Interstices 2

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Interstices 2

Edited by Michael Linzey and Ross Jenner

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Contents

	page
An Architectural Metaphor: the Destining of Imhotep Stone *Michael Linzey*	1
Shaky Ground *Paul Walker*	25
The Quadrature of Stone *Jonathan Lamb*	45
Mitchell Stout House *Sarah Treadwell and Mike Austin* *Photographs Lynn Logan*	62
Vladamir Cacala and the Gelb House (1955) *G. Elliot Reid* *Photographs Marcus Williams*	75
Sacrifice and Signification in the Poetry of Allen Curnow *Alex Calder*	85
Buildings of the Morehu - Te Ao Hurihuri *Bill McKay and Deidre Brown*	113
Stone and Shakespeare's Sonnets *John Dickson*	135

Lamella: a Spacing of Skin and Distant Boundaries 158
Sarah Treadwell

The Other "*ich*" or the Desire for the Void: for a Tomb of Adolph Loos 167
Hubert Damish (trans. Ross Jenner)

A House in the West 182
Bill McKay

The Venice Prize 189
University of Auckland

L'ingresso alle Corderie dell'Arsenale 202
Massimo Scolari (trans. Helene Furjan)

Interviews:

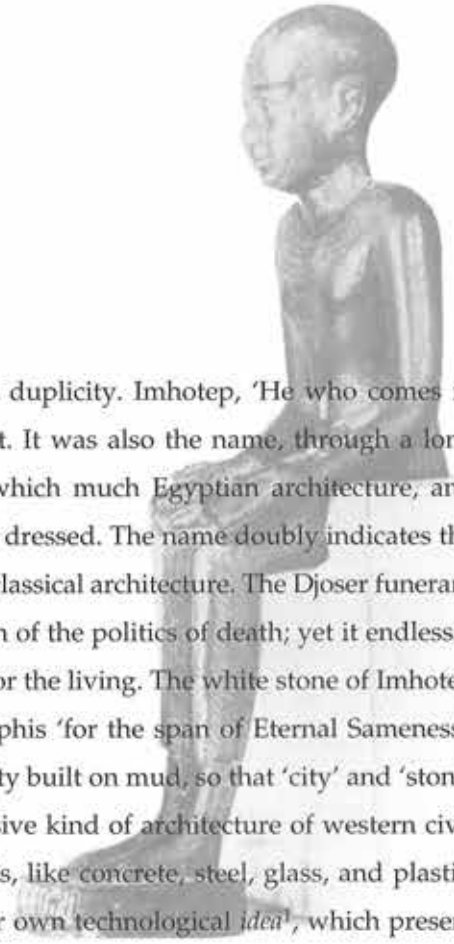
Francesco Venezia and Nigel Ryan 207

Mark Wigley and Paul Walker 219

Reconstruction work in progress—The Djoser complex, Saqqara, Egypt.

An Architectural Metaphor: the Destining of Imhotep Stone

Michael Linzey



Imhotep stone is an original figure of architectural duplicity. Imhotep, 'He who comes in peace,' was the name of the first historical architect. It was also the name, through a long Egyptian tradition, for a fine white limestone in which much Egyptian architecture, and Imhotep's own architectural work in particular, was dressed. The name doubly indicates the human subject and the material object of an original classical architecture. The Djoser funerary complex at Saqqara was an Old Kingdom expression of the politics of death; yet it endlessly imitated the forms and materials of archaic houses for the living. The white stone of Imhotep dominated the western horizon of the city of Memphis 'for the span of Eternal Sameness,' and eventually eclipsed altogether with stone that city built on mud, so that 'city' and 'stone' became almost synonymous names for the progressive kind of architecture of western civilisation. Compared to the 'honest' modern materials, like concrete, steel, glass, and plastic, which promise nothing, which are true only to their own technological *idea*[1], which present

Imhotep

themselves as if they were devoid of political, aesthetic or mythical agendas, unadorned, a-historical, demanding neither to be conserved nor vandalised, Imhotep stone is the 'false-work' of a traditional architecture, civilisation, culture. An original figure of duplicity. This metaphorical duplicity that pervades Imhotep's house of stone, these double figures, are a future promise perhaps of an archaic meaning that has so far eluded a theory of architecture.

The proper-ness and connectedness (and the duplicity) of the 'house of stone' is deeply rooted in language. The word 'masonry' carries the same double meaning. It means house, *maison* in French, mansion. It is also the name of one particular method of building houses (and funerary monuments.) It is the *measure* and means by which a mason sets out lines to dominate the earth, to make a house of stone. The root, *ma-*, which is also heard in measure, mathematics, map, and the making of the mansion, may be traced to the Sanskrit where *ma* means setting out the straight foundations for a building, and *maya* means a kind of illusion or dream that appears as a fabrication architected upon the 'true reality'. For summary purposes, we designate this metaphor which Imhotep 'coined' for architecture, and possibly for the first time, 'The masonry of masonry.'[2]

In ancient Egypt the Pharaoh was called the 'Great Mansion', domain and dominion of the God-King. His (or her) 'house' of stone was the duplex seat both of domestication and domination. The stone funerary complex of King Djoser[3] is estimated to have been built about the year 2,680 B.C. In the entrance colonnade of this funerary complex, the stone columns or wall-endings are over-sized, and carved to look like bundles of reeds. It appears stone was dressed in this way to imitate a traditional or archaic form of domestic construction with bundled reed columns. But this 'imitation' was not simply a linear 'copying' of an older exemplary architecture. It represents a domestic material expressed in stone. At the same time, by the majestic girth and regal stature of the attached columns, the masonry also betokens the power of Djoser, the domination by his united kingdom of North and South Egypt over the 'nine bows' of his traditional enemies. Domination and domestication, is a

A reconstructed shrine in the heb-sed court

perennial double figure of stone architecture, an architectural metaphor which now calls to us out of language itself.

At the beginning of stone masonry, already the capitals of columns were a preferred location for duplicity. To embellish a column at its capital is to make light of the roof. There is visual humour in this expression of contrast between effort and repose, between vertical order and horizontal stratification, between the stress and strain in the heavy masonry and the lightness and repose of a limpid papyrus flower, between the demand for civil obedience and the free weediness of a leafy plant. A political message is not hard to find here. A subject people who dwell in the house of stone must also bear the yoke of domination lightly, and with stony good humour, if they wish to live under the domain of the king, if they would subject themselves to the royal justice, called *ma-et*.

If the Djoser complex were built today we would describe it not only as duplicitous, but as fake, imitation, even unauthentic. Take for example its doors and gateways. The complex, covering 15 hectares, was surrounded by a 10 metre high stone wall with fourteen gateways. But only one of the gateways was an actual entrance-way for the living. The other thirteen entrances were imitation, entrances only in the imagination. To try to insist that there might

have been some practical function for this fakery—that the imitation entrances were to deceive grave-robbers for example—is to lamely seek for a continuity of purpose between ancient Egypt and today which the evidence cannot support. Throughout the complex, stone fake doors were carved in walls, open doors which led nowhere and closed doors which indicated but prohibited entry. Stone imitation doors complete with imitation stone hinges stand ajar for eternity. What possible meaning could there be for all this unauthentic duplicity?

The duplicity of Imhotep stone may have been built on a cosmic doubleness. We may be reencountering in it the long-ago twin gods, Tefnut and Shu, whose respective activities were designated in the texts of the day in terms of Eternal Sameness and Eternal Recurrence. If we compare this duplicitous Godhead with the modern nihilism, the singular god of 'Eternal Progress' in our own time, we may be persuaded that the thought processes of Imhotep the architect were more 'attuned' to duplicity than the reductive, object-oriented patterns of rational thought allow us today. But the thought processes of Imhotep also remain a closed door to a theory of architecture.

What can be more valuable and achievable than to speculate about subjective intentions is to see the course of western architecture itself through the duplicity of Imhotep stone, to trace the historical destining of its metaphor. All architecture suffers duplicity similar to the duplicity of Imhotep stone, (suffers from it also, bears with it, and likewise bares itself to it.) Stone architecture perhaps more than any other, is heroic in this respect in its barefaced deceit.

Metaphor in a Theory of Architecture

Having emphasised the aspect of metaphor as duplicity, I want to turn now to its aspect of

propriety in a theory of architecture. If a house is dressed up in stone to look like a rush and clay and wooden house, (or if a business house is dressed in the sacrificial ornaments of a stone temple,) this ought to be seen as improper, dishonest, duplicitous, even a foolish thing for an architect to do. Yet the house of stone is also, at the same time, the epitome of civilised architecture in western culture. 'The masonry of masonry' is a gross impropriety, a societal duplicity. Yet by the same token it is the proper property of western architecture. And when a figure is valued and used, when it is a valued property of a community, its original *im*propriety, the effect of its metaphorical beginning in duplicity, can be erased from memory, we can become oblivious to it, so we don't even think of a stone house any more as a metaphor.

But the proper architectural 'text' can and should be 'read' in terms of metaphor, not *because* architecture 'copies something that properly belongs to something else,'—in the sense, for example, that the limestone boundary walls of Djoser's funerary complex improperly copy the 'real' palace walls which 'rightfully' belonged at Memphis, but which presumably were made of mud, not because all architecture in a sense copies all previous architecture. Metaphor is proper in a theory of architecture because, further than this, (and in another sense which is also Aristotelean,) architecture uses metaphor to 'make one see things,' to represent things 'as in a state of activity.' If architecture is to have a theoretical life of its own, it is necessary to theorise *metaphorising thinking* along with *idealising thinking*. Here we are guided by Ricoeur's radical treatment in the tradition of Heidegger of the duplicitous logic of metaphorising thinking as a proper alternative to idealising thinking[4]. Ricoeur notes that although mimesis is usually understood to mean 'imitation', one thing imitating another thing, yet this weak form of correspondence was not the full original meaning understood by Aristotle. Mimesis describes the way that poetic language 'expresses existence *as alive*.' Metaphor is a language construct which 'makes one *see things* because it represents things as in a state of activity.'[5] Here Ricoeur is quoting Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. We should ask why

Aristotle discerned no fundamental conflict or difficulty in equating 'the imitation of nature' and the structured 'enlivenment' of a poetic text. 'Perhaps,' suggests Ricoeur, 'it is because, for [the Greeks] nature itself is living ... '

To 'enliven' the text of Imhotep stone with a theory of metaphorising thinking is not meant in the sense of 'opening the mouth' of the life-size stone image of the living god, the Horus Neterkhet Djoser, who, dressed in his heb-sed robes, once sat on his throne north of the wall of his pyramid. This stone sculpture, now deposited in the front foyer of the Cairo Museum, was once enclosed in a stone *serdab* or cellar at the base of the step-pyramid within the Djoser funerary complex at Saqqara, completely hidden from view. Only two tiny eye-holes had been drilled in the stone wall of the cellar to provide a glimmering of communication with the world of the living, through which two quartzite 'eyes' could stare at the northern horizon for the span of eternity. In ancient Egypt a ceremonial used to be performed on stone figures, known as 'open the mouth.' But while we can acknowledge the abundant strangeness implied by this practice, we are more inclined to enliven Imhotep stone as a metaphor for architecture history and theory, to reveal the life of architecture in its state of activity, to read the lively *Geschichte* of its destining.

What unlikely conjunction of names and events legislated the 'house of stone'? Why did Imhotep make the divine imperial 'house' of Egypt in the image of stone? What was this architectural propriety in its original metaphorical impropriety? Why did 'house' and 'stone' remain conjoined in an indissoluble structure, a masonic fixity, an historical propriety, until the modern era of technology? And why in the modern era did stone masonry suddenly become 'dis-honest' once more? These are proper questions to ask with respect to the history of a metaphor in the context of a theory of architecture.

Metaphorising thinking is a proper way to think about architecture. Idealising thinking is properly the property of philosophy. Wigley[7] makes this very important observation, which

Djoser

The serdab of Djoser.

breaks the ground for a truly autonomous theory of architecture, relocates the boundary between theory and philosophy, a professional division of interests. When philosophers like Plato and Kant secretly coerced metaphorical constructions into the text of philosophy, when philosophers like Heidegger and Derrida employ architectural metaphors as they embark on the deconstruction of traditions of idealised thought, we should say that *they are properly doing architecture*. Philosophy constructs edifices of idealised thought for purposes of edification. But when philosophy 'descends' to metaphor, it cannot any longer make this claim for edification, the clarification of thought, because metaphor can only edify its own edifice—the texts of every single philosopher, from Plato and Aristotle to Heidegger and Derrida, explicitly affirm and reaffirm this. Metaphor is repeatedly (and properly) judged to be improper in the text of philosophy. A metaphor in the text of philosophy can only be an edifice constructed for its own sake, a vanity. But this 'construction for its own sake,' which is improper in philosophy, *is* the property and the proper edifice of an autonomous theory of architecture. This is Wigley's argument as I understand it.

Metaphorical duplicity is proper for architecture but improper for philosophy. Yet all philosophers at one time or another have secretly stooped to this philosophical impropriety. Plato 'descended' to metaphor-like duplicity when he invented 'The idea of the idea.' Heidegger[7] remarks that Plato committed an *extreme violence* upon the Greek language, violated its propriety, duped its language community, when he used *eidos* to mean 'that which in each particular thing endures as presence.' For *eidos* in the common speech of Plato's day correctly meant appearance, 'the outward aspect that a visible thing offers to the physical eye.' Plato exacted of this word 'something utterly extraordinary,' remarks Heidegger: 'that it name what precisely is not, and never will be perceivable with physical eyes.' Plato

originally and duplicitously violated the meaning of the word *idea* to make it mean 'the non-sensuous aspect of what is physically visible,' whereas it properly and ordinarily names and is, 'that which constitutes the essence in the audible, the tastable, the tactile, in everything that is in any way accessible.' And it was upon this extraordinarily fertile but highly improper conjunction of names, this metaphor, 'The idea of the idea,' that Plato proceeded to 'architect' an 'edifice' of idealised thought. Idealising thinking became the 'clear ground', the unspoken 'dwelling-place' of western metaphysics. There is no space here to speculate what acute historical and cultural nexus or turmoil might have provoked this new metaphor, this *architecture*, from the pen of Plato. But this 'pyramid' of western metaphysics was built on shifting sand, not on the solid ground of the literal use of Greek language. It was built on a metaphorical duplicity.

Fissures of metaphorising thinking are like Y-shaped scratch-marks embedded in the petrified stratifications of history. Two unlikely thoughts are drawn together at some moment in history, by some individual of genius who gives one of them a name that 'properly' belongs to the other. In subsequent history the two act as one thing in the public imagination, and become as if they had always been united. This new-found and consequential unity of a metaphor is its destining *propriety*. But it derives from an initial act of gross *im*propriety, societal duplicity, *architecture*, in which a metaphor is first coined, con-joined. Once, a Y-shaped algebra of metaphor in the shape of a stone house also structured and informed a theory of architecture. Two lexicalised metaphors, expressed as the tautologies they have become: 'The masonry of masonry,' and 'The idea of the idea,' are equivalently *architecture*, like single words in a language, tokens of comparable value in a language of metaphorising thinking, as if Imhotep and Plato were equivalently architects in the fabrication of Western cultural reality.

Extending the terms of this edificatory metaphor slightly, we remark that the ultimate idealisation in the Western project of idealising thinking was to represent 'the whole' of reality

in the image of a perfect block of stone, ashlar, whole, absolute, ultimate, indissoluble, and founded on necessity; we disclose the 'architecture' of western thought 'as a whole,' from Plato to Kant. But even reality is socially constructed; even this perfect stone of metaphysics is a construction. The traces on the ashlar surface, the tiniest fissures of metaphor, are remnant marks of morphology on the idealised language of edification. To retrace these fissures, to locate them at all in philosophy is to deconstruct the philosophical project of idealisation, which has been Heidegger's and Derrida's project. Deconstruction reveals, not only that the ideal reality is constructed in this or that particular detail, but that the edifices of idealising thought itself are constructed out of and grounded upon metaphorical figures. The texts of western realism dwell in and on a con-text of architecture. But if metaphor is improper in the text of philosophy, and always understood to be a blemish and a defect which ought to be ground off the surface of the perfect block, yet to locate and disclose duplicitous fissures on the surface of the house of stone is to *open* the theory of architecture *as properly* a theory of metaphorising thinking. Metaphor *is* a trope of place and displacement. The proper place of theory is architecture.

This kind of 'secret history of a word' is a property of all words in metaphorised language, and *all* language is metaphorised. To suggest that all language is therefore *architecture* would bring a radical meaning to Heidegger's famous metaphor, 'Language is the house of Being.' Heidegger not only sets 'language' in a state of activity; architecture also is activated. Already released from its archaic technology, the house of stone, and now from the granite tyranny of idealising thinking, architecture is free to rediscover its postmodern propriety as 'poetry's innermost site.'[8]

Petrification of the Subject

The course of history, Vattimo[9] has remarked, is neither degenerating nor advancing, neither a progress nor a decadence. There is no secret narrative, not entropy, not evolution, not

decline, not ascent. Imhotep was not a Giant any more than he was a savage (although he was a Noble.) He was an architect of the first water, and he deserves critical attention on this ground alone. Imhotep opened a field of possibility for architecture by designing a first extensive work in dressed stone, stone art at the scale of dwelling, the material of Eternal Sameness posing, imitating, moving in the world of Eternal Recurrence. Imhotep made stone the subject of architecture, transformed the intractable underground worthlessness of stone and made it the *lingua franca* of civilised being. But within this stony-faced nihilism of history, changes have occurred specifically in terms of the architectural *meaning* of Imhotep stone. Whereas '... we become capable of playing those language games which constitute our existence upon the sole basis of our belonging to a particular historical tradition, in the same way in which we feel respect for monuments, graves, traces of past life ... ,'[10] yet simply belonging in the architectural tradition of Imhotep does not seem to be enough to cause us to comprehend, respect, embrace, imitate his monument. Even accepting that Imhotep stone is the 'true origin' of architecture, that Imhotep's language of stone 'constitutes our existence' as architects within a long tradition, yet it seems we are *not* able (not able any longer, not yet able) to play the language game whereby Imhotep stone was itself constituted. In brief, the original and lively propriety/duplicity of the architectural metaphor, 'The masonry of masonry,' has to be separated from a blocking effect, a petrification of the subject of architecture, attributable to the crypto-architecture of western realism, attributable in particular to a metaphor of architecture which Plato insinuated into the text of philosophy, 'The idea of the idea.'

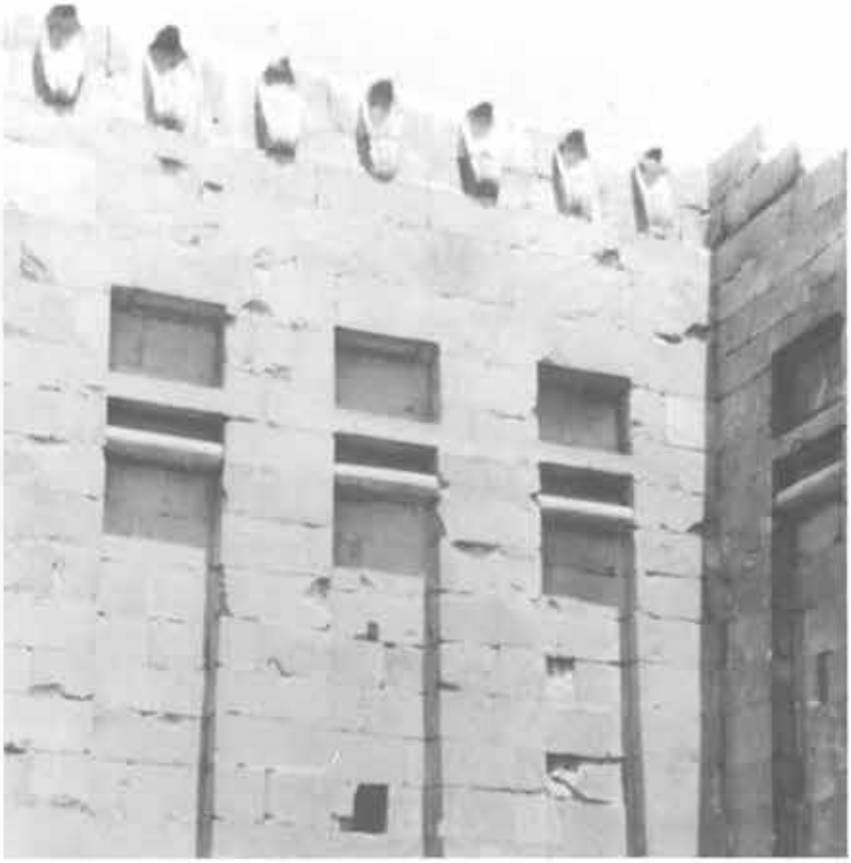
But is it possible to think the 'Petrification of the Subject' in an archaic reading, untrammelled by Platonic philosophy, prior to the Cartesian appropriation of the Subject into the interior of the being of *ego cogito*, think Imhotep stone independently of 'The idea of the idea' and its consequential destining, in any 'original' sense or appreciation of it?

This thinking is different from the figuration of the pyramids in the texts of Hegel, Foucault

and Derrida. In the postmodern reading an archaic Subject is felt to have been lost or killed or petrified with age, with time, or stoned to death by history[11], by impact with the west, by metaphysics, by technology. It is as if an excess of pressure had been generated in the interior of Imhotep stone, as if Imhotep himself expelled the 'subject' of his king out of the body of his own tomb. Was Djoser the king thus 'evicted' by Imhotep, forced to vacate his stony property, set upon and challenged forth in the ordering of the orderable, into dual and separate abodes in the deep pit beneath the pyramid and in the sky above, into different realms of body and soul, heaven and earth, metaphor and metaphysics? Was the pyramid thenceforth (in other words, was architecture from the beginning of stone architecture,) only a hoarding sign nailed to an empty house? Was the 'life' of architecture squeezed and compressed to a mere abstract point in plan, or a vertical line in elevation at the centre of an immense accumulation of stone, to only a token of abstract geometry, a vector of indication?

Two interpretations of Imhotep stone can be read in the conjunction of 'house' and 'stone': that the proto-architecture is a *house* properly understood, a place built of stone for the subject of the dead king to dwell within; and secondly, that the pyramid is a storehouse, a 'standing-reserve' of stone, a house of stone *for stone* to dwell. This second reading signifies in Heidegger's text as 'the advent of technology.'[12]

The differences between these metaphorical readings of an architectural work are drawn here not to disprove, disqualify or falsify one or the other, nor to demonstrate that architecture cannot sustain a single consistent meaning, but to show the historical *turning* of the destining of a living metaphor. There was a time when stone was the proper architecture of civilisation, and the appropriate medium in which to express domination and domestication through the figuration of *domus*. This historical destining of stone is divisible in two parts. First was the time of Imhotep stone, prior to 'The idea of the idea,' and therefore, we will seek a reading of it that is independent of Platonist ideation. The second interval was



the time of the Masons, the destining of the 'absolute ashlar.' Between and within these intervals, the expression of stone architecture underwent profound changes. Yet throughout its whole destining, the petrified subject itself of architecture, this metaphor, Imhotep stone, lying for the most part buried beneath the sand at Saqqara, was essentially unchanged.

The situation is further obscured by the longevity of stone architecture. Architecture regularly outlives its own time. It naturally outlasts the time when its metaphorical duplicity is evident to all (as lively relevance, as controversy), survives into the era of apparent singularity/propriety (sometimes but not always of meaninglessness). Architecture also regularly imitates exemplars that are thus dislocated in time, that no longer are what they once appeared to be, whose former meaning is beyond recall. The text of architecture is usually misread in this fashion by architects systematically and as a matter of course. Theories of architecture which represent history as some orderly progression of an idea or a progressive series of ideas, or history by a comparative method that describes works of architecture as unequivocal cultural and geographically specific idealised *objects*, are misled by the essential volatility of the metaphorical subject matter. Theory requires to treat *metaphors* rather than *objects* as the proper units of architecture, or more precisely as 'duplets', units of difference.

A first reading of the petrification of the subject can be reconstructed in terms of what

historians today call the politics of death. In a culture that is ruled by a living god, as Ancient Egypt was ruled for many centuries, the politics of death can exert a volatile and disruptive effect on the public imagination. Ebersole[13] has pointed out that although death itself is a 'given', a 'biological fact', yet its *meaning* is always open to be socially negotiated. Whenever a king dies or a national leadership changes hands, this is always a propitious time for political manoeuvring. When the king is also a god, his death can seem to put more at risk, can sometimes call for recreating and reforming the whole of cultural cosmology.

When the king died in the Old Kingdom of Egypt, the remains were returned to the mother-goddess, Nut. This metaphorical return at the time of death was a necessary ceremonial to restore the balance of life, which was understood by the Egyptians to be a cycle of Eternal Recurrence. Born of woman, the king returns at death to the body of a woman. This funerary intention is clearly stated in the following Pyramid Text:

> You are given to your mother, Nut, in her identity of the coffin.
> She has gathered you up, in her identity of the sarcophagus.
> You ascend to her in her identity of the tomb.
>
> (Pyr. 616 d-f)[14]

To the modern mind Nut is usually identified with the sky. The sky is unavoidably implicated by association with the metaphysical realm, supra-terrestrial, distinctively beyond the earth. It can be surprising therefore to hear that the goddess 'of the sky' is identified as a primal architecture 'of the earth,' a nesting of enclosure within enclosure in the stony forms of mortuary architecture. The modern mind is adept with nested idealisations of the 'real' sun and the 'real' sky, physical realities clearly delineated and apparently singular, so that when we read that 'the *akh* ascends to the sky,' it is not immediately apparent that a metaphorical 'sky' is meant, that the *akh* ascends *into* the pyramid itself as its proper abode and dwelling place, there to re-encounter the sky goddess Nut, *inside* the house of stone. It can

Horus

be a startling displacement, a dislocation of the goddess out of her 'proper' realm, to show herself as a pyramid on the ground, and as a sarcophagus under the ground. This reading of the funerary mound is not the 'high ground' or 'staircase' for a *descending* Epiphany of a god, as is more usually assumed. Rather it is an amniotic sac which bears *up* and protects the King, petrified in his limit, and an architecture which bears up stone into the sky.

The Heliopolitan cosmogony at the time of the Pyramid Texts was headed by an Ennead of nine major gods: Atum, the 'finished creation' who began like an egg floating in the abysmal chaos; his children, Tefnut and Shu, who are the 'air' and the 'dew', but also twin aspects of the 'finished creation', whose respective activities are ascribed the verbs *wnn*, 'exist' and *hpr*, 'develop'; Tefnut and Shu conceived two offspring, Geb and Nut, 'earth' and 'sky', who were also the active male and female principles of creation; their own children are Osiris, Isis, Seth, Nephthys, and Horus. Although these Egyptian gods are often represented in the forms of human and animal beings, they are not 'subjective' in the modern sense, not subject to the *ego cogito*. They are better understood to be metaphorical explanations of the architecture of Being, the constructive and conservative principles of cosmology, always recurring and always the same, in the socially constructed ordering of Egyptian reality.

If the politics of the death of Horus is thought and socially constructed in the double-logical frame of metaphorising thinking, the coffin, sarcophagus and tomb can be potently associated with Nut, mother of Horus. The king's mummified remains are preserved in a coffin within a stone sarcophagus in a deep pit under the ground. Subsequently the king is understood to ascend to a final dwelling-place in a tomb that is constructed over the head of the pit. And in this final dwelling-place, in the swollen body or womb of Nut, it is the king's pleasure that he may 'come and go' as and whenever he pleases:

> The King's lifetime is Eternal Recurrence, his limit is Eternal Sameness.
> In this his privilege of: "When he likes he acts; when he dislikes he doesn't have to act."
>
> (Pyr. 412 a-b)

There is some evidence that this metaphorical meaning of the lively interiority of pyramid architecture was understood in Egypt at least into the New Kingdom. Ames, son of Iptah, who lived at the time of the 18th Dynasty, wrote an inscription in demotic script on one of the walls of the Djoser complex, which records that he '... came to the temple of Djoser, and it was as if the sky was *inside* and the sun was risen *within* .'[15] [The emphasis on interiority is mine.]

Imhotep introduced a novel 'twist' to this social-political metaphor of death and resurrection by constructing the tomb as well as the sarcophagus out of stone. To build a step pyramid and a surrounding complex of imitation buildings, a city for the dead, in stone was a radical departure for architecture, instituting a new material and a new technology; but it was also in many respects a natural extension of the architectural language in terms of metaphorising thinking the identity of Nut. As an architecture of Nut, the step pyramid makes metaphorical sense. The tomb was now of the same material as the sarcophagus, stone the proper material to represent a god. The superior bearing strength, the precise technology of stone called Imhotep to raise the subject of Nut in mighty steps above the walls of the king's enclosure, to publicly reveal the dome-womb-tomb of the mother (and the grand-daughter) of creation. Egypt could now clearly see that Nut 'encloses' the deceased in the same way that the sky encloses the 'known' world of creation, nurtures and protects its creature/creation from dissolution in the abysmal waters of chaos. The giantism of the step-pyramid reinforces this metaphor of the sky, allows architecture to speak publicly of Nut in her identity as the sky. And the four sides of the pyramid are not oriented to the four horizons of the (real) sky, so much as they metaphorically *are* these horizons. By architecting Nut in her identity as the stone tomb, Imhotep emphasised the aspect of Eternal Sameness of the

sky goddess. Stone by its permanence reinforced the metaphorising thinking that the deceased king will remain and dwell in the body of Nut for a very long period of time. The subject of the king too is 'petrified' in stone for the span of Eternal Sameness.

> You will cause the King to be sturdy by causing this pyramid of the King and this his construction to be sturdy for the span of Eternal Sameness.'
> (Pyr. 1660 a-b)

Within the walls of the Djoser temple Imhotep constructed a stone imitation of an urban complex. He showed that a 'city of the dead' can be a beautiful, habitable place for a dead king to dwell forever. By the same token he raised the petrified image of a new lifestyle for the civilised living subject as well; that a living king and a subject people could equally 'dwell forever' in a city of permanence and precision, provided, dressed and decorated with stone. And the subject of architecture itself was petrified.

But postmodern theorists read a second family of meaning of 'petrification of the subject' in the Egyptian pyramids. Since Napoleon's expedition of 1798 rediscovered the archaic genius of Egyptian stone architecture, fragments and impressions of Imhotep stone were transported into a European intellectual climate in which a revolutionary idealism, coupled with nascent evolutionism, spawned a fervour of mystical free-masonry. The ancient architecture of death and resurrection was vigorously interrogated for its ideological significance. According to Derrida, Hegel wrote specifically about the Egyptian pyramids that they were an historical anticipation of Semiology, the first architectural 'signs' of a modern science of pointing. Hegel understood the pyramids to be pure signs 'undefiled by symbolic participation' in what was signified by them. As signifiers they did not bear an imitative relation to what Hegel believed to be their primary significance, namely the petrification of *Geist*. Hegel understood that the Sphinx at Giza was an older and more 'primitive' form of expression in stone; it was not yet a 'pure sign' but a 'symbolic' architecture, or not yet architecture but

sculpture. Its 'animality of spirit' was understood to be still present in the stone, 'asleep in stony sign.'[16] But the pyramids on the other hand were petrified signs of a departed Subject. Like so many stone arrow-heads, cast aside and forgotten in the desert, that for millennia had pointed to the blue unclouded emptiness of the Egyptian sky, they signified the departure from the earth into an idealised realm of some lost tribe of *Spirit*.

Derrida, reading Hegel, remarks that the Egyptian pyramids appear to be *arbitrary* in terms of signification[17]. Although a pyramid as a sign seems to point to the celestial sphere (which Hegel may have presumed to be located above, in the direction of the sky, the direction in which the pyramids are pointed,) yet its 'functional' point was to demark the dead body of the King, which, in the case of the Djoser step-pyramid at least, was once buried in a deep pit *beneath* the stony monument itself. This 'arbitrariness' in the pointing-sense might be said to mark a first architecture of *différance*; in that a 'deferral' and 'dislocation' of subjective meaning is indicated through the arbitration of direction of the pyramid-as-sign. Derrida notes that the letter 'A' in *différance*, the silent device in his theoretical deconstruction of Semiology, 'is' a pyramid.

> 'It is put forward by a silent mark, by a tacit monument, or, one might even say, by a pyramid—keeping in mind not only the capital form of the printed letter but also the passage from Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* where he compares the body of the sign to an Egyptian pyramid. The A of *différance* therefore is not heard; it remains silent, secret and discreet, like a tomb.
>
> 'It is a tomb that, (provided one knows how to decipher the legend) is not far from signalling the death of the king.'[18]

By this unlikely metaphor Derrida assigns to a letter a name that properly belongs to architecture. He thus signals the beginning of a short but fruitful incursion on his part into the domain of architectural theory. But the 'king' for Derrida, whose 'death' is signalled by the pyramid form is not his friend Peter Eisenman. It is the idealised Subject of modern thought, Hegel's *Geist*, secreted and petrified at the centre of the project of Semiology. The first stone

architecture signals for Derrida the finite history and deconstructed 'end' of the arbitration of Semiology. He writes: 'The process of the sign has a history and *signification* is even history comprehended. ... An initial index of all this is to be found in an architectonic reading ... .'[19]

Foucault[20] also returns, metaphorically, to Egypt when he represents the post-modern historical-critical endeavour with respect to the subject, as an 'archaeology'. The philosophical impropriety of 'doing architecture' in the name of edification, is acknowledged, and the proper con-text for thought is diverted instead to the site of archaeology. The modern discipline of history, Foucault writes, is in '... the grip of phenomenology.' (p. 203.) To overcome this phenomenological tenacity the historian should operate more like an archaeologist. It is proper therefore for a Foucaultian theory of architecture, in order to resurrect architecture from the petrifying grip of phenomenology, to invoke the figure of J.-P. Lauer, the French architect who was also diverted from architecture to archaeology, who fossicked for years through the ruins at Saqqara to unearth and reconstruct the buried fragments of architecture of Imhotep stone. Like Foucault, the text of Lauer also '... stands back, measures up what is before it, gropes towards its limits, stumbles against what it does not mean, and digs pits to mark out its own path.' His discourse also '... open[s] up underground passages, ... finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary.' (p. 17.) The subject of Lauer looms to presence in our reading of Foucault, as a metaphor for the archaeological project with respect to the subject of architecture. Theory, Foucault demands, should not be ' ... secretly ... related to the synthetic activity of the subject, ... the sovereignty of consciousness,' (p. 14,) but instead it should concern itself with ' ... the intrinsic description of monuments.' (p. 7.) We (Lauer) (history) should not attempt to ' ... pierce through the density [of a monumental trace] in order to reach what remains silently interior to it,' but should acknowledge instead that everything that is found and reassembled is fragments of a *former* monument. The transcendental Subject, the 'god' of modern phenomenology, the mythical point of origin

which secrets itself at the centre of a pyramid, which effectively repossesses everything to itself as objects of an idealised intentionality, turns the world to stone, is *another* monumental trace, a trace of modernity, a modern language game, and in particular it is the culmination and end in western history of the destining of idealising thinking. The task of criticism therefore is to free theory of architecture from subjection to the subject, to dispense with 'things', to 'de-presentify' them, and to deal with the archaeological traces of discourse as evidence of practices that once '... systematically form[ed] the objects of which they speak.' (pp. 47-49.)

The two sets of readings of the petrification of the Subject, archaic and modern, which we have had space here only to indicate in their barest outlines[21], are neither of them right nor wrong in themselves. The first, the gathering into stone and bearing up of a metaphorising thinking of cosmos, may or may not be more truly original or even representative at all of the archaic intentions of the pyramid builders. And the second reading, the modern nihilistic interpretation of a gathering of technology, a stony place, like a quarry, a site of no intrinsic significance, 'from which the gods have fled,' may be no less 'true' for disclaiming 'originality'. Every reading comprises its own meaning. But architecture can lay claim to autonomous meaning only when diverse and even contradictory readings are, not united, but allowed to co-exist, to dwell together in the figure of a word-play, a pun, in the structure of a metaphor, in the house of language. In philosophy Heidegger and Vattimo have called this event of critical revision of language *Verwindung*, 'overcoming', or 'recovering', a form of disclosure of meaning that is not a dialectical schism, a progress of logical disputation, but that is not at all the overthrowing and rejection of idealising thinking as such either. The difference between these readings of architecture, modern and archaic, is not a difference between idealising thinking and metaphorising thinking, for both sets of readings are metaphorical. The different readings reveal, not the superiority or inferiority of one or the other, not the falsification of true architectural facts, not the logical error, either in ancient or modern ways

of thinking about an architectural object, but what is revealed is a *turning* [*Einkehr*] in the historical path of metaphorising thinking about architecture, a doubling back of reading that is in fact recuperative and proper in a theory of architecture. For architectural metaphor has the character of destining. Duplicity itself, recovering itself, turning itself, but not refutation, is a proper property, a hallmark of a theory of architecture. Heidegger remarks:

> 'That which has the character of destining moves, in itself, at any given time, toward a special moment that sends it into another destining, in which, however, it is not simply submerged and lost. We are still too inexperienced and thoughtless to think the essence of the historical from out of destining and ordaining and taking place so as to adapt. We are still too easily inclined, out of habit, to conceive that which has the character of destining in terms of happening, and to represent the latter as an expiration, a passing away, of events that have been established historiographically. We locate history in the realm of happening, instead of thinking history in accordance with its essential origin from out of destining. But destining is essentially destining of Being, indeed ... Being itself ... changes in the manner of its destining.'[22]

What Imhotep really constructed when he built the first proto-pyramid, was something more remarkable than *either* a house for a god *or* a colossal piling up of stone, more permanent and pervasive than any single architectural object or happening can possibly be. It was most simply a metaphor in stone, but a metaphor that became for a very long period of time *the* figure of civilised architecture. I have attempted to trace what Heidegger has called the 'special moment' in the destining of Imhotep stone, its *turning* from the era in which possible readings of it are archaic to the era of modernity, to trace the *Geschichte* of an architecture through reading the destining of its metaphors.

Petrification of the Subject can appear to be a figure of irreconcilable duplicity. Its various readings ancient and modern cannot be reconciled within the dualism intrinsic to western philosophy—as human subjectivity cannot be reconciled to the foundational objectivity of stone. And in terms of history and the politics of death the intersubjective relationship between Imhotep and Djoser cannot be reconciled with more recent architectural relation-

ships, for instance of André Le Nôtre and Louis XIV, or of Hitler and Albert Speer, which latter are more immediately petrifying—in the sense that petrification connotes terror. The petrification of the Subject is however completely reconciled in architecture in the metaphorical figure of Imhotep stone—provided that architecture is rigorously theorised in terms of metaphor.

Notes:

1 An essential character of modern technology, according to Heidegger, is the aspect of *unhiddenness*, that modern materials reveal their *idea* and *eidos* from beginning to end of the processes of 'destining'. 'Natural' materials, by contrast, like stone, will always hide some reserve of nature, something which continues to call upon the 'techniques of the handcraftsman.' And this is because the geological origins of stone are hidden from the idealisation of technology, prior to the processes of mechanisation. The variable and unpredictable qualities 'of the earth' can never be completely eradicated from building stone. This is a sense in which the modern technologically constituted materials are understood to be 'honest', and stone reveals itself to be 'dis-honest'. M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Trans. W. Lovitt (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1977), pp. 13-14.

2 In Egypt in the Old Kingdom, this lexicographical connection of 'house' and 'stone' does not appear. *Pr*, one word for 'house', for example, also meant 'estate' and 'garden'. 'In the reign of Snefru, Metjin built a *pr*, 200 cubits in length and 200 cubits in width ... a very large lake being constructed in it, and figs and grapes planted.' P. Spencer, *The Egyptian Temple: A Lexicographical Study*, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984). The glyphs which represented 'funerary temple', 'heb-sed court', and 'house' were such that, were they translated into architectural language, they would represent or approximate 'plans' rather than 'elevations'. The glyphs for 'shrine', 'tenon-topped column', and 'papyriform column', by contrast, which is to say, figures of stone architecture, were represented in 'elevation'. In texts written after the pyramid age, 'pyramid' was glyphed as a triangle rather than a square, indicating it too was 'elevated' rather than 'planned'.

3 The architectural master-work of Imhotep has been unearthed (literally and physically) through years of dedicated archaeological research and fastidious architectural reconstruction by Lauer and co-workers. But large parts of the complex still remain buried beneath the sand. J.-P. Lauer, *Saqqara*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976); C. Aldred, *Egyptian Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).

4 Heidegger (M. Heidegger, *The Piety of Thinking*, Trans. J. G. Hart and J. C. Maraldo, (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1976)) identifies the essence of (idealising) thinking with the Hegelian Dialectic. 'Hegel's *Logic* ... made visible the richer truth of the laws of thought now returned to their foundations ... ' (p. 51.) These 'laws of thought' which are made visible by Hegel at the foundations of idealising thinking, include: principles of identity, of contradiction, and of the excluded middle. The principle of excluded middle exacts: either X is A or X is not A (p. 46.) Hegel was not the first to formulate these laws of thought, but by the dialectical method he showed their finitude. For to expose rules at the logical foundations of idealising thinking is equally to deconstruct its claim to absolute and universal dominance. The foundation rules themselves disclose that other modes of thinking, by other sets of foundational rules, are equally possible. We can now, Heidegger writes, 'acknowledge another thinking as strange and listen to it as estranging in its abundant strangeness.' (p. 58.) For example, a 'rule' of metaphorising thinking, which Ricoeur exacts, (P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. R. Czerny (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1977),) specifically contradicts the principle of excluded middle. Ricoeur notes that '... the 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is ... the copula of the verb *to be*. The metaphorical 'is' at once signifies both 'is not' and 'is like.' If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth ...' (p. 7.) In the duplicitous logic of metaphorising thinking, it can *properly* be said, as if one were relating a fictional narrative: 'It is and it is not so.' Derrida expresses this rule of metaphorising thinking in almost identical terms when he writes: '"*Because*" and "*although*" *at the same time*, that's the logical form of the tension which makes all this thinking hum.' J. Derrida, *Of Spirit*, trans. G. Berrington and R. Bowlby (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1989), p. 108. But the edificatory task, to reveal the complete double-logical 'rules of truth' of metaphorising thinking, has hardly yet begun.

5 Ricoeur, op. cit., p. 42.

6 M. Wigley, The translation of architecture: the production of Babel, *Assemblage 8*, (1989),

pp. 7-22. Also M. Wigley, Doctoral Thesis, University of Auckland, (1986).

7 Heidegger, (1977), p. 20.

8 '... ambiguousness, taken as a whole, becomes one side of a greater issue, whose other side is determined by poetry's innermost site.' M. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. P. D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 192.

9 G. Vattimo, *Verwindung*: Nihilism and the postmodern in philosophy, *Substance*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, (1987), pp. 7-17.

10 Ibid.

11 Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. A. de Sélincourt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), p. 158, remarks that in 'three hundred and forty-one generations' of history recorded by the Egyptian priesthood, 'no god ever assumed human form.'

12 Heidegger writes: 'The essence of technology starts man upon the way of that revealing through which the real everywhere, more or less distinctly, becomes standing-reserve. ... We shall call that sending-that-gathers which first starts man on the way to revealing, *destining* [*Geschick*].' The first pyramid is here read in the Heideggerian language as an 'original' site of a destining metaphor for technology, as an 'objectifying representation that makes the historical accessible as an object ... .' In its 'mode of revealing' as technology, the house of stone 'has its standing only from the ordering of the orderable.' Heidegger, (1977), pp. 13-24.

13 G. L. Ebersole, (*Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989),) in a seminal study, notes a number of points concerning the politics of death in early Japan that have their parallel in the Egypt of the time of Imhotep. He notes that structural fixity was not a characteristic of early societies in the period before the written word had yet firmly established and consolidated its authority as 'the' historical text. At the time of the death of the sovereign, apparently fixed structures of society could be deliberately put at risk, subjected to re-valuation and to political manipulation. Like Japan in the 7th Century BC, Egypt too, during the Third Dynasty, was only beginning to acquire a written language. In the mythistory of Egypt, Imhotep was not only an architect and the name for a kind of building stone—he was also the patron of scribes, and the 'inventor' of writing. (See J. B. Hurry, *Imhotep*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).) Whereas Japan 'borrowed' the art of writing from China, it is probable that Egypt also borrowed at least the rudiments of writing from Mesopotamia. One of the first books written in Japan, the *Nihonshoki* was of a piece with 'a strategy to legitimate the power, position and prestige of the imperial family,' through embroidering and supplementing the narrative of *tama*. The Pyramid Texts in Egypt ought to be interpreted in this light also, as part of a re-narration of mythistory in the interests of orderly succession.

14 Passages from the Pyramid Texts which follow are quoted from translations provided in J. P. Allen, The cosmology of the Pyramid Texts, *Yale Egyptological Studies*, Vol. 3 (1989), pp. 1-28.

15 A. Fakhry, *The Pyramids*, 2nd Ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p 38.

16 I am quoting here from J. Derrida, The pit and the pyramid, in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 69-108.

17 Derrida, (1982).

18 J. Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. D. B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 137.

19 Derrida, (1982).

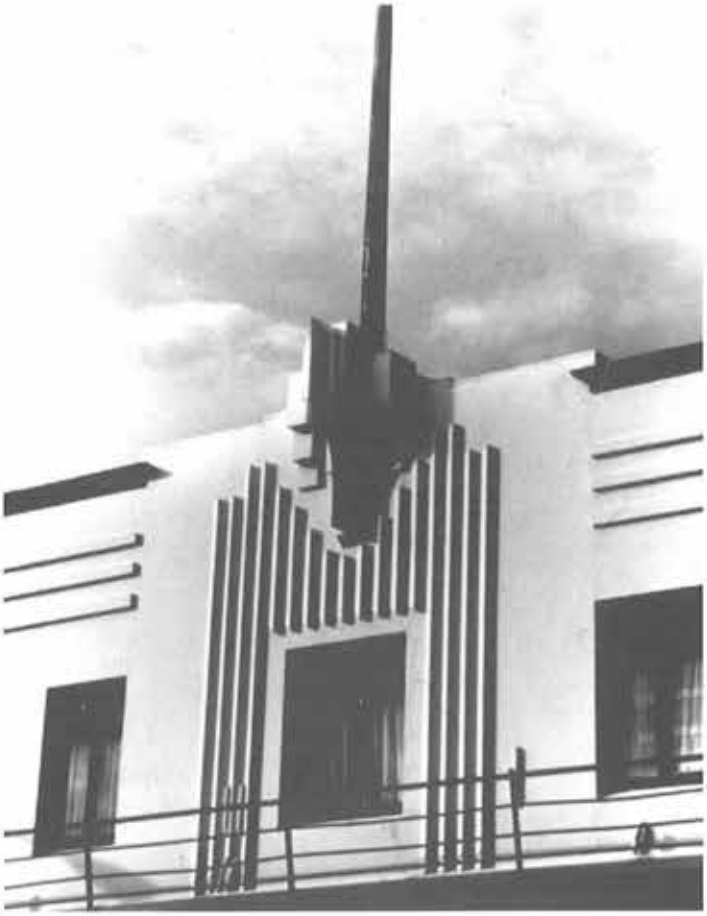
20 M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1975).

21 For further discussion on the 'point' of the Egyptian pyramids, see M. Linzey, The point of the pyramids, I.A.P.S. 11th Conference Proceedings, *Culture Space History*, Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara, (1990).

22 Heidegger (1977), p. 39.

Shaky Ground

Paul Walker



Masonic Hotel, Napier, 1932. W. J. Prouse, architect.

Why yet another book, where a seismic shuddering - one of the forms of the disaster - lays waste to it?

- Maurice Blanchot

Introduction: History and Semiotics

In a commonly held view, a paradigmatic semiotics cannot concede any explanatory role to history. It cannot acknowledge change. Tafuri writes in "The Historical Project", the introduction to *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*:

> The failure of a science of signs in general—of a semiology capable of translating one linguistic system into another—stands before us. One could try endlessly to relate Saussure's "system of differences" to that of architecture, of the physical environment, of nonverbal languages. One could try endlessly to exor-

> cise the uneasiness provoked by the perception of "epistemological breaks" by attempting to regain the innocence of archetypal symbols; the pyramid, the sphere, the circle, the ellipse, and the labyrinth could be installed as permanent structures of inexplicably changing forms, so that the archaeologist could placate his anxiety by recognising an "eternal return of the same."[1]

Umberto Eco's *Theory of Semiotics* offers a route out of this predicament by proposing that semiotics would study not only a theory of codes (of static structures) but also a theory of sign production.[2] What Eco describes in his theory of sign production is a kind of rule-governed creativity, the creativity being directed to a constant rewriting of the rules. Structure and event are bound together in a circular figure.

But in architecture, in Eco's account, this appears not to hold. Architectural history eludes semiotics. In his widely disseminated paper "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture" Eco specifically addresses change in the conventions that underwrite building, and though he writes there of the "dialectical interplay between forms and history ... structures and events" he finds that change seems to be precluded from architecture as a semiotic system. Architectural codes are sets of rules that cannot be used creatively:

> ... what stands out about these codes is that on the whole they would appear to be as communicative systems go, rather limited in operational possibilities. They are, that is, codifications of *already worked out solutions,* codifications yielding standardised messages—this instead of constituting, as would codes truly on the model of verbal language, a system of possible relationships from which countless significantly different messages could be generated.[3]

In the semiotic account, change can only occur in architecture from without, inexplicably, catastrophically, disruptively, disastrously. ("The disaster: break with the star, break with every form of totality... ."[4])

But the discipline of history has recourse to figures of violence also. In "The Historical Project" Tafuri writes that history's objective is to "shatter the barriers that it itself sets up."

History is always provisional, always subject to the violence of being rewritten. After Foucault, Tafuri describes criticism as a "language that should 'move and break up stones.'" The discipline of architectural history "ought to lead to the 'explosion' of the synthesis contained in the work wherever this synthesis is presented as a completed whole." And always there is the danger that this violence might be turned into ceremony, convention, myth, that "the language that should 'move and break up stones', is itself a 'stone' ... ."[5]

The Napier Earthquake and Technocratic Discourse

Bearing in mind these observations on architectural semiotics and architectural history, this paper will consider disaster and change. It will consider a literal mover and breaker-up of stone. Specifically it will consider one earthquake and ascribe to it a relationship to changes occurring in architecture in New Zealand in the 1930s. I refer to the earthquake that occurred in Hawke's Bay on February 3, 1931. It had a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale, killed 258 people, and laid waste to the town centres of Napier (population: 16,000) and Hastings (11,000). Subsequent fires exacerbated the destruction in both boroughs. Housing stock was also affected, mostly through the collapse of chimneys. Services in both towns—reticulated water, power, sewerage—were disrupted. Problems of water supply were particularly acute in Napier, and eighty per cent of the population there was afterwards evacuated.[6] Napier also suffered a major landslip from Bluff Hill, and to the west the Ahuriri Lagoon area was raised such that the lagoon emptied creating 2000 hectares of new land for the Harbour Board.

But beyond these bald facts the earthquake was "New Zealand's worst natural disaster;"[7] it has become "a key event in the history of an earthquake prone land."[8] This is to say that it has been taken up into a realm of Barthesian mythology to which having assumed the

Central Napier,
Feb. 1931

proper name "Napier Earthquake"—it belongs rather more than it does to seismology. As a seismic event it shaped or reshaped parts of the Hawke's Bay and Poverty Bay landscapes; but in turn it has been fashioned to be part of a New Zealand mythos of struggle with and defeat of nature: "Nature precipitated the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931, but it was the men and women of Hawke's Bay, and those who came to their aid, who triumphed in the end."[9] "Shared misfortune brought out the best in people and sparked off a spirit of cooperation."[10]

However, a cursory reading of the most thorough book about this disaster, G. Conly's *The Shock of '31* (on which this paper draws extensively) reveals some less triumphant and cooperative aspects of the picture. Refugee camps, for example, were racially segregated by the Health Department on the grounds that "typhoid fever is common among natives and a large portion are chronic carriers of the disease."[11] Nevertheless, Maori volunteers from the hinterland were welcome rescue workers in the stricken boroughs.

If racial discriminations were not displaced by the earthquake, and certainly gender ones were not (women who stayed tended to their families and the injured) nor were racial divisions erased. The chairman of the Hawke's Bay County Council is reported to have complained:

> One hears, for instance, of refugees getting to Wellington and then being carried as far as Invercargill free. We hear of some of them coming back with wardrobes having travelled everywhere while the business people of Napier and Hastings stuck to their guns like heroes and the farmers to their properties... .[12]

And further indications of social restiveness can be seen in the meeting held in Napier in late February, a few weeks after the 'quake, to protest against charges introduced then for food relief. Walter Nash addressed those present.[13] The parsimony of the authorities on this occasion was repeated later during the reconstruction period.

All this suggests the idea that the disaster somehow brought the wider community together as a whole is not quite the case. But though a strong community of individual citizens did not emerge, a community of corporate interests did: government, industry and the professions.

Thus the entrepreneurial James Fletcher was quick to intervene. Fletcher saw the Prime Minister, George Forbes, a few days after the earthquake and travelled to Napier with him on February 10.[14] Fletcher Construction had already secured contracts to erect a temporary building to be jointly used by all the Napier banks and for two buildings to be similarly shared in Hastings. They were opened a week later. These constructions were followed by a contract for the so-called "tin town" shopping centre, a group of 54 temporary shops erected at Clive Square, Napier, and opened on March 16. Fletchers went on to win a large portion of the reconstruction jobs—in both Hastings and Napier. The firm, says Conly, "became identified with the rebuilding,"[15] and although, according to James Fletcher's biographer, it did not make substantial direct profits from this activity, nevertheless any retrenchment in the company's already substantial nationwide organisation was forestalled despite the economic depression, because of its involvement in the rebuilding programme.

But if the quake aftermath afforded an early opportunity to demonstrate how formidable the Fletcher organisation already had become in its ability to muster influence and resources, it seems just as telling that it was also an occasion in which the interests of private capital saw themselves as being directly aligned with the national good, such that they undertook directly to advise the government as an equal party. Thus, records Neil Robinson, "the important thing, James [Fletcher] felt, was to get the towns working again, to restore a sense of purpose to a bewildered people."[16] This kind of alignment of corporate and state interests was to become much more pronounced in the housing programme of the first Labour government later in the decade.

Business and government also formed rather more substantive ties than those of Fletcher and Forbes. In April 1931 the government passed the Hawke's Bay Earthquake Bill which set up an Adjustment Court and a Hawke's Bay Rehabilitation Committee.'[17] In this latter was vested power to dispense relief funds (which it did mostly in the form of loans.) The Committee included senior bureaucrats from Wellington, businessmen and so forth. Its chairperson was also one of two commissioners appointed by the government at the request of the Napier Borough Council to administer council affairs and exercise council powers. The Rehabilitation Committee worked in collaboration with a voluntary agency in Napier called the Napier Reconstruction Committee, consisting of, again, representatives from local bodies, businessmen, and professionals.[18] Included was J.A. Louis Hay from the local branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. The Reconstruction Committee took advantage of extended powers granted the commissioners for the purposes of acquiring land for street widening to initiate wider ranging town planning initiatives. These initiatives were, however, still quite modest. Architect Stanley Natusch told the Wellington District Branch of the NZIA in March 1933:

> ... the original plan of Napier was quite sound and on reasonably good lines ... [But] several streets were widened and service lanes put in down the centre of large blocks. These service lanes gave access to the backs of shops for goods. They might also carry the sewage system, and underground telephones and electric light cables.[19]

The committee also considered sanitation and public health issues and it "... even considered cooperative ventures in the design of complete [city] blocks,"[20] and though these were not to be taken further than a uniform building height, a homogenous look marked and continues to mark remade Napier. And even if the town may not have been in the event sketched out in a single gesture, much of the design work for new building was nevertheless done by architects in Napier, in Hastings too, on a collective basis. The volume of work necessitated cooperation, it was believed,[21] but we can speculate that some coherent aesthetic was also

a motivation.

The earthquake of course strengthened calls for more adequate by-laws to guard against losses of life and property. Interestingly, such suggestions had been voiced during the 1920s by the Institute of Architects and its members. A strong advocate in this regard was C. Reginald Ford, a partner in the firm which, under the style Gummer and Ford, was, in the view of many, probably the most distinguished practice to have operated in this country.

In 1925 Ford published a book titled *Earthquakes and Building Construction*. It was perhaps the first such book to appear in English dealing with the seismic performance of building structures.[22] Model codes were initially put in place a few months after the 'quake in the form of a temporary general earthquake building by-law devised by yet another expert committee, which also made proposals for a uniform building code to apply throughout New Zealand. This lead to the establishment of the Standards Institution, predecessor of the Standards Association; and of a Building Research Committee within the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, forebear of the still extant Building Research Association.[23]

Hawkes Bay women cooking in their garden, Feb. 1931

Now, all these cooperative activities that have been examined—the emergency building work of Fletchers; the

planning activities of the Hawke's Bay Rehabilitation Committee, the Napier Reconstruction Committee, and the Associated Architects; the legislative measures promoted by the Building Regulations Committee—evidence a kind of paternalistic (fundamentally non-democratic) corporatism founded on technocratic competence. Such corporatism is essentially utopian. It strives for what Rowe and Koetter have called an activist utopia, Tafuri the utopia as project.[24] And it is essentially modern. The legacy that the 1931 earthquake left architecture in New Zealand, then, is not merely a collection of buildings distinguished by art deco or Spanish mission ornamental motifs of more or less quality, but more importantly a discursive milieu marked by utilitarian and hygienist concerns.

The Failure of Representation

Perhaps more importantly still for architecture than the creation (or extensive reinforcement at least) of this new discursive and legal environment was a crisis of representation. This crisis was not restricted to architecture however. I have already related how the Napier Borough Council relinquished its authority to a commission appointed from Wellington. Local representative government was effectively suspended in both main Hawke's Bay towns. In the first instance at Hastings a solicitor by the name of Colonel Hildebrand Holderness assumed charge immediately after the earthquake in the absence of the mayor, delegating responsibilities to other ex-Wellington Regiment officers in the vicinity. One hundred and forty men were, for example, recruited for pickets and patrols, which—with the cooperation of the police and dressed in their military uniforms (white arm-bands added)—guarded every crossroads in the ruined business area with batons and pistols. In Napier, patrols (to supplement those provided by police, territorial soldiers and shore parties from HMS Veronica) were organised by former officers also, no doubt partly in response to a police telegram received there warning that criminals were coming from Auckland (sin city even

then) to loot.[25]

A Napier Citizens' Control Committee was convened at a meeting of government ministers, Labour Party leaders, local body politicians, and business people in the town the day after the disaster. It lacked legal status until formally constituted a subcommittee of the Borough Council. The NCCC was in turn replaced by the commission mentioned earlier and the Reconstruction Committee.

While Holderness's unofficial militia worked alongside the Hastings Borough Council such that its work was absorbed into a general programme administered by officials of a democratically-elected organisation, control of local affairs in Napier did not return to a representative body until April 1933 when the Borough Council reassumed its authority.[26]

My view is that it is here in the breakdown of representational structures that the disastrous quality of the earthquake is properly to be located, not in the number of deaths or the material cost. The body count at Hawke's Bay was tragically high; but the 1918 influenza epidemic took more lives in the province and 6,700 deaths throughout New Zealand.[27] It is hardly remembered in our mythology at all—where are the 'flu monuments? The destruction wrought by the earthquake was a severe economic burden, but in the midst of the misery of the Great Depression it could be seen in a different light:

> Fifty years after the 1931 earthquake, a Hastings woman recollected thinking at the time: "It's an act of God of create work" ... While the earthquake "would ever remain one of their saddest memories", it was the depression and unemployment that really blighted their lives.[28]

But beyond the realm of government, disruption of representation occurred in economics too. The money economy of Hawke's Bay was in effect suspended by the direct distribution according to need of food, clothing and shelter. Trading activity was not re-established in Napier until the end of February.[29] Land titles were another representational device de-

feated by the 'quake, or, to be more precise, by the fire that subsequently burned in central Napier, the location of the Lands and Survey Department for the province. Survey plans and land title documents were destroyed. Duplicates held by owners usually burned too, deposited as mostly they had been with solicitors whose premises also were located in the central business areas. Further, land movements had dislocated survey pegs, reports Robert McGregor, and a new survey of the whole of Hawke's Bay had to be undertaken.[30] Interim title certificates were issued (some are still in circulation) which after six years were deemed conclusive of ownership, but not as to boundaries, which is to say they were hardly conclusive at all.[31]

But it is in architecture and urbanism that the breakdown of representation was catastrophic. Those parts of the townscapes of Napier and Hastings which were most densely significative of communal life and those buildings which most represented shared values and meanings were the ones which were destroyed. The location of such townscapes and buildings was the town centre.[32] It was at the town centre that architectural ornament was found, for it had always been a measure of the propriety of ornament that it was used to embellish those buildings privileged in the life of the community (accommodating privileged institutions) and those buildings gather at the centre. (Ornament has always been marked by the paradox of being both central and adjunct.) Buildings which collectively had the representational import "stability" all collapsed. Though this *did* cause institutional crises of the kind experienced by Lands and Survey, it should not be thought of as merely utilitarian dysfunction.

The case of the Hastings Post Office could be taken as paradigmatic here. After the earthquake that part of the building which housed postal services remained standing, damaged to be sure, but nevertheless recognisable (legible) as a building. But without its tower, which was ruined beyond any recognition, it is not clear what kind of building it might be. It signifies nothing. The construction of a new post office and a new tower *as separate buildings* perpetuated this failure of representation. Removed from daily life, the clock tower becomes

Hastings Postoffice
Feb. 1931

pure ornament, that is, ornament which transgresses its proper, auxiliary character. It has become Loosian in its strategy if, sadly, not quite Loosian in its execution. And the post office without architectural sign or character to distinguish its civic status, becomes a building without qualities (as the post office has recently become an institution without qualities,) essentially a modern building, a building among others similarly unforthcoming about their status or their role in the townscape's symbolic economy. Let me quote M.B. Boyd's description of rebuilt Hastings as further evidence of this semantic flattening:[33]

> Most new public and commercial buildings were inexpensive, reinforced concrete boxes of one or two storeys, strictly plain and functional. The most distinctive were the post office [I have exaggerated its poverty] and Edmund Anscombe's store for Westerman's which embodied new ideas of light and space. The Art Deco style of architecture imported from Europe and the United States prevailed, using horizontal lines with simple decoration around doors, windows and parapets which matched the long straight lines of the grid street system. A predominance of cream or pastel coloured walls, cantilevered shop verandahs, street awnings and large display windows enhanced the sunny, open, carnival atmosphere of the restored shopping centre. Low storeyed shop

> and office blocks, stubby chimneys and the decapitation of church towers and steeples added to the prevailing flatness of the emerging "City of the Plains." The Roman Catholic Church was the only remaining landmark.

This kind of thing was seen as desirable. The situation at Napier was more extreme since it was more extensively damaged than its rival. Even the governor general admired its homogeneity.[34] There, the severance of representation and building was further refined as ornamental features such as arches and classical orders which would previously have been disposed across architectural surfaces and volumes were weaned from such a role and corralled in a kind of beautifully kept lawn cemetery of "symbolic forms", of monuments, along the Marine Parade which separates the centre of Napier from its foreshore. But any forms, not only those drawn from architectural traditions would do.

This, of course, is overstated. Building was not completely stripped of decoration and a capacity to mean and was not entirely dissociated from the realm of the symbol. The fact that the symbolic centre of the home, the chimney/hearth, was generally rebuilt testifies to this. (As the centre of either town collapsed, so did that of each house. The damage around was at both scales - domestic and urban - much less severe.[35] Interesting, also, with respect to this was the alacrity with which new, temporary hearths were made, outside the house, to re-establish the home.[36]) The government carried the cost of rebuilding one chimney in each household; only one in four was not reconstructed.[37] Napier's recent fame as a centre of art deco and Spanish mission style (thoroughly documented by Heather Ives[38] first, then by Shaw and Hallett) is also evidence of the survival of a conception of architecture as decorated building.

Nevertheless, ornament came to be suspect in New Zealand after the 1931 disaster. It was held to be dangerous. This did not occur only in the professional press where it would have been expected (and where it had already been occurring in the twenties). Conly writes:[39]

> The Gisborne M.P., W.D. Lysnar, was particular[ly] concerned about the pedi-

> ments, parapets and other decoration which adorned buildings and which had been a main cause of death during the earthquake. "In Wellington," he told Parliament, "there are buildings with pediments and top hamper protruding three feet and four feet ... . In Gisborne, a single storey wall which carried an outward extension of nearly three feet of brick and concrete work, fell and killed a man on the footpath."

This could remind us of the many proscriptions of ornament that are to be found in the discourse of architectural modernism, though the imputed dangers are not usually physical ones. For Frank Lloyd Wright they were, however. Coincidentally, Wright published in 1931 a text titled "The Passing of the Cornice" in which he describes the collapse of the north wing of the Wisconsin State Capitol—while it was under construction—that he had witnessed as a young man. Workers were killed under the fallen rubble of the neo-classical edifice.[40]

Now, if this particular FLW passage could hardly have been known in Napier or Hastings or New Zealand in the year of the Hawke's Bay earthquake, Wright's views and the views of others who were, like him, labelled modernists here, did have currency. For example, Wright's desire for an architecture that "would allow America to live its own life" in the machine age, uninhibited by the stylism that obsessed the nineteenth century, was reported (disparagingly to be sure, but accurately) in the *NZIA Journal* in 1930 in a long paper by Professor C.R. Knight of Auckland University College.[41] (An extensive piece on European Modernism was included in the *Journal* in August 1928; 1929 saw—amazingly—some extracts from Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow*.[42]) And it is known that Wright's views were well regarded by at least one Napier architect, Louis Hay, who, as was mentioned earlier, belonged to the Napier Reconstruction Committee. Reminiscing in 1967, Basil Ward who was articled in Hay's office around 1920 and who had a distinguished career as a modern architect in England in the 1930s wrote that Hay's "office was lined with books on 'Art Nouveau', also evidence of Austrian Secessionism, the Chicago School and Louis Sullivan, but in particular, Frank Lloyd Wright."[43]

It is clear that the proscriptions of ornament made after the earthquake were based on moral grounds. They echoed (unknowingly perhaps, but surely not incidentally) the similar injunctions of the moderns. Ornament is dangerous and should therefore be suppressed, if not altogether than at least to the point of being no more than a surface relief of chevrons and so on. Shaw and Hallett note the *Napier Daily Telegraph's* advocacy of a Californian Spanish style in the rebuilding because of its "... multifarious advantages, notably economy, simplicity and safety."[44] But it should be remembered that it was not ornament (or ornament alone, if at all) which was compromised, failed or acted improperly at Hawke's Bay. The failure was that of the structure which, supporting the ornamental supplement, was also supposed to support itself. Significantly, one of the few buildings in Napier that stood unscathed was the Public Trust Building with ostentatious embellishments of engaged doric columns. The properly supplementary, signifying character of ornament remained intact.

Public Trust Office, Napier, 1920.
Eric Phillips, architect.

Conclusion

The Hawke's Bay earthquake gave impetus to the stripping of ornament and meaning from the built, pushed architecture nearer to the status of the empty sign of modernism. This empty sign was to be perfected by Ludwig Hilberseimer[45] and very nearly approached here by many a self-conscious post-war modernist. Recall Boyd's description of the new Hastings. Such ornament as did survive in the residual decoration of deco eschewed any representational role. All buildings in the rebuilt districts of Napier and Hastings were adorned to a near equal degree. Deco as a style has no decorum, no sense: Harbison writes that it merely "echoes technological innovation fawningly."[46] Though it may borrow simplified and flattened classical elements it has no conceptual connection with classical ornament (ornament of the Western architectural tradition,) governed as this has been by notions of propriety, of appropriateness and related to a hierarchical distribution of privilege, prestige, and value among different building tasks from the temple down to the private dwelling. In the modern world, a world without qualities, in which all values are relativised, such hierarchies do not hold. The Napier earthquake dislodged them from the culture of architecture in New Zealand. Pre-modern architectural semiosis ends then.

I am suggesting therefore, bearing these comments regarding value, representation, and propriety in mind, and those made earlier regarding the formation of such modern discursive modes as utilitarianism and technocratic corporatism, that the Napier earthquake marks the beginning of modernism in New Zealand. There the shaky beginning of modern architecture can be found, founded.

To state this is to rewrite the history of architecture in New Zealand in such a way that the modern cannot simply be equated with a set of formal motifs or strategies, that can be spotted in their full array only in buildings dating from the end of the thirties at the earliest (though many of the formal traits of the modern—horizontality, simplicity, honesty of

materials, etcetera—could be seen in the "tin town" shopping centre.) Further, to rewrite the history of the modern in this way is to do some violence to those histories which are already extant, Ian Lochhead's piece on New Zealand architecture in the 1930s for instance,[47] which holds that modern architecture arrived "late" here. It is also a questioning (more violence, more breaking of stones) of the view, put by Lochhead most succinctly, that the acceptance of the modern in New Zealand was conditional upon a recognition that it could be locally inflected. The regional inflections in the Hawke's Bay rebuild are, I believe, trivial—an admixture of Maori rafter patterns and deco at the Bank of New Zealand in Napier by Crichton, McKay and Haughton, reputed raupo leaves mixed with plaster roses at Hay's National Tobacco building at Ahuriri.[48] (But perhaps one could see more indigenous echoes in all those deco diagonals—the chevron is, after all, important in Maori art, and maybe all the zigzags say "NZ NZ NZ ...!") The discourse of modernism is indifferent to the local.

My rewrite also does some violence to meta-histories recently proposed, which, modelled perhaps on Francis Pound's scornful essays about nationalism in New Zealand painting,[49] are also concerned with the local. I refer to Ross Jenner's statement that "in most thinking concerning building in New Zealand I believe we may see a certain set of metaphors concerned with the notion of a clean slate ... intended for the most part, to ground an architect of national identity."[50] Have we not known since Napier that architecture could not be grounded here? At the very least this position needs close interrogation, the ambivalent qualifications it includes need to be taken very seriously. Why was Corb being discussed in New Zealand in 1929?

These histories and criticisms are not to be rejected, however. We have been taught to "multiply the 'beginnings,'" to acknowledge that histories are multiple and motivated by their contexts and by the legitimate or illegitimate concerns of the historian/critic. I became interested in the Napier earthquake not only because it yielded an opportunity to think of semiotics and history together, but because when I shifted to Wellington, another shaky

place, I worked in an office located on the upper floor of an unreinforced load bearing brick building, located on reclaimed land and immediately adjacent to the main Wellington fault.

Curious about Napier, I could not help but wonder also what stones might be overturned by an earthquake in New Zealand now.

Sundial, Marine Parade, Napier

Notes:

1 Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, trans. Pellegrino d'Acierno and Robert Connolly (Cambridge Mass., 1987), p. 6.

2 Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, 1976).

3 U. Eco, "Function and Sign: the Semiotics of Architecture", in G. Broadbent, R. Bunt, and C. Jencks eds., *Signs, Symbols and Architecture* (Chichester, 1980), p. 39.

4 Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1986), p. 75.

5 Tafuri, op. cit., p. 9.

6 G. Conly, *The Shock of '31: The Hawke's Bay Earthquake* (Wellington, 1980), p. 154.

7 Ibid., foreword.

8 Robert McGregor, *The Great Quake* (Napier, 1989), p. 2.

9 Conly, op. cit., p. 136.

10 Beverley Dunlop and Kay Mooney, *Hawke's Bay* (Auckland, 1986), p. 20.

11 Conly, op. cit. , p. 136.

12 Cited by Conly, p. 163.

13 Ibid., p. 170.

14 Neil Robinson, *James Fletcher: Builder* (London, 1970), p. 107.

15 Conly, op. cit., p. 168.

16 Robinson, op. cit., p. 107.

17 Conly, op. cit., p. 180.

18 Ibid., p. 184.

19 Stanley Natusch, "The Rebuilding of Napier", *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, April 1933, p. 21.

20 Peter Shaw and Peter Hallett, *Art Deco Napier: Styles of the Thirties* (Auckland, 1987), p. 7; Conly, op. cit., p. 173.

21 Shaw and Hallett, p. 8; M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings* (Wellington, 1984), p. 269; Natusch, op. cit., p. 21.

22 Robert Park, "Development of Structural Design Procedures for Earthquake Resistance in New Zealand", *Transactions of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand*, Vol 14, No 1, 1987, p. 23. My thanks to Andrew Charleson for drawing this article to my attention.

23 Conly, op. cit., p. 211.

24 Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City*, Cambridge Mass., 1978, p. 15; Manfredo Tafuri, "Ideology and Utopia", in *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development, trans.* Barbara Luigia La Penta (Cambridge Mass., 1976).

25 Conly, op. cit., p. 69.

26 Boyd, op. cit., pp. 261-263; Conly, pp. 146-159.

27 258 died in the earthquake, 296 in the epidemic. See Boyd, op. cit., p. 206; Max Lambert and Ron Palinski, *The New Zealand Almanac* (Wellington, 1982), p. 332.

28 Boyd, op. cit., p. 257; see also Conly, *Hawke's Bay "Before" and "After" the* Great *Earthquake of 1931: An Historical Record* (Napier, 1981).

29 Conly, (1980), p. 169.

30 McGregor, op. cit., p. 53.

31 Conly, op. cit., p. 169.

32 On the contemporary town centre, see Roland Barthes, "Semiology and Urbanism", *V/A*, Vol 2, 1973.

33 Boyd, op. cit., pp. 270-272.

34 Natusch, op. cit., p. 21.

35 McGregor, op. cit., p. 18.

36 Conly, op. cit., p. 210.

37 Ibid., p. 180.

38 Heather Ives, *The Art Deco Architecture of Napier* (Napier(?), 1982).

39 Conly, op. cit., p. 210.

40 F. L. Wright, 'The Passing of the Cornice", in *Modern Architecture* (Princeton, 1931). Wright repeats this story in his autobiography.

41 Knight, "Modern Tendencies in Architectural Design", *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal*, October 1930.

42 "Modernism in Architecture", *New Zealand Institute of Architects Journal,* August 1928; Le Corbusier, "The Great City", *NZIA Journal,* December 1929. This second article has been noted by Shaw and Hallett, (p. 15) who describe it however as being from a book called *Trends in New Architecture.*

43 Ward, "Connell, Ward and Lucas", in Dennis Sharp ed., *Planning and Architecture: Essays Presented to Arthur Korn by the Architectural Association* (London, 1967), p. 74.

44 Shaw and Hallett, op. cit., p. 8.

45 Tafuri, (1987), p. 221.

46 Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces* (London, 1981), p. 53.

47 Lochhead, "New Zealand Architecture in the Thirties: The Impact of Modernism", *Landfall,* No 152, 1984.

48 Robert McGregor, "'Indigenous Art Deco in New Zealand", *Historic Places,* Dec, 1990.

49 Francis Pound, *Frames on the Land* (Auckland, 1983).

50 Ross Jenner, "Noughts and Crosses: Architecture in New Zealand", *New Zealand Architect,* No 5, 1986, p. 63.

The Quadrature of Stone

Jonathan Lamb

Setting the Stone

In his book *The Roman Stonecutter* Giancarlo Susini informs us that the quadratarius was the mason responsible for 'the totality of operations involved in the execution of an epigraphic monument.'[1] That is to say, he was responsible for the accurate cutting and dressing of the stone, and for the subsequent tracing and engraving of the letters it was to bear. The name assigned to this expert seems intended to embrace the four key stages of monumental inscription, as well perhaps as the four faces of the shaped block or stele. Certainly he had four tools for the job: *scalpum*, *malleus*, *asciae* and *dolabrae* (p. 25). In this paper I want to explore the quadriform arrangements that monumental stone seems to require, and to show how analogous configurations of stone make their way into myth, and then into the monumental sculpture of 18th century Britain.

The relation between writing and stones is as old as writing itself, a fact evident in their joint etymologies. Monument is a term embracing stone markers and inscribed documents. As well as its more familiar meaning of carved or engraved stone, the OED gives 'written

memorial' as one its definitions for monument, and in its corrupt form of *muniment* the word refers specifically to historical documents such as genealogies, title-deeds, and marriage certificates—the sort of manuscript stili to be found in the muniment rooms of great country houses. In Greek the same ambiguity is to be found in the word *sema*, which means both funerary monument and inscribed sign. It suggests that the arts of writing and rearing monuments were coeval[2]. An 18th century etymologist called George Costard traced the word *hermeneut* and the name Hermes to the heaps of stones, called *arma* in Chaldean, which used to mark the boundaries of land. In Greece, Costard maintains, they first changed these *Heaps* into *single* stones, then carved a *Man's head* upon them; and at length shaped and ornamented them with greater Art and Contrivance ... . The Decoration made the original of the Practise forgot, so that the Stones themselves were called ERMAI, as if they were the Statues of Hermes.' By a species of synecdoche the sense of heap is preserved in the deceitful facility with language which is supposed to be the characteristic of Hermes ('speaking with *Fluency* and *Eloquence* ... is, in a metaphorical sense. The *heaping up of words'*.)[3] Likewise a hermeneut is one who shows skill in dividing and distinguishing between the words that make up the heap.

Whether Costard is right in his speculations, Hermes is the god credited with the invention of writing, his name is reducible to *herma*, or rock, and he is the god responsible for the dead, as well as for doorways and crossroads. Consistent with this combination of the written and the stony, Hermes' sacred number is four. John Kerrigan calls him the god of the tetraglyph[4]; and the tetraglyph which interests me is the four-sided pun emerging from *sema*: *sema* the stone and *sema* the sign; *soma* the body concealed and commemorated by the *sema*: and *semen*, the reproductive principle, or seed, of the *soma* that is either abetted or thwarted by the *sema*. So I shall be looking for a quadrature that will include stone, writing, the body, and the power of reproduction.

In various incomplete forms the tetraglyph can be detected taking shape in the oldest Greek

funerary structures. The intimate connection between the stone and the sign is intended to exert a magical potency over the forces of decay and oblivion; and to accomplish this the stone must carry the proper name of the person who is not to be forgotten: 'I am the monument of Phrasikleia.' 'I am the memorial of Glaucos.' 'This stone, close to the road, calls itself Prokleidas.'[5] Before the latter half of the fifth century BC these stones address the public on the highway in the first person, establishing literally an identity between the material object and the person it commemorates; and this identity takes on a voice when the traveller who has paused to read, spells out the inscription aloud, as early Greek readers had to do if the letters were to make any sense to them. In a remarkably vivid example of the figure of prosopopeia, the reader of the stele or column gives voice, name and face to the dead - an effect not possible with later inscriptions done in the third person. The inscribed stones by the wayside are like flowers, then, fertilised by the voice of the roaming bee-like reader who confronts them and proclaims their name and quality. To face the stone, *sema*, is simultaneously to deliver its written message, *sema*. And all this is possible because the reader allows his/her own body, or *soma*, to be instrument through which the sentiments of the buried body may be ventriloquised. In the case of Epimenides, who had his last words tattooed on his corpse, *soma* is even more directly transformed into *sema*.

The illusion generated by the stone is that it speaks for the dead, and sometimes this speaking is acknowledged to be a substitutive act, a speaking on behalf of the dead. Here the stone

Tomb of the Harpies (Souls borne aloft by winged females.)

bears the family name, the name of the father to whom it stands in the relation of child. The stone follows the Greek custom of naming the child with the epithet of the father or the grandfather, like the name Telemachos which refers to Odysseus, who fights a long way off. In an Orphic poem Phoibos gives Heleneus a stone which they treat like a child, dressing it and washing it.[6] This renders equivocal the phrase, 'to rear a column.' Like the Greeks, Absalom reared a pillar instead of a child, 'for he said I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name' (II Sam. 18). This seminal function of the stone is understood by Jesper Svenbro to establish a set of family links between the inscriber, the inscription and the reader of the stone: the writer is the father, the writing is the daughter, and the reader is the son-in-law. By applying this epitaphic structure of descent and alliance to Sappho's famous Ode, known as fragment 31, where she records the symptoms of jealousy as she watches her lover being courted by a man, Svenbro discovers the pathos of an epitaph in reverse. What is dramatised here, he suggests, is not a literal scene of jealousy, or even the spelling out of loss, but the agony of the writer of an inscription: Sappho's voice breaks and her body shatters as she beholds the lover/reader absorb the poem she has written, her daughter as it were, by giving the letters voice: 'All day, he sits before you face to face ... if you should speak he hears.' Like all writers of inscriptions, she foretells her own absence from the scene of reading: eavesdropping upon the strange intimacy between text and reader when, the one turning to the other, they meet face to face in order to continue the line of descent in flesh or in stone.

Possibly it is this specifically maternal relation between the memorialising agent and the mute (*infans*) object of grief (who nevertheless may recover voice by means of the female parent's intervention) that accounts for the prominence of bare-breasted females on ancient tombs. On Greek funerary urns and sarcophagi women bare their bosoms in the agony of grief. On one of the most ancient steles, the tomb of the harpies, the souls of the deceased are borne heaven-wards by large-breasted birdwomen, suggesting a primordial connection

between the work of mourning and the labour of nursing[7].

Perseus and Medusa

Now let us see whether this quadriform arrangement of stone, writing (for which we must suppose a writer as well as a reader,) body, and reproductive power can be applied to some archetypal stories. There are two myths in which stone plays a predominant part - the story of Niobe, where a woman is turned to stone; and the story of the Medusa, where a woman turns other people to stone. Niobe, wife of the Amphion, is punished by Artemis and Apollo for the maternal pride she shows in her fourteen children. Her punishment is to see them all die. She returns to her father's house at Sisyphus, where Zeus grants her prayer, and she is turned to a stone that weeps forever. In the second story, Perseus is challenged by Polydectes, ruler of Sesiphos, to bring back a Gorgon's head. Using his bronze shield as a mirror, he manages to cut off the head of Medusa, the only mortal one of the three Gorgons, without being transformed to stone by the sight of her face. He carries back her head, and by fixing it to his shield is able to turn all his enemies to stone, including Polydectes himself, who has been harassing his mother Danae.

At first sight neither story offers very much to go on. In his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Niobe's story is told together with a list of the petrifying feats accomplished by Perseus, George Sandys inserts an interesting note on Niobe. He says that she lost her children in a plague that raged at Thebes, and that her transformation into marble is a confounding of the symptoms of her immovable sorrow, which she indulged in the stony landscape of Sisyphus (a 'Place full of rocks and broken precipices,') with the *sema* surmounted by her own image, carved by Praxiteles, which she raised to her dead children. He mentions also the inscription on this monument, preserved by Ausonius:

> I liv'd; became a stone: now polish'd
> By thee Praxiteles, no longer dead.
> All by thy art restor'd; sence wants alone:
> And I, when I provokt the Gods, had none.[8]

and adds Ausonius' enigmatic commentary on it:

> This is a sepulcher without a body:
> A body this without a sepulcher:
> Both sepulcher and body unto her.

Using Svenbro's insights, it is possible to read Niobe's *sema*, as I think Ausonius is reading it, as a speaking image—'no longer dead' once the sense of the written stone is supplied by the reader. The *sema* as stone no longer can be said to conceal a cadaver if the *sema* as sign is activated by the reading voice; therefore the *sema* and the *soma* are the same thing ('both sepulcher and body unto her.') Whether this re-establishes some vestige of maternal descent is open to doubt, since the place of the children in the monumental structure is unclear, but the figurative reconstitution of Niobe would suggest that there is room for it. Here at any rate is the basis of an equivocation that operates at the edge of so many monuments of grieving women in the 18th century, where consorts in various attitudes of distress 'turn to stone' before the tombs or images of their husbands: 'A marble imag'd matron on her knees/ Half-wasted, like a Niobe in tears.' Richard Westmacott's Biddulph monument (1814) has the Niobe figure (Charlotte Biddulph) flanked by the inscription to her spouse, which seems to have petrified her in the act of reading it. The very medium of the monument allows the equivoke (a woman turned to stone in the gesture of turning towards a stone to decipher it) a dramatic immediacy. This brings into play the sexual element of the loss, or what Freud calls in his essay on mourning 'the libidinal position without an object.' This implication already had been formalised by Westmacott in the Brownlow monument, where the female mourns her loss beneath a broken column, conventionally an icon of childlessness; but in his tomb-sculpture, *The Distressed Mother*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1822 to huge

Richard Westmacott Monument to Lord Brownlow

acclaim, Westmacott restores the Niobe role to the wife as nursing mother, who is turned into stone as she turns to the infant in her arms, the fruit of lawful embraces. Here the primordial link between the mother and child, evident in the tomb of the harpies as well as the myth of Niobe and her children, is partly re-established, insofar as the infant is the medium (but not the object) of maternal grief. In one of the most celebrated paintings of the later eighteenth century, Wright of Derby's *The Dead Soldier*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1789, the mother mourns her husband, dead at her feet, while leaning over the baby at her breast—an image widely reproduced that drew tears from William Hayley and Robert Burns, among others.

Let us get back to Perseus and the Medusa. Apollodorus reports that Perseus was conducted to the Gorgons' den by Hermes, who gave him a sickle of adamant with which to decapitate the monster. He reports also that Perseus accidentally slew his father Acrisius with a stone. It is impossible to think of this myth without Freud's commentary on it, where he associates the snaky locks of Medusa with the fetishised pubic hair of the female, and her

terrifying face as the threat of castration held forth to the male in the sight of the female genitals, a threat that turns him to stone with fear (or possibly 'stones' him in the sense of removing his stones or testicles,) at the same time as it excites him and, with a reassuring stiffness, reminds him that his stones are still there. Doubtless there are many ways of reading the myth, and the two Freudian aspects of stone suggest some sort of Oedipal scenario that leaves a mother sexually vulnerable, and a father slain, all owing to the actions of the son; but if we stick to the model of the *sema*, then the stone weapon given to Perseus by Hermes suggests some sort of link between the somatic violence that is to be directed at the Gorgon and a semiotic function. The link is not to be found in the weapon but in the bronze mirror of the shield, which first reflects the living head and then frames the dead one. It is a sort of portable *sema*, a meeting point for the representation of life and death. So many pictures, Caravaggio's in particular, are repetitions of the shield, putting the artist in Perseus' place and the viewer in his victim's. In his verses 'On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci,' Shelley writes, 'Death has met life, but there is life in death,' and as if to emphasise the two-way traffic between flesh and stone in this picture which characterises all good face-to-face readings of tomb inscriptions, he draws attention to the spectator's substitute in the canvas, a toad, (a creature supposed to carry a stone in its forehead,) sitting on a rock and gazing at the Gorgonian head that is itself becoming indistinguishable from the wet stones it rests upon. The remarkable second stanza begins:

> Yet it is less the horror than the grace
> Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
> Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
> Are graven, till the characters be grown
> Into itself, and thought no more can trace.

He seems to imagine the gazer and the Medusa joined in one indecipherable, involuted petroglyph, a plenary sign meaning nothing but itself. The closest I can get to an analogue

of what Shelley is conceiving here, is an allusion in Roger Caillois' *Pierres* to the *autoglyphs* mentioned by Aretazus in his *History of Phrygia*, stones carrying the self-engraved image of the mother of the gods. 'If a eunuch were to come across such a stone,' he adds, 'he would no longer mourn his lost testicles, but endure his condition ever afterwards with great constancy and cheerfulness.'(20) In this light both the semic and the seminal elements of the Medusa point towards a more negative interpretation than Freud's double intuition of castration and puissance. Possibly the despatching of the female figure under Hermes' superintendency is, as Neil Hertz has suggested, a mythic representation of the abjection of the mother and of the location of the subject in language.[9] Jacques Lacan hypothesises the discovery of something like a *sema* or an autoglyph in order to explain how this location is made:

> 'Suppose that in the desert you find a stone covered with hieroglyphics. You do not doubt for a moment that, behind them, there was a subject who wrote them. But it is an error to believe that each signifier is addressed to you—this is proved by the fact that you cannot understand any of it. On the other hand you define them as signifiers, by the fact that you are sure that each of these signifiers is related to each of the others. And it is this that is at issue with the relation between the subject and the field of the Other. The subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other. But, by this very fact, this subject—which was previously nothing if not a subject coming into being—solidifies into a signifier.'[10]

In one sense this is an account of how an aspiring reader turns into what he reads, how the gazer at the stone turns into stone, and how, like the Phrygian eunuch, the subject reconciles himself to the loss (the stoning) that constitutes him as a subject. This is the doubtful triumph Hermes offers Perseus. In another sense, it sets the scene for Oedipus' tussle with a large-breasted female figure over an enigmatic text which he will both successfully interpret and by which he will be fatally misled, and as it were stoned.

Let us see if we can get any further with the quadrature of the stone by means of the myth

that introduces Lacan's remarks on the hieroglyphic stone and which forms the focus of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, namely Aristophanes' contribution to the discussion of love in Plato's *Symposium*. You know his story of our ancestors, the primitive whole creatures with eight limbs and two heads, who were sliced in two by Zeus for trying to unseat the gods. Ever since then the two halves have tried to reunite by means of sexual coupling. Aristophanes adds this warning to his fable: 'We have reason to fear that if we do not behave ourselves in the sight of heaven, we may be split in two again ... and go about like the people represented in profile on tombstones, sawn in two vertically down the line of our noses.'(64) The reduction from the unitary creature to the quartered fragment is figured as a shift from *soma* to *sema*, from living flesh to senseless stone, from the rounded lineaments of constantly satisfied desire to a bare effigy in bas relief. The incision made by the parental knife in fact draws two boundaries: first of all between the self-sufficient body and its divided, seminating parts, and then between the desiring halves and the stony quarters. So here we have a quadrature in sequence, ending at the tomb, assuming that the quartered figures make up a *sema* both as sign and stone. 'In this way,' says Lacan, 'I explain the essential affinity of every drive with the zone of death.'(199). Freud's interpretation of the myth is much the same in taking the sexual drive to be the colouring of a deeper desire to return to an earlier, inanimate state of things. In Freud's archaeology this is the state of stone, the pre-existence of the protiston in the rock-like form from which it was torn, in a primordial shock 'of whose nature we can form no conception,'(332) as quivering flesh. In this reading stone is the destination as well as the origin of all living things; but the degree of obliquity between these two points, which is the measure of life itself, depends on the amount of 'crust' the living splinter can accommodate without actually killing itself: 'Its outermost surface ceases to have the structure proper to living matter, and becomes to some degree inorganic and thenceforward functions as a special envelope.' The fragments of *soma* who have the best time are those whose line of descent from stone to stone is complicated by a strategic addition of *sema*. In the Swift-Sheridan version of Aristophanes this gives extra voice to what

was always a 'PUN of flesh and blood,' for 'When the thing was split in twain/ Why then it PUNN'D as much again.' This is like the voice the stone of a Greek *sema* acquires when it is properly read, face to face. It is precisely this voice, together with the mixture of flesh and stone which generates it, that is lacking from the Medusa story, but which is recovered by Niobe and which seems obscurely to be guaranteed by the maternal autoglyph that consoles the cut creature.

We have already seen how some British tombs and memorials from the 18th century abbreviate the circuit from stone to stone as a pun on 'turning to stone.' The circuit may be interpreted positively as a restoration of voice by means of a primordial reconnection of the mute form of loss with its mother. On the other hand it can be understood as a short-sighted gendering of mourning roles (the man dies, the woman weeps.) This ambivalent positioning of the tomb sculpture between restoration and oppression is something of which funerary verse itself seems aware, dramatising it as hostility between the stone and its reader, based on pointless repetition. A reader who says things like: 'What a poor Substitute for a Set of memorable Actions, is polished Alabaster, or the Mimickry of sculptured Marble,' (Hervey), or 'Lo! on each Tomb engrav'd the empty Name/ Of worldly Greatness levell'd in the Dust,' (Heber), is turning to stone with no thought of giving it voice, but only to make the *sema* a sign of its own inefficacy. Likewise a stone that roughly taunts its reader with sentiments like these: 'When thou readst/ The state of me/ Think on the Glass that runs for thee,' or 'Remember Reader when thou seest this stone/Who built for others now are built upon,' (Dingley), has ceased to expect an animating response from its spectator. In each case a refrain mocks the business of reading.

Although Wordsworth is to renew a sense of the 'communion of the living and the dead' that flourishes between the loving solicitations of the stone, and the 'affectionate admiration' of its reader, in his *Essays on Epitaphs*,[11] the breakdown is fully evident in the scene at Archbishop Laud's memorial in Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes: 'Around his tomb let

Art and Genius weep,/ But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.' These are examples of disfiguration, where the reader's prosopopeia made for the stone, and the stone's counter-apostrophe to the reader, are reduced to the stony prospects and retrospects of mortality. Such an undistracted contemplation of stone in the past and the future is analogous to the urgent desire of the organism to return to stone, of which repetition is always the symptom; so it is no surprise to find a kind of echolalia in these unconsoling epitaphs, what Debra Fried calls 'repetitious stalling':[12]

> Shall we all die?
> We shall die all,
> All die shall we—
> Die all we shall.

Even when the refrain is the result of passion rather than mockery, the same irrefutability of death draws utterance towards muteness. When David refused to be consoled by the pillar left behind by the dead Absalom, 'Thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.' (II Sam, 18:33).

The most successful examples of quadrature are to be found in Scripture and literature rather than in tombs themselves, where the growing antagonism between the stone and its reader is fatal to figures. The literary examples however draw on the conventions and devices of tomb-inscription in order to rearrange them. An interesting reverse example occurs in Thomas Dingley's *History from Marble*, transcribed from an epitaph in Berkeley Church:

> Where are thine accusers? Thus once spake he
> That wrote on dust to set the woman free;
> And where are thine accusers, may we ask,
> Writing upon thy dust. 'Twould be a task
> To find one that condemns thee. (98)

The allusion is to John 8, where the woman taken in adultery is brought before Christ before being stoned to death in accordance with Mosaic law. In spite of repeated invitations by her captors to endorse the sentence, he stoops down, and 'with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not,' until his accusers get tired of waiting and go away, leaving the woman unstoned. In a gesture normally reserved to the exegete who announces the law as he traces its letters with his finger on the stone, Jesus uses his finger to detach the text of the law from the stones that would enact it, leaving the sinful seminal female body a margin between the two texts that stops her being turned to stone. When he puts the question, 'Woman, where are those thine accusers?' it is inflected with the inspiriting prosopopeia of a reader who lends his voice to stone figures in order to keep them in countenance. The question reappears on the Berkeley monument as just such a prosopopeia, triumphing in the absence of bad readers who would make nothing of stone but stone.

Of all 18th century illustrators, Blake seems to have been the most alert to the quadriform figures that can be fostered or erased by stone. In 'Prone on the lowly grave - she drops,' an illustration to Blair's *The Grave*, he shows a female figure clasping what Edward Young calls the 'unrefunding tomb', or rather the briar-bound mound which stands for unredeemed physical mortality in Blake's pictures. Here there is no *sema*, either sign or convenient stone, that is not indifferent to her case, and for the two potential readers there is nothing to read. Blake was aware that there could be too much of both, as in the title-page of *Urizen*, where the obsessive figure crouches beneath a pair of stone tablets, his feet on a book, while in his right hand he wields a pen, and in his left a burin, like a quadratarius gone mad. In his illustrations of Matthew's gospel, Blake shows a repetition of this destructive intensity, as the sepulchre is sealed with supererogatory stone by the order of the scribes, who carry the law embroidered on their garments, and who are very keen that no voice and no body re-emerge from this tomb. The sequel is a fascinating reversal of the face-to-face roles of readers and stone-girt bodies, as Christ outside the structure comforts Mary Magdalene on the

Prone on the lowly grave — she woke —
Clings yet more closely to the sense-life thing
She finds the passenger who looks that way.

inside, as it were replaying his own resurrection by redeeming her from the empty stone.

I want to finish by showing how Blake follows Gray through the obliquities of the most famous graveyard poem of the century, *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*. At first it seems to be written to mock the vanity of tombs, like Young's *Night-thoughts* or Hervey's *Meditations*: 'Can storied urn or animated bust,/ Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath!/ Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,/ Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?' But these rhetorical questions are destined to find an answer. The poet responds to the

pathos of the rough grave markers of Stoke Poges churchyard which imparts to them a primitive legibility: 'Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect/ Some frail memorial still erected nigh,/ With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,/ Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.' Three stanzas later, the poet is ready to read with full prosopopeia: 'Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,' and in return to apostrophise his own tomb-reader with an imagined speech that posthumously takes place between a kindred spirit and a passing traveller: 'Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay/ Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.' The lay is the epitaph proper, addressed in the third person to the dead youth (alias the poet, alias Gray) who now sleeps in the bosom of his father and his God. This reflexive gesture is a superb re-establishment of the communion of the living and the dead, achieved as Gray oscillates, via his imagined readers, between the experience of writing and reading his own epitaph: or, in the family analogue discussed earlier, between being his father and his son. This is how Blake illustrates the three transitions. A sympathetic female figure traces with her finger the antagonistic legend, 'Dust thou art,' moderating like Christ, who wrote with his finger in the dust, the savage message of the stone. The stone bears the name William Blake, with an age that looks like 103. The next invitation to read is extended by the old shepherd to the young man as he points, apparently simultaneously, to an inscribed stone and a briar bound mound of earth that hides the decaying body. In the last plate a younger shepherd is leaning on his staff in such a way as to recall Poussin's famous picture, 'Les Bergers d'Arcadie,' and spelling out on the concealed plane of the tomb the identical text reproduced in the box above. In one sense the staff is like an elongated finger, doing the same job as the female finger that spelt out dust; in another sense it is like Gray's pen that turned his poem into a monument; and in another it is like the burin that cuts the plate, as if Blake were doing a clever self-portrait to answer his name on the previous gravestone. If this last hypothesis is plausible, then Blake moves himself from under the stone to the surface of the stone in a resurrective swerve that gains him about 75 years. By engraving his engraving of the grave, he makes an autoglyph that puts stone,

writing and body into a configuration entirely missing from the enclosure of the Urizen plate. This is achieved by imitating the recursive relations of writer and reader in Gray's poem which depend in both instances on parallel transactions between the child and the parent-figure. Here it is the bosomed father; in the draft title-page for the *Ode to Adversity* it is a nursing mother, half-absorbed by tree-root and rock, who consoles the infant for all the cutting that has been going on above: just like the image of Niobe or Phrygian autoglyph whose ingrown characters define the name-proclaiming and face-giving virtues that thrive between stones.

Notes:

1 Giancarlo Susini, *The Roman Stonecutter*, trans. A. M. Dobrowski (New Jersey, 1973), p. 15.

2 Samuel Johnson puts it succinctly: 'Epitaphs are probably of the same age with art of writing.' 'An Essay on Epitaphs,' in *Selected Writings*, ed. Donald Greene (Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 96.

3 George Costard, *Two Dissertations* (Oxford: Richard Clements, 1701), pp. 40-41.

4 John Kerrigan, 'Knowing the dead', *Essays in Criticism*, 37, (1987), pp. 11-42.

5 See Marcel Detienne, 'L'espace de la publicite,' in *Les Savoirs de l'ecriture en Grece ancienne*, ed. Marcel Detienne (presses Universitaires de Lille, n. d.), pp. 49-50; and Jesper Svenbro, *Phrasikleia: Anthropologie de la lecture en Grece ancienne* (Paris Editions La Decouverte, 1988), pp. 23, 44.

6 Roger Caillois, *Pierres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. 18.

7 See Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), figs. 25, 26.

8 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. George Sandys (Oxford, 1632; repr. Garland Publishing: Johns Hopkins University, 1976), pp. 222-3.

9 Neil Hertz, *The End of the Line* (Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 223.

10 Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. A. Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 199.

11 *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 2.66, 2.80.

12 Debra Fried, 'Repetition, refrain, and epitaph,' *ELH* 53:3 (1986), p. 615.

Mitchell Stout House, Auckland, 1991

Sarah Treadwell
Mike Austin

This work is a collaboration coloured by cooperation and compromise, confused by issues of age and gender. Ideas of sources and authority are undermined and obscured by the weft and weave of initiation and response. The classical architectural language of symmetry and axiality constructed as a series of self contained spaces hierarchically ordered from major to minor, interior to exterior, is used in this house by Julie Stout and David Mitchell. However the classical, reliant on an orderly categorisation, is undermined by ambiguous boundaries, a layering and leaving that creates a building unsettled by constant restless adjustments. Restless adjustments that are both combative and pleasurable, and lead to consideration of the picturesque.

> "It may come as a surprise to realise that the Picturesque is not about the inherent virtues of roughness, irregularity, and abrupt variation, but about their contribution to a larger composition. Its motivation is to keep things alive by

mixing in the marginal qualities, to maintain vividness, to resist the tendency for systematic application of any form of selection to become despotic."[1]

Recent re-readings of the picturesque emphasise its complexities and possibilities, including its connections to political theories—connections that have been repressed.[2] The political returns in this house in its resistance to consumption, its refusal of the fashionable and its rereading of the indigenous. It is also

part of the picturesque in its involvement in ambiguity, deferral of completion and its multiplicity of views.

To call this house picturesque in its external form and in its undecidable interiors further suggests the importance of its relationship to landscape or "nature".[3] But here the stability of the natural is as subject to doubt as the classical. The grounding of the house in nature is complicated by an absence of ground. The ground is covered with building, pool, entry steps, an introduced garden and even a beach. It is then reconstructed in a shell path, container boxes, clay dishes of soil; so that while the project acknowledges the impossibility of the ground (the often

repeated baseless, fissured and riddled nature of contemporary existence) it deals with the issue by covering it. The house floats above the ground.

The relationship of the house to the street has neither the discreetness of the urban house nor the openness of the suburban. It is a country house in the city; a country house treating its setting as landscape almost as if it were the only house in Freemans Bay sitting in its own tiny gully.[4] The site is both overlaid and revealed. The floor levels reflect the landforms as they step down from front to back and are dished across the site mirroring the gully. There is no sense of past occupation of the site except that the house adheres to subdivision patterns of street frontage alignment.

The open front of the house cannot accommodate the entry from the street and the paradoxical closure that this implies. Instead a tapering entry staircase, covering the contours beneath, slides up the side of the house stopping at a plywood wall five degrees off a right angle, leading to the door. The wall is diagonally slashed as if a fallen shadow drawn on an elevation. The slash points to the door; overhead is a canopy supported on a tapered angled beam on a central column.

Jennifer Bloomer commenting on Piranesi's plan of the *Collegio* suggests that the "apparatus" of the plan is not made apparent through an approach by way of conventional geometry but is rather revealed "by sliding in along the path of the inscribing or incising tool, sliding through a tear in the old curtains in the back of the theater ..."[5]

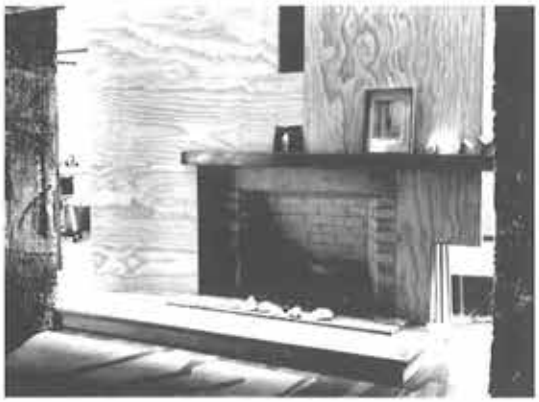
Sliding in through this tear there is an immediate engagement with the ambiguous boundaries of the house, the double wall that envelopes the central space. Called a "living room" this room seems to suggest the possibility of all living being contained in a single space, a place to lie, with fire, water and a cooling breeze. Other rooms surround and open off this

central space which, embedded within, organises the house. The room occupies an entire level on its own; you step up and down from it to other spaces. It is separated from the rest of the house by lintels over the many openings in its walls. This room, however, as in Piranesi's *Collegio* "... is an equivocal center that does not perform its traditional duty of stabilizing the structure. It is an eccentric center"[6]

A rug sits squarely in the middle attempting to repress the restless passage of the body in movement that the house in its oblique approaches and intricate ornament (picturesque qualities) sets up. The wall surfaces resist closure with openings at the corners. Two plywood structures on either side of the room refuse to align with the walls; set at diverging angles they also deny correspondence across the space. The plywood box that is part of the entry wall is pierced giving a view, partially blocked, onto the stairs. There is unaccounted for space within the wall and parts of the wall are curiously thickened. The central space can also leak out through a floor level window. Even the divan refuses to align with the containing walls.

Darkly internal, the exterior of the enclosing walls of the central room have been given a rough black external finish. The space, however, does not open directly to the outside. It is an interior space and unusual in a New Zealand house where, generally, the only interior space is the passage or hall. These are circulation spaces and the same is true of this central space. It is a centre as circulation; as Bois writes of the *Collegio*, "The center is a thoroughfare, i.e., an indifferent place with no other identity than the one conferred on it by the passers-by, a non place that exists only by the experience of time and motion that the stroller may make of it."[7]

But the issue of interiority is not straightforward in the Stout Mitchell house. The fireplace, displaced from the conventional central position, is outside the living room and beyond it.



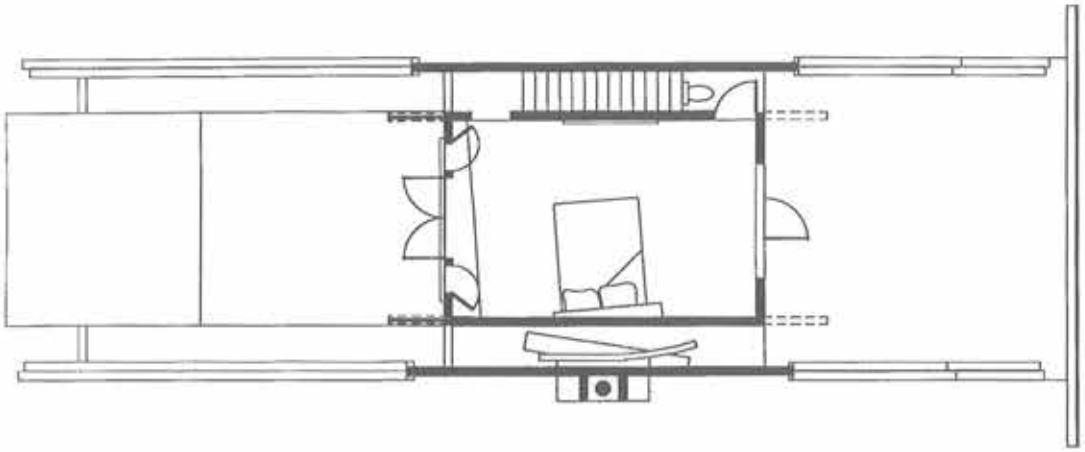
It skews and curves and closes the central space but it warms the outside. The pomposity of the conventional mantelpiece, the displaying of artefacts and trophies, is difficult here. The wood of the mantelpiece twists away from wall and fire; it is woven through the plywood panel above, which is itself split vertically. The fireplace endlessly denies its fiery qualities -it is surrounded by timber and has a downpipe running down through the chimney which is itself split. The fireplace refuses the usual comforts; warmth is whisked up through "the gap".[8]

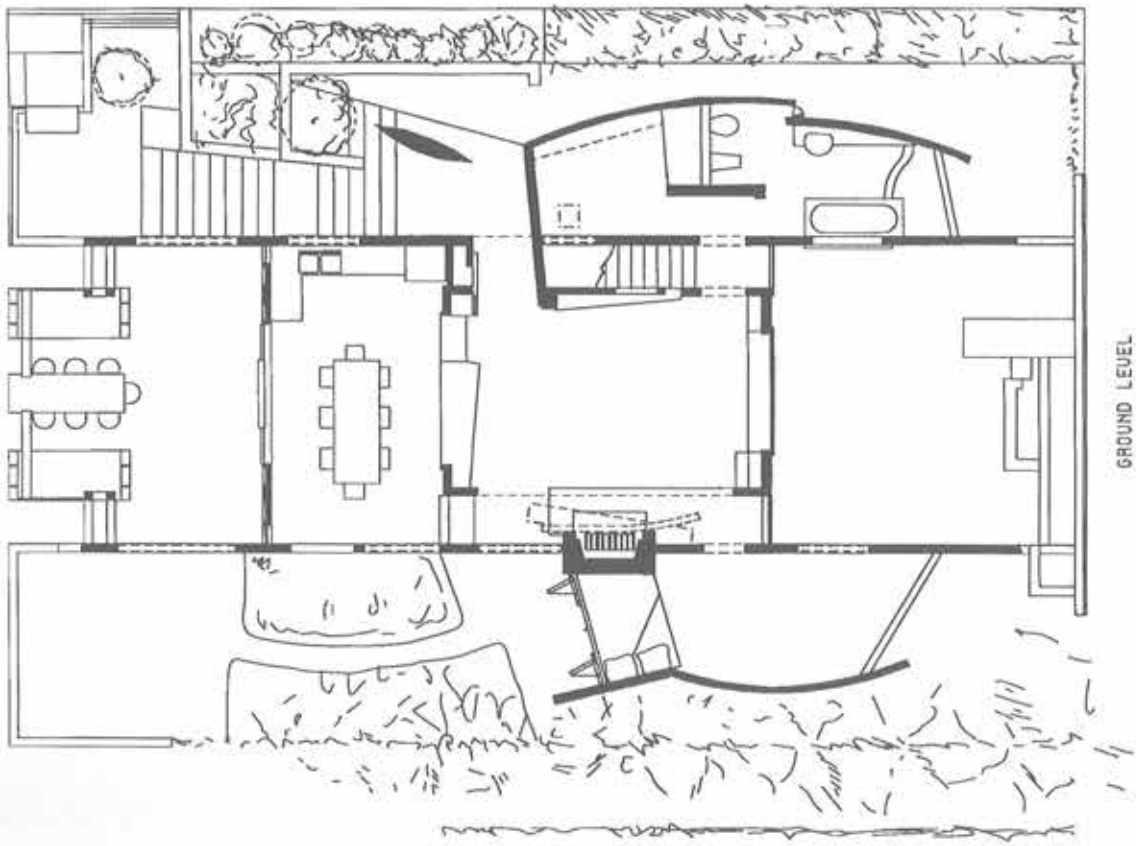
The gap according to Bloomer is the site of architecture and in this house the gap is between and both inside and outside—the seemingly endless architectural desire to make the outside habitable and dissolve the inside. In this unsettling of the usual demarcation between inside and out, the gaps become a vulnerable point of the house; there is an attempt to construct a non existence with plastic roofing and louvres. The wind can blow through the louvres—this is the negative detail at building scale. This gap between inside and outside is also between the classical and the domestic.

Domesticity is cleared away from the central space making an empty interior so that the rooms beyond the gap (the add-ons or wings) contain the expansive aspects of domesticity; objects, clothes, laundry, ablutions and visitors. These wings are cast outside the house which is insulated from these potential contaminants by the gap. The wings are both joined and detached, they bulge from the pressure of their domestic interiors and exclude the few remaining pieces of site. It is a house that in its doubled efforts to contain ends up being unable to contain.

It has, built-in, the possibility of its own unravelling. The roof bulges into the barrel vault which is peeled back. A skeletal network protrudes from under translucent corrugations which slip from under corrugated steel so that a possibility of further peeling back is suggested. The central space is not protected in this direction by the insulating qualities of the gaps; the unravelling could go from end to end. The gaps have their ends and beginnings in the water garden. The house, like a hydro dam, holds back and contains the water that might stream through and down the slope. The picture making tendency of the central space slices the water view into frames with a guillotine window (a big double hung with concrete counterweights), a technical (but hardly technological) solution. Framed as in a picture we are to look out to, but not to go into, this south side water garden containing sensuous dreamy possibilities both proffered and withheld. The bath opens onto the pool in a play of cold against hot water. The water is used to manipulate the light in the house and activates the picturesque[9] In the other direction the house is itself a frame that constructs, through its absent front wall, its own interior as part of the view through the trees to the city.

The house is swept through by this axis that starts at the source, the cubist waterfall (oddly non symmetrical) proceeds over the contours of the land to the bush and city to Rangitoto beyond and ultimately the openness of the Pacific. Sweeping the central space free of

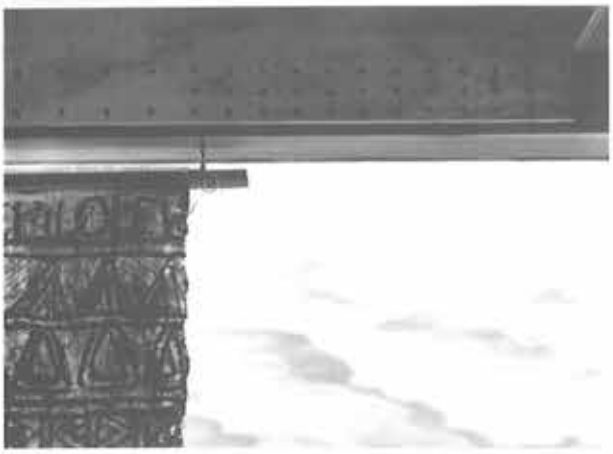

UPPER LEVEL


GROUND LEVEL

containment, this ruthless, rigorous and symmetrical axis is determined by the street layout of the city. The passage of spaces is also the passageway of a suburban house, the hall that splits the house. The suburban pattern repeats in the vertical dimension from cars in the basement to bed in the attic- familiar and ordinary. Which is to say that it is an ordinary New Zealand house with its deck to the street and the view and its public and private separations. It uses ordinary materials too. But the materials are never treated as ordinary; there is a sparseness, a lack of indulgence, a care in the details that raises the building out of the ordinary.[10] The extraordinary is combined with a beguiling accidental look that tells us that this is all artifice.[11]

Artifice is fundamental to the picturesque. The Mitchell Stout house is not a rustic house though it bears touches of that tradition with its creosote and unfinished ends to timber. Instead it is considered, deliberate and highly controlled. Everywhere the house is dependent on or indebted to nature ('natural' finished timbers, polished plywood, shadows and light). Most unnatural treatments construct its nature; water contained in a concrete box fountain, selective breeding of goldfish, a shell path miles from the sea and a sprouting ponga fence sustained with rubber hosing, all construct a vision of paradise.

Paradise is also a Pacific myth. There are Pacific references everywhere; hanging screens, rattan blinds, printed fabrics, and woven mats. These claim to be decorative rather than structural but the Pacific is not that easily categorised. The spatial and material organisation of the house is very Pacific; the empty pavilion, the separation of functions, the timber structure, the swelling forms. Consequently what is structural and what is decorative remains in doubt. For instance the central space in the Stout Mitchell house is structured ornamentally with a weaving of walls and gaps, interiors and exteriors. Fine cloths sway between the gap and the space and slant across the face of the bench. Nailing patterns on plywood beams are structural yet decorative. There is a decorative fineness both ornamental



and structural that makes the space complex and multiple and reaches into the rest of the house. The almost geodesic trellis over the deck pretends to be structural (it holds up the plastic roofing) but is also decorative.

Extension is prevalent; hanging timber screens shimmer and flap in the breeze and extend the walls out into space; a constant movement past the moment of contemplation and appropriation. The complex spatial wanderings initiated in the gaps are elaborated with ornament and fray the serene picture making of the spatial sequence.[12] This house is a building about extension and openness woven together in an intricate play of light and timber with varieties of timber and treatments of timber; overlaid, meshed, stretched and filleted. The rough and ordinary is woven with the polished and refined; the tyranny of structure dissolves in detail. Layers of light timber blur the axial system.

The power of classical centrality and axiality is constantly ameliorated and undermined but not avoided.[13] Here there might be a dialogue between the Pacific and the classical, a dialogue of questionable equivalence, certainly the "planimetric choice" of axiality is undermined by its own dependence on hierarchy of structure and ornament which the deeply decorative design dissolves. The Stout Mitchell House resounds with the internal upheavals of the picturesque.

Notes:

1 Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 27.

2 For example see Sidney K Robinson, "The Picturesque: Sinister Dishevelment", in Marco

Diani and Catherine Ingraham, *Restructuring Architectural Theory* (Evanston Illinois, 1989), p. 74; and Yve-Alain Bois, "A Picturesque Stroll around *Clara-Clara*", in Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, Joan Copjec (eds.), *October The First Decade 1976 - 1986* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987), p. 364 .

3 "Nature and the conventions of classical culture each served as foundations for stable, authoritive, aesthetic constructions. The appeal to such sanctioned sources may be argued in terms that seem to set up a contradiction between nature and convention, but neither is willing to replace its claims of absolute reliability by a recognition of its self-referential construction. Mixture itself can be proposed as stable, optimal condition only by seeing its prevention of homogenisation as a constant that lies behind obvious changes. Such a continuous reframing of the phenomenon as whole becomes a part serves to overcome the inertia of certainty." Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 21-22.

4 The picturesque, according to Bois, operates "not to force nature but to reveal "capacities" of the site while magnifying their variety and singularity." Bois, op. cit.

5 Jennifer Bloomer, "Towards Desiring Architecture", in Andrea Khan (ed.), *Drawing Building Text* (New York: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 62.

6 Ibid., p. 48.

7 Bois also suggests that Piranesi "foreshadows the space of all modern sculpture ... one of passage and displacement from the centre." Bois, op. cit.

8 "A third image is the gap between boundaries, the place where the edge of things comes close to touching. The place of architecture seems to be here in these places (as well as in its conventional disciplinary capsule, which rather sheepishly embeds itself in an imagined wall between art and science). This architecture is not disciplinary, but interdisciplinary. It seeps out of its capsule and bleeds into the interstices, ... " Bloomer , op. cit., p. 56.

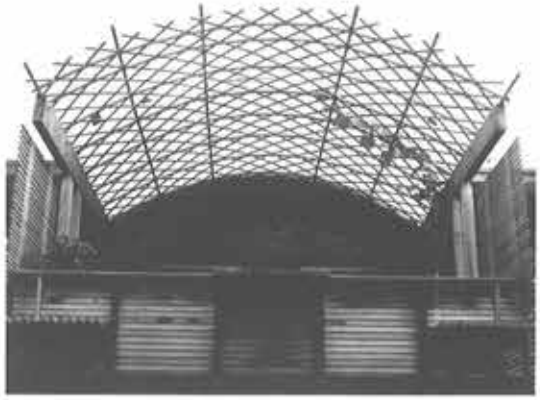
9 Also Le Corbusier about whom Bois says: "Le Corbusier, as his vocabulary shows, again takes up the idea of the picturesque, and tries to imagine what a picturesque architecture might be." Bois, op. cit.

10 This is less so in the wings which have conventional building details and which make one aware how refined and sophisticated the house is in its construction.

11 "For the picturesque is above all a struggle against the reduction 'of all terrains to the flatness of a sheet of paper.'" Bois op. cit.

12 "The struggle to avoid tyranny and system by habitually injecting "roughness, irregularity and abrupt variation...", Robinson, 1989, p. 78.

13 "The *Collegio*, then, constitutes a kind of gigantic question mark on the meaning of architectural composition: the "clarity" of the planimetric choice is subtly eroded by the process with which the various parts engage in mutual dialogue; the single space secretly undermines the laws to which it pretends to subject itself. Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987), p. 31.



Vladamir Cacala and the Gelb House (1955)

G. Elliot Reid

Eisenman writes of a "modernism of alienation"[1] which arises in the anxiety of dislocation, an architecture of "an alienated culture with no roots."

> "Architecture has repressed the individual consciousness in the physical environment that is supposed to be the happy home. I think it is exactly in the home where the unhomely is, where the terror is alive—in the repression of the unconscious. What I am trying to suggest is that the alienated house makes us realise that we cannot only be conscious of the physical world, but rather also of our own consciousness."[2]

I feel that a rootless alienated repression can be a central fact of life in New Zealand, particularly for the exiled immigrant, to which architecture on the whole usually chooses to 'turn a blind eye,' that architecture refuses to engage with a social disintegration and a repression, preferring instead to fragment itself, submerge itself uncritically into its own condition.

I refer to a work by such an exile, Vladimir Cacala, the Gelb House, Mount Albert (1955). Cacala's work on the whole remained committed to a small circle of influences, choosing to explore a reduced vocabulary of architectural forms. (This alien ground holds no memory, no associative value for Cacala.) The typical Cacala house comprises two enveloping walls with large expanses of glass to the north; planes pushed forward at floor and roof level in the manner of Richard Neutra (for example the Kun house, 1936, or the Davis house, 1937).

Cacala's four years of training at Prague Technical Institute under Svoboda Jiri (who was more recently the set designer for the film 'Amadeus') was in the tradition of a Bauhaus education. His architectural modernism was transplanted in New Zealand with little interest in developing the vernacular shed tradition that Vernon Brown was calling for—his clients were mainly continentals like himself. His only concession would be to the climate, seizing upon the overhang/verandah combination employed in colonial building ostensibly to protect the owners from a harsher summer sun.

Having escaped the communist takeover in 1948 to American-occupied Bavaria, he later made his way to New Zealand where his father already resided, arriving here in 1952. Brenner Associates employed Cacala to develop the furniture design aspect of the company. Vladimir's father had made plywood furniture and his father in turn had been involved with Thonet Mundas, Austria's woodbending manufacturers.

Brenner Associates Ltd.[3] comprised Stephen Jelicich and Des Mullen (who graduated alongside the Group Architect's members,) John Butterworth, Ron Grant and Milan Mrkusich. Throughout the 1950s these young men had helped to introduce "new overseas ideas in architecture, up-to-date decoration, and the best methods of presenting goods to the public."[4] The Herald ran articles on them with lines such as: "A modern Continental type of shop architecture is giving Queen Street a new look and taking some of the drabness from suburban business centres." (6.12.51) A bright, assured and increasingly fashionable mod-

ernism had moved out of the books, onto the streets and into the homes.

Shortly after he began with Brenner Associates, Cacala received a commission to design the Gelb house. Ilse and Ernst Gelb were an Austrian immigrant couple who had come to New Zealand in 1939.[5] Both were interested in contemporary European architecture and were impressed by the distinctive and sophisticated ideas of Cacala, whom they had met through friends. They were looking for a private house which would embrace the distant views from their hillside section.

Traversing a rather large series of generalisations, I believe that Cacala's work has been ignored up to this point[6] because of the condition of normalcy it appears to represent, the easy success with which it meets an unassuming brief. Cacala seems to be questioning how an individual might cope with the New Zealand conformity. Interest in the house eventually focuses on the interior, where originally Milan Mrkusich's fashionable colour scheme helped define the spaces, bold panels of sunset red and aqua combining with the texture of wood. The exterior, particularly as it addresses the road, is about denying interest. One would struggle to call the Gelb house radical in terms of what had already come before. Its very modernism seems schooled, technically good but limited, even off the pace. However, it is this apparent 'normalcy' I wish to question, for within the normal lies something less palatable, less simple and wholesome that one might initially not notice.

Set back slightly below the level of the road, the entrance elevation is unremarkable save for the careful attention to the fenestration, and the flat roof visible from the road. The house is entered either from the garage below or across a small bridge to the front door. Inside, the landing gives access to the kitchen hard left, living area straight ahead, stairs to the basement off to the right and around the corridor, bedrooms, bathroom and a separate toilet. The north elevation is more remarkable. The deck cantilevers beyond the basement and is protected above by an "eyebrow". Although Cacala speaks of the cantilever as an economi-

cal device, saving on the basement by tying the deck back to the building with extended joists, there is little doubt it is also a favoured aesthetic feature, expressing lightness in place of the traditional massing of masonry. The north facade makes a false gesture to confidence; blinkered at the sides, the house is like a camera posed towards a distant view. And like a camera the Gelb house could be set up anywhere else, in any country, to any view. This balcony lacks a definitive social purpose. One might stand on it, but would one lounge on it, eat or sleep under its overhang? Its actual dimensions preclude normal activities. Its purpose as such is more gestural. The balcony does not define security but more a state of siege. While one cannot ignore the exterior, nor can one really occupy it.

In the interior a number of subtle relationships are slightly distorted or erased. The absence of the hearth is notable from the start, an elaboration of what had been a central preoccupation in the work of Brenner Associates, into oblivion. In the Jelicich House, Meadowbank (1956/57) an enormous fireplace is located at the centre of a nine-square plan. Architecture enshrines the fireplace not only as the physical but also the communal core of the dwelling

and the subordination of the individual to the family ethos. Semper conferred on the fireplace connotations of sustenance and supplication. If we read it in this material tradition then, without a fireplace the Gelb House becomes spiritually decentred. Solidity is replaced by a peculiar centre-piece drinks cabinet structure behind which is a long wall-mounted cabinet with radio speakers.

Two black painted steel columns rise through the drinks cabinet and shelf, to support the ceiling's only visible beam. Surprisingly this centrepiece support was introduced at the last moment. The beam that runs through the room was unsupported in the architect's designs; excessive deflection was observed during building. This display of load and support expressing the construction of the house is exceptional for Cacala. His interiors are usually more abstract and devoid of beams. Demonstrating the typical concerns of the furniture designer, he speaks instead of surface textures, uncluttered distinction in joints between one surface and another, transparencies, and interior units, shape of furniture and effect of colour.

The conversation area is a peculiar grouping of furniture to which I will return shortly. The Gelbs' own a coffee table with a glass top and reversible yellow/orange base by Bob Roukema, the Dutch designer who produced work for Jon Jansen. (Other versions exist, one by Cacala had disc-topped legs, another by

Des Mullen had wrought iron legs.) A Roukema chair and two by Cacala also feature. These consistently appeared in Brenner advertisements and are made of Japanese Sen with foam rubber and originally were covered in Bedford upholstery. The legs have an elegant precision to their tapered form, though two pins have replaced the former one in connecting the hind leg to the back, stabilising the chair's initial tendency to wobble. A more formal version with a higher back has been placed near the reading area.

The long wall-mounted cabinet with radio speaker, and the built-in couches demonstrate Cacala's European concern with designing almost every piece of furniture in the house. The cabinet itself reflects the building on a minor scale.

The first floor's "in-line" planning allows both main bedroom and living area privileged amounts of sun. The deck's overhang allows the lower winter sun to stream in whilst designed to cut out the high mid-day summer sun. This sun however causes problems in the kitchen, where internal blinds have proved ineffective against the heat.

The prescribed hillside view is framed matter-of-factly by two pairs of glass panelled doors. But the built-in and fixed seating is strangely displaced to the periphery of view. The area before these vast doors, over-lit by the sun, is indeterminate, under-designated, unoccupied. Habitation is removed to a more subdued place, out of the light, out of the frame and is turned by stages away from the exterior world. A hierarchy of seating evolves, as a hierarchy of removal which is further complicated by a third person, who, entering the space, is immediately cast in the role of 'intruder'. Thus an inward gaze, the averted gaze which the interior determines, and the gaze of domination from the exterior, reside side by side. Colomina writes that:

> "Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant."[7]

If, by comparison, we take the work of Heinrich Kulka, in the Villa Kantor at Jablonec (1933-34) where seating patterns lie along or create lines,[8] one can see how the seated figure is privileged and given access/axis to the view, and a standing figure is denoted as an interloper, interrupting the subject/object (seated viewer/view outside) relationship. In the Kulka House at St Heliers (1944) a series of theatre boxes are established which also construct the subject, positioning the viewer to explore the exterior from the comfort of enclosed space, past an organised 'forecourt' to the chaotic world beyond. Colomina[9] is dismissive of Kulka in this respect. She reads his interpretation of the theatre box as an exigency of economic planning (tightness and openness) contrasting it with Adolf Loos's understanding of the Raumplan.

> "For Loos the theatre box exists in the intersection between claustrophobia and agoraphobia ... on the threshold of the private ... ."[10]

But for Kulka she claims they speak of the inability of the house to maintain its veil of security. Goldie too notes this difference between Kulka and Loos, although he appears to place a more positive value on the notion of the house as defensible mechanism.

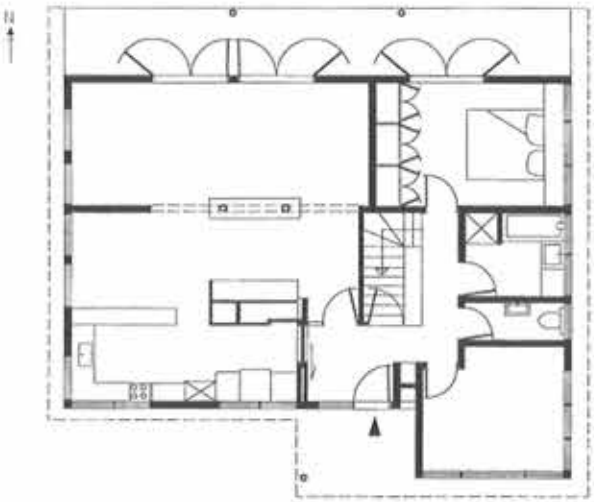
> "Knowing that a small, low nook (or recess or annexe) gives the feeling of mental shelter and appears as a place of contemplation; but only if it is a part of a larger room; as for example a box at the theatre which, by itself would give a feeling of claustrophobia."[11]

The interior of the Gelb house does not ascribe to these conventions of intimacy but, rather to a concept of removal. Comfort is no longer a given condition. The withdrawal of simple comfort calls one to reconstruct it in the mind. In this respect, Cacala the exile is distanced from a Utopian concept of reintegration of the individual and society.

Owners often experienced initial problems in these modern houses. The builder and Cacala had many difficulties, especially with the detailing. Cacala's attempts to reduce the size of interior skirtings, scotias, cornices and window sills ran counter to a building industry still

accustomed to hiding poor joints behind elaborate dressing; antithetical to modernism's purist streak. Other problems existed. Ilse complained that the mahogany wall initially installed looked like flooring so it was replaced and given a lighter finish. When the wind blew from the north in summer time, the french doors had to be shut, turning the house into an oven. Louvres were installed later, and some picture windows replaced by top hung sashes. When the original cedar overhang got fungus, it had to be painted, with holes bored to allow air to circulate between the ceiling and roof. Yet the Gelbs were prepared to put up with the "new ideas", saying that the "original ones had to suffer." They judge the house has been a success; the architect reconciling his aesthetic concerns with the client's specific needs. An elegant, pleasant and modern home.

What is at stake here, I believe, in reappraising this fragment of New Zealand modern architecture is to witness a simultaneous growth and decay, a sort of minor catastrophe of home and homelessness, a crisis injected just under the skin of architecture, an issue of anxiety and dislocation which was tackled to effect by one architect at least in the post-war period. If New Zealand subjectivity is shaped in its suburbs, defining this country's values, the way people act, dress and discuss things (or don't), it has little to do with angst, more to do with retentive banality; being straight-up, abrupt, but not without edge. Whether Cacala's work is symptomatic or critical of New Zealand suburbia is perhaps moot, nevertheless the concerns discussed here remain relevant and their examination is ongoing.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Notes:

1 Peter Eisenman—An Architectural Design Interview with Charles Jencks, *Architectural Design* 58, No. 3/4 (1988), p. 49.

2 Ibid., p. 52.

3 Brenner Associates Ltd. Refer to G. Elliot Reid, "Untitled: The Mrkusich House 1950-52", *Art New Zealand*, No. 62, pp. 79-81 & 86.

4 "Trading optimism in Auckland's Queen St." *Freelance Magazine*, (undated.)

5 The lack of cultural recognition given to war refugees is both notable and dismal, especially in relation to *their* experience of this country as opposed to the trite praise of the contribution they made—that is, what we took from them.

6 A notable exception is Peter Shaw, *New Zealand Architecture from Polynesian Beginnings to 1990* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), p. 165.

7 Beatriz Colomina, *Sexuality and Space* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), p. 83.

8 Jan Sapák, "Heinrich Kulka Villa a Jablonec 1933,1934", *Domus* 726.

9 Beatrix Colomina, op. cit., p. 76.

10 Ibid., p. 82.

11 C.R. Goldie, "Henry Kulka," Undergrad Thesis, Architecture Dept., University of Auckland, (1986).

Sacrifice and Signification in the Poetry of Allen Curnow

Alex Calder

1. CEREMONIAL

> At Athens, Lysimache, the priestess of Athene Polias, when asked for a drink by the mule drivers who had transported the sacred vessels, replied, "No, for I fear it will get into the ritual."
>
> — Plutarch [1]

> Poetry won't bear too much accidental stuff, but must have some. Warning: do not exceed the stated dose.
>
> — Curnow[2]

Lysimache, like Allen Curnow, is a true master of ceremonies. Those mule drivers stay thirsty precisely because a ritual won't bear too much accidental stuff. Just as a poet, according to Curnow, "never stops trying to save poetry from poetry, to make something of it, not a spurious everything," so must the priestess regulate ritual's appetite for the consumption of signs.[3] For both poet and priestess, mastery means maintaining an economy of signifi-

cation, and yet that mastery is always already in jeopardy: the medium each works in has the capacity to signify endlessly. What say those mule drivers did exceed the stated dose? The priestess might look to sanctions or corrections, some rite that would protect the unclean and the ritual itself from the consequences of inadvertent defilement. And if a poet were to ignore Curnow's warning? Indifference to an economy of signification risks banality or delirium—but, given that poetry must have some "accidental stuff," what rites, what correctives, maintain that economy? And at what cost are constraints against unlimited semiosis maintained? In answering these questions—or, more exactly, establishing them as questions Allen Curnow's poems answer, and answer variously—I have been interested by something else the poet and priestess have in common. It is a kind of professional expertise in matters relating to sacrifice, to the victims each, in a sense, "needs for their work," victims both poet and priestess may partly resemble.

But first, I would like to tell you the story of another such victim. She is one of Freud's "obsessional neurotic" patients and the behaviour she exhibits is the sort psychologists still term, "ceremonial." The patient, he writes:

> used to repeat an especially noticeable and senseless obsessive action. She would run out of her room into another room in the middle of which there was a table. She would straighten the table-cloth on it in a particular manner and ring for the housemaid. The latter had to come up to the table, and the patient would then dismiss her on some indifferent errand. In the attempts to explain this compulsion, it occurred to her that at one place on the table-cloth there was a stain, and that she always arranged the cloth in such a way that the housemaid was bound to see the stain. The whole scene proved to be a reproduction of an experience in her married life which had later on given her thoughts a problem to solve. On the wedding-night her husband had met with a not unusual mishap. He found himself impotent, and "many times in the course of the night he came hurrying from his room into hers" to try once more whether he could succeed. In the morning he said he would feel ashamed in front of the hotel housemaid who made the beds, and he took a bottle of red ink and poured its contents over the sheet; but he did it so clumsily that the red stain came in a place that was very unsuitable for his purpose. With her obsessive action, therefore, she was representing the wedding-night. "Bed and board" [*"Tisch und*

Bett"] between them make up a marriage.[4]

One of the more famous lines in New Zealand poetry— "the stain of blood that writes an island story"—also happens to be written in ink.[5]

"Landfall in Unknown Seas" is a ceremonial poem: it commemorates the three-hundredth anniversary of Tasman's discovery of New Zealand. The poem has two themes, only slightly distinct from each other. One is a meditation on discovery and the epistemological distinction between map and territory. Territory, be it a stretch of coast or the Real, is always already "something different, something nobody counted on."[6] What we do count on, all we can count on, are our maps. These might be as vague as the expectations that brought Tasman on his voyage or as rich as the faculties of language and perception, but they are maps all the same, and we mistake the categorical difference between map and territory at our peril. The second theme concerns the fact that the first encounter between the discoverers and those who discovered them was bungled: the day was "marred with murder," blood flowed, and its traces and substitutes leave the poet, like the patient, with a problem to solve. Already we might see how the second theme is an emblematic version of the first: the stain of blood that writes an island story issues, as it were, from the gap between map and territory. But I think something more is involved, and we might let Freud's patient be our guide.

Freud himself has only a little to say. The woman's ceremonial, he notes, shows a minutely detailed identification with her husband. Her actions follow the logic of wish-fulfilment, transforming what didn't happen into what should have happened; and because the stain, through displacement, is now "in the right place," her husband, says Freud dryly, "is made superior to his past mishap."[7] The last lines of "Landfall in Unknown Seas" might similarly propose a metonymic act of identification.

> Only by a more faithful memory, laying
> On him the half-light of a diffident glory,

The Sailor lives, and stands beside us, paying
Out into our time's wave
The stain of blood that writes an island story.

In this moment of identification, the mantle of a sacrificial victim is laid on the dead sailor so that he, too, is "made superior to his past mishap." In this, a wish is fulfilled — one that concerns, not the sailor, but rather the present of the poet's discourse. Much of the third section of "Landfall in Unknown Seas" is a catalogue of inadequate and white-washing responses to the events the poem commemorates. Set against "those speeches / Pinning on the Past like a decoration / For merit that congratulates itself" is the poet's "more faithful memory." The poem insists on the distinction, but it is only in wish that these *can* be kept separate, a wish accompanied by sacrificial violence.

Let us consider, once more, the patient's story. The honeymoon night is a conventional occasion, and its signs, once part of an older signifying system, now inform a nineteenth century code of male pride. That night something unexpected happens (ie. nothing happens), and this accident leads to an attempted correction and a crisis for signification. Suppose, for a moment, the housemaid did pay particular attention to those ink stained sheets. While I have little expertise in the semiotics of laundry, I expect she would have read a highly ambiguous message. She might imagine all sorts of contexts—hardly any of them erotic—in which the ink just happened to spill. She might also have read an attempt to deceive. In this case, the husband's impotence is only one explanation for the absence of blood and the presence of ink; the possibility that his bride was already "used goods" is another.

What has happened is that a connotative chain—bloody sheets signify a properly consummated marriage—has been damaged; the attempt to repair it, however, only succeeds in highlighting its denotative elements. The ink, signifying bloody sheets signifying a properly consummated marriage, doesn't signify; it remains, palpably, embarrassingly, ink. The resulting proliferation of possible meanings is then limited and controlled in the wife's cer-

emonial through an interplay of repetition and victimage. The husband's reputation is wishfully restored, the signifying system is stabilised, but at a price: the wife can only cast herself as a victim—both of the past she repeats and cannot understand, and of the reproach that may, in all likelihood, underlie her identification with her husband, the unfair reproach of a victim who feels, "it was all my fault."

I think "Landfall in Unknown Seas" follows a similar trajectory. The story it tells follows a sequence whereby the hubris and high hopes of discovery founder on an unexpected event; a story, I have suggested, the poem allegorises in terms of the distinction between map and territory. But there is a point where the poet's discourse also meets with an accident, one that reflexively poses a crisis for signification and requires a restoration of its economy.

The poem begins:

> Simply by sailing in a new direction
> You could enlarge the world.

So far, the poet has made no reference to territory. An opening irony implies that whatever discovery is or entails, it is not going to be simple. As for what is to be found, a term denoting territory—"the world"—is used here as a figure for knowledge, for our maps. The metaphor is particularly effective because it overlays a metonymy—one thinks of the kind of map on which the words "Terra Incognita" might appear, a map-of-the-world that might be enlarged or redrawn, by sailing in a new direction.

This complex of figurative meanings meets with an accident in the poem's final section:

> Well, home is the Sailor, and that is a chapter
> In a schoolbook, a relevant yesterday
> We thought we knew all about, being much apter
> To profit, sure of our ground,
> No murderers mooring in our Golden Bay.

In a poem so interested in maps and territories, the historical substitution of names—Mur-

derer's Bay becomes Golden Bay—just had to be mentioned, but mentioning it proves to be a snare. Is the new name more like the territory (where the sands underfoot are indeed "golden"), or does the substitution involve a lack of fidelity to the real? Neither question is appropriate: a change of place names is entirely in keeping with the rule, "The map is not the territory and the name is not the thing named."[8] Yet the tone of the poem is clearly derisory. It is as if the speaker has now taken his opening lines—"simply by sailing in a new direction / you could enlarge the world"—not figuratively, but denotatively; as if, in changing the place name, the territory has somehow been damaged, not "enlarged," but shrunk through this sanitising occlusion of the reality of past violence. The result is a loss of ground: everything becomes writing, *only* writing: "a chapter in a schoolbook," a speech "pinning on the Past like a decoration for merit that congratulates itself," a "self-important celebration" a "painstaking history."

This is the horror of unlimited semiosis. Meaning either proliferates endlessly—as in the list of writings—or, arrives at a condition of null semiosis: "'here is the world's end where wonders cease.'" The alternative is the poet's "more faithful memory"—a memory that can only wishfully be kept separate from writing. This moment of identification, I suggested earlier, makes the sailor a sacrificial victim. It has another function too: it limits semiosis. When the speaker has the sailor stand Christ-like beside us, "paying / Out into our times wave / The stain of blood that writes an island story," he has at last arrived at a stable meaning—"we are all victims in time"—a stability that requires an act of sacrificial transubstantiation, turning, not wine into blood, but ink into "the stain of blood that writes an island story."

2. THE UNSPEAKABLE

> There was a man in Boston who was so large when a babe that it was impossible to name him all at once.
>
> —Anon.[9]

Names and dimensions are two distinct logical types, but our facility for nonsense allows us to mix them, to think names and sizes on one equivalent plane. The humour of this old joke is hardly transgressive: it relies on and confirms the distinction it plays with, is funny, perhaps, precisely because it calls such a distinction to mind. But what about this?

> *Tane Mahuta* is a very big tree
> because of the signboards at the roadside.

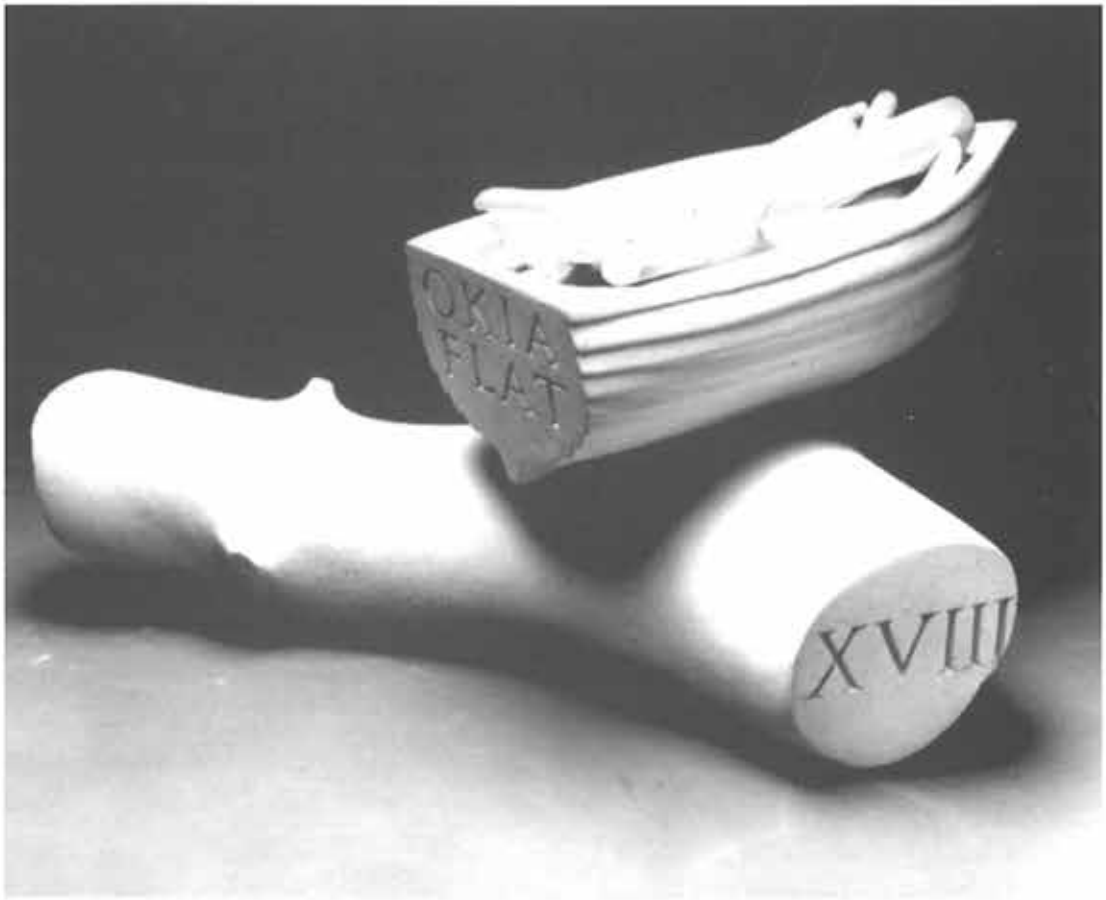
Or this?

> No nativity ode for Tane. At his namegiving
>
> nobody had the time, having time only
> short of an unspeakable supervention
>
> to blurt him, Logos begotten of log,
> the disyllable, as he came.[10]

The machinery of humour is there in both cases. The first, like a chicken crossing the road joke, springs a context surprise, the second puns on a word written within the Word. But these are serious jokes: they evaporate laughter and unsettle, rather than confirm, the categories of sense.

As that pun promises, "A Four Letter Word"—from the 1972 sequence, *Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects*—is something of a tall story about the origin of language. Is the title a clue to that origin? If "A Four Letter Word" suggests to you the sort of word that begins with an F and ends with an UCK, you will have been the victim of a "firetruck" joke: the poem's four letter

word turns out to be "Tane," the name of a tree, the name of a god. And yet Tane's name, we just heard, was not given but blurted—it is an expletive. What is the origin of language? A four letter word. The logic that takes us there is almost palindromic—like "Madam I'm Adam," a game of mere writing. But, like the poem's other jokes in and about writing, these games seem on the point of breaking the circle that contains them. For instance, when "Logos is begotten of log," the pun is not merely graphematic: it is as if a sign has been broken, sawn off, revealing a natural origin at the heart of all naming.



*Denis O'Connor, **Oarnest** 1985, South Island limestone.*

The idea is scandalous, but it is worth noting that there was a linguist-manqué who arrived, in all earnestness, at a theory very like this, in a manner somewhat like this. In *La Science de Dieu,* Jean Pierre Brisset located the origin of human language in the croaking of frogs. His evidence was a kind of energetic etymology. Brisset would take a word, *logé* (lodged) for instance, and find other words "inside" it, such as: *"l'eau j'ai"* (I have water), *"l'haut j'ai"* (I am high), *"l'os j'ai"* (I have a bone). This string of revealed words told him that man's ancestor, the frog, was carnivorous and lived by the water in lake villages built on posts — a detail confirmed by the Greek, if Logos is begotten of log. According to Jean-Jacques Lecercle, Brisset's wild etymologies generate a "real but diseased creation myth": "Beneath the veneer of Brisset's grammar," he writes, "there soon emerges the violent story of how the frog became man, an epic of cruelty and pain, of war and cannibalism, a tale told by a prophet, full of croaks and fury, signifying much."[11]

But what makes the one about the baby from Boston so different from Curnow's tall story or Brisset's delirium? We know, without even thinking, not to confuse the size of a baby and the size of a name, yet it will take an effort of thought—perhaps even an impossible effort of thought—to avoid positing some kind of natural link between names and the things they refer to. Saussure's great insight—that "in language there are only differences without positive terms"—may be unimpeachable linguistics, but it contradicts all our deepest intuitions about who and what and where we are.[12] Perhaps, acknowledging a debt to Brisset, we should read Curnow's poem as a story, not of the origin of language, but of the origin of our contradictory experience of language—a true story, I might add, of violence and desire, of the sacrificial dismemberment of the body.

The poem begins:

> A wood god bothering cantor
> rolls out his call. He names
>
> tanekaha, kaiwaka, taraire.
> Mispronounced, any of these

can strike dead and dumb. Well spoken,
they are are a noise neither of the writhing root

nor glabrous leaf nor staring flower,
all that can unspeakably supervene.

When the well-spoken cantor rolls out his call, *what* he names—tanekaha, kaiwaka, taraire—are conventional signs. This is a simple rule: the materiality of the signifier is not to be confused with the materiality of that which is signified; one does not water the name of a plant. Rather, the names denote or refer; if the well spoken word "strikes," hits its mark, this is merely an effect language is capable of achieving and not the model or basis of a relation beyond that effect.[13] What lies outside language is literally unspeakable. Indeed, the very notion of an outside is a construct of language: in the poem's words, extralinguistic reality "*super*venes," not intervenes, it follows upon the establishment of language.

It would seem that the poet has set in place the firmest of distinctions between linguistic and extralinguistic reality. At the same time, however, he adds a contrasting scenario, one that qualifies the force of that initial distinction. He suggests there is a difference between good and bad naming, between the possibility of the cantor calling the tree by name and the possibility of his mispronouncing it. A mispronounced name—I am thinking of something worse than "tanny-kaha"—"can strike dead and dumb." A name like that is just noise, it has lost its power to "strike" or refer. If good naming is like a bell that rings out when struck, the mispronounced name might simply go "clunk." The difficulty here is that sound does not change in accordance with reference: "dead and dumb" strictly describes the well spoken name (as signifier) too. To overlook that would seem to give the well-spoken name something extra, some attribute the mispronounced name lacks or loses. But neither the signified nor that which is signified is an attribute of the signifier: the poem's counter-suggestion is a first mark of resistance to the arbitrariness of signs. Further, the phrase "can strike dead and dumb" might also suggest a fate that befalls the mispronouncer of names.

But if linguistic transgression is an instance of "unspeakable" behaviour—an act that places a speaker beyond the pale—we again have a conflation of categories appropriate to linguistic and extralinguistic reality. It is as if the dead and dumb mispronouncer were to join the alterity of glabrous leaf and staring flower. But note the overkill of the phrase "dead and dumb." Redundancy in punishment, I would suggest, is often the lot of those who break taboos. Extralinguistic reality and linguistic transgression ought to be distinct logical types, but mixing them has a singular advantage. While the suggestion is barely made as yet, it prepares the way for a scenario in which the taboos and violence associated with transgression become guarantors of a more than conventional relation between language and the world.

In the poem's second section, we move from speech to writing, from the Cantor's act of naming to another mode of discourse the poet associates with advertising. This shift is profoundly defensive, for what is mocked here is by no means a special and degenerate case: it is characteristic of language as such.

> *Tane Mahuta* is a very big tree,
> because of the signboards at the roadside.
>
> Tired trunk, punky at the heart,
> disyllabic Tane is too venerable
>
> for words. True, that at a given sign
> they stop their cars and walk no distance
>
> to have seen, to have found themselves,
> as advertised, in the absence of the god,
>
> to have decently exposed some inches of film
> in honour of his great girth.
>
> Strike him with lightning!
> the old arboreal bore.

> Cut him up for signboards. Just look at that,
> such longevity, such bulk, such value in board feet.

Driving through Northland you might pass a roadsign that said, "To Big Kauri." And the tree is big because of the sign: Like the cheese label's "bigger block," the sign does not refer to a dimension, it promises better value, more "tree" for one's money and time. Such a tree is exactly as real as the photographs tourists take of it—it belongs, not to the order of objects, but to the order of simulacra, of "effigies." The poem's satire works by literalising the loss of the referent. Tane is "too venerable for words," he is old, punky at the heart, and boring; he might as well be cut up for signboards since this is all he has come to. But, as I hear it, the humour is sardonic and implies this is indeed a loss to be mourned. When the referential or "well-spoken" word falls, as a tree or Adam might fall, into mere sign value, the distinct becomes the same and what once seemed to have ground is plunged into groundlessness. If the tone implies a positive alternative to the prospect of unlimited semiosis, the poet will have to invent one. There is nothing unusual in this: we all encounter situations in which meaning seems to proliferate and we cope, often enough, by trying a new context. The poet's next move, then, will be to recontextualise his initial scenario of naming. He needs somehow to find a context that falls "in between" a naive cratylism he cannot support and the insupportable implications of a language that has always already lost its ground in reference. He does this by way of a swerve into mythology, by making a totem of Tane.

> Titans were titanic in the old days
> before the defoliant Thunderer.
>
> The children had no fathers then, as now.
> No nativity ode for Tane. At his namegiving
>
> nobody had the time, having time only
> short of an unspeakable supervention

> to blurt him, Logos begotten of log,
> the disyllable, as he came.

The myth is highly syncretic and I mean to reply in kind. First, I suggest we associate those "old days" with a particular point in the Greek creation myth. Kronos has castrated his father, Uranus, but will in turn be displaced by Zeus, "the defoliant Thunderer." In the meantime, he gobbles up his titanic offspring as fast as they are born. Suppose Tane is numbered among these; suppose, too, that as he is born there is time, "short of an unspeakable supervention," for something new to come about: the birth of difference and exchange. This might be thought of as a passage from tautology ("the titans were titanic") to the pun ("Logos begotten of Log"), and from undifferentiation ("the children had no fathers...") to the disyllable, Tane, a first diacritical mark on which all other discriminations—kinship, taboos, the nature-culture distinction—rely.

In a formal sense, the pun is associated with difference, with the Brisset-like possibilities of unbridled semiosis. Yet "Logos begotten of log" is also a pun that reclaims, again like Brisset, the solid ground of natural reference. On the one hand, language as differential system, on the other, its grounded transparency to the objects of nature. Our everyday experience of language straddles just such a contradiction: its implications, consequences, "origins," might be developed more clearly in relation to an analogous system of signification—that of the totem.

Imagine a culture in which one group of people identify with the Kauri as totem, other groups with the Tanekaha, Kaiwaka and Taraire. A member of the Kauri clan would not, or not without ritual precautions, chop down a Kauri, but he or she does make free use of all the other trees in the forest. Similarly, intermarriage is prohibited within a clan, permitted without. Indeed, all manner of rites and practices, from name giving through to the care of the dead, hinge on the totemic differentiation of trees. According to Levi-Strauss, the totemic institutions of such a culture are "based on the postulate of a homology between two

systems of differences, one of which occurs in nature and the other in culture."[14] The system is purely formal: Kauri clan members differ from those of the Tanekaha clan *as for instance* the Kauri tree differs from the Tanekaha tree. But this system of formal differences is felt and lived out in terms of resemblance, it being well known, for instance, that Kauri clan people have their heads in the clouds and are inclined to be hard of heart.

We have already heard the story the Kauri clan tell of Tane's birth and name giving: in a moment the poet will return to that scene, but now he comments on the culture that invented the myth, and compares it with his own.

> In the technologies nothing can be done
> without a divine sub-contract:
>
> this one for the felling, the hollowing,
> prone canoe, erected post;
>
> Tane demiurgos,
> lord of an obsolete skill:
>
> not to keep an old man ticking
> with a dead boy's heart
>
> (cut while warm, after the crash,
> pray for this tissue not to be rejected);
>
> an instance now, look at it like that,
> of what can unspeakably supervene . . . .

The poem began by positing a tension—if not a divide—between linguistic and extralinguistic reality. The totem, Tane Demiurgos, maker of the world, offers one resolution of that problematic relation. His line of ancestry—Logos begotten of log—is a mythical statement about a logical relation, a totemic code that organises homologies between distinctions in nature and distinctions in culture. But the totem also institutes a system of prohibitions and permissions—"divine subcontracts" or ceremonies that accompany exchange from nature

(the tree) to human artefacts (canoes, posts). And then, a startling transition, from the "obsolete" to the technologies of modern surgery.

We might ask a simple question: why heart transplants? The selection of this detail provides the most vivid of contrasts between modern and totemic technologies, but it is a contrast that points, not to the obsolescence of old patterns of thinking, but to their currency. The heart transplant is an operation that mediates between life and death, that effects an exchange between these two realms. One reason, perhaps, why these lines are introduced by a syntactically uncertain "not," a prohibition soon to be balanced by the ritual supplication, "pray for this tissue not to be rejected"; one reason, again, why the operation—the heart "cut while warm"—is made to seem as bloody a sacrifice as any offered to a totemic god. And yet, the heart transplant has another set of motivations as well. The detail is metonymically derived—transplanted—from earlier sections in the poem. Tane, the very big tree, is old; like the recipient of the transplanted organ, he is "punky at the heart." As for the donor, the medical practice of cannibalising a corpse for its reusable parts recalls the myth of Kronos, of the old man who feeds on his sons. Our initial question—why the heart transplant?—could do with a reformulation: why are textual exchanges so curiously dovetailed with the operation as a sacrificial ceremony of exchange?

We asked a similar question of "Landfall in Unknown Seas." Violence, I suggested then, constrains semiosis, it gives one the sense of a ground when groundlessness threatens. But this poem will become more violent yet. And, as it joins its end to the story of Tane's birth, it will not only develop a myth of origin that restates questions of sacrifice and signification as questions of the body, it should also allow us to speak the unspeakable's name. The poem continues:

> an instance now, look at it like that,
> of what can unspeakably supervene,
>
> ever since like cats in the dead of night
> the first heaven and the first earth

coupled and begot,
and the theogonies littered the place

with the lordliest imaginable
stumps. That's life. That's fear

of this unspeakable that smashed the mouth
open, stamped on the balls and

ripped from the tongue's root, womb syllabled,
Tane, Tane mahuta.

The closing lines are a return to and amplification of the poem's third section. I suggested then that we interpret the time between Tane's birth and the "unspeakable supervention" as a moment in a Kronos myth: first a birth, then the briefest of intervals, and now — the closing lines returning us to the scene — the birth as a kind of dismemberment. The logic of that sequence may become clearer by considering, once again, the Kauri people whose creation myth, we may imagine, this is. The myth tells, not only of the birth, but also of the premature death of their totemic ancestor. This is curious because every member of the Kauri clan claims descent from Tane — their system of exogamy is based precisely on this "fact" — and yet the totemic ancestor, it would seem, is given no opportunity whatsoever to be a genealogical ancestor. Levi-Strauss comments:

> Totemism, as in certain games of patience, lays all its cards on the table at the beginning of play: it has none in reserve to illustrate the stages of transition between the animal or vegetable ancestor and the human descendent. The passage from one to the other is thus necessarily conceived as discontinuous ... a veritable "scene-shifting" without dropping the curtain, which excludes all perceptible contiguity between the initial and the final states.[15]

The sudden "scene-shifting" is necessary because Tane has to be both inside and outside the system of totemic signification. Inside, as the principle of articulation regulating exchange,

but outside as well, since discontinuity in descent is required if the difference between clans is to be somewhere absolute and irreducible. Tane *must* die, then, in order to install the totem in its function of securing and maintaining the ordered play of difference.[16]

Language, similarly, might have been born all at once. What the poem suggests, however, is that whatever we might place at that "origin"—a natural sign, the word of God, a platonic idea, any transcendental signified—is actually the accomplishment of an operation: the type of "scene shifting" operation performed by the totem as an oxymoronic figure that is at once interior and exterior, plus and minus, presence and absence, at once purely itself and the structured rule of its play. The poem began by clearly locating two of those "scenes—linguistic and extralinguistic reality—but it also hinted at two more. A transgressive speaker, it seemed, himself would become unspeakable: a conflation of the linguistic and extralinguistic that recalls another contradiction at the heart of our experience of language. Language, of course, articulates a world it is discontinuous from, yet we are also aware that language is both a transpersonal and abstract system, and also a material product of the individual human body. The former is the realm of the well-spoken word, the latter a zone for expletives, for the inarticulate passions that drive the slippage and proliferation of meaning.

Perhaps the last lines of the poem take us there. It is now, and for the very first time, that something implicit in stories of origin is made explicit: the name Tane, Tane Mahuta, is "womb-syllabled." The phrase allows us to reformulate the word-world relation drawn at the start of the poem. Previously, this was a two term relation: on one hand, the well-spoken word, on the other, the unspeakable, call it nature or extralinguistic reality. It is the phrase "womb-syllabled" that now stakes out that position, and the "unspeakable," this principle of violence that wrenches — perhaps even to devour - the word from its natural origin, is now a third term triangulating the two prior positions.

The Unspeakable

"Tane, Tane mahuta"	"Womb syllabled"
(i) the name	(i) the tree
(ii) the son	(ii) the mother
(iii) poet/reader	(iii) the body

The unspeakable is what mediates the opposing terms, what makes language a totem. I suppose its best name might be something like the languageness of language or the figurativeness of figures, but if you recall the violence done to the body — perhaps an ongoing threat, perhaps an image of anyone's passage from infantine echolalia to the disembodied symbolic of a language system — another name suggests itself. The triangle is oedipal. At its apex write, "Papa" — a four letter word.

3. MOTHER ROCK

"The stone, the categorical effigy..."

—Wallace Stevens [17]

"... and that old Dame
From whom the stone was named."

—Wordsworth [18]

The place Curnow privileges above all others is the beach—that zone of arrival and departure, that set staged for the ritual encounter between territory and the one who would map it. "Dialogue with Four Rocks"—from the 1982 collection, *You Will Know When You Get There* —is a late variation.[19] Its title and project seem close to Wallace Stevens. "The absence of the imagination had itself to be imagined," wrote Stevens, and Curnow seems to be imagining

just that.[20] His rock is a referent for some outcrop of territory but also a figure through which that territory is imagined as if in the absence of human mediation, as if on its own terms. It is an effort that must fail, but I think Curnow's poem arrives at that failure sooner than we might have expected, that it goes on to become another kind of poem.

The poem's first section begins:

> High and heavy seas all the winter
> dropped the floor of the beach the whole mile
> exposing more rocks than anybody
> imagined the biggest surprise a
> reef the size of a visiting beast
> you have to walk round

This inert and alien wonder "disappears" as the poem continues to map it. It was there, no doubt anyone could have seen it, but as the speaker moves to a generalised present tense—"the sea shovels away all that loose / land and shovels it back"—we find we do not know whether, for him, the reef is presently in view. Still, something smaller is underfoot:

> a ball of sand stitched together with
> spun lupin and looping spinifex
> making it look natural
> little
> as you like to think nothing's either
> covered or uncovered for ever.

What had been figured as purely and simply present is now stitched together in the sandy, natural looking, overlay of language. The reef, previously this "thing," becomes the "nothing" of the closing lines—as if what might have been before one's eyes had been translated into the there and not there of its sign.

But something occurs before this figured supervention of language, this accommodation to the map. The speaker, trying to imagine the rock on its terms, regards it as an utterance or

hieroglyphic of geological process, geological time.

> a formation
> out of the gut of the gales the noise
> the haze the vocabulary of
> water and wind
> the thing 'demands an
> 'answer'
> I know you do you know me?

And so,staring at the rock, the speaker hears (or heard) its silence as a form of communication. It is not quite a "Dialogue," or not yet, since what is exchanged in that moment is a glance without words, a glance pregnant with questions of and for subjectivity. "I know you do you know me?" This is the question asked by every *momento mori;* it is also the "language" in which one addresses—is addressed by—the new born.

But this glance, so suggestive of ends and beginnings, is not held. The poet will return to and amplify that moment but, so far, the most we know about it is its position in a plotted exposition of theme. At first, there was a reef—an item of territory, something to walk round or bump into—and the subject whose map it surprises. Then the glance, the close encounter, and third, the play of absence and presence that marks the reef's accession to language.

The second section of the poem is set in a cave. It is the size of a small church and the speaker is inside, endeavouring once more to conceive the inconceivable. His conception takes the form of an analogy between his position inside the cave and what we might term the homuncular location of a "self" within the cavity of his skull. At first, the rock is presented anthropomorphically. It has a wig of trees and is "chapleted" with clematis and kowhai. It's spring and, under all that vegetation, the rock is "thinking big." Next, a reversal: the speaker's thought processes are naturalised in terms drawn from the external scene.

> ... if it
> stoops to speak so to speak the word
> of a stony secret dislodged

the creator knows he's made it!
his mate matter
out of nothing

To the question, "I know you do you know me?" analogy answers, "I am like you and you are like me." It is enough to trigger a small avalanche of "language."

a tied tongue loosed the stony ghost
before all of us talking all
at once in our own languages
the parakeet's brilliant remarks
the fluent silences of the
eel in the pool

At this point, I am reminded more of the languages Doctor Doolittle wished to speak than that moment in which the reef posed its question. But if the terms of an analogy open no outside to language they may, pressed hard enough, stage something like an outside as an effect within language.

The section ends: "I think the rock / thinks and my thought is what is thinks." This analogy between subject and rock has the tautological structure of all anthropomorphisms: "I think the rock thinks, and what I think is what it thinks." It is also a chiasmus: "I think the rock thinks and what it thinks is me." The undecidability between these two readings is both a crisis for signification and for the subject whose "I," turning into stone, unsettlingly discovers evidence of its own materiality. This moment in language replays the moment of the unmediated glance between subject and object and replays, too, in its reciprocities and deathly reminders, the double register of that "I know you do you know me?"

I have suggested that the poem sets out, much as a Wallace Stevens poem might set out, to imagine the extralinguistic as if on its own terms. But the poem doesn't so much delineate a "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" as envisage a more curious in-between place, not extralinguistic reality but not the real as articulated by language either.[21] This space poses a threat to the "I," to the differentiation of subject and object, and, if this space

comes to be associated with the transient materiality of the self, it would also seem to be more primordially known.

A rock face is creased in
places in others cracked
through to itself I have

never climbed though children
sometimes do up to the
chin of the cave below

I always look up though
something else is always
uppermost a cloud scuds

past the sun reappears
yellow lichens ashy
patches thicken sicken

on the skin of the face
of the rock from spots the
size of the iris of a

mouse's eye to a smashed
egg the rock is wetted
by a weeping lesion

long after the rain stopped
it looks down I look up
a wink is sufficient.

If borders between subject and object are disturbed when the self can imagine itself as rock-like, something more extreme is at stake when the incorporeal materiality of rock is given a face whose "ashy patches" and "weeping lesions" evidence a sickening corporeality. Something inside the rock seeps into the outside; what ought to be firm and distinct is porous, slimy, corrupt; it is only water, but, for the speaker, it seems a distillation of everything that

might turn his stomach. That such a horror should wear a face is one way to indicate a zone where subject/object distinctions fade into permeability. It is also, in the very giving of face and the disgust that accompanies that gesture, a shoring up of the boundaries whose collapse is being imagined. I shall explain why in a moment, but first, let us put a name to that face.

The third section of the poem tells us that the "I know you do you know me?" glance does not occur across the horizontal plane of adult eye contact. It is a perpendicular exchange: the speaker looks up, like an infant, at the eye looking down at him. And there is a final replay of that glance still to come: "recesses of mother / rock overhang me," writes the poet in the fourth section. If the enjambment suggests that matter is *mater*, it might also remind us that language, the symbolic realm "A Four Letter Word" associated with the paternal function, is also "womb-syllabled," developmentally underwritten by the pre-linguistic, the pre-symbolic.

I find it useful to consider this "mother / rock" not as an object but rather as the not-yet-object Julia Kristeva terms an abject. Her notion of abjection provides an account of how the infant, not yet a subject and still dyadically intervolved with its mother, comes to the threshold of his or her acquisition of language and identity. As a mechanism, abjection is a casting out by the infant of the pre-Oedipal mother, a formative evacuation and division of the not-self that underpins the subsequent construction of a unified body image and, with the entry into language, of a self that can master symbolically coded oppositions between inside and outside, pure and impure, me and not-me. Not that abjection is ever over and done with: traces of the developmental "stage" persist in dietary taboos, rites of pollution and defilement, reactions to death and the sublime, in forms of psychosis and in the ordinary experiences (foul changing sheds, a fly in one's cup, a burgled house...) where one finds oneself overtaken by revulsion or nausea.[22]

The speaker registers precisely this affect when "ashy / patches thicken sicken on the skin of the face of the rock." But it is the very walls of his own body, the boundaries of his own

self, that are threatened. If one detail—"spots the size of an iris"—suggests that such a collapse may be desirable (the iris is beautiful, alluring), the defensive nausea of "weeping lesions" quickly reaffirms the integrity of those boundaries. It would be inexact to say that the rock causes abjection. As Kristeva emphasises, "it ... is not a lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity , system, order." [23] Yet what does disturb identity, system, order is always already within identity, system and order: as the final section of the poem reminds us, death infects life and language is a system of arbitrary signs.

> Memory is a stonier
> place at the farm they called it
> Rocky Gully blackberry
> claws me back where I'm crawling
>
> pistol-gripping the rifle
> at arm's length after the hurt
> hare my two bullets in its
> body and couldn't reach it
>
> where the third aimed blindly hit
> home recesses of mother
> rock overhang me and the
> sun the rock offering no
>
> choice of exit under the
> one skin hare and hound I catch
> myself listening for the shot
> in the dark I shall not hear.

There ought to be something chancy or wild in a shot in the dark. But the speaker's shot, aimed however "blindly," is associated more strongly with the certain, the inevitable. Even so, the third bullet has ricocheted oddly, catching perhaps the hare, but also "recesses of mother / rock" and finally, though not yet, the speaker himself. It is as if the bullet's flight stitched together the beginnings and ends of the subject. Janus-faced, the abject mother/rock

links what has gone— the pre-Oedipal pleasure of fusion with the maternal body—with what is still to come: the shot in the dark that announces the speaker's entropic return to an earlier state of things. That shot, of course, is death, but I think we might also hear it as the "report" of a word, a sound one always can say but never can write.

The end of a certain kind of writing might be to write the real as if on its own terms. The poet who tries to write the unwriteable must do so backwards, as it were, from a position of linguistic mastery always in advance of the moment he wishes to reach or recover. What he does reach we have seen, is never the pure referent but either a sacrifice made in its place or, as here, the thing itself figured as an abject referent, as "mother/rock." This is the hieroglyph of a kind of proto-writing that promises to join a thing and its name much as, in the pre-Oedipal space of abjection, mother and child are inextricably fused and joined. This is what appeals; it is also what cannot be countenanced. The iris of that maternal eye threatens to ossify whoever would catch its gaze. It would be to pre-empt one's "detour towards death" by means of psychosis.[24] And so, the poet swerves away, finds it disgusting, sends a bullet home in an effort to kill it—but he can't. He can only regather his boundaries, and if we suppose that the swerve of abjection is, as it were, "back into" language, it is only to find that language has lost the naturalness within which he once found his place and identity. This is an assurance that might have been worth sacrificing for. Now, though, the assuring transparencies of language have become rock-like in writing. Its intransigent materiality speaks of the non-coincidence of a self and its signs, of death and of dying. But it may be that in the permanence of those traces we hear the report of another shot in the dark: not immortality, exactly, but (to vary a line) the way, for a poet, these dyings constitute his bloom.[25]

* * *

I think again of Lysimache and her predicament with economies of signification. No doubt

she was right to refuse the mule drivers' request, but I have a hunch it might have got into the ritual all the same. I picture her, at a great age, still making the solemn procession, a procession that has long since been punctuated by a riotous moment in which the mule drivers would playfully repeat their request and the priestess would playfully refuse.

Notes:

1 Cited in Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," *History of Religions* 20 (1&2), 1980, p. 113. In what follows I am indebted to Smith's discussion of this passage and to the "rabbinical" question he poses: "What if the mule drivers had taken their drink without asking anyone and then were discovered? What then?" (p. 117).

2 Statement in James Vinson and D.L. Kirkpatrick eds., *Contemporary Poets* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), p. 177.

3 Author's Note to Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects, *Continuum* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), p. 227.

4 "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices." In *The Origins of Religion*, trans. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library 13 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 35.

5 "Landfall in Unknown Seas." In *Collected Poems 1933-1973* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1974), pp. 136-39.

6 Cf. "The Unhistoric Story,"*Collected Poems*, pp. 79-80.

7 Freud's fullest commentary is in *Introductory Lectures On Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 301-3.

8 Alfred Korzybski's rule, cited in Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: Dutton, 1979), p. 30.

9 For many such jokes, see Susan Stewart, *Nonsense* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979).

10 "A Four Letter Word," *Continuum, op. cit.*, pp. 215-16.

11 Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *Philosophy Through The Looking Glass* (London: Hutchinson,1985), pp. 25-26, 15.

12 Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (Bungay: Fontana, 1974), p. 120.

13 For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Paul De Man, "The Resistance To Theory," in David Lodge ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory* (London: Longman, 1988), pp. 355-71.

14 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 115.

15 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1969), pp. 99-100.

16 And hence, too, my preference for a syncretic reading. Our "Kauri Clan" is unlikely to have been Maori. As Lévi-Strauss comments, "New Zealand has never been mentioned as offering typical examples of totemism ... . It is because the animals, vegetables and minerals are genuinely thought of as [genealogical] ancestors that they cannot play the part of totems." (Ibid.) For an interesting alternative reading of the poem - one that pays rather more attention to the Maori creation myth - see Terry Sturm, "Fictions and Realities: An Approach to Allen Curnow's *Trees, Effigies, Moving Objects*," *World Literature In English*, 14 (1), pp. 25-49.

17 "Chocorua To Its Neighbour," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (London: Faber, 1984), p. 300.

18 *The Prelude*, ed. J.C. Maxwell, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 74.

19 Reprinted in *Continuum*, pp. 91-94.

20 "The Plain Sense Of Things," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, op. cit., p. 503.

21 Cf. "The Snowman," *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, ibid., p. 10.

22 For a discussion of abjection see, Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

23 Ibid., p. 4.

24 Cf. Sigmund Freud, "Beyond The Pleasure Principle," section V. In *On Metapsychology*, trans. James Strachey, Pelican Freud Library 11 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984).

25 Cf. "Spectacular Blossom," *Collected Poems 1933-1973*, p. 193.

Temepara, Ratana

Buildings of the Morehu: Te Ao Hou

Deidre Brown and Bill McKay

Morehu : "... remainders. Those who have survived. But they are also the chosen; they are the leaders."[1] By now Morehu has come to denote members of the Ratana Church, but in the second half of the Nineteenth Century it was a name that had already been adopted by Te Ua, Te Whiti and Te Kooti for Maori rejecting or having lost the primacy of traditional affiliations and leadership, turning to new beliefs and ideas. It is not an all-enveloping term for a particular period of Maori history or culture, but it is a term used frequently by the Maori movements whose buildings are the subject of this project.

Te Ao Hou : the new world.

This paper introduces the buildings of the Morehu, to redress the neglect of certain buildings in the architectural history of this country. It is not our intention to lump these buildings together in any way other than inclusion in a survey of New Zealand architecture, but they

do have in common exclusion from mainstream histories of this country's buildings[2]. For this reason alone one could argue they figure a hidden and alternative architecture, not authorised by Pakeha, and represent an extraordinary period in the long history of this land's habitation. In this paper we must use a broad brush, for it is a big picture. We cannot dwell at length on individual buildings, but will try to prove a lineage of buildings that reflect the most radical hopes and beliefs of their time, constituting a rich and original architecture of this land, which we can call the "secret garden in the forest"[3].

Discussing Te Kooti, Michael Linzey makes the point that modernity holds itself apart from what it sees as an unchanging tradition[4]. So a modernist reading of New Zealand architectural history might give the impression that 'traditional' Maori buildings have been adequately covered, and Pakeha buildings, vernacular colonial and modern, are featured in the 'story' of New Zealand architecture. The buildings of the Morehu have been considered the work of eccentric fringe groups, and neglected or consigned to the realm of 'folk art'[5].

A New Land

By the late nineteenth century these islands now called New Zealand had been made over in the image of a Europe left behind; Pakeha had quickly made the country their own, as had the Maori before them. The land was "shaped to European convenience"[6]; forests mowed down for grass, new animals introduced supplanting the indigenous, and roads and railways driven through hills, a new law and institutions established even before Pakeha had outnumbered Maori. Pakeha buildings were simply European transplants or hybrids, the land altered to accommodate their 'rooting'. In 1899 Hurst Seager wrote of New Zealand architecture in the Royal Institute of British Architect's Journal:

> "In responding to the invitation of the Editor of the journal to write an article upon the development of our art in this Colony I can only regret that it is impossible for me truly to entitle it the Architectural Art of New Zealand, and bring before you examples showing the gradual process of development lead-

> ing to distinctive forms of expression. Unfortunately there has been no true development; we have no style, no distinctive forms of art.
>
> ... [T]he story is told in the forms of art developed in England, Italy, America, and elsewhere. Nor are there any interesting solutions of the problems in the science of building to record; all our methods are those of the Old World; our materials and our conditions of life are not sufficiently distinctive to lead to any special mode being adopted. That our cities are chiefly made up of architectural quotations ... is perhaps to be expected."[7]

It was the Maori who found themselves in a new land, who had a new world thrust upon them and had to make a way to live in it. It is to their response, their buildings that we should look to find the real architecture of the new world; theirs is the architecture of the New Land, New Zealand.

The Buildings

Many of the Morehu structures are not isolated examples but parts of programmes of building, usually religious in purpose or the communal/public buildings of new movements and social groups; new buildings for new needs, the architecture of rapidly changing circumstance, staking claims in a changing land. Their claim: to redress a drifting society and culture and to reconstruct a political shapelessness. These buildings have in common a blending of Maori and Pakeha influences, with new materials, new forms, shapes, symbols and motifs. But surveying the movements and groups producing these buildings reveals not an assimilation of cultures, but rather a selective appropriation by Morehu of Pakeha methods, forms, and symbolism for their own ends, the same innovative, aggressive adaptability already proven in Maori culture.

Te Miringa te Kakara, Tiroa.

One should not dismiss these buildings as formally similar, merely derivative of European building. Firstly Morehu architecture must be considered in the light of the religious and political motivation of its builders, its role in social organisation, and the way architecture

is used in the community. Secondly, contrary to Pakeha techniques, here symbolism and imagery are inseparable from the building, as a meeting house's carvings are essential to it, as Christian imagery is not merely embellishment of a church. The forms of these buildings are only the mute bones. The skin of paint fleshes out the structure with symbol, image and meaning. This animating imagery, the resonance of narrative, the communication of concepts, making ideas visible: this is what gives Morehu architecture its coherence and resonance. It speaks—but a language not yet learned and understood by Pakeha.

The Morehu

Judith Binney writes:

> "There are two remembered histories since 1840. That of the colonisers and that of the colonised. Their visions and goals were different creating memories which have been patterned by varying hopes and experiences."[8]

Maori architecture is rooted in genealogy. Maori oral narrative depends on the speaker's ability to express the present through the past, utilising specific architectural repositories such as the marae or temple. The culture of the past is not fixed, and indeed survives by being interpreted in different ways shaped by the pressure of change.

Pakeha culture is evidential. Authenticity is established by the standards of each generation, although current thought also recognises that:

> "... writing always transforms .... there will be no correct stories of the past that are not themselves a product of a politics of truth."[9]

According to Sissons[10], the work of Elsdon Best is typical of the way Pakeha objectified, authenticated and removed from its narrative and genealogical context the knowledge of Maori in an attempt to 'preserve' a 'traditional' frozen state of the colonised, in the wider history of New Zealand, before they, the colonised, finally succumbed to the superiority or

the ailments of the coloniser.

Of far greater importance to Maori than the Pakeha view of them however was the appropriation of the Bible, in particular the Old Testament. The parallels between Hebrew and Maori were recognised as early as 1845 when the role of the tohunga was adapted to the new situation, as were original beliefs; Binney[11] recorded (a Ringatu tohunga) Eria Raukura's narrative concerning Te Kooti's explanation of this:

> "The lineage ... started as deriving from the spiritual encounter of the ancestors with Io, when they arrived at Aotearoa. These were 'things of the past', 'nga mea a muri nei', which were joined with 'the first things', 'nga mea tuatahi', or the prophetic sayings from Abraham until Christ. 'Te hononga', Eria called it , or the marriage of two predictive views of history, and of two perceptions of the present as a cyclic renewal of the past."

Prophetic movements of the Morehu challenged both cultures as they sought to establish what could and could not be appropriated from each. It follows that the architecture and symbolism emerging from them is a highly political statement of changing times and circumstances.

Pai Marire

Pai Marire originated from the land conflict in Taranaki, its leader Te Ua Haumene to whom, in 1862, the Angel Gabriel declared that Maori were God's people and their land 'Israel'. Te Ua distrusted symbolism of the cross (like many facets of the New Testament which Maori found culturally distasteful), which he believed symbolised the crucifixion of the Tiu by their colonisers. Following Gabriel's instructions, he erected a 'niu' pole (the term niu, Binney[12] believes, comes from the 'news' it delivered, and may be an adaptation of the tohunga's divinatory sticks) as the agent for the word of God. A four metre high post with a yard-arm, it has been likened to a ship's mast and possibly derives from that of the *Lord Worsley* whose wreck inspired the prophet's visions. A drawing in a follower's notebook[13] has been inter-

preted as equating the niu with David's temple, transcending heaven and earth. Angels carried the word of God and the knowledge of the Pakeha through the ropes by hau, the wind, to worshippers who touched them.

The niu was also an important instrument of protest against Pakeha land encroachment, a fear expressed in Pai Marire chants:

> "... they spoke with the voices of soldiers, surveyors and celebrants, and descendants of Shem, and all these symbols signified the mana of the niu pole transmitted to them :
> *Kill, one two three four—Attention!*
> *River, big river, long river, big stone—Attention!*
> *Road, big road, long road, bush, big bush—Attention!*
> *Long bush, long stone, hill, big hill, long hill—Attention!*
> *Mountain big, mountain long, mountain big, niu long, niu—Attention!*
> *North, north-by-east, nor'-nor'east, nor'east-by-north, north-east-colony—Attention!*
> *Come to tea, all the men, round the niu pole—Attention!*
> *Shem, rule the wind, too much wind, come to tea—Attention!*"[14]

Parihaka

Te Ua's attempts to spread the word and hold on to the land, were misconstrued as an invitation to war. Fighting in 1865 sparked a seven year war; that resulted in many Pai Marire adherents becoming followers of Te Kooti while imprisoned on the Chatham Islands.

Te Ua had seen his nephew Te Whiti and Te Whiti's brother-in-law Tohu as successors to his prophetic mantle. Te Whiti was himself the mouthpiece of God, and sought to establish Israel at Parihaka, below Mt. Taranaki, in 1867. This was confiscated land, and their occupation questioned the validity of confiscation by peaceful protest; the Government responded in 1881 by arresting Te Whiti and Tohu, evicting the other residents and destroying Parihaka. Released two years later, the prophets rebuilt Parihaka which remained a centre for non-violent resistance until their deaths in 1907.

Te Kooti

Ringatu was a prophetic movement descending from Pai Marire but rejecting its teachings. Sent to Wharekauri in the Chatham Islands under suspicion of being a potential threat after land confiscations in 1866, Te Kooti inherited spiritual power from prophetic ancestors[15] and escaped with two hundred followers. In 1873 he constructed the first of several distinctive meeting houses which have survived to this day, Tokanganui a Noho. His architectural doctrine combined the strict usages for chiefs houses and the tabernacles of the Jews, and his meeting houses formed the basis for modern marae protocol. Te Kooti's process of empowering Morehu to hold onto the land by building meeting houses was continued by the King Movement, in particular Te Puea, and by Apirana Ngata. In prophecies Te Kooti outlined the future of the Morehu, predicting the rise of new leaders for the Morehu, such as Rua Kenana, Apirana Ngata, T. W. Ratana, and even anticipating the conflicts between them.

Rua Kenana

Partially fulfilling a prophecy of Te Kooti, Rua Kenana erected the tabernacle of David at Maungapohatu in 1907, under the sacred mountain where he had received a vision of Gabriel. Hiona (Zion), the meeting hall and council house and 'throne of mercy' was modelled on the Dome of the Rock (this Jerusalem mosque was often called the Temple of Solomon in Nineteenth Century Biblical literature)[16]. Hiona used symbols of Pakeha origin to explain Rua's mission. The exterior walls featured painted symbols from playing cards which, in Maori oral convention, have been open to a number of interpretations depending on the needs of the people. One version holds that the heart represents that of Jesus while the club is the Trinity and the diamond is the Holy Ghost. Other iconic symbols, particularly on flags, included the Union Jack, and the crescent moon and stars also used by Te Kooti and the King Movement at Gate Pa. Written texts from the Bible were inscribed inside the council

Hiona, Rua's meeting hall and council house at Maungapohatu, 1908 (Geo Bourne photograph, Auckland Institute and Museum C6221)

house, recounting narratives of David and Goliath and Egyptian bondage. The interior was also painted with rafter and Taniko panels presenting narratives in a pre-European style.

Hiruharama Hou (New Jerusalem) was Rua's residence at Maungapohatu, built to follow the description of Solomon's house. The two gables represented Nga Tuhoe and Ngati Whakatohea[17].

A sacred section of the settlement called Wahi Tapu enclosed both of these buildings, plus a bank, shop, and sleeping houses, while the kitchens (food being a profane element in Maori culture) and other houses stood outside this area. Entrance to the settlement was through a gateway marked 'Mihaia' (Messiah). Influenced by the imagery of Te Kooti's Rongopai meeting-house[18], the gateway depicted two stars: Hare Kometi (Halley's Comet), symbolising Christ's return, and Kopu (Venus), representing Rua's leadership as foretold in Te Kooti's 'Star in the East' prophecy. Rua's followers believed that both Christ and their leader were the sons of God.

Rua maintained that Maungapohatu would be rebuilt by each generation, like Parihaka, to renew the Covenant with God. In 1916 the Government reacted to Rua's mission by imprisoning him, and after his release in 1918 Hiona was demolished and the material reused elsewhere, while the prophet lived apart from his people to test their strength.

Auckland Museum C23094

Ratana

Te Kooti made several predictions about the future leadership of the Morehu. At Matamata in 1880 he declared:

> "there will come a time when a particular man will stand upon this plain and erect upon it his standard. In him will be the salvation of the Maori people"[19].

Te Kooti prophesied the rising of western and eastern stars; the western would receive his power and vision and set upright the capsized canoe of Maori, the eastern would be a leader of Ngati Porou.

In 1912 at Parewhanui, twenty-six years after Te Kooti's prophecy, Mere Rikiriki, a Maori evangelist and leader of the Holy Ghost Mission spoke of:

> "a time... when the child or chosen man will take action directly and strongly and with a great mission without favouritism, he will be more than a man in his attributes"[20].

Mere Rikiriki had lived at Parihaka and her followers believed she had inherited the prophetic agency of Te Whiti and Tohu. An Anglican, she taught against the influence of Maori spirituality and in 1912 she opened the Raetihi Marae and an auxiliary Christian church for the Ngati Uenuku on a site where tohungaism was said to have been preached. When Mere's nephew Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana brought his new-born twin sons to her for blessing she refused to touch them, explaining that they emanated a strong spiritual power. She named Ratana's two sons Arepa (Alpha) and Omeka (Omega). While camping with Arepa and Omeka on Whangaehu Beach in 1918, Ratana witnessed the stranding of two whales; one was killed instantly, the other writhed for some time before it bled to death. For Ratana the image of the distressed whale foretold a personal conflict that would become apparent in the future. Suffering from influenza during an epidemic that same year, he underwent a time of spiritual testing, whakamatautauranga, culminating in the famous vision of a cloud ap-

pearing from under a blue sky, out of a shining sea, and a voice calling itself the Holy Ghost speaking to him in Maori:

> "... I have come to Aotearoa, to you the Maori people. Repent; cleanse yourselves and your families, heal them of their infirmities, Ratana, I will call you Mangai (Mouthpiece), and those who follow you will be called Morehu."[21]

With personal funds Ratana built on his land a small, nondenominational church called Piki te Ora (Seek the Light), which was opened on Christmas Day 1920, a small, single gabled building with an entrance porch at the front, a small bell tower above and a lean-to porch at the back.

The Ratana Church

One thousand people from Te Kumi, near Te Kuiti, travelled to Ratana to experience his faith-healing. Impressed by his beliefs they erected the first Ratana Church in their own

Temepara, Ratana

district using Piki te Ora as a model[22]. By 1921 Ratana could draw on 19,000 followers among the Morehu, and a small eponymous township had grown up on the land around his farm-house.

Faith-healing was performed at Ratana in the Whare Maori, a small meeting house which became a repository for the crutches, spectacles, medicine bottles, walking sticks, wheel-chairs and other articles from successful faith-healing sessions. It also held what Ratana described as objects of superstition: portraits, photographs, clothing, sticks, tiki, and ornaments. This latter reasoning formed the basis behind the inclusion of tapu carvings on this building; consumed by Ratana's mana they could do no harm[23].

In Te Kao followers of Ratana were shut out of their Anglican church and forced to worship in the meeting house of a converted family. The frustration of this split manifested itself when the meeting house was literally chopped in half to symbolise the 'division between the black and white sheep.' Ratana followers in other districts appropriated the local mainstream church buildings that lay on their tribal land, at Raetihi for example.

Ratana began investigating Morehu land claims. Increasingly his new role was as a political leader, symbolised in illustration by his descent from an aeroplane in the

Ratana church at Te Kao

spiritual domain to an automobile in the human domain. Repeating a prophecy made by Taoni before his birth he said:

> "In one of my hands is the Bible, in the other is the Treaty of Waitangi. If the spiritual side is attended to, all will be well on the physical side."[24]

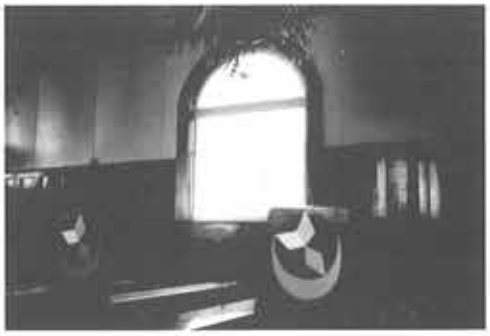
The Morehu in general do not acknowledge a difference between the 'ture tangata' and 'ture wairua', the secular and spiritual causes[25]. In 1924 Ratana set out 'to take the Treaty of Waitangi to its home,'[26] travelling to England via South Africa and Japan. A petition to the King signed by 30,000 Maori demanded the recognition of the Treaty as a constitutional document.

On his return Ratana embarked on the construction of a temple, based it is said on an idea he brought back from Japan (perhaps from the Christian churches in Nagasaki). Clifton Hood, a Wanganui architect, was commissioned by the church to produce sketch plans for the project. These were returned (without payment) with the message that the temple would be built "with Maori plans and Maori labour"[27]; Hood responded by taking legal action and successfully alleged that parts of the plans were copied and used in the final design. On January 25th, 1928, Ratana's birthday, the Temepara was opened. Standing on the platform over the front doors, he announced that his spiritual work was now completed and he would concentrate henceforth on material work:

> "The spirit of the Mangai is all about you. The Temple is your Mangai and your teacher. Learn from it."[28]

Shortly after, Arepa, the metaphorical still beached whale of the spiritual mission, contracted a lingering terminal illness and died at 12.00 p.m. December 31st, 1930. The speaker's platform was only ever used on this occasion. It is accessed through the towers, not through the door behind which opens into space. This door may be an indication that a mezzanine was intended. But a mezzanine would have disturbed the symbolic spiritual hierarchy of the

main body of the church. The church accommodates 1000 Morehu. Apostles face the Awhina and Morehu from the tiered seating to the left of the pulpit. On the right side the Ratana brass band face the choir in the front pews. Above sit the Ratana politicians and at the top of the dais sit Ratana's family and the President of the church, silhouetted by a single rear window. From here the spiritual whakapapa continues upwards and around the walls in a painted chain of Whetu Marama symbolslabelled 'Mangai' (gold), 'Faithful Angels' (purple), 'Holy Ghost' (red), 'Son' (white) and 'Father' (blue). Small pot plants and a timber dado running around the walls of the church represent the garden on earth, while large pot plants above them on the white walls represent the garden in heaven. The metaphorical paradise garden within the temple is in symbolic contrast with the state of the land without. A barrel vaulted ceiling is believed by some to represent the vault of heaven, and by others the body of a ship, canoe or ark. The symmetrical arrangement of the Temepara indicates the adoption of a Christian convention, challenging the subtle asymmetry of the meeting house and its distinction between groups. Above the main door the painted chains meet in a pattern of concentric circles which is said to be the Eye of God. All the windows bear a stained glass Whetu Marama. There are four side doors, two of which are used by sections of the congregation during services. A gateway in front of the church (similar in shape to the front of a meeting house) marks the change from the earthly domain to the sacred precinct of the Temepara. Some of the older Morehu leave material belongings such as watches and handbags at the gate before they enter the church, to emphasise this difference.



Interior of Te Kao church

The lore of the Ratana Church is known as Maramatanga. Ratana rejected the cross[29], as did most other prophetic movements. He experimented with several other emblems (rosette, club/clover) before adopting the Whetu Marama. The

Whetu Marama (star moon), is a crescent moon and a five-pointed star, each point a different colour, representing the quinity of Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Faithful Angels and the Mangai himself. The inspiration according to some followers was a star/moon conjunction which was seen on the voyage to England[30]. The star can also refer to Te Kooti's prophecy of the metaphorical 'star in the west'. The waxing moon and star together connote a beacon, a new era heralded, heavenly light out of darkness.

Branch churches have been built at Ahipara, Te Kao, Te Hapua, and Mangamuka in Northland. At Raetihi two bell towers were added to the church to achieve a likeness to the main temple. The Ratana church at Te Kumi burned down in 1949 and the Morehu adapted Te Piringa, a meeting house originally built in 1880, at Te Kanawa Pa. To create a resemblance to the Temepara, smaller gable structures were added to each side of the meeting-house, rather than towers. The house is no longer used today. It has been left to decay with dignity.

Omeka Pa was built as a secular centre for the political movement and for land agitation[31] fulfilling Te Kooti's prophecy that his successor would erect his standard on the Matamata plains. A second centre for the material works was the Manuao, built in the by now large township of Ratana in 1938. An inspiration for the Manuao (Man-o-war) may have come from Ratana's wife Te Whaea who dreamed of a great flood:

> "A ship (the Church) came to save the Morehu whose faith was strong whilst the unfaithful (who were weak) were drowned.
>
> The ship's guns (the Four Quarters) were firing and the shells represented the ideas of the people concerning the Treaty of Waitangi."[32]

Ratana drew the plan for the Manuao in the dust of the township, and it was copied by the builders. It contains four halls: 'Rangimarie' (peace), 'Whare Marama' (the house of light), 'Piki te Kaha' (seek truth/faith), and 'Ki Kopu' (fill the stomach). Arranged around the

complex are the kitchens, Church office ('Te Aroha'), Ratana police office and newspaper office ('Whetu Marama'). The exterior facade features electrically illuminated portraits of Ratana, his wife Te Whaea, Arepa and Omeka, and the names of the Trinity, Faithful Angels and Mangai. Along the front of the building stand models of seven migratory canoes, and Tasman's *Heemskerk* and Cook's *Endeavour*. These acknowledge the 'setting upright of the canoe' in Te Kooti's prophecy quoted above, and the equal standing of all tribes of the land coming together at Ratana.

Buildings of the Morehu

Ratana died in 1939—his mission spanned what Pakeha called the peace between two World Wars, the Modern period:

> "... all Gods dead, all Wars fought and all faith in men shaken."[33]

While it might appear that Ratana rejected Maori forms and motifs in his programme of

Manuao, Ratana

building, in no way was his architectural statement a surrender to Pakeha culture or a rejection of things Maori. On the contrary, Morehu took on Pakeha establishments and institutions on their own terms, like a counter-colonisation of New Zealand. Ratana called at an early stage for the restoration of Maori lands, rights and mana. By 1935 there were two Ratana Members of Parliament. The four Ratana MPs provided the Labour governments with their majorities in the parliaments of the 1940s and 1950s. There can be no doubt that the political tenor of these movements contributed in part to marginalise their architecture in terms of mainstream architectural history. The apparently more progressive Young Maori Movement of Buck, Pomare and Ngata with its emphasis on assimilation with Pakeha culture in the modern world while preserving 'traditional' arts and values on the marae, features more prominently in 'the New Zealand story.'

Ratana church at Ahipara

But Morehu buildings cannot be detached from their motivating ideology - they are the powerful projection of identity and image. The 'profound' quality of their message requires a different way of reading compared to Pakeha buildings. Some examples: many architects still believe that architecture in New Zealand is a response to the land, that climate and materials are the prime determinants of architecture. Morehu architecture does not partake of this romantic-expressive tradition.

Neither does it aspire to ideals of timelessness. There is a 'flatness' to Ratana branch churches that some Pakeha may read as a thin mimicry or poor copying of the Temepara at Ratana. But their economy of material and sometimes crude construction also indicates these buildings are built for now, not for a hundred years, to be altered and rebuilt by each generation (the act of building itself signifies differently as a result.) This flatness actually indicates a simplification and concentration of intention. Image takes precedence over form, and the architecture is more signal than sculptural. The bell towers at Te Kao for example are abstracted to the point where a single finger of paint traces out the arc of windows. The Manuao and Omeka present facades of signs with no hint of the hall shape behind, similar to Victorian shop-front architecture, as the meeting house also emphasises frontality and volume rather than overall form. The churches and meeting houses give a vivid sense that God (and his prophets) are present among his people; his hand, his signs visible, vibrant

Omeka Pa, standing upon the Plains of Matamata

through the land.

To pakeha eyes the buildings of the Morehu can sometimes seemlike strange visitations on the land, from out of the blue: commanding, proprietary, iconic, bold, awkward, engaging and charged. They seem to hold no intimate relation with the land (contradicting the usual Pakeha ascription to things Maori) but like Pakeha buildings compete to command the landscape, to voice a challenge, to stake a claim. Morehu selectively rejected Maori forms and appropriated Pakeha imagery, but even the symbols of Christianity were found tired and inappropriate. Ratana had to invent a new iconography to represent new spiritual and political concepts and a set of symbols and images to convey his vision (this had practical application in the 'pictorial histories'—a series of large illustrations communicating the history, events, signs, stories, myths, visions and beliefs of Ratana used for the instruction of semi-literate followers and children). Ratana's church differs, for instance, from other Christian churches in its addition of the Angels and Ratana himself (the Mangai or mouthpiece of God) to the Trinity. This obviously requires a change in liturgical symbol and imagery, but one can also see Ratana trying to make his movement's images more vivid and illuminating to regain direct impact, to avoid obscurity and to make his church relevant, set in the here and now.

Now

In this country the buildings of the Morehu do not represent traditional signifiers of Maori occupation but as Prescilla Pitts[34] writes of the continuing contest over the land, do 'reoccupy and redefine the locale, writing the landscape once again in and on Maori terms.' It is not just in Pakeha culture that generations work to define themselves, to absorb lessons and struggle to find a place in the world. Because the world is always turning, the land shifting and slipping, but building continues ... In the growth of this country the architecture described here is inevitable. It is time for architects to acknowledge this. Time to look, time to

listen. Time to learn a second language.

Te Ao Hou
te ao huri ai ki tona tauranga:
te ao rapu;
ko te huripoki e huri nei
i runga i te taumata o te kaha.

The New World
is a world revolving:
a world that moves forward
to the place it comes from;
a wheel that turns
on an axle of strength[35].

Notes:

1 Maka Jones, quoted in Judith Binney and Gillian Chaplain, *Nga Morehu, The Survivors*, Oxford University Press, Auckland, (1986).

2 Peter Shaw's *New Zealand Architecture from Polynesian Beginnings to 1990* (Auckland, Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), is the first to include these buildings.

3 Bronwyn Elsmore, *Mana from Heaven* (Tauranga, Moana Press, 1989), p. 210. Translation of Waerenga A Kakara more commonly called Te Miringa Te Kakara, a cruciform building in the King Country over 100 years old, with many stories attached to it. This building was deliberately destroyed by its caretakers in 1983 after talk of restoration, but survives in one way as the inspiration for John Scott's Futuna Chapel, Wellington, 1960 (Personal correspondence with McKay, 1990).

4 Michael Linzey, 'Te Kooti—Architect', *Architecture New Zealand*, September/October 1989, p. 90.

5 Odd, as the Ratana Temepara was found in a 1927 court case to be partly the work of Pakeha architect Clifton Hood.

6 Francis Pound, Frames on the Land (Auckland, Collins, 1984), p. 44.

7 S. Hurst Seager, 'Architectural Art in New Zealand', *RIBA Journal* Vol VII, No 19-21, September 1900, p. 481.

8 Judith Binney, 'Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts' in *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 21. No.1, 1987, p. 16.

9 Christopher Tilley, 'Interpreting Material Culture', in I. Hodder (Ed.), *The Meaning of Things*, (London, Unwyn Hyman, 1989), p. 192.

10 Jeffrey Sissons, *Te Waimana - The Spring of Mana*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin, (1991), p. 21.

11 Binney, 1987, p. 23.

12 Judith Binney, 'Ancestral Voices - Maori Prophet Leaders', in Keith Sinclair (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 159.

13 Eric Schwimmer, *The World of the Maori* (Wellington,Reed, 1966), p. 118.

14 Schwimmer, p. 119-120.

15 Binney, 1990, p. 169.

16 Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin and Craig Wallace, *Mihaia—The Prophet Rua Kenana and His Community at Maungapohatu* (Wellington, Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 46-49.

17 Sissons, p. 200.

18 Alan Taylor, *Maori Folk Art* (Auckland, Century Hutchinson, 1988), p. 32.

19 T.W.R. Smith, *Te Omeka Pa—The Passing Years* (Matamata, Te Omeka Marae Trustees, 1987), p. 5., Henderson also gives another version or translation.

20 James Henderson, *Ratana—The Man, the Church, the Political Movement* (Wellington, Reed/Polynesian Society, 1963/1972), p. 14.

21 Jeremy Ihimaera, Manuscript. Henderson gives a slightly different version or translation.

22 Bruce Sedcole, 'Ratana Architecture: A Temple for a Prophet', B.Arch thesis, Victoria University, (1985), p. 55.

23 Sedcole, p. 54.

24 Henderson, p. 55.

25 Maharaia Winiata, *The Changing Role of the Leader in Maori Society* (Auckland, Blackwood and Janet Paul, 1967), p. 99.

26 G. V.Butterworth, 'The Ratana Movement', in *New Zealand's Heritage*, Vol 16, (1971), p. 2187-2188.

27 Henderson, p. 70.

28 Sedcole, p. 12.

29 'Kia Marama Ai', unpublished Ratana manuscript, p. 26.

30 'Kia Marama Ai', p. 27.

31 Sedcole, p. 42.

32 Henderson, p. 96.

33 F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (Bodley Head, 1920), p.270.

34 Priscilla Pitts, 'The Unquiet Earth - Reading Landscape And The Land in New Zealand Art', in *Headlands—Thinking Through New Zealand Art*, (1992), p. 25.

35 National Museum of New Zealand in association with the Australian Museum, *Taonga Maori—Treasures of the New Zealand Maori People*, (Sydney, Australian Museum, 1989), p. 59.

"O carve not ... nor draw no lines"
On the Stones of Shakespeare (1564-1616)
[The Subversion of Fertility]

John Dickson

The Sonnets

Shakespeare's Sonnets can be understood as many elegant literary arabesques and grotesques, like the parterres in Renaissance gardens, reworking received antique and medieval world views, centring on fertility themes, and giving these renewed force.[1] Shakespeare, however, seems not content to simply accept traditional themes.[2] He has the intent and capability of distilling his own age, defining its course by means of a chilling deconstruction of the antique-medieval world view. I will seek to amplify this by examination of his references to stone in Sonnets 52, 55, 65, and 94 and reference in *The Sonnets* to building generally.[3]

There are three uses of the word stone in the 154 sonnets (i.e. 2156 lines) which otherwise employ a wide range of imagery. Two of these uses of stone occur in the context of building.

There are four uses of associated words, marble, masonry, and rock, and four of glass.[4] There are approximately twenty uses of words about building, its ruin and types and references to metals—brass, steel and lead—in the context of building, but rarely if at all to wood in building, let alone wattle or thatch. Wood could be implied sometimes in the word fuel, but that is usually stated to be coal, the new fuel of Shakespeare's period. I will be saying therefore, a great deal about that which Shakespeare in *The Sonnets* says little. His comparative silence on the subject will also be subject to scrutiny.

Shakespeare is compelled by his age, but he appears to go further, whether by accident or design, I cannot be certain. He is not a visionary, he does not describe that which is to come. He tends not to imitate anyway, but rather to use. In the 94th Sonnet he makes use of stone, rather off-handedly, modestly, or at least in an understated manner, as the great sometimes do, as his earlier 16th century contemporary Süleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566) chose to dress.[5] In this sonnet Shakespeare makes a contextual shift. Stone, distilled from an older, now deconstructed context, is shifted into another new one. And meaning therefore changes. No longer negative, stone becomes again a positive force with new meaning, defining a new context as it does so, a new sense of the sublime that will sweep away the old parterres and the sonnet form itself.

I suggest there are three sets of attitudes towards stone operating in *The Sonnets*. The first set of attitudes, familiar, traditional, concerns the building vernacular. The second concerns a contemporary, transitional, reappraisal of building, destructively so, particularly building in its full glory. The third set concerns the formulation of new attitudes which embody a distinctive architectural aesthetic.[6]

The 16th century can be seen as a period of transition from the point of view of building stone. A Gothic climax of soundly built perpendicular artistry, built up from a Saxon revival of the Roman stone industry[7]; with impetus in the Crusade period from Continental, Syrian,

Restoration of a timber roof at Canterbury overlaid with the nave of St. Etienne, Bourges, 1120.

Spanish, and Byzantine sources[8]; had been followed by its collapse with the Protestant revolt; with the dissolution of monasteries (1535-40)[9] and the abandonment of medieval fortifications. In England stone had only occasionally been used for other building, notably, the few town houses and palaces of the rich. The building vernacular had generally been timber, wattle, plaster, and thatch.[10]

There begins in the late 16th century what Muir calls *"the Great Rebuilding"* of England in masonry.[11] Stone is reduced on two fronts, that of its glory, and impregnability. These come to be seen as show, pretension, and sham. From its transcendental Gothic heights, stone is reduced to a building vernacular. Throughout England from the 17th century, in town and country, houses and churches are rebuilt in brick and stone, accelerating with an increase of the middle classes and new building types such as offices, factories, and public buildings. From the beginning this gave opportunities for building patents and monopolies; in the manufacture of bricks for example; as had been enjoyed by the rich in the Roman and Byzantine worlds.

The ruin becomes commonplace. Roman ruins had long since been recycled and rehabilitated, and Saxon stone buildings had likewise in turn been absorbed into later Norman and Gothic works. Recycling becomes again a common procedure. Ruin and repair feature in Shakespeare's reference to building.[12] In the 16th century ruins appear as evidence of ridicule and imprudence. It is too soon in the 16th and 17th centuries to anticipate the impact of this great rebuilding, but not perhaps for its impulse to be understood and de-

fined. Stone becomes a *"new-fangled"* garment[13], smooth, plain cut, embodying a new aesthetic, of which the classic English country house is the outstanding example.[14] Shakespeare documents this astonishing change of attitude to stone, and his comparative silence about it presumably reflects the gap between two great periods of stone building.

I have formed the impression that Shakespeare is rather ignorant of the subtlety of stone as a material in itself, and in building. Even making allowance for his tendency not to describe, but rather to imply and use, stone appears to be largely outside his experience. So he makes poor reading in this respect.[15] Shakespeare's interest in building, apart from eventually settling into a fine house emblazoned with his family's coat of arms in Stratford, may well have been largely financial, as his being a co-proprietor of the Globe theatre indicates. He certainly makes free use of legal and financial terms in *The Sonnets*, obsessively so—terms such as: patent, legacy, profit, usurer, sum, audit, executor, loan, lease, rent, cost, losses, interest, possession, penury, charter, bond, gift, mutual render, impeached, mortgage, debtor, suit, receipt, ransom, statute, and so on. This may well reflect his preoccupation with his audience and patrons, who could have been stock market cronies.

Nevertheless the use Shakespeare invariably has for these terms concerns finance as a form of increase, that is I suggest, as an image for the traditional concern with fertility. It must be mentioned here that printing, another obvious obsession of Shakespeare's, and also a financial one no doubt, is also used by him as an image for increase and immortality. Perpetual reproduction of the 'copy' guarantees this, so long as men have breath for speaking and eyes for seeing the black ink on the printed page, as Sonnet 81, one of many with this theme, vividly declares: *"Your name from hence immortal life shall have,... Your monument shall be my gentle verse,/ Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,/ And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,/ When all the breathers of this world are dead,/ You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)/ Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men."* (lines 5, and 9-14). Presumably many of the 46 sonnets (no's 127-152) addressed to the dark, or black lady, are further arabesques

on this theme. And there are amongst them startling grotesques concerning this capability of black ink.[16]

It can readily be observed that the four uses of stone in *The Sonnets* are not repetitive. That is to say, stone is not employed in each case with the same assigned meaning. On examination, each reference, remembering they are few in the context of the collection of 154 sonnets as a whole, appears to employ stone intentionally from a different, specific point of view. Stone is presumably selected in each case because it is thought to possess these peculiar, different capabilities. Shakespeare's interest in stone is primarily semantic. The three sonnets no's 52, 55, and 65 are relatively close in the overall sequence, and if we accept Harrison's analysis of thematic development,[17] they occur after initial declaration of a youth's beauty, love, and beauty's use, amongst sonnets indicating increased intimacy and emotional disturbance, occasioned by jealousy of the youth's relationship with Shakespeare's mistress, and awareness of aging. Sonnet 94 is further into the sequence, in a context of rebuke, followed by concluding reconciliation, before the last 46 sonnets addressing a dark lady.

In Sonnet 52 the word stones as *"stones of worth"* is used meaning precious stones. The words *"treasure"* and *"jewels"*, are also used in the sonnet. Stones of worth, says Shakespeare, are thinly placed, just as his references to stone in the collection of sonnets are few. In this sonnet Shakespeare distils the generality of stone, passing over its occurrence in nature and in building, to salvage the jewel, as an image for his beloved's worthiness. Shakespeare does not say what kind of jewel this stone is.

> *"So am I as the rich whose blessed key,*
> *Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,*
> *That which he will not ev'ry hour survey,*
> *For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.*
> *Therefore are feasts so seldom and so rare,*

Since seldom coming in the long year set,
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
Or captain jewels in the carcanet.
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
To make some special instant special blest,
By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.
Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,
Being had to triumph, being lack'd to hope."

Sonnet 55 is concerned with stone in glorious building, that is, as marble, but it is no sooner introduced in association with princes, than it is reduced to *"unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time."* Statues are overturned. Masonry is rooted out. This swift destruction of princely pretension by time, war, and death, destroys glorious building with it, but not Shakespeare's own rhyme, and the eyes of those who read it. This reference to eyes surely refers back to jewels in Sonnet 52, and reconfirms the salvaging of stone's essence despite its apparent destruction.

"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of Princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room.
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So till the judgement that yourself arise
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes."

Prominent in this reappraisal of masonry building are attitudes toward building in the full glory of all its manifold crafts, as in Gothic cathedrals. These are understood to have been, in their own time, greatly wondered at, but this implies their passivity and suggests the view

of a later age. Gothic building is surely an active phenomenon, not unlike gunpowder exploding.[18] In Chaucer's time cathedrals were places of pilgrimage. Later their nobler qualities were perhaps better moved to a more appropriate setting. Thus, in the context of naval architecture, such qualities were more beautiful, and certainly of more use. Here tallness continues to be admired.[19] This shift to the ocean triggers the sublime.[20] Sensual enjoyment of building is transferred to an antique context.[21] These contextual shifts of the medieval to the antique, and the medieval to far off oceans, are presumably occasioned by Protestant abhorrence of popish fertility themes. The far off Orient is an insistent Renaissance theme. The Orient's absence is vividly present in Shakespeare's imagination.

Shakespeare gives the Protestant voice full scope. Pretension of the gilded tomb (Sonnet 101) is his key architectural example. The tomb is the test case of monumental building. Intent on renewal its pretence can be measured by the old-world fertility view, intercepting the natural process of burial whereby the tomb becomes the womb. Shakespeare links these two words, tomb and womb, for the rhyme at least, adding the word come (pronounced coome[22]), and for reference to the old fertility scheme, whereby we are back in the arms of the old earth goddess. In four sonnets (no's 17, 81, 86, and 107) referring to tombs, and in many others, fertility is appropriated by printing through which Shakespeare's verses become tomb, inscription, and monument.[23]

Shakespeare thus seeks a closer alliance with the processes of fertility and renewal than gilded building can claim. If architecture once (as mother of the arts,) with all its associated crafts, seemed to teem with creature life. If in its incipient decay and inevitable rebuilding, as with the building vernacular, it seemed perpetual. If once in its gilded splendour it was raised to a pitch of excitement and fulfilling ecstasy that seemed the very act of creation itself; as with the sunburst, rose, vase and stem motifs and arabesques, in antique, Gothic, and Islamic design. Architecture in Shakespeare's time is spent.

Cognisance of building's decay may seem merely a continuation of the antique view.[24] With Shakespeare one senses discontent with this view. He does not seem to believe it, not trust in it. Shakespeare puts nature down. And with it all craft, for craft is nature's child. Mistrust passes between them. Craft is held up to scorn. Here is the issue of the *"painted process,"*[25] an idiom for deceit, whereby all craft is seen to be show. Like the ephemeral in nature, craft fades. All livery, the gaudy, all colour ornament, painting, drawing, carving, each in turn, is held to be deception. Not only, with Protestant ruthlessness, are the obvious representational crafts considered counterfeit, implying Plato's argument, but also the light of the sun, gilding, and transparency. And too, the dark of night, for it hides the truth, and thus misleads.[26] In short the entire medieval episode is reduced to a parlour game whereby its *"monkish piles,"* like Ferdinand's pile of a thousand logs, are to be lugged away and subjected to scrimmages amongst court favourites.[27]

Although war and politics are obvious agents in creating the ruin, one senses for Shakespeare the processes of nature, in their capacity for testing and purifying building, have greater fascination, as declared in Sonnet 65 which restates this theme of time's decay more explicitly. Black ink shines bright because of love being in it. This essence is distilled from stone, huge and hard, in nature, and in castle building, together with steel. These give way to time and mortality. The constancy and impregnability of castles is seen as an illusion. Guardianship of beauty passes from the castle, with the jewel, to black ink.

> *"Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,*
> *But sad mortality o'ersways their power,*
> *How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,*
> *Whose action is no stronger than a flower?*
> *O how shall summer's honey breath hold out,*
> *Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,*
> *When rocks impregnable are not so stout,*
> *Nor gates of steel so strong but Time decays?*
> *O fearful meditation, where alack,*
> *Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?*

Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright."

Elsewhere Shakespeare seems pleased to fortify nature with some of his most succinct images of the grotesque. In Sonnet 5, *"hideous winter"* is prelude to *"summer's distillation."* In Sonnet 27, *"ghastly night"* accompanies a jewel. And in Sonnet 34, the horror of base clouds hide his love in their *"rotten smoke."* Shakespeare is clearly, with this use of the grotesque, intent on the exquisite. With the grotesque we detect Shakespeare's deeper interest, that of distillation. There is respect for building whose fabric survives testing, and for the processes of repair and husbandry which attend it.[28] Shakespeare rehearses the process of distillation over and over again. As perfume is to the flower; as wine is to the grape;[29] as crystal to stone; and the age's lust for treasure of gold and silver; all are part of the repertoire of the Orient, so that the essence becomes the absent.

Ornament is distinguished from essence which does not suffer the charge of deceit. If ornament is seen to celebrate fertility, treasure is fertility raised to a higher power. For Shakespeare the black ink of printing is a distilled essence, an elixir of immortality. An essence distilled can be transferred elsewhere, as a ship takes treasure in plunder, or as goods and money pass in a business transaction. Shakespeare's often used reversal technique is such a transaction whereby nature's effects come from the beloved, from whom birds learn their song (Sonnet 78), the sun and stars their light, and spring and summer their green. Shakespeare thinks of his friend, Kerrigan writes, *"in violently reversed metaphors, subduing the nature of things for the sake of his beloved's particularity and being."*

These techniques of distillation and reversal are transitional devices because they continue to rely on an old context for meaning. A swinging pendulum, of scorn perhaps, can as easily swing back. There will be Gothic revivals. And in the 17th century there will be ornament

again. But Shakespeare cuts free of the old context. Stone is reduced to what appears to be a rather sorry state. Deprived of its own vitality, stone is viewed negatively, as the fallen are, in pity and shame. Thus in two sonnets both the glamour and practical utility of stone building are disposed of in favour of poetry and printing. Even the distillation of stone's essential worth, as jewel, in Sonnet 52, is let go in Sonnet 65.

In Sonnet 94 stone, stripped of its pretensions and illusions, is unnerved. Compared with the glamour, vitality and versatility of its undone use, stone now appears inert, lifeless and negative, as in the fourth line: *"Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow."* But unexpectedly, by reason of these very qualities, stone "inherits heaven's graces" and becomes "Lord of its own face." Suddenly stone is positive again.[30] Its immobility, coldness, and non-expressiveness are seen shrewdly as assets of inestimable worth. Stone is lord of its own façade.

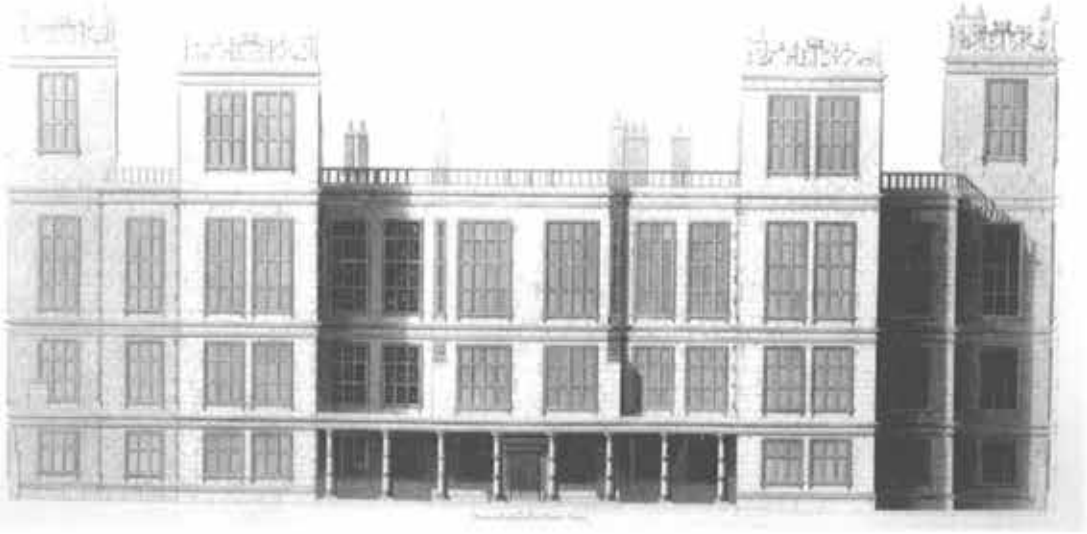
"They that have power to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow:
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense,
They are the Lords and owners of their faces.
Others, but stewards of their excellence:
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself, it only live and die
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds,
Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds."

This expectation of stone appears to be a distinctly new attitude which Shakespeare was either compelled to adopt by the momentum of his age, or which, of his own accord, tinkered to our effect. In relation to stone and architecture this attitude formulates an entirely new aesthetic. There now seems little hope of intimacy with a material with which stillness

had always been associated; little hope of it being tickled into response, or rattled, or glitterised or even instructed by a lover. Stone, here, seems as it has always been, yet is unloved; as its own essence, yet without force, now eluding evaluation. Stone seems to possess qualities which place it outside the antique and medieval scheme; qualities which don't really place it at all, for even the reference to outside fails. Stone has not moved there nor anywhere. It seems to embody the new science's objectivity, and the new humanism's censure. Unlike Chaucer's brass horse, in *The Squire's Tale*, that *"stood in the courtyard still as any stone,"* stone does not have a pin which can be twirled, so that the secret of its response is found out. [31]

The smooth self possession of stone, like that of his beloved, disturbs Shakespeare. It is the theme of his first Sonnet: *"But thou contracted to thine own bright eyes,/ Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,"* lines 5-6. In the 94th Sonnet and the 93rd Sonnet before it, Shakespeare focuses on the face, and for this reason refers to stone. In Sonnet 94 we appear to be at the threshold of the perception which would project ideal qualities onto stone. In this sonnet, I believe, we are entering the world of the sublime; as a child perhaps. Shakespeare is obsessed with presentment of his beloved's beauty being marred by age, particularly his brow. Sonnets 2 and 63 have this theme: *"When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,/ And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,/ Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now,/ Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held."* (Sonnet 2, lines 1-4); *"Against my love shall be as I am now,/ With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn;/ When hours have drain'd his blood and fill'd his brow/ With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn/ Hath travell'd on to Age's steepy night,"* (Sonnet 63, lines 1-5) Shakespeare's desire for his beloved's beauty to live on, in his black printed lines, may be an image for his beloved living in his own aged self. I am connecting here, the printed lines with the lines of age in Shakespeare's own brow. Certainly the relationship between the beauty of youth, and its perception by the old, is a mystery. Sonnet 19, from which the title of this paper is taken, seems to imply this theme: *"O carve not with thy hours*

my love's fair brow,/ Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen,/ Him in thy course untainted do allow,/ For beauty's pattern to succeeding men./ Yet do thy worst old Time, despite thy wrong,/ My love shall in my verse ever live young." (lines 9-14) Smoothness linked with youth strengthens the tabula rasa meaning here. Stone's senselessness becomes its virtue. Gothic design is all wrinkles, contortions of emotional intricacy, and ugliness. Not so, the clean cut ashlar stone façade.



Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, completed soon after 1597 for Elizabeth Shrewsbury. Engraving from P. F. Robinson, Vitruvius Britannicus, *London, 1835.*

Hardwick Hall

The smooth stone façade is under way in the 16th century, as Elizabeth Shrewsbury's new house, Hardwick Hall (1576-1597) shows. Its smoothness, both inside and outside, is astonishing, giving stone, glass, and plaster, one face. What a refreshment of spirit that old wrinkled lady must have endured within starched ruff, black gown, and this extended

architectural facial.[32] Nigel Nicolson observes of this exterior; *"There is not much surface decoration. The Tuscan colonnade between the two wings and the roof balustrade above it are the only concessions to classical fashion."* And of the interior: *"The staircase is built of stone. It has no mouldings, no carpet, and the mere pretence of a banister ... Sacheverell Sitwell has called (The High Chamber) 'the most beautiful room not in England alone, but in the whole of Europe." The proportions are extremely simple, a rectangular box extended on one side... The ceiling is quite plain without even the simplest cornice."* (pp. 88-93). He notes how this smooth overall form was exploited by its owner: *"Elizabeth Shrewsbury signed the house with her initials in fretted stone against the skyline."* (p. 88) Christopher Simon Sykes detects a 16th century contextual shift implied by the design of Hardwick Hall and also by its siting: *"High above the M1 motorway Hardwick Hall dominates the Derbyshire countryside like a great galleon."* (p. 202)

Shakespeare notices that building can of itself harness forces that would purge it. Thus fire, which previously had the power to destroy wooden building, transformed building. For example, the new fuel coal, invading houses which developed many fireplaces and chimneys in new brick, in the new style, for the new rich, disturbs the old view, and Shakespeare senses this, causing Capulet to call *"And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot."* (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1 Scene 5.) Fireplaces become grotesque elements in interior design. Shakespeare's fascination for lead suggests, I suspect, all the new lead flashings around these chimneys. Weight, like fire, becomes self-possessed by building. *"I have a soul of lead"* Romeo declares precociously (Act 1 scene 4). Grotesque fireplaces, composed of slabs of stone and a variety of geometrical stone forms, are a feature of Hardwick Hall.[33]

Buildings now disturb also in their alliance with light and air. Windows and doors are often used as images by Shakespeare, but the age's fascination with glass goes beyond traditional complicity of building with nature. Vast planes of smooth glass encompass Hardwick Hall on all sides.[34] Much of the disturbing aspect of these examples of fire and light is in the apparent re-assertion of the old order, of nature, and craft, even when these forces are

enslaved. This struggle is depicted in *The Tempest* by means of Prospero's control of natural forces. Prospero's control of these forces is based on his recognition of them, as when he identifies Ariel and Caliban with their respective elements of air and earth. But as useful as these natural forces are, tamed or otherwise, the new architectural aesthetic is not concerned with such complicity.

Venus and Adonis

Kerrigan sees the young man addressed by Shakespeare in *The Sonnets* as *"a god, an Adonis comprising the world's fertility as well as a Helen possessing its beauty."*[35] In Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* the conventions of love and fertility are ridiculed, by way of Adonis appropriating Venus's own role.[36] Shakespeare and Venus argue increase. Both Adonis, and Shakespeare's love, are *"unmoved, cold and to temptation slow."* Adonis pleads underage. His self-possession is terrible centring on his face.[37] His first response expresses his concern: *"Fie, no more of love! The sun doth burn my face, I must remove."* (lines 185-6) Adonis's disdain unhinges Venus. She understands that he is not, as we have seen, even like stone which can over time be worn away and caused to respond: *"Art thou obdurate, flinty, hard as steel?/ Nay more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth."* (lines 199-200)

In the poem Venus is content to relate to Adonis, either as slave, or mistress, or both. It's all the same to her. Life and death, love and war, growth and decay, all declare one world.[38] She commends her smooth brow and hands to Adonis: *"Thou canst not see one wrinkle in my brow/...My smooth moist hand, were it with thy hand felt,/ Would in thy palm dissolve, or seem to melt."* (lines 139 and 143-144) And having to no avail cited the flowers about them: *"Witness this primrose bank whereon I lie:/... Be bold to play, our sport is not in sight./ These blue-veined violets whereon we lean/ Never can blab, nor know what we mean."* (lines 151 and 124-126), she

suddenly with inspired impatience exclaims: *"I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer."* (line 231).

Thus a smooth park-like surface displaces the medieval garden, with its intricate flower beds, compartments, and water-works. Smooth grass, and continuous space, form the park. But Venus subverts the park, with arabesques of fertility: *"Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale;/ Graze on my lips and if these hills be dry,/ Stray lower, where pleasant fountains lie./ Within this limit is relief enough,/ Sweet bottom grass and high delightful plain,/ Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,/ To shelter thee from tempest and from rain:/ Then be my deer, since I am such a park./ No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.* (lines 231-240.) And

King's College Chapel 1446-1515, and the Fellows' Building 1724, by Gibbs, at Cambridge

Shakespeare subverts Adonis' face in turn with the tomb: *"At this Adonis smiles as in disdain/ That in each cheek appears a pretty dimple;/ Love made those hollows, if himself were slain,/ He might be buried in a tomb so simple,/ Foreknowing well, if there be cause to lie,/ Why there love liv'd, and there he could not die./ Those lovely caves, those round enchanting pits,/ Open'd their mouths to swallow Venus' liking:/ Being mad before, how doth she now for wits?/ Struck dead before, what needs a second striking?/ Poor queen of love, in thine own law forlorn,/ To love a cheek that smiles at thee in scorn!"* (lines 241-252).

Conclusion

If as C.S. Lewis has implied, Shakespeare's imagery and technique are largely a continuation of the medieval-antique world, my attempts to draw attention to any departure from this may well be forced. It is obvious that in *The Sonnets* neither stone nor building is a subject in the way that time, beauty, and love are. And I have given these scant attention. But then I didn't want to beg the question of what Shakespeare's subjects are. There is novelty in discovering others do not share one's own interests, as Shakespeare declares himself in Sonnet 91 *"every humour hath his adjunct pleasure wherein it finds a joy above the rest."* And one may well agree that the particulars I have discussed are not, by any means, Shakespeare's measure.

Of the four sonnets which particularly employ imagery concerning stone, only the 94th furnishes imagery that can match Shakespeare's confidence in his own printed rhyme, and a newborn child, for depicting his subject, at least his love. Jewels (Sonnet 52), gilded tombs (Sonnet 55), and castles (Sonnet 65), fall short. Yet in Sonnet 94 stone remains *"unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow,"* as if his love is unrequited. Shakespeare's rhyme does not give a detailed image of his beloved, as a child would. It is possible that the new aesthetic in

architecture gives clues as to what Shakespeare did admire in his beloved's figure, and gives also some idea of his conception of beauty. Perhaps this is what the preceding Sonnet 93 is saying: *"... the false heart's history./ Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange."* This could imply a dismissal of the Gothic age. And the last two lines may well evoke the new building aesthetic, with immediate concern that it may not be authentic: *"Whate'er thy thoughts, or thy heart's workings be,/ Thy looks should nothing thence, but sweetness tell./ "How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,/ If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show."*

But in 1616 when Shakespeare died it was too soon to tell. We have seen how sympathy with a familiar, inherited, old-world view of fertility and decay, has tended toward its subjugation, by means of reversal. And with its abstraction, through distillation, its decontextualisation has been achieved. There remains a self-contained plane of non-expressiveness, indifferent to collusion with natural forces, of which the smooth, ashlar, stone façade, and park, are exponents. Indifference to scorn, and violence, with which realisation of this aesthetic concurred, defines an age's conception of beauty. In architecture we have thus an unforgettable likeness of the youth whom Shakespeare loved.[39]

Notes:

1 I have selected *The Sonnets* as a text because of my current interest in the traditional themes of fertility and renewal in architecture and its ornament, and also in the use of stone in relation to these themes. I have recently examined these themes in Islamic architecture focusing on medieval Cairo. Thus *The Sonnets* attracted my attention, particularly the first seventeen, the so-called "breeding sonnets" in which Shakespeare urges a youth to reproduce his own beauty biologically, to thus make use of time, rather than let his beauty suffer time's inevitable devaluation and extinction. The same arguments are presented in Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* and by Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) also in *Hero and Leander.*

2 C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Excluding Drama)* (Oxford, 1954), has drawn attention to the lively and emphatic assertion of old concepts in 16th century

literature. He warns this is not Gothic lag but reinforcement of the medieval view. But not it seems, for its own sake any more. In *The Sonnets*, nature and time; seasons, elements, wind, rain, night and day, stars, sun, moon, cloud, growth, buds, leaves, flowers, earth, worms, decay, all are present. Shakespeare experiments with new ways of using these elements, presumably, thereby engendering increase of another kind.

3 All quotations of the Sonnets are from G.B. Harrison, ed., *The Sonnets, and a Lover's Complaint*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938/1964).

4 Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* of 1194 lines, makes use of the word stone twice, and flint and flinty three times.

5 Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), p. 195.

6 This seems to accord with Fox's (1988) analysis of a branch of English humanism, which includes Shakespeare and Marlowe, concerning classical and native traditions and the propagation of a revitalised new kind of literature. Alistair Fox, 'Chaucer, More, and English Humanism,' *Parergon*, Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, New Series No. 6, 1988, pp. 63-75.

7 Richard Muir's outline of the history of stone building in England is a helpful introduction to the subject. R. Muir, *The Stones of Britain. Landscapes and Monuments, Quarries and Cathedrals* (London: Michael Joseph, 1986). Also L.F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540. A Documentary History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). And for the Saxon stone industry in particular—E.M. Jope 'The Saxon Building-Stone Industry in Southern and Midland England' in *Medieval Archaeology*, VIII, 1964, pp. 91-118.

8 Rather more is known about these sources than about their influence on English architecture. Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

9 James Lee Milne, *Tudor Renaissance*, (London: Batsford, 1951).

10 Richard Muir, op. cit., quotes William Harrison writing in the late 16th century: *"The greater part of our building in the cities and good towns of England consisteth onlie of timber, for as yet few of the houses of the communaltie (except here and there in the Welsh countrie towns) are made of stone ... The ancient manors and houses of our gentlemen are yet, and for the most part of strong timber. Howbeit such as be latelie builded are commonlie either of bricks or hard stone. "* p. 259.

11 Muir, op. cit., pp. 259-260. Muir is quoting W.G. Hoskins.

12 Sonnet 73, *"...cold/Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang."* Sonnet 10, *"Seeking*

that beauteous roof to ruinate,/Which to repair should be thy chief desire"; and Sonnet 119, *"And ruined love, when it is built anew,/Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater."* Some ruins from this period have survived as such. They are often famous for their association with the picturesque and romantic impulses of later centuries. Examples are William Wordsworth's *"Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798,"* with its echo of Sonnet 104; also David Hockney's photographs *'My Mother. Bolton Abbey. Yorkshire. November 1982'* and *'Ian. Fountains Abbey Yorkshire January 1983'* in Lawrence Weschler, *David Hockney Cameraworks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984).

13 Sonnet 91.

14 Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the English Country House*, (New Haven: Yale, 1983).

15 Shakespeare's contemporary Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), by contrast, demonstrates an impressive knowledge, perhaps first hand experience, of stone and marble in antique and Byzantine building. So I don't think its just the age, that is, accidents of history and geography that have contrived Shakespeare's ignorance. Chaucer (c.1340-1400) having travelled to Italy, to Florence, and Siena perhaps, would undoubtedly have seen a range of impressive works in stone and marble. From what we know of him, if *The Canterbury Tales* are a measure, he was curious about such matters in antiquity, aware of contemporary practice, on account of his being in 1389 put in charge of *"repair of walls, ditches, sewers, and bridges between Greenwich and Woolwich and of the fabric of St George's Chapel at Windsor."* Nevill Coghill, trans., *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 14. Also John Gardner, *The Life and Times of Chaucer* (Paladin, 1979), p. 191.

16 *"In the old age black was not counted fair... But now is black Beauty's successive heir... Therefore my Mistress' eyes are raven black,"* Sonnet 127. *"If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head."* Sonnet 130.

17 Harrison, op. cit., p. 14.

18 Muir op. cit., p.252, quotes from William Langland's (c.1332-c.1400, a contemporary of Chaucer) *Crede of Piers Plowman*, a description of a *"wonderly wel-y-bild"* church: *"With niches on everiche half,/ And bellyche-y-corven;/ With crochetes on corneres,/With knottes of gold,/With gay glittering glas/ Glowying as the sunne..."* Muir contrasts this contemporary description with John Evelyn's 17th century summing up of the medieval legacy: *"a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building: congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use or beauty."* (253.)

19 Marlowe in his poem *Hero and Leander* would have this new context as a *"majestical ocean"* thus dressing it in the guise of the old. Here, *"a stately builded ship, well rigg'd"* echoes Langland's *"wel-y-bild"* church: *"Nor heaven, nor thou, were made to gaze upon;/ As*

heaven preserves all things, so save thou one./ A stately builded ship, well rigg'd and tall,/ The ocean maketh more majestical:" 1:lines 223-226. E.D. Pendry and J.C. Maxwell, ed., *Christopher Marlowe, Complete Plays and Poems* (Everyman, 1983). Shakespeare too, respects tall building of goodly pride, and like Marlowe shifts this image out to the wide ocean. But in that Sonnet 80 of jealousy, he abandons such construction. In the new context he mocks the pretension of its fine qualities, clinging rather to his own *"saucy bark."* It is a complex sonnet with contextual shifts; with ironies expressing hurt, scorn, impudence, and conceit; and, I suspect with bawdy undertows: *"O how I faint when I of you do write,/ Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,/ And in the praise thereof spends all his might,/ To make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame./ But since your worth (wide as the Ocean is)/ The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,/ My saucy bark (inferior far to his)/ On your broad main doth wilfully appear./ Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,/ While he upon your soundless deep doth ride,/ Or (being wrack'd) I am a worthless boat,/ He of tall building, and of goodly pride./ Then if he thrive and I be cast away,/ The worst was this, my love was my decay."* This sonnet is Shakespeare's saucy equivalent to Marlowe's description of Neptune's rape of Leander.

20 I am indebted to Dr Jonathon Lamb's discussion of Longinus for reference to ocean vastness as an image for the sublime.

21 Shakespeare does not as Marlowe gush with images of gorgeous building. In *Hero and Leander* these range from Thetis's glassy bower (2:204) to Neptune's ocean-floor azure palace: *"Leander striv'd, the waves about him wound,/ And pull'd him to the bottom, where the ground/ Was strew with pearl, and in low coral groves/ Sweet singing mermaids sported with their loves/ On heaps of heavy gold, and took great pleasure/ To spurn in careless sort the shipwrack treasure./ For here the stately azure palace stood/ Where kingly Neptune and his train abode."* (2: 159-166.) In his description of Venus's temple, Marlowe significantly retains Langland's sensual enjoyment of building, but transfers this to an antique context: *"So fair a church as this Venus had none;/ The walls were of discoloured jasper stone,/ Wherein was Proteus carved and o'erhead/ A lively vine of green sea-agate spread;/ Where by one hand light-headed Bacchus hung,/ And with the other, wine from grapes outwrung./ Of crystal shining fair the pavement was;/ The town of Sestos called it Venus' glass./ There might you see the gods in sundry shapes,/ Committing heady riots, incest, rapes:/ ... And in the midst a silver altar stood."* (1: 133-157.) Marlowe clearly knows about antique and Byzantine building, and with his Asia Minor theme concerning Venus's priestess Hero, and Leander, he understands the religion of this old earth goddess whose *"veins and sinews"*, Colin Thubron writes in his account of Lebanon in *The Hills of Adonis. A Journey in Lebanon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), *"were the fields and vines of men."*

22 Kerrigan notes the rhyme may be that of the short 'u' or long 'oo'. John Kerrigan, ed., *The Sonnets and a Lover's Complaint*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 195 and 319.

23 *"Who will believe my verse in time to come/ If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?/ Though yet heaven knows it is but as a tomb/ Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts:"* Sonnet 17, lines 1-4; *"The earth can yield me but a common grave,/ When you entombed in*

men's eye shall lie./ Your monument shall be my gentle verse,/ Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,/ And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,/ When all the breathers of this world are dead,/ You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)/ Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men. " Sonnet 81, lines 7-14; *"Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,/ Bound for the prize of (all to precious) you,/ That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,/ Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?"* Sonnet 86, lines 1-4; *"My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,/ Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,/ While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes./ And thou in this shalt find thy monument,/ When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent."* Sonnet 107, lines 10-14.

24 Horace sees even the great pyramids of Egypt - the tomb writ large and tall - succumbing to nature's inevitable processes of demolition although this has yet to occur for the great pyramids of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. He reserves nature's process of renewal, the *"green and growing,"* as an image for his own lasting reputation. Shakespeare does not say his rhyme is green and growing; although he does say his beloved is *"still green;"* but rather he rejoices grotesquely in black ink, black as the eye's pupil. Kerrigan points out that Shakespeare seeks immortality for his verses and lover, not for himself. Horace does not share Shakespeare's conception of printing. Horace's thought is wholly, explicitly, within the old fertility view, seeing architecture's decay as part of the natural world: *"More durable than bronze, higher than Pharaoh's/ Pyramids is the monument I have made,/ A shape that angry wind or hungry rain/ Cannot demolish, nor the innumerable/ Ranks of the years that march in centuries./ I shall not wholly die: some part of me/ Will cheat the goddess of death, for while High Priest/ And Vestal climb our Capitol in a hush,/ My reputation shall keep green and growing." Horace, Odes 111* 30, 1-9, James Michie trans., *The Odes of Horace,* (Penguin, 1964/1978), pp. 206-207.

25 Fox, 68, and Sonnets 16 and 67.

26 Sonnets 30, 33, 34 and 35.

27 In *The Tempest* Shakespeare appears to make use of the parlour game employing a log. Ferdinand has to lug and pile some thousand logs together, at Prospero's command. This wooden slavery he is happy to endure for love of Prospero's daughter Miranda. Inevitably a scrimmage betwixt Ferdinand and Miranda occurs as they argue over the task and Miranda grabs Ferdinand's log - the one he is carrying at the time.

28 As in Sonnet 13: *"Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,/ Which husbandry in honour might uphold,/ Against the stormy gusts of winter's day/ And barren rage of death's eternal cold?/ O, none but unthrifts, dear my love, you know/ You had a Father; let your Son say so."* lines 9-14.

29 *"But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,/ Leese but their show, their substance still lives sweet."* Sonnet 5, lines 13-14. *"Then were not summer's distillation left/ A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,"* lines 9-10.

30 *"This elusive poem "* Kerrigan comments *"is perhaps the most discussed in the collection."* Kerrigan considers this sonnet fraught with uncertainties *"Its ironies are almost inordinate, an ebb and flow between approval and disapproval ambiguating the text, whose iterative patterns ... offer a security which, in reading dissolves."* He notes the *"thorough going self possession"* evoked in the sonnet (pp. 290-2), and Shakespeare's use of stone as an image of unrelenting indifference.

31 *"Sir, there's nothing to explain/ But this; if you would ride it far or near,/ Just twirl this pin that's standing in its ear,/ ... To make him move or seek some other place/ Twirl this pin and he'll vanish into space,/ Yes, disappear completely out of sight,/ Yet will return... To you alone..."*

32 Girouard, op. cit., pp. 143-163. Also Christopher Simon Sykes, *Ancient English Houses 1240-1612*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), and Nigel Nicolson, *Great Houses of Britain*, (London: The National Trust and Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1978).

33 Girouard considers that Hardwick Hall's detail is taken from Flemish Pattern Books. He also observes that the gallery chimney pieces are taken from Serlio's 7th Book. (pp. 146-7.) C. Simon Sykes illustrates the chimney piece and doorway by Thomas Accres in the Green Velvet Room which incorporates alabaster, blackstone, and other Derbyshire marbles. (pp. 206-7.)

34 *"the importance and wealth of its owner is shouted to the world by the almost relentless use of the most expensive material available at the time—glass ... the result is breathtaking, and inspired the now celebrated piece of doggerel—'Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall.'* C. Simon Sykes, op. cit., p. 210.

35 Kerrigan, op. cit., p. 31.

36 In this poem Shakespeare presents a horse, a hare, and a boar, as creatures active, and forceful enough, to make one gasp. But the boar is ridiculed by Venus in this parody of heterosexual love. The horse behaving on cue runs off in lust for a mare. And the hare becomes an object of pity.

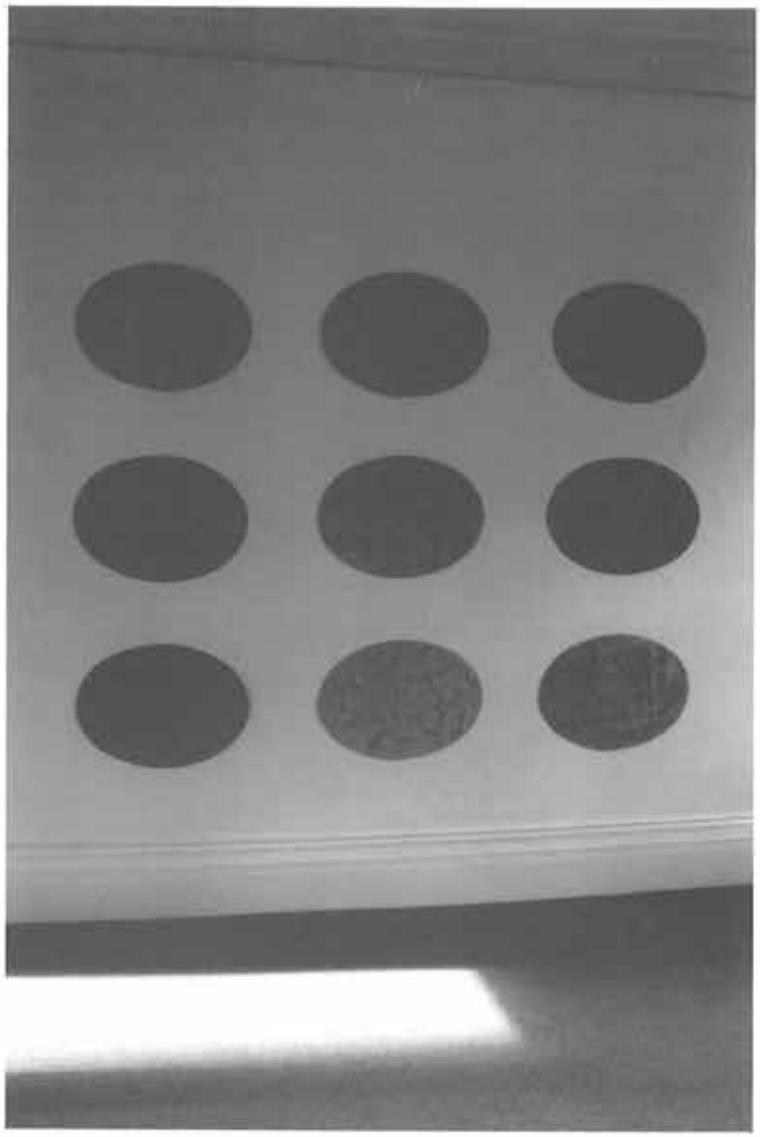
37 Venus remembers him thus after his death: *"Bonnet nor veil henceforth no creature wear:/ Nor sun nor wind will ever strive to kiss you/ Having no fair to lose, you need not fear./ The sun doth scorn you, and the wind doth hiss you/ But when Adonis liv'd, sun and sharp air/ Lurk'd like two thieves to rob him of his fair./ And therefore would he put his bonnet on,/ Under whose brim, the gaudy sun would peep:/ The wind would blow it off, and being gone,/ Play with his locks; then would Adonis weep,/ And straight, in pity of his tender years,/ They both would strive who first should dry his tears." Venus and Adonis*, lines 1081-1092.

38 The god Mars is her chief example; her most successful, best behaved lover, as she explains to Adonis: *"I have been woo'd as I entreat thee now,/ Even by the stern and direful god of war,/ Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow,/ Who conquers where he comes in every*

jar;/ Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,/ And begg'd for that which thou unask'd shalt have." *Venus and Adonis*, lines 97-102.

39 Sonnet 55 with the theme of marble monuments ceding to Shakespeare's rhyme, and with its reference to his love's presence on the Day of Judgement, makes fascinating comparison with the Taj Mahal, built within two decades after Shakespeare's death. Wayne E. Begley, 'The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning,' *The Art Bulletin*, 61, 1979, pp. 7-37, links the form of this building, begun in 1632, with Islamic and Christian, iconography, and texts. The cenotaphs of Shah Jahan, and his consort Mumtaz Mahal, follow Mughal convention with symbolic references to pen and tablet respectively. He argues a context - the larger composition of the Taj and its garden—with allegorical reference to the Day of Resurrection, and the Divine Throne of Majesty. As with Shakespeare, the pen and tablet both anticipate, and are, the means for creation, the prescription of human destiny, and final judgement. As a sheet of paper can be an image for a cosmological tablet, so also a plain stone façade, upon which a new conception of architectural beauty is impressed.

A continuation of the 16th century architecture of the smooth façade includes The Fellows' Building (1724) by Gibbs on the west side of the Great Court at King's College, Cambridge, and facing the smooth lawn sloping to the river Cam. This smooth ashlar building, together with the Chapel of King's College and the lawn, forms one of the renown prospects of England.



Lamella: a spacing of skin and distant boundaries

Sarah Treadwell

Recent works by Barbara Tuck, a series entitled *Lamella*, consist of groups of nine elliptical skins of painted aluminium. Each *Lamella*, the parts and the whole, is desirable, difficult and excessive; arousing the passions of the collector and refusing attributes of value. No frames to set apart or emphasise and no secret fixings to mark the artist as magician; the *Lamella* barely adhere to the wall surface.

They seem marginally located in art categories although participating, somewhat uneasily, in the conventions of the field; they are to be attached to walls in varying arrangements of the nine parts and can be described as oil paintings though on aluminium not canvas. The *Lamella*, membranes or gills, refer to the morphological not only through their naming, spreading out beyond the boundaries of the discipline that attempts to house them.

A calligraphic surface passes across the constrained shapes of the elliptical *Lamella*. The ovals

suggesting an imperfect origin, egg or womb, a distorted circle or stretched sphere straining the credibility of an originary I (the gestures of authorship are repressed and suggested in these works); a straining of an eye which locates a body in relationship to a surface gaze. The *Lamella* consists of unstable imperfections, ellipses which only the positioning of the body in space utilizing the laws of perspective can restore to the perfection of the circle (here the physical corrects or creates the ideal instead of the usual perfection of theory). The observer, a material body in space, can create the Platonic satisfaction of a circle but only fleetingly and at the expense of giddiness and disorientation utterly aware of the separation between mind and body.

The geometries of the *Lamella*, the repeated ellipses, and the regular patternings that they seem to resist, invite a biological reference. An egg contains a germ of future life but in the *Lamella* it is not a pristine new beginning nor a unique mark but rather an inevitable re-run of information contained in patterns that imprint the egg. Potential new beginnings are smothered in over-arching decorative patterns. Between the shape and the surface of the *Lamella* is a plane of slippage; a lack of conjunction between skin and body. Ornamental narratives flow over individual lamella; the *Lamellae* themselves create a field within which the individual is both marked and lost. Registered in ellipsis is an absence, "the omission of one or more words in a sentence, which would be needed to express the sense completely ... " ;[1] the works remain open in meaning and spatial configuration.

In *Lamella no VII* the nine pieces that make up the work are all different and separate but with internal references. Two milky egg shell blue lamellae, with a surface calligraphy that scrapes through to the tissue/flesh beneath, like twins, set up possibilities of pairing. But one is a pale reflection of the other; the body beneath the skin less bloody. A ghost constructed in a different focus, in a different layer, straining the eyes of the viewer, warping the surface of the wall to which they lightly adhere. In *Lamella no VII* the pairing off continues; the

sameness of two brick ochre dusty lamellae qualified by a difference that destabilizes the structure of the whole. Thus the control and clarity of the surface marks disintegrates the pairings; the surface skin is rumpled by a calligraphy cutting through to differing layers of chalky bone.

This is not "the nihilistic gesture of attempting to counter totality with the assertion of unmediated singularity or individuality" but rather "...[a] dwell[ing] on the possibility of thinking unity or totality beyond the determination of synthesis and therefore beyond a projected or posited essence and thus in terms of the possibility of unity/totality being the belonging together of the different; a fundamental and constitutive part of which will be distance."[2]

In the pairings and groupings within the *Lamella* familial connections and failures of connection are constructed. The distance between parts created by a shifting surface focus, contrasting tonal shifts and foreign hues. There is also, over-riding the internal arrangements, a stream of words, a babble of signs that momentarily adhere to the surface of the *Lamella* but seem to refer to another level of discourse. A distant other level beyond the particular individual case of ellipse or grouping of ellipses; a realm of writing.

The surface calligraphy is a writing that invites interpretation but also suggests the loss of a conscious will to decipher that subsumes meaning into form. The writing of a language that is unknowable, a babble that offers amnesia of form as an escape, into pattern, texture, colour and arrangement, into drawing. But as Catherine Ingraham points out "writing and drawing are exactly the same from a textuality standpoint. Neither are linear structures, neither are representational in the way that they claim."[3] The drawings of the writing on the *Lamella* suppress the differences that conventionally structure their separate 'reading' techniques. Denial of the hand-writing continues in the making of these paintings, a process that

eschews presence; the signature is buried in the automatic action of the roller that skims the aluminium surface which gives no resistance. The grain of canvas is absent and the working of self into the material of the *Lamella* is reduced.

The calligraphic form seems to insist on being read; marks of writing score the surface skin. The lines of writing are interrupted and also continued by the conventional notation of architectural drawing, drawings that defer to materiality while structuring the physical. These partial plans and sections that cause an "interruption of "linear writing by drawing, spatiality, volumetrics, may also be a moment of breach that is inevitably sexual (the imprint of the body or shape on the clean page.)"[4] The repetition of representation of the physical indicatesthe convoluted boundary between writing and spatiality; the marks of architectural drawing depending on formal qualities, the enclosing boundary, the turned shoulder. In the *Lamella* surface marks cannot be separated from the body. The body is marked by writing, a double writing that is constructed from the forms of presence.

That the works shifts between the surface/skin and the body refusing any simple separation of the two is recognized by the inclusion of *Lamella no IV* in an exhibition *Surface Tension* and the description of the works by the the curator; "These artists, then, are no longer charged with stripping away the outer and unnecessary trappings of art to reveal its essence, but rather, they are engaged in a constant play between a surface and that which putatively lies beneath it."[5] The "play between" in the case of the *Lamella* seems to be through a negotiation

of boundaries; apparent in the refusal to separate writing and, the marks of materiality, architectural writing. And in the swelling and contracting of the boundaries of the ellipses by the presence of a viewer; distortions of perfection. The boundaries between the enclosures of the ellipses and the fields of surface patterning that flow above them are also problematic as are those that govern the scale of ornamentation in relationship to size.

The surface of the *Lamella* seem to endlessly assert and withdraw from the act of enclosure, the formation of boundaries. Elbows, small L shape marks, construct corners that jab at the surface of the pieces. The corners, vestiges of contained space, acts of containment that creates an interior and an exterior, are places to dwell and to hold. "The constitution of the house necessitates distance. In addition it demands the experience of that distance. The experience of dwelling is, though in an as yet to be specified way, premised upon the experience of distance."[6] The *Lamella*, spaced out across the wall, concerned with relationships of distance and space, marked with gestures of containment written in an architectural language, can be seen to construct relationships of dwelling. The house, dependent on distance to separate floor from floor and room from room, is held together by corners. Corners are the outcome of collisions; the meeting of lines of distance and difference that the ellipse and the circle cannot acknowledge. In a circle all becomes one and the ellipse is an uneasy expression of unity but unity nevertheless whereas the corner, the place of disgrace, of secrets and security, is a point of accumulation and weakness where planes joined for strength can be prised apart; the corner is redolent of separation.

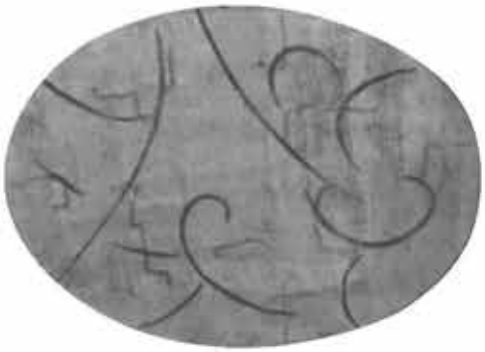
The incisions of calligraphy separate the surface of paint, splitting it to reveal an inner and create an outer layer. Writing, calligraphy cutting into the surface, like tattoo, violates and constructs the surface of skin; the boundary of the body is at risk, an opening or orifice created or revealed. The surface puckered and flaking; magnified, a piece of reptilian skin proffers up a decorative, physical and irritable surface. Excesses of colour, over-sized tex-

ture, an enlargement of matter pushing the limits of reason and the restrained boundaries of taste.

Excess wells up beneath the surface; like the marks of thumbprints on the body the surface reveals a bruising. A welling up of drops of blood that coagulate and congeal, marks of possession and ownership, a signature. The fluidity of the *Lamellae* is also transgressive of boundaries; drops of gold, blood and tears seep and exude through boundaries passing through a moment of perfection; the parts and the collection in a continuous flow. The surface of the works, a plane of evaluation, is in flux, the layers shifting. Like floaters that drift across the retina disturbing vision, the *Lamella* unsettle the "truth" of vision.

"Since non-meaning falls within the purview of the understanding it does not mark its limit. The limit will not be an absolute but rather exist as a site of tension at which in spite of its being present the understanding can no longer be said to dominate."

The *Lamella* is shadowed by itself, an anamorphic version of the sphere, the tracings and displacements of an impossible perfection.[7] The construction of the ellipse involves a division, a slicing of the circle, construction of displaced centres, a transferral of measurement leading to a multiplication of circles (displaced progenies in the image of their father). The new figure, the ellipse, is delineated by tracing the boundary that tangentially touches these displaced circles; the ellipse founded on an iteration and alteration of a structuring circle. In the *Lamella* the geometry of the ellipse acknowledges connections to



founding orders but also threatens to expand past its own formation, its expansiveness cannot be contained. In the process of construction, criss-crossing the dissection of a circle, the *Lamella*, germ of the material and maternal, begin to proliferate in a disturbing way.

Notes:

1 Shorter Oxford Dictionary 1973.

2 Andrew Benjamin, "Distancing and Spacing," in A. Benjamin (ed.), *Philosophy and Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1990), p. 7.

3 Catherine Ingraham, "Initial Proprieties: Architecture and the Space of the Line," in B. Colomina, (ed.) *Sexuality and Space* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), p. 258.

4 Ibid.

5 Christina Barton, "At the surface: an introduction," Catalogue for exhibition "Surface Tension" (Auckland City Gallery, 1992), p. 3.

6 Andrew Benjamin, op. cit., p. 7.

7 In an interview Barbara Tuck discussed spheres in their anamorphic forms as eggs in work by Piero della Francesca, *Pala di Brera*, Milan.

The other "ich" or the desire for the void: for a tomb of Adolf Loos[1]

Hubert Damisch, Translation by Ross Jenner

"Warum haben die papuas eine kultur und die deutschen kein?"

A city, Adolf Loos used to say, gets the architects it deserves. Hence the question: does Vienna, the "1900" Vienna, imperial Vienna deserve the credit, like the later republican, or democratic Vienna, which for a time entrusted Loos with the direction of the Municipal Housing Department, for having produced, kept in his person, a man who did not cease indicting, in his practice as well as in his writings, the falsity of the condition granted in the capital of the *oster reich* to those who claimed the title—in his eyes at least, suspect—of architect? And if it decidedly does not deserve credit, why did this polemicist, still better known today, and in Paris itself, for the part he took at the beginning of the century in the dispute against ornamentation, than as the author of Tristan Tsara's house at the rear of the Butte Montmartre, why did this architect (who practised architecture so little) not choose to

emigrate to America for which, unlike so many of his colleagues who, quite simply, refused to go and see it, he had embarked on leaving school, and the precocious discovery of which would make of him once returned to Europe, in a paradoxical way, uprooted? Was Vienna at this point necessary to him, and on what grounds, with what end in view ?

1. Potemkin City

Vienna, for Loos, was in the first place a "Potemkin" city: a city which hid its true identity, its nature, the realities of its class divisions, under the clothing, the tinsel which its architects ran up for it, in the way Catherine the Great's favourite knew how to set up entire villages in trompe-l'oeil made of canvas and pasteboard on the deserted planes of the Ukraine, during the visits of the Empress[2]. The Potemkin city which had destroyed the girdle of its medieval walls only to raise in their place a new *ring*, made of a row of false palaces, rentable properties treated in the image of the princely abodes of the time of the Baroque or the Renaissance. An architecture of the mask, it deserved a capital which meant to preserve its aristocratic appearance up till the era of the bourgeoisie and which assigned to its architects the task of concealing under the camouflage of a garb of false ashlar and a decoration made up of elements repeated in cement, all social difference between its inhabitants, at least those of the better districts (the problem of the people's districts will not be posed until later, once Vienna became "Red"). Architecture in trompe-l'oeil, which Loos considered "immoral" because it was founded on falsehood and imitation (the "substitute"), and born of a feeling of shame: falsity of materials, imitation of signs of a past that was completed, shame, not of being poor, as Loos wrote, but should one be well-heeled, as a bourgeois established on the *ring* amongst the banks and de luxe hotels could be, shame of not counting amongst the well born, shame in having to admit what one is, a bourgeois, a man of one's time, a "modern" man.

2. *Art, architecture.*

But modernity itself is already bound up with clothing, if not also, as will be seen, with the mask. From the outset, on the day after the creation, with the aid of the State and in the prestigious shadow of Otto Wagner, of the *Secession*, the Viennese avatar of the "art nouveau", the tone is set by a succession of articles on the exhibition of the Jubilee of 1898, which develop around the themes of clothing *(kleidung)* [vêtement] and cladding *(bekleidung)* [re-vêtement], and by Loos's first work as architect, the fitting out of Goldmann's, the menswear shop, in Vienna. A tone it must be said, which had nothing revolutionary about it, even if Loos could not stand authority in any form (and made no secret of it): the tone of an architect, and one who wanted to be modern, that is to say, of his time. Some years later, and anticipating in his way the opposition, itself charged with ideology, which Karl Mannheim made between ideology and utopia, Loos will not hesitate to write that if art, the work of art, has a revolutionary vocation, the house is conservative (the house, not architecture: since the latter produces not only houses but also monuments, tombs, to which—as will be seen—his art leads and to which it confines itself). *Das kunstwerk ist revolutionär, das haus konservativ*[3]: the work of art is oriented toward the future, it opens new ways to humanity, whereas the house is of its time and "thinks" of the present *(das haus denkt an die gegenwart)*. In this sense, if the work of art (and the tomb itself, the simple tumulus where class relations become meaningless as well as the "monument" which carries them to their limit) can take on the value and function of utopia, which transcends the "given" and seeks to break the bounds of the existing order, the "house" on the contrary comes under the heading of ideology, of consolidation, of confirmation of reality; as distinct from the work of art, whose action extends, in law, until "the last days of humanity" *(bis an die letzen tage der menschheit*[4]*)*, it responds to a need of the moment; it is in the service of present day utility; the house has nothing to do with art, it must please us: *man loves the house, he hates art*. But this is really why he does not know how to make himself comfortable, except by way of putting on a

borrowed garment, in a dwelling conceived according to his intention by an "artist", even if he were a member of the *Secession:* a house, an apartment lives and transforms itself with him or those who inhabit it; it must tell a story, that of an individual, of a family, and not bear witness to the art of the person—decorator, architect, and soon, Loos had foreseen, sculptor or painter—who from a usurped position is able to exercise an insupportable tyranny on the body of trades, but on that of his clients as well.

3. The principle of discretion

But why can any and everybody, if he has the means, not be housed like a king (even if, or all the more easily, by the effect of a contradiction which did not escape Loos, kings have lost the sense of display and live henceforth like any and everybody, that is like bourgeois)? As to clothing to which he always directly tied the question of housing, did Loos not maintain that one could judge the level of culture of a country by the number of its inhabitants who use their newly acquired freedom to dress outside of all constraint or hierarchical norm, and if they wanted to, like the king himself? As proof, the Anglo-Saxon countries, where "everyone" is well dressed, whereas in the Germanic countries the only ones are members of high society. But *well* dressed, what does this mean? It is to be conspicuous in the least manner possible *(dass man arn wenigsten auffält).* Again it must be understood: an Englishman will not dress in Peking like a Pekinese, nor in Vienna like a Viennese; but for his own part he has attained the height of civilisation. In its complete, developed formulation, the "principle of discretion" displays a radical ethnocentrism: to be well dressed, is to be dressed in such a way that one is not noticed when one is at the centre of the culture *(im mittelpunkt der kultur),* that is to say, according to Loos, and at the time when he was writing (since a "centre" is always subject to displacements) in London and in *the best society* (on condition, even in this privileged place, of having to change one's clothes at each street crossing). "An

article of clothing is modern if, having dressed for a particular occasion, and being at the centre of culture and in the best society, one attracts the least possible attention"[5]

4. Displacement of the centre

It is thus in a calculated setting in perspective that Loos' discourse, if not his practice as architect has had to assume, beyond the Viennese context, a function, a critical stance—to the point that, by the effect of his meeting with Tsara as much as for the singularly corrosive tone of his writings (these did not miss, once is not custom, attracting very soon the attention of the "advanced"[6] Parisian milieux), he attached to his name like an aura of "avant-gardism", perhaps equivocal, but in itself very revealing of the ideological contradictions of which the system allowed a meeting, in the pages of *L'esprit nouveau* as well as at the Weimar *Bauhaus*, of the Dadaist negation and the constructive propositions of the "modern movement". If Loos could feel the sense of speaking into the void (as is indicated by the title of his first collection, *Ins leere gesprochen*, published in Paris, moreover, before being published in Vienna), in reality the void was necessary to his discourse so that it might produce its effects, so that first of all it might produce *itself*. But as for this void, it would not be enough for Loos to state it, in marking the difference, the distance between the state of affairs which prevailed in the West, predominantly Anglo-Saxon, and the culture (or the absence, the lack of culture: of this more later) which according to him characterised the German speaking countries. He would have to set it up in as much as place, the generative space of his statements, by an operation which, looking at the matter closely, made the province of all his ventures in the ideological (literary) field as well as in that of architecture. An operation, if one can say it (and Littré wanted this indispensable word used so, to save it from disuse), by which the ego *estranges* [s'étrange] itself from itself, establishes itself with respect to itself in an off centre, if not eccentric, position as far as assuming the discourse of the other. *Das andere:* again the title is explicit, the journal that Loos, in the same way as his friend Karl Kraus's *The Torch*, would himself undertake to edit, in 1908, in order to "introduce western culture

into Austria" (since such was the subtitle of this publication, which only had two issues). If Vienna was necessary to him it was because it alone, of the capitals of the West, created the myth that it was at the centre of Europe, "at the crossing of the old axes of the world" (Musil), of a circle (the *ring)* so perfectly *void*—in the grammatical sense of the term—that at its place the very question of "centre" had to be posed from a position of exteriority, of otherness.

5. The place of the other.

Das andere, the other, the other I, the other *"ich"*, the I other, the *öster reich,* the power of the the East, Vienna, soon to be "red" (the east is red), fictitious place, place of fiction and, as such, propitious for all manner of operations on the notion of the subject, of identity, of centre, (of point of view,) if not of quality. Referring to Freud, obviously, and at a more modest level (but a modesty which had nothing innocent about it) to Loos himself. (To say nothing of Musil who pretended that no special significance should be attached to the name of 'the' city itself. It is true that, from the point of view of *The Man without Qualities,* to ask, in the case of this complex entity, what city one is staying in, what particular city one is dealing with, was to leave out otherwise important questions[7]. But of what other city could Musil pretend that it had no name? What other city, if not Vienna, taken in the vaguest generality, as an *empty* sign?)

6. Modernity and the function of the mask.

"Certainly, the artist is other. But precisely on account of that, in his exterior appearance, he must conform to others. He can live alone only if he disappears in the crowd [...]. The more

everything justifies the artist's being alone, the more necessary it is that he make use of the clothes of the average man as a camouflage." (Karl Kraus, *Dicta and Contradicta*).

"The person who runs around in a velvet suit is no artist but a buffoon or merely a decorator. We have become more refined, more subtle. Primitive men had to wear various colours to differentiate themselves, modern man uses his clothes as a mask. His individuality is so strong that it can no longer be expressed in terms of items of clothing." (Adolf Loos, "Ornament und Verbrechen" (1908), *S.S.*, p. 288.)

Modernity implies as its condition, if not as its sign, that the function of the mask has returned. There, in effect, where in archaic societies the mask confers a social identity on its wearer, registers him in his place in the body of society, modern man (and the artist himself, this "other" *par excellence*, whose discourse is always part of the collective unconscious, but who, as such, cannot be "modern" because the collective unconscious cannot have a history, and how is the artist to make a work of art, work turned to the future and the end of time, not of 'his' time?) uses it on the contrary to hide his difference, his otherness. Even the professional revolutionary has recourse to this trick; H.G. Wells was right when he said he distrusted Lenin *in a waistcoat*.

The paradox, but a paradox of class, meaning a paradox which, in a class structure, plays as indicator, such a paradox means that in the Viennese void the refusal of clothing as signifier, of dress as sign, itself functioned as a sign immediately recouped as such: discretion (the non-difference) became a mark of distinction (the difference). As a matter of fact, Loos was quite happy to write that the greatest tailors in Europe were to be found in Vienna, and that he was their client (it is for one of them moreover that he will construct the building on the Michaelerplatz): true artists according to him, who, working for a select clientele, shunning all publicity and showing, when the occasion demanded it, only clothes which lend themselves to copies, to imitation. Nothing more deceptive, consequently than the

"class" of a garment, in a context where the aristocracy dressed as the bourgeois should, and where the self-made wore a dress-coat and false shirt front. Like "style", there is never "class" but *a* class; that alone can have *some* style *(some* class), whereas historical epochs only ever have a (or several) style(s). But the tendency of the middle class to confuse its own interests with those of humanity as a whole would lead to a diffusion, a circulation, an unprecedented change of signs (and of styles). All clothing, and *a fortiori,* all cladding[8] is deceitful by definition; even if he should be in appearance as "smooth," as devoid of ornament as the Viennese cigarette-cases which Loos was fond of, a well dressed man wearing short hair should not be judged by his appearances (or scars so prized by German students), is to be related to the rule, no less *fascinated,* passed down in his discourse to 'art'. Since if it is true that the remarks of Loos on the house, conceived as an object of everyday use, have been able to contribute to the de-sacralisation of architecture, henceforth reduced to being exercised, in its artistic capacity, in cemeteries, indeed it is not even art, it has been seen that art escaped, by definition, the general law as well as the imperatives of modernity, that is to say of Capital, and that it represented in fact—even if this were under the ever so significant object as the *tomb*—the last refuge of the Sacred. If art, as the epoch desired it, originates in decoration, and if, in the fashion of a body painting or the decoration of a pot, it might appear at first like an adjunct, grafted onto a support, onto *a pre-existing body,* the supplement which it introduces has nothing, at the outset, of a supplement of "soul": the most simple, elementary tracing, that of a cross, which Mondrian will interpret in a mystical sense before Le Corbusier recognised in it less and less the sign of positivity, this tracing associates, in the copulation of the vertical and the horizontal, the masculine element with the feminine[9]. Which is to say for Loos all art was erotic, tied in principle to the life of unconscious drives. But the progress of civilisation, if it implies according to Freud's reading the forcing back, the repression of drives, does not lead for all that, quite the contrary, to the elimination of all possibility of surrogate satisfactions of the type of those which art, under its most elevated forms is in a position to procure: under its most elevated forms, that is to

say, on condition that the artist renounces ornament, that ridiculous variant of the elementary drive which made the primitive daub the walls of his cavern with erotic drawings, in the way in which "criminals" and "degenerates" today still cover the walls of public conveniences with obscene graffiti. In the same way (but Loos could hardly write that) in which the painters of the Secession, principally Gustav Klimt, covered the ceilings of the university buildings and the walls of the theatres or the museums of Vienna with frescoes where the decorative *overload* was put in the service of an eroticism which, while owing nothing the illusion of the 'flesh', revealed all the more, the marvels of ornament—wholly symbolic, and linked to the denial of the flesh—abetted by decorative painting. "The cultural level of a people is measured by the degree of degradation of the walls of its latrines"[10].

8. Division of labour.

Ornament, if not art itself from its decorative, applied kind of origin, functions well then as the repressed, posed as such, in Loos' discourse. Much better: it is only from this discourse, and by its operation that ornament takes on the position of the repressed. It is important to find out in what kinds of ways the repressed element will make its return in Loos' work itself: in fact if he hardly built anything (some private residences, and in addition to a number of interior arrangements, the building on the Michaelerplatz, set up—the height of blasphemy—facing the monument to the might of Austria, by Edmund Hellmer, one of the masters of the Secession), the very project of an architecture which owes the essence of its effects, of its wonders, to the combination of a truthful use of materials and the play of form which was, on the contrary, totally arbitrary (following the model which in music is called "serial" proposed in the tonal quality of sound) was not itself without borrowing something of its force from the element it claimed to be excluding. Loos conceived decoration (but a decoration which owed nothing to ornament?) quite adequate for shops, cafes, private apart-

ments, although this substantiates the affirmation according to which the task of the architect must be limited to enclosing within walls a void which will belong to those who will inhabit it, to *furnish*, with the aid only of cabinet-makers and curtain makers, those who have no need of being directed by an 'artist'. It is here that the assumption comes to the fore which made him denounce the attempts of the Werkbund, and later those of the Bauhaus, to define the conditions of an intervention of art in the process of production: since this apostle of the *American way of life*[11] (from the eating of *eggplants* to the wearing of short hair) would stay put, in the matter of social organisation and cultural hierarchy, with the traditional opposition between art and handicraft, the work of art and the object of everyday use. "God creates the artist; the artist creates the epoch; the epoch creates the craftsman; the craftsman creates the button." In other words, the artist, and the architect himself (for every architect dreams of being a bit of an artist, and Loos would be no exception to the rule) have better to do than claim to control the manufacture of buttons. Loos' idea was that every epoch, and the modern epoch itself, has at its disposal, by definition, objects, furniture, utensils, etc. which answer to it: were an object, a piece of furniture to escape from this law then one can be sure that the fault is in the untimely intervention of a master in aesthetics (even if it were industrial aesthetics). The sketch of a critique of ideology, and still more of the practice of *design* that one can isolate from his writing goes under the heading of degeneration, of cultural void. "The history of mankind has not known till today a period lacking in culture, this privilege was reserved for urban man of the second half of the nineteenth century": this means that an urban structure becomes one of the places, one of the instruments of the accumulation of capital, and in which the craftsman, no more than the architect, found opportunity for employment *as such*. Loos' repugnance, evident right up to the projects for public developments in the twenties, to take into account the change in scale of the problems in urban development is on a par with the idealisation of the craftsman's conditions of production. In this place of "alienation" *par excellence* which constitutes the great modern city, the architect is never anything but a displaced person, like in their way the

peasant masses abruptly proletarianised. The best that can be done is to limit oneself to punctual operations which he will strive to insert without damage into the urban fabric: (as can be seen) a very real program: that which the Michaelerplatz building conformed to, which had to create a scandal by the fact that it excluded plagiarism as well as every sign of usurped recognition: as distinct from those of the Baroque palaces, the columns of the ground floor are of real marble, and monolithic.

But the craftsman? In pretending that left to himself, and if only the architect let him make things as he understood them, a cabinet-maker could not but produce furniture perfectly adapted to the conditions of modern living, as the shoes which the shoemaker produces are to their use, forgetting that the effort of the architect to bend to his views (and to his interests) the different bodies of crafts is itself an integral part of the constant process of the restructuring of the division of labour of which the architect in his turn is the victim. The English furniture, those of Thonet which Loos appreciated so much, were not produced by craft but industrially. And that is the real question, which Loos refused to ask, which, quite on the contrary, he set about suppressing under the cladding [revêtement] of a class attitude, "aristocratic", and altogether characteristic: are the mechanisms of industrial production so perfectly rational that in letting them play 'naturally' one could expect the best *qualitative* results from them? Industry, second nature: this is what is implicit, the unspoken in the liberal ideology of laissez-faire, the real standpoint from which it discourses, but without being able to establish itself there, the *other* with which it pretends to hold discourse, but under the mask of the first person.

9. The law of cladding.

If the profusion of primitive ornament responds, in the traditional interpretation, to the

natural horror of the void, why would a highly sophisticated, urbanised, antinatural culture not play on the void (as others have played on velours), till it drew out from this "horror", and from the desire which the reverse makes of it, the principle of new pleasures (while allowing oneself the luxury of enjoying, simultaneously, the most archaic products, the products of *the other*, the discourse of which Loos did not neglect, but on the condition of defining the place well, that of the unconscious. A Maori sculpture, like a Corinthian embroidery, belongs to the unconscious side of our culture, a culture so perfectly *void* that to take an extreme example a Thonet chair can come under the heading of the *off centre*, if not the eccentric).

But, if he liked taking as point of comparison the peasant who constructs his house by himself, without thinking about it and as is fitting, Loos was far from preaching a return to a 'rural' architecture, which was to become one of the themes of the Nazi propaganda. He had learned from experience that an architect could only know how to make a work against nature: while he wanted to use the stone from the lake to build his first house at Montreux, was it not obvious to accuse him of casting a slur on the majesty of the site (but that day, as in the affair of the Michaelerplatz, the summons from the police would be worth it since it imparted the delicious sensation that he was an "artist")? It remains then to dispose of the materials in the most honest, the most judicious possible way: the law of cladding forbids giving to one material the appearance of another, and above all that of being a better quality than that which is its own ("fake wood"). The intolerable is not seeing the aristocracy dress like the bourgeoisie, but the bourgeoisie endeavouring to imitate aristocracy even to its most ridiculous signs: it may well be that everything is made of wood, not all woods are valuable (but what would Loos have said on seeing cabinet-makers disguise under thin sheets of precious wood the 'composites' which industry consigns to them today?). Loos' taste for material, for the *tactile* aspect of construction and of interior fittings, responds to the care with which he was to define, in the cultural void of the modern city, the condition of a new

architectural culture. A culture founded no longer on ornament but on cladding, which is the beginnings of all architecture, having been, originally, only an extension of clothing, as the umbrella can still be. Loos derived a particular pride from having introduced panels of polished marble or beaten copper into interior decoration: the look in which the banks of Zurich, of Milan or of New York, are clad, is made to let one think that the frontier between cladding and ornament is unsettled, and that from one to the other, change, the inversion of signs is always possible; is cladding not—even—masking, dissimulating, deceiving—but with the "discretion" which is fitting, that is to say, ornamentation? In fact, Loos's architecture testifies well, in its own way, to the "drama" which is modern architecture, and to which Manfredo Tafuri has given its most precise characterisation: an architecture reduced to wanting to be pure architecture, strictly formal instance, deprived of utopia, useless, but preferable, in any event, to the attempts made to dress in ideological rags actual buildings controlled, in reality, by the existing order [12].

10. Tomb.

It is this which confirms, by a supplementary paradox, Loos' project of 1922 for the *Chicago Tribune*. This project, a sky-scraper of more than thirty storeys in the form of a Doric column, set on a cubic base, represents not only, as Tafuri has well seen, the first proclamation of a 'pop' culture, and announcement of someone like Claes Oldenburg's finally much more modest 'monuments'[13]. It corresponds to utopia in its form, in its purest function, that of the dream which, to satisfy desire, knows how to play systematically with contradiction. "The most beautiful and distinctive building in the world" (as the competition's program demanded) in taking the shape of Trajan's column from the Capital, constituted a risk of which the sponsors were not aware or did not wish to take: one can only see to it that monuments of this kind do not take on [revêtent] a funereal meaning, made as they are to be knocked

off their pedestals (and revolutions, as is known, sometimes succeed in it). This project, like that of the project for a house for Josephine Baker (where a cube of transparent glass, forming the swimming pool would have made up the core), confers on the stubborn purpose which would be Loos's, its true dimension, which has nothing in common with the scale of problems architecture would appear to be confronted with today. Loos affected to judge that one of his main contributions to the architecture of his time would be to learn from the plumbers and cabinet-makers how to conceal a toilet pipe under a wooden cladding. "When, crossing a wood, one comes across a tumulus six feet long and three feet wide, raised by shovel in the form of a pyramid, we become serious, and something in us says: *That is architecture.*"[14] It happens, still today, that on entering a bathroom, one notices the sanitary installation is so made that nothing can be seen of the process by which it is emptied. Adolf Loos would have wanted no other tomb than that, a tomb which, combining in its layout, in its structure, the function of cladding (the pleasure of tactile appearance) and that, concealed, of emptying out (the desire for the void, in its anal connotation, characteristic of the reign of money), was in the very image of the pleasures which the modern metropolis, the capital of Capital, procures for any and everybody, even for the most disinherited, pleasures which he was not, with regard to himself, prepared to renounce. A toilet in its wooden coffin or its marble (or beaten metal) catafalque. *Das ist architektur.*

Notes:

1 This essay was first published in *Critique*, n. 339-340 (August-September 1975), "Vienne début de siecle", p. 806-818, republished as "L'autre 'ich' ou le desir du vide: pour un tombeau d'Adolf Loos," *Ruptures Cultures* (Les Editions de Minuit, Paris 1976), pp. 143-159, which is the version used for this translation. Unless otherwise stated all subsequent footnotes are those of the author.

2 Adolf Loos, 'Die potemkinsche Stadt' (1898), in *Sämtliche Schriften*, t. I, *Ins leere gesprochen* (1897-1900), *Trotzdem* (1900-1930), Vienna, Munich, 1962, p. 153.

3 "Architektur" (1910), ibid., p. 315.

4 "Antworten auf fragen aus dem publicum" (1919), ibid., p. 372. The title of Karl Kraus' tragedy on the 1914-1918 War *(Die letzen Tage der Menschheit)* will be recognised: but if today we are living the "last days of humanity", what is today *the future* of *the* work of art?

5 "Die herrenmode" (1898) ibid., p. 21.

6 From 1913, Georges Besson published in *Les cahiers d'aujourd'hui* the first translation of the essay on "Ornament and Crime", which would be published again by Paul Dermée in *L'esprit nouveau.*

7 Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities,* [Tr. Eng. trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, Vol. I (London, Secker and Warburg, and New York, Coward-McCarm, 1953). (London, Picador Classics, Pan Books 1988), p. 4.]

8 [Tr. Damisch plays on the words *vêtement,* clothing and *re-vêtement,* re-clothing, revetement, cladding, facing.]

9 "Ornament und verbrechen" (1908), *S.S.*, p. 277.

10 Ibid., p. 277. The same "Puritanism" which made Loos liken ornament to "crime" would lead him to prepare the renewal of typography, in eliminating from his text, as is evident from some preceding citations, the accumulation of capital letters with which German writing dresses up nouns, and with it all residual trace of the ornamental calligraphy considered "barbaric", in the manner of "Gothic" writing itself, which the Nazis had to restore to honour. Loos relied on the authority of Jacob Grimm to do this: "If we have rid our houses of their gables and projecting rafters, and we have removed the powder from our hair, why should we retain such rubbish in our writing *(warum soll in der Schrift aller Unrat bleiben)?"*, cited by Loos in *Ins leere gesprochen,* introduction, *S.S.*, p.10).

11 [Tr. English in the original.]

12 Cf. Manfredo Tafuri, *Projetto e utopia* (Bari, 1973), p. 3.

13 Ibid., *Teoria e storia dell'architettura* (Bari, 1973), p.101 We will, however, not follow Tafuri to the end of his analysis, according to which Loos' project would result from the removal of a 'linguistic' element (the column) from out of its context, and its transferal into another context, at a scale outside of all norm. In fact the column monument is nothing novel, and it is this *symbolic* autonomy, long since taken over by the column by reference to its 'linguistic', syntactical, and paradigmatic functioning, that Loos would bring into play, in enlarging the monument to the dimensions of a sky-scraper.

14 Adolf Loos, "Architektur", *S.S.*, p. 317.

A House in the West.

Bill McKay

"East and West mean nothing to us here," Odysseus told his men when they landed at Aeaea, the home of Circe. "Where the sun is rising from when he comes to light the world and where he is sinking we do not know."[1] And half a turn of the globe away on our own little stretch of island, on this isthmus at the narrowest neck of the country, do you think we would not know where in the world we were? Our site is near the end of the alphabet, Waterview, West Auckland, the piece of land under the W on the map. One can see the last stroke of that W in the stairway veering down to the water on a lava flow from the extinct volcano, that once ran down to the sea on a path the street now follows to the shore of a tidal lagoon. Sometimes there is water here when the last spit of the Pacific creeps up through the mangroves to this westernmost bit of the isthmus shore, looking out over one last rim of hazy hills to the Tasman Sea. The thinnest bit of the country, one can walk from ocean shore to shore, the sun rises from one sea, sets in the other. Portage country.

The tides make this lagoon seem primal, flooding and draining to its own rhythm disconnected from our days, the rhythm of the moon. The tides seem to recreate the original separation of sea from shore, the emerging land and emerging life in the thrust of mangrove pneumatophores from the mud.

Prompted by the woman's long held dream of Egypt these West Auckland mangroves conjure western history's beginning in Nile mud. These landscapes seeming opposite, antipodean, are not so far apart—New Zealand soldiers were shipped there twice—the man's namesake is under Egyptian sand. McCahon appealed to Egypt or something there when he saw "... perhaps an Egyptian god but far from the sun of Egypt in southern cold. Big hills stood in front of little hills—a landscape of splendour, order and peace—something belonging to the land, and not yet to its people."[2]

An Egyptian myth I found attractive: the sun traverses the sky in a day-boat, at sunset transferred to the night-boat on the horizon, to be towed on the waters under the earth, to be reborn in the redness of dawn.

In this island land, fished from the sea, and rediscovered several times over by people in boats, drawing boats up on shore to stay, we thought we detected a motif of the boat in the air:

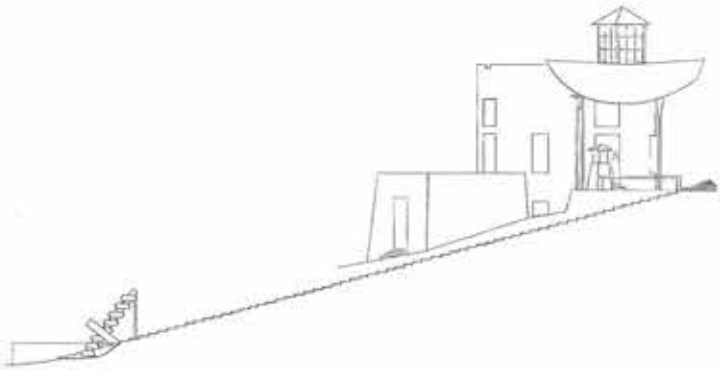
Patea Aotea Canoe Memorial;
Petone Pioneer Foreshore Museum;
Gisborne's Endeavours skewered on poles and Star of Canada on the Turanganui riverbank;
Devonport Naval Museum;
Waipu House of Memories Memorial;
Boats on trailers parked in streets, or built in backyards, or up on the hard;

The fishing boat safely ashore;
The lifeboat about to set out;
Ghost boats on the old foreshore;
Dinghies on the beach, wrecks, Ark, canoe;
The Ratana Manuao _ from the English Man o' War.

The boat in the air can be simply a joke, a pun on Waterview, a reference to the awkwardness of launching a boat on this bit of the harbour of the "City of Sails". A literal house for a littoral suburb. But it evokes the rising and falling of the tides, heightens the sense of the end of the isthmus, the change of surfaces where land blurs with sea and sky out on the shoals and birds alternate with fish, and the sky is unnaturally at one's feet, reflected in the smooth, knee-deep water. The boat shape reflects the crescent moon first seen in the west, riding low over the waterless lagoon, the moon that fills or drains the harbour. The boat — not sign or symbol, but real boat or rather imitation real boat — stands propped on mast and oar over the front door, portaged boat forming a port and portal, porte-cochere and portico. Port-harbour-home. Port-left-high and dry.

Another tide is evident from this site—traffic streaming home in the evening, across the causeway in the wake of daylight, red tail lights in the dusk like sparks from a fire roaring up into the emptiness after sunset, and the vast hollow aerial miles apparent before stars appear. The house is conceived as a suburban villa, a simple country house now hemmed in by suburban tides. There is no dialogue with neighbours, the house addresses landscape and distance, marks the end of the street where land is separated from sea and sky and day turns to night. A cylinder pushed away from the street to the corner of the site, by a tiny stream, it is an observatory lost in its own world of the dreamy lagoon.

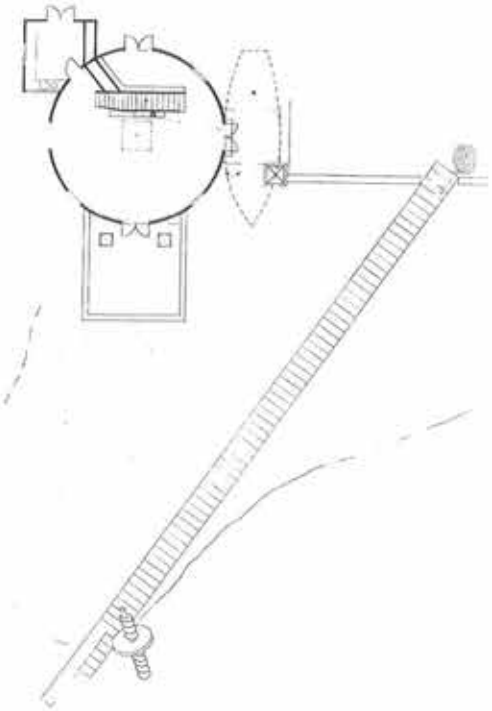
Simple shapes form the house: a cylinder resting on a cube, crowned with a tiny Egyptian pyramid, transparent in the guise of a skylight (or is it the volcano's tip or a glimpse of the



Southern Cross?) The expansive curve of the rotunda addresses the horizon, recalling the way that in water, ripples go away from you, on this edge of the Pacific, Melville's ocean, "that rolls the whole earth round,"[3] Banks's sea, "that lens of water twice bulged and wobbling and rolling round the Earth."[4] (This house—white whale or Pequod?—contains on its deck a tiny lens of precipitated water in an inverted perspex sky dome, lensing light into the basement: "Here the small waves fall on the beach for a while."[5]) Like an orrery the cylinder models and tracks the orbit of sun and moon, and curve of earth, as William Blake's "serpent temple, image of infinite shut up in finite revolution,"[6] expansive yet containing the domestic interior, intimate world cupped in the face of immensity, as seen in Joseph Cornell's 'space-object boxes,' where "once gone through we trace the round again ... where lies the final harbour where we unmoor no more?"[7]

The long flight of stairs (the stroke of the W,) veers off northwest and runs away down to an empty jetty and idle Archimedean screw at the extreme tip of the site, inscribed *"Lux lucis lune diminuendum est,"* our motto, "the light of the moon is not constant and cannot guide one from the other side to the shore of here."

As the earth turns, from the first inkling of morning sunlight in the library, the sun swings round the rotunda, slowly filling it with daylight, till brimming full and driving shadows before it, the setting sun buoys its satellite the boat up into the air, brilliantly lit at sunset, like the evening crescent moon sometimes seen floating over the shadowed lagoon, or the



full moon rising over the volcano at the other eastern end of the street. The last rays of horizontal sunlight penetrate the western portals of the house, drill through a pin hole in the farthest wall over the fireplace to project an inverted miniature image of the world in the *camera obscura* darkness of the stairs to the basement, and this last scene of day is played out in fading light over the kindled fire.

Two lighting systems are installed, labelled "true" and "false", one obvious, one subtle—glint and gloom.

At night a small lighthouse under the boat illuminates the porch, the dream world built by that strange artificial wavering light of candle and lamp beats out the pulse of the night. Outside the sinking moon grounds its driftwood and jetsam fleet and sucks out the lagoon water over the rim of the horizon, the travelling meniscus pushing mangrove propagules like tiny boats before it, out into the open sea, to circle the planet, heading for that foreign shore, the world, where once they said of a land upside down from them: "When the sun rises for us, then for them it sets; when it sets for us, then it rises for them. Our noon is their midnight, and our summer is their winter, and so everything goes in opposites and the ancient scholars have discussed this in amazement and at some length. Perhaps this newly discovered New Zealand is equivalent to our (untranslatable Dutch) 'opposite-footers'."[8]

Notes:

1 "... So the sooner we decide on a sensible plan the better." Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rein

(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1945), p. 163.

2 C. McCahon, Beginnings, *Landfall*, 80, 1966, pp. 363-4.

3 H. Melville, *Moby Dick or the Whale*, (1851).

4 I. Banks, *The Wasp Factory* (Futura, 1984), p. 182.

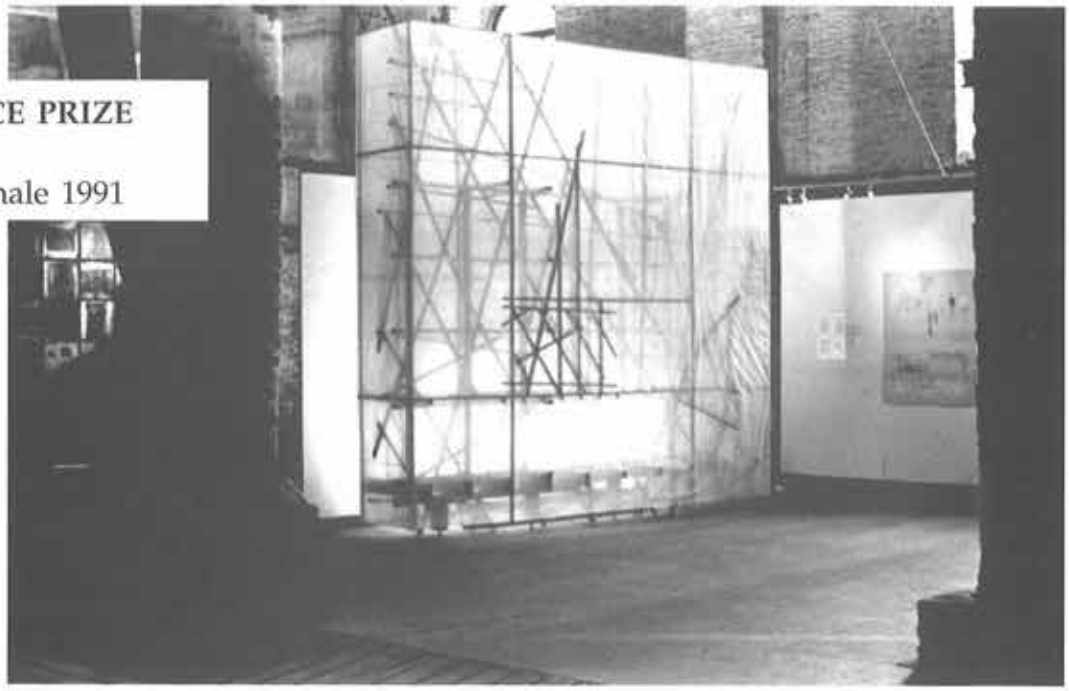
5 Ibid.

6 W. Blake, from 'Europe: A Prophecy,' Pl. 10.

7 Melville, op. cit., p. 114.

8 Van Nierop, Summary of Tasman's Voyage, 1674, (quoted in A. Salmond, *Two Worlds* (Viking, 1991), p. 82.)

Installation of the Auckland School at the Fifth Architectural Biennale, Venice. (Photo. Chris Adams.)



THE VENICE PRIZE

Venice Biennale 1991

The Venice Prize, a competition for Schools of Architecture, was mounted for the first time at the Fifth Architectural Biennale in Venice. A prize was awarded for the best installation showing current architectural research directions. Forty-three schools from around the world were invited to prepare exhibitions. Exhibiting schools were selected not only for cultural diversity, but also for the different social and historical conditions in which their students are educated for the profession. The Director of the Biennale, Francesco Dal Co, wanted to offer an initiative to students and teachers from centres of international debate with established lines of communication, and also to those of us from the margins who had never had such an opportunity to participate.

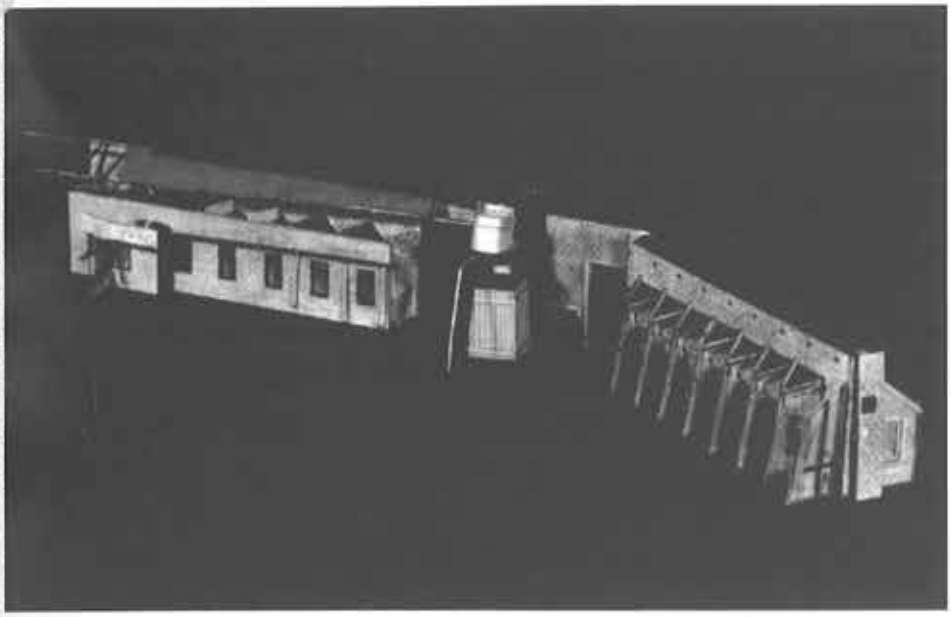
A prestigious jury comprising Ignazio Gardella, Hans Hollein, Arata Isozaki, Richard Meier and Franco Purini unanimously awarded the prize to the University of Auckland Department of Architecture.

Architecture to a Fault.

La Biennale di Venezia 1991 Settore Architettura "Venice Prize"
The Department of Architecture, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Design project model, The Architecture of Exile—Belinda Ellis. (Photo. Lynn Logan.)

Fault, faltering, faulting is a critical theme in this selection of recent work from the Auckland School. The work was selected to show what can happen to architecture that has been authorised by an 'archaeology of theory' when the ground itself, the land, culture, and civilisation is discovered to be shattered, shaken, faulted. Theories of design in this school as elsewhere had been founded on totalising phenomenologies of space, land-form, region, back-ground, etc., where these contexts were assumed to be a pure, unsullied land. The original and continuing violence within and beneath the landscape was either denied, re-



Design project model, "Nimesis"—Fraser Cameron. (Photo. Lynn Logan.)

sisted, ignored or reduced to the picturesque. Critical archaeology discloses a glaring fault in former theories of paradise.

Here we speak with architecture as with prophecy. The culture itself is at fault, a bi-culture—Europe and Polynesia, empire and its othe —not simply and merely divided, but an intimate and deep-founded grinding-together of peoples, an architectonic fault-line of pressures and upheavals, a seismic folding of languages, forged in the intense heat of fault.

When Empire reached this strip of land at the southern end of the world, a torn straggle of islands on the edge of the Pacific Plate, a crumpled strip of white fish-flesh torn from the realm of the sea, he faltered in the course of conquest. 'Man alone' hesitated. He revealed uncertainty in his progress. He felt exposed on the indefinite edge of the face of empire, unsure how to proceed beyond the horizon of the subject. Like Kokoschka's everyman, swallowed in emptiness, he felt compelled to invent his idea of society. He faltered upon the question, "What architecture is?"

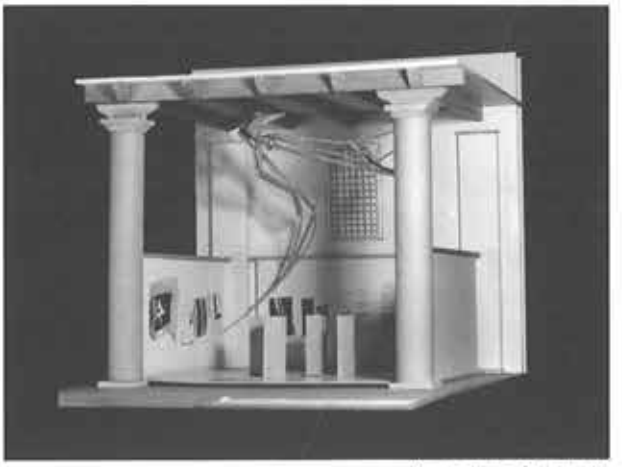
Civilisation arrives here as representations of the centre. A local reading of theory simulates but always distorts the original. (Another reading of semiotics, another version of deconstruction.) The slippage between the original and the copy produces an uncanny quality 'almost the same but different,' that is often noted. This difference again, this misrepresentation of the architecture of civilisation is 'our fault.' The nineteenth century beginnings

were themselves representations—of nature, history, the primitive hut, the subject. At every turn we are caught between strata of (mis)-representation.

At first, with a colonial perception of wilderness, remoteness and natural wealth, imperial architecture tried to produce a faultless culturation, not to expose too much the shabby workings of conquest and exploitation, but to imitate the European picturesque in the farmstead and the city. Later, particularly in the post-war period, this imitative tradition faltered before its own image of 'tabula rasa.' Architecture developed a passion to re-work the blank slate of the house, to re-invent the farm shed, to discover a regional identity which could be 'without fault.' Auckland architecture was a paradigm of the modern, Utopia in its place, on the edge of the empire of ideas. But still it faltered. The modernist clean slate cannot itself be simply effaced nor by-passed, but rather it must be interrogated. The Lyotardian project of 'elaboration of the initial oblivion' would mean here a 'working through' of the historical processes which led to the cleaning of the slate, allowing the repressed material to show

Venice Biennale winners (from left) Andrew Barrie, Helene Furjan, Glenn Watt, Mary Jowett, Richard McGowan, Chris Adams, Stephen Auld.

through, archaeologically cutting through its bland surface.



An early model study. (Photo. Lynn Logan.)

The aesthetic research direction which is illustrated in this selection of recent design work has little to do with a critical regionalism or with the empire of the picturesque. The work has been likened to a cloud, the 'long white cloud' of mythic arrival, or the uncanny ephemeral cloud in which Damisch found fault with the body-centred perspective. It is a tenuous ethereal thing, like the tattered white ghost of a cloak, a 'white mythology' drawn across the surface of building, the silent cloud of unknowing, which averts its face from the fault as it floats gracefully over the shaky surface of the ground. The work displays little fascination for technology, the final stitching together of a coherent aesthetic - for how can you stitch a cloud?

It would be a mistake to describe this work as superficial. It is not clever, tongue-in-cheek, street smart. It is often derivative, unashamedly so, quick to acknowledge its sources. It does not waver any more at mere imitation. But if it is like waves, there is also an undertow. If it is clouds, we also smell the heat of thunder. We detect a deep-grinding energy which causes the paper to crease and smudges the line. This architecture 'to a fault' embraces the fault itself into the body of its own text.

We notice a fault in all this work, that it is introverted. There is no context, no urban fabric, no geological ground, no horizon. Or is the ground itself, faulted, corrupted and imperfect, drawn into the text itself? We have not yet found an answer for this question. This is

architecture 'to a fault,' faltering, opening itself to fault. As it opens new ground for New Zealand architecture, we are also made aware that there are not the means at hand (traditional, theoretical, metaphorical or even mythical) with which to amend the fault which architecture exposes.

Michael Linzey

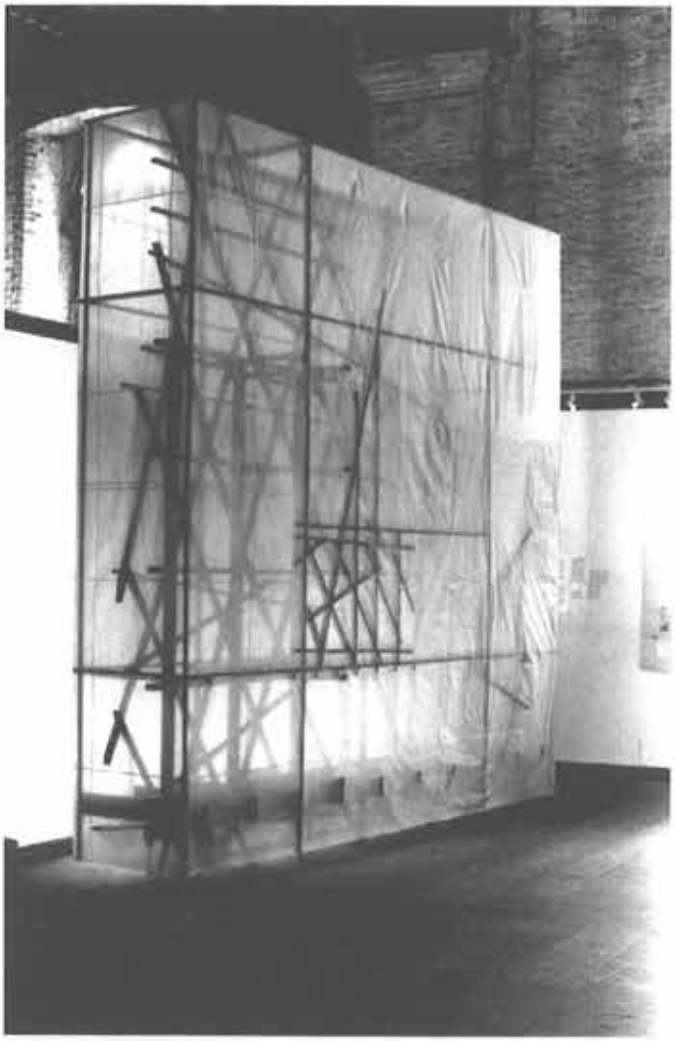
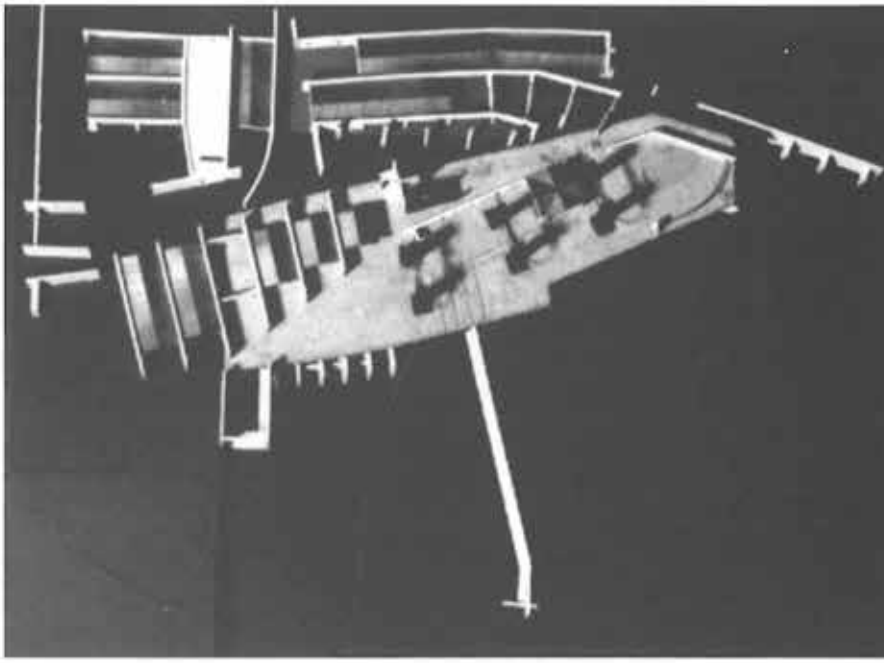


Photo. Chris Adams.

Crossed Lines: Drawing threads from the 1991 Venice Prize



Design project for a Navigation School—Fraser Cameron (Photo. Lynn Logan)

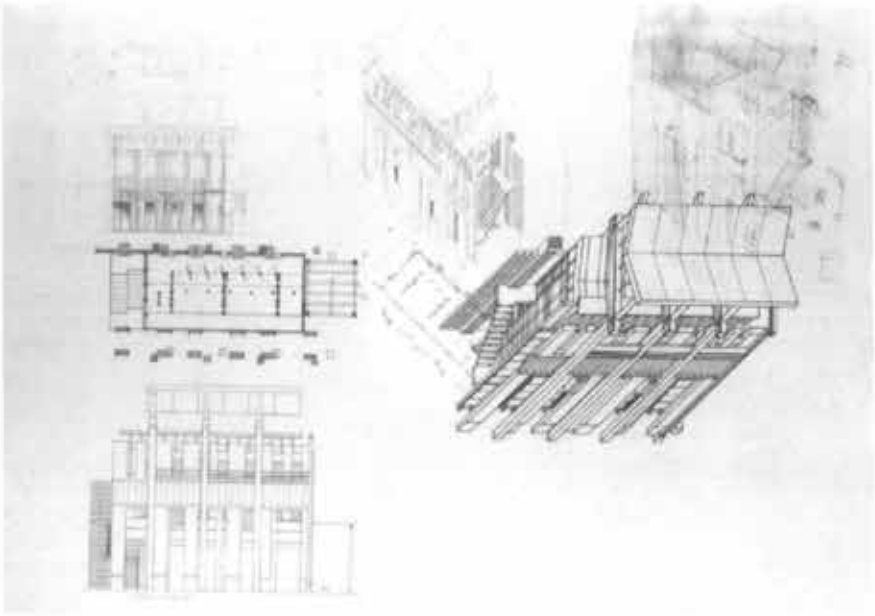
The winged sculpture by Massimo Scolari marked the entrance to the Corderie dell'Arsenale which housed the student exhibition. It both made and marked an arrival, a wooden and steel glider, crashed but intact, settled on a ruined wall.

The installation awarded the 'Venice Prize', by the School of Architecture at Auckland University, was a collection of drawings and models linked both literally and figuratively with a construction of wood and paper. This delicate 'object' was somewhere between a kite-like full-scale model and a complicated wall fragment of uncertain origin. Hovering between definitions, this object resisted definition, resisted being placed, and indeed resisted settling

in this place: hovering, barely connected to the floor by tenon pins.

These objects figure the beginning of Icarus's flight: that heady desire to rise above all constraints, "to fly above our corporality with fantasy."[1] But Scolari's glider also reminds us of the failure of that desire, "impossible constructions" for an "inhuman aspiration."[2] His landing, like Icarus's, brings us firmly back to earth, weighting the flight of fantasy with the gravity of the real, "that primordial aspiration to the lightness that our freedom has not been able to concede to us."[3] The world-wise wooden ruin is pinned to the earth, heavy in the knowledge of its own limits.

The Auckland student installation was composed from a working drawing laid out on the floor which was connected by the extension of a set of co-ordinate cross-axes that literally crossed the drawing (an arbitrary marker of centre-lines designated by the maximum length of cargo on a jet plane to Venice, a literal cross-section), to both this object, and to the exhibition of works (drawings and models), organising their display. The object was con-



Jeremy Leman, "House for Freud's Dora" (reinterpretation of the Auckland Pioneer Women's Memorial Hall.) (Photo. Lynn Logan.)

structed from two sets of light, prefabricated framing (the 'one' based on local domestic vernacular, defined by the *NZ Standard 3604 Code of Practice for Light Timber Frame Buildings*; the 'other' based on a Micronesian navigation map, figure for an-other architecture), crossed through each other, severed at the cross-axes, marked with crosses at their truncated ends (with lead inserts that 'traced' its origins in drawing) and finally covered in tissue paper crossed with a 500mm grid.

If, as a fragment, the framed construction of the Auckland School bears witness also to the descent of that tragic flight, it is as yet unaware of defeat. It presents the young face of the school, naively eager, like a kite straining at its ties, resisting the gravity of the limits that bind it. And yet it is aware of these limits: the construction is indeed 'framed', caught in the play of representations that is architecture in this place. Representing the condition of a school of architecture, it is confined always to the 'drawn'. Drawn on the floor and papered, its status hovers between construction and drawing, resisting presence in the act of presenting itself. At the limits of both, it exists as barely anything more than a "a strange light", an inner glow that "reveals the unconditional within its own limits; the light of the invisible within the visible."[4]

It is the 'strange light' of the ephemeral gaze of the angel, the modern angel of Klee's *Angelus Novus*. Scolari's glider, too, is such an angel. Together, they watched over the thresholds of architecture—the place of the schools in the Biennale. But unlike Klee's angel which, for Walter Benjamin, is driven backwards over the wreckage of the past, towards the future, by the storm of progress, these angels are static: "The air seems not to breathe and everything is arrested for an immobile instant."[5]

And in this stillness these objects are figured as enigmas: the glider amongst its ruins, the framed wall fragment, ancient cloak, or kite; both are at once so heavy that they would sink into the surface, speaking of "the weight of the wall, the construction of the architecture;"[6]

and so weightless that they could "at a certain point become as light as a cloud and vanish"[7] , speaking of "the aireal lightness of the flight"[8]. It is an enigma that sees these objects unable to be pinned to a stable meaning, unable to be grounded, just as the framed 'object' resists the pins that would tie it to the floor.

The installation treads the fine line between an archaeological fragment and a tourist trophy, a souvenir of a 'South Seas paradise' and the myths of its country. The white cloud of Aotearoa is at the same time the pure white of a white mythology: the blinding glare of the *tabula rasa*, the clean screen, of orderly, white tissue cladding signifying the unrepresentable, blank landscape that, like C.D. Freidrich's painting, *Wayfarer Above a Sea of Cloud*, attests to the colonial desire to 'discover' that there is nothing (already) here. But this ideal, this 'clouded' view that would conceal an existing architecture in a sea of mist, itself already resists the colonial gaze that constructs it: a cloud cannot be re-presented, it resists the perspectival projection that defines and records the gaze, and thereby renders impotent the claim that centres this gaze, as the averted face of Freidrich's wanderer also testifies. Writes Franco Rella of both Freidrich and Scolari's paintings:

> A strange world is this, in which nothing is diminished by perspective; a world in which objects lie parallel, equidistant from each other; so to speak, in an unterminated space—rendered infinite by its own confines.[9]

Where the tissue screen blurs the two framing systems into a shadowy, indistinguishable synthesis (the colonial enterprise that sees its other(s) assimilated- consumed and concealed), the surface is no longer the clean white of colonial *tabula rasa* but is etched by the marks and traces of a repressed architecture. It is a move that 'unveils', not so much in order to reveal what it hides, as to lay bear the fabric of the veil, to locate within it the working-over that sees its other(s) assimilated, consumed and concealed, that renders the 'bi-' of bi-culture as rend, a double cut, that allowed within the white mythology the possibility of cross-section,

of interstitial details, fleeting glimpses that resist a totalising view, a mastering gaze, hints at a crossing or weaving of figures of culture that move past and through each other, like the faulted landscape, shaking each other to the foundations, and contaminating each in a sliding trajectory.

Here, if it is the edge that speaks, it is an edge that, paradoxically, speaks with the authority of an empty centre: an edge too anxious, too edgy, to speak of itself. An edged figure from the edge of the world, it hedges the edge of its site. "Like an intact catastrophe that redeems the accident beyond common sense"[10], it speaks of the enigma of the threshold, of the limit.

Helene Furjan

Notes:

1 Massimo Scolari, 'L'ingresso alle Corderie dell'Arsenale', in the catalogue to *Quinta Mostra Internazionale di Architettura,* (Milan, Electa, 1991), p. 40.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Franco Rella, 'The Gaze of the Argonaut', in *Hypnos,* Massimo Scolari, p. 18.

5 Ibid., p. 12.

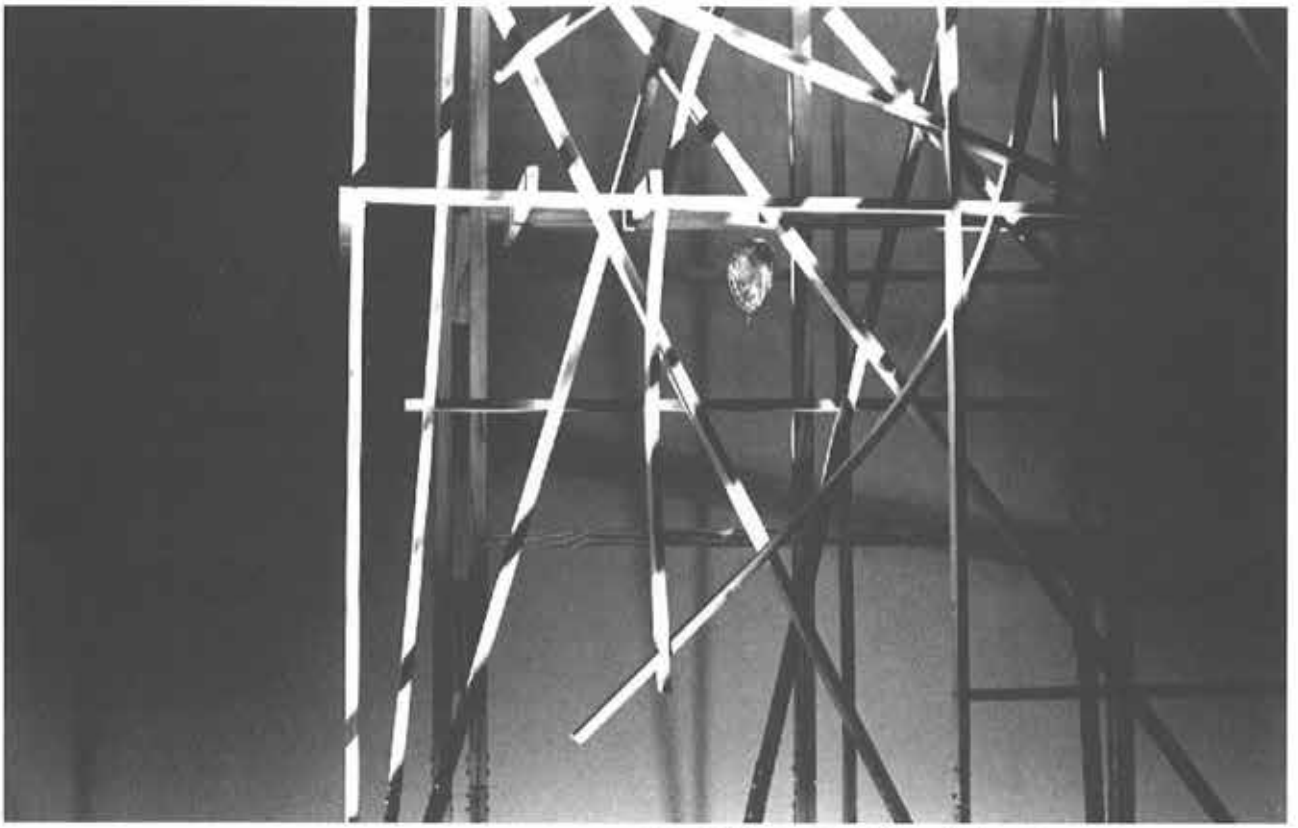
6 Scolari, op. cit.

7 Rella, op. cit., p. 10.

8 Scolari, op. cit.

9 Rella, op. cit., p. 14.

10 Scolari, op. cit.



A detail of the Auckland University installation under construction. (Photo. Chris Adams.)

Winged Entranceway to the Architectural Exhibition—M. Scolari. (Photo. Chris Adams.)

L'ingresso alle Corderie dell'Arsenale

Massimo Scolari (translated by Helene Furjan)

We could explain this sculpture as an expression of that freedom which flying caused in each one of us, as a record of paper wings between school benches, or of enchantment before the giddy evolution of swallows and the majestic gliding of birds of prey. And perhaps we will only succeed in veiling the evidence reminding us of the aeroplanes that streak the sky every day, depicting modernity with the white trails mingled with the breath of the clouds, or the too luminous points of the satellites that deform the ancient perspective of the starry vault. In reality this object has for years flown over my landscapes, slowly crossing their representations. In the *Porta per citta di mare* (*Biennale*, Venice, 1980), it hovered among unravelled clouds above an architecture that protected a peaceful cove. After eleven years of motionless acrobatics that glider settled here, at the limit of architectural construction, already freed from the lament for a heroic utility. Nothing else has attracted me like the flight in a way as silent and enigmatic, and perhaps has imprisoned that primordial aspiration to the lightness that our freedom has not been able to concede to us. We are able to fall from the sky, but not to rise, we can float or dive, but we cannot hover in the air like the

most modest of winged creatures. The flights of Icarus or Simon Mago punctuate the history of this inhuman aspiration, they skirt technical impossibilities until they verge on the laughter of the gods. But we are nevertheless able to fly above our corporeality with fantasy. Others have invented machines to glide on gravity and wear wings, as had Otto Lilienthal for the first time, a hundred years ago, gliding from the Berlin hills of Derwitz.

This sculpture only wants to understand all those impossible shattered constructions; it doesn't want to represent but to record them, evaporated from every anthropomorphism and deprived of noisy rotations. Two identical architectonic elements stolen from the oblique architecture of the *Arca* (Triennale, Milano 1986) have here been reunited without changing their individual meaning. From their meeting has sprung this archaic glider set down in front of the navy yards of *La Serenissima*, in this labyrinthine place for excellence from whose belly swarmed the might of Venice, *"cite humide, sexe femelle de l'Europe"* (Apollonaire).

In a great exhibition of architecture this useless sculpture, not functional, not even to itself, finds in the pride of its futility the region of its existence. And in its exhibited exterior scale this sculpture immediately shows a rupture between what it is and what it would like to be in this place. Two ideas interpenetrate and incorporate each other without choice except uncertainty. One belongs to the weight of the wall, to the construction of the architecture; the other, born from the simple symmetrical doubling of the first, returns to the aerial lightness, to the flight. The absence of a compact connection between the two wings was built from the compositional principal of the renunciation, first of all of the renunciation of every peripheral solution: only in the truth of this limitation do the effects not exceed the causes.

The image of the glider rested silently among rendered walls appears like an intact catastrophe that redeems the accident beyond common sense. I could have wanted to imprint on it an impalpable smile and to restrain the cutting enigma of the artifice. But if none of all this

will manage to unite with the real, I would like at least to leave desire suspended on the beautiful verse of Melville: "Not vastness, not profusion, /but Form—Place; /not obstinate invention, /but respect for the archetype."

Interview with Francesco Venezia and Nigel Ryan

NR. In the last ten years or so there has been a proliferation of the use of stone by architects, most especially marble. Indeed architects have again resorted to painting the effect of stone. However you have been critical of the recent use of stone, perhaps you might like to articulate your opinion.

FV. Post-modern architects in my opinion do not use stone very well because the starting point for their use of the material is not constructive. You might say that they use stone in an ideological manner, against the aesthetic of modern architecture. Post-modern architects use stone in protest, in a polemical mode and without a sense of art. I believe that for the most part post-modern architecture is of *Beaux Arts* origin and of course the *Beaux Arts* are not very constructive. In fact neo-classicists use stone in a very decorative manner, not in a structural way.

I have my own ideas for the use of stone. I was always surprised by a feature of classical architecture (by classical I refer to Greek and Egyptian) which I believe to be very important.

There is an antagonism, a battle between the integrity of the form and the way in which this integrity is reached, its construction. It is within this conflict between the integrity of the form, and the apparent disorder of the pieces forming the whole when viewed more closely, that the strength of these buildings resides. When you first view a classical building, you gain the impression of something very compact and united yet upon approaching the building one can appreciate that the unity is achieved by a certain movement.

Neoclassical walls have no such movement; the stones are very regular and "designed". Of course in classical architecture one can find some regularity, but this is not usual.

In the most evolved phase of architecture, an attempt was made to reconcile the contrast between an ideality and actuality; between integrity of form and that which is necessary for its construction. It is a pleasure to see such architecture. An example is an Egyptian relief where the figure is cut at the head and at the groin: the whole is composed of two or three blocks of stone. From a distance the silhouette of the human figure is strong but upon approach the cuts become apparent. The Egyptians used to cut the stone at these specific points, which were controlled casualties. The division of the stone was necessary as to work, install, one block of stone would have been impossible.

Similarly Etruscan terra-cotta sarcophagi were made in two pieces as a piece of terra-cotta 2m-2.5m long could not be fired as one. Therefore there is always this extraordinary conflict between the unity of the form, the reclining figure, and the fact of the cut. A further example is that of an ancient classical column. The structure of a column is a unity, but it can be seen that the cylinder is cut just above the base and also just below the capital. The apparent structure is base, cylinder, capital, but the capital is made of a stone which is also partially part of the cylinder.

This absence of coincidence between form and construction is very important. In a classical

building, the door and windows do not coincide with the systems of the stones, but always cut through the lintel. The same thing is found in old Norwegian wooden architecture. The door frame cuts into a big piece of wood. Similarly in Egypt. There is always this method of conflict; of putting things against things.

In much contemporary architecture, for example that of Ungers or Mies, there is always a coincidence in the geometrical system and the geometry of the material components of the material elements. In a building by Ungers the form and geometry of the material components coincides perfectly with the form of the building. Thus if the building is divided into squares, everything is a square and the square windows do not cut the system of the other squares. In a pavement, the small squares are all **sottomodolo** of the larger squares. And the squares in a metal net/grid are also **sottomodolo.** This destroys architecture because it is a system in which there is no interference—the main module is divided in four and those units are then divided in four. This is an elementary way to use geometry rather than a complex cultivated method. Within five seconds of viewing the building you understand everything and you are totally annoyed because you have captured everything in an instant. When I see these buildings I cannot understand how such mindless things are created after our great heritage of the art of building. I am sorry to say that this tendency, this way of producing architecture began with Mies van der Rohe.

I do consider Mies van der Rohe to be a great architect. Nonetheless he initiated this method. The National Gallery in Berlin, which I believe has a beautiful form is one of the strongest designs using Frank Lloyd Wright's influence. It is very strong, a true temple. However the ceiling inside is in the form of squares which are a **sottomodolo** of the main square. This is a pity because the strength of the square is a little weakened by the obsessive repetition of squares; in granite blocks, in the pavement, in the ceiling; everywhere. The square lives when it is made of figures which are not necessarily squares.

The German school of Ungers has banalised that which in the great tradition of Mies was just a detail but has now become everything. The small perhaps wrong detail has become the architectural system and I do not agree with this position. My response to this kind of architecture stems, perhaps, from my direct contact with ancient architecture, without reading it through *Beaux-Arts* architecture.

NR. I would have thought that this tendency, which in one way is but a manifestation of the conditions that regulate modern production, would have begun with the inauguration of "designed" architecture, with the very beginning of modernity, with the architects of the Renaissance, with Alberti.

FV. Yes but Alberti used two co-present systems. You are right, Alberti and Palladio too, both used a very regular system but both used a constructive system in which the components are very irregular in relation to the regularity of the formal pattern. If you get close to the wall of Palazzo Rucellai you can see that this Albertian system conflicts with the artisan's system. There is a medieval construction system where the stones are all of different sizes. These stones are inscribed, cut with a formal system that is very abstract. Today there is none of this co-presence. When one is in a building of Ungers, one is not in a building of Alberti.

NR. What you are discussing here with the examples of Palladio and Alberti may be said to have been not so much the result of architectural principles than a casualty of history: of the meeting of designed architecture with pre-design building techniques: there was a historic conflict between architectural culture and the building industry. To use a phrase of yours, you have discovered "a happy accident", that the economic contingencies of the constructive aspect of architecture can produce an interesting result.

FV. Yes perhaps you are right. For example Palladio's Palazzo Thiene. You note in the corner

he uses brick together with stone—for economic reasons. This was because the stone used in this period was white Istrian stone and very expensive because Istria was controlled by Turkey. Therefore it was difficult to import stone from Dalmatia. Likewise with Alberti: he had intended that the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini to be constructed totally in white stone from Dalmatia, but was forced to complete it with Byzantine marbles from Ravenna. There is, therefore, a strange conundrum between the white stone and the veined stone. The latter is not classical at all, in fact it is decadent. The Greeks never used marbles as they wanted to use pure colours. Occasionally they applied stucco to the stone as they could not tolerate the figuration.

NR. Here you are hinting at another conflict; an interior conflict within materials themselves, between their substance and image. For example figured stones, especially when polished, function in much the same way as do the painter's materials. In one sense stones thus treated are dematerialised pure image.

Moreover it is a quality that forms a principal component of an architectural tradition that is different from that about which you have been speaking. A tradition which you might say is decorative rather than constructive; perhaps even a tradition of de-materialised architecture. I am thinking here of the thematic treatment of stone by Mies Van der Rohe and Adolf Loos or Alvaro Siza for that matter. Also and perhaps more significantly the Venetian tradition which of course is ultimately Byzantine and therefore Roman.

To what extent are you interested in the figurative quality of stone or perhaps better are you interested in setting up a play between the tectonic properties of stone and its figurative properties?

FV. At this point let me stress that I believe that good architecture can be attained with any material; that every material can give great satisfaction to the architect.

With concrete too it is possible to obtain a complexity very similar to that of stone. I believe the complexity and intricacy of masonry construction can be utilised with other materials. Architects have had most experience with the stone system because as a material it coincided with the great period of architecture. Thus a stone system can aid architects to reach complexity in other materials too. And so it is with normal concrete which can be used in a complex manner.

For example in the house "L" in Lauro I used stone trying to effect a rhythm—using two different sizes of stone and two different treatments of the surface texture. It is the same idea the same system with two very different materials.

Using all that stone has taught us and all its complexity we can use another material in a manner analogous to the ancient Greeks who took the principles of building in wood and applied them to the building of stone temples. That was a case of using the grammar and syntax of wood, changing the material and translating it into a very new system. Indeed we must not forget that all the great stone architecture in the Mediterranean area was derived from wooden architecture. Therefore the technology of wood is present in the grammar and syntax of all classical architecture. Classical buildings cannot be thought of, understood without wood: they are petrified wooden buildings.

And when I went to Norway I found no great difference between its tradition of wooden architecture, totally wooden architecture and the architecture of ancient Egypt. I think that stone and wood which appear to be so distant are in fact the same material.

NR. You have been speaking of a conflict between form and its construction which you consider to be essential to architecture. Viewing your work, another conflict is evident. It is a conflict of geometrical systems or perhaps better an interplay of different figures. For instance you project for Salaperuta.

FV. This is a project which I designed at a moment when I was very interested and involved in the idea that a building may coincide with a body, which is of course a very well known architectural tradition. This is particularly so in the Renaissance from which period there exist many drawings showing a human body incorporated in the form of the church. However I was more interested in the Egyptian rather than the Renaissance approach to this problem, as whereas the latter is somewhat static, there is the idea of movement in the Egyptian tradition.

Some Egyptian buildings have deformations but these deformations do not stem from an inability to build, as the Egyptians had an exemplary capacity for achieving precision. There is the idea of movement in objects, of a "growing up" of forms. Take for example the well known question of the rhomboid pyramid. Some people explain the deformation as evidence of the Egyptians being incapable of building to their initial design and having to change the form in the middle of the building process. I do not believe this is the case. I think they wished to express double form.

Some Egyptian buildings have a deformation in the plan which is derived from this idea of relating the building to the growth of man—this idea is found in the building's proportional system and its systematic deformation. The system of proportion is not static but relates to a growing figure: it is very complex. It is the highest point of complexity reached by architecture and never afterwards achieved.

The project for Salaperuta was an experiment with this architectural tradition. It is a building in which everything is continually deformed using a strategy of Egyptian architecture—that is—a distortion of the right angle so that it is not exactly 90°—a technique called rhomboidalisation—transformation of the square to the rhomboid. Of course the distortion is very subtle—almost, but not quite a square. This is a technique the Greeks inherited from the Egyptians and used in mouldings, thus always avoiding using right angles. They sharp-

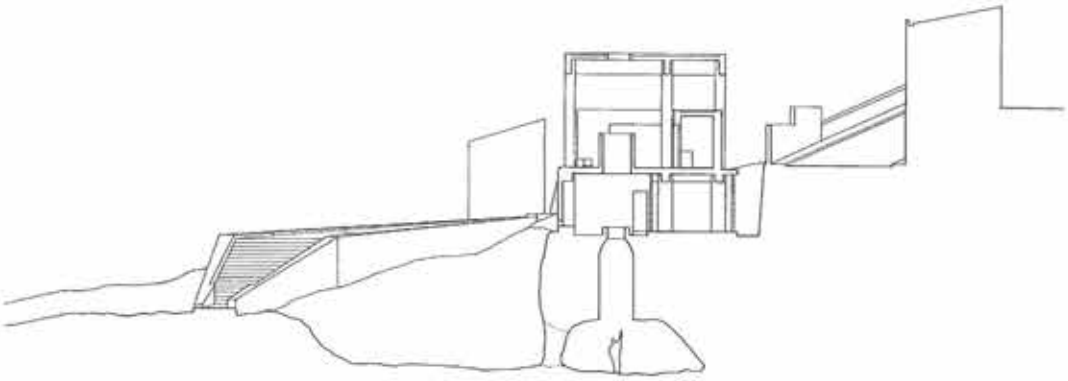
ened the corners. Due to this point which was not static but in tension, their architecture became more dramatic. Moreover the difference of light, the play between light and shadow is stronger because the shadow is deeper.

I have often been to the archaeological museum in Palermo which houses the gigantic fragment of the Selinunte Temple, in which I have a great interest. Normally there is a great distance between the object and the viewer and the latter can sense but not see a certain tension. When viewing this fragment one can at last discover the reason for the tension in the mouldings. There are also sections as the blocks are cut so one can appreciate the whole system. It is most interesting and whenever I am in Palermo I try to visit the museum.

NR. There is also a strong Greek presence here in Naples. It was after all a Greek colony. Nonetheless it would seem as if a tradition has developed here that could be best described as Neapolitan, that is neither Greek nor Roman.

FV. Here in Naples there is a strong presence of the earth in buildings—a co-presence. It is always difficult to perceive, to feel the point at which nature stops and the building material (the tufa) and the artificial action of the building begins. Everything is very connected. For example an architecture which consists of a substance of artificial ground and then a house above this structure. There is always a joke—having something on the earth which is the earth, etc. I believe that from this point of view Naples is extraordinary. Rome for example is very beautiful but in Rome there is not such a strong presence of the earth as there is in Naples. Of course in Rome there is the extraordinary presence of the seven hills which ensures that the city gently undulates; which is a very beneficial form from an urbanistic point of view. In Naples there is a strong connection between the city and the landscape.

NR. Here in Naples and for that matter right around the Bay, there is an extensive tradition of excavated architecture, of an architecture that is cut out of the stone. It is an architecture



of which you have written. Moreover I believe that in your work there is a sense of the subterranean, of the underworld. What precisely for you is the value of the underworld?

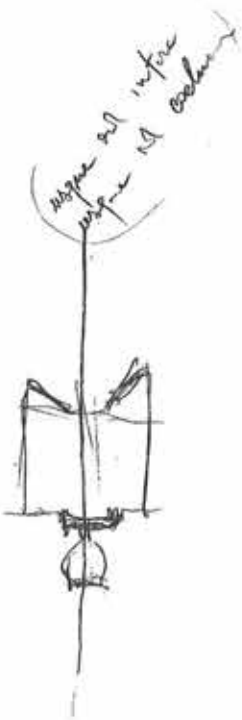
FV. In Naples the idea of excavation is very important. There is the building itself naturally but there is also the idea that the building comes directly from this excavation. There is the need to excavate, to produce a building. In Naples the interest is in the "co-presence" of underground quarries and buildings on the ground. Naturally there is a similar phenomenon in all towns but the two elements are usually separate.

Quarries were dug when towns were being established. An example is the Selinnute Temples in Sicily. Five to ten kilometres away from these temples are the quarries, where one can find abandoned pieces of column—very interesting to visit. But these elements are apart from each other. In Naples, however, you have, you perceive, you feel a simultaneous action. The quarrying and building are executed through a vertical axis. The constructive process can be seen and felt all in an instant. I do not like strange words but it is "synchronic". The other situation is diachronic—there is a transfer of the materials for five, ten, one hundred kilometres. Here in Naples it is immediate—you excavate and you build. And in the building can be felt the presence of the building's "mother". This is so in many Neapolitan buildings. Often the excavation is used as a storage room, other times it is transformed into

an annex of the house.

I was recently asked to design a house in Palazzolo Acreide, Sicily, on a site where there were small underground caves. I decided not to locate the house in the logical/practical position but directly above the caves, in a difficult position, in order to create this axis. This is the Neapolitan section. This is the relationship between my observation and the actual work which I always employ.

In another sense this section makes reference to the idea of the old Roman house: is an exploration of this idea of house. From the houses in Pompeii and Herculanium one can experience a relationship with the sky. That is not the case in this house but there is the excavated **impluvio.**



Underground there is a small (1.5-2 m) reservoir, not a cave, but the same concept. I have written a small article, **usque ad infera usque ad coelum.** This is the Latin definition of private property. Upon purchasing a piece of land in Roman times, your rights extended up to the stars and down to the underworld. They tried to express this right in their houses with the construction of the atrium, that is a windowless space in which all communication with the world is with the sky and the earth. Together with the Gothic idea of house this is probably one of the strongest notions of house.

This sectional idea is often present in the architecture of Le Corbusier ... who visited Pompeii on his early travels. However the use of the idea and form are of course peculiar to Le Corbusier, complex and not an imitation of the Roman house, but the concept is the same, containing the presence of the sky.

NR. Another important aspect of the history of Neapolitan architecture is the Baroque which exhibits a complex geometry. I can see, however, that you are not especially enthusiastic about the Baroque.

FV. I do not like the Baroque particularly. However the transition between the Renaissance and the Baroque is very strong. It is a moment, a terrible moment in which everything explodes. It is not a moment for normal architects. Michelangelo was the only great Baroque architect because he brought the explosion under his control. When the explosion becomes virtuosity, it becomes boring, becomes only a complicated game. However the moment of its creation is a great drama. But from the signs of this great drama, it becomes rhetorical and the Baroque which we know.

NR. How does this interest or rather belief in a necessary conflict inform the process of your work?

FV. Each project I do is different from all the others. I do not use a technique such as that used, for example, by Mario Botta. You know the sort of thing he will do before he does it—approximately of course—because he has a very clear, very consolidated language. In my work I prefer to "experience a way for each project." It is a method by which I can still be a student. My interest necessarily coincides with the nature of the work. When I have a particular project to work on I inject some of my current interests into that work. For example, three or four years ago I was in Chicago and there I very much appreciated the buildings of the Chicago School, Louis Sullivan etc. I was also very interested in the connection between the Chicago School and the architecture of Adolf Loos because I'm sure that Loos took to Europe that which the States had understood of classical architecture.

There had been a major experiment in the United States adapting classical architecture to commercial necessity, that is to capitalist cities and of course Chicago was more advanced

in this area than any European city. I believe that Loos—but before Loos, Schinkel—started with this ability to transform the classical heritage to something which can be adapted to contemporary needs. Now in Tokyo I have a commission for some urban development and in this work I tried to explore this idea, to adapt all the traditions of the classical world as seen by the architects of modern industrial cities, Chicago and then by Loos in Vienna.

Another of my current interests is the pyramid. I must tell you that I was shocked when Bruno Zevi declared that the pyramid was not architecture. It *is* architecture. It is an excessive architecture. It is an architecture in which the interior space is tremendously small in relation to the wall—the mass. There is something extra-ordinary in the relationship between the penetration system and the form.

I am exploring the architecture of the pyramid in a commission for a new large open air theatre in Gibellina. The programme demands a very long stage and I have given it the form of a boat. The section of the entrance however recalls the section of the pyramid. The constructive system is gone. It is a pyramid built in a system different from that used by the ancients but the idea is the same. In this case I have the idea and not the constructive system.

It is a project of course very different from others. There is a possibility of using a consolidated language so that as soon as a client asks you to design a building you can use the linguistic solution. I do not like to work in this manner. I prefer to use the occasion, the project as an opportunity to "climb through architecture" and to reach a point possibly far removed from or near to architecture. In this case—3,000-4,000 years—but it is not a problem. Architecture is always the same. I try to take an idea and place this idea in relation to the different moments in which the idea appeared in the history of architecture. The pyramid is present in our work at the same moment as the Chicago buildings.

Interview with Mark Wigley and Paul Walker

PW. Insofar as you are different from New Zealand architecture, or its lack, you apparently offend it. Was it necessary for the New Zealand condition to provoke an agent which would in turn provoke it?

Do we need to be offended at the moment?

MW. New Zealand's lack of architecture is precisely what makes it central to the world thought about architecture. It was also necessary that the complete denial of architecture here would produce some kind of licentious behaviour.

PW. I'm suspicious of this. My experience is only New Zealand, but I suspect that wherever I was, I might equally discover a unique condition for my region. I would discover the regionalism of my architecture to be unique, to have a unique and privileged role. This is what you seem to say about New Zealand architecture or its non architecture. It's a kind of unique keeper of past models, or something. And this seems to me, to be echoed in the

relationship of architecture to philosophy that you propose or trace: it's a privileged relationship.

Doesn't this make you suspicious that you're simply privileging wherever it is—New Zealand architecture—you find yourself?

MW. Yes. It is my current description of my work, but one which came after the work, that what I did was to generalise my contempt for New Zealand architecture into a contempt for architecture as such, to get over the contempt and admire architecture in the way it covertly resisted certain things. In a way I wrote a personal history bound to a certain location on the earth, bound to certain qualities of my education, and so on, that precisely calls into question notions of place, location, and all that. It would be nonsense to claim that my description of the relationship between architecture and philosophy was not influenced by the fact that I was largely outside the architectural world by virtue of being in New Zealand. I think it would be nonsense to say that I wasn't effected by the fact that I wasn't in the United States when I wrote my thesis.

PW. Would there be any discipline in New Zealand that would not feel itself in such a provincial position?

MW. Probably not. I think that all provincials are obsessed with their provincial status. Those who think that they are not in the provinces are also obsessed with their belief that they have got away from provincialism; they too exhibit all of the symptoms. To argue about the provinces is to argue about the relationship between the centre and the margins, or the inside of an architectural game, for example, and the outside. Everybody is trapped. We are all obsessed with provincialism, and we all start our argument from wherever we are told we are placed in this game. In New Zealand we are told, and tell ourselves, that we are outside. So that is where I started from; then I attempted to argue that the kind of things we

deviously protect here are inside the world, at the centre; and then I came across a series of texts which made talking about that interesting. Equally, the people who are on the inside take things like deconstruction in a way coloured by their thoughts that they are first, that they started at the beginning, that they are at the centre. I am saying that because I began thinking, as a provincial, that this angled the work I did and dictated its character, but I end up alongside the position of people who started off believing that they were at the centre.

Precisely by following up those respective positions thoroughly one ends up calling into question the inside/outside relationship, and therefore calling into question one's own provincial status, and in a certain sense rejecting it.

PW. There are different kinds of provincial status?

MW. Yes. I think the different provinces have a different sense. Australia has a different sense of its relationship to the inside. The people in New York who abhor provincials are extraordinarily provincial in their attitude. The force with which New Yorkers limit themselves to Manhattan is, in some way, much more oppressively provincial that the way in which we just say that it is obvious we are isolated—here are billions and billions of gallons of water cutting us off. Over there they work very hard and point to maybe a hundred yards of water, attempt to demonstrate that a hundred yards marks the beginning and end of thought, and entertainment, and theatre and so on.

PW. Is there anyone who isn't bound to be provincial?

MW. No. In my view the belief that you are not provincial is the belief that you are God. The full force of Western philosophy is based on the premise that one day we will get to the centre, that the centre is definitely the place to go. That is the imperative under which we all operate. So while I cite my provincial status as being extremely important in the construction of my arguments, at the same time, having completed those arguments, I then gener-

alise and proclaim that to be the condition of all rigorous inquiry into architecture.

PW. It seems to me that in your thesis you say architecture has a kind of provinciality with respect to philosophy, which makes the relationship between them special. But couldn't one equally write a thesis called 'Jacques Derrida and Law: The Deconstructive Possibilities of Judicial Discourse,' that would equally claim such a relationship for the law?

MW. Yes. There is a book by Gillian Rose called *Dialectic of Nihilism*[1] which proclaims that Derrida is somewhat uninteresting because, at his most interesting, what he says is actually already written into the legal tradition. But the argument has a different quality.

PW. I am asking if you can entertain the possibility that something other than architecture can claim an equally privileged relationship with philosophy.

MW. Yes, but we necessarily proclaim our own area to have such privilege. The particular privilege that I would ascribe to architecture would be different to that ascribed to other fields.

PW. Obviously you would have to use different philosophical writings in the construction of the argument.

MW. But I think it would have a different structural relationship.

PW. Am I right in saying that architecture is privileged in philosophy because it has acted as a powerful metaphor?

MW. I would rather say its privileged status comes from appearing to be a metaphor but turning out to be much more than that. My argument would be that the privilege architecture has is that unlike other metaphors employed by philosophy this one can't be rejected as a metaphor, can't be abandoned easily. Philosophy regards metaphor as being precisely

that which can be abandoned, but which is supplemental, illustration. But the concept of metaphor is itself dependent on an architectural argument. Therefore the architectural metaphor cannot be abandoned. One cannot abandon the thing with which one constructs the idea of metaphor so simply.

But, undoubtedly, at the same time that which I am calling architecture is not something which is isolated from that thing which you called law. So I would dip into legal texts and argue that they were architectural texts in disguise, and a legal theorist might read architectural texts as somewhat blurred versions of legal texts. I think other disciplines could not make the same first moves as we can with architecture, but the endpoint of these sorts of arguments is much the same; after some time the legal arguments and the architectural arguments could not be simply separated.

PW. It seems to me that you might not be able to make the same moves in law but you might still presume your moves were the privileged ones. Do law and philosophy have the same relationship between them as architecture and philosophy?

MW. While both disciplines can thoroughly demonstrate a privileged relationship, traditionally law is seen to be worthier of that privilege in that philosophers have dealt with the question of law more extensively. I suppose the interesting question would be things like painting, to compare painting and architecture, whether painting could assume the same status. Except painting never existed as a discipline.

PW. I'm not sure architecture has either. I accept arguments about architecture that suggest that it is really only constituted as a discipline in the Renaissance or the 18th century.

MW. Yes.

PW. I wouldn't see architecture just as being discourse on building for instance. I would

want to argue that architecture is a discourse on building that is structured in a certain way and that this structuring doesn't happen until quite late. That would make any kind of allusion to architecture in Plato's text, say, something difficult. I don't think that to discover reference to building is enough.

MW. My view is that those references to building were discovered in the Renaissance. To put it in a slightly different way: hidden bonuses in the contract between architecture and philosophy were discovered in the Renaissance. In a way the contract only became a contract at that point. In the Renaissance, certain conditions laid down within the [philosophical] text were exploited by a group of people to produce a discipline. They became constructural conditions. I'm interested in following this history of the idea of the contract, and relating that to the history of the idea of architecture.

PW. This brings me to my last question, which is about the relationship of building and architecture. For me this has become an obsession since working in an architectural practice, and one noted for the strongly tectonic qualities of its work. However, I feel remote from building. My experience is that the obligations placed upon me in my work situation seem quite self-contained and removed from any ultimate obligation to building. This may be false. Maybe the workplace is cleverly contrived. Would you sustain a definition of architecture as discourse about building?

MW. It's a particular kind of discourse about building. In any view it's a discourse that attempts to disguise the horror of building; it attempts to keep the nature of building unobserved, to construct a shield around building. Architecture is a kind of collective discourse on the nature of building, but it is a discourse which is desperately concerned not to interrogate building too closely. So it has concentrated on considerations of ornament, for example, which lead us to believe that building is non-problematical. In a sense, it's an attempt to keep us to one side of building. The concern of the architectural discipline is to reaffirm

the insight on which philosophy depends; that building is non-problematical, and by definition virtuous and uplifting, in the sense of lifting something up, erecting it on sound foundations, and so on, and that by these gestures it is necessarily moral.

In a sense, culture is then defined by its ability to build.

My particular interest is in articulating the horror of building itself. To return to Eisenman, his recent work is more challenging than the earlier work because it occupies building. And this is precisely why he has no disciples in architecture; it's impossible for Eisenman to have architectural disciples because all architects refuse to stage an in-depth encounter with building itself. Rather, they act around building in a certain way to claim that territory and prohibit others from occupying it. I think the only interesting work in architecture today is that which inhabits the realm of building.

To get access to that realm the traditional relationships between structure and ornament and between building and architecture have to be skilfully undermined, against the full force of the discipline. That kind of undermining is what I'm most interested in. Eisenman is its only successful exponent. So he is correctly seen as dangerous; he is undermining not just the foundations of our discipline, but also the assumptions on which we base our ideas about everything that we have.

PW. By whom is he seen as dangerous?

MW. By architects.

This is complicated. You can argue that up until two or three years ago he was seen as superficially dangerous—he was assigned the role of being the dangerous fringe of architectural inquiry, and it was felt he would soak up all that energy and allow the rest of the profession to get on with the business of doing architecture. Eisenman was appropriated by

the discipline as a demonstration that it was actually worried about its own condition, inquiring into it. But that has changed and now he is seen as truly dangerous. He can no longer be simply dismissed because he has now moved his projects into the heart of building. He's involved in the construction of major projects. And he's maintained the same conceptual rigour that he demonstrated earlier.

I'm waiting to see what the next project will be, and the one after that, because a very incisive inquiry has begun and it could have very significant results. At the same time quite a few of Eisenman's generation are sceptical about the condition of their own work.

PW. What kind of work—mainstream, postmodernism?

MW. Absolutely.

PW. I suppose my view is that the architectural mainstream will contain Eisenman as English departments contain Derrida, reduce the work to a set of motifs with which they can replace other motifs. But business will go on as usual.

MW. I wouldn't promote his work as a new wave; I think it will always remain without followers.

PW. Building must be a difficult location for dissent or inquiry or criticism because it costs money, you've got to get someone to pay for it, to get someone else involved in the act. Or you work covertly. Other disciplines perhaps do not face such severe stringencies.

MW. I agree. But that is also an assertion of architecture's privilege. I would tend to invoke rather than the financial costs and so on, the philosophical weight of what's being tampered with. But what our culture values philosophically it also values financially. Is it any surprise that it's hard to find support for a project which questions the nature of support? Obviously

one can only do that in a slippery way. That is the problem, if you want to undermine building. There's a limit to how surreptitious you can be. So-called deconstructionists who happily pull apart texts are immediately horrified at the thought that the room in which they are doing that might have some of the gaps in it revealed. Everyone is aware of the influence of building.

Notes:

1 G. Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Poststructuralism and Law* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1984).