

WWW.HAUSSITE.NET > SCRIPT SECTION

Title: Spatial Narratives
Author: Mark Rakatansky, 1991

Spatial Narratives

Mark Rakatansky

There is no mute architecture. All architects, all buildings "tell stories" with varying degrees of consciousness. Architecture is permeated with narratives because it is constituted *within* a field of discourses and economies (formal, psychological, and ideological), to any one aspect of which it cannot be reduced, from any one of which it cannot be removed.

If we examine, for example, any type of domestic architecture we will find already inscribed within the architecture a complex array of mentalities and practices (1) concerning the relations between genders, between parents and children, between "inside" and "outside", between what is supposed to be "public" and what is supposed to be "private", between what is supposed to be seen, smelt, or heard and what is not, and so forth. The hierarchy and degree of definition of spaces, their relative size and location, and the sub-architectural apparatuses of each space (furniture, appliances, media devices); all these are defined by and give definition to the social and psychological narratives that influence the behaviors (encouraged, allowed, discouraged, or forbidden) associated with each space. The elements of this field are polyvalent: each aspect will be influenced by mentalities and practices already established (perhaps already be in decline) and newly emerging (perhaps not fully articulated) and thus each will conflict with, reinforce, or ignore the others. (2)

Yet to speak of narrative strategies in architecture plunges one immediately into difficulty. Between those who would insist upon (or call for) the intrinsic nature of a "non-rhetorical" architecture (claiming that a brick is just a brick, a wall just a wall, a room just a room, that stone and steel, metal studs and gypsum board can not or should not "speak") and those all too eager to "add meaning" to buildings through the "telling of fables" there seems barely enough space to suggest another position. (3) The seemingly opposed positions of a "non-rhetorical" architecture and a "story-telling" architecture converge in their belief that rhetorical meaning does not reside in buildings other than in the most general sense, either as a "timeless expression" of Classical (or vernacular) ideals or as a *zeitgeist* expression." Both of these positions posit that if architecture could tell a story, that story would need to be designed into the "mute" and empty vessel of architecture as an additive feature. (4)

But rather than conceiving of narrative architecture as arising from an addition of a singular story-line, it would be critically more constructive to speak in the plural, of narratives of exposing and re-working certain repressed narratives within the field of discourses and economies already at work in architecture.

Before proceeding further it will be necessary to address the so-called linear structures of both narrative and temporality, as these related issues inevitably arise as arguments that are supposed to keep narrative wholly distinct from architecture. There is still a tendency to conceive of narrative in terms of what was assumed to be the conventions operative in nineteenth century realist fiction a linear development from origin to end. And thus any strategy that opposes the "naturalness" of these assumed conventions is thought to be "anti-narrative."

There are two problems with this view. On the one hand, recent literary theory has shown that the conventions of realism operate in much more complex and indeterminate ways than had been previously thought: beginnings do not constitute definitive origins, development is never seamlessly continuous (as transitions are inevitably disjunctive), endings do not provide definite closure. (5) And while it has been claimed that a book (unlike a building) can exert total control over its sequential unfolding, there are in fact no definitively linear readings. Each time we re-read a book we encounter aspects or relations between aspects that we remembered differently or not at all. Our attentions and inattentions are different with each passage through a book. The hegemonic claims of

"conventional" narrative for naturalism and stability attempt to mask these disjunctions, as Roland Barthes noted:

"...our society takes the greatest pains to conjure away the coding of the narrative situation: there is no counting the number of narrational devices which seek to naturalize the subsequent narrative by feigning to make it the outcome of some natural circumstance and thus, as it were, 'disinaugurating' it...The reluctance to declare its codes characterizes bourgeois society and the mass culture issuing from it: both demand signs which do not look like signs." (6)

On the other hand, "anti-narrative" strategies (montage, meta-narrative, and so forth) always continue to narrate, can not avoid narrating even as they problematize and resist certain conventional practices precisely in order to reveal the seams of narrative, to reveal how narrative is constructed from a discontinuous series of effects. "Anti-narrative" strategies, in other words, are not non-narrative.

It is within this struggle, between the inability to narrate in a seamless and definitive manner and the inability not to narrate, that narrative is constituted. This is the way, as it were, that narrative narrates, within this field of disability and ability.

There has been a similar misunderstanding with regard to the temporal dimension of architecture. It is commonly claimed that temporality does not exist within architecture (the way it supposedly exists within; and thus make possible; literary narrative), that buildings are "frozen in time", that temporality exists only in the experience of a building through time. Given these claims it is not surprising to find the current interest in "processional" buildings and building complexes that appear to be the only architecture to develop a linear "narrative" with a "proper" beginning, middle, and end (Guiseppe Terragni's Danteum project, the Villa Lante, and the Sacra Monti are frequently cited examples). My previous comments regarding narrative extend to procession in architecture: that is, on the one hand, all so-called processional architecture operates in much more complex and indeterminate ways than is generally assumed, (7) and on the other hand, all architecture is processional (in other words, can not be non-processional).

When I say that all architecture is processional, I mean that whether a building maintains the conventional relationships between spatial units for a given institutional type or attempts to disrupt such conventions, in both cases the subject will experience a procession through the various units of institutional space: from street to lobby, to stairs or elevators, to other lobbies or reception spaces or corridors or rooms, to other anterooms or corridors or rooms, and so forth. Even in the unlikely case that one's route through a building would differ each time, it would always be a sequence through a series of spaces. This is not merely an arbitrary procession along a "neutral" continuum that has been characterized as "public" on one end and as "private" on the other end.(8) We need only imagine a typical procession through the various spaces of a domicile, an office, or a governmental building, to be aware not only how each space is deeply saturated with a complex field of social and psychological narratives, but also how the effects of these narratives accrue (not necessarily in a unified way) in the procession from space to space.

Thus one could argue that the most significant temporal dimension of architecture is not given by the physical experience of moving through a building, but rather by the temporality of institutional practices inscribed in architectural space. Our understanding of the (seemingly stable) types of institutional space (the domicile, the office, the school, the museum, and so forth), is such that, once we experience these types, we need not physically traverse a given building to have a sense of the temporal dimension of inhabitation likely to be found there. We know even before we enter a domicile in our culture, whether it is a suburban tract house or an "open" loft, the forms of inhabitation that we can expect to find: the processional ordering and temporal use of the spaces, and the temporal and spatial ordering of the institutional rituals that take place there. But perhaps it is in the relationship between these two temporalities (the temporality of physical procession and the temporality of institutional practices) that the temporal dimension of architecture is best described.

II

Thus I will be arguing *that the ways in which human subjects are constituted and managed in institutional space* may provide one of the more productive themes for a narrative architecture (9) In fact, all designed space functions as institutional space. (10) Institutions are the principal sites through which ideologies work, and thus, as in the case ideologies (and conventional narrative, as Barthes noted) it is in the interest of institutions to effect (or at least give the illusion of) stable conditions. And like narrative both institutions and ideologies are constructs they are neither natural, nor universal, nor timeless, but artificial structures created through shifting historical

circumstances, discontinuous series of effects working within a field of ability and disability. The function of ideology, as Slavoj Žižek notes, "is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel." It is the very inconsistency of the social field, the impossibility of its seamless constitution, its gaps and residues, that ideology has to mask, conceal, screen. (11) And it is in such gaps at the level of the subject, the institutional program, the building, the site, and so forth that certain critical architectural narratives might emerge.

The institutional program is one professional mask that architecture wears in the service of ideologies. Generally the ideological and social shifts that have affected architectural shifts in the built form of institutions (given rise to, been barriers to) have been given little attention by architectural historians and critics in favor of formal analyses. However it is difficult to comprehend the shift in Western domestic space from commonly unspecified spaces prior to the eighteenth century to the subsequent development of specialized rooms unless this shift is read in relation to the history of domestic mentalities and practices: shifts in the concepts of family, gender, privacy, hygiene, the place of the child (and servants and non-family) in the house, the relationship of the family to the "outside" society, relations between classes, as well as the partial transfer of education and moralization from the religious to the secular and familial domain (12). Similarly, a number of developments in domestic, other institutional, and urban spaces beginning in the eighteenth century can be related to the "need" of the State for the surveillance and management of social space (the policing of the social body) instigated by a "concern" for hygiene. Beyond the official stated intentions, these hygienic programs involved the "surveillance, analysis, intervention, and modification" of populations as a means of providing finer and more adequate control mechanisms, as well as the maintenance of bodies as usable labor. (13)

But there are also moments when seemingly contradictory ideologies coalesce. One such moment, as Foucault has pointed out, is that of the French Revolutionaries' embrace of Bentham's Panopticon project as an instrumental model for a "transparent" society, which they linked to the Rousseauian vision of a totally unobstructed collective communication that would eradicate the darkness where injustice and unhappiness breeds. (14) Yet even in Rousseau it is already clear that this transparency is not to be equally distributed: Rousseau's desire for people to be able to look freely into each other's hearts was not, for him, a matter of abolishing social differences, but merely a way to give the "sense" of social fraternity in order to maintain the existing social order. (15) These contradictions, within and between ideologies, would become visible in the architectural form of the Panopticon, which is not specifically a prison (being equally useful for hospitals, factories, or schools) or even a building type. The Panopticon is a system of management an instrument for the control of the visible and the invisible, of bodies, of power. The theme of instrumental transparency in architecture, which the Panopticon exemplifies, circulates around the problems of management, of the illumination of some darkneses and the preservation of other darkneses, of efficient communication and productive labor, and of the maintenance of the physical and moral "health" of the "social body." This theme will return again and again: in the social hygiene movements, in the infiltration of Taylorism and Scientific Management in the work place and the home, (16) in many of the urban proposals and architectural polemics of the Modern Movement. (17) What is often constituted as, or presented under the guise of, progressive reform or democratization or social health, harbors the technologies of management and surveillance either as its means or its ends. (18) A more recent manifestation of instrumental transparency can be found in the "open office" system (which has been referred to as a "managerial tool"), where a shift away from earlier forms of the spatial repressiveness of hierarchization and compartmentalization of the subject in the office environment would result in just other forms of hierarchization and compartmentalization as well as an increased lack of privacy which came with an increased efficiency of institutional management and surveillance. (19)

III

It should be clear however that architecture cannot control behavior in some absolute manner. Architecture participates in the managing of subjects because its own structuring is not dissimilar, at many levels, to the structuring of the programs/institutions that it "houses" in terms, for example, of the organization, hierarchization, and systematization of order, activities, behavior, movement, and visibility. One could examine how the obsessive rationality obsessive to the point of irrationality of both architecture and institution is woven through and through the space of, say, the office: from the regularized architectonic systems of structure, to the hierarchical "space-planning" of subjects (managers, staff, and visitors), to the standardized body registers of office practices (under the "rigors" of ergonomic "science"), right down to the compartmentalization of subjects and objects via various filing systems. These systems exemplify the capillary action of Foucault's "micro-technologies of power," the "circulation of effects of power through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions." (20) It is in this manner that architecture functions both as *and under authority*. Architecture both structures and is structured by institutions. (21) It is a commonly held notion of our "postmodern" time that different programs can inhabit the same space because programs are completely independent from architectural spatiality. But it is the similarity, not the

disparity, between institutional structures, and between the structure of institutions and architecture, that allows for this interchangeability of inhabitation and management.

From the preceding discussion it should also be clear that the play of ideologies in architectural form is so complex that it would be pointless to expect a unitary ideology to be reflected in a building (even at the moment it is actualized as a design project or in built form). The conceptual gaps and temporal lags between ideologies and built forms are analogous to the gaps and lags between ideologies and "material" conditions. (22) To trace this ideological drama one would need to examine how the object, in Manfredo Tafuri's words, "reaches compromises with regard to the world and what conditions permit its existence" and thus what conditions govern its relationship to production and use. (23)

It would be equally pointless to imagine that any architectural project could be reduced, either in analysis or design, to a definitive map that could account for all the forces at play, to a totalizing diagram of formal, psychological, and social relations. The convergence of discourses and economies at the nexus of subject, space, site, or program provides an opportunity not to resurrect an ultimate truth-value of "Site" or "Program," but to utilize each force against itself, against the other forces, and against the entire project. The nostalgia of current "contextualism" can be interrogated by architecturally utilizing past or present aspects of the context to simultaneously problematize the object by the site and the site by the object. The naive problem-solving of sixties behaviorism can be similarly interrogated by architecturally utilizing the program to question certain institutional practices. In all cases, any representation of these forces will always be one of many possible representations.

IV

Thus far I have been discussing some of the ways subjects are constituted and managed in institutional space. To demonstrate the deep pervasiveness of these structurings and mechanisms it will be necessary first to examine how they are involved in a kind of a repressed architectural unconscious, and second, how the examination of this architectural unconscious reveals certain gaps and inconsistencies within the social field from which critical narratives and strategies might emerge.

The architectural project, like the social field, is never without some slippage, some gap, some residue that cannot be sheltered, institutionalized, concealed. In fact, one definition of architecture could be *the management of what can and cannot be "concealed."* One could speak, in this light, of many things that refuse to remain concealed: anomalous behaviors, sexuality, certain odors, (24) domestic violence (in the broadest sense), displaced social groups, and so on - as well as the social and institutional ideologies and mechanisms that attempt to manage the visibility of their own as well as others' practices. Yet it is because all that is supposed to be concealed refuses to remain concealed that it must be managed through the constant presentation of certain conventions of architectural order and propriety. (25)

The *unheimlich* is one word that has been used to refer to that which refuses to remain concealed. As several writers have noted, Sigmund Freud, in his essay "The Uncanny," puzzles over the strange confluence of meaning between two words that should have entirely opposite meanings: *heimlich* (the homey, the canny) and *unheimlich* (the unhomey, the uncanny). Freud, in the beginning of the essay, says that the "...German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, meaning 'familiar,' 'native,' 'belonging to the home'; and we are tempted to conclude that what is 'uncanny' is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar." In the course of the essay what is revealed is another meaning of *heimlich*: "...concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know about it...to behave *heimlich*, as though there were something to conceal...*heimlich* places (which good manners oblige us to conceal)." Thus the "uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old-established in the mind which has been estranged only by the process of repression." It is through this understanding that the force of Friedrich Schelling's definition of *unheimlich* as "...the name for everything that ought to have remained... hidden and secret and has become visible" becomes evident to Freud. The *unheimlich*, far from being the opposite and outside of the *heimlich*, is the *heimlich* it is what is already inside, the homey that returns as the unhomey. (26)

Let me go further with this already established elucidation. First, it is worth noting that it is not only in the German language that words related to the concept of home reveal an uncanny meaning. For example, the English verb "to dwell" is derived from the Middle English *dwellen* (from the Old English *dwellan*) which means "to lead astray, hinder," and is akin to the Middle Dutch *dwellen* which means "to stun," and the Old High German *twellan* and the Old Norse *dvelja* which mean "to delay, to deceive" which in turn are all derived from the Indo-European base **dh(e)we-* which means "to mislead, to deceive, to obscure, to make dull." (27) And for the Sakalava, a tribe in Madagascar, among whom "no one would refuse another entrance into his house *unless he were hoarding or*

hiding something," the word *mody*, which means "at home" or "heading home" also means "to pretend what one is not." (28)

It is precisely the uncanny connotations of dwelling that Martin Heidegger repressed in favor of more *heimlich* ones (in his etymological "derivations" from Old English and High German) in his late essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." It is interesting in this light to reconsider one of Heidegger's most famous statements : "Language is at once the house of Being and the home of human beings" (29) Heidegger claims that it is our highest "summons" to try "to bring dwelling to the fullest of its nature," (30) but fails to acknowledge that this fullness includes both the *heimlich* and *unheimlich*. Such a failure of acknowledgement, Freud suggests, is what causes the *unheimlich* to return.

The *unheimlich* meanings of "dwelling" suggest what is "familiar and old-established" in architecture that returns in the uncanny. The very constitution of architecture reveals, in Zizek's words, a "traumatic, real kernel." I am referring to a condition that is not specific either to recent times nor to Western cultures but, as the anthropologist Peter J. Wilson notes, at the very least an aspect of all cultures that inhabit "permanent" dwellings:

When people adopted settlement and domestication as a permanent feature of their lives, they did not impinge directly on their drives of aggression and sexuality, but they did impinge directly on the conditions of attention. That is, they impeded their sensory ability to monitor, stimulate, and govern these drives. Living behind walls affects the various aspects of attention, and people so affected must respond. This occurs in part by specializing attention, by developing modes of surveillance, supervision, and inspection, and by evolving stratagems of evasion and display. (31)

Architecture constructs this evasion and at the same time is in constant flight from acknowledging its part in this construction. This evasion is the trauma of architecture, the "antagonistic kernel" that always prevents the closure of the architectural field. (32) Thus it should not be so surprising that language returns to us this uncanniness of inhabitation, this duplicity, this doubled concealment. And it should also not be surprising that the mechanisms and conventions masking the trauma of this uncanniness should themselves attempt to remain hidden and repressed so that they, like the ideologies they mask, appear natural, stable, unalterable.

I am suggesting that the constitution and management of subjects through the types, or rather stereotypes, of institutional space, that is, through the compulsion to repeat these stereotypes without examination, is one means by which the uncanny returns in architecture. In psychoanalytical terms, as Peter Brooks notes "repetition is a way of remembering brought into play when recollection in the intellectual sense is blocked by repression and resistance. (33) It is not the past as past that is recollected, that is, as "something belonging to the past... in a bound state;" (34) what is repeated is repressed material brought into the present as an active force, as a defense against the direct examination of complex and potentially dangerous psychological relations. Architecture, for the most part, abandons itself to the unconscious repetition of stereotype of the house, the office, the museum, the hospital, the library, and so forth to such an extent that few architects think to re-examine the fundamental assumptions implicit within the conventional program. (As Freud says: "The patient abandons himself to the compulsion to repeat, which is now replacing the impulse to remember." (35) The basic functions of institutional stereotypes regardless of how their configuration varies from culture to culture or the formal shifts that may occur within a given culture through time are as mechanisms of management, to reinforce "proper" social and psychological relations, and as mechanisms of defense, to guard against potentially dangerous social and psychological relations, that is, all "that ought to remain hidden and secret." Architecture, according to Georges Bataille, is the expression of the very soul of society, but "it is only the ideal soul of society, that which has the authority to command and prohibit, that is expressed in architectural compositions properly speaking. Thus great monuments are erected like dikes, opposing the logic and majesty of authority against all disturbing elements: it is in the form of cathedral or palace that Church or State speaks to the multitudes and imposes silence upon them." (36)

The conservative cry within the architectural discipline to "remember" and repeat past formal, typological, and institutional models with the claim that these models will shore us up, will make us safe and *heimlich*, is thus only the most vocal, only the most apparent, indication of this widespread compulsion to repeat. This architectural cry is similar to another current cry to the "Great Books" a claim for connoisseurship as a defense against the critical examination of the classical canon. Such conscious cries for "remembering" share with obsessional neurosis a "forgetting" that "consists mostly of a falling away of the links between various ideas, a failure to draw conclusions, an isolating of certain memories." (37) This isolating of certain memories literally in architecture an isolating of elements, institutional forms, "typologies", and styles from the past - seeks to bring back the past, to

repeat what is "remembered" as pleasurable, as heimlich. But, as Jacques Lacan observes, the object is not retrievable, what is recalled is never the object itself: "The object is encountered and is structured along the path of repetition to find the object again, to repeat the object. Except, it never is the same object which the subject encounters. In other words, he never ceases generating substitutive objects." (38)

It is because the past is irretrievable (as only substitutive objects are generated in lieu of that past) and because, most importantly, truly conscious remembering requires a remembering not only of forms but of their repressed significance, that what is recalled in this repetition is repressed trauma. (39) Thus the most significant repetition that these conscious cries for "remembering" mask is a behavioral repetition the resistance to critical analysis as a mechanism of defense. As Freud states:

The crux of the matter is that the mechanisms of defense against former dangers recur in analysis in the shape of resistances to cure. It follows that the ego treats recovery itself as a new danger.... The patient now regards the analyst simply as an alien personality who makes disagreeable demands upon him and he behaves towards him exactly like a child who does not like a stranger and has no confidence in him. If the analyst tries to explain to the patient one of the distortions which his defence has produced and to correct it, he meets with a complete lack of comprehension and an imperviousness to valid arguments. We see then that there really is a resistance to the discovery of resistances and that the defense mechanisms... are resistances not only to the bringing of id-contents into consciousness but also to the whole process of analysis and so to cure. (40)

V

Freud, in his discussion of defense mechanisms, states that they are "in fact, infantilisms" that "share the fate of so many institutions which struggle to maintain themselves when they have outlived their usefulness." He continues this passage with a quote from Goethe's Faust summarizing the potential danger of both defense mechanisms and institutions, "Vernunft wird Unsinn, Wohltat Plage:" Reason becomes unreason, kindness torment. (41)

It is, of course, as impossible to escape the framework of institutions as it is to escape the framework of ideology. What is possible is an unending task the development of abilities to perceive and examine the structuring of institutions, to reveal those conditions where reason becomes unreason, kindness torment. In opening our institutions up to questioning, we reveal their artificial, and therefore alterable, construct. Bertolt Brecht, whose work was based on revealing the changeable character of that which presents itself as familiar and immutable, has already noted the difficulty of breaking into the repetitive cycle of society:

For it seems impossible to alter what has long not been altered. We are always coming on things that are too obvious for us to bother to understand them. What men experience among themselves they think of as "the" human experience. A child, living in a world of old men, learns how things work there.... Even if he realizes that the arrangements made for him by "Providence" are only what has been provided by society, he is bound to see society, that vast collection of beings like himself, as a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts and therefore not in any way to be influenced. Moreover, he would be used to things that could not be influenced; and who mistrusts what he is used to? (42)

Conventions, as representations of that which "has long not been altered," are blocks both to awareness and to potential change. "The past," as Freud says, "is the patient's armory out of which he fetches his weapons for defending himself against the progress of the analysis, weapons which we must wrest from him one by one." (43) What are the means by which the defenses of the past might be wrest from the patient? To ignore them, to proceed as if they did not exist would, of course, be useless. However paradoxical it might at first appear, it is precisely by utilizing the compulsion to repeat against itself by allowing it to display itself in its principal form (as a resistance to examination) that progress is gained within the analysis: "We render it harmless, and even make use of it, by according it the right to assert itself within certain limits... to display before us all the pathogenic impulses hidden in the depths of the patient's mind... Only when it has come to its height can one, with the patient's co-operation, discover the repressed instinctual trends which are feeding the resistance; and only by living them through in this way will the patient be convinced of their existence and their power." (44) As Brooks observes:

Repetition is both an obstacle to analysis since the analysand must eventually be led to renunciation of the attempt to reproduce the past and the principal dynamic of the cure, since only by way of its symbolic enactment in the present can the history of past desire, its objects and scenarios of fulfillment, be made known, become manifest in the present discourse....The narrative discourse like the discourse of analysis must restage the past history of desire as it exercises its pressure toward meaning in the present.... At issue... is not so much the

history of the past, or at least not the history of the past directly, as its present narrative discourse. This is a space of dialogue, struggle, construction. (45)

A restaging of the past history of desire as a construction requires a methodology able to distance itself enough from the past to perceive it as a construct and therefore not just reproduce it. As Brecht suggests, such a methodology would treat "social situations as processes, and... regard nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself." (46) But to create this distance it is necessary to denaturalize, to defamiliarize the past. For Brecht this involved a strategy he termed *Verfremdungseffekt*, most commonly translated as "alienation effect.": "A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar," in order to "free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today." (47) As in the psychoanalytical model, this involves a two-fold process: a restaging, a working on the past (on what is repressing and what is repressed), and in this process a swerving, a distancing from any direct repetition in order to allow for analysis and the potential for a different construction. The point is not to reproduce the restrictive nostalgia of memory but to develop the critical possibilities of counter-memory. (48)

Earlier I suggested that it might be possible to pursue an architecture that would be critically productive in the sense of exposing, critiquing, problematizing, and re-working certain repressed narratives already at work in architecture. Rather than avoid sites of ideological and psychological saturation, such an architecture might draw out some of this saturation. This drawing out, this thematizing, is one method by which the obsessiveness and irrationality of the "normal" and "rational" may be revealed, may "display before us all the pathogenic impulses" circulating around the repressed doubleness of inhabitation. One could characterize this inhabitation in the terms suggested by Wilson (in the developed modes and stratagems of surveillance, supervision, evasion and display) or in the somewhat more general terms I suggested earlier: the organization, hierarchization, and systematization of institutional practices.

The architectural operations addressing these themes could occur not only in the traditional realms of the architect (spaces, walls, windows, doors, and so on) but also at the level of what I have called the "sub-architectural." It is at this level of the office desk, or the filing system, or the household cabinet that one might argue has at least as immediate, if not a more immediate, impact in terms of the structuring of institutional ideologies, but it is at this level that architects mostly specify out of manufacturers' catalogs or leave to others to select. Even given the task of designing, say, a reception desk, most architects would architecturally repress its obvious social and psychological aspects. Inscribed through and through with a libidinal and ideological economy, the reception desk is a site of institutional desire in the broadest of senses as an apparatus of control, as a site that receives and keeps out, as an implicit participant and frame for the ubiquitous gender and class stereotyping of the "receptionist" position. Architects are of course not inattentive to institutions; on the contrary they occasionally custom design everything from spaces to furniture. It is just that their "deepest" attention tends to reside in the decorative design of lobby spaces and executive desks, rather than designing these spaces and furnishing or utilizing standardized objects in a critical manner.

VI

The limits of these critical narrative strategies are when they become another conceit, another way for architects to feign interest in extra-formal issues. It is clearly of little value to make a casual reference to these themes in a project, or to use them to mask merely aesthetized objects. What becomes crucial is not the arbitrary or casual evocation of conceptually or politically current concerns but the critical act of selection, processing, and re-working not to further mystify the object, nor to reduce the object to a diagram of social forces, but as a way to expose and examine the whole architectural enterprise. This of course includes the play of form through the architect, which is as much a theme to be explored and problematized as other psychological or social forces, and is thus subject to the same examinations and disjunctions within a narrative operation. In fact the very act of architectural narration is not only not exempt from similar examinations and disjunctions, but requires that such techniques be turned on itself in order to expose the complexity and contingency of its own operations. There is however always a difficult balance between a discourse which fails to examine its own constitution and one that becomes self-consumed in privileging its own constitution, between, one might say, naive realism and unrelenting metafiction.

It only remains in this regard to suggest that the interventions that attempt to expose and problematize institutional narratives might also expose and problematize, rather than merely reproduce, the tedium of an absolutist rationality. In fact, it is from the gaps and slippages of that rationality that these interventions may emerge: "Something that exceeds the thinkable and opens the possibility of 'thinking otherwise' bursts in through

comical, incongruous, or paradoxical half-openings of discourse." (49) As Brecht never tired of pointing out, this involves pleasure the pleasure "felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional," (50) the pleasure of "the instability of every circumstance, the joke of contradiction and so forth: all these are ways of enjoying the liveliness of men, things and processes, and they heighten both our capacity for life and our pleasure in it." (51)

However successful these narrative strategies may be at the level of the object, one still needs to acknowledge the limits of architectural practice to directly affect widespread social change, as well as the abilities of the hegemonic culture to absorb critical strategies. As Brecht has noted, "Capitalism has the power instantly and continuously to transform into a drug the very venom that is spit in its face, and to revel in it." (52) It is thus always necessary for critical strategies and this includes the strategies that might emerge from the theoretical positions of this essay to be constantly reevaluated and renewed.

Having stated certain critical limits of the architectural object I would nevertheless maintain the productiveness of an architectural narrative that is constituted within and through these limits. I would therefore disagree with the conclusions that Tafuri has drawn from his many years of analyzing the naiveté and bitter betrayals of avant-garde utopian dreams and progressive ideologies: "To the deceptive attempts to give architecture an ideological dress, I shall always prefer the sincerity of those who have the courage to speak of that silent and outdated 'purity;' even if this, too, still harbors an ideological inspiration, pathetic in its anachronism." (53) But what may be, for some, sincerity and courage, for others will be indifference, business as usual. At the risk of conveying, again in Tafuri's words, "impotent and ineffectual myths, which so often serve as illusions that permit the survival of anachronistic 'hopes in design,'" (54) I would suggest that if we, with our lowered "postmodern" expectations, can distinguish between direct political action and critical representations, we may be able to practice some means of both resistance and proposition within our work. In acknowledging the ineluctable rhetorical aspects of our discipline, we might critically examine within the limits of our practices (in ways that need not be on the one hand totalizing or utopian, nor on the other hand conciliatory or reactionary) the complex relationships between architecture and social practices.

FOOTNOTES

1. I am referring to mentalities and practices to avoid collapsing two related but distinct historiographic approaches. Regarding the former, see Jacques Le Goff, "Mentalities: a history of ambiguities," in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, ed. Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 151-165. Regarding the latter, see Michel Foucault, "History of Systems of Thought" in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 199-204 and his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972). On the relations between the two approaches see, Lynn Hunt, "French History in the Last Twenty Years: The Rise and Fall of the *Annales* Paradigm," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986), 209-224 and Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School 1929-89* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

2. This multiplicity is further enlarged by several other constitutive elements. Whether a "new" project or a renovation, the architectural work takes its place within a physical site with its own field of discourses and economies. All these forces are "filtered" and added to by the attentions and intentions (again at various levels of consciousness) of the architect, the succession of subjects who observe and inhabit the building, and the institutional programs under which they are managed.

For a discussion of the collision of forces under which architecture is constituted, and the concomitant "collision" necessary in historiographic analysis, see Manfredo Tafuri, "The Historical Project," in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), 1-21.

3. The confusion that surrounds the term "narrative architecture" is exemplified in the following attempt at a "definition" by the editors of *Oz* (the journal of the College of Architecture and Design at Kansas State University) in their 1988 issue dedicated to this theme:

Many architects have something to say in their architecture, a story to tell. There are a variety of means architects employ in expressing their own, or their clients values, thoughts, wishes, beliefs, and desires. They often communicate a unifying theme elaborated throughout the "plot." Some of the storytellers of our discipline choose to relate the entire story in a single building while others "write" continuing sagas in which each building is a sequel to the last. Others, whether consciously or not, allude to earlier work by masters or to vital vernacular traditions. The architect's tale can be as captivating and powerful as the writer's. The best narratives give building

added meaning and encourage people to become involved with and to cherish works of architecture. (3)

4. The limits of these positions become quickly apparent if one considers, for example, the matter of the so-called appropriate character for a given institutional type (houses "homey", museums "stately", prisons "foreboding"). Is this character supposed to be understood as an additive feature or as residing in the building?

5. See, for example, Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); D.A. Miller, *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); and Edward W. Said *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

6. Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 116. That certain postmodern practices seek to create signs which only look like signs is merely the flip side of the same coin, merely another attempt to posit a comforting separateness of "coding" and "narrative."

In my use of "hegemonic" here, I am referring not to a unitary power, but again to a diverse field of discourses and economies. As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Practice* (London: Verso, 1985), 142) have noted, "the hegemonic formation ...cannot be referred to the specific logic of a single social force. Every historical bloc or hegemonic formation is constructed through regularity in dispersion, and this dispersion includes a proliferation of very diverse elements.... The problem of power cannot, therefore, be posed in terms of the search for the class or the dominant sector which constitutes the centre of a hegemonic formation, given that, by definition, such a center will always elude us. But it is equally wrong to propose as an alternative, either pluralism or the total diffusion of power within the social, as this would blind the analysis to the presence of nodal points and to the partial concentrations of power existing in every concrete social formation."

7. So, for example, what is particularly interesting about Terrangi's Danteum project is the numerous ways in which a strict linear narrative cannot be maintained, the ways in which gaps, slippages, breaks appear in the project, the ways in which Terrangi's stated intentions (and the subject's experiences of the project) lose their linear grip, turn back on themselves, cross paths, dead-end, and are subsumed by the problems of translation, not merely from book to building, but from intended (and non-intended) meaning to geometry, from metaphysical architecture to State architecture, and vice versa. Thus understandably linear readings "The progression from dense to framed to open Inferno, Purgatory, Paradise following a scheme of ascent to the most holy and sacred space leads finally to the room dedicated to the New Roman Empire" (Thomas Schumacher, *The Danteum* (Princeton : Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), 32)); also cannot be maintained. For example, the Paradise space can be read as more cage-like and less open (with its slitted walls and field of glass columns and trellis) than the Purgatory space. And the room dedicated to the New Roman Empire, the Impero, is a narrow passage that gives no passage, a dead-end that requires the visitor to double-back and pass again through Paradise. One might also ask why Terragni releases his otherwise tight theatrical control in a number of locations: in the opening between Purgatory and Paradise, and in the arcades in Inferno and Purgatory that allow an avoidance of the direct thematic experience of those spaces.

8. In fact, it may be suggested that there is no such thing as pure "public" or pure "private" space, considering, for example, the degree to which the interventions of social values (from table manners to sexual manners) have shaped domestic practices.

9. I am using the term "management" here in a similar manner as Foucault has used the terms "power" or "power relations," that is, to refer to *the entire range of its manifestations*, not solely the negative and repressive ones. His definition of the term "subject," although brief, is also useful here: "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge." (Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The Museum of Contemporary Art, and Boston: Godine, 1984), 420).

10. For a discussion of how urban parks are involved in the constitution and management of subjects, see Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1982).

11. Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 45.

12. See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962). See also Robin Evans, "Figures, Doors and Passages," *Architectural Design* (Autumn 1978): 267-278 and his "The Developed Surface: an Enquiry into the Brief Life of an Eighteenth Century Drawing Technique," *9H8* (1989): 120-147.

13. Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 166-182. Regarding the effects of hygienic movements on domestic and urban spaces see Georges Teyssot, "The Disease of the Domicile" in *Assemblage 6* (1988): 72-97. Regarding other institutional spaces, in addition to Foucault's studies of the clinic, the asylum, and the prison, see Anthony Vidler's essays on industry, hospitals, and prisons in *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987) as well as his Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: *Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990). See also Robin Evans, *The Fabrication of Virtue: English Prison Architecture, 1750-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

14. See Michel Foucault's comments in "The Eye of Power" in *Power/Knowledge*, 146-165. Foucault refers to the discussion of the theme of social transparency in the writings of Rousseau by Jean Starobinski (see Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988) and *The Invention of Liberty* (1964; Geneva/New York: Skira/Rizzoli, paperback reprint 1987), 100ff). Also see Jacques-Alain Miller's extensive reading of utilitarianism through the body of Bentham's work in "Jeremy Bentham's Panoptic Device," *October* 41 (1987): 3-29.

15. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 92-101.

16. On the shifts in practices of the management of domestic space, see Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City: Anchor, 1978); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981); and Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago 1873-1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a discussion of the ways in which women's picture magazines played a mediating link between the social spheres of "industrial production and...domestic reproduction," reinforcing the scientific management lessons of order and efficiency, see Sally Stein, "The Graphic Ordering of Desire: Modernization of A Middle-Class Women's Magazine, 1914-1939," *Heresies 18* (1985): 7-16. For a discussion of Le Corbusier's embrace of, and subsequent disillusionment with, Taylorism see Mary McLeod, "Architecture or Revolution: Taylorism, Technocracy, and Social Change," *Art Journal*, 43, 2 (Summer 1983): 132-147. Other aspects of Le Corbusier's work related to the themes of spatial management and instrumental transparency are discussed briefly in Bruce Brice Taylor, "Technology, Society, and Social Control in Le Corbusier's Cite de Refuge, Paris, 1933," *Oppositions* 15-16 (Winter-Spring 1979): 169-186. For an extensive reading of the work of Le Corbusier and Adolf Loos with regard to the construction of the subject in the domestic interior see Beatriz Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism" in Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

17. Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's comments (from his Bauhaus Book, *Painting, Photography, Film*) contain a remarkable summary of these themes: "Men still kill one another, they have not understood how they live, why they live; politicians fail to observe that the earth is an entity, yet television (Telehor) has been invented: the 'Far Seer'; tomorrow we shall be able to look into the hearts of our fellow-man, be everywhere and yet alone; illustrated books, newspapers, magazines are printed; in millions. The unambiguousness of the real, the truth in the everyday situation is there for all classes. *The hygiene of the optical, the health of the visible is slowly filtering through.*" Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), 38, emphasis in original text. (The first edition of this book was published in 1925; the second edition, from which this translation was made, was published two years later). Another example is Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's 1923 comments on office buildings (that appeared alongside his well-known statement "Architecture is the will of the age conceived in spatial terms") in the first issue of the avant-garde publication *G*: "The office building is a house of work of organization of clarity of economy. Bright, wide workrooms, easy to oversee, undivided except as the organism of the undertaking is divided. The maximum effect with the minimum expenditure of means." (from *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-century Architecture* (trans. Michael Bullock, ed. Ulrich Conrads; Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1970), 74; spacing emphasis in original, text emphasis mine; although further emphasis could be given to the equation of office and house, as well as to the spatial aspects of work, organization, clarity, economy, and division).

18. As Foucault notes (in "An Interview with Michel Foucault," in *History of the Present 1* (1985):

2.): "As soon as a power infinitely less brutal and less extravagant, less visible and less ponderous than the big monarchical administration became necessary, greater latitudes for the participation in power and in the decision-making process were given to a certain social class. But at the same time and in order to compensate for it, a system of training was elaborated, essentially aimed at other social classes, but also at the new ruling class - for the bourgeoisie has in a way worked upon itself, it has developed its own type of individuals. I do not think that the two phenomena are contradictory: one was the price paid for the other. For a certain bourgeois liberalism to become possible at the level of institutions, it was necessary to have, at the level of what I call "micro-powers," a much stricter investment in bodies and behaviors. Discipline is the underside of democracy."

19. This is not to suggest that transparency as such is repressive, even less to suggest that we return to earlier forms of cellular management.

20. Foucault, "The Eye of Power," 151-152.

21. As Denis Hollier notes (in his *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 33): "There is consequently no way to describe a system without resorting to the vocabulary of architecture.... Architecture under these conditions is the architecture, the system of systems. The keystone of systematicity in general, it organizes the concord of languages and guarantees universal legibility. The temple of meaning, it dominates and totalizes signifying productions, forcing them all to come down to the same thing, to confirm its noologic system. Architecture is a compulsory loan burdening all of ideology, mortgaging all its differences from the outset." For a further discussion of architectural metaphor in philosophical thought, see Mark Wigley, "The Production of Babel, the Translation of Architecture," in *Assemblage 8* (1989): 7-19. For a discussion of the structuring and counter-structuring of architecture and culture see Catherine Ingraham, "Lines and Linearity: Problems in Architectural Theory," in Andrea Kahn, ed., *Drawing/Building/Text* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

22. By temporal lag between ideologies and built form I am referring to the time between the height of the "open classroom" pedagogical movement and the appearances of the first built examples, and to the degree to which these built examples may even have assisted in the movement's decline.

As George Duby notes (in "Ideologies in social history," in Le Goff and Nora, *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, 158-9) ideologies indicate changes in "the lived reality of social organisation... slowly and reluctantly, because they are by nature conservative. They are the locus of a process of adaptation, but this is sometimes very slow and always remains partial. Moreover, in a subtle dialectical process, the weight of ideological representations is sometimes such as to hold back the development of material and political structures..."

23. Tafuri, "The Historical Project," 17.

24. For a discussion of the relationships of propriety, property, and the proper name see Ingraham, "The Faults of Architecture: Troping the Proper" in *Assemblage 7* (1988): 7-13.

25. For a discussion of the historical shifts in cultural practices related to various odors, see Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The Development of Manners* (New York: Urizon, 1978).

26. All the quotations in this paragraph are from Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny'," in Freud, *On Creativity and the Unconscious* (New York: Harpers, 1958), 122- 161. For two other discussions on the uncanny in architecture see Vidler, "The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime," in *Assemblage 3* (1987): 7-29 and Wigley, "Postmortem Architecture: The Taste of Derrida," *Perspecta 23* (1987): 156-172.

27. *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) and the *Webster's New World Dictionary* (New York: William Collins and World Publishing, 1978). I would like to thank James F. Gramata for pointing out this etymology to me.

28. Gillian Feeley-Harnik, "The Sakalava House (Madagascar)," *Anthropos 75* (1980), 580, quoted in Peter J.

Wilson, *The Domestication of the Human Species* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 98. Emphasis in original text.

29. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 239.

30. Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking" in Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper, 1971), 145-161.

31. Wilson, *The Domestication of the Human Species*, 182. Emphasis in original.

32. Zizek (in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 162-4; emphasis in original) is using the term "the Real" in the Lacanian sense, that is, not to refer to an "transcendent positive entity" but an entity, like the Freudian example of the primal parricide, which "although it does not exist (in the sense of 'really existing,' taking place in reality), has a series of properties it exercises a certain structural causality, it can produce a series of effects in the symbolic reality of subjects." In fact it is only in a series of effects that this entity is present, but "always in a distorted, displaced way.... Laclau and Mouffe [in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*] were the first to develop this logic of the Real in its relevance for the the social-ideological field in their concept of *antagonism*: antagonism is precisely such an impossible kernel... only to be constructed retroactively, from a series of its effects, as the traumatic point which escapes them; it prevents a closure of the social field."

For the same reasons as Zizek has noted with regard to the primal parricide, it would be pointless to search for the "traces" of the built *unheimlich* "prehistoric reality, but it must none the less be presupposed if we want to account for the present state of things." In addition, we should not expect that architecture would need to blatantly and continually enunciate its *unheimlich* side (as it does in the rare example, say, of the panoptic prison) for its effects to be felt. In other words, direct suppression is not the only or principal means of control, as Jacques Lacan notes (in Lacan, "Television" in *October 40* (1987): 31-2; emphasis in original): "Freud didn't say that repression *comes from* suppression: that (to paint a picture) castration is due to what Daddy brandished over his brat playing with his wee-wee: 'We'll cut it off, no kidding, if you do it again.'" That this enunciation is repressed and masked not only does not take away from its pervasive power, it assures it.

33. Peter Brooks, "Psychoanalytic constructions and narrative meanings," in *Paragraph*,7(1986): 57.

34. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* New York: Norton, 1959), 12, 30.

35. Freud, "Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psychoanalysis: Recollection, Repetition and Working Through" in Freud, *Therapy and Technique* New York: Collier, 1963), 161.

36. Hollier, *Against Architecture*, 46-7. Bataille continues: "It is, in fact, obvious that monuments inspire social prudence and often even real fear. The taking of the Bastille is symbolic of this state of things: it is hard to explain this crowd movement other than by the animosity of the people against the monuments that are their real masters." Hollier commenting on this passage says (49, 55): "[Architecture's] job... is to serve society to defend itself against that which is its basis only because of its threat.... Architecture functions as the fantasy that man identifies with to escape his desire (to escape it is to control it). Man is confined: *conformed* within himself."

37. Freud, "Recollection, Repetition and Working Through," 159.

38. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955* (ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; New York: Norton, 1988), 100.

39. As Joan Copjec notes (in "*India Song/Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta desert: The Compulsion to Repeat*" in *October* 17 (1981): 42-43): "The compulsion to repeat is definitely not, according to psychoanalysis... an attempt to return to a previous state of satisfaction; rather it is the return to a trauma, which is conceived, psychoanalytically as it is medicosugically, as a wound, a break in the protective skin which triggers catastrophe, misfortune through the whole of the organism."

40. Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" in Freud, *Therapy and Technique* (New York: Collier, 1963), 256-8.

41. Ibid., 255-6. Freud continues: "The adult ego with its greater strength continues to defend itself against dangers which no longer exist in reality and even finds itself impelled to seek out real situations which may serve as a substitute for the original danger, so as to be able to justify its clinging to its habitual modes of reaction. Thus the defensive mechanisms produce an ever-growing alienation from the external world and a permanent enfeeblement of the ego and we can readily understand how they pave the way for and precipitate the outbreak of neurosis."

42. Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre*. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 192.

43. Freud, "Recollection, Repetition and Working Through," 161.

44. Ibid., 164-5.

45. Brooks, "Psychoanalytic constructions and narrative meanings," 57, 62, 67.

46. Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," 193.

47. Ibid., 192.

48. On the concept of counter-memory see Friedrich Nietzsche, "History in the Service and Disservice of Life" in Nietzsche, *Unmodern Observations*, ed. William Arrowsmith (New Haven: Yale, 1990), 87-145 and Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 139-164. It is also interesting in this regard to note Jacques Derrida's comments on architecture and "memory" (in "Jacques Derrida in Discussion with Christopher Norris," *Deconstruction in Architecture II* (Architectural Design Profile 74, London: St. Martins, 1989), 73, emphasis in original):

Now as for architecture, I think that *Deconstruction* comes about let us carry on using this word to save time when you have deconstructed some architectural philosophy, some architectural assumptions for instance, the hegemony of the aesthetic, of beauty, the hegemony of usefulness, of functionality, of living, of dwelling. But then you have to *reinscribe* these motifs in the work. You can't (or you shouldn't) simply dismiss those values of dwelling, functionality, beauty and so on. You have to construct, so to speak, a new space and a new form, to shape a new way of building in which those motifs are reinscribed, having meanwhile lost their hegemony. The inventiveness of powerful architects consists I think in this reinscription, the economy of this reinscription, which also involves some respect for tradition, for memory. Deconstruction is not simply forgetting the past. What has dominated theology or architecture or anything else is still there, in some way, and the inscriptions, the let's say, archive of these deconstructed structures, the archive should be as readable as possible, as legible as we can make it.

49. This is Michel de Certeau's characterization of the method of investigation of Foucault. de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 194.

50. Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," 205.

51. Brecht, "Appendices to the Short Organum," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 277. Theodor Adorno's critique of Brecht, even given "its partiality" (Jameson's apt expression (*Aesthetics and Politics* (London: New Left Books, 1977), 209)), would not be the first nor the last to comment on the distance between theory and practice, and the difficult relationship between direct social content and ambiguity, in the work of Brecht. I would suggest that, although on the one hand, the danger of social content in an aesthetic work that lacks a degree of ambiguity is overly simplistic didacticism, on the other hand, the danger of ambiguity from without, rather than from within, specificity of content is easy and empty seduction (as witnessed by the success of such politically questionable artists as Joseph Beuys and Anselm Kiefer). Closer examination of Adorno's position reveals, again in Jameson's words (in *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 1990), 223), a "subtle appreciation of his great adversary, Brecht," even in the aggressively critical essay "Commitment" (in *Aesthetics and Politics*, 177-195) but particularly in the more balanced *Aesthetic Theory*: "Still it is Brecht in large measure to whom we owe the growth in the self-consciousness of the art work, for when it is viewed as an element of political praxis its resistance to ideological mystification becomes that much stronger." (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, 344.)

52. Bertolt Brecht, "Rauschgift," in *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1967), vol. VIII, 593, quoted in Yve-Alain Bois's essay (on the work of the artist Hans Haacke) "The Antidote" in *October* 39 (Winter 1986), 143. Bois continues: "This recuperative power undoubtedly complicates Haacke's preparation of the antidote. His strategy is to convey his awareness of this in the work itself."

53. Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976), ix. Also see his *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*.

54. Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*, 182.

[back](#)