# THEORIZING A NEW AGENDA FOR ARCHITECTURE

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF ARCHITECTURAL THEORY 1965–1995

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# INTRODUCTION

## PART I: THE NECESSITY OF THEORY

Within the discipline of architecture, theory is a discourse that describes the practice and production of architecture and identifies challenges to it. Theory overlaps with but differs from architectural history, which is descriptive of past work, and from criticism, a narrow activity of judgment and interpretation of specific existing works relative to the critic's or architect's stated standards. Theory differs from these activities in that it *poses alternative solutions* based on observations of the current state of the discipline, or offers new thought paradigms for approaching the issues. Its speculative, anticipatory, and catalytic nature distinguishes theoretical activity from history and criticism. Theory operates on different levels of abstraction, evaluating the architectural profession, its intentions, and its cultural relevance at large. Theory deals with architecture's aspirations as much as its accomplishments.

Throughout history, one can identify recurring architectural themes that demand resolution, both conceptually and physically. Physical questions are resolved tectonically, while conceptual or intellectual questions are problematized in the manner of philosophy. Perennial theoretical questions include the origins and limits of architecture, the relationship of architecture to history, and issues of cultural expression and meaning. New theories arise to account for unexamined or unexplained aspects of the discipline.

A survey of architectural theory from the last thirty years finds a multiplicity of issues vying for attention. The lack of dominance of a single issue or a single viewpoint is characteristic of the pluralist period imprecisely referred to as *postmodern*. Evident in all the coexistent and contradictory tendencies is the desire to expand upon the limitations of *modern* theory, including formalism and ideas of functionalism ("form follows function"), the necessity of the "radical break" with history, and the "honest" expression of material and structure. In general, postmodern architectural theory addresses a *crisis of meaning* in the discipline. Since the mid 1960s, architectural theory has become truly interdisciplinary; it depends upon a vast array of critical paradigms. This project of revision of modernism, presented as *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*, is undertaken from political, ethical, linguistic, aesthetic, and phenomenological positions.

While only the first chapter is so titled, postmodernism is in fact the subject and point of reference of the entire book. I hope to make clear that postmodernism is not a singular style, but more a sensibility of inclusion in a period of pluralism. Reflecting this, the selected theoretical essays present a multiplicity of points of view, rather than a nonexistent, unified vision. In some cases, perspectives not represented by essays in my anthology have been mentioned in this introduction to broaden the context of the discussion.

I have attempted to construct a coherent discourse from fragmentary texts through the use of a thematic and paradigmatic structure for the book. The fourteen chapters and fifty-one essay introductions provide a framework with which to approach this heterogeneous material and understand the complexities of postmodernism. A chronological structure, while useful in terms of the publication history of the essays, was rejected in favor of clarifying the connections between the themes and positions of different writers, countries, and decades. The themes and theoretical paradigms chosen as chapter headings are recurrent subjects of writings in the postmodern period; they are interrelated and many of the essays could fall under more than one. Together, these themes and paradigms are intended to sketch in the intellectual climate in architecture since 1965 and facilitate comparison of historical positions on the same issues.

I will return in Part II of the introduction to the significant postmodern themes and paradigms that organize the chapters. The discussion of the various types of theory and the general purpose of treatises in the remainder of Part I is intended to situate the authors' recent contributions in relation to the historical body of theory.

## PART IA. TYPES OF THEORY

Theory can be characterized by several attitudes towards the presentation of its subject matter: for the most part it is *prescriptive*, *proscriptive*, *affirmative*, or *critical*. All of these differ from a "neutral," descriptive position. For instance, a conventional historian might show how others have approached the issues of the moment, without explicitly advocating a position. Such a descriptive history might offer explanations of phenomena that rely on correlation of factual occurrences, like the introduction of new technologies, with resulting changes in design. Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* is a good example of a conventional, descriptive approach.

Prescriptive theory offers new or revived solutions for specific problems; it functions by establishing new norms for practice. It thus promotes positive standards and sometimes even a design method. This type can be critical (even radical), or affirmative of the status quo (conservative). The tone in either instance is often polemical. Michael Graves's argument in "A Case for Figurative Architecture" (ch. 1) and William McDonough's "Hannover Principles" (ch. 8) are clear prescriptions. The former suggests a return to humanist ideals, and the latter is an ecological manifesto.

Very similar to prescriptive theory is proscriptive theory, which differs in that the standards state what is to be avoided in design. Good architecture or urbanism in proscriptive terms is defined by the *absence* of negative attributes. Functional zoning is an example of proscriptive theory, as is the town planning code for Seaside, Florida by Andres

Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Architects. This code, an instance of conservative instrumental theory, legislates consistent quality by restricting material and style choices, setbacks, and massing.

Broader than descriptive and prescriptive writing, critical theory evaluates the built world and its relationships to the society it serves. This kind of polemical writing often has an expressed political or ethical orientation and intends to stimulate change. Among many possible orientations, critical theory can be ideologically based in Marxism or feminism. A good example of critical theory is architect and theorist Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism, which proposes resistance to the homogenization of the visual environment through the particularities of mediated, local building traditions. Critical theory is speculative, questioning, and sometimes utopian.

## PART IB. THE PURPOSE OF THE THEORETICAL TREATISE: DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE DISCIPLINE

Theoretical treatises are fundamentally concerned with the origins of a practice or of an art. For example, a treatise on *building* might situate the origins of construction practice in the need for shelter. A treatise on *architecture* might place the origins of this disciplinary practice in the imitation of nature, (*mimesis*) and in man's innate desire to improve upon it. In the *Ten Books of Architecture*, Vitruvius hypothesizes that man, being "of an imitative and teachable nature...gradually advanced from the construction of buildings to the other arts and sciences."[1] Architecture is thus asserted as the origin and antecedent of the fine arts. Furthermore, in addition to positing a legitimizing origin, treatises sometimes delineate a clear relationship of difference between architecture and mathematics and the other sciences, in order to assert architecture's disciplinary autonomy.

In addition to the issue of origins, the basic subject matter of architectural treatises can be categorized using the following five points:
1. The requisite qualities of an architect in terms of personality, education, and experience. Alberti offers this mid-fifteenth-century definition of

> what he is that I allow to be an Architect....Him I call an Architect, who, by sure and wonderful Art and Method, is able, both with Thought and Invention, to devise, and, with Execution, to compleat all those Works, which,...can, with the greatest Beauty, be adapted to the Uses of Mankind.[2]

2. The requisite qualities of architecture. For instance, Vitruvius's well known "triad" of firmness, commodity, and delight has served as a set of criteria applied to architecture by treatises since the rediscovery of his work in the Renaissance. The Vitruvian triad has proven difficult to supersede or displace.
3. A theory of design or construction method encompassing technique, constituent parts, types, materials, and procedures. The Abbot Laugier's "Essay on Architecture" (1753) is one such treatise that emphasizes the proper composition of parts.
4. Examples of the canon of architecture, the selection and presentation of which reveal the author's attitude to history. Robert Venturi's use of examplars of Mannerist and Baroque

architecture in his 1966 book was anathema at the time, but compelling in light of his arguments for *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.
5. An attitude about the relationship between theory and practice. Two distinct views on this fundamental subject are represented by architects Bernard Tschumi and Vittorio Gregotti. For Tschumi, "Architecture is not an illustrative art; it does not illustrate theories."[3] His writings suggest that theory's role is one of interpretation and provocation. Gregotti, on the other hand, insists on "theoretical research as a direct foundation of action"[4] in architectural design.

Whether theory must be applicable, "useful knowledge," and whether it must result in predictable outcomes in design is widely debated. If theory must lead to predictable outcomes, then the only acceptable theory is prescriptive or proscriptive. (Not coincidentally, many who pursue predictable outcomes in design espouse neotraditional views of the city and of architecture.) Both aspects of this proposition are challenged by postmodern theorists such as Alberto Perez-Gomez:

> the [modern] belief that theory had to be validated in terms of its applicability...has entailed the reduction of true theory to the status of applied science....This "theory" is oblivious of myth and true knowledge and is exclusively concerned with an efficient domination of the material world.[5]

In an essay on the work of architect and educator John Hejduk, Perez-Gomez argues for the critical power of the unbuilt project, for "paper architecture." Daniel Libeskind and Zaha Hadid are other contemporary architects whose drawings have brought attention to their makers (in their cases, because of the implied new spatial qualities). Earlier examples of significant architectural projects include Étienne-Louis Boullée's monumental "architecture of shadows" and Piranesi's Carceri series, both of which demonstrate the power of the drawn vision. But in general, the role of the theoretical project in the discipline and whether it is part of architecture proper is contested.

In addition to defining the origins and scope of the discipline, theory addresses the following themes, all of which will be covered by essays in this collection: meaning, theories of history, nature, the site, the city, aesthetic issues, and technology. A brief general survey of themes and pertinent questions about each will be followed by a longer discussion of the postmodern period and its particular themes in Part II.

Inherent in the issue of origins is the question of the meaning of architecture and the definition of its essence and limits. For example, function, the programmatic use of shelter, has often been claimed as that which is unique to architecture, and therefore as equivalent to its meaning. But others have argued that accommodating function (in a literal sense) is instead the essence of *building*, as distinguished from *architecture*, which has a larger range of intentions, including symbolic function. This distinction is fundamental to various theoretical constructions of disciplinary boundaries and to the constitution of architecture as art, science, craft, and intellectual activity.

The creation of meaning in architecture has often been studied through the "linguistic analogy." Comparisons to the operation of language raise the following questions: What structures allow for understanding a form of expression? Does meaning not depend on a process of repetition of the familiar, and if so, how can meaning be sustained

through innovation and invention? Can there be meaning in form, or only in content? What is appropriate content for architecture?

Because of the durability of buildings, the architectural theorist is always confronted with a historical condition: the simultaneous experience of works dating from vastly different time periods. This necessitates a consideration of one's present relationship with the tradition of the discipline of architecture. What use can one make of past experiences with design and building? Is imitation the best route to beautiful and communicative architecture? Or have standards of beauty and comprehension of form changed, such that *mimesis* leads only to mute form? What is the importance of style? How do technological changes affect the use of prior models of construction?

Theory also addresses the relationship between architecture and nature, as developed through construction of the site. Historically, attitudes have fluctuated from sympathy, harmony, and integration with nature, to hostility and exploitation. Philosophical and scientific paradigms have largely shaped the architect's view of the territory of activity, of the way in which nature (the wilderness) becomes landscape (a cultural artifact) through the designer's efforts. What should the landscape, broadly defined to include urban, suburban, and rural situations, represent of the human place in nature?

The site of a work of architecture in the urban context must also be considered. How is building different in the city? What is the role of the architect in designing for and contributing to the city, understood as a physical, political, economic, and social entity? In the public realm, one encounters the idea of architecture's representational role, which is to find symbolic expression for the institutions that define society. Frampton writes: "the evolution of legitimate power has always been predicated upon the existence of the polis and upon comparable units of institutional and physical form."[6] What should these forms be? Within the process of symbolization are ideas of the relationship of the individual to the collective, often suggested through scale devices and the use of a multiplicity of similar elements in a building.

Through the projection of the human body (symbolic of the perfection of nature) into its form, architecture achieves a proportional harmony that speaks to the issue of scale and the individual. In Renaissance theory as well as in Le Corbusier's Modulor, the body offers a system of interrelated, comparative measurements that seeks to ensure a meaningful experience of architecture. Are these proportional systems, developed in the abstract, really perceptible?

Aesthetics offers criteria for beauty, including proportion, order, unity, and appropriateness. Thus Alberti states in his *Ten Books of Architecture* that architecture should emulate nature, such that no part can be removed or added without compromising the quality of the whole. This is an example of the aesthetic doctrines that characterize architectural theory and address questions such as: How is beauty to be defined in the present moment? How do ornament and decoration figure into beauty? Ornament was maligned by modern purists like Adolf Loos, who considered it decadent and "a crime." Can ornament, structure, and material play significant roles in the construction of meaning?

As discussed in relation to the inclusion of method in treatises, development of technique and technological advances are historically important themes in theory. Modern Movement architects placed high hopes on possibilities for the transformation of society through mass production of affordable objects and housing. Modern theory expressed an unqualified faith in the scientific and industrial revolutions' contributions to human well-being. From our postmodern perspective we ask: Was this faith in technique and technology justified by history?

The preceding survey of the general purpose and content of the theoretical treatise lays the groundwork for the complexity of theory in the postmodern period. It is offered to contextualize the essays in this anthology, which represent the most recent contributions to the discourse of architecture. The discussion shifts now to postmodernism.

## PART II: WHAT IS POSTMODERNISM?

Many books and long essays have attempted to answer the question, What is postmodernism? Clearly, it is a term that has different meanings in different contexts. It is thus beyond the scope of my essay to offer a critique or extension of these definitions. Instead, this second part of the introduction approaches postmodernism in architecture from three standpoints: as a historical period with a specific relationship to modernism; as an assortment of significant paradigms (theoretical frameworks) for the consideration of cultural issues and objects; and as a group of themes. The following sections of the introduction overlap each other's boundaries, but nonetheless help to outline postmodernism as a period and as a mode of inquiry with certain recurring themes. The essays are collected in chapters organized by these same paradigms and themes.

## PART IIA. POSTMODERNISM AS A HISTORICAL PERIOD

### THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

What is the context within which the crisis of modernism occurred? Cultural theorist Frederic Jameson offers:

> The 1960s are in many ways the key transitional period, a period in which the new international order (neocolonialism, the Green Revolution, computerization, and electronic information) is at one and the same time set in place and is swept and shaken by its own internal contradictions and by external resistance.[7]

This new order is variously known as late capitalism, multinational capitalism, postindustrialization, or the consumer society.[8]

It is easier to define the beginning of the postmodern period than its end, which we have probably not yet reached. Student activism for civil rights, freedom, and the protection of the environment was accompanied by the rise of the anti-war, rock music, and drug culture. Space exploration began gloriously in the 1960s and crashed in the 1980s. Hopes for safe nuclear power were shattered by disastrous accidents at Three Mile Island (1979) and Chernobyl (1986). Radical individualism clashed with repressive religious fundamentalism.

While local military conflicts (motivated by disputes over oil, ethnicity, and religion) have occurred in the aftermath of World War II, in general, peace has reigned in the West for fifty years. The world's population has exploded, and communism has collapsed

as a significant force in Eastern Europe, dramatically illustrated in the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

## CHALLENGES TO THE MODERN MOVEMENT IN ARCHITECTURE

In the mid 1960s, challenges to Modern Movement ideology and to a debased and trivialized modern architecture accelerated and proliferated to become known as the postmodern critique. As Frampton notes, "there is little doubt that by the mid-sixties, we were increasingly bereft of a realistic theoretical basis on which to work."[9]

In "Place-form and Cultural Identity," Frampton writes of his growing awareness that modernism needed to be redirected:

> we already saw our task as a qualified restoration of the creative vigor of a movement which had become formally and programmatically compromised in the intervening years....
>
> We had been, in any event, the last generation of students to entertain the projection of utopian urban schemes in both a programmatic and a formal sense.[10]

The demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St. Louis, Missouri in 1972 is widely hailed as marking the failure of modern architecture's vision for housing society. An anti-utopian "derivative which both inspires and deserves destruction," Minoru Yamasaki's "bureaucratic rendition" of the dreams of Le Corbusier, Hilbersheimer, et al[11] was despised by its low-income inhabitants, who undertook to destroy it through vandalism and neglect. The dramatic, intentional bombing of this work of modern architecture (which had been widely celebrated upon opening) was a clear wake-up call to the profession.

The faith of Frampton's generation in continuing the modern project had also been shaken by the appropriation of modern architecture's aesthetic as a progressive sign for corporate headquarters. Stripped of its social program, modern architecture was reduced in the 1950s to a style for reiteration in the commercial sector. This issue was perhaps of less concern to American architects. As Colin Rowe stated with respect to the "New York Five," European modern architecture was imported to America without its ideological component.[12] Furthermore, it was apparent by the 1960s that Europeans had had only limited success implementing their social agenda. A certain disillusionment with social reform had taken hold in the profession. Among the events transpiring in response to this professional crisis are exhibitions, publications, and the rise of theory institutions. Reference to significant instances of each in architecture will define the period of study, 1965 to 1995.

## THEORY INSTITUTIONS: NEW YORK, VENICE, LONDON

The institutionalization of architectural theory is evident in the founding of two independent think tanks in New York (1967–85) and Venice (1968–), both of which undertook prodigious publication. Similar in its mission to London's Architectural Association (AA, founded 1847), the cosmopolitan Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (IAUS) in Manhattan offered a program of lectures, conferences, symposia, panels, and exhibitions. Like the AA and the Venice Institute, the IAUS was established by a board of architects (led by Peter Eisenman) in opposition to the existing architectural educational system, which in England and Italy is state-run.[13] The IAUS published a newsletter, *Skyline*; two journals, *Oppositions* and *October*; and a series of books under the *Oppositions* imprint.[14] The short-lived book series included the influential English translation of *The Architecture of the City* by Aldo Rossi (1982; Italian, 1966). The Institute's heavy emphasis on discourse and dissemination of theory was characteristic of the postmodern period. (A Chicago Institute for Architecture and Urbanism, the CIAU, revived the IAUS model from 1987 to 1994, when funding dried up.) One of the IAUS's major contributions was to introduce European theorists and architects, many of whom were influenced by linguistic paradigms, to an American audience.[15] While there was no official connection between the IAUS and the Venice Institute, it would be fair to say that the two had many issues in common.

Among the most influential theorists in this period are the Italian architects, gathered around architecture schools in three cities: Rome, Milan, and Venice.[16] In particular, the postwar Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia (Architectural Institute at the University of Venice, IAUV), under the directorship of Giuseppe Samonà from 1945 to 1970, became an important teaching and research venue.[17] In 1968, Manfredo Tafuri (d.1994) founded the Institute of Architectural History at the IAUV, attracting the participation of others interested in critical theory and Marxism. Tafuri's writings, reconsidering the German historiographic method and the relationship between Marxism and architecture, continue to be widely read.

While Milan is the city more often associated with natives Rossi and Gregotti, they are among the neorationalist architects known collectively as the "School of Venice." Both have demonstrated in their careers the importance of simultaneous involvement in different aspects of the architectural profession, including teaching at the IAUV, for instance. Shortly after earning his degree, Rossi also became active editing publications and researching the city at the Venice Institute. Gregotti, editor of *Casabella* since 1982, speaks for many of his contemporaries when he says:

> for an architect to edit a magazine, like teaching, or participating in public debates, is a way of cultivating theoretical reflection, not as a separate activity, but as an indispensable part of design craft. Indeed, theory and history have been and still are, two important constituents of design, at least for my generation.[18]

Through all of these activities, the "School of Venice" has been influential.

## PUBLICATIONS: MAGAZINES, ACADEMIC JOURNALS, POLEMICS

Another response to the professional crisis in modern architecture was the blossoming of theoretical literature as new independent magazines and academic journals were established. Unfettered by alliances to professional organizations like the American Institute of Architects or Royal Institute of British Architects, these reviews often took a critical stance in relation to the official journals.

In addition to the output of the Venice Institute, Italy produced three other architectural magazines, all of which are still in print: *Lotus*, *Casabella*, and *Domus*. While the latter two began in 1928, *Lotus* was established in 1963; its sophisticated editorial

board has published internationally influential theory in Italian and English. Gregotti again offers some perspective on architecture at the beginning of the postmodern era:

> It is not therefore by chance that the 1960s revealed a new theoretical production marked by a partiality, sufficient to bring to focus new disciplinary questions and aspects, both in Italy and abroad.[19]

For ten years (1985–95), Danish architects under the patronage of Henning Larsen's Copenhagen firm published *Skala: Nordic Magazine of Architecture and Art. Skala's* thirty issues featured most of the major international postmodern figures. Articles and interviews in Danish and English were complemented by an oversized layout using strong graphic design and generous illustrations. Exhibits at the Skala Gallery and lectures by visiting architects made the program a small-scale version of the IAUS for Scandinavia.

Since its founding in 1971, the Japanese *Architecture and Urbanism (A+U)* has published seminal works, both design and text, made accessible to the West by English translations, superb photographs, and graphic design. An international group of advisers and correspondents shapes *A+U's* editorial direction.

Periodicals and thematic "Profiles" from the well-established *Architectural Design (AD)* in London continue to offer timely and provocative presentations of current debates. Many of the same architects serve on the editorial boards of *Lotus, A+U,* and *AD.* With a few exceptions, women have not been well represented in editorial positions or as writers. Exclusion from the masthead may partly explain the dearth of published work by women architects. This can be expected to change now that architecture student bodies are half female and women are moving into faculty positions.

In addition to these commercial publications, university-based architectural journals proliferated in the postmodern period; some were modeled on *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal,* dating from 1952. University of Pennsylvania's *VIA* and the *Architectural Association Quarterly (AAQ)* began publishing in 1968, the year of the manifesto by the student Strike Committee at the École des Beaux Arts.[20] AAQ ceased publication in 1982, but reemerged as *AA Files. Modulus* (University of Virginia) and *Precis* (Columbia University) appeared in 1979; the latter ceased publication in 1987. The themes of these topical reviews help chart the period's concerns. For example, the *Harvard Architecture Review* made its debut in 1980 with *Beyond the Modern Movement.* The *Princeton Journal of Architecture* first appeared in 1983, considering *Ritual,* and the *Pratt Journal of Architecture* volume 1, *Architecture and Abstraction* (1985), countered the rise of postmodern historicist representation with modernist abstraction. Some journals have a topical focus, such as *Center* (University of Texas at Austin), which since 1985 has focused on issues broadly related to the study of American architecture.

The earnestness with which subjects (history, the city, monumentality, the landscape, tectonics, ethics, etc.) are tackled by student editors and faculty advisors indicates the depth of the perception of crisis. Postmodern architects turned to the written word to sort out complex issues, as often as they turned to the theoretical project. Extensive academic publishing in this period is indicative of the recent impact and accessibility of desktop publishing in noncommercial markets. But it also reflects the lack of work at the drawing board to occupy architects, especially during the slowdown in building activity precipitated by the 1973 oil embargo and "energy crisis," and the subsequent recessions in the construction industry in the early- and late-1980s and 1990s. During slow periods in the profession, writing theory and designing theoretical projects often sustain architects' interest.

A sampling of emblematic books and articles will now be looked at in greater detail. The reader is also referred to the discussion of the theoretical paradigms and themes in the next sections, and to the individual essay introductions for more background information.

The challenges that arose in the 1950s to the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement came to a head in the mid 1960s with the publication of several substantial treatises in addition to the previously mentioned *The Architecture of the City* and *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). They include Christian Norberg-Schulz's *Intentions in Architecture* (1965), Christopher Alexander's *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* (1964), and Gregotti's *Territory of Architecture* (1966). The latter has not been translated to English in its entirety, but is often referred to by non-Italian writers. (ch. 7) For a discussion of Norberg-Schulz and Rossi, see the discussion of place and urban theory in the next section. (ch. 9, 6, 7)

Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (published by the Museum of Modern Art and eventually translated into sixteen languages) prescribes the importance of looking at and using architectural history in contemporary design. (ch. 1) In essence a manifesto for historicist eclecticism, it promotes the anti-modern component (listed first here) of pairs of binary oppositions such as hybrid/pure, distorted/straightforward, and ambiguous/articulated. Venturi is concerned with communication of meaning on numerous levels and avails himself of the associations formed by familiarity with the history of architecture. In a similar fashion, *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972) locates value in the familiar, lowbrow culture of the highway "strip." (ch. 6) His inclusive theory in *Complexity and Contradiction* of "both/and" recognizes explicit and implicit functions, literal and symbolic, and allows for multiple interpretations. In asserting his preference for the "difficult unity of inclusion" (and its resulting tension), Venturi is influenced by several thought paradigms: semiology; Gestalt psychology; and William Empson's literary theory in *Seven Types of Ambiguity.*[21] The last pages of Venturi's text hint at the direction his research will take, as he discovers in the "almost all right" of the American Main Street that "it is perhaps from the everyday landscape, vulgar and disdained, that we can draw the complex and contradictory order that is valid and vital for our architecture as an urbanistic whole."[22] For an architect to celebrate the "ugly and ordinary" in the environment is certainly revolutionary, but will the change be for the better? Is this celebration in fact the populist position he claims to represent?

Philip Johnson (one of Venturi's mentors) recollects the significance of *Complexity and Contradiction* for architectural postmodernism:

> It all came from Bob Venturi's book. We all felt—Venturi, [Robert A.M.] Stern and [Michael] Graves and I—that we should be more connected with the city, and with people. And more contextual: that we should relate to the older buildings.[23]

Within eleven years of its publication, the impact of Venturi's theory was widespread. Robert Stern, who first published an excerpt of *Complexity and Contradiction* as editor of *Perspecta* in 1965, wrote an early (1977) interpretation of the *postmodern historicist*

trend. (To differentiate the work Stern describes from postmodernism at large, I refer to it as postmodern historicism.) "New Directions in Modern American Architecture: Postscript at the Edge of Modernism" identifies three areas of focus: the city, the facade, and the idea of cultural memory. (ch. 1) Stern also states corollary principles: the building is a fragment of a larger whole (contextualism); architecture is an act of historical and cultural response; and buildings develop meaning over time.[24] While Stern's "Postscript" may have intended to signal the end of modernism and usher in the postmodern era, it is not a self-proclaimed manifesto like *Complexity and Contradiction*. The essay presents postmodernism as a critique, which Stern identifies as an attempt to resolve the modern split between "rationalism" (encompassing function and technology) and "realism" (history and culture). Interestingly, function and technology are the very things Peter Eisenman identifies with Modern Movement architecture's "realistic" representation in "The End of Classical." (ch. 4) Stern claims that postmodern architectural shapes are "real," not abstract, and are "cognizant of their own purpose and materiality, of their history, of the physical context in which they are built, and of the social, cultural, and political milieu that called them into being."[25] Stern's position, vis-à-vis the social role of building, is stated thus: "buildings are designed to mean something...they are not hermetically sealed objects."[26] In contradiction to this claim of communication and accessibility, postmodern historicist architecture has been strongly criticized as elitist fashion by advocates of social responsibility in architecture.[27]

Also in 1977, Charles Jencks published *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, codifying the emerging movement as a style with predictable features. Jencks popularized the term "postmodernism" (which dates from the late 1940s) in architecture, from which it spread to the other arts. In their theoretical work, Jameson and philosopher Jürgen Habermas use Jencks's brand of architectural postmodernism (my postmodern historicism) to point to larger cultural and societal issues.

In 1969, a group of architects calling themselves CASE (the Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment) held a meeting at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA). An indirect result of the meeting was the 1972 publication of *Five Architects*, showcasing the abstract, Modern Movement-inspired work of Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier, who became known as "the New York Five." Introduced by Arthur Drexler (then MoMA curator and Director of Architecture and Design), Rowe, and Frampton, and with a postscript by Johnson, the work of the five gained instant credibility with patrons of architecture. Representing a countertendency of abstraction in relation to Venturi's, Stern's, and Jencks's call for signification of meaning, *Five Architects* was widely influential on architects. Drexler sets the book's tone in his preface, describing the work presented as "only architecture, not the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth:"

> We are all concerned...with social reform....That architecture is the least likely instrument with which to accomplish the revolution has not yet been noticed by the younger Europeans, and in America is a fact.[28]

The common ground was formalist: an interest in the early architecture of Le Corbusier and in the untested possibilities of applying cubist painters' ideas to architecture. The architects' paths have since diverged, but all five remain important figures in academia and the world of practice.

In 1976, Rowe published a collection of his writings since the late 1940s, entitled *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays*. Many of the pieces had a substantial underground circulation before publication and the book has become a classic, including the influential "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," written with Robert Slutzky.[29] *Collage City* (1978), co-authored with Fred Koetter, is discussed in relation to the city, later in this introduction. A version published as an article in 1975 is reprinted in chapter six.

## EXHIBITIONS

A series of influential exhibitions have supported the dissemination of postmodern architectural theory. This coincidence of means was also characteristic of the high modern period of the 1920s and 1930s in Europe, with its radical new magazines and frequent exhibitions of housing prototypes. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art (prodded by Johnson) launched the first modern architecture trend in the United States with its International Style exhibition in 1932. This seminal show has counterparts in the postmodern period, when MoMA was the site of three prominent exhibits that charted the changing course of architecture. The Beaux Arts Exhibition in 1975 and its tome-like catalog (which still appeared on some Yale students' desks well into the 1980s) influenced postmodern architectural graphics with its presentation of exquisite watercolor washes of neoclassical projects from the French Academy. The plans also offered models of the use of classical procession, axes, hierarchy, *poché*, and proportion. Four years later, the "Transformations" exhibition presented work from 1969 forward, including a pluralist range similar to that in Jencks's *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*.[30]

A third MoMA exhibition in the postmodern period, which Johnson curated with Mark Wigley, was "Deconstructivist Architecture" in 1988.[31] The curators attempted the same kind of reorientation of the profession, the same codification of a "movement" as in the previous influential shows. While attracting some attention, the exhibition did not launch another major trend. The disparate appearance of the work and of the intentions of the architects made the gathering seem forced. Mary McLeod suggests in "Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism" that some of the architects rejected the "Deconstructivist" label, but nonetheless wished to be included.[32] It seems that "deconstructivism" served as a stylistic label to exhibit some provocative work that may not have had much in common intellectually. The ambiguous term, "deconstructivism," (used only in architecture, to my knowledge) is meant to reflect two sources of influence for the type of postmodern work exhibited: the philosophical deconstruction of Jacques Derrida (see discussion of linguistic theory) and Russian Constructivism. Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid, who used to work together, are perhaps the most committed to formal explorations based on Constructivism. Of the group exhibited, Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi are closest to a deconstructionist position, with their emphasis on critique and dismantling disciplinary boundaries. But Frank Gehry, Steven Holl, and Coop Himmelblau are not really similar to the others mentioned above; they have in common a process of working from intuition and the sensuous properties of materials. Gehry and Holl represent a strong countertendency to postmodern historicism: an almost metaphysical approach to things concrete. In their work and others' of this period, there is an under-

current of phenomenological thought not always consciously articulated, but quite present as a subtext.

In 1980, the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York solicited designs for private houses from major international architects, recognizing the increasing popularity of architecture with the general public. The eight visionary projects comprising "Houses For Sale" were presented as works of art, and sold rapidly.[33] The Max Protech Gallery in New York featured architecture shows on a regular basis throughout the 1980s.

The architecture section of the Venice Biennale in 1980 was organized by Paolo Portoghesi around the theme, "The Presence of the Past." In his book *Postmodern: The Architecture of the Postindustrial Society*, Portoghesi describes the phenomenon represented in the Biennale:

> The language of Postmodernism...has brought into the domain of the contemporary city an imaginary and humanistic component, and put into circulation fragments and methods of the great historical tradition of the Western world....A new force and a new degree of freedom have entered the world of the architect, where for decades a creative stagnation and an extraordinary indolence had rendered the heredity of the Modern Movement inoperative.[34]

The exhibition was very controversial, being seen by some as nostalgic and "scenographic," and by others like its curator, as breathing new life into architecture. Jürgen Habermas was so affected by visiting the show that he wrote a lecture of protest against this "avant-garde of reversed fronts."[35] Published as "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," his passionate essay has been a rallying point for architects concerned with salvaging the valuable aspects of the program of modern architecture.

## PART IIB. POSTMODERNISM'S DEFINING THEORETICAL PARADIGMS

In addition to the growth of architectural theory publications, think tanks, and exhibitions, postmodernism in general is marked by the proliferation of theoretical paradigms, or ideological frameworks, which structure the thematic debates. Imported from other disciplines, the primary paradigms that shape architectural theory are phenomenology, aesthetics, linguistic theory (semiotics, structuralism, poststructuralism, and deconstruction), Marxism, and feminism.

### PARADIGM 1: PHENOMENOLOGY

One aspect of this interdisciplinarity is the reliance of architectural theory on the philosophical method of inquiry known as phenomenology. That this philosophical thread underlies postmodern attitudes towards site, place, landscape, and making (in particular, tectonics) is sometimes overlooked and unquestioned. Recent theory has moved towards philosophical speculation by problematizing the body's interaction with its environment. Visual, tactile, olfactory, and aural sensations are the visceral part of the reception of architecture, a medium distinguished by its three-dimensional presence. In the postmodern

period, the bodily and unconscious connection to architecture has again become an object of study for some theorists through phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenology, consisting of a "systematic investigation of consciousness and its objects,"[36] is the basis for later philosophers' work.

Prompted by the availability of translations of works by Martin Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard from the 1950s,[37] phenomenological consideration of architecture has begun to displace formalism and lay the groundwork for the emerging aesthetic of the contemporary sublime. Architectural theory typically lags behind cultural theory and the case of the absorption of phenomenology is no exception. Phenomenology's critique of scientific logic, which through positivist ("optimism about the benefits that the extension of scientific method could bring to humanity"[38]) thought had been elevated above and devalued Being, appealed to postmodernists rethinking technology's contributions to modernity in a less enthusiastic light.

Heidegger (1889–1976) studied philosophy under Edmund Husserl. His questionable political alliances during WWII led to a harsh reception of his work by colleagues. Nonetheless, Heidegger's influence is evident on the deconstructionist work of Derrida and on postmodern theorists working on the body.

Heidegger's writing is motivated by concern about modern man's inability to reflect on Being (or existence); this is crucial, he argues, because such reflection defines the human condition. One of the most influential phenomenological works for architecture is "Building Dwelling Thinking," in which Heidegger articulates the relationship between building and *dwelling*, Being, constructing, cultivating, and sparing.[39] Tracing the etymology of the German word *bauen* ("building"), Heidegger rediscovers ancient connotations and broad meanings that express the potential wealth of existence. Dwelling is defined as "a staying with things." When *things* (elements that gather the "fourfold" of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities) are first named, he says, they are recognized. Throughout the essay he maintains that language shapes thought, and thinking and poetry are required for dwelling.

Christian Norberg-Schulz interprets Heidegger's concept of dwelling as being at peace in a protected place. He thus argues for the potential of architecture to support dwelling: "The primary purpose of architecture is hence to make a world visible. It does this as a thing, and the world it brings into presence consists in what it gathers."[40] The Norwegian critic has promulgated the connection between architecture and dwelling in a series of publications dating back to *Existence, Space and Architecture* in 1971. An earlier interest in the experience of things "concrete" is expressed in *Intentions in Architecture* (1965), and hints at his future direction. Norberg-Schulz is widely cited today and is considered the principal proponent of a phenomenology of architecture, that is, a concern with the "concretization of existential space" through the making of *places*. The tectonic aspect of architecture plays a role, especially the concrete detail, which Norberg-Schulz says "explains the environment and makes its character manifest."[41]

Phenomenology in architecture requires deliberate attention to how things are made. As Mies supposedly said, "God is in the details." This influential school of thought not only recognizes and celebrates the basic elements of architecture (wall, floor, ceiling, etc. as horizon or boundary), but it has led to a renewed interest in sensuous qualities of materials, light, and color, and in the symbolic, tactile significance of the joint.

Perez-Gomez proposes extending Heidegger's concept of dwelling to allow for "existential orientation," cultural identification, and a connection with history.[42] By providing an existential "foothold" in "authentic" architecture, man can deal with mortality through the transcendence of "dwelling."[43]

Influenced by phenomenologist Hans-Georg Gadamer, Perez-Gomez claims that the apprehension of architecture as meaningful requires a "metaphysical dimension." This dimension "reveals the presence of Being, the presence of the invisible within the world of the everyday." The invisible must be signified with a symbolic architecture. The emphasis on dwelling is similar to Norberg-Schulz's, but Perez-Gomez is more prescriptive in his requirement for representation: "a symbolic architecture is one that represents, one that can be recognized as part of our collective dreams, as a place of full inhabitation."[44] One can acknowledge potency in the concept of dwelling, while questioning Perez-Gomez's assertion of the necessity for representational, symbolic means to achieve it. Because on the contrary, abstraction is offered by some theorists as more open to interpretations, and therefore as more universally meaningful.

A Finnish phenomenologist, Juhani Pallasmaa, addresses the psychic apprehension of architecture. (ch. 9) He talks about "opening up a view into a second reality of perception, dreams, forgotten memories and imagination."[45] In his work, this is accomplished through an abstract "architecture of silence."[46] While Pallasmaa's investigation of the unconscious parallels the Freudian uncanny, his architecture of silence resonates with the contemporary sublime.

## PARADIGM 2: AESTHETIC OF THE SUBLIME

Like phenomenology, aesthetics is a philosophical paradigm that deals with the production and reception of a work of art. This section presents articulations of a single important aesthetic category in the postmodern period. Because of its function as the characteristic expression of modernity,[47] the sublime constitutes the principal emerging aesthetic category in the postmodern period. The sudden rebirth of interest in the sublime is partly explicable in terms of the recent emphasis on the knowledge of architecture through phenomenology. The phenomenological paradigm foregrounds a fundamental issue in aesthetics: the effect a work of architecture has on the viewer. In the instance of the sublime, the experience is visceral.

The emerging definitions of the sublime (such as the uncanny and the grotesque) give shape to the modern aesthetic discourse and coincide with postmodern thought. Contemporary theorists investigating the sublime are reinterpreting a tradition that dates to the first century A.D. and is elaborated during the Enlightenment. Writing at the dawn of modernity, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant are significant eighteenth-century sources.[48] A reconsideration of the sublime can be used to re-situate the architectural discourse and to move beyond formalism.

In twentieth-century architecture, any mention of the sublime or the beautiful seems to have been deliberately repressed by theorists and designers anxious to distance themselves from the recent past. To achieve the "radical break" with the history of the discipline that modernism sought, the terms of aesthetic theory had to be changed. A modernist polemic calling for an aesthetic *tabula rasa*[49] (of abstraction) and for the application of

scientific principles to design, supplanted the preceding rhetoric. Positivist emphasis on rationality and function marginalized beauty and the sublime as subjective architectural issues. The postmodern recuperation of the sublime (and therefore of its reciprocal, the beautiful) as outlined herein will allow a significant expansion of theory.

Following psychoanalytic and deconstructionist models, several theoreticians argue that the route to a revitalized architecture requires uncovering its repressed aspects. Within the concealed material are often found vulnerable assumptions about the foundations of the discipline. For Anthony Vidler and Peter Eisenman, the uncanny and grotesque, aspects of the sublime, have been repressed. (ch. 14) In Vidler's terms, the "uncanny in this context would be...the return of the body into an architecture that had repressed its conscious presence."[50] Clearly related is Eisenman's grotesque: "the condition of the always present or the already within, that the beautiful in architecture attempts to repress."[51] Their ideas start to define the contemporary sublime in architecture.

The uncanny, as described by Sigmund Freud, is the rediscovery of something familiar that has been previously repressed; it is the uneasy feeling of the presence of an absence. The mix of the known and familiar with the strange, surfaces in the German word for the uncanny, *unheimliche*, which, translated literally, is "unhomely." In Vidler's recent study of *The Architectural Uncanny*, he notes that a common theme is the idea of the human body in fragments.[52] His uncanny is thus the terrifying side of the sublime, with the fear being privation of the integrated body. Vidler sees a "deliberate attempt to address the status of the body in post-modern theory," which is necessitated by the fact that, "The body in disintegration is in a very real sense the image of the notion of humanist progress in disarray."[53] Fragmentation is an important theme in postmodern historicist and deconstructivist architecture, the sources of which may lie in the rejection of anthropomorphic embodiment.[54]

By focusing his phenomenological study on the uncanny, Vidler hopes to discover the power to interpret the relations between the psyche and the dwelling, the body and the house, the individual and the metropolis."[55] He notes that many architects have selected the uncanny as a powerful "metaphor for a fundamentally unlivable modern condition": homelessness.[56] The uncanny's role in an aesthetic agenda for architecture is to identify and critique significant contemporary issues such as imitation, repetition, the symbolic, and the sublime via the link forged with phenomenology.[57]

Vidler recognizes the use of defamiliarizing "reversals of aesthetic norms, [and] substitutions of the grotesque for the sublime," as avant-garde formal strategies addressing alienation.[58] Perhaps this explains Eisenman's exploration of the grotesque as "the manifestation of the uncertain in the physical."[59] He claims the grotesque offers a challenge to the continuous domination of the beautiful, its repressor since the Renaissance. Eisenman considers the Modern Movement a part of an uninterrupted 500-year-long period he refers to as "the classical." (ch. 4)

In Eisenman's work and in other recent theory, beauty is reemerging in the context of opposition to the sublime (grotesque). He proposes "a containing within," in lieu of reversing the current hierarchy, such that one term (the grotesque) still represses the other (the beautiful).[60] His alternative to the exclusion of oppositional categories recognizes that present within the beautiful is the grotesque: "the idea of the ugly, the deformed, and the supposedly unnatural."[61] The utility of this expanded aesthetic category lies in advancing

Eisenman's usual agenda: he sees the possibility of displacing architecture and its dependence on humanist ideals like beauty, through this complexity.

Perhaps Diana Agrest's model for the relationship of architectural practice and theory can be used to reconfigure the relationship between these two aesthetic categories: if the beautiful is the "normative" discourse of aesthetics, the sublime could be seen as an "analytical and exploratory discourse,"[62] in opposition to beauty. The sublime has been described as a "self-transforming discourse" that influenced the construction of the modern subject.[63] The process-oriented character of the sublime may explain part of its appeal for postmodernists.

The significance of the sublime in the twentieth century is finally being recognized in critical writing, which has dwelt primarily on art and literature. Whether presented as a modern phenomenon capable of social critique, or as an aspect of psychological encounter, the profile of the contemporary sublime is emerging. It encompasses Jean-François Lyotard's and Eisenman's advocacy of disciplinary deconstruction and the indeterminacy of abstraction. Under the rubric of the architectural uncanny, it includes Vidler's phenomenological articulation. These theoretical positions offer ways to remove the mask of avant-garde repression that has limited our ability to see architecture in terms of a continuous dialogue between the sublime and the beautiful. The emphasis Vidler and Eisenman place on the spatial experience of the human *subject* challenges a formalist and nonexperiential reception of architecture.

## PARADIGM 3: LINGUISTIC THEORY

A shift in concerns in postmodern cultural criticism has also been effected by the restructuring of thought in linguistic paradigms. Semiotics, structuralism, and in particular poststructuralism (including deconstruction) have reshaped many disciplines, including literature, philosophy, anthropology and sociology, and critical activity at large. A significant introduction of Continental theory to an American audience took place in 1966 at Johns Hopkins University. Among the paper presenters at the International Colloquium on Critical Languages and the Sciences of Man, were Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Lacan.[64]

These paradigms, a major influence on thought in the 1960s, paralleled a revival of interest in meaning and symbolism in architecture. Architects studied how meaning is carried in language and applied that knowledge, via the "linguistic analogy," to architecture. They questioned to what extent architecture is conventional, like language, and whether people outside architecture understand how its conventions construct meaning. Among others, Diana Agrest and her partner Mario Gandelsonas in "Semiotics and Architecture," and Geoffrey Broadbent in "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture," began to ask if a "social contract" exists for architecture. (ch. 2) In a challenge to modern functionalism as the determinant of form, it was argued from a linguistic standpoint that architectural objects have no inherent meaning, but can develop it through cultural convention.[65]

## SEMIOTICS

Linguistic theory is an important paradigm for analyzing a general postmodern concern: the creation and reception of meaning. Semiotics and structuralism in particular deal with how language communicates, conceiving of it as a closed system.

Semiotics (Charles Sanders Peirce's chosen term), or semiology (Ferdinand de Saussure's term) approaches language scientifically, as a sign system with a dimension of structure (syntactic) and one of meaning (semantic). Structural relationships bind the signs and their components (signifier/signified) together; syntactic relations are between signs. Semantic relationships have to do with meanings, that is, relations between signs and the objects they denote. Peirce's and de Saussure's initial research in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries established some principles.

The Swiss linguist de Saussure's lectures on semiology, originally presented in 1906–11, were translated from French to English in 1959, generating a revival of interest in his work. His particular contribution was to study language *synchronically* (in its current use), and to examine the parts of language and the relationships between parts.[66] De Saussure was the inventer of the notions *signifier* and *signified*, whose structural relationship constitutes the linguistic *sign*. As important as the two components of the sign is the idea that: "Language is a system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others."[67]

Applications of semiotic theory to other disciplines proliferated in the 1960s, with especially active practitioners in North and South America, France, and Italy. Umberto Eco, novelist, critic, and semiotician, has written on architecture as a semiotic system of signification. In "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture," Eco claims that architectural signs (morphemes) communicate possible functions through a system of conventions or codes.[68] Literal use or programmatic function is architecture's primary meaning. Signs thus *denote* primary functions, and *connote* secondary functions. His essay "A Componential Analysis of the Architectural Sign/Column/" demonstrates that a single architectural object (in this case, the column) can be a bearer of meaning and therefore a pertinent semantic unit.[69]

In "On Reading Architecture," (1972) an important semiotic investigation published in a mainstream professional magazine (*Progressive Architecture*), Mario Gandelsonas compares the syntactically loaded work of Eisenman with the semantically loaded work of Graves. In general, the theory and practice of Agrest and Gandelsonas is influenced by linguistics; they find in semiotics a way of reading architecture as a field of knowledge production. Gandelsonas's book *The Urban Text* is an example of this analysis.

## STRUCTURALISM

Structuralism is a study method that generally claims: "the true nature of things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationships which we construct and then perceive, *between* them."[70] The world is constituted by language, which is a structure of meaningful relationships between arbitrary signs. Thus, structuralists assert that in linguistic systems, there are only differences, without positive terms.[71]

Structuralism focuses on codes, conventions, and processes responsible for a work's intelligibility, that is, how it produces socially available meaning. As a method, it is not

concerned with thematic content, but with "the conditions of signification."[72] While structuralism has its roots in linguistics and anthropology, it is a cross-disciplinary

> investigation of a text's relation to particular structures and processes be they linguistic, psychoanalytic, metaphysical, logical, sociological or rhetorical. Languages and structures, rather than authorial self or consciousness, become the major source of explanation.[73]

The appeal of structuralism for rationalizing architecture is clear from the following explanation of method if one substitutes architectural work for literary work:

> structuralists take linguistics as a model and attempt to develop "grammars"—systematic inventories of elements and their possibilities of combination—that would account for the form and meaning of literary works.[74]

## POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Cultural critic Hal Foster marks the transition from modern to postmodern through two ideas borrowed directly from literary and cultural critic Roland Barthes (d.1980). The latter's ideas of the *work* and the *text* mirror the change of focus in artistic or literary production from the modern creation of a whole or unity, to the postmodern creation of "a multidimensional space,"[75] or "a methodological field."[76] While some[77] would argue that it is difficult to separate structuralism and poststructuralism, Foster also uses the work and text to do so. In his essay, "(Post) Modern Polemics," he associates the structuralist work with the stability of the components of the sign, while the poststructuralist text "reflects the contemporary dissolution of the sign and the released play of signifiers."[78] Barthes's later writings suggest that the signifier has the potential for free play and endless deferrals of meaning, which result from an infinite chain of metaphors.

Poststructuralism thus initiates the "critique of the sign," asking: Is the sign really composed of just two parts (signifier and signified), or does it not also depend on the presence of all the other signifiers it does not engage, from which it differs? Marxist literary theorist Terry Eagleton points out that while structuralism divides the sign from the *referent* (the object referred to), poststructuralism goes a step further and divides the signifier from the signified.[79] The result of this line of thought is that "meaning is not immediately *present* in a sign."[80]

Another way of marking the shift from structuralism to poststructuralism, occurring around 1970, is the move from viewing language objectively, (as an object independent of a human subject), to viewing it as the *discourse* of a subject, or individual. "Discourse," Eagleton explains, "means language grasped as utterance" or "as practice," and is poststructuralism's acknowledgement of the linked roles of speaker and audience, of the important role of dialogue in linguistic communication.[81]

Before structuralism, the act of interpretation sought to discover the meaning which coincided with the intention of the author or speaker; this meaning was considered definitive. Structuralism does not attempt to assign a true meaning to the work (beyond its structure) or to evaluate the work in relation to the canon. In poststructuralism, it is asserted that meaning is indeterminate, elusive, bottomless.

In the absence of relevance of the traditional critical project, Barthes offers, in "From Work to Text," the following ideas for what poststructuralist criticism ought to be. First, critics' search for sources, for influences on which to base their interpretations of an object, causes their work to suffer from the "myth of filiation."[82] In seeking to place modern works of art or architecture in a historical context, critics defy the modernist notion that everything must be original, arising from a *tabula rasa*. A better critical undertaking, Barthes says, is one in which "the critic *executes* the work," in both senses of the word. This double entendre refers to performing the critic's usual interpretive function, and it suggests his oedipal feelings with regard to the literature of the past. Barthes wants the critic, or reader in general, to take an active role as a producer of meaning.

The poststructuralist paradigm raises two main questions pertinent to postmodern architecture, according to Foster in "(Post) Modern Polemics": the status of the subject and its language, and the status of history and its representation. Both are constructs shaped by society's representations of them. In fact, the object of the poststructuralist critique is to demonstrate that all of reality is *constituted* (produced and sustained) by its representations, rather than *reflected* in them. History, for example, is a narrative with implications of subjectivity, of the fictional. Poststructuralism thus supports a proliferation of histories, told from other points of view than that of the power elite. These histories replace the "received" version of a "history of victors."[83]

Poststructuralist thinking similarly problematizes the subject as author, challenging his/her status and power in discussions like Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1968) and philosopher Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969).[84] Both suggest that the uniqueness and creativity of the author are just convenient cultural fictions, compared with the selective, reductive role authors actually play in presenting a limited number of issues. In their poststructuralist view, now widely accepted, this "individual" is in fact located within a system of conventions that "speak him/her."

The "romantic artist" as productive "genius" is attacked as an ideological construct like the author, because society's representation conflicts with the artist's function. Like the author, the artist is an exaggerated celebration of individualism. Foucault (d.1984) preferred to look at the author instead as a "function...characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society."[85] This perspective allows him to ask more important questions than are raised by traditional criticism, such as: "What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself?"[86]

Many influential practitioners and architectural educators assume poststructuralist stances. Postmodern architectural theory has thus undertaken a reexamination of modern architecture's disciplinary origins (including the tabula rasa notion), and its relationship to history (which could be characterized by Harold Bloom's phrase *The Anxiety of Influence*, 1973), the emphasis on innovation in modernism, and the notion of the individualist, "hero" architect.

The postmodern reorientation of critical priorities, refocusing the object of disciplinary study, occurs with the application of poststructuralist principles to other disciplines. For example, Foucault's consideration of the impact of various discourses leads to a sociological interest in the role of institutions in society. The psychoanalytic criticism of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva is filtered through a poststructuralist lens; in Kristeva's case, it is also layered with feminist thought.

## DECONSTRUCTION

One of the most significant poststructuralist manifestations is deconstruction. A philosophical and linguistic practice, deconstruction looks at the foundations of thought in "logocentrism,"[87] and at the foundations of disciplines like architecture. Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher whose work is most often associated with deconstruction, explores the use of rhetorical operations (such as metaphor) to produce the supposed ground or foundation of argument, noting that each concept has been constructed. (ch. 3) For instance, he speculates on what constitutes the "architecture of architecture": If architecture, tectonics, and urban design serve as the fundamental metaphors for other systems of thought, like philosophy, what supports architecture?[88]

Derrida describes his work:

Deconstruction analyzes and questions conceptual pairs which are currently accepted as self-evident and natural, as if they hadn't been institutionalized at some precise moment....Because of being taken for granted they restrict thinking.[89]

Deconstruction works from the margins to expose and dismantle the oppositions and vulnerable assumptions that structure a text.[90] It then moves on to attempt a more general displacement of the system, by ascertaining what the history of the discipline may have concealed or excluded, using repression to constitute its identity. This strategy is crucial in feminist critiques. (See the discussion on feminism in this introduction.)

The purpose of deconstruction is to displace philosophical categories and attempts at mastery, such as the privileging of one term over the other in binary oppositions, such as presence/absence.[91] The hierarchical binaries are seen not as isolated or peripheral problems, but as systemic and repressive. Derrida sees architecture as aiming at control of the communication and transportation sectors of society, as well as the economy. Deconstruction is part of the postmodern critique; its goal is to end modern architecture's plan of domination.[92]

Tschumi's stated goal for architecture is very close to Derrida's:

[to achieve the construction of] conditions that will dislocate the most traditional and regressive aspects of our society and simultaneously reorganize these elements in the most liberating way.[93]

In testing the limits of the discipline, discovering its margins, confronting it with other disciplines, and subjecting its premises to radical criticism, Tschumi is the architectural counterpart of Barthes and Derrida.[94] He is interested in the architectural text, as something potentially unlimited, not subsumed within disciplines and traditional genres, but crossing these disciplinary boundaries.

Eisenman has also made proposals (in theory and design) for architecture as text (ch. 4) and his numerous published exchanges with Derrida have been instrumental in introducing architects to deconstruction.

An evolution takes place in the postmodern period, from a structuralist interest in how meaning is created by relationships between signs and components of signs, to the conclusion that determining a definitive meaning is impossible in poststructuralist and deconstructionist thought. Many interesting questions are raised by linguistic theory, and these questions affect the making of architecture, architectural theory, and its critical reception. Is the pursuit of meaning fruitless or nostalgic? If the interpretation of artifacts is not a worthwhile critical practice, what is the purpose of criticism? Ferreting out ideologies? Creative writing? Constructing a parallel narrative which does not claim any particular authority in relation to an artifact?

The architectural concerns of place and meaning are thus threatened by poststructuralist notions like the arbitrariness of the communicative sign. If signs are unreliably interpreted, easily construed in several ways simultaneously, how can architecture express a shared sense of community? And if language is unreliable, can there be agreement on the meaning of architectural "language"? Furthermore, the loss of grand historical narratives, posited by poststructuralists, points to the unattainability of a consensus that might be meaningfully represented in architecture.

## PARADIGM 4: MARXISM

The Marxist paradigm is an influential one applied to the study of architecture in the postmodern period, especially for examining the city and its institutions. The postmodern urban critique is supported by the general reconsideration of political questions by Marxist intellectuals and theorists.

Marxist approaches to architectural history and theory (notably among the Italian writers of the "School of Venice"), raise issues of the relationship of class struggle and architecture. Historian Manfredo Tafuri explains his intentions in the conclusion to *Architecture and Utopia* (1973):

A coherent Marxist criticism of the ideology of architecture and urbanism could not but demystify the contingent and historical realities...hidden behind the unifying terms of art, architecture, and city. (ch. 7)

He defines "the crisis of modern architecture...[as] rather a crisis of the ideological function of architecture." That is, Modern Movement architecture failed to achieve the desired overhaul of the social order because only a *class critique* of architecture is possible. A class architecture cannot cause a general revolution because it depends on and follows this general revolution. Tafuri claims that modern architecture cannot even provide an image of architecture for a liberated society without revisions to its elements: language, method, and structure.

While Tafuri seems to rule out change through architecture, Jameson is more optimistic about the potential of Marxist "enclave theory" for grass-roots resistance to the status quo.[95] This model proposes that marginalized groups, working gradually from the fringes of society, can forge a position as a critical enclave and can initiate change. An example is the student revolutions of May 1968, "the events" in which European (particularly French) students and workers together attempted to overthrow the capitalist system and install Marxism. The students, like women and blacks, embraced the necessity of constituent group radicalism. (Eagleton hypothesizes that the revolutionaries' inability to change the entrenched government may have played a part in the turn to a poststructuralist attack on

language.[96] Enclave theory has spawned a number of architectural manifestations, including the above-mentioned Critical Regionalism, which I discuss later. (ch. 11)

These questions of the structure of political power are reinforced by French intellectuals like poststructuralist Michel Foucault, ("Of Other Spaces and Heterotopias") and the influential Frankfurt School, whose members take a modified Marxist position. Foucault's influence has been tremendously widespread, because of his broad analytical studies of the structure of disciplines and professions under the methods of *archaeology* and *geneology* of knowledge. His interdisciplinary approach fuses philosophy, history, psychology, and politics into what he calls a "taxonomy of discourses." Foucault's books *Madness and Civilization*, *The Order of Things*, and *Discipline and Punish* make clear that institutions (and the architectural forms that house them) serve a control function in society. The architectural utopia is even briefly considered in his essay "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" (1967). In addition to studying the role of institutions, Foucault identifies the role of professional jargon in creating an autonomous, legitimizing, and exclusionary discourse. The postmodern critique of power structures in the late 1960s and 1970s was inspired and facilitated by this analysis.

The Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School is the work of a group within the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. It is associated primarily with Max Horkheimer (d.1973), Theodore Adorno (d.1969), both directors of the Institute, and with Herbert Marcuse (d.1979), who remained in the United States after the exiled Institute was reestablished in Germany in the 1950s. Like Foucault, their interdisciplinary approach fuses philosophy, history, and psychology in an effort to accurately describe the phenomena of culture in the context of society and the political economy. Their study of issues such as the rise of authoritarianism and bureaucracy, the changing nature of social relationships, and the relationship of contemporary culture to everyday life, was intended to contribute to the struggle against domination.[97] They were and have continued to be influential with students and progressive thinkers. Walter Benjamin (d.1940), although a peripheral member of the Institute, is now one of the best known. His writings on culture, similar in scope to those of Barthes, have been frequently cited in architectural theory since the late 1970s.

## PARADIGM 5: FEMINISM

Activism in the 1960s called attention to the disenfranchisement within ostensibly democratic societies of groups defined by gender, race, or sexual orientation. More recently, it has been highlighted by younger scholars, often gay or female. Critical approaches calling for equity, inclusion, and an end to prejudice, known as "the critique of the Other," are broadening the discussion of architecture and other arts from just formal grounds (which dominate late modernist theory and criticism) to cultural, historical, and ethical grounds. An important instance of this critique of the Other is feminism.

Feminism arose as a political agenda to resist male domination in the postmodern period. This political movement made great strides in achieving social equity, from employment and educational opportunities to legal and financial independence. In the United States, the right to control one's own destiny, which these issues signify, finds its emblem in the ongoing abortion battle.

The exclusionary operations of disciplines and other institutions were successfully challenged in the 1970s by women who had been largely prohibited from full participation in the workforce, politics, and academia. Rejecting sex-based discrimination requires presenting *gender* as unnatural, arbitrary, and irrelevant. To reveal gender as a construction of social control that privileges some members of society at the expense of others, feminists use critical paradigms including post-structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Gender has been used historically to isolate or mark "the other." Theorist Chris Weedon points out the origin and implications of gender:

> Psychoanalysis offers a universal theory of the psychic construction of gender identity on the basis of repression [of part of a child's bisexuality]....It offers a framework from within which femininity and masculinity can be understood and a theory of consciousness, language, and meaning.[98]

Architectural theorist Ann Bergren says, "Gender is...a machine for thinking the meaning of sexual difference."[99] She notes that some languages, like English, function without the need for differentiation in gender terms. These kinds of observations have led Bergren to conclude that gender is "subjective in both senses of the term, and thereby rhetorical and political." As a result, feminists are examining the logocentric notion of difference, which originates in gender, and its unacknowledged impact on the built world.

Fundamental to reconsidering cultural constructions like gender is Foucault's "formulation of the subject as pure exteriority, the product of the inscription of the relations of power."[100] In other words, the individual is manipulated into behavioral conformity by explicit political structures and implicit social codes. These structures and codes are precisely the target of feminist attacks.

The feminist critique of architecture aims to engage theory and practice firmly in the sociopolitical reality. Influenced by Freudian and Derridean analysis, Agrest believes the "system" of architecture (the Renaissance theory accounting for classicism that makes up the received "Western tradition") is defined both by what it includes and what it excludes, or represses. In her essay, "Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, Sex," she finds herself and the female body in general to be excluded from this "phallocentric" system. (ch. 13) The pyschoanalytic term "repression" (denial of sex drive leading to neurosis) takes on a spatial meaning here as she describes "an interior of repression," defined by woman and her body, and the system that their repression maintains. She turns the liability of exclusion into an advantage:

> This outside is a place where one can take distance from the closed system of architecture and thus be in...a position to examine [architecture's] mechanisms of closure, its ideological mechanisms of filtration, to blur the boundaries that separate architecture from other practices.[101]

But Agrest also understands the risk that a woman takes in assuming an outside position, in not conforming to the social order: being labeled through history as an ecstatic, a witch, a hysteric, etc. She suggests that a productive extradisciplinary position from which to view architecture and urbanism may be found in film, as it shares with architecture the

elements of time and space. The critical point of view Agrest establishes in theory attempts to resituate the female body in postmodern architecture. It is also a significant reminder that the tradition of anthropomorphism was neglected in modern architecture. For more on this concept, see my discussion of the theme of the body.

## PART IIC. POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURAL THEMES

Some general themes around which one can cluster issues of postmodern cultural theory are history (the problem of disciplinary tradition), meaning, social responsibility (ethical engagement versus autonomous practice), and the body. In the case of postmodern architectural theory, a strong position is also formulated with respect to the city as cultural artifact, and to *place*, in the phenomenological sense. While most of these themes also characterize architectural theory of the preceding period, one can argue that place and the body were not recognized by the Modern Movement because of its focus on accommodating the collective over the individual, expressed in a language of universality, both technological and abstract. The celebration of the machine as formal model, for instance, excluded the body. Art plays a greater role in postmodern architectural theory than technology, as the pendulum swings again between the poles of architecture as art and architecture as engineering. Vidler says:

> The question of the art of architecture, closed by the functional ethic, may well be opened,
> with all its disturbing implications, by this attempt in the domain of ideas ….until recently
> architects [were] more concerned to develop machines for living in than art to wrestle with.
> The positivistic utopia of modern architecture was in this way based on the repression of
> death, decay, and the "pleasure principle."[102]

In this period, it often seems that the formal ideas being grappled with first become clear in art, (which is free of the complications of inhabitability, collaboration, and finance), and then trickle down to architecture. For instance, Foster has described how postmodern art creates a destructured object and field, a decentered human subject (both artist and viewer), and causes an erosion of history.[103] These ideas are emphasized in recent theory on the body in architecture.

There is tremendous crossover of issues between postmodern art and art criticism and architectural theory, in part because the same theoretical paradigms (notably poststructuralism) are influential in both disciplines. Common issues include the constellation of ideas surrounding the construction of the artist, such as the definition of his/her role as a producer in society and the reception of the work of art. These issues of making can be summed up as dealing with authorship, authority, and authenticity. Contemporary art curator Howard Fox notes that

> in the 70s art world the authority of certain ideas we associate with modernism had begun
> to erode: originality, artistic genius, virtuoso workmanship, the notion of the sacrosanctness
> of the art object.[104]

Many of the ideas now being questioned (holdovers from nineteenth-century romantic conceptions of the artist) are those originally challenged by the work of the surrealists as early as the 1910s. In particular, Marcel Duchamp's "readymades" raise radical, disquieting questions for colleagues about the alchemical, validating artist's signature; the role of the hand in manufacture; ideas of the original and authentic; and the privileged status of places of exhibition. Duchamp's appropriation and presentation of the mass-produced object as *objet d'art* anticipates Benjamin's 1936 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," which acknowledges the changing conditions of making and experiencing art in the industrial era.

Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, the Catalan architectural theorist, cites surrealism as the most committed critical stance against the Modern Movement, thus explaining its fascination for postmodern artists and architects.[105] Another generation of artists and theorists (Robert Morris, Gordon Matta-Clark, Alain Robbe-Grillet, etc.) began to explore this legacy in the mid 1960s. In architecture, Rossi is in the forefront in considering and using surrealism, followed by others who emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, including Tschumi, Koolhaas, and Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio.[106]

One of the postmodern strategies for challenging the notion of originality is appropriation: borrowing—even literally reproducing—another person's work with the intent to recontextualize it, or re-present it in a new context. For feminist artists, appropriating a famous male artist's work is a way of calling attention to the marginalization of women in the history of art. It is a controversial way to question the value society places on originality. In Sherrie Levine's work, appropriating and re-presenting the prints of Walker Evans calls attention to the mechanical and serial aspect of photography, and hence its odd relationship to traditional manufacture in the other arts.

## THEME 1: HISTORY AND HISTORICISM

That these questions have been raised indicates that modernism has lost its firm, univalent grasp on the art and architecture scene, leaving open the possibility of a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives and forms of expression. It also highlights the self-conscious, analytical, and image-oriented nature of the postmodern period, in which artists and architects concerned themselves with "a history of influence." Postmodern positions call for the reconsideration, if not embrace of disciplinary history, which had been rejected by modern theory. Appropriation is an aggressive way of dealing with the past. Another way is the attitude of self-consciousness of the present as a distinct historical moment, which leads to "periodization," the segregation of works and events into separate chronological or stylistic categories.

Periodization is typical of a *historicist* view of history, defined as seeking to express the *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, understood to be unique to the present time and requiring the development of a unique style. (ch. 4) It is clear that the modern idea of style depends upon this theory of history. A historicist culture thus pursues an ever-changing, "emergent ideal" on the model of organic growth or evolution in nature.[107] This nineteenth-century theory of history underlies the relativism of cultural modernity, especially avant-garde ideas about the necessity of a "radical break" with the past.

In "Three Kinds of Historicism," Alan Colquhoun notes: "in the architectural avant-garde this meant the continual creation of new forms under the impulse of social and technological development and the symbolic representation of society through these forms." (ch. 4)

A postmodern critic, Colquhoun discovers two paradoxical aspects of historicism. The primary paradox is that seeking an expression of the zeitgeist condemns one to a pattern of continual change. Habermas deepens the paradox with his suspicion that the "value placed [by modernism] on the transitory, the elusive, and the ephemeral...discloses a longing for an undefiled, immaculate and stable present."[108] Secondly, Colquhoun points out, instead of the fixed ideals and "natural law" of the classical world view, modernism substituted a "flight to the future," an inevitable (positivist) progression of relatively valid expressions of various times. The paradox, for Colquhoun, is that something can be both inevitable and relative. Other questions about historicism include how one can identify the zeitgeist from within history; for Eisenman in "The End of the Classical," (ch. 4) this logical problem suggests the need to find a new purpose for architecture.

Note that historicism has two other definitions that are also relevant in a discussion of postmodern architecture. Colquhoun offers the following: 1) an attitude of concern for the traditions of the past, and 2) the artistic practice of using historical forms. Postmodern historicist architects utilize elements of classical or other past styles in an artistic practice of collage, pastiche, or authentic reconstruction, clearly demonstrating that they feel these forms are superior to contemporary ones because of the associations and meaning they carry.

One of the significant events in recent architectural history is the reappraisal of work not conforming to or contained within the mainstream schools of the Modern Movement. The notion that modern architecture is not singular, but is composed of many distinct tendencies, characterizes the work of the Italian theorists Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co. These Marxist architectural historians choose a "dialectical" approach emphasizing the disparate nature of modern works, presented as a plurality of histories. Previously marginalized (as aberrant) buildings and architects are now elevated for comparison with Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe as significant exceptions to the hegemony of International Style functionalism (aggressively promoted as the style by the MoMA and historians like Gideion). The postmodern revision also looks for continuities with earlier works, and expresses skepticism about the avant-garde notion of the "radical break": Was it a worthwhile and achievable goal and has it occurred in the twentieth century?

## POSTMODERN ATTITUDES IN RELATION TO MODERNITY
Probably the most confusing aspect of postmodern theory is the multiplicity of terms used to describe the various positions taken with regard to the modern condition. The following attempts to simplify the range of possibilities, and to avoid the use of terms that conflict or have different associations outside of this discipline. The two main postmodern attitudes can be classified as either anti-modern or pro-modern. Within this basic schema, one finds critical and affirmative theories, resistant and reactionary, progressive and conservative.

## ANTI-MODERN THEORIES
Anti-modern theories seek a "radical break" with modernity, offering alternatives, either future-oriented (critical new visions), or backward-looking (reactionary revivals of tradition). While the former can be seen as "neoavant-garde" in striving for a new expression

of a self-consciously defined postmodern time, the latter includes *arrière-garde* (rear-guard) proposals to bypass modernity and return to premodern, preindustrial conditions.

The dominant rear-guard postmodern position calls for the return of history. It reflects skepticism of the extent to which modern artists and architects could actually operate from the tabula rasa they claim as their origin, as well as skepticism about the value of the origin itself. Frequently called "neoconservative" postmodernism, the return to and validation of classicism as transhistorical (not subject to historical change) is one example of the anti-modern position. This reactionary tendency paralleled conservative political developments in the 1980s, with party platforms centered on traditionalism and "family values." In architecture, classical aesthetic values like imitation were championed in this rejection of modernism.

## PRO-MODERN THEORIES
The opposite postmodern approach is the progressive position, desiring to extend or complete the modern cultural tradition. The progressivist carries over many ideas from modernism in an effort to transform it. Theorists of this persuasion, such as Foster, feel that the "adversary culture" of the twentieth-century avant-garde has been renounced by reactionary political opponents in order to maintain social control.[109] This conservative strategy of attack relies on equating modernism at large with the aesthetic doctrine of formalism. The reductive presentation of modernism *as* formalism, as occupying a position of "official autonomy," overlooks its potential for social critique. Furthermore, Foster agrees with Clement Greenberg that modernism is "a self-critical program... pledged to maintain the high quality of past art in current production" and to ensure the continuation of the aesthetic as a value.[110]

Habermas, whose work extends that of the Frankfurt School, is among the strongest advocates of this branch of postmodernism. He argues against conservatives' blaming societal ills on cultural modernism, saying (as does Frampton) that it is, in fact, economic and societal *modernization* that causes alienation:

> The neoconservative does not uncover the economic and social causes for the altered attitudes towards work, consumption, achievement and leisure. Consequently, he attributes all of the following—hedonism, the lack of social identification, the lack of obedience, narcissism, the withdrawal from status and achievement competition—to the domain of culture.[111]

To support Habermas's distinction between the effects of modernization and modernism, one can cite the disappointing lack of effectiveness of modern architecture in solving social problems. How can cultural modernism be responsible for social malaise when it cannot affect change? Sounding a Marxist note, Habermas advises resistance to the "autonomous economic system" through the development of checks and balances.

Habermas argues that the Enlightenment project and its liberal values must not be shelved, but renewed with efforts to integrate the three autonomous spheres of reason—art, science, and morality—with each other and with life. The proposed reconciliation of life and art, unsuccessfully attempted by the surrealists, is intended to result in social and personal emancipation.[112]

Also a progressive postmodernist, Jean-François Lyotard explicitly cites Habermas's theoretical work, along with Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* and Karl Popper's *The Poverty of Historicism* and *The Open Society*, as attempts to continue the project of modernity in specific spheres of art and politics. In their published exchanges, Lyotard disagrees with Habermas's desire for consensus and doubts art's ability "to bridge the gap between cognitive, ethical and political discourses...[and to open] the way to a unity of experience."[113] Lyotard has identified the role of *grand narratives*, or *metanarratives*, which are used to legitimize power structures, ideas such as the hermeneutics of meaning, emancipation of the worker (Marxism's narrative), and the creation of wealth (capitalism), justice, and truth.[114] His efforts to recuperate a critical modernism have discredited the metanarratives by the revelation that they operate to consolidate power. Lyotard claims that technology has taken over all the positions of power. For him and other intellectuals concerned with the ideal of freedom, only *petits recits* ("small stories") and a multiplicity of meanings remain operative in the postmodern period. The collapse of metanarratives thus marks the end of the modern era and of consensus. Lyotard's postmodern task is to wage war on totality (and totalizing intellectual schemes), and to avoid nostalgia for wholeness.

## THEME 2: MEANING

> Architecture derives its meaning from the circumstances of its creation; and this implies that what is external to architecture—what can broadly be called its set of functions—is of vital importance.[115]

### FORM/CONTENT: TYPE, FUNCTION, TECTONICS

Central to the postmodern discussion of meaning is the definition of the essence of architecture, about which there is little consensus. One frequently encounters three elements posited as that which cannot be removed from architecture: type, function, and tectonics. These concerns can be fairly well correlated to the Vitruvian triad of delight (beauty or ideal form), commodity (utility or accommodation), and firmness (durability).

Type is often linked to the other two terms; to function through types based on use, and to tectonics through types based on structural systems. (ch. 5) Typology can also be seen as a catalog of general solutions to problems of architectural arrangement, idealized to the most diagrammatic level. Considered this way, perhaps type constitutes what Derrida has called "the architecture of architecture," or the equivalent of deep structure in language.

The communication of meaning is also part of type because of the redundancy of form, whether the repetition of root forms or invariant elements (archetypes). Consciously or unconsciously perceived, type creates continuity with history, which gives intelligibility to buildings and cities within a culture.

For some postmodernists, the choice between imitation and invention as the origin of form is evaded by accepting the existence of an *a priori* inventory of types available for transformation into models. Since types are too generic (and styleless) to imitate, invention plays a large role in the design process. Type is thus "the interior structure of a form or...a principle which contains the possibility of infinite formal variation and further structural

modification of the 'type' itself."[116] Type offers a rational, valueless origin (as opposed to the judgmental choice of a specific historic building as precedent) from which to articulate a design method of transformation.

The writing of Enlightenment theorist Quatremère de Quincy underlies postmodern thinking about typology, such as that of the Italian Neorationalists:

> The foundations of neorationalism lie in its conception of the architectural project, the limits of which are already established by architectural tradition and whose field of action is logically framed by the constant return of types, plans, and basic elements: all synchronically understood as permanent and immutable, rooted in tradition and history.[117]

The architect's role is to transform the ideal or essence that is type, into a physical model. Solà-Morales Rubió calls this process "design figuration," and notes that Rossi's use of type is mediated by his poetic subjectivity and his inspiration from surrealism. Others fuse the typological ideal with the pragmatics of constructional technique, which is sometimes based on regional vernacular building. Giulio Carlo Argan, whose theory allows for the development of new types, suggests a powerful fusion of type with tectonics to create an "inevitable" point of origin for design. (ch. 5)

In the Modern Movement, communication of function is the major expressive issue. Function is seen as rational and scientific, not gratuitous or simply aesthetic. The priority placed on function as content would suggest that it is considered to be the essence of modern architecture. The assumption that architecture's form is derived from or "transparent to" function implies that there can be a direct correspondence between specific forms and specific functions. This correspondence requires codes to create meaning, since meaning is not inherent in the forms, but is culturally constructed. All of these issues and positions are revisited in the postmodern period in essays including Gandelsonas's "Neo-Functionalism," Eisenman's "Postfunctionalism," (ch. 1) Eco's "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture," and Tschumi's "Architecture and Limits" series. (ch. 3)

Eisenman argues that function has been a continuous aspect of architectural theory since the Renaissance, and that this fundamental connection with humanism prevents architecture from moving into modernism. Functionalism, he states, "is really no more than a late phase of humanism." He urges the reader "to recognize that the form/function opposition is not necessarily inherent to any architectural theory and...to recognize the crucial difference between modernism and humanism."

Postmodernism places a higher value on form than on function, deliberately and polemically inverting the modernist dictum: form follows function. The formalist position asserts that form itself is the essence or content of architecture. This emphasis on form as meaning parallels some linguistic developments in structuralism and poststructuralism. In particular, challenges to the notion that language mirrors reality find theoretical counterparts in self-referential architecture. Modern painting had ceased to present recognizable images from life, so why should architecture be bound to present something external to itself? This reasoning underlies the autonomous position which even views function as external to architecture.

Similar debates rage over the centrality of tectonics to architecture. (ch. 12) Some theorists assert that only built work can be considered architecture, while others maintain

that physical presence alone is no guarantee. But if a project is to be built, one must confront the issue of tectonics, which highlights again the distinction between building and architecture. Both practices share the need to employ structural systems and resolve material joints, so what elevates architecture above building? Architect Demetri Porphyrios claims that "imitative mediation" in handling raw materials distinguishes architecture; its absence explains why modernism produced only building. Thus, the goal of architecture should be: "To construct a tectonic discourse which, while addressing the pragmatics of shelter, could at the same time represent its very tectonics as myth."[118] For Porphyrios, this assertion leads to the conclusion that classicism is the necessary route to great architecture, based on its ability to mythicize vernacular construction.

Others argue more generally that tectonics is a rich source of meaning. The latter position is sometimes tied to a phenomenological interest in the "thingness" of architecture, in architecture's ability to *gather* (condense meaning in the environment). Part of "a return to things," construction as a process of becoming is a postmodern theme. For example, Faye Jones's Pinecote Pavilion features a partially clad roof that reveals its layered process of construction.

The tectonic emphasis is an important part of the postmodern critique of a sterile, debased modernism and of superficial postmodern historicism. Some architects construct a narrative through material and detail. The narrative is sometimes whimsical (using eclectic borrowing, pastiche, and appliqué), and sometimes pragmatic (taking the required detail as an opportunity for tectonic expressiveness). Gregotti's call for resituating detailing as an architectural problem is seconded by Marco Frascari and Frampton; all three published articles on the subject between 1983 and 1984. Their calls in "The Tell-the-Tale Detail," "Rappel à l'ordre, the Case for the Tectonic," and "The Exercise of Detailing" (ch. 12) have been heeded by the profession. In his search for essence, Frampton suggests "we may return instead to the structural unit as the irreducible essence of architectural form." For him, the structural unit refers to the connection between tectonic components—the joint—which is the "nexus around which building comes into being" and is "articulated as a presence" in phenomenological terms.

## REPRESENTATION AND POSTMODERN HISTORICISM

The form versus content debate summarized above is part of postmodernism's consideration of meaning. Representation and figuration are also central to this theme. Postmodern artists reintroduced the human figure and other recognizable forms into their work, ending the long reign of abstraction begun in cubism, constructivism, and suprematism. In postmodern architecture, the use of historic styles or identifiable fragments from specific styles has the same intent: to create form with associations, even to the extent of constructing a narrative. But Gregotti notes in his editorial on detailing that the appearance of the stylistic quotation coincides with a crisis of architectural language. He maintains that the (perverse, radical) historicist quotation is not, however, an adequate substitute for the tectonic detail, which articulates building technique as an expressive component in architectural language.

Graves's work since 1976–77 illustrates his interest in "figurative architecture," by which he means architecture with an associational relationship to nature and the classical tradition. (ch. 1) His suggestive use of historical fragments in the Portland Municipal Building linked his name with a recognizable formal vocabulary or image, which made him a favorite of advertising firms. As McLeod point out, in the status-conscious 1980s, architects were sought-after to design and endorse products from tea kettles to shoes.[119]

The 80s were glamorous years for architects, and the "signature building" was affordable for an affluent society. But the price exacted for mass-market appeal and an imitable style is the commercialization of one's image and the phenomenon of the architectural "knock-off." Developers and builders of strip shopping centers have superficially imitated the Graves style and palette, while entirely missing the point of "figurative architecture." Any critical component of the original is lacking in the commercial version.

This work and its assimilation by the marketplace indicate that there may be some validity to the idea that architecture can act as a semiotic sign system. This pertains primarily to work concerned with the stylistic dimension of architecture, whether it be classical or vernacular in inspiration. A good example is Stern's portfolio of neotraditional houses for affluent, conservative clients. The designs capitalize on associations of nineteenth-century architectural styles with wealth, status, and aristocratic lifestyles. In Stern's view, following Rossi, a form's meaning is understood to accrue over time through the function of cultural memory. But this is not to suggest other similarities in their approaches to their work.

A characteristic postmodern historicist compositional strategy is pastiche, the eclectic quotation of fragmented historical elements. Foster has discussed this phenomenon as appropriation of the past for present purposes. Presented as a critique of uncommunicative minimalism, he doubts whether a decontextualized history of emblematic fragments is any more accessible than abstraction. Pastiche tends to be accompanied by an attitude of parody towards the historical fragments, which belies a genuine respect for the past. Phillip Johnson's AT&T Building (1978) illustrates the kind of tongue-in-cheek games postmodern historicist architects play, in this case, exploding the scale of a Chippendale highboy to become a Manhattan skyscraper. What should we take to be the meaning of a building envelope resembling a piece of furniture?

Stern has pointed out the "ornamentalist" tendency of postmodern historicist architecture, which relies on the decorated wall plane to convey meaning. (ch. 1) This observation implies that the postmodern *facade* as concealing mask replaces the modernist *elevation* revealing the interior. (The change in terminology for the wall surface is indicative of postmodern historicist interest in the Beaux Arts tradition.) Recently, decorative energy has also been focused on materials and detail as expressive episodes in a building.

Predictably, some critiques of postmodern historicism focus on the prominent issue of representation. Removing stylistic fragments from their historical context results in what Frampton and others have called scenographic effects from de-historicizing architecture. In addition to "make-believe classical," Porphyrios identifies two other distinct postmodern architectural manifestations: "make-believe high tech" and the "transgression" of deconstruction. His article "The Relevance of Classical Architecture" criticizes all postmodern "culture" as founded on an unstable ground comprised of the primacy of context and the "rhetoric of style," an eclectic attitude of looking at styles as communicative devices. (ch. 1) The resulting postmodern historicist architecture is scenographic kitsch, epitomized by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's "decorated shed."

Porphyrios also feels that parody and pastiche are inappropriate to architectural investigation. His alternative is the authentic classical revival, with meaning derived from the logic of construction and its mythification. He finds further justification for classicism on the basis of ecology, urbanism, and culture.

Some theorists, including Diane Ghirardo, argue that postmodern historicist architecture tends to selectively misread history and to ignore larger ecological, political, and social responsibilities. She criticizes this abdication in pursuit of formalism. As an example, Ghirardo points out that in America in the 1970s, unemployed architects did not turn to designing social utopias, but retreated instead to fetishistic "paper architecture." (ch. 8)

In opposition to the often superficial appropriation of images from architectural history by postmodern historicists, other architects asserted the positive values of abstraction in their writing and projects. For instance, the inaugural volume of the *Pratt Journal* presented various discussions of the continuing validity of abstraction. Similarly, Lyotard's contemporary sublime challenges the notion that abstraction is without content, offering as an illustration modern artists' attempts to "present the unpresentable" from the realm of ideas.

## THEME 3: PLACE

> During the last decades it has become increasingly clear that this pragmatic approach [functionalism] leads to a schematic and characterless environment with insufficient possibilities for human dwelling. The problem of meaning in architecture has therefore come to the fore.[120]

### MAN, ARCHITECTURE, AND NATURE

The relationship between man and nature is a long-standing philosophical problem that has been highlighted by phenomenologists like Norberg-Schulz. In Western thought, nature as "the other" in relation to culture has been a stabilizing theme for centuries. For instance, the human struggle against a threatening nature characterizes Enlightenment ideas of the sublime.

Since the Industrial Revolution, advanced technology has reduced the urgency of this survival struggle. In fact, it has been suggested by deconstructionists that the ancient nature/culture opposition has been displaced, rendered irrelevant, along with all other binaries. If this is true, has the binary structure been eliminated? Some have argued that having conquered nature, the challenge to culture now comes from the opposite end of the spectrum: from man's knowledge and its instrumentalized form, technology. Along with technological advancement, for example, mankind has created a global environmental crisis.

Architecture literally and symbolically overcomes the forces of nature to provide shelter. In the pre-industrial past, the production of meaning in architecture relied upon structured references to and associations with nature. Modern architecture embraced the machine analogy instead of the organic analogy. Although machines are often designed on the basis of natural systems, their use as a formal model prevented architecture from referring directly to nature. This is problematic because despite technological advances, symbolizing man's position within the natural world remains one of architecture's roles.

### PLACE AND GENIUS LOCI

Albert Einstein defines place as "a small portion of the earth's surface identifiable by a name...a sort of order of material objects and nothing else."[121] Architectural historian Peter Collins accepts this definition and develops its implications:

> Now this is precisely the kind of space involved in architectural design, and one might contend that a "place" (plaza, piazza) is the largest space that an architect is able to deal with as a unified work of art.[122]

Theories of *place*, arising from phenomenology and physical geography,[123] emphasize the specificity of spatial experience and in some cases, the idea of the *genius loci*, or unique spirit of the place. Place offers a way to resist the relativism in modern theories of history through the engagement of the body and its verification of the particular qualities of a site.

Heidegger's position that the relationship to nature is crucial to rich human experience is shared by many contemporary architects and theorists including Gregotti, Raimund Abraham, Tadao Ando, and Norberg-Schulz. The latter claims the architect's responsibility is to discover the genius loci, and design in a way (place-making) that accounts for this singular presence. (ch. 9) In other words, Norberg-Schulz calls for man's intervention to intensify the natural attributes of the situation. Certain significant elements of architecture have been celebrated by phenomenologists as "embodiments of difference": "Boundary and threshold are constituent elements of place. They form part of a figure which discloses the spatiality in question."

Gregotti elevates place-making to the primal architectural act, the origin; laying a stone on the ground is the beginning of "modifications" that turn place into architecture. (ch. 7) He sees architecture as constituted by structural relationships (in particular, differences) in the environment, which, similar to structure in language, allow understanding. This notion of difference explains his emphasis on the measurement of intervals, rather than the presence of isolated objects. The architect's task is to reveal nature by situating and utilizing the landscape. The current interest in constructing the site[124] reflects the desire to make a place, as promoted by Norberg-Schulz and Gregotti.

### CONFRONTATION AND DWELLING

Abraham's inscribing the site clearly demonstrates an attitude of aggressive intervention in the landscape. Describing his process in "Negation and Reconciliation," Abraham says:

> It is the conquest of the site, the transformation of its topographical nature, that manifests the ontological roots of architecture. The process of design is only a secondary and subsequent act, whose purpose is to reconcile the consequences of the initial intervention, collision, and negation. (ch. 10)

Abraham's design and theoretical work reveal a commitment to the principle of engagement between architecture and landscape. There are perhaps less violent ways to conceptualize and realize this interaction, such that the design process is more than a

remediation of the "conquest." Other postmodern architects, for example Ando, assert a larger and more positive role for design than Abraham does.

Heidegger's "Building Dwelling Thinking" suggests a responsible relationship with regard to nature in his notion of *sparing*, or nurturing the earth. Sparing frees something to its own essence. It may mean clearing a place for inhabitation, or respecting a place as it is found. Ando feels "the necessity of discovering the architecture which the site itself is seeking" because "The presence of architecture—regardless of its self-contained character—inevitably creates a new landscape." (ch. 10)

There is another way in which contemporary architects and landscape architects establish a responsible relationship with nature: their work provides a frame for its spiritual apprehension, considered fundamental to a meaningful existence. In a recent polemic entitled "Toward New Horizons in Architecture," Ando underscores the primary role of his architecture in allowing for the presence of nature in modern urban life. He proposes that "architecture becomes a place where people and nature confront each other under a sustained sense of tension...that will awaken the spiritual sensibilities latent in contemporary humanity." Heidegger's notion of dwelling comes to mind again in this context.

## PLACE AND REGIONALISM

Based in part on phenomenology, Frampton's Critical Regionalism seeks the possibility of dwelling in an architecture of greater experiential meaning. (ch. 11) He espouses recognition of regional, vernacular building and its sensitivity to light, wind, and temperature conditions, all of which dictate an architectural response befitting the particular place. Critical Regionalism promotes the notion that climatically specific designs will be successful aesthetically and ecologically, and will offer resistance to the homogenizing forces of modern capitalism. Following Heidegger, Frampton resists universalizing forces by marking a bounded precinct on the earth and under the sky. An architectonic approach emphasizing the site's topography often characterizes his exemplars.

Another common aspect of Critical Regionalist work is a critical attitude towards the use of mass-produced building products. Without arguing for a return to primitive means of construction, Frampton recalls Semper's poetic understanding of the differences inherent in the frame (aerial) and the bearing wall (earthen, "telluric") building systems. (ch. 12) The richness that can result from the contrast between the two systems and the articulation of their juncture, is fundamental to tectonic communication. Instead of scenographic images, a meaningful narrative can be conveyed by the elements of construction and their thoughtful assembly.

Not all theorists are in agreement about the value of place. For example, although his writings suggest a phenomenological position, Perez-Gomez criticizes the genius loci as an "empty postmodern simulation, incapable of revelatory depth" in the context of our cities of shopping malls and traffic networks.[125] He suggests instead an emphasis on reinventing the site as open and liberative.

The possibility that phenomenological place is nostalgic and outmoded is also raised by theorists of postindustrial culture. Jean Baudrillard, Christine Boyer, and Ellen Dunham-Jones, among others, have addressed the issues of the transformation and dematerialization of the physical world by new electronic media. Gatherings such as "Between Digital

Seduction and Salvation" (Pratt, 1992) and "Buildings and Reality: A Symposium on Architecture in the Age of Information" (University of Texas, 1986) have offered opportunities to reflect on the meaning of these changes. As Peter Eisenman says in "Visions' Unfolding: Architecture in the Age of Electronic Media": "The electronic paradigm directs a powerful challenge to architecture because it defines reality in terms of media and simulation, it values appearance over existence." (ch. 13) Our attitude toward place is bound to be affected by the substitution of a virtual paradigm of experience for the body's spatial and tactile experience.

These critiques indicate one of the emerging issues in architectural theory: changing definitions of reality. Will making or marking a physical place, expressive of an ordered private or public realm, be irrelevant, redundant, or rhetorical in the future? What will be the effect of the electronic dematerialization of communication on architecture, whose production symbolizes solidity, permanence, and cultural community? What will be the effect on landscape architecture, which is ephemeral, temporal, and dynamic? Are place and meaning endangered by the electronic "global village"? In a recent opinion piece, architect Ezra Ehrenkrantz predicted drastic social and economic consequences for American cities based on the dispersal of population as receivers on the information superhighway.[126] His concerns are complemented by a range of urban theories that arose when postmodern architects rediscovered the city as a ground for architectural activity on numerous levels: socioeconomic, political, historical, formal, poetic, and artistic.

## THEME 4: URBAN THEORY

By the 1960s, urban renewal and drastic modern interventions had rent the urban fabric beyond recognition. Architects, having focused mainly on creating freestanding "object" buildings (such as the Guggenheim Museum and the Seagram Building in New York) for forty years, began to realize that there was no ground against which to read these objects. Instead, their buildings floated in an endless, undifferentiated modern "open space." The development of building sites into landscape or garden had been neglected in the twentieth century, slowing the steady evolution of the 400-year-long tradition of landscape architecture. Furthermore, a general consensus can be established for Rowe and Koetter's claim that "the city of modern architecture...has not yet been built. In spite of all the good will and good intentions of its protagonists, it has remained either a project or an abortion."[127]

This crisis situation is noted by planners, and by architects who often blame planners for poor implementation of good ideas. For example, functional zoning (first implemented in New York City in 1916) comes under fire by postmodernists for its negative approach to planning. In separating disparate land uses from each other via legislation, zoning aims at protecting property values and occupants from harmful conflicts of use. But zoning also increases distances between homes and grocery stores and other necessities of life, thereby increasing society's dependence on the automobile. Furthermore, design standards for roads privilege movement of the car, often at the expense of pedestrian circulation and a sense of neighborhood.

In the United States, the pursuit of ownership of the single-family house, along with the automobile, has contributed to megalopolitan sprawl, as retail areas crop up to serve

new, widespread residential markets. Eventually, office spaces are built further out into the suburbs to reduce commuting time from congested locales in which mass transit is absent. The problems of sprawl—faceless development, loss of nature, disorientation—and the likelihood that suburbs and cities will eventually expand until they touch each other, were predicted by novelist Italo Calvino in his depiction of "continuous" cities:

> You advance for hours and it is not clear to you whether you are already in the city's midst or still outside it...outside Penthesilea does an outside exist? Or, no matter how far you go from the city, will you only pass from one limbo to another, never managing to leave it?[128]

He could be describing the eastern seaboard of the United States and its "Bos-Wash megalopolis."

Journalists also joined the postmodern critique of the city; bracketing this period are books reacting against modern urbanism. Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) urges a reconsideration of the practices of urban renewal. She argues that institutionalized planning has not proven itself capable of predicting the outcomes of its initiatives. From her perspective, it is evident that planning results in the degeneration of the environment, perhaps attributable to the profession's lack of observation of the "real" city. Some twenty years later, James Howard Kunstler, author of *The Geography of Nowhere* (1993), rails against the American pattern of land use that has continued unabated since WWII: suburban sprawl and the commercial development along the highway. His lectures urge an embrace of neotraditional urbanism as an antidote to contemporary urban ills, many of which he blames on the automobile. He stresses that the solution to alienation, crime, and environmental degradation is small-scaled, pedestrian-friendly communities modeled on the American Main Street town.

The critique of the modern city begun in the 1960s includes utopian designs, large-scale "reconstructions," prescriptive theories and urban design codes, and defenses of unrealized modern urban objectives. Of these many proposals, this anthology presents three postmodern urban positions, selected for their influence or relevance in America: contextualism, represented by Rowe, Koetter, and Thomas Schumacher; "populism," or the American Main Street, represented by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour (with the firm VSBA); and a global, "contemporary city" model, represented by Koolhaas. (ch. 6) In addition to bringing forth ideas from these three positions, this introduction outlines aspects of European neorationalism, American urban design codes, and the application of semiology to the city.

Both contextualism and populism can be seen as developments from within academia, in that they are cultivated by teams of faculty and students analyzing the city and making proposals for new design strategies. Whether an appreciation of the piazzas of Rome, or the commercial highway strip of Las Vegas, Cornell and Yale design students contributed to the formulation of influential theories, later published by their professors. In fact, Rowe's student Schumacher published an article on the "collage" method of urban design before his mentor.

Similarly, Koolhaas's provocative and animated interpretation of Manhattan in *Delirious New York* (1978, 1994) was aided by the work of his students at the IAUS. Less a critique than a celebration of New York's "Culture of Congestion," it has a common attitude with VSBA's treatment of Las Vegas. The book is "an argument for a second coming of Manhattanism, this time as an explicit doctrine that can transcend the island of its origins to claim its place among contemporary urbanisms."[129] Like *Learning from Las Vegas*, this book's intention is to counteract the overwhelmingly negative views of New York within the architectural profession. Koolhaas's analysis of the city's defining formal feature is indicative of his approach:

> The Grid is, above all, a conceptual speculation....in its indifference to topography, to what exists, it claims the superiority of mental construction over reality. Through the plotting of its streets and blocks it announces that the subjugation, if not obliteration, of nature is its true ambition.[130]

The allure of a city which has "remove[d] its territory as far from the natural as humanly possible" becomes evident in the evocative, dreamlike narrative sequences and projects that Koolhaas presents. In the 1980s, he extended his optimism to urban studies of the "edge cities" of Atlanta, Seoul, and the periphery of Paris.

## CONTEXTUALISM

Rowe and Koetter's seminal article, "Collage City," (1975) offers the influential analytical and designs strategies still promulgated in some schools of architecture today. It begins with Rome:

> offered here as some sort of model which might be envisaged as alternative to the disastrous urbanism of social engineering and total design....the physique and politics of Rome provide perhaps the most graphic example of collisive fields and interstitial debris. (ch. 6)

Special emphasis on figure-ground and Nolli plans, and on Hadrian's Villa earns them emblematic stature in the postmodern period. The villa's similarities to the formal organization of seventeenth-century Rome lead to "that inextricable fusion of imposition and accommodation,...which is simultaneously a dialectic of ideal types plus...empirical context." This conjunction of opposites, expanded in their book to include order/disorder, simple/complex, private/public, innovation/tradition, is similar in form and intention (which could be summarized as "accommodation and coexistence") to Venturi's inclusive argument in *Complexity and Contradiction*. Rowe, Koetter, and Venturi are all influenced by the positive view of ambivalence in Gestalt theory, which permits a multiplicity of readings. (Rowe also emphasized ambivalence in the aforementioned "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" article.)

Imperial Rome evidences the essence of what Rowe and Koetter call the "bricolage mentality," an unscientific, unsystematic tinkering that resists any dangerous totalizing impulse in urban planning. Among other phenomena, they criticize the attempt to apply positivist logic to something as imprecise as architecture and urban design. Alexander's *Notes on the Synthesis of Form* is cited by the authors for its admirable, if unattainable effort at erasing values and personal prejudice from the design process to ensure universality. The anti-totalitarian position that dominates their discourse is supported by sociologist Karl Popper's pro-democracy writings. Rowe and Koetter propose a more genuinely populist position than VSBA's *Learning from Las Vegas*.

Rowe and Koetter distinguish bricolage (a term borrowed from Claude Lévi-Strauss) from collage, in which "objects and episodes are obtrusively imported and, while they retain the overtones of their source and origin, they gain also a wholly new impact from their changed context." One can see the persuasive appeal of collage as a postmodern urban technique when it is defined as "a way of giving integrity to a jumble of pluralist references," which "can allow Utopia to be dealt with as image, to be dealt with in fragments." The graphic techniques of reading developed by Rowe and the Cornell School offer a vocabulary (built on solid/void relations) and syntax of continued validity for describing and understanding the city.

The term "contextualism" is not used by Rowe and Koetter, but was applied to their theory by Schumacher in his 1971 essay, "Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations." Since then, contextualism has come to mean little more than "fitting in with existing conditions," according to Richard Ingersoll, who describes it as a "Teflon ideology."[131] Schumacher reflected recently on the distortions the term has suffered:

> After the so-called Postmodern revolution the term "contextualism" began to attach itself to stylistic manifestations—as do most co-opted ideas in architecture. It referred to red brick buildings being built in red brick neighborhoods and gingerbread matching gingerbread.[132]

## THEORIES OF READING AND MEANING

In the postmodern period, semiology has also had an impact on the perception of the city, through such works as Barthes's "Semiology and Urbanism," (1967) which suggests a process of reading the city as a text. It applies a linguistic model of meaning derived from structured relationships between objects in the city. Thus he says:

> a city is a fabric...of strong elements and neutral [nonmarked] elements,...(we know that the opposition between the sign and the absence of sign, between full degree and zero degree, is one of the major processes in the elaboration of meaning).[133]

Linguistics is embraced by postmodern architects as a way of codifying architectural meaning into a system. But in this essay, evidencing a move towards poststructuralist thinking, Barthes notes the "erosion of the notion of the lexicon," which had promised a one-to-one correspondence between signifiers and signifieds, on which ideas of symbolism rest. Despite this erosion, the city will continue to signify. This analogy summarizes his view of the urban condition:

> Every city is constructed, made by us, somewhat in the image of the ship Argo, every piece of which was replaced over time but which always remained the Argo, that is, a set of quite legible and identifiable meanings.[134]

The application of these structuralist and poststructuralist ideas to urban design has been investigated by Agrest and Gandelsonas. Barthes's interdisciplinary model of critique is also evident in their writings, especially in several of Agrest's essays on urbanism.

Interestingly, both Agrest and Tschumi propose the study of filmic representation and the use of film techniques as ways of approaching the experience of architecture in the city. Agrest says:

> at the beginning of this century—the [artistic] referent for architecture has been painting. This referent is not productive enough when we approach architecture from the urban field. A more powerful referent is film, a complex system that develops in time and through space.[135]

Tschumi has chosen to emphasize a different aspect of Barthes's discussion of the city: the overlooked "erotic dimension" of the city identified (by Barthes) as the attraction the center city holds for the periphery. Barthes's "Semiology and Urbanism" and Le plaisir du texte (1973) are clear influences on Tschumi's "The Pleasure of Architecture." (ch. 13)

## IMAGE OF THE CITY

It is interesting to compare these ideas of reading the city with those of urban planner Kevin Lynch, whose influential Image of the City (1960) described how people orient themselves in the environment. An early critique of the post-WWII city, Lynch insisted on the necessity of a memorable visual order in man's surroundings. Imageability or legibility of form thus became important attributes sought by urban designers and architects concerned with the issue of communication of meaning. Meaning is located in the distinctiveness of path, edge, node, district, and landmark, according to Lynch. Barthes cites Lynch as having "gotten closest to the problems of an urban semantics," but notes that his "conception of the city remains more 'gestaltic' than structural." Lynch's ideas are used by Norberg-Schulz and other phenomenologists to support positions asserting the significance of place.

## EUROPEAN URBANISM: NEORATIONALISM AND TYPOLOGY

Rossi also credits Lynch with shaping his idea that spatial orientation in the city derives from experiencing significant episodes, such as monumental precincts. The structuralist idea that the city is legible through the repetition of elemental (irreducible, archetypal) components, given meaning through collective memory, defines Rossi's poetic reading of the city. Rossi also investigates the function of type in the European city as the repository of collective memory. He compares the operation of these permanent urban elements to the function of the fixed linguistic structures of Ferdinand de Saussure. In The Architecture of the City (1966), Rossi spells out his intention to write a manifesto on typology and urban design as a reaction against the modernist city. He treats the city as an artifact, an evolving man-made object, and the representation of cultural values.

Rossi's reminder of what the city symbolizes was extremely important in refocusing attention on the idea of making architecture in an urban context: "The contrast between particular and universal, between individual and collective, emerges from the city and from its construction, its architecture."[136]

Rossi also reintroduced the notion of typology as an analytic tool and as the rational basis for a design process of transformation. In emphasizing that "type is the very idea of architecture, that which is closest to its essence,"[137] Rossi reveals his belief in the underlying idea of fixed laws, of *a priori* types, which had been dismantled in the modern period. Permanent urban aspects like housing and monuments are contrasted with "catalytic" primary elements that "retard or accelerate the process of urbanization."[138] His writing, teaching, and influential built works like the Teatro del Mondo, Segrate Town Center, and Modena Cemetery established Rossi as the leader of the Italian neorationalist movement, *La Tendenza.* In his introduction to *The Architecture of the City,* Eisenman contests a reception of the ideas as contextual:

> In light of the recent development of a so-called contextual urbanism which has come to dominate urban thought some fifteen years after the original publication of this book, Rossi's text can be seen as an anticipatory argument against the "empty formalism" of context reductively seen as a plan relationship of figure and ground.[139]

Architect Leon Krier takes a different view of the range of available types than Rossi, while agreeing in principle on their importance in constituting the urban realm. His source of types is Enlightenment neoclassicism and the preindustrial, eighteenth-century city. Through a taxonomy of urban building types (including spaces, buildings, and construction methods) and using a deliberately limited and rationalized range of building materials, he hopes to reintroduce rigor to architecture and urbanism. The re-creation of the public realm requires significant places and monuments, both of which need the support of a taut surround of "fabric" buildings.

While Rossi is concerned primarily with making an intervention in the context of the city, Krier has taken on the large-scale reconstruction of the European city as a critical project. In fact, he has argued forcefully that the unbuilt project is the most responsible way to engage architectural thinking given the current socio-economic conditions: "architectural reflection can at this precise moment only be undertaken through the practical exercise in the form of a critique or in the form of a critical project."[140] The possibility for utopian, visionary work remains open in his opinion, and is required by the degradation of contemporary urbanism. In particular, he is concerned with the reconstitution of well defined, exterior public spaces—the street, square, etc.—as "part of an integral vision of society, ...part of a political struggle."[141] The public place symbolizes the ethical responsibilities of the citizen.

Krier also takes on the modernist myth that industrializing the building process would liberate the worker. Ironically, he says:

> Industrialization has neither created quicker building techniques nor a better building technology. Far from having improved the physical conditions of the worker, it has reduced manual labour to a stultifying and enslaving experience. It has degraded a millennial and dignified craft to a socially alienating exercise.[142]

This supports Krier's decision not to build, which he later reversed when given the chance to build his own house in Seaside, Florida. He suggests using industrially

produced materials with an exaggerated tectonic sensibility intended to recall the mythification of construction embodied in classical details.

## LEARNING FROM LINGUISTICS

While *Complexity and Contradiction* uses European precedents, *Learning from Las Vegas* accepts as a given the American highway strip development and expounds a more ostensibly populist point of view. In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour (VSBA) are also influenced by communication theory and in particular, semiotics. Their discussion of the "duck" and the "decorated shed" is in essence an argument about reincorporating symbolic function with literal function as a necessary part of architecture. The issue then becomes how to accomplish symbolization: through expression in three-dimensional form with the "sign as building" (the modern functionalist "duck"), or through a two-dimensional sign fronting the building (the postmodern "shed")? It should also be noted that symbolic aspects of modern architecture were not acknowledged at the time, since functionalist theory holds that architecture simply works through a scientific analysis of program to determine and house the needs of the client.[143] That many modern masterpieces are "ducks" is a dramatic charge from these postmodern theorists.

Given the significance of the automobile in VSBA's study of Las Vegas, many decisions are made from the vantage point of the vehicle moving along the highway. Thus, the authors determine that billboards of tremendous scale operate efficiently to convey messages, commercial as well as civic ("I am a monument"), to 55-mile-an-hour traffic. They also privilege one part of the Vitruvian triad, commodity, which includes the idea of convenience, and which further supports their choice of the sign *on* the shed. They insist that the sign applied to a "dumb box" of a building is the most economical, and therefore the most honest and appropriate way to communicate.

This argument—founded on existing conditions including the market economy, construction practice, and urbanism (or rather the lack thereof)—is not neutral. It affirms the status quo of development in late-twentieth-century America, and hence is conservative. Furthermore, VSBA's idea of architectural theory or design "philosophy" emerges as quite utilitarian and prescriptive: it is only useful if "it helps you relate forms to requirements."[144] As an example of the function of the book as *apologia*, the duck versus shed discussion condenses their point of view of accommodation. They assess the American reaction to the built environment and find a lack of demand for quality over kitsch. They assume this indicates satisfaction with the existing conditions and that their approach should reflect this. In comparison with the arrogant Modern Movement "hero" architect, VSBA's approach is quite modest. While clearly they attempt to correct for the overly negative view of the world and its objects characteristic of the Modern Movement, their uncritical approach also misses the mark. Setting up a comparison between two equally ludicrous extremes is a rhetorical strategy that VSBA has used to great effect in many instances. In the case of the strip, perhaps VSBA's real goal is to find a position between total rejection and total acceptance.

## EDGE CITIES: THE CONTEMPORARY PATTERN OF DEVELOPMENT

Koolhaas's recent theoretical writings also generously accept the given conditions of limitless sprawl and placelessness. He seeks to discover the virtues within the situation at the edge of the city, which others have overlooked in favor of the better-defined center. He distinguishes his research in "Towards the Contemporary City" from other current, postmodern investigations as "a paramodern alternative." Koolhaas also advocated a different strategy in planning the IBA (International Building Exhibition) housing project in Berlin. Other architects saw IBA as an opportunity for the massive reconstruction of the city, along the neotraditional lines proposed by Krier, while Koolhaas suggested allowing the war-torn city to continue to present its history and "to make of the city a sort of territorial archipelago—a system of architectural islands surrounded by forests and lakes in which the infrastructures could play without causing damage." (ch. 6) Like postmodern historicist theorists, Koolhaas defends the nineteenth-century idea of "remodeling without destroying the preexisting city." The differences come in the choice of what and how to build. His basic strategy is to intensify and clarify the existing conditions through a contrast between open space and dense development.

Koolhaas would approve of the approach to American edge cities taken by Stephen Holl.[145] Holl has designed a *proun*-inspired aerial complex for Phoenix, which he calls "spatial retaining bars," and triangles of intense architectural development interspersed with triangles of greenery for the city of Cleveland. These projects, which resist sprawl through the deliberate construction of boundaries, are consistent with Holl's phenomenological interest in the specificity of place, articulated in his book *Anchoring* (1989). The significance of boundaries as noted by Heidegger becomes fundamental to a reconsideration of modern space. (See Harries, ch. 8) The value placed on anonymous, uninterrupted Cartesian space, an expression of freedom, must be weighed against the human need for the familiar and the security of limits. Holl's large-scale works and more intimate interiors (Fukuoka housing's flexible arrangement: "hinged space") play off this dialectic. Projects like his "Spiroid Sectors" for Dallas function as a critique on many levels: of master planning, of the current dependence on the automobile and the resultant environmental problems, of the hegemony of the American suburban dream, and of existing construction materials and methods.

## NEW AMERICAN URBANISM: DESIGN CODES

One of the recent theoretical manifestations mistakenly described as contextualism is that of the "neotraditionalists," who convene regularly as the Congress for the New Urbanism.[146] These postmodern urban theorists argue that architects must resist the dominance of the contemporary edge city. The prescriptive code-writing for new towns that characterizes the work of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Architects (DPZ), the acknowledged leaders in this movement, aims for stylistic coherence (often to a Victorian ideal) as well as consistency in setbacks, roof and fence lines, and building types. Their partially built community of Seaside has both garnered praise and generated tremendous debate, on occasion forcing the architects into a defensive position vis-à-vis its ecological, social, and stylistic implications.[147] While DPZ maintains that their work is not about style, most of their support comes from postmodern historicist architects. And of course, from developers in many states who rush to commission DPZ and their CNU colleagues to design new towns in suburban locations. These developments appeal to the paradoxical, nostalgic American desire for a simulacrum of tradition (and its associated values), while living in a brand new home built with the latest petrochemical simulations of materials.

## THEME 5: POLITICAL AND ETHICAL AGENDAS

The postmodern urban critique has been mirrored by the consideration of larger political and ethical questions by architectural theorists. At the heart of the debate is what kind of role architecture as a discipline is to play in society. Four possible roles come to mind right away: 1) architecture can be indifferent to social concerns and their expression and representation; or 2) architecture can be an affirmative actor supporting the status quo and accepting existing conditions; or 3) architecture can gently guide society in a new direction; or 4) architecture can radically criticize and remake society. The choice of model depends on the answer to the following basic question: Is architecture primarily an art or a service profession? The various opinions represented here by a series of articles written since 1975 are part of the growing political and ethical debate in architectural theory.

The issue of architecture's societal role is often framed in terms of the possibility and morality of an autonomous position. A pervasive theme in the writings of this period, autonomy is seen variously as being neutral, critical, or reactionary. Autonomy in architecture is usually associated with the creation of form by an internal, self-referential discourse. This usage of autonomy is roughly synonymous with formalism, defined as an overriding concern with issues of form, to the exclusion of sociocultural, historical, or even material and constructional issues. Such an autonomous position can be taken by the maker of a work, or by a viewer or interpreter. The resulting architectural object is often abstract, nonrepresentational. To identify an autonomous position, postmodern architectural theory struggles to define which elements are internal or unique to the discourse: Are form, function, materiality, or type essential? Can architecture about architecture communicate to a community at large? Can it be critical?

Tschumi suggests that architecture can never be completely self-referential. In "Architecture and Transgression, " he says, "architecture...thrives on its ambiguous location between cultural autonomy and commitment, between contemplation and habit."[148] While the art object is contemplated for itself in the artificial surrounds of the gallery, architecture becomes a backdrop for life. Tschumi certainly refers to Walter Benjamin's comments about the reception of architecture in "a state of distraction," which is the habitual mode in the modern city.

Tschumi may also be referring to another Frankfurt School member, Adorno, and his theory on *committed* art, art that is progressive and overtly political. A neo-Marxist, Adorno writes in the essay "Commitment" (1962) that political resistance in art can be achieved only through autonomy. Through removal from the fray, outside the normal conditions of representation, one can establish a site of resistance. The autonomous work of art is governed by its own inherent structure, not by its reception. This way, the critical function can be sustained longer. Adorno rejects committed art because it will be too easily assimilated or "co-opted" by conservatives. Politically committed art builds on familiar territory, and thus has an "entente" with the world. It can be used by all manner of parties at both ends

of the political spectrum, which again diminishes its critical potential. He writes: "The notion of a 'message' in art, even when politically radical, already contains an accommodation to the world..."[149] Adorno believes a position of silence, distinct from the aestheticist "art for art's sake," will prove a more fruitful vehicle of resistance.

Architecture by its nature is socially embedded, experienced by habit, not deliberation. Thus the applicability of Adorno's ideas to the realm of architecture is difficult, since architecture has this problematic entente with the world. Can one move outside the conventions of representation in architecture to create an architecture of resistance? Ando for one, argues that abstraction and austerity of means in architecture *will* awaken the viewer to a more conscious experience of architecture and to his/her own spirituality. This is the foundation of his critical, autonomous position.

Other theorists, including the editors of *VIA 10, Ethics and Architecture*, take a position against autonomy in architecture, asserting: "Because architecture aims to be understood and used by its society, it cannot be autonomous and still maintain its relevance. Architecture, in this sense, can never be value-free."[150] In other words, architecture must communicate and within the content of the communication are embedded values, of which the architect must be cognizant. To this end, the editors advocate a return to the study of ethics, which "questions what is appropriate, and more importantly, how we determine what is appropriate."[151] They offer the following definition of ethics:

> Ethics is the study of moral problems and judgments which form the bases for conduct in society. A consistent set of moral judgments enables us to determine a purpose, and thus to act intentionally....Ethical knowledge, the understanding of these values, is gained by practice and action in culture.[152]

In line with their emphasis on ethical knowledge is architect Philip Bess's article, in which he claims there is a "genuine and intrinsic relationship between architecture and ethics" in that buildings and cities embody an ethic, either communitarian or individualist. (ch. 8) He focuses on the necessity of shared values for the successful functioning of community. Bess argues that narcissistic personal development has outweighed socialization (at least in democratic societies), resulting in a culture of Nietzschean radical individualism. He blames the absence of a sense of community in contemporary life on the powerful influence of individualism. While individualism is surely part of the modern zeitgeist, one could argue more broadly for its basis in the values of scientific positivism, in capitalism, and in the American "frontier mentality." Noting that the traditional city symbolized legitimate authority and civic virtue, Bess suggests that communities today need to revive the idea of the "common good," and represent it in architecture. (Belief in the common good is essential to the success of the environmental movement, which asks for voluntary behavior changes, possibly involving hardship or inconvenience, to promote global betterment.)

A pressing political question for the ethical positions just outlined is the attainability of a societal consensus which can be represented by architecture. In light of the diversity of society, this goal appears increasingly elusive and naive to many theorists, and totalitarian and threatening to others.

## PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
The AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (1993) is interesting with regard to the issue of consensus. It lays out a set of *nonbinding* recommendations for conduct for its members, all of whom have agreed to abide by the code. The document's scope includes such broad goals as: consider the social and environmental impact of architectural activities (for example, avoid discrimination); respect and conserve the natural and cultural heritage; strive to improve the environment and quality of life; uphold human rights; and be involved in civic affairs. The fact that all these important points are nonbinding indicates that they are also the most difficult to define, to enforce, and on which to develop consensus in the architectural community.

Another branch of ethics in postmodern architectural theory calls for engagement in the political realm. This takes many forms, including calls for the resuscitation of a social welfare role for architecture, like that of the high modern period. Emblematic of this past idealism are the *seidlung*, housing estates designed by the leading architects of the 1920s and erected in Germany and Holland. Reviving this model of political and ethical engagement is one way of rescuing architecture, according to Ghirardo.

Ghirardo's recent writings, such as "Architecture of Deceit," raise provocative questions about whether architecture's primary role is art or service. Ghirardo clearly says it is the latter and adopts a critical position demanding political and social responsibility. Architects, she insists, should investigate the power structures in society that shelter their affluent clients, instead of retreating to a position reliant on the "purity" of the art of architecture.

Noting that the built world is not autonomous of the market economy, she sets out to "discern the relationship between political intentions, social realities, and building." (ch. 8) In other words, she suggests that members of the profession need to question the politics of building: who builds what, where, for whom, and for what price. To not question authority, for Ghirardo, is to be complicit with the status quo. And in the face of homelessness, racism, and sexism, she argues, such complicity is unethical.

This kind of analysis of the physical manifestations of power structures has always interested urban planners and Marxist critics. In the postmodern period, it also surfaces in the writing and projects of socially responsible architects. Ghirardo's model of political and ethical engagement offers a compelling alternative to "traditional art historical" approaches that highlight formal concerns to the exclusion of all others, risking degeneration to a discussion of style.

Ghirardo is also suspicious of other critics' unconscious deployment of ideology, and of reactionary efforts to denigrate the utopianism of the twentieth-century architectural avant-garde. While recognizing that the avant-garde's dreams and plans for social change were flawed and naive, she nonetheless applauds the optimistic and energetic engagement of modern architects in social, political, and economic issues. It is precisely this engagement she finds lacking in postmodern architecture of all stylistic types. Her conclusion is that "only when architects, critics, and historians accept the responsibility for building—in all of its ramifications—will we approach an architecture of substance."

## ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

An emerging political agenda is represented by the "green architecture" movement, which proposes the need for an environmental ethics of building. Such recent theory aims to develop a less antagonistic relationship with nature by resisting sprawl through high-density development, and through the use of renewable, non-polluting, and recycled materials. The "sustainability" movement is supported by the phenomenological idea that a relationship with nature is essential to full human self-realization on this planet.

William McDonough, architect and environmentalist, argues that the ethical implications of architectural work include acknowledging the rights of future generations and of other species to a healthy environment. He takes the AIA ethical guidelines very seriously and feels that the profession's status will improve if it takes a broader view of the services it provides. Like many of the other ethical positions, environmentalism embodies a critique of both modern architecture and the material conditions of modernity.

For McDonough, the continuation of current habits of architectural practice, in light of the known toxicity of building materials and processes, is negligent. His radical position calls for new definitions of prosperity, productivity, and quality of life. It begins with coming to peace with man's place in the natural world. The understanding that nature is not immutable requires an attitude of integration with and a commitment to renewing and restoring the earth and its living systems.

## THEME 6: THE BODY

The body and nature, two organic systems, both existed in an antagonistic relationship to modernism. Among modernists, Le Corbusier was almost alone in pursuing a human-based proportional system, the Modulor. The relationship between the body and architecture was for the most part neglected by functionalist architects except in the pragmatic accommodation of human form in shelter. Another postmodern route to a revitalized architecture thus converges on the human body as the site of architecture. The current interest in the body appears in several forms: phenomenological, poststructuralist, and feminist.

## BODY, SUBJECT, AND OBJECT

The body is the physical substance of the human being, often portrayed as opposite to the mind or soul. Some philosophers define the "person" or "self" as an entity constituted by the body and soul.[153] The psychic component, considered as subject, receives attention in modern psychology, psychiatry, and in epistemology. Epistemologically, the subject is an individual "knower," an ego, or an act of awareness. In the other fields, the subject is an "individual subjected to observation."[154] This meaning, with its political overtones, is common to the work of poststructuralists including Foucault, who offers this definition: "There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge."[155]

## THE BODY IN CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE: PROJECTION AND ANTHROPOMORPHISM

In classical architecture, the human body serves as part of a myth of origin through its use as a figural and proportional model for projection into plan organization, facade, and detail. Vidler points out that the body's image can be "mathematically inscribed" via proportions and scale, or "pictorially emulated."[156] The body metonymically represents nature in general, and nature's elegant way of organizing complex functions.

## THE END OF HUMANIST PROJECTION

Among the challenges to the classical, anthropocentric world view and to its construction of the human subject is the existentialist position that verification of man's existence is found in and depends on the material world. Jean-Paul Sartre claims in *Being and Nothingness* (1959) that the body derives knowledge of itself from objects in the world. Eisenman explains that what characterizes the shift from humanism to modernism is:

> a displacement of man away from the center of his world. He is no longer viewed as an *originating agent*. Objects are seen as ideas independent of man. In this context, man is a discursive function among complex and already-formed systems of language. (ch. 1)

Since the demise of the classical tradition, Vidler observes a steady retreat of the body from the building. The process, which results in "the loss of the body as an authoritative foundation for architecture," is marked by three increasingly abstract scenarios of bodily projection: the building is a body; the building represents or "embodies" states of body or mind; the environment has bodily or organic attributes.[157] This distancing tendency during modernism is also due to an obvious turning away from figuration and towards an agenda of abstraction, which was certainly influenced by the industrialization of building.

## THE POSTMODERN RENOVATION OF THE BODY

There are several different postmodern reactions to the modern treatment of the body. First, Graves's historicist work comments on the loss of meaning resulting from the end of the humanist ideal of anthropocentrism. Man cannot feel centered in the continuous space of modernism, he argues, even in an exemplary work like the Barcelona Pavilion, which suffers from the lack of clearly differentiated elements like floor, ceiling, wall, and window. In "A Case for Figurative Architecture," he writes:

> The Modern Movement based itself largely on technical expression—internal language—and the metaphor of the machine dominated its building form. In its rejection of the human or anthropomorphic representation of previous architecture, the Modern Movement undermined the poetic form in favor of nonfigural, abstract geometries. (ch. 1)

The role of architecture's poetic language is to provide orientation in the environment. In its absence, "the cumulative effect of non-figural architecture is the dismemberment of our

former cultural language of architecture." Graves's architecture aims to reintroduce anthropomorphism through the use of significant classical devices, which establish and symbolize man's relationship to nature and the cosmos.

Perez-Gomez makes a phenomenological proposal for the "renovation of the body" as "our undivided possession, which allows access to reality" (defined as the body-world continuum) and gives the world its appearance through projection. Perez-Gomez notes that great works of modern architecture necessarily refer to a different body image than did classical architecture, which was based on "an objectified unitary body." A postmodern form of reference as practiced by Hejduk points instead to "the qualities of the *flesh*." Perez-Gomez explains his idea:

> Our renovated body image can only be grasped analogically, indirectly, through the very instruments and objects that mediate between the body and the world, capturing the footprint of the embodied consciousness.[158]

He concludes that "An authentic interest in architectural meaning in our times must be accompanied by a conscious or unconscious renovation of the body."

As discussed, Vidler's contribution to the question of the body is a study of the uncanny, which "opens up the unsettling problems of identity around the self, the other, the body and its absence."[159] He notes that the experience of the uncanny, like Perez-Gomez's "bodying forth," is the projection of the mental state of the individual that "elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal to provoke a disturbing ambiguity."[160] As a critical tool, Vidler uses the uncanny to focus on anthropomorphic embodiment, gender, and the Other. The end of anthropomorphic embodiment in architecture has led to an uncanny sense of the presence of an absence and to "the building in pain."[161]

Tschumi also comments on the absence of the body. In "Architecture and Limits III," he critiques "The usual exclusion of the body and its experience from all [contemporary] discourse on the logic of form" as characteristic of reductive (formalist) interpretations of architecture. (ch. 3) The avoidance, even repression, of the body is an aspect of puritanism that he has observed in modern architecture, too. In place of reduction, Tschumi offers Dionysian "excess" and the transgression of rational limits to reveal the useless (positively so), excessive eroticism of space. Aspects of his essay "The Pleasure of Architecture" have phenomenological overtones: he describes the body's orientation in the spatially different conditions of plane and cavern, street and living room, and admits that "taken to its extreme, the pleasure of space leans toward the poetics of the unconscious." (ch. 13)

## POSTSTRUCTURALIST NOTIONS OF THE BODY AS SITE
Other theorists, having rejected anthropocentrism, are seeking to establish a poststructuralist understanding of the relationship between the body and the physical environment. Opposed to the concept of the projection of *interiority* (the mental state of the subject), are poststructuralist challenges to the centrality of man in the cosmos that this interiority assumes. The humanist ideal of man creating order in the world by projecting his bodily image is inverted by Foucault's notion of *exteriority*: that the external world of institutions and conventions determines the man. The projection of interiority thus collapses.

Agrest's claim that the body of woman is repressed by the "system" of architecture was noted in the earlier discussion of the essay "Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex." It is worth examining the mechanism of symbolic appropriation by which the repression of the female body is accomplished. Agrest explains:

> In a rather complex set of metaphorical operations throughout these [Renaissance] texts, the gender of the body and its sexual functions are exchanged in a move of transsexuality whereby man's ever-present procreative fantasy is enacted. (ch. 13)

Thus, the navel, as the center of the (male or female) body, "becomes a metonymic object or a *shifter* in relation to gender." Agrest borrows the idea of the shifter, a "signifier which opens to other systems,"[162] from linguist Roman Jakobson. The recuperation of the female body as central to architecture requires opening up the system, for instance, by allowing the shifter to transform the body into geometry, and nature (associated with the feminine) into architecture. Feminists play an important role in reintroducing the body into theory.

A posthumanist view of the body/world relationship underlies the projects of architects Diller and Scofidio. In the article "Body Troubles," Robert MacAnulty cites their recent theoretical investigations of the spatial structures and social customs that order our bodies, such as habits of domesticity. He writes: "Here again we are confronted with a model of space wherein the body's significance is not as a figural source of mimetic projection, but as site for the inscriptions of power."[163] Based on this critical work, MacAnulty suggests reformulating the body in "spatial, inscriptive, and sexual terms" instead of the "figural, projective, and animistic" terms of phenomenologists.

Eisenman raises a similar challenge to the body's projection which he identifies as taking place through our primary faculty, vision. (ch. 13) His analysis indicates that vision has *determined* architectural drawing, especially perspective, and that drawing conventions then limit ideas of space. Perez-Gomez concurs with Eisenman that "the main assumption [which needs to be rethought] is that architectural drawings are necessarily projections."[164] Recalling a familiar theme, Eisenman claims that architecture will never move beyond the Renaissance world view, unless it challenges representation.[165] He seeks a new kind of non-projective drawing capable of confronting the anthropocentric bias of the Western culture. Furthermore, Eisenman advocates that architecture problematize vision in order to critique its dominance and to come to a new understanding of space.

## CONCLUSION: THE NECESSITY OF POSTMODERN THEORY
Despite its confusing aspects, there are many reasons to study postmodern theory. The writings of 1965 to 1995 embrace a wealth of architectural themes, which are framed by fascinating theoretical paradigms. They help to illuminate the heterogeneous production of architecture during the last thirty years, and to explain its relationship to modern architecture.

Postmodern theory is critical, optimistic, and intellectual; it challenges and celebrates the capacity of the mind, and it offers models of critical and ethical thinking. In this regard, theory can pedagogically demonstrate comparative analysis of writers' positions

and the logic of their arguments. The ethical component also establishes a model for responsible behavior as an architect, emphasizing the link between the designer's activity and society.

The postmodern essays in this anthology are related to the larger tradition of architectural theory by virtue of a continuity of themes, such as architecture's meaning and its relationship to nature, the city, technology, and historical precedent. The *weighting* of these concerns, and the positions taken about the relationship between architecture and these themes, are what differ from previous theoretical endeavors. This difference is due to the influence of powerful, extradisciplinary theoretical paradigms on the discipline of architecture. For example, the idea that theory can be a catalyst for social change is inspired by Marxism and the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School critique.

The anthology attempts to present a balanced view of the prevalent postmodern ideologies; no single school of thought has been, or could be, chosen to represent this pluralist period. Instead, the authors of the essays are introduced and allowed to debate among themselves. This seems to be the most honest way to depict the situation. Some writers appear frequently in these pages, in part because of their ubiquitous involvement in the architectural profession: here, acting as editor, there as faculty member, dean, or curator. And in any case, writing. The genre of choice is the essay, which is a "sample, example, rehearsal; an attempt; a composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject, originally implying want of finish."[166]

The result of all the fluidity in the profession during these years is a discourse at once provocative, anticipatory, speculative, and open-ended. The results of this theory are unpredictable and varied. The critical orientation of much of the New Agenda is shaped by the social climate of the time, which encompassed political activism for expanded rights for women, blacks, gays, and even endangered species. Resistance to all totalizing structures, institutions, and modes of thought was the battle cry in the 1960s and 1970s. While the scale of the causes advocated seemed scaled back in the 1980s, the critical impulse persisted. The postmodern critique of modern architecture has been carried on by those powerfully entrenched in institutions, and by voices of the marginalized "Other."

Three themes of critical theory appear to be emergent in the mid 1990s: feminism and the problem of the body in architecture, the aesthetic of the contemporary sublime, and environmental ethics. From positions outside the mainstream of discourse and within, operating with the fragmentary essay as their tool, postmodern theorists approach the recurrent and emergent themes of architecture.

1    Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *The Ten Books of Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1960), 39–40.
2    Leon Battista Alberti, *The Ten Books of Architecture* (London: Tiranti, 1965), ix.
3    Bernard Tschumi, "Six Concepts," in *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 259.
4    Vittorio Gregotti, "The Necessity of Theory," *Casabella* no. 494 (September 1983): 13.
5    Alberto Perez-Gomez, "The Renovation of the Body: John Hejduk and the Cultural Relevance of Theoretical Project," *AA Files* 13, no. 8 (Autumn 1986): 29.
6    Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, WA.: Bay Press, 1983), 25.
7    Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, op. cit., 113.
8    Ibid.

9    Kenneth Frampton, "Place-form and Cultural Identity," in John Thackara, ed., *Design after Modernism: Beyond the Object* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 51–52.
10   Ibid.
11   Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, "Collage City," *AR* no. 942, vol. 158 (August 1975): 72.
12   Colin Rowe, "Introduction," in Five Architects (New York: 1972), 15.
13   On the mission of the AA, see their brochure, which states "The Architectural Association was founded in 1847 in opposition to a system of education controlled by the Crown. It was created to democratize the practice of architecture, to cultivate individual imaginations by means of a self-directed independent education." The mission of the IAUS is described in an article in *Casabella* no. 359–360 (1971): 100–102. David Stewart describes the Italian scenario: "the dispute between the government and the schools of architecture culminated in 1970–71 in the removal of Rossi and others from their teaching posts at the Polytechnic in Milan." Venice existed outside the interference of government. "The Expression of Ideological Function in the Architecture of Aldo Rossi." *A+U* no. 65 (May 1976): 110.
14   The journal *Oppositions* was published from vol. 1 in September 1973 to vol. 26 in 1984. See Joan Ockman, "Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of Oppositions," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *ArchitectureProduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 181–199.
15   The conspicuous overlap of IAUS fellows and Princeton faculty can probably be explained by the fact that Peter Eisenman, Director of the Institute, taught at Princeton as well.
16   See Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, "Neo-Rationalism and Figuration," *Architectural Design* 45, no. 5–6 (1984): 15–20.
17   Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943–1968* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), 449.
18   Gregotti, "The Necessity of Theory," op. cit.: 13.
19   Ibid.
20   Ockman, *Architecture Culture*, op. cit., 457–458.
21   Venturi cites Empson in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 22.
22   Ibid., 104.
23   Jo Ann Lewis, "It's Postmodern and if You Don't Get It, You Don't Get It," *Washington Post* (27 March 1994): G7.
24   Robert A.M. Stern, "New Directions in Modern American Architecture: Postscript at the Edge of Modernism," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 9, no. 2–3, (1977): 67–68.
25   Ibid.
26   Ibid.: 69.
27   Diane Ghirardo, "Past or Post Modern in Architectural Fashion," *Journal of Architectural Education* 39, no. 4 (Summer 1986): 2–6.
28   "Preface," in *Five Architects*, op. cit., 1.
29   "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," (1955–56) first published in *Perspecta* (1963).
30   At MoMA, 1979. Cited by Frampton in "Place-form," op. cit., 53.
31   See catalog of same name.
32   Mary McLeod, "Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism," *Assemblage* 8 (1989): 44.
33   The "Houses for Sale" show ran from 18 October to 22 November 1980. Some images are reproduced in Paolo Portoghesi, *Postmodern: The Architecture of the Postindustrial Society* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 110–111.
34   Ibid., 6.
35   Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, op. cit., 3.
36   Antony Flew, *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 157.
37   Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Maria Jolas, trans. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) and Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 145–229.
38   Flew, *A Dictionary*, op. cit., 283
39   Its significance for architects is evident in its publication in English and Italian in *Lotus* vol. 9 (February 1975): 208–210.
40   Christian Norberg-Schulz, "Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture," *Perspecta* 20 (1983): 67.
41   Christian Norberg-Schulz, "The Phenomenon of Place," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1976): 6.
42   Alberto Perez-Gomez, "Architectural Representation in the Age of Simulacra," *Skala* 20 (1990): 42.
43   Perez-Gomez, "The Renovation of the Body," op. cit.: 27–28.
44   Perez-Gomez, "Architectural Representation," op. cit.: 42.
45   Juhani Pallasmaa, "The Social Commission and the Autonomous Architect," *Harvard Architecture Review* 6 (1987): 119.

46  The architect in a lecture at the University of Virginia, 1993.

47  Jean-François Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-garde," *ArtForum* 20, no. 8 (April 1982): 38. See also "Presenting the Unpresentable: The Sublime," *ArtForum* 22, no. 8 (April 1984) and "Appendix" in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge,* Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi, transl. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

48  Edmund Burke, *An Inquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) and Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime,* John T. Goldthwait, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

49  Modernist idea that, to be "of its time," everything in artistic practice has to be original, beyond history, i.e., to start from a "clean slate," or *tabula rasa.*

50  Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 79.

51  Peter Eisenman, "En Terror Firma: In Trails of Grotextes," in *Form; Being; Absence: Architecture and Philosophy, Pratt Journal of Architecture* 2 (New York: Rizzoli, 1988): 114.

52  Anthony Vidler, "Theorizing the Unhomely," *Newsline* 3, no. 3 (1990): 3. Lacanian developmental psychology has revealed that children do not immediately understand themselves as integrated beings. But once having perceived themselves as bodily unities, (via the mirror stage), the idea of the fragmented or "morselated" body is banished to the unconscious. This hidden knowledge, when reencountered, explains the impact of horror films and dismemberment fantasies.

53  Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny,* op. cit., 79.

54  Ibid., xi.

55  Vidler, "Theorizing," op. cit.: 3. The writing here echoes the chapter on "The House" in Bachelard's classic *Poetics of Space.*

56  Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny,* op. cit., x.

57  Ibid., 12.

58  Ibid., 13.

59  Eisenman, "En Terror Firma," op. cit.: 114.

60  Ibid.: 115.

61  Ibid.: 114.

62  Diana I. Agrest, *Architecture from Without: Theoretical Framings for a Critical Practice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 1.

63  Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics, and the Subject* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 12.

64  Josüe Harari, *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 444.

65  Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas, "Semiotics and Architecture," *Oppositions* 1 (Summer 1976): 97.

66  Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 20.

67  Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 114.

68  Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture," in Broadbent, Bunt, Jencks, eds., *Signs, Symbols and Architecture* (New York: John Wiley, 1980), 11–70. Originally published in 1973.

69  Umberto Eco, "A Componential Analysis of the Architectural Sign/Column/," in *Signs, Symbols and Architecture,* op. cit., 232.

70  Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics,* op. cit., 17.

71  Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 28.

72  Ibid., 20.

73  Ibid., 21.

74  Ibid., 22.

75  Hal Foster, "(Post) Modern Polemics," *Perspecta* 21 (1984): 150.

76  Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image Music Text,* Stephen Heath, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 157.

77  Culler, *On Deconstruction,* op. cit., 25.

78  Foster, "(Post) Modern Polemics," op. cit.

79  Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 128.

80  Ibid.

81  Ibid., 114–115.

82  Barthes, "Work," op. cit., 160.

83  Foster, "(Post) Modern Polemics," op. cit.: 146.

84  Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text,* op. cit., 142–148, and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in Harari, *Textual Strategies,* op. cit., 141–160.

85  Foucault, "What is an Author?" op. cit., 148.

86  Ibid., 160.

87  The tendency in metaphysical philosophy to seek a foundation, or an origin. Logocentric thought sets up binary oppositions, like presence/absence, which privilege one term over the other.

Culler says: "Logocentrism thus assumes the priority of the first term [associated with identity and presence], and conceives of the second in relation to it, as a complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a disruption of the first." Culler, *On Deconstruction,* op. cit., 92–93.

88  Jacques Derrida, "Point de folie—Maintenant l'architecture," *AA Files* no. 12 (Summer 1986): 65.

89  Jacques Derrida, interviewed by Eva Meyer, "Architecture Where Desire Can Live," *Domus* no. 671 (April 1986): 18.

90  Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* op. cit., 133.

91  Culler, *On Deconstruction,* op. cit., 85.

92  Ibid., 24.

93  Tschumi, "Six Concepts," op. cit., 260.

94  Anthony Vidler, "The Pleasure of the Architect," *A+U* no. 288 (September 1988): 17.

95  Frederic Jameson, *Architecture Criticism Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 70.

96  Eagleton, *Literary Theory,* op. cit., 142.

97  David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 33–39.

98  Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 43, 46.

99  Ann Bergren, "Architecture Gender Philosophy," in *Strategies in Architectural Thinking* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 12.

100  Robert McAnulty, "Body Trouble," in *Strategies in Architectural Thinking,* op. cit., 191.

101  Agrest, *Architecture from Without,* op. cit., 3.

102  Anthony Vidler, introduction to Bernard Tschumi's "Architecture and Transgression," *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976): 55

103  Foster, "(Post) Modern Polemics," op. cit.: 151.

104  Lewis, "It's Postmodern…" op. cit.: G6.

105  Solà-Morales Rubió, "Neo-Rationalism," op. cit.: 19.

106  See *AD Profile* 11: *Surrealism and Architecture, Architectural Design* 48, no. 2–3, (1978), with articles by Tschumi, Frampton, and Koolhaas. See also my article on Duchamp's influence on contemporary architects, "Construction/Demolition, Object/Process" in *Proceedings of the 1991 ACSA Southeast Regional Conference* (Charlotte: University of North Carolina, 1992), 42–47.

107  See Alan Colquhoun, "Three Kinds of Historicism." (ch. 4)

108  Habermas, "Modernity," op. cit., 5.

109  Foster, "Preface," in *The Anti-Aesthetic,* op. cit., ix–xvi.

110  Foster, "(Post) Modern Polemics," op. cit.: 151.

111  Habermas, "Modernity," op. cit., 7.

112  Ibid., 11.

113  Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition,* op. cit., 72.

114  Ibid., xxiii.

115  Alan Colquhoun, "Postmodernism and Structuralism," in *Modernity and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 254.

116  Giulio Carlo Argan, "On the Typology of Architecture," *Architectural Design* no. 33 (December 1963): 565.

117  Solà-Morales Rubió, "Neo-Rationalism," op. cit.: 18.

118  Demetri Porphyrios, "Classicism is Not a Style," *Architectural Design* no. 5–6 (1982): 56.

119  McLeod, "Architecture in the Reagan Era," op. cit.: 43.

120  Norberg-Schulz, "Heidegger's Thinking on Architecture," op. cit.: 68.

121  Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750–1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 289.

122  Ibid.

123  D.W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

124  Carol Burns, "On Site: Architectural Preoccupations," in Andrea Kahn, ed., *Drawing/Building/Text: Essays in Architectural Theory* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), 146–168.

125  Perez-Gomez, "Architectural Representation," op. cit.: 43.

126  Ezra Ehrenkrantz, "Superhighway's Urban Dangers," *Architecture* 84, no. 5 (May 1995): 51, 53, 55.

127  Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978).

128  Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), 156–158.

129  Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), 10.

130  Ibid., 20.

131  Richard Ingersoll, *Design Book Review* 17 (Winter 1989): 3.

132  Thomas L. Schumacher, unpublished statement, May 1995.

133  Roland Barthes, "Semiology and Urbanism," in *Structures Implicit and Explicit, VIA* 2 (1973): 155.

134  Ibid.: 157.

135  Agrest, *Architecture from Without*, op. cit., 4.
136  Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 21.
137  Ibid., 41.
138  Peter Eisenman, "Introduction," in *The Architecture of the City*, op. cit., 6.
139  Ibid.
140  Leon Krier, "The Reconstruction of the City," in *Rational Architecture: The Reconstruction of the European City* (Brussels: Archives of Modern Architecture Editions, 1978), 38.
141  Ibid., 39.
142  Ibid., 41.
143  Alan Colquhoun, "Sign and Substance: Reflections on Complexity, Las Vegas, and Oberlin," in *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change* (Cambridge: Oppositions Books and MIT Press, 1985), 139–151.
144  Denise Scott Brown, "On Ducks and Decoration," in *Architecture Culture*, op. cit., 447.
145  Kate Nesbitt, "Cities of Desire/Boundaries of Cities," *Arquitectura* no. 288 (August 1991): 116–121.
146  First meeting, 8 October 1993, cited in Peter Katz, *The New Urbanism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 241.
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# 1.  POSTMODERNISM
## ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSES TO THE CRISIS WITHIN MODERNISM