symbolic gestures, but the impact of thunder pushed them to conceive that the universe itself constituted a symbolic order, where the dimensions of time and space colluded to construct an intricate network of meanings deemed 'divine' because access to them was based on rituals of divination. The sequence of a 'push' on top of an already-in-place symbolic system was the same that Helen Keller reported when her teacher, Ann Sullivan, held her hand under a water pump while signing the word, 'water'. Keller reported that, although she had previously used signs to relate to the people and things around her, it had never occurred to her that the objects were transformed by their relation to signs, a kind of reverse causality that generated signifieds out of signifiers.[10] The connection between this 'last term' and the 'first term' creates a Möbius-band topology whose meanings lie both on the lines of signification created from the backward and forward movement but also in the *poché* spaces in between, an anamorphic quality given to all terms in light of this reversal of temporal and logical directions.

My thesis is that the complex motions mediated by metonymy, anamorphosis, 'demarks' and other features of the master signifier define material spaces and relationships that map out concrete features in works of art.[11] Using the film *High and Low* as a laboratory to test this idea, the 'master's house' is the place portrayed in the film that corresponds to a specific part of the *process* of master signification. The relation of the house to the low docklands is also double: a literal landscape relation but also a semantic relationship between the master's logic of reversed antonomasia and the 'servant's logic' of interpolation, where the 'who' of the whodunit is sought through maps

that triangulate the synesthetic clues gathered by the police during the 'police procedural' segment of the film.

Because the crime story focuses on the problem of *naming* the unknown perpetrator, it has a special relationship to this thesis about master signification. It is my contention that the defect of causality cited by Lacan is directly related to the phenomenon of the proper name. It is important to consider how antonomasia can be reversed in both specific and general ways. Various national leaders can be called 'the George Washington' of their country; but it is also the case that a more important feature of nomination can be effective. When Lacan described how the proper name relates to other kinds of signifiers, he used a mathematical analogy. The proper name, he argued, evidenced two kinds of negation. The first was a '-x' form, a *privation* or literal conversion of a positive status to a negative one, when the proper name assumed a place that did not before exist, within a series of signifiers (other names) that did not before have a place for it. The -x conveys a curiously graphic idea, a 'dark crossing' that, in the act of passing over some boundary, negates itself. The literal aspect of this was captured by Hans Holbein's use of a crucifix in the upper left corner of his famous painting, *The Ambassadors* (1533), which completes an isosceles triangle specifying, among other things, the exact moment of the end of the world thought to be set through numerological traditions (1533 = 3 x 500 + 33, the age of Christ at the time of crucifixion, at 4 p.m., when the sun was precisely 27º above the horizon of London on Good Friday, April 11).[12]

The second kind of negation carries a quality of *prohibition*: 1/x as the 'sublimation' of a wish, a desire or demand denied or displaced. Combining the -x and 1/x yields the picturesque result of √-1, or *i*. Lacan explains this spurious demonstration by insisting on the point that naming results in the 'impossible-to-think' Real – effects that permanently and radically resist symbolization. The hapless dandy, George Washington, thus becomes *the* George-Washington-Father-of-his-Country.[13]

My thesis qualifies the Lacanian account with the implied convertibility, *i*, of privation (-x) and prohibition (1/x). This convertibility is the essence of Vico's account of the first moment by which the thunder is conceived as the word of Jove. That it is also the *name* of Jove is significant. The impossible-Real phenomenon of thunder becomes the basis of the first rituals: sacrifice, divination, marriage and burial. The *dimensionality* of the new human mentality combines the invisible world of space and the non-immediate forms of time, past and future, with the notion of *prohibited* knowledge – 'sacred' in its original sense of *both* reviled/feared and set apart. The √-1 quality that unites privation with prohibition in the Real of early religion appears, displaced, in the phenomena of the uncanny, which are transmitted, through folk practices and superstitions, down to the present modern phenomenon of pleasure in the 'pain' of suspense stories and films. In the spirit of uniting the causes of theory with materiality, I want to go further, to show how this Lacanian 'Real of the name', reversed antonomasia, can be found in the primary structures of

the uncanny and the deployments of the uncanny in architecture as viewed through the lens of popular culture.

## Components of the Unconscious of *High and Low*

**The enthymeme.** At the most generalized scale, master signification resembles the enthymeme, the kind of syllogism dedicated to rhetoric. Like standard syllogisms, the enthymeme comprises a major premise, in which a first and middle term are related ('All men are mortal', $A \supset B$), a minor premise ('Socrates is a man', $B \supset C$) and a conclusion ('Socrates is mortal', $C \supset A$). The middle term, 'man', B, is silent in the enthymeme. It is a metonymic aspect of the expression 'Socrates is mortal' that, by being suspended as a commonplace silently held in the minds of the audience members, creates a bond between speaker and audience. In actual applications, this suspension usually plays an ideological role. In suspension, the silent middle term becomes open to a wide range of associations that the audience believes that the speaker believes that the audience believes, etc. In *The Iliad*, Agamemnon tests the will of the Argives by telling them to go home. The effect of this inverted advice (-x) is to create, silently, the response of prohibition (1/x) felt as duty: the soldiers deem it cowardly to go home. Soldier speech constitutes an especially ideological type of discourse for ancient Roman and Greek thought.[14] Without the silent component, which 'crisscrosses' between the universals of morality and the immediacies of martial conflict, no soldier would find a way to attach the contingent particulars of his own thoughts and experience to the 'larger cause' of the personified city-state. Scenes of battle are framed 'anamorphically', that is to say, they are not simply static time-sections of an armed encounter but the Bergsonian 'dynamic time sections' that provide a topologically continuous space (Ø) that creates the stories of heroism, victory and defeat. This Ø is counterpart to the iconic trophy, the stack of weapons, valuables, standards and other devices of heroic uniform that, like the stack of stones (herms) used in silent trade, mediate without specifying particulars. Like the mechanical linkage of photographic images in film, the Ø 'opens up' the static, infinitely divisible space to the imaginative engagement of the audience members, who 'complete' the film with their own unconscious contribution through the Ø/β function.

The enthymeme's silent middle term, $B \supset B$, converts particulars to universals to create ideological messages that appear in a quite different form from the 'raw materials' of contingent experience. The self-cancellation of $B \supset B$, its zig-zag between container and contained, its twisted logic, produces a curious phenomenon: a space that serves as a 'domain' in a functional sense and an 'architecture' in a semantic sense – simultaneously divided (into two parts) and whole. If the unconscious is thought to be a kind of function, contingent experience is 'mapped on' to a domain thanks to explicit instructions of the function. F(x)=y, the general form of the mathematical function, instructs each

x to find its place within the new domain, y. This new domain is spatially structured by the function, F, which is 'invisible' unless the pattern of new locations can be discovered. The Lacanian unconscious qualifies the case of location in this way: each location is single and double at the same time – in other words, the condition of anamorphosis (appearance determined by the point of view). The *observer* is thus brought into the determination of location. This is not simply a thoughtful inclusion of the issue of intersubjectivity but a radical use of vectors relating subjectivity and objectivity.

The functional formula can be abbreviated. It is the same as that specified by Ernst Jentsch in his consolidation of the phenomena of the uncanny into two contrasting states: that of the dead thing or person that contains a kernel of life (DA); and that of the living person or thing whose essence is controlled by something dead (AD). The former condition is a variation on the Lacanian 'partial object' – what Žižek has called, in a telling inversion of Deleuze's phrase, 'an organ without a body'. This is the severed hand of the dead concert pianist who avenges his murder in a grade-B horror film (DA), which mirrors the function of the eponymous Red Shoes in Michael Powell's 1948 film, metonymies (parts of the dancer's traditional gear) that 'dance for her' (AD). The automaton component of the partial object, A or D, can appear as either the resistance to death that Freud called the death drive, and which Lacan associated with the period known as 'between the two deaths'; or as a more literal drive towards death as a kind of vanishing point, particularly the kind 'disassembled' by Giorgio de Chirico's (1888-1978) famous 'vanishing vanishing points' (VP$^2$), which articulated the process of vanishing to allow this 'point' to dart around corners and hop over walls.

AD and DA show how the enthymeme's middle term (B⊃B) is 'uncanny' in its ability to work as a universalizing-particulizing machine, but how its function is not at all theoretically complex but, rather, the highly consumable stuff of the popular imagination. In *High and Low*, the film, like the enthymeme's middle term, is divided into two parts that are really one part. The crisscross is the film's psychological midpoint, the apex of two lines of action, the first characterized by a dark cross/crossing, a '-x' logic of exchange (where the exact amount of money needed for the industrialist's take-over is matched by the kidnapper's demand, etc.), the second by a '1/x' logic of spatial determination, where every clue is given in a synesthetic code (the kidnapped child's memory of sun angles, trolley sounds, a glimpse of Mt. Fuji, etc.). Synesthesia dominates the ordering procedures of the police: maps, interpolations and traps. The theme of this second 'line of action' is triangulation. The kidnapper's planning, his execution and his flight yield three distinctively different kinds of clues.

Strangely, these correspond to the three kinds of architectural considerations that Vitruvius defines as the basis for the standard drawing types of plan, elevation and perspective/section: 'ichnography', 'orthography' and 'scenography'. In the first case, a domain is staked out, so to speak. Then, lines (or the buildings themselves) are raised orthogonally from the plan-site.

Finally, the 'scene' is constructed by placing the building in context, showing how sun angles create shadows in certain ways, how the building affords certain views, how qualities such as the thickness of walls and orientation of openings affect qualities of light and dark. 'Scenography' comes from *skiagrafia*, the 'casting of shadows' and, hence, relates to the more mysterious practices of foundation rites where representations of human shadows could be substituted for the flesh-and-blood victim to secure the spiritual safety of the building and its inhabitants.[15]

*High and Low* uses these Vitruvian qualities in reverse order, but in ways that require dropping out a metonymical feature and momentarily suspending its effects. The kidnapper has fixed the master's house with a telescope he has set up in his apartment down below. The metonymy of this optically enhanced variation on the evil eye is the shadow-line created by the edge of the house's windowsills. This shadow line defines a triangle of invisibility that traps the police, who must not be seen consulting with the industrialist and his family. They scuttle close to the floor, forcing the traditional posture of the servant in the presence of the master, though it is they, the -x of the kidnapper, who direct the master when he negotiates with the kidnapper on the phone. Orthography, the pride and wealth represented in the master's house as a representative metonymy – literally raised above the docklands district – is the dimension of the Real, the line along which metonymies rise and fall. The metonymy of the kidnapper, his invisibility, is returned to the story in the form of the 'acousmatic' voice over the phone. The suspension of any knowledge about the kidnapper's location is of course the *sine qua non* of any crime story. In kidnapping plots, the role of the voice is essential; so is the voice's relation to its dislocation. We see the elaborate dimensionality of this relation when the kidnapper directs Kingo Gondo to take a high-speed train, watch for specific marked locations and drop the ransom money through the train's air vent. Knowing that the police will be filming the drop, the kidnapper plans in advance the angles of view, face-shielding hats and concealed parking places needed for a 'clean getaway'. All of these details are normal for any crime procedural, but they are important clues for the critical understanding as well. They show how 'orthography' and 'ichnography' must intersect using the shadow lines of 'scenography'. What we also realize, as critics as well as consumers of the entertainment aspect of the film, is that the crisscross of scenography is the $B \supset B$, anamorphosis ($\omega$), the dynamic time section ($\emptyset/\text{ß}$), the *croce oscura* that affords and structures the multiple points of view whose interpolation will achieve the pleasure of the film. In other words, the enthymeme's silent middle, $B \supset B$, can be constructed into multiple material conditions, $\omega$, whose anamorphic quality in turn regulates the functionality of the audience's (and the narration's representative characters') points of view. In this materialization, we see how *encadrement* – internal framing and rotational 'bird's eye view' techniques – creates shadows-in-shadows that position the audience both outside and inside the work of art at the same time, another version of the AD/DA uncanny.

**Metonymy**. The orthogonal line that facilitates the elevation of the master's house and the mirrored drop-out of the kidnapper – a medical student who has literally 'dropped out' of his studies – should be considered as a symmetrical operation. In a sense, the two metonymies, master and servant, are a form of the -x logic: one 'pays for' the other. They are the vertical dimension of the domain on to which the function of the unconscious maps the events and actors. Agencies are reversed: the servant becomes the master, the master the servant. Acts are inverted: the kidnapper's hate must be converted to care for the child in order to get the desired ransom; the master's love for his child is inverted because he must pay the ransom for his chauffer's son, not his own; and, most generally, the audience converts its anxiety, the essence of any whodunit, to the pleasure of watching.

The twinned metonymies are echoed with various devices, the most famous of which is the colored smoke that indicates, from the vantage point of the master's house, the incinerator the kidnapper has used to dispose of the ransom money suitcase. The case, specified by the kidnapper, was packed with a special powder that burned pink. Kurosawa 'miraculously' shows us pink smoke in a few color frames sutured into the black-and-white film stock. At the end of the film, the industrialist's prize clock is shown with a price-tag on it. He has, in his descent from high to low, 'paid the price' in an atomistic way. The drop is apparent, too, in his return to his old trade, shoe repair. In another scene, he is shown mowing his own lawn, detached, in a trance: a zombie who is now 'between the two deaths'.

The exchange economy of -x is itself shadowed by the 1/x 'space of prohibition' that is the police procedural portion of the film. Here, the function of mapping that is the essence of the function is portrayed literally. The police work with a wall-sized map of Yokohama – literally connecting the dots – of the synesthetic/anamorphic clues they have collected. Triangulation reveals the location of the kidnapper's apartment, the house near the coast where the child was held. These economies, it should be noted, have their own temporal anamorphosis, or $B \supset B$, a simultaneous relationship of past, where the clues have been left, and the future, where the kidnapper must be trapped. In the former, the gaze is centripetal: it focuses on the master's house from an unknown point of view. The acousmatics of the telephone voice and the relation of the kidnapper's gaze to the folklore of the 'evil eye' (the force that seeks to 'even all scores' by redistributing concentrations of wealth, luck or beauty) focus on the objects of envy, the master and his house. In the second part of the film, the '1/x' phase so to speak, this directionality reverses. The police look outward: they set up surveillances, canvas neighborhoods, look outward freely from the master's house to the docklands below. The subtraction of the gaze and voice from perceptual space in the '-x' logic is transplanted by the inversion protocols of the '1/x' logic. Every point is a point *with respect to* the organizing framework of the hypothetical execution of the crime. The kidnapper has engineered a space within a space, intended to be invisible. The police must de-engineer this space to pull it to the plane of the

map that serves as their plan of action. They are, it should be noted, the agents of 1/x, of prohibitions taken in the most recognizable form, 'the Law'. They are officers, but, Lacan would ask, 'officers of *what*?' The film allows us to give a rather perverse answer: officers of the dead (-x) who 'make people pay (x) for their crimes (1/x)'. Gondo's status as the 'dead man' (*le mort* is the French term for 'dummy', in both bridge and ventriloquism) is evident in his AD-like, going-through-the-motions, zombie nature after his deal has been ruined by a case of mistaken identity. This, too, is ironic, for we may have overlooked the conversations early in the film about Gondo's presumption in 'taking over the company', in appearing to be a captain of industry when in truth he began as a simple shoemaker. Agency is about mistaken identity. Acts, ultimately love or hate, lead us to the intransitivity and anamorphy of the final scene where Gondo meets the soon-to-be-executed kidnapper, a case of DA meeting AD at a 'dark crossing' emphasized by the doubly reflecting glass of the interview cell. Here, the relationship between the two *systems* of exchange, privation and prohibition, kidnapping and police procedural, perform their final Möbius-band twist in the large glass's matched reflections of master and slave.

## The Architectural (=Political) Unconscious

The unconscious of *High and Low* displays many of the popular conceptions of what an unconscious should be. The themes, characterizations and story itself create details that are overlooked, seen but not noticed, present only in a virtual sense. These constitute a 'treasury of signifiers', present only under the condition that it is absent, a -x feature. They are opportunities held in reserve, a buried wealth that underwrites the film's basic story. The functional aspect of the unconscious, adds a 'motive' element to these opportunities or 'affordances'. Like the motive of any crime story, the quality of prohibition must be present for a crime to exist: *habeas corpus*. *Habeas*, translated 'We command that you have,' is a demand for evidence, but also the call for the appearance of the accused before a judge. The corpus is not the body of the murder victim, as is often thought, but the body of the accused, which must be brought to the imaginary screen of legal representation, the process of 1/x where contingencies are matched to laws. In the defense of officers charged with the beating of Rodney King in 1991, leading to acquittals that sparked the 1992 Los Angeles riots, the defense used video footage of the beatings that seemed to show clearly a group of policemen beating a black man severely and without provocation. Slowed down to a frame-by-frame presentation, the defense argued successfully that 'no crime was evident': no event shown on any single frame that could be said to portray anything not allowed by policy and law. In other words, the 1/x mapping, *when allowed to leave out the Ø/β*, was able to exchange technicality for true law. The Ø/ß, clearly, is related to the bonding of justice, required by common law, of the literal word of the law with the contingent circumstances of the hypothetical crime.

Word and image, logic and experience, law and order – these familiar couplings conceal a complex uncanny order. Without the materializations afforded by the uncanny crisscross of economies, the mirrored motions of metonymies, the creation of anamorphic conditions and partial objects, the silence of the middle term of the enthymeme, no justice can prevail. Logic creates only polarized terms that demand mediation, paradoxically aiming to sharpen the focus of the *necessarily blurred margin*. Blurring allows for the exchange of inside and outside that Lacan identified with *extimité*, the 'extimate'. Clarity destroys the dynamics of the time-slices that Bergson used to compare experience to cinema, albeit in fits and starts; but Bergson's genius was to compare the mechanical apparatus of cameras and projectors to the mechanical nature of the unconscious, the Ø as automaton. This half-live, half-dead agency, in a perpetual Proustian twilight between sleeping and waking, is the guarantor of authenticity, which Lacan signified by the *poinçon*, ◊, also written as <>, 'both lesser and greater than'.

Bruce Fink has made Lacan's complicated numerical analogy of the unconscious more understandable to non-native speakers of Lacanese. For a given sequence of, say, coin-toss results represented as 1 and 0 (e.g. 0010101110100101…), assigning numbers to represent the three possible conditions of contingency (Lacan used four) shows that there *must* be a consistent pattern of even and odd numbers. This rule resulting from randomness demonstrates how the unconscious 'forgets nothing', 'accepts everything' and 'works without instruction'. Similarly, the physicist Stephen Wolfram has shown how 'automatons' (transformation rules based on adjacency conditions) are capable of producing not only patterned relationships out of random initial sequences but structures that are fractal – i.e. structured the same *at all scales*.[16]

Mathematical analogies do not satisfy readers who, more intent on a phenomenological reading, inadvertently commit a conservative, 'right deviation', as Colin McCabe, the film critic and scholar of Freud and Lacan, characterized critical projects leading to a 'universal mythology grounded in biology'.[17] The swerve to the critical right is somewhat akin to the swerve to the political right: a Jungian reading that finds an 'inner nature' to ground appearances, a unity behind diversity. The complementary left deviation, represented by Alfred Adler's project of locating Freud's workings of the psyche in social relations, shows how politics is, inevitably, a condition of 'locating' the unconscious. The middle line, the Lacanian-uncanny line, is not politically neutral. Rather, it is 'neutrally' (objectively) political. Vico, in his idea of the *universale fantastico*, the 'imaginative universal' that converts the contingent syllables of the thunder into the laws of Jove, the -x of metonymies that drop out all conventionalizable meanings from the word that James Joyce quoted as 'bababadalgharaghtakamminarro-nnkonnbronntonnerronnt uonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohoohoordenenthurnuk', converts to the prohibitions of law by being *both* the name of Jove and the logic-of-the-name,

the antonomasia that materializes the connection of privation and prohibition in the √-1 (unsymbolizable) Real.

Vichian-Joycean thunder happens in ways that are radically historical, radically political, because they are in effect the enthymemic basis of the ideology that distinguishes the stages of history, taken at the scale of cultures, groups, individuals or even particular experiences. There is, so to speak, *always* a master's house, *always* an architecture of invisible-visible dimensions, *always* a ichnography and orthography linked by an anamorphic scenography. This is the meaning of the master and his house: the *politically* architectural unconscious.

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## Notes

1   Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. T.G. Bergin and M.H. Fisch (Ithaca, 1984). For an insider's early take on this work, see Mark Poster, 'Review, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* by Fredric Jameson', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 36/2 (September 1981): pp. 252-256.

2   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981).

3   Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honorable Defeat* (New York, 2001). The matter of double negation is a key component of Lacan's account of the unconscious and, curiously, a complex function that varies considerably from language to language. Where, in English, the double negative is ungrammatical ('I don't want no advice'), other languages require it. Cases of triple and even quadruple negations suggest that this is a case where language meets the unconscious directly.

4   Akira Kurosawa, *High and Low* (film), 1963. The title is a translation of 'Tengoku to jigoku,' literally 'Heaven and Hell'. The story was based on *King's Ransom*, a police-procedural novel by Ed McBain (pen-name of Evan Hunter).

5   The industrialist, Kingo Gondo, began his career as a shoemaker, a low profession because of the necessity to handle leather. In pre-modern, mostly vegetarian, Japanese society (1600-1868), leather crafts (along with grave digging) were the work of outcasts because of the necessity of handling the skin of dead animals.

6   Ernst Jentsch, 'Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen', in *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 8/22 (1908): pp. 195-198 and 8/23: pp. 203-205.

7   Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York, 1990): pp. 26-27.

8   Sidney Gottlieb and Christopher Brookhouse, *Framing Hitchcock: Selected Essays from the Hitchcock Annual* (Detroit, 2002): p. 48.

9   Andrea Battistini, 'Antonomasia e universale fantastico', in L.R. Santini (ed.), *Retorica e critica letteraria* (Bologna, 1978): pp. 105-121.

10  Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (London, 1914).

11  The reverse is also an interesting effect of master signification: the use of art to specify the 'ideal contents' of thought and language. In effect, the reciprocity suggests a dialectical method, where theoretical processes and material artifacts interact and suggest gradual adjustments, either to the theory of signification or to the ways the artwork is characterized.

12 That this cross and its attendant anamorphic geometry is frequently excluded in reproductions of the painting is addressed by John North, *The Ambassadors' Secret: Holbein and the World of the Renaissance* (New York, 2004). The symbol of prohibition, 1/x, could be examined from the perspective of the curtain that half hides the crucifix, keeps it near the frame and, hence, both in and out of the scene.

13 On the retroactive construction of public ego of this particular popular culture figure, see Jill Lepore, 'His Highness', A Critic at Large, the *New Yorker* (27 September 2010): pp. 80-86.

14 Nadejda Popov, 'Soldier Speech Acts in Greek and Roman Literature and Society', Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2008, pp. iii-iv.

15 Vitruvius Pollo, *On Architecture*, trans. Frank Granger (Cambridge, MA, 1962): pp. 25-27. The *skia* was originally a tent or screen set up for the projection of shadows made by puppets or live actors. In Elizabethan England, the standard slang term for actor was 'shadow.' See Donald Kunze, 'Skiagraphy and the Ipsum of Architecture', in *Architecture and Shadow*, ed. David Murray, *VIA, Journal of the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania* 11 (1990): pp. 62-75.

16 See Sir James George Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, Part 2, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 3rd edn (New York, 1955): pp. 89-90.

17 Stephen Wolfram, *A New Kind of Science* (Champaign IL., 2002). See especially, Chapter 6, 'Starting from Randomness', pp. 223-296. Again, we find this idea both at the highest reaches of scientific speculation and the ground-level of comedy. In Tom Stoppard's 1990 film, *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead*, the eponymous characters are shown flipping a coin that continually comes up heads. In true Lacanian fashion, Rosencrantz concludes that there is something wrong with reality, not the coin. The 'defect in causality' is the master signifier, just as in Hamlet, the source for the film, the defect is in the king, evidenced by the murdered father who 'does not know he is dead' (Da).

18 Colin McCabe, 'Introduction', in Sigmund Freud, *The Schreber Case*, trans. Andrew Webber (London and New York, 2003): p. xi.

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# The Stolen Hope: Reading Jameson's Critique of Tafuri

*Gevork Hartoonian*

## Opening

Paying homage to Frederic Jameson's two notions of the 'political unconscious' and history, this essay will attempt to provide a historical reading of Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* (1976). I will argue that the ontological aspect of architecture demands some modest interventions in the two notions upon which Jameson bases his criticism of Tafuri. This is not to underestimate his brilliant readings of the political unconscious through major contemporary literary texts. He has correctly demonstrated, for example, the possibility of reaching the 'political unconscious' of a text while unpacking the traces of the Real, which according to him, no narrative can omit. The text has to draw the Real into its own textuality.[1] And yet, while a novelist's narrative remains the most appropriate subject for Jameson's Marxist historicization, architecture's submission to a historicist analysis cannot avoid, for reasons that will be explained shortly, travelling a bumpy road. Still in the process of its inception, a novel enjoys a degree of autonomy that architectural production can only dream of. Architecture, instead, is driven by capital and, in part, is capital in its own right. This partly explains why Jameson's notion of semi-autonomy will be considered helpful, if only to highlight architecture's uniqueness among other works of art.

Written two decades ago, Jameson's reading of Manfredo Tafuri is still of interest today. Three viewpoints of historiography, Marxism and postmodernity underpin Jameson's take on Tafuri. Towards the end of 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology',[2] he criticizes the tendency within dialectical thought for betting exclusively on the reconciliation of opposites. Presenting as an historicist, not only can he not fail to see the *light of hope* through historical analysis, but he goes further, demonstrating the ways in which his position differs, firstly, from those of the writers who *feel at home* with postmodernism's disregard for fragmentation and contradiction. Secondly, he sees Tafuri's 'cultural pessimism' as the other side of the coin

celebrating postmodernism. Critiquing contemporary theories, he posits that any position on postmodernism 'must begin with a self-critique and a judgment on *ourselves*, since this is the moment when we find ourselves and, like it or not, this aesthetic is a part of us'.[3] At another level of consideration, his definition of postmodern architecture concerns the question of ornament, surface decoration on the wall, at the expense of tectonics.

Critical to the objectives of this chapter is the problematic kinship Jameson establishes between Tafuri and Robert Venturi.[4] This unwanted association is refutable on the basis of Tafuri's differentiation between the historian's task and that of the architect. This is evident from the Italian historian's claim that, after the failure of the project of modernity, the architect is left with no choice but to theorize a vision that finds itself in constant 'identity' with periodic transformations of capitalism, and working with those aspects of the art of building that in the aftermath of industrialization broke away from the old state of materiality, skills and techniques. And yet, as far as the historicity of modernism is concerned many radical architects, including Le Corbusier, had to theorize architecture in identity with the imagined *Zeitgeist* of modernity. Venturi did the same, if his work is mapped within the correlation Jameson makes between 'a moment of surface rather than of depth' and the state of late capitalism.[5] On another occasion, Jameson would equally fault the moderns and postmoderns: the first for their full trust in *Zeit* (time), and the others for their disregard for any possible appropriation of time at ontological and/or universal levels.[6] In retrospect, what differentiates Venturi from Le Corbusier is the historicity of the project of modernity. In the early stages of modernity there was enough room for utopian thinking, allowing architecture to be simultaneously timeless and contemporary. The contradictions of this historical opening inform Tafuri's criticism of the architect's constant indulgence with contemporaneity.

These tropes, and many others, I would argue, have influenced contemporary architectural historiography since then. They carry enough weight to differentiate the writing of architecture from that of 'theory'. The implied difference allowed Jameson to say correctly that one has to emulate a Blochian notion of *Hope* if one chooses to pursue a historical materialist approach. What is not addressed directly, I would further argue, is the conflict between historicization and architecture's claim for its own disciplinary history.

The difference between historicity and historicization will be taken up later in this essay. What should be discussed first is Tafuri's contribution to the formation of critical historiography in reference to the following questions, whch are essential for the objectives of this chapter. How does Jameson's criticism of Tafuri hold up against the pitfalls of 'master narrative'? Could one see the 'real' without ideological mediation: that is, the truth *as such*? No matter how insightful Jameson is on the subject of history, it is important to remember that any abstract historical narrative has the potential to dismiss the subject matter of Tafuri's historiography, that is, architecture.

These issues are raised here to show the singular position architecture occupies within the overall production and consumption cycles of capitalism. Architecture is unique in that it lives beyond its time of inception. Architecture also plays a significant role in framing and opening one's 'ideological horizon', a representational structure that allows the subject to imagine his/her lived-relations within the transpersonal realities of the metropolis, the collective.[7] Architecture's simultaneous ties with the aesthetic and the technological (the cultural and the base) are worth recalling too. No other form of artwork maintains such an exclusive rapport with capitalism, not even cinematography, to mention the most technical and artistic work of art today.

There are also residues of *pre-history* in architecture that late capitalism has not yet been able to erase completely. Even though traditional craftsmanship and material tactility are vanishing, architecture is still one of the most labour-intensive production systems, even in our age of digital reproduction. Of the tropes that work against architecture's total submission to the nihilism of technology, the body occupies a special place. The dialectic of 'inside' and 'outside' is meaningful only through the body's interaction with these spaces, and this in reference to Jameson's demarcation of the aesthetic of postmodernism from that of High Modernism, the discussion of which involves the 'dialectic of inside and outside and the question of ornament and decoration'.[8] Jameson is rightly suspicious of the available phenomenological approaches to space and the body.[9] He also scores a point in expressing his disagreement with those architects and thinkers who use the body to measure the relative alienation experienced in the metropolis. For him the body is informed and positioned through the historical processes of many social formations. It is against this theoretical background, discussed hastily in the opening pages of the aforementioned text, that Tafuri's idea of 'class criticism' captures Jameson's attention. This was enough reason for him to pursue a historicist interpretation of architecture that is centred on space and the body.

## Architecture and the Ghost of Autonomy

During the postwar era, and at the time of the rise of consumer culture, critical thinking was mostly formulated at the margins, and in a subjective withdrawal from the available mainstream discourse, High Modernism in architecture, for example. And yet, if one were convinced that there was not much to learn from Venturi's visit to Las Vegas, a radical choice was to revisit the historicity of the concept of autonomy.

Following Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) architects began to pay attention to the disciplinary culture of architecture.[10] One is reminded of the New York Five architects, and Peter Eisenman's work in particular. Of equal importance is the early work of Aldo Rossi, whose drawing, dedicated to Tafuri, was used for the front cover of *Architecture and Utopia* (1976). While

Eisenman and Rossi investigated what might be called the 'interiority' of architecture, others theorized architecture in the context of the late 1960s' interest in interdisciplinarity. One is reminded of Bernard Tschumi's notion of 'event' derived from film, Rem Koolhaas's strategic rapprochement to surrealism and Steven Holl's phenomenological interpretation of architecture. Post-1960s' architecture marked a decisive turn from the early modern architecture and the New Brutalism's interest in traditions as discussed by Reyner Banham.[11]

For Eisenman and Rossi, architecture's autonomy was geared to a formalistic interpretation of grid, plane and type. Eisenman's impulse for autonomy benefited from his own structuralist reading of Le Corbusier's Dom-ino frame. Having established the latter's conceptual contribution to modernism, Eisenman revisited formalism in analogy to what he called 'cardboard architecture'. Regardless of Eisenman's criticism of the Italian architect,[12] Rossi's work nevertheless shed light on the political dimension of architecture, a subject dismissed by Eisenman and critics who were still supportive of the idea of Brutalism. Regardless of whether one likes or dislikes Rossi's discourse on architecture, the fact remains that his generation of architects, including Tafuri, established their positions from within a left movement, the praxis of which differed from that of their colleagues in France, and other European countries. This is important because the best criticism of Tafuri, including Jameson's, dismisses the intellectual historicity of the Italian political environment.

Pier Vittorio Aureli has recently presented a picture of Rossi's work, the historical significance of which cannot be usefully assessed in isolation from the discourse of autonomy developed by the Italian Left movement of the 1960s. Criticizing the American interpretation of autonomy championed by Eisenman and Colin Rowe, Aureli discusses the architectonic implications of an autonomy that wanted to reverse the interests of working-class people defined and placed into work by capitalism. For Rossi 'the possibility of autonomy occurred as a possibility of theory; of the reconstruction of the political, social, and cultural significances of urban phenomena divorced from any technocratic determinism.'[13] While in the late 1960s the ideological dimension of capitalism found a temporary home in the renewed interest in humanism, Rossi sought *poiesis* of architecture in typological reinvention, a zero degree *form*.[14]

In retrospect, one can argue that Rossi's radicalism did not go far enough. Whilst reinterpreting architecture's autonomy, typological research did not open itself to the forces essential for a radical reconsideration of the concept of autonomy. Autonomy cannot stand without its opposite. This is evident from the discourse of a number of contemporary critics who have argued that the antinomy between aesthetic autonomy and its socio-historical imbrications are the two sides of one coin.[15]

Reiterating Althusser's discourse on semi-autonomy, Jameson moved to provide a historical criticism of tendencies permeating philosophies of

interpretation of the 1970s. Starting from the Weberian notion of the 'iron cage', Jameson highlights the idea of *total system* implied in Michel Foucault's synchronic vision of periodization. The latter's approach to history, he claimed, leaves no room for the *negative* and allows the system to expand itself to the point where it could internalize any form of resistance.[16] Jameson traces the notion of the 'negative' back to Adorno and a historicism that is blind to any positive reading of history in modernity. Jameson extends his criticism to include Tafuri and the Italian historian's strategic use of the disciplinary history of architecture as the theoretical platform for shedding critical light on architecture's operation within capitalism.

Jameson's unpacking of Tafuri's text, in the framework of 'historical materialism', leads to conclusions that are tuned with the particularities of a mode of production.[17] If his framework is suspended momentarily, then one can argue that Tafuri wrote the historicity of autonomy in the context of what Jameson calls the 'nightmare of history'. Still, if Jameson's readings are put in the context of the Italy of the 1960s, then the expected 'hope' disappears both in its cultural aspiration for High Modernism, as well as in its tendency for 'radical avant-garde up to but not beyond Brecht'. The impossibility of seeing the horizon beyond the implied limits was associated with the weakening of 'class', the universal driving force of history, and the witnessing of capitalism whose expansion on the global scale was/is unprecedented. Dialectically, these historical openings were enough for the Italian Left to promote a political praxis that differed from those proposed by their comrades in other European countries,[18] and in America where Marxism is generally reduced to an academic subject.

Massimo Cacciari's writings, among others, demonstrate the scope of theoretical work the Italian intellectuals had to survey. The cultural should be separated from economic and revolutionary politics, Cacciari argued. Indeed, all spheres of modern life should be dissociated from each other.[19] This not only recalls our earlier discussion on system-autonomy, but also says something about Tafuri's conviction that one needs to tighten the autonomy of architecture, and yet open the closure enough that it can suck in the entire disciplinary history of architecture. Both Rossi and Tafuri wanted to save architecture from 'history's nightmare' and to explain their turn to history, a domain where the distinction between local, contingency and general abstract theoretical work is blurred. Their arguments did not touch on the ground Jameson had established through his analysis of literary texts.

Towards the end of his reading of Barthes's text of 1953, Jameson suggested that a political discussion of the body (and for that matter, of architecture) would *always* 'involve a dual focus, in which the local issue is meaningful and desirable in and of itself, but is also *at one and the same time* taken as the figure for Utopia in general, and for the systematic transformation of society as a whole'. He wrote: 'the dialectic is in itself this dual obligation to invent ways of uniting the here-and-now of the immediate situation with the totalizing logic of the global or Utopian one.'[20] His dictum should be taken seriously,

particularly in relation to the reversal informing Tafuri's text. For the Italian historian, the 'general' was the International Style architecture unfolding on a global scale beyond its European and/or American contexts. The 'local' in Tafuri's paradigm was the political praxis of the Italian Left — where, in addition to the formulation of a political subject, at stake was the reconstruction of the postwar Italian cities.[21] Needless to say, the reversal informing Tafuri's work did not contribute to 'the Marxian problematic', a task Jameson expects to be pursued by any textual analysis. If so, how then can the historiography of architecture possibly contribute to the task Jameson underlined?

To expand the horizon of this question, we should turn to the two moments Jameson highlights in Tafuri's analytical work. We are reminded of Tafuri's reading of Mies's Seagram building, and what is today called Karl Marx-Allee. In both cases institutional decision-making preceded design. In the case of Vienna, a number of architects, including Peter Behrens and Karl Ehn, had the opportunity to collaborate with the Left-oriented thinkers, and to recalibrate Marxism with democratic politics. In her exhaustive study, Eve Blau demonstrates the theoretical underpinning of *Wiener Gemeindebauten*. Among others, mention is made of Otto Wagner's inclination for a potential reconciliation between the basic economic organization of the modern metropolis and architectural traditions, and Camillo Sitte's ideas regarding the three-dimensional concept of urban space.[22] This collaboration promoted the idea of social housing produced between 1920 and 1930, the outcomes of which preoccupied the Italian architects' debate concerning the state of architecture and the city.

Writing in *Contropiano*, 1971, Tafuri argued that socialism for Austro-Marxists was 'a moral ideal directly confronting the objectivity of the capitalist order'. Tafuri's criticism was centred on the pluralistic formal language of the erected buildings. He wrote that there is no meaning in the play of forms of the best buildings of the architects of Red Vienna. What they did 'accomplish with their architecture is the exhaustion of style'.[23] Red Vienna was exemplary for Tafuri, as was the case when the rethinking of the bourgeois urban space had no choice but to limit itself to housing blocks. Having witnessed the experience of the Soviets, for Tafuri, any political decision-making concerning the space of the city could not have a profound impact on the everyday life of the working class if it were not related to a radical change in the economic structure of capitalism.[24]

It is clear that Tafuri's analysis of the Karl-Marx-Hof housing project (1927-1930) challenged the editorial position of *Contropiano*. As Aureli has discussed in detail, the journal's founding editors, including Massimo Cacciari, were of the opinion that 'it was time to abandon the emphasis on the critique of ideology for a theory of power, focused not only on politics but also on culture at the level of philosophy and especially of architecture and the city'.[25] What most informed Tafuri's analysis was a relative consciousness of the state of the collective, which at its best, according to Jameson, could map 'optimistic' evaluation of a possible 'long march through institutions'. Or else the implied

totality could only support the idea that architecture plays its political role when the revolution has already taken place, as was the case with the Soviet Union of the early 1920s.

As for the Seagram building, one can suggest that the implied Miesian silence should be taken for *anonymity*. The building's failure to make a direct communication with the spectator, of the kind ensured by postmodern architecture, is consistent with the tectonics, which in this particular case work strategically against the drive for maximization of profit. The tower's setback from its property line, for example, provides a *terrace* in the Semperian meaning of the word, which in return complements the building's non-figurative volume. It is a strategy of deconstructing the notion of 'block', the economic measure of Manhattan's grid. In return, the setback offers the city a void, if not a wasteland.[26] This 'plaza' constituted the 'planimetric inversion of the significance of the skyscraper, the language of nil, of the silence which—by a paradox worthy of Kafka—assaults the noise of the metropolis'.[27] Following Fritz Neumeyer, Aureli points to the paradoxical rapport Mies's building maintains with the metropolis through the element of the plinth. This is another way of saying that architectonic elements of pre-history have the potential to put limits on the 'ineffable attribute of production'.[28]

This reading of Mies highlights the critical role that the elements of the pre-history of architecture (the tectonic grounding of a volume on its terrace) can play for, what otherwise Jameson considers, a Heideggerian concern for a phenomenological construction of 'place'.[29] The suggested interpretation also avoids canonical readings that highlight the abstract gridded volume of the Seagram building whilst declining to identify the work with High Modernism.

Sharing the basic principles of historical materialism outlined by Jameson, a semi-autonomous analysis of architecture is indeed useful. It concerns the ideologies of architecture, setting the benchmark for architecture's success and failure at each developmental turn of capitalism. Seen from this perspective, one can argue that Tafuri's strategy was open-ended. For him *crisis* was endemic to the project of Modernity. As we will see shortly, this was one reason he turned to the historiography of pre-modern architecture. On the other hand, he did not formulate a revolutionary architecture, a theoretical closure proper. For him, Soviet Productivism and Constructivism were 'the full affirmation of the ideology of work'.[30] Neither was he interested in following the early historiographies of modern architecture because, in his opinion, their authors retained an uncompromising modernist vision, making no attempt to introduce 'historiographical arrangement' into their narratives.[31] Tafuri's strategic position drew from the fact that the principle contradictions of capitalism are constantly and ferociously changing as the system moves towards total control of the body and space.

### Architecture and the Ghost of History

Jameson cements his criticism of Tafuri in a discussion that concerns the problems of writing history. He returns to the subject in another essay published in the same volume mentioned earlier.[32] Among other things, Jameson argues that the historian should establish a historical dialogue between past, present and future. This is convincing insofar as its outcome could overcome the limits of historicism, the narrative of which stops short of revealing the panorama of the idea of hope. Jameson leaves aside any discussion of *time* in historiography, at least for now. Instead, he takes the subject of 'period style', and illuminates his excursions into postmodernism critically evaluating a few contemporary architectural theories.[33]

Recalling the nineteenth-century fallacy that the past can be seen and is not represented in narrative form (storytelling), Jameson dwells on the dialectical tradition. He recalls Althusser's idea that the historian should not see his or her task as 'that of producing a representation of history, but rather as that of producing the *concept* of history'.[34] Jameson benefits from the French thinker's criticism of what is called 'expressive casualty', in reference to a historicization that charts events as the cause of some deeper master narrative, historical necessity. What Jameson adds to Althusser's consideration of history (understood as having an absent cause) is its accessibility in textual form, and that 'our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious'.[35] What is involved here is the idea that everything is social and historical,[36] including the past and its repressed revolutionary claim, which is expected to question and interrupt the smooth progression of history, to recall Walter Benjamin.

This German thinker's significance for both Tafuri and Jameson will be addressed shortly. Suffice it to say for the moment that the claims made above have to be restructured in the purview of the now of the present: how the Real turns into a 'symbolic act'. Such a complex picture of the rapport between past, present and future, and the critical drive to seek its political unfolding through various contemporary interpretative systems, is the hallmark of Jameson's contribution to Marxism. He writes,

> Marxism subsumes other interpretive modes or systems; or, to put it in methodological terms, that the limits of the latter can always be overcome, and their more positive finding retained, by a radical historicization of their mental operations, such that not only the content of the analysis, but the very method itself, along with the analyst, then comes to be reckoned into the 'text' or phenomenon to be explained.[37]

To this end, a structuralist notion of semi-autonomy must be critically restructured in three layers. The first layer concerns the text or the subject of study (considered as a symbolic act), which is not confined to the formal, but to what is called the content of form. The latter's modus operandi is expanded to include diverse antagonistic dialogues which take place within the totality

of a socio-economic system. The second layer, termed *ideologeme*, should be critically considered within 'history' (the third layer), the wind of which propels one to leave the dust of various earlier modes of production behind.

This rather dense summary of Jameson's main position ends in classifying Tafuri's formulation of a dialectical history of architecture with other 'negative' thinkers, Jameson critiques. We are reminded of Barthes and Adorno and how they perceived and presented a closed system of the history of literature and music, respectively. Having Marx's *Das Kapital* in mind, Jameson sees the role of historian neither as confirming nor denying historical events in terms of 'what should have happened', nor confining the main feature of dialectical historiography to the many transformations shaping a particular work of art, aesthetic or otherwise. In addition, the historical narrative should recognize that 'the phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process', to quote Marx.[38] Thus, the mental life of the architectural historian, for example, should not see the past as it was, nor should the subject of investigation be reduced to a deterministic account of some historical factor alone. An allegorical reading of history, instead, opens a space through which the past will become an active agent in the historian's interrogation of different historical structures. Instead of seeing and judging the past in the light of the *Zeitgeist*, it is the past's judgement on the forms of our everyday life that allows for the emergence of a critical awareness of the present.[39] Jameson's is a strategy for opening up the closed circle implied in any negative reading of the prospects of architecture in capitalism. This is the gist of his criticism of Tafuri. Its further understanding demands a closer consideration of the Italian historian's text.

Tafuri published *Architecture and Utopia* in essay form in *Contropiano* (1969) first, and later as a pamphlet titled *Progetto e Utopia* in 1973. Written during the postwar 'reconstruction' period of Italian architecture and design, the text presents a critical analysis of the experience of Modern Movement architecture. It also draws conclusions partly from ideas discussed in the author's first book, *Teorie e Storia* (1968). The time elapsing between the text's appearance in Italy and its English translation suggests a temporal doubling, which involves the dialectics of 'lived-time' and 'historical time'.[40] On the one hand, one can approach Tafuri's text in its historicality, the intellectual environment of the Italy of the 1960s and the 'operative' dimension of Tafuri's project. Added to this is the socio-political situation, when the intelligentsia of the Left was not yet completely disenchanted with its own destiny. Cynicism was not a viable alternative. Against the tendency for aesthetic detachment, and the economic integration of culture in the emerging organization of the late capitalist system, a group of Italian intellectuals of the 1960s considered 'the only path to autonomy to be a rigorous stance with respect to political positioning and political decision within society's new forms and relations of production'.[41]

On the other hand, the reception of Tafuri's English translation in America, speaks for the text's historicity in the America of the 1980s, when cultural

structuralism and semiological methodologies informed analysis. This is evident from Tafuri's letter to Joan Ockman, one of the organizers of a symposium held at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York City, March 1982.[42] In the letter, Tafuri attempts to clarify his position which, he felt, was misrepresented in the gathering. He was mostly pictured as a 'pessimist' or nihilist. Tafuri reminded the American readers of their limited ability to learn from history; their narrow scope of a critical understanding of the limits of architecture; and the fact that those who wrote about him in America never put 'things into their historical context: 1973 is not 1980, is not 1985 …'.[43] Reluctant to pursue a total picture of history, Tafuri wanted to underline the historicity of modernity: the cognitive mapping of an historical event palpable to various developmental phases of capitalism, their impact on architecture, and the latter's strategic weakness within the alleged confrontation. As will be discussed below, the historical time of architecture, hinted at in Tafuri's letter to Ockman, refers to that moment when architecture realized a third way of relating to its own disciplinary past, an alternative, essentially different from the Renaissance practice of complementing or reverencing the classical past. In doing so, Tafuri avoided fabricating a complementary relationship between *architectural* and historical. Daniel Sherer writes that Tafuri 'wove the two perspectives dialectically, preserving (as Piranesi did in the Parere) the *conjunctio oppositorum*'.[44] This dimension of Tafuri's work remains constant whether he is seen as a historian, architect or a critic.

Tafuri's contribution in *Architecture and Utopia* can be summarized in two points: firstly, that the eighteenth-century architecture enjoyed a momentary autonomy from the classical wisdom which soon had to give way to the imperatives imposed by the production and consumption cycles of capitalism.[45] The departure embodied a number of contradictions that modern architecture had to face in the course of its historical development. Nevertheless, the suggested rupture did not adhere to a structuralist understanding of history, a closed circle of enunciations and praxis. It was, rather, pursued as an open field of architectural operations and formulation of Utopia theories, the 'anguish' of which can only be apprehended if one sees in them the presence of architecture's past. The past included not only the artisan dimension of architecture but that which is 'internal' to architecture as well — that is, the disciplinary history of architecture. Here Tafuri introduces criticism into historiography, saying 'something new about architecture's tragic destiny — its ill-fated, at times heroic, attempt to acquire autonomy in the complex (often irrational) web of social reality'.[46]

Tafuri was also sceptical of any alternative totalities proposed in reference to the *Zeitgeist* of modernity, or Utopia visions inspired by technology. For critical historiography, architecture's departure from the classical wisdom marked an exceptional event, something similar to Sigmund Freud's idea of the primal scene. Thus the suggested historical departure becomes the site to return to whenever architecture has to reinvent its disciplinary historicity. Whereas capitalism considers 'crisis' as the engine of its reproductive system,

in each turn of its crisis architecture either returns to the aforementioned 'site', or re-appropriates the elements of its own pre-history. One result of this crisis is the avant-garde's interest in the revitalization of the notion of autonomy (the Five architects and Rossi). A second ending is the resurfacing of a different notion of crisis, where the pre-history of architecture meets technology midway (Brutalism and the current turn to the tectonics).[47]

Thus, we have the notion of *jigsaw puzzle*, an analogy with which Tafuri starts and ends his narrative called 'the historical project'.[48] The idea is borrowed from Carlo Ginzburg, and is also implied in Benjamin's discourse on history. Alluding to the relationship between the structure of power and the reading of historical facts, Ginzburg recalls Benjamin's proposition that 'one has to learn to read the evidence against the grain, against the intentions of those who had produced it'.[49] Benjamin is important for Tafuri in many ways, including his remarks on montage. The fragmented and productive capacity of the building industry, and the latter's separation from the industries producing objects of applied arts, as it happened during the period of reconstruction in Italy – this is a moment when the ideological programme of design became Utopia.[50] Hence, architecture's futile and cyclic renewal through self-destruction is seen in synchrony with the periodic ruptures taking place in capitalism, apropos of Tafuri's own periodic shift to intermingle his vision of history with the available theories of the day. Like Jameson, Tafuri wanted to save the importance of history for architecture, and to demonstrate the inevitable affliction of the intellectual work with the anguish released by architecture's departure from its own classical wisdom.

At another level of consideration, the theoretical structure *of Architecture and Utopia* can be understood in terms of Adorno's concept of closure, and capitalism's will to conquer all available territory – starting with technical space – experienced in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Adorno argued that the alleged expansion reached its critical point when, after World War II and contingent with the demands of rising mass culture, technology moved from the technical to the cultural realm. The implied closure, nevertheless, can be rechannelled towards an ideological criticism that, according to Tafuri, aims at identifying 'those tasks that capitalist development took away from architecture'. In capitalism, architecture is 'obliged to return to pure architecture, to form without Utopia, in the best cases, to sublime uselessness.'[51] The closure has another facet to it: it points to the total actualization of the project of modernity, the banishment of the artisan dimension of architecture and thus building's alignment with the production line. In this transgressive process, not only is the project of the historical avant-garde doomed, gone also is the illusion imagined by some sectors of modern society of the 1920s, including the bourgeois, who dreamed of the formation of a homogeneous society nurtured by the German idealist thinkers and the architects/artists associated with the movement of National Romanticism.[52]

Jameson highlights Tafuri's appropriation of Adorno's closure without asking whether any closure necessarily prompts an opening. If it is correct

to make an analogy between Tafuri's allusion to 'closure' and the idea of the return of the same, a subject essential to modernism, then one can argue that Tafuri's later decision to rewrite the history of the architecture of humanism was nothing but a project for making an opening out of the space already framed by 'hypermodern', a term he coined for the visual culture of postmodernity.[53] Later, Tafuri would attempt to step out of the homogenized understanding of space/ time permeating every product of the culture industry. His intention was as radical as the historical avant-garde's, whose Utopias eventually ended up in the ideology of planning as discussed by Tafuri on many occasions.

It is reasonable to ask, now, how Tafuri himself confronted the anguish unleashed by architecture's departure from the classical wisdom. In retrospect, his response was not a pessimistic project: neither was it melancholic, aiming 'to confer on the past a wholeness that never did exist, confusing the loss of the dream with the loss of the dream's realization'.[54] Tafuri, rather, wanted to present an analogy for the 'real' of the capitalist system, especially the absent collective, the one available to Russian Constructivism, the ghost of which colours Tafuri's discourse – even if the avant-garde of the 1920s could stand ahead of the system and make politically meaningful statements.[55] Tafuri's 'bleak' vision is more relevant today when resistance knows no space and territory. Both options are indeed informed if not occupied by capitalism. Hypermodernity contains a state of possibilities in which capital has resolved 'the problem of creating new institutions capable of making their own internal contradictions function as the propelling factors of development'. If this is the case, then what could be the nature of the dialectics of space/time today? And what is the task of architecture when there is no territory within the life-world of the system to occupy, taking into account a situation when the stillness of time is experienced, in one form or another, in the entirety of the culture industry on a global scale?

## Time Out!

Contemporary thinkers in addition to historians have seldom addressed the notion of *time*. An exception to this rather general verdict is Benjamin, a critic who played a constructive role in the formation of Tafuri's discourse on history, and who is occasionally discussed by Jameson.[56] Benjamin's discourse on *time* is relevant for a critical understanding of the dialectics Jameson establishes between past, present and future, and the way Hope is expected to work through temporality.

In the 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History',[57] Benjamin sets a 'time of the now', discussing its capacity to blast the homogenous and continuum representation of time engulfed in most versions of historicism. According to him, to 'articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was"… It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of change'.[58] Starting with the *now of the present*, one is allowed to think of

the past and the future, but always in conference with the dichotomies of modernity experienced in every particular moment of the now of the present. What this claim means is that modernity should be understood as a historical phenomenon that, since its inception, has secured the right to produce and unpack its own subjects and subject matters. This process of reproduction, if you wish, is an unfolding with no exteriority. The implied closure sounds structuralist, and rightly so, if intellectual labour is considered productive only within an experience of the time that is made available by the contradictions central to the capital's interest to expand the field of what Antonio Negri calls 'socialization of production'.[59]

Therefore, the reproduction, that is the writing of the history of history's past, does not take place in a void. The now of the present is neither aligned with the continuum of the past, nor separated from it. Benjamin's notion of *time* concerns an understanding of the past that is centred on modernity and the time needed to register the latter's multifarious manifestations. In modernity the past of a phenomenon is recognized when the subject comes to recognize itself as an autonomous entity deeply dependent on the reproductive logic of capitalism. How then can architectural history be historical without including other historical narratives – social and political – within its presumed fragmentary nature.[60]

Benjamin is twice mentioned in Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia*, the first time in reference to Benjamin's short essay 'The Author as Producer', and the second time in reference to Benjamin's discourse on the loss of aura and Adorno's criticism of Benjamin. More importantly, and speaking of social conditions and their relation to the conditions of production, mention should be made of the German thinker's conviction that 'instead of asking what is the attitude of a work to the relationship of production of its time … I should like to propose another. "What is its *position* in them?"'[61] Reading Benjamin in the context of the debate within the Italian Left, Tafuri came to the following conclusions: that a semi-autonomous understanding of architecture demands seeing the horizon of knowledge opening simultaneously within and beyond class boundaries; secondly, that in capitalism, architectural production is engaged in two kinds of labour, intellectual and *abstract*. While the first deals with 'the autonomy of linguistic choices and their historical function as a specific chapter in the history of intellectual labor and its mode of reception', the other 'must be fitted to the general history of the structures and relations of production'.[62] This is the closest that Tafuri comes to Jameson. Their difference needs attention.

Following Marx, Jameson suggests that there are three concentric fields through which the social ground of a text is widened. We are reminded of the interactive rapport between a text (the object of study), the class discourses wherein the text is approached as a semi-autonomous entity, and finally the particularity of the given mode of production through which the first two levels are read in terms of 'symbolic messages transmitted to us by the coexistence of various sign systems which are themselves traces

of anticipations of modes of production'.[63] Tafuri's position, instead, can be taken for a modified version of the orthodox Marxist articulation of the way the 'base' and the 'superstructure' relate to each other. The latter is Aureli's verdict against a Tafuri discussed within the Italian Left movement of *Autonomia*.[64] On closer inspection, however, there is more in Tafuri's position. Tafuri was not concerned with the literal relationship of architecture to the forces of production seen from a totalized point of view (Jameson). Neither was he projecting architecture as the expression of a given economic structure (Aureli). Like Benjamin, Tafuri was, rather, concerned with the *position* of architecture within the relationship of production and the specificity of the work in entertaining available *techniques*. But what does the word *position* mean here? And moreover, what is the subject matter of architecture's position within a given production system?

Tafuri believed that, in analysing architecture, the task of the historian is to show how the work fails to remedy its distance from the forces of production. To him, the historian should also address the non-attainability of a coherent unity of the kind implied in Foucault's discourse on resemblance through which architecture related to the divine forces prevailing in the humanist culture of the Renaissance. 'To look for fullness, an absolute coherence in the interaction of the techniques of domination,' Tafuri argued, 'is to accept the mask with which the past presents itself.'[65] Instead of showing how architecture expresses, or is part of the *Zeitgeist* of modernity, as Giedion did for example, Tafuri wanted to cut through the stone of certainties historicism wishes to establish. He was also of the opinion that the historian should consider the historicity of his or her own narrative, that is, the *historic space* of the 'now' of the present. Here we are back to the idea of 'delirious interpretation', a state of unresolved dialectics, the kernel of 'critical history', a mental space shared by Jameson and Tafuri.

Still, there is something of *pre-history* of architecture that is dismissed in most forms of historicism and avant-gardism. One is reminded of the culture of building – the tectonics for example – or Aldo Rossi's interest in the genesis of the architecture of Rationalism. It is the recognition of this aspect of architecture and its inclusion in any account of the past that highlight the idea of critical history today. The monuments and rubble of the past 'seems […] to refer, almost allegorically, to a hidden meaning' which is not something to be traced back and understood through mediation of the historical causes of its inception.[66] Standing there as a stage set for the event to take place, the work of architecture is praxis in itself; it informs and at times contests our subjectivity. The historicity of this dialogue posits the truth content of the work. It provides the historian with a critical tool to challenge the certainties historicism establishes.

We need now to return to the issues raised earlier and to check how they match or differ from Jameson's position on history, and his criticism of Tafuri. Before doing this, it is useful to recall Tafuri's rapport with Benjamin once

again. This will help us to understand the dual operation of the concept of autonomy in contemporary architecture.

To start with, the reader should be reminded that the idea of disciplinary autonomy implied in Tafuri's reading is not a green light to formalism. Tafuri's fascination with the work of the New York Five architects, for example, was not due to the formal merits of the work. Rather, he was enchanted with the work's capacity to disclose architectural strategies available in late capitalism.[67] According to Carlo Olmo, the autonomy resides in the uniqueness of the work as a document[68], the architectonic language of which demonstrates the gap existing between intellectual labour and the forces of production. A major task of the historian is the recognition of these contradictions.

Benjamin had reached the same conclusion although approaching the subject from a different direction. For Benjamin, it is the impact of modern technology, and the mechanization of the production process that triggered the 'aura', opening the space for a different expression and communication of the work of art. Furthermore, Benjamin was less interested in architecture's relative autonomy from the classical language. His criticism, on the other hand, draws from the experience of film; its appropriation by the masses; the fragmentation achieved through montage; and the exhibition value of the work of art. These historical unfoldings allowed him to reflect on architecture in terms of building's appropriation through habit and tactile qualities, even though he believed that these habits at a given moment would adopt and internalize the exhibition value of the work of art.[69] Tafuri, instead, was more concerned with the multiplicity of languages articulated by various power structures that directly or indirectly interact with the process of architectural production. Benefiting from Foucault's discourse, Tafuri attempted to depart from a structuralist understanding of history. He wrote, 'if structuralism in any of its disguise has some contribution to make towards an accurate program of architectural historiography it is precisely in its capacity to propose meaningful historical relationships, at least as critical instruments of an initial approximational value.'[70] Thus we have Tafuri's differentiation between the autonomy of architecture, a phenomenon exercised by radical architects, and the concept of semi-autonomy central to any critical understanding of architecture's destiny in modernity.

Mention should also be made of the dichotomy between periodization and autonomy. The association of formal aspects of art with the general manifestations of a given period is credited to art historians of the last century. What period style does is to institutionalize a chain of stylistic evolution and to cement the idea of progress. It also presents *form* as the language internal to each artistic discipline. What is involved here is the tendency to present a formal correspondence between time and the human spirit. 'The spirit must *fall* into time,' writes Agamben.[71] When these benchmarks are established, then, the binary dependency between autonomy and periodization is unravelled. One might argue that modernity's departure from its pre-history stimulated the move for the autonomy of art.[72] On the other hand, any discussion of

autonomy that does not domesticate (historicize) the formal language of a particular work of art can easily turn to a transcendental discourse. Even the Adornoesque discussion of autonomy should be considered part of an intellectual labour that wanted to theorize the modernity of the work of art, in spite, or because of Adorno's intention to save the work from the hegemonic power of what is called 'culture industry'.[73] Thus, the closure implied in structuralism avoids the aforementioned dichotomy at the expense of seeing discursive formations as autonomous entities unfolding independently of contradictions internal to capitalism. This last one is another point shared by Tafuri and Jameson.

The dichotomy between periodization and autonomy, however, is sharpened when architecture is put in the picture, a subject where the two main protagonists of this essay split from each other. The art of building possesses its own internal language (the tectonic) whose constructive and aesthetic possibilities are largely determined by techniques available in every particular developmental turn of capitalism. Jameson, however, insists that any reference to the tropes of the culture of building is a hindrance to the move to make formal abstractions of a given situation,[74] and the tendency to include the time to come in the historian's narrative.

The 'position' of architecture in capitalism is further complicated considering how the factor of *time* operates in the mental life of the historian. For Tafuri, time was given within a totalized vision of modernity. Whereas such an encompassing experience of time is akin to the time structured by late capitalism today, Tafuri was not able to follow the dialectics Jameson establishes between identity and difference, and to sustain a level of criticality that is not limited to the negative implied in historicization. For Jameson, the solution to the dilemma of historical time is to posit a 'mode of Identity that is also one of radical Difference'.[75] In other words, architectural writing should not aim for cultural reproduction (representation), but cultural production proper. For Jameson, the horizon of criticality is blurred when the work is made comfortable either in the present (Identity) or in the time past (Difference).[76] Only in this line of consideration can one fully agree with Jameson's reading of Tafuri. And yet, one can argue that in Tafuri's discourse the temporal difference is not seen as pregnant with any kind of Utopian narrative, but architecture's ontological limits are revealed within the operative system of capitalism, in the last analysis. What is involved in this reading is Tafuri's failure to consider the *pre-history* elements of architecture as potential sources for critical praxis.[77]

Perhaps the time was not ripe during Tafuri's formative years to cultivate the theoretical consequences of Jurgen Habermas's claim for the incompleteness of the project of modernity.[78] This is not to say that modernity is still alive, and that there is no validity to postmodernism. In fact, the proposition suspends the linear vision of time-modern highlighting, instead, historical contradictions essential to the structure of capitalism. Without mentioning Habermas, Aureli comes to a similar conclusion. According to him, 'the internal opposition

between bourgeois values and capitalism's tumultuous revolution, which destroyed in its wake any pretended or presumably established values— into the very engine of a culture that was finally able to master capitalism by internalizing its deep causes.'[79] And Kenneth Frampton has observed that, 'The liberative modern project of the left, and modern architecture were once inseparable, at a time when modernization and progress could only be seen in a positive light.'[80] To camouflage its own internal contradictions, late capitalism did indeed usurp the utopian aspirations of history, propagating it in the name of technological progress. Late capitalism has the tendency to suspend all good and bad expectations, moving 'to eliminate awareness of historical time in order to project the present as both eternal and natural'.[81] Jameson sees the position of these historians and critics as 'conterminous with the modernizing struggles of capital itself'.[82] His own reading of the near history acknowledges the possibility of weakening the notion of *Zeitgeist* while accepting the singularity of time in modernity: that is, the recognition of the pressure for constant change, flux and uncertainty, through contradictions in which one may find the seeds of hope. Tafuri dismissed this project.

## Conclusion

The 'stolen hope' used in the title of this essay is intended to say something about this author's ambivalent reading of the positions formulated by Jameson and Tafuri; ambivalent because it is too comforting to brand Tafuri's vision of historiography 'bleak' and pessimistic. It is equally unproductive to dismiss Jameson's drive for 'hope' when the ideological mechanism of late capitalism operates on a global scale. Neither are accessible. The dichotomies that once underpinned the differences between town and country, and were essential for keeping hope at a distance are inaccessible. Also inaccessible is, today, the diversity of architectural theories available during the postwar era. In the Italy of the 1960s, to remain consistent, the most politically engaging architectural debates were centred on the reinvention of a number of theoretical objectives already mapped out by the architecture of the Modern Movement. One is reminded of organic theories (Bruno Zevi), Walter Gropius's contribution during his Bauhaus period (Giulio Carlo Argan) and the ethical legacy of the CIAM (Ernesto Rogers). It is against the background of these movements that one should highlight Rossi's interest in the Rationalist position on the architecture of the city, and Tafuri's critical work as far as the ideology of the capitalist city is concerned.[83]

Today both the subjective and the physical space of the metropolis are conquered by some form of ideology, each legitimizing the overpowering stands of capitalism in various spheres of praxis. Even the current interest in sustainability and tectonics, both delivering aspects of architecture's pre-history, are not immune to the above verdict. The hardest task might be avoiding cynicism, and interpreting the current turn to these themes in

historical terms. At the heart of these observations is the state of the subject, its autonomy and the drive to historicize the ideology of architecture even at the price of dismissing the *negative* Jameson locates in Adorno's discourse.

To follow Jameson, as Terry Eagleton has observed recently, one has to debunk the subject and its moral and psychological baggage.[84] For Jameson history is the field where constant historicization of 'events' offers the only strategy for joining the path Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' pursued. Dismissing the cynic's claim for the end of every trope of modernity, including history and Marxism, Jameson recalls the Marx of 1857 to rebuff a one-to-one correspondence between art and the prevailing economic and technical apparatus of a society. According to him, 'the difficulty lies not in understanding that Greek art and epic poetry are bound up with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable model'. To put aside the negative attributed to historicism, Jameson persuades his readers to see the hope within contradictions informing every hegemonic system, from the Greek *polis* to contemporary metropolis, *we* the civilized creatures have created. Only in such a passionate appeal to history can Jameson picture a montage of 'Stalinist executions and starvation of millions of peasants' and the Soviet Union that was also 'the death knell of Nazism and the first sputnik, the People's Republic of China and the awakening of countless millions of new historical subjects'.[85] This is his way of energizing the claim made by the debris of the past. Was not Tafuri's later decision to rewrite the history of pre-modern architecture a modest project of hope rising from the ashes of architectural history?

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## Notes

1   Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays, 1971-1986 (Minnepolis, 1988),* p. 81.

2   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory Essays,* pp. 35-60.

3   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 60.

4   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 60.

5   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 53.

6   Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London, 2009): p. 504.

7   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981).

8   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 59.

9   In his most recent book, Fredric Jameson makes an exceptional case out of Paul Ricoeur's project, explained in the thinker's 'daring conception of temporality itself as a construction, and a construction achieved by narrative itself'. See Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic,* p. 486.

10  On this subject see Gevork Hartoonian, 'Tectonics: Testing the Limits of Architecture',  in Andrew Leach and John Macarthur (eds),  *Architecture Disciplinarity, and the Arts* (Louvain, Belgium, 2009): pp. 179-192.

11  Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethics or Aesthetic* (London, 1966).

12  Peter Eisenman, 'The House of the Dead as the City Survives', in *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1978* (New York, 1979): pp. 4-15.

13  Pier Vitttorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (New York, 2008): pp. 12-13.

14  If one accepts that Aldo Rossi formulated one aspect of critical practice available at the time, another, according to Pier Vittorio Aureli, is a 'critique of ideology of the capitalist city, as this ideology manifested itself in the postwar recuperation of the Modern Movement and a new wave of technological avant-gardism in the 1960s', discussed by Manfredo Tafuri and Branzi. See Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy,* p. 55.

15  Hal Foster, *Design and Crime* (London, 2002): pp. 83-103.

16  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 91.

17  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 69.

18  On the recent history of the Left in Italy see Perry Anderson, 'An Invertebrate Left', in *London Review of Books* 12 (March 2009): pp. 12-18.

19  Anderson, 'An Invertebrate Left', in *London Review of Books* 12 (March 2009).

20  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory,* p. 73.

21  Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985* (Cambridge, MA, 1989): pp. 3-34.

22  Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna, 1919-1934* (Cambridge, MA, 1999) Highlighting the importance of Tafuri's criticism, Blau's investigation is focused on a different historiographical method. Starting from the question concerning the ideological content of architecture, the book discusses typology in reference to contemporary discourses on urban space, those elucidated by Henry Lefebvre and Edward Soja.

23  Blau, *Architecture of Red Vienna*, p. 344. See also Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture* (New York, 1980).

24  Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, pp. 49-51.

25  Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, p. 48.

26  Gevork Hartoonian, 'Mies van der Rohe: The Genealogy of Column and Wall', in *Ontology of Construction* (Cambridge, 1994): pp. 68-80.

27  Tafuri, and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture*.

28  Aureli, 'More and More about Less and Less', in *Log* 16 (Spring/Summer 2009): pp. 16-28.

29  Martin Heidegger, 'Building, Dwelling, Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York, 1971): pp. 43-162.

30  Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, MA, 1976): p. 57.

31  Tafuri, *Theories and Histories of Architecture* (New York, 1980): p. 151.

32  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, pp. 148-177.

33  I am thinking of Fredric Jameson in *The Seeds of Time* (New York, 1994).

34  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 39.

35  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 35.

36  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 20.

37  Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 76.

38  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 41.

39  Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, pp. 172-177.

40  The notion of lived time and historical time is borrowed from Susan Buck-Morss, who reflects on the experience of the Russian avant-garde with an eye on Walter Benjamin's ideas on history. Interestingly enough, in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, MA, 1987) Tafuri recalls Benjamin in the following statement: 'The critical act will consist of a recomposition of the fragments once they are historicized: in their remontage'.

41  Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, p. 19. But also see Cesar Casarino and Antonio Negri, *In Praise of the Common* (Minneapolis, 2008).

42  The content of debates and essays presented in this symposium are collected in Joan Ockman, et al. (eds) *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (New York, 1985).

43  Tafuri's letter to Joan Ockman was first published in the special issue *of Casabella* on Tafuri. *Casabella* 619-620 (January/February 1995). For a summary of the overall reception of Tafuri's work in America, see Joan Ockman, 'Venice and New York', in *Casabella* 619-620 (January/February 1995): pp. 56-65.

44  Daniel Sherer, 'Progetto and Ricerca: Manfredo Tafuri as Critic and Historian', in *Zodiac* l5 (March-August 1996): pp. 32-51.

45  Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia,* p. 3.

46  Sherer, 'Progetto and Ricerca', p. 47.

47  On this subject see Gevork Hartoonian, 'Theatrical Tectonics: The Mediating Agent for a Contesting Practice', in *Footprint* 4 (April 2009): pp. 77-96.

48   Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth,* pp. 1-21.

49   Carlo Ginzburg, *History, Rhetoric, and Proof* (Hanover, 1999): p. 24.

50   See the chapter entitled 'Ideology and Utopia', in Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia,* pp. 50-77.

51   Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia,* p. ix.

52   On this subject see Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, UK, 2000).

53   Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985,* trans. by J. Levine (Cambridge, MA, 1989).

54   Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe,* (Cambridge, MA, 2000): p. 68. She says 'Rather than taking a self ironizing distance from history's failure, we—the "we" who may have nothing more or less in common than sharing this time— would do well to bring the ruins up close and work our way through the rubble in order to rescue the Utopian hopes that modernity engendered, because we cannot afford to let them disappear.'

55   For example, his assessment of the *Siedlungen* of Ernst May, and his collaborators in Frankfurt between 1925 and 1930. Tafuri, 'Design and Technological Utopia', in Emilio Ambasz (ed.), *The New Domestic Landscape* (New York, 1972): p. 389.

56   In addition to other occasions, I am thinking of Jameson's 'Conclusion' to *The Political Unconscious* that starts with a long quotation from Walter Benjamin. See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious,* p. 281.

57   Walter Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York, 1969).

58   Benjamin, 'Thesis on the Philosophy of History', p. 255.

59   Antonio Negri and C. Cessarino, *In Praise of the Common* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota): p. 62.

60   I am paraphrasing Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Manfredo Tafuri, or Humanism Revisited', in *Log* 9 (Winter/Spring 2007): pp. 34-35.

61   Walter Benjamin, 'The Author as Producer', in Peter Demetz, (ed.), *Reflections,* (New York, 1978): p. 222.

62   Tafuri, 'The Historical "Project"', in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 14.

63   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious,* p.76.

64   Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*.

65   Tafuri, 'The Historical "Project"', p. 7.

66   Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History*, trans. Liz Heron (London, 2007): p.136.

67   On the critical nature of Manfredo Tafuri's dialogue with American neo-avant- garde groups see Diane Ghirardo, 'Manfredo Tafuri and Architectural Theory in the U.S., 1970-2000' in *Perspecta 33* 'Mining Autonomy' (Cambridge, MA, 2002): pp. 38-47.

68   Carlo Olmo, 'One History, Many Stories', in *Casabella*, 619-620 (1995), p. 79.

69   See my chapter in Gevork Hartoonian in *Walter Benjamin and Architecture* (London, 2010): pp. 23-38.

70   Tafuri, 'Main Lines of the Great Theoretical Debates Over Architecture and Urban Planning 1960-1977', in *A+U*, 1, (1979): p.123. This article discusses the thematic of what later would be the essence of Tafuri's discourse on the historical avant-garde and the historical project.

71   Agamben, *Infancy and History*, p.108.

72   For a philosophical discussion of the idea of autonomy see Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetic and Subjectivity* (London, 1990). For a discussion of autonomy and its place in contemporary architectural theories see the entire issue of *Perspecta 33*, 'Mining Autonomy', (2002).

73   Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London, 1984) Also important is Peter Burger's historicization of the avant-garde in the latter's failure to brush aside art's autonomy in an attempt to reconcile art with life. See Peter Burger, *Theory of the Avant-garde* (Minneapolis, 1984).

74   This underpins Fredric Jameson's criticism of Kenneth Frampton's formulation of 'Critical Regionalism', See Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, pp. 183-205.

75   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 172.

76   Jameson posits Identity and Difference central to the dilemmas of historicism. Jameson, 'Marxism and Historicism' in *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 150.

77   On this subject see Gevork Hartoonian, *Crisis of the Object: The Architecture of Theatricality* (London, 2006).

78   Jurgen Habermas, 'Modernity: An Incomplete Project', in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, 1983): pp. 3-15.

79   Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy*, p. 47.

80   Kenneth Frampton, 'Architecture is a Fragile Enterprise', in *Werk, bauen + wohnen* (2008).

81   I am benefiting from Harry Harootunian's review of Istavan Mezaros, 'The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time' in *Radical Philosophy*, 157 (September/ October 2009): pp. 47-50.

82   Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, p. 14.

83   Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*.

84   Terry Eagleton, 'Jameson and Form', in *New Left Review*, 59 (September/October 2009): pp. 123-137.

85   Jameson, 'Marx and Montage', in *New Left Review*, 58 (July/August 2009): p. 178.

# Designing a Second Modernity?

*Hal Foster*

My hypothesis for this essay is this: We are in the midst of another stage of modernity, sometimes called 'second modernity', in which many of the spaces associated with the first modernity of industrial capitalism are also modernized (spaces of transport, above all, but others too). In this essay I discuss two architects whose production is most telling in this regard – designers who have done as much as any others to design the look of this second modernity, to shape its desire in built form, so to speak: the Englishman Norman Foster and the Italian Renzo Piano. Both emerged in the 1960s, inspired by the visionary energies of that time, but both matured in the neoliberalism of the last three decades in a way that largely recoups such energies for corporate clients. Questions that will run, tacitly, through this talk are the following: Is there now a break in second modernity? Is the neoliberal period at an end? Or is the present crisis just a pause in both?

Let me review Norman Foster first. Foster is really 'Foster and Partners', a practice of some 650 people with projects in some 50 countries, and among its myriad works are seven banks, nine bridges, eight civic designs (such as the transformation of Trafalgar Square), 10 conference centers, 38 arts halls, 28 buildings for education and health, 10 for government, 14 for industry, 12 for retail, 35 for leisure and sport, 30 for residences, 39 masterplans (from fairs to entire cities), 16 mixed-use developments, 65 offices, 28 product and furniture models, nine research complexes and 24 transport systems (from private yachts to train terminals, metro stations and airports). There are countries, let alone governments, that are smaller; like some of its clients, 'Foster' is global in its reach. Yet for all its varied production over the last 40 years the practice has remained coherent in style and consistent in quality; technologically advanced, spatially expansive and formally refined, its designs are abstractly rational to the point of cool objectivity, yet somehow distinctive, relatively easy to identify, nonetheless. No wonder corporate and political leaders go for this stylish office: there is a mirroring of self-images here, at once technocratic and innovative, that suits client and firm alike.

'Foster' offers an architecture of sleek surfaces, usually of metal and glass, luminous spaces, often open in plan, and suave profiles that can also serve as media logos for a company or a state. As a result, high-tech and high-design corporations are drawn to the practice: recent commissions include a European headquarters in Chertsey for Electronic Arts, which devises computer games, and a center in Woking for McLaren Technology, which develops Formula 1 racing cars; both buildings feature glass façades whose elegant curves stick in the mind. That 'Foster' is able to design efficient structures that are also media-friendly is proven: Renault uses its center in Swindon (1980-82), with its yellow exoskeleton of piers, cables and canopies, as the backdrop for its UK adverts, and the *Financial Times* has adopted the Commerzbank Headquarters in Frankfurt (1991-98), a towering wedge in white and grays, as its emblem of the city.

In this business of architecture as brand, other famous designers have relied on idiosyncratic forms: Frank Gehry uses neo-Baroque twists, Rem Koolhaas Cubistic folds and Zaha Hadid Futurist vectors to make buildings stand out. 'Foster', on the other hand, favors rather restrained geometries; its two colossal airports in China, for example, are little more than two arrows laid out point to point in plan. Such structures read almost as Gestalts or given forms; for the practice this graphic simplicity is all about clarity of program, and one can see how to get from taxi to plane from the plans alone. Even when 'Foster' employs irregular volumes – ovoid and elliptical ones often appear, such as the pinecone City Hall in London (1998-2002) – they are just odd enough to be distinctive, nothing more; and even when it's not clear whether the Swiss Re (1997-2004) is a gherkin, a bullet or a 'cigar', the associations remain strong.

'Foster' also exudes a heady air of refined efficiency that almost any business or government would want to assume as its own. The office stresses ecologically sensitive systems as much as technologically advanced deigns: clearly it wants to be seen as both 'green' and clean, which, apart from the real benefits, is good public relations for all involved. A further attraction is that the copious glass in a typical 'Foster' design suggests a 'transparency' that might be associated with the political or administrative workings of the client. (This is the gambit of the glass dome-cum-observation deck conceived for the refurbished Reichstag in Berlin [1992-99]: it is thought meaningful that German citizens can gaze on their political representatives from on high.) And yet, for all its image flair, the primary draw is that 'Foster' is able to offer a wide array of design services, apparently at any site or scale.

Foster the man achieved his breakthrough over 30 years ago with an office in Ipswich for the insurance company Willis Faber & Dumas. Here three banks of escalators rise from the ground floor, through an open plan, with all elements intended to 'democratize' the workplace. Yet the signature of the building is its pristine wall of dark glass, reflective by day and transparent at night, which curves with the street line: this early interest in spectacular effects (which is maybe not so democratic) has persisted to the present.

According to Foster, Willis Faber 'reinvented' the office building, and he sees the Hongkong & Shanghai Bank (1979-86), the Commerzbank and the Swiss Re (1997-2004) as successive elaborations of this type at the scale of the high-rise. In these buildings services and circulation systems are pushed to the perimeter, so that the office floors remain relatively open, and lofty atria trimmed with greenage become possible. 'What was once avant-garde,' Foster tells us, 'has entered the mainstream.'

Sometimes a 'reinvention' moves from one building type to another. The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts in Norwich (1974-78), another early design, also features a 'single unified space', which the practice has 're-explored' in other cultural centers. Yet for Foster the most significant expression of such space has occurred in three airports, Stansted (1981-91), Hong Kong (1992-98) and Beijing (2003-07). All are again open in plan, laid out clearly on a primary level, whose modular canopy guides passengers readily to planes – a model, Foster underscores, since taken up by airports worldwide. 'With Stansted,' Foster writes, 'we took the accepted concept of the airport and literally turned it upside-down.' That is, service systems were placed underground, where train transport is also found, not overhead, which left the roof free to be a light canopy – another signature device, and one that is not restricted to a single building type.

In fact, unified spaces and light ceilings (most often in glass) abound in 'Foster' designs. In renovations of historic buildings, another specialty of the practice, they are used to enclose the extant structure; this is the case, for example, at the Reichstag, as well as the Great Court at the British Museum (1994-2000). The basic strategy of these designs is to reinstate selected features of the original structure, add circulation systems and then to cover the whole with a dramatic glass top. By these means, Foster argues, 'new architecture can be the catalyst for the revitalization of old buildings': 'The Reichstag has become a "living museum" of German history,' he claims, and 'the Great Court is a new kind of civic space – a cultural plaza – that has pioneered patterns of social use hitherto unknown within this or any other museum.'

Yet for all the reanimation at either place, the original structure is also treated as a museological object: it is literally put under glass as if it were a polished-up artifact. This combination of historical building and contemporary attraction can tend toward spectacle: a political assembly become a spectator-sport at the Reichstag, a distinguished museum as its own marvelous display at the British Museum. Perhaps the best of this lot, the Sackler Galleries at the Royal Academy of Arts (1985-91), is the most penetrative; the new spaces are carved right into the old museum, and they do enliven it. But this kind of collision has its limits too. In the Hearst building in Manhattan, 'Foster' plunges a diamond-gridded glass tower of 42 stories into the original, a low Art Deco stone block on 58th Street and 8th, and the thing looks like a crash-landed space-station. Here, rather than 'the Mozart of modernism' (as Paul Goldberger of the *New Yorker* dubbed Foster for this project), he is more like its Steven Spielberg.

Like history, nature is also sometimes put under glass by 'Foster', literally so in the National Botanic Garden of Wales (1995-2000), which is 'the largest single-span glasshouse in the world.' As we might expect from the practice, the technology here is superb: an immaculate glazing system allows the glass roof to curve in two directions at once, with panes that open and close automatically as the climate demands. But what does such a project convey about the status of nature in the 'Foster' universe? On the one hand, the practice is capable of Promethean interventions into the landscape: for its Hongkong airport a 100-meter peak was flattened, and 200 million cubic meters of rock moved. On the other hand, nature is abstracted in the 'Foster' universe; it has become 'ecology', 'sustainability', a set of synthetic materials and energy protocols – that is, a fully acculturated category. Like its modern predecessors, 'Foster' frames this acculturation in benign (sometimes Zen) terms, and insists, rightly, on 'holistic thinking' when it comes to 'sustainable strategies' – yet when does 'the holistic' slip into 'the totalistic'? Certainly the dialectic of modernity has shown that the prospect of a nature humanized can easily flip into a world technologized, and there are intimations of this present-future within the 'Foster' oeuvre. For example, in 1989 a Japanese corporation asked the office to imagine a satellite extension of Tokyo (this topos of visionary architecture runs back at least to the 1960s), and its scheme is very sci-fi. A diamond-gridded cone of 170 stories set 2 kilometers out in Tokyo Bay, 'Millennium Tower' recalls, all at once, the Eiffel Tower, the utopian projects of Russian Constructivism, the dark Deco city of *Metropolis*, and the gigantic geodesic dome that Buckminster Fuller (a longtime Foster friend) once proposed for midtown Manhattan. That is, Millennium Tower conjures up a total world designed by a brilliant technocrat.

In such 'Foster' designs, then, both 'history' and 'nature' seem somehow abstracted and sublimated, and the same might be said of 'industry'. In the background of these projects one often senses the crown jewel of industrial structures, the Crystal Palace. With its efficient construction in industrial iron and glass, its bold reformulation of architecture through engineering, its technological rationalism and social optimism, the Crystal Palace is an architectural meme for 'Foster': again and again its transparent structure, unified spaces and undecorated surfaces show through 'Foster' designs, and not only in the 48 conference centers and arts halls conceived by the office. The Crystal Palace was the confident projection of an industrial Britain still on the rise; against the historical odds, 'Foster' attempts a similar projection for a postindustrial Britain, and this might be one reason the head man is embraced (as Lord Norman of the Thames Bank no less): gaze up at his grand buildings in his homeland, and you might believe that the British Empire lives on.

The practice also excels in other building types of the industrial era – the bridge, tower, train station, underground, airport, department store, office high-rise and so on. With the application of advanced materials and techniques, they too appear heightened and lightened – again, sublimated – and this holds for the values that accompany them as well. Functionality,

rationality, efficiency, flexibility, transparency: they, too, seem pushed to a new level, and altered in the process. Take 'transparency'. Again, like its modern predecessors, 'Foster' suggests an analogy between architectural and political openness, not only at the Reichstag but also at City Hall. ('It expresses the transparency and accessibility of the democratic process,' we are told; 'Londoners see the Assembly at work.') But the analogy is shaky from the start, and, when applied to the Singapore Supreme Court (2000) – 'Foster' touts the 'dignity, transparency, and openness' of its design – it borders on the absurd. Then, too, what once seemed 'transparent' can now appear 'spectacular'. The popular Millennium Bridge in London is described as a 'ribbon of steel by day' and 'a blade of light at night': both a place for viewing and a view of its own, this pedestrian way is a platform for 24-hour spectator people. In this manner an exhibitionist streak runs through 'Foster', and other practices as well (Herzog and de Meuron come immediately to mind). A spectacle society invites it, of course, and these architects can hardly be blamed for the society – but must they comply so brilliantly with its demands? Must they be so damned good at it?

The issue here is the ideological dimension of contemporary architecture. Consider how modern architecture of the early twentieth century – the white, abstract, rectilinear variety of Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier – captured the look of the modern. Such architecture still appears modern when nothing else of the period does, not the cars, the clothes or the people. 'Foster', I want to suggest, approximates a similar feat for the look of modernity today: perhaps more persuasively than any other office, it delivers an architectural image of a present-future that wishes to appear advanced. Of course, the very attempt is underwritten by the new-economy clients that the practice attracts – high-tech companies, mega-corporations, banks from Europe to Asia, governments of many sorts – but they are attracted for this reason too. Now, as with Le Corbusier et alia, this look of the modern is not merely a look; it is an affirmation of an entire ethos: if Corb imaged modernity as clean functionality, with architecture as a 'machine for living in', 'Foster' updates this image with sophisticated materials, sustainable systems and inspired schemes.

For me this look of the modern today is condensed in the signature element of the 'Foster' practice – its diamond grids of glazed glass, 'the diagrid'. Although other architects, such as Koolhaas, have used it, the diagrid is like the 'Foster' DNA: once you look for it in the work, it appears everywhere. It is a structural unit, of course, but it also serves as an ideological form, one that signals technocratic optimism above all else. At times in 'Foster' this optimism takes on a tinge of faith. This is literally the case in its most emphatic use of the diagrid, in its design for a Palace of Peace (2004-06) in Kazakhstan. A pyramid, here clad in stone, whose apex is made up of stained-glass diagrids, this palace was the planned venue for 'the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions'. Here, weirdly, 'modernity' and 'spirituality' are made to go hand in hand: modernity is figured as a faith for all…

Renzo Piano is not as technocratic as Norman Foster. Indeed, born into a Genoese family of prominent builders, he has long stressed his commitment to craft, and his firm is still called 'Building Workshop'. On the other hand, Piano burst into public view with the Centre Pompidou (1971-78), which, designed with Richard Rogers, is the most celebrated of the high-tech mega-structures of the period, and today he is also associated with such massive infrastructural projects as Kansai International Airport (1988-94), for which an entire island was engineered into being in the Bay of Osaka.

Another version of this tension is that, despite the persona of the humble craftsman, Piano is the favored architect of many high-class institutions. Among his buildings in this category are the Menil Collection in Houston (1982-87), a beautiful museum that distinguished the more classical Piano from the more Pop Rogers, the Beyeler Museum in Basel (1991-97), the Paul Klee Museum in Bern (1999-2006), and the Morgan Library extension in New York (2000-06); current clients in this vein include the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Whitney Museum of American Art. So, too, Piano has schemes underway for Columbia, Harvard and Michigan Universities, and his California Academy of Sciences and his 52-story tower for the *New York Times* on 40th Street and 8th Avenue are now complete. Clearly, the Renzo Piano Building Workshop delivers a design profile that speaks to different elites today: what is it that makes Piano so attractive? Perhaps his allure lies precisely in his ability to mediate the tension between the local craft of building and the global enterprise of big business. Piano does so, on the one hand, through a refined use of materials (sometimes as traditional as wood and stone), which helps to ground his buildings in particular sites, and, on the other hand, through a suave display of engineering (often in light metals and ceramics), which serves to associate his designs with the contemporary world of advanced technology.

Piano matured in the thick of progressive architecture in the 1960s and '70s (at one point or another he apprenticed with the likes of Louis Kahn and Jean Prouvé), and during this time he experimented with temporary structures, exhibition spaces and free-plan housing. In his embrace of clean design and smart engineering, Piano was associated not only with Rogers but also with Foster. All three young architects sought a way beyond modern architecture that would both realize its economic efficiencies and extend its technical advances; to this end they were inspired by the more visionary engineering of Bucky Fuller as well as by the more practical Californian modernism of Richard Neutra, Charles and Ray Eames, and other designers of the Case Study Houses in Los Angeles. However, by the late 1970s Piano, Rogers and Foster had diverged. Piano was never so Pop as Rogers nor so high-tech as Foster, and his signature device came to differ as well; in fact Piano is still guided by his distinctive notion of 'the piece'.

'The piece' is a repeated component of a building, often a structural element like a joint or a truss, which Piano exposes to view in a way that offers a

sense of the construction of the whole; to this extent it too seems to partake of the modernist principle of 'transparency'. However, even when the piece is more about appearance than about structure, it still lends a specific character to the building, which it also helps to scale vis-à-vis the site. The textbook instances in the Piano oeuvre are the modular trusses and 'leaves' (in cast iron and ferro-cement) that comprise the roof of the Menil Collection. Key to the special quality of this celebrated museum, these elements do several things at once: they allow us to see into its structural support and to sense its spatial ordering, they filter the strong light of Houston into its galleries, and they cover the colonnade of its exterior, which in turn connects the building to its setting – to both the large verandas typical of Southern homes and the Greek Revival style favored in civic structures in the US. This use of the piece is characteristic of Piano in general, whose 'art' is seen as one of 'fitting in' and 'fitting together'. However, other examples of the piece – from the massive cast-steel braces on the façades of the Pompidou to the light ceramic scrims on the sides of the Times tower – might not seem so fitting: the Pompidou ties are so big as to be brutal, while the Times tubes are so fine as to be precious (especially in the context of 42$^{nd}$ Street). In such cases it is not clear how tectonic, or even functional, such 'structure' is; in fact Piano sometimes treats 'technology' as a 'leitmotif'. One thinks immediately of the famous I-beams that Mies van der Rohe applied to the façades of his Seagram Building in New York, I-beams that are not structural at all. Sometimes Piano is inclined to this kind of Miesian finesse, in which architectural transparency seems to be affirmed, only to be made a little faux.

A rhetoric of the natural, especially of the natural charged with the technological, is often associated with Piano: for example, the leaf motif of the Menil Collection, the torus shape of the Kansai terminal, the sail forms that recur in his work (an avid sailor, Piano has designed two cruise ships and four sailboats) and so on. Of course, architectural discourse is steeped in such natural analogies, and they have always served not only to naturalize architectural form but to idealize it as well. The modern master of this rhetoric is Le Corbusier, who claimed that certain industrial products had developed as if by natural selection (which immediately made them appear necessary), and liked to compare luxury machines of the time (like sports cars) with the Parthenon. Similarly, Piano advocates see 'natural evolution' at work in the Piano pieces, which are also said to combine 'the efficiency of a machine and the integrity of the organism', and an abstracted classicism runs through his work, from the Menil right through the Morgan.

'The lesson of the machine lies in the pure relationship of cause and effect', Le Corbusier wrote in *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* (1925). 'Purity, economy, the reach of wisdom. A new desire: an aesthetic of purity, of precision, of expressive relationships setting in motion the mathematical mechanisms of our spirit: a spectacle and a cosmogony.' There is little here that does not speak to Piano: often in his architecture, too, the principle of transparency shades into 'an aesthetic of purity', in which a fusion of the organic, the

mechanical and the classical is essayed, and 'technology' is indeed treated as a 'leitmotif'. In *L'Art décoratif* Le Corbusier looked to the machine as the austere basis of a new kind of decorative art, one that would also differ from the stylish compromises with industrial production offered by Art Deco; yet his own fusion of the organic, the mechanical and the classical also worked to reconcile – to gloss over – the contradictory demands of the technological and the traditional. This note of an 'architecture deco' is present in Piano as well, perhaps because, like Le Corbusier, he also operates at a time when such contradictory demands are especially insistent.

At moments in Le Corbusier the pressure of such contradictions pushed his 'aesthetic of purity' to the point of outright fetishization. Here he is in the same passage from *L'Art decoratif*: 'The machine brings before us shining disks, spheres, and cylinders of polished steel, shaped with a theoretical precision and exactitude which can never be seen in nature itself. Our senses are moved, at the same time as our heart recalls from its stock of memories the disks and spheres of the gods of Egypt and the Congo. Geometry and gods sit side by side! Man pauses before the machine, and the beast and the divine in him there eat their fill.' This paean is over the top, but then 1925 was the high point of Parisian primitivism à la Josephine Baker, and Le Corbusier did eat his fill. Piano is never so extreme, yet sometimes his exquisite architecture discloses a fetishistic side, too. Consider his Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Center in Nouméa, New Caledonia (1991-98), whose distinctive feature is a fine series of ten pavilions with curved walls in wood slats that range from 9 to 28 meters in height. Disposed as in a village, the pavilions evoke nearby huts, palm trees and sails all at once, as well as the traditional basketwork and rooftop fetishes of the local culture; at the same time the Center is a state-of-the-art design expressive of the 'light modernity that Piano has long favored'. For Piano enthusiasts the result is a successful negotiation of the local and the global; for critics it evokes a contemporary version of primitivist deco.

The notion of a 'light modernity' is suggestive. 'There is one theme that is very important for me,' Piano remarks, 'lightness (and obviously not in reference only to the physical mass of objects).' He traces this preoccupation from his early experiments with 'weightless structures' to his continued investigations of 'immaterial elements' like wind and light. Lightness is also the message of his primal scene as a designer, a childhood memory of an awning of sheets billowing in the breeze on a Genoese rooftop, a vision that conjures up the shapely beauty of classical drapery as well as contemporary sailboats as architectural ideals. For Piano lightness is thus a value that bears on the human as well as on the architectural – it concerns graceful comportment in both realms. As a practical imperative, however, lightness confirms the drive, already strong in modern architecture, toward the refinement of materials and techniques, and yet now this refinement seems pledged less to healthy, open spaces and transparent, rational structures, as in its modern design, than to aesthetic effects and decorous touches. A

light architecture, then, is a sublimated architecture, one that is particularly fitting (that word again) for art museums and the like.

The attraction of this dream is clear, but, viewed suspiciously, it is little more than the old fantasy of dematerialization and disembodiment retooled for a cyber era, and it has become a familiar ideologeme to us all – though it still seems odd that architecture, long deemed the most material and bodily of the arts, would wish to advance it. Viewed even more suspiciously, this lightness is bound up not only with the fantasy of human disembodiment but with the fact of social derealization – the lightness of the unreal under Communist regimes for Milan Kundera, who advanced this sense of the term before the fall of the Wall, yet under capitalist regimes for the rest of us (nearly all of us today?). This kind of lightness is no ideal at all; it is often 'unbearable'.

In the discourse around Piano lightness is driven by historical necessity as well as technological advance. In fact, Piano advocates offer a fanciful schema à la Hegel of an architectural *Geist* that passed from the heavy forms of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt (ziggurats and pyramids), through the 'colonnaded edifices' of classical 'Mediterranean cultures', to the abstract 'grids' of modern 'Atlantic culture' 'in which nature is enmeshed by the grasp of reason and technology', and on to a 'Pacific cultural ecology' where, in the hands of designers like Piano, 'the lines of the grid will etherealise into intangible conduits of energy and information, or take tactile biomorphic form.' For his part Piano states simply that the Pacific is 'a culture of lightness', and that he prefers it: 'Although I grew up in Europe, I feel much closer to the Pacific, where lightness, or the wind, is much more durable than stone.'

Perhaps this notion of a 'light modernity' must also be viewed dialectically, countered, say, with the less sanguine notions of a 'liquid modernity' and a 'second modernity' proposed by the sociologists Zygmunt Bauman and Ulrich Beck respectively. In the first argument modernity is now 'liquid' because the present flows of capital are such as to uproot almost anything and to carry it along with them (maybe not yet 'all that is solid melts into air', as Marx put it, but closer all the time). If an architectural expression of this condition were requested, one candidate might be the Hermès store in Tokyo that Piano faced in glass blocks which do indeed appear liquid: here the 'floating world' of Edo meets the floating world of capital today. In the second argument modernity is now in a 'second' stage because it has become reflexive, concerned to modernize its own bases. Once again this notion is suggestive vis-à-vis Piano: like other major architects, he is commissioned to convert old industrial structures, indeed entire sites (such as the Genoa harbor), in ways that are fitting for a postindustrial economy. Here the most telling example is his series of additions to the Fiat Lingotto Factory in Turin. Designed by the engineer Giacomo Mattè Trucco in the late 1910s, this large structure, complete with a test-track for new cars on its roof, is an icon of modern architecture: Le Corbusier concluded *Vers une architecture* (1923) with images of the track, and Reyner Banham hailed it in *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960) as 'the most nearly Futurist building ever built.'

Tellingly, Piano has now fitted this old factory with a helicopter pad, a glass bubble conference room for company directors and a private museum for the Agnelli art collection on the roof, as well as a concert hall below.

In our economy – at least until very recently – such structures for exhibition and performance are much in demand, as are stadia for sport and entertainment, as well as the usual shopping malls, office towers, banks and business centers; and, like his peers Rogers and Foster, Piano is involved in all categories. In this economy display remains very important, and often architecture serves as both stager and staged, yet new infrastructure is also imperative, especially for transport, and designers like Piano are hard at work in this area as well, with new airports, train stations and subway systems. Some of this infrastructure is regional in scope, but some is global (Kansai Airport is hardly for Osaka alone). If modern architecture was 'the international style', then neo-modern architecture is 'the global style'; like the second modernity that it serves, it often exceeds national containers. And yet such design still needs traces of the local in order for its buildings to appear grounded; in fact these traces rise in value, as do vestiges of the past (as Koolhaas likes to say, there is just not enough past to go around, so its aura continues to skyrocket). Often, then, local reference appears in global architecture precisely as a trace souvenir of the old culture, a token at a remove, a 'mythical sign' (in the parlance of Roland Barthes): hence the allusion to the floating world in the Hermès store in Tokyo, the village huts in the cultural center in New Caledonia, the spire in the tower just completed in London, and so on. Beck calls this phenomenon 'banal cosmopolitanism', and Piano is adept at its architectural expression. In a sense, lightness sublimates not only material nature but historical culture as well: here fetishization is again at work; apparently it too can operate at a grand – even global – scale.

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## May Mo(u)rn: A Site-Writing

*Jane Rendell*

> It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text that repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.[1]

Frederic Jameson's term 'the political unconscious' calls for a form of literary criticism that explores the tensions of class struggle, not through vulgar Marxism but through mediation. If the unconscious is able to play a political role in producing a reading of a literary text that brings class struggle to the surface, what are the possibilities and processes of a criticism that would allow for the political unconscious to emerge in architecture?

In this essay I suggest that architecture's political unconscious can be explored through the site of 'the setting' and the practice of 'site-writing'. In psychoanalysis, the 'setting' is a term used to describe the main conditions of treatment, within which the psychoanalytic encounter occurs. Following Sigmund Freud, these conditions include 'arrangements' about time and money, as well as 'certain ceremonials' governing the physical positions of analysand (lying on a couch and speaking) and analyst (sitting behind the analyst on a chair and listening).[2] Coined by Donald Winnicott, 'as the sum of all the details of management that are more or less accepted by all psychoanalysts',[3] the term has been modified by other analysts. For José Bleger, for example, the setting comprises both the process of psychoanalysis, and the non-process or frame, which provides a set of constants, or limits, to the 'behaviours' that occur within it.[4] In the work of André Green it is a casing or casket that holds the 'jewel' of the psychoanalytic process.[5]

Green has drawn attention to the setting not as a static tableau, but as a psychoanalytic apparatus; not as a representation of psychic structure, but as an expression of it. For Green the position of the consulting room between inside and outside, relates to its function as a transitional space between analyst and analysand, as does its typology as a closed space different from both inner and outer worlds:

> The consulting room … is different from the outside space, and it is different, from what we can imagine, from inner space. It has a specificity of its own …[6]

In Green's work the setting is a 'homologue' for what he calls the third element in analysis, the 'analytic object', which is formed through the analytic association between analyst and analysand.[7]

> The analytic object is neither internal (to the analysand or to the analyst), nor external (to either the one or the other), but is situated between the two. So it corresponds precisely to Winnicott's definition of the transitional object and to its location in the intermediate area of potential space, the space of 'overlap' demarcated by the analytic setting.[8]

Allowing the political unconscious to surface demands engaging with the psychic dimension of architecture. I suggest that in order to do this architectural criticism might operate as a kind of 'analytic object', located in the area of overlap between architectural object and critic, with reference to the setting as that which frames the provocation of transference (and counter-transference) – the work of psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas has noted that Freud's clearest account of his method outlined in 'Two Encyclopaedia Articles: A. Psycho-Analysis',[9] suggests that psychoanalysis takes place if two functions are linked – the analysand's free associations and the psychoanalyst's evenly suspended attentiveness.[10] In 'On Beginning the Treatment' Freud explains how, in including rather than excluding 'intrusive ideas' and 'side-issues', the process of association differs from ordinary conversation.[11] Bollas defines free association as that which occurs when we think by not concentrating on anything in particular, and where the ideas that emerge, which seem to the conscious mind to be disconnected, are instead related by a hidden and unconscious logic.[12] In order to achieve evenly suspended attentiveness Bollas explains that the analyst also has to surrender to his own unconscious mental activity; s/he should not reflect on material, consciously construct ideas or actively remember.[13] Bollas connects the relation between free association and evenly suspended attentiveness to the interaction between transference and counter-transference.[14]

In Freud's later writings, he distinguishes between construction and interpretation as different forms of analytic technique:

> 'Interpretation' applies to something that one does to some single element of the material, such as an association or a parapraxis. But it is a 'construction' when one lays before the subject of the analysis a piece of his early history that he has forgotten … [15]

In this essay, I propose that when aiming to explore the unconscious of architecture it is useful to allow psychoanalytic modes of interaction – interpretation and construction – to inform critical strategies of engagement, precisely because they allow us to investigate moments of early history which

may have been covered over. But although an architectural critic may most often put him or herself in the position of the analyst using techniques of interpretation and construction, it is also the case that the critic occupies the position of the analysand.

Psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche is perhaps best known for his re-examination of the points at which he argues Freud went astray. This includes most famously Freud's controversial abandonment of the seduction theory, and his turn to the child's fantasy to explain seduction, thus at some level avoiding thinking through the complex interplay of inner and outer worlds between the child and what Laplanche calls 'the concrete other'.[16] Laplanche maintains that this early scene of seduction is of key importance to psychoanalysis as it works to de-centre the position of the subject in its articulation of the formation and role of the unconscious. For Laplanche, it is the embedding of the alterity of the mother in the child, which places an 'other' in the subject; this other is also an other to the mother – as it involves her unconscious. Thus the message imparted to the subject by the other, for Laplanche, the mother or concrete other, is an enigma both to the receiver, but also to the sender of the message: the 'messages are enigmatic because … [they] are strange to themselves'.[17]

Laplanche does not confine his discussion of the enigmatic message to psychoanalysis, but suggests instead that transference occurs not first in the psychoanalytic setting to be applied in culture, but the other way around: 'maybe transference is already, "in itself", outside the clinic'.[18] For Laplanche, the critic or recipient-analyst is involved in a two-way dynamic with the enigmatic message: s/he is, 'caught between two stools: the enigma which is addressed to him, but also the enigma of the one he addresses, his public'.[19]

So, following Laplanche, rather than use psychoanalytic theory to unravel or fix the 'unconscious' aspects of a work, I suggest that the critic is presented with the work as an enigma, and that s/he also produces another enigma in the form of a critical essay. It is possible to imagine then that the critic responds to a work drawing on the modes of operation of the analyst, as well as those more associative states – such as remembering and imagining – of the analysand.

This essay is conducted in the experimental and interdisciplinary spirit of my ongoing 'site-writing' project, which generates spatial and textual processes of art and architectural criticism out of psychoanalytic positions and modes of operation.[20] Drawing on Howard Caygill's notion of strategic critique, which shares with immanent critique the capacity for discovering or inventing the criteria of critical judgement in the course of criticism',[21] I suggest that with his/her responsibility to address the work and an audience, the critic occupies a discrete position as mediator and that this *situatedness* plays a part in conditioning the performance of his/her interpretative role.[22] Interested in how the spatial and often changing positions we occupy as critics – materially, conceptually, emotionally and ideologically – create conditions which make possible acts of interpretation and constructions of

meaning, my practice of 'site-writing' operates in the interactive space of the analytic object, between critic and work, but also between essay and reader. Drawing on interpretative modes of analysis to provide the structure, and construction and association to propose the detail, my aim is to configure a response, not only to the work, but also to the invitations of others, which frame the conditions of my response, and provide a setting which positions me in relation to the work and my future reader.[23]

**Prologue:** *The Re-Enchantment*

15 September 2009

Dear Jane,

Hoping this finds you well. It's been YEARS!
Please find attached a book proposal [*Towards The Re-Enchantment: Place and Its Meanings*] - I would be honoured if you would be able to consider contributing. I hope all is clear in the document about the brief but can obviously hope to answer any questions.
[…] Copy would be due in February 2010.
I would be very grateful if you were able to let me know if this is of interest/ or not at your earliest convenience.

Many thanks!

very best,

Gareth Evans

writer, editor, curator [24]

## May Morn
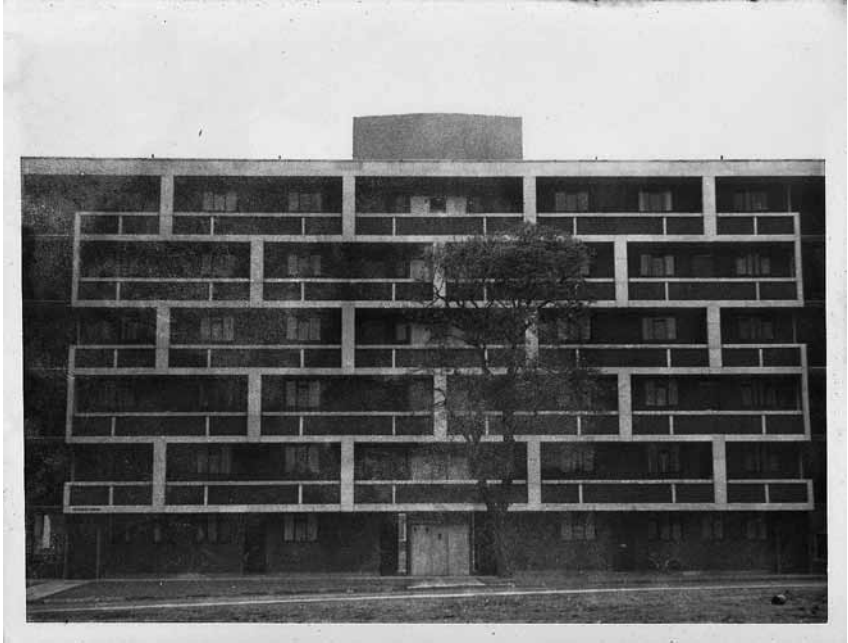


The house is beautiful – a one-storey building, with a square plan – born at the birth of modernism in the aftermath of the First World War. It embodies the values of early English modernism, of the Arts and Crafts movement: 'truth to materials' and honest craftsmanship.

From the road it looks a little unloved, in need of some care and attention. Up close it is clearly derelict, almost in ruins.

We enter a room with windows at each end. Curtains are falling away from the runners. The fabric has been soaked overnight and is drying in the spring afternoon sunshine.

On the window cill and spilling over onto the floor are piles of old magazines. The pages are stuck together and disintegrate if you try to pull them apart.

There are some photographs of buildings. One is particularly damp; the corners are soft, the surface is wrinkled.

It shows a tower block, just completed, empty and pristine, a moss-green utopia, the modernist dream dispersing as it soaks up spring rain.

Note: The captions to these photographs are taken from a text, originally entitled 'Moss Green', written as one in a series of three, contained within a critical essay on the work of artist Elina Brotherus and published as 'Longing for the Lightness of Spring'.[25]

### Longing for the Lightness of Spring

*THE CULMINATION OF ALL LONGING AND DESIRE*
Elina Brotherus' photographs are all about past time – time spent loving, time spent remembering, time spent mourning, time spent yearning. Much of the work is a recording of what has happened, rather than what is to happen. This is why *Spring* (2001), a piece of work commissioned by Jules Wright for the Wapping Project, London, is unusual for Brotherus. As well as using video, a media seldom used in her practice, the work looks forward srather than backwards, described in her own words as: 'the culmination of all longing and desire'.

Spring is composed of two installations: a video triptych in the boiler house and a back-lit image, 3m x 8m, *Untitled* (2001), reflected in the water tank on the roof of the Wapping Project. *Untitled* is an illuminated horizon that divides sky from earth. Like the scene in the distance, where a dark and dense London meets light cloud overhead, the pale grey sky of Iceland floats above once-viscous lava now covered in moss green. Brotherus requested that the work be time specific. *Spring* opened in Wapping as we entered winter, just after the autumn equinox in the northern hemisphere.

*MOSS GREEN*
*It's a beautiful house – a one-storey building, with a square plan – born at the birth of modernism in the aftermath of the First World War. It embodies the values of early English modernism, of the arts and crafts movement: 'truth to materials' and honest craftsmanship. From the road it looks a little unloved, in need of some care and attention. Up close it is clearly derelict, almost in ruins. We enter a room with windows at each end. Curtains are falling away from the runners. The fabric has been soaked overnight and is drying in the spring afternoon sunshine. On the window cill and spilling over onto the floor are piles of old magazines. The pages are stuck together and disintegrate if you pull them apart. There are some photographs of buildings. One is particularly damp; the corners are soft, the surface is wrinkled. It shows a tower block, just completed, empty and pristine, a moss-green utopia, the modernist dream dispersing as it soaks up spring rain.*

*RAIN, THE OAK FOREST, FLOOD (2001)*
Brotherus told me how much she hates the darkness of the Finnish winter and yearns for spring each year. It was no different when she moved to Paris, perhaps worse because she felt trapped in an urban setting with no view of the horizon. In search of spring, she left the city and went to Brittany and the Loire Valley. The videos make up a triptych, projected on screens hung from the ceiling, *Rain, The Oak Forest, Flood*. The first shows rain, streaming down. The second shows an oak forest after the rain has stopped, but when drops, still heavy, continue to fall to the ground, John Betjeman's 'second rain'. The third is of a flood, a forest of elegant trees rise silver from a pane of shining

water. Each video work has a different time loop, so there is an ever-changing combination of raining, rained and rain over.

In Finland, the skylark is the earliest bird to sing, its song heralds the coming of spring one month away. Like Jane Mulfinger's poignant piece, *Nachtigall, 3.00 Uhr, Berlin Stadtmitte*, (1996), where the artist recorded the song of a nightingale, which sang all night in the city, until dawn broke and his song was slowly drowned out by traffic noise, Brotherus' water-logged spring landscape recalls the delicate beauty of this stifled birdsong. For Brotherus *Spring* is about beauty, yet given what we know of climate change, it is also somehow prophetic.

### White Linen

*I dreamt of the house last night. My mother's house in Cwmgors, south Wales, a place where it always rained in the holidays, that as a girl I resented, but now, as it is being taken from me, I already begin to miss. I was in the dining room; the rest of the house was empty except this one room. The furniture was far too big and covered in linen. The air was thick and still, silent. With the curtains drawn, it was very dark, but the linen glowed white. I went towards the mantelpiece to take a look at myself in the mirror, and I saw for the first time in the reflection, that the room was full of plants; so alive I could smell moisture still on their leaves.*

### Depicting a Sentiment

*Suites Françaises 2* are photographs of Brotherus' home when she first arrived in France from Finland. On strategically placed post-it notes, Brotherus' script precisely yet gently names each object she sees in her new tongue, as well as parts of herself and her emotions. Brotherus' says these are images 'depicting a sentiment'. She looks straightforward, childlike in her directness, yet the simple naming operation demonstrates the inability of words to connect. To paraphrase Gillian Wearing, 'signs don't say what we want them to say'. Could it be that Lacan was right after all, that we are not in control of language, that on the contrary, language makes us?

Much of Brotherus' earlier work deals with intimate and personal subject matter, the death of her parents, the break up of her marriage, the desperation at the end of an affair. The photographs show Brotherus experiencing intense emotions. For her, these images 'tell it as it was' – they are not set ups. We see her genuinely distraught, we feel for her. But she is also capable of standing back. In many, for example in *Love Bites II* (1999), we are shown the artist holding the mechanism used to take the photograph. Here she is, both the image's subject and its maker. In showing herself as the producer of the art-work, Brotherus reassures us she is all right. She breaks the magic, the illusion of the image, and in so doing takes charge of her own emotional life.

Brotherus trained as an analytic chemist before becoming an artist. The analytic chemist is still there, looking carefully, patiently breaking things down into their most simple components, and recording with exactitude life

as it occurs. When we met we spoke of our mutual love of precision. Brotherus drew one hand down the centre of her face. She sees herself as split down the middle – the analytic chemist and the artist – the rational and the intuitive, the objective and subjective. It emerges that she has been working away from the personal towards the general: the 'post-it note phase' is right in between.

### To Be Able to See Far

In 2000 Brotherus began a new phase of work, entitled the *New Painting*, a series which critically explores certain motifs and genres in classical painting. For example, a series of images entitled *Le Mirroir* (2001) shows the artist in a bathroom filled with steam facing a mirror above a basin. In each successive image, read from left to right, the steam slowly evaporates and her face comes into focus in the mirror. Steam is a fascinating material, the marking of a brief moment of transformation from thick liquid to ephemeral gas. Rather like that brief instance in the mirror, when we hope that in catching sight of our reflection we will recognize ourselves.

Another group of work within the *New Painting* focuses on landscapes rather than the human figure. Brotherus has produced a series of horizons. These are scenes cut in half, ice and sky, stone and sky, earth and sky. The horizon is important to Brotherus; she needs 'to be able to see far'. All the *New Paintings* work with the same colour palette and distribution of tones. There are dark tones: blacks, blues and greens; and light tones: whites, pinks and greys; but not a lot in between. There is a strength and simplicity to this contrast in brightness that corresponds to the silver steel and rich brick of Wapping. The difference in weight between these sombre colours resembles the material qualities that distinguish between the elements – water, earth and air.

### Bittersweet

*In Palafrugell, a small town north of Barcelona on the Costa Brava is a derelict cork factory with a clock tower in front. The clock tower is a handsome structure, elegant and robust, but the clock on top has stopped. The floor is covered in dust and pieces of furniture, lamp-stands, chairs and old printing machinery. There are words everywhere scattered all over the floor: burnt orange, turquoise, black and white, bittersweet. We stay in the factory a long time. We don't speak, just walk and look. Later, once we've left the building, he brings something to show me. It is a white sign with carefully painted black letters: 'Bittersweet'. I reach into my bag and pull out a clear perspex rod; along one side of it letters printed onto cardboard are embedded. From the top it is out of focus, but from the side, you can read it: 'Bittersweet'.*

If matter has a weight, does emotion?
If space has a colour, does time?
What is the colour of longing, longing for the lightness of spring?

Brotherus' *Spring* was composed of two installations: a back-lit image *Untitled*, where a pale grey Icelandic sky floating over moss-covered lava was reflected in the water tank on the roof, and a video triptych, *Rain, The Oak Forest and Flood*. My essay made spatial, material and visual associations with Brotherus' work: the structure of the triptych, the textures of moss and lava, and the motif of reflection. But there are also temporal correspondences. *Spring* opened in Wapping just after the autumn equinox in the northern hemisphere. 'Moss Green' describes a spring visit to a derelict house in the green belt where we found decaying photographs of a brave new world of modernist high-rise housing. Just after the autumn equinox, just after her death, I dreamt of live plants reflected in the mirror of the home of my Welsh great aunt. 'White Linen' recalls this dream. While 'Bittersweet' remembers another spring visit, this time to an abandoned cork factory in Catalunya where we found the names of colours scattered over the floor.

Anticipating the end of winter, curatorially, *Spring* faced towards the long decline into winter, the season from which it desired to turn away. Paralleling this juxtaposition which poised spring's hope for winter's retreat right at winter's early edge, I positioned *Spring's* foregrounding of anticipation as a yearning that looks forward to the resurgence of new life, against my own fascination with a longing which turns in the other direction – the backwards gaze of nostalgia. In responding to *Spring*, my three tri-partite textual construction – 'Moss Green', 'White Linen' and 'Bittersweet' – connected Brotherus' landscapes infused with anticipatory longing to associations of my own, places tinted by nostalgia, constructing a tension between life and death, rejuvenation and decay, a looking forward and a turning backward.

## Moss Green (or May Morn)

My first visit to the house I came to call 'Moss Green' had occurred in the spring of 2001. For the next decade I was to walk past Moss Green several times a year, as part of my weekly Sunday walk. Every Sunday morning, whatever the weather, taking a flask of hot soup to be supped under the dripping branches of winter trees, or a picnic to be eaten in a sunlit meadow, my partner and I make the journey to Waterloo or London Bridge, and board a train taking us to the limit of the metropolis – to London's so-called green belt. After an about an hour (and more recently with the collapse of the Sunday rail network, more like two) we disembark from the train and walk into the dusk along the paths of the Weald.

In our walks out of Sevenoaks we sometimes take the route down Oak Lane, then Grassy Lane, past Fig Street and along Gracious Lane, drawing to a halt at the fork in the road where Moss Green is situated. When we first saw the house we were entirely enchanted, with the way of life it represented as well as the arresting beauty of its slow yet gentle decay. The house was single storey, of a brick-and-timber construction, placed at the top of a scarp slope – with its porch facing a view out over southern England, under which two benches faced one another.

The interior was full of exquisite touches: a perfectly placed built-in cupboard, a carefully detailed window cill and frame, a thoughtful light switch, a door handle that fitted like a glove. It was hovering at that point where the decay was still able to provide an atmosphere of charm, where the thought of collapse could be held off, and where it was still possible to imagine oneself into the house, repairing the woodwork and occupying the rooms. We guessed it had probably been built after the First World War, perhaps as part of the programme 'Homes fit for Heroes' which allowed returning and often traumatized soldiers to readjust to civilian life in the comfort of a simple domestic setting with space for gardening and growing food.

But over the years the house has increasingly fallen into disrepair, and our spirits now sink each time we see it. When its slate roof was removed around three years ago the rot really set in and as a structure it is now barely stable. As it slipped passed the threshold of being 'save-able', we surrendered our dream of living there ourselves in a modest rural retreat. No doubt the new owner is waiting for the moment of collapse, when the walls cave in, in order to construct a dwelling that requires no restorative work.

I wonder whether Moss Green should have been listed, whether I should have taken on that task myself. And if it is not valued as a piece of architectural heritage, what are those emotional qualities it holds that make it feel special enough to want to save?

On one visit, years ago, when the house was open to the elements, but some of its contents were still present, we noted books on architecture, old journals from the building trade and piles of photographs. We salvaged a few items – notably one book, *New Architecture of London: A Selection of Buildings*

*since 1930*,[26] along with a selection of back and white photographs, some of which are reproduced here. Recently, in examining the photographs more closely, I have become fascinated with tracking down the buildings imaged in them. As well as the architectural qualities of the structures, I have had five text-based clues to work with – a board in front of one block of flats with the name: 'Ernest Knifton Ltd.'; a car parked outside another with the registration plate: 'SLX 956'; a street sign reading 'Westmoreland Terrace'; and letters over the entrances to two other buildings with the words: '1-24 Edmund Street' and 'Witl-'.

In working between *New Architecture of London* as well as web searches for the various clues, I have managed to track down most of the structures – it turns out that the majority we now regard as modernist icons.[27] At the same time I have been searching for a new flat of my own in London to live in. So I took the opportunity to view these buildings via the website primelocation.com. The search revealed their 'value' in economic terms, as property, as commodities. From an estate agent's perspective, these flats are described as ideal investments, not as places where the purchaser might choose to live, but rather as buy-to-let opportunities, real estate to be rented out to students and others. The images of fully occupied domestic settings on the property website provided an interesting counterbalance to the just-completed exteriors photographed from the outside, positioning the architecture as a commodity to be purchased by individuals as well as (or instead of?) social entities to be lived in by communities.

Searching for modernist icons through primelocation.com has been a stark reminder of what has happened to the socialist ideals of modernism. Some of the modern movement's public housing projects have become oases of cool property in the London postcodes associated with the rich; those in the west of the capital have often been well maintained and sometimes privatized and provided with concierge schemes, and others in areas of regeneration have been connected with the aspirations of up-and-coming neighbourhoods and the somewhat grimy conditions of their rather neglected public spaces – lifts, stairways and façades – overlooked by purchasers keen to be part of the lifestyles offered by certain parts of London in terms of cultural caché: independent boutiques, cafes and galleries.

Those pieces of modern architecture in the poorer boroughs, outside the pockets of existing wealth and the aspiring regeneration zones, have been allowed to decline materially, often not included in 'major works' programmes – the large-scale council repair and maintenance cycles. Often located in so-called 'sink estates', many of the blocks house the poorest families in London. Some have been demolished either because the years of neglect have led to conditions of terminal dereliction, or because the original construction is viewed to be too expensive to overhaul. But the seemingly pragmatic solution offered by viewing the problems through economic concerns, is perhaps better understood as a symptom. Modern architecture is often seen as intimately tied to social deprivation and this has forced the designers of certain regeneration

schemes to adopt a new architectural language: one which is not so obviously 'modern' and is therefore capable of suggesting optimism, community and better standards of living in a different way.

But what of the person who lived in Moss Green and once owned the photographs of these modern buildings? Was he or she an architect, and if so did they play a role in designing the buildings in the photographs? How did they compare these schemes for urban mass housing with their own rural bungalow? If the delicate beauty of Moss Green points outwards to a whole network of modernist icons, how should one compare these two modernisms – the earlier vernacular, craft-based phase of the Arts and Crafts with the later phase of industrialization and standardization?

From Tacita Dean's work critiquing the heroism of modernism by pointing to the failure of certain technological schemes, such as *Sound Mirrors* (1999), to Rut Blees Luxemburg's glowing photographs of north London's high-rise flats, *Caliban Towers I and II*, which label modernist architecture a monster, there has been a recent fascination with the so-called failure of the modern project. In some cases, this takes the form of a wistful melancholy for modernism's passing, and at other times a more gleeful delight at the collapse of a social dream, which some see as too forceful and others as ridiculously idealistic.[28]

For a short period in 1998, as part of a public art project, *Wide*, curated by art-architecture collaborative practice muf, *Caliban Towers I and II* was installed under a railway bridge on the corner of Old Street and Shoreditch High Street in east London, a mile or so down the road from the very housing projects depicted in the image. Along with the commercial billboards, pigeon dirt and rough graffiti, the insertion of fine art photography into a grubby bit of Hackney could be understood as an indication of the future of the area.

Within a few months, the photograph was removed, but for a short while in 1998 a fragment of the democratic socialism of the modernist high-rise dream was juxtaposed with a particular stretch of street undergoing the first stage of gentrification, the kind of urban improvement typical of the postmodern capitalist city, while up the Hackney Road on a sunny Sunday in July, while *Caliban Towers I and II* were resident in south Hoxton, a block of flats just like them was demolished, dust in nine seconds.

*Caliban Towers I and II* (1997) is one in a series entitled *London – A Modern Project*. The photograph images two high-rise buildings aspiring to touch the skies. Shot at night with a long exposure, the architecture gains a strange luminescence. If the work is an elegy, a mourning of the modernist project, concerned as it was with social justice and progress, what does that imply? Who has the right to decide if these buildings have failed, that they should be demolished and on what grounds? Is a better future on offer? On the other hand, the desire to portray these buildings as beautiful might be taken as a plea to celebrate them. However, for those who live in these often decaying infrastructures, is it possible to consider them as such? Is this a vision that only someone removed from the realities of living in these poorly maintained environments could afford to have?

In a gallery setting, Luxemburg's seductive images of the modernist dream as a sad and beautiful failure certainly fail to invite critical engagement and face the charge of a luxurious and perhaps nostalgic disengagement that only some can afford to adopt – the ability maybe to escape certain aspects of social reality such as impoverished housing conditions. Yet, when situated in this particular urban location at a moment when debates about which buildings to demolish and which to maintain in order to fulfil the developers' ambitions for regeneration were ongoing activates the work with social potential. Positioned back in its own neighbourhood – a site undergoing redevelopment – this imaged fragment of a modernist London housing project is able to ask quite different questions.

I'm not so sure modernism has failed, rather I think the aspirations for social community and progress it embodies have been driven out, in England at least, by a Conservative and then a Labour government keen to promote an ideology of home ownership. If everyone is weighed down by a hefty mortgage, the capacity for dissent is drastically reduced, losing a day's pay by striking might easily mean losing the roof over one's head. There is a lot at stake when the social housing of the modernist project is sold off as 'a good opportunity for investment' on primelocation.com; it is perhaps not overstating the case to suggest it has created a disaster for the Left, not only because the number of homes available to let by the council are reduced for those who need them, but also because those who buy them become part of the propertied class and all that entails.

I know this because I am part of the problem.

The decaying images of modernism bring to mind Alison Marchant's *Charged Atmospheres* of 1993, where she reproduced photographs dating back to the 1970s, thrown away from the National Monuments Records, blown up to life size. The decaying photographs showed neglected interiors, high-ceilinged salons from London's Georgian building stock. The work doubled the materiality of decay and the related effects or emotional states associated with neglect and abandonment. The deterioration in *Charged Atmospheres* operated at the level of both signifier and signified – *abandoned* interiors appeared in *abandoned* photographs.[29]

The situation of the photographs found at 'Moss Green' is somewhat different; the material decay of the photographs, as ink and paper documents, is counteracted by the aspiration of the just-completed buildings in the images. In these photographs, the buildings are new, they look ahead; it is only the photographs themselves that bear the passage of time. The buildings are well tended to, indeed it might be that what holds them together is their place as the centre of attention in a tour of newly completed social-housing projects. But is it only the photographs themselves that have been left behind, to weather the rain on the Weald over the years?

Returning to Moss Green, once again, several weekends ago, much of the timberwork had collapsed and was lying in pieces over the grass. I turned one rotten section over to reveal two words painted in fast-fragmenting white

letters: 'May Morn'. This, I remembered, was the building's name plaque, which had been located at the entrance to the plot, framed by brambles, when we first came across the house.

Morn and mourn are homonyms; one suggests a beginning, the other an ending. Morning begins the day, while mourning – in grieving the loss of something or someone – marks an ending. Due to their deteriorating material states – the Moss Green house, the paper of the photographs and the painted letters 'May Morn' – each of the three points towards its own disintegration or ending, yet the buildings contained within the photographs are shown at the beginning of their life. What does it mean, now, to turn back and examine these icons of modernism at an early moment – a spring time – when hope for a better future was not viewed as a naïvely misjudged optimism?

On a bright spring day – a May morn no less – one day before a general election, I remain hopeful, facing forward. This is not a time for mourning, not a time for grieving the failure of the modernist project: such a gesture needs to be resisted. The ideals of modernism are ones to be cherished; not only aesthetically, but also, and importantly, politically. It is I think precisely because an aspiration for social change remains that we are being presented, continuously, with an image of modernism as a project that has collapsed – this is the myth-making of a capitalist ideology.

Writing positively of nostalgia, as a longing for something better, Jameson has pointed out, with reference to the earlier work of Walter Benjamin on allegory and ruin, that looking back to a past because it appears to be better than the problems of the present is not necessarily regressive, especially if it can be used to change the future. He writes: 'But if nostalgia as a political motivation is most frequently associated with Fascism, there is no reason why a nostalgia conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude, cannot furnish as adequate a revolutionary stimulus as any other …' [30]

*

I wrote the first version of this essay on a May morn, a day before the general election of 6 May 2010 in the United Kingdom, and I delivered it as a talk six days later, after I had voted Liberal for the first time in my life, so disgusted was I with New Labour's lies over the Iraq War, and with the transfer of public funds into the hands of the banking elite, on a day the coalition between the Liberals and Tories was formed, on a day on which I discovered I had helped to deliver the country a Tory government.

A bright doctoral student, Justin Hunt, approached me after my talk and asked: 'Did you know there are two homonyms in the title of your talk not one?' I looked back blankly. 'May the month and may the verb,' he explained. And then added, 'You seem to be asking for a right to mourn.'

It turns out May is a homograph not a homonym; May is a month of the year, but may is also a modal verb – one which expresses possibility: 'the modernist project may well succeed'; one which is used when admitting that something is so before making another, more important point: 'modernist buildings may have had a socialist agenda, but they looked great'; one which is used to express a wish or hope: 'may modernism rest in peace?'; and finally one which is used to request permission: 'may I mourn?'

So post election and post New Labour's ambivalence towards the public sphere, the advent of the new Liberal-Conservative agenda suggests there will be no ambivalence over the public sector – drastic cuts are to be made. The emptying out of the public purse is something we are now living out – 'twenty colleges and universities are currently in dispute with UCU [University and College Union] over compulsory redundancies.'[31]

In such a political climate this essay and its sense of hope starts to feel rather inappropriate as an emotion for these dark times – a nostalgia for modernist housing is a turning back to an idealized time in order to seek inspiration for a better future, but it now seems to be a turning back that takes place not so much with romantic regret but rather with a deep anger as I watch the start of the slow demolition of the public sector – potentially the end of that modern project of which these housing schemes are a key part.

**Epilogue:** *Beyond Utopia*

28 April 2010

Dear Jane,

We are writing to you with regard to a project we have been working on with Robin Wilson, titled 'Planning for Utopia' which was supported by the AHRC. We realise you have exerted invaluable influence on the project, although indirect, through supervising Robin's PhD. Knowing something of your areas of expertise and having met you at the 'Architecture and Documentary Practice' seminar at the Bartlett we thought you may be interested in this next stage of the project. We have been generating a screenplay that in part documents the 'Planning for Utopia' research process and speculates beyond. We are now producing a publication in association with Brandon LaBelle and some other interesting writers and we would very much like you to contribute to it.

The publication is titled 'Beyond Utopia' (working title) which takes the form of a screenplay accompanied by seven written contributions. It will be published as the 4th in a series of *Surface Tension Supplements* by a specialist art / architecture publisher, Errant Bodies Press based in Los Angeles www.errantbodies.org. We are inviting contributors from various fields to develop a piece of writing in response to the screenplay with the aim of provoking further discussion and speculation in the ideas raised within it.

The timescale for outline proposals is three weeks after receipt of this invitation and the 1st of August 2010 for completed contributions.

We attach further details of the publication, contributions and a list of other contributors who are being approached and those who have confirmed. We also attach the screenplay 'Beyond Utopia' which we hope you enjoy reading. We very much hope you will be able to participate and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Jonathan & Sophie[32]

**May Mourn**

A spacious one bedroom flat situated on the eight floor commanding marvelous views of communal gardens and the city beyond. The property is located in a Grade II listed ex-local authority block with two newly installed lifts giving easy access to the shopping, restaurants and transport facilities of Bayswater (Circle & District lines) and Queensway (Central line), plus overground routes of Paddington. Magnificent Kensington Gardens are also close by.

This property comprises of two double bedrooms and offers spacious living accommodation. The property is situated on the third floor and is in very good condition. The flat would be ideal for a first time buyer or a rental investment. It also benefits from being close to Roehampton university and local amenities.

A well-presented, bright one bedroom flat on the sixth floor of this Grade II listed modern block of flats, serviced by two lifts. This ex-council flat benefits from spacious rooms and communal gardens. The property is offered in good decorative order throughout further benefiting from being chain free. The property is ideally located for the shopping, entertainment and public transport facilities of Queensway, Lancaster Gate and Paddington.

A practical three bedroom flat split over two levels on the upper level of this small block in Churchill Gardens. The property consists of two double and one single bedrooms, kitchen, reception room, bathroom, separate WC and a large balcony. The property requires updating but gives potential buyers the chance to put their own stamp on the property.

An unmodernised two bedroom flat set on the first floor (lift) of this block on the superbly located Hallfield Estate (Westminster Council) in Bayswater. Occupying approximately 736 sq.ft/ 68 sq.m the property comprises two double bedrooms, reception room, generously sized kitchen, bathroom and separate wc and once refurbished would make an excellent Central London home or long term rental investment. Situated close to an abundance of amenities including Whiteley's Shopping Centre, Paddington Station / Heathrow Express, Lancaster Gate (Central Line) station and the open spaces of Hyde Park.

Another great located flat for sale. The property offers a well proportioned one bedroomed flat located on the eight floor with great views (don't worry about the mortgage, most high street banks will lend due to its excellent location).[33]

*

I presented a version of this text as a lecture at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in early June 2010 and was again advised by a smart doctoral student, this time Jon Dale, to read Owen Hatherley's *Militant Modernism*.[34] In referencing Richard Pare's amazing photographs of the ruins of the Russian 'vanguard', Hatherley reminded me of the link between the early Russian Constructivist projects of the 1920s and the aspirations of British modernism, particularly the post-war social housing schemes by the London County Council.[35] It reminded me of my fascination as an architecture student with the notion of the 'social condenser', which by overlaying a number of functional programmes suggested that architectural space might promote new kinds of social relations.

The concept of the social condenser was developed through the theoretical and then practical work of the Russian Constructivists in the 1920s. Quoting artist Aleksei Gan, 'the capitalist towns are staunch allies of counter-revolution', architectural historian Catherine Cooke describes Gan's belief that the existing design of cities did not allow the social form of the revolution to flourish. She goes on to suggest 'a logical implication', that if one were to design the right kind of space, this would promote the new kind of society: 'if a "misfitting" environment can obstruct social change, a "fitting" one can foster it. If spatial organization can be a negative catalyst, it can also be a positive one'. [36]

Cooke discusses how the notion of the social condenser invented and promoted by the Constructivists had to be, following Gan, actively 'revolutionary', and according to its subsequent development by architect and theorist Moisei Ginzburg, must 'work' materially.[37]

> Low voltage activity and a weak consciousness would be focused through the circuits of these 'social condensers' into high-voltage catalysts of change, in the habits and attitudes of the mass population.[38]

This Constructivist design methodology was developed in the designs for apartment types 'A-F' for STROIKOM, the Russian Building Committee, and then realized in six schemes, including the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, designed by Ginzburg with Ignatii Milinis in 1928-1929.[39]

In Victor Buchli's fascinating in-depth ethnographic study of the Narkomfin, he underscores the importance of generating a new socialist *byt* or daily life, domesticity, lifestyle or way of life, for architectural designers in this period.[40] He explains how OSA (Union of Contemporary Architects), headed by Ginzberg:

> sought to address the issue of the new *byt* by creating an entirely new rationalized architecture and material culture based on communist theories of industrialized production and on patterns of consumption guided by socialist ethics.'[41]

Buchli discusses how the original programme for the Narkomfin included four separate buildings: a living block with three types of living unit following the STROIKOM guidelines (F, 2-F and K types, along with dormitory units), the communal block (with a kitchen, dining room, gymnasium and library), a mechanical laundry building and a communal crèche, which was never built. Buchli explains that the Narkomfin was a 'social condenser' of the transitional type. This meant that the accommodation allowed for both pre-existing bourgeois living patterns (K and 2-F units) and fully Communist F units. The main distinction between the two was that the former included kitchens and a family hearth, while the latter was primarily a sleeping unit with minimal facilities for preparing food, since cooking and eating were to take place in the communal block. Buchli stresses that the variety was not an expression of tolerance, but rather reflected the OSA belief that architecture had a transformative power, capable of 'induc[ing] a particular form of social organization', and that the intention was that the building would help ease those following bourgeois living patterns into adopting socialist ones.[42]

Le Corbusier, whose articles were read by Ginzberg and other Social Constructivists in the early 1920s,[43] made visits in the mid to late 1920s to the Soviet Union to study the architecture. In the 'slab block' of the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles, Corbusier was inspired by many key aspects of the Narkomfin design – its central axis (*rue intérieure*) the variable range in possible apartment types, including one with double-height living space, and the provision of communal facilities – but at the same time references to Le Corbusier's five-point plan (comprising *piloti*, free façade, open plan, ribbon windows and a roof garden[44]) are evident in the Narkomfin.

Architectural historian Nicholas Bullock outlines how Corbusier's *Unité*, which began construction in 1947, was also a point of reference for the architects of the London County Council in the 1950s, and that while the architects of Alton East at Roehampton were advocates of New Humanism, those of Alton West were 'pro-Corbu'.[45] Bullock also refers to the hot debates held in London pubs over the adoption of the principles of the *Unité*, and how these were linked to divergent socialist views and attitudes to Soviet communism. Yet while he describes the loss of certain design principles vital to the *Unité* in the process of reformulating the project for London's public-housing provision – the difficulty in retaining the communal spaces, double-height living rooms and central access corridor – he fails to focus on the debt that Le Corbusier owed to the Narkomfin design. This results in an argument that vacates the political imperative at the heart of the Narkomfin and the public-housing projects in France and the UK that its design inspired. In failing to make full reference to the potential of the social condenser in activating social change, the link is lost between architecture and revolution.

At this moment, on the brink of the collapse of the public sphere, I'd like to put forward the social condenser as architecture's political unconscious, an aspect, in Jameson's terms, of the 'repressed and buried history' of class struggle.

I consider this essay, according to Freud's psychoanalytic practice, as a 'construction', 'a moment when one lays before the subject of the analysis a piece of his early history'. In this moment, I lay the Narkomfin, a piece of early history, before those photographs of London's modernist social housing found at May Morn, the subject of this analysis.

**List of Images**

Image 1: Found image, date and title unknown, showing the Hallfield Estate (1952-1955), Bishops Bridge Road, London W2, designed by Tecton, Drake and Lasdun for Paddington Borough Council.

Image 2: Found image, date and title unknown, showing the Hallfield Estate (1952-1955), Bishops Bridge Road, London W2, designed by Tecton, Drake and Lasdun for Paddington Borough Council.

Image 3: Found image, date and title unknown, showing either the Alton East Estate (1952-1955), Portsmouth Road, SW15, designed by the LCC Architect's Dept. or the Alton West Estate (1955-1959), Roehampton Lane, SW15, designed by the LCC Architect's Dept.

Image 4: Found image, date and title unknown, showing Churchill Gardens (1950-1962), Grosvenor Road, Lupus Street, SW1, designed by Powell and Moya for Westminster City Council.

Image 5: Found image, date and title unknown, showing Churchill Gardens (1950-1962), Grosvenor Road, Lupus Street, SW1, designed by Powell and Moya for Westminster City Council.

Image 6: Found image, date and title unknown, showing the Hallfield Estate (1952-1955), Bishops Bridge Road, London W2, designed by Tecton, Drake and Lasdun for Paddington Borough Council.

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## Notes

1   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* [1981] (London and New York, 1983): p. 4.

2   Sigmund Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis I)' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works*, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey (London, 1985): pp. 121-144, p. 126 and p. 133. For a detailed description of Freud's consulting room, see 'Berggasse 19: Inside Freud's Office,' in Diane Fuss and Joel Sanders (eds), *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity* (New York, 1996): pp. 112-139.

3   Luciana Nissin Momigliano, *Continuity and Change in Psychoanalysis: Letters from Milan* (London and New York, 1992): pp. 33-61, pp. 33-34.

4   José Bleger, 'Psycho-Analysis of the Psycho-Analytic Frame,' *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 48 (1967): pp. 511-519, p. 518.

5   The French word used is *écrin*. See André Green, *Key Ideas for a Contemporary Psychoanalysis: Misrecognition and Recognition of the Unconscious* (London, 2005): p. 33, note.

6   Gregorio Kohon and André Green, 'Dialogues with Andre Green,' in Gregorio Kohon (ed.), *The Dead Mother: The Work of André Green* (London, 1999), published in association with the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, p. 29.

7   André Green, 'The Analyst, Symbolization and Absence in the Analytic Setting (On Changes in Analytic Practice and Analytic Experience) – In Memory of D. W. Winnicott', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 56 (1975): pp. 1-22, p. 12.

8   André Green, 'Potential Space in Psychoanalysis: The Object in the Setting,' in S. A. Grolnick and L. Barkin (eds), *Between Reality and Fantasy: Transitional Objects and Phenomena* (New York and London, 1978): pp. 169-189, p. 180.

9   See Sigmund Freud, 'Two Encyclopaedia Articles: (A) Psycho-Analysis' [1923], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920–1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works,* translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey (London, 1955): pp. 235–254.

10   Christopher Bollas, 'Freudian Intersubjectivity: Commentary on Paper by Julie Gerhardt and Annie Sweetnam', *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 11 (2001): pp. 93-105, p. 93.

11   Freud, 'On Beginning the Treatment,' pp. 134-135.

12   Christopher Bollas, *Free Association* (Duxford, Cambridge, 2002): pp. 4-7.

13   Bollas, *Free Association*, p. 12.

14   Bollas, 'Freudian Intersubjectivity', p. 98.

15   Sigmund Freud, 'Constructions in Analysis' [1937], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937–1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, translated from

the German under the general editorship of James Strachey (London, 1963): pp. 255-270, p. 261.

16   Cathy Caruth, 'An Interview with Jean Laplanche' © 2001 Cathy Caruth.' Available at: http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/pmc/text-only/issue.101/11.2caruth. txt (2001)[accessed: 3 May 2006]. Laplanche notes that Freud uses the terms *der Andere* and *das Andere* to distinguish the other person from the other thing. See Jean Laplanche, 'The Kent Seminar, 1 May 1990', in John Fletcher and Martin Stanton (eds), *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation and the Drives* (London, 1992): pp. 21-40, p. 25.

17   Caruth, 'An Interview with Jean Laplanche'.

18   Jean Laplanche, 'Transference: Its Provocation by the Analyst' [1992], trans. Luke Thurston, in John Fletcher (ed.), *Essays on Otherness*, (London, 1999): pp. 214-233, p. 222. See also Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis,* trans. David Macey (Oxford, 1989): pp. 152-154.

19   Laplanche, 'Transference: Its Provocation by the Analyst', p. 224.

20   My site-writing project was initiated as a mode of spatializing writing first in Jane Rendell, 'Doing it, (Un)Doing it, (Over)Doing it Yourself: Rhetorics of Architectural Abuse', in Jonathan Hill (ed.), *Occupying Architecture* (London, 1998): pp. 229-46, and then developed through a whole series of essays and texts, brought together in Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London, 2010). It has also been used as a pedagogic tool at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, from 2001.

21   Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London, 1998): p. 34. See also p. 79.

22   For a discussion of the politics of spectatorship see for example, Umberto Eco, 'The Poetics of the Open Work' [1962], in Claire Bishop (ed.), *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London and Cambridge, MA, 2006): pp. 20-40 and Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London, 2005): p. 13 and p. 131.

23   While Jameson is highly sceptical of critical writings that create homologies between the production of texts and factory production, as well as the inclusion of the signifier within materialist critique, I argue that if one is to engage with unconscious processes then it is not only the literary text placed under analysis which must be included within the critical process but also the text produced by the critic him/herself, and that the material conditions which give rise to the production of such texts need to be taken into account. See Jameson, *The Political Unconscious,* p. 30.

24   Excerpt from email of 15 September 2010 from Gareth Evans to Jane Rendell. An earlier and shorter text-work version of this essay is published as Jane Rendell, 'May Morn', in Gareth Evans and Di Robson (eds), *Towards The Re-Enchantment: Place and Its Meaning* (London, 2010): pp. 40-59.

25   This section is taken from an essay commissioned by Jules Wright of the Wapping Project, London, and originally published as Jane Rendell, 'Longing for the Lightness of Spring', in *Elina Brotherus* (London, 2001): pp. 19-26. The quoted comments are based on an interview conducted with Elina Brotherus on 28 September 2001.

26  Sam Lambert (ed.), *New Architecture of London: A Selection of Buildings since 1930.* The British Travel and Holidays Association in collaboration with the Architectural Association (1963).

27  These include the Elmington Estate (1957), Picton Street, London SE5, designed by the LCC Architect's Dept., now largely demolished; the Hallfield Estate (1952-1955), Bishops Bridge Road, W2, designed by Tecton, Drake and Lasdun for Paddington Borough Council; the Alton East Estate (1952-1955), Portsmouth Road, SW15, designed by the LCC Architect's Dept.; the Alton West Estate (1955-1959), Roehampton Lane, SW15, designed by the LCC Architect's Dept.; and Churchill Gardens (1950-1962), Grosvenor Road, Lupus Street, SW1, designed by Powell and Moya for Westminster City Council.

28  See Rut Blees Luxemburg, *London – A Modern Project* (London, 1997) and my discussion of the work in Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London, 2006).

29  See Alison Marchant, *Field Study 3*, (University of the Arts London and the Archive Research Centre at the London College of Communication, London, n.d.).

30  See Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, 1971): p. 82.

31  Email correspondence from Sally Hunt, 'An update for members from Sally Hunt, UCU general secretary', 26 May 2010.

32  Excerpt from email of 28 April 2010 from Sophie Warren and Jonathan Moseley to Jane Rendell. I delivered a text-work to Sophie and Jonathan in July 2010 for inclusion in their co-edited collection *Beyond Utopia*, which is entitled 'May Mourn'. This collection is currently, as of 3 November 2010, in press.

33  All quotes taken from primelocation.com, May 2010.

34  Owen Hatherley, *Militant Modernism* (Winchester, 2008).

35  Richard Pare, *The Lost Vanguard: Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932*, essay by Jean-Luis Cohen (New York, 2007).

36  Catherine Cooke (ed.), 'Russian Avant-Garde: Art and Architecture', special issue of *Architectural Design*, 53(5/6), (1983): p. 38.

37  Catherine Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde: Theories of Art, Architecture and the City* (London, 1995): p. 118.

38  Cooke, 'Russian Avant-Garde: Art and Architecture', p. 42.

39  Cooke, 'Russian Avant-Garde: Art and Architecture', pp. 44-45. See also Victor Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism* (Oxford, 1999).

40  Buchli, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, p. 23.

41  Victor Buchli, 'Moisei Ginzburg's Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 57(2), (1998): pp. 160-181, p. 161.

42  Buchli, 'Moisei Ginzburg's Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow', p. 162.

43  Cooke, 'Russian Avant-Garde: Art and Architecture', pp. 38-39 and Cooke, *Russian Avant-Garde: Theories of Art, Architecture and the City,* p. 122.

44   Le Corbusier developed his five-point plan through publications in the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau* from 1921 and his book *Vers une architecture,* first published in Paris in 1923.

45   Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (London, 2002): pp. 102-107.

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# Allegories of Late Capitalism: Main Street and Wall Street on the Map of the Global Village

*Joan Ockman*

## Symbolic Geography, 2008

The epochal election of 2008, which brought the first African-American president to the White House, revived a long-standing battle in the United States between two other places: Main Street and Wall Street. Reignited by a crisis in the stock market and the arrival on the American political scene of a Republican vice-presidential contender from a small town in Alaska, the rhetorical fervor confirmed the role played by symbolic geography in the national psyche as each side staked its claim to the 'real America'. Over the course of the last century, these two allegorical places have increasingly departed – at least physically – from the classic imagery with which they are associated. Nonetheless they remain resonant stereotypes. The images of Main Street and Wall Street are worth decoding today in relation not just to the political landscape in the United States but also to the existential one, or to what Fredric Jameson has described, reinterpreting an idea put forward by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City* (1960), as the 'cognitive map' on which we locate ourselves in relation to contemporary reality.[1]

The following is a typical description of the relationship between these two 'streets', published shortly before the election:

> Main Street is the world of local businesses and working people engaged in producing and exchanging real goods and services – a world of real wealth. Wall Street as it now exists is a world of pure money in which the sole game is to use money to make money for people who have money – a world of speculative gains and unearned claims against the real wealth of Main Street.[2]

It is difficult to tell at first glance which side of the political spectrum this statement comes from. (It's from an anti-globalization activist on the Left.) But there is no doubt about the Manichean universe it calls into being, pitting

hard-working, middle-class people engaged in producing 'real wealth' against abstract, amoral agents who game the system to take away fast profits. The polar conception of reality and unreality on which this capitalist universe rests is in turn concretized spatially in the images of the small, face-to-face community and the big, anonymous city, respectively. However anachronistic or simplistic this mythos appears in light of latter-day changes in forms of urbanity and modes of social interaction, it has apparently lost little of its potency. This was amply demonstrated in the demonization carried out by the Republican candidates of their Democratic opponents, who were portrayed as urban activists and urban elitists – at the same time – and in both cases as out of touch with the nation's heartland. Barack Obama's singular background not just as a black man but as a 'community organizer' and the product of elite East Coast universities opened him to attacks from the party of John McCain and Sarah Palin as both a Chicago radical and the protector of New York's moneyed interests.

All the more painful, then, was the October 2008 bailout of the largest financial institutions in the country by the federal government, as American citizens were prevailed upon by their elected representatives to accept the notion that the fates of Main Street and Wall Street were inextricably linked. Just a few decades earlier the axiom 'as General Motors goes, so goes the nation' had tacitly acknowledged that workers and managers – as well as the rest of the citizenry – shared a common stake in the nation's economic health. In a literally 'post-Fordist' economy, with once blue-chip automobile companies teetering on bankruptcy, this message yielded to a still harder one for most people to swallow: that the prosperity of plumbers in Ohio and 'hockey moms' in Indiana was bound up with that of investment bankers and hedge-fund managers in downtown New York. 'The truth is,' stated an official of the National Taxpayers Union, 'so-called Wall Street is nothing less than America's financial faith in the future of the economy – pensions, college funds, venture capital, business loans, mortgages, and much more'.[3]

Thus, at the height of a highly divisive election campaign, amid partisan finger-pointing on all sides, there was the spectacle of Democrats and Republicans lining up with an unpopular President – Barack Obama and John McCain with George W. Bush – in grudging support of a government takeover of bad bank debts and failed mortgages and together pledging to institute sweeping regulatory reforms. Americans were asked to grasp the astounding idea that homeowners defaulting on mortgage payments in Florida and California could engender, by a 'butterfly effect', the economic collapse not just of their own neighborhood but of a remote nation like Iceland. The cataclysmic events of the 2008 season thus seemed, at least momentarily, to usher in one of those transformational moments in collective consciousness when a large number of people accede to a new understanding of the relationship between their local, individual lives and the structural forces shaping the world at large. Both Wall Street and Main Street – Americans suddenly recognized – were addresses in the same global village.

Notwithstanding that revelation, though, the old folklore proved, as ever, hard to dispel. Even as the fortunes of the fallen masters of the universe on Wall Street and those of the former mistress of Wasilla city hall were being linked by a very few degrees of separation, the pitched battle of Greed versus God (according to the stereotypes) attested to the power and persistence of deeply entrenched metaphors. The wealth of Wall Street and the moralism of Main Street continued to vie with one another as irreconcilable alternatives, opposite routes to the fabled American dream, or what one writer has called, in another context, 'dialectical utopias'.[4]

## First American Dream: Main Street

Unlike Wall Street, Main Street lacks a single, localizable address. A generic name for a type of commercial thoroughfare that acquired its iconic form in the rural and semi-rural towns dotting the American landscape at the turn of the twentieth century, it was basically the central business district of an area with a dispersed pattern of settlement. Sepia-color photographs depict hundreds of similar-looking places. They evoke a kind of fleeting atemporality, time seemingly arrested just long enough to be recorded on faded film stock before the telephone poles disappear into the horizon en route to the next town. While the period images contain clues to evolving architectural fashions and regional customs, the vehicles and signs they depict often provide the surest means of dating them. A savings-and-loan bank at one end, a small department store, drugstore or gas station at the other, in between an infill of low-rise shops and other unprepossessing establishments constructed of wood or brick – such street scenes, at times also including a simple place marker or Civil War monument, generally lacked much aesthetic ambition.

In 1920, this urban morphology became a full-blown, and pejorative, concept with the publication of Sinclair Lewis's novel *Main Street*. Drawn from the author's memories of his birthplace in west-central Minnesota, the fictional town in the book, Gopher Prairie, would ever after be a signifier for American provincialism, complacent small-mindedness and drab, stultifying middle-class life. Lewis describes the first view of Gopher Prairie's main street by his protagonist, Carol Kennicott, a cultured and progressive-minded young woman from Chicago who marries a country doctor from the town, as follows:

> When Carol had walked for thirty-two minutes she had completely covered the town, east and west, north and south; and she stood at the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue and despaired.
>
> Main Street with its two-story brick shops, its story-and-a-half wooden residences, its muddy expanse from concrete walk to walk, its huddle of Fords and lumber-wagons, was too small to absorb her. The broad, straight, unenticing gashes of the streets let in the grasping prairie on every side. She realized the vastness and the emptiness of the land….

> She trailed down the street on one side, back on the other, glancing into the cross streets. It was a private Seeing Main Street tour. She was within ten minutes beholding not only the heart of a place called Gopher Prairie, but ten thousand towns from Albany to San Diego....
>
> It was not only the unsparing unapologetic ugliness and the rigid straightness which overwhelmed her. It was the planlessness, the flimsy temporariness of the buildings, their faded unpleasant colors. The street was cluttered with electric-light poles, telephone poles, gasoline pumps for motor cars, boxes of goods. Each man had built with the most valiant disregard of all the others. Between a large new 'block' of two-story brick shops on one side, and the fire-brick Overland garage on the other side, was a one-story cottage turned into a millinery shop. The white temple of the Farmers' Bank was elbowed back by a grocery of glaring yellow brick. One store-building had a patchy galvanized iron cornice; the building beside it was crowned with battlements and pyramids of brick capped with blocks of red sandstone.
>
> She escaped from Main Street, fled home.[5]

Following this dispiriting experience, Carol determines to raise the taste culture of Gopher Prairie. But she quickly finds herself stymied by her middlebrow neighbors, who ridicule her urban-enhancement projects. The action of the novel takes place between 1906 and 1920. Eventually, with the onset of World War I, Carol resolves to leave her husband and take a job in Washington, D.C., a city that appears to her less intimidating than New York. Yet Lewis ends the novel on an ambivalent note: after years of living in the Midwest, Carol finds the anonymous cosmopolitanism of the nation's capital hardly more satisfying, and she arrives at the realization that human nature is not so different from one place to another. Despite her image of herself as a forward-thinking, modern woman, she resigns herself to returning to Gopher Prairie to raise her children. Nor does Lewis, an astute observer of both social and spatial mores, fail to emphasize the way class and education relativize perceptions. The passage above, from the beginning of the novel, is directly followed by one describing the response of another newcomer to Gopher Prairie, a country girl of Scandinavian background who has left her immigrant family farm to experience the 'excitements of city-life' and arrives at the same time as Carol. With perfect symmetry Lewis juxtaposes Bea Sorenson's wide-eyed and thrilled reactions to the same sights on Main Street that cast such a pall on Carol's spirits.

Lewis's book was a publishing sensation in its day and its depiction of Main Street was quickly absorbed into the national discourse.[6] But there were others in the 1920s who viewed small-town life more sympathetically and rose to defend it against condescension. It is important to note that by the time Lewis was commenting on Main Street's folkways, they were already being threatened by the inroads of modernity. In 1921 the United States census recorded that rural Americans constituted a minority of the population for the first time. People were moving in droves to the nation's cities while

the countryside was increasingly being encroached upon by burgeoning suburbs. Meanwhile, the fortunes of the hinterlands remained stagnant even as American wealth exponentially expanded in the decade leading up to the stock market crash of 1929.

Thus it was in the context of rapid urbanization that popular views of Main Street oscillated between disdain and nostalgia. For those in the latter camp, it was a bastion of the values of traditional family life, tight-knit community and small-scale democracy. These values permeate the small-town bank buildings designed by Louis Sullivan between 1908 and 1919, which still radiate a poignant aura. The products of the Chicago architect's later career, when he was unable to attract any larger commissions, they were built in towns like Owatonna, Minnesota; Cedar Rapids and Grinnell, Iowa; Newark and Sidney, Ohio; and Columbus, Wisconsin. Their solidity and small-scale monumentality, their extraordinarily rich ornamentation and streetscape dignity remain rare, idealistic expressions of a form of life that, by the end of World War I, was on its way to obsolescence.[7]

The Depression that followed the 1929 stock market collapse, ushering in a decade of widespread misery throughout America, took an especially hard toll on the nation's small towns. The Roosevelt administration strove to counteract this further deterioration both psychologically and materially with the civicism of the New Deal. Wall Street's financiers and speculators were widely vilified for the corrupt practices and excesses to which the catastrophe was attributed, and in this climate Main Street's homely virtues reasserted their appeal. A new regionalism emerged in American art and popular culture, captured at times with empathy, at times with sentimentality, in works like Thornton Wilder's play *Our Town*, the photographs of Walker Evans and Norman Rockwell's illustrations for the *Saturday Evening Post*. At the same time, the federal government took initiatives to jumpstart the economic recovery of the small towns through programs aimed at stimulating both consumer appetites and the construction industry. The Modernization Credit Plan, launched in 1934 under the Federal Housing Administration, made money available to local shop owners for the purpose of modernizing their storefronts. Designed to give the American townscape a more up-to-date image, the strategy was a harbinger of present-day urban branding and marketing schemes.[8]

Yet the cosmetic boosterism that underwrote the New Deal on Main Street could hardly forestall the large-scale suburbanization and highway-building that massively transfigured the American landscape in the immediate aftermath of World War II. With the rise of a territorially oriented, automobilized consumer culture, the small towns underwent a form of 'creative destruction' far more devastating than the ravages of the Depression. Expansive shopping centers set in oceans of parking and anchored by large department stores (and subsequently gargantuan roofed-over malls) fueled the new pattern of settlement.  In this context Main Street increasingly took on the attributes of a dream-image, a historical phantasm. In 1955, with the

opening of Disneyland in Anaheim, California, Main Street USA became a quintessential destination for a postwar generation of American tourists. The centerpiece of Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom, it was the liminal space through which all visitors had to pass on their way to Frontierland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland and Fantasyland.

In fact, the Magic Kingdom version of Main Street was a simulacrum of a real street that Disney recollected from his own boyhood growing up in a small town in the Midwest. In 1906, when he was five years old, his father – who a dozen years earlier had been employed as a carpenter on the construction of the 'White City' at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago – moved his wife and five children to a hardscrabble farm on the outskirts of Marceline, Missouri. There the young Walt endured an unhappy boyhood under the regime of a penurious and stern paterfamilias who did not spare the rod in disciplining his children. Elias Disney's decision to settle his family a hundred miles northeast of Kansas City stemmed from his conviction that 'after boys reach a certain age they are best removed from the corruptive influences of a big city and subjected to the wholesome atmosphere of the country'.[9] Half a century later Walt Disney preferred to look back on this period of his childhood through rose-colored glasses. Main Street USA was constructed at five-eighths of actual street scale because such a diminution, he believed, 'made the street a toy, and the imagination can play more freely with a toy'.[10] The ice-cream-colored storefronts, the gingerbread ornamentation and the rest of the meticulously designed, picturesque details served to fictionalize American urban history in a form that was no less fantastical than any of the other attractions in the park.

In recent decades a good deal of revisionist exegesis has been devoted to the Disney version of Main Street. Richard Francaviglia, an urban geographer and historian, has analyzed the spatial morphology at Disneyland and the later Disney World in great detail, himself making rather rose-colored claims for the 'magnificent' imagineering of this 'sacred site' of twentieth-century American culture. Yet as he justly notes in his book *Main Street Revisited* (1996), Disney's 'image-building' may be understood as falling within a long trajectory of reinventing the American past, one that extends as far back as the colonial period. It also reaches directly forward to the present in such recently built towns of the 'New Urbanism' as Seaside and Celebration in Florida. These places, and the related shopping destinations formulaically reproduced and marketed around the country as representations of national heritage, represent the American preservation movement at its most commercial, ingratiating and ersatz.[11]

But instead of retreading the well-worn critiques of Disneyfication and hyperreality here – adroitly lampooned in a Hollywood film like *The Truman Show* (1998) and exaggerated to the point of parody in Jean Baudrillard's book *America* (1986) – what I wish to stress from an urban-architectural perspective is the historical evolution by which a non-place like Main Street became a place, one defined by, and celebrated for, precisely its generic and

banal formal qualities. Relevant in this regard was an academic reappraisal of the American 'vernacular landscape' that began in the 1950s. America's small towns, or what was left of them, were now seen not just as deserving of serious ethnographic study, but as locales pregnant with iconographic meaning. Contributing to this ideological shift were the writings of the urban geographer and landscape historian J. B. Jackson, among others.[12] Within this new outlook conferring positive value on the spaces of 'everyday life', the ordinary landscape was reconceptualized as an authentic expression of American material and popular culture.

This theoretical revindication of the American vernacular led, in turn, to an entirely new aesthetic interpretation that eventually would trump traditional architectural evaluations. In a highly influential polemic, the Pop-inspired architect Robert Venturi overturned the scathing indictment of Main Street that Peter Blake, a contemporary architect and journalist, had launched in his book *God's Own Junkyard* (1964). Among the stark photographs that Blake had offered as evidence of the despoliation of 'America the Beautiful' and the decline of 'urban civilization' at the hands of 'people who no longer see' was a typically haphazard American street scene.[13] In his own book, which appeared two years later, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), Venturi pointedly reprinted the same photograph – actually an image of Canal Street in New Orleans – and, as it were, reversed the caption. Now, declared Venturi in the dénouement of his book, Main Street was 'almost all right': 'The seemingly chaotic juxtapositions of honky-tonk elements express an intriguing kind of vitality and validity'. No longer an object of quaint sentimentality, Main Street was now put forward as an antidote to the 'prim dreams of pure order' harbored by late-modernist American architects.[14]

A few years later, together with his wife Denise Scott Brown and partner Steven Izenour, Venturi ventured further into the territory of Pop-culture celebration and sociological-formal criticism, taking the students in his Yale design studio on a study trip to Las Vegas. In seeking out architectural lessons in the sign-saturated environment of the commercial Strip, the Venturis explicitly rejected Disney's nostalgia for a bygone America.[15] Yet what lessons were to be gleaned from this latter-day incarnation of Main Street? How might this 'ordinary landscape' be made to transcend its own ordinariness through the agency of architecture? As the product of a specific conjunction of commercial and real estate prerogatives, the raucous neon environment of Las Vegas did not necessarily provide clues that could be directly transposed to the Venturis' own architecture. Despite the verve and ardor of their analysis, which owed much to both Tom Wolfe's *Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965) and to artist Ed Ruscha's laconic photographs of parking lots, gas stations and facades on Sunset Strip (1962–67), they seemed to reach the logical limit of their argument when it came to turning architectural analysis into a project. As the critic Colin Rowe remarked at the time, the conscious effort by sophisticated architects to emulate unsophisticated architectural forms was something of a conceit.[16] The Venturis' self-described

'nonjudgmental' approach subsequently resulted in a number of buildings nearly as insipid as their Main Street models. Among them was a bank realized in 1996 on the main street of the Disney town of Celebration, which remains a far cry from the democratic populism of Louis Sullivan's earlier approach to this building type.

Thus, *mutatis mutandis*, a space that originally corresponded to a specific pattern of settlement and a particular stage of American history, successively became, over the course of a century, a token of disdain and decline, an icon of nostalgia and fantasy reinvention, an artifact of American material culture, and a subject of architectural pastiche, all prior to ending up as a conservative lifestyle choice and battleground in the culture wars. The 2008 election politics disregarded all the ironies of this evolution. Accepting the vice-presidential nomination at the Republican national convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, Sarah Palin intoned, 'We grow good people in our small towns, with honesty and sincerity and dignity'. She was either unaware of the fact that this remark was a direct quote from the mid-century Minnesotan journalist Westbrook Pegler – a vituperative anti-Communist, anti-Fascist and member of the John Birch Society who originally made the remark during the McCarthy period – or else she chose to ignore it.[17]

Meanwhile Palin's meteoric rise to stardom served to turn the media spotlight on her hometown of Wasilla, Alaska. Newspapers and networks sent their reporters 3,000 miles north to file first-hand accounts of it, and what they found bore little resemblance to the wholesome and homespun ambience she proudly evoked in her campaign appearances. A suburban strip-mall environment of four-lane highways, nondescript public spaces and vacuous parking lots encircling the same big-box stores ubiquitous in the 'lower 48', Palin's hometown was also home to the forty-ninth state's highest consumption of crystal-methamphetamine. To the view of most journalists, it had even less charm than Gopher Prairie did in the eyes of Carol Kennicott.

### Second American Dream: Wall Street

Once Manhattan's northernmost boundary, Wall Street got its name from an unfinished 10-foot-high wooden palisade erected there in 1653 under the tenure of New York's Dutch governor, Peter Stuyvesant. Intended to protect the town from marauding Indians and other threats, the wall was planned to extend from the Hudson to the East River. Instead, as attacks failed to materialize, it fell into disrepair and a busy commercial and residential thoroughfare opened up along its path. By 1699 the wall had disappeared in all but name. Ninety years later, George Washington was inaugurated in the new Federal Hall at Wall and Nassau streets, and three years later, in 1792, Wall Street became the site of the fledgling New York Stock Exchange, quaintly founded, according to legend, by a group of stockbrokers and merchants convening under a buttonwood tree.

During the first half of the 1800s, with the opening of the Erie Canal and the expansion of the railroads making New York City the seaboard gateway to the rest of the country, Wall Street steadily evolved into a financial hub where major sums of money changed hands daily. But it was in the last third of the nineteenth century, when the notorious American 'robber barons' consolidated the vast fortunes they had made in the Industrial Revolution and the Civil War, that Wall Street began to acquire its modern-day lure and lore. Between 1896 and 1899 trade in listed stocks on the New York Stock Exchange trebled, then nearly doubled again by 1901. The respective myths of Main Street and Wall Street thus go back to roughly the same moment in American history. But while Main Street is identified with the rugged small farming community and the frontier homestead, Wall Street is associated with the Gilded Age metropolis. Turn-of-the-century images feature the landmark spire of Trinity Church being progressively dwarfed by Wall Street's earliest skyscrapers in an epic battle between moralism and Mammon for the spirit of the capitalist city.

As the development of the technologies of telegraph, telephone and stock ticker increasingly turned the act of money changing hands into symbolic performance, architecture became the most visible embodiment of Wall Street's preponderance. 'The Street', as the several blocks of the wider financial district were now metonymically known, saw a rapidly accelerating construction of imposing edifices. In 1903 a new building for the New York Stock Exchange, designed by George B. Post after an invited competition among eight of Manhattan's leading architects, opened at 18 Broad Street between Wall Street and Exchange Place. Its Corinthian-columned facade, with a pedimented frieze glorifying the integrity of commerce, fronted a colossal 109- by 140-foot trading hall whose marble walls rose 72 feet to an ornate gilt ceiling. Among the first buildings in the world to incorporate a technically advanced system of air-conditioning, it also boasted 24 miles of wiring to run the annunciator boards installed at either end of the trading floor (used for paging members) as well as multiple dining rooms and a continuously staffed emergency hospital. Immediately identified as a tourist destination, the new Stock Exchange building was viewed by twenty thousand visitors on its opening day.[18]

During the next two decades, as the nation's flows of capital continued to find concretion in Manhattan's reflexive and relentless real estate cycle, older building stock was torn down in order to build back up at awesome new heights. By the end of World War I the United States was a creditor rather than a debtor nation for the first time, and New York symbolically overtook London as the world's financial center. The skyscrapers of Lower Manhattan became both real and symbolic capital in the new capital of capitalism. The metaphor of 'urban canyons' was constantly evoked; comparisons between the vertical chasms of Wall Street and the Grand Canyon and other wonders of the Far West acknowledged that Lower Manhattan was a kind of second nature, the result of inevitable laws rather than simply real estate coups and

architectural caprices.[19] In his 1926 book *Amerika*, a photographic album of his first trip to the United States, the German architect Erich Mendelsohn expressed ambivalence about this new urban sublime, both exalting its undeniable dynamism and denouncing its crushing, craven materialism.[20]

For the time being, however, the operations of American finance capital seemed to rest on a firm footing. After the gold standard was suspended during World War I in all countries except the United States, great sums of foreign gold had flowed into Wall Street from all over the world. Much of it ended up in a 90-ton cylindrical vault buried five stories beneath another massive neoclassical pile, the new Federal Reserve Bank, completed by the architecture firm of York and Sawyer in 1924. The buildings of the financial district thus not only sank their foundations into Lower Manhattan's unique geological substratum of bedrock but also sat literally upon enormous reserves of bullion. In 1925, however, Britain made a bid to win back its former financial dominance and restabilize its economy by returning the pound to the gold standard at the prewar value. Too high a rate of conversion at this point, this reckless action caused further weakening of Britain's already struggling exports. It resulted in not only massive unemployment throughout the country but a rapidly spreading monetary and trade crisis around the world. To compensate, the Federal Reserve Bank moved to ease credit to borrowers in the United States, making cheap money widely available. Wild speculation ensued, and stocks on the New York Stock Exchange quadrupled in value during the second half of the 1920s. The period also saw ever larger numbers of ordinary people become involved in the democratized 'game' of trading stock shares.[21] In the summer of 1929, amid swirling reports about the preternaturally rising bull market, crowds of visitors from around the world began converging daily on Wall Street, lining the streets and cheering the stockbrokers as they arrived for work. The bubble burst on October 24. Following a month of volatility, the market plummeted 12 percent in a record sell-off of nearly 13 million shares, an overwhelming number of transactions at a time of manually input stock prices and slow ticker-tape machines. Among the onlookers in the visitors' gallery of the New York Stock Exchange on that day, thereafter known as Black Thursday, was Winston Churchill. Ironically it was he who four years earlier, as British Chancellor of the Exchequer, had made the fateful decision to return the pound to the gold standard.

Despite the panic, the stock market did not actually hit bottom for another three and a half years. Nor did building in New York City come to a halt right away. In 1930 the 70-story Bank of Manhattan Trust Building at 40 Wall Street was completed after just 11 months of construction, briefly claiming the title of the tallest building in the world. It was overtaken a few months later by the spire of the Chrysler Building in midtown. Soon, however, such monumental gestures – including the Rockefeller Center complex a little farther uptown, whose completion dragged on until 1939 – were viewed as the hubris of a more bullish era. Berenice Abbott's Depression-era photographs of Wall Street, taken under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art

Project, are eloquent documents of this historical moment. With their tops veering romantically into the clouds, her skyscrapers seem to embody the classic Kantian definition of the sublime. A sensation that combines pleasure and pain – masochistically derives pleasure from pain – the sublime strains to exceed the capacities of conventional representation, operating at a threshold where existing categories break down. Abbott's massive but dissolving skyscrapers literally realize Marx's famous pronouncement that under conditions of capitalism, 'all that is solid melts into air'.[22]

It was a true architectural prophecy. With the end of World War II, the downtown skyscrapers were rapidly superseded by a new type of symbolic representation. The new postwar buildings were no less a statement of American wealth and prestige, but they were more emblematic of the ever-increasing abstraction, fleetness and fungibility of twentieth-century capital. An exemplary early postwar building was Skidmore Owings & Merrill's branch bank for the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, erected on Fifth Avenue in midtown Manhattan in 1954, just a few blocks from the same firm's iconic Lever House. Flaunting an elegant light metallic frame and a completely transparent curtain-wall facade, the four-story building displayed the stainless-steel faces of its two large bank vaults to passersby at street level, projecting the image of a financial shopfront on Manhattan's own Main Street.

Meanwhile the recent experience of the volatility of money produced a concerted effort to establish new mechanisms for controlling global fluctuations. An international agreement reached at the end of World War II at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, pegged Western currencies to the dollar – acknowledging America's hegemony – while matching the dollar itself to gold. This partial reinstatement of the gold standard was successful in staving off major monetary crises through the 1960s. In 1971, however, spiraling inflation created by the Vietnam War as well as other national and international developments caused the financial regulators to reverse the policy they had established after the war, cutting the markets loose once again from gold and ushering in the floating, deregulated system that remains in force today. Once more architecture revealed its inherent propensity for symbolic representation. In 1988, well into the era of Ronald Reagan's presidency and less than a year after another financial crisis followed the largest one-day drop in the stock market's history, Kevin Roche's J. P. Morgan Building opened at 60 Wall Street. A belated addition to the financial district's historic agglomeration of skyscrapers, it was the largest corporate building ever to rise in the area. The flamboyant postmodernist behemoth sported gigantic Tinkertoy-like columns clad in granite and a through-block lobby, the latter the result of a swap between the city and the developer of extra height for a street-level public amenity. Resembling 'an ice-cream parlor blown up to monumental scale', the lobby was 'almost feminine', in the explicitly gendered description of the *New York Times* architecture critic, consisting of 'a cloying mix of white marble, trelliswork, mirrors, and marble grids'.[23]

The same year 60 Wall Street was completed also saw the founding of the Museum of American Finance, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, in a modest space on lower Broadway. Two decades later, at the beginning of 2008, this institution would move to 48 Wall Street, the former headquarters of the Bank of New York, an imposing edifice completed, ever so ironically, in 1929. Wall Street's symbolic museification in a post-9/11 era was further sealed by the first conversions of financial buildings into luxury condominiums, hotels and retail establishments, a process that continues apace today.[24]

Nonetheless, in the public mind, the district apparently remains the symbolic center of world money. In fall 2008, following the Dow Jones Average's plunge of nearly 2,000 points, 'the Street' once again became a site for pilgrimage and spectacle as visitors drawn to New York by the weakened dollar streamed down to the famed urban canyons. The mood was almost apocalyptic, as though Lower Manhattan had been hit by calamity for the second time in a decade. Doomsday prognostications about the collapse of capitalism were trumpeted, not without *Schadenfreude*, in *Pravda* and *Islam Online*. The following report appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> Gawking tourists and panicky financiers brought a bizarrely carnival-like atmosphere to Wall Street on Friday.
>
> Outside the New York Stock Exchange hundreds of tourists joined police, TV crews, school children, hot dog vendors, and a white-bearded busker playing *Amazing Grace* on the flute.
>
> Swedish visitor Agneta Blomgren, 43, photographed her mother Berit outside the exchange. An electronic board displaying plunging share prices provided the backdrop.
>
> 'We wanted to come and see it,' Blomgren said. 'The Americans aren't world leaders any more. It's time for a shift and this is the symptom of that. Power is shifting away – perhaps to China.'
>
> The Chinese were there too.
>
> Tour guide Ying Wang had added the stock exchange to her 10-strong group's itinerary that included Times Square, the site of the destroyed World Trade Center, and Central Park.
>
> 'Everyone wants to see what's going on, what the place really looks like,' Wang said, waving a long toy flower to catch the attention of her excited flock, all clutching cameras.[25]

A month earlier, in an article entitled 'Financial Russian Roulette' published on the eve of the collapse of Lehman Brothers, Paul Krugman, the *New York Times* columnist and a 2008 Nobel laureate in economics, wrote:

> To understand the problem, you need to know that the old world of banking, in which institutions housed in big marble buildings accepted deposits and

lent the money out to long-term clients, has largely vanished, replaced by what is widely called the 'shadow banking system.' Depository banks, the guys in the marble buildings, now play only a minor role in channeling funds from savers to borrowers; most of the business of finance is carried out through complex deals arranged by 'nondepository' institutions, institutions like the late lamented Bear Stearns – and Lehman.[26]

Warning of 'postmodern bank runs' – 'frantic phone calls and mouse clicks, as financial players pull credit lines and try to unwind counterparty risk' – Krugman suggested that the real action had shifted elsewhere, principally to cyberspace.[27] In an age of almost ungraspable monetary complexity, of newfangled financial instruments like derivatives and subderivatives, Wall Street's corporeality had finally become little more than a facade. The tourists who came in 2008 to witness the stock market's implosion may or may not have intuited that they were looking at a Potemkin village, yet it hardly diminished their thrilled anticipation of panic and collapse, the sublime sensation of an impending crash.

## Sublime versus Picturesque, Reality versus Unreality

Anticipating Krugman's comments in a suggestive essay of 1998 entitled 'Culture and Finance Capitalism' (1998), Fredric Jameson proposed to trace the effects of recent transformations in the nature of finance on cultural production:

> [C]apital transfers today [abolish] time and space and can be virtually instantaneously effectuated from one national zone to another. The results of these lightning-like movements of immense quantities of money around the globe are incalculable, yet already have clearly produced new kinds of political blockage and also new and unrepresentable symptoms in late-capitalist everyday life. For the problem of abstraction – of which this one of finance capital is a part – must also be grasped in its cultural expression….Thus any comprehensive new theory of finance capitalism will need to reach out into the expanded realm of cultural production to map its effects.[28]

Undoubtedly architecture – intrinsically bound up with real estate and thereby bearing a more immediate relationship to large-scale finance than any other form of cultural production – lends itself to just such a symptomatic reading as Jameson envisages. Furthermore, to return to his concept of cognitive mapping, such a reading serves to reveal the lack of correspondence between local, individual experiences and the larger logics driving global capitalism.[29] If, as we have tried to show here, the architectural evolution of Wall Street and Main Street correlates with successive phases of twentieth-century capitalist development, then an analysis of the material and ideological transformations of each of these spatial tropes can provide a partial road map of our historicity.

Earlier we spoke of Wall Street and Main Street as 'dialectical utopias', borrowing the phrase from a characterization by Dave Hickey of two resort cities in the American desert. Hickey describes these two places – Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Las Vegas, Nevada – as the embodiment of opposite 'architecture[s] of desire': on the one hand, a neat, upscale, *faux*-Navajo consumer paradise; on the other, a 'saturnalian casino boomtown' built in a 'Biblical wilderness of fallen nature'. Hickey, an art and culture critic who himself resides in Las Vegas (where he enjoys the role of unofficial philosopher-king), does not hesitate to affirm his preference for 'the real fakery of Las Vegas over the fake reality of Santa Fe'.[30]

The small-town ethos of Main Street and the high-stakes gambling mentality of Wall Street may represent an analogous pair of oppositions within the American geographic imaginary. Yet as far as the 'real America' is concerned, it is hardly possible to say which place is which. The facades of Wall Street, ostentatiously draped in their post-9/11 flags today, are now mostly fronts for the historical set-piece that the district is becoming, while Alaska's Main Street, with its chain stores, big boxes and big oil interests, signals, no less punctually, the thorough colonization of one of the planet's last frontiers.

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## Notes

1   In the opening chapter of *The Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch writes of the existence of 'hidden' patterns within the 'vast sprawl of cities'; to apprehend these patterns and to avoid the terrifying experience of getting lost, in his view, markers and maps that afford 'visual recognition' and 'way-finding' are necessary. Lynch sees architecture's essential function as to provide literal tokens of 'imageability' that can counteract urban alienation. Architecture, he writes (quoting Suzanne Langer), 'is the total environment made visible'. See Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 1-13. In his own concept of cognitive mapping, Jameson jettisons both the gestalt empiricism and modernist positivism of Lynch, while taking his idea of mapping as a suggestive metaphor for his own interest in relating the disparities of individual experience to the global system of capitalism. Jameson's concept is indebted to Althusser's redefinition of ideological representation as the subject's 'imaginary relationship to his or her Real conditions of existence'. Jameson first articulates the concept of cognitive mapping in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*; see Fredric Jameson (Durham, 1991), pp. 51-54 and pp. 409-19. Related to this concept of mapping is his theory of allegorical interpretation, which draws on Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man. In the present essay, I use the term *symbolic representation* interchangeably with *allegory*. Jameson clarifies several related terms – *allegory*, *metaphor* and *narrative* – in *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*; see Fredric Jameson (London and New York, 2002).

2   David Korten, 'Main Street before Wall Street', *YES!* [Online: 24 September 2008] Available at: http://www.davidkorten.org/MainStreet.

3   Jeff Poor, 'Media Pit "Main Street" against Wall Street' [Online: Business Media Institute, 2 April 2008] Available at: http://www.businessandmedia.org/printer/2008/20080402161813.aspx.

4   Dave Hickey, 'Dialectical Utopias: On Santa Fe and Las Vegas', *Harvard Design Magazine* 4 (Winter/Spring 1998): pp. 8-13. Thematic issue on *Popular Places*.

5   Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York, 1961): pp. 36-41.

6   Lewis's portrayal of Gopher Prairie was inspired by the even bleaker picture of small-town life and its doldrums painted by Sherwood Anderson in a series of short stories published a year earlier under the title *Winesburg, Ohio*.

7   It is interesting in this context to read the opening paragraph of Sullivan's autobiography, originally published in 1924: 'Once upon a time there was a village in New England called South Reading. Here lived a little boy of five years. That is to say he nested with his grandparents on a miniature farm of twenty-four acres, a mile or so removed from the center of gravity and activity which was called Main Street. It was a main street of the day and generation, and so was the farm proper to its time and place.' Louis H. Sullivan, *The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York, 1956): p. 9.

8   See Gabrielle Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* (Chicago, 2008).

9   Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney* (New York, 1968): p. 47.

10   Schickel, *The Disney Version*, p. 323.

11  Richard V. Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space and Image Building in Small-Town America* (Iowa City, 1996).

12  See John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven, 1986). On Jackson's impact, see Chris Wilson and Paul Groth (eds), *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson* (Berkeley, 2003). Another early study of the American small town, specifically in the Midwest, was Lewis Atherton's *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington, 1954). Atherton, a social historian who grew up in a Missouri village in the early twentieth century, provides a rich and carefully documented account.

13  Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard* (New York, 1964): p. 33.

14  Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York, 1966): p. 104.

15  See Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1977).

16  See Colin Rowe, 'Robert Venturi and the Yale Mathematics Building', *Oppositions* 6 (1976): pp. 10-19.

17  On the Pegler connection and Palin's knowing or unknowing use of him as a source, see T. Dickson, 'Citizen Palin: Why Sarah Palin Quoted Westbrook Pegler', in *Global Research* [Online: 5 October 2008] Available at: http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=10461.

18  See Steve Fraser, *Wall Street: America's Dream Palace* (New Haven, 2008): p. 70.

19  The origin of the 'urban canyon' metaphor dates to the 1890s and the rise of the first New York skyscrapers, according to Irwin Lewis Allen, *The City in Slang: New York Life and Popular Speech* (New York, 1993): pp. 133-34. On the myth of the skyscrapers' 'natural growth', see Thomas A. P. Van Leeuwen, *The Skyward Trend of Thought: The Metaphysics of the American Skyscraper* (Cambridge, 1988) and Daniel M. Abramson, *Skyscraper Rivals: The AIG Building and the Architecture of Wall Street* (New York, 2001): pp. 174-79.

20  Erich Mendelsohn, *Amerika: Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (Berlin, 1926). Mendelsohn was accompanied on this trip by the filmmaker Fritz Lang, whose 1927 film *Metropolis* likewise registers the powerful and negative impact of the capitalist city.

21  Exemplifying the increasingly deterritorialized operations of the money economy in the 1920s (and anticipating today's remote transactions) were the stock-trading activities of passengers crossing the Atlantic aboard Cunard ocean liners, who used radio telegraphy to convey their orders.

22  It is worth quoting the full passage from Marx's 1848 *Communist Manifesto* (Section I): '[E]verlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.'

23  Paul Goldberger, 'A Tower Competes with Wall Street's Last Golden Age', *New York Times* (4 March 1990). Quoted in Robert A. M. Stern, David Fishman and Jacob Tilove, *New York 2000: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Bicentennial and the Millennium* (New York, 2006): p. 246.

24    See the announcement of a program in October 2010 cosponsored by the
      Museum of American Finance and the Skyscraper Museum: 'Whither Wall
      Street: The Recent Past and Evolving Future of the Architecture of Wall Street'
      [Online: Museum of American Finance, n.d.] Available at: http://www.moaf.org/
      events/general/evt_20101013.

25    'Tourists Flock to Witness Fall of Wall Street', *Sydney Morning Herald* [Online: 13
      October 2008] Available at: http://www.smh.com.au/news/news/tourists-flock-
      to-witness-fall-of-wall-street/2008/10/13/1223749895378.html.

26    Paul  Krugman, 'Financial Russian Roulette', *New York Times* (14 September
      2008): p. A25.

27    Krugman, 'Financial Russian Roulette'.

28    Fredric Jameson, 'Culture and Finance Capitalism', in *The Cultural Turn: Selected
      Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, edited by Perry Anderson (London and
      New York, 1998): p. 143.

29     For further elaboration by Jameson on cognitive mapping, see *The Geopolitical
      Aesthetic*, in which he describes it as the major remaining 'vocation for the
      postmodern cultural work' (p. 25) and a 'praxis' intended to be 'prescriptive
      as well as descriptive' (pp. 58, 188). Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic:
      Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington, 1992).

30    Dave Hickey, 'Dialectical Utopias', pp. 8-9.

# Rethinking City Planning and Utopianism

*Kojin Karatani*

**Part 1**

I am not an architect, nor an architecture critic. I came to be increasingly concerned with architecture after I published a book called *Architecture as Metaphor* in Japan in 1980. At the time, I did not know much about actual architecture. I was only interested in architecture as metaphor. In fact, my work had nothing to do with architecture proper. So I did not expect architects to read it, but to my surprise, a Japanese architect named Arata Isozaki positively evaluated my work. Moreover, he recommended it to an American architect, Peter Eisenman, and consequently the MIT Press published it as the first book in a new series on architecture theory. Additionally, they invited me to be a regular member of ANY, the international architects' conference that was held every year during the last decade of the twentieth century in different places of the world. I accepted this offer not because I was interested in the actual scene of architecture, but because I learned that Fredric Jameson and Jacques Derrida would attend regularly. As a result, I acquainted myself with many architects at home and abroad, and I gained some knowledge of contemporary architecture, but I lost any illusions that I had had about it.

I turned to the question of architecture for the following reason: I had been influenced by Jacques Derrida in the 1970s. At the time, what Derrida called 'deconstruction' was in fashion within the field of literary criticism, but I tried to rethink this idea more universally, applying it to linguistics, economics and mathematics. To universalize the question of deconstruction, I came to consider deconstruction in terms of construction, namely architecture.

This is not a mere pun. For example, following Heidegger, Derrida was trying to deconstruct western metaphysics, which he believed to have originated in Plato. In my view, Plato is the first thinker who introduced architecture as metaphor to explain philosophy. He used architects as metaphor in order to define the philosopher, and later philosophers availed themselves of this

metaphor. Architecture means the *arche* (origin and head) of *techne* (knowledge), namely, something that unifies all knowledge fundamentally.

Plato likened philosophers to architects, because philosophers also provide bases for all knowledge, although as was typical of the citizen of Athens, he looked down on architects since in reality they are craftsmen. Ever since that time the architecture metaphor has prevailed in western thought. For instance, God was considered the Architect in the medieval period. In the modern period as well, architecture has been used as metaphor. Descartes attempted to build a firm construction of Knowledge. Kant used the word 'architectonic' to describe his transcendental philosophical system.

It follows that deconstructing metaphysics is to deconstruct the system of knowledge indicated by architecture as metaphor. In the 1970s, the role of architecture as metaphor came to an end. It was replaced by something else, namely, text or texture. For example, in literary criticism, notions such as creation, author and work were cast into doubt. There is no such thing as an author. Rather, the author is imaginary.

What exists is only a text, which is intertextually woven from various preceding texts. The meaning of a text is not determined by the author. The meaning of a text is un-decidable. In contrast to the idea that the literary work is constructed, the text is rather woven or interwoven. Such a view was typical of post-structuralism or deconstruction. In this regard, deconstruction means the denial of architecture as metaphor.

The shift of metaphor from architecture to text took place in literary criticism and philosophy, but in the 1970s a similar thing happened in the field of architecture itself. That was postmodernism. Today people have forgotten the fact that the notion of postmodernism had its origins in the field of architecture and then spread across other disciplines. Postmodernism in architecture implied a critique of the dominant idea of architecture as metaphor. In this light, it may be said that modernists in architecture who are represented by Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier purified the essence of architecture as making or constructing.

For instance, Le Corbusier thought of something like a machine for living by eliminating all ornament. He and others brought architecture as metaphor to its logical extreme. Opposing them emerged others who reintroduced the ornament, or rather architectural history. Then architecture came to be regarded not as construction, but rather as text or texture, woven of quotations from historical works. These people called themselves 'postmodernists' and this word 'postmodernism' then spread to pervade other cultural fields.


## Part 2

However, the reason I was interested in the question of architecture as metaphor was not so much philosophical as politico-economic. For example, when Plato likened the architect to the philosopher, he also likened the

architect to the philosopher-king who rules his republic. The Platonic notion of the philosopher-king still remains today but in a different form. That is, for instance, the Marxist-Leninist idea of the enlightened intellectual leadership of a vanguard party that will change the whole of society according to their plan. Therefore, Marxist politics may be traced back to the Platonic idea of the philosopher-king.

A great deal has been written about this issue, including Karl Popper's 'The Open Society and its Enemies'. As a matter of fact, Derridian deconstruction was also concerned with this notion of the philosopher-king. Derrida appears to discuss the Occidental tradition of theology and metaphysics primarily, but he implicitly targeted the contemporary ideology of Marxists.

Meanwhile, I attempted to reconsider this problem in terms of architecture, particularly city planning. The philosopher-king shares more in common with the city planner than with architects who design single houses or monuments. The design of the city is directly related to the design of the society. So the city planner serves as a better metaphor for the philosopher-king.

In *Architecture as Metaphor*, I did not touch upon actual architectural matters, with the exception of works by two writers who critiqued city planning – Jane Jacobs and Christopher Alexander. I focused on the question of city planning, because it seemed to encapsulate the question of the architect as metaphor, from Plato's philosopher-king to Lenin's vanguard party. I was already familiar with much of the criticism of the planned economy, the vanguard party and so on, but when I read the works of Jacobs and Alexander in the 1970s, I found them brilliant and tremendously fresh. They modestly confined themselves to the question of city planning, but proved universally that the artificial design of a society necessarily fails and ends with the opposite of what was intended. Their critiques of city planning seemed to entail the fundamental critique of social planning in general. Thus, their works became the most appropriate and significant examples in my own book, *Architecture as Metaphor*.

Now let us take an overview of their works. First, Jane Jacobs was an architectural journalist and activist, who rose up against the urban redevelopment that was being disseminated in New York in the 1950s. In the late 1960s she then immigrated to Toronto, Canada, in protest against the Vietnam War. In the 1950s urban development in New York was based upon the ideas of 'zoning' and motorization. Zoning means dividing the city according to its functions, placing office buildings in the center of the city and placing residential areas in the suburbs. The city center and the rest of the city are then connected by motorization (in other words, expressways). Jacobs insisted that the attraction and vigor of the natural city came from the coexistence of different elements; new and old buildings, housings and offices, different classes and ethnicities, etc. In a word, the life of the city lies in its diversity. By contrast, modern city planning tends to dismiss the spontaneous diversity and complexity of the natural city.

Meanwhile, it may be said that Christopher Alexander clarified the points Jacobs made about the diversity of the city more abstractly and mathematically.

In his famous essay, 'A City is not a Tree' (1965), Alexander calls cities that have formed over the course of many years 'natural cities', in contrast to 'artificial cities', which have been deliberately planned by designers and planners. He argues that artificial cities lack the essential ingredients of natural cities.

Many designers have attempted to enliven modern-style artificial cities by introducing the ingredients of natural cities. But those attempts have so far been unsuccessful because they have failed to grasp the inner structure of the natural city itself and have instead imitated the appearance or image of the natural city.

According to Jacobs, one of the conditions for a city to become diverse is for a single place to have more than one function. By contrast, in the artificial city one place serves only one function; a residential area is just for residence and streets are just for passing through. This can be described as a tree structure, to use Alexander's words. In contrast to this, the natural city has a more complex structure. For instance, children often like to play on the streets rather than in parks. When streets become places for playing, they perform more than one function.

Alexander maintains that the natural city is organized in the form of a semi-lattice, whereas the artificial city is organized in the form of a tree. As this distinction is formalistic, it can be applied to the other types of organizations as well. In military or bureaucratic organizations, for example, the network is structured like a tree, and transversal intercourse is never allowed. However, it is in fact in spy and underground organizations that the most typical tree structure is rigidly maintained. In reality, the tree structure is often modified. For example, bureaucratic organizations often adopt the semi-lattice in their actual functioning, as communication occurs more or less transversally.

According to Alexander, both city and social organization would be devastated if the tree structure were followed too strictly; contemporary city planning has essentially followed this course, and the consequences are well documented in cities like Brasilia. Alexander writes, `In any organized object, extreme compartmentalization and the dissociation of internal elements are the first signs of coming destruction. In a society, dissociation is anarchy. In a person, dissociation is the mark of schizophrenia and impending suicide.'

Both the natural city and the artificial city are man-made. But why is one natural and the other artificial? This question reminded me of an essay written by the French poet and critic Paul Valéry, titled 'Man and the Seashell'. Observing the seashell, Valéry asks, 'Who made this?' But this question – 'Who made this?' – should not be 'answered'. It is a rhetorical question that in reality suggests the absence of the author. Valéry says, 'whenever we run across something we do not know how to make but that appears to be made, we say that nature produced it'. Here, Valéry is not comparing man and nature, but is instead provisionally proposing the name 'nature' to identify the limitations or impossibilities that are encountered in the course of the exhaustive pursuit of making. Nature, therefore, is not restricted to ostensibly natural objects

such as the seashell; it also includes things that are made by man but whose structure – how they are made – is not immediately discernible.

Valéry remarks that the structure of a thing made by nature is more complex than that of a thing made by man. Instead of describing 'what nature makes', Valéry exposes it as something that is irreducible to the structures that we construct in our thinking: needless to say, that is what Alexander pointed out, by saying that a natural city is not a tree structure.

In *Architecture as Metaphor* I applied this observation. Namely, I observed natural language, natural number and natural money (commodity money like gold) from this viewpoint. At this point, my inquiry into the city and architecture was suspended. After this I stopped thinking of the city and did not think about it again for years. I came to think of it again after 1990; especially after I became a member of the ANY conferences. But it was not because such topics were discussed there. On the contrary, it seemed that architects were no longer interested in the critique of planning made by Jacobs and Alexander.

Evidently people had lost interest in city planning. Or, rather, people had lost interest in social planning in general since the collapse of Soviet Russia. For instance, the idea of a planned economy was overturned and replaced by the market economy. Furthermore, in the capitalist nation, state interventions such as social welfare and public enterprise were rejected in favor of the mechanisms of the market economy. In short, the victory of Neo-liberalism and the globalization of capitalism made the idea of planning outdated.


**Part 3**

But I would like to rethink city planning, because the question proposed by Jacobs and Alexander is not settled at all. Please be aware that the kind of city planning they criticized was different from the actual capitalist development of modern cities. Jacobs was opposed to capitalist development of cities. Indeed, she pointed out that the redevelopment of cities, construction of highways and other similar activities are promoted to bring benefits to auto industries and civil engineering contractors. But her criticism was directed rather at the idealist theory underlying city planning. This ideal has no affinity with capitalist city development. Rather, it originates in the will to control such a process and create a more human city.

Jacobs states that this began with the plan of a garden city by Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) of England. This plan was an attempt to create a city in the suburbs, where workplace and home would be close to each other, and the number of residents would be limited to about 3,000 to 5,000 people. This city would be surrounded by parks and trees, with spaces for farming. There would be rental homes for families of various kinds and different economic means. This was a plan to create a town, as opposed to a city, which would be heavily populated with various kinds of people. In this sense, the garden

city is related to the idea of zoning, which suggests dividing residential and commercial areas.

The following example is Le Corbusier's *La Ville Radieuse* (The Radiant City), which was intended as a criticism of the garden city. Le Corbusier aimed at creating a modern city, with greenery and parks and high-rise buildings. According to Jacobs, despite its denial of the garden city, the Radiant City is based upon a similar idea. It is a vertical garden city, so to speak. The natural city, where different elements coexist, stimulating each other and bringing vibrancy, has vanished in the Radiant City.

Importantly, this kind of artificial city or city planning was critical to capitalist city development and based itself on the will to make cities more human. Jacobs and others showed that the utopian city ends up as dystopia. However, their criticism was not meant to suggest the complete abandonment of planning. To reject all planning would lead to chaotic development based on capitalist efficiency and profitability. This would never bring about a human 'natural city'.

What Jacobs and Alexander had in mind cannot be such a thing. They, too, wished to change the status quo. Yet they had to reject the idea of bringing change by means of an artificial city or planning. If there is utopianism in Howard or Le Corbusier, there is a different kind of utopianism or Constructivism in Jacobs and Alexander. This can be seen in the idea of 'pattern language', the term Alexander coined later. In 'pattern language', parts for constructing buildings are classified so that anybody can design his or her own house. With this book, a client can express and develop what he or she wants. However, does this imply that the architect is unnecessary? The answer is 'no'.

In any case, it is the architect who designs the parts. Alexander must have wished to deny the idea of seeing the architect as the single source of architecture. Architecture is created by those who live in the building as well. Of course, architecture is not possible without an architect. Still, the subject here is not the architect. The same can be said about city planning. The natural city, too, does not just happen without any planning. A certain amount of planning is necessary. Without this, a city becomes chaotic. But planning does not mean the planning of the entire city. Rather, planning should be controlled (and kept minimal).

Jacobs gave four minimal conditions for planning. One of them was to make blocks short and create many corners. By making many corners, people would encounter each other more often, which in consequence would bring vigor and diversity to the city. Conditions of design such as this exist to provide bases for people to spontaneously create multiple structures. Another condition was the coexistence of old and new buildings. The aim of this condition was to limit redevelopment of the city; old buildings were to be preserved. Such conditions will bring about a kind of multiplicity and vigor that differs from the 'artificial city'.

## Part 4

To repeat, Jacobs and Alexander did not reject utopianism or planning in general. They criticized modernist city planning, only because they were pursuing utopia in their own way. Then what are their utopianisms? And where do they come from? I believe that they are derived from the Bauhaus, and can be further traced back to William Morris of the Arts and Crafts movement. Walter Gropius, the founder of the Bauhaus, pronounced the idea of integrating a variety of arts under architecture in his *Bauhaus Manifesto* of 1919. Yet, this idea is different from, or rather opposite to, the idea of deeming architecture as the *arche* of the arts, which entails a philosopher-king or vanguard party. First of all, while philosophers from Plato onward made little of architects because of their lowly status as craftsmen, the Bauhaus gave priority to their very craftsmanship. In fact, the Bauhaus signals the restoration of craft and artisanship. Gropius proclaimed the formation of 'a new guild of craftsmen' by abolishing the hierarchy between artisans and artists in his *Bauhaus Manifesto*.

What Gropius did then was to compare 'a new guild of craftsmen' to architecture. In other words, he used the word 'architecture' to counter the Platonic architectonic hierarchy. However it should not be overlooked that this new guild of craftsmen was conceived on the basis of the realities of industrial capitalism. It was not a return to the medieval. Before the Bauhaus, there was a polar opposition between commercialism and art for art's sake, or industrial art technology and art. What the Bauhaus aimed at was the unity of technology and art. But this signifies that they aimed to abolish the historical social conditions that necessitated the rupture between the two. In this respect, modernism, while accepting the technology and industrial products brought about by the capitalist economy, is simultaneously a counter-movement against the capitalist economy.

Therefore, it was by necessity that modernists were more or less socialists. The question is, what kind of socialism? It was not only different from Bolshevism, but also far from social democracy. Today it is said that the Bauhaus encompassed multiple contradictory ideas within it, incessantly making itself complex; that is to say, it included many other elements that differed from socialism. However, this was their own form of 'socialism'.

In this regard, let's consider William Morris, who influenced the Bauhaus with his Arts and Crafts movement. Morris, the author of *News from Nowhere*, was one of the first Marxists in Britain, while Marx was still alive. Needless to say, Morris was critical of Fabian socialism, that is, the social welfare state, but he also rejected Bolshevism. I would like to call his socialism 'associationism' in order to avoid misunderstanding. In my view, when Jacobs and Alexander criticized city planning, they had their own socialism – 'associationism' – in mind.

## Part 5

I remarked above that in the 1990s after the collapse of Soviet Russia, people lost interest in city planning. The victory of Neo-liberalism and the globalization of capitalism outdated the idea of planning in general. But at the time not only the old type of utopianism (Constructivism) was ruined, but also the new type of utopianism was effaced. The only thing that remained was city development based on capitalism. Postmodernism did not resist it, but rather ironically supported it.

Global urban development was based upon the modernist idea of city planning, which Jacobs and Alexander criticized: zoning and high-rise buildings (skyscrapers) and motorization. Obviously, this does not create a 'natural city'. All over the world, cities are divided into high-rise business areas, slums and sprawling residential areas for the middle class. The problem is that architects are no longer critiquing such cities as they exist today. I think that architects shy away from it, because they have been profoundly disappointed and disillusioned.

As far as I know, the architect who most typically represent the tendency of architecture since 1990 is Rem Koolhaas. Koolhaas used to be close to the Bauhaus. But he must have felt the limits of such utopianism. In the 1980s, he began to attach importance to the metropolis. And his postmodernism appeared in this concept of metropolis, which is too 'big' for city planning. What Koolhaas saw in the metropolis is nothing other than the nature of the uncontrollable capitalist economy, which incessantly deconstructs itself. He worked in New York, Tokyo and Shanghai. According to the aesthetic criteria derived from the traditional cities of Europe, these metropolises look chaotic and hideous. Koolhaas praised them, for the reason that they fundamentally deconstruct the old European aesthetic. He insisted on accepting what the capitalist economy engenders, however horrible it may be.

Thus Koolhaas affirms capitalist globalization, but not necessarily because he wants to affirm capitalism in reality. Rather, it is the other way around. He is against capitalism. But he despairs of any attempt to control the capitalist economy, and rightly so in the 1980s. It seems that he got the idea of accelerating the movement of the capitalist economy to the point of implosion. Such an irony lies behind his admiration of the metropolis and construction booms. I understand his irony. For I myself thought the same way in the early 1980s.

But his stance could function as irony only until 1990. After that point, the deconstructive power of capitalism grew unbridled and spread globally. Now it is quite clear that if we leave things to the capitalist market economy, we are sure to find the human environment totally devastated. Can we just wait and see until the world comes to the extreme point of debacle brought about by capitalism? In fact, we have no such leeway. We have to do something by any means possible.

## Part 6

The deconstructive power of capitalism indicates our need to seek utopianism again. We need *Idee* and social planning, both of which postmodernism dismissed. Needless to say, I am not talking about planning by the state. I mean the kind of planning that Jacobs and Alexander presented as a critique of city planning. Take Jacobs, for example. She criticized planning, but did not offer her own plan. Despite this, I believe that her criticism brought about real changes.

Let me give you one example. In the fall of 2008, I visited Toronto University to give some talks. I did not think of Jacobs while I was there, mostly because the content of my talks bore no relation to architecture. I knew very well that she protested against the Vietnam War and migrated to Canada, and played an important role in the development of Toronto as a critic-activist. Still, I did not think of her in Toronto. I came to think of her when I moved on to Buffalo to give talks at the State University of New York.

The city of Toronto is located near the Niagara Falls, and the American city of Buffalo is located on the other side of the falls. These cities are about two hours apart from each other by car. Both developed as industrial cities on the coast of Lake Ontario. When Jacobs migrated, there must have been no significant difference between these two cities. When I was there I noticed that while the Canadian side, Toronto, is vibrant and industrially prospering, the American side, Buffalo, is desolate and in decline.

One of the causes for this can be found in city planning. In the city center of Toronto, there are public buildings such as City Hall and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Next to them, there are numerous buildings of the University of Toronto, Chinatown and downtown, which are all close to each other. In downtown Toronto there is a huge underground area, where there are shops, banks, cafes, parks, etc., allowing many activities without going above ground. This is especially useful in winter time. In addition to subways, streetcars are available. People use bikes instead of cars.

In short, there is no zoning in Toronto. In contrast to this, zoning is thoroughly carried out in Buffalo. As an example, there is no subway system. The construction of a subway system was met by opposition from upper- and middle-class people, who feared that a subway would enable poor people without cars to invade the suburbs. The university is placed in the suburbs. There are unsafe slums in downtown Buffalo. It is a typical American city. And it is not just typical of America: cities that were developed based on zoning are similar everywhere.

As we can see in classical Hollywood movies, in 1930s Los Angeles, street cars were running lengthwise and crosswise. But now one cannot go anywhere without a car. In contrast to this, in New York City, where Jacobs was active, people use the subway system and a car is not necessary. Of course, this is not due to Jacobs alone. This is the fruit of residents' social activism and movements. Still, without Jacobs, who held a clear theoretical understanding

of city planning and the power to put it into practice, Toronto too might have ended up like Buffalo. As I said earlier, Jacobs was opposed to planning by authorities and corporations. She did not present her own plan. What she suggested were only four minimal conditions. But these made it possible for Toronto to develop as a natural city.

I was impressed to witness that the existence of a single critic had brought about such a significant difference. I see architecture here. Also here I see the will to architecture. And that is what I would like to say to architects and those who wish to become architects. This also gave hope to me, a person who is not an architect. In this sense, we must never give up the 'will to architecture'.

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# Fredric Jameson and Critical Architecture

*Louis Martin*

In an important essay entitled '"Criticality" and its Discontents' published in 2005, George Baird analyzed the shift away from 'criticality' in the discourse of an emerging generation of North American architectural critics.[1] In his opinion, this shift had the appearance of a paradigmatic change in which issues associated with 'criticality', such as autonomy, resistance and negation, were in the process of being displaced by issues related to pragmatism, such as design intelligence, effectiveness and performance.

Baird, who recognized the presence of a generational predicament in this phenomenon, identified two moments in the materialization of the debate. The first was the publication in 2002 of a startlingly revisionist text by Michael Speaks, a former student of Fredric Jameson. As Baird put it, Speaks explicitly abandoned the 'resistance' of his teacher in favour of an 'efficaciously integrated architecture that would take its cues from contemporary business management practices'. The second moment was characterized by a series of responses to Speaks's anti-theoretical stance written by academics of the East Coast. Among them, Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting proposed an alternate scheme which advanced the exhaustion of the project of criticality propounded by Peter Eisenman and K. Michael Hays in terms of 'a disciplinarity understood as autonomy'. Overtly 'against autonomy' and therefore 'post-critical', they pleaded for the relevance of an anti-utopian pragmatism in the service of architectural practice. In presenting the instrumentality of the architectural project as the opposite of Eisenmanian autonomy, Baird implied that Somol and Whiting endorsed Rem Koolhaas's statement according to which 'critical architecture' is unable 'to recognize there is in the deepest motivations of architecture something that cannot be critical'.

While Baird judged that the point of view of Somol and Whiting did not differ fundamentally from the strongly pragmatic stance advocated by Speaks, his analysis showed that the protagonists aimed at different targets and that, in the process, the very notion of 'criticality' became difficult to isolate. As Baird rightly points out, the aura of 'resistance' and 'negation' associated

with 'critical architecture' can be traced back to the work of Manfredo Tafuri, which he identified as a point of departure for both Eisenman and Hays. But, on closer analysis, Jameson's 'resistance' can be associated only partially with 'critical architecture'. In effect, if Jameson is an important figure for Hays, he is not for Eisenman.

This debate on criticality seems a relevant entry point for the discussion of the impact of Jameson's critique on North American architectural culture, if only because Jameson is mentioned in the dispute. In the context of this book, which proposes that Jameson's theory could reactivate a political discourse in architecture, I want to suggest that Jameson's work had two kinds of effect on architectural culture. The first is linked to his theory of postmodernism, in which architecture became emblematic of the 'spatialization' of culture in late-capitalism. As discussed below, it is significant that the work of Manfredo Tafuri was the starting point of his analysis of architectural criticism. With his commentaries on Tafuri, Jameson, already in the mid-1980s, was perceived as a formidable analyst of architectural literature by the architectural community. The second effect is found in his direct impact on architectural criticism, notably on Hays and more recently on Reinhold Martin's revision of postmodernism.

This essay proposes to examine the transactions between these authors by pointing out, in a chronologically disjointed series of soundings, some of the literary tropes that migrated from text to text. This is far from a complete survey, since texts and themes important to each protagonist are left out. Nevertheless, in identifying the mechanisms by which intellectual filiations are created, an outline of a 'development' emerges. Chaotic in appearance, this 'development' is propelled by a quasi-hypnotic fascination for the paralyzing and anguishing effects of negative dialectics and by a frenetic search for alternate justifications for a cathartic architectural avant-garde.

## Architecture, Criticism, Ideology

The story begins in 1982, when the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) invited Fredric Jameson to participate in the symposium 'Architecture and Ideology'. Organized by '*Revisions*', a study group of 'younger' architects brought together by Peter Eisenman at the IAUS, the symposium studied the subject of architecture and politics with the specific objective of addressing the politics of postmodernism.[2]

In her introduction to the proceedings of the symposium, Mary McLeod explained that, in American architecture, postmodernism was viewed as a 'polemical movement with stylistic and social implications'.[3] More precisely, postmodernism endorsed the use of historical styles, emphasized the scenographic and the decorative and rejected the social objectives of the modern movement. Ultimately, postmodernism was not only nostalgic and formally regressive: it also 'appeared to relate in some fashion to the conservative turn

of contemporary American politics'.[4] Like the postmodernists, the organizers were critical of the urbanism and the 'naïve utopianism' of the modern movement, but they rejected the conservative ideology underlying American postmodernism. Robert Stern seemed to confirm their impression when he wrote in the *Harvard Architectural Review* (1984) that postmodernism was not revolutionary either in the political or artistic sense; worst, postmodernism reinforced the effect of the technocratic and bureaucratic society.[5] Animated by a desire for social transformation, the organizers were appalled by the poverty of materialist criticism in American architecture. In fact, contemporaneous criticism, McLeod explained, rejected outright 'any attempt to understand history as a dialectical process linked to class structures, no less the role of ideology in maintaining power relations'. Confronted with this systematic avoidance of the subject of architecture and politics in American architectural discourse, the group felt obliged to look elsewhere, and found it in Italy, in the form of an established ideological criticism of architecture in the work of 'the "young post-Marxists" around Manfredo Tafuri'.[6]

Yet, Tafuri's critical history was difficult to transform into a programme for a 'critical architecture'. He certainly provided a powerful critique of utopia but he did not see how architecture could offer alternatives and 'arrive at a specifically political position'.[7] Here is how McLeod summed up his argument.

> [The Tafurian position] views architecture as pure ideology, in which ideology is defined as 'false consciousness' – that is, as reflection of dominant class interests. Architecture thus plays a negative social role: it becomes an instrument of the existing power structure. Even purportedly critical architecture (and in this category Tafuri places all utopian impulses in architecture since the Enlightenment) contributes in its uselessness and, more seriously, in its deception to the perpetuation of bourgeois capitalism. Avant-garde practitioners, retreating into a reflected image of reality have overestimated the power of the image to generate change. A critical or revolutionary architecture was therefore impossible. Even irony and silence – pure form – have lost their 'cathartic power.' For Tafuri, revolutionary architecture is impossible. The critic's task is to destroy the ineffectual myths, which so often have given architects false hopes for social transformation through design.[8]

Evidently, the IAUS symposium was conceived as a founding event, since in mining Tafuri's work, the meeting aimed at outlining a possible 'critical history' to counter postmodernism's prohibition of 'any systematic analysis of ideology'.[9] Consequently, the three speakers who were invited to the symposium, namely, Demetri Porphyrios, Tomas Llorens and Fredric Jameson, and who 'engaged in responding in some way to the Tafurian position' were no accident. Porphyrios and Llorens were apparently invited because they had contributed in the previous year to an issue of the Architectural Design Profile (1981) series dedicated to the methodology of architectural history. Porphyrios had been the guest editor of this thematic issue, which collected 'certain significant texts on method previously not translated into English' and a few new texts by authoritative contemporary historians and critics.[10]

For his part, Llorens had published in that collection a topical, yet severe if not devastating, criticism of Tafuri's methods; he seemed therefore the most informed reader on the subject at the time. As to Jameson, he had just published *The Political Unconscious* (1981), the conclusion of which was a 'Marxist' reflection on the dialectic of utopia and ideology, which was central to Tafuri's work. Interestingly enough, Jameson did not refer to Tafuri in this work, which is a sign that the symposium was perhaps the moment of his first encounter with the theses of the Italian historian.

## Positivizing Critical History

Titled 'On Critical History', Porphyrios's introductory talk developed a model largely inspired by Tafuri's attempt to eradicate myth. Not unlike Tafuri and Barthes before him,[11] he considered that architecture as a discursive practice was an ideological apparatus which naturalized and dehistoricized a historically created reality by a process of symbolization and mythical transposition.[12] The task of critical history was precisely to examine 'the process of naturalization of architectural ideology into myth.'[13] Yet, critical history did not expose ideological error, because, Porphyrios maintained, 'ideology is *not* a matter of truth and error'.[14] Ideology merely served the purpose of justifying 'the very social reality of which it is the cement and nourishment'. Porphyrios thus divested architectural ideology from the negativity that Tafuri's criticism had attached to it. Critical history, therefore, was no longer akin to the Tafurian political struggle against false consciousness but 'a profound struggle toward achieving freedom of consciousness.'[15] Although Porphyrios never mentioned Tafuri in his text, he clearly attempted to salvage the notion of 'critical history' from Tafuri's absolute and paralyzing negativity.

## A Criticism of Tafuri

Interestingly, Tomas Llorens did not address Tafuri's work at all, as if he had nothing more to say than what he wrote in his essay 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History' published in AD Profile.[16] Instead, in an essay entitled 'On Making History', he examined the historical origins of the shortcomings of an ambient neo-Kantianism in art history.[17] His sophisticated critique was apparently conceived as a response to the Tafurian position which he had previously associated to 'that trend of *Marxism without dialectics* which in the 1960s under the influence of disguised neo-kantism (sic) reverted to the postulate of an unbridgeable gap between the epistemological and the ontological realm (and degenerated eventually into the 'negation' of substance for any sort of consciousness)'.[18] Clearly, Llorens wanted to find a way out of this aporia; his criticism ultimately rejected the Tafurian position.

Consequently, for our purpose, Llorens's 1981 AD Profile essay is the proper text to read.

In the first part of this essay, Llorens revealed that Tafuri shifted radically his position at the end of the 1960s. In the early 1960s, design methodology was a central concern at the school where Tafuri taught, the Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia. 'The central theme, Llorens explained, was labelled "*teoria della progettazione architectettonica*", and Tafuri's contribution was to fulfil the role of the professional architectural historian within the common enterprise.'[19] Following this trend, Tafuri in his early works ventured to 'test the operative potential of general historical concepts on the drawing board' of the architect.[20] According to Llorens, the book *Teorie e Storia dell'architettura* of 1968 'crowned Tafuri's effort to give an answer to the architect who addresses himself to history in search of a programme...'[21] But Tafuri abandoned explicitly that direction around 1969. Thereafter, Tafuri and his collaborators studied the development of avant-garde architecture in Germany and Russia with 'the concepts of the social philosophers who had so influenced the cultural atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, such as Tonnies, Sombart, Simmel, Scheler, the two Webers, Spengler and Mannheim'.[22] The book *Progetto e utopia* (1973), titled in reference to Mannheim's *Ideologie und Utopie* of 1929, constituted the major theoretical statement of Tafuri's new direction.[23]

In the second part, Llorens puts in question the logical and epistemological consistency of Tafuri's ideological criticism in comparing the argument of *Progetto e utopia* with the dialectical models of Massimo Cacciari (negativity) and Karl Mannheim (ideology). Tafuri was visibly influenced by Cacciari's study on the genesis of negativity but, according to Llorens, while Cacciari's arguments were inconclusive, Tafuri's were just more confused. More precisely, Tafuri appropriated Mannheim's intuition, according to which '"utopias" are, in early stages, the necessary form of expression of progressive thought, while they become "ideologies" in those stages where the thought they express or determine plays a socially conservative function'.[24] But his appropriation of Mannheim's concept of ideology was inconsistent. So, Llorens argued that the reader of Tafuri,

> realizes that the spirit of capitalist rationality – which is what Tafuri is concerned about – must be a rather stupid spirit. It needed, in the first place, to clear the ground of social reality, i.e. of those values of the old bourgeois culture which were becoming a hindrance. It needed, in other words, to '*break its own crystallised forms*', in what they '*defined the confines of existing social reality*', as Tafuri puts it. And it had Nietzsche and Weber to do the job. In the second place, it needed to '*throw itself entirely into the construction of the future*', and thus it 'positivised' that 'negative thought' (of which Nietzsche and Weber were the exponents) into 'utopia'. But then, 'utopias' being what they *really* are, they were *unfit* to do what the spirit of capitalist rationality had appointed them to do. In the third place, it had Mannheim to invent the *mystifying* notion that utopias could, after all, do the job. What for? If they could not, they could not, and Mannheim's saying the contrary would not change their real nature. But it is precisely this irreconcilable duality between 'saying' and 'doing', between 'reality'

and 'appearance' that lies at the heart of Tafuri's approach and causes the trouble.[25]

For Llorens, the Tafurian description of the link between architectural ideology and the spirit of capitalist rationality was both inconsistent and bogus. His conclusion was particularly harsh since he judged that Tafuri imparted to 'historical analysis the halo of a dream where mythified abstract characters (who bear a resemblance, but only that, to concrete historical phenomena with which we are familiar) play, according to fixed rules, an incomprehensible game'.[26]

A most remarkable discovery on the part of Llorens concerned Tafuri's approach to writing. Comparing different editions of Tafuri's publications, Llorens noticed that Tafuri constructed his texts like palimpsests in which new paragraphs were inserted between previous ones. In endnote 14 he wrote:

> His writing seems like the flow of a river that preserves in its waters fragments and trophies from whatever regions it has traversed. Themes and arguments which had their origin in his early publications are carried through, intact, ten years later, in spite of radical change in direction that the author underwent around 1969. And not only in the content, but in the letter as well. It seems as if Tafuri's method of writing reproduced, in a most extreme manner, the method Barthes once described as his own. It is as if he extracted from his readings in history, sociology, philosophy a continuous stream of notes and kept them in a range of assorted shoe boxes, ready to be used; given the occasion, he would sketch quickly the outline of an article or book, flesh in this pre-written material, and then return it all to the shoe boxes for further use. The reader expecting the linear exposition of an argument will be defeated. He should take each paragraph not as a link in a chain, but rather as a shot in a series aiming at a distant and not always discernable target. What is extraordinary about this is not so much the procedure in itself as the distinct impression one has, after reading several of his works, that the author has never thrown away one item of his collection of pre-written material.[27]

So in comparing the essay *Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica* (1969) with the book *Progetto e utopia* (1972), Llorens noticed that not a single word of the original essay had been changed in the book. More problematic though, Tafuri's interpolation of new paragraphs contradicted, in certain places, the original meaning of the essay. In endnote 16, Llorens gave an example which illustrated that comparison of the two texts made it impossible to know the author's last intention. While 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History' provided these crucially illuminating insights, with 'On Making History', the text that he read at the IAUS symposium, Llorens did not meet the organizers' expectations since he did not develop a model for a possible critical history established on an ideological criticism of architecture. In contrast, the contribution of Fredric Jameson offered a more promising outlook.

**The Dialectics of Postmodernism**

Entitled 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', Jameson's essay began by positing that there was two opposite ways of apprehending architectural space.[28] The first, the phenomenological, was based on bodily perception, that is, on lived experience of space; the second, the structuralist, was based on the intuition that space was a text, that is, a structure which could be criticized by introducing disrupting elements in older codes. The problem with the phenomenological approach was that the arguments based on the human body were fundamentally ahistorical. And the structuralist viewpoint was equally limited: first because the critical 'self-consciousness' or critical distance it assumed possible seemed increasingly problematic, and then, because its negative critical stance ultimately turned back into another critical ideology. Jameson saw in Tafuri's position a possible third term leading beyond the phenomenological and the structuralist moments.

   For Jameson, Tafuri's position was strikingly simple: it was not possible to anticipate a class architecture for a liberated society, it was only possible to introduce class criticism into architecture. This proposition came with a series of key elements:

1) the business of the architectural critic was not to promote an ideological vision of the future but to be resolutely negative in their unmasking of architectural ideologies;
2) it was impossible for an architect practicing within the capitalist system to imagine utopian alternatives;
3) the criticism of buildings tended to be conflated with the criticism of the ideologies of such buildings;
4) consonant with the Althusserian tradition of the 'semi-autonomy' of the levels and practices of social life, political action was not renounced but was radically disjoined from aesthetic practice;
5) a revolutionary architecture of the future would be possible only when a future total social revolution had arrived.

Jameson proposed to analyze Tafuri's text from three different viewpoints, which were: Tafuri's position in recent historiography; how his work related to the Marxist theory of the 1960s; and how his critique of high modernism enabled him to conceptualize postmodernism. For Jameson, Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* (1976) was one of few texts which produced the *concept* of history rather than a representation of history; Tafuri thus realized the solution Louis Althusser had proposed to supersede the crisis of historical representation. Tafuri's book produced the concept of a dialectical history of architecture in a fashion similar to what Adorno had done for modern music and Barthes for modern literature. These three authors expressed 'the sense of Necessity, of necessary failure, of closure, of ultimate unresolvable contradictions and the impossibility of the future'; as such, their writings could not fail 'to oppress

any reader of these texts, particularly readers who are practicing artists.'[29] All three showed that artistic 'solutions' were historically determined and determinate failures. Jameson saw, in their common dialectical method, strategies for the materialist reversal of historical situations. In this respect, Tafuri's text was exemplary for the variety of oppositions it proposed. For Jameson, since Tafuri's textual efficiency was built in the generic structure of his text, his 'pessimism' was not a matter of opinion or position but 'a formal necessity' embedded in dialectical historiography.

Tafuri's work was also typical of the new Marxian theory of the 1960s, the left-wing version of the 'end of ideology', which had two essential features. Firstly, there was the theory of a total system, that is world capitalism, which colonized the 'two last surviving enclaves of Nature within the older capitalism: the Unconscious [now mastered by the Culture Industry, *i.e.* the media, mass culture] and the pre-capitalist agriculture of the Third World [reorganized by the Green Revolution].'[30] Secondly, the new theory was accompanied by a mood of pessimism and hopelessness triggered by the realization that there was nothing outside the system. Revolutions were seen as mere structural and ineffective inversions within the system. Consequently, only a global socialist revolution could bring a total revolutionary and systemic transformation. Yet, that total-system theory was counterbalanced by an optimistic neo-Gramscian position which suggested that strategic pockets of political resistance could subsist and perhaps proliferate within the system. In this connection, in speaking in relatively positive terms of the urbanistic experience of communist Bologna, Tafuri seemed suddenly less somber. But Jameson noticed:

> What complicates this picture, however, is the discovery that it is precisely some such 'enclave theory' which in Tafuri's analysis constitutes the 'Utopianism' of the modern movement in architecture; that, in other words, Tafuri's critique of the international style, the informing center of all his works, is first and foremost a critique of the latter's enclave theory itself.[31]

But for Jameson, the problem was not utopian enclaves per se. The 'cardinal sin' of high modernism, he suggested, was that it conflated the political and the aesthetic, and foresaw 'a political and social transformation that is henceforth at one with the formal processes of architectural production itself'.[32] Jameson argued that modernist enclaves were not representative of the real possibilities of the Gramscian alternative. He believed that the very existence, outside the First World, of radically different spaces opened objectively 'the possibility of coming into being and development of "counterhegemonic values" here'.[33] But rather than rejecting the Tafurian perspective, Jameson concluded that both critical strategies were 'productive alternatively according to the situation itself'.[34]

In the third part of his argument, Jameson associated the rise of postmodernism with a historical transformation of world capitalism: just as high modernism corresponded to monopoly and imperialist capitalism – the

second stage of the economic periodization of capital that succeeded 'classical' capitalism, postmodernism as critique of high modernism corresponded to the third stage, consumer capitalism. Jameson circumscribed postmodernism in architecture as the practice of pastiche triggered by the will to learn from Las Vegas and 'the schizophrenic celebration of the commodity fetishism of the image, of a now 'delirious New York' and a countercultural California'.[35] Postmodernism emerged when the logic of media capitalism penetrated and transformed the logic of advanced cultural production, and blurred the distinction between high and mass culture, thus cancelling the negative value of advanced modernist art.

The problem for Jameson was that Tafuri saw postmodernist criticism as a simple extension of high modernist utopianism and thus refused his periodization. Yet, Jameson wanted to save Tafuri's model, which he considered to be a Leftist version of the 1960s 'end of ideology'. For Jameson, the end of ideology meant that ideas were no longer significant elements in the social reproduction of late capitalism: consumption and consumerism were enough to reproduce and legitimize the system. This development in which the immanent practices of daily life now occupied the functional position of 'ideology' was, in his opinion, a clear and sufficient explanation for the waning of the utopian ideologies of high modernism as well as of the Keynesian ideal of the control of the future on which it was based. In sharp contrast with Llorens, Jameson embraced Tafuri's history of the dialectical reversal of utopia on the ground that it was similar to a Hegelian 'ruse of reason', a ruse of History itself. In that model, the avant-garde utopian impulse evolved, since the Enlightenment, within the dialectics opposing the rationalization of life on the one hand, and subjectivity, the libidinal resistance to the system theorized by Barthes, on the other hand.[36] The power of Tafuri's negative critique of ideology was that both aspects participated totally in the reproduction of the system. But Jameson judged that the problem with Tafuri's analysis lay 'in the assumption that "social reproduction" in late capitalism takes much the same form as in the earlier period of high modernism'.[37] Consequently, Jameson argued, Tafuri failed to recognize 'the profound historical kinship between his own analysis and the onslaughts of the postmodernists, most notably Venturi.'[38] For Jameson, a whole new aesthetic was in the process of emerging with the postmodernist critique of high modernism. That new aesthetic opposed heterogeneity to the modernist 'aesthetic of identity or of organic unification'.[39] Overall, Jameson submitted that Venturi's aesthetic and Tafuri's pessimistic critiques embodied the two sides, the plus and the minus, of the new postmodernist dialectics. Conscious that in putting back to back seemingly opposed positions on the ground that they 'represent the two intolerable options of a single double-bind', Jameson adopted, like Tafuri did, 'one of the more annoying and scandalous habits of dialectical thought', that is, 'its identification of opposites'.[40] Only a third term would point to a way out: Lefebvre's call for a politics of space and Gramsci's enclave theory were possible directions for Jameson.

In the proceedings of the symposium, Mary McLeod noticed that Jameson's equation of Venturi and Tafuri would be most controversial to architects, at least, one presumes, to the architects who organized the event hoping to develop an ideological criticism of postmodernism. It is also significant that the two responses to the symposium published in the proceedings addressed specifically the problem of reconciling Tafuri and Gramsci. In different ways, it seems, Gramsci's enclave theory represented an appealing solution to Tafuri's condemnation of utopia. Retrospectively, Jameson's analysis was revelatory on several levels:

1) it introduced the Althusserean idea that a critical history could be developed outside the tradition of historical narrative, as a theoretical text capable of producing the *concept* of history;
2) it pointed out that negative dialectics was based on a literary trope, the double-bind, which had the effect of cancelling all possible reconciliation of the dialectical opposites;
3) it proposed a historical model of capitalist development in three phases, in which changes in the aesthetic sphere and the economic structure unfolded in synchrony;
4) it posited that the dialectics of the avant-garde opposed rationalization of life and libidinal resistance to the system;
5) it judged that the error of modernism was to conflate aesthetics and politics;
6) it suggested that utopia could survive in enclaves and eventually spread and overturn the system.

Finally, if Jameson shared McLeod's views that postmodernism in architecture was a historicist aesthetic of pastiche, he provocatively argued that Tafuri's negative criticism was the dialectical pendant of postmodernist historicism because both rejected utopia. Jameson thus provided an alternative conception of postmodernism. For him, postmodernism was not, as McLeod argued, the regressive aesthetics of ambient American conservative politics that had to be contested by a still absent materialist architectural criticism, it was instead characterized by the rejection of a high-modernist utopia by both the more conservative and the more critical factions of the architectural discipline.

**From Critical Architecture to Critical Architectural Theory**

In this section I examine four works by K. Michael Hays published between 1984 and 1998. The intent is to outline the transformation of his thought concerning the prospect for a 'critical architecture'. Hays published his first major essay entitled 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form' in the 1984 issue of *Perspecta*.[41] According to Baird, the generation who studied under Hays sees in his text the canonical definition of critical architecture.[42] At the time, Hays had just completed a doctoral dissertation at MIT in which he questioned a

historical model describing the modern movement in architecture as a dialectic opposing functionalism, of which the *neue Sachlichkeit* was paradigmatic, and avant-garde 'self-referential and self-critical formal practice'.[43]

## DEFINING CRITICAL ARCHITECTURE

In his *Perspecta* essay, Hays developed a similar dialectic opposing 'architecture as an instrument of culture' and 'architecture as autonomous form'. The first position saw architecture as an instrument which confirmed and assured the continuity of a dominant and hegemonic culture. This viewpoint called for a historical method, built on the study of 'the base material of historical world', the function of which was to restore the original and true meaning of the architectural object within the cultural situation in which it originated. The second position saw architecture as autonomous form, as a system of formal operations that one could understand directly without external references. The autonomy viewpoint called for an open interpretation operating in a non-historical, purely conceptual space. The function of formal interpretation was to endlessly read and misread architectural form and dislodged it from any worldly or socially external constraints. For Hays, architectural autonomy helped to do away with the idea that 'great' architecture had to be, by definition, an accurate representation of dominant culture. Nonetheless, Hays showed his suspicion in adding:

> The absolute autonomy of form and its superiority over historical and material contingencies is proclaimed, not by virtue of its power in the world, but by virtue of its admitted powerlessness. Reduced to pure form, architecture has disarmed itself from the start, maintaining its purity by acceding to social and political inefficacy.[44]

His opinion was quite compatible with Tafuri's judgment of the pathetic inefficacity of the 1970s neo-avant-garde formal tendencies.[45] Hays then argued that a properly critical architecture could 'claim for itself a place *between* the efficient representation of preexisting cultural values and the wholly detached autonomy of an abstract formal system'.[46] Critical architecture, Hays explained, could not be reduced 'to a conciliatory representation of external forces or to a dogmatic reproducible formal system'.[47] Critical architecture stood between culture and form: it was *resistant* and *oppositional*.

The architecture of Mies van der Rohe was exemplary of this third way. Mies repudiated formalism and proposed objects which abstained from any dialogue with the physical particularities of their contexts. Hay argued that 'Mies's achievement was to open up a clearing of implacable silence in the chaos of the nervous metropolis'.[48] This clearing was a radical critique, since it cancelled 'the complex network of colliding forces in which architecture originates to present us with the silent fact of its existence'.[49] Silence implied *discontinuity* and *difference* from other cultural activities. Yet, critical architecture took its place as both a participant and a disjunctive reality '*alongside* the real world, explicitly sharing temporal and spatial condition of that world, but

obstructing their absolute authority with alternative of material, technical and theoretical precision'.[50] Repetition of recurrent themes in Mies's architecture, Hays argued, pointed to the architect's authorial critical motivation:

> Repetition thus demonstrates how architecture can resist, rather than reflect, an external cultural reality. In this way authorship achieves a *resistant authority* – an ability to initiate or develop cultural knowledge whose absolute authority is radically nil but whose contingent authority is quite persuasive, if transitory, alternative to the dominant culture.[51]

Hays thus presented authorship as a key element in the development of critical architecture. The conscious architect was the active agent in the creation of a critical alternative and therefore a participant in the making of history. Hays wrote:

> The contingent authority of the individual architect exists at a nodal point. The individual consciousness is a part of and is aware of the collective historical and social situation. Because of this awareness, the individual is not a mere product of the situation but is an historical and social actor in it. There is choice and, therefore, the responsibility of a critical architecture.[52]

In conclusion, Hays indicated that critical architecture called for specific types of architectural criticism and critical historiography. These discourses were activities 'continuous with architectural design' and were, like design, 'forms of knowledge'. Their function was to understand how architecture could occupy actively and continually a cultural place, 'as an architectural intention with ascertainable political and intellectual consequences'. These discourses were therefore 'openly contentious and oppositional, as well'. Criticism looked for alternatives to the status quo; criticism's responsibility was to delimit 'a field of values in which architecture can develop cultural knowledge'. Critical discourses on critical design ultimately blended historical interpretation and the formalist resistance to essentialist meaning.

At first glance, Hays developed his argument on a dialectical model (functionalism versus formalism) different from the opposition of the modernist utopia (rationalization versus resistance) and the postmodernist anti-utopia (historical pastiche versus negative criticism) found in Jameson's reading of Tafuri. Footnotes testify to the fact that Hays's model was inspired by Edward Said (intention and worldliness) and Stanford Anderson (architecture and worldliness). Nonetheless, Hays visibly proposed a way out of Tafuri's double-bind, even though he did not mention the Italian's name. In actuality, Hays took the theme of architectural silence directly from Tafuri's criticism of architectural formalism. In effect, Tafuri had already interpreted Mies's architecture as a symbol of a disturbing silence in the midst of the metropolitan chaos. In Mies's Chicago residential skyscrapers, Tafuri saw an architectural equivalent to Barthes's *Writing Degree Zero*. He wrote:

> No longer is there a plurality of signs but the entire edifice appears as neutral sign. The will to dominate chaos is entirely contained in the

intellectual act that takes its distance from the real so as to affirm its own presence.

> In the interior of chaos the perfect silence is disquieting. It introduces ruptures that are polemical to the extent that the distance which the building as architecture interposes between itself and its context is hermetical.[53]

The reflection of the metropolis on the glass box's skin 'obliged the American metropolis to look at itself reflected… in the neutral mirror that breaks the city web'.[54] And Tafuri concluded: 'In this, architecture arrives at the ultimate limits of its own possibilities… alienation, having become absolute, testifies uniquely to its own presence, separating itself from the world to declare the world's incurable malady.'[55] Miesian aesthetics of silence were, for Tafuri, an unsurpassable endpoint. Silence meant, for him, the last logical position of renunciation.

Therefore, it is on a totally internalized reading of Tafuri, which borrowed references from, paraphrased and 'positivised' Tafuri's criticism, that Hays formulated his idea of a critical resistant architecture. That Hays avoided using the two controversial terms, ideology and utopia, is in itself revelatory: critical architecture and its allied discourses, architectural criticism and critical historiography, were initially not conceived as ideological criticism; and the question as to whether critical alternatives were utopian visions was not addressed. From a methodological point of view, Hays applied Tafuri's interpretation of Mies's American skyscrapers to Mies's theoretical projects of the 1920s. However, what Tafuri considered an endpoint, Miesian silence, became a starting point for Hays; rather than a retreat from the world, silence was interpreted as a critical alternative within the world (although none of the projects were actually built); in the process the 'hermetical' became 'architectural' and 'renunciation' was metamorphosed into 'resistance and opposition'. In addition, Hays's celebration of the critical efficiency of authorship was in total contradiction with both the post-structuralist 'death of the author' and the Marxist view that history is not the product of individual will but that of an immanent and abstract ideology, the 'invisible hand' of the capitalist market. If Tafuri was the absent starting point of Hays's project to rehabilitate architecture as a critical cultural practice, nothing remained of the Tafurian ideological criticism of utopia in the initial definition of critical architecture.

*The Historical Avant-Garde and the Dialectics of Negation*
In 1988, Hays published the central chapter of his doctoral dissertation in *Architectureproduction*, the second volume edited by the group *Revisions*. In that essay, entitled 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', Hays focused on the negativity of Hannes Meyer's architectural practice and on the more ambiguous implications of Ludwig Hilberseimer's view of the modern metropolis.[56] While Hays's thought was still influenced by Said's concept of worldliness, the essay essentially transposed the central

concept of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*,[57] that is, the idea that 'the major goal of the historical avant-garde was to undermine and transform the very institution of art and its ideology of autonomy'.[58]

For Hays, the work of Meyer was representative of such a position in architecture. Meyer was able to think a split within the historical avant-garde opposing: a) the dominant humanist ideology of high art, based on the definition of architecture as a self-referential and self-critical autonomous practice; and b) a negative posthumanist avant-garde whose strategies aimed at problematizing 'the notion of autonomous architectural form and the concomitant centrality of the humanist subject'.

Building on Kenneth Frampton's seminal essay on the 1927 competition for the Palace of the League of Nations,[59] Hays set out to chart the strategies of negation. Among others, he focused notably on the dismantling of architecture's formal conventions and the repudiation of the individual author as the originator of meaning. Meyer's works and manifestoes stated aggressively the dissolution of art in life, or in other words, the elimination of art as a subjective practice. His materialist viewpoint left no room for an aesthetic appreciation of architecture: architecture was radically an instrument and a direct reification of the building's programmatic requirements. The building symbolized nothing. For Hays, Meyer's position illustrated Walter Benjamin's insight that in the age of mechanical reproduction, 'not only does the authenticity of the object as a repository of meaning become reduced, but the reproductive technique *as procedure* takes on the features of a system of signification'.[60] In their refusal of the traditional forms of architectural representation, avant-garde architects 'saw meaning as arising from the multiple forces of social practice rather than the formal qualities of the auratic art object'. Overall, 'the radical quality of Meyer's modernism', Hays explained, 'lies in the difficult truth that *things are just what they are*, utterly shorn of any metaphysical illusions of artistic authenticity, unity, or depth… The work… falls into the world, becoming one worldly thing among others.'[61] This Benjaminian interpretation appears as a new and disturbing element in Hays's definition of critical architecture. It introduced an implicit dialectic opposing the forces of 'life' to the authorial intention as agent of architectural production; in other words, the immanence of mechanical reproduction could not be equated with the intentionality of authorial reproduction. Silence was also given additional meanings. Originally resistant and oppositional, silence was now interpreted as both loss of artistic aura and posthumanist criticism of metaphysics.

In contrast to Meyer's projects, the urban visions of Hilberseimer, Hays argued, operated 'a subtle deconstruction of [the central notion of *Sachlichkeit*] the notion of function as the origin of architectural form', since his drawings made clear that 'the originary status of function is a fiction'.[62] But, he added, Hilberseimer's urban projects were also caught in the circle of self-reproduction. Consequently, Hilberseimer's architecture did not and could not 'absolutely correspond to material life, but rather translate[d] one

sign system (socio-economic) into another (architectural)'.[63] In cancelling all dissonances and disjunctions, his metropolis was not simply 'a neutral matrix in which monopoly capitalism might… play itself out; it [was] itself a form of that system'.[64] Constraining rather than liberating, Hilberseimer's visions ultimately turned *Sachlichkeit*'s ambition of negation back on itself, and achieved the negation of negation. *Sachlichkeit* was thus transformed into an ideology, into fixed patterns of form, action, thought, into a hypostatized rationalism.[65] Paradoxically, in identifying too completely with the processes and structures of modernization, Hilberseimer was absorbed in the totalization of monopoly capital. Hays recognized that the practice of negation led the avant-garde to emptiness, on one side, and to totalization, on the other. In spite of these contradictory results, Hays embraced the practice of negation and suggested in conclusion that it was still a viable project for architectural practice. Reformulating his thesis of 1984, avant-garde critical practice was, in his opinion, predicated on 'reproduction as negation'.

In this essay, Hays superposed Bürger's concept of the negative avant-garde and Benjamin's concept of the loss of artistic aura in the age of mechanical reproduction onto his previous idea of a worldly critical architecture. Resistance was assimilated with negativity. He also duplicated Tafuri's interpretation of the historical avant-garde in depicting a scenario based on the Mannheimian reversal of progressive utopia (Meyer) into conservative ideology (Hilberseimer). The essay also introduced other themes, such as 'the translation of one system of signs to another' and posthumanist criticism, which became central in his following publications.[66]

*HUMANISM VERSUS POSTHUMANISM, OR, THE DIALECTICS OF MODERNISM*
With *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject* (1992), a reworked version of his doctoral dissertation, Hays expanded his theoretical arsenal.[67] In the introduction to this work, he presented his study as a critical reinterpretation of Sigfried Giedion's paradigmatic interpretation of modernism. Giedion's dream of a centered subject was a conceptual mirage to which Hays wished to oppose alternative, posthumanist subject positions which resided repressed within Giedion's modern space-time paradigm. After four more years of reflection, the works of Meyer and Hilberseimer were no longer, for Hays, merely representative of the negative avant-garde, they were more fundamentally emblematic of a posthumanist criticism, ignored by Giedion, which undermined the essentialist humanist unity of the subject Giedion longed for. Hays invoked a large number of authors from various disciplines and positions to secure his dialectical model which he presented as an advanced form of ideological criticism, avoiding the reductions of 'vulgar Marxism' and 'formalized deconstructionism'. In the process, Hays affiliated his work with the Frankfurt School and French poststructuralism. But in a telling sentence, he referred to Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* and mentioned: 'it is the transformations and extensions of the concepts of mediation, reification, and its "utopian vocation" made by Fredric Jameson –

who of all recent critics has perhaps most fruitfully merged poststructuralist and Marxist analyses – that especially inform my project'.[68]

The concepts of 'mediation' and 'utopia' were probably the most important in Hays's reframing of his thesis. He attached a crucial role to the concept of mediation, or 'transcoding' in Jameson's terminology,[69] since this device helped him to bridge the gap between the 'world' and architectural form. As Jameson explained in *The Political Unconscious*, 'mediation is the classical dialectical term for the establishment of relationships between, say, the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground.'[70] But for Jameson, these relationships were not based on the 'functionalist' hypothesis of causality. He referred to Louis Althusser's critique of Hegelian expressive causality to clarify his thought:

> Althusser himself assimilates the concept of 'mediation' to expressive causality in the Hegelian sense; that is he grasps the process of mediation exclusively as the establishment of symbolic *identities* between the various levels, as a process is folded into the next, thereby losing its constitutive autonomy and functioning as an expression of its homologues. Thus, … culture is seen as the expression of the underlying political, juridical and economic instances, and so forth.[71]

However, Althusser's critique was not meant to replace causation by mere structural homology: each level was not a simple mirror of others since each kept a degree of autonomy. It was the task of mediation to enumerate the differences between the levels 'against the background of some more general identity'.[72]

Hays appropriated the more modern characterization of mediation, the concept of transcoding as proposed by Jameson; on this, he quoted his mentor at length:

> The concept of mediation has traditionally been the way in which dialectical philosophy and Marxism itself have formulated their vocation to break out of the specialized compartments of the [bourgeois][73] disciplines and to make connections among the seemingly disparate phenomena of social life generally. If a more modern characterization of mediation is wanted, we will say that this operation is understood as a process of *transcoding*: as the invention of a set of terms, the strategic choice of a particular code or language, such that the same terminology can be used to analyze and articulate two quite distinct types of objects or 'texts', or two very different structural levels of reality. Mediations are thus a device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomization of social life… is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis.[74]

This passage indicates clearly that the mediating term was the 'text', the central poststructuralist term of reference with which all cultural phenomena were theoretically homologous. Although the formulation was clear, Hays seems to have been unable to instrumentalize it thoroughly in a book constructed by accretion, in an almost Tafurian manner. In effect, the central and pivotal chapter of his book reproduced integrally the *Revisions* essay, in which no mention of Jameson could be found.

Jameson's influence was most noticeable in the chapter entitled 'Contra the Bourgeois Interior: Co-op Zimmer', in which Hays interpreted Meyer's attempt to submit the private interior to the logic of industrial production. According to Hays, Meyer's construction was 'characteristic of utopian thought generally'. In order to reveal that utopian content, he quoted on page 74 an earlier essay of Jameson's entitled 'Of Islands and Trenches' (1977), in which the literary critic reflected on Louis Marin's *Utopiques – Jeux d'espace* (1973).[75] Here is Hays's quotation of Jameson:

> It is possible to understand the Utopian text as a determinate type of *praxis*, rather than as a specific mode of representation, a praxis that has less to do with the construction and perfection of someone's 'idea' of a 'perfect society' than it does with a concrete set of mental operations to be performed on a determinate type of raw material given in advance, which is contemporary society itself – or, what amounts to the same thing, on those collective representations of contemporary society that inform our ideologies just as they order our experience of daily life.

In 'Of Islands and Trenches', Jameson underlined that, in his reflection on utopia, Marin started with Claude Lévi-Strauss's intuition that 'myth is essentially a process of mediation' enabling the symbolic resolution of the real social contradiction between infrastructure and superstructure.[76] This structure could be visualized with a simple schema (Fig. 9.1).

Using Julien Greimas's semiotic rectangle, Jameson explained that, for Marin, the utopian narrative was the structural inversion of myth. Marin's proposal could be visualized in a more complex schema showing that the inversion, as in a reflection, introduced an inverted doubling of the initial contradiction (Fig. 9.2).

Consequently, utopian narrative constituted 'the union of the twin contradictories of the initial contradiction'; the procedure introduced a neutral term which was the exact opposite of the initial mediatory term. Simply put, utopian narrative was an inversion of mythical narrative; utopia symbolically neutralized myth. On page 80 of *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, Hays applied literally this schema to architecture in filling each variable with architectural content to show that Meyer's Co-op form was 'the neutral, utopian term of the structure, … the obversion of Simmel's complex term of style' (Fig. 9.3). This transposition is exemplary of Hays's structuralist appropriation of Jameson's schema, an empty schema that Jameson used in other essays to discuss various cultural phenomena which were not akin to utopia.[77]

It is now possible to see that, in the span of a decade, Hays's criticism of cultural determinism and formal autonomy was considerably modified by the superposition of several layers having only a certain degree of homology with each other. Initially, critical architecture was a resistant and oppositional alternative design practice developed between cultural determinism and formal autonomy; critical design triggers the emergence of companion critical discourses promoting alternatives to the status quo. Then critical architecture was assimilated to the negative avant-garde and its negation of
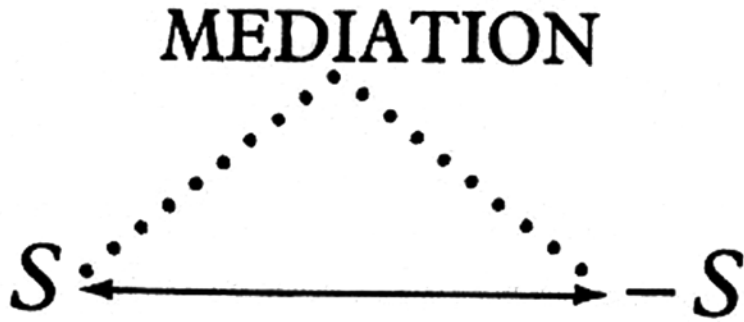
# MEDIATION



Fig. 9.1 – Jameson's schema of the myth as mediation.
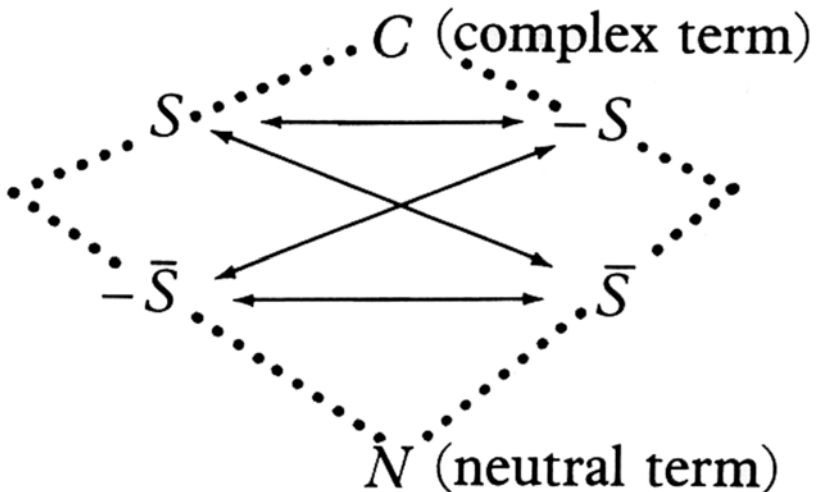


Fig. 9.2 – Jameson's schema of the neutralization of myth by utopia.

art, a proposal showing Hay's leaned more and more towards the materialist view that architecture was a reification of external factors. Informed by materialist negative criticism and formalized by Jameson's structuralist semiotics, Hays then defined critical architecture as a utopian praxis, which, in Jameson's terms, was 'a desperate (and impossible) final attempt to eradicate the contradictions of the system by some extreme gesture'.[78] For Hays, utopian praxis was, more precisely, an attempt at changing the mental frame of the individual subject, leading him away from humanism. It is this final layer, the dialectic opposing essentialist humanism and postmodern posthumanism, which is the novel element of 1992. That dialectic no longer corresponded with the initial dualism opposing 'architecture as an instrument

C ▮ style (Simmel)
    antistyle (Loos)                                    } inversion

S                                                    −S

centered humanist subject                        capitalist mode of
                                                    production

"not-capitalism," or                             "not-subject," or decentered,
   anticipated new mode of                          nomadic, collective,
   simultaneous collective                          antihumanist subject
   reception

−S̄                                               S̄

N ▮ Meyer's Co-op form
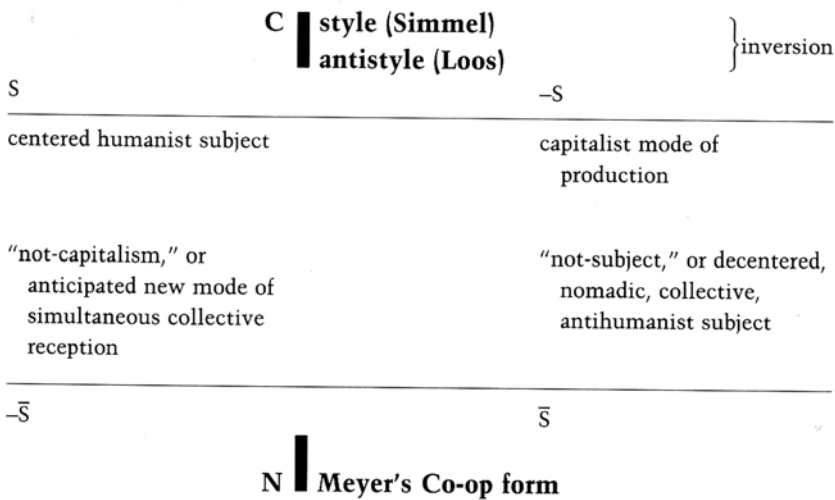
Fig. 9.3 – Hays's application of Jameson's schema to Hannes Meyer's architecture.

of culture' and 'architecture as autonomous form', but reflected instead the contemporaneous poststructuralist critique of metaphysics disseminated by Derridean deconstruction during the 1980s.

   As the conclusion of the book indicates, Hays was conscious that his interpretation of *Sachlichkeit* as posthumanist criticism was anachronistic.[79] In a manner similar to Giedion's 'constituent facts' and Tafuri's dialectical history of the avant-garde, Hays projected a contemporary debate onto the past.[80] More precisely, he projected the contemporary poststructuralist criticism of humanism onto the radical, politicized avant-garde of the late 1920s, creating thereby an appearance of structural homology and historical continuity. But one can also grasp Hays's embarrassment when he noticed that most of contemporary practice remained apolitical and ahistorical in spite of promises of destabilization. Hays did not condemn this apolitical attitude because it forced 'the construction of the ideological trajectory of modernism into the present'. He took it as his task to realize this construction; and, to achieve it, he adopted a pluralist method blending materialist and poststructuralist theory. In the process, he put back to back a neo-Marxian negational practice inspired by critical theory and the poststructuralist 'free-play of unleashed signifiers'. Both methods, he maintained, inflicted 'a stigma on humanist ideology by insisting on the heteronomy of architecture and the inexorable externality of the factors that enable its becoming'. Although Hays reiterated his dual definition of critical architecture as both something 'in the world', in history, in ideology and in the sensuous facts of everyday existence, and something having 'a degree of autonomy and irreducibility', the oppositional

stance of critical architectural theory seemed now specifically dedicated to the development of an erosive critique of humanism's eternal values.

### CRITICAL ARCHITECTURAL THEORY AS A PRACTICE OF MEDIATION

With his 1998 anthology, entitled *Architecture Theory since 1968*, Hays refocused his energy on the mapping of the theoretical texts that marked the discipline of architecture after 1968. Although the book included some projects which were emblematic of the critical design practices of the period, the anthology's first intention was to collect those texts which he considered representative of contemporary 'architectural theory'. For Hays, 1968 was a symbolic watershed. He wrote: 'Since 1968, "architecture *theory*" has all but subsumed "architecture *culture*".' This distinction indicated that cultural production was no longer 'something that one both belongs to *and* possesses' but something 'constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through more self-conscious theoretical procedures'.[81]

In the introduction, Hays explained that his selection was not meant to render victorious one discourse over all others (the texts included versus those excluded). Neither did he believe that the period in question was 'one of competing styles or group allegiances (Marxism versus formalism, structuralism versus phenomenology, and the like)'.[82] For him, these texts resulted from a collective experience: they articulated diverse responses to an objective situation, 'all attempting to provide maps of the possibilities for architectural intervention, to articulate the specific limiting conditions of architectural practice'.[83] Hays contended 'that historical experience sponsored, among other things, a very particular attitude toward commodification and consumption'. It was because the architectural theorists shared the same architectural culture that they also shared the same belief that 'theory can and must make a difference'.[84] Paradoxically though, theorists were 'individuals with some remaining faith in an engaged resistance to the "system" yet still able to be titillated by the ecstatic surrender of the architectural subject to the very forces that threaten its demise'.[85] This oscillation between resistance and surrender took many quasi-manic forms which were, for Hays, 'but a reaction formation against what history has dealt us – a totally reified life – and they are but one side of a demand for something different, *the other side of which is theory itself*'.[86]

Two main criteria guided the choice of material in the anthology. According to Hays, architecture theory was by definition a practice of mediation. Quoting Jameson again, Hays reiterated his belief that mediation was an operation of transcoding 'linking two sets of terms in such a way that each can express and indeed *interpret* the other'.[87] Consequently, the texts he selected were theoretical precisely because they tried to open up 'architecture to what is thinkable and sayable in other codes', such as Marxism, semiotics, psychoanalysis or rhizomatics, and in turn, introduced architecture's own terms into systems of thought usually thought to be properly extrinsic.[88] The anthology thus included texts by authors with an architectural formation

who referred to external disciplines and authors from external disciplines who took architecture as a manifestation, or even a model, for illustrating theoretical problems.

Marxism and semiology seemed the two paradigms that dominated the architectural theory of the period. Hays concluded his discussion of mediation in revealing the absolute centrality of the concept of 'text' in the process of theoretical transcoding: text appeared to be the key operator of mediation, the term that created homology between codes. He wrote:

> But a primary lesson of architecture theory is that what used to be called the sociohistorical contexts of architectural production, as well as the object produced, are both themselves *texts* in the sense that we cannot approach them separately and directly, as distinct, unrelated things-in-themselves, but only through their prior differentiation and transmutation, which is shot through with ideological motivation. The world is a totality; it is an essential and essentially *practical* problem of theory to rearticulate that totality, to produce the concepts that relate the architectural fact with social, historical, and ideological subtexts from which it was never really separate to begin with.[89]

The second criterion of Hays's selection was the historical importance of each text, rather than their popularity. But this criterion was justified by another motif found in Jameson. The project, Hays explained, was not to anthologize history 'as it really happened', but to produce the *concept* of that history in the way recommended by Althusser.[90] Hays thus selected those texts which illustrated that 'theory's vocation is to produce the concepts by which architecture is related to other spheres of social practice'.[91] As to what the concept of that history was, Hays provided a minimal plot. In the work written before 1977, he recognized that the criticism of the 1960s modernist models of functionalism gave birth to a dialectics of structuralism and phenomenology opposing signifier and signified, system and subject; but that dialectic ended around 1983 'with the emergence of interpretative techniques that cut across such oppositions and open[ed] to a more radical heterogeneity'.[92] This dialectic was a pale reflection of the contents of the anthology. Fortunately, Hays wrote his own introductions to each essay, which helped in identifying some of the manifold links that could be established between the various texts of his selection. Hays thus sketched a partial historical framework, leaving the task of synthesis to his readers.

As Sylvia Lavin once noticed, the anthology is a genre that creates a genealogy for the present rather than a history.[93] Seen under this light, Hays's introduction indicates that his selection created a genealogy for his own idea of a 'critical architectural theory' modeled on Jameson's structuralist transcoding. While some essays like those of Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest were exemplary of the structuralist method, the table of contents indicates that Hays could not respect totally his own selection criterion, for he would have left out fundamental texts, like Colin Rowe's 'Introduction to *Five Architects*' or Rem Koolhaas's '"Life in the Metropolis" or "The Culture

of Congestion"'', among others. Unintentionally, the anthology indicated that not all relevant post-'68 critical analyses of architecture were modeled on structuralist criticism. Perhaps more significant is the fact that Hays, in his desire to legitimize a normative definition of theory in terms of mediation and resistance, consciously imposed a conceptual map on 'what really happened' during the period. In this connection, it is noteworthy that he chose Tafuri's 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', an essay published in Italian in 1969 which had never been published in English before, to act as the foundational piece of 'architectural critical theory'. In choosing a chronological and transnational presentation which omits the reality of linguistic spheres, Hays gave an over-determinant role to a text which was received in North America in another form only in 1976. Hays justified his procedure in stating that theoretical mapping is 'a concept of something'. Being 'an idealized or total system of architecture', it is 'a kind of map of reality even if the particular coordinates of that map lacks a one-to-one correspondence with the everyday world'.[94] Here again, Hays's debt to Jameson is visible, yet not footnoted. In effect, his conception of the theoretical map was analogous to Jameson's 'cognitive map', a mode of conceptual representation inspired by Kevin Lynch's classic work, *The Image of the City*. About this device, Jameson wrote: 'the cognitive map is not exactly mimetic in [the] older sense; indeed, the theoretical issues it poses allow us to renew the analysis of representation on a higher and much more complex level'.[95]

Although productive of new, alternate interpretations, the imposition of an ideal map on the heterogeneous history of architectural theory led Hays to overlook that, perhaps more than the introduction of diagrammatic structuralist-Marxist critical methods, the crisis of utopia analyzed almost simultaneously by Tafuri and Venturi might very well be the inaugural element of postmodern criticism.[96] This did not escape the critical eye of Jameson when he placed Venturi and Tafuri back to back as the positive and the negative sides of postmodernist anti-utopianism. While the anthology represents in many ways a monument to Jameson – it is not by chance that Jameson's 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' occupies the center of the book – it is surprising that Hays omitted to consider Jameson's challenging dialectics. Visibly, Hays appropriated Jameson's critical method but left aside his dialectical analysis of the postmodernist rejection of utopia as well as his central thesis that postmodernist architecture was a symptom of the spatialization of culture in the age of consumer capitalism.

### The End of Theory?

In an essay entitled, 'Critical of What? Toward a Utopian Realism', Reinhold Martin commented on George Baird's analysis of the rise of the 'post-critical' position at the beginning of the new millennium.[97] In his opinion, the post-critical faction described by Baird collapsed 'critical architecture' into two

opposing positions. For Martin, it was necessary to make a distinction between 'critical architecture' and the 'critical' in architecture. On the one hand, 'critical architecture' was embodied in Peter Eisenman's autonomy project, a project based on 'the argument that formal syntax could be definitively separated from political semantics' which justified its dedication 'to the vigorous negation and revision of the *internal* assumptions of the discipline'. On the other hand, the 'critical' in architecture was

> assumed to have been defined by a Frankfurt School-style negative dialectics associated with historians and theorists such as Manfredo Tafuri and his American readers, such as Michael Hays. This position usually winds up testifying not to the existence of a critical *architecture*, but to its impossibility, or at most, its irreducible negativity in the face of the insurmountable violence perpetrated by… 'late capitalism'.[98]

For Martin, Eisenman's use of the word 'critical', with respect to his own work, implied that 'the stakes of an internal critique of a supposedly autonomous architecture… [was] equivalent to – rather than dialectically engaged with – a critique of architecture's tragic… collaboration with the external forces it appears to resist, as elaborated by Tafuri with respect to modernist avant-gardes'.[99] Martin argued it was wrong to assume that there was an equivalence between a *political* critique, as adumbrated by the tenets of the 'critical' in architecture, and an *aesthetic* critique, as adumbrated by architects like Eisenman.

While the trust of Martin's intervention was to reassert the political importance of maintaining a theoretical discourse about architecture in academia, his seductive distinction appears to be too absolute in the light of what has been discussed above. Martin's criticism does not recognize the impurity of both 'architectural critical theory' and 'critical architecture' and the fact that they share similar structuralist methods.

An original feature of Tafuri's architectural criticism, which brings him close to Althusser and separates him from the *belles-lettres* tradition – of which Colin Rowe is perhaps the prime representative in architecture, was his total adherence to a neo-Marxian dialectical historicism and his ambivalent appropriation of structuralist thematics. In effect, Tafuri once wrote: 'When dialectical historicism takes up structuralist thematics, it takes over, in fact, the weapons of the enemy.'[100] It is not the place here to explain how Tafuri integrated and distorted these structuralist thematics, which he took largely from Roland Barthes's most influential works, such as *Mythologies, Writing Degree Zero* and *The Pleasure of the Text*. I will only point out that the uneasy coexistence of these two adversary models also characterizes Hays's architectural critical theory. If for Hays both methods were allied rather than adversary, his affirmation does not erase the tension between the materialist point of view, which asserts that architecture is historically determined, and the structuralist method, which aims at the *mise en abyme* of architecture in a network of structural similarities between different disciplinary codes.

In the original Marxist theory, labor, capital and ideology were mediators which, in spite of their abstraction as concepts, determined the real, which implied a real link between concepts and the world, a causal effect: capital actually reified labor and alienated the worker from the product of his work; ideology as false consciousness actually enabled the ruling classes to control the subordinate classes. In Jameson's transcoding method, the 'text' displaces 'ideology' as mediator and achieves first and foremost a symbolic reunification which is assumed to reflect an underlying, unconscious unity of all levels or codes.[101] This symbolic reunification is presented as something real, which enables him to posit that changes in one code reflect changes in others. Following this structuralist, symbolic logic, autonomous resistance can be equated with political resistance because as a symbolic instance it cannot be separated from the world as a totality and reflects consequently a real phenomenon. In other words, symbolic resistance in architecture is assumed to be equivalent to political resistance on the basis of structural similarities. This structuralist hypothesis is shared by both Hays and Eisenman, which makes difficult Martin's attempt to oppose them. Using a Jamesonian trope – the semiotic square – it seems that Hays internalized Tafuri's dialectic of utopia, which opposed the rationalization of the world (+) and libidinal resistance to the system (-), and transformed that dialectic into an opposition of materialist negative dialectics (-) and (post)structuralist free play of the sign (+). Whatever model one adopts to explain Hays's position, it is his adherence to these two theories that enables him to advance the paradoxical if not contradictory proposal that architecture is at once a commodity participating in the reification of life and a means of symbolic resistance to reification.

On his side, Eisenman's autonomy project does not incorporate any materialist criticism; his position does not derive from Tafuri or Jameson. For him, ideology is not false-consciousness but something close to Raymond Aron's formula: 'ideology is the idea of my opponent'.[102] His confrontational project aims at realizing a utopian condition in which architectural form would be a rational mental construction, totally unaffected by external factors such as technology, programmatic requirements or historical factors. In this sense, his autonomy project can be interpreted as the antithesis of historical determinism. Yet, Eisenman's itinerary shows us that his thought was never severed from the *Zeitgeist*. In effect, while he conceived his conceptual architecture as a code reflecting Chomsky's 'deep structure' in the 1960s, he reinterpreted his auto-referential architecture as a Derridean deconstruction of architectural metaphysics in the mid-1980s. Therefore, Eisenman's 'formal' is not a simple formalism, like the 'architecture as autonomous form' described by Hays in 1984, since his critique of the internal condition of architecture is informed by the leading external theories of the day. Leaving aside the fact that Eisenman is a major and astute player in the academic politics of architecture, his autonomy project adheres totally to the belief that symbolic resistance in architecture echoes and amplifies symbolic resistance in other 'textual' practices, and thus participates in a larger transformation of culture.

It is precisely that assumption that Martin finds suspicious. In questioning the political efficacy of critical aesthetics, Martin touches a central problem of the postmodern period.

In effect, the autonomization of aesthetics was a major feature of the postmodernist critique of utopia and its accompanying disillusion about the actual capacity of architecture to transform society. The authors of *Learning from Las Vegas* formulated that disillusion in their critique of Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor. For them, Rudolph's building was emblematic of a 'lack of correspondence between substance and image'. The expressionist image of Crawford Manor, they argued, suggested 'the reformist-progressive social and industrial aims that [modern architecture] could seldom achieve in reality'.[103] In parallel, this disjunction was theorized by Colin Rowe as a separation of theory and practice, of *morale* and *flesh*: the autonomization of theory implied necessarily the autonomization of aesthetics. Tafuri was one of the few critics of the 1970s to assume the unity of ideological content and architectural aesthetics, and to develop consequently 'a criticism of buildings tending to be conflated with the criticism of the ideologies of such buildings', a conflation Jameson himself saw as the cardinal sin of high modernism. For Tafuri, the separation of the ideological and the aesthetic – or what amounts to the same thing, to believe that it is possible to develop a critique of architecture with architectural form (critical architecture) – was an ideological delusion, which led him to conclude that architecture was an ideology serving capitalist development. As seen above, his negative criticism was a point of departure for a re-conceptualization of 'critical architecture' and the invention of an allied 'architectural critical theory'. Yet, Tafuri's verdict generated also the alternate 'postmodernist' view that architecture was not an ideology, but a means of representation of all ideologies, of which the pre-OMA 'City of the Captive Globe' (1974) is the perfect illustration.[104]

Martin offers the concept of 'utopian realism' as a solution to the problem. Clearly inspired by the concluding paragraphs of Jameson's 1997 essay 'The Brick and the Balloon', Martin's oxymoron proposes a Derridean definition of utopia as specter, 'a ghost that infuses every day reality with other, possible worlds, rather than some otherworldly dreams'.[105] Martin insists his concept is a critical one. Utopian realism is

> utopian not because it dreams impossible dreams, but because it recognizes 'reality' itself as – precisely – an all-too-real dream enforced by those who prefer to accept a destructive and oppressive status quo. Utopia's ghost floats within this dream, conjured time and again by those who would prefer not to.

Moving away from the critical as opposition, negation, resistance, transcoding and autonomy, Martin proposes a reading of the 'real' quite similar to the critical-paranoid method with which Rem Koolhaas wrote his retroactive manifesto for Manhattan. In this, he follows the post-critical faction as well

as Jameson. In effect, Jameson developed an increasing interest in Koolhaas's work, the significance of which changed over time.

As seen above, Koolhaas featured in Jameson's analysis already in 1982, when the latter interpreted *Learning from Las Vegas* and *Delirious New York* as instances of 'the schizophrenic celebration of the commodity fetishism of the image'. He opposed these works to Tafuri's negative criticism in his dialectics of postmodernist anti-utopianism.

In 1997, Jameson turned again to Koolhaas in the evaluation of the Rockefeller Center that he developed in 'The Brick and the Balloon'. Jameson then presented Koolhaas's concept of congestion as a term of mediation 'between Tafuri's abstractions and a consideration of the concrete buildings complex in either architectural or commercial terms'.[106] Koolhaas thus accomplished a crucial operation, 'the establishment of a mediation capable of translation in either direction: able to function as a characterization of the economic determinants of this construction within the city fully as much as it can offer directions for aesthetic analysis and cultural interpretation'.[107] Asking then how one is to judge the Rockefeller Center's aesthetic, Jameson underlined the ambivalence of aesthetic symbolism, the very problem Martin wants to resolve, and once again put Tafuri and Koolhaas back to back:

> the work may… turn out to be a symbolic *act*, a real form of praxis in the symbolic realm; but it might also prove to be merely *symbolic* act, an attempt to act in a realm in which action is impossible and does not exist as such. I thus have the feeling that for Tafuri, Rockefeller Center is this last – merely symbolic act, which necessarily fails to resolve its contradictions; whereas for Koolhaas, it is the fact of creative and productive action within the symbolic that is the source of aesthetic excitement.[108]

Which led Jameson to ask: '… is the aesthetic of the individual building radically to be disjoined from the problem of the urban in such a way that the problems raised by each belong and remain in separate compartments…?'[109] Jameson's answer to the question consisted in an elaborate discussion in which some formal aesthetics of late modern architecture, as described by Charles Jencks, served to illustrate 'something of the formal overtones proper to late finance capitalism'.[110] The late-modern in architecture was modernism 'to the second power' and the aesthetic analogue of the 'new relationship to the future as space of necessary expectation of revenue and capital accumulation' found in the late capitalist forms of fictitious capital like land speculation.[111] For Jameson, architectural aesthetics and finance enjoyed the same semi-autonomy but shared similar formal features, which were derived from a new logic of abstraction or materialist sublimation beyond the modern one. Jameson remained faithful to the structuralist method.

In 2004, Rem Koolhaas reappeared in Jameson's 'Future City', a review of *Project on the City*, two books that assembled the research of a graduate seminar directed by Koolhaas at the Harvard School of Design.[112] Jameson was visibly seduced by the originality of the kaleidoscopic form of the books and of the insights they provided on the thematic of shopping and the

architectural forms it generated through history. Koolhaas's essay entitled 'Junkspace' was the *pièce de résistance* of the work and the text that most fascinated Jameson. Koolhaas described the spreading around the planet of the virus of junkspace, the actual leftovers of the process of modernization, the other and very concrete side of utopian formal aesthetics. The rap-like writing style of Koolhaas was a kind of revelation. Through repetition and synonymous redundancy, Koolhaas's style produced an effect of oppressive saturation similar to that of negative dialectics. By its very narrative structure, Koolhaas's essay transmitted the idea of a future being 'nothing but the monotonous repetition of what is already here'; the ultimate closure of a world in which there is 'little else to do but shop'. Koolhaas made tangible the idea that it was 'easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism'. Jameson wondered if this 'postmodern artefact in its own right', was not finally 'a whole new vision of history'.

Jameson recognized in Koolhaas's literary performance something close to science-fiction; as a piece of literature, it was something other than theory:

> It would be too simple to say that architecture and space are here metaphors for everything else: but this is no longer architectural theory; nor is it a novel whose point of view is that of the architect. Rather it is the new language of space which is speaking through these self-replicating, self-perpetuating sentences, space itself become the dominant code or hegemonic language of the new moment of History—the last?—whose very raw material condemns it in its deterioration to extinction.[113]

Although Jameson intended, in his conclusion, to both historicize Koolhaas's reading and show that shopping could be 'a new form of desire [situated] well before the sale takes place', he indicated to the architectural community that Koolhaas offered an alternative to 'theory'. In this connection, Baird is right to point out that the emerging generation of 'post-critical' theorists is under Koolhaas's spell.

It is probably not by chance if Jameson took great interest in *Learning from Las Vegas* and *Delirious New York*. For a structuralist critic like him, the productivity of both texts came from the fact that they interpreted the built environment as a system. Moreover, they contained an ideological criticism of high modernism, both works being conceived as retroactive manifestos for American built phenomena lacking an architectural theory. Like Venturi and Scott Brown who studied the formal structure of Las Vegas and developed their semiology of architecture, Koolhaas studied the form of Manhattan and developed his surrealist theory of metropolitan congestion. These works were useful because they found in the real an underlying structure offering a potential for mediation that Jameson could integrate in his theory of postmodernism. Yet, in spite of similarities, it seems not totally wrong to think that what distinguishes these works from 'architectural critical theory' is the fact that they theorize the built environment rather than produce concepts that relate architects' architecture 'with the social, historical, and ideological subtexts'. In other words, they theorize existing practices that shaped the

'real' rather than putting in practice existing theories capable of enacting architecture's symbolic capacity to resist the 'real'. These two points of view are not so much in contradiction, one being pragmatic and the other critical, but rather two different ways of creating otherness.

In refusing the status quo, Reinhold Martin helps us to understand that the critical in architecture is fundamentally committed not so much to novelty than to the formulation of alternatives: in a word, to *change*. Critical architecture, as defined by Hays, seeks change through resistance, negation and opposition to the forces maintaining the status quo. In contrast, the iron cage of an oppressive status quo becomes through Koolhaas's sublime descriptions the terrifying splendors of the real, a real in which there is no situation rotten enough for not containing a new positivity.[114] To negativity and resistance, Koolhaas opposes an exhilarating acceleration of the real as the only strategy for achieving change. His proposal cannot be reduced to pragmatism nor can it be assimilated to Michael Speaks's integration of business management practices to optimize professional efficiency. Nevertheless, with no particular political program, these two sides of architecture's 'critical' commitment to change are ambiguously political, although they keep, for many, the aura of 1968.

## Jameson and the History of Postmodernist Architecture

This analysis of the impact of Jameson's work on architectural discourse demonstrates the profound influence his theses had on the formulation of Hays's architectural critical theory. Yet, his theorization of postmodernism feeds also the current reappraisals of the postmodern period of which two recent books are emblematic.

The first, Reinhold Martin's *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again*, set to examine the reasons of the postmodernist ban on utopia.[115] In this eclectic work, Martin constructs his central argument from Jameson's assertion that architecture is the material evidence of the 'cultural logic of late capitalism'. But Martin questions this model, which reduces architecture to a mere reflection of capitalist processes. In his opinion, architecture also participates in the reorganization of life. So he offers the 'feedback loop' as cognitive model. For him, 'the economic never simply precedes the cultural (or the social for that matter), nor does it simply follow it. Instead, the different levels reflect and refract one another'.[116] Equipped with this model, Martin revisits some major projects of the period and produces a series of essays which outline more or less successful loops between levels that chosen drawings illustrate. In referring in its looping structure to most of Jameson's interpretations of postmodernist architecture, Martin's book integrates systematically for the first time Jameson's tropes in a history of architectural postmodernism. In conclusion, although banned, utopia survives as a ghost haunting the period. The 1977 project of O.M. Ungers and Rem Koolhaas for Berlin served to illustrate how anti-utopia harbored in actuality an archipelago

of utopian islands analogous to Jameson's political model of a federated archipelago.[117] Ultimately, Martin, as Jameson did before him, called for a renewal of utopian thinking.

The second work is Hays's *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde*.[118] More limited in scope than Martin's panorama, this book provides an elegant and lyrical interpretation of the works of Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk and Bernard Tschumi, which ends incidentally with four pages on Rem Koolhaas. In introduction, Hays explains he intended to revise Tafuri's and Rowe's interpretations of the neo-avant-garde's speculation on the critical potential and the limits of architecture's autonomy. He invokes again Jameson's critical apparatus, notably 'the imaginary projection he calls cognitive mapping',[119] the concept of late modern 'in which the ideology… of modernism has been theorized and identified in terms of artistic autonomy…'[120] and Jameson's reading of Lacan's Imaginary-Symbol-Real triad in which the Real 'is simply History itself'. Rejecting the postmodernist and the neo-avant-garde label, Hays chooses the term late avant-garde for its association with Jameson's late-modern, by which 'he intends an extreme reflexivity within the modern itself rather than a replay of modernism.'[121] The late avant-garde thus brought negativity to a higher level, 'to a second-order negativity, an architecture reflecting on Architecture'. In the process, the architectural object as such was 'annulled as an immediate thing and reconceived as a mediating material and process' and became Symbolic in Lacan's sense.[122] For Hays, the 'critical', the concept usually associated with the neo-avant-garde, was less adequate than the concept of desire to explain the late avant-garde's 'attempt to escape the ideological closures of the situation', as formulated by Tafuri, one presumes, 'through the portals of the libidinal and the collective'.[123] Although Hays maintains his allegiance to materialist criticism, his Lacanian reinterpretation of four of the most visible architects of the period is far from a dialectical critique of the post-1968. Instead, *Architecture's Desire* constitutes a monument to the architects-theoreticians who lived 'the trauma of having arrived too late'.[124] Just like the late avant-garde 'self-consciously close[d] in on its own limits rather than open[ed] outward',[125] the book appears to close the chapter of the 'critical' that Hays opened in the early 1980s. In this 'development' about 'critical architecture', Hays traveled from worldliness, through the politics of the avant-garde and posthumanism to Lacanian psychoanalysis, and remained faithful to his mentor's theory and method, but rarely, if ever, referred to his conceptualization of postmodernist architecture.


## A Change of Paradigm?

As Baird points out, an emerging generation wants to break with this 'critical' heritage by bringing to a close with their appraisal of pragmatism, symbolically, this period which was concerned with structuralist and poststructuralist theories. Their strategic return to the project may be a merely practical means

of attracting important commissions. But more fundamentally, the emerging generation takes side with the retroactive manifestos of the 1970s, which gave a theoretical content to the 'real' American landscape with semiology (Las Vegas) and the critico-paranoid method (Manhattan). At first sight, since they do not propose alternative critical models, they cannot pretend to have realized a true change of paradigm in architecture. Moreover, their 'post-critical' stance is evidently vulnerable to a politically oriented Marxian criticism. But this Marxian critique cannot make the economy of not developing a truly dialectical history of the theoretical discourse of architecture since the 1960s.

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## Notes

1   George Baird, "'Criticality" and Its Discontents', in *Harvard Design Magazine* 21 (2004): pp. 1-5.

2   Mary McLeod, 'Introduction', in Joan Ockman, et al. (eds), *Architecture, Ideology, Criticism* (New York, 1985): pp. 7-11.

3   McLeod eventually elaborated her thesis in an essay examining why postmodern architecture was considered among leftist architects and critics to be the architecture of Reaganism. See: Mary McLeod, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Decontructivism', in *Assemblage* 8 (1989): pp. 22-59.

4   Robert Stern, 'The Doubles of Post-Modern', in *The Harvard Architecture Review*, 1 (1984): pp. 74-87. Inspired by his discussions with Peter Eisenman, Stern proposed that the postmodern dialectics opposed traditional and schismatic factions, each faction having its own internal dialectics.

5   Editorial Statement, in Ockman (ed.), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology*, pp. 4-5.

6   Manfredo Tafuri,, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1976): p. 182.

7   McLeod, 'Introduction', pp. 10-11.

8   McLeod, 'Introduction', pp. 10-11.

9   McLeod, 'Introduction', p. 9.

10   Demetri Porphyrios, 'Introduction', in D. Porphyrios (ed.), *On the Methodology of Architectural History* (London and New York, 1981): p. 2.

11   Tafuri's transposition to architecture of the model Barthes developed in his essay 'Myth Today' is found in Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York and London, 1980).

12   Porphyrios, 'On Critical History', in  Ockman (ed.), *Architecture, Ideology, Criticism*, p. 17.

13   Porphyrios, 'On Critical History', p. 18.

14   Porphyrios, 'Introduction,' p. 21.

15   Porphyrios, 'Introduction,' p. 21.

16   Thomas Llorens, 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', in D. Porphyrios (ed.), *On the Methodology:* pp. 82-95.

17   Llorens, 'On Making History', in *Architecture, Ideology, Criticism,* pp. 24-47.

18   Llorens 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 89.

19   Llorens 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 84.

20   Llorens 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 85.

21   Llorens 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 85.

22  Llorens 'On Making History', p. 87.

23  I indicated elsewhere, that *Progetto e utopia* was also conceived as a commentary on the more recent book *Progetto e destino* by Guilio Argan. See: Louis Martin, 'Against Architecture', in *Log* 16 (2009): pp. 153-167.

24  Llorens, 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 89.

25  Llorens, 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 89.

26  Llorens, 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', p. 93.

27  Llorens 'Manfredo Tafuri: Neo-Avant-Garde and History', pp. 93-94.

28  Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', in Ockman (ed.), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology,* pp. 51-87.

29  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 58.

30  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 67.

31  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 71.

32  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', pp. 71-72.

33  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 73.

34  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 73.

35  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 75. Jameson referred to Robert Venturi, Denis Scott Brown and Steve Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, MA, 1972) and to Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, 1978).

36  Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris, 1974).

37  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 82.

38  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 82.

39  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 86.

40  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 87.

41  Michael K. Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', in *Perspecta*, 21 (1984): pp. 14-29.

42  Baird, '"Criticality"and Its Discontents'.

43  Michael K. Hays, *Architecture and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge and London, 1992): p. 11.

44  Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 16.

45  Manfredo Tafuri, 'L'architecture dans le boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language', in *Oppositions* 3 (1974).

46  Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 17.

47   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 17.

48   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 22.

49   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 22.

50   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 25.

51   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 27.

52   Hays, 'Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form', p. 27.

53   Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Modern Architecture/2* (Milan, 1979): p. 312.

54   Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture/2*, p. 314.

55   Tafuri and Dal Co, *Modern Architecture/2*, p. 314.

56   K. Michael Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', in Beatriz Colomina (ed.), *Architectureproduction* (New York, 1988): pp. 152-180.

57   Peter Bürger,*Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, 1984).

58   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p. 154.

59   Kenneth Frampton, 'The Humanist versus the Utilitarian Ideal', in *Architectural Design* 38, (1968): pp. 134-136.

60   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p.163.

61   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p. 172.

62   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', 176.

63   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p. 176.

64   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p. 177.

65   Hays, 'Reproduction and Negation: The Cognitive Project of the Avant-Garde', p. 179.

66   For an excellent analysis of Hays's essay, see Alan Colquhoun, 'Response to Michael Hays', in *Architectureproduction* (1988): pp. 213-216.

67   Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject: The Architecture of Hannes Meyer and Ludwig Hilberseimer* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

68   Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, p. 9.

69   'Transcoding' is Jameson's translation of the French *transcodage* found in A.J.

Greimas, *Du sens* (Paris, 1970). See Fredric Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton, 1972): p. 216.

70   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981): p. 39.

71   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 39.

72   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 41-42.

73   Hays's addition.

74   Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, p. 19.

75   Louis Marin, *Utopiques – Jeux d'espace* (Paris, 1974).

76   Fredric Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse', in *Diacritics, 7* (2), (1977): pp. 2-21. The two first diagrams are produced from this essay.

77   Firstly, it is important to point out that this empty schema is derived from Greimas's semiotic rectangle. The schema seems to capture an image of the complex 'structure' of negative dialectics. It is therefore not a structure unique to utopia, nor did it find its origin in the study of utopia itself. In fact, Jameson used this schema to discuss several other cultural phenomena. For instance, versions of it appeared in chapter 5 of *The Political Unconscious* (1981) to analyze the works of Joseph Conrad and in chapter 9 of *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), analyzing film.

78   Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, p. 80. Hays here quotes from Jameson's 'Of Islands and Trenches…'

79   Hays, *Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject*, p. 238.

80   In this connection, Tafuri wrote in 1967: 'It does not seem wrong to us to project [the new interests of the present] onto the past. We have known for quite a while now that there exists no historical reading that is not conditioned by our obligation to the present', in Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, p. 75.

81   Michael Hays, 'Introduction', in Michael Hays (ed.), *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1998): p. x.

82   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

83   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

84   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

85   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

86   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

87   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xi. Hays quoted pages 394-395 of Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, 1991).

88   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xii.

89   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xii.

90   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xii.

91   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xii.

92   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

93   Sylvia Lavin, 'Theory into History or, The Will to Anthology', in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58 (3) (1999): pp. 494-499.

94   Hays, 'Introduction', p. xiii.

95   Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Capitalism*, p. 51. See also: Fredric Jameson, 'Cognitive Mapping', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign, 1990): pp. 347-360.

96   Leaving aside 'what really happened', the anthology may indicate another possible, and to me more plausible, interpretative model in which Colin Rowe played the role of mentor in the search for new theoretical models in the English-speaking world. With his 'Introduction to *Five Architects*', Rowe formulated in 1972 the first critical analysis of the dilemma of the neo-avant-garde in the USA. This essay revealed, among other things, that the functionalist theory of modern architecture acted as a highly sophisticated mechanism 'for the suppression of the feelings of guilt: guilt about the products of the mind – felt to be comparatively insignificant, guilt about high culture – felt to be unreal, guilt about art – the most extreme anxiety to disavow the role of private judgment in any analytical or synthetic enterprise.' Rowe demonstrated that functionalist theory was not a guide to practice but a constellation of 'escapist myths' 'endeavouring to relieve the architect of responsibility for his choices'. And his conclusion, which stated that the '*physique* and the *morale* of modern architecture, its flesh and its word, were (and could) never be coincident', drove a wedge between theory and practice. Acquiring its autonomy, theory was freed from serving design doctrines and became conversely a field for the intellectualization of architecture of which architectural critical theory is an epiphenomenon. It was only two years later that Tafuri's criticism entered American academia, when Diana Agrest invited him to lecture at Princeton University in 1974. The publication of a much criticized English translation of Tafuri's legendary lecture in *Oppositions* 3, also in 1974, inaugurated the slow and chaotic reception of Tafuri's negative dialectics of the avant-garde. The publication in 1980 of the English translation of Tafuri's *Teorie e Storia dell'Architettura* (1967) gave a political meaning to the absolute separation of the critical discourses of history and theory from the ideological myths of practice, which, as seen above, became the point of departure for these more politicized critics, who wished to develop an ideological criticism of American postmodernism.

97   Reinhold Martin, 'Critical of What?', in *Harvard Design Magazine* 22 (2005): pp. 1-5.

98   Martin, 'Critical of What?'

99   Martin, 'Critical of What?'

100  Tafuri, *Theories and History*, p. 176.

101  Jameson discusses this problem on page 40 of *The Political Unconscious*, 1981. He wrote: 'Such momentary reunification would remain purely symbolic, a mere methodological fiction, were it not understood that social life is in

its fundamental reality one and indivisible… The appeal to some ultimate underlying unity of the various 'levels' is therefore a merely formal and empty one, except insofar as it supplies the rational and the philosophical justification for that more concrete and local practice of mediations with which we are here concerned.'

102 Quoted in M. J. Morfaux, *Vocabulaire de la philosophie et des sciences humaines* (Paris, 1980).

103 Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, 'Ugly and Ordinary Architecture or the Decorated Shed', in *Architectural Forum* 135 (11) (1971): pp. 64-67.

104 This drawing meant to show that the absolute grid of Manhattan could accommodate all ideologies, ideologies being here equivalent to aesthetics, and therefore not understood as false-consciousness. Bernard Tschumi's 'Architectural Manifestos' of the mid-1970s and their accompanying essays are another instance of the same 'postmodernist' view. The 1980s deconstruction of the architectural sign, in undermining the metaphysical unity of sign and meaning, could also be interpreted as another reaction to Tafuri's challenge.

105 Jameson wrote: '… Derrida has restored to the ghost story and the matter of haunting a new and actual philosophical dignity it perhaps never had before, proposing a new kind of "hauntology", the barely perceptible agitations in the air of a past abolished socially and collectively, yet attempting to be reborn. (Significantly, Derrida includes the future among spectralities.)' Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn* (New York and London, 1998): p.188.

106 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p. 182.

107 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p. 182.

108 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p. 183.

109 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p. 183.

110 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p.186.

111 Jameson, *The Cultural Turn,* p. 185.

112 Jameson, 'Future City', in *New Left Review* 2 (2003): pp. 65-79.

113 Jameson, 'Future City', p. 74.

114 OMA, *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 238 (1985).

115 Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis and London, 2010).

116 Martin, *Utopia's Ghost,* p. xxiii.

117 Martin, *Utopia's Ghost,* p. 174.

118 K. Michael Hays, *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

119 Hays, *Architecture's Desire,* p. 20.

120 Hays, *Architecture's Desire,* p. 11.

121   Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, p. 11.

122   Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, p. 13.

123   Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, p. 19.

124   Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, p. 12.

125   Hays, *Architecture's Desire*, p. 12.

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# Reloading Ideology Critique of Architecture

*Nadir Lahiji*

## Introduction: Ideology Critique in the Age of Collective Psychosis

Architecture in its contemporary form structures our perception of reality and renders it indistinguishable from the *aestheticized* image of it. And, according to the critical statement by Fredric Jameson in his *The Political Uncosncious,* aesthetics is an ideological act.[1] This aesthetic indistinction is the function of prevailing cultural hegemony of the neo-liberal political order and its *utopia.* This utopia is *ideology* at its purest. It is also the function of our *mediatized* society.[2] The psychopathology of this society shows the symptoms of a *psychosis.* This is a malady of the subject under the cultural logic of late capitalism. From the point in the early twentieth century when Walter Benjamin diagnostically spoke of 'mass psychoses', provoked by the new media technology, which, as he argued, created its own *immunization* in the same *technologization* through the mass art (film), our epoch of psychosis had already begun, having its pre-history in the nineteenth century. In the second version of 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility' Benjamin wrote:

> If one considers the dangerous tension which technology and its consequences have engendered in the masses at large – tendencies which at critical stages take on a psychotic character – one also has to recognize that this same technologization [*Technisierung*] has created the possibility of psychotic immunization against such mass psychoses. It does so by means of certain films in which the forced development of sadistic fantasies or masochistic delusions can prevent their natural and dangerous maturation in the masses.[3] [Italics in original]

For Benjamin, collective laughter 'is one such preemptive and healing outbreak of mass psychosis'.[4] This is why for him American slapstick comedies and Disney films could 'trigger a therapeutic release of unconscious energies'. And this is also why the figure of the 'eccentric' was the forerunner of this release of energies. 'He was the first to inhabit the new fields of action opened

up by film – the first occupant of the newly built house. This is the context in which Chaplin takes on historical significance.'[5]

   This was the state of mass subjectivity at the time of Benjamin. We may consider that state as the beginning of the rise of modern psychosis. It was the period when the political order in mass-mediated society underwent a 'Crisis of Investiture',[6] which was exemplified in the figure of Daniel Paul Schreber, the Presiding Judge of the Court of Appeal in Dresden, who wrote the famous *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness,* published in 1903.[7] This text, which was known to Benjamin,[8] provided the reference for discursive practice of the clinical diagnosis of psychosis when Freud wrote *The Schreber Case*, published in 1911.[9] This moment corresponds to the subjectivity of the 'autonomous individual' under liberal capitalism in the early twentieth century. At this stage, however, the symptoms of psychosis remained socio-culturally *latent* and its pathological instances were confined to clinical cases. The second moment, that is, the state of psychosis specific to our contemporary society, was brought about by the decline of 'Symbolic Authority',[10] unknown before in the entire history of secular capitalist modernity. The mode of subjectivity belonging to this phase is no longer the 'autonomous individual', but rather, as Slavoj Žižek has argued, the 'pathological narcissist', a form of subjectivity that corresponds to the political-cultural imperatives of contemporary global capitalism.[11] At this stage, psychosis displays its *manifest* content, more radical than in Benjamin's time, not confined only to clinical cases. This subjectivity breaks decisively from the previous instance of it. The root cause of its outbreak at this stage is as 'technological' as it was when Benjamin wrote. In this sense, psychosis is always-already a *technological psychosis,* retroactively altering all the previous discursive forms of technology. In a sense, in modern times, there cannot be a technology if it is not *psychotic.* This is another way to say that technology has an *unconscious,* as we have learnt from Benjamin. This entire epoch, therefore, may be named as *the epoch of technological psychosis*. But, why does technology come with its own unconscious? Primarily, according to Benjamin, in the early twentieth century, we must understand that *the reality revealed by technology is '*beyond the *normal* spectrum of sense impression'. As Benjamin wrote:

> It is through the camera that we first discover the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Moreover, these two types of unconscious are intimately linked. For in most cases the diverse aspects of reality captured by the film camera lie outside only the *normal* spectrum of sense impressions. Many of the deformations and stereotypes, transformation and catastrophes which can assail the optical world in films afflict the actual world in psychoses, hallucinations, and dreams. Thanks to the camera, therefore, the individual perceptions of the psychotic or the dreamer can be appropriated by collective perception.[12]

We must note that 'optical unconscious' was Benjamin's term to bring this unconscious of technology to the fore. Each phase of psychosis coincides with a distinct form of media. In this second phase of psychosis, something

radical has happened from the first instance: the *subject* has lost the distinction between 'reality' and the Real.[13] This is the *sine qua non* of the condition of subjectivity in our culture. In this non-distinction, the subject is threatened with psychosis because the current technology of cyberspace presents this subject with the undifferentiated state of *virtuality,* the meaning of which is linked to the notion of the Real.[14] This moment found its most powerful theoretical exposition in Jacques Lacan's Third Seminar, *The Psychoses*, 1955-1956.[15] In this seminar, Lacan defended Freudian analysis of the case of Dr Schreber and took it up for a radically new interpretation. In Lacan's epochal definition, psychosis arises when *what is foreclosed from the Symbolic returns in the Real.* Translated into an analysis of culture by Žižek, culture at large stages the complex relationship between 'reality' and the Real. Cultural artefacts can both provoke *and* ward off psychosis, 'in which reality collapses into hallucination because our psychic "real" and the outer "reality" are no longer differentiated'.[16] The technology of cyberspace in its undifferentiated form in our time is the main cause of this psychosis. Another fundamental difference differentiates the first instance from the second one. In contrast to the early twentieth century, this second phase can find no *immunization* in the same technology that has caused it. Neither film, nor any other form of art for that matter, is able to provide an immunization against it. Now, the fundamental question that must be asked is this: what form of *ideology* corresponds to this dominant state of subjectivity? It is the ideology of *Cynicism*, which we will come back to later in this chapter.

If architecture can still be defined, according to Benjamin, as the fundamental mode of technological organization of *experience* (technology designating the artificial organization of perception, and as such, experience itself changing with the development of technology), the crucial point to bear in mind is that it is not only experienced as *ideology*, but, rather, what we would call the 'architectural experience' in this society has determinately shaped our fundamental ideological experience with an inexorable force on our perception of 'reality'.[17] Against those who disavow the hold of this ideological experience and believe that they can or have exited it, Žižek has an apt warning: '*the stepping out of (what we experience as) ideology is the very form of our enslavement to it*'.[18] In this state, radical thought has an urgent task. It must address this basic question: *What* – and not *why* – 'ideological critique' of architecture is on the agenda today? But, before addressing this question, we have to address a corollary question: To what theory of ideology should we adhere, today?

The abandonment of the critique of ideology in contemporary academia, which was alive three decades ago, is not only intellectually ignorant and reactionary but is empty of ethical responsibility. In spite of its complexity, the project of ideology critique on the Left is once more on the agenda despite its detractors. In contemporary radical thought there are contending theories of ideology. The singular exposition of its problematic is the one that is brilliantly presented by Slavoj Žižek.[19] In contemporary radical thought, Žižek

is probably the only critic who has provided us with an accurate diagnosis of contemporary society and its culture. Where the Frankfurt School attempted the so-called 'Freudo-Marxist' theory of ideology and failed, Žižek has succeeded in linking Marxian theory and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory and has single-handedly renovated the theory of ideology for radical cultural, political, cinema, art and architectural analysis in our time.[20] His theory has not only surpassed all the reductive models and the debate surrounding the Left discourse on the so-called 'class' character of ideology, but has also come across as corrective to the most influential and sophisticated exposition of theory of ideology, which we inherited from Louis Althusser three decades ago, when he put forward the famous notion of 'interpellation' in his 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISA), written as his self-criticism.[21] For Althusser, as for Žižek, ideology is the 'unconscious', to begin with. Furthermore, Žižek has gone beyond the influential 'discourse theory' of Michel Foucault (and his contemporary followers), who, as is well known, dropped the word *ideology* altogether from his discourse on Power.[22] Žižek's theory also goes beyond 'discourse analysis' of ideology expounded in various contemporary post-Marxisms and its 'combination' with post-structuralism, particularly the most influential one, by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who brought the Gramscian notion of 'hegemony' into their theory of ideology.[23] But before entering Žižek's discourse of ideology, I want to briefly review the past history of the theory of ideology critique in architectural discourse.

## Tafuri and Jameson

The last time any serious attempt to keep the criticism of ideology in architecture alive in any significant fashion was by Fredric Jameson in 1982.[24] In a famous talk at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, he discussed Manfredo Tafuri's 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', which had appeared first in the Italian journal *Contropiano* in 1969 and was later expanded into *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development.*[25] What has changed since Jameson published his essay more than two decades ago? In his critique of Tafuri, Jameson delivered a final verdict: 'Perhaps … something is to be said for Lefebvre's call for a politics of space and for the search for a properly Gramscian architecture after all.'[26] This phrase, 'properly Gramscian architecture', is rather vague. Gramsci discussed architecture, albeit briefly, in his *Cultural Writings* under the term 'Rationalism'.[27] It was in 1930s Italy that public buildings were commissioned to the 'rationalists', in particular to Guseppe Terragni. Regarding this Gramsci wrote: 'It is evident that in architecture "rationalism" means simply "modern." It is also evident that "rational" is nothing other than a way of expressing the beautiful according to the taste of a given period. That this has happened in architecture is "collective" not only as an "occupation" but also in terms

of "judgment."'[28] He added: 'One could say that "rationalism" has always existed, that there have always been attempts to reach a given end according to a given taste and according to technical knowledge of the resistance and adaptability of the "material."'[29] Gramsci thought that it is from architecture that rationalism can migrate to other arts, a difficult task that can be resolved by 'criticism of the fact'. He noted that, by the mere fact that architecture is connected to 'life', it is the most 'reformable' and 'disreputable' of the arts. Now, I take it that what Jameson meant by the phrase 'Gramcian architecture' (better to be rephrased as 'Gramscian *criticism* of architecture') was not the comment Gramsci made on architecture, but rather, the political theory Gramsci advanced for the notion of ideology, for which complex concept he employed the term *hegemony*. Gramsci advanced the theory of hegemony along with those of 'war of position', 'war of maneuver', 'the ruling block', etc.[30] The most discussed among these, is the concept of hegemony as *the organization of consent*, which in fact extends the notion of ideology beyond its usual accepted meaning. As Terry Eagleton remarks, 'It is with Gramsci that the crucial transition is effected from ideology as "system of ideas" to ideology as lived, habitual social practice – which must then presumably encompass the unconscious, inarticulate dimension of social experience as well as the workings of formal institution.'[31] This development in the concept of ideology, which, as we know, was theoretically more vigorous, entered in Althusser's writing on ISA.

Although Gramsci's theory and Lefebvre's politics of space are still influential and widely discussed today, they are not by any measure the last words as Jameson claimed in 1982.[32] So what has changed? Not only has the intellectual discourse on the problematic of 'ideology' and its 'class' analysis changed, but also, concretely, we are now within a different political-cultural order, the so-called 'New Spirit' of capitalism and the collapse of the traditional working class party on which the traditional point of view of the 'class' analysis of ideology had been based. Moreover, we have witnessed the general historical defeat of the Left, the effect of which is also palpable on current intellectual hegemony inside the discipline of architecture. A prevailing position by 'liberal-left' critics has appeared in the 'critical' circles in academia which peddles the misguided claim that they have transcended 'criticality' and have supposedly overcome 'old-fashioned' Marxian theory. But in reality, they have mounted an assault on the tradition of the radical Left critique of architecture. The general ignorance in academia of the Marxist discourse, and, in particular, the near absence of its discourse inside architectural departments, are the symptoms of the co-opting of the discourse into the hegemonic ideology of 'liberal-democratic-capitalism' and its politico-cultural discourse. Two factors stand out: on the one hand, our era is misguidedly celebrated as 'post-political' and 'post-ideological'. And, on the other hand, architecture has been co-opted by the prevailing cultural logic and its institutional support within the imperatives of a market economy. It is my contention that any theory of 'ideology critique' of architecture

confronting this situation must revive two other terms dismissed today: the political economy of capitalism and the problematic of the concept of 'class struggle'.[33] Frederic Jameson had advanced the notion of 'class struggle' three decades ago with his novel concept of the 'political unconscious', to which Slavoj Žižek has a specific answer, as we will see below. Admittedly, the prevailing conditions are different now from when Tafuri was writing in late 1960s and early 1970s, within the Italian Left movement and its discourse of 'workerism' and 'autonomist' Marxism, grounded in the discourse of 'class' analysis of ideology to which Tafuri belonged.[34] I will shortly touch on Tafuri's conceptualization of the Marxian notion of ideology that he developed in the context of the Italian Left movement and its intellectual circumstances. But it must be emphasized here that our new conditions require a new attempt in reconfiguring the discourse of 'ideology critique' to countervail the contemporary proclamations of the 'post-political' and the 'end of ideology'. Let us first examine the idea of the 'post-ideological'.

More than two decades now after the historical collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the year that, according to Alain Badiou, marks the end of the twentieth century, we are witnessing the *ideological fantasy* of neo-liberal political utopia.[35] Regarding this utopia, we must first insert the political factor that defines its situation. Žižek has insightfully outlined this 'utopia' by confirming that the year 1990, the year of the collapse of Communism, is commonly taken as the year of the collapse of political utopia. In his words:

> The year 1990 – the year of the collapse of Communism – is commonly perceived as the year of the collapse of political utopia: Today, we live in a post-utopian time of pragmatic administration, since we learned the hard lesson of how noble political utopias end in totalitarian terror …. [H]owever, the first thing to remember here is that this alleged collapse of utopias was followed by the ten-year rule of the last grand utopia, the utopia of global capitalist liberal democracy as the 'end of history' – 9/11 designates the end of *this* utopia, a return to the real history of new walls of conflict which followed the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It is crucial to perceive how the 'end of utopia' repeated itself in a self-reflexive gesture: the ultimate utopia was the very notion that, after the end of utopias, we were at the 'end of history'.[36]

Žižek then instructively attempts to define what we mean when we say 'utopia'. He writes that, 'in its essence, utopia has nothing to do with imagining an impossible society; what characterizes utopia is literally the construction of a u-topic space, a social space outside the existing parameters, the parameters of what appears to be "possible" in the existing social universe. The "utopian" gesture is the gesture which changes the co-ordinates of the possible. […] *This urge of the moment is the true utopia*'.[37] He further elaborates:

> What this means is, again, that utopia has nothing to do with idle dreaming about ideal society in total abstraction from real life: 'utopia' is a matter of innermost urgency, something we are pushed into as a matter of survival, when it is no longer possible to go on within the parameters of

the 'possible.' This utopia has to be opposed both to the standard notion of
political utopias, books containing projects which were basically not even
intended to be realized (from its first supreme case, Plato's *Republic*, up
to Thomas More's *Utopia* and – not to be forgotten – De Sade's *Philosophy
in the Boudoir*) and to what is usually referred to as the utopian practice
of capitalism itself: commodities evoking utopian pleasures, the libidinal
economy that relies on the dynamic of continuously generating new
transgressive desires and practices, right up to necrophilia ….[38]

The aesthetic dimension has to be added to what Žižek has said above, as yet
one more dimension in the strategies of utopias today. We must recognize
that architecture, in its function of turning the perception of reality into an
aesthetic version of it, has lent its service to this ideological vision of the
utopia in the above sense – that is, the grand utopia of global capitalist liberal
democracy as the 'end of history'.

I have dwelt at length on Žižek's reflections on the notion of utopia to
open the problematic of Tafuri's theory of ideology and what in fact has since
changed regarding the notion of utopia. Tafuri paired *projetto* (project or
projecting) and *utopia* side by side, with the structuralist conjunction 'and' in
between in the title of his book, to signify the failure of the Modern Movement
and the discovery of *nihilism* as the driving force of the European intellectual
movement. As Alberto Asor Rosa, an intellectual fellow traveller of Tafuri,
who has recently reflected on this pairing, writes: 'In fact: the other pairing of
the words constantly present in Tafuri's thought (and also inseparable), are
*project* and *utopia* […] or *project* and *destiny* (similar, in operative terms, to the
pairing of *order* and *chaos*) … The conclusion of Tafuri's analysis is gloomy'.[39]
Asor Rosa goes on to quote Tafuri: 'Order and disorder, in this sense, do not
oppose each other anymore. Read in their true historical significance, there
is no contradiction between constructivism and "the art of protest," between
rationalization of the building trades and informal subjectivism or the irony
of pop art; between capitalistic plan and urban chaos; between ideology of
planning and the poetics of the object.'[40] Asor Rosa comments: 'In other words,
project and utopia continuously flow into each other, while simultaneously
cancelling each other out.'[41] Today, however, confronting the grand utopia of
global capitalism, we have to change the co-ordinates of Tafuri's argument
in order to be able to conceptualize the fundamental notion of *deadlock*, and
not the notion of 'failure'. Deadlock is a concept that inheres in the notion of
*social antagonism* (more about this term below) in any evaluation of utopia,
in the guise of societal or architectural programming and planning, in the
sense of Žižek's definition of utopia above. But before we get into this, let me
pause here and try to further reflect on Tafuri's position and what I see as his
'blind spot' in formulating the problematic of ideology. I must preface my
reflections in advance by some preliminary remarks.

The position of the intellectuals of the Left, responding variously to political
development in our time, has been rather disappointing. Within the discipline
of architecture, after Tafuri, radical critique of architectural ideology in Marxist
tradition is virtually non-existent. The post-Marxist, postmodern position

on ideology critique – which often times is eager to drop the problematic of ideology – is not any better and must be submitted to critical scrutiny. The failure of Left critique inside the discipline, even by those who would like to claim Tafuri for their own cause, is a symptom of the larger defeat of the Left that has taken place in the political scene. We are supposed to jubilantly embrace the 'really existing' liberal capitalist democracy and to think hard about how we might lend architecture aesthetically to its utopia. So, nothing of significance has happened since Jameson wrote his critique. The re-opening of the question of ideology, therefore, has a sense of urgency. To renew this project, we have to submit Tafuri's position (and Jameson's critical judgment on it) to critical scrutiny, taking into account the current state of the theory of ideology. This means that, more than 40 years after Tafuri wrote his piece and more than 20 years after Jameson presented his own response, we can discern certain inadequacies in Tafuri's analysis of ideology. Tafuri correctly qualified, in the preface to the English edition of his *Architecture and Utopia*, his advice about how to enter the discourse of 'political theory' in order to take up the critique of ideology: '[I]t is necessary to enter into the field of political theory as this has been developed by the most advanced studies of Marxist thought from 1960 to the present. Ideological criticism cannot be separated from this context. It is an integral part of it, and all the more so when it is conscious of its own limits and its own sphere of action'.[42] But, what political theory?

Tafuri's references for Marxist political theory were largely confined to Asor Rosa, Mario Tronti, Cacciari and Tony Negri, and against the background of the 'workerist' movement particular to the Italian situation, as mentioned above.[43] It is significant to note that the discourse of the political philosophers Tafuri referred to were theoretically insulated from the intellectually powerful theories of ideology, which at the same time were coming into the discourse of the Left through the writings of Althusser. It is also perplexing how Tafuri on several occasions contradicted himself on the 'naïve' Marxist theory of ideology as 'false Consciousness'. Let me cite them. First, in *Architecture and Utopia*, he says: 'Ideology is useless to capitalist development, just as it is damaging from the working-class point of view. After the studies of Fortini in *Verifica dei poteri*, and those of Tronti, Asor Rosa, and Cacciari, I feel it superfluous to turn again to *German Ideology* to demonstrate this fact. Of course, once the work of ideological criticism has been completed, there remains the problem of deciding what instruments of knowledge might be immediately useful to the political struggle'.[44] Then, in *Theories and History of Architecture* (in his notes to the second Italian edition) he refers again parenthetically to Marx's 'false Consciousness' in *German Ideology*: '… (I would like to repeat that I use the term *ideology* specifically as the structure of the false intellectual conscience.) …' [note the careless English translation of 'consciousness' as 'conscience'].[45] Whereas, in the important introduction to *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, 'The Historical "Project"', Tafuri has this to say: 'To define ideology *tout court* as the expression of a false intellectual consciousness would be totally useless'.[46] Two things must be pointed out

here: firstly, these three separately published comments were written at a time when tremendous intellectual re-examinations of the theory of ideology were going on, and secondly, if Tafuri had to decide to drop the naïve notion of ideology as 'false consciousness' in *German Ideology*, he should have gone instead directly to the mature work of Marx, *Das Kapital*, where Marx does not use the word 'ideology' anywhere in his analysis of 'commodity fetishism'. Is this Tafuri's national intellectual prejudice, instructed and determined by the specific Italian political Left movement, as we are told,[47] relying solely on the Italian political philosophers as reference for his analysis of ideology, or is it simply an oversight? Admittedly, as we will see in a moment, there is more in Marx beyond *German Ideology*, as Žižek informs us, on the vexed question of ideology, which was overlooked by Tafuri, and which we have yet to study. But, problematically, Tafuri has more 'blind spots'. In his complex 'The Historical "Project"' he gives a misleading representation of Jacques Lacan:

> After the persuasive demonstration of the untranslatability of architecture into linguistic terms, after Saussure's discovery that language itself is a 'system of difference,' after the calling into question of the conspicuously features of institutions, historical space appears to dissolve, to disintegrate, to become a justification for disordered and elusive multiplicity, a *space of domination. Is this not the final outcome reached by a good part the 'Lacanian left' or by an epistemology of pure registration?* And after all, is not architectural writing (this phantasm that we now recognize as divided and multiplied into techniques incommensurable among one another) itself an institution, a signifying practice – an ensemble of signifying practice – a multiplicity of project of domination?[48] [emphasis added]

There is much to be contested in this passage on the dubious notion of the 'Lacanian left' and unqualified notions of 'writing' and a 'system of difference', etc., that we do not need to take it up here. Suffice to say that in 1980 when Tafuri penned these words Lacan's major work, *Écrits*, had already come out (1966) and, with it, the most important essay in the annals of the twentieth century, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytical Experience'.[49] Although this text was available to Tafuri, it seems that Tafuri at this time was reading Gilles Deleuze's anti-Lacanian book, the apparent source of his notions of 'desire', etc.[50] None of this cancels out the enormous historical achievements of Tafuri's novel analysis of twentieth-century architecture within the political theory on the Left. After all it is said, the limits of Tafuri's theory of ideology critique are inherent in the limits of the Enlightenment's general theory of ideology to which it belongs. In the attempt to overcome these limitations and to renew the project of ideology critique of architecture for our time based on the Left political theory specific to our condition today, we have to look elsewhere. To that end, we turn to Slavoj Žižek.

In doing so, we must initially discern a certain affinity that exists between Žižek and Jameson on the concept of 'class struggle' through the doctrine of the 'political unconscious' as analysed in Jameson's seminal essays in *The Political*

*Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* We must recognize that they both are indebted to Lacan and Althusser, with certain reservations towards the latter. A comprehensive treatment of this enormous topic is not possible in the space allowed for this chapter. For our purposes, we can only highlight the main line of argument in Žižek's otherwise very complex analysis.

## Jameson and Žižek

Žižek's position on the contested 'class-based' analysis of ideology is concisely explained in the following passage written by Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner, the authors of the book titled *Žižek: Beyond Foucault*

> … [T]he only truly progressive position that the left should occupy: the politicization of class. The reference to class permits us to grasp the fundamental dialectic nature of ideology, in as much as the explicit ideological sphere hegemonized by conflicting discourse (say, today's liberal democratic consensus) is always-already sustained by the intractable Real of class struggle, *which therefore is, from a political angle, the very kernel of ideology, i.e. ideology at its purest.* What must not be missed in Žižek's account is that ideology functions as a dialectical device where its positive, historically changeable and describable content (Fascism, Socialism, Liberalism, etc., i.e. ideology in the plural) is always anchored in some disavowed kernel of traumatic negativity, an non-symbolizable and ultimately trans-historical notion of antagonism that the Lacanian psychoanalysis defines as 'the Real of *jouissance*', i.e. non-discursive enjoyment. Strictly speaking, class struggle is political *jouissance* …[51]

In his most systematic exposition of the problem of ideology titled 'The Spectre of Ideology', Žižek, while disengaging the concept of ideology from its 'representationalist' problematic, asserts that '*ideology has nothing to do with "illusion,"* with a mistaken, distorted representation of its social content'.[52] In this essay, Žižek, takes to task Jacques Derrida's novel notion of 'specter' in his *The Specters of Marx,* and goes beyond Althusser's ISA. He writes:

> The pre-ideological 'kernel' of ideology thus consists of the *spectral apparition that fills up the hole of the real*. That is what all the attempts to draw a clear line of separation between 'true' reality and illusion (or to ground illusion in reality) fail to take into account: if (what we experience as) 'reality' is to emerge, something has to be foreclosed from it – that is to say, 'reality,' like truth, is, by definition, never 'whole.' *What the spectre conceals is not reality but its 'primordially repressed,' the irrepresentable X on whose 'repression' reality is founded*.[53]

Žižek further writes: 'is not the supreme example of such "reality" however, provided by the Marxists concept of *class struggle*? The consequent thinking-out of this concept compels us to admit that there is no class struggle "in reality": "class struggle" designates the very antagonism that prevents the objective (social) reality from constituting itself as a self-enclosed whole.'[54]

Here Žižek accepts the concept of *social antagonism* in Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Moreover, his amplification of the concept of 'class struggle' is a big step forward in extending Jameson's conceptualization of it in *The Political Unconscious*. Let us continue with Žižek's further extension of the term. Amending or correcting the Marxist tradition in believing that class struggle is the 'totalizing' principle of society, Žižek argues that this means that it is an ultimate guarantee that society is a 'rational totality': '… the ultimate paradox of the notion of "class struggle" is that society is "held together" by the very antagonism, splitting, that forever prevents its closure in a harmonious, transparent, rational Whole – by the very impediment that undermines every rational totalization.'[55]

Žižek then resumes his thoughts on the problematic of ideology most relevant to our purpose. He writes: 'The interpretation of social antagonism (class struggle) as Real, not as (part of) objective social reality, also enables us to counter the worn-out line of argumentation according to which one has to abandon the notion of ideology, since the gesture of distinguishing "mere ideology" from "reality" implies the epistemologically untenable "God's view," that is, access to objective reality as it "truly is."'[56] We get to the crux of the matter when Žižek says that 'what matters is that the very constitution of social reality involves the "primordial repression" of an antagonism, so that the ultimate support of the critique of ideology – the extra-ideological point of reference that authorizes us to denounce the content of our immediate experience as "ideological" – is not "reality" but the "repressed" real of antagonism.'[57] At this point Žižek returns to his favourite case to illustrate his idea of the Real as *social antagonism*, which remains 'constant' in all situations. He founds it in Claude Lévi-Strauss's exemplary analysis of the spatial arrangement of buildings in an aboriginal South American village that Lévi-Strauss described in his *Structural Anthropology*.[58] Žižek has repeatedly cited this case in his various writings, and it is in the explication of this case that we may come to a possible working redefinition for an ideological critique of architecture. Let's examine the analysis offered by Lévi-Strauss as narrated by Žižek. The inhabitants in this village are divided into two subgroups; when an individual belonging to a subgroup is asked to draw the ground plan of his or her village on a piece of paper or on the sand, we see two different drawings showing the same spatial arrangement of cottages differently: 'A member of the first subgroup (let us call it "conservative-corporatist") perceives the ground-plan of the village circular – a ring of houses more or less symmetrically arranged around the central temple; whereas a member of second ("revolutionary-antagonistic") subgroup perceives his or her village as two distinct clusters of houses separated by an invisible frontier ….'[59] Žižek explains that Lévi-Strauss's central point is not that a 'cultural relativism', i.e., the perception of social space depends on the point of view of a person's membership in this or that group, but rather, the very splitting into the two 'relative' perceptions implies 'the hidden reference to a constant – not the objective, "actual" arrangement of buildings but a traumatic

kernel, a fundamental antagonism the inhabitants of the village were not able to symbolize, to account for, to "internalize" or come to terms with: an imbalance in social relations that prevented the community from stabilizing itself into a harmonious whole.'[60] The crucial conclusion to draw from this lesson is that 'the non-symbolizable traumatic kernel that found expression in the very distortion of reality, in the fantasized displacement of the "actual" arrangement of the houses'[61] *is the real of social antagonism.* Here Žižek refers to Jacques Lacan in support of his argument when he claims that '*distortion and/ or dissimulation is in itself revealing*: what emerges via distortion of the accurate representation of the reality is the real – that is, the traumatic around which social reality is structured'.[62]

If we couple the analysis above with the analysis Žižek presents in his discussion of Fredric Jameson's reading of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* in *The Political Unconscious,* we can drive a powerful and surprising theoretical framework within which the question of ideology can be grounded in a new critique of architecture.[63] Jameson in his text proposes an 'ideological-political' reading of Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of the unique facial decoration of the Caduveo Indians from Brazil. They use, as Žižek quotes Lévi-Strauss from his *Tristes Tropiques*, 'a design which is symmetrical but yet lies across an oblique axis … a complicated situation based on upon two contradictory forms of duality, and resulting is a compromise brought by a secondary opposition between the ideal axis of the object itself [the human face] and the ideal axis of the figure which it represents'.[64] The facial decorations are, Žižek further quotes Levi-Strauss, 'a fantasy production of a society seeking passionately to give symbolic expression to the institutions it might have had in reality, had not interest and superstition stood in the way'.[65] Jameson comments: 'Already on the purely formal level, then this visual text has been grasped as a contradiction by the way of the curiously provisional and asymmetrical resolution it proposes for that contradiction'.[66] Caduveo facial art, Jameson further writes, 'constitutes a symbolic act, whereby real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm'.[67] And the crucial conclusion Jameson draws is that 'the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solution" to irresolvable social contradiction'.[68] Žižek in taking to task Jameson's interpretation goes one step further and remarks that 'it is not that, simply and directly, Caduveo facial decorations formulate *an imaginary resolution of real contradiction*; [my emphasis] it is rather that they supplement the lack of a properly functioning "appearance" which could be inscribed into their very social institutional organization. In other words, we are not dealing with a longing for a real equality, but with the longing for a *proper appearance.'*[69] And Žižek's conclusion is most instructive for our purpose in formulating the problematic of the ideology critique for architecture: 'This is why Jameson is fully justified in talking about the "political unconscious": there is a coded message in formal architectural play,

and the message delivered by a building often functions as the "return of the repressed" of the official ideology'.[70]

We can, therefore, proceed from the analysis above – Jameson/Žižek's reading of Lévi-Strauss – and deduce a general statement: Every architectural design, project or projection, is the *Imaginary Resolution of a Real Contradiction.* It is through the *social antagonism,* that is, 'class struggle', i.e., the Real as the traumatic kernel in the heart of the social that cannot be symbolized, and from which the *imaginary resolution* is derived. This imaginary resolution comes with its *aesthetics as an ideological act,* and therefore requires ideology critiques to be demystified. All critics who are too easily tempted to subscribe to the prevailing neo-liberal ideology of the 'post-ideological' era must learn this lesson. They must face, in short, their ethical responsibility: that the ideology critique of architecture is not a luxury but, rather, a necessity in linking architecture to the discourse of social *exchange.*

## With Žižek Against Cynicism as Ideology

Still, the last word about the main contour of the ideological critique specific to our time has to be spelt out. For this purpose we go to Žižek's further re-examination of Marxian theory in his 'How did Marx Invent the Symptom?'[71] After the past defeats of revolutionary causes, and after the failed event of 1968, and in the aftermath of the collapse of communism in 1990 and the triumphant victory of global capitalism, we have come to realize that we live in a postmodern society, and that its dominant ideology is cynicism. Peter Sloterdijk in his *Critiques of Cynical Reason* argued that the classic critical-ideological procedure to explain this form of ideology is no longer valid.[72] 'The discontent in our culture has assumed a new quality: It appears as a universal, diffuse cynicism. It does not know what bottom to push in this cynically keen consciousness to get enlightenment going.'[73] Arguing that the cynical subject is well aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but still insisting upon the mask, Sloterdijk put forward the formula of ideology as: 'They know very well what they are doing, but still they are doing it.'[74] Žižek contrasts this with the famous statement by Marx in *Das Kapital*: 'They do not know it, but they are doing it.' This concept of ideology as Žižek explains 'implies a kind of basic, constitutive *naïveté*: the misrecognition of its own presuppositions, of its own effective conditions, a distance, a divergence between the so-called social reality and our distorted representation, our false consciousness of it.'[75] The cynical position must be distinguished from what Sloterdijk calls *Kynicism*. Kynicism, as Žižek explains it, represents the popular rejection of the official culture by irony and sarcasm. And, therefore, kynicism is the answer to and subversion of the cynicism of the ruling culture: '[Cynicism] recognizes, it takes into account, the particular interest behind the ideological universality, the distance between the ideological mask and the reality, but it still finds reason to retain

the mask.'[76]At this point, however, Žižek goes beyond Sloterdijk's praise of kynicism. By going back to Marx's theory of ideology he advances his own psychoanalytical terms of *fantasy* and *symptom* with a novel argument. He writes: 'It is here, at this point, that the distinction between *symptom* and *fantasy* must be introduced in order to show how the idea that we live in a post-ideological society proceeds a little too quickly: cynical reason with all its ironic detachment, leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself.'[77] Žižek, in referring to the Marxian formula of ideology cited above, asks a simple question: 'Where is the place of ideological illusion, in the "*knowing*" or in the "*doing*" in the reality itself?'[78] After re-examining Marxian 'commodity fetishism' and 'money', Žižek contests the idea that behind things we must detect the social relations, the relations between human subjects. What is missing with this approach, Žižek argues, is that 'it leaves out an illusion, an error, a distortion which is already at work in the social reality itself, at the level of what the individuals are *doing*, and not only what they *think* or *know* they are doing'.[79] Here Žižek is going beyond Kantian Enlightenment and its slogan *Sapere aude!* [Dare to know!], 'Have courage to use your own reason!'[80]

So the conclusion to draw from the Marxian formula 'they do not know it, but they are doing it', is that the illusion is not on the side of knowledge, it is already on the side of reality. Žižek informs us: 'What they overlook, what they misrecognize, is not the reality but the illusion which is structuring their reality, their real social activity. They know very well how things really are, but still they are doing it as if they did not know. The illusion is therefore double: it consists in overlooking the illusion which is structuring our real, effective relationship to reality. And this overlooked, unconscious illusion is what may be called the *ideological fantasy*.'[81] To contest more emphatically the idea that we live in a post-ideological society, Žižek writes: 'The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself. And at this level, we are of course far from being a post-ideological society. Cynical distance is just one way – one of many ways – to blind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironic distance, *we are still doing them*.'[82] Based on this argument, Žižek then accounts for Sloterdijk's definition of ideology, 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it'. In this formula, Žižek argues, if the illusion is on the side of knowledge we of course would be in the post-ideological position. But if the place of illusion is on the side of doing itself, then Žižek proposes that we read the formula in a different way: 'They know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it.'[83]

From another view, cynicism 'represents a departure from the traditional enlightenment idea concerning the power of knowledge'.[84] In this sense the cynical subject is the post-enlightened subject. The cynic resists the hold of power and rejects the 'Symbolic Authority'. 'Cynicism stems from the belief

that one sees through the functioning of power, that one knows fully how the system works. The cynic sees her/himself as a completely enlightened subject – because she/he thinks that she/he has "seen it all" – which is why Sloterdijk claims that "cynicism *is enlightened false consciousness*".'[85] The cynic puts faith in the image and not in the symbolic authority. This subject is the function of the contemporary 'society of commanded enjoyment', that comes after the decline of the 'society of prohibition', as Todd McGowan has argued. Cynicism is the symptom of the society of enjoyment. This society is also the society of saturated image and the decline of Symbolic Law.

Let us reiterate Žižek's argument one more time, in his own words, before we conclude this chapter.

> This is probably the fundamental dimension of 'ideology': ideology is not simply a 'false consciousness,' an illusory representation of reality; it is, rather, this reality itself which is already to be conceived as 'ideological' – *'ideological' is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence* – that is, the social affectivity, the very reproduction of which implies that individuals 'do not know what they are doing.' 'ideological' is not the 'false consciousness' of a (social) being but this being itself in so far as it is supported by 'false consciousness'.[86]

## Conclusion

So what is at the core of the theory of ideology critique in Žižek that we must learn and retain? After all that has been said above, it comes down to an invitation to traverse our *ideological fantasies* and to confront the Real that structures our desire. And how do we confront psychosis as *the* pathological symptom of the political-cultural subjectivity in our time? Furthermore, what prevents the radical critique of architecture from falling into the same psychosis? Žižek, in his early writing, provided a concept that helps to answer this question, an answer which he has recently transformed into a more powerful concept. In *Looking Awry*, apropos of the transition 'From Reality to the Real', he introduced the notion of the 'anamorphotic' gaze after Jacques Lacan. He wrote: 'Lacan was well justified in modeling his notion of surplus enjoyment (*plus-de-jouir*) on the Marxian notion of surplus value: surplus enjoyment has the same paradoxical power to convert things (pleasure object) into their opposite, to render disgusting what is usually considered a most pleasant "normal" sexual experience, to render inexplicably attractive what is usually considered a loathsome act …'[87] He added that 'Such a reversal engenders, of course, a nostalgic yearning for the natural state in which things were only what they were, in which we perceive them straightforwardly, in which our gaze had not yet been distorted by the anamorphotic spot'.[88] He concluded: 'Far from announcing a kind of "pathological fissure," however, the frontier separating the two "substances," separating the things that appear clearly in an objective view from the "substance of enjoyment" that can be perceived clearly only by "looking awry," is *precisely what prevents*

*us from sliding into psychosis*. Such is the effect of the symbolic order on the gaze.'[89] However, in 2006 when Žižek published his magnum opus, *The Parallax View*, the term 'anamorphosis' was replaced by the complex term 'Parallax', adopted from Kojin Karatani, who, in turn, adopted it from Kant.[90] Žižek's contribution to this volume, 'The Architectural Parallax', is the most systematic text to date, which illuminates his thesis for an ideology critique of architecture by adopting and extending Fredric Jameson's ground-breaking idea of the 'political unconscious'. We must take it from there for further investigation into the theory of ideology in architecture.

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## Notes

1 Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981).

2 A cautionary note must be inserted here about the term society 'mediatized'. Many appellations used nowadays to characterize our contemporary society, including 'administered world' (Adorno), 'post-industrial society', 'post-Fordist society', 'information society', 'society of surveillance' (Foucault), 'society of control' (Deleuze), 'Society of Spectacle' (Debord), etc. are reductionist terms if not grounded in the Critique of the Political Economy of the capitalist system in the original Marxian sense. So I use the term 'mediatized society' with the proviso that it has to be grounded in discourse of capitalism.

3 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility', second version, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, vol. 3, 1935-1938* (Cambridge, 2002): p. 118.

4 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 118.

5 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 118.

6 See Eric Santner, *My Own Private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's Secret History of Modernity*, (Princeton, 1996).

7 Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* (New York, 2000).

8 As the background to Benjamin's remarks we should recognize his fascination with Daniel Paul Schreber's text. In his short essay on 'Books by the Mentally Ill', first published in 1928, Benjamin narrates that in 1918, in a small antiquarian bookshop in Berne, he came across Schreber's book and remarks: 'Had I already heard of this book? Or did I read about it a few weeks ago later in the essay on it by Freud in vol. 3 of his *Kleine Schriften zur Neurosenlehre* [*Short Writings on the Theory of Neurosis*], published in Leipzig in 1913? No matter. I was at once spellbound by it.' See Benjamin, 'Books by the Mentally Ill', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, vol. 2, 1927-1934* (Cambridge, 1999). Also, see Sara Ley Roff, 'Benjamin and Psychoanalysis', in David S. Ferris (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge, UK, 2004).

9 Sigmund Freud, *The Schreber Case (Psychoanalytic Remarks on an Autobiographically Described Case of Paranoia)*, (London, 2000).

10 For an analysis of this concept see Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London and New York, 1999), especially chapter 6 'Wither Oedipus?'

11 See Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

12 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 117.

13 The crucial theoretical distinction between these two terms comes from Lacanian psychoanalytical theory. See below.

14 Žižek discusses the notions of 'cyberspace' and 'virtuality' in different places, see for example his *On Belief* (London and New York, 2001); also see Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*.

15 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III, The Psychoses, 1955-1956*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. Russell Grigg (New York and London, 1993).

16   See Sarah Kay, *Žižek: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, 2003): p. 68.

17   See Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London and New York, 1998).

18   Slavoj Žižek, 'Introduction: The Spectre of Ideology', in *Mapping Ideology* (London and New York, 1994): p. 6. As Fabio Vighi reminds us, Žižek's ideology critique relies on Lacan's motto '*les non-dupes errant*': 'those who think that they are not being fooled are in the wrong, for ideology is particularly effective over those who count on a degree of imaginary dis-identification from the ideological predicament – this being specially true of the cynical post-modern subject who believes precisely through disbelief.' See Fabio Vighi, *On Žižek's Dialectics: Surplus, Subtraction, Sublimation* (London, 2010): p. 4. I discuss more the cynical postmodern subject again below.

19   After his landmark *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York, 1989), the most systematic exposition of his theory of ideology can be found in his 'The Spectre of Ideology', pp. 1-33.

20   See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology.*

21   See Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)', reprinted in Slavoj Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*. See also Žižek, 'How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?', in Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology.*

22   For differences between Foucault and Žižek, see Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner, *Žižek: Beyond Foucault* (New York, 2007).

23   See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards A Radical Democratic Politics* (London and New York, 1985).

24   Jameson's essay was subsequently published in Joan Ockman, et al. (eds), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (New York, 1985) and was republished in Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory, Essays 1971-1986: vol. 2, Syntax of History* (Minneapolis, 1988).

25   For the English translation of Tafuri's article see K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA, 1998). See Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA, 1976). For Jameson see his 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', in *The Ideologies of Theory.*

26   Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 60.

27   Antonio Gramsci, *Selection from Cultural Writings* (Cambridge, MA, 1985).

28   Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, p. 128.

29   Gramsci, *Cultural Writings*, p. 128.

30   See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York, 1971). See also Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, trans. David Fernbach (London, 1980).

31   Terry Eagleton, 'Ideology and its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism', in Žižek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, pp. 179-226.

32   For a concise discussion of Gramsci in the work of Laclau and Mouffe see

Michelle Barrett, 'Ideology, Politics, Hegemony: From Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe', in Žižek (ed.), *Mapping Ideology*, 235-264.

33   For this argument see Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London and New York, 2010), especially chapter 3.

34   See Gail Day, 'Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz, Manfredo Tafuri and Italian Workerism', in *Radical Philosophy* 133 (September/October 2005). In this article, defending the political movement that provides the background to Tafuri's analysis, Day hurriedly judges as 'misguided' Jameson's notion of 'Gramscian architecture' in his final critiques of Tafuri discussed above. Day writes: 'Waving the *Prison Notebooks* at Tafuri, as Jameson does, may seems politically honorable, but it deracinates the strategic argument of Gramsci's politics', p. 35. This judgment against Jameson is a bit too quick. Buci-Glucksmann writes that it was the criticism of Gramsci's 'historicism' by Mario Tronti which was developed in 1964-1967 that the Italian Left movement took issue with the 'limitation of Gramsci Marxism'. See her *Gramsci and the State.* This so-called 'limitation' must have formed the background for Tafuri's reliance on Tronti and his other colleagues for his theory of ideology. But what about transformation of the theory of ideology into the theory of *hegemony* by Gramsci, which did not enter Tafuri's discourse but was taken and transformed by Althusser, who was also critical of Gramsci's 'Hegelian Marxism'? As Buci-Glucksmann writes: 'It is as if Gramesci's work found its way into Althusser's at the cost of a certain re-elaboration and distortion, with implications of the kind that we have already analysed. This is why Gramsci's astonishing achievements are inseparable from his weakness, precisely in the field of philosophy, of his interpretation of Marxism. For "Marxism is not historicism".' In *Gramsci and the State*, pp. 340-341. Notwithstanding Jameson's own limitation in raising the question of Gramsci as the final word against Tafuri, the raising of the Italian Left discourse as the legitimation for Tafuri's analysis must not be used to gloss over certain problems in Tafuri's approach to the theory of ideology.

35   See Alain Badiou, *The Century* (Cambridge, 2007).

36   See Slavoj Žižek, *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London and New York, 2004): pp.122-123.

37   Žižek, *Iraq, The Borrowed Kettle*, p. 123.

38   Žižek, *Iraq, The Borrowed Kettle*, pp. 123-124.

39   Alberto Asor Rosa, 'Manfredo Tafuri, or, Humanism Revisited', in *Log* 9 (Winter/Spring 2007): p. 32.

40   Quoted in Asor Rosa, 'Manfredo Tafuri, or, Humanism Revisited', p. 33.

41   Asor Rosa, 'Manfredo Tafuri, or, Humanism Revisited', p. 33.

42   Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. ix.

43   See Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Automist Marxism* (London, 2002). Also see Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism* (New York, 2008).

44   Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. x.

45   Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York, 1976), n.p.

46   Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, MA, 1987): p. 16.

47   See Day's 'Strategies in the Metropolitan Merz'.

48   Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, p. 2.

49   See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York and London, 2006).

50   See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, 1983).

51   Fabio Vighi and Heiko Feldner, *Žižek: Beyond Foucault*, pp. 48-49.

52   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 7.

53   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p 21.

54   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 21.

55   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, pp. 21-22.

56   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 25.

57   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 25.

58   Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Do Dual Organizations Exist?', in *Structural Anthropology*, chapter 8 (New York, 1963).

59   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, pp. 25-26.

60   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 26.

61   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 26.

62   Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 26.

63   See Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax' in this volume.

64   Quoted in Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax'.

65   Quoted in Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax'.

66   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 63, quoted by Žižek in 'The Architectural Parallax'.

67   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 64.

68   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 64.

69   Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax'.

70   Žižek, 'The Architectural Parallax'.

71   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology.*

72   Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis, 1987).

73   Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, p. 3.

74   Quoted in Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 29.

75   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology,* p. 28.

76   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 29.

77   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology,* p. 30.

78   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology,* p. 30.

79   Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 31.

80  See Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?', in Lewis White Beck (ed.), *Kant On History* (Indianapolis, 1963).

81  Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 32-33.

82  Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 33.

83  Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 33.

84  See Todd McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction? Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment* (Albany NY, 2004): p. 122.

85  McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction*? p. 126.

86  Žižek, *Mapping Ideology*, p. 305.

87  Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA, 1991): pp. 12-13.

88  Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 13.

89  Žižek, *Looking Awry*, p. 13.

90  See Karatani, *Transcritique on Kant and Marx* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

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# A Photography Not 'Quite Right': Fredric Jameson's Discussion of Architectural Photography in 'Spatial Equivalents in the World System'

*Robin Wilson*

Fredric Jameson's essay 'Spatial Equivalents in the World System' includes some of his most powerful passages of architectural criticism in response to a specific architectural object.[1] Jameson identifies in Frank Gehry's own house in Santa Monica a moment of utopian production within the emergent spatial configurations of a genuinely post-modern architecture. The essay is a key work in Jameson's wider project to redefine the role of utopian expression or 'impulse' in the transition phase from the modern to the post-modern period and to hone theoretical techniques required to decipher evolving modes of utopian expression in the era of late capital. We see in 'Spatial Equivalents' how Jameson's concerns for the role of the utopian impulse in cultural production and the political unconscious as an interpretative method are effectively inseparable terms within his critical project. Jameson's articulation of the spatial innovations of Gehry's house firmly defines the project of architectural criticism as one that can and must respond to the economic and political context in which architecture is produced. But it is because of Jameson's stubborn insistence that we return to and persist with the utopian project of collective innovation and transformation in architectural production that the essay achieves its singular importance. The work of critical decipherment through techniques of the political unconscious can, as we witness in 'Spatial Equivalents', be complex and protracted. Neither can we expect it to yield precise results – 'symbolic meaning is as volatile as the arbitrariness of the sign', as Jameson wrote elsewhere.[2] We need not seek to qualify Jameson's reading of the Gehry house as definitive. Besides, the house itself, with its ongoing transformations, continues to resist the authority of any singular reading or interpretative moment. Perhaps most importantly, Jameson's mapping of the spatial and material experiments of the Gehry house at that volatile moment of transition continues to provide a benchmark for a level of radical ambition in architectural practice and criticism alike.

Within 'Spatial Equivalents' Jameson also addresses the representation of architecture through, what he terms, the 'peculiar phenomena' of the architectural photograph.[3] Jameson raises the issue of architectural photography as one that is central to our perception and understanding of architecture, in its cultivation of an 'appetite' for architecture, albeit as commodity.[4] Moreover, Jameson constructs a reading of the Gehry house in which a discussion about architectural photography itself becomes integral to the understanding of how the house is a critical work of architectural production and one that for Jameson articulates a utopian potential. Architectural photography is established in this essay as an unavoidably politicized context for architectural practice.

Jameson's relatively brief comments on architectural photography reveal a level of complexity to its role in mediating the perception of architecture rarely touched upon in more specialized histories and critiques of the canon. Here I will attempt to articulate Jameson's position on architectural photography, and also make the case that from this position a different interpretative approach to architectural photography might emerge. The implication will be that Jameson's comments on architectural photography are incomplete. However, I entertain this possibility in light of the fact that Jameson addresses architectural photography not as subject matter in its own right, but principally as a concern that emerges within his interpretation of the Gehry house itself.

Jameson does not qualify in great detail what he understands by architectural photography, defining it as that mode of imagery we confront and consume in architectural journals and histories and through the promotion of the iconic architecture of cities in the broader media. He invokes a commonly recognized norm of professional, architectural documentation, a generic architectural image, the products of professional photographers and picture agencies that dominate the global, architectural press then as now.

The architectural photograph is also portrayed in an exclusively negative light in Jameson's essay. The photograph of the 'already existing building' constitutes for Jameson '"bad" reification – the illicit substitution of one order of things for another, the transformation of the building into the image of itself, and a spurious image at that.'[5] Significantly, Jameson opposes the bad reification of the photographic image with the 'good' reification of the architectural project as a work on paper, especially works which explicitly deal with architecture at the level of the imagined, as 'the drawing of the building that will never see the light of day'. To this Jameson ascribes the potential of making 'infinite utopian freedom possible'.[6]

Jameson's remarks on the reification of the image of architecture broadly echo that of specialist commentators. From the late 1970s in the British architectural press articles such as Tom Picton's 'The Craven Image' were registering an increasing distrust at the 'unreality' and 'sterile perfection' of the architectural photograph as a mode of imagery systemically complicit with an aggressive corporate colonization of urban space and 'commodity

fetishization'.[7] Jameson invokes the yet more intractable terms of Guy Debord's 'spectacle', the 'final form of commodity reification', in relation to which we are no longer able to perceive a 'reality' beyond the reified image. Jameson associates such levels of abstraction in our response to the production values of the architectural magazine or book's glossy colour image where, as he writes, 'a new set of libidinal forces comes into play so that it is no longer even the building that is now consumed, having itself become a mere pretext for the intensities of the colour stock and the gloss of the stiff paper'.[8] This would suggest that the material dimension to the media image of architecture nullifies specific architectural content within the photograph, and that our consumption of the image is as a vehicle to endlessly repeat and rehearse the displacement of architectural specificity into the stereotypical.

Although this provides a thorough exposition of the effects of a perhaps dominant mode of imagery within the canon and a perhaps dominant mode of consumption of its products, I also wish to consider the possibility of different modulations or inflections in the construction of, and attention to, the architectural photograph. The article by Picton points to a curious ambiguity in the mainstream architectural media, that such critiques of the practice of architectural photography are intermittently published and yet their warnings or complaints have little or no effect on its practice. Such articles do not serve to reform the practice of architectural photography, they would merely seem to register the episodic surfacing of editorial guilt. They might even be said to bury the issue, allow its suppression from the machineries of editorial production perhaps more completely than before. Nevertheless, I am intrigued by the way the architectural press is, as it were, tempted to incorporate the presence of the other, to intermittently publish the critical discourse that exposes its own mechanisms of complicity. My approach is then to search for and evaluate other moments of ambiguity in the content and format of the architectural media as indications of a suppressed discourse, as potential signs of a 'political unconscious'.

Jameson proposes that the reification of architecture through photography also impacts on architectural production, suggesting that much postmodern architecture anticipates its destination in the photographic image;'many are the postmodern buildings that seem to have been designed for photography'.[9] Jameson associates the growing power and presence of the architectural image with a concomitant displacement of investment away from architectural space itself, a cheapening of materiality and material performance in post-modern architecture, which then stands differentiated from the more 'solid' and 'tactile' spaces of late modern buildings, exemplified in the work of Louis Kahn. Value, Jameson suggests, is transferred to the quality of image production: 'it is the value of the photographic equipment you consume now, and not of its objects.'[10]

The materiality of the first phases of Gehry's work on the Santa Monica house offers its own response to such a tendency. Gehry's original palette of ply board, corrugated metal, chain link fencing and the stripped-back

frame and skin of the old 1920s house are 'cheapscape', but expressed with all the tactile 'honesty' of more conventionally valuable materials. But it is not with specific recourse to issues of architectural materiality that Jameson constructs his critique of the Gehry house, nor indeed the representation of material detail in photography. There is an imperative in Jameson's writing on architecture to return the discussion of architecture firmly to issues of spatiality and the prospects for the evolution of architectures as spatial systems, social and political. Correspondingly, it is within his account of the 'revolutionary spatiality' of the Gehry residence that Jameson argues that aspects of the building are resistant to the 'spurious' reification of the architectural photograph.[11]

Jameson's analysis of the Gehry residence incorporates an account of the building by critic Gavin Macrae-Gibson. This reading of Macrae-Gibson's essay also enables Jameson to address issues of historical periodization in architectural criticism's relationship to the emergence of post-modernism. Whilst validating Macrae-Gibson's essay as a strong example of 'phenomenological and formal description',[12] Jameson sees a need to modify his conclusions, arguing that they reflect older modernist themes that are effectively outmoded in the context of Gehry's work. Jameson cites Macrae-Gibson's descriptions of fractured perspectives, 'distortion' and 'illusion' in the shaping of the new ground-floor sections of the house, primarily comprising the spaces of the kitchen, situated in the space between outer frame of the old house and the new outer skin or 'wrapper'.[13]

Macrae-Gibson ascribes to the Gehry residence effects of 'perceptual shock' through its play of perspective 'illusion' and 'contradiction', and proposes that this complexity serves to prevent the formation of, what he terms, 'an intellectual picture'.[14] Jameson explains that this 'intellectual picture', as the 'negative' value that 'perceptual shock' works to subvert, stands for something of the nature of a bourgeois norm, that is, a stereotypical or habituated understanding of domestic space. Jameson makes the point, however, that the ambition for 'perceptual shock' within cultural production is a modernist one and that 'the Utopia of a renewal of perception has no place to go' within the era of post-modern simulacra.[15] But Jameson also perceives in Macrae-Gibson's text a possible shift in the application of a modernist interpretation, a latent awareness in the text of other criteria at play within post-modern problematics of perception and representation, and an evolved position.

Jameson notes that Macrae-Gibson structures the positive term 'perceptual shock' as a temporal value of the immediate, the actuality of 'concrete perception' in the present, whilst the negative term, the 'intellectual picture', is designated as a past tense 'memory of a thing'.[16] This association with time and memory leads Jameson to suggest that the phrase 'intellectual picture' should rather be understood to relate to the architectural photograph itself, which, as a media product, becomes yet one more vehicle for the colonization and degrading of memory, as a 'repository of simulacra'. Jameson then goes on to clarify that

this photographic 'remembered image of the thing', 'inserts the reified and the stereotypical between the subject and reality or the past itself'.[17]

We habitually view imagery in the architectural media through the passive substitution of the stereotypical image for architecture's reality, 'coming at length to believe', as Jameson writes, 'that these are somehow the things themselves'.[18] However, Jameson also elaborates upon this structure of abstraction to suggest that the architectural media 'inserts' its photographic commodity into an already mediated relationship between architectural 'reality' and the subject. For, as Jameson reminds us, 'perception is already a perception by the physical and organic machine [the human organism] but we have continued to think of it, over a long tradition, as a matter of consciousness'.[19] This implies, as Jameson continues, 'that it is already an illusion to imagine ourselves before a building in the process of grasping its perspective unities in the form of some glorious image-thing'.[20]

Potentially, as Jameson comments, photography and the various other 'machineries of recording and projection' have the capacity to 'disclose or deconceal' this 'long tradition' of mistaking bodily perception for the actuality of the real.[21] The materiality of the photographic image, evidence of the signs of material production, might prompt critical reflection not simply on the question of how photography itself mediates vision, but also the assumption that bodily perception itself is an unmediated, unaffected original. As far as Jameson is concerned there seems little or no prospect that such occasions of 'disclosure' would occur as a result of architectural photography, especially of the full-colour variety. The formal, generic norms of pictorial composition work precisely to perpetuate the passive assumption of the photograph's referential truth and the supposed completeness of its analogon.

Jameson concludes his thoughts on the subject of photography in relation to Macrae-Gibson's 'intellectual picture',

> […] we may accept Macrae-Gibson's formulation that the peculiar structure of the Gehry house aims at 'preventing the formation of an intellectual picture that might destroy the continual immediacy of perceptual shock.' It does this by blocking the choice of photographic point of view, evading the image imperialism of photography, securing a situation in which no photograph of this house will ever be quite right, for it is the photograph alone which offers the possibility of an 'intellectual picture' in this sense.[22]

With these remarks, the focus of Jameson's essay shifts and he moves on to conclude his interpretation of the spatial configuration of the house based on methods of allegorical mapping or 'transcoding'. This produces a valuable political reading of the current 'system' of American reality. However, this concluding section does not evolve an argument in terms of the implications for the relationship between photography and architecture. We are left, it would seem, with quite meagre consequences for photographic simulacra and 'imperialism': that no photograph of the house 'will ever be quite right'. Rather than being fundamentally impeded, the canon of architectural photography is merely put out of sorts by the building; the photographer

will perhaps not attain the usual 'standards'. It remains to be defined how significant that effect of not being 'quite right' actually is.

Jameson presents the switch to the work of allegorical mapping as a 'different tack' in his argument, the search for 'other possible meanings' of Macrae-Gibson's expression 'intellectual picture'.[23] The discussion of photography ceases and seemingly has no where to go. Jameson's interpretation then goes on to address what no photograph can possibly represent – the totality of the interplay of the different spaces of the house. The discussion of photography has no purchase then on the fundamental work of spatial interpretation itself. We should thus understand that for Jameson the house's challenge to generic architectural photography is of the nature of a secondary critical function to the primary function of allegory. In this concluding phase of the essay, Jameson argues that architectural production can be understood in terms of an act of philosophizing through the production of space, and that through this way of 'trying to solve philosophical or cognitive problems' the Gehry house produces allegorical form of a specifically post-modern type.[24] This, as Jameson qualifies, is not in the manner of a 'positive' allegory, by which 'each of the elements stands for another element in the other system'.[25] Rather, what is allegorically mapped, Jameson claims, are the 'incommensurabilities' of reality, the complexities and contradictions of the networks of America and the 'world system'. Jameson writes, 'The gaps in the world system, its incommensurabilities, are somehow what authorizes the emergence of incommensurable, unmappable, unrepresentable forms in the aesthetic realm'.[26] What Jameson thus qualifies as a photography not 'quite right' in relation to the Gehry house constitutes a fundamental incompatibility between one order of representation that seeks to construct a stable unity (the photographic, media product) and the other which inherently expresses the very impossibility of resolved or unified form (Gehry's house).

### A Sub-standard Photography

A recently published book on the houses of Gehry Partners incorporates an extensive photographic record of the Santa Monica house.[27] This includes images of the original and more recent phases of the house's development by named photographers alongside unaccredited images, probably provided by the Gehry partnership itself. Jameson's notion of a photography 'not quite right' is, indeed, borne out by the documentation, especially of the original phases of the house's development described by Jameson and Macrae-Gibson. In its spatial complexity and disjunction the house clearly disrupts the technical standards and compositional formulae characteristic of the generic image. In the first instance, the complex geometry of the apertures of the building (the skylights of the new phases of the house and the cuts through the skin and structure of the old house) perturbs that essential technical norm of the architectural photograph: corrected verticals and perspectives

(the precise alignment of the frame of the image with the vertical elements of the building). The photographic field is fractured: the house seems to enforce a greater fragmentation of the photographic document than usual; only small pockets of the house can be rendered 'legible' in any one view. It is characteristic of images of the house that the foreground space of the image may ostensibly be rendered understandable, even banally so (the 'intellectual picture' recuperated as a fragment of the foreground), but glimpses through apertures beyond reveal puzzling, seemingly random form, structural events that seem to have no correlation to the immediate space and that simply cannot be 'resolved' or 'understood' through the photographic image. The view of the immediate, 'stable' ground gives onto and frames ruptures in expected architectural logic. This lack of structural, perspectival unity is reinforced by the complex way in which light enters the ground-floor spaces through the front corner skylight and the 'tumbling cube' of the main kitchen. For there seems little or no opportunity to use of directional lighting and tonal contrast to enhance the photography's 'spatial' legibility, and almost all images of the ground-floor areas of the house are compromised by some degree of solar glare (a fading out of some portion of the image). Gehry's open-ended process of development is also an affront to the norms of the generic image, for no view can evade the signs of an architecture in process and the seemingly provisional status of its material finish.

What, of course, this latest monograph on Gehry's houses also testifies to is that, despite these disruptions to the achievement of the strictly orthodox, technical norms of architectural photography, the house does not resist its mediatization. Images of the Gehry house are still published, the object continues to be reified in glossy books. There is, undoubtedly, an 'appetite' for this technically 'sub-standard' imagery.

Perhaps Jameson's own reconfiguration of Macrae-Gibson's text requires some further clarification. For, whilst we can affirm the implications of a photography not 'quite right', the adopted phrase 'preventing the formation of an intellectual picture' seems an inadequate characterization of the house's effect upon photography. Clearly, the act of photography is not itself prevented, and commercial, photographic reification continues. The thing 'prevented', that which is not 'quite right', is the formation of a photographic image of optimum, libidinal seduction, in its full, glossy, colour-saturated 'splendour'; the image or set of images that would, through the technical accomplishment of the stereotypical image assert photography's, or more precisely, the media's mastery of the object (its 'imperialism'). Jameson chooses not to address the imagery that *is* produced in response to the house. The finality of the adopted verb from Macrae-Gibson's text, 'prevent', would seem to erase it as a concern. It would seem significant, however, that whilst a photographic 'documentation' in accordance with the technical norms of the stereotypical image has been thwarted, another, 'affected', 'sub-standard' document takes its place. What status does this affected photographic document then have? Do the 'failings' of the photographic document shift it

to a position that can now be in some way recuperated and further discussed in relation to the interpretative method that Jameson adopts or inform more generally the relationship between photography and architecture?

We might modify the adopted phrase from Macrae-Gibson and add that, whilst the 'formation of an intellectual picture' or generic image is prevented, the image is also transformed. Let us consider that, in a rather more complex sense than merely preventing or blocking the formation of the generic image, the house affects architectural photography to create a different photography, a photographic document in which the formal relationship to the object or 'referent' of the canonical norm has become consistently destabilized.

It seems notable, and a glimmer of a possible way forward, that Jameson's notion of a photography not 'quite right' would seem to align with the kind of existential qualities he associates with the house and other post-modern spaces of the period. For Jameson it can be a quality of 'malaise' that indicates 'the new postmodern space proper', of bodies imperfectly adjusted to the novelties of spatial innovation, not yet habituated and faintly suffering from a fracturing of norms.[28] Accounts of life in Gehry's opened and extended ground floor remind Jameson of the disorientations he observed in John Portman's Bonaventure Hotel lobby, of a 'loss of spatial orientation', existential dispersal and 'messiness'.[29] For Jameson, 'malaise' is potentially the symptom of an historical transformation in spatial production in relation to the specific, historical, modern to post-modern period shift that he addresses.

Technically, the imagery of the Gehry house is compromised, but not unusable. It thus enters into media circulation as the generic image but with defects, bearing the discrete signs of a photographic disorder. If we might thus qualify the effect on architectural photography as in some way equivalent to Jameson's term 'malaise', could the 'sub-standard' photography of the Gehry house also be usefully understood as a 'symptom'? Could this imply that abnormalities within the use of the generic image of architecture, that is, when generic formulae are in some way systematically compromised, be understood and utilized as the foundation of interpretative projects in themselves? This would consist then of identifying abnormality as a kind of starting point, a potential point of departure for an interpretive investigation to determine the cause.

## Mapping the 'Totality'

Jameson's discussion of the relationship between architecture and photography opens the possibility that architecture might explicitly or unintentionally resist, as part of its spatial discourse, the reification of the photographic image. My essay will in its concluding sections turn to suggesting how we might identify within the practice of architectural photography itself similar signs of resistance to the generic image, and a possible move toward the recuperation of photographic practice as a valuable tool of architectural critique.

In a first step to unlocking such a possibility I turn to examining certain kinships between Jameson's interpretative method and the work of the post-structuralist theoretician Louis Marin. In his semiological studies of painting and graphic art Marin reveals the pragmatic and ideological structure of visual representation, the hidden modalization of the image by institutions of power. Jameson addresses this aspect of Marin's work in a superb account of Marin's methodological approach to the decipherment of the utopian works.[30] Specifically, Jameson highlights the role of 'figuration' in Marin's approach, in its attentiveness to latent or unconscious discourse in the utopian work occurring as a result of ideological contradiction. Marin achieved some of his most effective demonstrations of the presence of figural discourse in relation to historical topographic and cartographic portraits of cities of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Marin understands city maps to have a utopic dimension in that they attempt to represent the 'plurality' or multiplicity of the city as a unity. What Marin terms the 'mutually inconsistent places' of the city are rendered visible under the single, totalising order of the map.[31] To reduce the diversity of the city to a map is to produce a discourse of the city, or more precisely, as Marin writes, 'The city map represents the production of discourse about the city'; it comprises, in other words, the reification of a pre-existing discourse about it.[32] But Marin also suggests that we can bring to the city map a strategy of deconstructive analysis that he employs in the interpretation of utopian fiction itself, that is, one which pays particular attention to the play of inconsistency in the figure's 'plurality'.[33] Marin's post-structural analysis of Thomas More's *Utopia* reveals that the narrated account of the utopian island contains a network of organizational inconsistencies, from the distribution of cities across the utopian isle to the arrangements of seating in its communal dining halls.[34] As Jameson explains, this comprises 'noncongruence' between 'image and text' in the utopian work.[35] This 'image' and 'text' distinction is not directly equivalent to a straightforward distinction between the 'pictorial' and the 'textual', for *Utopia* has no actual 'pictorial' elements – it is not illustrated, as such. Rather, the distinction between 'image and text' occurs within what Jameson qualifies as the 'verbal discourse' of the account of the fictional traveller Raphael,[36] who in 'Book II' of *Utopia* narrates an account, or 'tells a description', as Marin puts it, of the utopian figure. This 'duality' of image and text can be understood as the difference between what one would be able to produce from the account as a drawn 'map' of the figure and the narrated description in its entirety. For, the account contradicts itself in terms of the order of spaces it describes. 'Discontinuity' in the account of Utopia thus arises between, as Jameson explains, the apparent intention of the narrated account to set out a stable and harmonious geometric figure in description, as compared to the more ambivalent and incongruous figure that the narrated account actually produces when considered in its entirety. In Marin's work of utopics this kind of internal contradiction within the utopian work is understood to be a structural characteristic of the genre and, moreover, its

effects are demonstrated to be, not random, but determinate, serving to indicate a space in discourse 'in the form of a blank or gap, of what could not in the very nature of things yet be conceptualized'.[37] Jameson summed the lessons he draws from Marin in an essay written in 1994, 'As Louis Marin has taught us […], the utopian text really does hold out for us the vivid lesson of what we cannot imagine: only it does so not by imagining it concretely but rather by way of the holes in the text that are our own incapacity to see beyond the epoch and its ideological closures.'[38]

In Jameson's concluding passages on the Gehry house it is precisely the map or mapping that replaces photography as the alternative and more productive method for translating the critical operations of the house. Jameson writes, 'Yet other possible meanings of this curious expression "intellectual picture" suggest themselves if we now lift it completely out of its context: there are, for example, maps that are both pictorial and cognitive, but in a very different way from the visual abstractions of photography.'[39] Whilst photography can only ever deal in fragments, mapping can always be ascribed the greater claim to be a medium and technique that addresses the 'totality' of the object. More specifically, mapping offers a method for reading the different spaces of the house *simultaneously*. The totality of the map, as Marin reminds us, is illusory. The 'world system' is ultimately 'unmappable', as Jameson insists. With mapping we must then still grapple with the effects of representational failure and abstraction. However, in the context of the map Marin and Jameson share the conviction that the failed project of representation can also offer a way forward through the utopic method of observing and deciphering the 'gaps' (Marin) or 'incommensurabilities' (Jameson) in its discourse. Correspondingly, we might also note that Jameson establishes in his comments on mapping and photography quoted above a duality between the 'pictorial and the cognitive', echoing the duality of 'image and text' discussed in relation to Marin's utopic method. The application of this duality to built architecture and the Gehry house is possible in the context of Jameson's conception of architecture as 'an attempt to think a material thought', that is, 'a way of thinking and philosophizing' through the production of material form and space.[40]

In the concluding section to 'Spatial Equivalents' Jameson again quotes from Macrae-Gibson's interpretation of Gehry's 'tumbling cube' invoking in particular the connection Macrae-Gibson makes between the cube's complex geometry and the 'Utopian and mystical modernism' of Malevich.[41] Jameson then stages once more the updating of the utopian reading, redeploying its application in a manner that owes much to Marin's method. For Jameson the 'tumbling cube' presents an 'impossible mental puzzle or paradox', a geometrical form that contains 'a sense of space existing in two distinct dimensions at once'.[42] According to Jameson these two dimensions cannot be reconciled or fused into synthesis but are held in dramatic tension. In the earlier essay on Marin and utopics it is precisely the presence of the irreconcilable tension or opposition, dramatized disjunction in form, that Jameson describes as characteristic of the figural thinking of the utopian imagination. The utopic

work is an object of 'fruitful bewilderment', he writes, whose function is to 'jar the mind into some heightened but unconceptualizable consciousness of its own powers, functions, aims and structural limits'.[43] Through the work of allegorical transcoding this unconceptualizable, utopic disjunction of Gehry's 'tumbling cube' is thought through in terms of a symbolic correlation to the complexity of 'overlapping dimensions' of the wider reality (of America and its place in the 'world system'). Jameson refers here to, what he terms, the 'historical dissolution of place' in the era of late capital, through the emergence and extension of corporate space in juxtaposition to the older categories of spatial emplacement (the home, the town, nation state, etc.).[44] The 'tumbling cube' thus presents or allegorizes this unthinkably complex problematic at the level of the individual subject, having to plot or negotiate an existence within such abstract networks.

Of course, architectural photography, in its fragmented portrait of the building, can establish some kind of relationship to the 'tumbling cube', as a 'detail' of the house. But it is precisely in relation to the 'tumbling cube', particularly when photographed from the interior, that the house's disruption to the legibility of the generic, photographic image reaches a point of crisis. The 'tumbling cube's complexity indeed seems amplified in photography. Each photograph of it seems to offer a quite markedly different 'record' of its form.

Whilst Jameson's reading of the 'tumbling cube' as a space and geometry of disruption and incommensurability finds some kind of register within the 'affected' photographic document, the final phase of Jameson's allegorical transcoding equates to the blind spot of the photographic method of architectural histories and journals, a definitive movement beyond the limits of its frame. In the concluding phases of the essay Jameson stretches his allegorical map to grapple with some sense of the house's wider totality, of the interplay or 'intermediary spaces' of old and new phases, the 'tumbling cube' and the 'wrapper' of corrugated aluminium and chain link fencing. Through the development of this wider allegorical map a yet more virile set of existential paradoxes emerge, as Jameson now defines the 'tumbling cube' as an expression of the technological First World super-state of American reality, against which the 'cheapscape' wrapper intimates for Jameson 'the junk or Third World side of American life'.[45] The intermediary space of the kitchen and dining room then present the possibility – as yet indeterminate – emergent space of mediation between the two.

## Delegate Figures: A 'Project' in the Photographic 'Portrait'

I have sought to recount Jameson's allegorical mapping of the Gehry house in relation to the work of Marin not simply to trace a methodological precedent, of which of course there are many in Jameson's work, but to now draw

attention to another dimension to Marin's method which will assist in moving forward with the notion of symptom in relation to architectural photography.

I return then to the distinction Jameson makes between the 'good' reification of what he refers to as the 'architect's project' as drawing and the 'bad' reification of the architectural photograph. Whilst the former architectural fantasy on paper harbours, as Jameson writes, the possibility of 'infinite utopian freedom', the latter represents the 'final form of commodity'.[46] Clearly for my purposes the position of photography as the irrecoverable 'negative' of this opposition needs to be in some sense redressed. That a more positive engagement with architectural photography might be defined depends, therefore, on the re-evaluation of this mode of representation with regards to a notion of 'project'.

Marin associates the iconic city map with the city portrait, explaining that maps were historically categorized as portraits.[47] In the sixteenth century the two dimensional city plan coexisted with other forms of city portrait, such as the 'bird's eye view' (in which, although seen from above, the city was depicted in two-dimensions, either as a whole or selectively) and the more straightforwardly topographic view of the city panorama. Thus, in the city portraits at the dawn of our modernity a fragmented, partial view coexisted alongside the supposed image of the city's totality, the map itself. For Marin, these partial views provide a privileged object of study for unlocking the ideological and institutional discourse of the map in its wider, projected image of the city as 'unified'.

That such explicitly selective or fictive renderings of the city exist within cartographic works is in part explained, as Marin suggests, through the etymology of the word 'portrait' itself. Marin deconstructs the word in the following way: 'the "pro-trait" is what is put forward, pro-duced, extracted or abstracted from the individual portrayed. It is a model in the epistemological sense, but is also what is put in the place of, instead of, what is substituted for.'[48] Thus whilst the 'trait' of portrait denotes the line of the representation as 'trace' or 'remainder', the portrait nevertheless builds toward a drawing that is, as Marin suggests, a 'design', a 'project' and therefore a new thing.[49] In this way, he asserts, the portrait as a city map is 'at once the trace of a residual past and the structure of a future to be produced'.[50]

Marin suggests that the apparent precision of the map and city portrait, its accuracy or faithfulness to 'reality', rather than simply being a response to the imperative for a practical guide to the city as such, might operate more in terms of a 'rational requirement that functions like an enticement to read'.[51] Precision would thus be exercised in the service of authenticating the discourse expounded, as a concealment for the inscription of power.

Clearly, the architectural media invests heavily in the perpetuation of the understanding of its architectural photography in terms of referential precision, its putative ability to produce a precise 'trace' of the object in question. It strongly suppresses, on the other hand, the notion that the photo-documentary task might effect a transformation of the architectural

object or, indeed, that the photographer might in any sense interpret, 'design', manipulate or *project* a new architecture in creating its image. The compositional norms of generic architectural photography, the more-or-less obligatory professional 'standards' of image quality and pictorial composition actively enforce this 'suppression'. To admit any trace, or 'trait' other than the trace (line) of the architectural object itself would countenance another 'project', and a counter discourse. To this end signs of the passage of time and social processes are excluded (such as the construction process, human use or climactic exposure), as is the world beyond the margins of the building, its immediate context and surrounding urbanism. To represent architecture in accordance with the generic codes of professional architectural photography is to represent the completed object in isolation, such that the 'project' as a process of problem-solving through design and construction initiated in response to a particular brief and site, has disappeared to be replaced with its 'perfected', 'unified' solution.

The role of the photographer within the architectural media is that of a specialized technician, the operator of expensive photographic equipment. That the photographer is restricted to a technical role in the final stages of architecture's project, guided by generic norms of image production enables in turn the journalistic text that accompanies the photography – staff and editorial 'critique' – to be essentially complicit with the architect's discourse (that is, the architect's intentions for the project). With photographic imagery supplied according to a 'norm' that offers no surprises, the relationship between the editors of the journal, its contributing architects, their contractors and suppliers can be established on the basis of good will, a professional partnership for the object's dissemination. This describes the systemic circumstances of professional practice within the architectural media, the basis of trust on which most architects put forward their work for publication and through which media specialists demonstrate their professional and technical competency. It often comprises a situation, not of blatant disregard for critical standards, but of institutional assimilation of critical limitations inherent in the mechanisms of reportage as an uncontested norm, as 'the way to see'. This arrangement sees the photographer reduced to a discrete item of accreditation, a name in small print at the foot of the article or removed yet further to the journal's title page. This name serves to denote not the personal nature of the photographic document, but merely to certify that the object has been faithfully witnessed by a properly equipped initiate of the canon.

How, therefore, might a 'project' of architectural photography, the 'text' of the architectural image, materialize as a symptom of the mechanisms of its suppression? Marin reminds us that all representation functions through two modalities: the 'transitive' and 'intransitive'.[52] Representation both refers to itself (intransitive) as well as to something 'exterior' to itself (transitive). The intransitive, reflexive mode, or what Marin otherwise refers to as 'opacity in representation' comprises instances in which 'representation *presents itself* as representing something' (Marin's emphasis).[53] The most fundamental of the

mechanisms of the intransitive mode and reflexivity in painting addressed by Marin is the frame of the representation itself, the physical armature of a work's presentation, the device through which representation is closed off, made distinct from the external objects and context of its reception. Marin writes:

> The framing of a painting is … the semiotic condition of its visibility, but also of its readability. … The frame is not a passive agency of the icon: it is, in the pragmatic interaction between viewer and representation, one of the operators of the constitution of the painting as a visible object *whose entire purpose is to be seen.* (Marin's emphasis)[54]

The frame is defined here, not as a passive embellishment, but as the active agency of the image's function as a 'symbolic operation', of its meaning and 'readability' as a contemplative or theoretical act.[55] From the understanding of the frame as agency and 'operator' Marin also reveals how the work of intransitivity assumes other forms *within* the scene of representation. This includes a particular figurative presence in painting and graphic art that Marin refers to as 'delegate figures'.[56] A case in point is G. Braun and A. Hogenberg's map of Strasbourg 1572, in which two figures appear on a fictional hill overlooking the city, as if echoing within the image the position of the external viewer to the map. Marin writes of such delegate figures:

> In this point, which could easily go unnoticed, a discrete rupture in the 'blank transitivity' of the representation is manifested through them; a reflexive opacity intervenes to trouble the transparency, to break the quasi identification between referent and represented in the representative. More profoundly, they reveal to us that every representation presents itself representing something. They are the figures of that self-representation.[57]

The work of the Barcelona-based photographer Hisao Suzuki provides us with what would seem to be a remarkable contemporary example of Marin's devices of 'reflexive opacity'. Suzuki is responsible for all of the commissioned photography appearing in the Spanish architectural journal *El Croquis*, a publication with particularly high production values that produces monographs on contemporary architectural practices. His work is exemplary of the technical rigour of the canon and largely reproduces its dominant pictorial method. On first sight *El Croquis* is photographically illustrated in a way that is entirely consistent with other architectural publications. However, the exclusivity of Suzuki's commission enables us to discern certain significant differences that have emerged in his approach to architectural documentation. Closer inspection of Suzuki's imagery will reveal a discrete but consistent figurative presence. Most of Suzuki's photographic reports or portraits (the edited compilation of Suzuki's photography of a given building) will include photographs that incorporate the same two male figures in the fore- or mid-ground of the image. Their deployment in the imagery takes on various configurations: sometimes a single figure stands alone, but often they appear

together and frequently they are depicted conversing with others. Given the rarity of any representation of occupancy in architectural photography this playful presence should indeed incite our curiosity. As it turns out these 'actors' of the architectural scene are the two editors of *El Croquis*. Those they are seen to converse with are in many cases the architects of the building.

Suzuki himself claims that the presence of these figures is merely to help establish a sense of physical scale within the image. We perhaps need not contend the degree of Suzuki's conscious intentions here, for I believe this systematic and carefully deployed figurative presence is precisely what Marin describes as 'an effect of the frame' and a mark or symptom of underlying dynamics in the production of the image. Suzuki produces in his use of architects and editors as occupants of the building what we might qualify as a generic variant within the generic codes of architectural photography. He affects a playful divergence from the pictorial methods of the canon and its system of exclusions. This pictorial device also comprises a 'delegation', to recall Marin's term, representative of the editorial 'frame' of the journal. These scenes of co-occupancy and conversation present the co-operative or complicit relationship between architect and editor in the construction of the architectural portrait. The serial nature of this device, its incorporation into Suzuki's method as a norm, suggests that no matter how discrete, it nevertheless harbours a motivation to be seen and reflected upon. It betrays a will, presumably played out instinctively through the construction of the image rather than through conscious 'political' intent, to 'rupture' and 'trouble', as Marin puts it, the 'transparency' of the portrait, enabling a break in the 'identification between referent and represented'.[58]

Through this discrete generic variation on the norms of architectural photography Suzuki seems insistent upon the portrayal of architecture as the depiction of an encounter, a moment of professional liaison. We might thus suggest Suzuki's portrait of architecture contains a certain indication of time within the image. This inference to the temporal should not, of course, be confused with a meaningful representation of the passage of time and the processes of historical reality. Again, its meaning should grasped in terms of intransitivity and the reflexive mode, whereby the abstractions of the architectural portrait are not 'reformed' as such, but indicated, raised as a matter of consciousness. Here Jameson's comments on the processes of mediation and the photographic commodity prove invaluable. Jameson, we recall, developing from a distinction made in Macrae-Gibson's account of the Gehry residence between the 'memory of a thing' and the immediate 'perception of a thing', describes how the photographic image 'inserts the reified and the stereotypical between the subject and reality or the past itself'.[59] Through his figurative, pictorial device Suzuki portrays the building being witnessed by others, a sequence of scenes that also refer us, through the specific identity of those witnesses, to the formative conditions of the creation of the document itself: the substitution of 'the perception of a thing' for the institutional, generic image. In Suzuki's portraits a moment of 'perception'

and of communication is shown, but its depiction is also the construction of a sign of the building's 'reality' becoming simulacra, the media product that substitutes for 'the past itself'.

The question remains as to whether such 'symptoms' and devices of reflexive opacity in Suzuki's work and the discovery of others within the wider scene of architectural photography, both current and historical, can refer us beyond a mere indication of the problematics of the media portrait and take the analysis of architectural photography fully into the realms of a positive 'project' of the interpretation of architecture itself. Could such surreptitious, generic variations on the canon be considered to indicate, not simply the limits of photography to document architecture and the institutional control of the medium, but be, as they are for Marin in relation to the utopian text, the valuable symptoms of a deeper contradiction? The message that emerges from Jameson's evaluation of the generic image in 'Spatial Equivalents' is that architectural photography is systemically a distraction from the consideration of architectures as spatial systems. Photography fragments architecture into commodity, constitutively disrupting any possibility of grasping the message of the totality of the object.

It would seem then that there are broadly two possible responses or avenues of future experimentation to take: to move toward a reform of the use of architectural photography through a closer co-operative relationship with textual critique as mapping. Or, to attempt to turn the tables completely and to read such symptoms as Suzuki's delegate figures as the sign of a movement beyond photography's referential relationship to the 'real' architectural object altogether. The implication would then be to seek ways in which to selectively engage with individual architectural photographs, not as the documents of buildings in the world, but as the discrete photographic simulations of an architectural reality that, like the utopian architectural drawings and works on paper that Jameson invokes in 'Spatial Equivalents' as 'good' reification to photography's 'bad', 'will never see the light of day', but remain, precisely architectures of the page.

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1   Fredric Jameson, 'Spatial Equivalents in the World System', in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (London, 1991): pp. 97-129.

2   Fredric Jameson, 'Is Space Political?', in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anyplace* (Cambridge, MA, 1995): pp. 192-205, p.194.

3   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 110.

4   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 99.

5   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 124-125.

6   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 124.

7   Tom Picton, 'The Craven Image, or The Apotheosis of the Architectural Photograph', the *Architects' Journal* 25(7), (1979): pp. 175-190.

8   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 125.

9   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 99.

10   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 99.

11   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 107.

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13   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 110-115.

14   Gavin Macrae-Gibson, 'The Representation of Perception', in *The Secret Life of Buildings: An American Mythology for Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA, 1985): pp. 2-29, p.12.

15   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 122.

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25   Fredric Jameson, 'Allegories of Anywhere', in Cynthia C. Davidson (ed.), *Anywhere* (New York, 1992), pp. 174-177, p.177.

26   Jameson, 'Allegories', p. 177.

27   Mildred Friedman, *Frank Gehry: The Houses* (New York, 2009).

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29   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 116-117.

30   Fredric Jameson, 'Of Islands and Trenches: Neutralization and the Production of Utopian Discourse', in *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971-1986, Volume 2: Syntax of History* (London, 1988): pp. 75-101.

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33   Marin, *Utopics*, p. 201.

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35   Jameson, *Ideologies*, p. 95.

36   Jameson, *Ideologies*, p. 94.

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38   Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York, 1994): p. 75.

39   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 125.

40   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 129.

41   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 126.

42   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 127.

43   Jameson, *Ideologies*, pp. 87-88.

44   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 127.

45   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 128-129

46   Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 124-125.

47   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 204.

48   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 204.

49   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 205.

50   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 205.

51   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 204.

52   Marin, 'The City in Its Map', p. 204.

53   Louis Marin, 'Figures of Reception in Modern Representation in Painting', in Werner Hamacher and David E. Welbery (eds), *On Representation: Louis Marin*, trans. Catherine Porter, (Stanford, 2001): pp. 320-336, p. 321.

54   Marin, 'Figures of Reception', p. 323.

55   Marin, 'Figures of Reception', p. 324.

56   Marin, 'Figures of Reception', p. 330.

57   Louis Marin, 'Ruptures, Interruptions, Syncopes in Representation in Painting', in Werner Hamacher and David E. Welbery (eds), *On Representation: Louis Marin*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, 2001): pp. 373-387, p. 380.

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# The Architectural Parallax

*Slavoj Žižek*

I must begin by confessing my doubts about being really qualified to speak on architecture. My knowledge of architecture is constrained to a coupler of idiosyncratic data: my love for Ayn Rand and her architecture-novel *The Fountainhead*;[1] my admiration of the Stalinist 'wedding-cake' baroque kitsch; in Slovenia, my country, nationalists treat me as a traitor for my disparaging remarks on Joze Plecnik, the Slovene retro-architect from the first half of the XXth century who was rediscovered in the 1990s as a post-modernist *avant la lettre*; my dream of a house composed only of secondary spaces and places of passage – stairs, corridors, toilets, storerooms, kitchen – with no living room or bedroom. The danger that I am courting is thus that what I will say will oscillate between the two extremes of unfounded speculations and what most of you have already known for a long time.

But maybe, just maybe, my use of the notion of 'parallax' will justify the risk involved in my venturing some remarks on architecture based on this concept, which I took from Kojin Karatani.[2] The common definition of parallax is: the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight. The philosophical twist to be added, of course, is that the observed difference is not simply 'subjective', due to the fact that the same object which exists 'out there' is seen from two different stations, or points of view. It is rather that, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently 'mediated', so that an 'epistemological' shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an 'ontological' shift in the object itself.

The parallax gap is thus not just a matter of our shifting perspective (from this standpoint, a building looks like this – if I move a little bit, it looks different …); things get interesting when we notice that the gap is inscribed into the 'real' building itself – as if the building, in its very material existence, bears the imprint of different and mutually exclusive perspectives. Let me make this point clear with an example from literature and cinema. The cinema version of Doctorow's *Billy Bathgate* is basically a failure, but an interesting

one: a failure which nonetheless evokes in the viewer the spectre of the much better novel. However, when one then goes to read the novel on which the film is based, one is disappointed – this is NOT the novel the film evoked as the standard, with regard to which it failed. The repetition (of a failed novel in the failed film) thus gives rise to a third, purely virtual, element, the better novel. This is an exemplary case of what Deleuze deploys in the crucial pages of his *Difference and Repetition*:

> While it may seem that the two presents are successive, at a variable distance apart in the series of reals, in fact they form, rather, *two real series which coexist in relation to a virtual object of another kind*, one which constantly circulates and is displaced in them […] Repetition is constituted not from one present to another, but between the two coexistent series that these presents form in function of the virtual object (object = x).[3]

With regard to *Billy Bathgate*: the film does not 'repeat' the novel on which it is based; rather, they both 'repeat' the unrepeatable virtual x, the 'true' novel whose spectre is engendered in the passage from the actual novel to the film. The underlying movement is here more complex than it may appear. It is not that we should simply conceive the starting point (the novel) as an 'open work', full of possibilities which can be deployed later, actualized in later versions; or – even worse – that we should conceive the original work as a pre-text which can later be incorporated in other con-texts and given a meaning totally different from the original one. What is missing here is the retroactive, backwards movement that was first described by Henri Bergson, a key reference for Deleuze. In his 'Two Sources of Morality and Religion', Bergson describes the strange sensations he experienced on 4 August 1914, when war was declared between France and Germany: 'In spite of my turmoil, and although a war, even a victorious one, appeared to me as a catastrophe, I experienced what [William] James spoke about, a feeling of admiration for the facility of the passage from the abstract to the concrete: who would have thought that such a formidable event can emerge in reality with so little fuss?'[4] Crucial here is the modality of the break between before and after: before its outburst, the war appeared to Bergson '*simultaneously probable and impossible*: a complex and contradictory notion which persisted to the end';[5] after its outburst, it all of a sudden become real AND possible, and the paradox resides in this retroactive appearance of probability:

> I never pretended that one can insert reality into the past and thus work backwards in time. However, one can without any doubt insert there the possible, or, rather, at every moment, the possible insert itself there. Insofar as inpredictable and new reality creates itself, its image reflects itself behind itself in the indefinite past: this new reality finds itself all the time having been possible; but it is only at the precise moment of its actual emergence that it *begins to always have been*, and this is why I say that its possibility, which does not precede its reality, will have preceded it once this reality emerges.[6]

THIS is what takes place in the example of *Billy Bathgate*: the film inserts back into the novel the possibility of a different, much better, novel. And do we not encounter a similar logic in the relationship between Stalinism and Leninism? Here also, THREE moments are in play: Lenin's politics before the Stalinist takeover; Stalinist politics; the spectrw of 'Leninism' retroactively generated by Stalinism (in its official Stalinist version, but ALSO in the version critical of Stalinism, like when, in the process of 'de-Stalinization' in the USSR, the motto evoked was that of the 'return to the original Leninist principles'). One should therefore stop the ridiculous game of opposing Stalinist terror with the 'authentic' Leninist legacy betrayed by Stalinism: 'Leninism' is a thoroughly *Stalinist* notion.

And should we not apply the same paradoxical logic to architecture? When we succeed in identifying a parallax gap in a building, does the gap between the two perspectives not open up the place for a third virtual building, something akin to the unwritten 'really good' *Billy Bathgate* novel? In this way, we can also define the creative moment of architecture: it concerns not merely or primarily the actual building, but the virtual space of new possibilities opened up by the actual building. Furthermore, the parallax gap in architecture means that the spatial disposition of a building cannot be understood without the reference to the temporal dimension: the parallax gap *is* the inscription of our changing temporal experience when we approach and enter a building. It is a little bit like Cubist paintings, which present the same object from different perspectives, condensing into the same spatial surface a temporal extension. Through the parallax gap in the object itself, 'time becomes space' (which is Claude Lévi-Strauss's definition of myth).

It is in this sense that, when confronted with an antinomic stance in the precise Kantian sense of the term, one should renounce all attempts to reduce one aspect to the other (or, even more, to enact a kind of 'dialectical synthesis' of the opposites); the task is, on the contrary, to conceive all possible positions as responses to a certain underlying deadlock or antagonism, as so many attempts to resolve this deadlock … and this already brings us to so-called postmodern architecture which, sometimes, seems to enact the notion of parallax in a directly palpable way. Think about Liebeskind or Gehry: their work often appears as a desperate (or joyous) attempt to combine two incompatible structuring principles within the same building (in the case of Liebeskind, horizontal/vertical and oblique cubes; in the case of Gehry, traditional house with modern – concrete, corrugated iron, glass – supplements), as if two principles are locked in a struggle for hegemony.

In his seminal essay on Gehry, Jameson reads his plans for individual houses as an attempt to mediate tradition (old ornamented wooden structures) and alienated modernity (corrugated iron, concrete and glass). The result is an amphibious building, a freakish combination, an old house to which, like a cancerous outgrowth, a modern concrete-iron part is annexed. In his first landmark, the renovation of his own home in Santa Monica (1977-78), Gehry 'took a modest bungalow on a corner lot, wrapped it in layers of corrugated

metal and chain-link, and poked glass structures through its exterior. The result was a simple house extruded into surprising shapes and surfaces, spaces and views'.[7] Jameson discerns a quasi-utopian impulse in this 'dialectic between the remains of the traditional (rooms from the old house, preserved like archaic dream traces in a museum of the modern), and the 'new' wrappings, themselves constituted in the base materials of the American wasteland'.[8] This interaction between the preserved old house space and the interstitial space created by the wrapping generates a new space, a space which 'poses a question fundamental to thinking about contemporary American capitalism: that between advanced technological and scientific achievement and poverty and waste'.[9] A clear indication, to my Marxist mind, that architectural projects are answers to a problem which is ultimately socio-political.

But are we justified in using the (now already half-obsolete) term 'postmodernism'? Insofar as post-68 capitalism forms a specific economic, social and cultural unity, this very unity justifies the name 'postmodernism'. Although many justified criticisms were made of postmodernism as a new form of ideology, one should nonetheless admit that, when Jean-François Lyotard, in his *Postmodern Condition*, elevated this term from the name of certain new artistic tendencies (especially in writing and architecture) to the designation of a new historical epoch, there was an element of authentic *nomination* in his act: 'postmodernism' effectively functioned as a new Master-Signifier which introduced a new order of intelligibility into the confused multiplicity of historical experience.

In what did, more closely, the shift announced by '68 consist? Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* examines it in detail, and especially apropos of France.[10] In a Weberian mode, the book distinguishes three successive 'spirits' of capitalism: the first, entrepreneurial, spirit of capitalism lasted until the Great Depression of the 1930s; the second spirit of capitalism took as its ideal not the entrepreneur but the salaried director of a large firm. From the 1970s onwards, a new figure of the 'spirit of capitalism' began to emerge: capitalism abandoned the hierarchical Fordist structure of the production process and developed a network-based form of organization founded on employee initiative and autonomy in the workplace. Instead of a hierarchical, centralized chain of command, we get networks with a multitude of participants, organizing work in the form of teams or projects, intent on customer satisfaction, and a general mobilization of workers thanks to their leaders' vision. In this way, capitalism is transformed and legitimized as an egalitarian project: by way of accentuating auto-poetic interaction and spontaneous self-organization, it even usurps the far Left's rhetoric of workers' self-management and turns it from an anti-capitalist to a capitalist slogan.

At the level of consumption, this new spirit is one of so-called 'cultural capitalism': we primarily buy commodities neither on account of their utility nor as status symbols; we buy them to get the experience provided by them, we consume them in order to make our life pleasurable and meaningful. This triad cannot help but evoke the Lacanian triad of the Real, the Symbolic and

the Imaginary: the Real of direct utility (good healthy food, the quality of a car, etc.), the Symbolic of the status (I buy a certain car to signal my status – the Torstein Veblen theory), the Imaginary of pleasurable and meaningful experience. Consumption should sustain the quality of life, its time should be 'quality time' – not the time of alienation, of imitating models imposed by society, of the fear of not being able to 'keep up with the Joneses', but the time of the authentic fulfilment of my true self, of the sensuous play of experience, of caring for others, from ecology to charity. Here is an exemplary case of 'cultural capitalism': Starbucks's self-description of their 'Ethos Water' programme:

> Ethos Water http://www.ethoswater.com/is a brand with a social mission – helping children around the world get clean water and raising awareness of the World Water Crisis. Every time you purchase a bottle of Ethos™ water, Ethos Water will contribute US $0.05 (C$0.10 in Canada) toward our goal of raising at least US $10 million by 2010. Through The Starbucks Foundation, Ethos Water supports humanitarian water programs in Africa, Asia and Latin America. To date, Ethos Water grant commitments exceed $6.2 million. These programs will help an estimated 420,000 people gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.[11]

This is how capitalism, at the level of consumption, integrated the legacy of '68, the critique of alienated consumption: authentic experience matters. Is this not why we buy organic food? Who really believes that the half-rotten and expensive 'organic' apples are really healthier? The reason is that, by way of buying them, we do not just buy and consume a product – we simultaneously do something meaningful, show our care and global awareness, participate in a large collective project … (The latest scientific expression of this 'new spirit' is the development of a new discipline, 'happiness studies' – however, how is it that, in our era of spiritualized hedonism, when the goal of life is directly defined as happiness, anxiety and depression are exploding? It is the enigma of this self-sabotaging of happiness and pleasure which makes Freud's message more real than ever.)

Do we not find these same three levels in architecture and urbanism? First, there is the reality of the physical laws one has to obey if a building is to stand, of concrete functions it has to fulfil, of needs a building has to satisfy (people should be able to live or work in it, it should not cost too much, etc.) – all the pragmatic-utilitarian panoply. Then, there is the symbolic level: (ideological) meanings a building is supposed to embody and convey. Finally, there is the imaginary space: the experience of those who will dwell in a building – how does it feel to live in a building? One can argue that one of the defining features of postmodernism is the autonomization of each of these three levels: function is dissociated from form, etc. If there ever was an extreme example of architecture where the symbolic function predominates, it is Communist Albania in which the leader (Enver Hoxha), obsessed with protecting the country from a foreign invasion, ordered the construction of over 10.000 small, concrete, cupola-like bunkers (mostly around 6 yards in perimeter)

which are strewn all around Albania, the poorest country in Europe, with 1.5 million inhabitants. Obviously, the role of these bunkers was neither real (as a means of military defence they were worthless) nor imaginary (they certainly were not built with the pleasurable experience of those trained to use them in mind), but for a purely symbolic reason: to serve as a sign of the country's determination to defend itself at whatever cost.[12]

One should not fear denouncing sustainability itself, the big mantra of ecologists from the developed countries, as an ideological myth based on the idea of self-enclosed circulation where nothing is wasted – sustainability is effectively our version of the (in)famous *juche* idea of North Korea's founding leader Kim Il-sung, vaguely translatable as the 'spirit of self-sufficiency/self-reliance'.[13] The problem is that nature is definitely *not* 'sustainable' but one big crazy process of producing waste where, sometimes, this waste is 'ex-apted', used in some locally emerging self-organizations (like humans using oil – a gigantic waste of nature – as an energy source). Upon a closer look, one can always establish that 'sustainability' always refers to a limited process which enforces its balance at the expense of its larger environs. Think about the proverbial sustainable house of a rich, ecologically enlightened manager, located somewhere in a green, isolated valley close to a forest and lake, with solar energy, use of waste as manure, windows open to natural light, etc. – the costs of building such a house (to the environment, not only financial costs) make it prohibitive to the large majority. For a sincere ecologist, the optimal habitat are big cities where millions live close together: although such a city produces a lot of waste and pollution, its *per capita* pollution is much lower than that of a modern family living in the countryside – how does our manager reach his office from his country house? Probably with a helicopter, to avoid polluting the grass around his house…

To these three levels of architecture – real, symbolic, imaginary – one should add the fourth one: *virtual architecture*. 'Second Life' is a thriving 3-D world of virtual communities in which one buys part of a virtual space shared by others, composes the identity of one's own avatar, and then goes on to build a home, do business, interact with others, etc. – even China is moving in with its own version. The key difference with regard to multiple-player internet games like World of Warcraft is that in Second Life there are no pre-established rules and tasks; one forms one's own identity. (Of course, this leads to ethical and legal problems: there have already been cases of virtual paedophilia.) The phenomenon is getting more and more massive – according to some estimate, in a couple of years, more than three-quarters of internet users (over a billion people) will also inhabit a Second Life universe.[14] The irony is that this community has its own money, 'Linden Dollars', with a fixed rate of exchange with 'real' dolars. That is to say, within this universe, one's avatar has to shop – one has to buy, say, clothes, food, cars and houses, since a large majority of us cannot program them. And who sells them? Other players who can. There is a Second Lifer fashion designer who is selling shirts and jackets for other people's avatars: in real life, he wasn't earning

enough, so he moved to Second Life, making drafts of the clothes and then hiring an inexpensive programmer to digitalize the designed items. His earnings in real money are three times more than in his real-life job, plus he has no problems with physical workers and raw materials – once the design is digitalized, selling thousands involves just making so many copies, which costs nothing. No wonder Second Life is praised for offering a space of 'pure' frictionless capitalism.

In his modernist manifesto *Ornament and Crime* of 1908, Adolf Loos drew from the axiom that 'form follows function' the demand of the 'elimination of ornament': 'The evolution of culture marches with the elimination of ornament from useful objects'. For Loos, ornaments were 'immoral' and 'degenerate', so their suppression was necessary for regulating modern society. Interestingly, he took as one of his examples the tattooing of the Papuan – Loos considered the Papuan not to have evolved to the moral and civilized circumstances of modern man, who, should he tattoo himself, would either be considered a criminal or a degenerate… The first thing to add here is that, in our everyday life, ideology is at work, especially in the apparently innocent reference to pure utility – one should never forget that, in the symbolic universe, 'utility' functions as a reflective notion, i.e. it always involves the assertion of utility as meaning (for example, a man who lives in a large city and owns a Land Rover doesn't simply lead a no-nonsense, 'down to earth' life; rather, he owns such a car in order to signal that he leads his life under the sign of a no-nonsense, 'down to earth' attitude).

One of the ways to exemplify the 'architecturally correct' opposition between pure authentic function and vulgar display of useless material wealth is the image of a simple water pump alongside a gold tap: a simple object satisfying a vital need versus the excessive display of wealth… However, one should always be careful in such cases to avoid the trap signalled by John Berger in his *Success and Failure of Picasso*, where he tartly notes that Picasso's Blue Period, 'because it deals pathetically with the poor, has always been the favorite among the rich'. Upon a closer look, one soon discovers that this opposition is overdetermined by a much more complex and ambiguous background. Anyone who knows real slums (like the Latino-American *favelas*) can't help noticing how the improvised slum buildings, even if made of remainders of corrugated iron and wooden patchwork, are full of often ridiculously excessive kitsch decorations, including even (fake, of course) gold taps. It is (mostly) poor people who dream about gold taps, while rich people like to imagine the simple functionality of household equipment – a simple, lean water pump is how Bill Gates sees the way to help poor Africans, while the real poor Africans would probably embellish it as soon as possible with 'kitsch' decorations. It is like the ironic remark of an observer of the Yeltsin years in Russia that ordinary women who want to appear attractive dress like (the common idea of) prostitutes (with heavy red lipstick, excessive cheap jewels, etc.), while real prostitutes prefer to mark their distinction by wearing simple, expensive grey 'business' suits. Indeed, as a saying popular

among the poor who participate in carnivals in Brazil goes: 'Only the rich like modesty; the poor prefer luxury.'

In contrast to Loos, Robert Venturi emphasized the importance of a building to communicate meaning to the public, which necessitates non-functional elements of the building – he wittily changed Mies van der Rohe's maxim 'less is more' into 'less is a bore'. What we should, again, add here is that modernist functionalist austerity is always reflective; it also communicates meaning: the 'functionality' of a high-modernist building is the message this building emanates. It is not that it simply and directly *is* functional, it *declares itself as* functional, and the irony is that this declaration of functionality can be at the expense of the building's effective functionality: modernist buildings that want to get rid of superfluous ornaments and just fulfil their functions, end up by precisely not fulfilling their declared functions – people who live in them feel constrained and uneasy. It is the excessive non-functional elements of a building which make it actually 'functional', i.e., livable.

If, in great classic modernism, a building was supposed to obey one all-encompassing great Code, in postmodernism we get a multiplicity of codes. This multiplicity can be either the multiplicity (ambiguity) of meanings – what Charles Jencks called 'alluded metaphor' (is the Sydney Opera House the growth of a blossom or a series of turtles copulating?) – or the multiplicity of functions, from performances to shopping and cafeterias (Snohetta's National Opera House in Oslo, designed to appeal to a younger generation, tries to appear 'cool' by imitating sleek stealth-bomber lines; furthermore, the roof inclines into the fjord and doubles as a swimming platform).

As was often remarked, postmodernism can be said to stand for the *deregulation* of architecture – for radical historicism where, in a globalized pastiche, everything is possible, anything goes. Pastiche works like 'empty parody': a radical historicism where all the past is equalized in a synchronicity of eternal present. The exact functioning of pastiche should be specified by concrete analysis work. Let me take an extreme example: in today's Moscow, there are a couple of new exclusive apartment blocks for the new rich which perfectly imitate the outside form of the Stalinist neo-Gothic Baroque (Lomonosov university, the House of Culture in Warsaw, etc.). What does this imitation mean? These buildings obviously integrate Russia's Soviet hangover with its hyper-capitalist present – it is however crucial to analyse the precise modality of this integration (or, to put it in more contemporary theoretical terms, articulation). The self-perception of the engaged public is that of playful indifference: Russia's Soviet hangover is acted out, reduced to an impotent pastiche. Postmodern ironic Stalinism should thus be considered the last stage of Socialist Realism, in which the formula is reflectively redoubled, turning into its own pastiche. We should read this use of 'totalitarian' motifs as a case of postmodern irony, as a comic repetition of the 'totalitarian' tragedy. It was Marx who wrote that history happens first as a tragedy, then as a comedy – ancient Greeks said farewell to their gods in the form of Lukianus' satires, making fun of them. However, as many perspicuous commentators have

noticed, sometimes the order can also be reversed: what begins as a comedy ends up as a tragedy. Throughout the late 1920s, Hitler and his fringe party were universally mocked.

The 'class basis' of neo-Stalinist postmodernism is thus the new wild-capitalist elite, which perceives itself as ideologically indifferent, 'apolitical', caring only about money and success, despising all big Causes. The 'spontaneous ideology' of this new bourgeoisie is paradoxically what appears as the opposite of their vulgar 'passion of the real' (pleasures, money, power), a (no less vulgar) pan-aestheticism: all ideologies are equal, equally ridiculous, they are useful only for providing the spice of aesthetic excitement, so the more problematic they are, the more excitement they generate. Neo-Stalinist architecture *pretends to pretend* – it (and its public) think they are just playing a game, and what they are unaware of is that, independently of their playful attitude, the game has the potential to get serious. Their 'playful indifference' conceals the reality of the ruthless exercise of power: what they stage as aesthetic spectacle is reality for the masses of ordinary people. Their indifference towards ideology is the very form of their complicity with the ruling ideology.

This indifference bears witness to how, in postmodernism, parallax is openly admitted, displayed – and, in this way, neutralized: the antagonistic tension between different standpoints is flattened into an indifferent plurality of standpoints. 'Contradiction' thus loses its subversive edge: in a space of globalized permissiveness, inconsistent standpoints cynically co-exist – cynicism is the reaction of 'So what?' to inconsistency. You ruthlessly exploit natural resources and contribute to green causes – so what? Sometimes, the thing itself can serve as its own mask – the most efficient way to obfuscate social antagonisms is to openly display them.

But perhaps I have gone too fast and too far ahead – let me step back and address the basic issue: how does an ideological edifice (real architectural edifices included) deal with social antagonisms? In his old classic *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson proposes a perspicuous ideologico-critical reading of Claude-Lévi Strauss's interpretation of the unique facial decorations of the Caduveo Indians of Brazil:[15] they use 'a design which is symmetrical but yet lies across an oblique axis […] a complicated situation based upon two contradictory forms of duality, and resulting in a compromise brought about by a secondary opposition between the ideal axis of the object itself /the human face/ and the ideal axis of the figure which it represents'. Jameson's comment: 'Already on the purely formal level, then, this visual text has been grasped as a contradiction by way of the curiously provisional and asymmetrical resolution it proposes for that contradiction.'[16] (Incidentally, does this not sound like a map of Manhattan, where the symmetrical design of streets and avenues is cut across by the oblique axis of Broadway? Or, at the architectural level, to a typical Liebeskind building with its tension between vertical and crooked lines?) In the next, crucial, move, Lévi-Strauss interprets this imagined formal resolution of an antagonism as (not a 'reflection', but

a) symbolic act, a transposition-displacement of the basic social imbalance-asymmetry-antagonism of Caduveo society: the Caduveo are a hierarchical society, and their 'nascent hierarchy is already the place of the emergence, if not of political power in the strict sense, then at least of relations of domination: the inferior status of women, the subordination of youth to elders, and the development of a hereditary aristocracy. Yet whereas this latent power structure is, among the neighboring Guana and Bororo, masked by a division into moieties which cuts across the three castes, and whose exogamous exchange appears to function in a nonhierarchical, essentially egalitarian way, it is openly present in Caduveo life, as surface inequality and conflict. The social institutions of the Guana and Bororo, on the other hand, provide a realm of appearance, in which real hierarchy and inequality are dissimulated by the reciprocity of the moieties, and in which, therefore, "asymmetry of class is balanced … by symmetry of 'moieties'."[17]

Is this not our predicament too? In bourgeois societies, we are split between formal-legal equality sustained by the institutions of the democratic state, and class distinctions enforced by the economic system. We live the tension between Politically Correct respect for human rights, etc., and growing inequalities, gated communities, exclusions, etc. This, however, does not mean that the relationship is simply the one between deceiving appearance and reality: apropos of liberal egalitarianism, it is not enough to make the old Marxist point about the gap between the ideological appearance of the universal legal form and the particular interests that effectively sustain it – as is so common amongst politically correct critics on the Left. The counter-argument that the form is never a 'mere' form, but involves a dynamic of its own which leaves traces in the materiality of social life, made by theoreticians such as Claude Lefort[18] and Jacques Rancière,[19] is fully valid. After all, the 'formal freedom' of the bourgeois sets in motion the process of altogether 'material' political demands and practices, from trade unions to feminism. Rancière rightly emphasizes the radical *ambiguity* of the Marxist notion of the gap between formal democracy with its discourse of the rights of man and political freedom and the economic reality of exploitation and domination. This gap between the 'appearance' of equality-freedom and the social reality of economic and cultural differences can either be interpreted in the standard symptomatic way, that is the form of universal rights, equality, freedom and democracy is just a necessary, but illusory expression of its concrete social content, the universe of exploitation and class domination. Or it can be interpreted in the much more subversive sense of a tension in which the 'appearance' of *egaliberté* (freedom-equality) is precisely *not* a 'mere appearance', but has a power of its own. This power allows it to set in motion the process of the re-articulation of actual socio-economic relations by way of their progressive politicization: why shouldn't women also vote? Why shouldn't conditions in the workplace also be of public political concern? And so on. One can use that old Lévi-Straussian term of 'symbolic efficiency': the appearance of *egaliberté* is a symbolic fiction which, as such, possesses an actual efficiency of its own.

And exactly the same goes for architecture: when a building embodies democratic openness, this appearance is never a mere appearance – it has a reality of its own, it structures the way individuals interact in their real lives. The problem with Caduveo was that (like today's non-democratic states) they lacked this appearance – they were not 'lucky enough to resolve their contradictions, or to disguise them with the help of institutions artfully devised for that purpose. […] since they were unable to conceptualize or to love this solution directly, they began to dream it, to project it into the imaginary'. The facial decorations are 'a fantasy production of a society seeking passionately to give symbolic expression to the institutions it might have had in reality, had not interest and superstition stood in the way.'[20] (Note the refined texture of the analysis – Jameson himself seems to miss a dimension when he resumes its result: the Caduveo facial art 'constitutes a symbolic act, whereby real social contradictions, insurmountable in their own terms, find a purely formal resolution in the aesthetic realm',[21] and, in this sense, 'the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal "solutions" to unresolvable social contradictions'.[22]

However, Lévi-Strauss deserves here a precise and close reading: it is not that, simply and directly, the Caduveo facial decorations formulate an imaginary resolution of real contradictions; it is rather that they supplement the lack of a properly functioning 'appearance' which would have been inscribed into their very social-institutional organization. In other words, we are not dealing with a longing for real equality, but with the longing for a *proper appearance*. (Does the same not hold for Niemeyer's plan of Brasilia, this imaginary dream of the resolution of social antagonisms which supplements not the reality of social antagonisms but the lack of an ideologico-egalitarian mechanism which would cover them up with a properly functioning appearance.) This is why Jameson is fully justified to talk about the 'political unconscious': there is a coded message in an architectural formal play, and the message delivered by a building often functions as the 'return of the repressed' of the official ideology. Recall Wittgenstein's motto: what we cannot directly talk about can be shown by the form of our activity. What the official ideology cannot openly talk about can be shown by the mute signs of a building.

In order to clarify this 'unconscious' functioning of ideology, let me recall an interesting philosophical debate which took place in the US in March 2003. Donald Rumsfeld engaged in a little bit of amateur philosophizing about the relationship between the known and the unknown: 'There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know.' What he forgot to add was the crucial fourth term: the 'unknown knowns', things we don't know that we know – which is precisely the Freudian unconscious, the 'knowledge which doesn't know itself', as Lacan used to say. If Rumsfeld thought that the main dangers in the confrontation with Iraq were the

'unknown unknowns', the threats from Saddam, the nature of which we did not even suspect, what we should have replied was that the main dangers were, on the contrary, the 'unknown knowns', the disavowed beliefs and suppositions we are not even aware of adhering to ourselves. It is with these 'unknown knowns' that design deals.

This level of the 'unknown knowns' not only articulates the key message, it can also do it in contrast to the explicit content of an ideological edifice, telling more than this edifice is explicitly ready to state, its 'repressed truth' – to quote the *X Files* motto: 'The truth is out there.' Such a focusing on material externality proves very fruitful in the analysis of how fantasy relates to the inherent antagonisms of an ideological edifice. The two opposed architectural designs of *Casa del Fascio* (the local headquarters of the Fascist party), Adolfo Coppede's neo-Imperial pastiche from 1928 and Giuseppe Teragni's highly modernist transparent glass-house from 1934-36 – do they not, in their simple juxtaposition, reveal the inherent contradiction of the Fascist ideological project which simultaneously advocates a return to pre-modern organicist corporatism and the unheard-of mobilization of all social forces in the service of rapid modernization?

Niels Bohr, who gave the right answer to Einstein's 'God doesn't play dice' ('Don't tell God what to do!'), also provided the perfect example of how a fetishist disavowal of belief works in ideology: seeing a horseshoe on his door, a surprised visitor said that he didn't believe in the superstition that it brings luck, to which Bohr snapped back: 'I also do not believe in it; I have it there because I was told that it works also if one does not believe in it!' It is with these disavowed beliefs that architecture interacts: it materializes them in the external form of a product, so that we can 'have our cake and eat it', enjoy in our secret obscene beliefs without explicitly committing ourselves to them.

This brings us to an unexpected result: it is not only that the fantasy embodied in the mute language of buildings can articulate the utopia of justice, freedom and equality betrayed by actual social relations; this fantasy can also articulate a *longing for inequality*, for clear hierarchy and class distinctions. Jameson takes Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, another film focused on architecture, as exemplary of this ambiguity of utopian impulses. As we all know, the film (based on Stephen King's novel) takes place in a large modern mountain hotel closed for winter, occupied by a single family who are taking care of it. (Already this basic situation cannot but evoke rich associations: while, in Japan, one can be squeezed in a subway crowd and still feel at a distance from others, in *The Shining*, even a large abandoned hotel is not large enough for a single family whose members feel crowded and explode in aggressiveness.) The big hotel is, of course, a cursed building haunted by the spirits of the past – by which spirits? It is here that Jameson finds the film disturbing:

> The drive towards community, the longing for collectivity, the envy of other, achieved collectivities, emerges with all force of a return of the repressed: and this is finally, I think, what *The Shining* is all about. Where

to search for this 'knowable community,' to which, even excluded, the fantasy of collective relations might attach itself? It is surely not to be found in the managerial bureaucracy of the hotel itself, as multinational and standardized as a bedroom community or a motel chain [ … ] Where the novel stages the 'past' as a babel of voices and an indistinct blast of dead lives from all the generations of historical inhabitants in the hotel's history, Kubrick's film foregrounds and isolates a single period, multiplying increasingly unified signals: tuxedoes, roadsters, hipflasks, slicked-down hair parted in the middle [ … ] That generation, finally, is the twenties, and it is by the twenties that the hero is haunted and possessed. The twenties were the last moment in which a genuine American leisure class led an aggressive and ostentatious public existence, in which an American ruling class projected a class-conscious and unapologetic image of itself and enjoyed its privileges without guilt, openly and armed with its emblems of top-hat and champagne glass, on the social stage in full view of the other classes. The nostalgia of *The Shining*, the longing for collectivity, takes the peculiar form of an obsession with the last period in which class consciousness is out in the open: even the motif of the manservant or valet expresses the desire for a vanished social hierarchy, which can no longer be gratified in the spurious multinational atmosphere in which Jack Nicholson is hired for a mere odd job by faceless organization men. This is clearly a 'return of the repressed' with a vengeance: a Utopian impulse which scarcely lends itself to the usual complacent and edifying celebration, which finds its expression in the very snobbery and class consciousness we naively supposed it to threaten.[23]

And, *mutatis mutandis*, does the same not hold for Stalinist neo-Gothic architecture? Does it not enact the 'return of the repressed' of the official egalitarian-emancipatory Socialist ideology, the weird desire for hierarchy and social distinctions? The utopia enacted in architecture can also be a conservative utopia of regained hierarchical order. Recall the great projects of public buildings in the Soviet Union of the '30s, which put on the top of a flat multi-story office building a gigantic statue of the idealized New Man or a couple: in the span of a couple of years, the tendency to flatten the office building more and more (the actual working place for living people) became clearly discernible, so that it changed more and more into a mere pedestal for the larger-than-life statue – does this external, material feature of architectural design not render visible the 'truth' of Stalinist ideology in which actual, living people are reduced to instruments, sacrificed as the pedestal for the spectre of the future New Man, an ideological monster who crushes under his feet actual living men? The paradox is that were anyone in the Soviet Union of the '30s to say openly that the vision of the Socialist New Man was an ideological monster squashing actual people, they would have been immediately arrested – it was, however, allowed, encouraged even, to make this point via architectural design … again, 'the truth is out there'. It is not simply that ideology also permeates the alleged extra-ideological strata of everyday life: this materialization of ideology in external materiality renders visible inherent antagonisms which the explicit formulation of ideology cannot afford to acknowledge – it is as if an ideological edifice, if it is to

function 'normally', must obey a kind of 'imp of perversity' and articulate its inherent antagonism in the externality of its material existence. Social oppression and hierarchy concealed in the explicit Stalinist ideological text (which talks about equality and justice), were thereby acted out, staged if not stated. (And does the same not hold for the monumental public buildings from the Roosevelt era, like the central post office in New York? No wonder the NYU central building in downtown Manhattan looks like Lomonosov university in Moscow…)

The architectural background of *The Shining* is thus crucial – the murderous madness which explodes can only be explained in the terms of the tension (or incommensurability) between the single family and the gigantic empty building they occupy. In this sense, one can even read *Psycho*, Alfred Hitchcock's masterpiece, as the staging of an architectural antagonism: is Norman not split between the two *houses*, the modern horizontal motel and the vertical Gothic mother's house, forever running between the two, never finding a proper place of his own? In this sense, the *unheimlich* character of the film's end means that, in his full identification with the mother, he finally found his *heim*, his home. In modernist works like *Psycho*, this split is still visible, while the main goal of today's postmodern architecture is to obfuscate it. Suffice it to recall the 'New Urbanism' with its return to small family houses in small towns, with front porches, recreating the cosy atmosphere of the local community – clearly, this is the case of architecture as ideology at its purest, providing an imaginary (although 'real', materialized in the actual disposition of houses) solution to a real social deadlock which has nothing to do with architecture and all with late-capitalist dynamics. A more ambiguous case of the same antagonism is the work of Gehry: he takes as the basis one of the two poles of the antagonism, either the old-fashioned family house or a modernist concrete-and-glass building, and then either submits it to a kind of Cubist anamorphic distortion (curved angles of walls and windows, etc.) or combines the old family home with a modernist supplement. So here is my final hypothesis: if the Bates Motel were to be built by Gehry, directly combining the old mother's house and the flat modern motel into a new hybrid entity, there would have been no need for Norman to kill his victims, since he would have been relieved of the unbearable tension that compels him to run between the two places – he would have a third place of mediation between the two extremes. (And does the same not hold for Josef Fritzl, the Austrian monster who held his daughter imprisoned for more than 20 years and had children with her? Does the very architectural arrangement of the Fritzl house – the 'normal' ground and upper floors supported [literally and libidinally] by the underground windowless enclosed space of total domination and unlimited *jouissance* – not materialize the 'normal' family space redoubled by the secret domain of the obscene 'primordial father'?)

Our application of the Lévi-Straussian analysis of Caduveo face decorations to architecture can be further justified by the fact that Lévi-Strauss himself applies the same type of analysis to urbanism and architecture in his wonderful

short essay 'Do Dual Organizations Exist?'[24], where he deals with the spatial disposition of buildings in the Winnebago, one of the Great Lake tribes. The tribe is divided into two sub-groups ('moieties'), 'those who are from above' and 'those who are from below'; when an individual is asked to draw on a piece of paper, or on sand, the ground-plan of his/her village (the spatial disposition of cottages), we obtain two quite different answers, depending on his/her belonging to one or the other sub-group. Both perceive the village as a circle; but for one sub-group, there is within this circle another circle of central houses, so that we have two concentric circles, while for the other sub-group, the circle is split into two by a clear dividing line. In other words, a member of the first sub-group (let us call it 'conservative-corporatist') perceives the ground-plan of the village as a ring of houses more or less symmetrically disposed around the central temple, whereas a member of the second ('revolutionary-antagonistic') sub-group perceives his/her village as two distinct heaps of houses separated by an invisible frontier… The point Lévi-Strauss wants to make is that this example should in no way entice us into cultural relativism, according to which the perception of social space depends on the observer's group-belonging: the very splitting into the two 'relative' perceptions implies a hidden reference to a constant – not the objective, 'actual' disposition of buildings but a traumatic kernel, a fundamental antagonism the inhabitants of the village were unable to symbolize, to account for, to 'internalize ', to come to terms with, an imbalance in social relations that prevented the community from stabilizing itself into a harmonious whole. The two perceptions of the ground-plan are simply two mutually exclusive endeavours to cope with this traumatic antagonism, to heal its wound via the imposition of a balanced symbolic structure. And in order to dispel the illusion that our 'developed' universe is not dominated by the same logic, suffice it to recall the splitting of our political space into Left and Right: a Leftist and a Rightist behave exactly like members of the opposite sub-groups of the Lévi-Straussian village. They not only occupy different places within the political space; each of them perceives differently the very disposition of the political space – a Leftist as a field that is inherently split by some fundamental antagonism, a Rightist as the organic unity of a community disturbed only by foreign intruders.

Lévi-Strauss makes here a further crucial point: since the two sub-groups nonetheless form one and the same tribe, living in the same village, this identity somehow has to be symbolically inscribed – how, if the entire symbolic articulation, all social institutions, of the tribe are not neutral, but are overdetermined by the fundamental and constitutive antagonistic split? By what Lévi-Strauss ingeniously calls the 'zero-institution', a kind of institutional counterpart to the famous *mana*, the empty signifier with no determinate meaning, since it signifies only the presence of meaning as such, in opposition to its absence: a specific institution which has no positive, determinate function – its only function is the purely negative one of signalling the presence and actuality of social institution as such, in opposition to its absence, to pre-social chaos. It is the reference to such a zero-institution that enables all members of

the tribe to experience themselves as such, as members of the same tribe. Is, then, this zero-institution not *ideology* at its purest, i.e. the direct embodiment of the ideological function of providing a neutral all-encompassing space in which social antagonism is obliterated, in which all members of society can recognize themselves? And is the struggle for *hegemony* not precisely the struggle for how this zero-institution will be overdetermined, coloured by some particular signification? To provide a concrete example: is not the modern notion of *nation* such a zero-institution, emerging with the dissolution of social links grounded in direct family or traditional symbolic matrixes, i.e. when, with the onslaught of modernization, social institutions became less and less grounded in naturalized tradition and more and more experienced as a matter of 'contract'[25]. Of special importance here is the fact that national identity is experienced as at least minimally 'natural', as a belonging grounded in 'blood and soil', and as such opposed to the 'artificial' belonging to social institutions proper (state, profession…): pre-modern institutions functioned as 'naturalized' symbolic entities (as institutions grounded in unquestionable traditions), and the moment institutions were conceived as social artefacts, the need arose for a 'naturalized' zero-institution that would serve as their neutral common ground.

And my hypothesis is that big performance-arts complexes, arguably the paragons of today's architecture, try to impose themselves as this kind of architectural zero-institution. Their very conflictual meanings (amusement and high art, profane and sacred, exclusive and popular) cancel themselves mutually, so that the outcome is the presence of meaning as such as opposed to non-meaning: their meaning is to have meaning, to be islands of meaning in the flow of our meaningless daily existence. In order to provide a brief insight into the parallax nature of their structure, let me begin with Jameson's description of Rem Koolhaas's Library of France: the enormous box that houses the library

> rebukes traditional conceptions of the shell or the shape by its very enormity, attempting [ … ] by the prosaic nature of the form to escape formal perception altogether. What this nonform specifically negates […] is the grandest of modernist, Corbusean conceptions of the essentially expressive relationship between the interior and its outer plastic lines and walls, which were to shed their rigidity and simply follow their functions in such a way as to correspond aesthetically to the rather different realities within.[26]

This *expressive correspondence* between the inside (the division of a building into rooms and spaces for different activities) and the outside of a building thus shifts towards radical *incommensurability*: 'the functions, the rooms, the interior, the inner spaces, hang within their enormous container like so many floating organs.'[27] These formal shifts in the relation between outside and inside 'reincorporate the paradoxes of private property after the end of civil society [in the Library of France in Paris], by way of the dialectic of the

property of information, in the See Trade Center in Zeebrugge, by way of the more classic antinomy of a public space that is privately owned.'[28]

However, one should not misunderstand this emphasis on the incommensurability between outside and inside as a critique (relying on the demand for the continuity between the two). The incommensurability between outside and inside is a transcendental *a priori* – in our most elementary phenomenological experience, the reality we see through a window is always minimally spectral, not as fully real as the closed space where we are. This is why, when driving a car or looking through a window of a house, one perceives the reality outside in a weirdly de-realized state, as if one is watching a performance on a screen; when one opens the window, the direct impact of the external reality always causes a minimal shock, we are overwhelmed by its proximity. This is also why, when we enter the closed space of a house, we are often surprised: it seems the inside volume is larger than the outside frame, as if the house is larger from the inside than from the outside.

On the southern side of the demilitarized zone that divides North from South Korea, South Koreans built a unique visitors' site: a theatre building with a large screen-like window in front, opening up onto the North. The spectacle people observe when they take seats and look through the window is reality itself (or, rather, a kind of 'desert of the real'): the barren demilitarized zone with walls, etc., and, beyond, a glimpse of North Korea. As if to comply with the fiction, North Korea has built in front of this theatre a pure fake, a model village with beautiful houses; in the evening, the lights in all the houses are turned on at the same time, people in the area are given nice clothing and are obliged to take a stroll every evening … a barren zone is given a fantasmatic status, elevated into a spectacle, solely by being enframed. Does something similar not happen in Peppermint Bay, a community centre in Tasmania (designed by Terroir Pty Ltd), where the function area establishes itself opposite the oak tree at the termination of the labyrinthine route? In a large hall, we see the big ancient tree on the grass just outside the building through the windowpane which covers the entire wall and whose zig-zag form vaguely fits the shape of the tree. What we see through the windowpane (the tree, but also grass and water in the background) is an attractive scene of natural landscape – however, one should never forget that we see it as such from the inside of the building, through a frame. We thus have to distinguish between two outsides, the direct outside (the tree seen directly from the grass outside) and the inside-outside (the outside seen from inside). The two are not the same: in the second case, the outside is no longer simply the encompassing unity which contains the inside, but is simultaneously enclosed by the inside (or, one might say, nature is enclosed by culture). So North Korea is sublime – viewed from the safe spot in South Korea; or, the inverse case, democracy can appear sublime – viewed from an authoritarian or 'totalitarian ' regime. Bernard Tschumi's New Acropolis Museum, built in Athens in front of the hill of the Parthenon relies on a similar effect: when one reaches the third floor, one can see through the glass partition of the wide windowpane the

'thing itself', the Parthenon – seeing it through this frame, rather than directly, enhances its sublime appearance. (There can also be a false inside. In the ZKM house in Karlsruhe, there is a TV screen in front of the entrance to the main toilet area, showing continuously on its black-and-white screen the inside of a small toilet cubicle with an empty toilet bowl. After the first moment of release (thankGgod, the toilet is free, I cannot wait … ), I become aware that it will no longer be empty when I enter it, so I will be seen defecating … it is only then that the obvious truth strikes me: it is, of course, a pre-recorded tape we see, not the actual inside of the restroom!)

What this mutual encroaching indicates is that Inside and Outside never cover the entire space: there is always an excess of a third space which gets lost in the division between Outside and Inside. In human dwellings, there is an intermediate space which is disavowed: we all know it exists, but we do not really accept its existence – it remains ignored and (mostly) unsayable. The main content of this invisible space is excrement (canalization), but also the complex network of electricity, digital links, etc. – all this is contained in narrow spaces between walls or floors. We of course know well how excrement leaves the house, but our immediate phenomenological relation to it is a more radical one: it is as if shit disappears into some netherworld, out of our sight and out of our world. (This is why one of the most unpleasant experiences is to observe shit coming back from the hole in the toilet bowl – it is something like the return of the living dead…) What I am talking about here is similar to how we relate to another person's body: we know very well that he or she sweats, defecates and urinates, etc., but we abstract from it in our daily relations – these features are not part of the image of our fellow man. We rely on this space, but ignore it – no wonder that, in science-fiction, horror films and techno-thrillers, this dark space between walls is the space where horrible threats lurk (from spying machines to monsters or contagious animals like cockroaches and rats). Recall also, in science-fiction architecture, the mysterious topic of an additional floor or room which is not in the building's plan (and where, of course, terrifying things dwell …).

In the scene in the hotel room, the place of crime, in Francis Ford Coppola's *Conversation*, the investigator inspects the room with a Hitchcockian gaze, like Lila and Sam do with Marion's motel room, moving from the main bedroom to the bathroom and focusing there on the toilet and the shower. This shift from the shower (where there are no traces of the crime, where everything is clean) to the toilet sink, elevated it into the Hitchcockian object that attracts our gaze, fascinating us with its premonition of some unspeakable horror, is crucial here (recall Hitchcock's battle with censorship to allow the inside view of the toilet, from where Sam picks up a torn piece of paper with Marion's writing on it, detailing the amounts of spent money, the proof that she was there). After a series of obvious references to *Psycho* apropos of the shower (quickly pulling open the curtain, inspecting the hole in the sink), the investigator focuses on the (allegedly cleaned) toilet seat, flushes it and then the stain appears as if out of nowhere, blood and other traces of the crime

flowing over the edge of the bowl. This scene, a kind of *Psycho* reread through *Marnie* (with its red stain blurring the screen) contains the main elements of the Hitchcockian universe: it has the Hitchcockian object which materializes some unspecified threat, functioning as the hole into another abyssal dimension (is flushing the toilet in this scene not like pushing the wrong button, which then dissolves the entire universe, as in science-fiction novels?); this object, which simultaneously attracts and repels the subject, can be said to be the point from which the inspected setting returns the gaze (is it not that the hero is somehow regarded by the toilet sink?); and, finally, Coppola realizes the alternative scenario of the toilet itself as the ultimate locus of mystery. What makes this mini-remake of a scene so effective is that Coppola suspends the prohibition operative in *Psycho*: the threat DOES explode, the camera DOES show the danger hanging in the air in *Psycho*, the chaotic bloody mess erupting from the toilet. (And is not the swamp behind the house in which Norman drowns the cars with the bodies of his victims a kind of gigantic pool of excremental mud, so that one can say that he in a way flushes the cars down the toilet – the famous moment of the worried expression on his face when Marion's car stops sinking into the swamp for a couple of seconds effectively signals the worry that the toilet did not swallow the traces of our crime? The very last shot of *Psycho*, in which we see Marion's car being pulled out of the swamp, is thus a kind of Hitchcockian equivalent to the blood re-emerging out of the toilet bowl – in short, this swamp is another in a series of entrance-points to the pre-ontological Netherworld.)

And is not the same reference to the pre-ontological Underworld operative also in the final scene of *Vertigo*? In pre-digital times, when I was in my teens, I remember seeing a poor copy of *Vertigo* – its last seconds were simply missing, so the movie appeared to have a happy ending, Scottie reconciled with Judy, forgiving her and accepting her as a partner, the two of them passionately embracing … My point is that such an ending is not as artificial as it may seem: it is rather in the actual ending that the sudden appearance of the Mother Superior from the staircase below functions as a kind of negative *deus ex machina*, a sudden intrusion in no way properly grounded in the narrative logic, which prevents the happy ending. Where does the nun appear from? From the same pre-ontological realm of shadows from which Scottie himself secretly observes Madeleine in the florist's. It is the reference to this pre-ontological realm that allows us to approach the quintessential Hitchcockian scene which was never shot – precisely because it renders the basic matrix of his work directly, its actual filming undoubtedly would have produced a vulgar, tasteless effect. Here is this scene that Hitchcock wanted to insert in *North by Northwest*, as reported in Truffaut's conversations with the Master:

> I wanted to have a long dialogue between Cary Grant and one of the factory workers [at a Ford automobile plant] as they walk along the assembly line. Behind them a car is being assembled, piece by piece. Finally, the car they've seen being put together from a simple nut and bolt is complete, with gas and oil, and all ready to drive off the line. The two men look at

each other and say, 'Isn't it wonderful!' Then they open the door of the car and out drops a corpse.[29]

Where did this corpse emerge, fall, from? Again, from the very void from which Scottie observes Madeleine in the florists's – or, from the void from which blood emerges in *Conversation*. (One should also bear in mind that what we would have seen in this long shot is the elementary unity of the *production process* – is then the corpse that mysteriously drops out from nowhere not the perfect stand-in for the surplus-value that is generated 'out of nowhere ' through the production process?) This shocking elevation of the ridiculously lowest (the Beyond where shit disappears) into the metaphysical Sublime is perhaps one of the mysteries of Hitchcock's art. Is not the Sublime sometimes part of our most common everyday experience? When, in the midst of accomplishing a simple task (say, climbing a long flight of stairs), we are overwhelmed by an unexpected fatigue, it all of a sudden appears as if the simple goal we want to reach (the top of the stairs) is separated from us by an unfathomable barrier and thus changed into a metaphysical Object forever out of our reach, as if there is something which forever prevents us from accomplishing it… And the domain where excrement vanishes after we flush the toilet is effectively one of the metaphors for the horrifyingly-sublime Beyond of the primordial, pre-ontological Chaos into which things disappear. Although we rationally know what goes on with excrement, the imaginary mystery nonetheless persists – shit remains an excess which does not fit our daily reality, and Lacan was right in claiming that we become human the moment we develop concerns about how to handle excrement, the moment it turns into an excess that annoys us. The Real in the scene from *Conversation* is thus not primarily the horrifyingly disgusting stuff re-emerging from the toilet bowl, but rather the hole itself, the gap which serves as the passage to a different ontological order. The similarity between the empty toilet bowl before the remainders of the murder re-emerge from it and Malevich's *Black Square on White Surface* is significant here: does the look from above into the toilet bowl not reproduce almost the same 'minimalist' visual scheme, a black (or, at least, darker) square of water enframed by the white surface of the bowl itself? Again, we, of course, know that the excrement which disappears is somewhere in the sewage network – what is 'real' here is the topological hole or torsion which 'curves' the space of our reality so that we perceive/ imagine excrement as disappearing into an alternative dimension which is not part of our everyday reality.

What can architecture do here? One of the possible things is to re-include this excluded space in a domesticated form. With its 509 metres above ground, the Taipei 101 Tower of Taiwan is the tallest building on earth; since Taiwan is often hit by typhoons, the problem was how to control the swinging when the building is exposed to strong winds. The solution was an original one: to reduce lateral vibrations, a gigantic steel ball weighing 606 tonnes is suspended from the 92nd floor, reaching down to the 87th floor; the ball is connected to pistons which drive oil through small holes,

thus damping vibrations. What makes this solution especially interesting is that it is not treated as a hidden construction secret: it is publicly displayed as the building's main attraction. That is to say, while the ball occupies the central open space between the 92nd and 87th floor, the outside space close to windows was used as the site of a magnificent restaurant: on one side of the table, one can look through the glass at the panorama of the city, while on the other side, one can see the gigantic ball gently swinging… This transparency is, of course, a pseudo-transparency, like the stalls in big food supermarkets where food is prepared in front of our eyes (fruit is squeezed into juice, meet and vegetables are fried…).

And one should generalize this approach: the basic lesson of psychoanalysis is that the limits of what we experience as 'external reality' are always determined by a certain fantasmatic frame; if a traumatic shock is too intense, this frame explodes and we experience a loss of reality. This excessive intensity can concern enjoyment as well as pain: when sexual enjoyment is excessive, it blurs the contours of reality; when we see a terrifying scene of torture, our sense of reality also disintegrates – we are entering a space which is properly inhuman. Gilles Deleuze often varies the motif of how, in becoming post-human, we should learn to practise 'a perception as it was before men (or after) […] released from their human coordinates':[30] those who fully endorse the Nietzschean 'return of the same' are strong enough to sustain the vision of the 'iridescent chaos of a world before man.'[31] Although Deleuze resorts here openly to Kant's language, talking about the direct access to 'things (the way they are) in themselves', his point is precisely that one should subtract the opposition between phenomena and things-in-themselves, between the phenomenal and the nolumenal level, from its Kantian functioning, where noumena are transcendent things that forever elude our grasp. What Deleuze refers to as 'things in themselves' is in a way *even more phenomenal* then our shared phenomenal reality: it is the impossible phenomenon, the phenomenon that is excluded from our symbolically constituted reality. The gap that separates us from noumena is thus primarily not epistemological, but practico-ethical and libidinal: there is no 'true reality' behind or beneath phenomena, noumena are phenomenal things which are 'too strong', too intens(iv)e, for our perceptual apparatus attuned to constituted reality – epistemological failure is a secondary effect of libidinal terror, i.e., the underlying logic is a reversal of Kant's 'You can, because you must!': 'You cannot (know noumena), because you must not!' Imagine someone being forced to witness a terrifying torture: in a way, the monstrosity of what he saw would make this an experience of the noumenal impossible-real that would shatter the co-ordinates of our common reality. (The same holds for witnessing an intense sexual activity.) In this sense, if we were to discover films shot in a concentration camp among the *Musulmänner*, showing scenes from their daily life, how they were systematically mistreated and deprived of all dignity, we would have 'seen too much', the prohibited, we would have entered a forbidden territory of what should have remained unseen. This is

also what makes it so unbearable to witness the last moments of people who know they are shortly going to die and are in this sense already living-dead – again, imagine if we had discovered, among the ruins of the Twin Towers, a video camera that had magically survived the crash intact and was full of shots of what went on among the passengers of the plane in the minutes before it crashed into one of the towers. In all these cases, we would have effectively seen things as they are 'in themselves', outside human co-ordinates, outside our human reality – we would have seen the world with inhuman eyes. (Maybe the US authorities do possess such shots and, for understandable reasons, are keeping them secret.) It is against this background that one should also locate Claude Lanzman's famous statement that, if, by chance, he were to stumble upon some documentary shots depicting the actual process of killing the Jews in Auschwitz, he would have destroyed them immediately – here we find Jewish iconoclasm at its purest, as the prohibition of showing the pictures of the raw Real.

The basic lesson of psychoanalysis is thus that our world is never one: reality is non-All, i.e., what we experience as reality is always based on complex exclusions. Primo Levi reports that it was not possible for him to experience his life in Auschwitz and his civil life before and after as parts of the same social reality: when he was in the camp, the only way to survive was to accept the reality of the camp as the only reality, and to relate to the previous civil life as to a vague dream, something not quite real. (Symmetrically, after the release from the camp, the camp life was instantly de-realized, experienced as something which 'couldn't really happen'.) This is how we survive in our miserable lives: we de-realize parts which are unbearable.

What this means is that the dialectic of semblance and Real cannot be reduced to the rather elementary fact that the virtualization of our daily lives, the experience that we are more and more living in an artificially constructed universe, gives rise to the irresistible urge to 'return to the Real', to regain the firm ground in some 'real reality'. The Real which returns has the status of a(nother) semblance: *precisely because it is real, i.e. on account of its traumatic/ excessive character, we are unable to integrate it into (what we experience as) our reality, and are therefore compelled to experience it as a nightmarish apparition*. This is what the captivating image of the collapse of the WTC was: an image, a semblance, an 'effect', which, at the same time, delivered 'the thing itself'. This 'effect of the Real' is not the same as what, way back in the '60s, Roland Barthes called *l'effet du réel*: it is rather its exact opposite, *l'effet de l'irréel*. That is to say, in contrast to the Barthesian *effet du réel* in which the text makes us accept as 'real' its fictional product, here, the Real itself, in order to be sustained, has to be perceived as a nightmarish unreal specter. Usually we say that one should not mistake fiction for reality – recall the postmodern doxa according to which 'reality' is a discursive product, a symbolic fiction which we misperceive as a substantial autonomous entity. The lesson of psychoanalysis is here the opposite one: *one should not mistake reality for fiction* – one should be able to discern, in what we experience as fiction, the hard kernel of the Real which we

are only able to sustain if we fictionalize it. In short, one should discern which part of reality is 'transfunctionalized' through fantasy, so that, although it is part of reality, it is perceived in a fictional mode. Much more difficult than to denounce-unmask (what appears as) reality as fiction is to recognize in 'real' reality the part of fiction.

One should therefore turn around the standard reading according to which the WTC explosions were the intrusion of the Real which shattered our illusory Sphere: the contrary, it is prior to the WTC collapse than we lived in our reality, perceiving Third World horrors as things that were not effectively part of our social reality, as things that existed (for us) as a spectral apparition on the (TV) screen – and what happened on September 11 is that this screen fantasmatic apparition entered our reality. It is not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality (i.e., the symbolic co-ordinates which determine what we experience as reality).

So, back to postmodern architecture, the ambiguously 'meaningful ' form into which the building is wrapped – often a primitive mimetic symbolism, like the entire building resembling an animal (turtle, bird, bug…) – is not an expression of its inside, but just imposed on the stuff. The link between form and function is cut, there is no causal relationship between the two, i.e., form no longer follows function, function no longer determines form, and the result is a generalized aestheticization. This aestheticization reaches its climax in today's performance-arts venues whose basic feature is the gap between skin and structure. Which are the basic architectural versions of this gap? The non-expressive zero-level is presented in some of Koolhaas's buildings, like the above-mentioned Library of France: the envelope is simply a neutral enormous box that, in its interior, houses the multiple functional spaces which 'hang within their enormous container like so many floating organs'. (It is the same with many shopping malls contained within grey rectangular boxes.)

Some of Liebeskind's projects (exemplarily the Wohl Centre at the Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel) reflect the gap between the protective skin and the inner structure as 'skin' itself: the same external form (enormous box) is multiplied, relying on the contrast between the straight vertical/horizontal lines and the diagonal lines of external walls. The result is a hybrid effect, as if the same building is a condensation of two (or more) asymmetrical cubes – as if the same formal principle (a cube box) was applied on different axes. A weird tension and imbalance, a conflict of principles, are thus directly inscribed into the form, as if the actual building lacks a single anchoring point and perspective.

The next step is the minimal aestheticization of the external container: it is no longer just a neutral box, but a round shell protecting the jewel inside. Formally, the contrast between outside and inside is usually the contrast between the roundness of the skin and the straight lines of inner structures – a round envelope (an egg-like cupola) envelops the box-like vertical-horizontal buildings inside, like the 'giant teacups' of the Oriental Art Centre in Shanghai, or, by the same architect (Paul Andreu), the National Grand Theatre of

China in Beijing with its giant metal-glass cover, an eggshell protecting the performance buildings. Kinder Surprise, one of the most popular chocolate products on sale in Europe, is an empty eggshell made of chocolate and wrapped up in lively coloured paper; after one unwraps the egg and cracks the chocolate shell open, one finds in it a small plastic toy (or small parts from which a toy is to be pieced together) – one can effectively claim that the National Grand Theatre of China is a gigantic Kinder Surprise egg. This logic of protecting the jewel reaches its climax in the project for the new Mariinski Theatre in St Petersburg: the functional box-like theatre building in black marble (an eighteenth-century sprawling palace) is cocooned by a freestanding irregular glazed structure, a 'lamella'.

The aestheticization of the 'skin' culminates in the so-called 'sculptural Gehry buildings' where the outside shell enveloping the functional inside is no longer just a shell, but a meaningful sculpture of its own (the Performing Arts Center at Bard College, whose skin is a curved aluminium bug-cockroach form; or the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, with its curved metallic forms without windows; or the Jay Pritzker Pavillion in Chicago Millenium Park, which tries to achieve the 'Bilbao effect', i.e., to create a vibrant public space in the midst of the city's concrete jungle, akin to the effect achieved with the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao). One should also mention here the Tenerife Auditorium in Santa Cruz, whose skin looks like a giant sea bird trapped by the encroaching half-moon (or sickle) like wing.

There is yet another variation on this gap between skin and content – the so-called 'terrain buildings where the building's surface-skin is constructed as a direct continuation of the surrounding terrain, with undulations of a hill covered by grass, etc. (recalling the hobbits' dwellings in *The Lord of the Rings*). The Yokohama International Port Terminal (designed by Foreign Office Architects) is exemplary of these terrain buildings: an open public space whose roof functions as an open plaza, continuous with the surface of the nearby park. 'Rather than developing the building as an object or figure on the pier, the project is produced as an extension of the urban ground', is how the designers themselves described their work. The Yokohama Terminal can thus be seen as the extreme case where, in a way, the whole inside of the building is reduced to the interstitial space between the skin/envelope (the green or wooden surface) and the body of the earth, squeezed in the flattened domain between the two. Not surprisingly, the actual effect of such buildings is the very opposite of the intended 'naturalization' (seamless immersion into natural environs): nature itself is thereby de-realized, i.e., it appears as if the 'natural surface of grass is an artificial skin concealing a complex machinery.

And, to conclude, the relationship between outside and inside can also be turned around, as in the case of Tate Modern in London, where a decaying, old, abandoned, derelict megalith (power station) is retained as the exterior envelope, with all internal walls and floors totally restructured and modernized. (The same goes for the Eastgate Theatre and Arts Center in Peebles, Scotland:

of the big old disused church, only the Victorian Gothic facade was kept, while the main body behind was rebuilt in modern glazing style.)

The very relationship between urbanism and architecture is thus to be historicized: it changes with postmodernism, where the difference is progressively blurred: postmodern buildings tend to function as their own urban spaces (like parks inside malls, these self-contained capsule-worlds).[32] In this way, the public space is privatized to such an extent that it potentially suspends the very dialectical tension between private and public. A shopping mall building is like a box with a world inside, separated from the outside by a plain grey wall or by dark glass panels which just reflect the outside, providing no insight or hint of what goes inside.

The ideologico-political investment of such venues becomes even clearer when they are raised in a town caught into a (not only political) battle. On 28 October 2008, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the Simon Wiesenthal Center could continue building its long-planned Center for Human Dignity – Museum of Tolerance on a contested site in the middle of Jerusalem. (Who but) Frank Gehry had designed the vast complex, consisting of a general museum, a children's museum, a theatre, conference centre, library, gallery and lecture halls, cafeterias, etc. The museum's declared mission is to promote civility and respect among different segments of the Jewish community and between people of all faiths – the only obstacle (overrun by the Supreme Court's ruling) being that the museum site served as Jerusalem's main Muslim cemetery until 1948 (the Muslim community appealed to the Supreme Court, declaring that the museum's construction would desecrate the cemetery, which allegedly contained the bones of Muslims killed during the Crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries).[33] This dark spot wonderfully enacts the hidden truth of this multi-confessional project: it is a place celebrating tolerance, open to all… but protected by the Israeli cupola which ignores the subterranean victims of intolerance – as if one needs a little bit of intolerance to create the space for true tolerance.

And as if this is not enough, as if one should repeat a gesture to make its message clear, there is another, even vaster, similar project going on in Jerusalem: Israel is quietly carrying out a $100 million, multi-year development plan in the so-called 'holy basin,' the site of some of the most significant religious and national heritage sites just outside the walled Old City, as part of an effort to strengthen the status of Jerusalem as its capital.[34] 'The plan, parts of which have been outsourced to a private group that is simultaneously buying up Palestinian property for Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem, has drawn almost no public or international scrutiny'. As part of the plan, garbage dumps and wastelands are being cleared and turned into lush gardens and parks, now already accessible to visitors who can walk along new footpaths and take in the majestic views, along with new signs and displays that point out significant points of Jewish history – and, conveniently, many of the 'unauthorized' Palestinian houses have to be erased to create the space for the redevelopment of the area. The 'holy basin' is an infinitely complicated

landscape dotted with shrines and still hidden treasures of the three major monotheistic religions, so the official argument is that its improvement is for everyone's benefit – Jews, Muslims and Christians – since it involves restoration that will draw more visitors to an area of exceptional global interest that has long suffered neglect. However, as Hagit Ofran of Peace Now noted, the plan aimed to create 'an ideological tourist park that will determine Jewish dominance in the area'. Raphael Greenberg of Tel Aviv University put it even more bluntly: 'The sanctity of the City of David is newly manufactured and is a crude amalgam of history, nationalism and quasi-religious pilgrimage […[ the past is used to disenfranchise and displace people in the present.' Another big Religious Venue, a 'public' inter-faith space under the clear domination and protective cupola of Israel…

The central semiotic mystery of performance-arts venues is the mystery of this redoubling: why a house within a house, why does a container itself have to be contained? Does not this (sometimes freakish) display of inconsistency and excess not cry out loudly, functioning as a symptom – a message encoded in this mess? What if this redoubling renders the 'contradiction' of public space which is privately controlled, of a sacred space of art which should be open to profane amusement? A close analysis of the 'envelope' that encompasses (a) building(s) brings us to the same result. Alejandro Zaera Polo's ongoing work on the concept of the architectural envelope is focused on the border between outside and inside, instead of on the internal organisation of the inside: he defines 'envelope' as the membrane which separates the Inside of a building from its Outside.[35] As such, the envelope (the outward appearance of a building volume) is the oldest and most primitive architectural element, it materializes the division between exterior and interior and is therefore automatically politically charged. In his detailed elaboration, Zaera Polo distinguishes four typological forms: flat horizontal, flat vertical, vertical and spherical/cubic; each type possesses a number of features which make it suitable for representations and functions which can be linked to certain social and political effects. However, more interesting than these detailed differentiations is the way Zaera Polo grounds the notion of the envelope in a very precise idea of late-capitalist dynamics based on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Peter Sloterdijk.

Zaera Polo's starting point is what one is tempted to call 'neo-capitalist Deleuzianism' (no jibe intended). Deleuze and Guattari proposed a certain conceptual network – the opposition between molecular and molar, production and representation, difference and identity, nomadic multitude and hierarchic order, etc. – within which one pole is the generative force and the other its shadowy representation: multitude is productive, and is as such reflected in a distorted way in the theatre of representation. To put it in a brutally simplified way, the problem is: how does this network relate to capitalism? There are two opposite answers. Deleuze and Guattari's own is a Marxist one: even if capitalism is a force of 'de-territorialization', of unleashing the productivity of the multitude, this productivity remains constrained within the confines of a

new 're-territorialization', that of the capitalist frame of profit which encloses the entire process; only in Communism will the nomadic productivity of the multitude be fully unleashed. The opposite answer is the one of the advocates of the post-'68'new spirit of capitalism': it is Marxism itself which remains caught in the totalizing-representational logic of the Party-State as the unitary agent regulating social life, and it is capitalism which is today the only effective force of nomadic molecular productivity… Paradoxically, one should admit that there is more truth in the second answer: although Deleuze and Guattari are right in conceiving the capitalist frame as an obstacle to fully unleashed productivity, they commit here the same mistake as Marx himself, ignoring how this obstacle is (like the Lacanian *objet a*) a positive condition of what it enframes, so that, by way of abolishing it, we paradoxically lose the very productivity it was obstructing. Zaera Polo is thus justified in inscribing his Deleuzianism into the capitalist side:

> There are two basic forms of political structures that have historically organized exchange and flow of resources, skills and command structures in time and space: markets and bureaucracies. They are the two domains where architects may try to construct their agency. Within the global economy the market has become predominant as a mechanism of organization capable of integrating a larger number of agents in its processes within a shorter time. Bureaucracies are organizations of power which are based on a hierarchical totality operating in stable conditions for extended periods of time and can hardly survive the pace of change and level of complexity required by a global economy. While within bureaucracies the agents and their relationships are fixed over time, markets are organizations that organize power through a complex and constantly changing set of agents and factors. As the form of political organization better suited to integrate ever expanding domains, the market is a powerful force behind the failure of ideology and utopia as effective political devices, as they would require a centralized power if they were to be implemented. The market is probably a better milieu to articulate the current proliferation of political interests and the rise of micro-politics. [ … ] Those advocates of ideology who hope for a return to a state-driven, ideologically-enlightened society as a remedy to the miseries of the market economy and as an alibi for the reconstruction of a representative, significant, even utopian architecture would do well to remember the miseries of bureaucracies and consider how possible institutional interventions can be channelled through the huge machine of markets to prevent them from becoming sclerotic.[36]

Consequently, one should drop all anti-market ideological utopianism and fully endorse the fact that the global market 'is the primary milieu of contemporary architectural politics' – one should operate within the system of global capitalism. How? The main feature of globalization is the hitherto unheard-of unleashing of the powers of de-territorialization – the process described long ago by Marx in the famous passage from *The Communist Manifesto*: 'All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all

that is holy is profaned…'[37] This, however, does not mean that everything is gradually turning into a formless social slime: de-territorialization itself creates the need for new modes of delimitation, which are no longer the old hierarchic fixed walls, but the multiplicity of 'envelopes', 'bubbles', containers of liquid reality:

> Globalization has propelled a set of spatial typologies primarily determined by the capacity to conduct flow. Architects have tried to engage with this borderless space, the 'space of flows', by dissolving the envelope as an obstacle to flow and spatial continuity and presenting an image of the world as a chaotically flowing magma. However a new picture is emerging in the form of bubbles and Information Technology, Economic foams, containers of a liquid reality.[38]

Here enters Peter Sloterdijk and his monumental *Spheres* trilogy: far from advocating a return to pre-modern containment, Sloterdijk was the first to propose what one can call 'provincialism for the global era':

> the world as a foamy space filled with bubbles and balloons of different scales and qualities. This capsular society and its phenomena such as global provincialism, the politics of climatization and the social uteri describe a new paradigm that requires not just a reconsideration of the technologies and economics of the building envelope, but of its political, social and psychological implications.[39]

So what are the political implications of the 'current appetite for the envelope as a device of insulation and immunization'? Zaera Polo is well aware that the interior of a building is thoroughly determined by the demands for efficiency, etc.; his wager is that the envelope – in its independence from the functional inside – can function as a potential space of freedom, of aesthetic autonomy, purveying its own message:

> While most other aspects of the architectural project are now in control of other agents (e.g. project managers, specialist contractors) that ensure the efficiency of the project delivery, the increasing facelessness of the client gives architects license to invent the building's interface. The envelope has become the last realm of architectural power, despite the discipline's inability to articulate a theoretical framework capable of structuring its renewed importance. Mobilizing a political critique of the envelope capable of addressing its multiple attachments

> and complexities may enable us to frame architecture not merely as a representation of the interests of a client, of a certain political ideology or an image of utopia, but as

> an all-too-real, concrete, and effective political agency able to assemble and mediate the interests of the multiplicities that converge on the architectural project.[40]

In contrast to the old radical politics tending to act as a single agency with the goal to undermine the System, the new efforts to enact a redistribution of power work at a sub-political level of local interventions:

> Instead of resorting to predefined and all-encompassing political ideologies or utopian references to frame the practices of architecture, we aim to map possible correlations between architectural strategies and political effects in order to mobilize the discipline on a sub-political level. The question now is not whether certain architecture is aligned to the right, to the left or to a certain political party – as in earlier embodiments of architectural politics – but rather what architectural strategies may trigger effects on the distribution of power. [ … ] There is a growing number of new forms of political action which herald both the emergence of different political qualities (such as affects) and domains (such as everyday life). Contemporary politics are giving way to a new wave of powerful material habitats, artificial environments, artificial organizations, belongings and attachments, which are literally redefining political surroundings in which we are and co-exist. Both governmental agencies and corporate organizations are moving toward multiple layers of governance with intensified connections between them. [ … ] As a result, the challenge to power can only be selective and a division of political labour has to be addressed by multiple disciplines operating independently and simultaneously [ … ] A singular politics of resistance is no longer capable of challenging contemporary forms of instituted power.[41]

However, as Zaera Polo has to admit, apart from the (relative) aesthetic and political autonomy it provides (and the obvious environmental function), the envelope also serves as a security device: 'The design of spherical envelopes has consequently focused recently on the construction of the surface itself, both as an environmental and security device and as the locus of symbolic representation.' The security task here is not the same as that of the traditional building walls protecting the inside from external dangers: the fateful difference is that the envelope secures a privatized public space: 'A more permeable definition of the property boundary is more likely to effectively accommodate a fluid relationship between private and public *in an age when the public realm is increasingly built and managed by private agents'* (emphasis added). So, from the Deleuzian poetry of fluid de-territorialization, we are back to the task of how to enact and protect the (private) enclosure of public spaces. If traditional architecture was an attempt to enclose the inside from the outside, today it often tries to enclose the outside itself, i.e., to create a protected/screened outside, separated from the 'wild' outside. The envelope which isolates a (set of) building(s) is thus the urban-architectural version of the enclosure of the commons: not only the interior of a house, its exterior itself is cordoned off and 'climatized' – not only with regard to heat and air quality, but also with regard to the undesired presence of potentially 'toxic' subjects:

> Sloterdijk's 'politics of climatization' points to a process in which growing sectors of urban space are given to private agents to develop and maintain:

gardeners, event managers and private security agents are part of the design of these atmospheres. Koolhaas' junkspace is another description of the same phenomenon of sanitization of ever-larger areas of the city, providing a safe environment, assuming we are prepared to surrender police duties to private security services.[42]

This tendency reached its peak (for the time being, at least) in the 'Crystal Island' project in Moscow, recently announced by Norman Foster – '2.5 million square meters under a single envelope, the world's biggest building, approximately five times the size of the Pentagon building. The project is described as an example of sustainability, able to improve the environmental performance of the building by swallowing ever larger areas of the city under a single envelope designed to enhance natural ventilation and daylight.'[43] The official 'progressive' ideology and politics (like New Labour in the UK) like to celebrate such projects as models of the 'revitalization' of decaying city centres; however, Zaera Polo is right to ask the question 'whether this is actually a regeneration of the urban centres, as New Labour claims, or whether it is the takeover of the inner cities by a sort of alien organization with air-conditioning and private security'.[44] This brings us to the social antagonism these buildings try to resolve. On the one hand, to build a performing-arts venue rates 'as a holy grail for architects': 'Unlike the more conventional types of buildings, such as offices, housing and even civic architecture, which have to conform to the streetscape, a performing-arts venue can afford to be bold and unusual, to stand out'.[45] However, this space for creative freedom is counteracted by the demand for the building's multi-functionality – venue managers cannot 'simply rely on performances themselves to provide a sufficient attraction; the building must create an "experience" and a "sense of place" for its increasingly demanding audience. It is with such intangibles that events can really win against home entertainment. Thought must be given to all aspects of a visit, from the foyers and bars to the facilities and ease of access'.[46] This demand, however, is not merely financial but profoundly ideological – it reflects a 'cultural tension':

> The perception that public funds are being spent on 'elitist' buildings has always been an Achilles heel for these projects, leaving them open to attacks from all quarters, and in today's more transparent and politically correct society it is the issue of inclusion more than any other that has influenced the design of contemporary performing spaces. As a result, the performing-arts venue has had to be redefined for the twenty-first century. The new generation of buildings must be part of the public realm, with access to only the core areas being restricted by the requirement for a ticket. These venues include public activities within and around the complex, attracting a wider range of visitors.[47]

This constant effort to counteract the threat of 'elitism' signals a series of oppositions with which performance-arts buildings deal: public/private, open/restrained, elite/popular … all variations on the basic motif of class struggle (which, we are told, no longer exists in our societies). The space of these

oppositions delineates the problem to which performance-arts buildings are solutions. However, one should be very precise about how the class reference functions. The 'class' connotation as it is encoded in cultural 'ways of life' can often turn around the explicit political connotation – recall how, in the famous presidential TV debate in 1959 responsible for Nixon's defeat, it was the Leftist Kennedy who was perceived as upper-class patrician, while the Rightist Nixon appeared as his lower-class opponent. And the same reversal goes on today, when the opposition of liberal-Left feminists and conservative populists is also perceived as the opposition between upper-middle-class feminists and multiculturalists and lower-class rednecks. Rightwing populism endlessly plays this card: the Politically Correct care for sexual and racial minorities is really an upper-middle-class affair promoted by people out of touch with the real concerns of ordinary workers. In this populist universe, the lower-class hard-working people, patriotic, ethnically homogeneous, religious, are opposed to the cosmopolitan upper classes favouring abortion, ecology, health food, feminism …

Is this Right-populist version of class struggle can be read as a simple mystification of the fact that Kennedy stood for the Left and Nixon for the Right. However, one can also claim that Kennedy – who, in his public statements, presented himself as Nixon's progressive-liberal opponent – signalled by his life-style-features that he is an upper-class patrician? The truth is a more complex one: the Right-populist advocacy of the lower classes signals the limitation of Left liberalism. Liberals who are appalled at the fundamentalist rancour of Rightist populism are getting back from them their own message in its inverted (true) form: the lower-middle-class fundamentalism, this scarecrow of progressive liberals, is the symptom of what is false in liberal openness.

Claude Lévi-Strauss mentions one of the native American tribes whose members claim that all dreams have a hidden sexual meaning – all *except the overtly sexual ones*: here, precisely, one has to look for another secret meaning. The same goes for class antagonism: every non-class issue (ecological, feminist, racist …) can be interpreted through the reference to class antagonism, except the direct reference to class antagonism, which (because it is a necessarily distorted displacement of the 'true' antagonism) needs a reference to another antagonism. When Buchanan 'codes' in class terms his opposition to multiculturalism and feminism, his racism, etc., when Nixon was perceived as 'low class' against Kennedy's 'upper class', etc., here the very direct class reference functions as a false screen, dissimulating the true link between class antagonism and the issue at stake (feminism, racism …). What this means is that – in Hegelese – class struggle encounters itself in its oppositional determination (*gegensaetzliche Bestimmung*), in its distorted/displaced form, as one among the social struggles. And, in exactly the same the way 'anti-elitist' populism in architecture is the mode of appearance of its opposite, of class differences.

So how does the anti-elitist architecture of performance-arts venues fit these co-ordinates? Its attempt to overcome elitist exclusivity fails, since it reproduces the paradoxes of upper-class liberal openness – its falsity, the failure to achieve its goal, is the falsity and limitation of our tolerant liberal capitalism. The effective message of the 'political unconscious' of these buildings is *democratic exclusivity*: they create a multi-functional egalitarian open space, but the very access to this space is invisibly filtered and privately controlled. In more political terms, performance-arts venues try to enact *civic normality in a state of emergency (exception)*: they construct an 'open' space which is cocooned, protected and filtered. (This logic is brought to extreme in shopping malls in some Latin-American countries, well protected by security personnel armed with machine guns.) Their 'openness' is as fake as the 'production process' artificially staged in some food stalls in shopping malls where food or fruit juice is prepared right in front of the customer's eyes, as mentioned earlier.

As such, performance-arts venues are utopian spaces which exclude *junkspace*:[45] all the foul-smelling 'leftovers' of the city space. To use a term coined by Deleuze, a contemporary big city is a space of 'disjunctive inclusion': it *has to include* places whose existence is not part of its 'deal-ego', i.e., which are *disjoined* from its idealized image of itself. The paradigmatic (but by far not the only) such place are slums (*favelas* in Latin America), places of spatial deregulation and chaotic mixture, of architectural 'tinkering/*bricolage*' with found materials. (It would have been really interesting to study in detail big suburban slums as an architectural phenomenon with a wild aesthetic of their own.) In between these two extremes – the 'self-conscious' architecture meant to be noted and observed as such, as exemplified by performance-arts venues, and the spontaneous self-organization of the junkspace – there is the large, mostly invisible domain of 'ordinary' architecture; thousands of 'anonymous' buildings, from apartment blocks to garages and shopping malls, which are meant just to function, not to be noted in the press or architectural journals. Should we be surprised to discover how these three modes of architecture fit three big strata of our societies: the managers, lawyers, show personalities and other top 'immaterial workers', (whatever remains of) the ordinary working class and the excluded (those living in slums).

Performance-arts venues function as exceptions: artificial islands of meaning in our meaningless existence, utopian enclosures sticking out from the ordinary reality of our cities. As such, they unite the opposites: they are sacred and profane, like secular churches – and the way a visitor relates to them is with a mixture of sacred awe and profane consumption. They evoke awe with their majestic sublime features, but the object of this awe is again ambiguous: is it High Art whose temples they are or capitalist Corporations which stand behind them? Hal Foster was right in his remark that

> the individuality of [Gehry's] architecture does seem more exclusive than democratic. Rather than 'forums of civic engagement,' his cultural centers appear as sites of spectacular spectatorship, of touristic awe. […] Such is

the logic of many cultural centers today, designed, alongside theme parks and sports complexes, to assist in the corporate 'revival' of the city – its being made safe for shopping, spectating and spacing out.[46]

This brings us to what is false about the anti-elitism of performance-arts venues: it is not that they are secretly elitist, it is their very anti-elitism, its implicit ideological equation of great art with elitism. Difficult as it may sometimes be for the broad public to 'get into' Schoenberg or Webern, there is nothing 'elitist' about great art – great art is by definition universal-emancipatory, potentially addressing us all. When, in 'elite' places like the old Met in New York, the upper classes attended an opera performance, their social posturing was in blatant contrast to the works shown on the stage – to see Mozart and the rich crowd as belonging to the same space is an obscenity. There is a well-known story from the early years of the Met, when a high-society lady, one of the opera's great patrons, arrived late, half an hour into the first act; she demanded that the performance be interrupted for a couple of minutes and the light turned on so that she could inspect the dresses of the other ladies with her binoculars (and, of course, her demand was granted). If anything, Mozart belonged to the poor in the upper stalls who spent their last dollars to see opera. Far from making the exclusive temple of high art more accessible, it is the very surroundings of expensive cafeterias, etc., that are effectively exclusive and 'elitist'. Recall what Walter Benjamin wrote about the Garnier opera palace in Paris: the true focus of the opera house was not the performance hall but the wide open staircase on which high-society ladies displayed their fashion and gentlemen met for a casual smoke – this social life was the true focus of opera life, 'what it really was about'. In the terms of Lacan's theory, if the play on stage was the enjoyment that made the public come, the social game that went on on the staircase before the performance and during the intermissions was the fore-play that provided the *plus-de-jouir*, the surplus-enjoyment making it worth coming. (Bringing this logic to its absurd extreme, one can imagine a building which would consist *only* of a gigantic circular staircase, with elevators taking us to the top, so that what is usually just a means, a path to the true goal, would become the main purpose – one goes to such a building to take a slow walk down the stairs… Does the Guggenheim Museum in New York not come pretty close to it, with the art exhibits *de facto* reduced to decorations destined to make the long walk more pleasant?[47]) And the same also holds for today's performance-arts venues – the truth of their democratic anti-elitism is the cocooning protective wall of the 'skin'. It is this additional protective 'skin' which is responsible for the effect of the Sublime generated by these buildings. Jameson

> used the vast atrium of the Bonaventura Hotel in Los Angeles designed by John Portman as a symptom of a new kind of architectural Sublime: a sort of hyper-space that deranges the human sensorium. Jameson took this spatial delirium as a particular instance of a general incapacity to comprehend the late capitalist universe, to map it cognitively. Strangely, what Jameson offered as a *critique* of postmodern culture many architects

(Frank Gehry foremost among them) have taken as a *paragon*: the creation of extravagant spaces that work to overwhelm the subject, a neo-Baroque Sublime dedicated to the glory of the Corporation (which is the Church of our age). It is as if these architects designed not in contestation of the 'cultural logic of late capitalism' but according to its specifications.[48]

In short, even such a perspicuous critic as Jameson was too naïve here: what the cultural critic discerns through painful analysis is openly admitted in and by the object of his critique… There is, however, another question to be raised here: but why should our human sensorium not be deranged? Is such deranging also not a way to awaken us from our daily ideological slumber? There is a very simple but trenchant dilemma that confronts us here: if we live in alienated-commodified society, what should architecture do? Make us aware of alienation by making us feel uncomfortable, shocked and awed, or provide a false semblance of a nice life which obliterates the truth? For Nikos Salingaros, the pursuing of formal or critico-ideological concerns instead of adapting to nature and to the needs of ordinary human beings defines 'bad architecture' which makes people uncomfortable or physically ill. Salingaros' targets were the postmodern star architects who emphasized meaning at the expense of the concrete experience of the people who use buildings. Let us take Bernard Tschumi – from the premise that there is no fixed relationship between architectural form and the events that take place within it, he drew a socio-critical conclusion: this gap opens up the space for critical undermining. Architecture's role is not to express an extant social structure, but to function as a tool for questioning that structure and revising it. Salingaros' counter-argument would have been: should we then make ordinary people uncomfortable and ill at ease in their buildings just to impose on them the critico-ideological message that they live in an alienated-commodified and antagonistic society? Koolhaas was right to reject what he dismissively calls architecture's 'fundamental moralism', and to doubt the possibility of any directly 'critical' architectural practice – however, our point is not that architecture *should* somehow be 'critical', but that it *cannot not* reflect and interact with social and ideological antagonisms: the more it tries to be pure and purely aesthetic and/or functional, the more it reproduces these antagonisms.

Is there a way out of this deadlock? There is no easy way out, for sure. The first step is, of course, the shift of focus from the 'great' symbolic projects of star architects like performance-arts venues (which are meant to be 'noted') to the 'anonymous' buildings growing up everywhere and in which the large majority of the people will spend almost all of their time: a true revolution would have been to change something here, in the way these 'anonymous' projects are conceived and enacted. (In the same way, cinema theorists have noted that a true revolution in cinema is not to be found in eccentric shots or camera movements meant to be noted as such, like Hitchcock's famous crane shots, but in the transformation of how an everyday conversation between two characters is shot.) There are some interesting attempts in this direction,

like the works of the Lacaton & Vassal tandem in France, whose goal is to halve the price of a building per square unit and to return to the density of housing in ancient crowded European towns, which involves much less energy for temperature regulation and transport of the inhabitants (see their architectural school building in Nantes, a low-price multifunctional building – school, local musical centre, space for community reunions – but multifunctional in a way which is totally different from the celebrated 'multifunctionality' of the representative performance-arts venues).

But even the performance-arts venues open up new and unexpected possibilities. There is an interesting new phenomenon which emerges with the assertion of the gap between skin and structure – an unexpected interstitial space. Something similar happened long ago in modern painting – one of the minimal definitions of modernist painting concerns the function of its frame. The frame of the painting in front of us is not its true frame; there is another, invisible, frame, the frame implied by the structure of the painting, the frame that enframes our perception of the painting, and these two frames by definition never overlap – there is an invisible gap separating them. The pivotal content of the painting is not rendered in its visible part, but is located in this dis-location of the two frames, in the gap that separates them. This dimension in-between-the-two-frames is obvious in Malevich (what is his *Black Square on White Surface* if not the minimal marking of the distance between the two frames?), in Edward Hopper (recall his lone figures in office buildings or diners at night, where it seems as if the picture's frame has to be redoubled with another windowframe – or, in the portraits of his wife close to an open window, exposed to sun rays, the opposite excess of the painted content itself with regard to what we effectively see, as if we see only the fragment of the whole picture, the shot with a missing counter-shot), or in Munch's *Madonna* – the droplets of sperm and the small foetus-like figure from *The Scream* squeezed in between the two frames.

Do we not find something similar in some of the performance-arts venues, like the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia, where the same third space is generated? Its two halls are like 'two jewels in a glass case', covered by a gigantic roof: arching over all the structures is 'the vast vaulted roof of folded steel and glass creating a spectacular indoor-outdoor experience'.[49] Beneath the vault, on the top of boxes, there are terraces with greenery, located in this space between inside and outside. There are furthermore open entries on both sides, 'creating a sheltered extension of the sidewalk outside, and blurring the distinct between the city and the outside'.[50] This 'open space inside', this outside which is inside, open to access, is full of cafes, free puppet shows, etc. The same holds for the Esplanade National Performing Arts Centre in Singapore: above the buildings there is a giant metal-glass round half-ball, fish-like 'skin', a 'buffer zone, or bio-climactic environment, that would moderate the climate between the fully conditioned and sealed environments of the two major black-box performance spaces and the ever-changing external environment'.[51] This 'interstitial space' opened

up by the 'disconnection between skin and structure' plays a crucial role: 'For many, the real magic of this building is the dramatic sense of place in the 'leftover' spaces between the theatres and the enclosure. The curvaceous shapes of these public areas are the by-products of two separate design processes – those of the acoustic- and logistic-driven performing zones, and the climactic- and structure-driven envelope.'[52] Is this space which offers not only exciting viewing areas of inside and outside, but also hidden corners to stroll or rest, not a potential utopian space?

One of the names for this interstitial space between the skin and content of a building is *poche* (French for 'pocket'). *Poche* primarily refers to plans or maps of a building that have materials completely blacked in, to get a better idea of the geometry of the physical space by outlining it; more generally, it refers to all the 'uncanny' spaces which are ignored in the overall scheme of a building.[53] There is, however, a much more specific meaning of the term specified by the Badiouian term 'subtraction': the thickening of walls to create a 'subtractive space'; this space is created by carving through a large wall, cutting halls and chambers into it. *Poche* allows for the creation of unique movements through a building; it is useful not only for the shaping of the floor plan of a structure, and for the design of both the roof and floor; it also allows us to cut through a structure horizontally to create a visually pleasing flow of movement (say, a way to get light into a structure would be to cut through the thick roof, leaving slits that admit light). To put it in clumsy Hegelese, *poche* reflects the dialectic of envelope and body into the thickened envelope itself: the envelope itself is blown into the body out of which additional interiors are carved. This is why *poche* can also be inverted in a *virtual poche* which appears to have the large thickness of 'poched walls' but is actually void: if '*poche*' designates the carving of halls and chambers into an actual thick wall, 'virtual *poche*' stands for a spatial disposition of (normal thin) walls which creates the illusion that the space delineated by these walls is enveloped by (or carved into) a thick wall.

The notion I propose here is exaptation, introduced by Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin.[54] There are two types of exaptations: (1) adaptations that initially arose through natural selection and were subsequently co-opted for another function (co-opted adaptations); (2) features that did not arise as adaptations through natural selection but rather as side effects of adaptive processes and that have been co-opted for a biological function (co-opted spandrels). Gould's favourite example is the human chin, whose presence is an incidental consequence of the differential growth rate of two bones in the lower jaw. The dentary bone, which carries the teeth, elongates more slowly than the jawbone itself, so the chin juts out. In our ape-like ancestors the jawbone grew more slowly so no chin developed.

What should draw our attention here is that Gould and Lewontin borrowed the architectural term 'spandrel' (using the pendentives of San Marco in Venice as an example) to designate the class of forms and spaces that arise as necessary by products of another decision in design, and not as adaptations

for direct utility in themselves. In architecture, the prototypical spandrel is the triangular space 'left over' on top, when a rectangular wall is pierced by a passageway capped with a rounded arch. By extension, a spandrel is any geometric configuration of space inevitably left over as a consequence of other architectural decisions. Thus, the space between the floor and the first step of a staircase or the horizontal course between the lintels of a horizontal line of windows and the bottom of the row of windows on the floor just above are also called spandrels. By generalization, a spandrel is any space necessarily and predictably shaped in a certain way, and not explicitly designed as such, but rather arising as an inevitable side consequence of another architectural decision (to pierce a wall with a rounded arch, to build a stair at a certain height from the floor, to construct a multistoreyed building with windows in rows). The spaces between the pillars of a bridge can subsequently be used by homeless persons for sleeping, even though such spaces were not designed for providing such shelter. And as church spandrels may incidentally become the locus for decorations such as portraits of the four evangelists, so anatomical spandrels may be co-opted for uses that they were not selected for in the first place.

In Hitchcock's films, we find the same visual or other motif that insists, imposing itself through an uncanny compulsion and repeating itself from one film to another, in totally different narrative contexts. Best known is the motif of what Freud called *Niederkommenlassen*, 'letting [oneself] fall down', with all the undertones of a melancholic suicidal fall[55] – a person desperately clinging by his hand onto another person's hand: the Nazi saboteur clinging from the good American hero's hand from the torch of the Statue of Liberty in *Saboteur*; in the final confrontation of *Rear Window*, the crippled James Stewart hanging from the window, trying to grab the hand of his pursuer who, instead of helping him, tries to make him fall; in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (remake, 1955), in the sunny Casablanca market, the dying Western agent, dressed as an Arab, stretching his hand towards the innocent American tourist (James Stewart) and pulling him down towards himself; the finally unmasked thief clinging onto Cary Grant's hand in *To Catch a Thief*; James Stewart clinging onto the roof funnel and desperately trying to grasp the policeman's hand stretching towards him at the very beginning of *Vertigo*; Eva Marie-Saint clinging onto Cary Grant's hand at the edge of the precipice (with the immediate jump onto her clinging to his hand in the sleeping car's berth at the end) in *North by Northwest*. Upon a closer look, we become aware that Hitchcock's films are full of such motifs. There is the motif of a car on the border of a precipice in *Suspicion* and in *North by Northwest* – in each of the two films, there is a scene with the same actor (Cary Grant) driving a car and dangerously approaching a precipice; although the films are separated by almost 20 years, the scene is shot in the same way, including a subjective shot of the actor casting a glance at the precipice. (In Hitchcock's last film, *The Family Plot*, this motif explodes in a long sequence of a car that rushes down a hill, since its breaks have been meddled with by the villains.) There is the motif of the '*woman* who knows too

much', intelligent and perceptive, but sexually unattractive, with spectacles, and – significantly – resembling or even directly played by Hitchcock's own daughter, Patricia: Ruth Roman's sister in *Strangers On a Train*, Barbara Bel Geddes in *Vertigo*, Patricia Hitchcock in *Psycho*, and even Ingrid Bergman herself prior to her sexual awakening in *Spellbound*. There is the motif of the mummified skull which first appears in *Under Capricorn* and finally in *Psycho* – both times, it terrifies the young woman (Ingrid Bergman, Vera Miles) in the final confrontation. There is the motif of a Gothic house with tall stairs, with the hero walking up the stairs only to encounter a room where there is *nothing*, although he previously saw a feminine silhouette in the first-floor window: in *Vertigo*, it is the enigmatic episode of Madeleine seen by Scottie as a silhouette in the window and then inexplicably disappearing from the house; in *Psycho*, it is the appearance of the mother's silhouette in the window – again, bodies which appear out of nowhere and disappear back into the void. Furthermore, the fact that in *Vertigo* this episode remains unexplained opens up the temptation to read it in a kind of *futur anterieur*, as already pointing towards *Psycho*: is the old lady who is the hotel clerk of the house not a kind of strange condensation of Norman Bates and his mother, i.e. the clerk (Norman) who is at the same time the old lady (mother), thus giving in advance the clue on their identity, which is the big mystery of *Psycho*? *Vertigo* is of special interest, insofar as, in it, the same *sinthom* of the spiral that draws us into its abyssal depth repeats itself and resonates at a multitude of levels: first as a purely formal motif of the abstract form emerging out of the close-up of the eye in the credits sequence; then as the curl of Carlotta Valdes' hair in her portrait, repeated in Madeleine's haircut; then as the abyssal circle of the staircase of the church tower; and, finally, in the famous 360-degree shot around Scottie and Judy-Madeleine who are passionately embracing in the decrepit hotel room, and during which the background changes to the stable of the Juan Batista Mission and then back to the hotel room; perhaps, this last shot offers the key to the temporal dimension of 'vertigo' – the self-enclosed temporal loop in which past and present are condensed into two aspects of the same endlessly repeated circular movement. It is this multiple resonance of surfaces that generates the specific density, the 'depth' of the film's texture.

Here we have a set of (visual, formal, material) motives which 'remain the same' across different contexts of meaning. How are we to read such persisting gestures or motifs? One should resist the temptation to treat them as Jungian archetypes with a deep meaning – the raising hand in Wagner expressing threat of the dead person to the living; or the person clinging to another's hand expressing the tension between spiritual fall and salvation… We are dealing here with the level of material signs which resists meaning and establishes connections which are not grounded in narrative symbolic structures: they just relate in a kind of pre-symbolic cross-resonance. They are not signifiers, neither the famous Hitchcockian stains, but elements of what, a decade or two ago, one would have called cinematic writing, *ecriture*. In the last years of his teaching, Jacques Lacan established the difference between

*symptom* and *sinthom*: in contrast to symptom, which is a cipher of some repressed meaning, sinthom has no determinate meaning – it just gives body, in its repetitive pattern, to some elementary matrix of *jouissance, of excessive enjoyment* – although sinthoms do not have sense, they do radiate *jouis-sense* [enjoy-meant]. And is something similar not going on in creative architecture? Do spandrels not open up the space for architectural ex-aptations? And does this procedure not expand into buildings themselves, where church or train station can be ex-apted into an art gallery, etc.?

Are, then – back to our main line – the 'interstitial spaces' opened up by the 'disconnection between skin and structure' in performance-arts venues not such spandrels, functionally empty spaces opened up for exaptation? The struggle is open here – the struggle for who will appropriate them. These 'interstitial spaces' are thus the proper place for utopian dreaming – they remind us of architecture's great politico-ethical responsibility: much more is at stake in design than it may appear. Recall William Butler Yeats' well-known lines:

> I have spread my dreams under your feet, Tread softly because you tread
> on my dreams.

They refer also to architecture, so my warning to architecture is: when you are making your plans, tread softly because you tread on the dreams of the people who will live in and look at your buildings.

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## Notes

1  One should mention here Brigitte Reimann's *Franziska Linkerhand* (first published after the author's death in 1974, but in a censored form), a classic of German Democratic Republic literature: a true anti-*Fountainhead*, the struggle of a young woman architect to construct buildings which would be livable for ordinary people.

2  See Kojin Karatani's *Transcritique. On Kant and Marx* (Cambridge, MA, 2003).

3  Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): pp. 104-110.

4  Henri Bergson, *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1970): pp. 1110-1111.

5  Bergson, *Oeuvres*, p. xxxx.

6  Bergson, *Oeuvres*, p. 1340.

7  Hal Foster, 'Why All the Hoopla?', in the *London Review of Books* (23 August 2001).

8  Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, 1991): p. 276.

9    Jameson, *Postmodernism.*

10   See a detailed description of this passage in Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 2005).

11   Quoted from http://www.starbucks.com/retail/ethoswater.asp.

12   In his short novel *The Pyramid* (London, 1996), Ismail Kadare underpins this symbolic function with a real one. The novel begins with the Pharaoh Cheops announcing to his advisors that he does not want to build a pyramid like his predecessors. Alarmed by this suggestion, advisors point out that pyramid building is crucial to preserving his authority: some generations earlier, prosperity made the people of Egypt more independent, and they began to doubt and resist the Pharaoh's authority. When Cheops sees the need to ruin this prosperity, his advisors examine different ways to radically diminish prosperity: engaging Egypt in a large war with its neighbours; artificially provoking a big natural catastrophe (like disturbing the regular flow of Nile and thus ruining agriculture), but they are all rejected as too dangerous (if Egypt loses the war, the Pharaoh himself and his elite may lose power; natural catastrophe may expose the inability of those in power to control the situation and thus generate chaos). So they return to the idea of building a pyramid so large that its construction will mobilize the resources of the country and drain the prosperity out of Egypt – sapping the energies of its populace will keep everyone in line. The project puts the country into an emergency state for two decades, with the secret police busy discovering sabotages and organizing Stalinist-style arrests, public confessions and executions. The novel concludes with a report on how the Pharaoh's wise and ingenious insight was practised again and again throughout later history, most recently and originally in Albania where, instead of one big pyramid, thousands of bunkers did the same job…

13   The key components of *juche* are 'independence in politics' (*chaju*), 'self-sustenance in economy' (*charip*) and 'self-defence in national defence' (*chawi*). First formulated in 1955, in 1972, *juche* replaced Marxism-Leninism in the revised North Korean constitution as the official state ideology: in clear contrast to Marxism, *juche* ideology maintains that Koreans are a blood-based national community, that the Korean nation-state will remain forever, and that Koreans will always live in Korea and speak Korean. No wonder the writings of classical Marxism are generally forbidden for ordinary readers in North Korea; no wonder also that Michael Koth, the leader of the small pro-North-Korean *Partei der Arbeit Deutschlands* ('Labour Party of Germany') later moved towards neo-Nazi positions.

14   See the report 'Alternate Universe', in *Newsweek* (30 July 2007): pp. 36-45.

15   See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (New York, 1971): p. 176 ff.

16   Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (1981), new edition (London, 2002): p. 63.

17   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, pp. 63-64.

18   See Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, 1986).

19   See Jacques Rancière, *Hatred of Democracy* (London, 2007).

20   Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, pp. 179-180.

21   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious,* p. 64.

22   Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* , p. 64.

23   Fredric Jameson, 'Historicism in *The Shining*', Available online at http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/amk/doc/0098.html.

24   Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Do Dual Organizations Exist?', in *Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963): pp. 131-163; the drawings are on pp. 133-134.

25   See Rastko Mocnik, "Das 'Subjekt, dem unterstellt wird zu glauben" und die Nation als eine Null-Institution', in H. Boke (ed.), *Denk-Prozesse nach Althusser*, (Hamburg, 1994).

26   Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York, 1994): p. 135.

27   Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, p. 136.

28   Jameson, *The Seeds of Time*, p. 135.

29   François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York, 1985): p. 257.

30   Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis, 1986): p. 122.

31   Deleuze, *Movement Image*, p. 81.

32   One is tempted here to conceive the triad of urbanism-architecture-design as a Hegelian triad of the Universal, Particular and Singular, where architecture is the mediator, drawing the line of separation between the outer space (the domain of urbanism) and inner space (whose arrangement is the domain of design or inner decoration).

33   See Tom Tugend, 'Israel Supreme Court OKs Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem project', *The Observer* (29 October 2008).

34   See Ethan Bronner and Isabel Kershner, 'Parks Fortify Israel's Claim to Jerusalem', *New York Times* (9 May 2009).

35   Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope. A Political Critique of Materialism', *ArchiNed* 17: pp. 76-105.

36   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 103.

37   Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985): pp. 83-84.

38   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p 78.

39   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p 78.

40   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 79.

41   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 102.

42   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 84.

43   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 84.

44   Zaera Polo, 'The Politics of the Envelope', p. 85.

45   Michael Hammond, *Performing Architecture: Opera Houses, Theatres and Concert Halls for the Twenty-First Century* (London and New York, 2006): pp. 24-25.

46   Hammond, *Performing Architecture*, p. 25.

47   Hammond, *Performing Architecture*, p. 26.

48  A term coined by Rem Koolhaas – see his 'Junkspace', in Rem Koolhaas / OMA, *Content* (Cologne, 2004): pp. 166-167.

49  Hal Foster, 'Why All the Hoopla?'

50  Incidentally, for the same reason, I find skiing stupid: why climb to the top of a hill just in order to slide down to the starting point? Is it not better to stay down and, say, read a good book?

51  Hal Foster, 'The ABCs of Contemporary Design,' *October* 100 (Spring 2002): p. 191.

52  Foster, 'The ABC's', p. 42.

53  Foster, 'The ABC's', p. 42.

54  Foster, 'The ABC's', pp. 65-67.

55  Foster, 'The ABC's', p. 67.

56  See Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge, 1994).

57  See Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin, 'The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm: A critique of the Adaptationist Programme', (1979), reprinted in *The Richness of Life: The Essential Stephen Jay Gould* (New York, 2007).

58  See Sigmund Freud, 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,' *The Pelican Freud Library*, vol. 9, *Case Histories II* (Harmondsworth UK, 1979): p. 389.

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# Botanizing the Bonaventura: Base and Superstructure in Jamesonian Architectural Theory

*Terry Smith*

Jameson's best-known evocation of architecture is his famous description – in his 1984 essay 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' – of the disorienting effects of the interior of the Bonaventura Hotel, Los Angeles, which he takes to be definitive of the experience of postmodernity. While concentration on a broadly shared, and in principle generalizable, experience of the users of buildings and cities is essential when one is attempting to define a cultural phenomenon, an equally persistent, and arguably more interesting, theme in his writing about architecture is his puzzlement about how architectural thinking – the designs of actual architects and urban planners, especially those Deconstructivists who complicate his general theory of postmodernism – might be read in relation to larger historical transformations, above all the changes in capitalism over recent decades. The challenge in attempting such readings, of course, is that the set of forces that he identifies as postmodernity might have – indeed, must have – shifted the grounds on which such readings may be made. Even more: in postmodernity, the 'base' may have changed in character, and so (by necessity or not) may the 'superstructure' – indeed, even Raymond Williams' famous modification of Marxist cultural theory, itself a sign of modernity's instability, may no longer be adequate in the circumstances.[1] While no one matches Jameson in exploring the implications of these relationships as manifest in literature, and perhaps more arguably film, what happens when his focus is the visual arts, especially architecture, the art form and social practice that he repeatedly identifies as key to his conception of postmodernity? In pursuit of this question, I will explore a range of Jameson's key essays on architecture written at the same time and subsequent to his 'cognitive mapping' of postmodernity during the mid-1980s.

## Learning from Los Angeles

Just before the conclusion to 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', Jameson launches a seven-page analysis of John Portman's Westin Bonaventura Hotel, built between 1974 and 1976 in downtown Los Angeles, as his ultimate, clinching example of that logic in 'full-blown' operation. His key argument is that the building – and a number of others like it by postmodern architects – represents 'a mutation in built space itself', a new kind of 'hyperspace' that invites us to experience it as a member of a 'new and historically original kind of hypercrowd'.[2] Close reader that he is, Jameson takes us to the building on foot, noting that it looms as a mirrored presence, seemingly nothing in itself but an array of reflections of the city around it. Searching in vain for a clearly signified entrance, he concludes that the building wants to manage the transition from outside by obliging us to ignore or repress that experience in favor of delivering ourselves to whatever we might encounter inside, assuming that to be the opposite of the city we have just left, indeed, that it will be a 'minacity' in its own right, host to its own, instantly-generated 'hypercrowd'. Once inside, we are quickly thrown into the central atrium, to be dazzled by its most conspicuous feature, the elevators. Naming Portman an 'artist' in his use of this feature, and citing Portman's own description of them as 'gigantic kinetic sculptures', Jameson sees them as a people-moving device that, along with the ubiquitous escalators, perform a qualitatively new, postmodern kind of operation upon modernist presumption about spatial movement: 'Here the narrative stroll has become underscored, symbolized, reified, and replaced by a transportation machine which becomes the allegorical signifier of the older promenade that we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own: and this is a dialectical intensification of the autoreferentiality of all modern culture, which tends to turn in on itself and designate its own cultural production as its content.'[3]

  Two characteristic features of Jameson's critical practice are on display here. First, his openness (of mind, body, even heart, but always imagination) to whatever it is that the cultural phenomenon is placing before him, however immediately repellant (ideologically, politically, viscerally) aspects of it might seem. Second, the equally-present awareness and admission of the presumptions that are brought by all of us to new experience – in his case, as for most of us, those that have been learnt during the years of modernity's triumph, within which our preferred, or most aspirational, cultural responses were those taught by high-modernist artistic practice. Measuring new experience against these deeply internalized aesthetic instincts allows him to register them as continuations, variations, internal (avant-gardist, say) challenges to that regime, or, in this case, as encounters with something different in kind. They could be, then, harbingers of a historical shift, a deep change not simply in architectural style, but in society at large. If the dazzling elevators can be read as an intensification of a core modernist experience,

it is what happens when you step out of them that strikes him as the new, postmodern experience.

> I am more at a loss when it comes to conveying the thing itself, the experience of space you undergo when you step off such allegorical devices into the lobby or atrium, with its great central column surrounded by a miniature lake, the whole positioned between the four symmetrical residential towers with their elevators, and surrounded by rising balconies capped by a kind of greenhouse roof at the sixth level… What happens when you get there is something else, which can only be characterized as milling confusion, something like the vengeance this space takes on those who will still walk through it. Given the absolute symmetry of the four towers, it is quite impossible to get your bearings in this lobby; recently, color-coding and directional signals have been added in a pitiful and revealing, rather desperate attempt to restore the coordinates of an older space.[4]

This experience leads directly to his major conclusion,

> that this latest mutation in space – postmodern hyperspace – has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment – which is to the initial bewilderment of the older modernism as the velocities of spacecraft are to those of the automobile – can itself stand as a symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communication network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects.[5]

Jameson concludes this passage with a final illustration: the recollections of a fear-addled, drug-fueled Vietnam veteran as evoked in Michael Herr's novel *Dispatches*. These, he implies, echo the way all of us experience 'postmodern hyperspace'.

If these remarks seem strange to us now – over-wrought, partial or merely quaint – this is a function of the fact that any account of what is now a 35-year-old building (including one written ten years after its event) has inevitably been shaped for us by our everyday experience of what has turned out to be a huge flood of similar structures. It only adds to Jameson's analysis to point out the extremities to which such spaces have been taken in recent decades elsewhere in the world, above all in the 'tiger towers' of the Asian economic boom (many of them built by Portman's firm, now led by John Portman Jr.)[6] Yet it is legitimate to ask whether identifying 'symbol and analogon' as the causal connector between base and superstructure is methodologically adequate to the claim that 'the cultural logic of late capitalism', in the forms it was taking at the time, is successfully identified in this essay, and in these examples.

If the style of argument in 'Postmodernism' seems at times odd, choppy, this is because Jameson's openness to the phenomena – a necessary condition

of any critical practice – risks mimicry of its structures, or, in this case, of postmodernist art's deliberate lack of fixed frameworks. Sometimes the flow of text imitates what Jameson himself described as postmodernism's typical 'practice of fragmentation within the picture – diptych framing, sequential collage, scissored images, which it may be best to term *screen segmentation* – as it is practiced in what I am tempted to call the base-and-superstructure features of David Salle'.[7] Only he would be so tempted. Artist after artist during this period emphasized that they were producing work that existed at the level of its surfaces only; that there was, precisely, no base, only superstructure. This highlights his (of course Marxist) enterprise: to identify a materialist causality in action, however fractured, mixed or reversed it might now be. Cognitive mapping is the only possible antidote to late capital's wild ride.

Those readers with strong visual arts knowledge were puzzled at the time by his choice of examples and his positioning of them relative to the larger forces in play. Van Gogh's shoes – an early, anything but modernist painting by a rank outsider – as 'one of the canonical works of high modernism?'[8] The late, celebrity-ridden Andy Warhol's deadpan, ironic double-takes, in works such as *Diamond Dust Shoes*, read as 'powerful and critical political statements'? This is immediately followed by a tetchy comment: 'If they are not that, then one would surely want to know why, and one would begin to wonder a little more seriously about the possibilities of political or critical art in the postmodern period of late capital.'[9] Given the swingeing battles over precisely this issue that had for over ten years riven art worlds everywhere, and given that works such as this one by Warhol featured in those debates as exact examples of art that was *not* political or critical, that dismissed even the relevance of such terms, to 'wonder a little' seemed to be out of touch. How precise, then, were his readings of architecture?

### The Renaissance Parachutes into Detroit

I want to address this question, not in distanced retrospect, but by revisiting a near-contemporary commentary on Portman's 1977 Renaissance Center, Detroit, that I wrote in 1986 as the centerpiece of an essay on that city.[10] Not to claim it as in any sense a better account of what was at stake (it is not, no way), rather, to show what a closely similar engagement with the same set of issues looked like at the time. My essay, moreover, was written with a fresh awareness of Jameson's argument, yet from within an immersion in a city so devastated by its recent history that postmodernist architecture hit it like a spaceship from Mars.

An even more extreme instance of what Jameson was describing, at 73 stories the Renaissance Center's hotel core was twice the height of the Bonaventura. It was the tallest in the world at opening and is still the tallest hotel outside of Asia and the Arab Emirates. Around this core Portman strung a shopping center, restaurants, banks, brokerage firms, a movie-theater

and a number of private clubs, plus four mixed-use office towers. When I visited it I had just completed my dissertation and was undertaking further research towards what became the book *Making the Modern: Industry, Art and Design in America*.[11] My study of the visual cultures of mass-production, mass-consumption capitalism in the US in the first 40 years of the twentieth century – a sequence of interlinked case studies that spun out from Albert Kahn's 1908 Ford Motor Co. plant at Highland Park, Detroit, to the New York World's Fair of 1939-40 – pitted US actual functionalism against the symbolic type imported from Europe, and argued for the emergence then spread of a vernacular, as distinct from an International Style, modernism in art, architecture and design during those years. Against then fashionable declarations of epochal transformation, especially the vacuous celebration of 'American hyperreality' by Jean Baudrillard and others, I argued that just-in-time risk-taking was at the heart of the Ford enterprise, while manipulating the simulacra was being invented by the nascent advertising industry – in other words, postmodernism's much celebrated, supposedly after-modern features were already present in the engine rooms of twentieth-century modernity. These insights into 'the complex and multiple visual cultures of modernity' in the first half of the twentieth century made me skeptical about claims that 'we have arrived at a condition somehow beyond modernity and its problematics'.[12]

My essay, 'Black Swan in the City…Detroit, first week of August, 1986', was interleaved with extracts from my travel diary, paraphrases of chapters in *Making the Modern* on Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, poems by quintessential Detroiter Glen Mannisto and other fragments. After evocations of the city's pre-industrial past, and its booming industrial phase, one passage records the impact of Portman's building as we saw it from the riverfront: 'As the Renaissance Center swings into view it falls, shockingly, into the gestalt of one of the ideal cities envisioned by the most brilliant of Malevich's Vhkutemas students, Yakov Chernikov. Where else but in the capital city of capitalism at its point of collapse would one expect to find materialized the utopia so intensely dreamed of at the height of the Russian Revolution, in the exact form which expressed so precisely the open future of socialism about-to-be? Never original but always new, capitalist modernity yet again shows off what it does best: recruit the critical, the real, the idealism of opposition. Who else but Ford Motor Co., master manufacturer of an earlier modernity, here seeking revival as a property developer by replaying the Revolution (*whose* revolution?). Or is it just a transitional coping with crisis: during the Great Depression, Ford Co. survived principally on the huge fees it charged Soviet Russia to set up an automobile and tractor industry. Albert Kahn Inc. also made millions there. So the Revolution helped these two monoliths survive a rupture that destroyed many others; is it happening again, on the level – this time – of the symbolic? The Renaissance Center reduces the ultramodern to a look.'

This passage reads the Center first as an erudite, but empty, historical gesture, that is, as historicist. An architectural historical simulacrum, staggering in its disrespect for its source…or, I half-presumed, maybe the developer, and perhaps even the architect, were ignorant of it? No matter: the point was to erect something that looked like the future. If the only way to envisage the future was in Buck Rogers, Krypton, Metropolis terms, then why not go for it, whole hog, connotations be damned, bright and shiny, bold as brass? My Foucaultian groping for a way of seeing this design as a gesture embedded in history, real history, as grounded in a form of production, however strange, continues in the next paragraph: 'In Chernikov's dream socialism was a glass city, because the absolute equity of all relationships meant that all were equally transparent to every gaze. When the Revolution turned Stalin-sour, transparency meant exposure to state inspection, peer policing, and self-automation: Zamyatin saw through this straight away, in *We*, and Orwell followed. From inside the towers of the Renaissance Center one can see out – to Detroit Garden City, but mostly into the other towers. How better to keep the bees buzzing than to have them watch each other frantically at it! When someone falls invisible – their cell stilled for a day or two whilst movement around it stirs, visibly – are they not quickly replaced by someone stirring similarly? These stacked tubes are factories for the production of information about production (the material kind, occurring elsewhere) and about information about its own flows (the informational kind). They are also, above all, conduits through which this flow can be regulated by a kind of observation that sees the flow against a grid of points at which surplus value may be extracted. Their shapes echo the steel chimneys, coking ovens, blast furnaces, storage bins (but not the processing sheds) of industry. An abstract echo (via the Revolutionary dream that Fordism plus electricity plus the Soviets would equal Socialism), so abstract that the connotation is lost. Only one brand name intrudes into this forest of anonymity, and it is one replete with ironies given the history of capital in Detroit: Manufacturers Bank. Now, from outside, the shining city of the river is opaque to the gaze; it does not even reflect is own towers, nor the buildings around it. It lacks even this chameleon-like dependency, it replays only the general light conditions, saying nothing about its environment as weather or history. It relates to its context primarily as a photo-opportunity.'

Obviously, I had in mind the landscape of the Ford Plant at the River Rouge, Dearborn, a few miles away, as conjured by Charles Sheeler in the early 1930s and countless others since. But I had also been there, and had for the book imagined it (as Rivera did, so intensely) as a place of work, so there is a crude attempt to read the Center not simply as a place of leisure but as a work site, where real labor, albeit of a new kind, is undertaken. My next notes show that I had read Jameson's essay (and Hal Foster's *Anti-Aesthetic*) but was skeptical, if admiring, of both: 'Nothing about the outside look of the Renaissance Center tells the approaching voyager what happens inside it: anything could, or it could be a (non) thing-in-itself. Form fails to articulate function – or it speaks

the abstraction of function differently. Has modernism mostly fudged such articulations? Promised them, rung resonantly with the rhetoric of them, like a bell struck just right? Whatever happened to processional entranceways? You have to get into the Center (of what? where?) wherever you can. It's not even a building, is it? It's an agglomeration, you finally get in and you're lost right away, everything's different, they've even got these people standing in just about every blind spot to tell you where you are and you still don't know. G. had to put money in the meter and it took him *forty-five minutes* to get back to the summit. Then he left his notebook in the restaurant, had to go all the way back up again, cut twenty-five minutes off it this time. It's crazy. Detroit reborn? The reassertion of the same reach for an always expansive, infinitely self-replicating global order, just like Ford Co. tried in its heyday at the Rouge? Or is it a nostalgic echo of that domain of invention, via the abstractions that it promulgated in the 1930s, in the motor company pavilions at the Chicago and New Work World Fairs? Or is it the dawn of a new creativity, a productivity of in this case of such symbolic density that it blinds all who enter it? Is not such a radical disorientation the sign of something new and necessary? So novel, in fact, that it cannot be expected to have its own shapes: can't you see that Portman's new originality just is his plagiarism of Chernikov? Does not post-industrial consumer capital finally triumph in spaces such as these? Jameson has alerted us to our need to adjust to such experiences if we are to be "of our time," if we wish to pass through the needle's eye from reactionary to resistant postmodernism. Wow!'

Ironic exaggeration: I am resisting Jameson here, acknowledging his concluding appeal for a no-illusions 'cognitive mapping' (a state reached *after* accepting the impact of the illusion, distant within it *as it happens* – Baudelaire's modernist double *par excellence*) but switching it into Foster's resistant knowingness. Yet there is also a glimpse of the need for something more. 'Portman's creativity is touched here and there by a laudable desire for the remarkable. There are some lines of sight between columns, across water, through drapes, past wall edges that let us see ourselves moving (walking, escalating, being conveyed) like the passages of the eye through a High Cubist Picasso. Painted seventy-five years ago. Or, more accurately, like the Underground Population Center in John Vassos' *Ultimo* of 1930 – but without his political anger. And here is the basic concept of turning a building inside out, "enclosing" a "foyer" with an "exterior" courtyard, his design signature. Somewhere here is an indication of a social formation more fundamental (?) than the "modernism"/'postmodernism" distinction: the *de*securing movements of international travel space, the global proliferation of environments of transience, channels of mobility, furrows for the dispersal of desire, redolent with the sensuality of pampered suggestiveness and the anxiety of the promise of unpredictability.'

At exactly this time Marc Augé was training his anthropological gaze, refined in the Ivory Coast, on the defined spaces of Paris (the Luxembourg Gardens) and, more importantly, its 'non-spaces'.[13] In a similar vein, my essay

kept returning to the actuality of the site, and to the experience of repeat visits, something that Jameson – in this sense, a residual modernist – does not presume. They were not so disorienting really, especially if you approach, as most visitors do, by car. His insistence on walking to the Bonaventura and walking through it as a visitor, not a guest, is to move against its grain anyway. Nowadays, conference hotels everywhere are like this: the older-style ones, such as the New York Hilton, are less successful in this regard. By returning to such places, if we must, we work out familiar pathways within this disorientation, we learn that this is the kind of environment in which power is insisting that we subsist. Indeed, at the Renaissance Center we soon make out that the ground plan of the building is a diagram of just such a space. 'Portman's design actually contains only one disorienting device: all around the base structure of the hotel of the building he has strung this hotelized zone (of which the hotel itself is only a section), a basically simple circling field that must be crossed before the towers yield up their already well-known secrets. But even this limited, ultimately pleasant experience proved too much for the other necessity of capital: after the disruptions which throw us into a state of consumer receptivity, we must be brought to the exact focus of the point of exchange, the handing over of money. So false walls are added to create an orthodox hotel entry, four colors code sections of each particular foyer; signs imply a regularity of towers above, maps are handed out like confetti, the huge columns are clad in bands of garish brightness, information booths appear everywhere. Whatever was "postmodern" about the space has been riveted to the illusion of domesticity (creating, according to the guides, even greater confusion). This is the counter-movement of modernity itself – the evocation of the archaic other, the persistent replay of the past, the mobilization of nostalgia, the conquering of the ordinary domains of normalcy. A double-bind best seen in the layout of almost every American house: "ultramodern" in the kitchen and bathroom, "period" in the front of the house, mixed use in the rooms between. Familiarity, in the U.S.A. today, must have at least this density of difference.'

Again, the theme of complication: modernity's doubling is old now, well practiced and, however fundamentally self-destructive, it will absorb such feeble gestures as 'postmodernism'. Jameson echoes and updates Benjamin, implying that Portman's buildings are the arcades of late modernity, late capital: they prefigure a new, economic, social, political, cultural (dis)order. Not the modernism that was coming into being in Benjamin's time, and so splendidly embodied (he thought, following Giedion) in Le Corbusier, but its epochal replacement by a postmodernity to come. Less optimistic, I argued that: 'There is more to modernity now that the *de*securing movement of international space and its constant companion, the *in*securing thrust of the local/particular/familiar/homely. This couple has wrestled together for so long that it has become full of counter-shifts, odd mixtures of commitment, everyday aberrations: on Thursday, the Center thronged with the Happy Families of delegates to the Pentecostal Assembly of America – these folk

seemed quite at home. And the opposite seems, now, also true: that both these movements lack, now, any real hopes for the future, for persistence beyond mere hope, any goals "in the end," a teleology, a paradise/utopia of arrival, even a sense that things will stay the same. Nor is there anything else: these worlds without end are the only options, and they have ceased to be options to each other.'

This modernity was, I felt, already in a terminal state, one that would last forever, in eternal contemporaneity with itself. Jameson was describing his experience of the relationship between center and suburbs in Los Angeles, at the beginning of a burgeoning that has since made it a global city.[14] Something that has not happened in Detroit, to put it mildly. My essay was illustrated with views of the Renaissance Center from just those non-places, from the wastelands that still border downtown, photographs taken by S. Kay Young. It concludes with this passage: 'The Renaissance Center has become a color-coded white elephant on the edge of town, a shining swan blinded by its own temporary, increasingly tacky brilliance. It has failed to capture the City, to obliterate all other images of it in its opaque promise of revival. The City itself exists in the interstices between the Renaissance Center and Highland Park, framed by freeways, tied by the strung-outs lots of guerilla space, torn by failed dreams of global control and by the evident impossibility of achieving an everyday life tolerable to most of its inhabitants. Detroit has become the black swan of broken metaphor, turning all of us who love her into tourists, bewitching us with the proof that the possible happens only elsewhere, making the getting through the day a kind of fire drill for the holocaust, throwing life in any other sort of town into a relief of smoldering dreariness, drawing us back…a life, a city: what else could there be?'[15]

Subsequent changes at the Renaissance Center have occurred as a result of fitful efforts at renascence. Two additional office towers opened in 1981. In 2004 General Motors, that had bought the Center in 1996, added a five-story retail wintergarden, bringing the total floor area of the complex to 515,800 square meters. These changes reflect what is by now the widespread acceptance of mixed-use cities-within-a-city (especially within those that have become, on a broader scale, dysfunctional). The color-coded guides are no longer necessary at the Renaissance Center precisely because users of these spaces, consumers of them, have been trained in the routines that Jameson, by no means alone at the time, found so disorienting. However, the users are not, primarily, the people of Detroit, but those visiting the city en route to other, similar centers, where they will find a by now quite familiar mode of 'disorientation'. These centers are nodal points on that 'great global multinational and decentered communication network', so difficult to map in 1984 for many, yet easy even then for some already eager subjects of globalization, but now they offer little challenge to most of us. We have learnt our places in the recurrent go-round of globalized no-place.[16]

## The Modern Movement and Ideologies of Space

This bleak prognosis connects us to the other conception of architecture that haunts 'postmodernism' like an absent specter: modernism, or more precisely the Modern Movement in architecture understood as a modernist architectural ideology.[17] Jameson's understanding of the Modern Movement, it seems obvious, took as its deepest (but also deeply problematic) touchstone the writings of the Movement's most trenchant Marxist critic, Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri. The latter's *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (1976) ends with sentiments such as these:

> Indeed, the crisis of modern architecture is not the result of 'tiredness' or 'dissipation.' It is rather a crisis of the ideological function of architecture. The 'fall' of modern art is the final testimony of bourgeois ambiguity, torn between 'positive' objectives and the pitiless self-exploration of its own objective commercialization. No 'salvation' is any longer to be found in it: neither wandering restlessly in the labyrinths of images so multivalent that they end in muteness, nor enclosed in the stubborn silence of geometry content with its own perfection.[18]

Peter Eisenman and Aldo Rossi are only the most obvious among the targets here.[19] It follows that the only role for architectural criticism – an essential and to Tafuri 'political' one – is a systematic critique of the ideologies accompanying the history of capitalist development: 'Today, indeed, the principal task of ideological criticism is to do away with impotent and ineffectual myths, which so often serve as illusions that permit the survival of anachronistic "hopes in design".'[20] Adornesque negativity meets modernist wishful thinking, with potentially incapacitating results for both, as Jameson argued in his most sustained treatment of Tafuri, a 1985 essay 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology'.[21]

'How can space be "ideological"?' This is the question Jameson posts as the opening gambit of the essay, immediately stating that its asking and answering is an essential precondition to the real goal: 'conceptions or ideals of nonideological, transfigured, Utopian space'. Much would stand in the way of any such conception, not least Tafuri's radical negativism, his total loss of faith in architecture as a profession, in the efficacy of criticism and in the immanence of societal revolution. This reads less like Marxism and form, more like Marxism as form, nothing but form. Jameson extends it to two other 'dialectical histories of comparable intensity and intellectual energy, Adorno's *Philosophy of Modern Music*… [and] Ronald Barthes' early and unequalled *Writing Degree Zero*'.[22] The dilemma is that these three texts are the *best* of their kind in their respective fields: nothing, including everything that offers a more heroic historical narrative, and holds out a more utopian prospect, matches them *as texts*. Jameson goes on to reprove these authors for their tendency to shrink to contracted situations the complex contexts in which individual works of art are created, their totalizing, closed vision of history, one that inevitably becomes a 'story of failure… In all three, the present is ultimately

projected as the final and most absolute contradiction, the "situation" that has become a blank wall, beyond which History cannot pass'.[23] (This prefigures the reading of art critic Clement Greenberg, and of modernism in general, that Jameson was to set out in *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* – his own effort, perhaps, to add to this small, singular corpus?)[24]

Against the contractive, reflexive modernism defined by Adorno, Barthes and Tafuri, Jameson pitches the flexible, young Marx of the *Grundrisse*, Gramscian counter-hegemonic struggle, and Lefebvre's celebration of the revolutionary potential of the spaces of everyday life. With tools like these, some holes at least can be broken in the blank wall of the present. Add Mandel's theory about capitalism reaching the third, 'late' stage of its historical development, and the idea immediately arises that the superstructure might also be very different – indeed, it might sport a new *aesthetic* – let us call it, as its practitioners do, 'postmodern'. Jameson is, by now, in no doubt about what the present looks like in architecture. It is postmodernism – a Venturian version of which, in 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', finally puts paid to Tafuri – who is cited, at length, as ranting against it.[25]

But modernism, as a historical formation, seems to have been surrendered to its most narrow and negative self-definers. During the 1980s, miniaturizing modernism in order to raise the interest level around postmodernism was a move embraced with enthusiasm on all, or at least most, sides.[26] This, to many of us, and for many reasons, was a loss – one of world historical dimensions – and remains so. Thus the ongoing task of rebuilding that history, of course by restoring to it complication and contradiction – themselves products of the century-long struggle within architecture and planning between designing and dwelling. And by showing that, far from being a blank wall that divides ossification from emptiness, the present is constituted by the contemporaneity of these continuing, historical currents as their dense, volatile mix flows through us, and through all of our thinking and building.

## Opening Out the Enclave: Revolutionary Spatiality

Jameson's awareness that Portman's postmodernism, while closest to the people's new taste – and therefore, he thought for a time, was *populist* in a positive way – was, in fact, awful architecture, grew in proportion to his understanding that Graves, Moore and Venturi were serious architects, that Gehry was doing something truly revolutionary in his Santa Monica house, and that the so-called Deconstructivist architects such as Koolhaas, Eisenman et al. were doing something else again, something that went beyond – or, better, broke through – postmodernism itself.[27] The 1990 essay 'Spatial Equivalents: Postmodernist Architecture and the World System' emerges from the opaque wrappings of its opening pages when it asks just what is this 'notion of novelty or innovation that seems to have survived the modern itself'? And answers, by ostentation, through a long, probing pan through Gehry's

home, each dolly more illuminating than the last, as we successively grasp the layered constituents of the building's 'powerful claim on revolutionary spatiality'.[28] Jameson draws upon remarks of the architect, study of the plans, the writings of various critics (especially Gavin Macrae-Gibson's *The Secret Life of Buildings*), but mostly on his own experience of the house itself, which he imaginatively recreates, over and over again.[29] He resists Macrae-Gibson's efforts to read the house using the vocabulary and protocols of modernist architectural criticism, seeking instead to see it as an 'allegorical transcoding' of the larger world system, that is, postmodernity itself. The mediating term is Gehry's design process, the specifics of his thinking. As is well known, Gehry bought a two story, gambrel-roof, clapboard house in the suburb of Santa Monica, erected an irregular wall of corrugated metal around much of it, as well as penetrating sections of the original house with spaces in the shape of a tumbling cube, and covering some of the exterior spaces to create open interiors. To Jameson, this interplay of an ordinary, mass-produced tract house and inventive, yet arbitrary abstract form is the key to Gehry's revolutionary spatiality. By retaining the suburban ordinariness of the original house, Jameson argues, Gehry acknowledges the persistence *and* the anachronism of a certain 'American Dream'. By using chain links and corrugated fencing, he acknowledges 'the junk, or Third World side of American life today'. The tumbling cube acknowledges the disorientation that is becoming typical of our experience of pubic space in late capitalism ('the superstate'). In each case, these connotations are present as allusions, not as representations (quotations, pastiches and pictures). This occurs because the renovated house is not conceived as a solution to a design problem, but as a practice of a certain kind of thinking, a kind of mediation – in fact, a materialization of a specific sort of mediation. 'The problem, then, which the Gehry house tries to think is the relationship between that abstract knowledge and conviction or belief about the superstate and the existential daily life of people in their traditional rooms and tract houses.' In its actuality, in its spatial interplay, the Gehry house solves the problem posed by Portman's engineered disorientation. It is a clear example of the kind of 'critical cognitive mapping' for which Jameson called at the end of the 'Postmodernism' essay. Successful, too, because you can *live in it*, Jameson says, in a way that is both 'comfortable' and 'new'.[30]

## Battering the Constraints

If through the distorting lens of retrospect, we sense a somewhat self-prodding, slightly beat-up quality to Jameson's prose as he moves around the atrium at the Bonaventura, it is because we have since, in 2003 for example, read him write like this:

> …a breaking of the sound barrier of History is to be achieved in a situation in which the historical imagination is paralyzed and cocooned, as though by a predator's sting: no way to burst through into the future, to reconquer

difference, let alone Utopia, except by writing yourself into it, but without turning back. It is the writing that is the battering ram, the delirious repetition that hammers away at this sameness running through all the forms of our existence (space, parking, shopping, working, eating, building) and pummels them into admitting their own standardized identity with each other, beyond color, beyond texture, the formal blandness that is no longer even the plastic, vinyl, rubber of yesteryear. The sentences are the boom of this repetitive insistence, this pounding on the hollowness of space itself: and their energy now foretells the rush and the fresh air, the euphoria of a relief, an orgasmic breaking through into time and history again, into a concrete future.[31]

The 'blank wall, beyond which History cannot pass', erected by the terminal modernism of Adorno, Barthes and Tafuri, is exploded. This time, by an architect, Rem Koolhaas, whose 2001 essay 'Junkspace', Jameson has just read. Science fiction infuses both texts, and is much loved by both theorist and architect. Philip K. Dick, Ursula Le Guin, but also J.G. Ballard hover over these metaphors of rupture. 'The problem to be solved is that of breaking out of the windless present of the postmodern back into real historical time and a history made by human beings.'[32] Koolhaas does this in his quality of architectural thought: of *S, M, L, XL*, Jameson writes: '…this is a vanguard operation without the avant-garde vision or mission; a powerfully future-oriented material imagination without a future in any traditional sense of the word; Dystopia as Utopia, perhaps, but at an intensity that dissolves the usual overtones or connotations of both those words all at once.'[33] This thinking is evident in books such as *Delirious New York*, with its entrancing recognition that the Manhattan skyline – *the* indisputably great architectural achievement of a city full of relatively undistinguished buildings when taken individually (their decorative schemes are, often, another matter) – was the product of the fortuitous conjunction, on an undulating surface, of a gridded street plan and the elevator.[34] In a number of essays Jameson tracks Koolhaas and OMA's efforts to realize, in public projects in urban centers – some relatively modest (the Karlsruhe Art and Media Center), others grand (the Zeebrugge Sea Terminal, the Très Grand Bibliotèque, Paris) – an unfolding, expansive, indeed, 'epic impulse'.[35] Eisenman, too, carries a similar promise, in his deft attention to 'betweenness', to the discontinuities of a given site, thus allowing the residua that have shaped each specific site to arise again, to live in the present. Pushing aside pseudo-historicism, History breaks back into our spatial experience, into social consciousness.[36]

All of these projects have ideas of the city implicit within them, prefigurations of a kind of city that has broken away not only from the failed, frozen rigidities of modernist planning, but also from what Jameson came to see, during the 1990s, as the disabling *constraints* of postmodernism. Now, the real step forward (and it is a step forward from Gehry, and from Eisenman) is to do all this at the level of the city, on the scale of the city, the sprawling metropoli, to embrace what Koolhaas calls 'Bigness'. Especially in the viral nodes of the 'Asian economic miracle'.

Koolhaas and many others dwell there, as did Jameson in person, and in his writings about the limits of globalization.[37] But he has been loath to follow them in his thinking on architecture, about which he seems to have written less in recent years, having much else to draw his attention. In the recently published book of interviews, *Jameson on Jameson*, architecture recurs constantly as a theme of concern to both interviewers and the interviewee, and many of the positions posed and examined in this essay turn up, and get the gentler polishing that a direct exchange between two people tends to bring out.[38]

But the slow fade is also there. Perhaps he did not follow Koolhaas to the outer reaches of late capitalism because he had already guessed what he might find: the vacuous specter of Waterfront City, a new urban domain, twice the size of Hong Kong, for 1.5 million residents and other users on the border between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Originally designed for Foshan, China, it exemplifies Koolhaas' concept of the 'generic city', one that could be built anywhere, if sufficient local elements could be removed, and the generic format could be tweaked sufficiently to fit the designated cultural setting. OMA added some regional symbolic nuances to the already given jumble of skyscraper forms. This is pro-forma utopianism. To Koolhaas personally, it promises to realize the Manhattan that New York City, in the 1930s, dreamed itself to be but never became. Within the terms of the argument of this essay, it proposes to solve the base-superstructure dilemma with which Jameson so bravely wrestled by the designed merging of both terms, one laid across the other so that they achieve perfect identity. This glassy, self-reflective city is globalized superstructure showing itself to itself and to all who would gaze upon it. In such projects, not only has the container become the content, but the superstructure promises to become the base. To constitute a domain of symbolic, superstructural living – from which not only the sight but the thought of any material basis for the generation of wealth has been banished – is precisely its basic purpose, its ground plan, its foundation. In the words of the website: 'The masterplan takes an optimistic view of the future of urbanism and exploits two usually opposing elements of 21$^{st}$ century architecture: the generic and the iconic.'[39]

Measured against the trajectory of Koolhaas' design thinking these words sound a pale echo: compare them to the epic energy that drove 'Junkspace'. What might they mean to Jameson? As we have seen, his appetite for thoughts that might challenge his materialism is omnivorous. Like Williams, Althusser and others, he has, in the face of changes in reality, been willing to radically revise, indeed, overturn, his presumptions about the necessary relationships between base and superstructure. However difficult it becomes to articulate the operation of these relationships, he has never been willing to surrender their fundamentality, their necessity for any possible politics. He would, one guesses, welcome OMA's ride-the-contradictions strategy – after all, it is yet another manifestation of the cultural logic of a late capitalism that keeps on encouraging its servants to invent yet more spectacular ways of prolonging its

incandescence. But the glib 'optimism' of the blank, generic kind embodied in their statement, is not a sentiment that he would entertain for a second. More to the point, however open to the objects of his critique we have seen this great critic to be, the sentence from the OMA website just quoted is not one that we can ever imagine him bringing himself to write.

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## Notes

1   Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', *New Left Review,* vol. 1, no. 8 (November/December 1973): pp. 3-16, also in John Higgins (ed.) *The Raymond Williams Reader* (Oxford, 2001): pp. 158-178.

2   Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991): pp. 38-40. In this volume the essay is entitled 'The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism'. Is has some but not significant variations from the original essay in the *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July/August 1984): pp. 59-92. In all citations in this essay, I will, for ease of reader reference, use the anthologized versions of Jameson's essays.

3   Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p. 42.

4   Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', pp. 43-44.

5   Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p. 44.

6   See http://www.portmanusa.com/founder.html.

7    Fredric Jameson, 'Utopianism After the End of Utopia', in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*: p. 176.

8   Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p. 6.

9   Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', p. 9.

10   Terry Smith, 'Black Swan in the City…Detroit, first week of August, 1986', *Art & Text*, 25 (June/August 1987): pp. 2-18. *Art & Text*, founded by Paul Taylor in Melbourne in 1981 was programmatically a postmodern magazine.

11   Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

12   Smith, *Making the Modern*, p. 450.

13   See Marc Augé, *Un ethnologue dans le métro* (1986), leading to his key book *Non-Lieux: Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* (1994), translated as *Non-Places: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London, 1995).

14   A different story of that city was being told at the time by urban historian Mike Davis, in his *The City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London, 2006), and by artist Allan Sekula in his photo-stories, already models of the kind of cognitive mapping for which Jameson was calling, yet greatly undervalued in the US at the time, and since. See Sabine Breitwieser (ed.), *Allan Sekula: Performance Under Working Conditions* (Vienna, 2003).

15  The reference to swans in this passage is intertextual. I had earlier cited Baudelaire's *The Swan*, with its metaphor of a white swan loose from its cage in the Les Halles markets, dirtying its feathers. The black swan, found in Western Australia, alludes to antipodean exceptionality in general, and specifically to lines, cited at the end of my essay, in a poem by Ern Malley, a supposedly 'vernacular modernist' but actually an invention of two anti-modernist poets, whose book of poetry caused a literary sensation when published in Adelaide in 1944.

16  In his *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism Again* (Minneapolis, 2010), Reinhold Martin argues that this kind of subjectivization, rather than a disabling distractedness, was exactly what buildings such as the Bonaventura accomplished from the moment that they were erected. Contra Jameson, Harvey et al. he argues that they did so by revealing their efforts at economic determination, thus inviting us to revel in the new, here, there and everywhere world of globalized financial capital that they both pictured and embodied. I think that this took time, was resisted by many would-be subjects, and still is.

17  As it did my thinking at the time, but which I explicitly refute in 'Pure Modernism Inc.', chapter 11 of *Making the Modern*, the whole argument of which is based on showing that a limited variety of conceptions, in the form of coupled images (I labeled it 'the imagery of modernity'), emerged from specific and specifiable, contingent but determinative relationships between fundamental, radical reorganizations of productive conditions and of the superstructural formations raised upon them. See 'Introduction', *Making the Modern*, pp. 1-11.

18  Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge, MA, 1980): p. 182.

19  Something Rossi recognized in his etching, *L'architecture assassinée*, 1975, which shows his own designs splitting, collapsing. Yet he agreed that it should grace the cover of the 1976 English edition of the book.

20  Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, p. 182.

21  Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', in Joan Ockman, et al. (eds), *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (New York, 1985), and in Fredric Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* (London, 2008). The latter will be cited here.

22  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 349.

23  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 350 and p. 354. In a contemporary essay, Jameson derides Tafuri, along with Lyotard, as so purist about total social revolution that, 'in a period of depoliticization and reaction', he can do little but promote an anti-Marxist renunciation of the political altogether. See 'Theories of the Postmodern', *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 61.

24  Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London, 2002).

25  Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', pp. 366-367.

26  John Frow, *What Was Postmodernism?* (Sydney: Local Consumption Occasional Paper #11, 1991).

27  On populism as a good thing in postmodern architecture see Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 62. On Portman's awful architecture, see p. 116.

28  Jameson, 'Spatial Equivalents in the World System', *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, p. 107.

29  Gavin Macrae-Gibson, *The Secret Life of Buildings* (Cambridge, MA, 1985).

30  All quotations in this paragraph from page 128.

31  Jameson, 'Future City', in *The Ideologies of Theory*, pp. 573-574.

32  Jameson, 'Future City', p. 573. A more critical reading may be found in Antonio Negri, 'On Rem Koolhaas', *Radical Philosophy* 154 (March/April 2009): pp. 48-50.

33  Jameson, 'Space and Congestion: Rem Koolhaas and *S, M, L, XL*, 1996, in *The Ideologies of Theory*, p. 557.

34  Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto* (New York, 1994).

35  See, for example, 'The Constraints of Postmodernism', in Fredric Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York, 1994): pp. 134-144.

36  See *The Seeds of Time*, pp. 170-183.

37  For example, Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (eds), *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, 1998).

38  Ian Buchanan (ed.), *Jameson on Jameson: Conversations on Cultural Marxism* (Durham, 2007).

39  See http://www.oma.eu/index.php?option=com_projects&view=portal&id=1021&Itemid=10.

# Jameson, Tafuri, Lefebvre

*Xavier Costa*

**Part 1: Jameson**

Fredric Jameson's 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' constitutes his first major essay on the subject of contemporary architecture. This essay transcribes a lecture formerly presented by Jameson at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies in New York in 1982, at the symposium on 'Architecture and Ideology'.[1] The text's main contents coincide with the analysis of *Architecture and Utopia* (1976), by the Italian architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri, and originally published in Italy as *Progetto e utopia*.[2] The New York Institute had been responsible for introducing the work of Tafuri to the North American public in previous years. Jameson's essay analyzes Tafuri's position and radical criticism of modern architecture and its ideology – thus the title of the essay – in parallel to the emergence of postmodernism in the architectural production of the 1980s.

   Starting with the question 'how can space be ideological?', Jameson summarizes the two prevalent approaches to architecture of the time, i.e., the *phenomenological* – receptive to the full potential of human experience, especially the  bodily one in space – and the *structuralist* approach – based in turn on an understanding of space as text, as made of signs and codes. In addition to these two contemporary positions, Jameson wonders if there is a 'third' term beyond phenomenology and structuralism. His answer lies in two possible options – Lefebvre and Tafuri.

   Jameson unfolds in his 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology' a lucid interpretation of Tafuri's view on architecture, a most influential one on the course of international architecture from the late 1960s onwards, and perfectly encapsulated in *Architecture and Utopia*. Tafuri´s overall position is outlined in the essay through the following points. First, the architectural critic cannot be an ideologist, only a ('negative') denouncer of present or historical ideologies. Second, within the context of capitalism, practicing architects cannot hope to devise a radically different architecture. Third, architectural history

and criticism coincide with those of the ideologies of architecture. Finally, politics is necessarily disjoined from aesthetic (architectural) practice. Tafuri's profoundly pessimistic conclusion is that architecture will only be possible once a total social revolution has taken place, therefore in an undefined future. This is, in Jameson's words, a position that has managed to exert among architects and critics the intellectual fascination of the 'uncompromising intransigence of all absolutes'.

Tafuri is not an isolated figure in his totalizing vision. For Jameson, he shares his 'somber visions of the total system'[3] with other intellectual figures of the time, such as Theodor Adorno and Roland Barthes. The vision of history as an increasingly total or closed system is already embodied in Adorno's study of Schoenberg's dodecaphonic 'final solution' for music, as an absolute point that is also a full ending, rejecting any expression beyond or aside this final stop. In Barthes, Jameson finds a reverse totalization, the absolute point of the 'zero degree of writing'. For Tafuri, an architectural equivalent to the zero degree may be found in one concrete structure: Mies van der Rohe's New York Seagram building, which embodies the ultimate, frozen silence. In Jameson's words, in Tafuri's interpretation of the Seagram tower 'architecture arrives at the ultimate limits of its own possibilities'.[4]

The author of *Architecture and Utopia*, therefore, acknowledges the impossibility of a future in architecture, and by extension in all of our culture – unless we arrive at the 'total' revolution. This fatalism, shared by the School of Venice in a first phase, and by a wide range of architectural historians and critics afterwards, has marked the recent decades of architectural debate and production. For Jameson, an alternative within Marxist positions would be a neo-Gramscian 'optimism', that in the Italian context did not prosper, due in part to its link to the official position of the Communist party in Italy.

In another direction, Jameson also remarks that Tafuri remained completely alien to the contemporary dawning of postmodernism, an aesthetic phenomenon that was either ignored or quickly dismissed by him as a mere epigone of high modernism, a lighter version of the existing, old solutions. Jameson, on the contrary, decided to pay a special attention to postmodernism, as he found in this phenomenon an eloquent aesthetic expression of the time – even though postmodernism might remain in 'some kind of parasitic relationship with the extinct high modernism it repudiates… with postmodernism a whole new *aesthetic* is in the process of emerging'.[5] In his essay, Jameson then proceeds to summarize the presence of the postmodernist aesthetic in architecture through two distinct themes, the dialectic of *inside/outside* (in modernism, the exterior appearance is always an expression of the interior organization, as Le Corbusier and others had clearly stated); and the theme of *decoration/ornament*, as expressed by Robert Venturi in his well-known concept of the decorated shed, as he expressed it in *Learning from Las Vegas*.

The radical opposition between Tafuri's cultural pessimism, his inflexible and, in Jameson's words, 'ideological asceticism', and on the other hand the

'complacent free play' of postmodernism, is seen by Jameson as ultimately sharing the same conviction that no fundamental change can be introduced into the moment of late capitalism. Jameson, however, concludes the essay with a suggestion for an alternative way, that of 'Lefebvre's call for a politics of space and for the search for a properly Gramscian architecture after all'.[6]

**Part 2: Tafuri**

Tafuri was mainly introduced to North American architects and critics through the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, and especially its journal *Oppositions.* Tafuri's article 'L'Architecture dans le Boudoir' appeared in *Oppositions* in May of 1974. Subsequently, *Progetto e utopia* (1973) was translated into English as *Architecture and Utopia* – it was in turn a reworking of Tafuri's previous *Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica*, first published in Italy in 1969. This text may be considered 'the most significant manifesto of global criticism of the modern production of architecture as ideology in the negative Marxist sense of the term'.[7] After the Frankfurt School, critical theory sought to discredit any creative production, taking them in the direction of nihilism – in Althusser's expression, artistic practice was supplanted by theoretical practice, which had to unmask the mystifying practices of the time that Adorno had termed as *Spätkapitalismus*.

   Seemingly, for Tafuri the history of architecture is one of mystification and deceit. The Tafurian critique of architectural ideology, together with his line of negativism and radical criticism, and especially as amplified by the School of Venice and its followers, has determined the tendencies in the history, criticism, as well as in the production of architecture, particularly in what may be termed as 'critical projects', those which in the 1970s and 1980s – at the time of Jameson's essay – often became 'paper architecture'. These were speculative designs that seemed directed at showing the impossibility of architecture – as in the case of some works by John Hejduk, Massimo Scolari, Daniel Libeskind and others during those years, which reflected the disappearance of trust in the possibility of a truly realizable and culturally valid architecture.

   In a surprising turn towards the end of his essay, Jameson concludes by arguing that Tafuri's and the postmodernist positions are essentially the same, in spite of their apparently profound divergence. In his words, 'these two positions are in fact the same, and that, as different as they may at first seem, both rest on the conviction that nothing new can be done, no fundamental changes can be made, within the massive being of late capitalism.'[8]

**Part 3: Lefebvre**

In front of a scenario in which Manfredo Tafuri's radicalism is seen to converge with the emergent phenomenon of postmodernist architecture,

Jameson looks for an alternative, and this lies in Henri Lefebvre's ideas on space and the city. In the introductory pages to his essay 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', Jameson declares, 'Lefebvre's conception of "space" as the fundamental category of politics and of the dialectic itself – the one great prophetic vision of these last years of discouragement and renunciation – has yet to be grasped in all its pathbreaking implications, let alone to be explored and implemented; while Lefebvre's influential role as an ideologist and a critic of French architecture today must be noted and meditated upon.'[9]

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre demands a non-phenomenological restoration of the experiential primacy of the body in space, which is primarily a restoration of the non-visual: 'The user's space is *lived* – not represented (or conceived). When compared with the abstract space of the experts (architects, urbanists, planners), the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective.'[10]

To follow Jameson's invitation to see in Lefebvre a prophetic vision on space and architecture, one of his most suggestive, yet somewhat evasive concepts is that of the 'moment'. This is essential to his understanding of time and space, marked by discontinuities which he defined as moments – a particular mode of presence and communication. For Lefebvre, moments in lived experience have the capacity to reveal the emancipatory condition of potential situations, and therefore contain an essentially political dimension. Beyond Lefebvre's writings, the theory of moments found a particular resonance in the work of Guy Debord, who was interested in this notion, yet considered it excessively abstract. Debord thus created the concept of 'situation', a key term incorporated in the very naming of the Situationist International group in 1957.

An unsigned article 'The Theory of Moments and Construction of Situations' was published in the *Internationale Situationniste* journal's fourth issue, in June 1960. It starts with a quotation of Henri Lefebvre's *La Somme et le Reste*, outlining his theory of moments, then proceeds to define the concept of situation and its derivation from the former: 'The situation as a created, organized moment […] includes perishable instants – ephemeral and unique. […] Like the moment, the situation can be extended in time or be condensed. But it seeks to found itself on the objectivity of artistic production. Such artistic production breaks radically with durable works. It is inseparable from its immediate consumption as a use value essentially foreign to its conservation as a commodity.'[11] Moments may therefore be constructed into situations, which are not only temporal, but also spatial and rather unrepeatable.

For Lefebvre, space and by extension the city are understood as a social product, one that has suffered a progressive impoverishment through the privileging of the image – what Debord had termed as sublimation of capital, a fetishized abstraction. Lefebvre called for architects to be no longer complicit with a society increasingly dominated by spectacle, and defined a direction in urban thought that participated from a political as well as a profoundly cultural understanding of cities.

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## Notes

1   Fredric Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', in *The Ideologies of Theory* (London, 2008): pp. 344-371. This essay was first published in the collective work *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology,* edited by Joan Ockman (New York, 1985). It is based on a paper previously presented at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York, in March 1982, and more concretely at the symposium 'Architecture and Ideology', sponsored by *Revisions*. The Institute existed from 1967 until 1985.

2   Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia. Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge, MA, 1976) Originally published in Italy in 1973 as *Progetto e utopia* (Bari: Laterza, 1973).

3   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 349.

4   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 353.

5   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 368.

6   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 369.

7   Ignasi de Sola-Morales, 'From Autonomy to Untimeliness', in Cynthia Davidson (ed.), *Anyone* (New York, 1991). Reprinted in Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture,* trans. by Graham Thompson (Cambridge, MA, 1997): p. 81.

8   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 369.

9   Jameson, 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology', p. 346.

10  Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden and Oxford, 1991): pp. 362-363. An urbanism that would correspond to Lefebvre's moments was already described in the pre-Situationist text 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', writen by Gilles Ivain in 1953.

11  Anonymous, 'The Theory of Moments and Construction of Situations', in *Internationale Situationniste* 4, 1960.

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