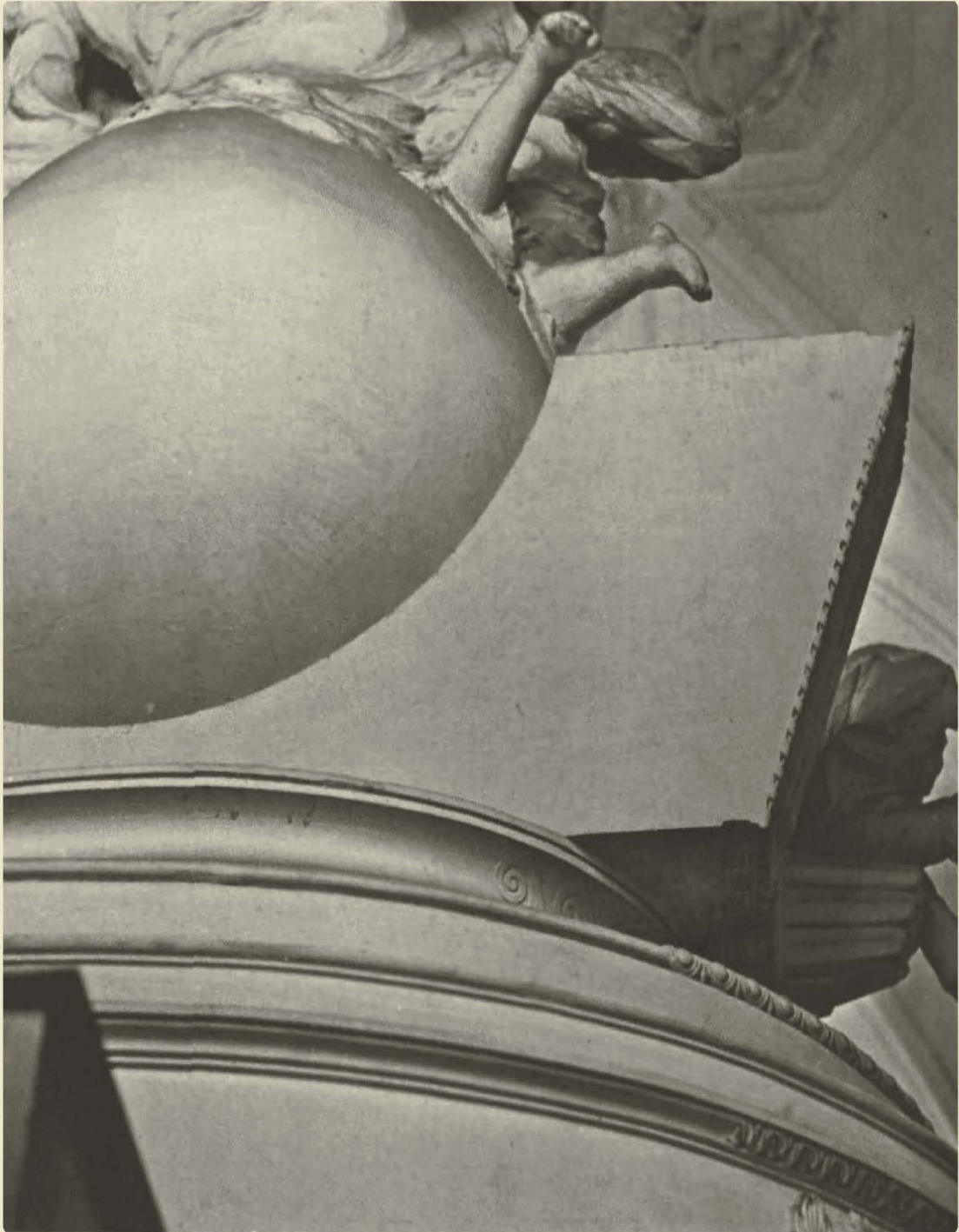

The Sphere and the Labyrinth

Avant-Gardes and
Architecture from Piranesi
to the 1970s



Manfredo Tafuri

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translated by
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Robert Connolly

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Introduction: The Historical “Project”

There comes a moment (though not always) in research when all the pieces begin to fall into place, as in a jig-saw puzzle. But unlike the jig-saw puzzle, where all the pieces are near at hand and only one figure can be assembled (and thus the correctness of each move be determined immediately), in research only some of the pieces are available, and theoretically more than one figure can be made from them. In fact, there is always the risk of using, more or less consciously, the pieces of the jig-saw puzzle as blocks in a construction game. For this reason, the fact that everything falls into place is an ambiguous sign: either one is completely right or completely wrong. When wrong, we mistake for objective verification the selection and solicitation (more or less deliberate) of the evidence, which is forced to confirm the presuppositions (more or less explicit) of the research itself. The dog thinks it is biting the bone and is instead biting its own tail.¹

In this way Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi synthesize the labyrinthine path of historical analysis and the dangers with which it is fraught, in one of the few recent volumes that have had the courage to describe, not the Olympian and definitive results of research, but rather its tortuous and complex *iter*. But why should we propose, at the beginning of a volume dedicated to the adventures of architectural language, the problem of the “jig-saw puzzles” characteristic of historical research? In the first place, we could answer that our intention is to follow an indirect path. Contrary to those who pose the theme of architectural *writing*—the term “language” should, it seems to us, be adopted only as a metaphor²—we shall present the theme of critical writing: is it not the function of criticism to constitute the historical (and thus the real) specificity of artistic writings? Does not historical work possess a language that, entering perpetually into conflict with the multiple techniques of environmental for-

mation, can function like litmus paper to verify the correctness of discourses on architecture?

Only in appearance, then, *will we speak of something else*. For how often, when probing what is on the fringes of a given problem, do we discover the most useful keys for dealing with the problem itself—particularly if it is as equivocal as the one that we are about to examine.

Let us further define our theme. Architecture, language, techniques, institutions, historical space: are we simply lining up on a wire stretched over a void a series of problems, each with its own intrinsic characteristics, or can we legitimately contest the “terms” used here to trace these problems back to an underlying or hidden structure, in which these words can find a common meaning on which to rest? It is no accident that we have reduced to “words” the density of historically stratified disciplines. Every time, in fact, that the critic’s zeal causes his guilty conscience to erupt, constructing linear routes that force architecture to migrate into language, language into institutions, and institutions into the all-encompassing universality of history, one feels the need to ask how such a totally illegitimate simplification could gain currency.

After the persuasive demonstrations of the untranslatability of architecture into linguistic terms, after Saussure’s discovery that language itself is a “system of differences,” after the calling into question of the conspicuous features of institutions, historical space appears to dissolve, to disintegrate, to become a justification for disordered and elusive multiplicity, a *space of domination*. Is this not the final outcome reached by a good part of the “Lacanian left” or by an epistemology of pure registration? And after all, is not architectural writing (this phantasm that we now recognize as divided and multiplied into techniques incommunicable among one another) itself an institution, a signifying practice—an ensemble of signifying practices—a multiplicity of projects of domination?

Is it possible to make a history from such “projects” without breaking away from them, without abandoning the multiple perspectives of history itself, and without inquiring into that which permits the very existence of history? Is it still necessary to remember that the totality of the capitalistic means of production is a condition for both the cohesion and the diffraction of techniques, that the “mystical character of the commodity” breaks up and multiplies the relationships that are at the base of its own reproduction?

A series of questions confronts the historian who discovers the dishomogeneity of the materials of his work. These questions go to the very roots of historiographic work, uniting indissolubly the question of languages, of techniques, of sciences, of architecture, with that of the languages of history. But which history? Toward what productive ends? With what long-term objectives?

The questions that we are posing arise from a precise assumption. History is viewed as a “production,” in all senses of the term: the production of meanings, beginning with the “signifying traces” of events; an analytical construction that is never definite and always provisional; an instru-

ment of deconstruction of ascertainable realities. As such, history is both determined and determining: it is determined by its own traditions, by the objects that it analyzes, by the methods that it adopts; it determines its own transformations and those of the reality that it deconstructs. The language of history therefore implies and assumes the languages and the techniques that act and produce the real: it “contaminates” those languages and those techniques and, in turn, is “contaminated” by them. With the fading away of the dream of knowledge as a means to power, the constant struggle between the analysis and its objects—their irreducible tension—remains. Precisely this tension is “productive”: the historical “project” is always the “project of a crisis.”³ Franco Rella writes:

*Interpretive knowledge has a conventional character and is a production, a positing of a meaning-in-relation and not an uncovering of the meaning. But what is the limit of this operari, of this activity? What is the locus of this relationship? What lies behind the Fiktion of the subject, of the thing, of the cause, of the being? What, then, can bear this 'awful plurality'? The body. 'The phenomenon of the body is the richest, the most significant [deutlichere], the most tangible phenomenon: to be discussed first [voranzustellen] methodologically, without coming to any decision about its ultimate meaning.'*⁴ This, then, is the limit of interpretation, that is to say the locus of the description. . . . In fact, through criticism and the 'plurality of interpretation' we have acquired the strength 'not to want to contest the world's restless and enigmatic character,' and in this way genealogy has proved itself to be a critique of values, for it has discovered the material origin of them, the body.⁵

Thus emerges the problem of the “construction” of the object—disciplines, techniques, analytical instruments, long-term structures—to be put in crisis. Immediately the historian is confronted with the problem of the “origins” of the cycles and phenomena that are the objects of his study. But is it not precisely in the study of long-term phenomena that the theme of the origin seems mythological. However much Weber’s “ideal types” or Panofsky’s conceptual structures appear to be instrumental abstractions, is it not precisely in them that the fundamental difference between *beginning* and *origin* is posed? And why a beginning? Is it not more “productive” to multiply the “beginnings,” recognizing that where everything conspires to make one recognize the transparency of a unitary cycle there lies hidden an intertwining of phenomena that demands to be recognized as such?

In effect, to link the problem of history with the rediscovery of mythical “origins” presupposes an outcome totally rooted in nineteenth-century positivism. In posing the problem of an “origin,” we presuppose the discovery of a *final* point of arrival: a destination point that *explains* everything, that causes a given “truth,” a primary value, to burst forth from the encounter with its originary ancestor. Against such an infantile desire to “find the murderer,” Michel Foucault has already counterposed a history that can be formulated as *genealogy*: “Genealogy does not oppose

itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the mole-like perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significance and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for 'origins.'"⁶ Not by chance does Foucault base on Nietzsche his "archaeology of knowledge," which, like Nietzsche's genealogy, is "made up of little, not obvious truths, arrived at by a rigorous method."⁷ To avoid the chimera of origin, the genealogist must avoid all notions of linear causality. He thus exposes himself to a risk, provoked by the shocks and accidents, by the weak point or points of resistance that history itself presents. There is no constancy in such a genealogy, but above all no "rediscovery" and no "rediscovery of ourselves." For "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting."⁸

So, in opposition to *wirkliche Historie* [real or actual history], then, an analysis capable of reconstructing the event in its most singular and precise character and of restoring to the irruption of an event its disruptive character. But this analysis primarily serves "to smash to bits those tendencies that have encouraged the consoling play of recognitions." Recognition, in fact, presupposes what is already known: the unity of history—the subject to be "re-cognized"—is based on the unity of the structures on which it *rests*, on the unity, as well, of its single elements. Foucault makes quite explicit the consequences of such a cruel "will to knowledge" exempt from consolatory temptations:

*Even in the greatly expanded form it assumes today the will to knowledge does not achieve a universal truth; man is not given an exact and serene mastery over nature. On the contrary, it ceaselessly multiplies the risks, creates dangers in every area; it breaks down illusory defenses; it dissolves the unity of the subject; it releases those elements of itself that are devoted to its subversion and destruction.*⁹

This is exactly what Nietzsche had predicted in *Aurora*: "Knowledge has been transformed in us into a passion that shrinks at no sacrifice, at bottom fears nothing but its own extinction."¹⁰ And in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he went on to warn that "it might be a basin characteristic of existence that those who reach absolute knowledge of it face their own annihilation."¹¹

But is not this limit, this mortal risk, the same one that language runs when it tries to theorize itself perfectly? Is not the crystalline purity that one claims from history analogous to what Wittgenstein regarded as the preconceived idea of the crystalline purity of language? What guarantee do I have that, after breaking up and dissociating stratifications that I recognize as already plural in themselves, I will not arrive at a dissemination that is an end in itself? In fact, by instituting differences and disseminations, as Derrida does, I actually run the risk of encountering the "annihilation" predicted and feared by Nietzsche. But perhaps the real danger does not lie even here. The danger that menaces the genealogies of Foucault—the genealogies of madness, of the clinic, of punishment, of sexual-

ity—as well as the disseminations of Derrida, lies in the reconsecration of the microscopically analyzed fragments as new units autonomous and significant in themselves. What allows me to pass from a history written in the plural to a questioning of that very plurality?

Undoubtedly, for both Nietzsche and Freud theoretical language must comprise within itself a plurality: the plurality of the subject, of knowledge, of institutions. Once language has been discovered to be only one of the ways of organizing the real, it becomes necessary to introject the profound fragmentation of the real itself. Hence it must be made clear that history cannot be reduced to a hermeneutics, that history's objective is not to rend the "veil of Maya" covering the truth, but rather to shatter the barriers that it itself sets up, in order to proceed and to go beyond itself. There is no point in identifying these barriers with the great institutions. Power is itself plural: it runs through and cuts across social classes, ideologies, and institutions. On this we can still agree with Foucault: a single locus of Great Refusal does not exist; only from within systems of power can the mechanisms of power be known.¹²

In other words, it must be clearly understood that between institutions and power systems perfect identity does not exist. Architecture itself, inasmuch as it is an institution, is anything but a unitary ideological block: as with other linguistic systems, its ideologies act in a highly nonlinear fashion. So much so that it is legitimate to suspect that the very criticism of architectural ideology—as it has been conducted up to now—has only reckoned with the most obvious and immediate aspects of that ideology: the refusals, repressions, and introspections, which run through the body of architectural writing. However, to displace the investigation from a text (a work that offers itself up in all its character of apparent completeness) to a context is not sufficient. The context binds together artistic languages, physical realities, behaviors, urban and territorial dimensions, politico-economic dynamics. But it is constantly broken up by "technical accidents": it is broken up by tactical maneuvers that obscurely intersect larger strategies; it is broken up by subterranean ideologies that nevertheless act on an intersubjective level; it is broken up by the interaction of diverse techniques of domination, each of which possess its own untranslatable language.

Simmel, on the basis of a partial reading of Nietzsche, recognizes this in his *Metaphysics of Death*: "The secret of form lies in the fact that it is a boundary; it is the thing itself and at the same time the cessation of the thing, the circumscribed territory in which the Being and the No-longer-being of the thing are one in the same."¹³ If form is a boundary, there then arises the problem of the plurality of boundaries—and the calling them into question. It is not by chance that Simmel himself in his essay "Fashion" recognizes that "the way in which it is given to us to comprehend the phenomena of life causes us to perceive a plurality of forces at every point of existence; we feel that each of these forces aspires to surpass the real phenomenon, limiting its own infinity in relation to the others' and transforming it into pure tension and desire."¹⁴ And he adds

shortly afterward: "The principle of adherence to given formulas, of being and acting like others, is irreconcilably opposed to the striving to advance to ever new and individual forms of life; for this very reason social life represents a battleground, of which every inch is stubbornly contested, and social institutions may be looked upon as the peace treaties, in which the constant antagonism of both principles has been reduced externally to a form of cooperation."¹⁵

At issue is not the validation, through Simmel, of the Freud of Eros and Thanatos or—perverse but nonetheless possible—the metaphysics of desire of Deleuze and Guattari. Rather it is a question of recognizing that the thematic of the boundary intrinsic to forms, of the *limits of language*, is an integral part of a historically determined crisis beyond which (but within the signposts that it has imposed upon us) we are today obliged to situate ourselves. This is to say that one may speak of language only when realizing that there is no place from which an all-encompassing fullness springs forth, because that fullness has been destroyed by history. 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 exorcize 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 recognizing an "eternal return of the same." A more radical betrayal of Nietzsche cannot be imagined than that which the inattentive readers of Cassirer are capable of carrying out today.

The problem is rather to discover why such a need for certainty still persists, and to ask whether such infantile attempts at reconstructing a lost fullness for disenchanted words are not equivalent to the privilege attributed by Lacan to the pure materiality of the signifier. Once this equivalence is established, all that remains is to attend to the analysis of forms as instantaneous advents of the Subject—the ectoplasms of Borromini, Piranesi, or Le Corbusier would lend themselves perfectly to the game—and their reunification as the manifestation of the world of the Other. The nostalgia for dialectical synthesis, in other words, is fed by terror in the face of "differences" that dominate linguistic games and multiple practices of power dispersed in innumerable mechanisms. The temptation to rediscover a cozy, domestic hearth by resuscitating—through the most underhanded of means—the *I think* of Kant is intrinsic to the history of a crisis that sets up fragile barriers in the way of its own path of progress.

How much longer must we remind those who cling nostalgically to "centrality" that there is no other alternative, at present, than to trace the history that leads to the divorce between the signifier and the signified, to retrace the crisis of that unstable marriage, to concretize its inner structures?

To look for fullness, an absolute coherence in the interaction of the techniques of domination, is thus to put a mask on history; or better, it is to accept the mask with which the past presents itself. Does not the same “ideological crisis” theorized by great bourgeois thought perhaps conceal the appearance of even more underhanded signifying practices, hidden in the folds of the techniques for the transformation of the real? And if that real is the site of a permanent battle, will it not be necessary to penetrate it to bring to light what it contains that is less evident?

“Precisely because Napoleon III was nothing,” writes Marx,¹⁶ “he was able to signify everything, except what he in fact was. . . . He was the common name for all of the parties in coalition. . . . The significance of the election of Napoleon III could only become clear when . . . the multiple meanings of his name were substituted for the one word Bonaparte.” In place of one, then, there are “multiple meanings.” Only by assuming that hidden plurality as real, can we break through the fetish that attaches itself to a name, a sign, a language, an ideology. With this, we go right back to Nietzsche, who writes in *Aurora*:

*Wherever primitive mankind set up a word they believed that they had made a discovery [Entdeckung]. How different the truth is! They had touched upon a problem, and by supposing they had solved it, they had created an obstacle to its solution. Today, with every new bit of knowledge, one has to stumble over words that are petrified and hard as stones, and one will sooner break a leg than a word.*¹⁷

Inasmuch as the use of language is a technique of domination, it should not be difficult to apply Nietzsche’s observation to other techniques. For example, the whole of Marx’s *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* executes a filtering and rewriting that serves to break “words that are petrified and hard as stones.”

With such “words,” criticism—and not just architectural criticism—constantly constructs impenetrable monuments. The “stones” get piled up; their multiplicity is hidden by buildings that pretend (and pretend only) to give form to an “imaginary library.” Or the opposite occurs: always leaving to the “stones” their indisputable density, caverns are excavated in their interstices. And so criticism finds itself obliged to make superfluous journeys. The phantasms it meets within the false space it itself has carefully delimited assume the most varied guises—urban analysis, typological analysis, semiological analysis—but only to hide the true interlocutor at the bottom of that cavern: dialectical synthesis. Cacciari has recently noted:

There is currently a criticism of dialectical synthesis because this synthesis has been in a crisis, which has marked the history of an entire phase of contemporary development and of the contemporary State. . . . If it is by now ‘indecent’ to speak of the Political in metaphysical terms—or of a political Language that is perspectively privileged, all-encompassing, ‘pan-optic’—then it is equally indecent to want to ‘save’ the forms of the Polit-

*ical as institutions that are in some way 'autonomous' with respect to the transitoriness of other languages and to the constant transformation of the 'techniques' in whose universe the Political remains inexorably confined.*¹⁸

Architecture as politics is by now such an exhausted myth that it is pointless to waste anymore words on it. But if Power—like the institutions in which it incarnates itself—“speaks many dialects,” the analysis of the “collision” among these dialects must then be the object of historiography. The construction of a physical space is certainly the site of a “battle”: a proper urban analysis demonstrates this clearly. That such a battle is not totalizing, that it leaves borders, remains, residues, is also an indisputable fact. And thus a vast field of investigation is opened up—an investigation of the limits of languages, of the boundaries of techniques, of the thresholds “that provide density.” The threshold, the boundary, the limit all “define”: it is in the nature of such definition that the object so circumscribed immediately becomes evanescent. The possibility of constructing the history of a formal language comes about only by destroying, step by step, the linearity of that history and its autonomy: there will remain only traces, fluctuating signs, unhealed rifts. The “knight’s move” can be historicized as a “game” complete in itself, finite, and therefore tautological. The “many languages” of the forms thus lead us to discover that the limit of the forms themselves does not contain monads casually floating in their “divine” self-transformation. The boundary line—that which the rigorous formalism of Shklovsky, author of the *Theory of Prose* or of Fiedler and Riegl has so skillfully traced around the verbal and figurative arts—is there to mark the points of impact that determine the interaction of signifying practices with power practices endowed with their own specific techniques.

But when and why did it come about that the disciplinary fields recognized themselves to be so specific as to become untranslatable into one another, lacking transcendent unifications? When and why did the autonomy of techniques define itself as a permanent crisis, a conflict among languages, and even among the various dialects found within one language alone? Does it help us in some way, in the field of architecture, to recognize its increasingly radical fragmentation, from the eighteenth century on, into disciplinary areas that only a regressive idealism today wants to reestablish as operative unities?

And regarding all this, a new question: is it legitimate to pose the question of *when* and *why* without constantly and repeatedly submitting to criticism the theme of the origin? Thus we have come full circle, to face once again the question of genealogy, just as Nietzsche had proposed it—as a “construction” in the true sense of the word, an instrument (modifiable, therefore, and to be consumed) in the hands of the historian.

Historical genealogy presents itself with all the characteristics of a *labor*: a deconstructive and reconstructive labor, a labor that displaces the Nietzschean “stones” and reassembles them, which *produces* meanings by re-

moving those already given. Jean-Michel Rey has very acutely taken the “massive omissions” that Nietzsche had discovered in the formation of languages, of values, of knowledges and related them to the work of decipherment that Freud indicated as basic for analysis.¹⁹ Freud observes in *Moses and Monotheism*:

*In its implications the distortion of a text resembles a murder: the difficulty is not in perpetrating the deed, but in getting rid of its traces. We might well lend the word Entstellung [distortion] the double meaning to which it has a claim but of which today it makes no use. It should mean not only ‘to change the appearance of something’ but also ‘to put something in another place, to displace [verschieben].’ Accordingly, in many instances of textual distortion, we may nevertheless count upon finding what has been suppressed [das Unterdrückte] and disavowed, hidden away somewhere else, though changed and torn from its context. Only it will not always be easy to recognize it.*²⁰

Let us try to turn the discourse back on itself. Are not the language of history and the languages codified by critical analysis also “spoken” through a series of censures, repressions, negations? Textual criticism, semantic criticism, iconological reading, the sociology of art, the genealogy of Foucault, our own criticism: are they not techniques that decipher only by hiding the traces of “murders” committed more or less consciously? We could put it in another way and say that even the language of criticism, the language that should “move and break up stones,” is itself a “stone.” How are we to utilize it, then, to prevent it from becoming the instrument of a sacred rite?

Perhaps we can now see more clearly the danger that lies in the analyses of a Blanchot, a Barthes, a Derrida. By willingly taking on the plural aspects of objects themselves written in the plural—literary works acting as human sciences—these critical languages prevent themselves from crossing the threshold that divides language from language, one system of power from other systems of power. They can break up works and texts, construct fascinating genealogies, hypnotically illuminate historical knots glossed over by facile readings. But they must necessarily negate the existence of the *historic space*. It is indisputable that the task of science is to cut rather than to join together. And it is equally indisputable that the true supersignifying metaphor—supersignifying to the point of impenetrability—is the linearity of scientific discourse: a discourse that by definition has sought to eliminate every metaphor from itself. Therefore, it is not against the acceptance of metaphor or aphorism within the historical sciences that we protest. The real problem is how to project a criticism capable of constantly putting itself into crisis by putting into crisis the real. The real, mind you, and not merely its individual sections.

Let us return to Marx: if values pass into ideologies that repress initial needs, we can interpret these ideologies as “delirious representations” in a Freudian sense. On the other hand, a delirious representation is produced socially. The history of German Social Democracy demonstrates how the

myth of “fraternity” and peace split up the great Bismarckian strategy and the forces that opposed it. But the myth also splits up the factions within this same opposition and reunites different signifying practices. Lassalle, Kautsky, the various expressionist currents, the Aktion group, Spartacism, Berlin dadaism, the utopianism of the *Gläserne Kette* and the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, come to be “spoken” through instruments laden with interstices—interstices through which the grotesque populist ideologies of Darré and Rosenberg can penetrate. Should we really be surprised when we detect affinities between the superman anarchism of Taut’s *Alpine Architektur* and the horrifying ideologies of the Blut-und-Boden?²¹ And yet, these delirious representations turn out to be historically necessary. By suturing the “discontents of civilization,” they permit the survival of that same civilization. But since they act as dams to restrain surging forces, they soon become obstructions if not quickly broken through. The deconstruction of these dams is the task of historical analysis, but not to keep vigil for improbable epiphanies of the individual or collective subject nor to celebrate Masses for flows of desire finally set free to explode.

As representation, history is also the fruit of a repression, of a negation. The problem is to make of that negation a *determinate abstraction*, to give a sense of direction to theoretical work. Not by chance does Marx employ abstraction for the analysis of political economy.

The determinate abstraction is such only if it knows its own limits: that is, if it is constantly willing to put itself into crisis; if, in transforming and shattering the material of its own analyses—its own ideological dams—it transforms and shatters itself and its own language. Criticism, therefore, is *labor* in the true sense of the word, and the more fecund the more it is conscious of its own limits. But it is not permissible to feel complacent about this consciousness.

The theoretical knot that must be confronted is how to construct a history that, after having upset and shattered the apparent compactness of the real, after having shifted the ideological barriers that hide the complexity of the strategies of domination, arrives at the heart of those strategies—arrives, that is, at their modes of production. But here we note the existence of a further difficulty: modes of production, isolated in themselves, *neither explain nor determine*. They themselves are anticipated, delayed, or traversed by ideological currents. Once a system of power is isolated, its genealogy cannot be offered as a universe complete in itself. The analysis must go further; it must make the previously isolated fragments collide with each other; it must dispute the limits it has set up. Regarded as “labor,” in fact, analysis has no end; it is, as Freud recognized, by its very nature *infinite*.²²

But at this point a new problem arises: ideology never acts as a “pure” force. Not only does it “sully” and is in turn “sullied” by praxis, but it also gets entangled with other, often antithetical ideologies. One could say that ideologies act in groups [*per fasci*] and expand in a capillary fashion in the construction of the real. Negation of the subject, sacredness of the banal, Schopenhauerian ascetism, devastation and reaffirmation of matter,

celebration of the “mystical character of commodities” and desperation in the face of it: all are inextricably intertwined in the poetics of the negative avant-gardes. The advent of the ideology of labor translated into ascetic images, characteristic of “radical” and constructivist architectural and artistic currents, shifts the factors which make up that intertwining; but the *neue Sachlichkeit* sinks its own roots in the macabre decompositions of Gottfried Benn’s *Morgue*. The ramifications of ideology are thus never an open-and-shut case; they can become so once their own historical tasks have been exhausted—as happens today—displaying a viscosity that must be combatted, but must first be analyzed in its most particular characteristics.

We would not like to be misunderstood. By no means do we intend to sing hymns to the irrational or interpret the ideological groups in their complex interaction as “rhizomes” à la Deleuze and Guattari.²³ We firmly believe it necessary “not to make rhizomes” of those groups. Implicated though it may be in the objects and phenomena it analyzes, historical criticism must know how to balance on the razor’s edge that separates detachment and participation. Here lies the “fertile uncertainty” of the analysis itself, its interminableness, its need to return constantly to the material examined, and, at the same time, to itself.

A new doubt arises at this point. Having recognized that ideologies and languages—Nietzschean “stones” and Freudian “delirious constructions”—are social productions, one could fall into a crass idealism by maintaining that their theoretical illumination through pure historical analysis could bring about their efficacious and actual elimination.

It would be useless to tear into the methods of “operative criticism” (but it would be more correct to call it “normative,” to avoid the ever-possible misunderstandings as to our true intentions) while leaving intact the principles upon which these methods are based. One fights a social production with alternative social productions; this seems to us indisputable. Must we invoke a mythical dialectical exchange between the “collective intellectual” and restructured disciplines? Is not perhaps such a path, which nonetheless one cannot avoid following, still the traditional decanting of subjective experiences into institutions left unanalyzed and ultimately considered untouchable?

Perhaps it is not yet possible to offer valid and concrete answers to our question; it is important, however, to grasp its centrality for the present debate, precisely as it is a delicately political problem. Whoever does not wish to mythicize the space of “theory” is today faced with the unresolved problem of the socialization and productivity of historical space. Analysis and project: two social practices divided and connected by a bridge that is at the moment artificial. Here the unsettling theme of *interminable analysis* crops up again—interminable because of its internal characteristics, because of the objectives that as such it is obliged to set for itself. But for this kind of analysis without limits to become a praxis, it must establish its own boundaries, at least partial and temporary ones. In other words, historical work is obliged to betray itself consciously: the final page of an

essay or investigation is necessary, but it should be interpreted as a pause that implies ellipsis marks. In any case, the more a pause is programmed, the more productive it is.

Such a work, then, must proceed over time, constructing its own methods as supports in perennial transformation: what determines the modes of such a transformation is always the material on which it is operating. History—exactly like Freudian analysis at its core—is not merely a therapy. By questioning its own materials, it reconstructs them and continuously reconstructs itself. The genealogies it traces are therefore also temporary barriers, just as analytic work is anything but shielded from the conditionings of signifying practices or modes of production. The historian is a worker “in the plural,” as are the subjects on which he performs his work. In history, then, the problem of language exists. Inasmuch as it is a criticism of signifying practices, it will have to “shift the stones” by shifting around its own stones. Criticism speaks only if the doubt with which it attacks the real turns back on itself as well. Operating on its own constructions, history makes an incision with a scalpel in a body whose scars do not disappear; but at the same time, unhealed scars already mar the compactness of historical constructions, rendering them problematic and preventing them from presenting themselves as the “truth.”

Thus analysis enters into the center of a series of battles and takes on the characteristics of a struggle: a struggle against the temptation to exorcize sicknesses, to “cure”; a struggle against its own instruments; a struggle against contemplation. Every analysis is therefore provisional. Every analysis seeks only to measure the effects that it sets into motion in order to change itself according to the intervening transformations. The certainties that history presents should thus be read as expressions of repressions. They are nothing but defenses or barriers that hide the reality of historical writing. They incorporate uncertainty: “true history” is not that which cloaks itself in indisputable “philological proofs,” but that which recognizes its own arbitrariness, which recognizes itself as an “unsafe building.”

Again, this characteristic of historiographic work is measured by the processes which that work provokes: precisely these processes determine the validity of the temporary construction, itself offered as material to be reinterpreted, to be analyzed, to be overcome. But at this point we are again confronted by the problem of the materials of history. With respect to history, certain artificially preestablished fields of inquiry stand out sharply: the sciences and techniques of the transformation of the real, the systems of domination, the ideologies. Each of these fields of inquiry presents itself with its own language. What this totally formalized language conceals is its own tendency to dissolve into an all-encompassing language, its *inclination toward the other*. Is not the distance that separates words from things—the divorce of the signifier from the signified—an instrument of differentiated techniques of domination? To break them up, to reveal their arbitrariness, to throw light on their hidden metaphors, does not this require identifying new historical spaces?

Historical space does not establish improbable links between diverse languages, between techniques that are distant from each other. Rather it explores what such distance expresses: it probes what appears to be a *void*, trying to make the absence that seems to dwell in that void speak.

It is, then, an operation that descends into the interstices of techniques and languages. While operating within these interstices, the historian certainly does not intend to suture them; rather he intends to make emerge what is encountered on the borders of language. Historical work thus calls into question the problem of the "limit": it confronts the division of labor in general; it tends to go outside of its own boundaries; *it projects the crisis of techniques already given.*

History as a "project of crisis," then. There is no guarantee as to the absolute validity of such a project, no "solution" in it. One must learn not to ask history for pacifications. But neither must one ask it to traverse endlessly "interrupted paths," only to stop in astonishment at the edge of the enchanted forest of languages. One must abandon the path to discover what separates it from the other paths: the practice of power often occupies the unfathomable forest. This is what must be broken, "cut," traversed, over and over again. We harbor no illusions regarding the power of historical analysis to demystify per se; its attempts to change the rules of the game enjoy no autonomy. But inasmuch as it is social practice—a socializing practice—it is today obliged to enter into a struggle that puts into question its own characteristic features. Within this struggle, history must be ready to risk: to risk, ultimately, a temporary "inactuality."

How do we fit these premises into the specifics of architectural writing? We have already pointed out here, too, the usefulness of instituting a "system of differences," of identifying a constellation of diverse practices, each with its own history to be constructed by archaeological means. Let us return to the beginning of our discourse: architecture, techniques, institutions, urban administration, ideologies, and utopias converge in a work or a formal system only in the most felicitous moments—at least for the historian. Especially since the Enlightenment, this convergence has been called for by intellectual work, but only because the fragmentation of the classical *ordo* has dispersed and differentiated the diverse approaches to the construction of the physical environment. As many histories are written as there are techniques. But for architecture in particular, it often turns out to be more productive to start with fragments and unrealized intention, with the purpose of tracing back to their contexts, in which are inscribed works that otherwise remain mute.

A failed work, an unrealized attempt, a fragment: do they not, perhaps, raise problems hidden by the completeness of works that have attained the status of "texts"? Do not Alberti's "errors" in perspective or Peruzzi's excessive "geometric games" speak more clearly of the difficulties intrinsic to the humanist utopia than do those monuments that appease the anxiety appearing in these incompleted attempts? And to comprehend fully the dialectic—suspended between the extremes of the tragic and the banal—that shapes the tradition of the twentieth-century avant-garde, is it not

more useful to go back to the hallucinatory buffooneries of the Cabaret Voltaire than to examine those works in which the tragic and the banal are reconciled with reality?

The manipulation of forms always has an objective that transcends the forms themselves: it is this constant "beyond architecture" that triggers the moments of rupture within the "tradition of the new." And it is precisely against such a "beyond" that the historian is obliged to measure himself. Not to have it constantly present leads to a sinking into the quicksand, formed of sublime mystifications, on which rests the monumental construction of the Modern Movement.

We are hence forced into a constant process of dismantling with regard to the object of our research. This research presupposes the chemical examination of the quicksand, its analysis made with reagents of a nature opposed to it.²⁴ This means placing emphasis on the dialectic that in time comes to establish itself between *concrete labor* and *abstract labor*, in the Marxian meaning of both terms. In this way, the history of architecture can be read on the basis of historiographical parameters that are relative to both the vicissitudes of intellectual labor and to the development of the modes and relations of production.

Architectural history thus assumes diverse tasks. On the one hand, it must be made capable of critically describing the processes that condition the "concrete" side of the creation of projects, that is to say, the autonomy of linguistic choices and their historical function as a specific chapter in the history of intellectual labor and its mode of reception. On the other hand, it must be fitted into the general history of the structures and relations of production; it must be made, in other words, to "react" with respect to the development of *abstract labor*.

By this standard, architectural history will always seem the fruit of an unresolved dialectic. The interweaving of intellectual models, modes of production, and modes of consumption ought to lead to the "explosion" of the synthesis contained in the work. Wherever this synthesis is presented as a completed whole, it is necessary to introduce a disintegration, a fragmentation, a "dissemination" of its constitutive units. It will then be necessary to submit these dis-integrated components to a separate analysis. Client reactions, symbolic horizons, avant-garde hypotheses, linguistic structures, methods of reorganizing production, technological inventions will all be seen thus stripped of the ambiguity ingrained in the synthesis "displayed" by the work.

Clearly no specific methodology, when applied to such isolated components, can take into account the "totality" of the work. Iconology, the history of political economics, the history of thought, of religions, of the sciences, of popular traditions will each be able to appropriate fragments of the broken-up work. The work will have something to say for each of these histories. By taking apart a work of Alberti, for instance, I can illuminate the foundations of bourgeois intellectual ethics in formation, the crisis of humanist historicism, the structure of the fifteenth century's world of symbols, the structure of a particular patronage system, the con-

solidation of a new division of labor in the building trades. But none of these components will serve to demonstrate the validity of that work. The critical act will consist of a recomposition of the fragments once they are historicized: in their "remontage." Jakobson and Tynyanov, followed to a certain extent by Karel Teige and Jan Mukarhovsky, have spoken of continuous relations between linguistic and extralinguistic series.²⁵ The complete historicization of the multiple "nonlinguistic" components of a work will have, in this sense, two effects: that of breaking the magic circle of language, obliging it to reveal the foundations on which it rests, and that of permitting the recuperation of the "function" of language itself.

But with this we have returned to our initial assumption. To study how a language "acts" means to verify its incidence in all the individual extralinguistic spheres obtained by the "dissemination" of the work. At this point, we find ourselves faced with two alternatives. Either, following Barthes and the *nouvelle critique*, we can endeavor to multiply the metaphors within the architectural text, dividing up and varying ad infinitum its "free valences," its specific "system of ambiguity,"²⁶ or we can return to factors external to the work, extraneous to its apparent structure.

Both approaches are legitimate: it is only a question of the ends that one proposes. I could choose to descend into what we have defined as the magic circle of language, transforming it into a bottomless well. The so-called operative criticism has been doing this for some time, serving, like fast food, its arbitrary and pyrotechnical send-ups of Michelangelo, Borromini, and Wright. Yet if I choose to do this, I must realize clearly that my aim is not to forge history, but rather to give form to a neutral space, in which to float, above and beyond time, a mass of weightless metaphors. I will ask of this space nothing but to keep me fascinated and pleasantly deceived.

In the other case, I would have to measure the real incidence of language on the extralinguistic series to which it is connected. That is, I would have to measure just how the introduction of a measurable conception of figurative space is a reaction to the crisis of the Renaissance bourgeoisie; how the disintegration of the concept of form corresponds to the formation of the new metropolitan universe; how the ideology of an architecture reduced to an "indifferent object," to mere typology, to a reorganization project of the building trades, fits into the real perspective of an "alternative" urban administration.²⁷ The interrelationship of intellectual labor and conditions of production will offer, in such a case, a valid parameter for recomposing the mosaic from the pieces resulting from the analytic disassembly previously effected. To reinsert architectural history within the sphere of a history of the social division of labor does not at all mean regressing to a "vulgar Marxism"; it does not at all mean erasing the specific characteristics of architecture itself. On the contrary, these characteristics will be emphasized through a reading that would determine—on the basis of verifiable parameters—the real significance of planning choices within the dynamics of the productive transformations that they set into motion, that they slow up, that they try to impede. It is

clear that this kind of approach is intended in some way to respond to the problem posed by Walter Benjamin, when, in "The Author as Producer," he pointed out that what the work *says* of the relations of production is of secondary importance, putting primary emphasis instead on the function of the work itself *within* the relations of production.²⁸

All this has two immediate consequences: (a) With respect to classical historiography, it obliges us to reexamine all the criteria of periodization; the above-cited dialectic (concrete labor/abstract labor) presents itself under a new aspect only where it triggers a mechanism of integration between an intellectual model and modes of productive development. And it is the task of historical analysis to recognize such an integration, for the purpose of constructing *structural cycles*, in the fullest sense of the term. (b) With respect to the debate on the analysis of artistic language, the proposed method switches attention from the level of direct communication to that of underlying meanings. That is to say, it obliges us to measure the "productivity" of linguistic innovations and to submit the domain of symbolic forms to the scrutiny of an analysis *capable of calling into question at every instant the historic legitimacy of the capitalistic division of labor*.

The need for this overturning of analytical criteria is already implicit in the central assumption of our research: that is, the historical role of ideology. In fact, given the superstructural nature of ideology, the historicization of ideology's concrete interventions into the real opens up an original field of inquiry. One task, indeed, seems increasingly urgent: the ambiguous face of the superstructure must not be left to itself. Namely, it is necessary to prevent it from multiplying ad infinitum in the engrossing game of mirrors that it presupposes as its own attribute. But this is possible only if one succeeds in entering the magic castle of ideological forms, armed with a philter that functions as an effective antidote to hypnosis.

The parameters proper to a history of the laws that permit the existence of any architecture must thus be called upon—like the threads of Ariadne—to unravel the intricate and labyrinthine paths traveled by Utopia, in order to project, on a rectilinear grid, the "knight's move" institutionalized by poetic language.

It is precisely this, in fact, that Viktor Shklovsky meant to stress when, in speaking of the trajectory of poetic language, he referred to the "knight's move."²⁹ Like the discontinuous, L-shaped move of the "knight" in the game of chess, the semantic structure of the artistic product executes a "swerve," a side step, with respect to the real, thereby setting in motion a process of "estrangement" (Bertolt Brecht understood this well) and organizing itself as a perpetual "surreality."³⁰ The entire energy of a philosopher like Max Bense has been devoted to defining the relationship between this "surreality" and the technological universe from which it springs and to which—in the case of avant-garde art—it returns as the stimulus to constant and permanent innovation. But even here, it is necessary to make careful distinctions. To define ideology *tout court* as the expression of a false intellectual consciousness would be totally useless.

No work, not even the most pedestrian and unsuccessful, can "reflect"

an ideology preexisting itself. The theories of “reflection” and “mirroring” have been in dispute for some time. But the “swerve” that the work executes with respect to what is other to it is in fact charged with ideology, even if the forms it assumes are not completely expressible. One can reconstruct the specific structure of these forms—but only by bearing in mind that between the ideology incorporated into the signs of the work and the current modes of ideological production there always exists a margin of ambiguity. One can recognize more immediately, however, the way in which that swerve “functions” with respect to the real: how it reaches compromises with regard to the world and what conditions permit its existence.

Another consideration must be added here. The principal goal of much of avant-garde art and architecture has been to reduce, to the point of extinction, that “swerve” between the work and what is other to it, between the object and its conditions of existence, of production, of use.

Once again, the ideologies invoked in support of architectural practice, or underlying it, fracture, calling for a complex critical operation. An ideology molded on the existing order, of a purely documentary value, is opposed, in history, by at least three other modes of ideological production: (a) a “progressive” ideology—typical of the historical avant-gardes—that proposes a total seizure of the real: this is the avant-garde (spoken of by Fortini)³¹ that rejected every form of mediation and that, when the chips were down, clashed with the mediating structures of the consensus, which in turn reduced it to pure “propaganda”; (b) a “regressive” ideology, that is, a “utopia of nostalgia,” distinctly expressed, from the nineteenth century on, by all forms of antiurban thought, by the sociology of Tönnies, and by the attempt to oppose the new commercial reality of the metropolis with proposals aimed at restoring mythologies of anarchist or “communalist” origins; (c) an ideology that insists directly on the reform of the major institutions relating to the management of urban and regional development and the construction industry, anticipating not only real and proper structural reforms, but also new modes of production and a new arrangement in the division of labor: an example is the American progressive tradition, namely, the thought and the works of Olmstead, Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Robert Moses.

There is nothing abstract in these classifications. To repeat, ideologies always act “in bunches”; they intertwine among themselves; they often make complete about-faces in their historical unfolding. Typical is the case of antiurban ideology, which, through the work of Geddes and Unwin and their confluence in the currents of American Conservatism and Regionalism in the 1920s, takes an unforeseen turn with the founding of the modern techniques of regional planning. So also, a single cycle of works—the example of Le Corbusier is extremely pertinent—can be assessed according to diverse yardsticks of judgment, presenting itself simultaneously as a completely internal chapter in the overall story of the avant-garde and as an instrument of institutional reform.

But it is rather important not to confuse different levels of analysis.

That is to say, one must screen with differentiated methods products that interfere in different ways with the overall productive order. To be more specific: One can always carry out a purely linguistic analysis of housing developments such as Radburn or the Greenbelt Cities of the American New Deal. But a similar method—the only one valid for giving a historical account of the work of Melnikov or Stirling—would prove inadequate for placing these proposals in their correct context, namely, the relationship between the institutional renewal of the economic management of public administration and the reorganization of demand within the building industry.

To those who would accuse us of methodological eclecticism, we would answer that they are incapable of accepting the transitional (and thus ambiguous) role that even today is assumed by a discipline as multiform and disorganized as architecture.

Again, all this implies that the term “architecture” must still be used in an extremely broad sense. It is clear that the validity of the analyses we propose is measurable in an extremely particular way in the modern and contemporary periods—from the crisis of the feudal system to the present day—where they must pass through changing meanings of intellectual labor that are bound to the transformations of the economy of the building industry and that cannot be reduced to a single common denominator.

The difficulty can be gotten around by attributing a transient and flexible significance to the concept of architecture. Thus it will be necessary to destroy the contrived mythology connected to the concept of “the work.” But not, as Foucault proposes, in order to establish the ineffable supremacy of the anonymously produced *word*, nor to revive slogans dear to the infancy of the “Modern Movement.”

The history of contemporary urban planning does not at all coincide with the history of avant-garde hypotheses. On the contrary, as certain recent philological investigations have been able to ascertain, the tradition of urban planning rests on foundations constructed outside of any avant-garde experience: on the “*medicalisation de la ville*” so intrinsic to physiocratic thought; on the late-eighteenth-century taxonomy of service spaces; on the nineteenth-century theories of Baumeister, Stübben, Eberstadt; on the practice of the American Park Movement; and on French and English regionalism. This necessitates a radical reexamination of the interrelationship between the history of urban planning and the parallel history of the ideologies of the Modern Movement. If this method is followed, many myths are destined to crumble.

To undo the mass of threads artificially tangled together, we shall have to lay out many independent histories alongside each other, so that we may recognize, where they exist, their mutual interdependencies or, as is more often the case, their antagonisms. The “great beyond,” to which modern architecture by definition tends, must not be confused with the reality of the urban dynamic. The “productivity of ideology” can be verified by mirroring its results in the history of political economy as embodied in urban history.

The phenomena that have made possible the direct comparison between artistic writing and the reality of production mark an extremely complex process, whose beginnings cannot automatically be made to coincide with the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Robert Klein has described the stages in the process of the “disappearance of the referent” for the cycle of modern art, and André Chastel has justly noted the affinity between Klein’s approach and that of Benjamin. Klein writes:

This contradiction [the slow agony of reference and its kaleidoscopic transformation] is, in the end, epistemological, comparable to the logical impossibility of knowing the object of knowledge. How can one postulate, beyond the image, a nonfigurative norm, a telos of figuration against which the image is measured? Sooner or later such terms of reference have to be placed within the work itself; we must finish with any thought that places outside itself a subject and an object, and whose last word, already unsure because of its initial postulate, was psychologism in philosophy and impressionism in art.³²

The relationship among referents, values, and *aura* is immediate: one can give neither the history of the actual attempts to reduce the work to the pure existence of the act that mimes the processes of art nor the history of the attempt made by modern architecture to break the barrier between the language of forms and that of existence, except in dialectical opposition to the historical cycle of classicism. To “actualize” that cycle means to recognize its profound structurality, to individuate, diachronically, its closed systematic nature. But it also means to grasp its twofold character: the emergence of a mode of intellectual production with which we are still called upon to reckon and the appearance of a conception of language totally directed toward “referents,” which the “dialectic of enlightenment” will set about to destroy. For this reason, the history of classicism already reflects the difficulties of contemporary art; and for this reason, the method we are trying to fine-tune must be applicable, with appropriate adjustments, to the prehistory of bourgeois civilization. In other words, the cycle opened by the rationalization of sight introduced by Tuscan humanism can function as a rearview mirror—a mirror in which are reflected the ghosts of the contemporary bad conscience—for a history intent upon seeking the beginnings of capitalist *zivilisation*.³³

And on that subject, we can even accept the warning formulated by Adorno:

The theory of the aura handled in a non-dialectical way can lead to abuses, for it serves as a convenient mechanism to translate the notion of desubstantialization [Entkünstung] of art into a slogan. This trend is already well under way since the beginning of the age of mechanical production in art. As Benjamin pointed out, the aura of art works is not only their here and now, but also their content insofar as it points beyond the work’s givenness. . . . Even demystified art is more than sheer function. It may have lost its auratic ‘cult value,’ but there is a modern substitute

which Benjamin calls 'exhibition value.' The latter is an 'imago' of the process of economic exchange.³⁴

The result of such reasoning does not in reality greatly modify Benjamin's original thesis, which could quite readily admit that the "exhibition value" is the "imago" of the exchange process, but only in works that have not completely incorporated that process within themselves. Adorno's proposition betrays a nostalgia that becomes explicit at the end of his passage on "expression and construction": "the category of the fragmentary," he concludes referring to the contrast between integration and disintegration in the art work, "is not some contingent particular: the fragment is that part of the totality of the art work that resists totality itself."³⁵

Beyond this nostalgia, there remains the problem of "handling the theory of the aura in a dialectic manner." That which the work "exposes," even when it takes as a starting point the intention of laying bare its own process of creation, is merely the least vulnerable side of its structure. The semiological approach can turn back on themselves the laws governing the production of images;³⁶ but throwing light on their implications belongs to another method of dissection.

The failure to acknowledge the need to weave together and integrate multiple methods of analysis has led to a historiographic impasse: instead of clarifying the real resistances presented by the institutions of the capitalist system to the hypotheses of the global renovation of the physical arrangement of territory, historians have preferred to devise histories completely internal to the development of the supporting ideologies of that system.

It is no accident that the jeremiads of the "crisis of architecture," as well as the weak-willed proposals for "anticlassical languages," seem increasingly confused and ineffective. To arrive at an eventual understanding of the meaning of the real transformations of the activity of planning, it will be necessary to construct a new history of intellectual labor and its slow transformation into purely technical labor (into "abstract labor," to be precise). Besides, have not Rodchenko's productivism, Mayakovsky's work for Rosta, and the prophecies of Le Corbusier and (on the other side of the coin) Hannes Meyer raised the problem of the transformation of artistic activity into *labor* directly inserted into the productive organization?

It is useless to cry over a proven fact: ideology has changed into reality, even if the romantic dream of the intellectuals who proposed to guide the destiny of the productive universe has remained, logically, in the super-structural sphere of utopia. As historians, our task is to reconstruct lucidly the road traversed by intellectual labor, thereby recognizing the contingent tasks to which a new organization of labor can respond.

The influence of physiocratic thought on the ideas of urban reform in the eighteenth century; the birth and development of company-towns in the nineteenth century; the birth of urban planning in Bismarck's Germany and in *laissez-faire* America; the experiments of Sir Patrick Geddes and Raymond Unwin and, later on, those of the social-democratic and rad-

ical administrators of the German cities; the theoretical work of the Regional Planning Association of America; the organization of the Soviet cities of the first five-year plans; the contradictory reorganization of territory realized by Roosevelt's New Deal; the American urban renewal of the Kennedy era: these are chapters of a story in which manifold experiments are bound up together, all aimed at finding new roles for the work of a technician, who remains the traditional architect only in the less significant cases (even though often more linguistically significant). And if someone should point out that from time to time a gap can be perceived between the history that can be traced by following this continuous succession of themes and the history of the *forms* of the architecture of the Modern Movement, we shall answer that it is the very gap that exists between avant-garde ideology and the translation into *techniques* of that ideology. It is a gap that historiography is incapable of filling, but one that it must instead accentuate and turn into the material of concrete and widespread knowledge.

The present volume may at first glance seem to be a collection of essays. In reality, however, in writing the single chapters—published in provisional form in various Italian and foreign journals between 1972 and today, and subsequently completely revised—we have adhered to a design that we invite the present reader to contrast with the theses expounded in this introduction. The themes that weave in and out of this design are, we believe, evident: at the beginning, the discovery of “transgression” and of formal writing as a perverse excess, as the subject's voyage beyond the columns of Hercules, beyond the codified limits; then, the slow taking over of a “language of transgression,” the realization that the subject's freedom was merely “freedom for techniques,” rather than freedom for *writing*. At the center is the search for an unstable equilibrium between the dialects of this new writing and its new institutional referents. Only in certain chapters is the “technique” that the avant-garde speaks of confronted as such—to demonstrate that its history is *other*, certainly, but also to trace its points of tangency with the themes we have chosen to analyze.

My intention, then, has been to present, not a piece of history complete in itself, but rather an intermittent journey through a maze of tangled paths, one of the many possible “provisional constructions” obtainable by starting with these chosen materials. The cards can be reshuffled and to them added many that were intentionally left out: the game is destined to continue. As always, for the concrete help and the stimuli received over the past ten years that have enabled my work to take shape, my thanks to my friends and collaborators in the Department of History at the University of Venice, who are responsible with me for these “jig-saw puzzles,” these “*giochi di pazienza*.”

Part One

Prelude: "Apocalipsis
cum Figuris"

**“The Wicked Architect”:
G. B. Piranesi,
Heterotopia,
and the Voyage**

Oh, agonizing compulsion toward freedom!
terrible and ever-renewed revolution of
knowledge! which justifies the insurrection
Absolute against Absolute, the insurrection of life
against reason—justifying reason when,
apparently at variance with itself, it unleashes
the absolute of the irrational against the
absolute of the rational, justifying it by
providing the final assurance that the unleashed
irrational forces will once more combine
into a value-system.

Hermann Broch, *The Sleepwalkers*

In the first edition of *Le carceri* (The Prisons), Piranesi includes a plate (IX), only slightly modified in succeeding states, that is totally unlike his later works of invention. An enormous oval eye, cut by the upper margins of the page, reveals to the observer the usual repertory of catwalks and hermetic torture devices. The artificiality of the organism is further accentuated by the placement of this perspective eye on top of an ambiguous walled structure, in which a central slanting portal is flanked on both sides by arches, through which can be seen a staircase and a low structure, apparently attached to the central portal.

At first sight, the plate seems to present a polemical enlargement of the typical baroque device of the perspective telescope, framed by an oval opening: we are reminded of Borromini’s “eyes” that perforate the portico of the Palazzo Carpegna and the Falconieri crypt in San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, but also of the landscapes painted on oval panels or canvases and of the cosmological themes that, from the time of the Cinquecento, were based upon the reflective properties of convex mirrors.¹ Observing the

plate more carefully, one realizes that the network of beams, stairs, and walkways suspended in the air not only projects beyond the foreground of the large eye, but passes through a second oval structure, which emerges from the customary vanishing [sfumarsi] of the image into spirals of smoke and depths of space. But that is not all. The shadow cutting diagonally across the structure that serves as the base and the presence of the gallows in the left foreground—absent in the first state of the engraving—reveal that what seemed to be an “exterior” is in reality an “interior”: we now realize that the observer himself is immersed in the structure formed by the large ovals arranged in a series.

The plate in question can be considered, for several reasons, the key to understanding the entire series of the *Carceri*. In it, the two poles of Piranesi’s research—the evocation of a primordial *structurality* connected to the celebration of the *Lex romana*, of the idea of justice, and the disarticulation of the structure evoked—are shown, without any didactic or narrative intent, reduced to the encounter between two novel forms.²

Ulya Vogt-Göknil can be given credit for having devised a reading of Piranesi’s *Carceri* that carefully avoids the usual interpretations of a literary nature.³ His perspective reconstructions of the plan, in particular, tells us a great deal about Piranesi’s method of composition: Piranesi’s complex organisms are seen to have their origins in planimetries whose dominating element is the randomness of the episodes, the lawless intertwining of superstructures, the undermining of the laws of perspective, so as to make *nonexistent* sequences of structures seem *real*.⁴ All of which clearly contrasts with the constant allusion, present in Piranesi’s imaginary structures, to the austerity and organicity of Etruscan and Roman architecture. Thus, on one hand, we find a disarticulation of the organisms; on the other, references to highly structured historical precedents. The Piranesian contradictions begin to emerge in all their complexity. In the *Carceri*, Ulya Vogt-Göknil sees a potential liberation of form; we would say, rather, *from* form. The indefinite opening up of spaces, one fitted within the other, their multiplication, their metamorphoses, and their disarticulation polemically supersede the sources of the *Carceri* itself. The “scena per angolo”; the scenographic inventions of Juvarrà, Bibiena, and Valeriani; Marot’s *Prison of Amadis* itself—all so often cited as direct or indirect precedents of the *Carceri*⁵—are actually used by Piranesi as points of reference with which to open up a fierce polemic.

May Sekler has furthered the formal reading of the *Carceri*, identifying in it a constant disintegration of the coherence of structure that, nonetheless, has a precise function. It is, in fact, just this disintegration that induces the spectator to recompose laboriously the spatial distortions, to reconnect the fragments of a puzzle that proves to be, in the end, unsolvable. But it can also be said that the spectator of the *Carceri* is obliged, more than invited, to participate in the process of mental reconstruction proposed by Piranesi. Sekler herself accurately describes as “uncomfortable” the position the engraver reserves for the observer of his images, with respect to the angle from which the space is represented.⁶

The isolation of the elements and their sudden breaking off, just where they should confirm the organic connection of the whole, have been correctly identified by Sekler; for this reason we do not hesitate in recommending her text to the reader.⁷

Our principal interest here, however, is to reexamine this hermetic fragmentation of the architectural *ordo*, to test its theoretical premises, and to examine the perspectives it puts on mid-eighteenth-century European culture.

What must be made clear from the start is that all this breaking up, distorting, multiplying, and disarranging, apart from the emotional reactions it can elicit, is nothing more than a systematic criticism of the *concept of place*, carried out by using the instruments of visual communication. It has already been pointed out that, as far back as the perspective compositions of the *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive* (First Part of Architectures and Perspectives) (1743), Piranesi presents organisms that *pretend* to have a centrality but that never achieve one. In plate X of that collection, the elliptical courtyard, which seems to constitute the *focus* of the organism, is seen, in the reconstruction of the plan, to be deliberately inserted as a spiral into the continuum of the columns; while in the “ancient temple invented and designed in the manner of those which were built in honor of the goddess Vesta,” the outer circle winding around the Pantheon, the directrix of the stairway, and the Corinthian colonnade prove to be off-center in relation to one another and dislocated onto independent rings.⁸

One might object that these distortions of perspective are not after all infrequent in the tradition of late-baroque scenography. That Piranesi’s engravings, however, present to us not merely a set designer’s whim, but rather a *systematic criticism of the concept of “center,”* is clearly shown in the *Pianta di ampio magnifico Collegio* (Plan for a Vast and Magnificent College), inserted in the 1750 edition of the *Opere varie di architettura* (Selected Architectural Works).⁹

The neomannerism of Piranesi’s *Collegio* has led many to conclude that his research of the early 1750s was influenced by Juvarra and the architectural ideals of Le Geay, which John Harris—particularly through the copies of Le Geay’s projects executed by William Chambers—has dated in the 1740s. More recent studies by Pérouse de Montclos, Gilbert Erouart, and Werner Oechslin have cast strong doubt on Harris’s hypothesis, concluding that, apart from the collaboration between Le Geay and Piranesi for the *Roma moderna distinta per Rioni* (Modern Rome Divided by Districts), edited in 1741 by Barbiellini, the fantasies of Le Geay preserved in the Kunsthhaus in Zurich, datable at 1757–61, the copies of the album of Chambers (Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 5712, loc. 93 B21), and the *Tombe* (Tombs) of 1768 refer to recollections of his Roman sojourn, and can in no way precede Piranesi’s inventions.¹⁰ The fact remains that the ties between Piranesi and the circle of the Académie de France in Rome, clearly demonstrated by the conference and exhibition at the Villa Medici

in 1976, constitute a neo-Sixteenth-century revival, utopian and anticlassical in nature.

But beyond a doubt, Piranesi's *neocinquecentismo* grew out of certain aspects of Juvarra's research. It has already been pointed out how Juvarra's design for the Duomo of Turin (1729) constitutes a reflection on the proliferation of spaces by gemmation that reaches paradoxical heights in Piranesi's *Collegio*;¹¹ moreover, in the *Pensiero dedicato a un sogno* (Thought dedicated to a Dream) also by Juvarra (dated 25 August 1706), the diagonal flight of space and the articulated stairway at the right of the page is accompanied by an oval eye, which, like an oneiric telescope fraught with presentiment, frames a landscape dominated by an architectural structure. Similarly, the scenic designs for the Ottoboni Theater at the Cancelleria can be included among the precedents of Piranesi's *Carceri*. Without a doubt, however, Piranesi's *neocinquecentismo* has nothing in common with that of Alessandro Galilei. His reference models are neither Della Porta nor Maderno, but rather the most open-minded experimentalists of the Mannerist period.

In the cinquecento what was—for Peruzzi, Serlio, and Du Cerceau—utopian in the fullest sense of the word and what represented an avant-garde position, by 1750 had been completely realized. The critical examination of the concept of space, or better, of the determinative value of space, conducted by Hume and Hobbes, now becomes an element in the experiment par excellence of "constructed space": architecture.¹² But it must be explained just why Piranesi, followed by Le Geay, Peyre, George Dance, Jr., and John Soane, gave birth to a highly experimental line of research.

In the dedication to Nicola Giobbe, prepared for the 1743 edition of his *Prima parte de architetture e prospettive*, Piranesi ties the theme of a purely ideal restoration of the "ancient majesty" to the painful statement of the objective and subjective impossibility of a concrete plan. He writes:

I will not tire you by telling you once again of the wonder I felt in observing the Roman buildings up close, of the absolute perfection of their architectonic parts, the rarity and the immeasurable quantity of the marble to be found on all sides, or that vast space, once occupied by the Circuses, the Forums and the Imperial Palaces: I will tell you only that those living, speaking ruins filled my spirit with images such as even the masterfully wrought drawings of the immortal Palladio, which I kept before me at all times, could not arouse in me. It is thus that the idea has come to me to tell the world of some of these buildings: since there is no hope that an Architect of our times can successfully execute anything similar, be it the fault of Architecture itself, which has fallen from the blessed perfection to which it was brought in the times of the maximum grandeur of the Roman Republic, as well as in those of the all-powerful Caesars who followed; or whether it be the fault of those who should act as patrons of this most noble art; the truth is that today we see no buildings as costly as, for example, a Forum of Nerva, an Amphitheatre of Vespasian, a

Palace of Nero; nor have Princes or private citizens appeared to create any; no other option is left to me, or to any other modern Architect, than to explain his own ideas through drawings and in this way to take away from Sculpture and Painting the advantage that, as the great Juvorra said, they have in this respect over Architecture; and to take it away as well from the abuse of those who possess wealth, and who make us believe that they themselves are able to control the operations of Architecture. . . .¹³

The criticism aimed at the customs of the Roman milieu is accurate. Apart from any practical economic consideration—Focillon and Scott have dealt elegantly, if not analytically, with the situation of eighteenth-century Rome¹⁴—Piranesi accuses the Roman aristocracy and the authorities of ignoring the need for an urban reorganization founded on great public works. And on that subject, it is worth noting the shrewd observation by Bertelli, who sees in the dedication to Giobbe a reflection of the readings of Machiavelli's *Prince*, which took place within Bottari's circle: a reflection of an idolization of the continuity of the Italian tradition and of republican Florence within the frame of "*storia patria*."¹⁵

Nonetheless, in thanking Giobbe for permitting him to approach Salvi and Vanvitelli, whose works he lists,¹⁶ Piranesi seems to indicate a positive direction for the policies of urban planning. Moreover, even the projects of urban reform formulated by Pascoli waver between functionalism and rhetoric; we must remember, too, that the reformist ferment of the circle of Bottari and Cardinal Neri Corsini translates, in architecture, into an attitude at once rigorist, aristocratic, and erudite, capable of embracing the positive merits of a Michelangelo and of a Borromini, but incapable of pinpointing the structural motives of a possible renewal.¹⁷

But the above passage contains something even more important: the statement of the autonomous role of utopia. We have not yet arrived at the "negative utopia" of the *Carceri*. For the moment, Piranesi merely exalts the capacity of the imagination to create *models*, valid in the future as new values, and in the present as immediate contestations of the "abuse of those who possess wealth, and who make us believe that they themselves are able to control the operations of Architecture."

Utopia, then, is seen as the only possible value, as a positive anticipation, as the only adequate outlet for an intellectual work that does not want to relinquish the commitment to making projects.

The theme of *imagination* thus enters into the history of modern architecture with all its ideological significance. What might at first seem a lull or a refusal, on the contrary, reveals itself in all its worth as anticipation. The *invention*, fixed and circulated by means of the etching, renders concrete the role of utopia, which is to present an alternative that departs from actual historical conditions, one that *pretends* to be in a metahistorical dimension—but only in order to project into the future the bursting forth of present contradictions.

Moreover, the irreplaceable role of the imagination as an instrument of scientific progress, as a source of hypotheses not otherwise formulable, had

been repeatedly recognized within the debates of the Enlightenment movement. Hampson has pointed out that in a work in which no one would ever have expected a similar statement, La Mettrie's *Homme-machine*,¹⁸ the function of the imagination is praised, as a source of scientific and artistic innovations. And Burke himself, in his *Enquiry into . . . the Sublime and the Beautiful* of 1756, again takes up the theme, affirming that "all that which draws the soul into itself, tends to concentrate its strength and render it capable of greater and more vigorous flights of science."¹⁹

But it is important to remember that the sublime, for Burke, is connected to the idea of power, of domination. "I know nothing," he writes, "which is sublime which is not connected to the sense of power; this branch proceeds naturally . . . from terror, the common origin of all that is sublime," declaring the succession and uniformity of the parts as instruments capable of constructing the artificial infinite. And one notes that Diderot, in his *Salon* of 1767, invited the poets to speak "always of eternity, of the infinite, of immensity, of time, of space, of divinity, of tombs, of hands, of Hell, of a dark sky, of deep seas, of shadowy forests, of thunder, of lightning that splits open the clouds."²⁰ It is the same celebration of a deformed nature that Chambers, in his *Dissertation* of 1772, attributed to the "Chinese genre."²¹

To represent the horrid and the demonic means to give a language to that which in reality eludes a rationalization of a classic type; it means to change the linear concepts of time and space. The *dominion* evoked by Burke must be exercised exactly on those two uncontrollable dimensions: by making them speak, by representing them, it is possible to make a case for their potential utilization.

The "power" will be that of the new techniques—unnamed, but lying underneath like repressed demands—capable of controlling the forces that elude the eighteenth-century *philosophe*.

The rhetoric of the infinite and the linguistic disorder—the language of the imaginary—thus constitute invitations to new techniques of domination. The utopianism of Enlightenment architecture is made clear by a lucid acceptance of this new role: architecture now tends to formulate hypotheses, rather than to offer solutions. And no one will ever claim that a hypothesis must be completely realized.

Let us examine Piranesi's *Collegio* once again. As in the *Carceri*, what at first seems to be the subject is later negated and turned into a supplementary element. The centrality of the composition, with its successive and independent rings, projects outward from the circular space of the grand staircase subdivided into eight flights, which, among the organisms "that are in search of their own role" within the concentric structures, is, significantly, one of the minor spaces. Actually, as one proceeds gradually from the center toward the periphery of the composition, the dimension of the rooms seems to grow progressively larger, while their geometrical structure becomes increasingly more differentiated and articulated. For example, look at the succession of loggias and atriums on the perpendicular axes or, even more revealing, the succession of spaces juxtaposed on the

diagonal axes, terminating—at the bottom half of the sheet—in two mixtilinear rooms with a boldly carved-out perimeter.

What differentiates Piranesi's design from the abstract designs "of great dimension," so customary in the eighteenth-century competitions of the Academy of San Luca,²² is its obvious programmatic character. The "ampio magnifico Collegio" is in fact a structure theoretically endlessly expandable. The independence of the parts and their montage obey no other law than that of pure *contiguity*. 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.

In this sense, the *Carceri* serves to heighten the crisis of the architectural object expressed in the *Collegio* and of which Piranesi had already given a metaphorical hint in those masterful representations of the twilight of the rococo, the four *Capricci* (Caprices) of 1744–45. Refuting the hermetic-masonic interpretation of Calvesi, Jonathan Scott has interpreted the *Capricci* as a reflection of the Arcadian games: of that Arcadia, to be sure, to which Piranesi belonged from 1750—perhaps through the intervention of Bottari—and from which he expected renown and useful contacts.²³

It has already been pointed out that, in the *Carceri*, the constriction comes not from the absence of space, but from an opening toward the infinite.

Inasmuch as Piranesi's erudite citations present a whole *universe*—which includes, as we have seen, the spectator himself—and inasmuch as these citations themselves (as Calvesi and Gavuzzo Stewart have observed) indicate that this universe is both that of republican justice and that of imperial cruelty, we must conclude that the universe of intersubjective domination, of the *contrat social*, establishes, together with control of "natural" subjectivity, the reign of the most absolute coercion. It is not by accident that the Nature invoked by the Enlightenment to legitimate the domination of the bourgeoisie is represented by Piranesi as a corrosive, diabolical, antihuman element. But even this contestation of a transcendental and providential order of nature is a basic part of Enlightenment criticism. Think, for example, of Hume's *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (published posthumously in 1779), in which the Christian Demea recognizes that "a perpetual war is waged against all living creatures," or Goethe's *Werther* (1774), where the theme of the "necessity" and "naturalness" of cruelty is dominant, or the *Neveu de Rameau*, written by Diderot between 1761 and 1774, in which the disharmony between the individual and society is seen as inevitable: "In nature, all the species devour each other; in society, all the classes devour each other." (And we have deliberately overlooked, for the moment, the contrasting and complementary cases of Rousseau and Sade.)

In return, it is Montesquieu—often mentioned in reference to Piranesi's extolling of the *Lex romana*—who, in his *De l'esprit des lois*, condemns

torture as a convenience of despotic governments, but as contrary to the “voice of nature.” Thus as early as the *Carceri* the affirmation of the *need* for domination clashes with the affirmation of the rights of the subject. The result of the clash—represented epically in plates II and X,²⁴ which depict surreal scenes of torture—is that not men but only *things* become truly “liberated.” In particular, in the re-etching of his copperplates, Piranesi fills the structures of the *Carceri* with hermetic “objects.” The universe of pure *power*, of the absolute alienation of the subject, is not by chance a “mechanical” universe. A judgment on the part of Piranesi is implicit here. He sees that mechanical universe, kingdom par excellence of the artificial, as the place where there occurs the definitive loss of primordial *organicity*, of the union between the world of nature and the universe of human institutions. And yet, this very organicity is the subject of the *Magnificenza ed architettura de’ Romani* (Magnificence and Architecture of the Romans).

If the words of the *Magnificenza* are to be taken literally, then we must set aside the judgment of Kaufmann, who finds in the 1761 work more advanced theses than those of the successive *Parere* (Opinions).²⁵ The defense of Roman architecture, against Allan Ramsay, the anonymous *Investigator* (1755), and against Le Roy’s *Les ruines* (1758), is conducted on the basis of naturalism, the principles of fittingness, the criteria of *truthfulness*, brought back into favor by Cordemoy and Laugier, but extraneous to the “moderate” position of Blondel.²⁶ Piranesi writes:

*I believe that in building, beauty consists of giving to the entire work a form which is truly proper and attractive, and in distributing the parts in a clean and tasteful manner, so that there is a lawful agreement among them, and so that a certain natural beauty and ornateness is produced, which holds the gaze of whoever looks at it. But I think that regarding this kind of work, one must consider above all its nature and its purpose, for the reason that since the beauty of boys is different from that of men, so in buildings requiring gravity and dignity the ornaments must be used sparingly, inasmuch as this very gravity and dignity serves as their adornment. In “charming buildings” of a less serious nature [“fabbriche deliziose”], however, if a free hand is used in the decoration, no one is likely to object. . . .*²⁷

The relationship between Piranesi’s idea of architecture and Addison’s sensism—noted by Wittkower—is thus confirmed. Also as an anticipation of *architecture parlante*, the indicating of “a certain beauty and ornateness” as pertinent to the “nature and the purpose of architecture” stands up to historical verification. It is necessary only to distinguish, in the influences generated by Piranesi’s theories, the line that attempts to recover a new secular and worldly allegorism—certain works of George Dance, Jr., and John Soane come to mind—from that other line concerned with liberating the aggregative or collective qualities of pure geometric forms—from Peyre to Durand, that is.

But the passage cited contains something more. Between the architec-

ture of great public works and private architecture, a clear distinction of *genres* is made. Piranesi's ambiguous attitude toward the rococo, attested to by some of the plates of the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini* (Diverse Ways of Decorating Chimneypieces) and by his few documented works on the theme of interior decoration,²⁸ is resolved, in the *Magnificenza*, in the *right to free rein* in the field of *private works*.

The severity that must be adopted in the celebration of the supremacy of the *res publica* is compensated for by the regaining of subjective freedom in "charming buildings" [*fabbriche deliziose*], in architecture as a manifestation of subjective egoism. The distinction between "Civil Society," that is, the State, and the area belonging to the bourgeois has already been clearly made.

What is amazing to the reader of the *Magnificenza* is an incoherent dedication of faith to the "natural" laws of architecture:

*Even though, as Horace has written, painters and poets have the right to venture as far as it may please them, this does not give architects the rights to do things according to their whims: architecture also having its method and its fixed limits, beyond which one cannot go and still work with rectitude. In fact, not even the above-mentioned professors, of poetry or painting, are of an importance which gives them the right to depart from a resemblance to what is real, as they propose; inasmuch as all the arts are an imitation of nature, and he who conforms most closely to nature is considered the most excellent artist of all. And if all the arts are subject to this law, we must certainly not exempt from it architecture, which also springs from what is real, and whose purpose is, as we can see, to imitate man's first manner of dwelling. . . .*²⁹

The *naturalness* of the primordial sources: Piranesi, too, is nostalgic for the happy time of the infancy of humanity. But with a clear ideological slant. The Etruscans and the Egyptians, concerned "more with the majestic in their works, rather than with enticing the eye,"³⁰ furnish architectural language with a guarantee of legitimacy, permitting it to obey certain norms. The *naturalness of the majestic* signifies, in this sense, *naturalness of state power* and the alienation of the subject with regard to this power. It is exactly the theme of the *Carceri*. "Naturalness" is converted into its opposite, or, rather, is revealed as pure pretext.

In the *Campo Marzio* (The Field of Mars) the metaphor of the machine-universe heralded in the *Carceri* is fully developed and articulated. To confirm Piranesi's relationship to the neomannerist style of the Roman eighteenth century, we must observe that it is here in the reconstruction of the *Campo Marzio* that he gives form to what in the sixteenth century, or in the era of the so-called baroque Mannerism, was still an unexpressed hypothesis, a utopia so dangerous that it could be manifested only through allusions and in structures of limited dimensions.

The dissolution of form touches *urban* structure in the *Campo Marzio* — and no longer with the onerific pretext of the *Carceri*. Of course, the ulterior historicist pretext remains. But, as we shall see, also in the *Campo*

Marzio (in fact, principally in *Campo Marzio*) Piranesi uses that pretext as a double-edged weapon: the *Auflösung* [the dissolution] touches both history, inasmuch as it is a principle of value and an instrument of action, and the very concept of the city.

Compared to the *Carceri*, the *Campo Marzio* actually appears polemical and self-critical. It was published in 1761–62, at the same time as *Magnificenza ed architettura de' Romani*, and slightly after the re-elaboration of the *Invenzioni capricciose di Carceri*.³¹ We have already observed how this re-elaboration marks the advent of an intense *crisis of the object* in the Piranesian poetics. In the *Campo Marzio* what is contested is the limitedness, the abstractness, the randomness of the hermetic “objects” that throng the plates of the *Carceri* of 1760.

It is necessary, then, to give concreteness to those objects and show them for what they are: shreds of what remained of the humanist *ordo* after the devastation wreaked upon its ideals.

The problem turns out to be one of language: that is to say, the most debated topic in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, at least on the theoretical level. It has been accurately observed that the active pole of the Cartesian cogito, the *ergo*, which mediates the withdrawal of the subject from things in order to reinsert them into the subjective and antimetaphysical ground of existence, is precisely language.³² This makes even more significant the fact that the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio* unequivocally attack “language insofar as it is a mode of acting upon the world.”

All of which means, conversely, to claim an absolute autonomy for that language. But, at the same time, it also means to cover over a disconcerting suspicion regarding the unfeasibility of such an autonomy. Piranesi's declaration, contained in the dedicatory letter of the *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*, finds further confirmation here. Only in the utopia of subjective negation, only in the ivory-tower land of the avant-garde, is it possible to recognize, despite everything, the residual margins of a positive presence within the sphere of architecture.

We must verify our observations in the very heart of the structure the *Campo Marzio*. It is immediately apparent that this structure is composed of a formless heap of fragments colliding one against the other. The whole area between the Tiber, the Campidoglio, the Quirinale, and the Pincio is represented according to a method of arbitrary association (even though Piranesi accepts the suggestions of the *Forma urbis*), whose principles of organization exclude any organic unity. Only the areas to the northeast and southwest, included in the double bend of the river, seem to be recomposed into structures in some way unitary and well defined: two orthogonal axes, roughly parallel to the course of the river's bend, guide the composition of the Sepulchrum Hadriani [Hadrian's Tomb], of the complex formed by the two circuses of Hadrian and Domitian, which extend along the axis of the mausoleum, of the Circus Agonalis, of the Circus Flaminius, of the Templum Martis, of the Gimnasium Neronis, of the Terme [Baths] of Agrippa. A second alignment, regulated by a rectilinear axis, is found in the northeast sector.

Here we come upon a succession of groups of monuments, totally without archaeological basis and characterized rather as public facilities: the *Porticus amoenitatis* annexed to a gymnasium, the *Naumachia Domitiani*, a triangulation of areas of green, protected by the “*statuae virorum illustrium*” and connected to a *natio*, it, too, triangular, open on the other side of the Pons Fabianus.³³

Clearly, however, the acknowledgment of these alignments serves only to heighten still further the “triumph of the fragment,” which dominates the formless tangle of the spurious organisms of the *Campo Marzio*. Not by accident does it take on the appearance of a homogeneous magnetic field jammed with objects having nothing to do with each other. Only with extreme effort is it possible to extract from that field well-defined typological structures. And even when we have established a casuistic complex of organisms based on triadic, polycentric, multilineal laws, or on virtuoso curvilinear layouts, we end up with a kind of *typological negation*, an “architectural banquet of nausea,” a semantic void created by an excess of visual noise.

Yet it is worth noting that what is valid for the entire composition is even more valid for the individual organisms. It is evident that, in his *Campo Marzio* Piranesi presents a virtual catalogue, a typological sample book of models based on an *exception* that very effectively gives the lie to the *rule*. For further verification of this, note the degree to which the structures of Hadrian’s Tomb, the Pantheon, or the Theatre of Marcellus—among the few major monumental works in Piranesi’s plates having a basis in reality³⁴—are arbitrarily reduced to minor, almost unrecognizable incidents, even as they are inserted into a continuum of fragments that deprives them of any autonomy as well as of the very status of “monument.” They are exceptions that do not confirm a rule, then, and that lack any hierarchical organization. All of which permits Piranesi to show, simultaneously, just how vast the field of these *exceptions* can be, once a generic classical reference has been appropriated by an experimentation based on geometrical deformations having no limits. But this same exaltation of the fragment also permits him to demonstrate, conversely, the uselessness of this breathless pursuit of exceptional structures.

Note, for example, the insertion of the *officinae machinarum militarium* within the triangle formed by the three large piazzas joined at the Pons Fabianus. The central star, formed by the intersection of two equilateral triangles, appears to be rotated with respect to its natural lying position, so that its vertices, aligned on the cross-axis, terminate in the little side rooms flanking the round site: the whole organism seems to be a kind of clockwork mechanism, in which, however, there is an independence of the parts and a lack of interest in formal qualities.

Also structured like hermetic “machines” are the organisms of the *Circus Agonalis* and the group of the *Templum Martis* and the *Gymnasium Neronis*, which form a kind of enormous notched wheel having differentiated spokes; the group located at the site of the *Cripta Balbi*, based on the intersection of two ternary groups of circular spaces and of a central

rotunda defined by several concentric orders of columns broken by trapezoidal rooms on the traverse axis; or, finally, the group dominated by the *Bustum Caesaris Augusti*, an imposing collection of regular and irregular geometric forms one grafted on to the other according to the law of opposition. (Attention is also called, in passing, to the appearance of two phallic-shaped planimetric organisms converging on the hexagonal atrium, which foreshadow, perhaps with no other intent than a pure *ludus geometrico*, the project of Ledoux's *Oikema* and some of Soane's typological notions.)³⁵

But it is in the *Horti Luciliani* that the *mechanical architecture* of Piranesi reaches an extreme level of abstraction. Here, a complex of structures in semicircles and in sectors of circles obeys the rule of gemmation, as they revolve around the *Atrium Minervae*: an astonishing mechanism, in which Piranesi achieves the maximum refinement of his geometric instruments.

The overall result of this sample book of typological inventions excludes—the choice is deliberate—the characterization of the city as a completed formal structure. The clash of the organisms, immersed in a sea of formal fragments, dissolves even the remotest memory of the city as a *place of Form*. The “city as a forest,” theorized by Robert Castell, followed by Laugier, and picked up again by Milizia,³⁶ has a specific value for the culture of the Enlightenment. It is in fact called upon to supply a formal justification for the doctrine of natural law and for physiocratic ideology.

Nature now appears stripped of its metaphysical attributes, in the guise of the supreme legislator of bourgeois freedom. Molding itself on the structure of Nature, the city—the idea of the city as an *ideal type*—must put into concrete form the “sociality” of a civil order that will soon seek in the anarchy of production its truly new *right to exist*. The project for the urban redevelopment of London drawn up by Gwynn and those of George Dance, Jr., for the London areas of Finsbury and St. George's Fields, much more than the ideal Paris reconstructed by Patte or the Bath designed by Wood, reflect that equation between city and nature (an equation, after all, already set forth by Wren in his plan for the reconstruction of the City of London after the fire of 1666). We are still in the realm of ideology here; the relation between physiocratic thought and plans of reform is part of another story, yet to be written. In the sphere of ideology, however, there emerges a plan of synthesis between chaos and geometry: the “naive dialectic” of the Enlightenment still sees the synthesis in the form of universality and still tends toward noncontradiction.

*It is the system which one analyzes and recomposes; the voice of contradiction is a moment of universality, a universality which alone exists, and can reproduce and recognize itself. Civilization is the history of this universality, for which there exists a perfect equivalent of form and content.*³⁷

Exactly this equivalence of form and content is negated in the *Campo Marzio*. The only “natural” element which appears in it—the Tiber, with its sinuosity—contributes to the dissolution of every residue of order. As

in all of Piranesi's work, Nature is no longer identified with the origin of the "*beauté positive et convainquante*," which Claude Perrault had already excluded from the sphere of the naturalistic mimesis.

The city as antinaturalistic, manufactured article negates itself as *ordo*, as structure. This is not so much (or not only) a prophecy of what will happen in the sphere of the capitalist-bourgeois administration of the city. Rather, we find ourselves confronted by a paroxysmic exaltation of a *principium individuationis* brought to the limit of its own possibilities, and of which Piranesi recognizes, with equal skepticism, the explosive effects in the sphere of form.

That the subject here is a city indicates that in the *Campo Marzio*—as in the *Carceri*—form brought to the point of self-consumption is an absolute. What was safeguarded in the *Pianta di ampio magnifico Collegio*—a formal arrangement criticized but not negated—does not survive in the *Campo Marzio*. Here, moreover, it is no longer a question of a *criticism*; it is a question of the representation of an active decomposition. The *ordo* whose dissolution is presented is none other than the totality of Form. The theme hinted at in the *Capricci* is here brought to full development.

The duplicity in the *Campo Marzio* becomes evident. The typological casuistry, at the very moment it finds itself fully liberated, demonstrates its own inability to structure an urban organism. The supremacy of pure form declares its own ineffectuality when confronted by the power of space.

One cannot exclude the possibility that Piranesi had as a second goal a criticism of the obsessive typological experimentalism of eighteenth-century Europe. If this were so, the sample book contained in the planimetry of the *Campo Marzio* would serve as an explicit moralistic warning. Such a hypothesis can be confirmed by certain passages of Piranesi's commentary on the plates. In fact, in the dedicatory letter to Robert Adam, Piranesi hides between the lines his negative opinion of the transformations wrought on the *Campo Marzio* in the Imperial Age: ". . . when . . . the Empire was given to one person alone . . . that site was kept, no longer for the use of the military, but to introduce the populace to pleasure."³⁸ It is difficult not to discern here a parallel between the ancient tyranny of *one man alone* and the tyranny of the ancien régime. The republican virtues appear once more as polemical models of reference. The above is confirmed subsequently by a parallel that Piranesi draws between two architectural "decadences"—that of the Imperial Age and that of the late baroque. He writes:

What I must fear, rather, is that certain aspects of this delineation of the Campo might seem inspired by mere caprice, rather than drawn from what is real; if someone compares these aspects with the ancient manner of architecture, he will see that many of them break with tradition, and resemble the usage of our own time. But whoever he is, before condemning anyone of imposture, let him observe the ancient plan of Rome mentioned above [the Forma urbis in the Campidoglio], let him observe the

ancient villas of Lazio, the villa of Hadrian in Tivoli, the sepulchres, and the other buildings in Rome that remain, in particular outside of Porta Capena: he will not find more things invented by the moderns, than by the ancients, in accordance with the most rigid laws of architecture.³⁹

And thus the cause of the “decline and fall” is one alone—the loss of republican freedoms and the advent of a laxist aristocracy. The Piranesian “labyrinth” begins to give itself a political significance, cleverly disguised.

The ambiguity of the *Campo Marzio* now becomes evident; it is at once a “project” and a denunciation. As a disenchanting documentation of the impossibility of an unambiguous definition of language, it—projecting this situation into the past—sounds like a merciless satire of the infinite capacity of late-baroque typology to reproduce itself metamorphically. (The fact that in the *Campo Marzio* the allusion to baroque typologies is filtered through a classicist geometrism fools no one; it is simply a means of rendering metahistorical and universal the polemic already begun.) Inasmuch as it is—despite everything—an affirmation of a world of forms, the *Campo Marzio*, precisely because of the absurdity of its *horror vacui*, becomes a *demand for language*, a paradoxical revelation of its *absence*.

Negation and affirmation cannot split apart. The “naïve dialectic” of the Enlightenment is already superseded.

The “great absentee” from the *Campo Marzio*, then, is *language*.

The absolute disintegration of formal order, of what remained of the humanist *Stimmung*, of its sacred and symbolic values—and, above all, of perspective as a symbolic instrument for the quantitative control of space—logically also affects the subject of Piranesi’s work: the relationship between history and the present. On one side, there is the painstaking, scientific study of archaeological findings; on the other, the most absolute arbitrariness in their restitution. (In this respect, after all, the *Campo Marzio* is anything but an exception in Piranesi’s work.) History no longer offers *values* as such. Subjected to a merciless inspection, it is revealed as a new principle of authority, which as such must be disputed. It is the experience of the subject that establishes *values*; in this, already lies all the aspiration to the negative polemic of romanticism.⁴⁰ Is Piranesi the “archaeologist” interested in caves, underground passages, and substructures purely by chance, then? Rather, cannot this interest in “what is hidden” in ancient architecture be interpreted as a metaphor for the search for a place in which the exploration of the “roots” of the monuments meets with the exploration of the depths of the subject? In the *Antichità di Albano e di Castel Gandolfo* (1764), the methodical reconstruction of the hydraulic and building techniques of the Romans is accompanied in a significant way—as Scott has noted⁴¹—by views of mysterious underground passages. In both the *Carceri* and the *Campo Marzio* History and Nature become *detached* from the subject, not to open up a new universe of values, but rather to present this radical divergence as the only possible value.

No contradiction exists between this operation and the scientific pole of Piranesi’s activity. Archaeology, the rational study of historical evidence, is

in itself a development of the principle of Reason. But knowledge, which that archaeology assures, *gets separated* from action, gets returned to a documentary or evocative sphere, and becomes the occasion for cryptic and allusive messages, reserved for the "inner few." Piranesi, no longer founding language on the authority of history, brings to completion, coherently, the same principle of reason that guided him in his diggings into antiquity. Just as history is the reconstructive analysis of ancient findings, so language, precisely because it is finally freed from the authority of history—here Piranesi reveals what he has learned from Lodoli—will impose itself as "an in-progress criticism of language itself."

In this light, Piranesi shows himself the conceptual heir of the great critical line of modern architecture. The sixteenth-century avant-gardes, the experimentalism of Sir Christopher Wren, the eighteenth-century debate on the value of typology, the hypothesis of a language as universal synthesis of languages, disguised as a pure hedonistic game in the English garden of the eighteenth century, had already implicitly put forth the theme that Piranesi burst out with. On the other hand, in the English pastoral garden—as Argan has acutely observed⁴²—there is embodied an implicit attempt at the reunification of the entire linguistic experience of mankind, at least in its figurative expression. In the microcosm of a "nature educated to be natural," little Chinese temples, Graeco-Roman ruins, Gothic memories, magical and arcadian settings, symbolic organisms, enchanted places add up to an evident aspiration to the synthesis of human customs. And that this synthesis compromises the institutionality of architectural language—where *tout se tient*, a linguistic Babel is inevitable—is only a secondary effect, perhaps not even clearly realized by the supporters of the pastoral garden. (It is for this reason, however, that such an aspiration hides behind the screen of an evasive and aristocratic theme, such as the large ancestral park.) But that this same aspiration made itself felt so deeply, and precisely as a consequence of the discovery of the *relativity* of languages and customs—the theme will be rationalized by Montesquieu, but is already present in Vico—is demonstrated by that most fundamental document, the *Entwurf einer Histrioschen Architektur*, by J. B. Fischer von Erlach (1721). We know that this work was well known to Piranesi, who reproduced some of its themes in a document now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.⁴³

Thus the work of Fischer von Erlach and the gardens of Brown and Kent serve as active criticism of the concept of language as a structure that is transparent with respect to its signified. Piranesi, however, intends to go beyond those experiences. To analyze a language thoroughly, it must be isolated, not only from its historical foundations but also from its signifieds. It is not by chance that Piranesi's criticism deeply touches the symbolic pretexts of architectural forms (and here, too, one could enumerate the many precedents, from the sixteenth century on, that this attempt can lay claim to).

Let us try to link up the perspective restorations of the *Carceri* with the geometric confusion of the *Campo Marzio*. The shattering of the organ-

isms, the violence wrought upon the laws of perspective, the intuition of the possibilities offered by an indefinite “opening up of form”—the constant metamorphosis of the spaces in the *Carceri*, the gemmation, which theoretically could be continued ad infinitum, of the geometrical bodies in the *Campo Marzio*—mark, without any doubt, the end of Alberti’s theoretical precepts of *concinntitas* and of *finitio*. But they also sanction the definitive divorce of architectural *signs* from their *signifieds*.

We have already seen how it is precisely the hermetic emphasis on content [*contenutismo*] of the *Carceri* which indicates that in this work the true meaning is entirely in the *disorganization* of the formal fragments. The *list* of the geometric variations contained in the *Campo Marzio* leads to the same conclusion.

The obsessive articulation and deformation of the compositions no longer correspond to an *ars combinatoria*. The clash of the geometric “monads” is no longer regulated by any “preestablished harmony”;⁴⁴ and, most important, it demonstrates that the only meaning this paradoxical casuistry can refer back to is pure geometry, in the absolute semantic void that characterizes it.⁴⁵

Piranesi’s contestation attacks not only *perspective as a symbolic form*, but also the utopia of the inventions of 1743 and of the *Collegio*. The swarm of theoretically equivalent forms—*theorems* constructed around a single thesis—makes it clear that Piranesi’s intent in the *Campo Marzio* is to draw attention to the birth—necessary and terrifying—of an architecture bereft of the signified, split off from any symbolic system, from any “value” other than architecture itself.

It is almost too facile to read into this the anticipation of what would become the impotency of the signified in the Victorian age. The “loss of the center” is undergone and sublimated by Piranesi, accepted without disguising its negativity. The “negative” now becomes the *egoism* and the *silence* of form. The hypothesis, presented as “necessary” and inevitable, is to build with these debased materials; the recovery of freedom coincides—as in the *Carceri*—with the sinking into constraint.

It is significant that Piranesi has this “freedom” coincide with a discontinuous montage of forms, citations, and memories (and not only in the *Campo Marzio* or in the plates of the *Parere*, but also in the dedicatory plates of the *Antichità romane*). One could very well apply to this obsessive technique of assemblage Foucault’s definition of *heterotopia*: where the utopia affords consolation—he observes⁴⁶—by covering “cities with vast avenues,” the heterotopia disturbs, secretly undermining language, “destroying ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’” And does not this definition of heterotopia also hold for Canaletto’s reconstructions of a nonexistent Venice?

The change wrought by Canaletto upon the urban context of Venice attests to the profound reality of this city for the eighteenth century; to

the fact, that is, that the most devastating manipulations are legitimate on an urban organism that has become merely an object at the disposal of the fantasy of a tourist elite. And it is certain that Canaletto's *Capricci* as well as Piranesi's *Vedute*, *Carceri*, and *Campo Marzio* are, in their way, "invitations to a voyage," publicity material: as we know, the economic value of his etchings is quite clear to Piranesi, who adopts a clever strategy to attract his public.⁴⁷ Both Canaletto and Piranesi, however, want the voyage to be more than a hedonistic accumulation of sensations. The traveler must realize that the sought-for *adventure*, to be total, must be limitless, that therefore the voyage must be prolonged indefinitely, and that *one cannot return from it*. And in fact, how does one return from a Venice that does not exist? How indeed, from a form exaggerated in its dimensions, distorted in its reality, and confronting us with its wanderings in the maze of the *Carceri*? Was it merely by chance that Piranesi, after the failure of the first edition of the *Carceri*, republished it at a moment of great personal success, *imposing it*, transformed and divested of its theatricality, upon a public that had formerly been unenthusiastic?

The *Carceri* "explains" Piranesi's sense of metaphorical archaeology. By its very nature, in fact, a voyage brings on a mental "montage"; it can reconcile the voyages with time and space, "braved" during the course of the voyage, once he has "returned home." But if time and space are regarded as "problems," once the voyage has been begun the return trip becomes impossible: thus the chain of associations must be multiplied in the etching, which renders cruelly evident to the traveller the ultimate meaning of his choice. At the least, the collector, having returned to London with his Piranesi books and prints and with the fragments of an antiquity rendered hermetic, will feel obliged to continue his painful journey into the labyrinth of history. John Soane will be aware of this, reproducing in his own home in Lincoln's Inn Fields a "prison" swarming with "archeological" shreds reduced to *things*.

The etching-commodity, a reflection of Italian cities similarly reduced to "pictures on display" and utilized as such for economic survival, is thus anything but "innocent."

But to justify the perverse operation carried out by the "devastation of syntax," it is necessary to consider every utopian reconstruction of languages aimed at opening up "cities with wide avenues."

There is a passage in the *Parere su l'architettura* in which Piranesi lets slip a statement that confirms our reading. After having attacked at length the monotony of "rigorist" architecture—the attack is definitely directed at the early experiments of French and English neoclassicism and at Laugier's theories—Piranesi defends the inventive freedom of Bernini and Borromini⁴⁸ having the protagonist of his dialogue exclaim:

*you censure [criticizing the "necessity" of constant formal renewal] that same spirit that was the inventor whom you praise, and who, realizing that therefore he had not pleased the world, was obliged to follow that direction and that manner which displeases you.*⁴⁹

The *inventor* to whom Piranesi refers is none other than the mythical primitive follower of Nature. Thus it is naturalism that “does not please the world.” But even more significant, the consequence of this indelible initial error is the *condemnation to constant variation*.

One is *forced* to “vary”—whether referring to the baroque meaning of the word or to Piranesi’s meaning, the two joined by his own words in a single “destiny.” And that it is a question of an initial “error” in the thinking of Our Man is demonstrated by a passage in which Piranesi further defends his *Magnificenza* from Mariette’s criticism. All the rigorosity, which in the *Magnificenza ed architettura dei Romani* had been recognized as typical of the Etruscan-Italian culture, is now justified by the pretext that in that volume it was necessary to demonstrate to Le Roy, and to the supporters in general of Greek artistic supremacy, that the Romans “being unable to restore to health the rules of an architecture infected at its roots, after they had embraced it, had tried to mitigate the rules.”⁵⁰

There is no passage more dramatic than this in the entire theoretical work of Piranesi. If the very foundations of the language are recognized as precarious, then there is no point in seeking any “salvation” in the return to their original state. *To build* on those precarious bases, “infected at the roots,” is a tragic duty; variation proves itself once again to be a technique of survival.

It is difficult not to relate this discovery by Piranesi of the dramatic force inherent in the *compulsion to vary* to the protagonists of baroque experimentalism. Christoph and Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer, Bernardo Vittoni, Johann Michael Fischer: in the light of the *Parere*, their research on the *ars combinatoria* takes on a pathetic significance, appearing as the final explosions of an experience, which, in order to come to a definitive conclusion, feels the need to test to the limit of its own possibilities the gamut of hypotheses that are “realistic,” or at least coherent with the premises of baroque rhetoric. Nor is it accidental that in the final results of this research, the *ars rhetorica* is cancelled out by the rediscovery of pure geometry in the inhibited recovery of a textual classicism: think of the parochial Victoriana of Villafalletto or of the church of Pastiky, but also of the architectural alphabets of Carlo A. Rana and Johann David Steingruber, who, under the cover of the graphic “joke,” announce the possibility of an alienation from architecture effected by the pure sign deprived of meaning.⁵¹

But in Piranesi something else occurs. His views of ancient Rome subvert the real dimensions of the buildings; typical is his view of the piazza of the Pantheon, in which the imperial rotunda is made smaller, while standing out against it is the obelisk—enlarged—at the center of the fountain. Piranesi’s etching shows us here a truth “beyond the real.” The Pantheon is forced to merge with the urban continuum; it is forced to “contaminate itself” with it. Piranesi intuitively grasps the historical significance of Roman architecture, later “explained” by Riegl: the “impure” Roman forms are such because they are compromised by the dimension of the lived-time of space, eroded, actually, by time, compromised by existence,

by the quotidian. A further motive exists, thus, for the oscillation of language between autonomy and heteronomy.

The ruthless *authority* of language is felt in an almost unbearable way by the person who discovers not only its arbitrariness, but also its instability. In this sense, the tragic nature of Piranesi's work acquires a historic sense, extraneous to many of the mythologies constructed around it.

In the *Parere su l'architettura*, Piranesi explicitly attacks the principles of absolute linguistic coherence that are founded on naturalism. Blondel, Cordemoy, Laugier, Lodoli, and Algarotti are all caustically challenged. In the same work, Piranesi turns his criticism against himself, although in a totally dissimulated manner: his attack on Greek architecture, on Le Roy, Mariette, Mengs, and Winckelmann conceals the most complete insecurity regarding the working hypothesis upon which is founded the "return" to Italic architecture. The search for "origins" manifests itself as a compulsion due to a secret sense of guilt.

The reasoning that Didascalò presents to the rigorist maestro is exemplary. Assuming the entire mental *habitus* of his adversary, he completely overturns his conclusions; his objective is to demonstrate the absolutely arbitrary nature of architectural writing, its extraneousness to any "natural" origin.⁵² This is what—in the field of both general linguistics and architectural language—the debate conducted in France and in England had already conclusively demonstrated.⁵³ It is certainly possible that Piranesi gathered up the echoes of those themes; it is clear, however, that he portrays the conclusions regarding architecture in an ambiguously paradoxical light. His Didascalò, in a rhetorical masterpiece rich in irony, subverts—or so it appears at first glance—the thesis of naturalist rigorism. Lodoli's and Laugier's coherence of language and syntax is demolished once it is brought to its extreme consequences.

Greece and Vitruvius, then?—Didascalò, turning to his opponent—well then tell me, what do the columns represent? According to Vitruvius, the upright brackets of the houses; according to others, the shafts placed to hold up the roof. And the fluting of the columns, what do they mean? Vitruvius claims they are the folds in the matrons' clothing. Thus the columns no longer represent brackets of shafts that hold up a roof, but women. Now what do you think of the fluting? It seems to me that columns should be made smooth: smooth columns, then, should be cast aside. The brackets and shafts are planted in the ground, upright. In fact, this is how the Dorics formed their columns. So, they must be made without bases; cast aside those without bases. The tops of the shafts, when used to hold up the roofs, should be smooth; those of the brackets can resemble anything you want, except capitals; and if that does not satisfy you, they must represent solid things, not heads of men, or virgins, or matrons, nor baskets surrounded by leaves, nor the matrons' wigs placed on top of the baskets. Cast aside, those without capitals. Do not fear; there are other rigorists, who would like their columns smooth, without bases, and without capitals.⁵⁴

Adopting the criterion of the rigid naturalist and functionalist justification of architectural language, Piranesi continues his operation of demolition; the criteria assumed as basic turn back on themselves:

Let us observe the walls of a building both from the inside and from the outside. Those at the top terminate in architraves, and with all the rest that goes up there; and under these architraves are disposed for the most part semidiametric columns or pilasters. Now I ask, what holds up the roof of the building? If it is the wall, then this has no need of architraves; if it is the columns or pilasters, then what does the wall do? Come, signor Procopio, what do you want to knock down? The walls or the pillars? You do not answer? Then I shall destroy everything. Cast aside, 'Buildings without walls, without columns, without pillars, without friezes, without cornices, without vaults, without roofs, space, empty space, bare countryside. . . .'⁵⁵

Bare countryside: it does not much differ from Malevich's "pure desert." What Piranesi seems to refuse as a terrifying prospect is exactly the point of departure of the historical avant-gardes. Piranesi's anguish, revealed as anguish for the now-evident presence of the arbitrary nature of human institutions—"it is use that makes the law," he had affirmed at the beginning of the *Parere*—can only be conquered by giving voice to that arbitrary nature.

But in the second half of the eighteenth century this arbitrariness can appear only as the power of the irrational. Piranesi's attempt to anchor it to history fails with his first encounter with the infinite freedom which that power presupposes. Baroque arbitrariness thus appears in two facets: exalted in the *Parere* as an emblem of freedom, it is condemned in the *Campo Marzio* and the *Ragionamento apologetico*, in terms of a revelation of its dangerous ambiguousness, not to speak of its impotence.

A surprising result is thus obtained: *rigorism is annulled only because it is insufficiently rigorous*. At the end of his reasoning, Didascalo discovers that the absolute presence of reason by itself leads to silence, to a semantic void, to geometric nothingness. But the crowding of objects around the multiple centers in the *Campo Marzio*, in many of the designs of the inventions, in the very plates that accompany the text of the *Parere*, and the annulling of the concept of space itself lead exactly to the same result.⁵⁶ Only the procedure of the demonstration changes; an absurd reasoning is substituted for an affirmative one. On the other hand, the naturalism of the "rigorists" can be followed to the letter; in the *Diverse maniere*, the infinite variety of the shells engraved by Piranesi seems to demonstrate that even nature's models invite us to a constant invention.

It is in this sense that the text of the *Parere*, not casually cast into the form of a dialogue, constitutes a record of the discussion that Piranesi sets up with himself. This is reflected in the passages of the *Parere* in which Piranesi reveals the meaning of the conflict he has experienced and expressed. The reduction of architecture to a *sign* involves the expropriation

of the intellectual qualities of planning by a new professional figure, whose expertise is purely technical.

Piranesi's prophecy approaches the question of the functionality of intellectual work in the field of architecture, in the light of the exigencies that will be typical of the new bourgeois clientele. Being merely ideological, Piranesi's prefiguration does not even touch on the themes that will be characteristic of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debate on the supremacy of technology; but he already poses, with incredible clarity, the question of the dissolution of the professional figure of the architect, as defined in the orbit of humanist culture.

Let us suppose—he has Didascalo say—that the world, although it disdains anything that does not vary from day to day, were gracious enough to put up with your monotony, to what state would architecture be reduced? A un vil métier où l'on ne feroit que copier, a certain Signore has said: and so that would make you others not only mediocre, extremely mediocre Architects, as I have just said, but even less essential than bricklayers. They, after all, after doing the same piece of work repeatedly, will have memorized the procedure and will have another advantage over you: their mechanical ability; in fact, you will cease to be Architects, since those seeking to build would be foolish to ask an architect to do what a bricklayer could do for them at much less expense.

Protopiro: Yes, only if architecture consisted of something other than the beautiful and the majestic.

Didascalo: Do not speak to me about beauty and majesty. You know better than I that when it comes to foundations, materials, thicknesses, and the grading of walls to create arches, of everything, that is, that has to do with the substance of a work, the bricklayers can hold their own with the Architects: let us also consider, then, that the works would be much simpler, and in the same style as always.

The reduction of intellectual work to abstract repetitive work is already completely foreshadowed. Even the fundamental distinction, made a century and a half later by Adolf Loos, between architecture (the monument and the tomb: that which has no part whatsoever in our daily existence) and the simple building, extraneous to the world of art, is already anticipated in Piranesi's writings:

Architects are normally called in when one intends to build a beautiful building: this is what we may well affirm Architecture consists of today. But when one does not have such a concern, it is the patrons themselves who are the Architects, and it is enough for them to find someone merely to throw up the walls. All the rest of Architecture, other than ornamentation, is of so little importance and of so little glory for Architects that few of them are proud of it.

Protopiro: But do you consider them Architects? And do you praise the patrons who act thus?

Didascalò: On this subject I will tell you only that in so many works guided by patrons, bricklayers, and Architects of this kind, each has compromised himself, and whoever sees the people living in these buildings, instead of feeling sorry for their being badly housed, often reproves them for being too weak. And, getting back to ourselves, if you took away from me the freedom to vary the ornamentation, each artist according to his talent, in a few days you would see the sanctuary of Architecture open to all. Architecture, understood by all, would be scorned by all; with time, buildings would be constructed indifferently; those sensible styles, which you esteem, would be lost by the same means by which you wish to support them; and you others would be deprived of the desire to reproach and to duel with those architects who would no longer exist—a misfortune that for you would be the greatest of all. Thus to avoid this disorder, I ask you to consider those alleged possibilities, yes, but also to respect freedom, which is what sustains them.⁵⁷

The hint at dilettantism is explicit. But even more explicit is the prospect glimpsed: the crisis of the professionalism of the architect, the extinction of architecture as intellectual work. Piranesi's polemic regarding the neo-Greek revival thus finds a further justification. Purism, in fact, seems to lead directly to an elementarism capable of opening up "in a few days the sanctuary of Architecture."

In the combinatory paroxysm of the *Campo Marzio*, the reduction of architecture to geometric signs merges, not by chance, with the proliferation of variations. But we have already glimpsed, at the end of this obligatory journey, the prospect of a reduction of the *invention* to an abstract framework of lines, of mere textbook figures. Durand's *Précis* is the extreme limit of a secularization of architecture that had been prophesied and feared for some time. "The democratization" of intellectual work compromises the very *worth* of that "work," at the same time that it opens up to it unforeseen possibilities of intervention into the form of the human environment.

Piranesi's heterotopia lies precisely in giving voice, in an absolute and evident manner, to this contradiction: the principle of Reason is shown to be an instrument capable of anticipating—outside of any *sueño*—the monsters of the irrational.

However, the rational-irrational dialectic, as we have just stated it, still appears too schematic. Piranesi does not constitute an "incident" in the historic journey that leads from Cordemoy to Durand to Bruyère.

Certainly these latter are "worthy architects," in the sense that Klossowski calls a philosopher "worthy," starting with Plato. Klossowski writes:

The worthy philosopher is proud that the fact of thinking is the only valid activity of his being. The wicked man who philosophizes does not grant to thought any value other than that of favoring the activity of the strongest passion, passion that in the eyes of the well-bred man, is always a shortcoming. But if the greater evil lies in concealing the passion under the

*appearance of thought, the wicked one sees nothing in the thought of the honest man than the covering up of an impotent passion. If we want to render justice to Sade, it is necessary to take this wicked philosophy seriously, since, in a tremendous outpouring of effort, it puts into question the activities of thinking and writing, and particularly of thinking and describing an action, instead of committing it.*⁵⁸

But does not Sade's "countergenerality of perversions," his "total monstrousness," perhaps help to clarify a question that in a way pertains as well to Piranesi, who was also tormented by the *difference* between the writing of an action and the concrete act? (Between *design* and architecture?) And does not Piranesi's inscription, taken from Sallust, placed at the top of the last *fantasia* of the *Parere*—"Novitatem meam contemnunt, ego illorum ignaviam"—reveal perhaps the impotent passion covered up by the "worthy philosophers"?

Piranesi is thus presented as a "wicked architect," who, in the monstrousness of his contaminations, reveals the cracks guiltily repressed by a deviant rigor: language and non-language counterposed, perhaps? Klosowski continues:

*The traditional language, which Sade uses with impressive force, can easily admit everything that conforms to its logical structure: it undertakes to correct, censure, exclude, and omit anything that would destroy this structure, that is, non-sense. To describe the aberration is to set forth positively the absence of elements that make it possible for a thing, a condition, a being, not to be livable. And yet Sade accepts and keeps that logic without question; indeed, he develops it, he systemizes it, to the point of violating it. And he violates it by conserving it only to make of it a dimension of the aberration, not because the aberration is described by it, but because the aberrant act is reproduced in it. [But this means] designating language as a possibility of action: whence the eruption of non-language into language.*⁵⁹

In this perspective, the "wicked architect" presents himself as *monstrously virtuous*; the eruption into writing of that which is external to it brings into discourse the category of aberration as an immanent reality.

How many problems will he encounter in his attempt to close up the distance between the written act and the committed act?

The texts of the *Osservazioni sopra la lettre de M. Mariette* and of the *Parere* were published in 1765: the preceding year, Piranesi had been appointed to take over the reconstruction of Santa Maria del Priorato on the Aventine, as well as that of the apse of San Giovanni in Laterano. Körte and Wittkower have reconstructed with precision the limits and the process of the eighteenth-century intervention in the church of the Knights of Malta. The latter in particular has given a correct critical reading, which privileges northern Italian aspects—those of the Veneto and the sixteenth century, but of Juvarra as well—of the reorganization of the lighting of the apse and of the transept, confirming, by surveying the variations on

the theme of pillar-column pairing elaborated by Piranesi, the derivation from Mannerist tradition, previously underlined by Körte.⁶⁰

Sufficient attention has not yet been paid, however, to the theme of the placement of the altar of San Basilio in the new choir. Wittkower observes that the projecting of the altar toward the transept, introduced by the three steps and the forward balustrade, leads to a deliberate fractioning of the spatial continuum of the organism. According to Wittkower, the introduction of this hiatus represents a conscious recourse to the Veneto models (Palladio and Longhena: since the altar has the same form, the examples of the Redentore of San Giorgio Maggiore and of the Church of the Salute are cited by the German art historian). In this way, the breaking up achieved produces the effect of a "subjective experience of space," which is dominated by the final image of the altar that is illuminated by a "chamber of reflections" constituted by the perforated apse and by the lantern that opens onto the transept. Also called to mind here are the lighting tricks of Juvarra in the church of the Venaria Reale; furthermore, the lighting of the apse of the Priorato recalls the artifice of Piranesi's third plan for the new apse of San Giovanni in Laterano, rich in the motifs of Borromini.⁶¹

And thus the altar of San Basilio becomes the protagonist of the restructuring of the church of the Priorato. The same articulation of the framework, the unusual disposition of the sources of light, the cryptic iconography of the vaults are simple complementary "functions" of the altar, which presents itself as a summation of elements arranged in an allogical succession. The mensa, the back, the pyramidal trunk of the oval sarcophagus placed as a crowning part, the central medallion above the ciborium, the globe with the statuary group of the saint's flight inserted in the pyramid are arranged only as a labyrinthian image, not unintentionally immersed in an ambiguous totality. This complex, in fact, is situated against the light with respect to the apse, but directly exposed to the light coming from above. Again, Piranesi's architecture seems to break up and de-compose its fundamental lines. The logic of the variations—note the ensemble of the framework of the transept and the apse in their compositional balance—and the logic of the summation: the structure of the altar, studied in its internal articulations in the autograph design in the Kunstbibliothek in Berlin,⁶² demonstrates that there is a *logic of de-composition* that presides over its ambiguous interpolations.

But, exactly like the *Parere*, the altar of the Priorato, an isolated object and thus perceivable as such, is nothing more than a mechanism that flaunts its duplicity.

The light coming from the apse directly illuminates the back of the altar, accentuating its hallucinating geometrism. The overlapping of the images on the front facing the entrance, facing the community of the faithful, corresponds to the striking abstraction of the pure geometric volumes on the back of the altar: a bare sphere and a solid figure of complex structure that embraces it.

As the *hidden face* of the altar, as a concealed aspect *to be discovered*, in contrast with the triumphal exhibition of the *recto*, the *verso* of the altar of the Priorato reveals completely the internal dialectic of Piranesi's "virtuous wickedness." What is given as *evident*, as an immediate visual stimulus from a *common* point of view, reappears purified, rendered pure intellectual structure, on the reverse side, on the *hidden* side. But this structural essentiality, this revelation of the laws that govern the rhetorical emphasis of the "machine" that faces the nave of the church, can be achieved only by a deliberate act, performed by one who refuses to be deceived by the "evident" aspect of things.

No other work of Piranesi's succeeds, as well as the altar of the church of the Knights of Malta, in rendering so violently explicit the ultimate essence of his research. What the two faces, *together*, of the altar of San Basilio make brutally clear is the discovery of the *principle of contradiction*.

Certainly, in the altar of the Priorato many cosmological references can be found, and it can be amusing to list their precedents in baroque scenographic design and their consequences in the geometric inventions of the "architects of the Enlightenment." But doing this would prevent our comprehension of Piranesi's tragic disenchantment. Abstraction and representation, silence and communication, the freezing of the signs and the abundance of images—these pairs of opposites are closely linked in the altar of San Basilio.⁶³

It can be safely stated that the sphere hermetically inserted into the silent exchange of geometric solids, emerging from the altar, is the terminal point, constantly fleeting and feared, of Piranesi's research. The absolute *void*, the silence of the "things by themselves," the tautological affirmation of the pure sign, turned solely back onto itself: in the *Campo Marzio* we have already glimpsed the demonstration *ad absurdum* of this necessary "nullification of the signified." In the church of the Priorato that semantic void is no longer hinted at. Now it is finally spoken of as it is, in all its brutal nakedness. The authentic *horrid* of Piranesi is here, and not in the still ambiguous metaphors of the *Carceri*. Precisely because Piranesi has to demonstrate that the *silence of architecture*, the reduction to zero of its symbolic and communicative attributes, is the inevitable consequence of the "constraint" to variation—here once again we have the theme of the *Parere*—the two faces of the altar cannot be separated. The destruction of the symbolic universe is seen to be closely linked to the last, pathetic triumph of the allegory, which unfolds itself on the side facing the faithful. So that if Piranesi's altar still contains a symbolic residue, this *signifies* only the announcement of the semantic void that *must* result in the desanctification of the artistic universe. When Ledoux, Boullée, Sobre, and Vaudoyer point out Piranesi's geometric silence, they will feel obligated to substitute for the ancient symbolism of transcendence a symbolism of man made sacred to himself.⁶⁴

We can now interpret correctly the passage of the *Parere* in which Piranesi seems to recover completely the baroque principle of *unity in the*

many. After having terminated his antinaturalistic and anti-Vitruvian polemic, Didascalo concludes:

*. . . show me designs made by any rigorist that you please, by anyone who believes he has drawn up a really marvelous plan for a building; and if he is not more foolish than someone who works without rules, I will pay you a wager, whereas he will be able to conceive a building without irregularities; when four upright poles with a cover on top constitute the prototype of all architecture, they can exist whole and united during the very act of their being halved, distorted, and rearranged in a thousand directions: in sum, when the simple becomes a compound, and the one becomes that multitude that one wants.*⁶⁵

The "simple" is thus *equivalent* to the compound, and the "multitude" that converges in the one is *that which one wants*. It could not be stated more clearly that the *one*, with which we are dealing here, no longer has anything to do with the universal *con-sonantia* of Leibniz's monadology, nor, even less, with the cosmic harmony of humanistic panpsychism.

For this reason Calvesi's attempt to link Piranesi's position to the hermetic and Masonic tradition leaves a great many doubts, not only because of the shakiness of the evidence offered, but also because of the much more radical significance that Piranesi's discovery of the negative, of the inherence of the contradiction within reality, assumes with regard to the idealistic Masonic appeal to brotherhood and justice.⁶⁶

The next step in the reduction of space to a tangle of *things* that question one another's meaning interchangeably in an impossible colloquy is the experimentation carried out on the surface, in what Piranesi himself calls the dimension of "little architecture."⁶⁷

In the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini* (1769), as previously in the façade and the enclosing wall of the little church on the Aventine and in some of the last designs of invention, the critical inquiry into the semantic residues of an architectural language reduced to pure decoration arrives at conclusions no more reassuring than those obtained in the large-scale attempts. And, after all, the sadistic destruction of the organicity of space that takes place in the *Campo Marzio* and in the plates of the *Parere* leads directly to architecture as hermetic decoration.

It is significant, however, that in the *Ragionamento apologetico*, which accompanies the *Diverse maniere*, the technique of *bricolage* is justified by the author in one of his most ambiguous theoretical discourses. Piranesi writes:

It may be said that I have overloaded these drawings of mine with too many ornaments; it may be displeasing to others, that to decorate private rooms, where one usually finds the graceful, the delicate and the gentle, I have used Egyptian and Etruscan styles that, according to common judgment, are daring, bold, and harsh styles. . . . To certain natures, then, whom the poverty of their ideas more than propriety renders abnormally fond of simplicity, these designs of mine will seem to be too laden with

ornaments, and they will throw up in my face Montesquieu's maxim, that a building laden with ornaments is an enigma for the eyes, just as a confused poem is for the mind, and I in turn shall repeat that I stand with Montesquieu and all other enemies of enigmas and of confusion, and that I disapprove as much as anyone of the multiplicity of ornaments.⁶⁸

Again Piranesi conceals his true intentions. It is interesting, however, to note his insistence upon the value of clarity of perception and upon "fittingness" ["*convenienza*"] in decorative elements. And one can even believe in his sincerity, in this specific case. In fact, Piranesi himself experiences the crisis of classicist harmony as a "loss," as painful as it is irreversible. What he feels he must justify, then, is precisely his intuition of the *inevitability of disorder*, using equivocal arguments. He asks:

But what multiplicity? That which out of lack of order and arrangement encumbers the eye and confuses it. The man deceives himself who believes that it is the multiplicity of ornaments which offends the eye and confuses it; just as he is deceived who, his ear being confused and dazed by a bad concert, attributes this to the multiplicity of voices and instrument, and not to the ignorance of those unable to arrange them properly, or those unable to perform this music. Thus, the sole reason for which the eye may be offended or confused by an architectural work is the ignorance of that high or that low by which in nature, as in the arts, there exists among the ornaments a certain variety of degrees, and grades, of greater or lesser worth, whereby some assume the figure of the prince, and others serve as bystanders.⁶⁹

The recourse to naturalism, to polyphony, to the value of the hierarchy of forms is amazing. Piranesi seems to want to enumerate, in support of his architecture, the very values and instruments of work which that architecture mercilessly places into crisis. Little wonder, then, that to justify further the audacity of his chimneypieces, he calls upon the "ancients" for support:

No! An artist who wants to acquire respect and a name must not be content to be merely a faithful copier of the ancients. But, studying their works, he must show that he as well is an inventive spirit (I almost said creator); and, combining the Greek, the Etruscan, and the Egyptian with skill, this man of courage must open himself up to the discovery of new ornaments and new ways. The human mind is certainly not so limited that it cannot give new embellishments and new charm to architectural works by combining a most careful and profound study of nature with that of the ancient monuments.⁷⁰

Historicism suddenly turns in the opposite direction. The more archaeological interest extends, to the point of touching unexplored areas, the more any illusion is dispelled about the possibility of extracting from these areas any useful principles.

In certain ways, however, the etchings of the *Diverse maniere* mark a step backward with respect to the *Campo Marzio* and the altar of San

Basilio. In the chilly atmosphere of neo-Egyptian chimneypieces and rarefied rococo objects, which despite the different languages reflect the same taste, Piranesi tries to construct a syntax of contamination, to return to a deliberately naïf

Apart from the furnishings executed by Piranesi, this "naïf" is materialized in a building of eighteenth-century Rome that has been virtually ignored by Piranesian scholars: the small palazzo situated between Via de' Prefetti and Vicolo Rosini. We do not have the elements to ascertain the attribution of this singular work, undoubtedly influenced by the inventions of Piranesi. It is certain, however, that the paratactical composition of the façade, the arched portal on Tuscan columns and the tribulation reduced to a shell, the sequence of the oval atrium and the metaphysical grand staircase in which the continuity of the walls and vaults is underlined and rendered abstract by hermetic engravings in the masonry, and the decoration of the third-floor windows, reflect the ideas of the plates of the *Parere* and the *Diverse maniere*.

This interpretation of the *Diverse maniere* opens up the path for nineteenth-century eclecticism, even though, in some of the most irascible of the plates as in some of Piranesi's drawings of the last years, the tension toward an unplacated dialectic remains. Nevertheless, the propagandist significance of the drawings of the *Diverse maniere* did not escape James Barry:

A book by the Cavalier Piranesi has just been published, written, as was his Magnificenza, for the purpose of condemning the Greeks. . . . But this purpose conceals something more equivocal than may easily be believed: merchants often indulge in double dealing, and he has accumulated an enormous quantity of various marbles which he would be happy to sell. Given, however, that no one would ever take them for objects of Greek origin, for a very obvious reason, the renewal and the sharpening of old prejudices against the Greeks prove to be a useful contribution towards facilitating the sale of his collection. This is the purpose of his book, published as a kind of publicity announcement.⁷¹

But in Piranesi the attention to the market is never separated from a programmatic intent. The Piranesi *mixture*, set forth in the *Discorso apologetico* and exemplified in the bricolages of his compositions and in the wall decorations for the Caffè degli Inglesi, completes the operation begun with the *Carceri*, continued in the *Campo Marzio* and in the plates that accompany the *Parere*, and resulting in the realization of that theoretical "manifesto" par excellence, the altar of Santa Maria del Priorato. The destroyed space makes room for the "things." And these are no longer, as in Leibniz's theorization, conditions of space, but rather appear in all the hermeticism of their object-void. In the *Antichità romane*, the *Antichità di Cora*, the *Descrizione e disegno dell'Emissario del Lago di Albano*, and the *Vedute di Roma* itself, the isolation of the architectural objects corresponds to the back of the altar of San Basilio. The hermetic muteness of "things in themselves" can also be expressed by the freezing of their geometric struc-

tures, as occurs in many plates of the *Antichità romane*, the *Pianta del Sepolcro di Alessandro Severo*, the *Caverna sepolcrale . . . dirimpetto la chiesa di San Sebastiano*, the *Spaccato della piramide di Caio Cestio*, and the *Ponte Fabrizio*, which are only some of the examples that could be cited. To be considered as well is the process of enlarging some architectural particulars, accessories, or work tools, which, extracted from their context, often assume the appearance, in Piranesi's engravings, of surrealistic objets trouvés.⁷²

But this enlargement of the single archaeological object certainly hides something; its ceremonial significance is too blatant to be evaluated simplistically. There is too much *clarity* in those tripods, in those shields, in the technical reconstruction of the *Aqua Giulia*, or—in the *Antichità romane*—in the cemetery urns of Villa Corsini and in the inner portal of the Castel Sant'Angelo. The dangerous voyage into the labyrinth or into the underground is here replaced by a overdetermination of form; but that form is only an enlarged fragment, equally hermetic by excess of eloquence. The sphere of the altar of the Priorato, which appears in all its nudity in the detailed drawing conserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, and the Babel-like towers that stand out in the dedicatory plates of the *Antichità romane* and, even more significant, in the imaginary mausoleum of the drawing in the Gorhambury Collection (datable to the 1770s) demonstrate once again the Piranesian tension between the "too evident" and the "too ambiguous."

Quite correctly, in the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini*, Piranesi directs his criticism against the very hermetic "objectuality" to which he himself has forced objects (and even antiquity, reduced to an "object"). The *desert of the signified*, once more, must be filtered and examined closely through a further historicist experience. Etruscan and Egyptian architecture are represented as sources of a primordial constructivity; one can turn to them only to contest again any pretext at linguistic absoluteness.

The destruction of language as *grammaire raisonnée* is achieved. The plates of the *Cammini* are the fruit of a reduction to zero of architectural constructivity: the richness of the sources and the cult of *contaminatio* join in the refusal to render the sources studied really "historical."

Bricolage is, as we know, among the most corrosive forms of antihistoricism. In this sphere, everything is now permitted and everything is recoverable. The subjective experience, which *refounds* history by its research, is forced to travel once more over that history which is like a labyrinth without exits: the heterotopia and the "voyage" are locked in a desperate embrace.

The metahistoric maze of the *Carceri* attempts, at any rate, to rationalize itself in the etchings of the *Diverse maniere*. Its linguistic pluralism is agreeably presented, leading into a skepticism that manages to place rococo influences next to the boldest Etruscan-Egyptian-Roman collages. *The loss of meaning*, of its univocity, is fully explained: the Piranesian heterotopia consistently uses *infinite dialectics*.

Piranesi thus recognizes the presence of contradiction as absolute reality. And we do not ask *which* contradiction. The tools of his work exclude a similar specification, reaching levels of abstraction that permit multiple interpretations. The greatness of his "negative utopia" lies in his refusal to establish, after such a discovery, alternative possibilities: in the crisis, Piranesi seems to want to show, *we are powerless*, and the true "magnificence" is to welcome freely this destiny.

The *Carceri*, the *Campo Marzio*, and the *Cammini* thus reveal his recognition—dramatic but for this very reason "virilely" accepted—of the inherence of the aberrant within the real.

The dissolution of form and the void of the signifieds are thus the presentation of the negative as such. The construction of a *utopia of dissolved form*—what has been naïvely called Piranesian eclecticism—constitutes the recuperation of this negative, the attempt to utilize it.

In the ambiguity and specificity of his instruments of work—freely chosen, for that matter—Piranesi may appear as a critic of Enlightenment hypotheses; leaping over them with his secret aspiration to found new syntheses, he follows his own intuition to the end. It is not by chance that his criticism remains within the sphere of pure "possibility." Architecture is nothing more than a sign and an arbitrary construction, then; but this is intrinsic to Piranesi's discovery of the absolute "solitude" that engulfs the subject who recognizes the relativity of his own actions. To such an extent that one of the great anticipations of the future that can be identified in Piranesi's work is his founding of what would emerge as the ethic of the dialectical becoming of avant-garde art: of that art which—in the worlds of Fautrier—"can only destroy itself" and which "only by destroying itself can constantly renew itself."⁷³

The Historicity of the Avant-Garde: Piranesi and Eisenstein

To begin a detailed analysis of the relationship between the avant-garde and architecture with the work of Piranesi is undoubtedly provocative. And yet, to calm the perplexity of the skeptics, there exists an exceptional study by Sergei Eisenstein on Piranesi's *Prisons* that offers us an opportunity to confirm our thesis. The connection between Piranesi and the Soviet film director is shown to be a direct one; our purpose here is merely to examine some of its salient points.

In April 1939, Eisenstein wrote to Jay Leyda: "I expect to finish a very amusing article, 'El Greco y e Cinema!' . . . Imagine some twenty-six thousand words (!) for the sole purpose of pointing out how much there is that is cinematic in the art of that Spanish old master! . . . C'est Piquant!" But the completion of the essay proved to be particularly laborious, since in August 1941 the director again wrote to Leyda: "I am finally finishing the article on El Greco. I am also translating into English a long article of mine on Griffith and the history of montage in the different arts. I will probably add a study of the idea of the close-up in the history of art."

There is certainly nothing new in Eisenstein's curiosity about the history of art, which he explored in his constant search for historical justification of his cinematic poetics. It is significant, however, that he insists in particular on including among the precursors of the new film language figures like El Greco and Piranesi.¹ Although the works of these two contain motifs that can quite easily be related to the theory of montage, what interests us is rather the type of operation that Eisenstein carries out in analyzing El Greco's paintings or in taking apart and reassembling Piranesi's *Carceri*.

Eisenstein's article on Piranesi, which appears in the appendix to this chapter, is in fact connected to a previous article—surely the one cited in the letters to Leyda—which can be found in the third volume of Eisenstein's complete works, published in Russian. The two articles are linked

by a particular technique of critical analysis, based on what the director calls "explosion" or "ecstatic transfiguration."

El Greco's *View and Plan of the City of Toledo* (1604–14) and Piranesi's *Carcere oscura* (*Dark Prison*)—the two works upon which Eisenstein focused his analysis—are, in other words, "put into motion": they are made to react dynamically, the result of an ideal *explosion* of the formal tensions within them. We will trace the specific procedures of this unique critical operation in a moment. We must first point out, however, that between this method of analysis and Eisenstein's theory of montage exists no discontinuity. Eisenstein himself, in fact, stated that "montage is the stage of the *explosion of the shot*"; furthermore, in his *Lessons with Eisenstein*, he adds that "when the tension within the shot reaches its peak and can mount no further, then the shot explodes, splitting into two separate pieces of montage."²

For Eisenstein, then, the shot and the montage cannot be counterposed as separate spheres, but must be considered as stages of a single process, which fulfills itself in "a dialectic leap from quantity to quality."³

In this regard, one could note the affinity between this theory of montage and the theory of the unity of the literary work as the *dynamic integration of its components*, elaborated by Tynjanov after 1924. But for our purposes, it is more interesting for the moment to observe the way in which Eisenstein, on the basis of the preceding considerations, forces the works of El Greco and, especially, Piranesi to lose their natural autonomy, to come out of their isolation, in order to become part of an ideal series: to become, in other words, simple frames in a *cinematic phrase*.

It is therefore of considerable interest to analyze, in the specific case of Piranesi, what cognitive contributions the critical method of the Soviet director can offer, in order to shed light on the singular relationship that links the eighteenth-century etcher to an heir of the historical avant-garde such as Eisenstein. (And one should note that the essay on Piranesi's *Carceri* was written in 1946–47, shortly before the director's death.)

It is evident that Eisenstein sees in the entire series of the *Carceri* a totality composed of disconnected fragments belonging to a single sequence, based on the technique of "intellectual montage," that is, according to his own definition, on a "juxtaposition-conflict of intellectual stimuli which accompany each other."⁴

The *explosion* he imposes upon the architectural elements depicted by Piranesi in the *Carcere oscura* cruelly forces the compositional line of the original etching. That is, Eisenstein pretends that a telluric force, born of the reaction between the image and its critical contemplation, upsets all the pieces of Piranesi's *Carceri*, setting them in motion, agitating them convulsively, reducing them to fragments awaiting an entirely new recomposition. It is difficult not to see in such a mental operation an analytical technique resulting from the overall lesson of Russian futurism; in this sense, the elements of eighteenth-century etching undergo a true reification: they are reduced, at least at the beginning, to an alphabet having no syntactical structure.

There is something more, however. With the explosion literally provoked by Eisenstein, we are confronted by what the Russian formalists had called "semantic distortion": the material elements of Piranesi's composition undergo a change of meaning, due to the violent alteration of the mutual relationship that originally bound them. It must then be remembered that for Shklovsky in particular, semantic distortion has as its chief function the recovery of the original function of language, purity of communication. In the same manner, the violence inflicted by Eisenstein on Piranesi's *Carcere* can be interpreted as an attempt to make the etching itself speak, beyond the usual meanings attributed to it. In other words, Eisenstein's entry into the world of the eighteenth century seems to have effects similar to those of Chaplin—the "Lord of Misrule" for the Soviet cinematic avant-garde—upon a milieu that seems almost to exist just to be turned upside-down by the rapid-fire gags of the actor. But let us proceed in our analysis by examining the motifs that emerge from a reading of Eisenstein's text.

We observe, first of all, that the *explosion* of the elements of the *Carcere oscura* takes, in the words of Eisenstein himself, the form of a *dissolution*. This means that Eisenstein interprets the elements themselves as forms in potential movement, even though artificially frozen. The technique of "ecstatic transfiguration" thus accelerates that potential movement, activates it, *frees it from the resistance of forms*.

This happens, however, because in the eighteenth-century etching, the forms are already seen to be "dissolved." Eisenstein observes perceptively how, in the *Carcere oscura*, the persistence of a rigorous structuralism is accompanied by the "fragmentation of the means of expression." It is precisely this fragmentation that attracts the attention of the Soviet director. It is precisely this collision between the laws relative to the structure of the organism and the disintegration of its single formal elements that he precipitates with his imaginary "explosion."

Finally, in the course of his analysis, Eisenstein employs one last model. Indeed, it can be maintained that the idea of "setting in motion" the *Carcere oscura*, of provoking in the work a "rebellion of the objects," a "displacement of the signs"—to use Shklovsky's metaphor⁵—has its origin precisely in this final model. The comparison between the *Carcere oscura* and the first edition of the *Carceri* suggests to Eisenstein the direction in which to bring together the fragments and the residues freed by his imaginary explosion.

In other words, Eisenstein perceives in Piranesi's youthful etchings nothing less than a hermetic bundle of formal functions, containing the seeds of the far more substantial innovations of the mature Piranesi. It is this bundle that he proposes to untie. With the explosion of the *Carcere oscura*, he merely applies, in a violent and totally intellectual manner, the very same procedure adopted by Piranesi in the composition of the *Invenzioni capricciose di Carceri* and in the second edition of the *Carceri* itself.

Does not Eisenstein also recognize, with acute critical perception, that in the *Invenzioni capricciose* Piranesi dissolves not only individual forms but

also their "objectuality"? (More precisely—Eisenstein adds—"the objects are dissolved as physical elements of representation.")

Starting thus from a result already assured, Eisenstein extracts the static frame of film, which for him is represented by Piranesi's *Carcere oscura*, from the *open sequence* of the *Carceri*. Or, Piranesi's *Carcere oscura*, from the *open sequence* of the *Carceri*. Or, better, he forces that ideal frame to participate in the dynamic and thematic continuity that characterizes the *Carceri* themselves. The "ecstatic transfiguration" provoked by the explosion has thus this first meaning: filling the empty space between the etching of 1743 and the first series of the *Invenzioni capricciose*, it multiplies the potential meanings of the *Carcere oscura*. In this case, as in that of El Greco's painting, Eisenstein performs a critical operation virtually the same as that which comes to be associated with the *nouvelle critique* of a Barthes or a Doubrovsky. The Piranesian work appears to Eisenstein as a multilayered material, inviting an operation of dismemberment and multiplication of its formal components.

What Eisenstein calls the "inoffensiveness" of the *Carcere oscura*—its static ambiguity—he interprets as a kind of challenge. The criticism aimed at it must thus take the form of an act of violence. In this sense, the Russian director does not hesitate—to use the words of Roland Barthes⁶—to "dissociate the signifieds" of Piranesi's etching, to superimpose "on the first language of the work a second language, that is to say, a coherent system of signs," introduced as a "controlled transformation, subjected to optical conditions; it must transform *everything* that is the object of its reflection, according to determined laws, and always in the same direction."

It is of little importance that Barthes and Doubrovsky deny that their critical method has direct connection with the formalist tradition.⁷ Neither Eisenstein nor Barthes seem capable of any criticism that does not consist of a true *multiplication of the ambiguities* of the text under consideration and, in particular, of the ambiguities inherent in the organization of the original linguistic material. What Eisenstein *explodes* in the *Carcere oscura* is thus the false equilibrium imposed by Piranesi on the contrast between the structure of form and the dissolution of objects. It is the *falsity of the equilibrium* that Eisenstein's ecstatic explosion attacks. The criticism of Piranesi tends to expose, in the work analyzed, the dynamic valences hidden in it. The result of the criticism itself will be once again the covering over of the neutral space that separates the *Carcere oscura* from the following two editions of the *Carceri*. The "semantic estrangement" produced by Eisenstein's reading thus assumes a paroxysmal form. But one must go even further. Eisenstein, by forcing to the point of paradox the principles of the formal distortions already potentially present in Piranesi's work, causes the formal organization of the etching to react to the pressure of the concerted action of the "rebellion of the forms."

The criticism of the work thus becomes an operation on the work itself. But it is evident that this is possible only if there exists an affinity between the context of the work and the language of the critic—in our case,

a critic particularly interested in reading dynamically the organization of the Piranesian forms.

It will not be difficult, therefore, to recognize in Eisenstein's criticism of the *Carcere oscura* something very similar to his criticism, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, of the discontinuous montage of Dziga Vertov, the *epic montage* of Pudovkin, the parallel action technique of Griffith, and the theory of the shot as the "inflexible letter of the alphabet."⁸ Eisenstein wrote in 1929:

The shot is by no means an element of montage.

The shot is a montage cell.

Just as cells in their division form a phenomenon of another order, the organism or embryo, so, on the other side of the dialectical leap from the shot, there is montage.

By what, then, is montage characterized and, consequently, its cell—the shot?

By collision. By the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other. By conflict. By collision.

In front of me lies a crumpled yellowed sheet of paper. On it is a mysterious note: 'Linkage—P' and 'Collision—E.'

This is a substantial trace of a heated bout on the subject of montage between P (Pudovkin) and E (myself).⁹

Eisenstein goes further, however, and in the evolution of his theoretical research comes to consider the form of montage as the structure of the image, and the montage itself as the "law of the structure of the object."¹⁰ The programmed discontinuity of the "montage of attractions" and in general the entire shock treatment on which the historical avant-gardes—from futurism to the FEKS [Factory of the Eccentric Actor]—had been based are supplanted by an entirely structural consideration of the work, where basically what is restored is the concept and the value of the *text*. To questions relative to his personal appropriation, through intellectual work, of the ideology, neopopulist and universalist at the same time, that accompanies the launching of the first two Soviet five-year plans, Eisenstein responds with his ambiguous synthesis of the avant-garde and realism. (Of course, when we refer here to "realism," we mean merely the recovery of the classic laws of structuring that restore to the work of art its *organicity*—its totalizing vision of history and of the world.)

It is thus interesting, for our purposes, to ascertain which avant-garde experiments Eisenstein seeks to retain as the most suited to his research in the 1930s and 1940s. The principle of montage had always been linked to the theme of activating the public.¹¹ But in the U.S.S.R. after 1928 the theme of the public was forced to rid itself of all generality and obliged to assume a specificity directly correlated to the new functions that the urban proletariat and the peasant masses in transformation were called upon to

perform within the limits provided by the regional economic plans. The crisis that Mayakovsky underwent was certainly influenced by the form—material and concrete—which ideology had assumed between 1924 and 1930. Nor was it possible to ignore that ideology, once admitted that intellectual work under the conditions dictated by the October Revolution was merely a response to a “social mandate.”¹²

For Eisenstein, the ideology of the public has to pass through the filter of a new representationalism. As early as 1934, he acknowledges his debt to the circus, the music hall, the fox trot, jazz, Chaplin: that is, to the materials already appropriated by futurism and the expressionist “left” as the foundation of a renewed rapport between aesthetic provocation and the public. But immediately afterward, Eisenstein himself warns that beneath “Harlequin’s parti-colored costume,” spread “first over the whole structure of the program, and finally into the very method of the whole production,” there exist even deeper roots in the tradition of nineteenth-century culture. He is speaking, no less, of the method of cross-cutting: the example he cites, not by chance, is the scene from *Madame Bovary* in which Flaubert alternates the speech of the orator in the square below with the dialogue between Emma and Rudolph.¹³ In Flaubert’s passage, Eisenstein sees

*[the interweaving of] two lines, thematically identical, equally trivial. The matter is sublimated to a monumental triviality, whose climax is reached through a continuation of this cross-cutting and word-play, with the significance always dependent on the juxtaposition of the two lines.*¹⁴

Precisely in the concept hidden by such an analysis lies the reason for Eisenstein’s interest in the *Carceri*. In Piranesi, in Flaubert, in the Leonardo of *The Deluge*, in El Greco, the Soviet director sees the synthesis of two opposites: on the one side, the experimentalism of the avant-garde and of formalism, which in these examples appears to be historically sanctioned; on the other, the confirmation of the character of the *totality* of the text, the salvation of its organicity, the permanence of the (dynamic) structuralism of form.

But this would seem to negate one of the basic affirmations of the historical avant-garde: the dissolution of form and the destruction of the very concept of the *work of art* in favor of a discontinuous montage of empty signs in opposition. The ambiguous autonomy of a similar linguistic system, after the early years of the Five-Year Plan, *no longer functions*; it does not stand up to a direct examination by the new public of a Russia imbued with the ideology of socialist work. It was not by chance that, before completely abandoning the constructivist legacy, architects such as Vesnin, Burov, and even adherents of the Vopra group (Alabyan and Mordvinov, primarily) would try to pass through the filter of the proletarian epic, certain formal structures hovering between neofuturism and “twentieth-century” metaphysics.

In effect, this is the same attempt made in the Soviet Union during 1934–37 by an architect such as André Lurçat—and which finds its fullest expression in the theories of Lukács. For Lukács, as for Lurçat or for Eisenstein, it is a question of pushing the bourgeois tradition of form to the most extreme limits.

In fact, only in a socialist society, where the organicity of the individual and that of the community find the complete realization denied to them by a bourgeois society, does the bourgeois tradition seem able to escape from the dilemma into which it had been forced by the nineteenth-century conflict between aspiration to totality and foundering in cosmic alienation.

It should be pointed out, however, that for Eisenstein, the formula of an “intellectual cinema” by no means signifies the negation of the internal dynamics of filmic construction. The organicity of the dynamics: departing from this tension, Eisenstein requires the “intellectual montage” to attract the spectator, in order to make the spectator participate in the dynamic process of constructing the image.

A specific reason, then, leads Eisenstein to analyze Piranesi’s work. In analyzing the structure of the *Invenzioni capricciose*, in fact, he draws particular attention to a unique conflict to be found in that work. The “crisis of the object,” hotly denounced by the eighteenth-century etcher for its distortions and spatial interpenetrations, corresponds to a conservation of the figurative character of the individual elements. Eisenstein writes:

One stone may have ‘moved off’ another stone, but it has retained its represented ‘stony’ concreteness [predmetnost]. A stone has hurled itself across into angular wooden rafters, but the represented ‘concreteness’ of both has been preserved untouched. . . . The concrete reality of perspective, the real representational quality of the objects themselves, is not destroyed anywhere.

Eisenstein perceptively discovers the *ambiguous dimension* attributed to objects by Piranesi, to the point of discerning in the *Carceri* an unanswered question regarding the destiny of the organicity of form: “a first leap—beyond the limits of the precise outline of objects engaged in the play of the geometrical forms composing them—and we have Cézanne. . . . A step further—and the blossoming of Picasso. The object—the pretext [*povod*]—has now disappeared.

From Piranesi to Picasso, by way of Cézanne: the continuity of the avant-garde is thus decisively affirmed. From the Piranesian crisis of the object to its disappearance, then. But Eisenstein goes further, for he is interested in mirroring in the origins of the avant-garde the crisis of the avant-garde itself and the “overcoming” of that crisis. It is not by accident that he inserts in his discourse a hasty attack on the architecture of constructivism, accusing it of having underestimated the specific role of the *image*. And thus *Guernica* will be the work in which, through its return to pathos, the avant-garde *becomes historic*, and in which Picasso transcends that completely subjective moment when

not knowing where to strike those responsible for the social disorder of the 'order of things,' he struck at the 'things' and the 'order' before suddenly regaining his sight in Guernica . . . and then seeing where and in what lay the evil and its 'initial cause.'

This reading of *Guernica* is of interest for the light it sheds on Eisenstein's evaluation of Piranesi's "anticipatory" work. Piranesi, too, like the cubist Picasso—seen by the director in a highly questionable destructive, dadaist light—upsets "the things" and "the order" because he cannot attack "the order of things" directly. But precisely this formal distortion, this twisting of canons, this "architecture as an extreme event" attracts Eisenstein's attention. Except that Eisenstein himself is then obliged to distill from this pathos the purely technical elements: note how he compares the "ascent to nowhere" of Piranesi's staircases to the repeated motif of Kerensky ascending in the film *October*. But note also how he compares the typical superimposition and interpenetration of the spaces in the *Carceri* to the construction of the shots in *The Old and the New* and *Ivan the Terrible*, in which a close-up of the actor, "exploded" beyond the space represented, is contrasted to the space of the "scenography as such." It is at this point that Eisenstein's dialectic, in its constant reshuffling of the cards of its theoretical discourse, cannot hide the inner aporias of the presumed political duties of the cinema.

Comparing Piranesi's method of composition to that found in the vertical landscapes of Chinese and Japanese painting, Eisenstein recognizes two different ways of dealing with the synthesis of opposites. In the case of Oriental art, he maintains that we have "a quietism which attempts to reconcile the opposition by means of the *dissolution of one into the other*." In Piranesi's case, however, we have the extreme aggravation of each of the juxtaposed terms, forced to "impale each other" and to carry to an extreme their destructive dynamism.

But once we have recognized in the red thread that connects the *Carceri* to *Guernica* this method of unduly forcing the contradictions, is such a comparison between formal pathos and ethical-political commitment still really justifiable in the Picasso "who had suddenly regained his sight?" To what degree is the subjectivism, invoked repeatedly in the study on Piranesi, really comparable to techniques of formal construction as rigorous as those of "intellectual montage" and the "counterpoint of sound"? After all, is not that obsessive structuring of formal oppositions, seen in Piranesian precedents, a highly integral part of the theories of Russian formalism?

Does not this use of Piranesi—or El Greco or Flaubert—to confirm the alliance between realism and the avant-garde appear at this point a highly equivocal procedure? These are precisely the questions that Eisenstein evades answering. Indeed, it can be said that his later essays, including the one on the *Carceri*, were written to avoid such questions.

We eventually discover, in fact, that the laborious search for historical antecedents capable of justifying the theoretical compromise between the

recovery of representational values and the autonomy of formal structures tends to validate the linguistic instruments characteristic of the avant-garde, even if Eisenstein is willing to recognize the anachronistic and utopian character of the avant-garde.

We must not, however, be misled by his self-criticism regarding the abstract character of "intellectual cinema." In the essay on the *Carceri*, it is evident that the route he traces from *Piranesi* to *Guernica* is in reality a closed circle. From *Guernica* he returns to the *Carceri*, to their infinite figurative potential, to their exaggerated emphasis on conflict, devastation, and *lapsus*; and not to this alone, because behind the *Carceri* is Eisenstein himself, with all of his linguistic baggage and arguing with himself.

The avant-garde, bereft of its utopian potential and of its ideology ready to reconquer the fullness of language, can only fall back on itself; it can only explore the stages of its own development. At best, it can recognize the ambiguity of its own origins.

This is exactly what happens at the moment in which Eisenstein "completes," by bringing it up to the present, the hermetic sequence of Piranesi's *Carceri*. The clash of forms "forced to impale each other" belongs both to Piranesi and to the Soviet director, who is searching for a historical continuity that will give a non-transient, institutional sense to his linguistic research.

The return to origins thus involves the discovery of the ambiguity of language. The formal distortions, the dialectic between order and chaos, the technique of estrangement are shown to be, in the transition from Piranesi to Eisenstein, merely "materials," and completely disposable ones at that.

It is difficult not to recall, in reading the passages in which Eisenstein likens his own film sequences to Piranesi's compositional method, Boris Eichenbaum's fundamental statement:

The everyday automatism of word-use leaves untapped a mass of acoustic, semantic, and syntactic nuances—precisely these find their application in literary art. Dance is constructed out of movements which do not take part in the ordinary processes of walking. If art does make use of the everyday, it uses it as material—in order to give it an unexpected interpretation or place it in a new context, in an explicitly deformed state (as in the grotesque).¹⁵

Eisenstein metaphorically declares his fidelity to the formalist ideology, choosing as his term of comparison Piranesi's "negative utopia," in other words, the first true expression of the "dialectic of the avant-garde." For this reason the reference to the engagement of the "antifascist" Picasso of *Guernica* introduces into the organization of Eisenstein's essay a clearly dissonant motif with respect to the line of his lucid argument. So much so that Eisenstein avoids answering the ultimate question: how does one justify, outside of strictly disciplinary considerations, the recourse to epos and pathos as specific elements of socialist realism?

In reality, the entire essay answers this question, even if in an elliptic fashion. The recourse to epos always expresses a nostalgia. Eisenstein, paralleling his own work to Piranesi's research and to the organic laws of the great nineteenth-century novel, reveals the object of his nostalgia: for him, realism, the heir of the avant-garde, looks backward, and stops to shed a tear for the heroic era of bourgeois ambiguity.

Appendix

Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms

by Sergei M. Eisenstein¹

I am sitting in a bright yellow room flooded with sunlight. It is the corner room of my apartment in Potylixia and one of its windows looks out on the village of Troitskoe-Golenishchevo. From here partisans, attacking the French "on the flank," once pursued the army of Napoleon's invaders from Moscow. (This provided the name for the whole region.)

Another window looks out on an empty field.

This field was once an apple orchard.

I dug up the apple orchard—

in 1938.

I cleared this square of orchard to make the battlefield for "The Battle on the Ice."

Here, that summer, after transforming the square into the ice-covered surface of Lake Chud, I went on recreating for a month, earlier hordes of invaders of the Russian land, the dog-knights of *Alexander Nevsky*.

Only recently the contour of the city of Moscow ended just beyond these windows,

And the house where I live was the last house inside the boundaries of the city of Moscow.

If a cucumber had dropped inadvertently out of the kitchen window, it might have dropped into . . . Moscow's suburbs.

Now the edges of the city have expanded, and the space between suburbs and city has moved far beyond my windows.

In 1941 the German invader was not permitted to come as far as this line and was detained somewhere without having rolled up to my yellow room

above the village of Troitska and the field of "The Battle on the Ice" looking with its windows into the direction of Mozhaisk and Minsk.

Between the windows in the corner is a section of wall.

On the wall—is it.

It is the object of an aggressive hunt that went on for years.

I first saw it in the form of a reproduction in a small book (thicker than it was wide) on the history of theater design: Giulio Ferrari, *La Scenografia* (Milan, 1902) from the library of the former theater of S. I. Zimin.

It is a Piranesi etching.

It is part of the series *Opere varie di Architettura*,

And it is called *Carcere oscura*.

It is thought to have been created under the influence of the etching "prison d'Amadis" of Daniel Marot. It far surpasses the prototype. And it is dated 1743.

Quite recently—only just now—I was able to acquire it.

As always—by means both strange and inscrutable.

By barter.

An exchange with a provincial museum.

The base of the museum's collection was an extravagant and unsystematic assortment of rare pieces gathered by some merchant who had often traveled abroad.

In his private residence a stuffed bear got along peacefully with a serving dish, terrible carved "Moors" with candle-sticks and pretty objects of very high quality: for example, several etchings by Piranesi.

In exchange went one Edelinck, one Hogarth, one Nanteuil and a charming Claude Méllane . . .

Perhaps it was too much.

But finally in return this and one other etching by Piranesi are now my property.

Neatly mounted, this property is separated from the canary-yellow walls by its expressive burnt sienna colored coffee stains.

I am a long-standing admirer of the architectural frenzies of Piranesi's *Carceri*.

But more of an enthusiast than a connoisseur.

Therefore I always assigned this etching that I like so much to the series *Invenzioni capricciose di carceri*, known in two variants, 1745 and 1761–65, and not to the earlier series *Opere varie*.

I am now looking at this etching on my wall,

And for the first time I am struck, despite its amazing perfection, by the degree of its balanced . . . gentleness. Probably because the impressions produced by the originals of the later *Carceri*, as I viewed them for the first time, are still fresh, it seems unexpectedly harmless, with little feeling.

Unecstatic . . .

And now, while looking at the etching and mentally analyzing the methods of producing "an ecstatic effect," I involuntarily begin to apply them to this etching.

I ponder over what would happen to this etching if it were brought to a state of ecstasy, if it were brought out of itself.

As a whole. With all its elements . . .

I admit that this experiment on Piranesi preceded what was similarly described above and performed on El Greco,

And both experiments were presented here in "historical" sequence of their origin not merely with the aim of maintaining the progressive sequence (actor-painter-architect) according to the motives stated above.

In order to make a clearer exposition of what I worked out in my mind, let me introduce here a reproduction of the etching and put a diagram of it right next to it. I will number the basic elements and distinctive features of the etching in the diagram.

Now—step by step, element by element—we will explode them one after another.

We have already done this once with El Greco's painting.

Therefore this operation is now simpler, more familiar, and demands less time and space.

Ten explosions will be enough to "transform" ecstatically this diagram that has been drawn in front of our eyes.

However, it would be unfair to reject any type of emotional feeling in this initial etching.

Otherwise—what is the source of the great fascination this etching holds for me, an etching that I got to know before coming upon the savage exuberance of the *Carceri* of the principal series?

But if there is any "going out of oneself" here in this etching, it is realized not as an explosion, but as . . . dissolution,

And—not of forms, but only of the system of the expressive means,

And therefore instead of frenzy and a strong impression of fury, there is a flowing lyrical "mood."

It is in just this spirit, for example, that Albert Giesecke writes about this etching in his work on Piranesi:²

"The etching *Carcere oscura* is daring and yet restrained [*befangen im Vortrag*] in its presentation of the material. . . . The luminous and airy perspectives go even farther here . . . [compared to the other etchings of the series] a soft, silvery light, so much loved by the Venetians, streams down from above into this airy chamber and is lost in the process of self-dissolution [*Auflösung*], and the picture itself spills over tenderly in rivulets of separate strokes. . . . "

I would add to this that the vaults extend and stretch upward to the degree that the dark mass at the bottom, gradually becoming illuminated, flows into the vaulted heights flooded with light . . .

But let us return to the technique of the explosion.

In order to do this let us enumerate the basic elements of the etching:

A the general arch enclosing the whole design.

a_1 and a_2 its side walls.

B and C the arches that serve as the principal supports of the architectural composition as a whole.

D a system of angular arches that thrust into the depths, a system that at its farthest point abuts the wall with the barred window.

E a staircase ascending into the depths of the columns.

F, F_1 ropes marking the center of the composition (F) and emphasizing the composition's movement into the depths (F_1).

G the round window over the "*zaválinka*."

H the firmly placed stone tiles of the floor.

J the heavy rise of stone blocks in the severe vertical columns.

m_1 and m_2 little balconies to the right and left near the columns in the foreground.

Now let us attempt to give free reign to the ecstatic violence of the whole, and we will then see that what must occur—and would occur—for this to happen to all elements of the composition.

In the first place, of course, the arch A, enclosing the engraving, explodes.

Its upper semicircle of stone flies out beyond the borders of the etching.

If you like—from a semicircle it becomes . . . polygonal.

From stone—to wood.

The intersection of wooden rafters—replacing the stone arch—allows the arch to "leap" simultaneously out of material and form.

Under the pressure of temperament, the space of the etching included between the columns, a_1 and a_2 "is hurled" beyond these limits.

Columns a_1 and a_2 , abandoning their framing role, “exploding” inside the etching, and the etching, after expanding beyond their limits, “leaps” out of the vertical format—into the horizontal (we can remember a similar leap of format into the opposite—but from the horizontal to the vertical—in the example of El Greco!).

The arches B and B_1 are also not lacking in this tendency to explode. From the arches A and C, which flew completely into bits, these arches can undergo an “explosion” *within their own form*; that is, having retained the “idea” of an arch, they can be modified into something opposite in character.

Under these conditions what will such a qualitative leap within the form of the arch be like?

A leap from a semicircular arch—into an arrow-shaped arch.

Moreover, this can be a leap from a single-bay arch into a two-bay arch of the vertical type.

Such a form would have been particularly appropriate, since in his actual design there is already the image of an arrow-shaped upper arch N, which seems to have burst out of the bay with the flat overhead M and the two-cornered outline p–q that was hurled into the triangle x–y–z, as if in this drawing a trace of the process that occurred in the case of the entire arch A was retained.

Rushing down forward and moving off into the depths from column a_1 on downward, the staircase, in its increasing explosion, displaces column a_1 standing in its path, hurls forward, but now no longer by only the one flight of stairs E, but like a stroke of lightning in zigzag fashion—E, E_1, E_2 —hurls *forward* to the maximum possible extent. And this maximum extent turns out to be a thrust beyond the limits of the contours of the etching. In exactly the same way, the system of arches D, while increasing its tendency to plunge *into the depths*, in the course of having changed the angular contour into a semicircular one breaks with its thrust through this enclosing wall with the barred window and whirls off somewhere in the direction of a general point of descent, which in turn, in contrast to the way it appeared in the initial etching, turns out to be somewhere not between the upper and lower edge of the etching, but beyond its limits not only on the right, but also *downward*; and following this example, the solid foundation of the floor (so clearly visible in the first state and which in the second disappears somewhere in the depths outside the frame in its new ecstatic form) vanishes with a roar.

The broken balconies m_1 and m_2 on the foreground columns a_1 and a_2 throw themselves toward each other, become a single bridge, and this bridge remains not as balconies in front of the arch encircling D, but undoubtedly rushes beyond it—into the depths and perhaps upward.

The severe shape of the piled stone breaks apart.

The round window *c* is transformed into a square and turns into a flat plane perpendicular to it.

And finally, breaking loose from the central line (which is drawn so distinctly), the ropes and blocks explode into those parts of the etching that were not even in the first, vertical, state of the plate!

And as though picking up their signal, all the other elements are caught up by the whirlwind;

And "all swept up by the powerful hurricane" as though they resound from the etching, which has lost its self-enclosed quality and "calm" in the name of the frenzied uproar . . .

And now in our imagination we have before us, in place of the modest, lyrically meek engraving *Carcere oscura*, a whirlwind, as in a hurricane, dashing in all directions: ropes, runaway staircases, exploding arches, stone blocks breaking away from each other . . .

The scheme of this new ecstatic form of the etching slips into your imagination before your very eyes. Our eyes now slide along the yellow wall.

Now they slip out beyond the limits of the margins of the first sheet.

Now they slip past the other example of uproar hanging between the window and the door, *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Callot . . .

And now they stop unexpectedly on the second etching of Piranesi, which has come to me from that same remote source, the canopy formed from those carved figures of Moors with candlesticks, a bear with a tray, and the second-rate Japanese bronze bric-à-brac.

To where did the scheme that had just been before our eyes suddenly disappear?

I cannot understand it.

Apparently the scheme . . . has now crept into this second etching of the incomparable Giovanni Batista,

And so it has!

The "miracle" of El Greco—has been repeated!

The scheme that we devised—turns out to actually exist.

Namely it lies at the basis of Piranesi's second etching.

It was thus actually necessary that among everything else in the bundle, beside the *Carcere oscura*, of all the possible etchings by Piranesi the late merchant Maecenas brought this very one from Italy.

So that in the form of an exchange it would fall into my hands as the second etching.

So that framed, they would both hang on the yellow wall of my room,

And so that, having torn myself away from the first etching, my eyes, with the imagined scheme before me, would stop on this very one after having cast, like an invisible net, this imaginary scheme of the transformed first etching onto the second.

In any case, Piranesi's second etching is actually the first one exploding in ecstatic flight.

Here it is.

Try to dispute it!

Let us quickly review its devices.

They coincide down to the last detail with what we hypothetically sketched above.

After this we find we have little in common with the general remarks by Benois on the ecstasy of Piranesi.

(Moreover, we discovered Benois's words only many years after the spontaneous "illumination" that resulted from the comparison of the two etchings.)

The dates of the etchings interest us.

The biographical continuity that links them.

The place of the *Carceri* in the general biography of Piranesi's work.

The stages of their creation.

The chorus of enthusiasm accompanying them.

The personality of the enthusiasts.

The nature of architectural fantasies in which one system of visions is transformed into others; where some planes, opening up to infinity behind each other, carry the eye into unknown depths, and the staircases, ledge by ledge, extend to the heavens, or in a reverse cascade of these same ledges, rush downward.

Actually the ecstatic image of a staircase hurling across from one world to the next, from heaven to earth, is already familiar to us from the Biblical legend of Jacob's dream, and the emotional image of the elemental head-long descent of human masses down the Odessa staircase, stretching to the sky, is familiar to us from our own *opus*.

The *Carcere oscura* is known as the restrained forerunner of the most celebrated *Carceri*.

The *Carcere oscura* is only a distant peal of thunder, out of the entrails of the 1743 series, which have quite a different resonance.

Two years later this distant peal explodes with a real thunderbolt.

During those years there occurs in Piranesi's mind and feelings one of those explosions, one of those inner "cataclysms" that can transfigure

man, shaking his spiritual structure, his world outlook, and his attitude toward reality. One of those psychic leaps that “suddenly” “instantly,” unexpected and unforeseen, raises man above his equals to the heights of a true creator capable of extracting from his soul images of unprecedented power, which with unremitting strength burn the hearts of men.

Some interpret the *Carceri* as visions of the delirium of an archaeologist who had imbibed too deeply the terrible romanticism of the gigantic ruins of Rome’s former grandeur. Others have attempted to see in them the image of a persecution mania from which the artist began to suffer at this time.

But I think that in the interval transpiring during these several years, what happened to Piranesi is that same instantaneous illumination of “genius” that we noted above in Balzac and about which P. I. [Tchaikovsky] has written so clearly concerning another musical genius—Glinka.

On 27 June 1888 Tchaikovsky notes in his diary:

“An unprecedented, extraordinary phenomenon in the field of art.

A dilettante who played now on the violin, now on the piano; having composed totally colorless quadrilles, fantasies on fashionable Italian themes, having tested himself both in serious forms (the quartet, sextet) and in romances, not having written anything except in the banal taste of the thirties, suddenly in his thirty-fourth year composes an opera that in genius, range, novelty, and irreproachable technique stands alongside the greatest and most profound that can only exist in art? . . . Sometimes I am alarmed simply to the point of a nightmare by the problem of how such a colossal artistic force could coexist with such banality and in such a manner, that after having been a colorless dilettante for so long, Glinka suddenly in one step arrives at the level (yes! at the level!) of Mozart, Beethoven, or whomever you please. . . .

And indeed there was no model of any kind; there were no precedents in Mozart or Gluck or in any of the masters. It is striking, amazing! . . .

Yes! *Glinka* is a real creative genius. . . .”

One must realize, of course, that in this “sudden moment,” everything immediately and instantaneously “burst out,” everything that in bits and pieces had been accumulated and assembled grain by grain in the “banal,” the insignificant, and the “dilettantish” so that in *Ruslan* it all burst out as a complete, organic unity of individual genius.

But what is particularly striking is its total correspondence with what happened to Piranesi between the series *Vedute varie* and the *Carceri*.

Actually the *Carceri* stand almost at the beginning of Piranesi’s creative path.

Everything that had been done until then has almost no real independent value. (With the exception of two or three of the *Capricci*.)

And even those different groups of etchings created by Piranesi before the *Carceri* did not compose independent series; but later the majority of them became part of the series of architectural panoramas of 1750.

As we can see, the “divine word” of ecstasy touches Piranesi at a relatively early stage of his creative work,

And the blinding flash of the *Carceri* seems to retain its own reflection and transmit its beams, filling with poetic inspiration not only the picturesque-ness of the ruins of former Rome, which in such inspired abundance emerge from under his stylus, but also the more prosaic *vedute* of the public constructions of his contemporary city.

Out of this flame that burns without extinction through all his work, fifteen or twenty years later there comes from his hand a new, more profound, even more perfect state of these same etchings, whose amplified redrawing reinforces their unrestrained, elemental grandeur. (We should recall how many times El Greco repainted one and the same theme in different variants, while continuing to perfect their inner spirituality!)

Even here there is a correspondence to El Greco!

But in El Greco it is more than that.

The year 1745, after the first rough draft of 1743, brings forth the series of *Carceri* in their first state.

Giesecke calls them, and correctly so, imitating Goethe’s *Ur-Faust*—the “Ur-*Carceri*.” (The earliest and original *Faust* is the first state of *Faust*; the earliest and original *Carceri* is the first state of the *Carceri* series.)

Correct and apropos because in the case of Goethe, at the same time as the *Ur-Faust* (1770–1775), comes the *Faust* proper (1770–1806) in its place,

And in its place, the second state of *Faust* (1773–1832).

In the same way, in place of the first state of the *Carceri*, fifteen to twenty years later there appears the second state, which is unchanged in composition but redrawn and retouched, and, from the technical point of view of “etchings,” is unimproved; but from the point of view of figurative ecstatic revelation it is even more profound and graphic. And this is followed by the third state of the *Carceri*, the inner self-explosion.

True . . . no longer the work of Piranesi himself.

Beyond the limits of his biography.

Even beyond the limits of his country and epoch.

One hundred years later.

And not on the soil of Italy, but of Spain.

But nevertheless along the same line.

And by a step that begins from the point to which Piranesi’s raging spirit propelled the volume and space of his conceptions.

These three phases, continuously raising the intensity of their plastic conceptions, seem to repeat the development of the conception of Goethe's *Faust* by sudden jolts, from a sketchy beginning to its apocalyptic conclusion.

The *Carcere oscura* has here played a role similar to that of the medieval *Faust* (which also served Christopher Marlowe in 1588) as a purely thematic vehicle for Goethe's future philosophical conceptions.

They also repeat "literally" the same path taken by El Greco's *Purification of the Temple* from the stage of depicting "an everyday Biblical scene"—which is the level of *Carcere oscura*—to the emotional dramatic effect of the intermediate variants of the composition—the "Ur-Carceri" (1745)—to the ecstatic last variant—the *Carceri* (1760–66).

Is it possible to go even further?

And is it possible, after a relatively short first stage with its dissolution of forms, to foresee and discover through the second stage—which is already exploding the very objects of depiction, and this occurring in two jolts, increasing the disintegration of forms and thrust of elements both back into the depths as well as forward (by a method of extensions of the foreground)—one more "leap," one more "explosion," one more "spurt" beyond the limits and dimensions and thus, apparently, the "norm" that in the last variant of *Carceri* exploded completely?

Is this last leap possible?

And where, in what area of representation should one look for it?

In the *Carcere oscura* the concreteness is retained while the means of representation "fly apart": the line disintegrates into a cascade of tiny strokes:³ the flatness of form, softened by light, flows into space, the preciseness of facets is absorbed in the fluid contours of form.

In the *Invenzioni capricciosi*, given these same means of expression (true, at a somewhat higher level of intensity), the concreteness has also by this time "flown apart."

To put it more precisely—the objects as physical elements of the representation itself have flown apart.

But the represented concreteness of the elements has not been modified by this.

One stone may have "moved off" another stone, but it has retained its represented "stony" concreteness.

A stone vault has hurled itself across into angular wooden rafters, but the represented "concreteness" of both has been preserved untouched.

These were "in themselves" real stone arches, wooden beams realistic "in themselves."

The accumulation of perspective moves into the distance, borders on the madness of narcotic visions (about this, see below), but each link of these totally dizzy perspectives is "in itself" quite naturalistic.

The concrete reality of perspective, the real representational quality of the objects themselves, is not destroyed anywhere.

The madness consists only in the piling up, in the juxtapositions that explode the very foundation of the objects' customary "possibility," a madness that groups objects into a system of arches that "go out of themselves" in sequence, ejecting new arches from their bowels; a system of staircases exploding in a flight of new passages of staircases; a system of vaults that continue their leaps from each other into eternity.

Now it is clear what the next stage will (or should) be.

What is left to explode—is the concreteness. A stone is no longer a stone, but a system of intersecting angles and planes in whose play the geometrical basis of its forms explodes.

Out of the semicircular outlines of vaults and arches explode the semicircles of their structural design.

Complex columns disintegrate into primary cubes and cylinders, out of whose interdependence arises the concrete semblance of elements of architecture and nature.

The play of chiaroscuro—the collision of luminescent projections with the ruins of gaping darkness between them—changes into independent spots no longer of light and dark, but of corporeally applied dark and light colors (precise colors, and not a range of "tones").

Can this all really be in Piranesi's etchings?

No, not within the limits of the etchings.

But beyond them.

Not in the work of Piranesi.

But beyond their limits.

A leap beyond the limits of this *opus*.

And in the category of cannonades of directions and schools bursting out of each other.

And in the first place, beyond the canon of Realism in the form in which it is popularly interpreted.

A first leap—beyond the limits of the precise outline of objects engaged in the play of the geometrical forms composing them—and we have Cézanne.

A connection with the object is still perceptible.

Next—the young Picasso, Gleizes, Metzinger.

A step further—and the blossoming of Picasso.

The object—"the pretext"—has now disappeared.

It has already dissolved and disappeared.

It exploded into lines and elements, which by fragments and "stage wings" (the legacy of Piranesi) construct a world of new spaces, volumes, and their interrelationships.

Leftists of the arts and . . . ecstasy.

Picasso and ecstasy?

Picasso and . . . pathos?

Whoever has seen *Guernica* would be less surprised at such an assertion.

The Germans, while looking at *Guernica*, asked its author: "You did this?"

And proudly the painter replied: "No—you did!"

And it would probably be difficult to find—with the exception of Goya's *Horrors of War*—a more complete and more heartrending expression of the inner tragic dynamics of human destruction.

But it is interesting that even along the paths to what appear here as a burst of social indignation by the militant Spaniard, the connection between Picasso and ecstasy has been noted in relation to his actual method in even earlier stages of his work.

There the ecstatic explosion did not yet coincide with the revolutionary essence of the theme.

And it was not from the theme that the explosion was born.

There, like a single elephant in a china shop, Picasso trampled and smashed completely only the "cosmically established order of things so hateful to him" as such.

Not knowing where to strike out, who was guilty of the social disorder of the "order of things," he struck at "the things" and "the order" before "gaining sight" momentarily in *Guernica* and seeing where and in what lay the disharmony and the "initial cause."

Thus, curiously enough, even before *Guernica* Picasso was included in the category of "mystics" by, for example, Burger (*Cézanne and Hodler*).

And this was because of signs . . . of ecstasy.⁴

But in Picasso's *Guernica* the leap is accomplished from an unconcretized, ecstatic "protest" into the emotion of a revolutionary challenge to the Fascism crushing Spain.

And Picasso himself was in the ranks of the Communist Party.⁵

The fate of the majority of others is different.

Their insides are not familiar with ecstatic explosions. For their insides have not been burned by passion.

Their insides were not scorched by the flame of an overwhelming idea.

And by the very loftiest of all possible ideas—the idea of social protest.

By the fire of battle.

By the flame of the recreation of the world.

They are not shaken by inner thunderous peals of indignation.

In their souls there do not gleam serpentine thunderbolts of wrath.

They do not blaze with a white fire in which the service to an idea flares up in action.

And few are those who know ecstasy within their own creations.

An ideological impulse is lacking.

And there is no passion of creation.

And in the scheme of ecstasy they are like separate links of a single historical chain of the leaping movement of art as a whole, and there is lacking in their personal biographies those very grand leaps and bursts beyond the frame of the newer and newer limits that overflow in the life paths of El Greco and Piranesi, Zola and Whitman, Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy.

Even if they no longer burn with a mere nuance of a flame.

Even if the fires of their burning do not reach the degree of the flame of social protest.

But they all are devoured by ideas more valuable for them than life itself.

And only such ideas.

Only the obsession of such ideas.

Only self-dissolution and self-immolation in the service of what is capable of engendering passion.

Only in such a degree of incandescent obsession is ecstasy possible through uninterrupted leaps, of the expressive means of the artist; who is embraced by ideas like flames, who erupts with images like lava, who with the blood of his own heart nourishes his own creations . . .

However, after this flight of one's own feelings, which is somewhat unexpected on the pages of research, let us return once again and look at the various aspects of the phenomenon that interests us—in the work of the very same Piranesi.

Perhaps this would be a most appropriate moment to pause briefly at a strange appearance of ecstasy that for some reason is very often connected with visions of architectural images.

One of the greatest merits of architectural constructions and ensembles is considered to be the harmonic transition of some of their forms into others, as if some "overflowed" into others.

This is immediately perceptible in the most perfect specimens of architecture.

And the dynamics of these elements of construction overflowing into each other arouse that feeling of emotional captivity, that “non-concrete,” “non-representational” whole, that a truly harmonious building would represent for us.

The “non-concrete” and “non-representational” in the given case in no way removes from such an ensemble a very well-defined “figurative quality.”

And in this sense architecture in various epochs is expressive in different ways and, moreover, expresses a definite thought or idea in the most concrete sense of the word.

The very rhythm (and melody) of forms harmoniously overflowing into each other is a reflection, through the interrelationship of volumes and spaces and the construction of materials, of a certain prevailing image of social conceptions, and a completed building thus expresses and embodies the spiritual content of a builder-nation at a definite stage of its social and historical development.

(The mistake of so-called Left architecture—especially constructivist—consisted in the rejection of the “figurative” content of a building, which reduced it to a dependence on the utilitarian aims and the characteristics of the building materials.)

No less repulsive in its ideology is the architecture that substitutes for [the figurative content of a building] an eclectic reconstruction “in fragments” of elements taken from obsolete architectural epochs that, in their forms, express the ideology of other nations and social institutions of political varieties strange and alien to us.

If one compares the perfect transitions of architectural forms into each other in such different models as, let us say, the Hagia Sophia or Chartres Cathedral with a government building of the epoch of Nicholas I or with the façade of the Pitti Palace, then one is immediately struck by the basic difference of the rhythmic passage of the transition of one into the other that occurs in the process of the formation of a complete organic architectural unity.

And each of these models begins to speak with utmost figurative eloquence of its own epoch: of its system or its inner aspirations.

So expressive is the appearance of palaces of feudal lords who constructed a fortress in the center of the city—as a stronghold against a commune of too independent townspeople.

An image of absolutism frozen in its indestructible principles is the structure of buildings of the Nicholas era. The terrestrial emperor is a concrete and tangible “Tsar and God,” leaning on the bureaucrat and gendarme.

And on the other hand, the exalted “soaring” of the Middle Ages in Gothic churches that aspired to the abstract idealistic God of the mystics, for whom the Roman high priest—the Pope—did not succeed in substituting himself.

However, at the basis of all the historical differentiation of the architectural image in the composition of ensembles of various epochs, there always lies one and the same principle: the principle of the transition of separate parts of a work into one another, the principle of a harmony that resounds in different ways in different epochs.

It is on this second feature that we will now concentrate our attention.

On the various paths and crossroads of my journey toward cinematography I had to occupy myself for some time with architecture as well (at the Institute of Civil Engineers). I was just about to proceed with my projected work when the whirlwind of the Civil War swept me away and then did not return me to the drawing boards of architectural projects, but transferred me to the stage of the theatre, first as a designer, then as a theatre director, finally as a film director.

My experience as an architectural planner and theatre designer did not last long.

But long enough to grasp one extremely important feature of the actual process of the “creation” of spatial-volume constructions.

There is a good reason for calling architecture “frozen music” (*gefrorene Musik*—Goethe).

At the basis of the composition of an architectural ensemble, at the basis of the harmony of the piling up of its masses, in the establishment of the melody of future overflowings of its forms and subdivisions of its rhythmic articulations that provide harmony to the minting of its ensembles, lies that same unique “dance” which is at the basis of the creation of works of music, painting, and film montage.

The masses and the spatial caesuras between them the spots of light and the pits of darkness setting them off, the accumulation of forms growing out of each other, and the definitions of the general contours that run off in trills of details are all preceded by a preliminary sketch of spots, lines, and intersections that attempt to make fast on paper that flight of spatial visions which is condemned to become embodied in brick or stone, in iron or concrete, in glass and in the textural treatment of the walls of the finished construction.

At the basis of the architectural projection is the same excitement that from the degree of inspired obsession now pours over into flames of ecstasy—and dithyrambs of its visions are made secure in the choir of a cathedral frozen in stone, now by a sumptuous march step whose image for centuries has been embodied in the palatial and park structures of Versailles, and now, finally, is capable of dispersing itself in the artificial play

of the pipes of porcelain shepherds and shepherdesses who through their coquettish playing revive the atmosphere of the Trianon . . .

We are interested in the first case.

A case of extreme obsession.

A case when architecture is not yet analogous to salon conversation in stone, but is a unique stone "symbol of faith"—a passionate expression conveyed in stone of its ideological credo, whose ardor forces stone upon stone to pile up and in their aspiration toward the sky, to forget about their own weight, to fly by means of arrow-shaped arches suspended in the air, and moving apart the piers between them, to return into them along the surface of the stained-glass windows burning with multicolored fires.

It is difficult to find structures that more distinctly represent the embodiment of ecstasy frozen in stone than Gothic churches.

It is difficult to find buildings that by their structure alone are more capable of being "in tune" with the ecstatic harmony of one entering beneath their vaults.

A separate chapter would be needed to analyze the degree to which the structure and form of such a cathedral in all its features repeat that system of successive degrees of intensity erupting out of each other, the principle of going out of self and the transition into each other and the final merging into one of all the elements composing it when the vaults are shaken by the organ and the sun is streaming through the stained-glass window, etc., etc.

But we are also interested in the social-historical aspect of the form of a Gothic cathedral, about which a great deal has already been written, as well as in the internal prototype of it as an ecstatic vision.

And we are quite justified in suspecting such a psychological basis for it.

If at the initial source of this image there would have been no ecstatic state, then the image that had not been engendered by such a state would not be in a condition to function as a "prescription" that would induce the reader experiencing it to fall into a state of ecstasy by repeating it.

Tolstoy wrote about music in this way. (The shortest path of the direct transmission of the initial state of the author—to the listener.)

Thus waltz tempo is a copy of that state in which Johann Strauss's "soul danced," repeating in its movements the structure of this tempo in the finished waltz. One who is dancing participates in that same state in which the author was at the moment of the creation of the dance.

A rudimentary model of this same phenomenon can be found in the culture of ancient Mexico.

Here there are models not quite so grandiose and systematically developed by a system of canons as in the culture of the Gothic church. But it is just

because of this, probably, that everything is even clearer and more perceptible. Chimeras are solemnly enthroned in these cathedrals like the frightening visions of delirium.

Frightening are the thousands of figures encircling like a forest the structures of the Mexican's Asiatic peers, the Indian "gopurahs."⁶

But they (basically composed of separate natural phenomena: the head of an eagle over the breasts of a woman, a human body crowned by an elephant's head) are nothing in the horror they inspire to the ornamental monsters of ancient Mexico.

And here the monstrosity and frightening unexpectedness derives less from the combination of various frightening details that actually belong to various animals (just as Leonardo da Vinci composed "real" stuffed animals from unreal creatures) than from . . . the ornamental decomposition of visible objects of nature.

Your head literally whirls when you look at the treatment of the corner of the Nunnery in Uxmal,⁷ which has the form of a decomposed human profile, or at the serpent heads disintegrating into unbelievable irreconcilable confusion on the galleries behind the pyramid in Teotihuacan.

How simply and clearly are the split details composed back again "in reverse" into a bear: muzzle, eyes, paws, its back on a light blue rug of North American Indians.

How easy it is to recover the whole from this ornamental distribution done "by montage." And what dizziness actually overcomes you when a stone hook, protruding diagonally from a corner of the building, begins to be read as a nose, and deformed stone eyes must be sought by a system of separate carved stones on both sides of the corner, and the teeth of the lower part of the decoration of the building suddenly appear to be a system of monstrously deformed jaws.

The dizziness is the result of the constant sliding from the prototype-face into this system of fragmented details that lose their human features, and back again into a face, in an anguished attempt to reproduce the *process* through which one becomes the other, the initial one becomes the monstrous result and the monstrous result again—"in reverse"—becomes the initial one (without which it is impossible to "read" it, to understand, perceive, and include it into the system of representations peculiar to us), And . . . dizziness is not simply a turn of speech—it is what actually occurs.

For in the attempt to "enter" into the process of the genesis of these frenzied forms of ornamental arrangement of faces and heads (which actually become "frenzied" by the way the forms have been arranged), you enter into a system of the normal, standard process that engendered these modes of arrangement of forms that are inaccessible to a normal state of consciousness. . . .

De Quincey writes about the vision of similar architectural images found in states of exaltation and ecstasy in connection with . . . opium (*Confessions of an English Opium-eater*, 1821). (He calls his own addiction to opium a sickness.)

"In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds" (De Quincey, *Confessions*, ed. Richard Garnett [New York: White and Allen, 1885], p. 135).

Later he quotes Wordsworth, "a passage which describes, as an appearance actually beheld in the clouds, what in many of its circumstances I saw frequently in sleep" (p. 135).

In the same excerpt he pauses at the episode of the *uninterrupted* flow of architectural ensembles that piled up like thunder clouds: "the sublime circumstance—'battlements that on their *restless* fronts bore stars'—might have been copied from my architectural dreams, for it often occurred."

What has already been said above would have been enough to compare Piranesi's amazing architectural visions, which float into each other in terms of not only the uniqueness of their structure, but even their figurative system, to the reflection in concrete forms of the fantastic architecture of the author's ecstatic states.

However this is also confirmed by the fact the De Quincey actually uses Piranesi's own *Carceri* as the most precise correspondence to those architectural visions that capture him in states of exaltation under the influence of opium:

"Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever: Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) representing vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc., etc., expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.—

With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams" (p. 133).

We must not be disturbed by factual impreciseness of petty details.

The *Carceri* are called *Dreams*.

The movements of Piranesi himself along the staircases of his own fantasy—are invented.

An etching similar to the one described is not in the series *Carceri*.

But the fact that the flight of staircases reproduced the inner flight of the author himself is evident.

And it is not accidental that the mutual memory of the two poets—one about the etchings and the other the story about them—embodied this idea into a real image of the author of the etchings running along the staircases.

There is also no testimony of visions of any feverish delirium imprinted on these etchings. And the reflection in them of states of real exaltation—is nothing more than baseless conjecture. But even more basic is the mistaken definition of the halls as Gothic.

This is not so much a mistake as Piranesi's ecstasy caught very precisely, which through architectural form is expressed very fully in Gothic halls and cathedrals.

The scheme, the device, the formula or method is manifested very clearly when you see them applied not only in pure form, but in parody. Parody can be of two types.

Either what is parodied—"is raised to laughter"—is both the theme as well as its treatment. And then parody is an oblique attack on something.

Or parody is of method (device, formula, scheme). This arises when the object of scorn is not the "treatment," but the "theme." Then the means are in the hands of the author himself, and he applies them when, for example, in order to achieve persiflage, "the insignificant" is raised to heights of great emotion.

The application to "the insignificant" of a treatment normally applied to "the worthy and significant" in and of itself produces—by the lack of correspondence between the form and content of narration—a mocking and comic effect.

(Thus, for example, the comic "catalogues" of Rabelais, which "emotionalize" the trifles of everyday life in the childhood of the giant Gargantua, sound like a parody on Whitman.)

There is a similar case in my own practice.

It is interesting to note that such an example was inserted productively into a series of shots (when the production of *Old and New* was sus-

pended)—that is, in the middle of shots of the very film in which the problems of emotion were made more precise.

This “case” is one of the scenes from the film *October* (produced in 1927).

The scene is the ascent of Kerensky, the head of the pre-October Provisional Government, up the Jordan Staircase of the Winter Palace, which is treated as an ironic symbol of his rise to the summit of power.

The “trick” of this scene (and its ironic effect) consists in the fact that *one and the same* piece showing the ascent of the head of state up the marble staircase of the Winter Palace has been cemented together in succession “ad infinitum.” Of course, not really “ad infinitum,” but in the course of the four or five variants in which this same scene was shot, which during the actual shooting was intended to be a very luxurious and ironic episode; however, the episode is solved simply and “in an everyday fashion”—after ascending the staircase, Kerensky “democratically” shakes the hands of former tsarist footmen lined up on the top landing of the staircase.

Already in the course of montage there arose the idea of solving the sequence as a parody through the repetition of the shot showing the ascent up the staircase.

In any case, the same fragment showing the ascent is repeated four to five times.

Besides “the insignificance” of the object, the ironic effect was helped by the fact that to achieve emotion in the scheme of construction—where to produce ecstasy the transference (leap) from dimension to dimension, from piece to piece is absolutely necessary—here not only are there no “leaps” in quality, but not even a change in the sequence itself.

In one piece Kerensky climbs from the bottom to the top.

In the second—from the bottom to the top—up that same staircase.

In the third—from the bottom to the top.

In the fourth.

In the fifth.

This lack of a qualitative *crescendo* from piece to piece was emphasized by the fact that into the cutting of these pieces was included a crescendo of titles that cited the ranks of ever increasing importance by which this pre-October toady of the bourgeoisie was so obligingly covered.

“Minister of this,” “minister of that,” “president of the Council of Ministers,” “Chief of State.”

And the repetition of one and the same path in the representation in its turn “decreased” the crescendo of titles and ranks—lowered them to the level of that absurdity in the ascent “to nowhere” that the little legs of the high commander-in-chief, fettered by English-style leggings, beat up the marble stairs.

As we can see, through an essentially simple system of displacement the emotional rise of Piranesi from the visions of De Quincey–Coleridge was transformed into the ironic flight “in place” of Aleksander Fedorovich Kerensky.

“From the sublime to the ridiculous—in one step.”

Just as in the essence of the phenomenon, so in the principles of its compositional embodiment!

In any case, this example provides us with the realization of our basic principle from one more angle of possible perspectives. From the position of a parodic-ironic construction.

We have already spoken above about the “significance” and meaning of just those forms—architectural forms—pouring into each other, which belong to the system of the most stable objects of nature organized by man.

However let us turn back, for a moment, and once again compare what Piranesi does in his classical *Carceri* to what Giesecke calls the “Ur-Carceri.”

The similarity of these two states is particularly notable. In them we see everywhere one and the same technically composed device.

To the already existing states (see, for example, in Giesecke the reproductions of both states of the title sheet or the sheet of the powerful monumental staircase with armor, helmets, and standards at its feet) Piranesi invariably adds new foregrounds.

These new foregrounds in one step hurl ever deeper into the depths the spanning forms that thrust, plane after plane, ever backward.

Even without this, the actual composition of architectural ensembles is constructed on the basis of the uninterrupted reduction of repetitions of one and the same architectural motif, repetitions that seem to hurl out of each other (by perspective).

Like the tubes of a single telescope extending in length and diminishing in diameter, these diminishing arches engendered by the arches of a plane closer up, these flights of stairs ejecting progressively diminishing new flights of stairs upward, penetrate into the depths. Bridges engender new bridges. Columns new columns. And so on *ad infinitum*. As far as the eye can follow.

In raising the intensity of the etchings from state to state, Piranesi, in establishing new foregrounds, seems to thrust once again into the depths one measure deeper the entire figure created by him of successively deepening volumes and spaces connected and intersected by staircases.

Plane bursts from plane and by a system of explosions plunges ever deeper into the depths.

Or through a system of new foregrounds continuously arising, which by their displacement plunge forward from the etching, attacking the viewer.

Forward or into the depths? Here is it not all the same? And in this simultaneity of opposite aspirations—forward and into the depths—once again there is solemnly removed in ecstasy one more pair—a pair of opposites!

As we can see, this occurs not only in the scheme of a finished construction, but even in the method of the actual process of construction in which one plane “issues out of” another one.

One must pause for a moment here and say a few words about the significance of reduced perspective.

Their role in Piranesi is twofold.

In the first place, the usual role, illusory—spatial, that is, “drawing in” the eye toward an imagined depth of space that is represented according to the rules of how one is used to seeing distances as they diminish in actual reality.

But there is another—“in the second place.”

Perspectives in Piranesi are constructed quite uniquely.

And the basis of their uniqueness is their constant interruption and image of “leaping.”

Nowhere in the *Carceri* do we find an uninterrupted perspective view into the depths.

But everywhere the initial movement of deepening perspective is interrupted by a bridge, a column, an arch, a passage.

Each time behind such a column or semicircle of an arch the perspective movement is caught up again.

However, it is not in the same perspective mode but in a new one—usually in a much more reduced scale of representation than you would expect or might suggest.

This produces a double effect.

The first is a direct effect expressed in the fact that such reduced representation through the breach of an arch or from under a bridge, or between two columns, creates the illusion that what is represented in the depths is extremely remote.

But the other effect is even stronger.

We have already said that the scale of these new pieces of architectural space turns out to be different from the way the eye “expects” to see them.

In other words: the dimensions and movement of architectural elements that are directed, let us say, toward meeting an arch naturally define the scale of elements behind the arch while proceeding from the scale of elements in front of the arch. That is, the eye expects to see behind the arch

a continuation of the architectural theme in front of the arch, reduced normally according to the laws of perspective.

Instead through this arch another architectural motif meets the eye, and moreover—a motif taken in reduced perspective, approximately twice as large as the eye would suggest.

And as a result one feels as if the suggested arched construction “is exploding” out of its naturally suggested scale into a qualitatively different scale—into a scale of higher intensity (in the given case, the normally proposed movement into space is exploding “out of itself”).

This is the source of the unexpected qualitative leap in scale and space.

And the series of spatial movements into the depths cut off from each other by columns and arches is constructed like a succession of broken links of independent spaces strung out not in terms of a single, uninterrupted perspective, but as a sequence of collisions of spaces whose depth is of a qualitatively different intensity. (This effect is constructed on the capacity of our eye to continue by inertia a movement once it has been given. The collision of this “suggested” path of movement with another path substituted for it also produces the effect of a jolt. It is on the analogous ability of retaining imprints of a visual impression that the phenomenon of cinematic movement is built.)

It is very curious that certain aspects of Piranesi’s method correspond to the “vertical” landscapes . . . of Chinese and Japanese painting (*kakemono*).

Their scheme is like that represented in the sketch.

Here also a remarkable feeling of ascent is achieved.

But the character of this “ascent” is very different from Piranesi’s models.

If in Piranesi everything is dynamism, whirlwind, a furious tempo drawing one into the depths and inward, then here everything is a serene, solemn ascent toward the enlightened heights.

But in their emotional effect both this and the other model exceed the limits of a common realistic effect.

The first does so—by passion.

The second—by enlightenment. It is as if the active aggressiveness of Western ecstasy were engraved in them (Spanish, Italian) in contrast to the ecstasy of the quietism of the East (India, China).

It is interesting to compare the difference in the means by which these effects are obtained, effects different in nature but equally ecstatic in regard to the “normal” order of things.

The attempt of the Italian is directed with all his might toward producing a three-dimensional body captured realistically from the flat surface of the plate.

The attempt of the Chinese is to make out of three-dimensional reality—a two-dimensional image of contemplation.

This is the source of the representational canons—the excessive perspective of the one and . . . the reverse perspective of the other.

What is common to both is the exact same sequential explosion of the uninterrupted representation that occurs.

In Piranesi the continuity of perspective is smashed by columns, arches, and bridges.

In Chu Chi-Kuei and Buson Essa⁸ the compactness of the representation simply explodes or “is motivated” by layers of clouds.

After each such explosion or letting in of a layer of clouds, the successive representation of an element of landscape (a mountain mass) is once again not given in the scale that would be dictated by an effect that would produce a sense of real distance.

However, in contrast to Piranesi, here the new element turns out to be unexpectedly reduced, but at the same time unexpectedly increased (also approximately twice!)

The volume of the object (the mountain ridge) also “goes out of itself” in respect to the suggested scale.

But this leap is not for the purpose of increasing the range between the normal perspective dimensions of details, but on the contrary, for the purpose of reducing this range.

According to the scheme it is obvious what occurs in both cases.

Let the real perspective reduction of the object AB at the point A_1 be expressed through A_1B_1 .

At this point Piranesi represents it in the dimension A_1C (thus $A_1C < A_1B_1$).

The jump between AB and A_1C is *greater* than the normal perspective interval $AB - A_1B_1$.

This is the reason the “bursts” are stronger, and the illusory feeling of depth greater, and the eye, carrying point A_1 to A_2 explodes into the depths.

The Chinese painter at this same point A_1 represents the object in the dimension A_1D (thus $A_1D > A_1B_1$).

The jump between AB and A_1D is *less* than the normal perspective interval $AB - A_1B_1$, and the eye, carrying A_1 to A_3 , extends it forward—to the flat plane.

As a result both cases produce an ecstatic effect that goes beyond the limits of the simple actual reflection of the appearance of phenomena.

But their character is different (opposite): one serves as an expression of the pantheistic quietism characteristic of the ecstatic contemplation of the East; the other expresses the "explosiveness" typical of "active" ecstasy—one of the tendencies of "Western" ecstasy. (This certainly does not mean that the East is unfamiliar with the fanatic ecstasy of the dervish or the Shashsei-Vashei,⁹ and Spain—the mystical ecstasies of St. John of the Holy Cross, or that the creations of Fra Beato Angelico do not correspond to the Bodhisattvas of India or the Mongol demons to the works of El Greco. This division is, of course, quite "conventional.")

Quietism tries to reconcile the opposition by means of the *dissolution of one into the other*. This is why the reduced range of the difference in dimensions repeats this process, returning and bringing the explosive leaps into one smooth, single flow.

The other type of ecstasy acts in a different way: while sharpening each of the contrasts to the maximum, it tries at the highest point of this tension to force them to *penetrate each other*, and through this it raises their reduced dynamism to the highest limits.

The present section of this work has been basically devoted to this type. Attention is drawn to quietism in another work of this collection—in "Non-indifferent Nature."

This method of capturing depth of space is very close to me in my own work on the shot.

It is interesting that this method is formulated more clearly in *Old and New*, and it finds its most extensive application in the scenery of *Ivan the Terrible*, where it also achieves the effect of the "enormity" of the chamber. I wrote about the meaning of these various scales in an extract of a paper on the Terrible in issues of *Izvestiia* [4 February 1945] in connection with the release of the first part of the film. And probably it is not accidental that I designated their size not by a static term, but by a dynamic one like "growing dimensions," vaults "rearing up," etc. Through this terminology I expressed the feeling created in them of the obsession and exaltation of the theme that the author achieved.

This method consists in the fact that "scenery as such" for my shots is never exhausted as a real "place of action."

Most of the time this "scenery as such" is like a "spot on the background" that penetrates an applied system of foregrounds, which are distributed endlessly "like stage wings" in front of it, driving this "scenery as such" farther and farther into the depths.

In my work scenery is unavoidably accompanied by the unlimited surface of the floor *in front of it*, which allows an unlimited advancement of separate details of the foreground, and these details consist of the following: transferred columns, parts of vaults, stoves, piers, or objects of everyday use.

The last point on this path is usually a close-up of the actor carried beyond all conceivable limits, over whose shoulder is all the space that can be outlined by the scenery with various modes of application, and nape of whose neck conceals that part of the studio that no longer can be fettered by applied details of a "place of action."

This "ecstatic" method of constructing the scenery according to the scheme . . . of a telescope is not limited in my work to the area of the visual and the plastic.

As other "schemes" of ecstatic construction, this also finds a place in the dramatic composition of my work.

If in terms of *Potemkin* and *The General Line* we have touched on the "transference into the opposite" in the course of the drama itself, and in *Old and New* the pivot of action consisted in a similar transport from "the old" into "the new," then in another case of epic-drama we are concerned with a pure scheme of the phases of the development of a historical subject hurling out of each other consecutively "like a crossbow."

It was exactly in this way that the scheme of the subject of the film about the Ferghana Canal was constructed, which Pyotr Pavlenko and I planned right after *Alexander Nevsky* but, unfortunately, was never realized. . . .



1. Giovanbattista Piranesi, *Carceri* (Prisons); plate IX (second state), etching. In G. Piranesi, *Carceri d'invenzione*, Rome, 1761.

Part Two

The Adventures of the
Avant-Garde: From the
Cabaret to the Metropolis

The Stage as "Virtual City": From Fuchs to the Totaltheater

In our "prologue in heaven," it is evident that the figure of Piranesi is merely a pretext that serves to fix a *beginning*. Nevertheless, the poetics of transgression of the eighteenth-century etcher really has the function of establishing a foundation. The historic leap that we propose in this and succeeding chapters needs no further justification than that of being a reflection on the continuity of the two great themes established by Piranesi: that relative to the limits of form and that of the violence done to the forms themselves.

But the Piranesian "voyages" and the cruel vicissitudes to which they subject the travelers also announce the theme of a new relationship between the subject and the public. The *Carceri* are theatres in which are staged the acrobatics performed by an apostate anxious to drag his own spectators into the universe of "virtuous wickedness."

It is this imaginary theatre that the historical avant-gardes drop into the real: from here it shall be necessary to start again, to reestablish the thread of our discourse.

*Whereas the other arts signify . . . , music, instead, exists; the signs of which it makes use are identical with its direct action. It represents the very voice of our soul: its ideality in time is thus perfectly founded and legitimate.*¹

Thus wrote Adolphe Appia in 1919. More than ten years earlier, Georg Fuchs had exalted the free expression of the human body as the basis of an antinaturalistic theatre rich in ritual suggestions: in 1901 Fuchs and Behrens had celebrated, in front of the Olbrich-designed house of Ernst Ludwig von Hessen, the mystical marriage of life and art, in the name of the crystalline *Sign*, the symbol of the sublimated fusion of actor-priests with an elite audience.² In those same years, György Lukács denounced the loss of the "tragic," the essence of the bourgeois theatre; while in

Vienna, Kraus condemned the theatre of Max Reinhardt for the sake of a full and realistic utilization of the means of mass communication.

Between the end of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth, the affirmation of the conventional worth of the spectacle, the problem of the reunification of the spectacle and the audience, as well as that of the overturning of artifice into real life, became part of an already well-established thematic, concerned with a profound reflection on the Wagnerian tradition and on Nietzschean thought. The theatre became the means for the recovery of a collective catharsis—for the recovery of a portion of unalienated space.

In 1909, however, Lukács defined the limits of this possible catharsis, recognizing, in a basic essay on the sociology of modern drama, a definite split between drama and theatre. He writes:

The fact is that there no longer exists a real mass corresponding to the mass sentiments that determine dramatic form. The true modern theatre can be imposed on the mass public only by arriving at a compromise. It sometimes happens, in fact, that the audience of today accepts even the essential, but only when it is presented to it together with other things: this audience is incapable of accepting the essential by itself. In Elizabethan times—not to mention the tragic age of the Greeks—this distinction did not exist, because then the individual dramas could have varying degrees of success while the essential of their intentions was and remained always the same.³

The obstacle singled out by Lukács to “an immediate effect on the masses” is a constant “process of intellectualization,”⁴ while the sign of this crisis is the appearance of the “drama-book.” In that process,

the purely individual effect supplants the general one, the differentiated effect the primitivistic one, the intimate and psychological the monumental one, the intellectualistic the sensitive one, the effect that acts little by little the one that acts with the vehemence of the immediate. . . .⁵

With these observations of Lukács in mind, it is not difficult to understand why Fuchs in his *Die Revolution des Theaters* (Revolution in the Theatre), also published in 1909—four years after his first theoretical work, *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft* (The Stage of the Future)—foresees a variation in the audience corresponding to the three typologies of Drama, Opera, and Variety, while the need to identify a “theatrical specific” leads him to condemn completely the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or “total artwork.” In 1900, Behrens wrote:

The theatre must not offer us the illusion of nature, but rather that of our superiority over it. It must not try to carry us from one reality to another, but rather to have us enter into the world of art by means of the symbols of our culture.⁶

For Behrens, this “entering into” is already a collective “projecting into”: the amphitheatre that contains the audience is set in opposition to a

stage that is deliberately neutral, Apollonian, a place for events having no reference to precise circumstances; the “festival of life and art” finds in the stage not only a point of caesura, but of suspension as well. The non-said becomes the condition for new communions. Fuchs also follows this line. He writes:

We have attempted to renounce the illusionism of the conventional Italian stage, to let the backdrop speak in its function as backdrop, and to develop dramatic movement in front of the backdrop, intentionally, in front of the backdrop that is, to approximate the laws of bas-relief, in which the principal figures are made to stand out clearly in the foreground, and there is added a background level without any effect of perspective, where only the outlines are suggested, merely to create an evocative impression.⁷

Are not we really confronted here by a revival of the motifs of the Elizabethan theatre coupled with those of the symbolist theatre? Is it perhaps Maeterlinck that Fuchs follows—that Maeterlinck who had stated that the “représentation d’un chef-d’oeuvre à l’aide des éléments accidentels et humaines est antinomique”?⁸ Certainly the marriage between soul and form presumes *renunciation* as the supreme means of representation. But is there not in Fuchs’s theory much of the ultimate sense of Riegl’s *Spättrömische Kunsterindustrie*? The law of the isolation of bodies *against a limit*; but the body itself is also a *limit*. What meaning can stressing its liberation have? A limit is not a boundary. And yet Fuchs was to write shortly after: “Drama is possible without words and without sound, without sets and without costumes, as pure rhythmic motion of the human body. The authentic provoker of the dramatic phenomenon is the actor.”⁹ This means that the true drama, the true “provocation,” is the body-limit hurling itself against its own boundaries in extreme solitude: in this struggle, in this forced *ex-expression*, the *Seele* [the soul] is called upon to reveal itself.

Max Littmann, who had collaborated with Fuchs on the sets for his first work, attempted to give architectural form to this hypothesis in the Künstler Theater in Munich—designing an amphitheatre and a tripartite stage with a mobile upper level—as well as in the Hoftheater in Weimar in 1908; but it was Erler, with his staging of *Faust* in Munich, who actually carried out the theatrical reform projected by Fuchs.¹⁰

Replacing a jumble of languages, then, are an anti-illusory setting and a glorification of the vaudeville artists—those “dramatic animals” that were able to win the battle against literature while preserving intact on the stage the “essential” value of drama. Thus for Fuchs as well as for Appia, the body, in the scenic space, acquires a semantic value, and is in itself the metaphor for that *essentiality* in which they, like Lukács, see the possibility of infinite transparencies.

The body “liberated” from music, capable of living the “voice of the soul,” is for Appia that of the Dalcroze dancer. In the face of his purifying action, no “incident” is permitted. The stage that contains that marriage of body and spirit will have to be silent: it will have to freeze itself in geo-

metries conquered by the "soul" and by its "interior time." The hallucinating bareness of Appia's scenes and the Olympian Grecian ones of Behrens thus respond to a plea for theatrical reform that was widespread in Europe at the beginning of this century. But it is Appia himself who wonders how this materialization of souls in space, this private ritual, can be translated into everyday behavior. "The fireside pours out into the street," he writes, "and street-life bursts in through our windows." And yet, in 1918, Appia had called for a "cathedral of the future," a "free space, capable of holding the most diverse manifestations of social and artistic life . . . , a place par excellence in which dramatic art will flourish, with or without spectators."¹¹

A striking analogy exists between the "cathedral of the future," foreseen by Appia and the one chosen as a symbol of utopian reunification in the name of the *Brüderlichkeit*, of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, and of the early Bauhaus. And yet, it is merely a formal analogy: that in the last sentence cited, Appia firmly declares that the spectators are superfluous seems rather to foreshadow the neo-avant-garde hallucinations of Yves Klein or, better—but we shall have to demonstrate it—the "metaphoric" theatres of Mies.

The impossible reconciliation between "the soul and the forms," pervades this search. But Appia's cathedral of the future is still a "form," in fact, a total form. Against the "fireside that pours out into the street," the metropolis, executioner of every "fireside," imposes itself as the only place of action: no "form" is any longer reconcilable with it. The theatrical place itself must dissolve into the city. In such a place, one can only celebrate the grotesque annihilation of the soul, or the equally grotesque attempt of the soul to reappropriate the objects in revolt. The place of the "grotesque," of the contradiction that is both pathetic and ridiculous at the same time, is the cabaret. In 1910 Kurt Hiller published in *Der Sturm* the manifesto of the Neopathetisches Cabaret, in which Nietzsche's Pan-like laughter is taken up as an instrument capable of "scattering the most highly serious bits of philosophy between popular songs and (cerebral) jokes."¹²

The expressionist, futurist, or dadaist cabaret is thus the crucible in which the metropolitan grotesque, the clash between objects in ebullition, is assumed and represented—even if only as a means of provoking the total introjection of the nothingness that runs through its formless structure.

It has been stated repeatedly that in the manifestos and experiments of the early futurist theatre one can find all the premises of the experiments of the European avant-garde theatre.¹³ In Marinetti's *Manifesto del teatro di varietà* (Manifesto of the Variety Theatre) of 1913 the destruction of scenic time and space serves to introduce the "shock technique," the exchange between the real and the artificial based on surprise; in 1915 Marinetti, together with Settinelli and Corra, proclaimed the principles of the Futurist Synthetic Theatre, emphasizing the irruption into the perfor-

mance "of the real that vibrates around us, bombarding us with hails of fragments of interconnected events, jammed together, confused, mixed-up, chaotic."

It is certain that the exaltation of the "synthesis of everything that humanity has up to now refined in its nerves to divert itself by laughing at material and moral grief," contained in the manifesto of 1913, represents a desecration that integrates the nostalgia for the future with a suppressed nostalgia for the past: Marinetti's *fisicofollia* [body-madness] certainly draws on Nietzsche's "gaiety" and on Bergson's "laughter," unconsciously translating Freud's observations on "jokes" into theatrical techniques. But while Fossati hits the mark in writing that for Marinetti that task of the theatre is to objectify hidden values that lie beyond everyday behavior and mental habits,¹⁴ it is also true that the instruments of surprise and bewilderment have a curious precedent in the baroque theorization of Sabbatini. In his *Pratica de fabbricar scene e machine né teatri* (On Constructing Scenery and Stage Machinery) published in Ravenna in 1638, Sabbatini writes:

Diverse tricks are commonly used. For example, an accomplice is planted in the back of the hall . . . and begins to create a disturbance with another person, also planted, or perhaps . . . they pretend to demolish some of the beams in the staircase, or with a few bars from a trumpet, drum, or other instrument, they distract the spectators' attention from the stage, and in those few seconds, the scenery is skillfully made to vanish, so that when the audience turns back to the stage, appeased once again, they gaze with wonder and delight at the new scenic devices before their eyes.

The authentic innovation of the avant-garde is thus the elimination of that "appeasement" characteristic of the baroque "peripeteia." Montage, mélange, and discarding are not, for Marinetti, pure and simple instruments, as they are for the dadaist theatre: they are rather ways of acting, as Bartolucci has recognized,¹⁵ "to the limits of behavior in life." But this representation-action "to the limit" still possesses an object of reference of its own, and is a long way from presenting itself as autonomous.

It is, in short, the metropolitan universe seen as a pure anarchic market, a flow of events without place or sense, that in the theatre come to be revealed and exalted. "Noise" is taken to be the dominant reality of that indomitable metropolis and its absurd mechanics; it can be exorcized only by Russolo's *intonarumori*, or "noise-intoners," by Pannaggi's mechanical puppets, by the infantile cruelty of Balla's scenes, by Depero's "plastic sound-effect complexes," and by Prampolini's polydimensional scenic space, in which the actor is considered, as by Craig and later Moholy-Nagy, to be a disturbing element.

Italian futurism thus furnishes a list of instruments and of problems, from which emerge the thematic of the grotesque; "the identification with the assassin" characteristic of the worship of the machine; the use of non-sense, of the "language of madness," placed next to a language of the dreariest banality. We are, here, on the inside of a totally formal percep-

tion of the new metropolitan universe. Not the domination of it: if anything, a mimesis, a “wanting to dominate because of *not* being able to.”

It was Hugo Ball, in the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, who assumed completely the Nietzschean “universal gaiety” as a means of destroying the “form that is in us.” The vitalism that shapes the first dadaist cabaret rushes toward the most absolute annihilation of the soul, toward the “yes” said to collective alienation, to the putting to death of values.¹⁶ Ball, Tzara, Janco, Arp, and Huelsenbeck are the sacrificing priests as well as the sacrificial victims of this death. Only the wind of global reification enters through the windows open onto the world; assailed by it, the intellectual discovers that the metropolitan “sickness” has infected him forever and that his sole duty is to have everyone witness his own decomposition. Between the laughter and the outrage of the good people of Zurich, Ball is made into a new saint, voluntarily transforming himself into a mannequin, showing, in moments of uncontrolled vitalism, the misery of any form not annihilated in the face of the flow of pure existence. Under the date of 12 June 1916 we find in Ball’s diary: “what we call Dada is foolery, foolery extracted from the emptiness in which all the higher problems are wrapped, a gladiator’s gesture, a game played with shabby remnants, a public execution of false morality.”¹⁷

converge in a repeated suicide, performed to teach the person who is willing and able to understand to *laugh at himself*. Note: it is the same teaching that Zarathustra gives to the “superior men.”

No one said, however, that that laugh would not be followed by a compulsion to repeat: in such a case it would give birth to a language of the man-thing. This is the road taken by Tzara in Paris, or that tried by Picasso, Cocteau, and Erik Satie in the *mise en scène* of *Parade*. In other words, the exorcism of chaos can reconstruct the theatre as an institution.

On the contrary, to bring back the provocative gesture to the exact spot where it originated—in the heart of the city—is the objective of the appearances of David Burlyuk and Mayakovsky, disguised as public buffoons, with painted faces, eccentric clothing, and a wooden spoon in their lapels. A 1913–14 cubist-futurist painting by Mayakovsky is explicit in this regard: the man-thing, a player on that dangerous stage that is the city, immerses himself in the sea of disordered objects to attempt the last possible synthesis with them.¹⁸ It was no accident that Mayakovsky entitled his first theatrical work *The Revolt of the Objects*. It was 1913, and in the face of this allegorical revolt, the poet could only take on the exaggerated tears of suffering humanity. But in 1918 *Misteriya-Buff* (Mystery-Bouffe) showed that in the country where socialism had been fully realized, things, animated, were reconciled with man—on the condition, however, that man be “impure.” There would have been no place for Appia’s aristocracy of spirit in the “promised land” of *Misteriya-Buff*.

And yet a subtle ambiguity pervades the experiments of Soviet scenography and avant-garde theatre in the early 1920s. Alexandra Ekster’s theatrical stagings of 1917–21 are still—like those of Tatlin for Khlebnikov’s *Zangezi*—chaotic assemblages of deformed and clashing geometric ob-

jects.¹⁹ In keeping with the experiments of the Berlin dada, these scenes explicitly portray the city as an anarchic heap of rubble and debris. Consider, for example, the sketch *The City* from 1918: Ekster's setting represents the same cosmic estrangement of Tatlin's counter-reliefs, of the eccentric decor of the Café Pittoresque by Yakulov, Tatlin, and Rodchenko (1917), and of the Mayakovsky painting cited above. The city is still the place of the anarchic collision of commodities.

A theatre made up of things in revolt was, on the other hand, also predicted by Schwitters in 1919:

The Merz stage knows only the fusing of all factors into a composite work. Materials for the stage set are all solid, liquid and gaseous bodies, such as white wall, man, barbed-wire entanglement, blue distance, light cone. . . . Objects will be allowed to move and revolve, and lines will be allowed to broaden into surfaces. . . . Take a dentist's drill, a meat grinder, a car-track scraper, take buses and pleasure cars, bicycles, tandems and their tires, also war-time ersatz tires and deform them. Take lights and deform them as brutally as you can. Make locomotives crash into one another, curtains and portières make threads of spider webs dance with window frames and break whimpering glass. Explode steam boilers to make railroad mist. Take petticoats and other kindred articles, shoes and false hair, also ice skates and throw them into place where they belong, and always at the right time. . . . Take in short everything from the hairnet of the high-class lady to the propeller of the S. S. Leviathan, always bearing in mind the dimensions required by the work. / Even people can be used. / People can even be tied to backdrops. / People can even appear actively, even in their everyday position, they can speak on two legs, even in sensible sentences.²⁰

An "antimechanical" theatrical machine, then. It is no coincidence that Kate Trauman Steinitz recalls an idea expressed either by Schwitters or by Arp: "The antimechanical machine has the function of being not functional."²¹

But from 1922 on, dating from Meyerhold's production of *Le cocu magnifique* (The Magnanimous Cuckold), with scenes and costumes by Popova, the dadaist priest-buffoon is transformed into a clown capable of a joyous reconciliation with a world represented as a "living machine," as the "gay science" incarnate. The constructivist theatre presents itself, from then on, as a model of a positive relationship between man and machine, but not because the cause of alienation has disappeared, but rather because alienation has become the rule. Meyerhold's biomechanics and the theatrical experiments that stem from it—from Ferdinandov's "metrorhythms," to Foregger's *Mastfor*, to the FEKS's eccentricity—are all based on the reconciliation between work and play.²²

"The art of the festival" is no longer just the destruction of old churches. Now it must penetrate into the interior of the productive processes, transform their forms, bring back to them a Dionysian liberation. To Meyerhold, planning and Taylorization meant establishing within work

the need for play. Only through a maximum of planning and mechanization (thus, only through a total alienation) can man-mass be dragged into a collective work-festival, liberated from the sacrificial rites of dadaism. But all this is still, and solely, "theatre." Certainly Meyerhold's objective is to create out of utopia the foundation of a new "construction of life." Nevertheless, theatrical constructivism can only celebrate its own separate-ness from the real: by definition, its pivotal point is the technique of *estrangement*. Not by chance do constructivist architects and painters pour into the theatre their yearning for a reconstruction of an urban universe totally planned, yet "liberated" from that same planning. The formless scenic machines of Ekster and the Vesnins for Tairov's theatre, of the Steinberg brothers for the 1923 open-air production in Moscow of Tretyakov's *Earth in Turmoil*, of Stepanova for *The Death of Tarelkin*, staged by Meyerhold in 1922, all present the spectator with the bare skeleton of a total world:²³ in it, circus, acrobatics, drama, and music hall tend to come together, while the actor—clown and acrobat, capable of a strict control over the eccentricity of his gestures and his gymnastic tightrope walking—is invited to compete with the peripeteia offered him by the scenic mechanism.

The domination of the body, the basis of the gymnastic spiritualism of Appia or Dalcroze, has been transformed into the ruthless precision of biomechanic acrobatics: the bath in the desacralized world of the futurist and dadaist puppet has had its effects.

And yet Meyerhold is extremely critical of Stepanova's scenery and costumes for *The Death of Tarelkin*. He utilizes Popova's scenic mechanism for *Le cocu magnifique* as an instrument for exalting through contrast the gestural semantics entrusted to the body alone; it is nothing but an ensemble of "utensils," as he calls them,²⁴ "for the purpose of showing . . . conventionality carried to its maximum degree, to its apogee, as our elementary school teachers used to say." The cruelty of Stepanova's "surprise machines," on the other hand, forces this dialectic: the body, trapped by them, is no longer free, and reveals its own imperfection. This may be similar to some of Dziga Vertov's theoretical positions, but it is opposed to the intentions of Meyerhold, who not coincidentally is equally polemical toward what he calls the "leftist extremism" of Ekster and of the Kamernyi Theatre directed by Tairov,²⁵ and who on the contrary augurs a renewal of the "bridge thrown up between the stage and the street" by Carlo Gozzi in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁶

With the Soviet experiments of the early 1920s, the theatre no longer goes into the city: that phase had reached its peak in the mass revolutionary festivals staged by Altman in 1918. Now it is the city that reenters the theatre, even if it is a city projected into the future and reduced to a skeleton. The biomechanic acrobat, master of "matter" (body and setting), is the prophet of a *society of total work*: the game is redirected into the flow of production, subjugated to it, "captured." Therefore the problem of the relationship between the representation of the work-game and real work has not disappeared; it has only been accentuated. The technique of

provocation is now forced to construct a true communicative structure, a *language of the gesture-sign*. The pure theatrical sign is “the attraction”; the formalist, cubist-futurist, or dadaist technique had already introduced the instrument of “montage.” At the school of Meyerhold, the young Eisenstein was to explore the extreme limit of this eccentric language—the “montage of attractions.”²⁷ While staging Ostrovsky’s *Enough Simplicity in Every Sage* at the Proletkult Theatre in 1923, Eisenstein attempted to violate the nervous energy of the audience: the spectacle is brought close to the spectator, in a kind of circus in which the extreme fragmentation of Ekster’s early set designs is translated into action. As in the contemporary productions of the FEKS, in Eisenstein’s *The Sage* the pirouettes of the clown alternated with gags inspired by the American cinema, the flights of acrobats, bits of films projected, and the sonic outbursts of an orchestra of noises.

The “montage of attractions” is aimed solely at the nerves of the audience; not by chance, at the end of the performance Eisenstein has fire-crackers go off under the orchestra seats. Note well: this pure nervous stimulation corresponds to what Simmel had recognized as the basis of the behavior of the metropolitan man. For Simmel, the metropolitan individual is subjected to an acute *Nervenleben*, caused by the bombardment of contradictory images, in the midst of a jumble of “things,” undifferentiated one from the other, all floating with the same specific gravity in the flux of the monetary economy.²⁸ The slogan that in 1923 Evreinov would launch is “theatricalize life.” The “attractions” of Meyerhold, Eisenstein, Kozintsev, and Trauberg, on the contrary, tend to concentrate the maximum of urban *Nervenleben* in actions that are the “double” of life. The hoped-for marriage between the real and the artificial is but one of the possible tricks of the imaginary circus with which the avant-garde tries to enchain its own restlessness.

Meyerhold, Mayakovsky, and Eisenstein do not hesitate to give a political significance to their experiments. The “new city” prophesied by their theatre is formed by a liberated and liberating technology. The technology itself can “speak”: this is what Lissitzky announces in 1921 with his project for the electromechanical peepshow *Victory Over the Sun*:

Nobody pays any attention to the magnificent spectacle in our streets, for every ‘somebody’ is in the play himself. . . . We instead are constructing on a square a stage, open and accessible on all sides, that is the machinery of the show. This stage offers the ‘bodies in play’ all the possibilities of movement. . . . The bodies themselves are each designed as occasion and volition demands. They glide, roll, float, on, in, and over the stage. All the parts of the stage and all the bodies are set in motion by means of electromechanical forces and devices, and the control center is in the hands of a single individual. . . . He directs the movements, the sound and the light. He switches on the radiomegaphone, and across the square re-sounds the deafening noise of railway stations, the rushing of Niagara Falls, the hammering of a rolling-mill.²⁹

A project of intensification of the new technological messages, then, which reduces the theatre to electromechanical acrobatics: compared to Lissitzky's project, Moholy-Nagy's proposals seem purely repetitive. Justly, Moholy-Nagy's theatrical poetics, expressed within the Bauhaus in dispute with both Lothar Schreyer and Schlemmer, has been linked to the screenplay of the film *Dynamic of a Great City*, written by Moholy-Nagy in 1921–22.³⁰

Regarding this subject, it is fitting to reflect upon the dialectic within the Mitteleuropean avant-gardes. If Moholy-Nagy's screenplay leads directly to Ruttmann's film *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), it is in direct contrast to another film project, that worked out in 1920 by Bruno Taut for the Glass Chain, *Die Galoschen des Glücks* (The Galoshes of Fortune), from a fable by Hans Christian Andersen. In *Dynamic of a Great City*, Moholy-Nagy's cinematic eye coldly explores the organizational capacity that the cinematographic apparatus can reveal once put into direct contact with the heterogeneous and manifold material offered by urban reality. In Taut's *Die Galoschen des Glücks*, the "miracle" intervenes to transform the desolate reality of post-World War I Germany and its humble protagonists into an architectural dream dominated by "luxuriant vegetables in stone and glass," crystalline landscapes, and "cities of fire" projected into distant futures free of all anguish.³¹

The utopia in the pure state of Taut is without a future, precisely because the future is its subject. That of Moholy-Nagy, by contrast, has a destiny of its own, inserting itself into the debate concerning the relationship between man and things, between actors and instruments. In a universe composed only of objects, the author must place himself "next to the other means of communication that are equivalent in worth to him": he must reduce even himself to a transmitter of pure information. In this sense, Lissitzky's *Victory Over the Sun* can be compared to Moholy-Nagy's *Score for Eccentric Mechanism for Variety Show* (1925). The technological miracle is focussed on the control of the parallel streams of information coming from different transmitters intersecting among one another (film, music, actions, etc.). Actually, this "intersection," freezing the provocative futurist and dadaist simultaneity, demonstrates that nonsense can acquire a new sense, if decodified according to proper parameters. The real problem, then, is to learn to absorb the "quantities of information" coming from a universe structured by polyvalent technological *media*. Not by chance, for Lissitzky, as for Moholy-Nagy and Dziga Vertov, is that universe *within itself communicating*.

"The *Theatre of Totality*," writes Moholy-Nagy,³² "must be, with its diversified interweaving of light, space, surface, form, movement, sound, man—with all the possibilities of variation and combination of these elements in turn—an artistic configuration: an ORGANISM." This type of *total theatre* no longer has anything in common with Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It relies on the primary means of the various instruments of communication; its intent is to give life to "a great dynamic-rhythmic

formal event, which gathers together, in a form reduced to the elementary, the most extensive heap of means, ricocheting off one another."

If desired, we can also cite a baroque precedent for the "theatre of totality," as we did for the futurist theatre of "surprise": the project for a total spectacle conceived by Leibniz, which combines in a single location theatrical performances, amusement parks, mechanical instruments, scientific "marvels," counterfeit objects, spaces of illusion.³³ The baroque *théâtre des machines* renders familiar the "ingenious machines"; the "total theatre" of the twentieth century has a similar task with respect to the socialization of the new productive universe.

"The most extensive heap of means, ricocheting off one another," creates an atonal polyphony whose elements are reduced to sign-forms. Are we not led back by this to the "montage of attractions"? Certain of Moholy-Nagy's "demonstrative photos," such as *The Benevolent Gentleman*, thoroughly confirm this. The metropolitan shock is thus made to flow into the sphere of a technique that makes it "act," that renders it productive, that constructs a specific language from it, once it has neutralized the paralyzing anguish that can only contemplate itself, insisting upon exposing the fragments of an "order" now lying in pieces. This occurs to such a degree that one is inevitably forced to question just what was, beyond the practical results, the real conflict, within the Bauhaus, between Moholy-Nagy and Oskar Schlemmer.

Schlemmer writes: "Everything that is mechanizable becomes mechanized. Result: the recognition of what is not mechanizable."³⁴ The theatre thus becomes a search for the unfillable interstices that constitute the cracks in the technological universe. Given the loss of the authentic, "in the name of the ludic and of the marvelous," the theatre can still occupy the entire domain that "lies between the religious cult and naïve popular entertainment," marking precisely the borders of legitimate meanings. Schlemmer is perfectly aware of the final consequences of the liberation of the stage from the "scandal" constituted by man:

*The absolute visual stage would, in theory, consist of a similar, kaleidoscopic game, infinitely variable. . . . Man, the animated element, would be banished from the visual sphere of this mechanical organism. He would instead be made the "sole operator" of the control board of the power station, from which he would govern the visual feast.*³⁵

However, to Schlemmer, this totality is mutilated, given that "in the meantime, man seeks the *Sense* . . ., his own reflection, the superman, or the fantastic force." The "working script" for *The Two Epic Figures*—which Schlemmer published in the fourth volume of the *Bauhausbücher* in 1925—dedicated to the theatre, illustrates this theory. Two monumental forms, grotesque personifications of lofty Values (Strength, Courage, Truth, Freedom, Law) occupy the entire stage, moving, like mechanized supermarionettes, with spare, grave gestures, in a dialogue alternately amplified or muffled.

Man moves and speaks, in the three-dimensional scene, extraneous to that superior and unattainable dialogue.³⁶ In his desire to “show” Values, Schlemmer is obliged to reify them. Man appears to be himself only if excluded from the sublimeness of their grotesque dialogue. Only after the law has been interiorized will that man himself assume the appearance of the marionette: in the *Triadic Ballet*, conceived in Stuttgart around 1910 and presented in its entirety in 1922 at the Landestheater in Stuttgart, and in 1923 at the Nationaltheater in Weimar during the Bauhaus Week, the three choreographic scenes—the first a light-hearted burlesque, the second ceremonious and solemn, the third a mystical fantasy on a black stage—are closely connected to the space created by the dancers, squeezed, as in *Parade* or in the productions of Panaggi or Ball, into confining costumes, which condition their movements. Thus the Law, interiorized, conditions, to the point at which the loss of the totality of being turns into an awareness of the varying degrees of freedom granted by that same Law. The obligatory movement, in fact, increases the intensity of the gesture.

The acceptance of the mask transforms the reified condition into a term of “probation”: the *only* liberty still attainable and able to show the possibility of a space of action in which the man who has learned to accept the conditioning of objects may find new ritual dimensions, in harmony with a geometric freezing of the real.

The theme of Hugo Ball and that of Meyerhold find a synthesis in Schlemmer. The “great yes” said to the reality that reduces man to a marionette “liberates” that same marionette. As well, in Schlemmer the audience is at the center of the theatrical action: in the exhausting movements of the dancers in the *Triadic Ballet*, the audience is called upon to recognize the limits of its own daily existence. And like Mayakovsky, Meyerhold, and Tairov, Schlemmer also resorts to the grotesque aspects of the circus to increase the pathos of his choreography. He himself defined his *Figural Cabinet I* (1922) as:

*Half sideshow, half metaphysical abstraction: a mixture, that is, an oscillation between sense and countersense, framed by means of color, form, nature and art, man and machine, acoustics and mechanics. The organization is everything, and the heterogeneous is the most difficult thing to organize.*³⁷

As in Meyerhold’s *Death of Tarelkin*, the difficulty of organization is here shown, revealed, translated into comedy that springs from the absurdity of an exaggerated objectualization:

The figures file past slowly: the ball, white, yellow, red, blue, moves; the ball becomes a pendulum; the pendulum swings; the clock runs. The character with the body shaped like a violin, the character dressed in light-colored checks, the conservative character, the “gentleman of class,” the gentleman of questionable class, the rosy young lady, the Turk. The bodies look for their heads, which move in opposite directions across the stage. There is a jerk, a blow, a little victory march, whenever a body and

*a head meet. . . . The gigantic hand orders: 'Stop!' The painted angel rises and trills tralala. . . .*³⁸

The spiritualism of Lothar Schreyer or pure Eccentricism are here surpassed. Schlemmer's marionette—taken back into the Bauhaus by Breuer and rendered banal by Kurt Schmidt—less denounces the loss of an initial unity, as in Ball, than gives an answer to the demand for meaning posed after the realization of the limits of mechanization. What Schlemmer questions in Moholy-Nagy is his eagerness to identify himself with the murderer. The influence of Heinrich von Kleist's *Theatre of Marionettes* is obvious. The total domination of the puppet had led Kleist to prophesize the disappearance of the last shred of the spirit, of consciousness. But Schlemmer's mannequin is, still like Kleist's, "that body which has either no consciousness at all or an infinite one," that is to say: "the marionette or the god."³⁹ Kleist wrote:

*Every movement has a center of gravity; it is sufficient to govern that center within the figure; the members, which are nothing but pendulums, will follow by themselves, in a completely mechanical manner. . . . This movement is very simple: every time that the center of gravity is moved in a straight line, the lines will trace curves, and often, when it is shaken in a casual way, the entire figure will begin a kind of rhythmic dancelike movement.*⁴⁰

The movement induced is simultaneously precise and casual: the marionette transforms the impulses imparted to it into gestures that possess the sublime indifference characteristic of divinities—that is, of "metaphysical essences"—frozen by the Angelus Novus of mechanization and displayed in their resulting grotesque appearance, exactly as in Schlemmer's *Two Epic Figures*. In the same way, the puppet of Kleist and of Schlemmer is but the metaphorical figure of abstract labor, the exaltation of which is denounced as "neopathetic," according to Hiller's definition. Appia's pure body, portrayed in flowing art nouveau style by Loïe Fuller, finds a final form in Schlemmer, having passed through the dadaist deformation, the biomechanical levitation of Meyerhold, and the eccentric acrobatics of Kozintsev and Trauberg.

Let us reflect further on the *Figural Cabinet*. The puppets and the paradoxical objects of that pantomime react only to shock effects, in a disjointed manner, through a montage of unforeseen effects. Their movement accentuates—to bring it to our consciousness—the metropolitan behavior described so effectively by Benjamin, and so perceptively linked by him to the dynamics of the assembly line.⁴¹ It is thus the space of the real city that is, for Schlemmer, "half sideshow, half metaphysical abstraction": a great spectacle for a new infancy of humanity and the exaltation of itself, and of its own ineffable reality.

The desire for synthesis, the Simmel-like nostalgia for a metropolitan totality recovered by means of the intellect, Schlemmer denounces as impossible.

In the *Figural Cabinet I*, "directing, gesticulating, telephoning, shooting himself in the head, the maestro, E. T. A. Hoffmann's Spallanzani, shouts and suffers a thousand deaths *because of his anxiety about the functionality of the functional.*" That this anxiety is diabolical Schlemmer himself shows in the variant to the *Figural Cabinet*. Here Hoffmann's Spallanzani is transformed into a demon who dances among metal figures "which shoot rapids, revolve, rattle, speak, or sing." For a theatre of this kind the place of action can only be a real one. There can be no separation between the space of the spectacle and the real space of living: pantomime is merely a "putting into form" of the real rapport between man and space within the technological universe.

But in that case, what is the meaning of the *U-Theatre* presented by Farkas Molnár in that same Bauhausbuch in 1925? The three stages of Molnár's theatre, separately mobile and partially accessible to the audience that surrounds the artificial space; the stage suspended and provided with a sound box; the cylindrical cable movable in every direction, a synthesis of lighting equipment and mechanical trapeze for aerial acrobatics; the auxiliary mechanisms for increasing the scenic effects (jets of water, perfume sprayers)—do they really constitute a machine suitable to the new theatre of the unexpected, or do they not tend rather to substitute themselves for it?

The problem arises again with the theatre projected in the Soviet Union for Meyerhold by Barkhin and Vakhtangov, and with the spatial scene planned by Lissitzky for the production of Tretyakov's *I Want a Child*. Even Max Reinhardt had asked Poelzig to adapt an old circus for his Grosses Schauspielhaus in Berlin. But the "mechanized circus" of Barkhin and Vakhtangov and the constructivist scenery design of Lissitzky break the ambiguous rapport between life space and the space of theatrical action tragically imposed by Marinetti's variety theatre, by the avant-garde cabaret, by the eccentric promenades of the *budetliane*, by feasts, and by Soviet propaganda decorations. Audience involvement, the spatial realization of the futurist desire to lead the eye of the spectator to the center of the stage, is now entrusted to a theatre-machine, a new institutional place.

This fact becomes still more evident when we examine the relationship between Gropius and Piscator. Gropius's *Totaltheater* emphatically overturns the *mise en scène*, mounted by Eisenstein for Tretyakov's *Gas Masks*, which takes place in a real gasworks, between the roar of the sirens, the jackhammers, and the red-hot coke. In *Gas Masks*, the real factory nullifies the very technique of scenic estrangement. "The cart fell to pieces," Eisenstein was to comment, "and the cart-driver fell into the cinema." He also added: "Revolutionary theatre as a problem no longer exists. It is absurd to perfect a wooden plow; one buys a tractor."⁴²

But Piscator, having abandoned the equivocal experiment of the Volksbühne, poses the problem of exorcizing the tractor, substituting it with a plow disguised as an electromechanical apparatus. The discovery of the "great mechanism of history," in a theoretical position halfway between the German *Linkskommunismus* and an optimistic evolutionism à la Kaut-

sky, becomes the desire to represent the "great world machine."⁴³ There predominates in Piscator a fideistic expectation for a regeneration of the modes of theatrical production, by means of a technical revolution in stagecraft brought about by the liberation of technological development under the banner of the proletariat. "It is not mere coincidence," writes Piscator, "that the moment in which the proletariat takes ideological and organizational control of the theatre marks the beginning of the theatrical revolution from the technical point of view."⁴⁴ With respect to Piscator's experiment with the *Proletarian Theatre*, where he had decentralized in a widespread fashion productions that he staged using a "poor" technique, his theatrical poetics underwent a decisive change after 1925. From then on, the expansion of every possible scenic device—from functional platforms to revolving stages, escalators, multiple accessories, the projection of both slides and motion pictures, the use of sound tracks—realized the integration of acoustic and visual means about which Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy had only theorized. This kind of pyrotechnical interaction of the instruments of communication strives to fulfill an ethical-political purpose; however, as a method of theatrical production, it is the exact opposite of the *Proletarian Theatre*. For a theatre dissolved into the city, and for the clash between reification represented (that of the dadaist mask) and real alienation (that of the metropolitan crowd), Piscator substitutes a "theory" of the audience and the reconstitution of the theatrical place as a separate space.

Piscator's "didactic machine" gets hopelessly blocked with the *mise en scène* of *The Merchant of Berlin*: the machines rebel, in a "revolt of the objects" that is no longer merely metaphorical. And yet Piscator was to declare: "I simply tried to dematerialize the stage, by the means of a total technique, to make it a flexible and manageable instrument."

Dort has observed that in Piscator's *scenocratic* theatre, even more than in his romantic dramaturgy, "the stage tells the truth about the world. Better still, the stage is this truth."⁴⁵

Or—and this is the same thing—the stage obliges the real to compress itself into it and then to explode at the spectator. Piscator has not then forgotten his dadaist origins. It is just that in place of the explosion of the provocation in the space-without-center of the metropolis, he substitutes the artificial reconstruction of the metropolis in the new "center."

The *Totaltheater*, space of fascinating illusion, is presented in Gropius's project as an "instrument constructed approximately like a typewriter, furnished with all the means of lighting, with thrusts and rotations in both vertical and horizontal directions, with an unlimited number of projection booths." The goal is always the same: to drag the spectator into the center of the scenic events, obliging him to join with the actor in a new "community." The *Totaltheater* of Gropius and Piscator presents itself as a *counter-city*, complete in itself, a global alternative to the real in which it floats. Despite Piscator's theories on the recovery of critical and dialectical "attention," in the *Totaltheater* one can only *sink*. The problem differs little from that faced by Meyerhold in his struggle against the static na-

ture of the theatrical edifice, in favor of an "organic dynamism, that dynamism which excites us in the port of Hamburg, where cars pass easily from a ship at sea to a moving train."⁴⁶ Desiring to have the audience participate in the final phase of an "open" production, Meyerhold, too, makes use of what he calls the "cinefication" of theatre: a highly mechanized and flexible technical apparatus within an amphitheatre that is a spiritual heir of the old, beloved circus is called upon to make of the mass a "collective corrector" of the proposals offered by the author, by the director, and by the actor.⁴⁷ But the automobile Meyerhold has driven through the audience in *The Earth is in Turmoil*, or his project for a theatre in which the auto can reach the stage directly from the street, with passageways that permit the spectators access to the stage—do they really contribute to the completion of an "open" text?⁴⁸ Here, too the theme of the involvement of the audience runs into involuntarily neobaroque sceno-technical metaphors.

In reality, the distance between "political theatre" and "mechanical theatre"—between Piscator and Moholy-Nagy—tends to reduce itself to nothing. Both are didactic theatres: both teach the elimination of nonobjective time from daily behavior, of every experience that does not come from things and does not return to them. Gropius's and Piscator's problem is how to return the theatrical "community" to the state of a chorus in the face of the tragedy of History; but the technological languages that have taken over the *Totaltheater* sing independently the hymn of victory of the negative that has taken over the real from which that theatre tries to isolate itself. Piscator is well aware that the alienation between language and things has become internal to language itself, but he still deceives himself that he can dominate it.

The "total theatre" as a counter-city will not be achieved, and not only for economic reasons: it is superfluous. The real city is already total theatre. Ball and Schwitters were more conscious of this than Piscator. Within that metropolis it will surely still be possible to design places destined to intensify the daily shock, to neutralize the anguish, to familiarize oneself with it. From Artaud to Grotowsky the road opened up by the historical avant-gardes will be carefully covered again. The technique of estrangement, however, can be used as an end in itself.

The overly decorative scenes and costumes designed by Ekster around 1923–24, and in particular those for Protazanov's film *Aelita* (1924), with its hypermetropolitan sets by Rabinovich, no longer belong to the great utopia of productivism.⁴⁹ Nor does a subsequent total theatre: that planned in 1931 by Konstantin Melnikov for the Central Theatre of Moscow. Melnikov's theatre consists of an assemblage of object-forms. Three fan-shaped sets are arranged in front of a circular orchestra; the first is in the form of a large ovoidal pool, the second revolves horizontally, the third revolves vertically and is seen from the outside as an enormous cylinder. The biomechanical acrobatics are here transferred into the body of the architectural construction. The technique of the "montage of attractions" is ironically absorbed by the building itself: the theatrical machine speaks

a language of its own made up of windings, slippages, swervings, and surprises, which give meaning, by laws of opposition and contrast, to objects and spaces.

It is the Hollywood musical of the thirties that realizes the dream of the historical avant-gardes: here, even the scenic mechanism of constructivism is translated into the imaginary. In the musicals of Busby Berkeley, the "chorality" of the dance is the absolute protagonist and is enriched with symbolic values. In *Forty-second Street*, the chorus girls are once again disguised, as in *Parade* or *The Triadic Ballet*. But here their mask is created by urban reality: the outlines of the skyscrapers of New York dance optimistically—in the very midst of the Depression—along the inevitable staircase, inviting the audience to enter into the collective celebration prof-fered by a metropolis that is intended to negate the crisis.⁵⁰

Here, truly, montage of the attractions and symbolic universe, artifice and narration, instruments of information and technological knowledge converge. The mechanical equipment no longer needs to exhibit itself: in the film, its laws are entirely incorporated by the product. Furthermore, the Berkeley musicals are "political" spectacles; Warner Brothers directs them explicitly at the masses who support F. D. Roosevelt and the New Deal.

The collective dance in the Hollywood musical is not mere escapism: a synthesis of precision and bodily liberation, of the surreal and of kitsch, it is even capable—as in the "Forgotten Man" sequence in *Gold Diggers of 1933*—of reminding American society of its own responsibility regarding the Great Depression and the grave unemployment.

Theatrical constructivism was to have a further result, tragically ironic. In the penguins' pit at the London Zoo (1932–33), Berthold Lubetkin used, almost as a literal citation, the spiral ramps designed by Lissitzky for Meyerhold. The enclosed space is used for a zoo: here the penguin is enclosed, while the man on the other side of the net is given the role of passive spectator.

The theatre dreamed of by Appia for a community that needs no theatres to realize itself was to have, however, another fleeting expression. In 1929 in the Barcelona Pavilion, Mies van der Rohe constructed a scenic space whose neutrality shares profound similarities with that of the rhythmical geometries of the sets of Appia and Craig. In that space, a place of *absence*, empty, conscious of the impossibility of restoring "synthesis" once the "negative" of the metropolis has been understood, man, the spectator of a spectacle that is really "total" because it is nonexistent, is obliged to perform a pantomime that reproduces the wandering in the urban labyrinth of sign-beings among signs having no sense, a pantomime that he must attempt daily. In the absoluteness of silence, the audience of the Barcelona Pavilion can thus be "reintegrated" with that *absence*.⁵¹ No more attempts at synthesis between the "grease paint and the soul." In a place that refuses to present itself as space and that is destined to vanish like a circus tent, Mies gives life to a language composed of empty and

isolated signifiers, in which things are portrayed as mute events. The sorcery of the theatre of the avant-garde dies out in the wandering without exits of the spectator of Mies's pavilion, within the forest of pure "data." The liberating laugh freezes at the perception of a new "duty." The utopia no longer resides in the city, nor does its spectacular metaphor, except as a game or a productive structure disguised as the imaginary.

Appendix

The Galoshes of Fortune by Bruno Taut

Bruno Taut's film project, *Die Galoschen des Glücks* (1920), presented here in English translation,¹ was linked to the utopian experiments of the *Gläserne Kette* (the *Glass Chain*). The various sets were to have been created by Finsterlin (the "plant house"), by Brückmann (the "flame house"), by Krayl (the "radiant cathedral"), and by Hablik, who offered to design an entire city as well as individual edifices—underwater, underground, in the mountains, and flying in the air. (See *Die Gläserne Kette: Visionäre Architektur aus dem Kreis um Bruno Taut, 1919–1920, catalogue of the exhibition at the Schloss Morsbroich, Leverkusen, and the Akademie der Künste* [Berlin, 1963], pp. 48ff., 57ff., 64. See also W. Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* [New York: Praeger, 1974], pp. 163–64.) Taut's scenario is based on a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen and belongs to a movement of cinematic reform that sought to establish a link between the visual arts and literature. During the early years of the 1920s, the movement included members of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, such as Peter Behrens and Bruno Paul.

As Pehnt has pointed out (*Expressionist Architecture*, p. 164), the art historian Konrad Lange, a member of the *Dürerbund*, had recommended fantastic stories like *Gulliver's Travels* as suitable material for cinematic adaptation (see Konrad Lange, *Das Kino in Gegenwart und Zukunft* [Stuttgart, 1920]). While Taut's project was never realized, Paul Wegener's film *Der Golem* (1920), with sets by Hans Poelzig, is the perfect response to Lange's recommendations. With respect to the cinematic subjects gathered by Kurt Pinthus in his *Kinobuch* (1914), the liberating visions of Taut mark the extreme stage of expressionist film theory. The compromise with kitsch, foreseen by Pinthus, becomes here the promise of a total transformation of the universe: of a universe, however, that is the object of ecstatic contemplation and the occasion for Dionysian play. In this sense, *Die Galoschen des Glücks* is related to the well-known theatre

piece elaborated by Taut almost contemporaneously and published in Hagen in 1920 as Der Weltbaumeister: Architekturhauspiel für symphonische Musik (The World-Master-Builder: An Architectural Drama for Symphonic Music).

The Galoshes of Fortune (Title taken from Andersen):

Full-length Fairy-tale Film in Two Millennia by Bruno Taut¹

Regarding the style of this presentation: the film is never interrupted by pauses for title cards. Scene changes are made either by flashbacks or by slow dissolves, in which one image emerges from another. The characters do not speak or write: everything by means of pantomimic gestures and rhythmic movements; the richness of the images by means of objects that appear as a spiritual reflection of the movements and gestures. The entire film, therefore, is not stylized in the expressionist manner; instead, nature is natural in it and art artistic. Art is architecture, because architecture is the purest reflection of spiritual movements. This effect is secured by employing the collaboration of the so-called fantastic architects: Finsterlin, Brückmann, Gösch, Krayl, Max Taut, Scharoun, Hablik, Bruno Taut, W. and H. Luckhardt.

Out of work. Faint from hunger, despondent. Torn clothing, worn-out shoes, a bundle on his back. The youth wanders through the most desolate suburbs, then to the highway—wants to go to the country. Hollow-cheeked girl accompanies him. Dismal farewell. The girl sadly turns back. He wanders, slinks, drags himself. For a long, long time. Gloomy deserted highway, air thick with fog. Images like phantoms in the air. Internal flashback: a miserable room, his desperate parents and siblings, tenement courtyard, alley, basement dwellings. Everything flits by, the highway stretches on, endlessly, toward nothingness. He stops short. In the distance, far ahead of him, he sees a light, stands still, strains to see. At the top of the screen, as if through a telescope, we see what's happening in the distance: a boy, in a blaze of light, stands on the highway—the very image of happiness—and places a pair of galoshes at the side of the road. Disappears, and for the laborer, the magic glow is extinguished in the distance. "Oh, only an illusion!" Dejected, he travels on. Endlessly. A weary tortuous path of sorrow. Suddenly he sees the galoshes in front of him. Astonished. How strange! Looks at his shoes—how torn, toes are showing through. And—he wants to try the galoshes on, somewhat timid. He does it, takes off his ragged ones and very carefully tries on the new ones. And—suddenly everything is different, he, the road, the air. Sun. The spindly trees are now magnificent crowns, and a man strides through the world, glowing, in beautiful, strange raiment, filled with joy. (The year 2000 flickers across the top of the screen.) The path leads into a forest. A real forest! Sparkling and glittering in all the treetops. To one side, there seems to be a clearing to which lead ever new leafy paths. He looks in. Good God! It's sparkling in there: like the work of man, and yet like the work of nature, like the trees, the springs—like all the creatures.

He goes and stands before it—could it be . . . a house? But it looks as if it were grown—yes, it's really growing—and as he silently looks on nothing moves. Fear and happiness in his demeanor—amazement, amazement. When he stands in front of it and nothing stirs, he claps his hands. It opens, the house opens, and a person steps out, bearded, beautiful, and dressed as strangely as he. Dread. But the person comes toward him, greets him, and since he hesitates, invites him in, and leads him into his "apartment." Flowering stone-glass plants inside, as well. Children, women. Hospitality. Cleanliness, different, everything different. Fantasy, happiness everywhere. The two climb up into a glass room, the host points outside. Forests, and in the distance near and far, here and there, everywhere such a sparkling from the treetops and in the fields, like the sparkling of the house itself, when the youth first saw it. The man's wife enters the room. The lad seems to be reminded of something by her (resemblances), withdraws into himself and—sees, as through a fog, his hollow-cheeked girl. He weeps—the man tries to comfort him. He doesn't succeed. To cheer him up, he leads him into an exquisite chamber. There are many strange plants, large floating leaves (like *victoria regia*) and many others. The man takes a curious wand and strokes these plants with its tip, and out of the leaves grow, yes grow, houses, as sparkling and dreamlike as his own, like opals, butterfly-wing structures—oh, inexpressible—a fairy-tale city, reflected in the water, intoxicatingly beautiful. He is lost in these visions, leans over, sits on the grass, dozes, and falls asleep. Then suddenly the original dreary highway. The pale girl with the hollow cheeks who longs to run after the boy. The merry child of fortune comes toward her, offers her magic slippers, all different kinds, some like the ones he had placed before the boy, and others. Lays them down before the girl, she has no money, can't buy anything, but at his urging she tries on a pair—but—a different pair from those the boy had received. Once again, the road, the girl, everything different. Summer night. Flowering bushes, not trees, along the roadside, the girl barefoot in an airy garment, with her hair falling loosely, merry, almost unrestrained, leaping under a glittering star-filled sky. Meteors in the sky, lights far back and many coming, dancing people with lights, lanterns, and such. (The year 3000 flickers across the top of the screen for a moment.) The girl at once joins a merry round, dancing and leaping with others like her, and they rush across a meadow to where, in the distance, a city of flames is blazing. They come to where the flaming buildings actually stand. One can't tell whether they are built of flames or whether the flames themselves are architectural elements. Some actually appear to be made entirely of live embers. The throng dances around one of these houses, rushes in—an indescribably animated display of flames and sparks and a fountain of water. A fire-bath festival. The lights grow dimmer little by little, leaving only a soft sparkle, and the girls wearily collapse. In the foreground, the former working girl; she cannot fall asleep, gazes into flame-patterns that are softly playing at the top of the room, and in the flames that face so dear to her takes shape—like a distant memory. Deeply moved, she weeps, inconsolably.

The radiant child of fortune comes to her, strokes her to sleep, and places different shoes before her, the same as the boy had received. It becomes lighter. Morning. The building radiates light. The girl puts on the shoes and . . . is standing in a sparkling, dew-fresh garden, amazed, in front of the same sparkling house that the boy (in the year 2000) had entered. The house opens. Woman, girls come. Cheerful activity. Man and boy also come, joyful recognition, purest, profoundest bliss, mutual amazement at this house, departure, merry wandering, hunting, and nibbling forest berries. Plateau. Panoramic view, buildings glisten in the distance. We recognize them, the boy finds a telescope in his pocket, they look through it together—enchancing things, scattered all over the countryside, gleaming crystal soaring up and radiating into the air. Yearning of the two to go there. They turn their eyes, and an airborne vehicle, odd-shaped, sparkling, gently hovering, lands on the plateau. They get in, hover off, and below them appears the wonderful Earth, now far—under clouds—now near—with those structures. And then in the distance, now close up—a radiant cathedral. Landing. A solemn procession of festive people. A turn in the road and then ahead: the couple in front of the cathedral amongst the people. They are timid in the face of such happiness, step aside humble, distressed. An old man at the portal (a kind of priest). Sees them, takes them in, leads them into an adjoining room, the library. Strange the room, strange the volumes. The lad takes a book, opens it, leafs through it—these people are rebuilding the Earth, already at work at the foot of the Alps instead of waging wars. Emotional closing of the book. The girl had selected and opened another, the young man looks on with her. Pictures: 1800, the stagecoach; 1870, the war; 1890, coal-mine explosions; 1916, trenches, and then tenements, misery and more misery, and finally their own miserable dwelling. Tears gush from their eyes. Their parents, their brothers and sisters, they see themselves, too—distressed they go outside. When they see the radiant cathedral from the outside, its image becomes mixed with and distorted by oppressive tenements, emerging like phantoms. They flee from these to pleasant surroundings, run through the forest, and arrive, fatigued, at a deep spring under a dark leafy canopy, where they quench their thirst and fall asleep on the moss. Dusk. Night and fountain depths as one. Glowworms appear. Come closer. Are glass cupolas, luminous, seen from above. One unfolds, becomes a building-flower; in its interior—below—a light is moving. We seem to fly into it. Below the shoe-library of the radiant child. He is surrounded by nothing but compartments with dates on them! 3000, 1850, 700, etc. He unlocks the boxes and looks at the shoes belonging to each date. In the middle, on a glass table, are the couple's two pairs of magic shoes. He takes them, locks them into compartment 2000 and searches: 1900, 1950—no, 1930—no, 1924—no, 1921—no, 1920—yes!, unlocks it and pulls out two pairs of wooden clogs. Delighted, he takes them in his two small hands, flies up, out of his flower-house. He is in the grotto with the sleeping couple, brings them these shoes of former days, no longer torn, but new, in fact the very same wooden clogs. The two are overjoyed when they awake and

see them. They see what they have longed for, but now more beautiful. They put them on and—are now young peasants, returning from the fields. A new farmhouse, cheerful, yet not really farmlike, as are the people, who seem to be more agiie than the old peasants. The parents, the children greet them, the setting sun sparkles in the window, the sparkling is very much like the wonders experienced in the dreams of the future, in the light of the windows the images dance off. Cheerful meal in the garden under the leaves of a tree. Sunset . . . The bright child of fortune is playing in the moonlight in the meadow, with all different kinds of magic shoes. Other children arrive, throw the shoes to each other like balls and throw all of them, one after the other—plain ones, high-heeled ones, fabulous ones, glistening colorful ones—at the moon, until the child of fortune has only the wooden clogs left in his small hands. He puts them on his bare feet, taps around the meadow in them, and finally dances drolly into the air. The End.

**U.S.S.R.-Berlin, 1922:
From Populism to
"Constructivist
International"**

If the history of the theatrical avant-gardes seems to unfold with a certain linearity, it is nevertheless necessary to point out the contradictions within the very concept of the avant-garde that manifest themselves as moments of rupture—as moments of conflict that emerge along the problematic boundary line separating the avant-garde itself from the reality principle. It is on that shifting line that the space without places of the avant-garde tries to cover its tracks. And it is this game of hide-and-seek between necessity and freedom that nullifies the Nietzschean discovery of the free acceptance of the necessary as the unique and supreme freedom. Seated in the orchestra, the pre-avant-garde—and we are dealing here with the *flâneur* of impressionism, but also with the symbolist caught up in his feverish nights—could make its own peregrinations within Piranesi's *Carceri*, incarnated in the nineteenth-century metropolis, the provision for a regression to the happy optics of childhood. Climbing onto the stage, the "baby Don Quixote" forces himself to enumerate his own cruel, destructive impulses. Exposing himself stark naked, he is forced to admit what Sade and Piranesi, in different ways, had announced to the world: that where the logic of assassination has taken over, the greatest pleasure is in being simultaneously torturer and tortured; that it is useless to wander through the city looking for the guilty one, inasmuch as "guilt" is found in the flesh and blood of the prisoner as well as the prisoner; that the devastation wreaked on linguistic institutions appears first as grotesque farce, then as tragedy. By making a code of such infractions, mountains of rubble will be obtained. I can limit myself to heaping these fragments into piles, to manipulating them into assemblages poised between utopia and heterotopia, to forcing once communicating signals to react to the incongruous juxtaposition to which I oblige them; but the very fact that I express this desire to assume the guise of the executioner "represents," and

only represents, the fiction of my fabulations. Cruel as they may be, they remain within the enclosure where I keep them. The space separating them from the chain of events that, despite everything, transforms each deconstruction into a new universe of discourse is infinitesimal.

Why should we be surprised, then, if, in the early 1920s, there was an attempt to confront with institutional structures the logic, perfect in itself, of the illogical? If the attempt was made, that is, to transform the “bridge” uniting the devastated language with the reality that reduced it to such a state into a “door,” suddenly thrown open onto the extreme boundary that divides and rejoins object and subject?¹

From this perspective, will the organization of the intelligentsia be aligned as fellow traveler or as alternative to the political organization? The problem had already been at the center of German *Aktivismus* in the years around 1910, but it changed dimension when confronted with the historic drama of the October Revolution.

On one side, there was the tradition initiated by Pinthus and Pfemfert with the proposal, in 1911, for a “world office” that would “unify all of the humanitarian tendencies that run in parallel but disorderly directions, and bring about a concentration and a promotion of all creative activities.”² On the opposite side, there was the ambiguous alliance between the formalist school and the constructivist avant-garde, which presented itself to the public as the homology of the October Revolution. The clash between these two hypotheses of political hegemony could only have taken place in Berlin—there where the revolution in the councils, defeated, could still “speak” through the pages of *Die Aktion*, opposing the KPD with the same antibureaucratic themes used to confront Social Democracy.³

The encounter between the German and the Soviet avant-gardes thus took place in a climate of certainties clashing with anxieties: it was the very function of the intellectual that was now at stake, both for the artists in the West, who were trying to safeguard their existence in the face of the world of capitalistic non-value, expressed in all its brutality during the years of inflation after the war, and for the artists in Russia, facing the new problems posed first by wartime communism, and then by the NEP. Berlin, on the other hand, had for some time been historically designated as the meeting place between the East and the West. In Berlin, Diaghilev, through the “painting in motion” of his Russian Ballets, had promulgated the image of an uncontaminated Eastern “spirituality,” and a similar function was performed by the Russian artists of the Blaue Reiter and their guests—Kandinsky, Goncharova, Larionov, David Burlyuk, Kasimir Malevich—who had exhibited their work in 1919 at the Herbst-Salon, and by the one-man shows of Archipenko and Chagall, organized by Herwarth Walden at the Sturm. It was the very same cultural climate that, in the first years after the war, had dominated interest for Russian art.

Nevertheless, the impact of the first official manifestations of Soviet art in Berlin in 1921–1922 cannot be understood unless we take into account the particular tension dominating German avant-garde circles between

1917 and 1920. The reaction against the catastrophe of the war, the revelation of the violence of the institutions of the European bourgeoisie, the intellectual excitement aroused by what came to be called the "November Revolution," and the prospect glimpsed of a "new world" generated by the emergence of the popular masses as political protagonists were appraised quickly by German intellectuals as new terrain for ideological construction—as a specific terrain, that is, that would restore meaning to intellectual work itself.

The old program of the Die Aktion group now seemed to have been legitimized by historic events: caesuras between ideology and political action, in the name of a populist impulse heir to the eschatological expectations of prewar expressionism, could no longer exist.⁴

Ludwig Meidner closed his pamphlet *An alle Künstler*⁵ with these words: "It is a question of socialism—meaning justice, freedom, and love for one's fellow man, *the divine order of the world*"; and his words were echoed in Max Pechstein's statement, "Art to the people and the people to art *through work*." Work as an ethical redemption, then, as a new "anti-bourgeois" value, as a "richness" specific to the proletariat. The traditional hopes placed in the revolutionary role of the "conscious producers" were all gathered together by the postwar German messianism. It was not by chance that in 1919 Kurt Pinthus defined socialism as the "Great dawn of humanity, gravedigger of a decaying world! Guide to the earthly paradise!" The appeal to the "obscure masses," of pure expressionist imprint, was counterbalanced by the promise of a new *peace*.⁶

Karl Jakob Hirsch, writing in 1928 in the special issue edited by Will Grohmann, *Kunst der Zeit: Zehn Jahre Novembergruppe*, recalled the atmosphere that arose during the war within the group of artists engaged in the inspection of aerial troops; among them was Georg Tappert, one of the most active coordinators of the Novembergruppe:

*It all began in the inspection office of the aerial troops, so similar to an atelier, where painters dressed as soldiers were supposed to reproduce aircraft. Under their desks, however, lay revolutionary drawings by the talented Pfmfert for the Aktion, done on Prussian Imperial sheets of paper with Prussian Imperial ink. Here were born Die schöne Rarität and some of the Roter Hahn. They winked a circumspect eye at the demonstrating workers as a sign of sympathy in January of 1918, and they stayed shut up there waiting for the hour of liberation, because the light shone from the East.*⁷

The *light that shone from the East* was clearly the light of social peace, of "realized Jacobinism." This is evident in the rough draft of the *Manifesto of the Novembrists*, in the manifestos of the Hallische Künstlergruppe, of the Vereinigung für neue Kunst und Literatur of Magdeburg, of the groups Der Wurf and Bielefeld, of the Rih-Gruppe of Karlsruhe, not to mention of the most noted program, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst:

Art and religion.

The world's people become holier through them. Freer in brotherhood. Greater in their thrust toward loftier heights. The liberator of us all: ART.⁸

The people and art must form a whole. The artist with his work will create the space in the Absolute for the regeneration of his heart.⁹

Freedom of the subject, as a corrective and confrontation to the conservative social art practiced with the unstable ethic of commercial interests. Freedom and authentic life for the individual. . . . It wants to transcend the commonplace, which means freedom from it. It tends to recognize the forms of expression of counter-art, that is to say, of the art of those regarded as infantile or as sick, according to its own laws, not as a rational product of consciousness, but rather as an expression subjected to its own particular laws.¹⁰

We find ourselves on the fertile terrain of the revolution. Our motto is LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY. Our union is derived from the equality of our human and artistic conceptions. We consider it our highest duty to dedicate ourselves totally to the spiritual edification of the young, free Germany. We fight for the worthwhile in every field and we support our intention with all the means at our disposition. We therefore ask for an unconditional adhesion and a definite stance on the part of the public. . . . We are neither a party nor a class, but men, men who work untiringly in the space that Nature has assigned to them: at work which, like all other work for the good of all the people, must find favor with the general interest and needs the esteem and recognition of the masses. . . . Our struggle is directed at all the forces of disintegration, our love at all the forces of construction. Our sentiments are young, free, pure. Our uncontaminated love goes out to the young, free Germany; we want to combat with courage and without hesitation the backwardness in it with all the forces at our disposal. We send to all cubist, futurist, and expressionist artists, conscious of their mission, our fraternal greeting with the hope that they will unite with us.¹¹

A complete fusion of art and people, and “struggle against the forces of disintegration”: the Novembergruppe, the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, and the Bauhaus of Weimar all agreed on this generic program (for another reason as well: to a large extent, the various groups ended up with the same protagonists). Thus, the Berlin dada proclaimed itself an enemy of the pacifism of that which came to be called the “O-Mensch-Bewegung,” and Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, Hans Richter, George Grosz, and Hans Arp joined in with the Novembergruppe, together with the Sturm painters, with Enrico Prampolini, and with Kurt Schwitters.

The utopian and humanitarian populism that shaped the activist, anti-war, and messianic wing of the second German expressionism can, in fact, be recognized in an October Revolution interpreted—by the West—as the epiphany of the Spirit self-fulfilled in the proletariat. For Bruno Taut, too,

the "new world," the "day of peace," appeared on the horizon of the East; but the "new world" glimpsed by him was the one dreamed of by utopian expressionism, the one evidenced by the ambiguous projects presented at the competition for the "House of Friendship" in Istanbul (1916) or by the projects for the "City of Peace" designed by César Klein, Kampffmeyer, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Taut himself.¹²

It was not by chance that Robert Michels had been a collaborator in the Aktion, and that from the beginning Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were its political points of reference, just as Tolstoy and Kropotkin had been guarantors of the "fraternity" (*Brüderlichkeit*) of which Hiller and Rubiner had become the apostles. The antibureaucratic stance, inherited from the Aktion, gloried in the Tautian utopism. But the improbable synthesis of subjective consciousness and the utopian collectivism of Taut had already been enunciated by Lu Märten, who in 1911 had written:

*It is not the individual who creates, awakens, and ultimately expresses the unprecedented forces and demands of a new content of life; on the contrary, the longing, the thrust, the thought, and the demands that . . . increasingly coalesce give birth to that Only One, that Superman, that dream now become flesh and blood, who discerns in the chaos of the present a conscious creation and, eventually, a form.*¹³

The Only One thus coincided with the dream: only the dream was capable of "conscious creation" within chaos. Rubiner, for his part, in 1912 prescribed "intensity, wisps of the fire of intensity, its bursting out, its shattering into pieces, its explosion. Its spurting forth, its assassinating, its proof of the extreme unforgettability of a single instant."¹⁴

The "longing for catastrophe" was a reaction to the threat that *Zivilisation* had hurled at the Spirit:

*Once the great bewilderment caused by technique is overcome, because it has become accepted as an obvious thing, there is no difference in principle between the Iliad and Die kleine Stadt of Heinrich Mann. At least, not in the principle, which is close to the Iliad.*¹⁵

And it is logical that this was so for one who could accept, as did Lu Märten, that the Supreme One was Christ (or as for Yvan Goll, a Chaplin burdened with the sorrows of humanity): sacrifice was called for to guarantee a synthesis capable of connecting millenary cultures and apocalyptic expectations. The Christ-Superman was certainly not the Zarathustra who, as a "last sin," tried to teach "superior men" to mock themselves. On the contrary: he was the prophet of a regression, or better, of a repression. Within the symptomatic experience of this conflict there was concealed a supreme desire for peace. Antibureaucratism ended up in the longing for eighteenth-century anarchies. Here too the decomposition showed its constructive side; but the hoped-for cosmic revolt of the Only One was mirrored in the mysticism of Blok's *Twelve*.

The City of Peace of the German utopians was, in essence, the expression of the utopia of the *city of social peace*: in this, the radical artists

rejoined the humanitarian socialism of Berlage, who in 1915 planned his Enlightenment-like Pantheon of Humanity, or the subsequent projects of Le Corbusier for the Mundaneum, which aroused, not surprisingly, the criticism of Karel Teige.¹⁶ The Bolshevik revolution, in fact, was seen as the realization of the Temple to Humanity, as the realization of the fullness or the purity of the ideology of the Enlightenment, as a synthesis of Jacobinism and petit-bourgeois anarchism. Rousseau plus Kropotkin plus Tolstoy equals Lenin: this was the synthesis more or less unconsciously proposed by the heirs to the activist pole of expressionism. A synthesis that remained alive, but with different ends, in the organs of the opposition groups that grew up in Berlin during the course of the war and that were to converge in the Berlin dada: from the Café des Westens, to the journal *Neue Jugend* of the Herzfelde brothers, to *Die Freie Strasse* of Raoul Hausmann and Franz Jung.

It was in this atmosphere of excess that Adolf Behne could give life to his utopia of *architecture as a natural absolute*: as a collective action aimed at the recovery of a creativity that was an end in itself, *free from the slavery of necessity*, free from the alienating weight of technology. The architecture of Oriental temples was indicated by Behne as a model to be followed, as the expression of a complete communion of man with his fellows, and of society with nature—a communion, moreover, explicitly considered as an anti-European cultural motif (anti-intellectualistic, that is) and, in a broad sense, laden with protesting values; the romantic anticapitalism of the early Behne can be found, after all, in the Gropius of the years from 1917 to around 1922.

The recent philological inquiries made by Pehnt, Klotz, and Franciscano have in fact thrown sufficient light on the characteristics of this period of Gropius's research—a period not accidentally carefully downplayed by Gropius himself, who, from 1923 on, was intent on imparting a totally mythic dimension to the German experiences of the early 1900s.¹⁷

Pehnt's archival research has brought to light the joint project of Behne, Gropius, and Bruno Taut who, together with J. B. Neumann, planned the magazine *Bauen*—the first issue of which was to appear in June 1919—directed not at specialists but at the "people," and with the specific intent of contributing to the "victory of true socialism." It was Gropius himself, after all, who at the inaugural conference of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst declared, "I think of our organization as a conspiracy [*Verschwörung*]. . . . Our goal is a new *Spirit*, which, once created, will lead to new achievements."¹⁸

The utopia of the "cathedral of the people," created by the hands of millions of workers, thus united—in the postwar Gropius—with the romantic idea of the *Bauhütte* executed with Adolf Meyer near Berlin for Sommerfeld. The inaugural ceremony for the Sommerfeld house was deliberately conceived by Meyer as a mystical ritual, in the very same tradition of the sacral rite with which Peter Behrens and Georg Fuchs had inaugurated the cenacle of art of Ernst Ludwig von Hessen in Darmstadt.

The communion between human work and the cosmos posited by Adolf Behne was also interpreted by Gropius, who recognized in wood—bear in mind that Sommerfeld, his client, was the leader of Germany's wood industry—the material in which the mystical union between people and nature could be found. Glass—the synthesis of matter and the immaterial, the symbol of the transparency of the subject with respect to collectivity—should be used only when the “new man” (Toller's “naked man”) knew autonomously and collectively how to build with it his own future “cathedrals of socialism.”¹⁹

Clearly, apart from some tangencies that definitely exist (and that we shall not fail to point out), such mystical populisms, descendants of the apocalyptic dreams of social regeneration of Mühsam, Pinthus, and Rubiner, and in general of the intellectuals grouped around Herwarth Walden and the gallery and the review *Der Sturm*, were objectively antithetical to the activist and provocative idealism of the dada group.

It is necessary, therefore, to go back to the historical sources of this antithesis. Indeed, one cannot ignore that the motto that opened the manifesto of the Novembrists—“liberty, equality, fraternity”—merely repeated the themes of the propaganda apparatus set into motion on a vast scale by the Social Democratic party after 1890. All the means of mass communication, as Buonfino shrewdly demonstrates,²⁰ were used by the party, on the authority of the ideologies of Kautsky and Bernstein, to evoke the *Geist* of class solidarity. But this solidarity, for Kautsky as for Engels, was an instrument of organization in the name of a mechanical transformation of the great trust into a rough draft for socialist society. If, in fact, the *Konzernes* had as their ineluctable *destiny*—as Kautsky theorized—a plan aimed at their “natural” elimination, the *brotherhood* of the proletariat, and of the masses of farm workers subordinated to industrial production, was not so much a political antidote as the corrective that could “humanize” that unstoppable and fatal process. Not surprisingly, Bernstein dwelled on the instruments of universal suffrage and on consumer cooperatives—rather than on those of production, which to him were antithetical to socialism—reducing the action of the party to pure “movement,” without an immediate goal.

The centralization of cartels was thus for Bernstein a means of control of the market and of arbitrary adjustment of production and of prices. To the theory of collapse promulgated by Rosa Luxemburg, Bernstein counterposed a capitalistic harmony at the interior of which any action by the state could only be a disturbance. The orthodox wing of the party, on its own, followed the expansion of proletarianization in order to seize its immediate political advantages. But the purpose and the line of march of this split between politics and economy remained indefinite. For Kautsky, the development was to be neither interfered with nor supported: all that was necessary was to remedy “its ruinous and degrading consequences.”²¹ Buonfino has written perceptively:

the mythology of the class in itself was simply the froth of the political program for democratic planning: and incredibly it became the substance

of the thesis of the opposition on the left—Kautsky was opposed by the extreme left with the instruments that he himself had forged . . . the concepts of 'avant-garde' and of 'working-class spontaneity' were inherent to the elevation that Kautsky had elaborated in terms of 'class in itself,' immanent in history and in the social universe, and thus perfect and autonomous. This mystification, once accepted, implied that the only political task could be that of liberating it from organization; this would have let loose in all its pure violence a total antibureaucratism against the state, against capitalism, but also against the workers' party.²²

This explains why the groups of independent socialists (PUS) and of anarchists headed by Wille and Landauer could propose the sacralization of the *Geist* against every form of organization. The attack on the workers' party was thus conducted simultaneously with that on the state plan. The colonies of leftist artists and writers that propagated by imitating the living conditions of the proletariat certainly had adopted as their model the medieval "immaculate knight." But in practice they transformed Lassalle's and Kautsky's ideology of "brotherhood" into an antibureaucratic protest. *Die Aktion* would assemble these aspirations into a totality, trying to form an alternative to the powerful Social Democratic culture industry. But its humanism of dissent would become trapped on the terrain of Kautskian ideology. As for the Berlin dada, it could also lash out against the activists, calling them "exhausted men, beating time to and singing psalms through streets in which escalators run and telephones ring," who resurrected the sick fable of "humanity."²³ But was the metropolitan experience lived as merely a moment, as a "non-significant *Erlebnis*,"²⁴ as a momentary accident, this reduction of the individual—exalted and ridiculed at the same time—to a nullity, really antithetical to the Social Democratic pedagogy regenerated by Landauer's philosophy of spontaneity?

Certainly the harmonic synthesis of Weimar was rejected by the "living for uncertainty" of dada. But now the field of comparison was no longer the humanitarian sermon of the Social Democratic *Bildung* or the *Schau* (the vision) of Rubiner, but the "new organization" that Russia made a reality in 1917.

It is significant that the contacts with the Soviet artistic experiments in the years immediately after the October Revolution closely followed these premises. The example of Yefim Golyscheff is a case in point. Golyscheff, who was born in Cherson in 1897 but lived in Odessa until 1909, went to Berlin to study music. Interested in architecture, painting, and chemistry, he played in the Odessa Symphony Orchestra. From 1911 to 1913 he toured as a violinist; as he himself wrote, he witnessed "the coronation at Delhi, the war in Tripoli, the Chinese revolution in Canton, and 9 November 1918 in Berlin." It was Behne who "discovered" the Russian artist, who was exhibiting at the "show of unknown architects" in Berlin.

In his paintings and drawings, Golyscheff approached a kind of abstract and naïve expressionism. He was suited perfectly to becoming a model of the "revolutionary artist" in the eyes of the Berlin avant-garde fort, but

also because of the lighthearted, ironic, and at the same time experimental character of his work. In fact, he invented new musical instruments and created happenings of a dadaist flavor; it must also be remembered that in 1914 he worked out a dodecaphonic system, which, some have claimed, even influenced Thomas Mann in the writing of his *Doctor Faustus*.

Golyscheff's intense experimentalism was totally in keeping with the feverish Berlin experiments of the years immediately following the war. In 1919 he exhibited his work with the Novembergruppe at the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung, but quickly became a part of Berlin's dadaist group, as Raoul Hausmann recalls:

One day, in the spring of 1919, I met a young man by the name of Yefim Golyscheff. If there exists some doubt as to whether the dadaists were truly dada, there was none in Golyscheff's case. He did not have to inquire about the opinions held in dada circles; he possessed innately all the qualities of the authentic dadaist. Like Caesar, he came, saw, and conquered. . . . At the first dada exhibition, in April 1919, he showed things never before seen: jam jars, tiny bottles, pieces of wood, scraps of plush, locks of hair. An optical shock; there had never been such a presentation. . . . The first dada exhibition at the Graphischen Kabinett opened with a gala evening, in which Golyscheff appeared together with a young lady dressed in white. I can still see this scene today, as though it were yesterday. Golyscheff, holding back a laugh, goes to the piano, with a slight movement of his hands sits the innocent angel down, and with the voice of an electronic doll, says: 'Antisymphony part 3a/=guillotine of musical war/a) provocatory spray, b) chaotic oral cavity or the underwater airplane/indissoluble Hyper-Fis-chen-dur.' . . . His astute mechanical art, on the edge of acrobatics, snatched from the artfulness of music uncanny sounds, so unexpected that they transported the mind to infratonal vertigoes.²⁵

Even Behne underlined, with the populist coloring often found in his essays of the period, Golyscheff's experimentalism and the hymn to the "joy of proletarian work" contained in it:

[Golyscheff] brings little, touching elements—nuclei, seeds of a new art. . . . With sheets of paper colored and pasted together, with note paper, he creates something original. . . . A Russian and an iconoclast, with his drawings intended for the proletariat, he wants to incite his viewer to the joy of producing, even in the area of the simple and charming. There is altruism in Golyscheff's art, an art that he feels to be "communist." . . . An art of the elementary, of that which is the most human [Menschlichsten].²⁶

Golyscheff's Berlin experiments thus represent the vitalistic and "positive" pole of dada tendencies. Far removed from the self-destructive mysticism of Hugo Ball or Johannes Baader, he embodied, between 1919 and 1922, an intellectual figure totally in keeping with the typology of the

"Russian artist" dear to the German avant-garde in their messianic expectation of the "horizon of peace" coming from the East.

In this sense, his well-documented relations with Bruno Taut and the group dominated by Taut were clearly decisive. At the exhibition of the *Unbekannte Architekten*, Golyscheff presented an urban system with residential buildings for two thousand families, hospitals, concert halls of glass, and bridges of various heights—one of the customary utopian images through which the artists of the Glass Chain expressed the desire for a pure state of planning. But it is more important to emphasize other, more original motifs that appear to have been absorbed by Taut: the "theory of colored architecture," being in effect an explosion of the oppressive urban structures as well as an invitation to a "reconstruction of the universe"²⁷ and to a liberating and anticonventional collective behavior, is so close to the vitalist and naïve dadaism of Golyscheff that it becomes legitimate to suspect a concrete relationship between his work and that of Taut.²⁸ Moreover, it must be pointed out that, for both, the invitation to a self-liberating behavior was explicitly directed at the proletariat, the only historical subject capable—for them—of making its own the "gay science" of purifying devastation.

This was so to the point that Golyscheff, in polemic with the manifestos then proliferating in Berlin, published his own leaflet, *A-ismus*, directed against seriousness and in favor of gaiety—still another Nietzschean motif, in the purest dada tradition. And it is important to point out that Golyscheff's *A-ismus* was answered in the pages of *Frühlicht* by Taut's "Nieder der *Seriosismus*"²⁹—further proof of an exchange of experiences, merged in the complex kaleidoscope of the Berlin avant-garde.

It is evident that the significance of Golyscheff's moment in the spotlight of the Berlin dada and in the circle of the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* should not be overestimated, especially since as far as our study is concerned, the bond between the avant-garde and populism as embodied by Golyscheff is a completely fortuitous one. On the other hand, the very same *Arbeitsrat* was to reveal itself to be anxious for a considerably more institutional bond with the innovations, especially those on an organizational level, then underway in Soviet Russia. Nor must it be forgotten to what an extent the Berlin groups—from the *Arbeitsrat* to the *Novembergruppe*, until the *Ring*—had as one of their primary objectives a relationship between avant-garde experiments and national and municipal institutions (educational, administrative, and commercial).

Not surprising, then, is the attention paid by the *Arbeitsrat für Kunst* to the "Artistic Program of the Commissariat for Popular Instruction in Russia," published in the *Kunstblatt* (no. 3, 1919), and submitted by Ludwig Baer to the members of the *Arbeitsrat* for discussion. Baer also furnished additional material of Soviet origin to the Kiepenhauer publishing house in Potsdam, which in 1920 published the first German work on the Russian avant-garde, *Neue Kunst in Russland, 1914 bis 1919*, by Konstantin Umansky, an author who also wrote essays on Kandinsky and on Tatlin's

Monument to the Third International for Munich's avant-garde review *Der Ararat*.

Eberhard Steneberg has compared the *Artistic Program* of the Soviet commissariat with the first Bauhaus manifesto (Weimar, 21 March 1919).³⁰ The attention that Gropius directed to the new Soviet educational institutions was of a contradictory nature, however. The entire early period of the Bauhaus, in fact, appears—after the more recent philological and documentary rereadings³¹—considerably more like the ultimate proof of a “flight from the world” attempted by an intellectual coterie anxious to protect itself from urban anguish than the logical premise to what would later become the mystical aspect of the Bauhaus itself. The fact is that in 1920 Gropius became acquainted with Kandinsky, from whom he obtained the program of the Inchuk.³² In this way new themes began to circulate within the Bauhaus environment—from the analysis of the specific means of artistic communication, to the influence of forms on the public, to the relationships between formal structures and behavior. Kandinsky's psychologism—of German origin, after all—thus began to disturb the mystical vitalism of Itten's *Vorkurs*, and an early project for the restructuring of the school was given as the reason for the summoning of Kandinsky himself by Gropius. But apart from this personal relationship, there is no doubt that for Gropius and for the new masters of the Weimar Bauhaus, the mysticism of the “cathedral of the people” was reflected in a millenarian and eschatological interpretation of the October Revolution. In this sense, there was no contradiction between the flight into the Goethian city—the explicit symbol of an incurable nostalgia for totality, for the fullness of experience, for the integrity of values—and the attention (more than just feigned) to the new Soviet experiments.

And so we are still in the atmosphere of a worn-out populism: in the same climate that impelled Taut to cite—alongside Kropotkin's anarchic theories on the dissolution of the city and the formation of integrated communities of production and consumption—Lenin's decrees on the socialization of the land;³³ in the same climate of the declarations of faith in the creative force of the people published by Gropius in that significant document, the *Deutscher Revolutionsalmanach*;³⁴ in the same perspective of waiting for an ethical revolution evidenced by the Berlin avant-garde, a typical example being the dada manifesto of Huelsenbeck, Hausmann, and Golyscheff.

It is precisely the latter document that offers the occasion for establishing an exact watershed between the populism of the early Bauhaus and the Berlin dadaist ethic: two ways, in effect, of reacting to the shock of 1917.

The manifesto of the Central Dadaist Revolutionary Committee was divided, as we know, into three fundamental points:

1. *The international revolutionary union of all productive and intellectual men and women on the basis of a radical communism.*
2. *The progressive elimination of work, achieved by means of the mechanization of every type of activity. Only through the elimination of work*

would it become possible for the individual to achieve certainty, authenticity of existence, and integrity of experience.

3. *The immediate expropriation of wealth (socialization) and its transfer to the community; the subsequent creation of cities of light, whose gardens would belong to the entire society and would prepare man for the state of freedom.*³⁵

It is difficult to find—among the numerous political testimonies of the European artistic groups of these years—a more paradigmatic document of a completely idealistic interpretation of the Bolshevik revolution and of the first decrees of socialization emanating from Lenin. But it also reflects, even though indirectly, the antibureaucratic polemic conducted in Germany by Rosa Luxemburg. Among the jumble of themes emerged the following: a) the prospect of a universal epiphany caused by the cosmic embrace between intellectuals and the people; b) the fundamental theme of a *freedom from work* brought about by the acceleration of technological innovation—a freedom that must overflow into human behavior, into a regained collective ethic; c) the theme, again, of the *city of peace*, seen as a ludic instrument of education to the new freedom achieved.

This political program—whose novelty for the worn-out intellectual consciences of successive generations intent on “saving their souls”³⁶ it is useless to emphasize, as does Coutts-Smith, given that the entire avant-garde experience is subject to cycles and recurrences—we have said was completed by Huelsenbeck, Hausmann, and Golyscheff, with further, paradoxical requests: the daily provisioning of intellectuals and workers, the obliging of priests and teachers to subscribe to the “dadaist articles of faith,” the adoption of a simultaneous poem as a state prayer, the organization of one hundred and fifty circuses “for the illumination of the proletariat,” “the immediate regulation of sexual relations in compliance with the principles of international dadaism and through the institution of a dada sexual center.”

The politicization of the Berlin dada differentiates it sharply from the original Zurich dada or that of Paris. In the manifesto of the Central Committee of Dada, in the clownish parades in neighborhoods still riddled by Noske’s bullets, in the leaflets written by the Herzfelde brothers, Walter Mehring, Hannah Höch, Georg Grosz—*To Each His Own Football, Bankrupt, Adversary*, etc.—we can see the break between the heterogeneous Berlin group and the lucidly self-destructive legacy of the “negative utopia” so tragically embraced by Hugo Ball. Mehring recalls:

In the streets lined with gray barracks, marked by the bullets from the battles of Spartacus and lacerated by the howitzers of the Noske regime, our group was received with applause and shouts of joy, while we performed somersaults or marched to the rhythm of sentimental songs such as Ich hatt’ einen Kameraden or Die Rasenbank am Elterngrab. After the cannibalesque dances of the putsch of Kapp, much more savage than those of Sophie Tauber’s marionettes, after the danse macabre of the Stahlhelm movement and its swastika ornaments, which seemed to have burst out

from a Hans Arp Heraldry, our dada procession (Jedermann sein eigener Fussball) was greeted with a joy as spontaneous as the on y danse of the Paris mob before the Bastille. The phrase "to each his own football" became popular in Berlin as an expression of antiauthoritarian and demystifying contestation.³⁷

It may seem paradoxical, but it was actually through the intervention of the least politicized of the Berlin dadaists—and of that isolated dadaist, Kurt Schwitters—that the experiments of Soviet constructivism conquered an ambiance such as that of Berlin, still so bound up with the last ferments of expressionist humanitarianism. The famous photograph taken at the 1920 dada fair in Berlin, showing George Grosz and John Heartfield with a placard extolling the tower of Tatlin—"Die Kunst ist tot/Es lebe die neue Maschinenkunst/TATLINS"—documents expressively this period of transition. "Art is dead": this was the typical slogan of dada. But here it lacked the divine afflatus that allowed Ball his supreme identification of the saint with the clown.

The "death of art" was now greeted as a consequence of the advent of *Maschinenkunst*.

It was no longer a question of the "art of technological reproduction" but of the image of a "new world" in which the "revolt of the objects"—the dominating motif of bourgeois anguish—was tamed by the embrace between "liberated objects" and socialist man: exactly as in the finale of Mayakovsky's *Mystery-Bouffe*. The "light that comes from the East" was now an "electric message," as Yvan Goll wrote.³⁸ Soviet Russia, which in 1920 launched the Goelro plan for electrification and economic regionalization, was no longer the bearer of a reconciliatory ideology between man and nature, but rather an ideology that reconciled collectivity and technology. All of which could be accepted without objection by the Berlin dadaists. Had not the political program of Huelsenbeck and Hausmann recognized in the technological utopia the new, liberating ideology? In the face of such a prospect, dada's very spirit of contestation found itself in crisis. Or rather, the contestation now seemed a wholly contingent task, waiting to be able to create a productive organization in the field of art and collective behavior, inspired in some way by the Soviet example.

In this climate, the arrival in 1920 of Ivan Puni and his wife Kseniya Boguslavskaya constituted for the Berlin avant-garde a kind of prelude to the philo-Soviet explosion that followed the arrival, one year later, of Ehrenburg, Lissitzky, and Gabo, and of the exhibition of Soviet art held in 1922 at the van Diemen Gallery on Unter den Linden.

While Kseniya was working for the Russian cabaret Karusell and for Juschny's Blaue Vogel, Puni organized in February 1921 his famous exhibition at the gallery Der Sturm, in which paintings and sheets of paper, clearly inspired by the geometry of Malevich and Lissitzky, were mounted in a deliberate disorder reminiscent of the antistructuralism of futurism. Enormous numbers and alphabet letters were superimposed on the paintings or allowed to show through between them, in an attempt to reaffirm

the object quality of his work and to reconstruct the entire exhibition space as a "global object" (an obvious prelude to Lissitzky's *Prounenraum*, and a result of the experiments by Tatlin and Rodchenko on the tensions between formal objects and space).

The influences of dada were not lacking: on the occasion of the exhibition, Puni had men dressed in the style of Picasso's *Parade* going up and down the Kurfürstendamm. The total atmosphere created in the gallery thus overflowed into the street: Puni's "sandwich men" with their costumes inspired by Tatlin's *Counter-Reliefs*, by the *lettrismo* of Puni himself, by Ball's sacral clowning, by the marionette man of the Italian futurists, brought to life what remained crystallized in the galleries of Herwarth Walden. The pedagogical intent was no different from that of the provocative evenings of the negative avant-garde: what had changed, however, was its way of offering itself to the public, and not only because of the propagandist objectives of the paradoxical parade. In a certain way this latter challenged what went on in the exhibition galleries: it tried to raise "total ambiance" from its tomb.

Puni's work, furthermore, was anything but linear and coherent. Puni had signed the *Manifesto of Suprematism* on the occasion of the exhibition "0. 10," speaking of a liberation of the object from all meaning, of the destruction of its utilitarian aspects,³⁹ and at the same exhibition had collaborated with Malevich, Boguslavskaya, Klyun, and Menkov in a "collective painting." W. E. Groeger, in the catalogue of the exhibition at the Sturm, justified Puni's "naturalistic" works (circa 1919), considering them particular aspects of "artistic materialism"; but Puni himself, writing in *Iskusstvo k*

*In order that the proletariat may be able truly to possess beautiful and useful objects, in order that beauty not be the attribute only of machines and plows, it is necessary to extend the utilitarian principle still further to the various branches of production. . . . And as for the artist . . . what is left to him? Well, nothing but a sketch for a trademark—this little domain of "applied" art, which is his, will remain his.*⁴⁰

For Puni, there was a gap between art as a "creation of life" and pure art, which could never be bridged. His polemic was directed against orthodox productivity and represents a "rightist" interpretation of the same clash between form and production that would later be denounced by Tarabukin.⁴¹

In any event, this polemic was not grasped by Berlin culture. Puni's atelier—as Hans Richter also recalls⁴²—became one of the most important centers of artistic encounters: Eggeling, Richter, Ehrenburg, Shklovsky, Hausmann, and Nell Walden met here periodically and wrote about it.

But Puni's arrival also gave rise to a chance encounter between German and Russian experiments; one has only to consider the finest painting that he did in Berlin, *The Musician* (1921), to judge the eccentricity of his experiments with respect to the constructivist current, which in 1922 catalyzed the Berlin intelligentsia. Other Russian eccentrics in Berlin at that

time included Archipenko and Chaikov, as well as the group of Russian Jews who in 1922 published in Berlin the book *Rimon/milgrom* (Hebrew Artists in Contemporary Russian Art).

The exceptional concentration of Russian intellectuals in Berlin was in any event a highly significant phenomenon.

One has to only think of the Russian club Haus der Künste, which gathered in the Café Leon. From 1922 to 1923 this was the meeting place of writers, artists, intellectuals, and poets such as Andrey Bely, Ilya Ehrenburg, Mayakovsky, Boris Pasternak, Igor Severyanin, Shklovsky, Elsa Triolet, Nikolai Berdyayev, S. Bulgakov, Natan Altman, Archipenko, Ivan and Kseniya Puni, Gabo, Lissitzky, David Shterenberg, Nikolai Zaretsky, Osip Brik, and Roman Jakobson. It was clear that the Café Leon was the meeting place for the elite of the revolution who were disappointed by its initial results, agnostics, and intellectuals organically tied to Bolshevik power.

The concentration of Russian intellectuals in Berlin reached its apex precisely in 1922, the second year of the NEP, then suddenly diminished the following year, the year of the failed Communist attempt at insurrection and the beginnings of "German stabilization." Ehrenburg writes:

I don't know how many Russians were living in Berlin in those years but there were clearly a great number of them, inasmuch as you could hear Russian spoken in every canton. Dozens of restaurants had been opened, complete with balalaikas, gypsies, blini, shashlik, and, of course, the inevitable Russian hysteria. A small variety theatre was also operating. Three dailies and five weeklies were being published. In one year alone seventeen Russian publishing houses sprang up, putting out Fonvizin and Pilnyak, cookbooks, treatises on patrology, technical manuals, memoirs, and pamphlets.⁴³

It is Umansky who has related to us the occasion that brought both Kandinsky and Lissitzky to Berlin. The interest shown by the young artists of Berlin in the new Soviet artistic institutions in fact resulted in an invitation to Kandinsky to head the International Office of Russian Artists, with the task—which he never accomplished—of reconstructing the "Artistic International." In December 1921, Kandinsky thus arrived in Berlin, from there proceeding toward the Bauhaus at Weimar. Toward the end of 1921, Lissitzky received a similar assignment, and was permitted a surprising degree of freedom of movement given the unfavorable judgments expressed in Russia on his work. One can conclude that it was in the Soviet interest not to allow Russian culture in Berlin to remain the exclusive privilege of emigrants of the opposition and non-politicals; the exhibition of 1922, while still eclectic, clearly represents an attempt to regain control, officially, over ideological propaganda and contacts with the German intellectuals. These contacts were important for two reasons: for their propagandistic role and for the access to new levels of intervention to which they would lead.

It must not be forgotten that Soviet interest in Germany had a double aspect—political and technical. The revolutionary turmoil of November

1918 had been a blow to the Bolshevik party and, particularly after the deaths of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the relations between Russia and the KPD became intense. In 1923, the failed attempt to create a "German October" followed a plan of insurrection prepared in Moscow, to which Brandler and other leaders of the Communist party had been called.⁴⁴ Clearly, sending intellectuals in the guise of innocuous observers could be useful to Soviet Russia, but no proof exists that this was the political mandate of Lissitzky, Mayakovsky, or Ehrenburg. It is more probable that the primary motives here were those of ideological propaganda.

The second element of interest that Germany held for Soviet Russia was—as Lenin himself repeatedly emphasized⁴⁵—its launching of a policy of economic planning, begun as a project of intensification and rationalization of military industries coordinated by Walther Rathenau and Moellendorff during the war. Furthermore, in 1920 the regional plan of the Ruhr covered a surface of 4,500 square kilometers. For the Bolshevik party, which between 1920 and 1921 undertook its first experiment in planning, the German model served as a constant reference, even though all the Soviet theoreticians were careful to emphasize that there was much to criticize in this kind of capitalist system of planning. It remains a fact that, with the exhibition organized by David Shterenberg at the van Diemen Gallery in 1922, the Berlin intellectual world was confronted with the *image of the ideology of the organization*. Apart from the works of the "rightist" current (Mashkov, Konchalovsky, Malyavin, Kustodiev), displayed in the lower hall of the gallery, the experiments of Lissitzky, Altman, Gabo, Pevsner, Rodchenko, Shterenberg, Mansurov, and the other suprematists and productivists, moved to the floor above, could be interpreted by their Berlin viewers as the bearers of a new technique of communication, above and beyond the usual divergences and debates existing among various currents and various artists.

The "wind from the East" had now assumed a concrete form for German intellectuals. The exhibition of 1922, with all its institutional importance, succeeded in presenting a common frame of reference within which comparison to the German experiments became inevitable.

Constructivism was a metaphor for the technical organization of the real, as we have already said. And in effect, from Lissitzky's *Prouny* to the experiments of the suprematists, to those of the youngest generations, which are documented by the production of the new schools of art, to the sculptures of Gabo, to the constructivist stage designs, the exhibition of 1922 throws into relief the original element of the Soviet avant-gardes: their tendency to a continuous, ideal form of design, seen as the dynamic articulation of signs that were completely disenchanting.⁴⁶

The Berlin intellectuals thus found themselves violently confronted by an avant-garde that, with respect to the traditional current, arose as an answer—by turns desperate or cynical—to the tragic, and that now appeared under a new sign. Mayakovsky had lucidly forecast it in 1915:

*We consider the first part of our program of destruction to be concluded. And so do not be surprised if in our hands you no longer see the jester's rattle, but rather the architect's plan; do not be surprised if the voice of futurism, yesterday still soft with sentimental fancies, today rings out in the metal of sermons.*⁴⁷

The Soviet experiments, strong with the authority accorded them by their having presented themselves as allies or protagonists of a still-evolving socialism, demonstrated the absolute anachronism not only of the populist and humanitarian appeals of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, of the early Novembergruppe, or of the Sturm, but also of the vitalistic and mystical didacticism of Itten's *Vorkurs* and of the dadaist polemics. To be sure, the politicization of dada was also linked, in Berlin, to the discovery of the "value of non-value," of the technological utopia as a frame of reference for a communication whose own specific space was that of the *Grossstadt* at the height of its anonymity, its perpetual and violent metamorphosis, its presenting itself as a "theater of shock," of the unforeseen, of the absurd. But it was still a discovery that limited itself merely to specifying the instruments themselves—such as the technique of assemblage and of photomontage—without succeeding in indicating just how to put them to institutional use. Between the graphic experiments of dada and the compositions worked out by Lissitzky in Berlin—the illustrations for Ehrenburg's *Six Stories with Easy Endings*, published by Helikon in 1929, those for Shklovsky's *Zoo*, the magazines *Veshch* and *Broom*, the volume of the *Kunstismen*, the edition of Mayakovsky's *Dlya Golossa*, etc.—the leap achieved was that between a mere enunciation of principles and the systematic definition of a typographic language complete in itself.

The new dimension of the Soviet experiments was further confirmed by the exhibition, also in 1922, of the work of Alexandra Ekster at the Sarja bookstore on Marburgerstrasse, with catalogue and text prepared by Jean Tugendkhold; by the show at the same bookstore in 1923 of the work of Boguslavskaya and Charchoune, and of the stage designs, miniature-scale models, and costumes by Ekster, Alexander Vesnin, Georg Stenberg, and Georgy Yakulov on the occasion of the publication of Tairov's book *Das entfesselte Theater*, with graphics by Lissitzky; and finally by the appearance of the review *Veshch* (1922–1923).

The utopianism of the Glass Chain, of the ideal "cathedral of socialism," and of the *Stadtkrone*, suddenly appeared anachronistic: the publication of the review *Frühlicht*, edited by Bruno Taut—and containing an article by Iszelenov on Zholtovsky's naïve scheme for a "socialist city," and one by Ehrenburg on the tower of Tatlin—can be seen as the final stage of an expressionist-dada "contamination" on the verge of extinction. The new dimension of international constructivism, immediately grasped by Moholy-Nagy and by Gropius, soon bore fruit. From 1922, Gropius and Adolf Meyer, with their projects for the Chicago Tribune Tower, the Kallenbach house, and the Kappe factory, appeared to be interpreting a *neue Sachlichkeit* far different from the preceding experiments.⁴⁸ In 1923 Gro-

pius brought about a fundamental change in the didactics of the Bauhaus. Figures formerly absorbed in the general climate of expressionism, such as Mies van der Rohe and Hilberseimer, began to acquire far greater importance. Naturally, the reception accorded the Russian avant-garde was not unanimous. In *Das Kunstblatt*, Paul Westheim referred to the painters in the exhibition as "Oriental barbarians"—an expression already used against the Russians of the Blaue Reiter—recognizing, however, their intellectual affinity with the course leading to Malevich's *White on White* or Rodchenko's *Value of the Surface*.

At the same time, Waldemar George wrote four articles in the *Ere Nouvelle* extolling the theatrical activity of Tairov, of the constructivist directors, and of "leftist" tendencies in general, and calling for the show to be sent to Paris (a project later thwarted by the French government). In the liberal *Vossische Zeitung*, the critic Osborn singled out, instead, Konchalovsky and Falk as the major protagonists, together with Chagall and Filonov, of the "swinging to the left" of Soviet art, citing as its most prominent exponents Archipenko, Kandinsky, Shterenberg, and Altman, while remaining completely baffled by the works of the Unovis and of Tatlin. Among the more radical critics, however, mention should be made of Fritz Stahl, whose article in the *Berliner Tageblatt* we shall discuss shortly, and Andrey Bely, a theoretician and symbolist poet, from 1921 a follower of Rudolf Steiner and until 1912 professor of literature at the Proletkult, who called Lissitzky and Ehrenburg "specters of the antichrist."⁴⁹

To these judgments must be added the evaluation of a representative of Hungarian constructivism such as Kállai with respect to Lissitzky's work—an opportunity Kállai himself used to clarify the new meanings that the contact with the Soviet avant-garde had hurled into the midst of parallel European tendencies.

Kállai wrote in 1921, "We have lost our unity with nature and the religion of the supernatural."⁵⁰ With these words he still seems to be echoing the anguished question concerning the destiny of the intellectual in the midst of a society whose disintegrating forces compromise his original "mandate," as set forth by Franz Marc in the almanac of the Blaue Reiter in 1912.⁵¹ But immediately afterward Kállai added:

Our paths run according to laws of energies dominated by science and technology, organized by reason. This can be regarded tragically or with satisfaction: for an art that does not want to remain a fiction, but that wants rather to bear up against the true facts of civilization, this situation creates the need to be moved not by subconscious and metaphysical impulses, but to be instead disciplined and intellectually clear in one's visual sensitivities. To spiritualize not organic growth, but abstract construction.

The man of the future, liberated from social anarchy and the dark ferment of psychosis . . . is today still a beginning, a single cell, simple, elementary, but with definite possibilities of future historic realization. For this very reason, however, in no case must he become entangled in the

*net of the contradictory, impure relationships of the present, with its tattered and mediocre reality.*⁵²

For Kállai, then, the positiveness of the Lissitzkian object consisted of its intervention in a "space filled with energy," there being no doubt—as he himself would write in a second article on the Soviet artist, which appeared in *Der Cicerone*⁵³—that that object was nothing but a fictional construction of a fictional mechanism.

But it was precisely this "fiction" that shook the German artistic world. It was this explicit ideological function that was characteristic of a perspective that—in order to be expressed with all the fullness and completeness that belong to pure intellectual elaboration—had to remain just that: a horizon constantly shifted forward, in order to catalyze Berlin artistic circles by impressing upon them a decisive development, and contributing, moreover, to their unification.

But it was also this basis for the reunification of avant-garde ideology—a primary objective of Lissitzky, quite evident in the publication of the *Kunstismen*—that could not receive official party approval in Russia. Anatoly Lunacharsky personally undertook to review the Berlin exhibition of 1922, paying particular attention to the reactions of the German critics. And it is significant that Lunacharsky's sympathies were with the most critical of the German reviewers, Stahl: that is to say, with an avowed anti-Soviet, who even compared the U. S. S. R. to the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm. Lunacharsky nevertheless was willing to overlook such "liberal stupidities," as he called Stahl's polemical barbs at the Soviet regime, to be able to cite certain remarks made by the German critic that could possibly assume a different meaning in the context of his own cultural politics. Stahl wrote in a passage cited *in toto* by Lunacharsky:

*If the old represented merely a tendency parallel to that of the West, little different from the art of the academy, in leftist art cerebral acrobatics reigned supreme, a phase that we in Germany have already passed through. . . . There is no doubt that a particular harmony exists between the revolutionary art of these painters and the revolutionary character of the Soviet power itself. This power, in fact, wants to create new and extraordinary forms by destroying everything old, but in painting this revolutionary spirit is expressed in completely abstract forms, which go to extremes and end up as simply absurd, forms that the people are not likely to accept.*⁵⁴

It was precisely these final remarks that won Lunacharsky's approval. He emphasized the populist tones of Stahl's arguments, taking up again a polemic dear to the Proletkult. Stahl had written, "It would be better to teach the people technologies and trades exclusively, leaving it to them to define their own new style"—a concept too close, for various reasons, to both the cultural politics proclaimed by Lenin and to Trotsky's observations on the task of "productive" art not to have been taken up again by Lunacharsky. In fact, Lunacharsky wrote:

Stahl states peremptorily that, once freed from the exterior influence of the intellectual groups, the people would return to their own resources—their warmth of feeling, richness of fantasy, musical refinement, use of colors, etc.

I hasten to declare that on many points my judgment coincides with that of the bourgeois critic. There was no doubt that our pseudo-progressive aspiration to exclude feeling and fantasy from art, to intellectualize it at all costs, is not counterbalanced by the enfeebled, lax forms of our academic and semiacademic past. I too believe that the new generation now being educated in our schools is capable of mirroring the revolution in forms far richer and more immediate than those employed by leftist extremists, excellent men all, and often sincerely friends of the revolution, but nonetheless influenced by the bourgeois leftist art of the Parisian bohème.⁵⁵

If up to this point the attitude of the People's Commissar for Artistic Instruction appears to have been extremely cautious, careful to balance criticism of an antiacademic nature with that directed at the avant-garde tradition, in the succeeding passage his discourse assumed a decidedly Trotskyist tone:

Our exhibition in Berlin did not fully reflect either the today, or, in particular, the tomorrow of our art. It reflected only those conjunctural peculiarities in the midst of which we have lived these past years, that is, the influx of forces from the leftist front of prerevolutionary art. Nonetheless, it is pleasing to observe that even an exhibition of works born of this transitional phase has elicited from both the German critics and public such a favorable reception. . . .

An art in transition, the direct heir of the avant-gardes, of the prerevolutionary progressivist bourgeoisie: Lunacharsky's "official" judgment can be immediately compared to Trotsky's considerations on just this "transitional" role specific to the Soviet artistic avant-gardes.⁵⁶

Before drawing a conclusion from Lunacharsky's review, it is necessary to compare it to an article that in a way constituted a reply to it, formulated explicitly by the "leftist artistic front." In 1923 Mayakovsky, in *Krasnaya nov*, deemed it necessary to reply, on a specifically political level, to the People's Commissar.⁵⁷

Mayakovsky, too, lamented the incompleteness of the Berlin exhibition, but he avoided using this factor to further other ends, as Lunacharsky had done. What interested him was rather to emphasize immediately that what he calls "the revolutionary exhibition" was inaugurated on the very day on which in the streets of Berlin, near the Busch Circus, the German Communists skirmished with the Nationalists. "This fact," he continued, "influenced the revolutionary mood, and the exhibition was inaugurated in an atmosphere of good feeling."⁵⁸

Mayakovsky did not point to this coincidence gratuitously. He viewed the exhibition at the van Diemen Gallery as being under the "moral" sign

of avant-garde art: the lower floor, dedicated to "right-wing painting," appears in his article as merely a useful element for the correct evaluation of the "left-wing art" gathered in the upper hall. There was a connection between the uprisings organized by the KPD and the success of the first exhibition of Soviet art; Mayakovsky's objective was to demonstrate the propaganda value of the avant-garde experiments, and in a truly political sense.⁵⁹ He wrote:

It is evidently impossible to judge from this exhibition what is happening in Russia. Our main force lies not in the paintings, good as they may be, but rather in a new organization of art, particularly in the schools, in industry, and in the union movement, which imparts to our art a new vital force, unknown in Europe. It is essential to demonstrate by every means possible this particular aspect of the work being done in the Soviet Union.

Europe is trying to move away from us politically, but is unable to stop the growing interest in Russia, and thus is trying to find another outlet by opening up the safety valve of art. France, for example, which is so reluctant to grant a visa to an individual Soviet citizen, grants it to the Theater of Art, and it would scarcely have been a surprise if Millerand's wife herself took over the leadership of the Committee to boost our exhibition in Paris. We must make certain that as many communist ideas as possible filter through this aperture.

Thus the identification of communism with the avant-garde was again strengthened by Mayakovsky. A Soviet art exhibition in a capitalist country was for him a vehicle of ideological penetration, provided that it was shaped by constructivist currents. The clash between Lunacharsky and Mayakovsky becomes more comprehensible in this light. For the People's Commissar—politically pressed by Lenin's criticisms—the "left-wing" factions already revealed values that were all potentially assimilable by the evolving capitalist universe—exactly as Tugendkhold would note three years later in reviewing the 1925 Paris Exposition.⁶⁰ For Lunacharsky, the only possible course was that of a return to the great themes of bourgeois humanism; it was the "solution" that Lukács and, in architecture, the Vopra group were to offer to the ideology of "socialist art."

For Mayakovsky, as for Rodchenko, Arvatov, or Brik, there existed only one consumer "who doesn't know what to do with paintings, nor with ornaments, and who does not fear iron and steel," and "this consumer is the proletariat."⁶¹ This thesis in itself needs no comment, but its appeal takes on a particular value with regard to the diverse meaning assumed by the Berlin exhibition for a responsible party member and for the avant-garde intellectuals.

The truth is that Mayakovsky considered himself, just as did Lissitzky for the figurative arts, the "official envoy of the opposition" in the West. In the name of the "social mandate" that they claimed for themselves, both believed themselves able to enter into a direct dialectic with the

party; thus it may well be that their ideological propaganda in the West had as a second purpose the strengthening of the position of the intellectual avant-gardes within Soviet Russia, as a result of the prestige received from the acclamation of the European intelligentsia.

It thus becomes essential to follow closely the cultural politics conducted in Germany by the principal propagandist of constructivist ideological themes, Lissitzky.

It is in fact extremely significant that Lissitzky, while discussing on diverse occasions the Berlin artistic atmosphere, felt it necessary to attack both the Sturm group and the politicized dadaist group.

In the first number of *Veshch*, he insisted on an international perspective identified with the objectivity of constructivism:

From now on, art, while preserving all local characteristics and symptoms, is international. The founders of a new guild of painters are making sure that the links are securely established between Russia, which experienced the most powerful revolution, and the West, with its miserable, postwar Black Monday mood; in doing this, they are ignoring all distinctions between psychological, economic, and purely national art. 'Object' provides the link between two adjacent lines of communication.⁶²

And he continued, echoing the words of Mayakovsky in 1915:

We consider the negative tactic of the 'dadaists,' who are as similar to the early futurists of the prewar era as one pea is to another, to be anachronistic. The time has come to build on open ground. Whatever is exhausted will die anyway, without assistance from us; for land that is lying fallow needs not a program, not a school of thought, but simply work.⁶³

In the third number of *Veshch* the attack was directed at late expressionism, as well as at the sculpture of Archipenko and the painting of Kandinsky, the former criticized for its "saccharine quality," and the latter for its "lack of clarity and compactness," for its extraneousness to the *object*.

Lissitzky was basically concerned with liquidating the last late-romantic ferments, underlining the escapism of the experiments of the Russian artists who had deliberately cut themselves off from the political debate of the avant-gardes. He wrote:

One expects to find modern art at the Galerie Der Sturm; but this giant ocean liner has changed into a shabby little tramp. A short time ago the Hungarians could be seen there. Begotten of the Revolution in Russia, along with us they have become productive in their art. Moholy-Nagy has prevailed over German expressionism, and is striving to achieve an organized approach. Against the background of the jellyfish-like nonobjective painting, the clear geometry of Moholy and Peri stands out in relief. . . .

The culture of painting no longer comes from the museum. It comes from the picture gallery of our modern streets—the riot and exaggeration of colors on the lithographic poster, the black glass signs with white letters

*pasted on, the light from electric lamps that have been colored with violet lacquer.*⁶⁴

The pictorial culture that “comes from the gallery of our modern streets” was, in sum, the program of the nonverbal techniques of communication that the entire avant-garde had turned to, from Meidner’s manifesto on the big city, to the “factograph” championed later by Lef. But it was also, and principally, the justification of the technique of montage, championed by Hausmann (with the approval, it seems, of Lissitzky himself) as a specific innovation of the Berlin dada, but brought to the highest linguistic level by Kurt Schwitters.⁶⁵

And, in fact, it was with Schwitters that Lissitzky set up an organic collaborative relationship. Through Schwitters, he came into contact with the Kestner Society of Hanover, and with his help, as well as that of others, later succeeded in entering a Swiss sanatorium. Lissitzky and Schwitters together edited numbers seven and eight of *Merz*, the “Merz-Nasci,” and, together with Hans Richter and Mies van der Rohe, created the elementarist review *G*. This collaboration poses a historical problem—the same posed by Lissitzky’s collaboration with Arp, with whom he edited the *Kunstismen*, or with van Doesburg—as to the precise choice made by the Soviet artist in the composite panorama of the European avant-gardes.

In number two of *Merz* (1923), Schwitters, together with Arp, van Doesburg, Christoph Spengemann, and Tzara, signed the *Manifest Prolet-kunst*, explicitly directed against “political” art—an attack that had been preceded in 1921 by his article “Merz” in *Der Ararat*:⁶⁶

*Art is a spiritual function of man, and its object is to free him from the chaos of life (from its tragedy). Art is free in the use of its own means, but is subject to its own internal laws. . . . Trivial as it may sound, no real difference exists between paintings showing the imperial army led by Napoleon and the Red Army led by Trotsky. . . . The art that we want is neither proletarian nor bourgeois, inasmuch as it undertakes to influence culture in its structure, without letting itself be influenced in turn by social conditions.*⁶⁷

If the first phrase quoted was largely influenced by the manifestos of de Stijl and by the theories of Mondrian, filtered through van Doesburg—art as a liberation from suffering—the second part of the quotation is similar in every detail to the theses of the Russian formalists, and in particular to those of Shklovsky and Tretyakov, where these two affirm that ideology “does not lie in the material that art makes use of, but rather in the procedures of working out this material,”⁶⁸ and that art “is not a thing . . . but a relationship of materials, and, like every relationship, it is of zero degree . . . [hence] happy works, tragic works, universal works, or chamber works, *the contrasts of one world to another or of a cat to a stone are equal.*”⁶⁹

Schwitters thus resolutely denied the utopia of a “political” art in favor of a production of formal objects conceived as a pure clash of neutral

signs—even if they were extracted from unused vestiges of everyday life. In this sense, the alliance formed by Lissitzky and Schwitters becomes even more significant: it was not so much the “artistic left” that interested Lissitzky, but the author of “Merz,” who from the beginning had been driven away from the Berlin dada group by the activities of Huelsenbeck.⁷⁰ And besides, even Moholy-Nagy—who did not enjoy the sympathies of Lissitzky for “technical reasons”—had written for the review *MA* in 1922 an article entitled “Konstruktivismus und das Proletariat,” in which were set forth highly ambiguous theses on the internationalism of constructivism. In Moholy-Nagy’s article, in effect, the spirit of the machine was shown to be *in itself* the bearer of social egalitarianism, but only insofar as “everyone can become masters or slaves” of the machine itself. The “root of socialism,” in the words of Moholy-Nagy himself, was in the objectivity and collectivism imposed by the new technologies. Moholy-Nagy essentially was picking up the demands championed by the abstract cinema of Eggeling, by the metropolitan thematic that had been present in German culture from the beginning of the century, and by the forces that tended toward a synthesis of the avant-gardes. His screenplay *Dynamik der Grossstadt* tended to make of montage a technique directly inspired by a reading of the metropolitan universe, and it is perhaps no accident that a passage of his *Malerei, Photographie, Film* of 1925 is but a paraphrase of Simmel’s famous text on the metropolis and nervous life.⁷¹ The need to give unity to the kaleidoscope of the avant-gardes is further evidenced by the *Buch neuer Künstler*, which Moholy-Nagy published in 1922 with Lajos Kassák, while, as we shall see later, in 1921 Moholy-Nagy was close to Hausmann, Puni, and Arp. If from a technical point of view the work of Moholy-Nagy thus shows a consequentiality of its own, it is only right to recognize the extreme ambiguity of his political position. To be sure, socialism is “mentioned” in the article “Konstruktivismus und das Proletariat” (always assuming that the article is not apocryphal); but the phrase “there is no tradition in technology, there is no consciousness of class or rank” should be cause for reflection. One might observe, first of all, that the immediate identification of technological impersonality with socialism is so naïve (or cynical) as to be considered a symptom that in itself should be historicized. Undoubtedly, the political uncertainty of the review *MA* also affected Moholy-Nagy after 1922. Kemény and Moholy-Nagy, together with Kállai and László Peri, signed a declaration in favor of the Proletkult,⁷² without realizing that they were thus supporting an organization totally antithetical to their experiments; but in 1924 they advocated in *Der Sturm* an art composed of a “system of dynamo-constructive forms,” accentuating the material “only as a conveyor of energies.”⁷³

All things considered, it is pointless to follow the intellectual peregrinations of the artists converging on Berlin and in search of political roots solely to obtain justifications for their experiments. It may be observed, however, that in the alleged “socialism” of Moholy-Nagy there lay not only the technological utopia expressed at its maximum level by Benjamin

in his *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, but also the heritage of Kautsky's Social Democracy: the machine—like the great trust that subjugates it—was a prime requisite of social transformation. To spread the word regarding its functioning, as Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter, or Lissitzky did, was not contradictory to plunging it—while dominating it, “holding it together”—into the sea of the topsy-turvy alphabets of the metropolis, as Hausmann or Schwitters did. It was rather a matter of an interiorization or of an exteriorization of the impulses generated by the “new Babylon.” Van Doesburg would demonstrate, completely absorbing the subjective alienation provoked by it, that dada could take on an experimental guise, and elementarism the technique of collage.

All this does no more than document the decline (temporary—think of the virtually contemporary formation of the surrealist group) of the late-expressionist and dada “revolutionary” inclinations.

With Schwitters, and with the catalyzing influences of the 1922 show, of *Veshch*, of *G*, of the “turning point” in the Bauhaus after 1923, of the formation, in essence, of a “Constructivist International,” the technical pole of avant-garde work became separated from the encrustations of content that had been superimposed on it. The ideology of permanent innovation (the *shock technique*) was now looked upon as the principal instrument of an out-and-out “theory of the sign,” directed solely at controlling the unsettling tensions created between society and a technological universe in rapid transformation.

But it is also interesting in this regard to recall the testimony of a “pure” intellectual such as Erich Bucholz, who offers a symptomatic picture of the discussions within the Western constructivist group. Bucholz himself affirmed that in 1922, together with Peri, he had singled out architecture as a point of arrival for the avant-garde. Even more significant discussions, inasmuch as they came from the Hungarian group in Berlin, were those of Kállai, Kemény, and Huszar:

Theme of the debate: dynamics, the model: Tatlin and the futurists. The central theme of the discussion was familiar. Transported into kinetics, we tested it out, together with Eggeling. I maintained the opinion that within the sphere of painting, statics and dynamics did not constitute isolated values, in absolute opposition to each other, nor were they antithetical principles, even less so if considered in terms of chromatic relationships. In terms of the formal equation Constructivism equals Dynamics of the Revolution, dynamics, taken by itself, constituted an abuse, and Kállai countered me: ‘Think of electricity and you will know what dynamics is.’⁷⁴

Essentially, then, beyond the discussion on the symbolic value of constructivism, the true theme of the debate was the possible cognitive value of artistic elementarism. Bucholz wrote further:

We persisted above all in discussing two opposing conceptions of the term ‘conscious.’ If the circle and the line were the instruments that constituted

*the point of departure, the essential requisites, in light of the affinity of our work, the question was understandably posed: 'What was the process of construction?' Here our opinions became tangled. My reply was that our creations had to spring from an irresistible impulse, governed by an eye that measured and thought with but one goal: the final result. The work was thus 'that which has been rendered conscious.' Lissitzky answered me sarcastically: 'Romantic.'*⁷⁵

After all, Bucholz was not alone in his attempt to transport the last vestiges of expressionist pathos into the elementarist language. Think of Moholy-Nagy's work between 1920 and 1921, or of Puni himself. Even here Lissitzky's opposition was symptomatic and clearly reveals his cultural politics. A cultural politics, in any event, that began to reveal its internal ambiguities with the publication of the review *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, which he directed together with Ehrenburg, as mentioned above, from 1922. *Veshch's* program was explicit. Objective art, the metaphor of the technological universe in dynamic growth, and the image of a mechanized production capable of pacifying the collectivity in an organic plan were here greeted as concrete moments of common work of the Constructivist International. In this sense, *Veshch* was a political act: the ideology of the plan emerged as a unifying moment of the Soviet intellegentsia and of that of the West as well.

Veshch

will champion a constructive art, whose mission is not, after all, to embellish life but to organize it. We have named our review

Veshch

because to us art means nothing other than the creation of new 'objects.'

. . .
*Every organized piece of work—whether it be a house, a poem, a painting—is a practical 'object,' not intended to estrange people from life. . . . Thus we have nothing in common with those poets who announce in verse that they will not write any more verse, or painters who use the picture as a means of publicizing their renunciation of painting. Basic utilitarianism is far from our thoughts.*⁷⁶

Compare this programmatic passage with the very premises of the review:

*The blockade of Russia moves toward its end. The appearance of *Veshch* is an indication of the fact that the exchange of 'objects' between young Russian and West European masters has begun.*

We are standing in the dawn of a great creative era. . . . The days of destroying and beleaguering and undermining are behind us. . . .

*We consider the triumph of the constructive method to be essential for our present. We find it not only in the new economy and in the development of industry, but also in the psychology of our contemporaries in art.*⁷⁷

The theme of dissent from the dadaist positions was thus reaffirmed. The impossible politicization of a falsely destructive ideology was grasped in an explicit manner. But asserted at the same time was the need for intellectual work that stopped at the doors of industrial production, that touched the world of labor only tangentially, that did not abandon the field of pure ideology. And it was on the slippery terrain of ideology that *Veshch* presumed to follow the Leninist directions on Russia's overtures toward a Europe experimenting with advanced techniques of state capitalism. (The reference to the NEP in the programmatic platform of *Veshch* is significant.)

The ideological ambiguity of the operation was accentuated by the contemporary writings of Ehrenburg, and in particular by his volume *And Yet It Moves!*, also of 1922, in which one notes the emergence of the red thread that joins together movements such as the *Esprit Nouveau*, *de Stijl*, *Unovis*, and the *Vida Americana* under the banner of an internationalism with a constructivist line. With a warning, however:

An art constructed in the proper way can exist only in the midst of a society that is organized in a rational manner. . . .

Can a cubist who constructs his painting according to a rigorous equilibrium of forms and an impeccable interdependence of weight among the various colors breathe freely in a state founded on chance, the arbitrary, and anarchic confusion? . . . Can an artist who finds his pathos in creating an object, in transforming material, bestow his approval on contemporary Europe, which prefers not to produce but rather to quarrel over the destruction of what has already been produced?

*The new art favors a single plan, a system, an organization, in contrast with the anarchic impressionism of petit-bourgeois society. . . .*⁷⁸

Art thus emerged as an image of the ideology of *Rationalisierung* upheld as an eminently socialist value; the anarchy of distribution and productive passivity were designated, on the other hand, as the non-values of the capitalist bourgeoisie.

To this distorted interpretation of the reality of international capitalism, then in the process of reorganization, Ehrenburg added a new slogan: the rationalist tendencies of intellectual ideology were to him—as they were to Lissitzky—the substantial new forms “of opposition” in the Western countries. Hence, the legitimacy of the Constructivist International.

Immediately Boris Arvatov accused *Veshch* of opportunism in the pages of *Pechat' i revolyutsiya*.⁷⁹ For Arvatov, the union of forces that had gathered around the review—Archipenko, Chaplin, Craig, Gleizes, Goll, Léger, Jules Romains, Severini, etc.—was only a concentration of aestheticizing intellectuals in their first contact with the productive universe, around the new fetish of modern technique seen not as a means but as an end. Between Lunacharsky's criticism of the 1922 show and that of Arvatov directed at *Veshch*, there lay at least an area of mutual agreement. The technological universe, evoked outside of a recovery of the *city of man*,

too clearly carried for them the mark of "objectivity" to be accepted in itself as a valid ideology of support for the universe of "socialist work."

Yet it was this very technological utopia, intent on identifying aesthetics with the ideology of production, that was singled out by Ehrenburg and Lissitzky as a catalyst for the dispersed European efforts.

All of which was already clear in Lissitzky's manifesto "Proun" (1920), made known in Europe by van Doesburg's review in 1922:

Proun is the name we give to the stage on the way to neoplasticism, which is rising on the ground fertilized by the dead bodies of pictures and their painters. The pictures crashed together with the church and its god, whom it served as a proclamation; with the palace and its king, whom it served as a throne; with the sofa and its philistine, whose icon of happiness it was. . . .

We have set the Proun in motion and so we obtain a number of axes of projection; we stand between them and push them apart. Standing on this scaffolding in the space we must begin to mark it out. Emptiness, chaos, the unnatural, become space, that is: order, certainty, plastic form, when we introduce markers of a specific kind and in a specific relationship to each other. The structure and the scale of the group of markers give the space a specific tension. By changing the markers we alter the tension of the space, which is formed from one and the same emptiness. . . .

Proun's power is to create aims. This is the artist's freedom, denied to the scientist.

Purpose results in usefulness, which means the depth of quality is spread into the breadth of quantity.⁸⁰

Apart from the specific linguistic instruments used, it is clear that notable affinities exist between the Lissitzkian Proun and the ideas of the de Stijl group; it may, in fact, be said that if constructivism appeared almost totally new to Berlin, the avant-gardes gathered around the "Stijl" had for some time been following the program with which Lissitzky proposed to reunify the European experiments. As in the case of Schwitters, here too, unexpressed but implicit, was the political aspiration of Russian constructivism. The Lissitzky-van Doesburg alliance itself was based on an acceptance of an avant-garde in which the "revolutionary" wills were entirely subordinated to their autonomous collective program and their technological utopia.

After all, already in 1921 Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Puni, and Moholy-Nagy had published in *De Stijl* the manifesto "Aufruf zur Elementaren Kunst."⁸¹ The avant-garde congress held in Düsseldorf from 29 to 31 May 1922, with the determinative participation of Lissitzky, thus merely picked up again a thread of work begun a good while earlier.

Art as organization of one's entire existence, in the same manner as science and technology: the constructivist resolution of the Düsseldorf congress—signed by van Doesburg, Lissitzky, and Richter, in polemic with many German and French groups⁸²—was once again only the founding, on

this program, of an international of the avant-garde. The Russian constructivist theory of "art as the construction of life" thus obtained European recognition, and was sanctioned in September 1922, following the dadaist and constructivist congress in Weimar, by the institution of the *Konstruktivistische Internationale schöpferische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (International Union of Neoplastic Constructivists).⁸³ Steneberg attributes to Kállai the transformation of the dada meeting in Weimar into a constructivist congress.⁸⁴ In reality, it was through van Doesburg himself that the technical-constructive valences of the dada movement had already been singled out as new, positive instruments of communication. It was not only the ideology set forth by the Russian avant-gardes that was now put in parentheses, but the dadaist ideology of protest as well. On this point, van Doesburg, Kállai, and Lissitzky were in perfect accord.

What van Doesburg now proclaimed through his forays into the dadaist sphere (under, as is well known, the pseudonym of I. K. Bonset), and through his dada tour in Holland, undertaken together with Nelly, Huszar, and Schwitters, does not seem, therefore, contradictory.⁸⁵ It was not only a programmatic introjection of alienation that led van Doesburg to set himself against the negative avant-gardes, nor was it solely a question of an ultimate attempt at a subjective reunification of the entire arc of the European experiences of rupture. (The latter was the path taken by Hans Richter, perhaps more consistently than by van Doesburg.) The dadaism of the director of *De Stijl* was not that of Ball, nor of Hausmann, much less that of Tzara. Cleansed of any purely iconoclastic matrix, van Doesburg's dadaism reduced the avant-garde to experimentalism; it manifested itself as a list of techniques of communication; it served as the affirmation of a "tradition of the new" and of its "other logic," antithetical to the traditional logic scoffed at by van Doesburg himself in the pages of *Mécano*.⁸⁶

In this sense, the choice of Weimar as the site of the congress was quite significant. Van Doesburg, along with Lissitzky and the European constructivists, viewed the Bauhaus, dominated by Itten's *Vorkurs*, as an anachronistic educational center in which the glorification of anthroposophical myths or of artisan technique presented itself as an alternative to the effort to unify the techniques of mass communication. The congress of 1922 was thus an obvious provocation (parallel to the noted clashes between van Doesburg and the Bauhaus), which was immediately received and absorbed by Gropius. The *Bauhauswoche* of 1923, with the exhibition and the manifestations that marked the official moment of the "rationalist" turning point of the school, took place, and probably not by chance, at the same time as the exhibition of student work of the Metfak in Moscow.

Both the Bauhaus and de Stijl had as their primary objective—from different points of view—the synthesis of avant-garde experiments; a number of the points that emerged in the 1922 congress would be taken up again the following year by the Bauhaus. The manifesto signed by the Central Committee of the International Union of Neoplastic Constructivists insisted, in fact, upon collective work, on an international, antisentimental art, on an *art as organization*, as reformer of social life. "This

international," wrote van Doesburg, Richter, the Belgian Karel Maes, Max Burchartz, and Lissitzky,⁸⁷ "is not the result of some humanitarian, idealistic, or political sentiment, but springs from *the same amoral and elementary principles* on which both science and technology are based."

The avant-garde, brought back to its elementary principles, was thus obliged to reveal its cards completely, to recognize its own origins in "negative thought," to declare once again not only its own nonpolitical nature, but also its own *immoralism*.

At this point, one might continue to follow the complex affair of the exchanges between Soviet avant-gardes and European avant-gardes, from the great Lissitzky exhibition of 1923 in Berlin, to the relations with the Kestner Society of Hanover and with Alexander Dorner, to the growth of the elementarist reviews—*G, Merz*, and the *Swiss ABC*.⁸⁸ But the affair would by this time be a different one.

Between 1922 and 1923, in fact, this historical paradox became apparent: the Soviet avant-garde, introduced as a paradigm of the art of a developing socialism into a Germany permeated with expressionist pathos, found itself objectively carrying out the task of revealing that the only "politicalness" possible for the avant-garde was that of announcing the advent of a universe of *non-values, amoral, elementary*: exactly the technological universe of the organized development of great capital denounced by Grosz as a terrifying universe, "without quality."

The ideology of production or, better, *the image of the ideology of highly mechanized work* became, from here on, the authentic manifesto of the Constructivist International, above and beyond the chance divergencies separating the experiences of the different groups. All of the history that follows is affected by the failures and frustrations suffered by the avant-gardes in their attempt to "realize the ideology," in the West as in Russia.

Yet the two congresses, at Weimar and Düsseldorf, especially because of the polemical tone that characterized them, did not lead to new institutional organizations of intellectual work. The apparatus set up by German Social Democracy was by now in an evident state of crisis and, if need be, replaceable by new "technical" supports of management. The most constructive demands expressed in 1922 would, significantly, find an outlet in the founding of CIAM.

The ideological unification was, in reality, already in the cards: in the discovery of the silence surrounding the *sign*, that residue, that insuppressible boundary that remained after the dadaist devastation. The negative, having arrived at the limit that separates language from silence, was in a position to organize syntactical structures deprived of referents—or, better, full of referents intent on verifying themselves.

But at this point the ambiguous oscillation of the *Proun* between the real and the unreal became anachronistic. The "wicked transgression" composed itself into a series of codes. The avant-garde, more or less consciously, consigned to architecture and to the techniques of the visual transformation of the environment the task of testing in a concrete fashion its own productivity.⁸⁹

Toward the "Socialist City": U.S.S.R., 1917–28

Given the controversies that shook European cultural circles upon contact with Soviet experiments, it becomes evident that the reduction of formal writing to a "conventional game," to an object completely autoreferential, is the outcome of a crisis of language that views the city no longer as a "sickness" to be cured but rather as a privileged site for experimental formalization.

It is particularly significant, however, that very little of what Soviet Russia was feverishly exploring in the field of the revision of planning instruments was discussed in Germany or in Europe, until 1925, at any rate. But this is understandable: in a Russia just emerging from the October Revolution, the discipline of urban planning was practiced by "another avant-garde," having virtually no contact with the avant-garde that the historiographic tradition has treated until now.

But, as we have pointed out many times before, ideologies "work in groups." The politico-economic utopias of the first years of Soviet urban planning may adopt different forms and different techniques, but they are not based upon a content substantially different from that which informs suprematism, productivism, and constructivism. We must now examine those utopias, paying particular attention to their fate within the debate relative to the First Five-Year Plan.

On 13 January 1918 the nascent Soviet state issued the declaration of *The Fundamental Rights of the Working and Exploited People*, which, for the first time in contemporary history, abolished the right of property ownership:

The private ownership of land is eliminated; the entire territory is declared the property of all the people and handed over, without compensation, to the workers, on the basis of the common use of the territory. All forests, the riches of the land, the waters of public importance, the entire inventory of personal property and real estate (belonging to the living and

dead), all valuables and suitable establishments are hereby declared national property.

This law of generalized expropriation, destined to create the grounds for a planned management of natural resources, was accompanied by a number of laws pertaining to landed property and public housing, in a beginning attempt to bring some order to the frightful living conditions inherited from the Czarist era: a law passed on 20 October 1917 allowed the communes to confiscate all empty apartments in order to distribute them among the homeless and the classes living in poverty; furthermore, a subsequent decree passed on 14 December of the same year prohibited every form of speculation on urban land. Mortgages and agreements for the sale and purchase of city land and buildings were declared null and void, as a further step toward the definitive transferal of the entire building stock into the hands of the communes and the local Soviets. These were empowered by special housing commissions to proceed with the redistribution of the existing patrimony. In this manner, the direction indicated since 1872 by Engels was taken as the first step toward a socialist administration of the city and, in parallel to what was being accomplished—in different and less radical ways—by the Social Democracy in Vienna in the first years of its administration.

It would be useless, for our purposes, to point out the contradictions that arose during the years of "War Communism" as a result of the practical difficulties encountered in executing the provisions of the law and of the impossibility of following up the redistribution of the existing apartments with adequate measures for a coordinated intervention in the construction sector. It is more important to observe that the provisions for socialization stemming from 1917–21 opened up entirely new areas for planning, while closing the doors to any pretense of autonomy for the discipline of urban planning, as it had come to be defined through a long theoretical toil from 1870 to 1914, in the countries with the most advanced capitalist development: England, Germany, and the United States. All the models that meet and collide at the Town Planning Conference and Exhibition, organized in London by the Royal Institute of British Architecture in 1910, are characterized, in fact, by a logic based on three orders of problems: (a) the development of an ideology of public intervention grafted onto the rationalized grids of a speculative laissez-faireism (the American City Beautiful movement); (b) the attempt to "regulate" the marketplace by using marginalist economic theories (the theorizations of the German school); and (c) the transfer of the urban theme to a regional site by using instruments that tend to eliminate or reduce the revenue from urban sites and that permit the recouping of induced revenues by the community (the English Garden Cities movement). The entire spectrum of these hypotheses is suddenly made anachronistic when the basic problem they attempt to resolve—the equilibrium of the land market and the construction industry—is superseded by the Soviet laws, which eliminate in practice the very subject toward which these hypotheses were directed: the market.

Certainly, and particularly after 1921, it will be necessary to come to terms with the decrees on "building laws," which allow private citizens and cooperatives the temporary use of land for building; but what is more important here is that the general socialization of land permits the opening of a completely new debate on the instruments of planning.

Precisely at this point the Western tradition of urban planning manifests a high degree of viscosity. Partly because the first hypotheses of urban and regional planning theorized after 1917 come from the domain of architectural culture, they tend to state, on an expanded scale, the problem of *equilibrium*, central to all the intellectual baggage of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. After all, is not the utopia of perfect equilibrium—typical of marginalist theories—the agenda of the debates and of the economic practice of War Communism?

The entire first phase of Soviet planning is actually geared toward the development of instruments of planning, rather than toward the elaboration of concrete programs. Or to be more precise, this condition results historically from the dialectic that takes place between the efforts made by technicians who put forward proposals that were more or less perfected and the actions taken by the central government and the local Soviets. Architects and urban planners, often working in isolation within the various bureaus and the people's commissariats, believed themselves to be already equipped with the theoretical foundations necessary to begin the development of regional, urban, and sectorial plans; and it is clear that these theoretical foundations had their roots either in the tradition of humanistic and utopian socialism or in the instruments devised by nineteenth-century reformism.

In other words, the most advanced segment of culture, between 1918 and 1925, seems not to have been aware of the problem of elaborating new instruments that could be inserted within the various phases of the development of the Soviet economy. The plan, for avant-garde intellectuals and for city planners like Semënov, Sakulin, Shchusev, Shestakov, is merely an ideological objective, capable of realizing the perfect equilibrium prophesied by Engels. This is all the more significant when we consider that the urban planners working in the first phase, with a few exceptions, were certainly not members of avant-garde groups but rather were aligned with academic culture. We have seen how Lissitzky's *Proun* represents an attempt to make "speak" the empty signs rendered disposable by the victory of socialist man over the "revolt of objects." But when the *Proun* becomes an urban object, the gap between the hypotheses of the avant-garde and the urban plans of the academic tradition begins to diminish. To verify this, it is necessary only to compare Lissitzky's administrative skyscrapers with Shestakov's plan for Greater Moscow.

But, aside from this example, the direct commitment to urban and regional planning is maintained, up to the years 1927–28, roughly, almost exclusively by the culture extraneous to the avant-garde. This is easily explainable. The specific field privileged by the avant-gardes is the metropolis, captured in its essence as a "communication machine." But their in-

tervention into the metropolis is focussed on the microcosm of the object: only through experimentation on the object is it possible to transmit a message regarding the total reconstruction of human experience. When Ladovsky undertakes urban-scale projects, not by chance does he attempt to translate into three-dimensional spaces the formal experimentation of a Lissitzky or a Rodchenko.

Shchusev, Fomin, Zholtovsky, Semënov do not privilege, on the other hand, the superstructural aspects of the city and are willing to concede to urban planning an autonomy, at least relative, with respect to the architectural scale. Their academic background prevents these architects from accepting a clear solution providing for continuity between the various phases of the formation of the city: this explains, among other things, the reasons for which they are tied to the thought of Camillo Sitte and Raymond Unwin.

However, this does not mean that an "avant-garde" urbanistic experimentation did not exist in the Russia of the first postrevolutionary years.

It is, in fact, very significant that the Russian urban planners active during the years between War Communism and the NEP [New Economic Policy] attempt to free the discipline of urban planning from the concrete historical phases that the Communist party found itself having to confront: the hypothesis of the "socialist city" is advanced as the product of programs elaborated between the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth by bourgeois culture. The underlying conviction was that those programs, utopian and incomplete within capitalist countries, could be concretized only in the country of realized socialism.

Ultimately, four theoretical sources were available: that of German urbanistic thought, characterized by the tracts and plans of Baumeister, Stübben, Eberstadt, and Wolf; that propagated by the Garden Cities Movement; that deriving from the Fourierist tradition; and that pertaining to the anarchist tradition. The last two hypotheses—already current in the years following 1917—will officially clash in the beginning year of the First Five-Year Plan; the others will come to characterize prevalently the first Soviet experiments in urban planning. These experiments, from 1918 on, in the midst of War Communism, seem to proceed along a double track. On the one side, they involve partial and sectorial projects, relating to the basic restructuring of urban services, to reorganization schemes, to new residential districts of an experimental nature, to single infrastructures (projects for new bridges on the Moskva River in 1920–21, projects for the subway system, etc.). On the other, they involve comprehensive projects that have a direct impact upon the regional dimension.

If we consider the role reserved for urban planning in those years, these hypotheses only appear to be in contradiction. Both the small- and large-scale projects perform, at the same time, the task of validating and establishing the hypotheses of the discipline and the task of propaganda. It should not be surprising, then, if between 1918 and 1920 the same technical organism—the architectural studio of the Construction Section of the Mossovet—developed projects for restructuring the center of Moscow and

the Khamovnitsky quarter (with S. E. Chernyshev as architect) and a masterplan for the decongestion of Moscow by establishing a regional net of satellite cities.¹

A tendency that will become dominant in the years of the NEP thus starts to unfold: alongside of Sakulin's, Shchusev's, and Shestakov's general plans for Greater Moscow, we find the projects for Red Square (1923) by Shchusev again and by I. A. Golosov; the competitions for the Palace of Labor; the competitions organized by MAO [Moscow Association of Architects] for the residential quarters on the grounds of the Simonov Monastery and on Serpukhovskaya Street (1922–23); the completion of the Sokol garden city (1923–27); and the project for the satellite garden city of Privolye (1920).

We shall analyze the significance of these interventions further on. We can, however, immediately recognize a direct link between these two scales of planning, based on the recurrence of the theme of the garden city in Soviet urban planning of the first period. This concern with the garden city is attributable both to specific causes and to the transition from prewar to postrevolutionary experiences. Vladimir N. Semënov, former collaborator with Unwin, and author, in 1912, of the first Russian book on urban planning, devised a project in the prewar period for a garden city for railroad workers near Kazan, based on an antiromantic interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon models; between 1905 and 1917, as the result of philanthropic initiatives, the garden cities of Solodovnikov, near Moscow, and Davansky, on the outskirts of St. Petersburg, were created; from 1908, M. G. Dikansky gave his support, in a theoretical work, to the idea of the garden city; while between 1917 and 1925, B. G. Knatts, G. B. Barkhin, and V. F. Ivanov considered Howard's model in the light of the new problems posed by the housing crisis and by workers' housing.²

There is, however, a great difference between the prerevolutionary and the postrevolutionary experiences. The philanthropic initiatives of the first part of the twentieth century do not manage to reduce the level of rents, even though a settlement such as the Davansky garden city was specifically designed to meet the needs of the lower-income classes: composed of two hundred apartments with one, two, or three rooms with a kitchen and of a block of one hundred and two rooms for singles with common kitchens, and complemented by schools and services, the quarter as a whole, like the one designed by Semënov near Kazan, represented an exceptional phenomenon within the planning practice of Czarist Russia. This is the case even though in newspapers and specialized journals the garden cities were followed with a great deal of attention, eliciting polemics and debates. The complex designed by Semënov, in particular, became a sort of showcase city, presented polemically as a countermodel to the European garden cities, being distinguished both by the greater abundance of green areas and lots, and by the high quality of its general services. (The Kazan garden city was equipped with a theatre, with every type and level of school, with a hospital, a tuberculosis asylum, a rest home, and so forth.) But in 1913, at an architectural congress held in St. Petersburg, the ab-

tract quality of this experiment was attacked, because the new settlement was unregulated by laws and because its relation to places of work remained undetermined, forcing the workers to undertake a long commute to Moscow and to Kazan.³ This undetermined relationship between residential and industrial centers is characteristic of other prerevolutionary experimental garden cities, such as the one designed by I. Fomin in 1916 (really only a mechanical aggregation of small individual houses) or those situated near Riga and St. Petersburg. Only four months before the 1917 revolution, a settlement project for a complete and autonomous city, equipped with its own working places—Ostankino—was approved.

The research done after 1917 cannot but denounce the incompleteness of these experiments. The greatest efforts are made to incorporate the maimed and deformed interpretations of Howard's model into the context of a global planning practice and into strict correlation with the centers of production. This prevents the disavowal of an already established and, generally, progressive tradition, while at the same time introducing a model that seems particularly well equipped to handle urban problematics within the context of a region.

Howard's model indubitably exerted a double charm on the Soviet architects. On the one hand, it seemed to represent the culmination of the long nineteenth-century debate on the control of the capitalist city—hovering on the border line where the antiurban ideology was on the verge of transforming itself into an ideology of regional equilibrium. On the other hand, the garden city was seen as a model for the public use of land and for the reappropriation, on behalf of the community, of the increases in value produced by the settlement itself: this idea will particularly interest the construction cooperatives active in the Soviet Union after 1925, that is, after the laws have been established that define the taxation criteria on urban land.⁴ All of this is extraneous to Mayakovsky's disturbing celebrations of the myth of the machine and the metropolis; yet it is in line with the ambiguous uncertainty of Khlebnikov, Kamensky, and of a great part of the Russian avant-garde, who vacillate between a nostalgia for the primordial peasant world and the prospect of an anarchic liberation through a cosmic mechanization of the universe. The garden-city model is then principally valid for the regional hypothesis it presupposes.

We know too little about the 1918 Mossovet plan for Moscow to be able to express categorical judgments. Yet this elementary scheme for decongestion, achieved by satellite nuclei dispersed throughout the region and connected with the city through a network of infrastructures, seems to indicate that to the themes discussed above it is necessary to add another.

And this is the idea of the region as an alternative to the widespread urbanization in highly concentrated agglomerations—even if this as yet naïve formulation does not seem to be based on a plan for localizing productive zones. In some ways, the plan of 1918 does endorse the idea of a regional-scale organization of the satellite nuclei as a homage to an “anarchic” theory of suburban diffusion. After all, the idea of the *Auflösung der Städte* [disintegration of the cities] had been advanced by Bruno Taut, in a

Germany overturned by the November Revolution, as a precise renewal of Kropotkin's theories, but also as a response to the socialization of land decreed by Lenin after the October Revolution. This is the theme that, as we have already mentioned, will reappear in the early thirties in the theories of the "disurbanists," and that, even before the official disavowal by Kagnovich, will be harshly attacked in 1919 by Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, who in *The ABC of Communism* define the anarchic redistribution of the means of production as a subproletarian aspiration to economic regression.

To think in terms of redistribution and decongestion, however, meant to liken the urban reality of Moscow and its economic condition to that of other European *conurbations* for which those models had originally been devised. Yet, first within the perspective of reconstructing the productive potential, and then later within the frame of open competition between the agricultural and industrial sectors, this *policy of equilibrium* seems completely ill timed if not anachronistic. And moreover, it appears as an obvious attempt on the part of the urban-planning culture to superimpose forcibly its own models upon a policy of planning still in the making and upon a strategy, pursued from the NEP onwards, that seeks an "organized competition" between city and countryside, between state-regulated industrial production and peasant markets. After the most recent interpretations of Leninist strategy, in fact, one can no longer speak about the NEP in terms of an alliance between the city and countryside and of a simple "strategic withdrawal."⁵ In the face of a policy leading toward a growing conflict between State industry and peasant free market, however, every proposal for regional equilibrium appears objectively to be shortsighted or reactionary.

All this is coherent with Lenin's position on the ideology of the plan. If the NEP is a reopening of "organized conflicts" and as such contains explicitly the plan for a new form of class struggle, it is not yet possible to establish within it rigid global programs. Writing to G. Krzhizhanovsky, president of the GOELRO, and later president of the GOSPLAN, Lenin observes that

regarding the plan, M. [V. P. Milyutin] writes some foolish remarks. The main danger is that of bureaucratizing the matter with a plan for state economy. It is a grave danger. M. does not see this. I am afraid that, from another point of view, neither do you see it. . . . We are poor. Hungry, down and out. A real plan, complete and integral, is today for us only a 'bureaucratic utopia.' Do not run after it.⁶

According to what Zholtovsky has recently written in an autobiographical article,⁷ the instructions that Lenin gave to Zholtovsky himself and to Shchusev—both of whom were to guide the groups in charge of planning the reorganization of Moscow between 1918 and 1920, by commission of the local Soviet—were limited to specific problems concerning the collective plant (green spaces, subway, etc.) and zones in urgent need of expansion. Consistent to himself, Lenin does not seem disposed to anticipate the

specific role of the city within a regional strategy yet to be defined. This was particularly hard to accept for the avant-garde urban planners, ready to advance at all costs the arrangement of "socialist land." Two projects of great historical importance, both designed for the Moscow region by B. V. Sakulin, and only recently reevaluated by Soviet scholars, are exemplary in this regard. Sakulin, a member in 1918 of the urban-planning section of the Ugorsselstroy⁸ presented to the building department of the Moscow Soviet, just a few weeks before the presentation of the first plans by Zhol-tovsky and Shchusev, a report entitled *The Redevelopment of Moscow as a City of the Future*. (The report was published only in 1922, but Duglach Astafeva, who had access to Sakulin's personal archives, was able to date the project with precision.)⁹

Sakulin's plan proposed a triple band of satellite cities organized concentrically around Moscow, in such a way as to integrate residences and industries within a dense network of infrastructures. The ring-shaped railroad was to act as a limit for the urban agglomeration, beyond which he planned a broad belt of agricultural lands, forests, and recreational parks with passages converging upon the historic city center. The formal analogies between this plan and that of the Mossovet are evident, even though Sakulin's project pays closer attention to the function of transportation on a metropolitan scale: the existing ring-shaped railroad system is transformed by him into a tramway line, creating, outside of the agglomeration, a second electrified railroad circuit equipped with the necessary shunting stations. But no trace of the ideology of equilibrated dispersal can be found in this plan. Sakulin, in fact, rejects Howard's romanticism,¹⁰ for the sake of a plan of regional industrialization based on the study of areas of influence within the various integrated residence-industry nuclei. It is not by chance that he names his diagrams for the regional planning of Moscow and Yaroslavl "influencegrams," which should be considered as among the first examples of the spatial analysis of economic regions. (The Moscow "influencegram," it must be noted, deals with an area of 90,000 square kilometers of which 35,000 related directly to the capital.)

It is clear that, despite the polemical tone, Sakulin's plan does not ignore the proposals for regional reorganization presented by Howard and Unwin; what is new, rather, is the scale to which he extends the plan and the planned integration of transportation, housing, and industrial locations. It is even quite easy to discern within Sakulin's plan surprising anticipations of the programs for integrated decentralization on a territorial scale cherished by American regionalism and by Patrick Abercrombie: the stimulus provided by the new availability of urban and agrarian land, resulting from the directives on landownership, offers to avant-garde urban planning a theoretical field for experimentation completely unprecedented.

But it remains a totally formal analysis, lacking real qualitative and quantitative analyses of the program for regional industrialization and of its role within an overall economic strategy. Sakulin's denial of the possibility of establishing an optional dimension for the city is significant only

if we keep in mind the models of unlimited growth stemming from the German theoreticians and the theory of modeling elaborated by them.¹¹

The plan of 1918, however, must be considered only as an anticipation of the project of regional planning elaborated later by Sakulin himself for the entire area of a million square kilometers, designated by the GOELRO as the "central industrial region" comprising the regions of Tver, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod, Vladimir, Moscow, Penza, Ryazan, Tula, Kaluga, Orël, Smolensk, Gomel, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, and sections of Minsk, Mogilëv, Kursk, and Tambov. It is certain that this second plan, published right after the first in 1922,¹² was drawn up in an effort to translate into physical terms the directives of the GOELRO plan according to the criteria of economic regionalization. Once again, we are dealing with an attempt that can only be seen as an anticipation of, and as an operation capable of testing on an unprecedented regional scale, instruments of planning whose novelty lies in the great scope with which they are endowed. If the institutional context of the 1918 plan is War Communism, that of Sakulin's is the electrification plan of 1920.¹³ But precisely within this perspective Sakulin's plan reveals itself to be—in the appropriate phrase of Lenin—a "bureaucratic utopia." This electrification plan can be considered historically as a premise for the challenge made by the NEP to the countryside market, as a premise for the political strategy that moves Lenin to join the achievement of social capital to the speed and the conditions of the class struggle, to the expansion and the unification of the working class itself, dynamically linked to development.

In this sense, the preparatory work done in 1921 by the GOELRO and the GOSPLAN of defining the characteristics of economic regions, their internal divisions into *oblast* and subregions, the criteria of interregional exchange and collaboration, the axes and poles of development, is projected not only toward what will become the formation of the interregional Kombinat, but also toward the central issues of the debate on strategies of development. Lenin's political lucidity has the merit of understanding that, between 1920 and 1922, the pressing task was to prepare the ground for that debate, *to make it inevitable*, to place it beyond any anticyclical, re-equilibrating, Sismondian utopia. But it was precisely the task of establishing the real conditions for posing the problem of the *dynamics of development* as if absolutely new, irreducible to petit-bourgeois utopias, that adjusted the demand to the market and maintained the equilibrium of supply and demand, of industrial development and primary sector. Only *after* the conflicting mechanisms of the NEP have created these conditions would it be possible to open a debate on the "models" of planning. Lenin's attack on V. P. Milyutin, mentioned above, is completely coherent with this strategy.

This is not so with Sakulin's plan. For him, the first hypotheses of regionalization elaborated by the GOELRO already suffice as a base upon which to construct a model for the physical distribution of production centers and of housing developments. The central region—the chief of the eight primary economic regions designated by the GOELRO¹⁴—consisted

of 38 million inhabitants, of which eighty-four percent (32 million) were of peasant origins, and had a moderate growth, which, however, in the preceding twenty years (1900–20) had definitely favored immigration toward the city. Sakulin takes the total growth of urbanization as a “natural” given, capable of being generalized. In his plan, Moscow is connected to the major centers, Smolensk, Nizhny, Novgorod, Kursk, by radial electrified railroad lines, integrated into a singular ring-shaped line that connects, in turn, the centers to each other. Each of these are, in addition, surrounded by a chain of satellite nuclei: the organization of urban developments in terms of delimited nuclei, applied to metropolitan reorganization in the 1918 plan, is here translated into a macroregional scale.

The integration of the transportation infrastructure is among the most significant elements of the 1922 plan: railroad, automobile, and navigation lines are coordinated, as connecting axes of an integrated region.

However, the relative importance, the productive capacity, and the specific interrelations of the centers localized within the region remain undefined. Sakulin himself seems to recognize the experimental nature of his proposal by demanding scientific analyses and precise economic programs as the basis for regional organization.¹⁵ Sakulin’s regional scheme, in other words, bears witness to the feverish *search for a plan* undertaken by the intellectuals from the years 1918–20 and based upon a hasty identification of socialism with global planning.

Having said this, it is important to note the transformation regarding proposed objectives that occurs in the transition from Sakulin’s first to second plan. Whereas the 1918 plan advanced a precise program for urban decentralization, based on “organic” ideologies of English and German derivation, the 1920 plan, precisely because of its scale, presents itself as an open and flexible scheme: as a pure declaration of *wait and see*, which the avant-garde urban planners deemed necessary to make their presence felt.

Against Sakulin’s proposals, presented as the contribution of an isolated intellectual, stands the work of the Planning Commission for the “New Moscow,” presented in 1924 by Shchusev to the MKCH, and that for “Greater Moscow” under the direction of S. S. Shestakov.¹⁶ Both of these plans perpetuate the traditional monocentric structure of the city and endorse a program for its functions on the national scale that is ambiguous but already oriented to give precedence to a tertiary and symbolic city rather than to a city of labor. The Greater Moscow of Shestakov, based on prewar growth rates, forecasted a population of four million inhabitants by 1945, distributed in four concentric rings that would cover a total of approximately 200,000 hectares: (a) the central historic nucleus, placed within the circular railroad system; (b) a first ring-shaped zone divided into four sectors, two of which are industrial in nature and of fixed development, while the remaining two are protected urban parks, equipped for recreation; (c) an area of 82,000 *desyatiny* (89,380 hectares) made up of residential garden cities, separated by forest and park complexes, connected in turn to the green areas of the preceding ring; and (d) a protected wooded area of three to four *versty* (three to four-and-a-half kilometers):

an authentic greenbelt that marks the boundaries between the city and the country.

In addition, Shestakov anticipates in the design—perhaps under the influence of Sakulin’s plans—a double belt of satellite industrial cities: the first, 40 to 80 kilometers from the historical center of Moscow, the second at 90 to 120 kilometers. The satellite cities were to have grown as redevelopment of existing towns and nuclei.

Shestakov’s plan, completed by the reorganization of the traffic network, does not directly contradict the “new Moscow” presented by Shchusev. Shchusev tries to identify the primary zones of expansion—construction would be concentrated in the Simonovsky district—and of redevelopment and reorganization of Red Square, the placement of the Palace of Labor on the Okhotny ryad, the construction of a new central railroad station in Kalanchevsky Square, establishing a ring of approximately 60 kilometers as a continuous garden city, surrounded in turn by a two-kilometer-wide ring, zoned for a maximum of twenty-five percent construction: from here, a series of green wedges would reach the urban center and the urbanized zones on the periphery.

With respect to the actual development of Moscow that took place between the 1930s and the 1950s, Shchusev’s plan without doubt contains elements that were taken up and realized in various ways. The perpetuation of the existing radiating structure, for example, will be one of the guiding assumptions of the 1935 plan, and, in Shchusev’s program, it should be seen as a valorization of the historic organism, within the perspective of a redevelopment of the administrative and governing center: Moscow as the city of planning and of culture, that is, *as the city of socialist Form*.

Shchusev does not by accident clash, in 1925, with N. F. Popov, Director of the Moscovite Commission of Real Estate (MUNI): against the plan valorizing historical Moscow, there rises the idea of Moscow as “city of labor and of knowledge,” a place of a profound reorganization in the name of economic development of the city’s public housing stock.¹⁷

We are dealing with two options that, from the first projects devised for the 1932 competition for Greater Moscow to the problems of the 1960s, will present themselves alternately or simultaneously, but that, undoubtedly, had already presented themselves, in the twenties, with large margins of ambiguity. The conservative aspects of Shchusev’s plan are mixed with the innovative ones: we are thinking of the programs dealing with the transportation network; the large public park in the zone occupied, in 1923, by the temporary structures of the Agricultural Exhibition; and of the Moscow-Volga canal, which, after its completion in 1935, will play a decisive role in the regional economic development.

If Sakulin’s plans are all projected within the space of the region, those of Shestakov and Shchusev progressively confine themselves within the boundaries of more directly urbanized areas.

It is not only a question of *rappels à l’ordre*. Between the years 1923 and 1926, amid the Scissors Crisis, that is, and the hot phases of the

debate on industrialization, the place for anticipations of the physical form of the region, elaborated from within an exclusively urbanistic point of view, inexorably disappears. The "realism" of Shchusev's plan, approved by a vote of the Plenum of the Moscow Soviet, which in 1925 affirms the necessity of safeguarding the radiating structure of the city,¹⁸ corresponds to that "retreat" of Soviet urban planning from the advances and temporary positions that had been characteristic of Sakulin's research.

The substance of these plans, exactly like the economic models elaborated by the Menshevik professors in the twenties, will become material for theoretical consideration and for actual programs within the capitalist countries during the fifties.¹⁹ The fact remains that Shchusev's plan, more than Shestakov's marks a change in the direction of Soviet urban planning.

Sakulin's satellite cities constitute a premise for the new industrial cities emerging from the programs of the first two Five-Year Plans: Shchusev's and Shestakov's "city of form" points toward what will become Semënov's plan of 1935, even though Kaganovich at first, and later Mikhaylov, will take it upon themselves to denounce its ambiguities and defects.²⁰

The connection between large-scale projects and projects relating to direct intervention into construction must, however, confront an economic situation that requires, once again, the policy of simple "wait and see." It is, in other words, impossible to give birth to any managerial or productive unification of the building trades, just as any proposal for technological reorganization will appear not only utopian but objectively reactionary: the policy of strengthening private and cooperative enterprise, put into effect at the outset of the NEP, confirms the absolutely secondary role given, in Soviet Russia, to the "housing problem."

Residential housing as an item in short supply: against this policy, which persists until the Third Five-Year Plan at least, the Bolshevik left and the trade unions will set themselves into opposition; but it is an opposition that clashes with the logic of forced industrialization and with the internal characteristics of the house-as-goods. However, the grounds for experimentation, on a small scale, remain open for the development of typologies at the urban level and at the level of individual buildings: this represents an authentic alternative to the premature regional plans by Sakulin and Shestakov.

Not by chance then do the first great attempts to define the "socialist city" insist on the theme of propaganda—the plan of monumental propaganda, the Agricultural Exhibition of 1923, and the competition for the Palace of Labor—or on the theme of social and urban services—from the competition for the Leningradskaya Pravda, to the clubhouses for workers, to the buildings for the local Soviets.

In this context, the planning experience for the satellite city of Privolye is extremely interesting. The design for Privolye, in fact, is in direct continuity with prewar experiments: in 1920 its construction, in an area west of Moscow on wooded land near the Rublevo River and on the banks of the Moskva River, was considered to be urgent, and the architects V. V.

Voeykov and V. D. Dubovskoy were called in to draw up the plan.²¹ Privolye is thus configured like a garden city, but, unlike Ostankino, it is conceived as a residential nucleus completely dependent on the productive areas of Moscow, while for the most part self-sufficient in terms of food.

There is no integrated decentralization of productive and residential areas: in this, the project for Privolye reveals itself to be much more realistic than the plans of Sakulin or Shestakov. The residential decentralization results in a daily commute to work for about 35,000 people, thus turning the problem of transportation (subway, tram, railroad, and ferry) into a primary concern.

A question immediately comes to mind: what other logic may underlie such an operation, if not that of the development of a practical model the economic consequences of which remain ignored? In fact, if in the regionalist idea of Sakulin the importance of the multiplicative effects of the concentration are inadequately evaluated, in the Privolye plan the apparent realism seen in the renunciation of autonomy is compounded by a passive acceptance of an urban typology considered as "traditional" *avant-garde*: the new decrees on public land ownership render useless the economic instruments typical of the Howardian model, while the hike in the social costs of the operation are, in an unacceptable proportion, transferred to one of the most delicate and problematic sectors of the economy of the new Soviet state, that of transportation.

The Privolye initiative appears, therefore, to be much more the outcome of propagandistic aims than the result of a careful economic analysis. It represents, however, an opportunity for the architects to investigate their discipline, defining with precision the standards, urban modules, and the time needed to carry out the operation. The basic module, which characterizes the complex, is a residential superblock of 25,000 square meters inhabited by between fifteen and seventeen hundred residents lodged in three-story houses placed along the perimeter of the lot and in a five-story house that dominates the quarter, placed in clear view at the center of the land arranged as a public green area and equipped with social services. Voeykov and Dubovskoy, therefore, present a first working out of the urban type of the "quarter," the basic modular unit of control of the urban whole and the premise for the innovative interventions in the technological sector that will be taken up, after 1930, in the proposals made by Ernst May and Semënov for the industrial cities of the First Five-Year plan.²² But they succeeded in differentiating the quarters properly—designating a peripheral quarter of an agricultural type to serve the alimentary needs of the city. The city itself, provided with institutions and social services was meticulously programmed according to stages of development: an initial period of five years was set to execute the task of primary urbanization; a second period of another five years was set as the limit for the definitive realization of an initial nucleus; a third period of ten years was allotted for the final expansion, providing accommodations for 150,000 residents. Within twenty years, therefore, a city quite different in dimensions and qualities from the English experiments could have functioned as an imple-

ment of decongestion that would not have had to confront the instability of the perspectives of productive localization.

Not by chance, Privolye will remain on the drawing board. The garden city of Sokol, on the other hand, will be begun three years later, in 1923, on a lot in the Krasnopresnensky district, on the road to Leningrad, commissioned by the building cooperative of the real estate commission of Moscow: once again, there wins out an urbanistic model characterized by a strong resistance to the discipline. But, this time, it is internally justified, given that the garden city, designed by Shchusev and by N. V. Markovnikov, coheres to the logic of the activity of the cooperatives in the period of the NEP: residential self-sufficiency is instrumental to an independent economic initiative. For this reason, the project for Privolye and that for Sokol are not comparable. This is especially so because the sheer scale of the project for Privolye obliges Voeykov and Dubovskoy to attempt a large-scale typological investigation, whereas Markovnikov limits himself to a quite traditional set of one-family houses with gardens and multifamily blocks made of brickwork, wood, or lightweight masonry walls of cement or pebbles—quite rough, in fact, particularly when compared with their English prototypes. In many ways, the overall construction of Sokol's garden city is representative of the middle-class taste favored by the NEP; while as a whole, although old-fashioned in its specific solutions, it remains a unique accomplishment for the bankrupt management of the building economy maintained by the cooperatives in the years 1921–28.

In other words, the Sokol garden city—which covers a total of 550,323 square meters, with 280,236 for buildings, 142,150 for green spaces, and which offers houses to mortgage, as well as to rent—represents a kind of translation and vulgarization in petit-bourgeois terms of the already distorted interpretation of the morphology of the Garden City made by Fomin in the prerevolutionary era. Basically, the Sokol experiment, which is given ultimate approval by the Moscovite Administration of City Economy only in 1927, appears out of place and completely anachronistic. This fact is promptly taken into account by the official policies of urban planning: a new line of experimentation is instituted, both in Moscow and Petrograd, from at least 1922 on. Against the global plans and the unrealistic prefiguration of regional order, and out of touch with the experimentation that dominates the “problem of planning” both during the NEP and after 1924, this new line of urban intervention, especially in the housing sector, is based on the establishment of still simple, yet completely experimental, criteria. And it should be further noted that this line certainly contradicts the *ideology of the plan*, but not Lenin's sharp assessment of the importance—especially in a moment of great political “invention” such as that of the NEP—of experimental techniques of analysis and implementation, such as those that pertain to establishing criteria for economic regionalization. This partly explains the easily discernible split between certain principles of the avant-garde architects and their actual work in response to the first concrete opportunities for planning in the field of

workers' housing: a field that logically is privileged after 1918 and that immediately reveals the need to define unified criteria of experimentation.

And that we are dealing here with a real experimentation, at least in terms of intentions, is demonstrated by the decision made on 18 October 1918 investing the Committee for State Construction with the responsibility of constructing in Moscow, for the building program of 1919, a pilot quarter of eight to twelve residential buildings equipped with collective services for a total population ranging from one hundred to two hundred residents. The competition, announced in 1919, bears witness to the desire to give birth to a quite unambitious economic intervention, through which, however, two opposing typologies are made to confront each other. The first is traditional; the second is based on communal services—the residences for single occupancy do not come equipped with kitchen facilities but lead into a communal dining room—indicating a collective criterion at work in the exceptional dimensioning of social services: common kitchens, common laundry rooms, public baths, a nursery, a school, a meeting room, a shopping center, a garage, and an administrative center. Just as in Privolye, here too, the great breadth of the services declares an ideological intention, which is likely one of the major reasons for the elimination of the project. The project, therefore, should also be linked to all the collectivist ideology that, together with the anarchist, had proliferated during the period of War Communism. The utopia of the “new man” to be “formed” through a technical-intellectual operation transformed into an “engineering of souls” could not but branch into the two opposite equivalents to which the great tradition of the nineteenth-century bourgeois intelligentsia had appealed: the dream of a completely interiorized libertarianism at the level, precisely, of “souls,” and the absolute pacification of the consciences of the collective Subject. Sade's nightmares now seem able to invade the claim for the impossible advanced by Fourier: War Communism can thus be seen by Soviet intellectuals as the finally arrived moment in which to question this supreme koine of the two souls of the bourgeois *Geist der Utopie* (and by way of examples, think of Malevich's contributions to the review *Anarkhiya* or of Blok's interpretation of the revolution).

A document exists in which what we have up to now observed becomes completely transparent: the project for the communal house elaborated by Nikolai Ladovsky in 1920. Whereas the competition of 1919 dealt with the problem of collectivism only in quantitative terms, the designs by the head of the school of Asnova attempted a purely qualitative solution. The generic and completely occasional statements made by Lenin on the “new modes of life”²³ are wedded here to ideologies of an explicitly anarchist nature. Not accidentally, Ladovsky employs a language of futurist derivation, made up of “disarranged figures,” vaguely reminiscent of the cabaret. In fact, the poetics of the cabaret, archaizing nostalgias and allusions to a machinelike “displacement of objects” are blended together in Ladovsky's pure scenography: the liberating machine is called upon to sustain a completely exposed ideology. In comparison with Ladovsky's “declaration of

principles," the communal house designed in 1921 by S. Serafimov and the one designed in 1924 by Leonid Vesnin express an almost disturbing degree of realism. But in the years flanking 1920 the position of the avant-garde can still be duplex. Or more precisely, it can express itself much more concretely in fields more markedly superstructural, rather than in disciplines obliged to confront directly the reorganization of the modes of production so clamored for by the avant-garde intellectuals. If the "5 × 5 = 25" exhibition—Aleksandr Vesnin, Lyubov Popova, Aleksandra Eks-ter, Rodchenko, Vavara Stepanova—held in 1921 in Moscow and that of 1922 in Berlin mark the moments of maturity for the constructivist and productivist movements, the same cannot be said of some of the projects designed by the protagonists of avant-garde architecture after 1923, for the stiff test presented by the competition for the construction of two workers' quarters in Moscow that was set up by the MAO in 1922.

The role played by the Moscow Association of Architects, already active before 1917 under Skhekhtel's presidency and reorganized in 1922, has been often misunderstood, having had attributed to it *tout court* reactionary and conservative intentions.

In reality, the new MAO, under the direction of Shchusev and Leonid Vesnin, played a primary role in stimulating architectural experimentation in the sectors open to postrevolutionary exigencies: one need consider not only issues one through five of the review *Architektura*, edited in 1923 by M. Ginzburg, L. Ginzburg, L. Vesnin, and E. Norbert, but also the annals of the MAO for 1929–30 (numbers five and six), edited by Barkhin, and the special issue of 1926, which published the projects entered in the competitions held by the association since 1923.

The program of the 1922 competition for workers' housing attempts to establish model-projects by choosing as sites two different terrains: the first, Kamer-Kollezhky (Simonovsky district) in the area comprised by the Simonov Monastery and the Simonovsky Embankment; the second, along the main street Serpukhovskaya (Zamoskvorece district). These are urban quarters, which impose problems of continuity with the already existing fabric, in total opposition to the problems of the garden city. The announcement for the competition calls for the construction of two- or three-story brick buildings—no concession is made, therefore, to the dreams of technological innovation—with a maximum of three rooms per apartment, and with seventy percent of the land reserved for an equipped public green.²⁴ On 1 March 1923 the MAO announced the winners of the competition: for the Simonovsky district the first prize was awarded to Leonid Vesnin, the second to Ilya and Pantelemon Golosov. Anyone seeking to find in the projects of Vesnin and the Golosov brothers concrete anticipations of the formal investigations that they will prove to undertake in their well-known projects for the Pravda and for the Palace of Labor will remain deeply disappointed. It is quite true that Leonid is, of the three Vesnin brothers, the most cautious and the most bound to the vaguely purist but definitely academic experiments made by the group before 1917; yet the leap from the project for the Simonovsky district to

that for the great public buildings of the subsequent years is too bold not to make us wary. This is all the more the case when we consider that Vesnin's simple residential blocks, empirically fitted within the trapezoidal lot, not only avoid a real typological investigation, but moreover rely on totally superficial effects to achieve a formal definition: this can be seen in the use of bow windows, corresponding to the living-room spaces, on the bare surfaces capped by tall roofs, articulated in a language halfway between the reductions of Tessenow and vernacular inflections.

Neither do the typologies of the Golosov brothers, even richer in popular touches, anticipating some of the "current" solutions of the Viennese Höfe of 1923–30, appear to be more innovative. Their project, instead, should be appreciated for the attempt to articulate the intervention by freeing it from the geometric logic imposed by the site, which is cut diagonally and confronted, at its boundaries, by two blocks opening out into a semicircle and by the articulation *à redents* of the building opening onto the courtyard on the western side.

The problem of workers' housing neither inspires mechanistic images nor stimulates strictly typological investigations: the sole vague hint to the constructivist experiments is provided by the attempt to give the settlement the form of an urban sector closed within itself and autonomous. This is exactly the opposite road of that taken in the Privolye project. The workers' housing, already at this point, appears to be something different from the universe of labor evoked by the formal machines of the workers' clubs and of the large public buildings. The concessions to populist themes seem to unite these first experiments with those, generalized, coming after the "turning point" of 1930–31: the projects of Chernyshev and of the Golosov brothers for the Agricultural Exhibition of 1923 clearly demonstrate this.

In this context, a significant exception is the project worked out by Melnikov for the Serpukhovskaya Ulitsa district, which won the second prize. In contrast to the dull exercises of Chernyshev and Kolli, winners of the first prize, Melnikov presents a double fan of blocks of various typologies, placed on a semielliptical space broken up, in turn, by hermetic geometric graftings and defined by their grounding and by the disarticulated volume of the buildings.

The typological invention is based on duplex elements that define cells open to the freest combinations: the very graphics of the plan, upon which Melnikov mounts in a deliberately casual way the parts of his project, clearly express the direction taken by his investigation, which is much closer to the one that he followed in the project for the Palace of Labor. The poetics of the fragment and the collage must be composed of repeatable structures. Open spaces and constructed volumes can thus enter into dialectical relationship: the residential blocks, differentiated and intersected by a ring-shaped road that violates their continuity, explode outward from the ambiguous central nucleus, within which the void assumes the appearance of a surreal sign traced into the ground, to form an ironic "transmental" cipher.

The *zaum* [the transrational] of Khlebnikov and of Kruchënykh is thus translated into the scale of urban intervention. There is no utopia in all this. Even Melnikov, like the first Ladovsky, follows in this project a “futurist path” for architecture. But from formalist theory he does not simply accept the systematic distortion of signs and the opposition between pure materials: his conscientious acceptance of the method of semantic distortion presupposes the analysis of the functional components of language. And even if his project for the quarter can be likened to a Kandinsky composition, its real structure presupposes a comprehensive relationship with the city that makes into its own, ultimately, the law of the “displacement of signs.” It must not be forgotten that both the Simonovsky district and the one on the Serpukhovskaya Ulitsa are located within an urban area dating back to the eighteenth century. For the MAO, which fixed the terms of the competition, this constitutes a choice antithetical to the logic of the segregation on the periphery of workers’ residences; for Vesnin, it is a given fact external and extraneous to the programming of the project; to some degree for the Golosovs, but in a decisive way for Melnikov, it is an invitation to consider the urban core as a limit to be shattered, to be violated, to be put on trial. This is so, however, without giving “positive” responses concerning the repeatability of an intervention that “opens up” to affirm obstinately its own closed character.

Even more than for other projects contemporary to or slightly later than Melnikov’s, the one considered here opens up to the world in order to declare its symbolic autonomy from it. The cruel universe of forms can thus play out its own hermetic game in the presence of a public that is both attracted and outraged by it.

It is useless to repeat once more meditations on the destiny of formalism. Melnikov’s project is clear in this regard, and only a ingenuous reading of it can find within the project allusions to the “revolutionary explosion” of 1917.

The distance that separates this project from the projects actualized in Moscow after 1924 is insurmountable: on the periphery of urban Moscow, architect B. Venderov will build, between 1924 and 1925, on Begovaya Street, a linear housing complex for the workers of the DUKS factory, in which the banality of the residential blocks cannot be redeemed even by an adequate range of social services. Increasingly, particularly after 1925, the housing sector seems to be conditioned by a structural backwardness that cannot be overcome by any subjective effort. Leonid Vesnin’s project for the Leninskaya Sloboda quarter in Moscow (1924) clearly reflects this situation, both in its schematicness and in its attempt to weld together an “avant-garde” purism and a control of urban form achieved by inarticulated reiterations of elements. Ultimately, L. Vesnin’s passage from the Simonovsky quarter, to the project for the communal house of 1924—quite similar, formally, to the building types of the preceding work—to the Leninskaya quarter is indicative of an eclecticism that exposes not only a formal insecurity but also the desire to remain independent of the models of the radical architecture of Weimar Germany. Even the residential units

in the first workers' village of the "Red Manchester," the city of Ivanovo-Voznesensk, built by the Standard Company under the direction of A. Andreevsky and with the collaboration of L. Vesnin, O. Vutke, P. Golosov, V. Kokorin, and N. Kolli, from a plan by V. Semënov and S. Chernyshev (1924–26), do not go beyond a banal interpretation of the garden city.²⁵

The Russian avant-garde responds to the nascent poetics of the *neue Sachlichkeit* with an anxious search for "images" within the urban environment.

To bring about, within the economic logic that dominated the period supervening the NEP, the establishment of proposals that fit the new role that, despite everything, was demanded of workers' housing was possible only by completely accepting the obstacles and limitations inherent in a policy of transition. This occurred in Leningrad in an experience for the most part unique within the history of Soviet architecture during the 1920s. Between 1924 and 1930 an entire sector of the Narva district (today called Kirov) took shape under the direction of L. A. Ilyin, head architect of the city.²⁶ Even though at Leningrad the relationship between experimental interventions and general plans is completely vague, the focusing of attention on the planning of sectors renders particularly interesting the role given to these interventions, precisely because they are typical products of a period of waiting, in which every hypothesis remains feasible.

The Narva district had been the object of particular attention in the overall plan for the reorganization of Leningrad elaborated by Fomin in 1919; while in 1920 L. M. Tverskoy and N. A. Trotsky won the competition for the planning of this same quarter.

But in a practice not uncommon in the postrevolutionary years, projects and competitions remain dead letters and pile up on top of one another, due to a basic uncertainty as to the prospects of each single intervention. In 1923–24, Ilyin presented a project for the entire Putilovsky quarter, in which, on the axis defined at its extremes by the Narva Gate and by what is today known as Kirov Square—dominated by the headquarters of the local Soviet—there corresponds a second axis, grafted onto the Kirov Square at approximately one hundred thirty degrees, as the basic grid for a series of residential superblocs with open courtyards. Ilyin's project served as the basis for the competition for the housing complex on Traktornaya Street perpendicular to the Stachek Prospekt, which was sponsored in 1925 by the Committee for the Collaboration with the Building Cooperative of the Leningrad Soviet.

Simultaneously, competitions were announced for the systemization of the entire district and for the erection of a series of public buildings along the radius of the city, placed to define the pivotal components of the complex with respect to the overall urban structure: Stachek Square would be demarcated, just within the Narva Gate, by the Gorky Palace of Culture designed by Gegello and D. L. Krichevsky (1925–27), and by the Kirov factory-kitchen and stores designed by Barutchev, Gilter, Meerzon, and Rubanchik (1929); opposite the entrance to Traktornaya Street on the Sta-

chek Prospekt, Nikolsky would construct, from 1925 to 1927, the October 10th School; later, between 1930 and 1934, Trotsky would construct the neighborhood Soviet headquarters on Kirov Square, in line with the Narva Gate. In this way, between 1925 and 1934, the entire zone, originally occupied only by a few wooden houses, is equipped with services and urbanized. Along the axis of the Stachek Prospekt, extends a series of public edifices that triangulates the basic structure, giving it a metropolitan appearance; at right angles to it, the Traktornaya Ulitsa district, constructed by Gegello, Nikolsky, and Simonov from 1925 to 1927, is inserted as a secondary structure into the system thus formed.

To the clarity of the general system, based on the differentiation of the urban functions of single episodes and sectors, there corresponds, however, a significant empiricism in the structuring of the various elements. As a homage to the formal laws of neoclassical St. Petersburg, the principal of "perspective" is perpetuated—but reduced to a mere infrastructure that unites urban components having a high density of functions. Because of this, the treatment of various buildings appears to obey a programmatic disarticulation of the entire complex, so that the "collision" among individual architectural objects renders dynamic the entire urban fragment: emphasizing, that is, its "open," incomplete, fragmentary character. The downward-sloping tiered volumes of the constructivist factory-kitchen—a new social structure joined to a large store, planned as a dining facility for the entire worker zone and equipped for a maximum of fifteen thousand meals per day—have, therefore, the task of breaking the static quality of the entrance to the Stachek Prospekt; while, on the opposite side, the house of culture offers an alternative background to that of the Narva Gate (an alternative that would have been even more accentuated if the project elaborated by V. A. Shchuko had been adopted). And yet, the asymmetric semicircle of the October 10th School focuses the forces concentrated in the node of conjunction, shunting them kinetically toward the Traktornaya Ulitsa and toward the puristic volumes, joined in a discontinuous way, of the neighborhood Soviet.

Despite the notable linguistic differences of the architectural units, they form a harmony by constituting themselves as components of a continuous system: the constructivist matrix of the work of Trotsky, Barutchev, and Nikolsky plays a role in the formation of this part of the city in which the accentuated relationship of complementarity between discontinuous objects is the protagonist.

It is instead in the residential building of the Traktornaya Ulitsa that an uncertainty of choice reappears, which is resolved by resorting to a populist aura. The schism between residential intervention and public building reappears, then, summed up in this unique urban episode. For Gegello, the Traktornaya Ulitsa is a sort of first work, preceded by an unexecuted project for a workers' village (around 1923) that reveals many affinities with the houses of Leningrad. No direct link exists, in either case, between the typology of the residences and the structure of the settlement. To a technology necessarily traditional and downright makeshift—bricks, blocks of

recycled stone, beams in the form of a double-T obtained from the demolition of old houses—the fifteen units of the Traktornaya constitute a completely simplified organization based on the rejection of large-scale blocks and services that articulate the connected cells.

The funnel-shaped opening of the two series of facing sections, toward the Stachek Prospekt, and, on the opposite side, their coagulation in the internal square have been seen as an abstract design that, along with the curved ground plan of the October 10th School, reproduces the emblem of the hammer and sickle.²⁷ But the symbolism of the Traktornaya Ulitsa is less infantile and of a different type: its defining elements are the transitional half-arches between the building units and the modifications on surface areas, where—as in the 1923 project by Gegello cited above—the interruption of a “finite” element, such as an arch, and a volumetric purism reminiscent of Behrens introduce epic and vaguely allusive notations. We are dealing with a persistence, in architecture, of the nostalgia for a primordial communication, in the form of a myth of popular origin, characteristic of the entire first phase of the Russian avant-garde. Not by chance, the workers’ quarter planned by Gegello in 1923, much more than the complex realized at Leningrad, unites folk allusions to a formal agitation rich in futurist overtones. And one can also compare the populism of the Traktornaya Ulitsa to that of the Höfe realized by the Viennese Social Democratic commune, by disregarding not only the heroic component present in the latter and absent at Leningrad, but also and principally the determining fact that the Höfe constitute—despite the traditionalism of the residences and their technological solutions—a system of intervention in the urban network that is in some way typed.

Neither the comprehensive systemization directed by Ilyin nor the quarters planned by Gegello, Nikolsky, and Simonov, nor the Palevsky quarter realized in 1925 in the Nevsky district of Leningrad by A. Zazersky and N. F. Rybin, nor the Tkachey Ulitsa quarter drawn up by L. M. Tvesky and D. P. Buryshkin, on the left bank of the Neva, in any way constitute models of intervention capable of inclusion within a disciplinary corpus employable on a grand scale. Their limits and eventual validity are typical of a transitional phase that appears to negate the very necessity of “models.”

Thus, in the testing of new dimensions of intervention established by the first two Five-Year Plans, the architectural and urbanistic culture of Soviet Russia finds itself entrenched in two positions, each of no use: that of the more or less romantic realm of empiricism and that of the artificial universe of the avant-garde.

This helps to explain the recourse to the guidance of the radical architects of Weimar Germany after 1930 and might constitute a key for interpreting more correctly the divergence of the experiments of May, Forbat, Hebebrand, and Hannes Meyer from those of the protagonists and the epigones of formalism. While May, in the 1932 plan for Moscow, offers the completest application of Unwin’s regional scheme to the capital of the Soviet Union, the *Letatlin* and the project for the flying city elaborated by

G. Krutikov as a Ph.D. thesis (1928) explain without compromises the "flight from the real" that the *plenity* of Malevich had already pointed out as a cul de sac for the suprematist annihilation of the object.

By now there remains only the space of matter. Beyond it lies the exit from the world; on this side of it, the nostalgia for bourgeois "totality," pursued by the means of the communicative redundancies of an archaic kitsch.

The New Babylon: The “Yellow Giants” and the Myth of Americanism

(Expressionism, Jazz Style,
Skyscrapers, 1913–30)

While the adventures of planning in the Soviet Union follow paths in which the avant-garde, tradition, and realism converge—at least until 1927—demonstrating reciprocal limits and defining the conditions of a tolerable coexistence, the second of the “great world-systems” endures, until the Great Depression, the incubation period of a disease marked by the conflict between a progressive tradition and dispersed aspirations to new models of capitalistic self-management. There, where the Armory Show had introduced the virus of the “European negative” and where dadaism had experienced an autonomous and original phase, the avant-garde appeared to find before it, in the 1920s, two “strait gates” to pass through: on one side, the paradox of a radicalism that identifies in the tradition of the American Renaissance a reference point with which it must continually keep faith; and, on the other side, thematics that emerge from metropolitan reality, but that exclude purely utopian “solutions”—that exclude from the very start a *one-to-one* correspondence between a utopia devoid of any mediations and techniques of intervention.

The impracticability of the negative appears to be the imperative that winds through the debate on urban reform in the America that had seen frustrated the hopes fueled by the wartime economy and the uncertainties of Wilson’s policy of the “New Freedom.” Nevertheless, it is with respect to the control systems of urban chaos that American progressivism plays its hand: among the “conclusions” we have attempted to draw regarding the destiny of the avant-garde theatre, we have not by chance encountered the Hollywood musical.

This poses a problem, upon which criticism seems not to have adequately reflected: Does not what appears in the United States as a rejection of the avant-garde, at least in architecture, in fact conceal a “diverse” approach to the same themes animating the European *negatives Denken*? Do we not find ourselves confronting in America a rapport with the public

that appropriates the theme of shock, embodying it in nonhuman subjects, or rather superobjects, that, indeed, obviates the strategy of the elites and the esoteric *Bauhütten*? In considering American culture, must we not adopt a different viewpoint from which to evaluate the utopia of the avant-garde?

Significantly, perhaps no better way exists of grasping what the American skyscraper is *not* than by studying how European culture has attempted to assimilate and translate into its own terms, especially in the years immediately following the First World War, that paradox of the Metropolitan Age. The skyscraper as a "typology of the exception": the first elevator buildings in Manhattan—from the Equitable Life Insurance Building of Gilman & Kendall and George B. Post (1868–70) to Post's mature works¹—are real live "bombs" with chain effects, destined to explode the entire real estate market. The systematic introduction of the mechanical elevator, equalizing the price of rents at various floors of commercial buildings, levels in a single blow the existing economic values and creates new and exceptional forms of revenue. Immediately, the "control" of such an explosive object presents itself as an urgent problem—even if there ensues, just as immediately, a clear renunciation of any regulation of the economic effects. The entire typological elaboration that, first in New York and then in Chicago, lies at the heart of the structural inventions of architects like Post, Le Baron Jenney, John Wellborn Root, Holabird & Roche explicitly tends toward a visual control of all that which now appears as "anarchic individuality," a mirror of the "heroic" phase of the entrepreneurship of the Age of Laissez-Faire.²

Winston Weisman has quite correctly emphasized the central role played by Post in the formation of the typology of the nineteenth-century skyscraper.³ In many ways the work of Post takes an opposite path from that of Sullivan; nevertheless, Sullivan owes a great deal to the until now undervalued New York architect. In Post's U-, "tree-," and tower-shaped structures, there already emerges quite clearly that aspect of the skyscraper phenomenon that European interpretations tend to overlook: namely, that it is exactly by embodying the laws of the concurrent economy and, afterwards, of the corporate system, that the skyscraper becomes an instrument—and no longer an "expression"—of economic policy, finding in this identity with economic policy its own true "value." Only after the typological and technological experiments of the last decades of the nineteenth century have exhausted their provisional tasks, setting into position repeatable structures, will the attribution of the "surplus value" of language to these structures manifest itself—correctly—as pure ornament. But it will do so with a precise function: to emit well-known or immediately assimilable messages, to soothe the "distracted perception" of the metropolitan public subjected to the bombardment of multiple shocks, both visual and economic, provoked by the new *giganti della montagna* [mountain giants] in the downtowns.

It is just this phenomenon that European culture could not or would not grasp. What in the United States was produced by a complex but straight-

forward process was experienced in Europe as a trauma. The skyscraper, which Henry Huxley could call in 1875 the “centre of intelligence,”⁴ was seen, especially by German culture after 1910, as a symbol and threat of total reification, as a painful nightmare produced by the drowsiness of a metropolis on the verge of losing itself as a subject. In such a frame, optimism and pessimism wind up coinciding. In 1913 Karl Schaffler points out the possibility of a new “Spirit of Synthesis” in American territorial organization: the metropolis will be recuperated as a conscious subject dominating the complementariness of City and Suburb—and here he re-proposes a municipal administration retaining ownership of the terrain—but also reestablishing the equilibrium between the individual and the totality.⁵ Reification can be overcome only by considering it a “bridge” that permits the crossing of the Grand Canyon of the anguish of the masses. A “bridge”: but precisely by going beyond the experience of the Brücke, Kandinsky, in presenting his own theatrical piece *Der Gelbe Klang* [The Yellow Tone] in *Der Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912), puts forward in metaphoric form a completely opposite interpretation of the same phenomenon. In Kandinsky’s unique text, as is well known, five yellow giants undulate, grow disproportionately or shrink, contort their bodies, emit guttural sounds, under a flickering light that accentuates their oneiric aspects.

The previous allusion to Pirandello’s *giganti della montagna* was not accidental. For both Kandinsky and Pirandello, the theme is that of individuals who are “all too human,” and therefore on the verge of becoming pure signs, dumbfounded testimonies of an existence whose faculties of communication have been blocked. The whispering of the yellow giants and their “difficult” movements are the last, clumsy attempts at expression by beings who, having seen the truth, feel condemned to drown in it:

at the very instant in which the confusion in the orchestra, in the movements, and in the lighting reaches the high point, all at once, darkness and silence fall on the scene. Alone at the back of the stage, the yellow giants remain visible and are then slowly swallowed up by the darkness. It appears as if the giants are extinguished like lamps; or rather, before complete darkness sets in, one perceives some flash of light.

The finale of *Der Gelbe Klang* represents, in tragic form, the annihilation of value in the flux of monetary currents—which the people of Manhattan could register, nondramatically, using such real giants as the Woolworth or the Equitable Life Insurance buildings. Moreover, such giants, in reality, despite their linguistic clothing that is just as paradoxical as the yellow color with which Kandinsky clothes his “new angels,” also give off a flash of light. But here we are already dealing with—in the words of Rosenquist—“the fleeting gleams of static motion.” Kandinsky’s symptomatic piece synthesizes the entire European attitude toward the zeroing of form that the skyscraper induces as a corollary of its own domination of the laws of economic growth of the American downtowns. The yellow giants have lost the gift of speech; but, they nevertheless insist on attempting to communicate their alienated condition. If one now glances

over the pages of the German and Dutch avant-garde magazines from the period immediately following the First World War (*Die Woche, Frühlicht, Wendingen; G*), one will find that the projects entered in the competition for the Berlin skyscrapers on the Kemperplatz or on Friedrichstrasse, or for the administrative center on the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Platz in Magdeburg, and the experiments on the typology of tall buildings by Mies and Hilberseimer all represent a mood quite similar to Kandinsky's. Once again, optimism and pessimism go together hand in hand. Whether in the graphic divertissements of Hablik, in the dignified reserve of Behrens, or in the grotesque geometric distortions of Scharoun or Wijdeweld, a common concern remains: to try to discern within the depths of the "great alienated one" the promise of a collective catharsis.

Just like Mendelsohn's photographs taken, a little while later, in the American metropolises,⁶ the skyscraper projects of the German avant-gardes are immersed in a mystical atmosphere reminiscent of that of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. And this is not simply because the compositions of Soder, Taut, and Scharoun involve a derangement of signs similar to that of Robert Wiene's film, but, more important, because in those troublesome tangles of forms, torn asunder by an unrelievable tension between aspiration for the sky and rootedness in the earth, reside the same drama and the same hope: the overturning of the disenchanting and pure "being" of the skyscraper to make it into an instrument of a superior *synthesis*. Therefore, not the skyscraper as a type, no matter how paradoxical, but the skyscraper as a *unicum*, as a Merzbau, that, by upsetting the order of the stratified city, succeeds in recuperating a symbolicalness, a communicative structure, a genius loci. The skyscraper that, finally, through an act of extreme violence, succeeds in purifying, while restoring its own power of speech, the place of the collective murder—the metropolis—which is now dominated by an observatory explicitly designed to reincarnate the symbolic place of the Gothic community: the cathedral.

The esotericism of Taut's *Stadtkrone* is, therefore, the leitmotiv of these invocations of a "spirituality" of the exceptional, of these mystical exorcisms intended to reestablish—like Feininger's Cathedral of Labor—the community spirit so dear to the sociology of Tönnies.

Even Mies, in mounting the model of his skyscraper in the form of a mixtilinear design with a typical medieval texture, appears to have wanted to respond to the assumption of his friend Schwitters: "because of the tiresomeness of its materials, there is no other task for architecture than to reutilize the old and to integrate it within the new . . . thus the metropolis can be transformed into a powerful masterpiece of matter."⁷ Certainly, Mies's project responds to this in a paradoxical way. But its anti-materiality, with respect to the surrounding context, plays the same role as the emphatic materiality of the skyscraper designs of Poelzig, Walter Fischer, and Max Berg.

Nevertheless, a substantial difference does remain that will reveal its true significance only in the works undertaken by Mies in the United States. The glass prisms of the experimental skyscrapers of 1921 and 1922

appear to announce the same "Millennial Kingdom" of which Ulrich speaks to his sister in the third part of Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*: "you must imagine it to be like a solitude and a motionlessness full of continuous events of pure crystal." That "Millennial Kingdom" is—as has been written⁸—the "*unio mystica* of proposition and silence, activity and nihilism," the place *where something happens without anything happening*. The skyscrapers of Mies "realize" the truth of the solipsism of Wittgenstein and Musil: *they cannot speak of it*.

By contrast, the tall structures planned by Otto Kohtz, Emmanuel Josef Margold, Paul Thiersch, Poelzig seem to want to *speak*, as completely as possible, of the tragedy of solipsism, caught in the pure substance of the great mountains of Babel. Too much happens in these projects—Poelzig's designs evoking a spiral-shaped *Flughaus* are typical—so that something actually does happen in them. They contain too many "words," repeating to the point of obsession that the *unio mystica* they invoke is not that of Mies, but, on the contrary, that of the Great Subject with the crowd.

However, was it not Otto Kohtz himself who predicted, in 1909, the advent of an architecture in the form of a gigantic landscape designed for pure contemplation, the evocation of a Schillerian people in the form of a "universe decorated for a festival"?

The skyscraper as a cathedral, as a metaphor symbolizing a rediscovered collectivity, did not remain solely at the unconscious level in German culture. Gerhard Wohler, commenting in 1924 upon the results of the competition for the new *Chicago Tribune* headquarters, spoke of the German skyscraper as a "symbol of the aspiration toward the metaphysical and of the spiritual behavior" proper to the Cathedral, which, when translated into modern terms, represents nothing other than "the exaltation of the idea of work."¹⁰

Not far from such a reading are the judgments given by Wijdeheld and by Adolf Behne in the first issue of *Wendungen* (1923) dedicated to the theme of the skyscraper.¹¹ Wijdeheld—who published in the same issue, among other things, his notable project for Amsterdam from 1919, which was decidedly organic in origin—spoke explicitly of "constructing life from death"; Behne, having criticized as useless and provincial the initiatives in Frankfurt, Danzig, Berlin, and Königsberg, in the end pointed out a way to transform such a typology: "We must be custodians of a certain romanticism even when we hide it behind the cold American hyperobjectivity. Doubtless, the construction of the American Goliaths in our cities will provoke a shock; if conceived correctly their construction will be urbanistically romantic."

And "urbanistically romantic" are, for sure, the results of the competition for the skyscraper in Cologne that, in 1925, under the auspices of Burgomaster Konrad Adenauer and the Tietz firm, was planned to be built exactly at the approach to the new bridge, with its flow of traffic directed transversally to the elongated square adjacent to the Neumarkt. The Cologne initiative is a greater example of provincialism than those for Berlin or Danzig: a long satiric article published in *Wasmuths Monatshefte* in

1926—perhaps drawn up by Hegemann—attacks both the enterprise that gave rise to the competition, initiated by Fritz Schumacher's compromised plan, and the 412 competing projects.¹²

In effect, from the project in spherical form by O. E. Bieber to the restrained romanticism of the project by Bonatz and Scholer, to the exaltation of dimensions in the projects by Wehner and by Poelzig, to the Mendelsohnian organicism of the project by Scharoun, to the ziggurat-shaped solutions of the project entered under the motto "*Haus der Arbeit*," to the populism of the projects by Fritz Fuss, by Edgar Wedepohl, and by Wilhelm Pipping und William Dunkel, to the geometric restraint of the projects by Werner Hebebrand, Rudolf Perco, Pols und Richter, and Wilhelm Riphahn, to the project with flights of steps and formed like a St. Anthony's cross by Max Berg, to the many vaguely neogothic executions, the elaborations for the Cologne competition mark a fundamental stage in the long crisis of the expressionist and spiritualist hypotheses through which in Germany the formal problem of the skyscraper was stated. In the sphere (a geometric motif used many times in the architectural culture of expressionist origin), in the metaphors of the cathedral, the torn castle (the project of "*Haus der Arbeit*"), and the triumphal gate planned aerodynamically (Poelzig and Scharoun),¹³ hides a common investigation that traverses the diversity of forms: the "mountains" of the German architects attempt to be, simultaneously, "bridge and door," to reabsorb grotesquely the metropolitan "sickness" by exhibiting it as totem and Moloch. Thus, the monster of Caligari poses as an instrument of mediation between the extremes of degradation and a new salvation: the paradox of the distorted giant insures that the positiveness of the "Good Old Days" will shine in the new light. The economic program of the Tietz firm could not have found a more cunning sublimation. The *Kölner-Carnaval* brings back in disguise the pressing need to restore the "Spirit of Synthesis," hidden within the impotent *will to form* expressed by the enthusiasm for the tall building as the new "soul" of metropolis.

Beyond such ineffectual exasperations, the European analysis of the skyscraper, while not abandoning its predominantly un-American viewpoint, tended, at the same time, toward projects involving a new global management of urban land and a scientific criticism of this phenomenon. Let us put in brackets the well-known proposals of Le Corbusier, Perret, and Sauvage, to focus our attention on three complex projects of urban planning based on the systematic use of the skyscraper: the two worked out during the first years of Weimar Germany by Bruno Möhring, for Berlin, and by Max Berg, in his capacity as Stadtbaurat of Breslau (1920), and a later one put forward by A. L. Pasternak in the Soviet Union on the verge of the launching of its First Five-Year Plan.¹⁴

The first interesting fact is that these projects, despite the diverse political-economic situations in which they are immersed, all presuppose a global control over the land available for building—exactly the opposite condition from that which in America generates the proliferation of tall office buildings. Berg, in particular, like Möhring in Berlin, conceived a

municipal building policy aimed at concentrating skyscrapers to form a crown around the historic center of Breslau (on the Lessing Platz, near the Cathedral, on the Schweidnitzer Graben). This arrangement had the specific function of centralizing within these urban nodes the entire pressure of commercial affairs and of tertiary functions, thereby unburdening the historic center that was destined for a conservative restoration and for residential use. The sketches that accompany Berg's essay display towers characterized by a moderate expressionism, in line with the contemporaneous work of the designer of the Jahrhunderthalle. However, it is interesting to observe that in this proposal, which was never actualized, the mystical exorcism of Taut and Scharoun becomes administrative policy without losing the basic trait of those utopias: the skyscraper—put forward as a providential "exception" through which the language of matter expresses itself—intervenes to "save," not to change, the existing community.

The criticism of the indiscriminate laissez-faire of the United States is quite apparent in the programs of Berg and Möhring, which in some ways bring to mind Lissitzky's subsequent project for skyscrapers as "stirrups of the clouds," which he proposes to arrange in the form of a crown around the center of Moscow. But this criticism is even more explicit in a 1926 article by Pasternak—and even more significant, when one remembers that Pasternak will become, four years later, an adherent of the theses of the "disurbanist" group.¹⁵ Pasternak attacks polemically both the German urbanists (Taut, Möhring, Berg) and the chaos of the American cities. For him, insisting as he does on the full social ownership of land, the skyscraper is a simple element of urban composition, capable of establishing an area equipped for and subjected to an incessant dynamic. Pasternak regards the skyscraper as pure form, stripped of any economic functions—he ignores, as do "disurbanists" later, that not only the land but also the building and its management involve costs—introduced for its ability "to incorporate velocity," for its ability to give form to that exaltation of change so pursued by the Americanism of the Soviet avant-gardes during the NEP period.

And so the skyscraper introduced as a disposable object in the regional landscape has a polemical role: it proclaims the socialist victory over space, over time, over economic materialism. Although Pasternak would never have admitted it, the skyscrapers of the Stalinist era that triangulated the center of Moscow do not have, finally, any objectives distinct from those now introduced.

The skyscraper as a "structure that incorporates velocity within itself" was interpreted in a different way by the famous project that Eliel Saarinen entered in the 1922 competition for the new headquarters of the *Chicago Tribune*:¹⁶ once again, we are dealing with a "magic mountain," which prevents a direct confrontation with the painful reality of the American metropolis.

Thus it becomes possible to describe precisely the critical attitude of European culture toward the skyscraper: whether that critique expresses

itself in global proposals or results in the fascinated contemplation of the advancing monster.

This critique becomes scientific only in the pages dedicated by Raymond Unwin, in 1924, to the relationship between the skyscraper and the city.¹⁷ One should note that the Unwin of the twenties is no longer the simple mediator between the ideas of Morris and the Sittian tradition of the pre-war years. As Chief Architect for Building and Town Planning in the British Ministry of Health, Unwin had assumed tasks involving the comprehensive management of urbanization; from that viewpoint and not from one of a romantic antiurbanism, he sees the skyscraper as an insurmountable obstacle in the way of the rational planning of the city. The example analyzed by Unwin is the Woolworth Building of Cass Gilbert (1913), facing city Hall Park. In twenty-eight floors, including the basement level, with a daily movement of employees equivalent to 14,000 persons, to which the number of occasional visitors must be added, its permanent population—Unwin writes—would occupy approximately 854 meters of sidewalk; but, if everyone were in movement, the occupied length of the same sidewalk would leap to more than two kilometers, equivalent to around half an hour for everyone to gain access to the subway. Furthermore, calculating one car for every ten people, Unwin obtains a figure of approximately 1,280 meters of street used for parking space. He also notes that, at the beginning of the 1920s, in a situation such as the Chicago Loop there circulate 60,000 cars, with parking available for only 3,500; the remaining cars are forced back into Grant Park, jamming it.

The skyscraper system, therefore, becomes uneconomical with respect to the *comprehensive* tertiary functions. This is what in America the commissions of inquiry into congestion, the studies of the RPAA, the investigations of the Committee for the Regional Plan of New York, and, a little bit later, those of Frederick A. Delano were all beginning to recognize, despite their failure to find efficacious solutions to the problem.¹⁸

And this is what Werner Hegemann observes, analyzing skeptically the initial proposals of the Regional Plan of New York, in a 1925 essay that takes up in great measure Unwin's analysis.¹⁹ Hegemann, it should be recalled, is a particularly acute observer of the urban scene in the United States, which he experienced as an insider from 1905, serving as the housing inspector of Philadelphia, then as an expert with the East Bay Communities of San Francisco, and then as an associate of Elbert Peets and J. Hudnut on planning jobs in Wisconsin and Pennsylvania.

Therefore—as urbanist, as organizer of the great exhibitions of urban planning in Boston (1909), Berlin (1910) and Düsseldorf (1911), as essayist—Hegemann is the most adequate link between the urbanistic cultures of America and Germany:²⁰ his critique of the skyscraper system belongs to his distinct polemic against the urban *laissez-faire* of the United States. This polemic also implicates the protagonists of the Chicago School as well as the New York Zoning Code of 1916 and Bassett's action.

For Hegemann the skyscraper is the consequence of an "arbitrary law" that must be broken; in support of this, he cites favorably the proposals of

Harvey Wiley Corbett, aimed at introducing into the congested tertiary centers multilevel systems of traffic, employing elevated pedestrian walks. Yet in 1913 Hegemann himself had already advanced similar proposals: but these are merely palliatives—as he himself recognizes—in the face of which the comprehensive uneconomicalness of the “skyscraper system” remains certain.

The European critiques do not, however, appear to touch the American architects themselves, whose concern was focused on the problem of gaining partial control over such a distorted system. Writing in *Pencil Points* in 1923, Corbett exalts—as he had already done in previous articles²¹—the new formal possibilities and the functional advantages of the New York Zoning Law. Corbett is not as interested in the structural significance of zoning, even though he points out in passing its effect on the stabilization of land prices,²² as he is in the new scenic apparatus that it suggests: precisely in that article are reproduced the four famous schemes for setback skyscrapers, made emphatic in the perspective renderings by Hugh Ferriss that illustrate the results of Helmle & Corbett’s zoning envelope studies. Corbett, while holding reservations of an economic and functional nature regarding the second scheme—with its upward thrusts arranged in levels of two floors in the tower on the right side, and with its tower of an indefinite height on the left—comments on it in a most significant way: “with the vertical part inclining up to the top and with the tower that, like the ideal of the Biblical epoch, touches the sky: an authentic tower of Babel.”²³ The specter of the tower of Babel thus begins to circulate in New York architectural culture; the apocalyptic allusions perfectly coincide with the new optimism that in Manhattan, especially after 1925, follows the upsurge in building and the new boom in tertiary structures. It is not accidental that a few years after the publication of Corbett’s article, Fritz Lang films, in his *Metropolis*, the very reconstruction of the myth of Babel.²⁴ The setback skyscrapers, determined by the zoning law, come to be read as carriers of two complementary symbolic meanings. The confusion of tongues resulting from the undertaking of Babel merges with the reference to the city as “New Babylon”: the project for the system of roof gardens and bridges suspended over the streets in Rockefeller Center is only a belated result of this widespread identification.²⁵ But, meanwhile, it becomes necessary to compensate for such a disquieting reading with a cathartic interpretation. Babel is the prelude to new knowledge, to the division of language, the triumph of “difference”—but only as the premise of a new globality. If Claude Bragdon could interpret the renderings by Ferriss as Piranesian prisons, in which man is swallowed up by a machine that is infernal because it is irrational,²⁶ Helmle & Corbett do not hesitate to elaborate in 1925 an ideal restoration of King Solomon’s Temple and Citadel, in a plan sent, along with others, to the Berlin exhibition of American architecture opened in 1926 at the Akademie der Künste.²⁷

It would be an error to consider the pastiche designed by Helmle & Corbett as simply a *divertissement* of kitsch derivation. The rationality of Solomon is not an antithesis to the “differences” institutionalized by the

chaos of Babel; on the contrary, the latter is the very foundation of that rationality. The paroxysmal competition that invades mid-Manhattan along with the new commercial skyscrapers does not need to rationalize interventions coming from outside the market. The new *laissez-faire* has built into itself adequate potential for *self-planning*: this is the unexpressed ideology that makes the rounds of New York architectural culture during the 1920s. The zoning law, precisely for its "restrictive" characteristics, for its capacity to project the status quo into the future, for its use as an instrument for stabilizing the economy, can be accepted as a tranquilizing measure; the same does not apply, however, to the reports prepared by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein for Governor Al Smith, which were seen as destructive of a *self-correcting* equilibrium. The orgy of forms deposited on the skyscrapers of New York, between the resumption of building activity after the First World War and the crash of 1929, cannot be interpreted monolithically as a simple optimistic merging of the influences of late-romantic European culture and Hollywood taste. That art deco, expressionist, Viennese, and Dutch influences had shaped this orgy of forms is indubitably, as has been recently underlined by Rosemarie Bletter. But nothing as yet has been said about the structural reasons that pushed for such a widespread adoption of the "jazz style," for such a deliberate mediation of mechanization and allegories that are immediately understandable, for such an indifference to matters of linguistic coherence (every language is permitted in the "great theatre" of the metropolis). Certainly, the "New Babylon" is invited to participate joyously in the world of commerce: the commodities themselves, here, tend to hide the abstractions of their exchange value, to exalt the "gratuitous," to present themselves as pure use-value. The refined lobbies of the Chanin Building, the Chrysler Building, and the Film Center Building are composed as true and proper *boîtes à surprises*: the conventional naturalism of the exteriors (the decorated walls of the Chanin Building come to mind) or their fragmentariness are exalted in spaces that absorb into themselves the only "social" values possible in the new metropolis. Yet the fragment, isolated as it is, celebrates its own provisionality: the elevator lobby designed by Ely Jacques Kahn for the Film Center Building (1928–29) is merely an accumulation of plastic objects in syncopated rhythm, unstable, ready to change form in a mechanically controllable metamorphosis.

There is no celebration of the irrational in such an ostentatious fragmentation of objects. The cute remark that Benjamin made in "Zentral-park" is quite valid. Referring to Nietzsche's well-known metaphor, he writes:

For the idea of eternal recurrence, most important is the fact that the bourgeoisie no longer dared to face the next phase in the development of the order of production which it had set into motion. Zarathustra's idea of an eternal recurrence and the motto on the antimacassars covering the cushions [of the divans of the bourgeois salon] 'Just a quarter hour' are complementary.²⁸

Thus the unstable surfaces hollowed out and dotted with denticles and the graded, slanted ceilings of Ely J. Kahn's Film Center elevator lobby, and the spiral tangles of the radiator grills in the lobby of Sloan and Robertson's Chanin Building and the polychrome backgrounds of that building's elevators, though through different devices, express the same allegorical meaning: the exaltation of the temporary. "The eternal recurrence" is banalized, but rendered totally enjoyable; "the bad infinity of time" is exorcized in a triumph of the transitory, of the flowing without pause, of the "inessential" play of forms. "Just a quarter hour": the entire metropolis calls for the ceaseless acceleration of movement, of velocity, of exchange. Within the metropolis, it must be made impossible "to stop," impossible to perceive the laws of its own productive order. "The New Babylon" must present itself as a variety theatre, through which eccentricity becomes an institution, a mode of collective behavior.

Outside of this framework, the link, continually reaffirmed in the twenties and the early thirties, between the development of the skyscraper and Americanism is incomprehensible. No longer a structure but a scenic toy rich with ludic valencies, the skyscraper negates the structural matrix imposed upon it by George Post and by Earnest Flagg. Its vitalism is both a response to the unrestrained course of financial speculation that leads directly to the catastrophe of the Great Depression and, at the same time, a "mask" superimposed on that course.

Writing in 1930 in *The Architectural Forum*, Paul Robertson, President of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, reaffirms the tenacious bond between the development of the skyscraper and the American way of life, contesting, with the usual arguments addressed to the forces governing the financial speculation of the epoch, the relation between congestion and tertiary concentrations. The real enemies that Robertson intends to strike are the restrictive regulations conceived, as he writes, by the same mentality that in the good old days would have been frightened by the thought of trains proceeding at the speed of fifteen to twenty miles per hour. Robertson, having taken into account the values of the lands and buildings, does not hesitate to affirm that the total investment in the commercial building sector is in excess of seven billion dollars, making the skyscraper, at least in terms of invested capital, into an industry larger than the auto, steel, and railroad industries. Moreover, he expresses disappointment on behalf of his own group in the system of taxation that hits the buildings of the central business districts:²⁹ in his analysis, the inflationary effects provoked, on an urban scale, by the proliferation of skyscrapers are made to disappear, along with any consideration of the paradoxical situation of the building market in New York City—afflicted already around 1926 by an overproduction of office spaces, according to investigations by Frederick A. Delano and confirmed (note well) by the New York chapter of Building Owners and Managers Association.³⁰

While even during the depression, the skyscraper, against all evidence, could be reaffirmed as an ineluctable component of an urban "destiny"

already marked out, the initial stages of the economic cycle that reshapes the face of the tertiary aspects of New York were experienced in an exactly opposite manner by the architects. To begin the chapter on New York art deco—as is usually done—with the Barclay-Vesey Building (1923–26) by McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, with Ralph Walker as designer, can, from the viewpoint of the previous sentence, send us off in the wrong direction. If we examine the structure of this skyscraper, which was constructed for the New York Telephone Company, we find that its base takes the form of a parallelogram, coinciding with the shape of its lot. The building rises compactly to the tenth floor, where it assumes the planimetric form of an H, with the short sides still determined by the basic shape of the parallelogram. Independent of this structure, however, the central core of the building rises for another nineteen stories, culminating in three large triumphal arches and a series of recessions in the form of parallelepipeds descending in tiers against the sky “à la manière de Saarinen.” The typology of the skyscraper with an open courtyard—introduced by Post in 1880—is thus replaced by one with a single tower. And since we are dealing with an assemblage [a tower that twists in relation to the base of the building], what is emphasized is the effect of torsion, produced by the divergent orientation of the geometric coordinates of the central core and of the volume articulated by the form of the parallelogram. The dramatization of structure is further accentuated by the prevalence of the continuous vertical bands of brickwork that “liberate” themselves from their functional constrictions once they reach the level of the crown with its varying heights: a “liberation” that is underlined by, among other things, the heightened density of the decorative motifs—interwoven plants and exotic animals—at the levels of the shopping arcade and the upper stories.

Louis Sullivan had perceived correctly; Eliel Saarinen’s project for the *Chicago Tribune* concluded a formal experiment that Sullivan had left incomplete. The Barclay-Vesey Building is entirely within such a tradition. The struggle of structure to reaffirm its own coherence assumes here an epic tone: only formal distortion guarantees to the tension of volumes an organicity regained by means of a dialectic. Thus the tragic quality inherent in the very condition of the skyscraper—a typological event sundered from every morphological support on the urban level—is assumed and sublimated: the organicity of the building is not guaranteed by the givens upon which it is based but by their deformation, by the imposition of a structurality obtained by means of “heroic” disarticulations. The distance from the fragmentariness of the Film Center Building could not be greater.

Nevertheless, three years after its opening, the Barclay-Vesey Building would be hailed by Mujica as a work marking the triumph of the Modern School, as opposed less to the neo-Gothic already in decline than to the classicism advocated by Hastings.³¹ Yet even Lewis Mumford, writing in 1928 his first article dedicated to the review of new tendencies in American architecture,³² having argued against every connection between the zoning envelope and the aesthetic treatment of the skyscraper, cites the Barclay-Vesey Building as one of the signs of a cultural renaissance, placing it

alongside Hood's Radiator Building, the Graybar Building, and the Alabama Power Company Building. Mumford, however, sees the work of Ralph Walker not as a unified organism, but rather as a split, dualistic structure:

The building as a whole has a feeling of dark strength, but in the stonework of the lower stories and in the interior the designer introduces a delicate, naturalistic carving, heightened within by the use of gold. When one enters the main hall, one almost forgets its purpose: it is as gaily lighted and decorated as a village street in a strawberry festival. Mr. Walker, in other words, accepts the contrast between structure and feeling: he does not attempt to reconcile them. . . . In Mr. Walker's design decoration is an audacious compensation for the rigor and mechanical fidelity of the rest of the building; like jazz, it interrupts and relieves the tedium of too strenuous mechanical activity.³³

It is significant that Mumford does not comprehend the structural aspects of the Barclay-Vesey Building, which, with its shopping arcade on Vesey Street, among other things, takes into account the principle of multilevel traffic, even though it is confined to the restricted ambit of a single passage. What interests the American critic is the juxtaposing of the elementaristic terrorism of the European avant-gardes against the principle of synthesis at the heart of the tradition of Sullivan and Wright; to Walker's work, he opposes the Park Avenue Building by Ely Jacques Kahn, which he interprets as a reconciliation of the two poles that, in his opinion, the Barclay-Vesey Building keeps apart.

And yet, from the structural point of view, Raymond Hood, Corbett, and Kahn are in accord in advancing proposals antithetical to the regionalism that was advocated by the RPAA and that Mumford himself will defend against the bland hypotheses of decentralization suggested by the Regional Plan of New York drawn up by Thomas Adams. Hood and Corbett more explicitly, and Kahn more generally, propose concentrations of high density in the large areas of the central business district to create a vertical integration of residences, services, offices, industries, and social spaces, in single and completely equipped blocks.³⁴ However, Kahn arrives at the solution of the Park Avenue Building only after a Beaux-Arts education, an experience as a painter, researches in vernacular style, buildings in New York that are still ambiguous, such as the John Thorpe Building (1921), the Arsenal Building (1925), the 550 Seventh Avenue Building (1925), the International Telephone and Telegraph Building (1927). Only with the triad of skyscrapers built in 1927—the Insurance Building, the Park Avenue Building, the Broadway and Thirty-seventh Street Building—does a Kahnian “style” become definitive: exactly the personal style that triumphs in the Film Center discussed above, in the Allied Arts Building of 1929, and in the Bricken Casino Building of 1931.

It is evident that Mumford praises the formal continuity of the Park Avenue Building for its vague resemblance to some of Wright's formulas. But the decomposition of Buchman & Kahn's skyscraper, on the whole a

traditional organism, effected by its ornamental and colored projections, designed in collaboration with Leon Solon, belongs to a composite poetics, which departs from European experiments only to confront them critically with openly anti-European traditions. The abstract silhouettes that torment the surfaces of the Park Avenue Building alternate, and enter into dialogue, with a gamut of colors and materials ranging from masonry, to terracotta, to ochre, to magenta red, to blue, with gradations dimensioned according to their distance from the observer's eye. Presenting the building in 1928, Leon Solon speaks of a scientific approach to form as opposed to a stylistic approach:³⁵ one should note that in this same year Kahn, together with Hood, Walker, Saarinen, John Root, and Schoen, organizes an architectural exhibition for the Metropolitan Museum of New York, which testifies to the ferments raging within the Architectural League and which is in some way a response to the Paris Exposition of 1925, thoroughly studied by Kahn. And one should further note that Kahn himself, so attentive to the debate of the European avant-garde,³⁶ cites the use of color in ancient Greek temples to justify the formal artifices of the Park Avenue Building. In an unpublished autobiographical manuscript composed shortly before his death (around 1972), he writes: "We were thinking of the primary colors of Greek antiquity. It is exactly those that we have attempted to reproduce."³⁷ (Particularly interesting, the detailed model of the building was submitted to the judgment of Hood, who approved its erection.)

Thus the color and the texture of materials come to be exalted as new formal instruments. Kahn also writes in 1928:

*The dream of a colored city, buildings in harmonious tones making great masses of beautiful patterns, may be less of a vision if the enterprising city developer suspects the result. There is evident economy of effort in the application of color in lieu of carved decoration that cannot be seen and the novelty of a structure that can be distinguished from its nondescriptive neighbors has a practical value that must appeal without question to the designer and his public.*³⁸

The "colored city" is therefore a self-advertising structure, a system intended to involve the metropolitan public, and, as in the case of the new skyscrapers on Forty-second Street and on Park Avenue, the efficient instrument of a speculation perceived as pioneering, an attack upon and conquest of new areas for the "adventure" sung by the skyscrapers themselves. It is not coincidental that the professional organization of Kahn's studio is ironbound: the firm can offer its clients not only new forms of publicity but also accurate advice on the suitability of locations, thanks to a scientifically kept up-to-date archive monitoring the state of land prices on the chessboard of Manhattan.³⁹

It is upon such a relation between design and speculation that a poetics aimed at a search for the autochthonous values of "American Civilization" is based. Kahn possessed, not by chance, a library containing texts on classical, Egyptian, and Oriental archaeology and a collection of objects,

majolica, and porcelains from ancient Persia that were unique in New York. His interests in Chinese primitive decorations, Mayan architecture, Persian art, Moorish styles directly influenced his work, but they also have a deeper ideological meaning: Kahn saw the ascendancy of the Turkish Empire and the decadence of the Byzantine and European civilizations as consequences of the definite deterioration of an obsolete tradition, whereas his recourse to pre-Columbian art belongs to a "cult for roots" that places him close to the free wanderings of Wright in search of the red thread that was broken, in the American continent, by the "corrupting" rationality of Europe.⁴⁰

Besides, had not Rose Henderson, already in 1923, exalted the colonies of painters who had installed themselves after 1903 at Taos and Santa Fe, in New Mexico, near the anthropological sites of the Indians and the remaining Pueblo tribes, affirming that "the Indians were the first Cubists in this country"?⁴¹ The unitary masses of Kahn's skyscrapers, commented upon by a fragmentism that becomes appeased only in the Squibb Building (1930), are not as remote from Helmle & Corbett's reconstruction of Solomon's Temple as appears at first sight. The Park Avenue Building, the Allied Arts Building, and the Holland Plaza Building (1930) are also monuments to "knowledge": even if in them the cult of the archaic merges with a celebration of the "monumentality of the eccentric and the transitory," unknown to the formal disjointedness—by now lacking any will to reintegration—of a skyscraper like the Master Building (1928–29) by Helmle & Corbett.

The immediately consumable image, despite its articulation by dynamic trajectories (one thinks immediately of the flagrant virtuosity exhibited by Kahn in the ultimate designs for the Bricken Casino Building), seeks roots in a culture that ignores the historicity of the European tradition. In the quest for the autochthonous, Kahn encounters neither Emerson nor Whitman, but rather arts and cultures apparently "ahistorical," stable, capable of being absorbed as new "Sources of Inspiration," in a context that makes the transitory into a monster to be exorcized but to which, nevertheless, sacrifices must be dedicated.

And is it not significant that the reductionism that Ely J. Kahn and Raymond Hood both reach, but by different paths, was anticipated by an American sculptor, only recently "rediscovered," like John Storrs?⁴² It is uncertain whether his aluminum statue placed at the vertex of the Board of Trade Building at Chicago's Century of Progress Exhibition in 1933 concerns us in this matter. Rather, more emblematic are his abstract sculptures influenced by the complex Parisian milieu, in which in 1920 this pupil of Rodin gave birth to a meditation on cubism in a work entitled *The Spirit of Walt Whitman*. Storrs's *Forms in Space* (those in marble from 1920 through 1923 and those in metal from 1924 through 1927) have been interpreted as postsuprematist documents of a technocratic universe: abstract models of potential purist skyscrapers, they nevertheless do reflect the influences of the jazz style, even though restrained and reduced to minimal signals. In this sense, the experimentalism of Storrs—he estab-

lishes himself permanently in Chicago only in 1929—clears a path that American architecture will have to traverse reckoning with itself alone, once again removed from every advance made by the avant-garde in the traditional sense.

Note well: whether for Richardson, Kahn, or Wright, the “roots” sought for a new American culture are embedded in the *other*. What counts is the equation between the archaic—symbol, and only symbol, of an uncontaminated truth—and the victory over the atavistic inferiority complex vis-à-vis Europe. But with a new feature, which emerges alongside the neoromanticism of the Golden Age: now, at the end of the twenties, the enemy to defeat appears to be the organicity of language. In fact, being neither able nor willing to offer themselves as complete “syntheses,” the skyscrapers of the “new” Manhattan pose as spectators at a gigantic collective ballet. The subjectivity that the system of big business transfers to the molecules of the crowd—the individuals—it dominates is thus recuperated, in a sort of propitiatory rite, by the “new subjects” of the city, who advance joyously to the front of the stage of the metropolis transformed into a music hall. The ludic installs itself in the metropolis with masks that lack thickness; the vitalism that emanates from it knows not the desperation of Fitzgerald, but rather the “foolish” vanities of Zelda.

Yet the vitalism of the parade, denounced by critics like Croly or Murchison,⁴³ is deeply characteristic of the search for the Americanism of which we are attempting to reconnect the threads. The “New Babel” is the innocence that accepts every language, but also the ability to single out collective myths to follow, conscious of their provisionality. It is not surprising that one of the first systematic histories of the skyscraper—that of the Chilean Francisco Mujica—works out organically some of the hypotheses that Ely Kahn had formulated empirically and with the taste of a collector.

The binding together of the search for a truly American architecture and the “American” typology par excellence, that of the skyscraper, is for Mujica a straightforward operation. In this sense, his interpretation of the reasons for the “downfall” of the so-called Chicago School, after the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, is symptomatic: the neoromanticism of Root and Sullivan was “un-American.”⁴⁴ Moreover, the search for “roots,” obstinately pursued by Mujica, is the legacy of the tradition of the American Renaissance. That compounding of transcendental subjectivity and the naturalistic refounding of civil society had as its objective a “frontier” folded back on itself: the metropolis of the skyscrapers was an instrument at the national level, the brain of a complex organization, that, especially in the twenties, aspired to a self-control, to an automatic healing of its institutional wounds. (In fact, such an aspiration to capitalist self-planning, in the absence of interventions by the public administrators was the goal of the regional plan for New York financed and organized by the Russell Sage Foundation, from 1923 onward.)

It is exactly to such a “miraculous” compounding of irrepressible differences that the search for the roots of a “pure” Americanism, liberated

from the mortgages fixed by European culture and founded on a neo-Rousseauian naturalism of the “noble savage,” attempts to offer a contribution. Mujica writes:

In these latter days a new tendency has appeared that does not accept the preconceived patterns of the classical and the Gothic styles, but strives to express spontaneously a rational and sincere decoration of the structure employing for this purpose the most modern lines. . . . The characteristic qualities of these new lines and proportions present great resemblance with the elements of primitive American architecture. As to cornices it has not been possible to apply to skyscrapers any of the hitherto known proportions. The new architecture has had to find an element which only marked the limit of the wall-surface. By this quality and by the fact that its principal decorative elements are brought out in large surfaces, the new style strikingly recalls the Pre-Columbian architecture with its palaces and pyramids with small cornices, and magnificent decorations carved in big dominating surfaces.⁴⁵

That the first illustrations in Mujica’s book are ideal reconstructions of the Mexican pyramids of Papantla and Teopantepec and that of Tikal, in Guatemala, has therefore a polemical significance. The “new” draws its guarantees of validity by fastening itself to the primitive—even though the examples used by Mujica do not appear innovative with respect to the practice of designing within the circle of the Architectural League of New York. But let us allow the author to continue:

After a profound study of the ruins it is possible to conceive a new line in which only the sentiment of the American forms subsists. It appears to me correct to call this new type of architecture Neo-American. The difference between the Renaissance and the Neo-American architecture is fundamental: The Renaissance worked with a model before it. The Neo-American architecture is a new creative work which requires profound study of the primitive American architecture and of the geometrical and mechanical elements of the regional nature. When all the forms peculiar to us have germinated in our minds and can follow the summons of our imagination we will be prepared to create this new architecture and to produce designs and plans embodying reminiscences of their primitive origin, but at the same time revealing their modern character clearly and powerfully.⁴⁶

As you can see, Mujica manages merely to rationalize the ideas widely circulating in the New York milieu. Beyond the subjective mysticism of a Frank Lloyd Wright, it is very clear that the appeals to a “Neo-American architecture,” to the art deco style, to a domesticated machinism tending toward kitsch—I am thinking of the Chrysler Building, but also of the residential skyscraper by the Chanin firm—are merely instruments to seize a general consensus for an urban structure that is paradoxical and increasingly shackled by its own laws of growth. The opinion poll of New York architects that addressed the convenience of the skyscraper system,

which Mujica published in the fifth chapter of his book, is indicative. The opinion of Thomas Hasting, who is absolutely opposed to the tall commercial building, is coupled with that of Mayor Henry Curran, who, in his speech delivered at the meeting in 1927 of the Civic Development Department of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, confirms the uneconomicalness of the tertiary concentrations, posing these questions:

Is it good sense not to have a dollar for any other city need, to pour it all into more traffic facilities to take care of a coagulated bunch of skyscrapers, is that sense? Is that city planning? Is that good business? Is it good for your individual business? That is where we are.⁴⁷

But John Sloan, Wiley Corbett, and Mujica himself are ready to demonstrate that the skyscraper can be an instrument of good business: the problem is to limit the central business district, possible because of the high tertiary concentration; to apply taxes compatible with the market; to use the resulting fiscal yield for a reconstruction of the streets, supervised by a public administration capable of taking into account the proposals for the separation of traffic advanced since the first years of the century; and to adopt Le Corbusier's model for the *ville radieuse*.⁴⁸ Here utopia extends its hand to professional optimism: Corbett, Sloan, Hood, Mujica merely put into the form of their own discipline the demands of Paul Robertson.

If, going beyond such considerations—with which American big business will not come to terms even after the Great Depression—we attempt to consider the effects the “New Babel” had upon the collective consciousness of the 1920s, we must place, alongside documents like the film *Madam Satan*, cited by Bletter,⁴⁹ one more illuminating cinematic sequence. In the film *Gold Diggers of 1935*, Busby Berkeley inserts a practically independent segment, a film within the film: *Broadway Lullaby*. The camera begins with a long shot of the singer Wini Shaw, isolating her face against a black background. While Wini performs her song, the camera executes a perpendicular movement, framing the protagonist from above. After a dissolve, Wini's face remains only in profile, within which appears an aerial view of Manhattan. The metropolis of the skyscrapers is completely contained in the unconscious of the individual, as it were: the whole and its parts are no longer distinguishable, bound as they are in a relationship of complete correspondence. But here we are dealing with a mortal relationship. After an exceptional representation of “urban chorality”—a musical sequence that assembles a hundred dancers in a gigantic nightclub—Wini falls from the top of a skyscraper, while the camera moves within a Manhattan that continues indifferently its own existence. Once again, the metropolis is superimposed upon the face of Wini.⁵⁰

In this way, Berkeley demonstrates that the loved-hated big city requires concrete reform in order for the collective festival of the musical to be experienced “authentically”; but he also shows that the entire search for “roots,” which we have attempted to characterize by isolating some examples from the 1920s, is completely superfluous. The individual has already internalized the “values” of the urban machine—and they are

mortal. The dream will survive: the dance and the choral song of the musical. We are no longer dealing with the gaiety of the Chrysler and Park Avenue buildings. The hopes raised by Roosevelt's New Deal remain as yet unfulfilled; the "Dinosaur City" will see to their destruction all too soon, reaffirming its own indissoluble connection with the triumphal march of urban-industrial America toward imperialist expansion, the destiny of which—in spite of everything—the Americanist ideology of Helmle & Corbett, of Ely Kahn, of Mujica had celebrated.

Appendix

A City under a Single Roof

by Raymond M. Hood

*The following essay by Raymond Hood (1882–1934), a designer of highly innovative skyscrapers in New York in the 1920s and one of the chief figures in the realization of Rockefeller Center, contains a proposal described even by the magazine in which it appeared, *The Nation's Business*,¹ the organ of the National Chamber of Commerce, as worthy of one of Jules Verne's fantastic tales. And yet, however much at the beginning of the great crisis of 1929 the idea of an enormous complex housing a large number of the most varied facilities might have seemed anachronistic and the expression of an entrepreneurial class tied to economic formulas against which the New Deal would launch an attack, Hood's proposal constitutes a prophetic document with respect to the enormous structures that, from the 1970s on, have attempted to install themselves as autonomous islands in the American metropolises. Hood was surely inspired by vague recollections of Le Corbusier's ville radieuse. Nevertheless, in the same year (1929), he presented a proposal for the whole of Manhattan, in which the island and the boroughs across the water, dotted by a series of enormous complexes are connected by residential bridges for three million inhabitants. Hood's proposal closely combined the elimination of commuting between home and downtown with the renewal of tertiary structures, anticipating projects such as Battery Park City. (See M. Tafuri, "The Disenchanted Mountain," in *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal*, by various authors [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979], pp. 451–60; *idem*, "La dialectique de l'absurde," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 178 (1975): 1–19; Walter H. Kilham, Jr, *Raymond Hood Architect: Form through Function in the American Skyscraper* [New York: Architectural Book Publishing, 1973]; Robert A. M. Stern, "Raymond Hood," *Progressive Architecture* 7 (1974): 110–14; *idem*, *Raymond Hood* [New York, 1982].) In any event, the typological formula of the skyscraper is Hood's solution for the most diverse spatial situations. Also in*

1929, he planned for A. A. Ainsworth a recreational center, Arcady, near Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, amid 16,000 acres of virgin forest, dominated by a Main House built on levels. Rather than the return to rude nature advocated by Emerson and Thoreau, Hood's Arcady involves the conquest of nature by a culture closely tied to the forces of the great urban speculation that tries to export its own models even in the planning of luxury suburbs designed for the ruling classes. (See Rosemarie Bletter, "King Kong en Arcadie: Le gratte-ciel américain approuvé," *Archithese* 29 (1976): 25 ff., in particular pp. 32–34.)

A City under a Single Roof

By Raymond M. Hood, President, New York Architectural League
(As told to F. S. Tisdale)²

The traveler in Italy gazes in wonder at the works of the Renaissance. He is moved to deplore what he considers the shortcomings of his own period as he studies magnificent buildings adorned by the paintings and sculptures of the immortals.

What a pity there are no such artists in our day! How colorless and commonplace our lives seem beside the vivid romance of the sixteenth century!

This man is too close to the twentieth century to see what is happening. The truth is that he is in the midst of a Renaissance compared to which other upheavals in art are local phenomena. To reach Italy the traveler traversed the ocean in a palace which compared favorably to those of Florence and which was able to travel thirty miles an hour.

Perhaps he realized man's age-old dream of flight by crossing the Channel in an airplane. If he was worried by his business in New York he went to a telephone and talked with his partner, 4,000 miles away.

Instead of being the property of a few rich lords, our awakening is devoted to all humanity. It does not center its forces on the creation of so-called works of art which give pleasure only to the eye; it directs its energies toward the intimate things of everyday life which perform our heavy labors and serve our convenience. Instead of being at the mercy of mercenary Borgias or Medicis, the modern artisan is directed by business scientists who, by means of mass production, are bringing hitherto unheard-of luxuries within the reach of common men.

Art and beauty are no longer confined to some pretty object to be hung on a wall or installed in a museum. They are now woven into the construction and design of the things we use and live with. You find beauty in kitchen accessories, in motor cars, fountain pens, office desks, grain elevators, factory buildings, locomotives.

While the sweep of this Renaissance is world-wide, its most spectacular phases are to be found in the United States and particularly in New York City. As a nation we are too busy with our own part in the work to get a perspective on what is taking place about us. Visitors from Europe view

New York with more astonishment than any American tourist could possibly feel in "doing" Rome.

Acute growing pains

Since the cultural and industrial power of the nation pours into New York, that city suffers a constant agony of growth. Buildings that once were pointed to as marvels are torn down—dissolve before our very eyes to be replaced by loftier towers. The streets are ripped up while four-track subterranean railways are installed. Tubes carry traffic under the rivers and great bridges are thrown across the water channels.

It is no wonder that such swift and powerful growth gets beyond control. Problems multiply themselves. Skyscrapers created congestion; there was a great outcry for subways. Instead of easing the jam of traffic, the subways produced more tall buildings. These in turn demand more subways and so on in a vicious ascending spiral whose end no man can foresee.

Big buildings do not merely follow the subways: they now anticipate them. As soon as real estate operators learned there was to be a subway along Eighth Avenue land values in the vicinity leaped skyward. While subway engineers were digging under the street, other engineers were sinking building foundations alongside. The race has been won by the building constructors. The subway is still a long way from completion but rows of tall buildings have grown up along the route, many of them already occupied.

Both the above factors aggravate conditions on the street level. Vaster hordes of pedestrians jostle each other on the side walks; motor traffic freezes more frequently into hopeless solidity.

Intolerable conditions bring about cures. New York has been experimenting in the right direction.

The tendency is toward related communities within the city—communities whose activities are confined within certain areas, whose traffic does not need to travel distant streets to collect supplies or deliver orders.

The Grand Central Station is one example. I know men with offices in this section who add nothing to the city's traffic problem. They come in daily from homes along the New York Central or the New York, New Haven and Hartford railroads. Their offices are in buildings connected directly with the terminal. They lunch in clubs or hotels which can be reached by convenient tunnels. It is possible for these men to go to work every day for weeks without once venturing onto the crowded streets.

The Garment Center is another example. This is a district along Seventh Avenue and neighboring streets devoted to the clothing industry. Furriers, cloth manufacturers, tailoring establishments—all are gravitating to this area where long street hauls are unnecessary and where the traffic is confined largely to related thoroughfares.

About the Pennsylvania Station another community has been formed. Plans for the New Metropolitan Opera center at Fifth Avenue and Fiftieth

Street are now being worked out.³ The new Medical Center on Riverside Drive is built on this principle.

A smaller but even more exact expression of the idea can be found in the Architect's Building, where the advantages of gathering together a whole industry are evident. Here, under one roof, are assembled the various elements of the building business—architects, contractors, material dealers and even professional clubs. Only hotels and apartments are lacking to make it a complete city within a city.

Save time and rush

It seems to me that the salvation of New York depends on the wider application of this principle. Every business man in the city must at some time have realized what an advantage it would be to live in the building where his office is located. It is toward this ideal that real estate firms and architects should work.

Whole industries should be united into interdependent developments with clubs, hotels, stores, apartments and even theaters. Such an arrangement would make possible great economies in time, as well as diminish wear and tear on human nerves. An average office working day is seven hours, and of this many persons spend from one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half hours on the street. These persons add a further incumbrance to an already difficult traffic problem. Put this worker in a unified scheme and he need hardly put his feet on the sidewalk during the entire day. His business, his lunch, his club and his apartment are all in the same building. The time he saves goes either into recreation or into greater production.

The plan I have worked out and which I hope to make a reality covers a space of three blocks, developing later into greater units. There is no limit to the possibilities, the only requisite being that each layout be properly integrated to pursue its activities without jostling the rest of the city.

In this plan the whole ground area is free for traffic—for automobiles, pedestrians and parking. The buildings are supported on columns which leave the space beneath them open. Only the stairways and elevator entrances come down to the street level. Below are as many stories of covered garage space as the foundations permit.

From the second to the tenth floors are shops, stores and even theaters, served by connecting arcades at every floor. Office space occupies the level from the tenth to the twenty-fifth floors. From the twenty-fifth to the thirty-fifth are clubs, restaurants and hotels. Above that are the apartments. The entire unit would be planned with reference to the needs of an industry and the type of people who compose it.

Compare the relative values of three blocks under the present disorganized system of building and the same three blocks under logical coordination. The same amount of money is spent in each construction, the same floor area and capacity for occupancy is produced.

Under present conditions forty per cent of the total building is in badly lighted and ventilated space which faces depressing backyards or interior

courts across which the maximum view is not more than fifty feet. The rest of the space is what we call first-class exterior space: it is lighted entirely from streets that are between sixty and one hundred feet wide. In buildings averaging twenty-five stories, at least forty per cent of the room is below the tenth story, which is today rated as inferior.

No dark offices here

In the new plan all space is outside. Each office would look across an opening at least three hundred feet wide. This would be true in the case of a single unit, where three or four units were planned together, every window would look into a court seven hundred feet square.

By present methods forty per cent of all space is in undesirable levels below the tenth floor; handling such as described above would reduce the space below the tenth floor to fifteen per cent. Since these floors would be devoted to shops, theaters and the like, the closeness of the ground would be an asset rather than a liability.

It is safe to say that there is hardly a block in the center of New York that will not be torn down and rebuilt within the next twenty years. Under present real estate conditions the operations will consist of from five to twenty separate transactions, each conducted by a separate interest which is opposed to all the others. Rarely will they be complementary; in most cases they will be competitive and mutually destructive.

An example of this is a block on the East Side with which I am familiar. In this block within the past two years there have been two twenty-story operations costing in all about five million dollars. One is a building for printers, and it has some chance of success, but it completely blankets the rear of an apartment house operation. Both buildings are damaged by their unhappy juxtaposition.

On all sides of these structures are garages and old apartment buildings under eight or ten separate ownerships. Any one of these may introduce discordant factors which no one can foresee. In that block an investor must keep his sails continually trimmed to meet dangerous and unforeseen developments. A single enlightened ownership would improve conditions in every way.

Even in neighborhoods where operations are of a single character, such as apartment houses, there are continuous quarrels.

Each group covets and encroaches on the trade, light and other advantages of the neighboring group.

This undirected growth has brought about real estate conditions that would not be tolerated in any other industry. The whole tenor of the age is toward consolidation and mutual aid against individual conflict. Building units are too small. They are not sufficiently financed to give themselves even partial protection. Huge investments are at the mercy of chance and the whims of a next-door neighbor. The result is a quarrelsome, competitive, destructive battle into which only the shrewdest opportunist or the most audacious adventurer can afford to put his money.

Would be no more costly

As a basis for calculation let us take a block under present conditions where buildings of twenty-five stories cover seventy per cent of the ground area. I would substitute for that building a spread over three blocks which would give the same floor area as the above. It would work out as a forty-five-story building in the new form.

The cost of the single structure covering three blocks would be no greater than in the other case. The only difference would be that the money would be assembled at one time and by a single syndicate instead of being brought together by fifteen or twenty operators over a period of fifteen or twenty years. It would mean a single, directing intelligence rather than a score of mutually destructive interests of relatively feeble financial strength.

I have proceeded on a basis of a three-block operation. The exact size is not essential. It should merely be large enough so that each operation can control its own environment and comprehensive enough to include a branch of industry. The central organization endures a form of amalgamation such as occurs every day in the business world. It means the application of farsighted direction to a movement that already has shown itself in the city's growth. Certainly, some such remedy must be applied to prevent New York from strangling itself by its own growth.

Sozialpolitik and the City in Weimar Germany

The adventures of planning in the U.S.S.R. and the adventures of the skyscraper in the U.S.A. have been of use to us in exploding the seemingly most resistant nuclei of the concept of the avant-garde. New questions confront us upon returning to Europe and facing the analysis of the architecture and the city planning taking form in the third of our "great world-systems," the Germany of the Weimar period.

What space can still be carved out for the demands of the avant-gardes, once they are plunged into a crucible in which *Arbeitsideologie*, productive reorganization, and divergent drives toward constructions that incarnate a multiplicity of sectorial hypotheses converge in a "system of compromises," the crisis of which is a structural condition? Is a "search for the truth" still admissible, where the *Machtfrage*, the question of power, has become embedded in institutional mechanisms that detach themselves from the ideology of a *Volksstaat* and coalesce unstably in distinct alignments that are supposed to be "exemplary"? And how to distill, from within those alignments the positive legacy—the "technique"—of the "impracticable utopias" that had undermined the terrain of language in order to direct itself toward that which calls for responses embedded in the contradictory essence of the quotidian?

Such are the questions confronting the radical culture committed to working within the institutions of the Weimar Republic. For them, "choosing a party" can no longer mean to entrust oneself to "real" organizations. We have already pointed out that for the avant-gardes, 1922 marks the obligation to go beyond themselves. But the bond that held together artistic avant-gardes and political avant-gardes had already been dissolved in 1919: the avant-garde cenacle as *Kommunismus des Geistes*, as community of the spirit—even though iconoclastic—no longer has any meaning when the myth of the *revolution*, embodied, after Eisner's assassination, by Landauer and Toller in Munich, discovers that it can only be

for-its-own-death. A synthesis of idea and reality, the *Gemeinschaft* of the *Aktivismus* or that of the groups advocating programmed transgressions can drown in its desperation or insist on exhibiting itself in grotesque guise; it is ever a question of "stopping on the threshold." To enter the city will be possible only by crossing the "data," by coming to terms with the *Politik als Beruf*, by recognizing that "if the world is all that happens," concrete results will be produced only by disenchanting professions. A difficult arrangement this, resulting, by necessity, from the divergent pressures in force from the very beginnings of the Weimar Republic. The "other" avant-garde is called upon to precipitate as the *techne* of those divergences; the avant-gardes themselves are called upon to "betray themselves": thus, to "come to an end," to dissolve out of extreme fidelity to their own premises. But by responding to which political questions? Which institutional referents? Which choices? "Political" Weimar is too involved in the *facies hippocratica* of the *Arbeitsideologie* and of the "capitalist revolution," to admit of linear answers.

It was nevertheless necessary to meet head-on this basic difficulty, dispersing once and for all "conciliatory" illusions. Neither Naphta nor Settembrini: to descend from the "magic mountain" meant to immerse oneself in the universe of conflict, accepting a worldly impurity.

The pure and the impure could be identified only initially, respectively, in the KPD and in the SPD. The Spartacist avant-garde was "classic," that of the KPD impotent;¹ the organization of the Social Democracy was somehow just a "bureaucratic enterprise." The organization of the Republics of the councils of Thuringia and Saxony seemed a pathetic *Machtfrage*; not by chance was there still room in them for the afflatus of the *Aktivismus*. The policy of the SPD, on the other hand, appears to have been inclined toward reality; in it, the pure and the impure lose their meaning and balance each other out. Infiltration into the institutions, management of a vast network of alternative organizations, management of precisely defined economic sectors: diverse tactics that require diverse techniques, forcing intellectual work into specialization, into entering the forest of bureaucracy. In this sense, the Weimar intelligentsia embraced many new roles that were truly "avant-garde," anticipating—almost in spite of itself—truly "present-day" tasks.²

It is difficult, at the present stage of studies, to trace a map of the political attitudes of the architects and urbanists involved in the restructuring of their own disciplines in the turbulent climate of Weimar Germany; it is easier to evaluate their contributions to the operations that the Social Democracy and its designated agencies set into motion until the dissolution of the system. First, however, we must examine the theory-praxis-technique relationship that sustained those operations, together with the alternatives that still seemed possible in the immediate postwar period. Tronti wrote:

Lukács had been correct in laying bare the essence of 'Social Democratic tactics,' according to which the proletariat must make compromises with

the bourgeoisie, because the true revolution is still a long way off, and its true conditions do not yet exist: 'The more the subjective and objective presuppositions of the social revolution mature, the more purity the proletariat can bring to the realization of their own class goals; since a compromise in praxis represents, on the other side of the coin, a great radicalism, an absolutely pure adherence to principles with ultimate goals. This is Social Democracy, the real one, the classic and historic one. . . .' The fact remains that, from the beginning, the contact between the workers' struggle and the Social Democratic party has been direct, the relationship so close as to not even permit mediation on a union level: trade-unionism has, in fact, no part in the German workers' tradition.³

But to understand the phenomena that followed the November Revolution and that witnessed the fall of that "organizational solution" based on a "daily practice of Menshevik actions and an ideology of pure subversive principles," it is necessary to consider the other side of that coin. It is necessary, that is, to put the accent on that

*intermediate level of intellectual mediocrity, of scientific approximation, of theoretical poverty, which could produce only the failure that they did produce: that scholastic attention to Marxist truth, which from Lenin on we are still obliged to waste time in combatting.*⁴

To be sure, the "theoretical poverty" is not that of Hilferding, nor that which induces the mass workers' movement to support the founding compromises—the military pact, the social pact, the political pact—in which Rusconi has perceptively seen the unstable structure of the "contract democracy" of the Weimar Republic.⁵ Instead, it resides in the incapacity to put into practice several hypotheses of transformation—battle within the exposed contradictions, in the incapacity to arm oneself to manage the crises that these contradictions of necessity brought with them, rather than to take up the defense, at any cost, of a system that from the beginning had been constructed as transient. In this, the political brain of Weimar socialism and the intellectual adventures of its technicians proceed in a parallel fashion.

All of which can be followed right from the debate on the workers' councils and on socialization. In Berlin, Daüming and Müller had already formulated, from within the movement of the delegates, the councils' point of view as the struggle for a new organization of work: in short, an ideology of "participation" as a control of the production process, reflecting the opposition of the strata of "conscious" workers—of the qualified labor force—to the processes of standardization and homogenization of class. Only in this way, as the *Arbeiter Rat* wrote, would the joy and passion for work take root in the German people. The synthesis of a "conscious class" and work is thus based on a reaction to political and business bureaucratization; the ideological identification of work and management is founded on the nostalgia for a *work without capital*, that is, an "autonomous and liberated" work. This does not change management's need to subordinate

the organization of that work to its control: the postulated synthesis proves to be precarious.

The essence of the "industrial democracy" predicted by the *Linkskommunismus* is, after all, clearly explained by Karl Korsch in 1919, in *Der Sozialist*:

The inevitable consequence of every large mechanized industry is subordination and the lack of freedom; on this point as well, in direct contrast to the 'antiauthoritarian socialism' of the 'anarcho-syndicalists,' the champions of modern socialism have clarified, irrevocably and thoroughly, their ideas. Every large mechanized industry is in fact organized labor, and organized labor means continual subordination of all the participants in the work to the unitary will of the management. . . . Even in the fully realized industrial democracy of the socialist era, it is necessary therefore to apply, in fact, even more firmly this principle: during work, the mass of workers must be passively subordinate to the person directing the process of production. . . . But who is to perform this function, and for how long, is to be decided by the working-class democracy, sovereign of the socialist society. . . ; in this way, by means of the essential liberation of the men active in production, it is assured that no harm will be done to the economic laws of the most modern and effective form of production.⁶

The German Social Democracy would inherit the misunderstandings contained in this ideology on the economic level, carefully placing in parentheses its political substance; the architectural avant-gardes would glorify them to bring to life their models of intervention.

Significant in this respect was the role that Martin Wagner, enrolled in the SPD around 1919, performed within the debate on the councils: as an architect and urbanist, responsive to the economic implications of every initiative relative to the transformation of the physical order, Wagner was one of the spearheads of German architectural culture in fighting experimentally for a definite "politicization of technique."

Having attempted a standardization under the banner of the elimination of dead pauses in work and of unproductive costs, with the five hundred apartments of the Grosssiedlung Lindenhof that he built as *Stadtbaurat* of Schöenberg (1918), Wagner founded, in 1919, the first Berlin Soziale Bauhütte, and, in 1920, the Verband sozialer Baubetriebe. In addition, in April of the same year, together with the engineer Becher, first director of the Berlin *Bauhütte*, he launched the Forschungsgesellschaft, a building society of employers and workers, closed in May 1921 because of the opposition it raised on the part of small enterprises afraid of the competition.⁷ Already in his articles published during the First World War, Wagner had advocated a dynamic conception of the urban organism, foreseeing a renewal of the legislative corpus and an effort to rationalize the organization of labor through reforms of financial and credit arrangements.⁸

But it was with the 1919 essay "Die Sozialisierung der Baubetriebe"⁹ that Wagner entered directly into the debate on the workers' councils, with a complete plan for the socialization of the building industry. It is not

accidental that the essay opens by citing the *Erfurt Programme* and the *Richtlinien für ein sozialistisches Aktionsprogramm* of Kautsky, to confront immediately the problem of increasing factory productivity by means of a council organization. The theme remains that of a conciliation between rationalization of work, workers' participation in the enterprise, and accumulation of capital. Nor is it unimportant that Wagner feels the need to eulogize the medieval *Bauhütten* as examples of *Brüderlichkeit*, in the name of a collaboration based on the ideology of a work ethic compromised by the industrial system. His proposal for a socialized building enterprise does not, however, indulge in mystifying optics. The reference to the medieval loses the esoteric aura with which the nostalgia of the German late-expressionists had imbued it. The socialization advocated by Wagner is in reality an instrument, entrusted to a large degree to union management, for the control of the labor force, more than for the control of productive objectives on the part of the working class. The details of Wagner's *Sozialisierung* may be followed in the text reprinted as the appendix to the present chapter. Here it is interesting to point out that worker participation in the administrative management of socialized enterprises is balanced by a rigorous union control of the membership's claims; that socialization itself is greeted as a means for introducing a rationalization based on Taylorism and without friction; that socialization itself, to be put into effect gradually, by individual enterprises and as an alternative to municipalizations or nationalizations, which are rejected in no uncertain terms by the author, does not exclude, in fact provides for, free competition and a market—even though, according to Wagner, the latter must be "regulated" and the former must witness the victory of the socialized enterprises.

A veritable alchemy, then, on the part of Wagner, to insure the productive operation of the quotas of surplus value assured to the workers, under the form of social expenditures as well, on the presupposition of an alliance, still totally ideological, between manual and intellectual labor. A new *Geist* should emerge, also in the domain of planning, from this compromising and cautious *Sozialisierung*, which meanwhile scorns neither piecework¹⁰ nor a rigorous supremacy of the technicians over final decisions. The Berlin *Bauhütte* of 1919 and the *Forschungsgesellschaft* of 1920–21 can thus be considered as partial attempts to achieve objectives that, in the political domain, prove untenable after the failure of the battle for the councils.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that, compared to the hypotheses of Korsch and Kautsky, that of Martin Wagner—sectorial as it may be—makes of realism a weapon blunted from the start. Above all, it should be noted that Wagner's socialized firm—and not solely because it remains a monad estranged from a total restructuring of the building sector—is not intended to function as the instrument of a recomposition of class; on the contrary, it holds together artificially a class crystalized in its internal stratifications. The control built into it operates primarily on the movements of the labor force. As an instrument of planning, furthermore, that

socialization is not rendered capable of responding to a political organization of public operators: the antibureaucratization invoked by Wagner to reject Kautsky's second hypothesis—the municipalization of enterprises¹¹—on the one hand, is contradicted by the apparatus provided for the control of production in the single enterprise, and, on the other, enters into conflict with the needs—constantly emphasized by Wagner himself—of a production management of the city economy.¹²

The fact remains, however, that the difficulties encountered by Korsch, by the movement for the councils, by Martin Wagner, in reconciling, at least on a theoretical level, the exigencies of a self-regulated capitalist production with a distribution and a consumption that are also self-regulated, form a part of the balance sheet of a “socialism as a social reconfirmation of the value of work,” perceptively analyzed by Cacciari in its historical origins.¹³

It is, in actuality, the Social Democratic organization that also in the field of building and urban administration realizes the “positive” side of the ideology of the council. Cacciari has written:

*It is neither a question of 'reduction' nor of 'betrayal.' Having eliminated all political meaning from the nostalgia for autonomous, 'conscious' labor, having correctly assumed the concept of labor within the real forms of development, it cannot as such be separated from the overall relationship of production. To praise it is to praise this relationship, to the extent in which one is able to express it in a programmed-rational manner. To realize the 'positive' side of the ideology of the council thus means to restore labor to the totality of the capitalist system of production relations, to see Labor as an element of capital, exactly to the extent in which it is truly productive labor. . . . The State of Arbeit, prefigured by communism and Linkskommunismus, can be nothing but the State of the achieved rule of the capitalist system of production relations, of the mature phase of development, in which even the moment of Arbeit succeeds in structuring itself as a union and political 'figure.'*¹⁴

Yet after 1923 capital could manage on its own its programs of reorganization. The Social Democracy, by contrast, had to operate by managing the transformations of the communes that it controlled directly or indirectly: to refound *balanced communities of subjects* in them was a given; the city became the place in which to demonstrate the qualitative superiority of “socialist humanism.”

The competition thus involved two production organizations: that of the “social goods”—with housing, foremost—managed to a large extent by the ADGB and the SPD, and that of the large cartels. Before long the impasse would become evident. The dualism of the economic forces, in fact, quickly produced a fundamental imbalance. The workers' movement, after the application of the law on the financing of public housing and the reorganization of cooperative structures, was able to manage a significant share of the housing sector, enjoying what was virtually a monopoly on production; but in the face of this, there arose a new capitalist use for the re-

gion: the distribution of the places of production, the transportation policy, at both a regional and national level, the resident-industry relationship were all removed from the control of the cooperative organizations.

While the urbanist ideology of the radical architects employs a *theory of equilibrium*—the city as center of a new social equilibrium; laws: the city as seat of social peace—the capitalist praxis induces new imbalances in the regional order, bringing about a considerable leap forward in the same urban theme. The plan for the Ruhr Basin, drawn up by R. Schmidt in 1926 and involving an expanse of over 4,500 square kilometers and more than four million inhabitants, already reveals the new dimension of the problems to be dealt with.

In reality, the attempt to control the housing market through a program of state loans to building companies and cooperatives is one of the cornerstones of the Weimar *Sozialpolitik*: it was no accident that as early as March 1918 the Prussian Landtag had issued a law regarding loans to cooperatives—the *gemeinnützige Baugesellschaften*—under the control of regional municipal agencies (*Wohnungsfürsorgegesellschaften*), adopted on a federal scale in October of the same year.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the only real measure relative to the *Wohnungsfrage* taken during the period of inflation was the artificial control of rents, which in 1925, at any rate in concurrence with the stabilization of the mark and the economic recovery, returned to prewar levels. Only in February 1924 did a new tax on the place value of existing dwellings make available the funds required to put into effect the law of 1918: the *Hauszinssteuer*, sustained by the SPD, thus became the instrument of a “distributive justice” and of a policy of social expenditures on the part of the municipal authorities, soon hindered by the right wing, but winning out until 1930.

The loans of the Dawes plan indirectly supported the launching of this building policy; the economic recovery, even though contradictory, seemed to have been able to get underway without the aid of those sources of collateral accumulation that the land and building revenues represented.

The Dawes plan, in reality, strengthened an industrial system laden with internal conflicts—such as the opposition between light and heavy industries.¹⁶ And its politicoeconomic effects were anything but linear, provoking, simultaneously, a stiffening of the industrial cartels, a rationalization both devoid of production conversions and financially fragile, an artificial inflation of prices and of the internal market, and a frenetic system of exportations: one thinks of Germany’s plentiful supplies to Soviet Russia and of the international agreements of the cartels of steel, electronics, chemicals, automobiles, etc.¹⁷ A trade policy intent on stabilizing internal prices at the highest possible level was countered by a policy of social spending that gave rise to conflicts, in the short and the long run, that were difficult to control. Thus, no “peace” was to be found in that social policy: the “Weimar system” once again reveals itself as founded on unprogrammed contradictions, on a dialectic whose antithesis is put between parentheses and whose synthesis, paradoxically continually crumbles in the hands of those who pursue it. In the sector that interests us most closely,

not even the collaboration between public operators and the cooperative movement was facilitated. The *Hauszinssteuer*, striking at parasitic capital and partially replying to the endemic housing shortage, did not lack effect on the lagging sectors of the new economic cycle, but it would be severely criticized when it conveniently came to see in the *Sozialpolitik* an incentive to unproductive expenditure. Arthur Rosenberg wrote that after 1924, “the German authorities believed that money was of no importance, and that at any moment they could have as much of it as desired”¹⁸; it may also be interesting to remember that at Duisburg in 1927 Chancellor Stresemann expressed to Burgomaster Jarres his fears regarding the disproportionate social expenditures of the communes of Berlin, Cologne, and Frankfurt, and the consequences on foreign policy.¹⁹

The union activity in the building sector was, on the contrary, propagandized as the prime nucleus of “community economy” at the convention of the ADGB in December 1927:²⁰ the demands expressed by the movement for the councils now assume a technical guise and are reduced to detailed programs of intervention. The existing *Bauhütten* are reorganized by the Verband sozialer Baubetriebe, whose membership includes the production and consumer cooperatives of the early postwar period, and which is used by the DEWOG (*Deutsche Wohnungsfürsorge-Aktiengesellschaft für Beamte, Angestellte und Arbeiter*), a corporation constituted in 1924 with union funds, operating in the Berlin territory through the GEHAG and the Markische Wohnungsbau, and expressing its ideas in the biweekly *Die Wohnungswirtschaft*.

Collotti notes, justly, that “the programmatic text of the ADGB of 1926 contains a formulation of ‘economic democracy,’ destined to supply an ideology to the SPD and to the Weimar Republic itself.”²¹ Through its eleven branch societies, located in Frankfurt, Altona, Berlin, Augsburg, Leipzig, Munich, Königsberg, Rostock, and Schwerin, the DEWOG—writes Naphtali—constitutes the

*germ of a collective economy (Gemeinwirtschaft) in the sector of building and housing. . . . On the one hand, it, as a collective economic organization, administrator of building and dwellings, replaces the building speculators and capitalist private homeowners; on the other, the companies that build houses, organized in the union of companies of a public nature, supplant the entrepreneurs, as possessors of the means of production in the building field and as dominators of the production apparatus.*²²

Thus, in effect, the tactic of the DEWOG is founded on a “democratic capitalism.”

But, in some way, the organization of the DEWOG and of the Arbeiterbank, by introducing a compact management and financial structure between the state system and that of the commune, fulfills one of the requirements of the “new” Social Democracy that has by now abandoned its traditional idealistic moralism, or has confined it to superstructural bounds. In fact, the Weimar Social Democracy is undeniably not only a political party, but also—as has been written—an ensemble of services that

answer the basic educational, recreational, and welfare needs of the working class. Upon contact with the new Weimar reality, this Social Democratic universe loses much of its original ideal aura: "it returns to secular life—so to speak—it reveals what it actually is: a system of social services."²³

Within such a framework, it becomes necessary to set out a rigorous technique for this system of services. The technique becomes the guarantor of the political choices: Wagner, May, and Taut (who from 1924 was the consultant of the GEHAG) are all called upon to perform a new technical-intellectual role, geared to the objectives of what Naphtali would call the "*Wirtschaftsdemokratie*," but which already appears as a term in the proceedings of the union convention held in Breslau in 1925.

On the other hand, the *Wirtschaftsdemokratie* presupposes that the union has a position of strength in society and in the State: in the union document of 1928,²⁴ the cooperative movement is considered in that light as an organized consumer power as opposed to a monopolistic power, an instrument of frontal combat, not a simple means of self-defense.

The organizational apparatus deployed by the ADGB and by the SPD, in their respective areas of authority, surely cannot be regarded as the result of a pure economism or of a resigned adapting to existing conditions. Rather, "the partial tasks of the moment," despite the edifying teleology that shines through the uncritical faith in state interventionism as a machine in itself favorable to the construction of socialism, call for tactics devoid of strategy. The gap between means and ends remains open—or better, filled in only by a ritual phraseology. For this reason also, the trajectories of the new management techniques evoked by the *Sozialpolitik* find autonomous spaces for original experimentation. After 1924, Cooperative organization and Urban management tend to unite in the zones in which coordinated intervention appears possible, thus giving the lie to what Max Weber had maintained in 1907 during the debate at Magdeburg on the organization of municipal administrations.

Asserting the impossibility of revolutionary socialism administering power "rationally" without ruining the administrations themselves or without changing their own connotations of class, Weber contended that *nothing would backfire with greater force, on us as well, than the attempt to construct the future socialist policy on the base of our present economic and social order: the first to abandon the Party . . . would be its own partisans, the workers.*²⁵

The "new order" that proves to contradict, in the Weimar Republic, Weber's assertion is essentially founded upon the spaces left open by the "social contract" stipulated at its origins: every new technique is called upon to adapt itself and to limit itself with respect to it. Significantly, in this regard, in exact coincidence with the first concrete experimentation of the new administration, the libertarian utopianism of the German avant-gardes proves to be an inefficient instrument. The contradictions in which Taut, in his capacity as *Stadtbaurat* of Magdeburg, finds himself entan-

gled, no longer obtain after 1924: the first *Siedlungen* realized by Otto Haesler in Celle—the Italiensischer Garten and the Georgsgarten—already signal a change of direction.²⁶

From a general tactic, there ensues a penetration into the meshes of the apparatus of local power: here the ambiguous relationship between the techniques stimulated to renew themselves in order to adapt themselves to this penetration and the heritage that permits their existence finds its justification. The “*Siedlungen* theory,” the “positive” application of the models of Howard and Unwin to the *Grossstadt*, the modeling of Arminius, Eberstadt, and Wolf, the mediation between the controllable fragment and the urban whole that forms a background, the experiments of Ernst May—formerly a pupil of Theodor Fischer in Munich and later a participant in the Unwin experiments—and those of Leberecht Migge in Silesia, May’s application of the theory of the nuclear city (the *Trabantenstadt*) in the competition for the master plan of Breslau (1921): even if, for sheer historiographic convenience, we can consider those stages as so many approaches to the “exemplary” case of Frankfurt, they must also be regarded as elements of continuity with the attempts of Huber and of C. A. Hoffmann in Berlin after 1847;²⁷ with the tradition of the *Siedlung* of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century in the experimentation of the public utility associations; with the achievements of Schmidt in Hellerau or of the Krupps in the Ruhr (Alferdshof, Altenhof, Margaretenhof, etc.).²⁸ But at this point, the continuities and fractures at the heart of the “exemplary case” cited above should be evaluated as precisely as possible.

When Mayor Landmann, supported by the SPD, called Ernst May to Frankfurt to assume the special post of *Stadtbaudezernent* (1925), the reorganization of the municipal technical offices and the unification of the structures of the general plan (*Generalbebauungsplan*) with the programs for public housing (*Wohnungsbauprogramm*) in a new office, the *Siedlungssamt*, was a *fait accompli*, and corresponded to an urban model defined as far back as 1919 by Landmann himself, then town councillor and director of the fiscal sector.²⁹ A deep affinity of views thus binds Landmann’s urban policy to May’s *Trabantenprinzip* [the idea of a city divided into semiautonomous nuclei]. Consequently, May is empowered to direct the entire municipal building, to control the building industry in Frankfurt, and to supervise a select team of collaborators in the planning of the new public-sponsored *Siedlungen*. At the same time, he serves as designer of the new general city plan as well as vice-president and then president of the principal building society controlled by the municipality, the *Aktienbaugesellschaft für kleine Wohnungen*.³⁰

May thus assumes a totally new technical-intellectual responsibility: the traditional architectural and city-planning terms now become inadequate to describe the characteristics of the new role. It is no accident that in the balance sheet of his activity drawn up in 1930, May insists on the successes and failures of the residential programs (2,200 dwellings built in 1926 against 1,200 planned; 2,685 in 1927 against 1,400 planned; 3,259, plus 300 temporary dwellings, in 1928 against 4,000 planned; and only

3,200 in 1929 against 3,650 planned); on the check constituted by increasing construction costs and on the need for loans (at three percent) as the backbone of the financing of public housing; on the need for state loans; on the action of the local savings bank; on the mechanism for the division of loans between cooperatives and private entrepreneurs; on the policies of land acquisition, transportation, and expropriation; and on the criteria of standardization.³¹ Diverse technical languages and diverse modes of management are thus reunited in the search for a new urban identity.

May's work in Frankfurt, in any case, oscillates between two poles: on the one side, the reaffirmation of an overall "model" for the city—the *Trabantenprinzip*—and, on the other, the designing of *Siedlungen* as articulated and flexible structures (at least in the first phase of his activity), capable of demonstrating that no contradiction existed among the rationalization of production, the full assumption of "technical reproducibility," and the enhancement of the characteristics of the site. Between nature and artifice, mechanization and *its image* permit the springing forth of a typological richness based on variations of finite elements or on planimetric inventions aimed at demonstrating the liberating capacities of standardized production. The three housing projects in the Nidda Valley, Römerstadt, Praunheim, and Westhausen (but the first two in particular), the project located to the south of the Meno, Riedhof, the *Siedlungen Bruchfeldstrasse* and *Bornheimer Hang* are all freed from laws fixed *a priori*, and, within well-defined limits, even from those dictated by the typological aggregations. The teachings of Sitte (mediated by Fischer) and of Unwin are filtered through a syntax composed of signs that are the more rigorous the more they can inflect a language conscious of the communicative values of the "surprise." That they are "controlled surprises," besides, is not unimportant. As "phrases," the *Siedlungen* of May and of his collaborators incline to a completeness: this is the reason for the *exception* in Römerstadt, the tall serpentine building with the semicircular head on the *Hadrianstrasse*, which—also because of its particular functions—acts as a spine and watershed between two structures alternative to one another; this is again, once more in Römerstadt, the reason for the metaphoric bastions pointed toward the Nidda Valley, put there to create a "deviation" from the calculated monotony of the residential streets, but somehow "announced" by the descending transverse routes that cross the row houses; this is, finally, in Riedhof-West, the reason for the "reinforcements" at the borders of the complex, for the adjustment to the prefixed planimetric conditions, for the rotation of the axes that guide the alignment, for the brusque passage from the articulations of the northeastern sector to the indefiniteness of the funnel-shaped sector to the southeast, to the rigidity of the inverted V of the southern sector.

"Deviation" is here a synonym of "distortion." The semicircular element that closes the central park space on the lower edge of Riedhof-West is the alternative to the cult of monotony that shapes the alignments of the row houses; but it is the alternative as well to the organicism of the northern sector. The mixtilinear and multilevel spine of Römerstadt, even

in the deliberate accentuation of its "promotional" character—not by chance, for a building destined to house commercial offices is the ironic use of elements of Mendelsohn's *Reklamearchitektur* resorted to—demonstrates that the high visibility of the *Siedlung* is created by "differences," by dosages of visual shocks. Only in this way can the "vision," so celebrated by the Anglo-Saxon sources from which the young May draws, penetrate to the interior of an organization that intends to show the infinite capacity of the "type" to vary itself, while remaining itself. It is inflected subtly in the *Siedlungen Riederwald* and *Höhenblick*; it is tested, with minor originality, in the eastern sector of *Praunheim*; it presides over the court-shaped organization of the *Siedlung Bruchfeldstrasse* and the planimetric fan of *Bornheimer Hang*; while it disappears in *Westhausen*, in the *Siedlung Miquelstrasse*, and in the project for the *Gross-Siedlung Goldstein*.

In some way, the exaltation of the "difference"—this difficult conjunction of Unwin's naturalism with metaphors, employed in the name of a *Rationalisierung*—of the "deviation," of the "distortion," seems, to May, innate not only, and not so much, to the single phrase, the *Siedlung*, but also, and even more, to the *Trabantenstadt*.

Dishomogenous, the unrepeatable fragments that compose the *Trabantenstadt* seek their significance in the interstices left free between them: the *Nidda Valley*, assailed by the bastions of *Römerstadt*, can thus re-echo as an alternative urban space, can make its own "void" resound. The difference—and not only functional—renders the *Trabantenstadt* unitary.

The model of the garden city, still invoked on a theoretical level, is transformed in the "*neue Frankfurt*" into experiments aimed at celebrating the liberating powers of technique: a technique all the more liberating—it should be noted—the more it is rigorously exercised. The standardization of the minimum elements of the cell—to which Grete Schütte-Lihotzky is dedicated—the experimental construction sites, such as those of *Praunheim* and *Riedhof-West*, the housing estates of *Römerstadt*, which Lewis Mumford refers to as being "prophetic of a new civilization," the new techniques of prefabrication (despite their shortcomings, which will arouse the ire of the inhabitants of *Praunheim*: "humidity, thy name is May," they write in a local daily in January 1931)³² are each there to "show themselves off," to indicate a future for the "hygienic man," who can recognize in the total introjection of Taylorism the premise for his own "reconstruction." Under the banner of "gay asceticism," thus, we see the dialectic between rigor and community spirit that transpires from the first *Siedlungen* of Frankfurt. But it seems a distortion to see in the slogan "hygiene, sport, and nature" and in the effort of rationalization in the Frankfurt of Landmann and May the premises for the geometrization of the masses and for the nightmarish National Socialist rites at Nuremberg, as has recently been written.³³ The true, dramatic antecedents of those rites are rather the *Massenspiele* of the Social Democrats and then of the KPD, as Buonfino has pointed out:³⁴ *Das neue Frankfurt* calls for an interiorization of the "game of techniques" that has little or nothing to do with those rites.

The question remains, over and above the considerations already stated, as to the reason for the rarefication of that "game" in *Siedlungen* such as Westhausen, but principally in the Gross-Siedlung Goldstein. In the latter, in fact, commissioned by the Gartenstadt A. G. as a residence for the workers of Höchst and Greisheim, with a total of 8,530 housing units, the anonymity of repetition reigns triumphant—whether interpreted as the rejection of any dialectic with respect to the existing city or as the losing sight of spatial norms, already to be found in the Siedlung Hellerhof of Mart Stam, in the Dammerstock in Karlsruhe, and in the only work of Gropius in Frankfurt, the Siedlung am Lindenbaum (1930), designed for the GAGFAH.³⁵

The first *Siedlungen* of May and his collaborators assume an explicit pedagogical role: the linguistic techniques of the avant-garde can be translated coherently into the dynamics of a *Spiel* that assumes as its own material the ambiguous intertwining of nostalgias for puritan *Gemeinschaften* and the thrust toward the prophecy of the "*neuer Mensch*." No longer can a pedagogy be found in the Goldstein: here the signs are only themselves; presiding over them is the disenchantment of one who seems to want to affix to the limits of urban space a final signature, sorrowfully traced in an empty space, rendered even more acute by the exceptional dimensions of the intervention. The control of those dimensions by means of the accentuating of the standardized elements and the cult of repetition is still joined to a composition based on "deviations": the voids of the collective spaces and the rows of multiplane buildings that break the uniform grid at the base are inserted as incidents of calculated effect.

The stiffening of the *principium individuationis* is symptomatic in the Siedlung Goldstein. In it, the very relationship with the existing city becomes problematical: at the same moment in which the *Siedlung* poses to itself the problem of its own repeatability as a finite element, it breaks away from the context that justifies its existence, "departs" from it, "bids it farewell."

The *Trabantenstadt* is still called upon to weld together its own parts: their autonomy, however, is no longer a foregone conclusion. Only with this in mind can a relationship be hypothesized between the Goldstein and the plans that May would devise for the Soviet industrial cities. But the crisis of the *Trabantenprinzip* goes beyond simple compositional problems. If for the Goldstein it is legitimate to recall Kracauer's metaphorical description of the dancing of the Tiller Girls in Berlin (*Das Ornament der Masse*, 1927), whose undulations joyfully celebrated the virtues of the assembly line and the superiority of the scientific organization of work,³⁶ the first *Siedlung* for the homeless built in Frankfurt in 1928, with prefabricated panels, but without the *Frankfurter Küche*, and with communal baths and showers, makes clear the ineffectiveness of the *Rationalisierung* tested elsewhere. It is, in fact, the citizens' committee of Frankfurt that, on the basis of Otto Haesler's analysis, declares in writing the incapacity of the rationalization of the builders' yard to lower construction costs.

The "*neuer Mensch*" in a position to live in Praunheim is a member of

the middle class: for the homeless, among whom are members of craftsmen's associations that have been made obsolete by new building techniques, is reserved substandard housing, only in theory temporary. The transportation costs themselves are a burden on the overall economy of the *Trabantenstadt*. The National Socialist propaganda will easily denounce the limitations of the "Lenin of German architecture" in the *Plattenpleite* and in the pamphlet *Bausünden und Baugeldvergeldung*, distributed free in 1931. The *Existenzminimum*, normalization, prefabrication prove impotent instruments when confronted by the free play consented to the prices of materials. But such a contradiction is not limited to Frankfurt: Karel Teige would denounce it in 1930 at the CIAM of Brussels as an insuperable limitation of the entire experience of the "rationalist front."³⁷

One must instead ask whether *Das neue Frankfurt* possesses a continuity with the processes begun before the war by the Miquel and Adickes administrations, and how much remains alive in it of the tradition of the "classic" treatise on urban planning. Mancuso has rightly underlined the influence of the premises established, around 1890, on the normative and experimental level, on what Landmann and May would create in Frankfurt after 1925.³⁸ Despite the deficiencies of the first projects—the complex at Bornheim, for example—the Aktien-Baugesellschaft für kleine Wohnungen was created by Burgomaster Miquel in January 1890, in response to the demands expressed by the Verein für Sozialpolitik; in 1891, at the beginning of his term, the new mayor Franz Adickes gave the go-ahead to studies for the revision of building regulations and for the zoning plan issued on 13 October of the same year; Adickes himself promoted an intensive and complex operation of land acquisition, with the municipality of Frankfurt as titleholder, at the end of 1912, of four percent of the areas around the city boundaries; in 1904 the new tax on land (the *Wertzuchwachssteuer*)—also introduced and supported by Adickes—permitted the community to reconfiscate up to thirty-three percent of the increase in value obtained by operations performed by the municipality; the Lex Adickes, finally, through the *Umlegung*—the redivision into lots and the organization of buildable land by the commune, with successive redistribution to the former proprietors—arrived at, if not the hoped-for objective of a lowering of land costs, at least a rationalization of public and private operations. The tradition that began in 1890 in Frankfurt, at any rate, hovers between two extremes: the emergence of the city as a sector competing with the private sector, and the equilibrium—the municipal operation functioning as price controller in the land market—between the interests of the two sectors.

The reintroduction of public utility building societies, brought about by Adickes in the wake of Miquel's actions, is also undertaken in the name of a project of economic equilibrium that starts from the recognition of the existence of a double market. The low-cost construction industry is split off from the "normal" one, so that in 1910 approximately twenty public utility societies, cooperatives, and nonprofit enterprises are in operation, having been granted the right to build on communal property on the basis

of the law of 1901 (*Erbbaurecht*) and of the Städtische Erbbau-Dehlenkasse, founded in 1903, in exchange for communal control on rents and on hygienic requirements of the completed dwellings. But the failure of these regulations leads to the foundation of societies using private capital for which the commune issues debenture loans: the Hellerhof A. G. (1901), the Franken Allee A. G. (1902), the Mietheim A. G. (1910) are among the principal societies that mark the victory of this form of collaboration between public and private capital. Contributing as well to this success are a policy of incorporating vast agricultural areas within the city borders and, in 1910, the new zoning that opens the district to building with reduced density. These last acts of the Adickes administration can also be interpreted as a premise for the decentralization directed by May in the post-war period: it is perhaps more important, however, to point out that the housing realized through public initiatives, by 1915, amounts to only 6,880 units, 7.2 percent of the total production. The balanced redistribution of revenues between both the public and the private, seems to end up an incentive, also through the rationalization of the processes of expansion, to the free market.

If, however, it is true that from 1919 to 1925 the AGKW and the *Erbbaurecht* are reintroduced for the construction of peripheral *Siedlungen*, often of a semirural character, and that the institutional apparatus and the prewar experiences permit Landmann and May to operate on the basis of a reaction to the successes and failures of the recent past, it nevertheless seems indisputable that the quality and quantity of their programs bring into play elements hardly comparable to those of the preceding administrations. Landmann's objective is no longer the planning of an equilibrium between the public and the private, but rather a control—direct or indirect—of the entire building industry involving low- and middle-cost housing; the *Trabantenprinzip* and the “model” of the *Siedlung* are functional to such a project that, contrary to what had taken place during the administrations of Miquel and Adickes, excludes the historic city center from substantial public intervention.³⁹ The institutional skeleton created before the war, in other words, serves to support a building policy that saw Frankfurt spend, between 1924 and 1927, 118 million marks, 66.5 million of which in the form of loans, divided between private entrepreneurs and cooperative societies, with the objective of striking out in every way at private speculation. But the massive intervention of the public sector is not confined within municipalist limits. In 1930 May insisted upon the need for the state to participate in an administration of the entire urbanistic activity, calling upon long-term foreign capital in order to overcome the constrictions brought about by the difficult economic situation.⁴⁰ Without a doubt the latter proposal was merely a palliative of questionable effect. What counts is the desperate attempt to safeguard the unitary and dominant role of the commune in the residential sector: “To have one's flat” is defined as a primary function and priority object of the intervention. Something is hidden behind the iciness of economic reasoning. The unity of the city is pursued by breaking up its functions and letting the least

productive one emerge as dominant: the solution is disguised as *principlum individuationis*; in its search for an identity, the *Trabantenprinzip* "cancels" the uncontrollable, lays it aside at least, presenting the selection made as a totality.

It is useless to insist on the incomplete nature of such a selection: the difficult integration of the new *Siedlungen* into the production centers and their equipment, by turns deficient or excessive, are only consequences of the initial choices made. But at this point the "Frankfurt case" can serve as a test that is also valid for the Wagner administration in Berlin, for the experiments of Göderitz in Magdeburg, and, in part, for those of Fritz Schumacher in Hamburg and Cologne. With this we can attempt to answer the second part of our examination, relative less to the techniques than to the continuity of planning tried out in Weimar Germany with respect to the techniques proposed by the manuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It should first be noted that Baumeister, Stübben, Eberstadt, Endell, and Behrens had all tried to discover systems of control over the urban dynamic by considering the *Grossstadt* as a whole, as a global process indissolubly linked to capitalist development. The *Grossstadt* itself is for them the new reality with which the discipline of architecture must come to terms, and not an *evil*. Endell and Scheffler are explicit about this: "*die Schönheit der Grossstadt*" is their discovery. There is nothing in them of the expressionist protest against the "negative" of the metropolis, nothing of the nineteenth-century anguish toward the crowd or the images of standardization.⁴¹

The dualism brought *into* the city by radical architecture interrupts that theoretical tradition. The city of production, controlled by the large cartels, is counterposed to the city of the reproduction of the workforce, exalted by the polemical elementarism of the *Siedlungen* in Celle, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Berlin. The proof of this is confirmed by those peripheral islands, in which it is not even possible to introduce systems of standardization on a vast scale. Experiments such as that put into practice by Haesler in the *Siedlung Rothenberg* are exceptional cases.

But the *Trabantenstadt* is an alternative model to the metropolis of unlimited growth theorized by Baumeister and Stübben, principally because it sets into crisis their economic presuppositions: the infinite reproduction of the *Grossstadt* in the manner of an oil slick meant, for those theoreticians, to affirm the "naturalness" of ground rent, to control, actually, as far as possible, with the two-dimensional instruments of the plan, the phenomena of "distortion," to return the speculative mechanisms to the channel of a "perfect" competitive market. This is the structural supposition that permits them to regard the metropolis as a whole. The task of the public sector, in that sense, is to supervise, also giving specific assistance to the sector, the retrieval of the "natural" characteristics of revenue, placing—as will be the objective of Eberstadt's analyses—the problem of the *Wohnungsfrage* within the sphere of the new equilibriums regulated by the zoning. It is not accidental that the models proposed by the "classics"

see no contradiction between *Mietkasernen*—eventually reformed along more human lines—and extensive peripheral building, putting forward the theme of residential typologies differentiated by classes but in direct contact with each other as a corrective to a market in itself incited to “distortions.”⁴²

The model of the *Trabantenstadt*, already present in the treatises of Arminius (1874) and Paul Wolf (1919), perfected by May and adopted empirically by Martin Wagner and Fritz Schumacher, has virtually nothing whatsoever to do with those theories of planning. The modest structure of the interventions for finite districts corresponds to an abandoning of the hypothesis that sees in revenue a regulatory principle by which to restore the lost naturalness: the coherence of the urban organism is now entrusted to *arbitrary principles*; it is based on choice, on programmed differences. This decision, the pivot of the programs operated by the municipality, divides, separates, severs. It also explains why the city planning of Taut, May, and Wagner fails to submit the urban centers to a programmatic restructuring. The numerous competitions held for the redimensioning of the heart of Magdeburg, Cologne, and Berlin remain dead letters, except for a few isolated cases (such as the renewal of the Alexanderplatz, partially realized by Peter Behrens).

The center of the large cities—Behrens himself had clearly recognized this in 1912⁴³—is being transformed into a place of tertiary work, becoming a primary function of the sphere of productive work. The new instruments of management and control are inadequate to intervene at that point where it is in the interest of private capital to manage directly the distribution and the operation of the places of work. The heart of the *Grossstadt* and the region increasingly assume the character of independent variables.

If this does not seem a major problem in Frankfurt, it becomes a specific one in a metropolis such as Berlin—to which Mächler’s plan offers only a vague methodological support. The basic organism of radical city planning, the *Siedlung*, thus appears, on the metropolitan level, to be a structure of compromise. One may go even further.

The *Siedlungen* built between 1923 and 1933—by Otto Haesler in Celle, Kassel, and Rathenow; by Bruno Taut, Martin Wagner, Mebes and Emerich, Fred Forbat for the GEHAG in Berlin; by Riphon and Grod in Cologne; by Karl Schneider in Hamburg; by Ernst May, Boehm, Mart Stam, Rudloff, Kaufmann, Schwagenscheidt in Frankfurt—are, in fact, worth far more as “utopias realized” than as interventions conceived at the level of the new dimensions of the cities and metropolitan regions in evolution.

Situated through a strategy of property acquisition largely conditioned by the heritage of the nineteenth century, often independent of the location of industrial centers, the “rationalist” *Siedlungen* assume an eminently ideological role.

The organization of the cells, accurately studied from the point of view of the *Existenzminimum*, surely constitutes the extreme result of the radi-

cal avant-gardes. The “empty form” of Haesler, the Tauts, Schneider, and Forbat exhibits the “rationality” that characterizes the “workers’ city” as a rigorous *ethical city*, a city of physical and social hygiene, a city, primarily, of *social peace*.

The elementarism of the formal structures, the same process of “montage” that shapes the *Siedlung*—from the cell, to the block, to the overall organism—is flaunted seriality of the elements, constitute (as Hilberseimer clearly realizes)⁴⁴ the results of the absorption and introjection of the research of the visual avant-gardes. The destruction of the unicum, the reduction of form to a montage of objects, the object itself, assumed as a neutral sign become materials for the construction of the city: architecture, by now considered an “indifferent object,” seeks its new *raison d’être* in the integration into the urban structure.

“The pathetic is dying,” Bruno Taut would write in 1928, “pathos, the pose, withdrawing into oneself, the empty gestures, the nostalgia for the past, and modernism all belong to a field of architectural packaging to which we must not abandon ourselves.”⁴⁵ All of which does not mean, for Taut, that this “death of the pathetic” cannot be represented, cannot be staged: the heads on the blocks of the Wohnstadt Carl Legien on the Erich-Weinert Strasse (1929–30) and the entrance on the Paul Heyse Strasse of the H-shaped block in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg (1927–28) attempt to speak the language of the rejection of nostalgia. Even here, the *neue Sachlichkeit* “exposes itself,” professes to attain an eloquence, underscores with barely concealed emphasis a sorrowful *Entsagung*.

This link between radical city planning and the historical avant-gardes imparts to the “rationalism” evoked by the *Siedlungen* a character all their own: not the “rationality” immanent to the restructuring of the capitalist cycle, which by now besets the productive territories in a new form, but that of *liberated work*. The workers’ *Siedlung*, built and managed with union and social capital, speaks metaphorically of the gap that interposes itself between those “islands of rationality” and the capitalist territory. It must, and wants to, guarantee its own *distance* from the large tertiary centers and from the industrial installations. Its formal purity resounds like an accusation toward the *Grossstadt* and the productive territory.

The working-class and cooperative *Siedlung* as image of the *city of work*, then. That characteristic sinks again into the myth of the proletariat as standard-bearer of a “new world” and of a socialism founded on a society of *conscious producers*: the phantom of socialization is evoked by “images” of a possible alternative to the capitalist city as a whole.

This utopian ethic might even persuade us to view the experiment of the “rationalist” *Siedlungen* as a balancing between the populist and libertarian motives of the expressionist avant-gardes and the ostensible reserve of the “new objectivity.” But the rejection made in Berlin of the typology of the *Siedlung* takes on features different from those that May had made his own in Frankfurt. Martin Wagner, *Stadtbaurat* of the city since December 1926, is linked only empirically to that instrument of “community economy.” For him, Berlin is a “*Weltstadt*,” and every proposal relative to

its future is connected to problems of national economy not definable by long-term predictions, as he points out in criticizing the *Bevölkerungsplan* of 1925.⁴⁶ In fact, Wagner sees the management of the metropolis as the result of an extremely elastic and dynamic process of decision making, antithetical to any rigid type of planning, particularly if extended to vast dimensions: "it is the poets of city planning," he writes caustically, "who have brought about the boom of urban and regional planning."⁴⁷

The scheme for city-planning law organized by the Prussian Landtag, against which Wagner lashes out, has, in fact, in his eyes, two antithetical flaws: it attempts to fix structures and quantities for the next seventy-five years without an analysis of the overall and infrastructural costs; but—and this is an even more serious lacuna—it excludes a unitary financial organism and a centralized politicoadministrative organ for the management of intercity programs, which, according to the projected machinery, would always consider Berlin in a minority with respect to the minor bordering communes. The Wagner who appears here is already critical, within his own party, toward the "politicization of city management" and "overdemocratization." Despite his own elastic vision of public intervention founded on programs controllable on a short- and medium-term basis, capable of following and stimulating technical, economic, and social developments, his main concern is focused upon a unitary and overarching control, upon a reunification of the scattered forces of decision making.⁴⁸ Wagner is in reality posing the problem of *how democracy can decide*: the clash of the forces does not guarantee any result; the large dimension, obliged to synthesize *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*, must assume a "superior form" *rendered visible*;⁴⁹ the relationship between technician and political choices *becomes a problem*, whose solution oscillates according to the objectives to be achieved. Despite the peremptory tones assumed by Wagner, both his technique and his policy make a strong point out of that oscillation: the impreciseness of the "democracy" invoked by Wagner is only an indication of dissatisfaction at the congenital limits of the Weimar democracy.

Typical is the stand he takes against the priority of the state claimed by the Prussian city-planning law of 1925 and defended by the *Geheimrat* F. W. Fischer: for Wagner, the city must manage its own building policy—freeing itself from innumerable higher controls—on the basis of an increasing coordination of all the branches of the sector and of a law regarding expropriations that cancels the law, still in force, of 1874, the effects of which were to raise prices on land. Note that in 1929 the coordination of traffic systems goes into operation in the Gross-Berlin, paving the way for a new development of the metropolitan network; while Rappaport, referring to the studies of Roman Heiligenthal, who until 1933 devised economic-spatial analyses of the Berlin territory, presents an outline of industrial locations that favors the northwest sector of the city. (Heiligenthal himself confirms the proposal, consequently foreseeing as well decentralizations, with residential and industrial sites integrated, along the

waterways to the north—Oranienburg-Eberswald—and to the south—Potsdam-Zossen-Furstenwalde.)

The problems of the urban and regional framework thus come to the forefront: in light of them, the residential theme will be reconsidered. For this reason Wagner was already in 1929 theorizing a limitation of urban expansion. This about-face in Wagner's thought cannot fail to arouse surprise. In 1923 Wagner, arguing with Bruno Möhring, had praised the mass-transportation system of Berlin as the most economical in the world—so much so as to permit extensive expansion at reasonable cost.⁵⁰ Just when Bruno Taut and the GEHAG are engaged in designing or constructing *Siedlungen* such as Britz, Onkel-Toms-Hütte, and Prenzlauer-Berg, Wagner places a first theoretical mortgage on the *Trabantenstadt* as well, laying on the table the cards of conservative restoration and the recycling of the existing fabric.⁵¹

Wagner's proposal is amazingly contemporary. In his *Städtebaugesetz-entwurf*, the Berlin *Stadtbaurat* presents a policy of improving the historic center as an alternative to urban development, in an attempt to respond not only to the already clearly defined economic crisis, but also to the problem of transportation costs and of unauthorized residences: Wagner calculates that the one hundred thousand inhabitants of unlawful housing installed in 2,640 hectares on the outskirts of Berlin annually lose thirty million marks out of their salaries because of the need to commute; at the same time, he criticizes the haphazardly located *Siedlungen*, particularly in the lake areas, which are lacking in services, but to which the public has been attracted through "American-style methods" (elimination of city taxes).⁵² The "nuclear" model praised by Scheffler, Wolf, and May does not therefore stand up to careful scrutiny. The costs of rehabilitation, invoked as a corrective to the downward trend, should not, according to Wagner, be covered by taxes on the new constructions, which would hinder rather than encourage public initiative and would provoke a recession of production in the building sector, nor by taxes on land: instead, he proposes the application of a law concerning the funding of improvements, perhaps inspired by the law in effect in Frankfurt.

The finger pointed at the existing building stock newly brings into question the "white zone" that radical city planning finds difficult to cut into. But even Wagner himself goes no further than a preliminary indication. Berlin as *Weltstadt*, as a "world city," is always to him a "city of work" that must show itself as such. Wagner takes up this theme, again in 1929, presenting in the first issue of *Das neue Berlin* the projects created in collaboration with Hans Poelzig for an exhibition center of national scope, as an instrument for relaunching German industry and as a premise for the transformation of the metropolis into a gigantic theatre of rationalization and planning.⁵³ Thus three themes are intertwined in Wagner's theoretical elaborations of around 1929: Berlin's international role; its productivity; and its quality as a city of work and the reproduction and conservation of the labor force.⁵⁴ The "materials" for the new direction cited are listed together with possible sectoral solutions; the dynamic in-

terrelation and the flexibility of the instrumentation are, in turn, replies to the multiple pressures of the *Weltstadt*, which even more than the *Grossstadt* excludes final models. And so we have Berlin versus Frankfurt, despite the apparent resemblance of only a few requirements and partial objectives. In the face of this theoretical elasticity, the accomplishments of the GEHAG, the *Siedlungen* of Taut, Mebes and Emmerich, Erwin Gutkind, and Rudolf Salvisberg no longer possess the central value bestowed on them by the administration of Landmann and May.⁵⁵ It is not just the metropolitan dimension that thwarts the dialectical effect of the "system of differences" structured in Frankfurt by the *Siedlungen*, to which the role of new cogwheel is entrusted. The asceticism constrained in "figures," as in the horseshoe and in the rhombic space of Britz and the court of Berlin Prenzlauer Berg or of "Freie Scholle"; laid out in a wordless narrative, as in Berlin-Weissensee (the blocks on the Buschallee) or in Zehlendorf: reiterated in an explicit display of the aesthetics of renunciation, as in the *Siedlungen* "Ideal" and "Friedrich Ebert"; articulated in the search for effects of little consequence, as in the Gross-Siedlung Schillerpromenade, compensates for the retrieval of *völkisch* accents of the *Siedlung* at Berlin-Eichkamp, or, looking backward, Taut's Dutch touches in the *Siedlung* Schillerpark. There is no *language* for a "neue Berlin" conscious that its elements exist only to attest to the "not done" or the "not possible" at the level of its national and international role. The struggles for the imposition of the new forms and the engagement in an intense activity involving the future inhabitants of the "cooperative islands" compensate for a necessarily empirical localized policy and the indefinite postponement of the requirements that Wagner can express solely on a theoretical level. In fact—and we shall see how Wagner himself will denounce it in a self-critical fashion—the *Siedlungen* in which, as in Frankfurt, one can trace an outline of "socialism realized" embody the contradictions of a management project that considers the destiny of the historic city center and the regional dimension as the place in which, despite everything, the conflict, inherent in the democratic system, installs itself with disconcerting question marks to which the "new technique" cannot respond. Those who insist on hailing the Berlin of the "Wagner era" as an "open city"⁵⁶ would do well to modify their judgment, and recognize in that "opening up" not a form but rather a gap that designates an incurable tension between theoretical-disciplinary baggage and *realpolitik*.

In any event, it can be confirmed that, at least in Berlin, the *Sozialpolitik* expresses itself by placing ellipses and doubts around every fragment achieved. And with good reason. The rationalization of industry, despite having been carried out with no real reconversions of the productive apparatus, with excesses in internal and international absorption, with an indiscriminate use of foreign loans that would provoke hopeless indebtedness,⁵⁷ soon threatens the building sector. In 1927 the attempt of the metallurgical and mechanical industry to gain control of a portion of the market of prefabricated one-family houses was answered by the institution of the Reichforschungsgesellschaft für wirtschaftliches Bauen, on behalf of

the Reichstag and the ministry of labor, with the financing power of ten million marks and efforts of coordination and experimentation in the field of construction on a national scale.⁵⁸ In the midst of this struggle, Paul Frank maintained that a “modern architectural studio becomes of necessity, in a certain way, a large enterprise.” And yet the Reichforschungsgesellschaft, of which Gropius was vice-president, could not transform itself into an organism capable of promoting a structural renewal in the building field.

The proposal put forth in 1929 by Ludwig Hilberseimer was to limit the activity of the Reichforschungsgesellschaft to a mere coordination of experimental research in the technological field and of residential standards. “Not large complexes,” he wrote,⁵⁹ “like those projected for Haselhorst-Spandau, but residential complexes like the Weissenhof of Stuttgart.”

A separation of duties, then, between experimental planning and mass production, with loans and verifiable interactions. The Reichsforschungsgesellschaft did, in fact finance some residential complexes, like those of Praunheim in Frankfurt and of Törten Dessau, built in successive stages first by Walter Gropius and later by Hannes Meyer. But its action, limited and uncertain, was insufficient to perform the task of the concrete restructuring of the building industry, within a planned organization of the sector. The pressure brought by Gropius, Bruno Taut, and Martin Wagner to transform the new agency into a state commissioner’s office for the entire residential building trade, with the aim of imparting an extensive rationalization, standardization, and normalization to mass production, failed, to a large degree because of the 1929 economic crisis and the subsequent decline in building activity. But it must be pointed out that in Weimar Germany every attempt to centralize decisions seems destined to fail; nevertheless, the intellectuals continue to press for unitary planning organisms.

This is precisely the need that Walter Dexel, too, felt in 1928. Writing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on the crisis of the Bauhaus, in relation to Gropius’s resignation as director, he predicts a nationalization of the industries connected to building and the programming of a series of schools of architecture, decentralized and directly linked, as laboratories of concrete experimentation, to a planned and centralized building industry in the hands of state capital.⁶⁰

On the one hand, we have a constellation of experiments that bring to light, one by one, the obstacles and the viscosities of the individual branches of power impossible to reach or even to graze in the Weimar system; on the other, we have requests for power that sound like demands for a radical overcoming of that system. But, exactly, “radical,” founded on ineffectual demands.

Frankfurt, Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft, the polemic on legislative order, the Bauhaus, the policy of the DEWOG and of the publically owned building societies: the gamut of experiments accomplished by that galaxy of forces, only in some cases intertwined with one another, raises—above and beyond the concrete results—the problem

of the real transformability of the game they undertake. The instruments given reveal almost immediately their own limits; May, Wagner, Dexel, Haesler, and Schwab declare them in the first person. To force those limits would have meant to open up a constellation of crises at the point at which the *Sozialpolitik* ordered the construction of a constellation of partial powers. It is no surprise that the techniques, arriving at the impasse of 1929–30, cannot “be-for-their-own-crisis.” In effect, it is their own political deficiency that they reveal every time they undertake a self-analysis: this is true for both May’s economic reflections of 1930 and for Wagner’s from 1929 on. But the politician, at least on the Social Democratic side, can only defend the “community institutes,” the *Gemeinschaftskörper*, which, in his eyes, open up alternative spaces with respect both to the Konzerne and to the old idea of an authoritarian and bureaucratic State socialism.

In reality, the *Gemeinschaftskörper*, in the building sector and in that sector concerned with the extraction of raw materials and the production of energy, introduce conflicts, both political and intercapitalistic, while the ideology that sustains them sinks into the myth of the balanced achievement of an “economic democracy” whose perspective is always the collaboration of producers, consumers, and democratic State through the economic councils, the *Wirtschaftsräte*. That means, in substance, that the same Social Democracy that forces its way into the openings large enough for it, aggravating contradictions and conflicts, surrenders, refusing to treat as such the crises it has provoked. The denunciation of an overall control of the “game,” coming from the intellectuals, thus finds as its own area of privilege that of the “new theory”: this holds for the “Frankfurt thinkers” as well as for an outsider like Ludwig Hilberseimer. It is Hilberseimer, in fact, who brings up a theory of the metropolis in which the criticism of the experiments in progress is transparent and in which equally transparent are the connections to the analyses of the city made by Georg Simmel and Max Weber. Hilberseimer wrote in 1927, upon beginning his book *Grossstadtarchitektur*:

The present type of large city owes its birth above all to the economic form of capitalist imperialism, which is in turn closely connected to the evolution of science and of production techniques. Its possibilities surpass by far the sphere of the national economy, and its influence is reflected ever more strongly on the world economy. With the maximum concentration and an extensive and complete organization it achieves a superabundance of intensity and energy: as soon as production does not find a sufficient outlet for its own exigencies, there is a move toward overproduction and toward antagonism with other countries, and a tendency to the stimulation of needs rather than to their satisfaction. Thus the large city appears primarily as the creation of omnipotent large capital and therefore imprinted with anonymity. Furthermore, it is a type of city with its own economic-social and psychocollective bases, in which is found at the same time the maximum isolation and the densest crowding together

*of its inhabitants. In it, an enormously intensified rhythm of life very rapidly represses every local and individual element.*⁶¹

It is difficult not to read into Hilberseimer's observations the echo of the relationship indicated by Simmel between the "metropolitan intensification of nervous life" (*Nervenleben*) and the superior level of "consciousness" caused by the latter (*Verstand*). The disorganization of the capitalist city is, for Hilberseimer as well as for Simmel, tied to an initial moment of formation, necessary only as a transitional phase, but destined to resolve itself in a superior collective "consciousness." This transition has as its primary condition a global plan of urban and territorial productivity, integrated into a national and international economic plan.

For Hilberseimer, the *Grossstadt* is actually a *productive organism*, not a parasitic phenomenon:

*The great cities having been conceived as the heirs of the princely capitals, the seats of bureaucracy, it has come about that they were stamped as parasitic with respect to the rest of the country and considered as organisms capable only of consumption and not of production. Their true nature has been completely misconstrued, and the fact ignored that it is precisely the large cities that automatically increase the productive process, taking over with ever-increasing rapidity and ability the direction of the economy and contributing in a substantial way to the material and spiritual productivity of the country.*⁶²

The "evil" of the *Grossstadt* is in capitalistic "abuse," not in its substance. Here Hilberseimer enters a typical vicious circle: for him, as well, only a "new order" can render the productive machine "human." This is the weakest part of his otherwise extremely lucid argument. In that perspective of an *anticapitalistic use* of an "instrument of large capital," Hilberseimer reveals the result of the profound influence exercised on radical culture by the intelligentsia of "democratic capitalism." He cites, and not by chance, Henry Ford; but in the same way he could have cited Walther Rathenau.⁶³

It is more important to point out the consequences of his reading on a scale superior even to the *Grossstadt*: "The planning of the city widens, becoming planning on a national scale, so that from the building of the city one arrives at the building of the country."⁶⁴ The process, twofold and integrated, of tertiary concentration and industrial decentralization must be subject to the laws—still set forth in the framework of a pure and deliberately abstract model—of an overall programming.

That is closely bound to planning on a national scale, the future development of which will be conditioned by that of the large economic complexes. From the fusion of the national or multinational states we will arrive at economic unions: for us, above all, the fusion of the European continent, today politically torn apart, into a single economic entity, will constitute the premise for an avant-garde urban policy in a productive

*sense, which will finally lead to the solution of the problem of the large city.*⁶⁵

The superior size of the forces in play is no longer amenable to perspectives of local planning: the space for urbanistic intervention seems to be reduced to infinitesimal fractions. No other choice remains than to accept the precariousness of that instrument, its temporary quality; ultimately its ambiguousness. This "ambiguous space" can still be occupied by "theory," making use of techniques of rationalization presented as models waiting for content, completely "extraneous."

The entire problem of the *Grossstadt* is thus extrapolated by Hilberseimer from immediate praxis and brought back to the sphere of pure modeling. In fact, he writes:

*The chaos of the city of today can be opposed only by attempts at theoretical systematization, having the purpose of enucleating from actual situations—in a totally abstract way—the fundamental principles of urban planning, thereby arriving at the formulation of general norms that then permit the solution of determined concrete problems. Only the abstraction of the specific case enables us, in fact, to demonstrate how the disparate elements that make up a large city can be placed, in an orderly way, in relationship with the whole.*⁶⁶

Counterposed to chaos, therefore, *only* attempts at theoretical systematization. One should reflect carefully on this theoretical conflict. The "theory" *does not resolve*: it is only a *Bild*, complete in itself, to be set into confrontation with other *Bilder*, as, consistent with himself, Hilberseimer does.

Against the fragmentation of the "cooperative islands," against the utopia of an architecture that realizes a "socialist humanism," Hilberseimer lucidly poses the problem of a "city-machine" with integrated functions that is perfectly placed in the process of capitalist development, while not ignoring the possible role in its realization to be attributed to the state and to public and union agencies.⁶⁷ Hilberseimer's tertiary city is thus the ultimate expression of the German theoretical tradition on the subject of the *Grossstadt*. Being a *city of development*, it is visualized as a naked structure, laconic, "sober." The images that accompany Hilberseimer's text are therefore highly ambiguous. On the one hand, they prefigure a painfully nullified architecture, an architecture stripped of individual traits; on the other, they have an air of pure theoretical models of urban organization. Wavering between the two extremes, they occupy the hermetic space of allegory: they refer to an "other" order, representable only by abstractions; as abstractions, they present themselves as "full words," indisputable events. The heavy "presence" of the metropolitan organization is mirrored in the "absence" of the forms that give it body. It is not a question, here, of the pure silence of Mies. In Hilberseimer the abstraction is "double": it has a value per se, and it suggests something else. The urban theorem, in search of a law, immerses itself in the hermetic space that

marks the border between asceticism and metaphysics: only “metaphysically” can the law be achieved; and this renders empty the phrases that designate the law. Neither May’s calculated spatial articulations nor Bruno Taut’s ambiguous experiments are valid here. The organization is only “showable,” in all its charismatic value as an absolute imperative, desperately disenchanting, without prophetic value.

Nevertheless, Hilberseimer’s *Grossstadt* can be compared with Mächler’s plan for the Gross-Berlin and with Le Corbusier’s *Ville de 3 millions d’habitants*, precisely because in these three proposals the *whole* of the metropolis has been dealt with. For Hilberseimer, concentration and decentralization do not constitute alternative choices: again, the parameter constituted by traffic and commuting distances appears as the protagonist.

The *Grossstadtarchitektur*, even in the visual form that Hilberseimer gives to his model with superimposed functions, is a radical alternative to the theories of Unwin, to Taut’s *Auflösung der Städte*, to the models of intervention tested in Frankfurt and Berlin.

The criticism—implicit but all too clear—of the urban management of May or Wagner is immediate in Hilberseimer. Solely through a supranational economic programming, can the “multiplex,” the capitalist chaos of production, of which the *Grossstadt* is the image, be “molded,” *dominated*. It is no coincidence that in one of the most significant pages of Hilberseimer’s volume, regarding the chaos “forced” to become *form*, the aphorisms of Nietzsche resound.

Significantly, between the theoretical, laboratory-based writing of Hilberseimer and the conclusions drawn by Martin Wagner from his daily experience as *Stadtbaurat*, a vague correspondence does exist. Now, the underlying ideology is no longer that of a “democratic capitalism,” but that of a planned State capitalism, which is recognized as the strategic foundation of an urban policy that identifies itself with the struggle against free-trade anarchy.⁶⁸

The plan, then, serves as a law to *impose* and as a motor force of capitalist development. We are still, despite everything, in the realm of general ideology. Only partially surpassed are the most obvious limits of the strategy of the SPD and the ADGB.

The fact remains, however, that, above and beyond the strong propagandistic appeal exerted on a European level by the quarters of May, Taut, Gropius, Gutkind, Haesler, Riphahn, and Göderitz, and above and beyond their specific architectural qualities, their approach to city planning, in the early thirties, proves to be highly lacking in the eyes of the very technicians and architects who had given form to it. Alexander Schwab—in an article published in 1929 in the journal of the Deutscher Werkbund, *Die Form*—would criticize harshly the project for a “cooperative city” to accommodate approximately 24,000 persons, proposed for the outskirts of Berlin by Gropius, Fischer, and Paulsen.⁶⁹

His criticism is based exclusively on economic considerations. To Schwab’s mind, the complex by Gropius and his collaborators appears as a holdover from utopian socialism: the economic independence of the devel-

opment—two thirds of which would be built with foreign capital, and furnished with collective services—sounds anachronistic to him, compared with the new dimensions and the calculated redistribution of production firms and centers of consumption. Gropius's cooperative city, Schwab observes, supposing that it could stand up to the competition of metropolitan services, would appear as "a utopian island, with a cooperative organization, in the midst of a capitalist world."⁷⁰ Schwab has grasped an essential fact of the problem. It is not the "capitalist world" that would be encircled by the cooperative organization, as was so in the programs of the ADGB and the DEWOG. The multiplication of cooperative cities would produce exactly the opposite effect: the capitalist metropolis would encircle the cooperative utopia.

Alongside the "leftist" criticisms, the "rightist" criticisms. At the convention of the Verein für Sozialpolitik of Königsberg in September 1930, Walder Zimmerman finds the situation deplorable, complaining of a supply-demand mechanism kept throttled by the frozen rents of the old apartments, as well as by the public subsidies needed to keep down the rents on the new housing built in a period of fearfully increasing construction costs. Zimmerman writes:

With the system of the compulsory administration of dwellings and the freezing of the old rents at a low level, the right to an old dwelling or to a dwelling in general has formally become a precious title of ownership, of which no one would willingly deprive himself, because in the regime of a coercive economy, a similar title cannot be gained or replaced with one's own efforts. It is for this reason that everyone is desperately attached to his own dwelling, even when it no longer corresponds to his new needs. Less inhabitable space is freed than if the housing market were free, with old rents somewhat higher, and by today's standards—according to the mean derived from German statistics—greater living space is needed per person than in 1910.⁷¹

Zimmerman's criticism focuses on the scanty mobility accorded by what he defines as a "regime of coercive economy," arriving at conclusions relative to the entire national economy. He continues:

Apart from the substantial deterioration of the national patrimony, there is a decrease in the value of capital below the value of costs of replacement, in fact, far below the construction costs of former times, a reduction of credit openings and of the whole complex of available capital, in a period of greatly straitened circumstances and of appeals for the formation of capital.

Zimmerman's critique of the *Sozialpolitik*, made in the midst of the Verein two months after Brüning had decided to dissolve the Parliament in the name of a policy of economic restraint and of rigorous deflation, but with the explicit purpose of pinning down the SPD to its inner contradictions, translates into academic language the political action undertaken by Hjalmar Schacht in December 1929. Schacht, by imposing a drastic reduc-

tion of public spending and a fiscal diminution, provoked the resignation of Hilferding from the ministry of finance of the Grosse Koalition.⁷² Furthermore, again in December 1929, the official organ of employers, *Der Arbeitgeber*, effectively synthesized the positions of the bosses, strongly attacking the "social policy," that is to say, the compromise upon which the Weimar Republic was based. According to *Der Arbeitgeber*:

*'Social policy' is the necessary correlate of the capitalist economy, and is by no means a step forward toward a socialist economy. For this reason it has its limits: they are to be found at that point where social policy creates constraints so strong that capitalism is impeded in its development. This can happen in the sphere of labor when the measures of social policy, instead of conserving the work force, lower its intensity, paralyzing its will to perform. Secondly, social policy can block the formation of capital, which would be the ruin of the economy.*⁷³

Undoubtedly, to recognize—as does Silverberg at the extraordinary assembly of the members of the RDI on 12 December 1929—in the policy of the democratic governments a "financial and fiscal socialist-collectivist" tendency is a demagogic expedient. Public spending, which in 1913 represented fifteen percent of the gross social product, certainly reaches twenty-seven percent in 1926 and thirty-one percent in 1929. But both Schacht and Silverberg, as well as the majority of employers, are not attacking so much the social conditions in themselves, as their quality, the conception of the State as manager of determined economic sectors, and above all, the Weimar democracy. Depression and economic crisis are thus consigned to a subversive project, a move that catches those intellectuals who are in some manner participants in the *Sozialpolitik* unprepared to respond, except with second thoughts that weaken the SPD even more. The hopes aroused by the Grosse Koalition turn into attitudes that are pessimistic, if not apocalyptic and regressive.

The precipitating of the economic situation and its able political management on the part of the Zentrum, in fact, despite the unforeseen outcome of the elections of 14 September 1930, are clearly reflected in the stands taken by the Weimar intelligentsia. Acting upon the intellectuals, moreover, are other elements deserving of close attention.

Precisely coinciding with the fall of the coalition, doubts on the validity of the "great experiment" turn into an increasingly feverish search for hypotheses of intervention that surpass the limits fixed by the political game into which the forces of the organized workers' movement are constrained.

And coinciding exactly with the approach of the economic crisis and with the rush of events, the appeal for an intersectorial and national planning takes on self-critical overtones. It is no accident that it is Martin Wagner who denounces the failure of the municipal policy of the SPD in Berlin: between 1931, the date of his exit from the Social Democratic party, and 1934, we witness a theoretical change of notable historic importance, investing management topics with direct reflections on both political

and disciplinary perspectives. Indeed, Wagner goes as far as diagnosing the end of the nineteenth-century "city of work": an end brought about by the processes of rationalization of German industry, by the structure of the new organic composition of capital, by the reduction of unskilled labor to pure abstract labor, by the tertiarization of metropolitan functions, by the formation of productive installations that are decentralized and dimensioned on an extraurban scale.

Wagner is clearly conscious of the relationship that exists between the massive decentralization of the productive areas in the region and the effects stemming from the new structure of the organic composition of capital.

The process of rationalization of the German industry has transferred an incredibly large number of jobs from men to machines, thereby rendering useless the jobs in the city, while . . . conveyor belts and machinery more and more often require only unskilled, rather than skilled, workers, who in the country and in small towns can be found at a better price. . . . To this factor we must add the means of transportation, which formerly, it must be admitted, made possible the rapid centralizing of workplaces in the large cities, and today increase noticeably to the same extent a development in the opposite direction, toward the decentralizing of jobs.⁷⁴

This signifies that the introduction on a vast scale of assembly-line work, abruptly nullifying the "quality" of unskilled labor, inevitably leads to a management of the territory that overruns the municipal limits: not without reason does Wagner dwell with insistence on the new value that the policy of transportation has in the territorial sphere.⁷⁵ Consequently, he is led to denounce as inefficient precisely those limitations in the field of urban management that the Social Democracy, the unions, and the co-operatives had been obliged to impose upon themselves.

If we calculate roughly that the value of the creation of a workplace in Berlin (excluding the land) amounts to approximately 12,000 marks, the fact that for 670,000 abandoned workplaces a capital of approximately eight billion marks remains without profit should make a distinct impression. And we should be equally horrified by the thought that that capital, worth billions, should be destroyed because of the continual shifting of workplaces. According to a carefully executed computation, a workplace in the field of the mechanical industry already costs 14,000 marks, in the field of the chemical industry, 28,000 marks, and in the field of the industry of gas, water, and electric energy, 82,000 marks. . . . Why do we continue to maintain millions of citizens in workplaces that are incontestably dead? And how long are we going to permit this political-economic crime? . . . I find that the moment has arrived to call upon responsible political-economists to manage the cities. Until now the autonomous municipal administration has been nothing but a service of day and night surveillance for an economic system that is totally secret and private, wasteful and excessively disorderly.⁷⁶

The fixed costs of the large metropolis, measured by Wagner on the basis of the costs of transportation, are thus transformed into variables and assimilated to those of a large business firm. But this means considering the metropolis as a firm, as a *production machine*. The problem becomes how to integrate the *Grossstadt* into the national economy, into the *territory as a place of production*, with specific laws all its own.

From this standpoint, Wagner is not far from calling for the imperative action of a GOSPLAN, capable of eliminating the “wastes” of the capitalistic anarchy of production. An entire tradition of city planning is in this way placed under accusation. No longer does the subject of the residence for the *new man*, for the *conscious producer*, who “must” recognize himself in the architectural structures of the avant-garde, take priority, but rather the economic calculation of the productivity of the tertiary city; the reorganization of the transportation network in relationship to the integration of the production centers and to the commuting of the workforce; and global and centralized planning.

The calculation of the productivity of the city: this is the exigency supported by Wagner, in a terse polemic with the economic policy of the SPD. Of great interest in this regard are the two articles that Wagner wrote in 1931 to justify his leaving the party.⁷⁷

In these texts, however, the indictment of the SPD is not of a political nature; it is founded instead on highly technical considerations.

In fact, Wagner verifies—figures in hand—how the very plan for the expropriation of terrain, on the part of the city of Berlin, took place outside of any calculation and in the most total anarchy.

The “free” disposition of the *Siedlungen*, praised by some critics as an example of a “city by districts”—May and Schmidt would nonetheless write that the city by districts is the “capitalistic city,” while the compact one is the “socialist city,” accepting, in their turn, a formal and distorted interpretation of the problems⁷⁸—thus proves to be the result of a casual land-buying policy, which excludes every evaluation of the cost of transportation and of the relationship among residences, the tertiary city, and production decentralization. Wagner writes:

Where this behavior, which sees the most important party of the city of Berlin tolerate for the acquisition of land a system that deceives the other decision-making organs, will fatally lead can be illustrated with an example of the acquisition of land in Asching, on the Alexanderplatz. That land, which has a taxable value of 2,725,000 marks, was bought with the aid of the regional deputy Heilmann, the city councillors Loewey and Zangemeister, and with the agreement of the councillors Hahn and Reiter, for 13.5 million marks, that is, at a price of 6,000 marks per square meter. The buying price, more than 10 million marks higher than the taxable value of the land, has brought about a rent for the constructions that is 92 times higher than it was before the war.⁷⁹

The examples cited by Wagner follow in a continuous chain. There emerges a frightening picture of the conflicts that have sprung up between

the social policy, placed at the center of the programs of the “economic democracy,” and their concrete management. Wagner continues:

*We must keep in mind what it means to be unable to finance on a long-term basis the acquisition of land for 300 million marks, what it means to be constantly driven to the wall by short-term debts for 650 million marks, and to have to obtain these sums not from the profits of the capital used, but from the yield. . . . A similar city policy endangers not only the income of our power plants, which are in themselves productive, but also the balance of the expenditures for public works, which are of vital importance.*⁸⁰

Consequently, Wagner criticizes the investments destined to a reorganization of the metropolitan networks carried out outside of a global plan and, an even more serious fact, independent of the system—in itself already chaotic—of residential locations. He places the entire responsibility on the executives of the SPD. He observes:

*When, in the spring of 1927, the Chapman group offered to the city of Berlin to build in the entire south zone of Schöneberg, then one could have shown the world how to do city planning while practicing economy. The extension of the subway, particularly if built in a trench, would have created in a new quarter of 50,000 inhabitants, an increase in traffic with little investment on the part of the city. The traffic, the electrical network, and the costs of the city administration would have been much more profitable in a compact organization of the city.*⁸¹

Significantly, Wagner never attacks the principles of “economic democracy” but always and only the methods of realization. The unproductiveness of public spending is in his opinion due to avoidable distortions, to subjective inefficiencies, which can be linked to a lack of discipline. Therefore, it becomes almost an obligatory procedure for him to skip over the analysis of the real function of the city and of class conflicts in the framework of capitalist development, to confront directly the subject of the globality of planning.

But once the need for global planning is recognized, the problem of its characteristics remains: what type of plan, and with the support of which political-economic forces? A notable ambiguity weighs on the rejections and choices made by Wagner between 1931 and 1934.

His protest is wholly “technical,” internal to a rigorous disciplinary specialization. His perspectives, however, are global. It is no coincidence that, in the 1932 article cited above, he foresees a “programmed” and controlled fusion of the AEG and the Siemens, recognizing, albeit tardily, the tacit opposition in the Weimar economy between light and heavy industry.⁸² The return to a planning that is stable but without real protagonists, from such a dual perspective, proves to be considerably more suited than at first appears to the renunciatory policy of the workers’ movement under the Brüning government (a government, note well, of which Wagner is explicitly critical).⁸³

Wagner's "technique" thus leads to the threshold of a project for a "new economy," polemical with regard both to the strategy of the *Selbsthilfe* and to a compromise between capitalist economy and municipalist autonomy. In 1932, in *Das wachsende Haus* (The Growing House) Wagner, by now a prophet of the collapse of capitalism but also of the collapse of the mixed economy, lashes out at the *Hauszinssteuer* and predicts the passage to the State of the entire national land.⁸⁴ A new role for the State, then: and it comes precisely from one who, like Wagner, had proclaimed himself, in the 1920s the champion of a municipalized management of the building problem.

In reality, Wagner's lack of faith in the State and in the unions in 1931–32, at a moment in which, as has been noted, the unions happened to possess a narrow margin of control "because of the overestimation of the importance given to social policy within the framework of the general policy . . . and in the grip of their own incurable autosuggestion,"⁸⁵ reveals the uncertainty of his "technique," once separated from a framework of institutional reference.

Das wachsende Haus is a text halfway between realism and utopia: against the economic crisis, Wagner hypothesizes a "community economy" capable of overcoming, in the building sector, the strategies adopted up to this point. The disorderly suburban developments with single-family houses (*Stadtrandsiedlungen*) are defined by him as the result of "a first step, and probably the worst, toward a new housing."⁸⁶ The new objective to be achieved will be rather a state management of the fiscal yield coming from the proprietors of the old housing units, combined with the private savings gathered at a public *Bausparkasse*. The reduction of transportation costs, production centralization, standardization, rationalization, prefabrication with precise "assembly plans," are, instead, called for as premises for a final product that foresees a model of installation curiously nostalgic compared with Taut's *Auflösung der Städte*, even if lacking its anarchic components. The one-family house with a garden as an indissoluble unit, a house with standardized parts but in constant growth is indicated as an instrument of anticonjunctural economic policy and of a new communion with nature. Wagner writes:

I can already see the day when the new customer will give the architect his order: build me a "Luft-Sonnen und Gymnastikbad" in the garden as a continuation of my bathroom! Build me a sleeping space in the garden, as an extension to my bedroom, so I can have a view of the stars! . . . And thus the house grows in all its parts, within the garden. We of the big city will commune again with nature and with the land, we will entrust ourselves again to our senses, which now seem to be dead among the heaps of stone and asphalt. We will begin again to live with plants and animals, and from this communal life, we will attain a life that surpasses all techniques.⁸⁷

A new utopian romanticism, then, a regression to *Die Erde, eine gute Wohnung*,⁸⁸ seasoned with Wrightian suggestions for the emphasis placed

on the need for a continuous transformation of the one-family house? The attraction of the dynamism of nature as a model for an ever-growing house presupposes the equation, freedom equals naturalness—not without a hint of Emerson: not by chance is the model favored by Wagner the wooden house. It would, however, be excessive to connect this model to the mysticism that had shaped Gropius and Adolf Meyer in the design of the Sommerfeld house. Here, too, Wagner seems to follow the path of economic realism, with respect to the cost not only of materials, but also of the infrastructures necessary for an extensive installation.⁸⁹ The problem he poses himself is how to integrate his model within an efficient urban plan. The *wachsendes Haus* is to him the answer to the territorial mobility of the places of production and to the five-hour work day (!). But upon being asked which point of arrival his model might prefigure, Wagner is obliged to acknowledge:

*as a city planner, even for me, in the face of such a question, there can only be the great silence. I don't know! I don't know, after the great economic earthquake that has come crashing down on all our installations, urban and nonurban, where the fixed workplaces will be. . . . The cities and the installations are forced to wander, and we must first of all analyze carefully this wandering before building in grand style and with great expectations new inhabitable spaces.*⁹⁰

Nevertheless he remains firm in his conviction regarding the disintegration of the *Grossstadt*, the result of a "sin against nature":⁹¹ free mobility in a new world—the *wachsende Stadt* and the *wachsendes Land*—is the general objective of a new urban planning, which seems sensitive also to the "disurbanization" predicted by Ford (the text lacks, however, any references to the proposals of the Soviet "disurbanists"), exposing at the same time the dishomogenous projects outlined by Poelzig, Otto Bartning, Gropius, Hilberseimer, etc., for the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft für ein wachsendes Haus." Without a doubt no affinities exist between the Wagnerian nostalgia tending toward a socialism of uncertain prospects and Darré's wild ideologies on the "new peasant aristocracy," just as none exist between the moralistic attacks hurled by Wagner on the "unnaturalness" of the *Grossstadt* and the "News from the Asphalt Deserts," published in 1928 in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. And yet, technique often speaks a language of its own, which surmounts, surreptitiously, the ideologies underlying it. The attacks of the *Völkischer Beobachter* against the architects of the Ring and Martin Wagner can be compared to the antiurbanism that weaves through the *wachsendes Haus* and with the personal appeals addressed by Gropius, Wagner, and Häring to the Reichskulturkammer until June 1934.⁹²

However, we wish to emphasize neither the regressive utopias of the Weimar intelligentsia after 1930–31 nor the undefined hopes in the new regime, probably brought about by the anticapitalist demands of the "National Socialist left," but in any case already swept aside by 1934. The crisis of the Weimar system, nonetheless, is amply reflected in the uncer-

tainty of the architects and "radical" city planners—in this regard, we find much to criticize, from a sectorial point of view as well, in the thesis advanced by Peter Gay and backed up by Cesare Cases on the significance of the German intellectual immigrants, who would find in their new settings the space denied to them in their own country.⁹³

The attention with which figures such as Kracauer, Wagner, and Taut follow the realization of the Soviet First Five-Year Plan and May's work in the U.S.S.R. must, however, be considered in another light with respect to the observations made so far.⁹⁴ In the *Tagebuch* of 25 July 1931, Martin Wagner writes:

*The irony of destiny: the same day in which more than a thousand city planners, after having witnessed for five days the autopsy of the cadaver of the European urban organism, agreed, in their final meeting, on their inability to do something, the municipal assessor of city planning, Ernst May, gave his report on Russian city planning before a circle of enthusiastic young architects and interested builders. . . . The young feel instinctively that a new vitality is springing forth from Russia, that there new possibilities are maturing and will bear fruit, that there the creative joy of city planning, freed from all the obstacles of property and of private profit, can fully expand.*⁹⁵

And Wagner concludes his hymn to realized socialism with an indicative expression, which puts in the forefront the "ethical" value of global planning: in the Soviet city, "there must be contained the greatest and noblest moments of a socialist *Zeitgeist* . . . as the Cathedral of the people." The mythical "cathedral of socialism" makes its last appearance here. Wagner, like May, Hannes Meyer, Mart Stam, and Hans Schmidt, sees in the U.S.S.R. of the Five-Year Plans the only possible checkpoint for the hypotheses of city planning put forward in Germany from 1924 on. In the experiment of global planning, the intellectuals of the Weimar Republic believe that they can recognize the "exact" arrangement of technical-operative work, denied them by a capitalist system in regression. But behind this widespread hymn to the oneness of the decision-making apparatus, behind the panegyrics to the "great machine" of Power—of the Power-Plan—lies concealed an attitude of dark revenge against the "specialization" embodied by the same intellectuals who now embrace the mystique of the One. Certainly, Weimar Germany had brought to a climax the shrill notes arising from the friction between the "many strategies," between various infiltrations into various techniques of power: but in the presence of a cult of the State as the last container of the encounters between the various decisions, the various "separations." The one and the many: the two extremes, in the radical culture of Weimar, are not in dialectical relation. They remain there, sheer as absolutes, inviting illusory choices to be made. The mythology of the Power-Plan, at this level, is an allegory of the state of mind of one who has exercised, without illusion, a microphysics of power on scattered paths. But in those very years preceding the collapse of the Weimar democracy, Benjamin pointed out, referring

to German baroque drama, "the allegory is . . . the unique and powerful amusement here offered to the melancholy man."⁹⁶ And we know well how much Benjamin's discourse "on the past" was, in turn, an allegory of the ephemeral present.

The "melancholy man" in the 1930s is the frustrated intellectual: too much certainty in the techniques that he had manipulated, without, however, ever having theorized *a statute of crisis* for them; too much faith in their "consistency"; too many hopes for a "solution" entrusted to them. It was inevitable to invest these hopes in other universes; the teleology, the goal, remains that of a "reconciliation" by means of techniques.⁹⁷

Yet the new ideological role that the Soviet Union assumes for the radical intellectuals of Weimar Germany does not seem separable from the long internal debate on the SPD and on the influence of Rudolf Hilferding's thesis on "organized capitalism," which takes place from the 1915 article in *Vorwärts* [the national paper of the SPD] to the Kiel Congress (22–27 May 1927). For Hilferding, organized capitalism—as has been justly observed⁹⁸—is not a guarantee of an automatic passage to socialism; on the contrary, it is merely a premise and an opening of a *possibility* for an intervention by the State, the class nature of this latter left unresolved. But the Kiel Congress poses resolutely the subject of economic planning as a *necessity* of "organized capitalism" and of the struggle of the workers' movement: two subjects *both revolutionary*, as Hilferding had already recognized in his contribution to the Heidelberg Congress of 1925.⁹⁹ He states at the Kiel Congress:

*The last sociological objection to socialism falls. Organized capitalism represents in reality the substitution in principle of the socialist principle of planned production for the capitalist principle of free competition. This planned economy, guided in a conscious way, is subjected to a much greater degree to the possibility of the conscious intervention of society; this signifies nothing other than the intervention through the only organization of society that is conscious and provided with constrictive power, the intervention of the State.*¹⁰⁰

The disappointments of the radical intellectuals are therefore largely due to the Social Democratic tactic between 1928 and 1933, a tactic that contradicts the substance of the Kiel theses, or, as Rusconi sustains,¹⁰¹ unmasks their "fragility at one of the key points: the necessary connection between 'political form' and 'social content.'"

The spectacular failure of the Grand Coalition (June 1928–March 1930) leaves the two souls of the Weimar SPD tragically divided between the left, entrusted to the force of the working-class base but blind to the reality of the formal political context, and the Direction, which focuses on the democratic institutional system but in the absence of precise economic projects for the management of the crisis. The intellectuals are thus deprived of credible referents.

The dissolution of the "social pacts" on which the "contract democracy" of the Weimar Republic was based becomes evident in the course of the

Brüning's government by presidential decree and in particular after the breaking up of the Parliament of July 1930. In the face of this collapse of the compromises that had held together fragily the heap of contradictions in which the Weimar culture had found its own spaces, the U.S.S.R. of the First Five-Year Plan can be considered in a new light: no longer a place of collective catharsis, but rather the place where the State seems to assume the role assigned by Hilferding and by the Congress of Kiel to the connection "political form/social organization of capital." This role, note well, is still claimed in 1932 by the ADGB and the Afa-Bund, in the pamphlet *Umbau der Wirtschaft*, the last significant document of Weimar syndicalism.¹⁰²

In this light, May's and his collaborators' acceptance of the invitation of the Cekombank, Bruno Taut's work in Russia, Martin Wagner's exit from the SPD and his recognition of the U.S.S.R. as the only subject capable of bringing to completion the political-disciplinary hypotheses thwarted by the crisis of the Weimar system take on notable significance. Even more so, if one considers such direct interest in the U.S.S.R.—especially on the part of a former member of the Social Democratic party like Wagner—in relation to the increasingly anti-Soviet declarations by the leadership of the SPD, beginning with those of its president, Otto Wels, at the Congress of May 1931, in which Bolshevism and National Socialism are equated with violence and dictatorship.

It is all too easy to emphasize the mythicization of Soviet planning carried out by the radical Weimar intellectuals. With respect to the debates on Soviet art, which, as we have seen, profoundly affect the German milieu after 1922, the situation at the beginning of the 1930s seems completely reversed. The disciplinary baggage tested *in vitro* in Germany now seems able to furnish technical answers to planning demands to which the reflection on that baggage had autonomously led: the convergence between the two parallel journeys seems not only possible but actually historically necessary. The avoidance of composing a *Trauerspiel* on what could appear as a grandiose failure, by sublimating the tragedy into certainties transferred to a different institutional terrain, is indeed touching. That such a transferral was inappropriate can be demonstrated by the well-known vicissitudes of European architects in the U.S.S.R.¹⁰³ The lesson that can be learned from this experience surpasses, however, the limits that define it: in its search for a "homeland," technique risen from the ashes of the avant-garde will be forced to recognize that it is rootless, forced onto a journey that has nothing adventurous about it, since its obligatory course is circular.

The "incomplete figure" sung in Frankfurt will not resound in the east in any chorale; it will remain there, an episode in a story that could only be dispersed before reaching its entelechy, forced into a garb from which it became impossible to extricate itself, and which, for this very reason, will be the prototype of a "mode of distortion." The search for an identity, which the tormented Weimar experimentation pursues in an institutional

leap mistaken for a leap in scale, will not founder in vain. The fragments rising to the surface, in fact, form a question mark, which installs itself forcefully in the narrow passage that was painfully opened up between disciplinary reorganization and politics. The encounter was transformed into a clash: only one who refuses to cross the mined terrain of this new battlefield will be able to see the funeral drapes fluttering over it.

Appendix

The Socialization of Building Activity

by Martin Wagner

*The text by Martin Wagner, presented here in an English translation,¹ with the exception of the appendix (pp. 44–56 of the original work), which summarizes its concepts, constitutes a highly significant document, both for its analysis of the effects of the German council movement in the sector of building organization, immediately after the November Revolution, and for the way in which it places in proper historical perspective a leading figure in Weimar city planning such as Wagner. The idea for the work stemmed from a meeting that, in turn, took place in response to a report by specialists presented to the Berlin city councillor for building, Beuster. It constitutes further an early result of the reflections on a possible restructuring of building in a social sense, expressed by Wagner in many articles, past and present. (See M. Wagner, "Bebauungsplan und Verunstaltung des Stadtbildes," *Technisches Gemeindeblatt* 19 (5 April 1916): 1–4; idem, "Die Abschaffung der Baupolizei für den Wohnungsbau," *Die Volkswohnung*, 1, no. 20 (1919): 258; idem, "Die Abbürdung der Baukostenüberteuering, ein Beitrag zur Sozialisierung des Wohnungswesen," *Die Volkswohnung* 1, no. 21 (1919): 261–66.) Of particular interest, in the conclusion of the essay, are the text of the motion on socialization resolved upon by the assembly of German building workers (Weimar, 6 May 1919) and the positions taken regarding Ellinger, with whom Wagner was, for the most part, in agreement: especially significant is the criticism of every "theory" of the Sozialisierung and the supremacy assigned to the praxis. It is, in fact, on this basis that Wagner lashes out against the hypothesis for the municipalization or the nationalization of enterprises: for him, the free market in no way conflicts with the socialization of individual enterprises. When read against the light of the classic texts of the theoreticians of socialization, Wagner's work seems in several ways compromissary. And yet, for this very reason, it ultimately throws light upon the regressive entreaties that seek to reconcile the ideology of*

“liberated work” with a program of accumulation expressly inspired by Taylorism. A large part of the development of Wagner’s theory and praxis has its premises in this text. The rationalization that informs the most experimental construction sites of the GEHAG in Berlin, set up with the consultation of Bruno Taut and the technical direction of Franz Hillinger (see the catalogue Die Gehag-Wohnung, Berlin, 1931), together with the experiments in popular “participation” that Taut himself discusses in his Siedlungsmemoiren, can thus be regarded as the heirs of a Sozialisierung transformed into techniques for which no utopia exists—except that which transpires from the distilled signs with which the neue Sachlichkeit still expresses, despite everything, its own nostalgia for a pathos that has become out-of-date.

The Socialization of the Construction Industry by Martin Wagner

Introduction

In 1847 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published their *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, which represented the first theoretical and practical party program of Social Democracy. In October 1891, at the congress of Erfurt, there was presented the so-called *Erfurt Programme*, which established the strategy of the Social Democratic Party. Since then, twenty-eight years have passed.

In November of last year, German Social Democracy was overtaken by the revolution, and obliged to contend with tasks of real responsibility, in order to demonstrate the actual validity of its party program, talked about for so many decades. Even taking into account all the difficulties that stand in the way, today and in the future, of a practical application of its party program, it must nevertheless be admitted that the spiritual leadership (*geistige*) of Social Democracy has clearly been wanting. It has neglected to prepare practical and feasible plans of socialization. It is totally lacking in plans of mobilization for its socioeconomic battles. The masses, to whom Social Democracy has been appealing for years, have today entered the struggle. But they do not know in which direction they are to march. Their leaders were caught by surprise by 9 November; they are perplexed and would prefer to interrupt the call to mobilization, to have time for their plans of socialization.

Now it is impossible to revoke the social mobilization. Never was Goethe’s phrase more pertinent: *“Das Erste steht uns frei, beim Zweiten sind wir Knechte.”* The movement must be propelled forward. The masses must be organized and disciplined. They must not pile up in chaos. There is only one watchword for everyone, regardless of party: *“Führer vor!”* For our masses, in today’s bitter emergency, words do not constitute a guide: *action is the guide*. The troops must be called to action. What needs to be resolved are the technical-organizational problems. And so: *“Techniker vor!”* We shall not wait for the chaos of Russia to set in. We shall not wait for some German Lenin to call us and offer us a percentage

of 25,000 or 100,000 rubles. It is characteristic of the German race to place itself at the service of the people freely and in a disinterested manner.

This cry for help also reached the ears of the author when he saw that the construction field, like all the others, lacked plans and works preparatory to socialization. In Karl Kautsky's *Richtlinien für ein sozialistisches Aktionsprogramm*, published in February of this year, he saw clearly this lack of the groundwork necessary for the advent of socialization. In chapter five, paragraph six, Kautsky, under the significant heading *Kommunalisierung*, discusses socialization in the field of construction:

In the end it is up the community to socialize the construction of apartments, to build sound and inexpensive apartments for the masses and to manage them.

It is the local relationships, and the maturity and organization of the workers, that will determine the road to take to achieve the best results: whether to use private building contractors who will follow the conditions imposed upon them, (for example, those regarding the relations of work); whether to construct buildings under their own management or to have them built, according to their own plans and specifications, by an organization of building workers.

This plan of action for the construction of low-cost apartments for the masses living in the city (as well as in the country) bears out the above-made argument; that is, it confirms that the problem of socialization was not brought along to a stage of practical realization by the leaders of Social Democracy. When Kautsky assigns to the communities the construction and administration of apartments, he is posing a particular problem. Kautsky indicates three ways of constructing housing, the feasibility of which for him depends upon the maturity and the degree of organization of the workers' movement; he advises building by:

1. *the private contractor;*
2. *community management;*
3. *the organization of building workers.*

Let us initially analyze the first way. The engagement of a private company for the construction of apartments is a basic contradiction of the socialist economic system. Kautsky should recommend this way only for a period of adjustment, leading to the formation of other forms of activity, and chiefly for the development of the free rein of the worker. But even today serious difficulties impede the construction of apartments by a private company. The great majority of workers are tired of having to work for a private contractor. The workers see in him, rightly or wrongly, the exploiter of their manpower, and they oppose him with passive resistance, which we see expressed nearly everywhere in a disgruntled *atmosphere of strikes* and in a *lowering of the work performance*. The contractor has until now fought this hostility with firings and lockouts. With the installation, already begun and certain to increase, of the factory councils (*Betriebsräten*), employers' rights become increasingly limited. It is clear that

internal conflicts lower the factory's production and render the private company uneconomical. In any event, one must not give in to the hope that a company system in which the authority of the contractor is destroyed and the legitimate desires of the workers cannot be entirely satisfied will lead to the construction of low-cost dwellings. A prerequisite for a reduction in production costs is a maximum *growth of work productivity*, as might be obtained with *piecework* and an *economical operation of the company*. These factors cannot be applied to an old private enterprise, however, because the workers fear—quite rightly—that the contractor will take advantage of their increased productivity.

Another difficulty in utilizing the old private enterprise for the production of houses is that the Reich, the Länder, and the municipalities have to, on faith, contribute to these companies hundreds of millions of marks for the high cost of living adjustment. The private contractor can give no reasonable guarantee for the circumspect use of such subsidies that is in the interest of the entire economic life, of those who pay the taxes, and of the consumers. Furthermore, when the tension between workers and contractors is reflected in the work productivity, an economic insecurity remains in the building market, which makes it almost impossible for any contractor to offer fixed prices and to keep to the established contracts. The investing authorities thus have a growing interest in a *fiduciary company*, whose economic management is not that of private capitalism, but of community economy. For the same reasons, the situation of the raw material market is heading toward a solution other than that of private capitalism.

Kautsky's second way envisions the municipalities building under their *own management*. This way explicitly proposes that the municipalities themselves act as contractors, preparing and paying bricklayers, carpenters, glass workers, painters, etc., and buying the necessary machinery, the raw materials, and putting them to work in their own companies and construction sites. This would thus be a case of the *communalization of the construction company*. The author cannot agree with Kautsky here. The communalization of a construction company is feasible in theory, but in practice cannot function. Some may reply that the communalization of construction companies is nothing new; even today we have certain operations under State direction, such as street cleaning, the supervision of parks and gardens, the repairing and lighting of streets, etc. Certainly! The experts, however, are of the opinion that these agencies operate in a costlier way than do private ones, and that it was not the aim of making these agencies more economical and more productive that led to their municipalization. Other reasons were involved. The decades of discussion on the municipalization of companies urges us to *do away* with this system. In the era of capitalist economy, the communalization of firms was an expedient aimed at safeguarding the interests of the collective. *For a new, radical reconstruction of our economy, this system can not be seriously considered.* I will be asked to prove my statements, and I will say that the municipalization of firms requires not only a "maturity" of both

blue- and white-collar workers, but—and this is even more important—the present administrative and bureaucratic machinery of the municipalities is not “mature” enough for a complete communalization. Today even less than before. We must realize that the administrators’ rights and powers of control, because of the corruption of internal politics, have been limited, exactly like those of the contractors, and the clout of the agencies has suffered gravely as a consequence. This transformation was necessary, in any event; it has not yet been completed. The new structuring of the municipal apparatus has barely begun. In the future it will be seen that the paralyzed clout of the administrative machinery will have to be regained on the basis of different premises. A statement by Ludwig Meyer in the *Vorwärts* of 27 May, concerning the *Sozialistischer Arbeitsplan*, points out that:

As far as Western Europe is concerned, it is evident that the parliamentary democracy remains the highest form yet attained by the national and cultural government of the people. The field of business enterprises, on the contrary, refuses to be dominated by any type of parliamentarianism. It requires, above all, resoluteness and the spirit of initiative. This ought to be clear to everyone, in case one country alone, surrounded by a capitalist world, should be obliged to socialize. No fewer than four hundred small and medium-size cities in America have voluntarily adopted a kind of popular dictatorship. Through a general election, five commissioners are elected who take on the running of the municipal administration and of the administration in general. This measure was born as an answer to a need for personal responsibility, efficiency, and speed of action.

The author, with his many years of experience in state administration, can only confirm that the field of business concerns refuses to be dominated and commanded by “any type of parliamentarianism,” at least not in the directing of technical, economic, and cultural advancement. It would be an error of the gravest kind to force the entry into a bureaucratic machinery, regulated by pure administrative work, a system of businesses that is built upon personal responsibilities, on the capacity for individual action, on the freedom of decisions, and on personal powers. The construction firm, with its disparate categories of workers (bricklayers, carpenters, painters, boilermen, roofers, glaziers, tinsmiths, etc.), is even less suited than other businesses to a centralized bureaucratic management. And what would happen if a municipality wished all the companies of craftsmen to be run by a horde of officials? Would all the craftsmen have to become employees of the municipality? Would the municipality have to run all the factories, businesses, and construction sites, or expropriate them? This would all be too absurd even to discuss seriously, if influential theoreticians had not propagated for years the idea of the municipalization of businesses, and had not aroused the workers in this regard. We now arrive at the third possibility proposed by Kautsky, the production of apartments according to plans and under the direction of the municipalities, through

the *construction workers' organization*. This is the most unclear of his proposals, but also the most workable.

Kautsky does not specify the nature of this "organization." But we do not wish to reproach him. One can justly wait for practice to modify theory. Modesty in one's acts brings with it certain benefits that quite frankly deserve to be recognized. Now the experts also have a right to speak. They want to reclaim—with political understanding of the present situation—labor, something that till now the Social Democracy has neglected to do. Time forces one on to practical action. We do not want to wait until immature ideas on the problem of socialization lead the masses to rash acts. To clarify is now one of the most important tasks of the technical guide. This consideration has stimulated the author as well to communicate to the public the following treatise on the socialization of the construction firm, which, originally a report of an independent commission of specialists to the president of the economic section of the association for apartments of Greater Berlin, the city councillor for building, D. Beuster, furnished the impetus for a conference aimed at creating the basis for an open discussion and, more important, for concrete action.

The Precapitalist Building Firm

When we compare the "modern" building with the medieval one for form and content, we have no doubt as to where the *highest technical knowledge, the greatest artistic ability, authentic cultural feeling* found their true expression. It suffices to observe the cathedrals of Berlin and Cologne to destroy completely any taste for the "modern."

If we want to understand and appreciate present-day work productivity, we must examine how the "ancients" did it. What tools and what organization of labor enabled the Middle Ages to contribute its marvelous cathedrals to the history of the world?

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is very difficult for us today, because historical information on the organization of labor in the medieval building industry is extremely scanty. It is known that in the Middle Ages the art of building was considered an *occult science*, which could not go beyond the guilds. *To give information to one who did not belong to the guild, or to put any secret teaching down on paper, was forbidden.*

We can, however, form an approximate picture of the organization of construction in the Middle Ages through the history of the old *Bauhütten* and of craft organizations. What we still have today of Medieval building is the art of the churches, which was nurtured by the *brotherhood* of the *monasteries*. This *building fraternity* traveled from site to site and from town to town. They would set up their encampment in a suitable area and erect their own *Bauhütten*. Ten or twelve brothers would be placed under the surveillance of a "master builder," a monk.

The brothers were subjected to an iron discipline. The assistants were recruited from the people; work was directed by the bishop, the abbot, or

the canon, who, if he was not familiar with architecture, would delegate a well-known *Hüttenmeister*.

These builder-monks were versatile artists, possessing "all the arts and all the sciences." Before construction was begun, they selected the workers, gave them "lessons," negotiated the contracts, saw that the workers had continuous employment, and assumed responsibility for the result of their work. The entire organization was based on the most rigorous *obedience*, which they themselves were the first to practice. Their greatest pride was to promote the call to the *Bauhütte*. It was not easy to be chosen. The name of the candidate was posted in the *Bauhütte*, and *all the brothers had the maximum freedom to express themselves for or against him*.

Not more than five candidates at a time could be accepted, in order to have ample time for their *preparation*. The Strasbourg *Hütte*, one of the most noted of the time, produced Erwin von Steinbach in 1270.

The following features were among the regulations of the building activities organized by the Church:

1. *the client (Bauherr) was at the same time the contractor;*
2. *the builder (Baumeister) was both artist and head of works;*
3. *architecture was an occult science of the brothers;*
4. *the education of the new recruits took place during the actual building operation;*
5. *the honor of the Bauhütte depended upon the successful outcome of the work;*
6. *work was part of the credo of the Catholic faith.*

In his book *Origin of the System of Guilds*, Eberstadt writes: "New chapters of history are written regularly with the movements of settlements and the shifts in population." The movement from the *rural areas* to the *cities* must have also produced significant consequences for architecture. (Today we see the beginnings of a movement from the cities toward the country.)

The *Bauhütten* of the brotherhood were mediated by and in the course of time replaced by the *guild system*. Even without analyzing the foundations of the guild, certain factors should be pointed out that were particularly influential in their creation. According to Eberstadt, the twelfth century saw a complete reversal of the concepts of *honor* and *justice*—"a change similar to which we have no other example in history." (Eberstadt obviously could not refer to the revolution of our own times.) "A new situation is created, which requires *absolute honor*, it being a practical virtue, and justice suddenly becomes a *justice of work*." But in this powerful movement—and this is another important factor—we are never dealing with the individual; manual labor never struggles for the individual, nor is it through the individual that the social situation as a whole, as a community, advances these needs.

The law of labor imposes its own rules. "And so one sees a general shift of the social situations, from the lowest social strata to those at the top. Here everything is moving quickly. The old situations are considered dead,

the old legal relationships change rapidly. On the whole, the condition of the lower strata improves, through the fixing of norms and the dissolution of the rendering of services. In the lowest strata of the population a continuous economic rise is taking place." The *saturation of the labor market* strengthens egalitarian principles. The original freedom of the economy, "the freedom of men to work, enters on the scene against the *privilege of work*, conferred by the men of industry." It would be an error to evaluate this development in a purely materialistic manner.

Von Schmoller defines the origin of the guild as basically an *ethical* movement, aimed at the *obtaining* of a new *jurisdiction*, and at *industrial self-management*. The liberation from the "rights of the court," the "rights of the landowners," and the influence of the Church may have been a contributing factor to the founding of the guilds. It is certain, however, that the guild system brought with it the *affirmation of a high level of technico-industrial development*.

What are the components of the building organization within the guild? Masters, journeymen, and apprentices make up the membership of the building industry guild.

The family-community is the oldest bearer of the guild economic form, and remains so today, even when people are called in from outside to collaborate. When partners and apprentices enter into this family association they do so whole heartedly and are in return embraced by the association, usually for the rest of their lives (Sombart).

The apprentice must serve his master for five years. After being named journeyman, he must travel about for a year or more. As a member of the guild, he is bound by his own honor to maintain a high standard of craftsmanship. No journeyman must discredit the work of his master. He cannot go on strike without the permission of the *Hütte*. In the case of controversies, the guild jury, formed by masters and journeymen, imposed its judgment. The masters were even more bound to the guild regulations than were the journeymen and apprentices. No more than five apprentices could be hired, and no more than two could be assigned to any given construction. (What a rigorous training for the apprentice! These measures were taken against the exploitation of a low-cost labor force, and against overcrowding in their professional status.)

Just as no journeyman may work with outsiders who have not mastered their manual work, neither may he work with a master who is not recognized by the guild.

In large industries with many collaborators, the master often loses his significance. He becomes merely a *primus inter pares*, an organizer and guide. The journeymen are completely equal to him with regard to salary, prestige, and authority.

While originally his salary from independent work was the master's principal source of income, its place was later taken by the Meistergroschen. At the beginning, this was not paid by the journeymen, when the master

himself participated in the work. But, despite the resistance of the journeymen, according to the craft regulations, masters who were active on the building site could claim both a salary and the Meistergroschen. The Meistergroschen is considered by the journeymen as compensation for the tools procured by the master. The compensation for the renting of tools thus becomes the principal income of the master, who earns more, with the increase of the Meistergroschen and of the number of journeymen, and suddenly becomes elevated by the customer to a higher level, striking a blow at the salaries of the journeymen themselves. The designing, cost estimation, and ordering of construction materials constitute further sources of income for the master (Bockert, *Das Baugewerbe in Leipzig, Berlin, 1914*).

Concern for mutual work was the basic element of the guild system. It was severely prohibited for the master to take assignments away from others, or put them in a bad light. If a master finished the work of a colleague who had died, he was obliged to complete the building according to the preestablished plans. He could not alter the old plan, nor demolish parts already built.

The result was an *exclusive conception of the profession and an attitude toward work* that could only awe the layman, and that has surely contributed to the perpetuation of the tradition for generations, in craftsmanship and in art. While the confraternities organized by the Church combined all the craft disciplines under a single head, thus still retaining the characteristics of a general enterprise, the firms organized in a guild manner were moving toward a *division of discipline*.

The regulation of the London bricklayers of 1356 considers *work in gross*, the acceptance of an entire construction assignment by a contractor, as such an unusual thing that when an entire construction operation is undertaken, four or five masters had to give their guarantee. The guild building industry was still organized in a completely *anticapitalistic* manner. In the Middle Ages the *canonical prohibition of interests* for manual labor was still in force, and given the limitation of building trades to "small enterprises," one wonders how the Middle Ages ever produced its marvelous buildings. But the important functions of the contractor were carried out in part by the guild, in part by the client. In Nuremberg, for example, the *Stadtbaumeister* controlled the management of the firms and paid the salaries of journeymen and masters. The ecclesiastical clients surely acted in a similar fashion, and the private clients bought their construction materials and consigned them to the master of works. The guild itself established a specific compensation for the general contractor. It maintained in many places *Materialhäuser* for the building industry, such as brickyards; it dealt in the buying and selling of raw materials, and organized regional trading. The guild here appears as a *cooperative association of artisans*. The significance of the guild building industry can be summarized thus:

1. *the client is usually no longer the contractor, as in the times of the building industry of the confraternities; instead, the client consults the promoter;*
2. *the builder remains both artist and head of works;*
3. *architecture, from an occult science of the brothers of the convent, becomes a community science (Gemeinwissenschaft) of the guild, which, in applying it, enhances the moral value of its own rules;*
4. *the education of the young is imparted by the master, with the supervision of the guild;*
5. *the professional honor of the master and of the guild depend upon the quality of the work.*

The guild system declined in proportion to its move away from community economy and toward individualist economy. The private interest of the master produced a situation of great antagonism between the employer and the worker, between master and journeyman.

The concession (*Konzessionierung*) of autonomous industries to the masters, through the guilds, the closing of the guilds, that is, the limitation of the formation of *new building industries, rendered difficult the social growth of the journeymen, who united into workers' unions* to present their demands to the masters. They fought against the *privileges of the children of the masters*, against the limitation upon their freedom, and for new rights. They had to fight fiercely to keep "blue Monday" free for bathing. In these struggles, in which they were opposed not only by the masters but also by the city councillors and the regional government, the strike was not an unknown weapon. From the struggles for political and ethical rights, there began to emerge increasingly struggles of an economic character. *The ruin of the guild system began with these struggles.* Its ethical-cultural character became lost in a materialism aimed at defending the existence of a privileged class. Hardenberg was to respond to the well-known degeneration of the guild system with the edict on the introduction of *free enterprise* of 2 November 1810.

As Hardenberg states, the introduction of free enterprise may have been an "inevitable need of the times," and doubtless had as its consequence the *downfall of the active community spirit, and paved the way for an unlimited selfishness*, which made rapid progress down the path of the precapitalist economy, and met its downfall equally rapidly. This briefly sketched history of the precapitalist building economy teaches us that the *highest point of the building art is linked to a form of community economy of the building industry, which the masters and apprentices organized together for the sole purpose of producing skilled work.* It is on this foundation that the most precious examples of architecture rest.

The appearance of worthwhile constructions in the areas around individual princely castles, even in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, does not disprove the preceding point, but is rather evidence that *absolute power makes possible a selection of strengths, positive or of medium worth (consider the reign of William II).*

The principal effects of the building activity of the landowning princes are expressed in an art at their command, and thus one without a deep cultural significance, lacking the wide cultural base that is obtained only through the intimate collaboration of all the popular forces.

The Present-Day Construction

The Architect

With the destruction of the guild system and the introduction of the *laissez-faire* system, we also experience the subdivision of the builder's duties into specialized subclasses. That this type of forced development is in some way unnatural is seen today in the instinctive judgment of the people, who refer to the *Mauremeister*, the *Bauunternehmer*, the *Architekt*, and the *Baurat* as *Baumeister*.

It is significant that even through the present day the academically prepared architect, try as he may, has not yet succeeded in obtaining the legal title of *Baumeister*.

Even today every contractor, well prepared or otherwise, has the right to call himself architect and *Baumeister*. It is not going too far to say that the *architectural profession has plunged itself into a blind alley*. And we refer here not only to the technical end, but also to the economic and artistic end of the architectural profession. The architect today learns his profession in school, no longer on the construction site. The architect has lost his link with the artisan's practice; today he is more designer than *Baumeister*; at his drawing table, he gives way completely to his ideals. This office work trains him unilaterally in aesthetics, unreality, and overspending.

He had been told repeatedly that he is not practical, and, in fact, his inclinations have led him to have snatched out of his hands the great majority of everyday projects, the construction of houses. He is no longer the *inventor* of times gone by; he should be the *professional and spiritual guide of building*, but he lacks influence in the building trades. In fact, for him it is a mark of status to have nothing to do with the construction industry. He feels himself the defender of the client against the tricks of the contractor. In this respect, he sets himself in opposition to the developing industry. This is another example of the familiar opposition between architect and contractor.

The contractor feels dominated and controlled by the architect. The architect is obliged to take on duties that the contractor must also see to, such as cost estimation, calculation of the assets, deductions, overseeing of the work, etc. In this way the architect does double work, which influences construction costs, raising them, and gives to the layman and to the contractor the idea that he is superfluous. The consequence of the separation between architects and production is the well-known drop in the level of our architectural culture, clearly evident in our large cities. In recent years, we have struggled against this lowering of standards, by organizing debates on building, exhibitions, and associations of groups interested in

art and in artistic craftsmanship (*Werkbund*). *All these attempts have in the end had little effect or, in the majority of cases, superficial results.* The reason for this lies in the fact that we wanted to deal with *external* defects, rather than *internal* ones (the subjects themselves). We are faced with an organizational error in social development. The architect does not want to have a special profession (*Sonderberuf*), totally separated from industry. The division between the policy lines of manual labor and intellectual work can no longer be maintained. The development of the construction business stagnates because a spiritual guidance is sorely lacking; while, at the same time, the industry is progressing by leaps and bounds, hiring *engineers as company heads*.

The watchword for architects is this: go back to the building trades (*Baubetrieb*). The ideal of the "autonomy" of the private architect is defended spasmodically in opposition to a mediocre and ill-defined contracting system. Apart from this system, the defense in favor of an architect removed from the construction industry does not hold up. There would, in fact, be nothing to prevent an architect from placing himself as the artistic head and guide of a building industry.

The Construction Worker

If we compare the work of the construction worker in a medieval guild with that of a modern one, the following differences are immediately apparent:

1. *the quantitative and qualitative output of the workers has decreased;*
2. *the worker has lost pride in his work, which has become nothing more than a means of subsistence. He manifests his dissatisfaction with his job by constant demands for a raise in salary;*
3. *the construction worker no longer feels himself to be linked to a corporation; as in another era, he thinks of himself as a hostile victim, he feels exploited by the contractor, and thus no longer works with all of his strength. He refuses piecework, preferring to be paid by the hour. He has no desire to work at full strength, because he has no interest in making the best of himself;*
4. *even his interest in making the most of his capability as an artisan has been lost. He knows well that in the work process he counts as a number, not as an individual. He is hostile to all technical innovations because they might deprive him of his job or lower his salary.*

One can observe this attitude of the worker toward industry only with amazement: the construction industry has for decades been *contributing to the formation of this passive resistance, conscious or unconscious, of the workers, and is nevertheless still capable of functioning.* Only the power of capitalism, sustained from outside, could have been responsible for this miracle. *Now that these reinforcements to capitalism have disappeared, the sins of the past years are coming to light.* The driving away of workers from the spiritual and economic interests of the industry is paid for today by demands that cannot be met. Significantly, these demands are

greater and less restrained in large industries than in small ones, where the worker is treated as an individual and appreciated, where the surplus value produced by his work does not lead, as in large industries, to an accumulation of wealth.

The control over the surplus value produced by labor in the large industries is a need of construction workers that must in some way be satisfied, if we wish to return to work tranquilly.

The Contractor

With the introduction of free enterprise, it became easy to become a contractor. From year to year, recognition of one's personal qualifications became secondary; the highest certificate of authority was the possession of capital. But in recent years, not even this is the main requisite, thanks to the racketeerlike activity of land speculators. The profession of building contractor is open to all: anyone who plays the stock market can become a contractor, if only he has at his disposition a significant amount of *Unternehmenslust*. The objective of the contractor is not the *spontaneous joy of building*, but working capital, or better, making it work.

For a specific class of contractors—those who act as a figurehead—one cannot speak of love of work, of the company. A far more solid base underlies the work of another class of contractors, risen from the ranks of master mason and carpenter, whose way of thinking is that of the guild and of the shop masters. An active capability is still reflected in them, coming from years of experience.

Their work is thus totally that of a guide; they construct what the private architect or an authority has designed. The quality of the project does not concern them: it depends spiritually on the finished plans of construction. The initiative of the independent entrepreneurial system is missing. The industries are not centers of spiritual development. They are more conservative than progressive; their operation is based on one brain alone, and thus they tend toward medium-small firms, in spheres of production that are easily controllable and that require less risk and a limited outlay of capital.

The limited activity of this intermediate type of firm has been extended only in recent years by the large capitalistic contractors' system. In fact, of the 232,654 building firms in 1907, only two percent operated as large enterprises, that is, having fifty-one persons or more. And yet, in these large enterprises, only forty percent of the employees are utilized as an active labor force. That is to say, in these large enterprises, the spiritual command (*Führerschaft*) has been newly activated through heads educated to guide—unfortunately, however, with the principal aim of creating capital from this labor, and nothing but capital. *The concentration of all the forces subdivided in the firm in a work of skill and high quality, the change from the pain of work to the joy of work even in the large capitalistic firm, has once more been neglected.* Here, too, the heads of industry and the salaried working class confront each other as enemies. With this situation continuing, the large firm cannot exercise any lasting influence

upon the development of building. *Basic to the reconstruction of our shattered economy is an increase in work productivity.* This increase will be achieved only when the economic guidelines of the building trade (the Taylor system without its noted defects) will also take root in conjunction with an individual remuneration (piecework salary) and the sharing of the workers in the surplus value (*Mehwert*) of their work, in the form of dividends. All these measures toward an increase in work productivity presuppose the *socialization of the building trades.*

The Socialized Construction Industry

Before closely analyzing the problem of the socialization of the construction industry, it is important to recall certain characteristics of the industry itself:

1. *the construction industry, unlike fixed industries, is a worksite industry;*
2. *the construction industry, unlike that of the Middle Ages, is highly specialized. It is a priori impossible to consolidate all the craft organizations that participate in a project in one industry;*
3. *the construction industry is seasonal, up to a certain point, inasmuch as it deals with the construction of new buildings, and is tied to the respective means;*
4. *the construction industry works with prefabricated and partially prefabricated products, and is thus highly dependent on supplies of building materials;*
5. *the construction industry must take into account the problem of extremely mobile workers (the contradiction between fluctuating and stable workers);*
6. *the construction industry principally executes works to order, and cannot, like other industries, accumulate stocks;*
7. *the construction industry is essentially geared to a specific local market.*

The listing of these distinctive features of the construction industry already makes evident that for its socialization one *cannot* consider the form of nationalization or of municipalization (*Kommunalisierung*). This organizational form is suited only to industries whose production and sales have reached a maximum degree of continuity and simplicity and whose guidance will tolerate a heavy and bureaucratic development of their business affairs. The socialization of the construction industry, on the other hand, aspires to a form of organization that leaves room open for artistic, technical, and economic adjustments to changing needs and market situations, for an unobstructed collaboration with the most diverse economic sectors. Given these factors, a fruitful socialization of the construction industry depends on satisfying the following conditions:

- a. *conservation of the free competition of the firm;*
- b. *free rein to individual performance, its utilization and its payment.*

This reasoning leads to an organizational form similar to a stock company, involving a tripartition of the directorate (*Rechtsträger*) of a specialized industry.

The organs of the socialized construction industry are:

- a. *the administrative management in tandem with a local factory council (Betriebsrat);*
- b. *the presidency (chairmanship) of the industry;*
- c. *the building union (Baugewerkschaft).*

The Administrative Management

The heart of the socialized construction industry is the administrative management, which is flanked by two higher organs of supervision and control, and one lower organ. The interests of the majority of the workers, permanent and otherwise, will be defended principally by the *higher* organs of supervision, that is, by the presidency and by the union. Every thrust *from below* at the administrative management must remain within a rigid industry control, if the industry itself is going to work in a reliable way, capable of withstanding competition. And thus the organs of local industrial management, placed alongside the administrative management, are permitted to exercise only highly limited functions. The administrative management can be composed in diverse ways, according to the specific nature of the industry. In normal cases an industry for major building projects will be composed of:

- a. *an artistic management;*
- b. *a technical management;*
- c. *business management.*

A subdivision of the *artistic management* is the *designers' office*. It is responsible for the drawing up of projects. Its history and its art will determine whether the building industry can enter into competition with the best projects, thus keeping its reputation high. And so in the future, it should no longer have to settle for the more economical projects and programs imposed from the outside, but rather, can undertake superior quality projects, which it itself has planned. Just as in the construction of bridges, in the construction industry the firm must produce projects with estimates. This procedure has the following advantages for the private employer and for the authorities:

1. *it lightens the work of the designers' office;*
2. *the project can be furnished with material designed according to industry specifications by using patents, trade marks, etc., and can thus be made less expensively;*
3. *it takes the design away from the poorly paid workman and puts it in the hands of highly qualified specialists;*
4. *the design and its execution are carried out by the same people;*
5. *it puts a stop to impractical projects and guarantees once more to the artist a position of high responsibility;*

6. *it causes the architect's work to have a direct impact upon all the workers in the building industry, down to the bricklayer and the laborer.*

It is precisely "their" architect who will gain commissions through this form of competition. And thus the workers grow with the project, and learn once again to love art and to respect it. In the future, therefore, the personality of the architect and his particular natural capabilities will play a decisive role in the prosperity of the construction industry.

The *technical management* has control over the *entire running of the industry*. In particular:

1. *the office of economic appraisals;*
2. *the technical office;*
3. *central and local leadership.*

On its shoulders lies the responsibility for the realization of the buildings, for maintaining the prices offered, and for commercial guarantees.

It is clear that all the members of an industry have the greatest interest in placing the strongest elements in these roles.

The business management must take charge of the following functions:

1. *administration of accounts;*
2. *administration of capital;*
3. *salaries, payment of stocks, and percentages;*
4. *acquisition of materials, keeping of company books;*
5. *administration of offices.*

The listing of the functions of the three managements makes it clear that they must all collaborate in a collegial way and leave plenty of room for each others' decisions. If the artistic and technical management win the commissions, it is the technical management, along with the business one, that ensures the profits. Their position is similar to that of the director of a stock company. The directors draw fixed sums and shares of the profit, like all others participants in the enterprise. The *local industrial management* is subjected to the technical management, which transmits its orders to the manager (*Bauführer*), the master builder, and the administrator of materials. For large-scale constructions, such as *Siedlungen*, to the local supervision of the industry is added a *construction-site office*, organized according to the rules of scientific industrial management. The local office must above all oversee daily work productivity, which is essential to paying for piecework. These services will be calculated for each worker and for each team, and recorded for the final calculation. According to the scientific system of industrial management, every day the worker indicates on his wage card (*Lohnkarte*) the amount of work done. The worker is thus aware of his daily work load, and so can regulate his earnings as he pleases by putting in more or less work. The efficiency of the teams of workers will be subjected to *Werkpolieren* and *Arbeitspolieren*.

While the *Werkpolier* will be responsible only for the technical execution of the work, the *Arbeitspolier* must exercise control over the work

process, and must give instructions for an economic utilization of the work force and for increasing work productivity. This division between the technical execution and the work process under two *Polieren* is also found among the directors of works. One director must take charge of a technically perfect execution, while another must see about achieving the most economical work process on the construction site. He must see, for example, that the construction materials arrive on time, and that they are used in the most efficient and least costly way.

The Local Factory Council

The interests of the working class employed in a construction site will be represented by a local factory council. This council may be organized in the following manner: a representative of the business management, a director of works, a *Polier*, a permanent workman, and four laborers. Before discussing the functions of the factory council, it is necessary to clarify the basic difference between a permanent worker (*Stammarbeiter*) and a laborer. As has already been said, the construction industry is a seasonal industry, which must deal with a highly variable workforce. A truly productive building industry is one that has achieved a high organizational level; the temporary laborers can in fact have a decided influence on the industry itself. Every socialized construction industry must therefore have at its disposition a *tribe* of workmen, shop foremen, group chiefs, and foremen, who have grown up in the industry tradition and have worked in it continuously, in contrast to the laborers hired by the industry from time to time and discharged once the work is finished.

The temporary laborers should have a decisive influence in the local factory councils. But this influence should not damage the technical and economic foundation of the industry. The functions of the local factory council thus should not go beyond:

1. *control of the positioning of the workers on the work site (sheds, shops, on-the-job protection, etc.);*
2. *smoothing out differences on the site;*
3. *collaborating on maintaining local piece-work rates.*

Differences of opinion between industry management and the local factory council should be examined by the construction workers' union.

The Governing Body of the Industry

We have likened above the business management to the management of a stock company; and so, in the socialized construction industry, in place of the board of directors (*Aufsichtsrates*), we have the *governing body of the industry*, composed of three representatives of the building union, two permanent workers, a foreman, a *Polier*, a clerk, and the business management. The functions of this governing body cover:

1. *end-of-the-year budgets and subdivision of profits;*
2. *fixing of wages and of piecework rates;*

3. *hiring and firing of personnel and of laborers;*
4. *confirming of contracts, credits, and business transactions that involve a greater than average risk or a precise infusion of capital;*
5. *explaining and control of business rules and industrial regulations.*

The governing body of the industry is the direct organ of supervision and control of the business management; it sets specific limits to the autonomy of its own activity. Permanent workers and temporary laborers send their representatives to the governing body. The interests of temporary laborers will be represented indirectly by three elected members of the union. This diverse way of being represented is important, in that it guarantees to the industry a stability in business management and a defense against exaggerated demands of the temporary laborers, who do not have continuing interest in the operation of the enterprise.

The Construction Union

In the place of the general assembly of a stock company, we have the *construction union*. The union assumes the function of the old guilds. It is the corporative representation of the collective interests of the socialized construction industry of a city. Inasmuch as in the socialized construction industry an opposition no longer exists between employer and worker, the construction union thus absorbs, on one side, the functions of the *free unions* and, on the other, those of the *contractors' associations*. The duties of the union are manifold. It is important to define them in order to free the industry from any bureaucratic-commercial management, from any problem or eccentricity that might hinder it. The following functions should pass from the present unions to the construction unions:

1. *regulation of local wage rates;*
2. *industry control of on-the-job protection;*
3. *listing of workers in all professional categories;*
4. *management of funds for professional aid;*
5. *management of auxiliary institutions (libraries, nursing homes, savings funds, legal aid);*

From the preceding contractors' associations, the union takes control of:

6. *regulation of contracting companies (Submissionswesen);*
7. *representation of the interests of the producers vis-à-vis the Reich, the municipality, and the consumers;*
8. *production objectives;*

From the public organs, the union takes control of:

9. *professional insurance;*
10. *administration of health insurance funds;*
11. *old-age and invalid pensions;*
12. *utilization of war invalids;*
13. *aid to the unemployed;*
14. *systems of artisan taxation;*

New duties for the union are:

15. *payment of profit shares to the workers;*
16. *finding of capital;*
17. *administration of:*
 - a. *brickyards and gravel quarries;*
 - b. *sawmills and commerce in timber;*
 - c. *limekilns and cement factories;*
 - d. *administration of warehouses of construction materials;*
 - e. *industries for the construction of roads, etc.;*
18. *control of schools of technical specialization;*
19. *attending to scientific company management in building;*
20. *establishment of building regulations and classifications.*

The construction union will be based financially:

1. *on contributions and transfers from the socialized construction industry;*
2. *on the earnings from communal activities;*
3. *on the subsidies from the Reich, the Länder, the municipalities, as compensation for the assuming of important administrative duties.*

Of the functions of the building union described so far, the one requiring further clarification is the *payment of profit shares to the workers* (point 15). Accepting the basic rule that the worker must benefit from the surplus value of his work—something obvious for an industrialized society—it will be necessary to create a *central office for the mobile component of the labor force*, which will see to it that workers who are no longer employed will share in the annual profits. This may come about:

- a. *as unemployment benefits;*
- b. *as contributions to welfare services;*
- c. *with cash payments of company profits.*

The net profit of a socialized building industry will be determined by an annual budget, similar to the reports of stock companies. A fixed percentage of this profit will be paid to the permanent workers and to the officials, with a larger share going to the union. Let us give a practical example. An industry has an annual turnover of ten million marks, thus subdivided:

<i>Salaries</i>	<i>3,200,000</i>
<i>Materials</i>	<i>4,800,000</i>
<i>Social expenditures</i>	<i>1,070,000</i>
<i>Profits</i>	<i>930,000</i>

<i>Total</i>	<i>10,000,000</i>
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Given that the society's expenses, approximately 640,000 marks, or twenty percent, are earmarked for salaries for commercial directors, *Po-liere*, and permanent workers, the total figure for salaries rises to

3,840,000 marks. The ratio between salaries and wages is roughly seventeen percent to eighty-three percent. The profit of 930,000 marks cannot be completely assigned to payments, because every firm operating on a healthy basis must allocate a part of the gross profit, for possible losses in other ventures, for increasing the firm's capital, for making good on guarantees, for the depreciation of industrial plants, etc. Let us say that of the 930,000 marks of gross profits, 280,000 are held in reserve; one could thus count upon a profit of approximately 650,000 marks payable to commercial consultants and workers. Of this profit, approximately seventeen percent, approximately 114,000 marks, would go for compensation to business experts and permanent workers, and eighty-three percent, 540,000 marks, could be earmarked for workers' wages. Assuming an average wage of 2.50 marks per hour, the 3,200,000 marks would represent 1,280,000 working hours. Calculating 268 work days in a year, and seven-and-a-half hours, we obtain 2,000 working hours, or 1,280,000: 2,000 equals 640 workers sharing in the profit.

It has already been said that the payment of the profit shares must take place through the construction union, because it is impossible to gather together all the workers sharing in the earnings, due to their constant mobility. The union, for its part, cannot pay the entire 540,000 marks to the workers, because it must keep for itself a share for its own business activities and for social services.

Let us assume that this share is twenty-five percent; the union can then allocate 405,000 marks out of 540,000 for wages. If the construction industries affiliated with the union were to register, in their annual budget, figures equal to those cited above, the union could enter in a savings deposit for 640 union workers a profit of 405,000 marks, that is, approximately 630 marks for every worker. The calculation of the net profit for every worker must follow these procedures: the construction industry administers a wage account for each union worker, which records the individual payments. The wages paid to each union worker are recorded in his payroll; the worker thus obtains a record of his salary account. Having deducted the costs of management and the physical plants, the union assigns the remaining part of the profit to the individual annual salary.

Another important duty of the union is the organization of a *central list of workers* for all the branches of the industry. With the demise of the conflict between employer and worker, one also sees the end of the decades-old struggle concerning the formation of an officially recognized list of workers. From now on the list of workers is a professional organization without bearing on the municipal administration, and is administered independently by the union.

It is not necessary to explain further why the union must also assume responsibility for the management of the funds for professional aid, for collective services, for workers' insurance, for the sick, the invalid and the aged, for disabled veterans, and for the unemployed. If the author also assigns the task of taxation to the union, it is based on the reasoning that the union possesses a complete overview of the possibilities and the earn-

ings of the industry and of the workers, and can carry out the taxation in the fairest and simplest manner. In fact, the entire operation of imposing and collecting taxes would be greatly facilitated by the aid of the union. In the future, instead of numerous individual taxations, the construction union would be utilized as the sole authority in the collection of taxes.

The administration of industries of common interest, such as brickyards, gravel quarries, saw mills, lime and cement factories, road construction units etc., is conceived of in such a way as not to involve an autonomous union management. These industries must remain private. The fixing of prices and the marketing of the products should be, however subjected to an overall union control, responsible for maintaining a balanced production.

The author also submits professional and superior schools to union control. These schools prepare the new generations of the building industry, whose education must include as much actual practice as possible. This contact with practice has heretofore been too often lacking in professional schools. Above all, schools of every type and level must be reorganized within a single system that will assure the emergence of the most gifted. The present subdivision of the technical schools must be eliminated, in order to pave the way for a reconciliation between manual and intellectual work. Ideally, the union should represent professionally all the workers active in industry, both manual and intellectual. Thus it cannot be compared to our present-day unions, which in fact require membership only on a voluntary basis. The construction union of the future must be an *obligatory organization*, similar to that of the preceding guild associations. This is not the place to discuss whether or not to use the council system (*Rättersystem*) in setting up these construction unions. In any case, its organization does not exclude this system. A *central council* and one of *management* appointed by the central council, are the principal organs of the construction union. Both bodies have the same relationship as the assembly of town councillors has to the magistrate.

The central council makes the decisions, while the managing council carries them out. All workmen and other employees taking part in the construction, both on the site itself and in the office, have the right to vote in the central council, through a general election, direct and secret, based on the proportional system.

An important objection can be raised against an organizational plan for a socialization dependent upon the construction union, which is that the industry, in close collaboration with the union, may come to represent unionist tendencies and cause production costs to increase, because both have a boundless interest in high profits. This objection does not seem plausible to us.

In the economy of the building trades, until today three factors in particular have acted to hinder an increase in prices:

1. *the strong opposition between the interests of employers and those of the workers;*

2. *the absolutely free competition among the firms;*
3. *the free market, which regulated prices through supply and demand.*

It must be admitted that the opposition between employer and worker in socialized industry, although greatly lessened, has not been completely eliminated.

The socialized construction industries will always clash with the demands of the unions, because they are struggling for their very existence, and will examine two or three times over every union demand. The determination of prices can take place only in the closest contact with the general economic situation. Unlimited claims by the union would lead to the closing of the market, and no one would fear that closing more than the union, which for its part must assume the burdens of all the welfare institutions.

For these reasons, I advise the union to take active steps to find means with which to aid the unemployed and to supply workers' insurance, because the union has everything to fear in the event of a neutralizing of the market due to exaggerated demands. Also to be feared is a decline of the products of public utility industries—brickyards, sawmills, cement factories, etc. Further along, it has to be considered that the Land and the Reich, from the point of view of the collectivity, must have an influence on the determination of prices, directly or through the mediation of a workers' association or of an economic parliament. *Free competition* between individual industries must not be eliminated among socialized industries, but must instead be encouraged. These factors would also lead to regulation of prices. To be sure, the community foundation of the industry, in the form of the construction union, will limit influences from the outside.

But today this limitation is already within reach of the association of employers, with the not inconsiderable difference that the union has a vital interest in spurring on individual firms to competition, while the association of employers, to date, has had a limited influence on competition, hindering the lowering of prices by the contractors.

The third factor: the free market remains unvaried, even with socialized industries. Actually, it should be widened, with the establishment of construction industries capable of high-level services, inasmuch as their field of activity, like that of the rest of the industry, should be extended beyond local confines, something that until now has taken place only to a limited degree. The maintenance of the free market is another reason why socialization cannot be furthered through municipalization or nationalization; on the contrary, the individual concern must be protected. The maintenance of industrial activity is also of particular importance for the period of transition.

In this form of socialization, present-day industries can be transformed into socialized industries as smoothly as possible, without impeding the life of the economy. The temporary opposition between the two forms of industry would have a precise and stimulating influence on industrial orga-

nization and would prepare the way to experiences impossible under municipalization or nationalization.

Putting Socialization into Effect

Is the construction industry ripe for socialization? This is a question that will be asked by those who reject socialization. They will say that the construction industry on the whole is not yet sufficiently developed and organized in terms of large-scale capital, to be plucked as the ripe fruit of the tree of the economy.

Our response to this objection is that the entire hypothesis is false, because it is based on a concept of socialization tied up with municipalization and nationalization. The passage from a capitalist individual industry to a socialized individual one does not depend upon an abstract maturity of the enterprise, but on entirely different circumstances. The construction industry is ripe for socialization once the following conditions obtain:

- a. *both manual and intellectual workers must want socialization;*
- b. *the economic result of the socialized construction industry must be at least the equal of capitalist industry;*
- c. *the entire economic situation must call for socialization.*

The author has no doubt that today these three conditions obtain, and that with the socialization of the construction industry, they will continue to develop.

The manual and intellectual workers uninterested in capitalism want socialization. There can be no doubt of this. The profits of the private construction industry have plummeted to such a point—with the increase in salaries on one hand and the lowering of work productivity on the other—that today it operates virtually at a loss. An increase in work productivity, however, cannot be achieved without socialization. We can be pulled out of the present economic depression only through an increase in work productivity, something that does not come about for the interests of the contractor, but for the well-being and advantage of the community. The field of corporative work is predominant in the construction of housing developments and apartments.

In fact, the purpose of its production is that of public use, so much so that for a good deal of time it will still need sizable contributions from the Reich and the municipalities. Thus it is to the utmost interest of society that they continue as fiduciary industries that convert the millions in contributions into work, through an increase in work productivity on rational bases. Particularly important is the elimination of the high middle-man earnings of the private contractor, in a period in which it is almost impossible to draw up binding contracts because of an uncontrollable economic situation.

But must the socialization of the construction industry come about by way of a *complete* or *partial* socialization? The organizational scheme developed above shows a construction industry of complete socialization. The

author is of the opinion that this complete socialization must be *the goal* toward which we aim with all our might. But aiming at this goal does not mean putting the entire field of construction on a new basis overnight. Complete socialization can be achieved only by going through the stages of partial socialization; to do otherwise would mean accepting blindly the risk of catastrophe, learning at a high price and at one's own expense, with bitter disappointments.

Partial socialization is advisable for economic, technical, and tactical reasons: Economic reasons, because the construction of housing developments, already begun, and on a grand scale, could, in the majority of cases, easily crumble in the case of a complete transformation of the industry. This transformation could take place through expropriation and compensation, inasmuch as the Reich and the municipalities do not at present have at their disposition financial means. Technical reasons, because the construction of a socialized construction industry that operates economically must have a specific size and cannot be adapted to the haphazard dimensions and the dispositions of existing industries. It must be well organized from a technological point of view, and be furnished with the finest equipment. Tactical reasons, because partial socialization costs society almost nothing and leads automatically to complete socialization. Just as land speculation crumbles when, for example, the government enters the market by dumping prices, the construction industry organized capitalistically must also move to a different economic terrain, when the socialized construction industry, because of increased work productivity, enters into competition with them.

Another important reason in favor of partial socialization is that the capital invested in presently existing industries will continue to remain more or less in socialized industry, when people are convinced that the socialized form of industry increases and does not diminish profits. Furthermore, it must be remembered that complete socialization can be achieved only through a regulation based on a law that obtains the general approval, which in the absence of practical experience and knowledge would have to be constructed on flimsy theories and in the end would lead to a highly risky experiment. From an economic point of view, it is healthier and more intelligent to prepare a general consensus for socialization by means of a partial socialization, and to gain experience that is valid for all from practical examples conducted in an isolated manner. This method is surely the quickest and surest and presents fewer risks.

One may advance the substantial objection that a partial socialization cannot be achieved. Just as it is impossible to create an island of socialist economy in a capitalist state, it should not be admissible in the public domain to have one or two socialized industries operate near dozens of capitalist industries.

The objection of the socialist island cannot be held for the construction industry. The construction industry does not depend upon foreign commerce, nor does it use a work force or raw materials coming from outside the country. Its field of work has a purely local character.

The socialized industry proposed by the author need not fear the competition of industry organized in a capitalist manner. It is rather the latter that runs the risk of being crushed by the competition. The increase in work productivity and the possible lowering of production costs create a very strong position of power for socialized industry, assuring it victory.

The controlled situation of the economy (state financing of building activity, state control of the raw material market, etc.) is of help to it in this peaceful war. One condition for its success, however, is that construction workers and the unions have faith in partial socialization, and place themselves totally at the service of the initiative. Obviously the period of passage to complete socialization will not fulfill all the dreams of the workers and the unions. But they must realize that every building needs a foundation and that the interior finishings of a house can be begun only when the roof has been built.

The decades of opposition toward Social Democracy in the economic life may have been a tactical necessity. But today we see a rebellion against it, based upon the fact that Social Democracy lacks all the requisites for the realization of its economic objectives. In any event, very few hypotheses for the socialization of the construction industry have sprung from generalized theoretical discussions. Certainly these discussions have too often suffered from a theoretical rigidity, which hindered the practical realization of socialism. In Russia, four important bases of work, hitherto rejected by Social Democracy, have found a practical realization: piecework, scientific management of the enterprise, free competition between industries, and the autonomous management of industry. In his *The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government* (April 1918), Lenin remarks:

The more class-conscious vanguard of the Russian proletariat has already set itself the task of raising labor discipline. This work must be supported and pushed forward with all speed. We must raise the question of work and test it in practice; we must raise the question of applying much of what is scientific and progressive in the Taylor system, we must make wages correspond to the total amount of goods turned out. . . . We must organize in Russia the teaching and the lesson of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our purposes. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. . . . Among the absurdities which the bourgeoisie are fond of spreading about socialism is the argument that Socialists deny the importance of competition. As a matter of fact, it is only socialism that, by abolishing classes, and consequently, by abolishing the enslavement of the masses, for the first time opens the way for competition on a really mass scale. . . . It is much easier to organize this in the political field than in the economic field, but for the success of socialism, it is precisely that latter that is important. . . .

The more resolutely we now have to stand for a ruthlessly firm government, for the dictatorship of individual persons, in definite processes of work . . . the more varied must be the forms and methods of control from

below in order to counteract every shadow of possibility of distorting the Soviet power, in order repeatedly and tirelessly to weed out bureaucracy.

We must learn to combine the "meeting" democracy of the toiling masses—turbulent, surging, overflowing its banks like a spring flood—with iron discipline while at work, with unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader, while at work. We have no yet learned to do this. We shall learn to do so.

Given ideal class consciousness and discipline on the part of those taking part in the common work, this subordination would more than anything remind one of the mild leadership of a conductor of an orchestra. It may assume the sharp forms of a dictatorship if ideal discipline and class consciousness are lacking. But be that as it may, unquestioning submission to a single will is absolutely necessary for the success of labor processes that are based on large-scale machine industry.

For these reasons as well, socialism must procure for itself the highest intelligences, wherever they are to be found, for the direction of its socialized enterprises. The basis for success, for a partial socialization, is capable management along with high artistic, technical, organizational, and economic knowledge. It may certainly be said that the success of socialization is a question of people. Obviously the chiefs who are chosen must, in principle, place themselves on the terrain of the socialist economic system. For the preliminary distribution of positions, however, it will be unnecessary to request a particular political viewpoint. It is the capability that must be the deciding factor. Not even Lenin has been able to ignore this fact. He writes: "Now we have had to resort to the old bourgeois method and to agree to pay a very high price for the 'services' of the biggest bourgeois specialists."

Regarding the practical realization of socialization, one is confronted with the important question: *who must be the responsible legal party of socialized industry?* The forms of socialization proposed by the author exclude the State and the municipalities from legal responsibilities. In the same way, the private contractor cannot be considered such. A community (*Gemeinschaft*) of participants in the industry has to be established.

But the responsible judicial organizations currently existing under law, such as stock companies, limited liability associations, cooperatives, etc., are constituted in a purely capitalistic manner. The possessors of capital are the only ones authorized to make decisions regarding industry. A socialized industry cannot build on this kind of legislative foundation. During the period of transition, however, it will be impossible to set aside the capitalist regulations. It is clear that legal forms must be sought that will lead to equalizing the rights of workers and employers. An industrialist from Basel recently published a proposal in the national newspaper of 8 May. He writes:

If the worker considers his labor power as capital, it is necessary to respond to his expectations, which could be satisfied by considering annual

wages as work capital and making the workers shareholders by means of stocks or dividends. Let us take the case of a stock company with a capital in shares of two million francs and 220 workers, with an average yearly salary of 3,000 francs; the workers would have the right to 660,000 francs' worth of shares in the capital, which could be paid to them in the form of free shares—marked with a W (workers' shares)—neither sellable nor transferable. The outside owners of shares purchased with money—marked with a K (capital shares)—should obviously have the right to receive payment of interest, given that the worker, too, wants above all in return for his labor a payment in money, that is, his salary. . . .

From now on, in order to eliminate any distrust toward the administrative management and the distribution of dividends, the stockholders of series A should be given a certain number of seats in the management council. This collaboration in management is absolutely necessary to eliminate, once and for all, the distrust of the workers toward their employers, and to enable the workers to see, through their direct control, how much is actually earned in toto—surely far less than they believe.

This proposal clearly shows a way to place a barrier on the power of capital in private industry. In the building industry, the series W shares would prevail over those of series K, because the amount paid in salaries should exceed the industrial capital. Although the form of the stock company is particularly suited to the socialized construction industry, it cannot be used without the above-proposed variations regarding the corporative law. If one does not want to render homage to the revision of corporative law, then one may find in the legal system of the limited liability company a form adaptable to the needs of a socialized industry. It is impossible to formulate more precise proposals in this regard, because they must adapt themselves from one instance to the next to different individual relationships. One should not have to run into insurmountable difficulties to find the feasible legal routes, because where there's a will there's a way.

Conclusion

At the meeting of the association of German construction workers in Weimar on 6 May of this year, the following motion was considered regarding the socialization of the construction industries:

The assembly of the association of German construction workers is in agreement with the demand for socialization on the basis of the Social Democratic Erfurt programme, which proposes the socialization of private property as a means of production. To achieve the socialization of the means of production, the assembly requests the transferral of the capitalist industries ready for it to the State and to the municipalities, and the transformation of the political bodies into administrative bodies, on a vast scale, with the complete collaboration of the working class.

The assembly urges the Reich, the Länder and the municipalities to implement these measures as soon as possible.

It is certain that after the transfer of the large capitalist industries of mining, metallurgy, transportation, gas and electricity into the hands of the Reich, the individual Länder, and the municipalities, the construction industry is also ready for a progressive socialization. Above all, the assembly proposes an immediate gearing up of the production of building material for the construction of small apartments under the auspices of individual states and municipalities, and the expropriation of land for low-cost residential building and for new state or municipal construction works.

Inasmuch as the raw materials industry is not yet ripe for nationalization or municipalization, the assembly proposes a state control of these industries and of the market of raw materials.

The assembly realizes that nationalization and municipalization of the means of production can lift Germany out of its present misery only when they have been strengthened by good labor productivity.

One thus expects the members of the association, within state or municipal industries, to work with total dedication for the good of the community.

The assembly authorizes the governing body of the association to take all action necessary to achieve this resolution. To this end, it is necessary to join with the imperial and state authorities, with the representatives of the free organizations of architects, and with the other organizations concerned with the socialization of the construction industry, to explore in detail the possibility of socialization and to support socialization itself.

The representatives of the union emphasize, regarding this resolution, that the construction industry is also ripe for a *progressive* socialization. But they do not say what they mean by this term. The speaker Ellinger admits that for the working class many aspects of the concept of socialization are still unclear.

. . . just as they are unclear to our socialist theoreticians. Something that is certainly understandable, given that the present government and the national assembly have not progressed regarding the question of socialization. As is well known, the majority of the socialists are timid with respect to the realization of socialization.

This admission aptly sums up the current situation: it shows how the problem of socialization can be resolved only in a *practical*, and not *theoretical*, way. Not the theoretician, but the practical man—the engineer, the construction worker, the company manager, the architect, and the contractor—must take over and transform theory into *action*. This goes as well for the last paragraph of the resolution of the association of construction workers, wherein the governing body is delegated to contact the imperial and state authorities, the representatives of the free associations of architects, and other organizations interested in the socialization of the construction industry, to explore in detail the possibilities of socialization and to uphold socialization itself.

The debates at the assembly of Weimar have clearly proved that the problem of socialization cannot be resolved theoretically. Ellinger has dealt with this subject very well in his speech; we are in complete agreement with his views on the problem of putting the plan into effect. Certain of his proposals bear repeating here. He says:

By the term socialization I mean all that can be transformed into social property, every means that separates us from private capitalism and leads us to the socialist society. . . . According to my conception, we already have socialism when we limit the influence of the private contractor in industry and in production, obtaining for the workers greater rights within the production process. Thus by Vergesellschaftung I mean the objective to which we aspire, and by socialization (Sozialisierung) the roads that lead to this objective. As I see it, one question alone should be answered by the pursuit of socialism: what can we obtain from it?

When Ellinger has doubts that "today we already have sufficient strength to achieve socialization according to our desires," we must admit that he is right. Our present strength is certainly not sufficient to achieve complete socialization, although it may be for partial socialization. Ellinger also doubts that our working class today is mature enough for socialization. He is of the belief that the worker must be able to take on an enormous quantity of responsibilities, and be able to comprehend economic relationships, if socialization is not to fail. The author cannot accept this point of view. It would be a fundamental error to make socialized industry from the beginning dependent upon the masses' ability to comprehend economic relationships and upon an increased responsibility on the part of the workers. Control and responsibility should rather be expected from the management of industry. Doctor Otto Reurath expresses it well in his pamphlet *The Field of the Road to Socialization*:

A democratization of industry pushed to the point of entrusting the technical management to workers' councils, and the administration of entire groups of industries to higher committees, will bring about from a technological and social point of view, paralysis of production.

Obviously, the working class in socialized industry must also have a higher sense of responsibility and greater say in determining economic relationships. But these qualities can be taught only in socialized industry, and Heckert is right when, in speaking to the assembly, he states: "Socialization must thus be preceded by socialization of things, and only afterward will socialization of people arrive. The socialist cannot wait until men are ready for it." What men—what workers—must bring to a socialized industry is a sincere faith in this form of industry and in its management. The workers must bring this faith to "their" industries, and the management must earn and sustain this faith through a disinterested and community-minded operation. When Ellinger protests to his colleagues that they have not utilized the labor force productively enough in state and municipal industries, with the result that structures built by the State and by the

cities proved to be far more costly than those built by private contractors, he shows us that communalization and nationalization of the construction industry are *not* organizational forms suited to an efficient socialization. In these organizational forms, the sense of responsibility and of control on the part of both workers and management is lessened, while the administrative and bureaucratic apparatus increases noticeably. And thus, regarding socialization in the construction industry, it is necessary to choose only the form of *individual industry* in which the workers' profits depend upon the yield of their work. The result of the Weimar Congress is the virtually unanimous recognition that the socialization of the construction industry is "of almost unprecedented significance in this present moment of lack of housing, such as Germany has never before experienced." For the majority of the participants it was clear that socialization cannot be achieved overnight, but only step by step. As spokesman for the majority at the assembly, Ellinger said:

In my opinion, the socialization of the construction industry can be begun much more easily than the socialization of other industries because the construction industry is completely independent of foreign influence. All the raw materials for the building industry are found in the home country, apart from small quantities of paints, oils, special woods, etc. The construction industry is also completely independent of foreign competition, something always brought up as a justification against the socialization of the industries of finished products. As a consequence, socialization, even when it fails to provide greater profits than capitalist industry, does not have to fear the industry going into ruin because of foreign competition. A basic premise of socialization is that the working class understand that, as far as it is concerned, in the new societies and in the socialized industries, it must work in the most productive manner. Once this premise is respected, I retain that socialization is possible and I hope that it will be achieved as quickly as possible.

Not even the congress of the association of construction workers has served to clarify the problem of the organization of socialized industry. This clarification can be arrived at only by the experts. The author hopes that with this contribution he has offered a basis for the practical work to be carried on by engineers, architects, workers, and contractors.

Every active Glass Bead Game player naturally dreams of a constant expansion of the fields of the Game until they include the entire universe. Or rather, he constantly performs such expansions in his imagination and his private Games, and cherishes the secret desire for the ones which seem to prove their viability to be crowned by official acceptance. The true and ultimate finesse in the private Games of advanced players consists, of course, in their developing such mastery over the expressive, nomenclatural, and formative factors of the Game that they can inject individual and original ideas into any given Game played with objective historical materials. A distinguished botanist once whimsically expressed the idea in an aphorism: "The Glass Bead Game should admit of everything, even that a single plant should chat in Latin with Lannaeus."

Hermann Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* (New York: Bantam, 1970), p. 124; original edition, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, 1943.

Part Three

The Glass Bead Game

“L’architecture dans le boudoir”

We have repeatedly stressed, in the course of this book, how much working with degraded materials, with refuse and fragments extracted from the banality of everyday life, is an integral part of the tradition of modern art: a magical act of transforming the formless into aesthetic objects through which the artist realizes the longed-for repatriation in the world of things. It is no wonder, then, that the most strongly felt condition, today, belongs to those who realize that, in order to salvage specific values for architecture, the only course is to make use of “battle remnants,” that is, to redeploy what has been discarded on the battlefield that has witnessed the defeat of the avant-garde. Thus the new “knights of purity” advance onto the scene of the present debate brandishing as banners the fragments of a utopia that they themselves cannot confront head-on. The avant-garde entrenches itself all over again in nostalgia, and the about-face we have witnessed in the last works of Eisenstein returns to become a present-day reality.

Today, he who wishes to make architecture speak is thus forced to resort to materials devoid of all meaning; he is forced to reduce to degree zero every ideology, every dream of social function, every utopian residue. In his hands, the elements of the modern architectural tradition are all at once reduced to enigmatic fragments—to mute signals of a language whose code has been lost—shoved away haphazardly in the desert of history. In their own way, the architects who from the late fifties until today have tried to reconstruct a universe discourse for their discipline have felt obliged to resort to a new “morality of restraint.” But their purism and their rigorism are those of someone who is aware that he is committing a desperate action whose only justification lies in itself. The words of their vocabulary, gathered from the lunar wasteland remaining after the sudden conflagration of their grand illusions, lie precariously on that slanting sur-

face that separates the world of reality from the solipsism that completely encloses the domain of language.

It is precisely several of these salvage operations that we wish the language of criticism to confront: after all, to historicize such deliberately antihistorical projects means nothing more than to reconstruct, as rigorously as possible, the system of ambiguity of metaphors that are too clearly problematic to be left isolated as disquieting monads.

We must immediately point out that we have no intention of reviewing recent architectural trends. We shall, instead, focus attention on a few particularly significant attitudes, questioning ourselves about the specific tasks that criticism must assume in confronting each case. It is necessary, however, to bear in mind that every analysis that seeks to grasp the structural relations between the specific forms of recent architectural writing and the universe of production of which they are functions requires doing violence to the object of analysis itself. Criticism, in other words, finds itself forced to assume a "repressive" character, if it wishes to liberate all that which is beyond language; if it wishes to bear the brunt of the cruel autonomy of architectural writing; if it wishes, ultimately, to make the "mortal silence of the sign" speak.

As has been perceptively pointed out, to Nietzsche's question "Who speaks?" Mallarmé answered "The Word itself."¹ This would seem to preclude any attempt to question language as a system of meanings whose underlying discourse it is necessary to "reveal." Therefore, wherever contemporary architecture ostensibly poses the problem of its own meaning, we can discern the glimmering of a regressive utopia, even if it simulates a struggle against the institutional functions of language. This struggle becomes evident when we consider how, in the most recent works, the compositional rigorism hovers precariously between the forms of "commentary" and those of "criticism."

The most striking example of this is the work of the British architect James Stirling. Kenneth Frampton, Reyner Banham, Mark Girouard, Alvin Boyarsky, Joseph Rykwert, and Charles Jencks have all contributed to the difficult task of determining the meaning of Stirling's enigmatic and ironic use of the "quotation."² But in some of his more recent works such as the headquarters of the Siemens A.G. near Munich, the Olivetti Training Centre in Haslemere, and the housing development for Runcorn New Town, one has wanted to detect a change of direction, a breaking away from the disturbing composition of constructivist, futurist, Paxtonian, and Victorian memories of his university buildings at Leicester, Cambridge, and Oxford and of the Civic Center designed with Leon Krier for Derby.³ And yet, the parabola covered by Stirling does possess a high degree of internal coherence. It clearly demonstrates the consequences of reducing the architectural object to a syntax in transformation, to a linguistic process that wishes, nevertheless, to challenge the tradition of the Modern Movement, that is, to be measured against a body of work strongly compromised in an "antilinguistic" sense. Stirling has rewritten the "words"

of modern architecture, constructing an authentic "archaeology of the present."

Let us examine the design of the Civic Center in Derby. An ambiguous and wry dialogue with history is established by the old Assembly Hall façade, tilted at a forty-five degree angle and serving as the proscenium for the theatrelike space created by the U-shaped gallery. In fact, the entire architecture of Stirling has this "oblique" character. The shopping arcade at Derby echoes the Burlington Arcade in London. But it also recalls the bridge of Pyrex glass tubing in the Johnson Wax Building by Frank Lloyd Wright and, even more strongly, an architectural scheme that was never built nor even designed: the shopping arcade in the form of a circular Crystal Palace, which, according to the description of Ebenezer Howard, was to have surrounded the central space of the ideal Garden City. In fact, the Civic Center in Derby is also an urban "heart." Except that it is part of a real city, not a utopian model, and, consequently, the allusion to Paxton takes on the flavor of a disenchanting but timely *repêchage*.

Unlike Kevin Roche and I. M. Pei, for whom every formal gesture is a hedonistic wink addressed to the spectator, Stirling has revealed the possibility of an endless manipulation of the grammar and the syntax of architectural signs, exercising with extreme coherence the formalist procedures of contrast and opposition: the rotation of axes, the montage of antithetical materials, and the use of technological distortions.⁴ With Stirling's work a new *ars rhetorica* is installed at the heart of an investigation that has very little to do with those of Denis Lasdun or Leslie Martin, both of whom are also committed to employing hermetic metaphors under the sign of a self-satisfied "Englishness." Stirling's "symbolism," in fact, is based upon the extenuation of form, an extenuation that, as in his most recent works, can very well reach the point of deforming language, of exhausting it. But it always remains an exhaustion that stops short of a complete shattering of language. The works of Stirling are "texts," not explosions of an imaginary utopia. The results of such an operation of controlled *bricolage* can be seen in a metaphoric reference to one of the subjects most dear to the English architect: the architecture of ships.

"A dream with marine associations" is how Kenneth Frampton has accurately described the Leicester University Engineering Laboratory, a virtual iceberg that navigates in the sea of the park in which it is casually placed, according to a mysterious course.⁵ And even though Stirling does not seem to enjoy the "fishing for references" on the part of the critic, the porthole that emerges ironically from the podium of the laboratories at Leicester, alongside the jutting Melnikovian halls, would seem to confirm that constructivist poetics are one of his occasional sources—an all-too-obvious reference to the design for the Palace of Labour (1923) by the Vesnin brothers. But the theme of the ship returns, this time freighted with literary allusions, in the terracing, in the overall organization, and in the planning of the common passageways of the Andrew Melville Hall of St. Andrews University. It is again Frampton who observes that here the naval metaphor has a deeper meaning:⁶ the ship, like the phalanstery, is

the symbol of a community will that proves unattainable. (Is it mere coincidence that the fourth meeting of CIAM was held aboard a ship?) The ship, the monastery, and the phalanstery are thus equivalent; in striving to reach a perfectly integrated community, they isolate themselves from the world. Le Corbusier and Stirling seem—at La Tourette and St. Andrews respectively—to set forth a painful discovery: social utopia is only worthwhile as a literary document and can enter into architecture only as an element, or better, as a pretext. The dynamic atmosphere of the English “angry young men” of the fifties and of the Independent Group, of which Stirling was a member from 1952 to 1956, thus has a coherent result. Stirling’s articulation of language, based on the interweaving of complex syntactic valences and ambiguous semantic references, also includes the “function,” the existential dimension of the work. The problem is that it deals only with a “virtual function” and not an effective function. Andrew Melville Hall “represents” in theatrical form the space of community integration that—from the Spangen superblock (1912–21) of Michael Brinckman to the Narkomfin housing project (1927) of Moisei Ginzburg, to the postwar plans of Le Corbusier and of Alison and Peter Smithson, to the construction of the Park Hill residential complex (1957–65) in Sheffield and the Robin Hood Gardens complex (1960–64) in London⁷—the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement had hoped to make *act* as a nucleus of social precipitation.

Suspending the public destined to use his buildings in the limbo of a space that oscillates between the emptiness of form and a “discourse on function”—that is, architecture as an autonomous machine, as is announced in the library of the history faculty building at Cambridge and made explicit in the project for the Siemens A.G.—Stirling executes the cruelest operation possible by violating the sacred canons of the semantic universe of the modern tradition. Neither attracted nor repelled by the autonomous articulation of Stirling’s formal machines, the spectator is compelled, in spite of himself, to recognize that this architecture does indeed speak a language of its own, one that is, however, perversely closed within itself. It is impossible to participate in this language “by living it”; instead, one can only tread water or swim in it, forced into a vacillating course, itself just as vacillating as the sadomasochistic game the architect plays with his linguistic materials. Stirling, usually so reluctant to “explain” his own architecture, confirms these last observations in some notes written in 1974 as an outline for a lecture delivered at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh:

The combination of neutral forms and significant forms, sometimes focusing on a central significant point with neutral extensions (Olivetti Training Centre), or vice versa (Andrew Melville Hall, St. Andrews), sometimes placing a projection that “acts as a façade” against a neutral background, even when an urban context is involved (Civic Center, Derby; the Arts Centre, St. Andrews). The ‘causal’ exhibition of maintenance tools, such as ladders, tracks, cranes, etc.⁸

Neutral forms juxtaposed against evocative images, then, and attributions of semantic depth—the “casual exhibition”—to accessories elevated to the rank of protagonists: a full-fledged poetics of the *objet trouvé* is contained in the words of Stirling, who confirms his intention to “clear away” the traditional logic of structures in order to allow them to fluctuate in a metaphysical play.⁹ This claim is borne out by the close reading, deliberately confined to the syntactic level, that Peter Eisenman has performed on the Leicester Engineering Building.¹⁰ According to Eisenman, Stirling carries out at Leicester a systematic “conceptual destruction”: where the nature of the materials seems to call for a “full” iconic figure—the laboratory tower, composed of brick cut into by bands of raked glass windows—Stirling reduces the solid volume to a paper-thin surface; where the glass would seem to suggest a dematerialization—the block of sheds or the office tower—he treats the glass as a prism, thereby making it contradict its “natural” evanescence. Thus a process of erosion appears to pervade the “strong” forms—typical is the handling of the cement columns of the office tower, emphasized just at the point at which they are about to be absorbed by the glass prism—whereas the “weak” forms undergo an inversion of their function. But in the cantilevered struts that support the body of the sheds, this play of programmatic inversions reveals itself in all its ironic force: their “literal void,” as Eisenman points out,¹¹ is, at the same time, a “conceptual solid.”

Eisenman contends that the writing of the building for Leicester University represents a unicum in the work of Stirling and cannot be placed in a “historical continuum” with the writings employed by him at Cambridge or Oxford.¹² And yet, all of Stirling’s work takes place under the sign of *distortion*. That which at Leicester appears the product of conceptual inversion takes form elsewhere as the opposition between linguistic elements and the context, an opposition no less polemical than those inversions. The problem is always how to mediate the hermetic metaphors, intrinsic to the finds uncovered by his archaeological excavations of the tradition, and their assemblage. Not only in the Florey Building at Oxford, but also in the projects for the Olivetti headquarters in Milton Keynes, the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, and the Landesgalerie Nordrein-Westfalen in Düsseldorf,¹³ the reassemblage follows two seemingly divergent laws: on the one hand, it imitates the mechanical world; on the other, it reduces the formal assemblages, obtained by the accumulation of forms, to a succession of “events.” The “casual exhibition” is not limited to secondary elements, but applies as well to principal structures. The *objets trouvés* are set into astonishing juxtapositions, either through their surreal encounter with the landscape—the Olivetti headquarters in Milton Keynes—or their no less surreal encounter with preexisting seventeenth-century and Victorian structures—the Arts Centre of St. Andrews University or the Olivetti Training Centre in Haslemere. Here irony turns into self-irony, as if to demonstrate that a rewriting based on fragments of other texts requires the use of a hieroglyphics whose code can be cracked only by a chain of subjective associations.

This explains in large part why many of Stirling's formal machines appear to be crystalized in the moment of their collapse. The projects for Selwyn College, for the Florey Building, for the Olivetti headquarters at Haslemere assume the aspect of structures violated and fixed by a photographic lens an instant before their explosion. The aggregation follows, then, the path of uncertainty and alliteration. Like Raymond Roussel, Stirling is imprisoned within the chains of associations evoked by the "available words" selected by him: in this light, the frequent references to the architecture of Hawksmoor take on a new significance.¹⁴

Commentary and criticism, as we have previously mentioned, prove to be superimposed in such an operation. Commentary takes the form of a repetition desperately in search of the origins of signs; criticism takes the form of an analysis of the functions of the signs themselves, once that search for the pristine meaning of signs has been abandoned. The operation carried out by Stirling is exemplary: it condemns the utopia inherent to the attempt to salvage an architecture as "discourse." In this light, the criticisms that are constantly leveled at Stirling in the name of functionalism are at the same time correct and unwarranted.¹⁵ Once having artificially reconstructed the autonomous system of linguistic structures, these criticisms can only play themselves out in an interplay of tensions between the world of signs and the real world.

All of this leads us back to our initial problem: in what manner does criticism become compromised in such a "perverse play," under whose ambiguous sign the entire course of modern architecture wavers? At the origins of the critical act, there always lies a process of destroying, of dissolving, of disintegrating a given structure. Without such a disintegration of the object under analysis—as we have already made clear in the introduction to this book—no further rewriting of the object is possible. And it is self-evident that no criticism exists that does not retrace the process that has given birth to the work and that does not redistribute the elements of the work into a different order, if for no other purpose than to construct typological models. But here criticism begins what might be called its "doubling" of the object under analysis. The simple linguistic analysis of architecture that confines itself to speaking only of the work's status as language laid bare would result in mere description. Such an analysis would be unable to break the magic circle that the work has drawn around itself, and, consequently, it would only be able to manipulate the very process by which the text produces itself, thereby repeating the laws of this productivity. The sole external referent of such a completely "intrinsic" reading of the object under analysis would have to be found in the gaps, in the interstices of the linguistic object. Thus, this "doubling" engendered by criticism must go beyond the mere construction of a "second language" to be kept floating above the original text, as theorized by Barthes and realized by Stirling.¹⁶

The discourse on language requires still further elaboration. Criticism must determine with precision its tasks with regard to architectural proposals that fold in upon themselves, that refer to and reflect themselves, if

only because today they are the most apparent. We arrive at the limit-case: wherein the nonlinguistic residues in the architecture of Stirling and Louis Kahn—those aspects of the real world that have not been converted into form—are suddenly eliminated; wherein the absolute presence of form renders “scandalous” the presence of chance—and even that expression *par excellence* of chance, human behavior. The work of Rossi is an excellent litmus paper for checking the effects of a problematic that inexorably divides the entire course of contemporary art.¹⁷ Rossi answers the poetics of ambiguity of a John Johansen, of a Charles Moore, or of a Robert Venturi with the freeing of architectural discourse from all contact with the real, from all incursions by chance or by the empirical into its totally structured system of signs.

The “scandal” of Stirling’s architecture is constituted by man, as he is forced to ricochet between architecture as pure object and the redundancy of hermetic messages, deranged by a “rhetoric of interruption.” The architecture of Aldo Rossi eliminates such a scandal. Its reliance upon form excludes all justifications from outside. The distinctive features of architecture are inserted into a world of rigorously selected signs, within which the law of exclusion dominates. From the monument of Segrate (1965) to the projects for the cemetery in Modena (1971) and for student housing in Chieti (1976), Rossi elaborates an alphabet of forms that rejects all facile articulation. As the abstract representation of the inflexibility of its own arbitrary law, it makes artifice into its own domain. By such means, this architecture reverts to the structural nature of language itself. By deploying a syntax of emptied signs, of programmed exclusions, of rigorous limitations, it reveals the inflexibility of the arbitrary—the false dialectic between freedom and norm inherent to the linguistic order.

The emptied sign is also the instrument of the metaphysics of De Chirico, of the oneiric realism of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, and of the mute enigma projected onto the object by the Ecole du Regard.¹⁸ “The world is neither significant nor absurd”—writes Robbe-Grillet, placing himself anachronistically *before* Weber, Wittgenstein, and Mies—“It is, quite simply. . . . And suddenly the obviousness of this strikes us with irresistible force.” This gives rise to the poetics of the inhuman declaimed with a contradictory anguish, barely disguised: “to construct from nothing a world that stands on its own feet without having to lean on anything external to the work.” With these three attempts, Rossi has in common only a sort of frustrated nostalgia for the structures of communication. But for him it is a communication that has nothing to speak about except the finite character of language as a closed system.¹⁹ As we have previously noted, Mies van der Rohe had already experimented with the language of emptiness and silence—the *unio mystica* of solipsism. But for Mies, the reification of the sign still occurred in the presence of the real, that is, in direct confrontation with the “swamp of the cities.” In Rossi’s work, however, the categorical imperative of the absolute estrangement of form is in effect, to the point of creating an emptied sacrality: an experience of fundamental immobility and of the eternal recurrence of geometri-

cal emblems reduced to ghosts.²⁰ There is a specific reason for this phenomenon. The result at which Rossi arrives is that of demonstrating, conclusively, that his removal of form from the sphere of the quotidian is forced continually to circumnavigate the central point from which communication springs forth, without being able to draw from that primary source. This is not so because of any incapacity on the part of the architect, but rather because that "center" has been historically destroyed, because that "source" has been dispersed into multiple streams, each without beginning or end. It is precisely this "revelation" that Rossi's architecture seems to offer; the superimposition of the triangular hollow on the emptied cube, in the courtyard of the De Amicis School (1971) in Broni, is clearly emblematic of this. Around those "cuttlefish bones" circles the question that they disdainfully drive away from themselves.

If a neo-Enlightenment attitude is discernible in Rossi, it can be understood as a mode of compensating for the irreparable act perpetrated in the eighteenth century: the fragmentation of the "order of discourse." Only the ghost of that lost order can be held up today. And the accusations of "fascism" hurled at Rossi mean nothing, given that his attempts to recover an aristocratic ahistorical status for forms preclude naïve verbalizations of content and all compromise with the real.²¹ Through such attempts, this research loses itself in one last endeavor to save a humanistic ordinance for architecture. The thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his typological research does not lead to the "reestablishment of the discipline," but rather to its dissolution, thereby confirming *in extremis* the tragic recognition of Georg Simmel and György Lukács: "a form that preserves and is open to life, does not occur."²² In his search for the Being of architecture, Rossi discovers that only the "limit" of *Being there* is expressible.

This gives rise to a theoretical result of fundamental importance, one that has, in fact, been taken for granted by contemporary culture, but that is continually laid aside. The rejection of the naïve manipulation of forms, maintained by Rossi, concludes a debate that was fought personally by Loos in his early years and that in Karl Kraus has its strongest spokesman. Kraus writes in 1914:

In these great times, which I knew when they were small, which will become small again, provided they have time left for it . . . in these loud times, which boom with the horrible symphony of deeds that produce reports, and of reports that cause deeds; in these unspeakable times, you should not expect any word of my own from me—none but these words which barely manage to prevent silence from being misinterpreted. Respect for the immutability, the subordination of language before this misfortune is too deeply rooted in me. In the empires bereft of imagination, where man is dying of spiritual starvation while not feeling spiritual hunger, where pens are dipped in blood and swords in ink, that which is not thought must be done, but that which is only thought is inexpressible. Expect from me no word of my own. Nor should I be capable of saying anything new; for in the room where someone writes the noise is so

great, and whether it comes from animals, from children, or merely from mortars shall not be decided now. He who addresses deeds violates both word and deed, and is twice despicable. This profession is not extinct. Those who now having nothing to say because it is the turn of deeds to speak, talk on. Let him who has something to say step forward and be silent!²³

If it is turn of deeds to speak, then nothing else remains except to let deeds speak and to preserve in silence the holy ark of great values: of these—Kraus, Loos, and Tessenow all agree on this—“one cannot speak,” at least not without contaminating them. Loos expresses it clearly. Only that which evades life can elude the refusal to speak through architecture: *the monument* (the artificial creation of a collective memory, the true “parallel action” of men “without qualities”) and *the tomb* (the illusion of a universe beyond death).²⁴ One can construct such virtual spaces, only in the service of virtual, that is, illusory functions.

It is useless to dismiss Kraus and Loos from such considerations with too much haste, while it is even more harmful to make Kraus and Loos serve as the introit to the thought of Wittgenstein.²⁵ He who must “step forward” to “be silent” certainly has nothing in common with the lapidary proposition seven of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*: “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” If the Krausian critique of language is only a *beginning*, if it is still part of the *ethical* sphere, it is also true that its lucidity—“I am only one of the late followers, who inhabits the old house of Language”—makes Kraus “our contemporary” by virtue of its excessiveness. Much more Krausian than one thinks is the caustic irony of the “architects without architecture,” or the silent manipulators of their own modesty. Contemporary architecture, in fact, is far too fascinated with not wanting or not knowing how to decide whether the noise that enters the room “comes from animals, from children, or merely from mortars” not to follow Kraus’s ineluctable command to make out of keeping silent the new, last word. It is certainly true, as Brecht cruelly remarked in *On the Rapid Fall of an Ignoramous*, that Kraus always “spoke about the ice at the North Pole to those who already were cold” or showed “how useless is the desire to proclaim the truth when one does not know what is true.” And yet, our neo-avant-gardes, more or less knowingly, operate today *under the sign of Kraus*. This obliges us to come to terms with their “indecent” fascination.

“The word is indecent”: Hugo von Hofmannstahl had come to this conclusion already in his youth, only to repeat it later in *The Difficult Man* (1918). In the *Letter to Lord Chandos* (1902), he declared: “In truth, the language in which I would have wished not only to write but also to think is not Latin, nor English, Italian, or Spanish, but the *language in which mute things speak to me* and in which perhaps one day from the tomb I will be able to exculpate myself in front of an unknown judge.” The language in which “mute things” speak is the one spoken by the “islands of

the air" that Hofmannstahl writes about in *Andreas*: it is the language that Rossi would like to hear and *to make heard*.

The ineffable attracts all the more strongly the less we are conscious that words which are unpronounceable and yet utterable "do not produce," precisely because they cancel—by wishing to make it manifest—the *mystical* of Wittgenstein. For this reason, the late followers who delude themselves into thinking themselves able to inhabit "the old house of Language" believe that the "return to nature"—the *triste tropiques* of Aldo van Eyck or the landscapes inhabited by the *silent witnesses* of Hejduk—involves, as an inevitable consequence, biting into the apple of knowledge offered by an Eve eager to accept the serpent's invitation. They find themselves "beyond good and evil," and for their mute writing, the "beyond" is proposition seven. The wearing out of material suffered by Klimt, by Mahler, by Mies has apparently taught them nothing. Or better, they think they can remain in that state of suspended animation which accompanies that wearing out. But if the long voyages of no return that, from Piranesi to Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, mark the stages of the long goodbye to the ancient homeland of certitudes have enabled us to recognize the *necessity of the lie*, it would be a grave error to mistake for one's new "duty" the standing at the edge of the dock to wave goodbye perpetually to the "friend" who is leaving. To split oneself in two, to make oneself at the same time the friend who departs and the friend who remains behind: and yet, this is certainly not the plurality to accept or, at any rate, not the one to celebrate. However, it is also useless to hand lighted matches to a man who is freezing. The instancy of form is nothing but such a "match": time consumes it rapidly, without offering an *Erlebnis* to redeem the suffering.

The aforementioned statement by Lukács, at this point, could very well be inverted: the space of life, of time as it is actually experienced, excludes the space of form or, at least, holds it constantly in check. In the Gallarate Quarter in Milan, in opposition to the moderated expressionism of Carlo Aymonino, who articulates his residential blocks as they converge upon the hub of the open-air theatre in a complex play of artificial streets and tangles, Rossi sets the hieratic purism of his geometric block, which is kept aloof from every ideology, from every utopian proposal for a "new lifestyle."

The complex designed by Aymonino wishes to underscore each solution, each joint, each formal artifice. Aymonino declaims the language of superimposition and of complexity, in which single objects, violently yoked together, insist upon flaunting their individual role within the entire "machine." These objects of Aymonino's are full of "memories." And yet, quite significantly, Aymonino, by entrusting to Rossi the design for one of the blocks in this quarter, seems to have felt the need to stage a confrontation with an approach utterly opposed to his own, that is, with a writing in which memory is contracted into hieratic segments. It is here that we find, facing the proliferation of Aymonino's signs, the *absolute sign* of

Rossi, involuntarily and cunningly captured by the play of that proliferation.

The position taken by Kraus and Loos is not negated; it is only rendered more ambiguous. Since it is the turn of deeds to speak, form may keep silent: the new word, the "eternal lament," is condensed into allusive symbols. The coexistence of objects, heaped together in constructivist fashion and obstinately forced to communicate impossible meanings, and a mute object, closed within its equally obstinate timidity, recapitulates in an exemplary fashion the entire "drama" of modern architecture. Architecture, once again, has fashioned a discourse on itself. But, this time, in an unusual way: as a dialogue, that is, between two different modes of architectural writing that arrive at the same result. Not by chance, in the *liceo* in Pesaro, Aymonino pays homage to his silent friend. The noise of Aymonino and the silence of Rossi: two ways of declaiming the guttural sounds of the yellow giants in which, as we have already noted, Kandinsky had personified the "new angels" of mass society.

These observations are validated by a significant document: the illustration presented by Aldo Rossi at the Biennial of Venice in 1976, a graphic metaphor of his theory of the "analogous city." For that matter, Rossi had already accustomed us to evaluate as formal machines designs based on the combinatory manipulation of real and ideal places.²⁶ Analogical thought as an archaic symbolism only expressible through dehistoricized images? And why, now, such a belated proposal for an itinerary in the labyrinth of an urban dream, within which the fragment of a Renaissance treatise is equivalent to an eighteenth-century design or to one of Rossi's?

Even for Rossi's "analogous city," there is no real "site." Beneath the composition, there could very well appear the inscription, scrawled in childish handwriting, *ceci n'est pas une ville*, which would produce the same discursive slippage that occurs in Magritte's *Pipe*.²⁷ Nothing else remains except to play out the game proposed by the architect, throwing oneself into the deciphering and the recognition of the elements of his puzzle. As logbooks of elliptical voyages into *temps passé*, the montages of Aldo Rossi renew the desire for an ecumenical embrace with the dreamt-of reality. Yet such a wish to take in the whole of reality—object and subject, history and memory, the city as structure and the city as myth—expresses a state of mind that Michelstaedter has defined as "the anxiety of the persecuted beast." The "colossal humming" coming from the social machine (is it not the same noise heard by Kraus?), "which creaks in all its joints . . . but does not breakdown [because] this is its way of being, and there is no change in this smog,"²⁸ provokes, in the interlocuter of the *Dialogue on Health*, written by Michelstaedter in 1910, the anguishing question: "How can this cursed smog be broken through?" The answer offered by the Triestine writer is concise and concedes no alternatives either to the aloof *flâneur*, deluded into thinking he can pose as a "new Baudelaire," or to the man who would "save himself" by making his own stream of consciousness into the object of his own voyeurism:

*Do you understand? The path is no longer a path, because paths and ways are the eternal flowing and colliding together of things that are and things that are not. But health belongs to the man who 'subsists' in the midst of all this; who lets his own need, his own desire flow through himself and still 'subsists'; who even if a thousand arms seize him and try to drag him along with them still 'subsists,' and through his own stability imparts stability to others. He has nothing to keep from others and nothing to ask from them, since for him there is no future, because nothing 'awaits.'*²⁹

"Subsisting" is thus elevated into a symbol for the contemplation of pain: the course of the real is immutable, but in such an acceptance of suffering, in such a negation of utopian alternatives, there lives the *duty of being aware*. Of this "duty"—the highest expression of upper-middle-class introspection—perhaps only Mies, in the architecture of our century, speaks by making of silence a mirror. Such a road excludes every further "voyage." Why take a "path that is no longer a path," especially if it only leads to self-description?³⁰ If, as Rossi has written,³¹ "the lucidity of the design is always and only the lucidity of thought," there is no longer any room for those disturbing heterotopias that "shatter and entangle common names." Rossi, in his allegory of the "analogous city," attempts a magical operation: to unite the declaration of his own "subsisting" to a dried-up nostalgia. *Trieste and a Woman* is how he titles in 1974 his own project for the regional building in Trieste, explicitly alluding to those aspects of the city immortalized by Umberto Saba. But the Trieste of Saba had already been set into crisis by Svevo. The "woman" of Rossi is the Angiolina that Emilio creates for himself as a lie in *Senilità* (*As a Man Grows Older*). In this sense, the "subsisting" of Aldo Rossi is, contradictorily, in desperate search of a place in which to deposit its own "stability."

That such a place should be the labyrinth of "many beauties" gathered together in an ideal montage has an equally contradictory meaning. It indicates the need of a public to which to "ask something" and from which to expect responses. It is necessary to restore these reciprocal roles to their rightful places. It behoves one not to respond to those who seek a conscious "stability," yet actually wish at all costs to solicit assent. The keeping silent of criticism means, in such a case, rejecting the fragility of the poet, who expresses, *coram populo*, his own desire to stretch himself out, in front of his public, on a comforting Freudian couch.

To expose oneself even more than Rossi has done means to transfer architecture into a realm dominated by the "Icarus complex"; it means renewing Breton's dream of a purity entrusted to a waiting without hope. But then architecture would have to levitate, to take off and fly, like the *pliancy* of Malevich, like the *Letatlin*, like the utopian projects of Krutikov, or like, with greater coherence, the oneiric landscapes of Massimo Scolari.

Having lost its roots, the *contaminatio* between architectural graphics and dream deposited on paper indicates, in Scolari's work, that the "dwell-

ing" place no longer is the city. The detailed watercolors of Scolari reveal neither the cynical play of Koolhaas nor the utopian tensions of the Krier brothers. Writing is everything in them; therefore, they speak of nothingness. The architectural landscape lives on as a private memory within which forms regain, without the use of subterfuges, a Kantian "beauty without purpose." Such coherence has an unquestionable critical value, even if it does not coincide with the one spelled out by the author:³² it demonstrates that the incessant transformation of language, in the absence of matter—once the "spirit of the old mole" has been accepted³³—is presented solely as an evocation of *autres* labyrinths. One can exit from these labyrinths only by agreeing to "sully oneself" without restraint; the anxiety of purity is completely dissipated in them. Even the *boudoir* of Scolari is crowded with portraits of De Sade, but there is no place in it for the De Sade of Bataille.

Throughout this discussion, we have deliberately intertwined the analysis of specific phenomena with the search for a correct use of the instruments of critical inquiry. The examples chosen have proven useful precisely because in confronting them the very function of criticism becomes problematic and because, as limit-cases, they encompass a great part of the current debate on architectural language, as it extends from the work of Louis Kahn to that of the American neo-avant-gardes and of the Italian experimentalists such as Vittorio De Feo, Franco Purini, and Vittorio Gregotti.³⁴

In writing about De Feo, Dal Co has spoken of "architecture as a suspended form."³⁵ And, in fact, the works of De Feo oscillate between the creation of virtual spaces and mannered typological exercises. The experimentation w
concern. From the project for the new House of Representatives in Rome, devised with the Stass Group (1967), to the Technical School at Terni (1968–74), the competition for an Esso service station (1971), and the project for the new communal theatre in Forlì (1976), De Feo treats geometry as a primary element to be made to clash with the chosen functional order. Compared with the purism of Rossi, the architecture of De Feo certainly appears more empirical and more open to chance. However, in its attempt to lay bare the intrinsic qualities of form, his architecture possesses a self-critical and self-ironic force that manifests itself most clearly in the exorbitant Pop image, in which the exasperated geometric play of the project for the Esso station is resolved. One can detect a warning here: once form has been "liberated," the geometric universe becomes the site of the most uncontrollable "adventure."

Certainly, similar works come about historically from reflections upon the new thematics introduced by Louis Kahn; but, in the particular case of the Italians, the exploration of linguistic instruments is conducted without any mystic aura and without any misplaced faith in the charismatic power of institutions. We find ourselves, therefore, faced with an apparent paradox. Those who concentrate on linguistic experimentation have lost the old illusions about the innovative powers of communication. Yet by accepting the relative autonomy of syntactic research, they must then own up to the

proaches, applicable to predetermined situations. It is useless then to ask if their "neopurist" tendencies are actual or not.³⁹ As instances of the barring of linguistic structures, they are asked simply to be rigorous in their absolute ahistoricity. Only in this way can their nostalgic isolation be neutralized, thereby permitting the recognition of the necessity of their estrangement to emerge from those meticulous exercises. (A recognition, by the way, that would never spring from the self-satisfied stylistic gestures of Philip Johnson or from the equally self-satisfied fragmentism of Paul Rudolph.)

But what is the meaning of this isolation of pure *design*, not only, or not so much, for the latest work of Stirling and Gregotti—which is "obligated" to it—but rather for the work of Rossi, Scolari, the Kriers, Pichler, Purini, Hejduk, and Eisenman? Leo Castelli, in New York, immediately seized the opportunity to merchandize the images consigned to the sheets on which our "untimely ones" deposited "images as deeds." Those *designs* wish to resist the attack of time; they demonstrate in their absoluteness the sole possibility of "narrating clearly." In this sense, they are *texts in which form lies inert*; it "reposes"; it narrates its own fractures attempting to possess them totally. They do not represent "interrupted architectures," but rather universes that attempt to heal the radical rift that Le Corbusier had originally established between painting and constructing. Now, the "clear narration"—which Graves and Stirling renounce voluntarily—is there to declare that real differences are expressible only at the price of an absolute reification. The path taken by Lissitzky with the *Proun* is thus followed in reverse.

Let us try to synthesize the argument made so far. It requires a specific reading of the languages under examination as well as a use of diverse critical approaches. For example, in treating the work of Stirling and Gregotti, it is necessary to refer to technological aesthetics and to information theory, for they prove to be instruments essential to a full understanding of the rationale behind the semantic distortions employed by both architects. But information theory sheds very little light on Rossi's study of typological invariants, especially since Rossi's formalism seems to want to contest the original formulation of linguistic formalism by Shklovsky and Eichenbaum.

To dismantle and reassemble the geometric metaphors of "the compositional rigorists" may prove an endless game, which may even become useless when, as in the case of Peter Eisenman, the process of assemblage is all too explicit and presented in a highly didactic form. In the face of such products, the task of criticism is to begin from within the work only to break out of it as quickly as possible in order not to remain caught in the vicious circle of a language that speaks only of itself, in order not to participate guiltily in the "infinite entertainment" that it promises.

Clearly, the problem of criticism is of another order. We do not give credence to the artificial "New Trends" attributed to contemporary architecture.⁴⁰ But there is little doubt that a widespread attitude does exist that is intent upon reclaiming the dimension of the object and its character as

unicum by removing it from its economic and functional contexts; by marking it as an exceptional—and thus surreal—event by placing it between parentheses within the flux of “things” generated by the system of production. One could describe such acts as an *architecture dans le boudoir*. And not simply because, as we have already emphasized in treating the opposed but complementary examples represented by the work of Stirling and Rossi, we find ourselves facing an “architecture of cruelty”—the cruelty of language as a system of exclusions—but further because the magic circle drawn around linguistic experimentation reveals a significant affinity with the structural rigor of the texts of the Marquis De Sade. “Where sex is involved, everything must speak of sex”: that is, the utopia of eros in Sade culminates in the discovery that the maximum liberty leads to the maximum terror and indifference, while that utopia itself remains completely inscribed within the supreme constriction of the inflexible geometric structures of narrativity. But as we have already pointed out with respect to Piranesi, this means making nonlinguistic forces break into the domain of language. And yet the *boudoir* of the great new writers of architecture, however well furnished with mirrors and instruments of pleasure it may be, is no longer the place where the maximum degree of “virtuous wickedness” is consummated. The modern libertines become horrified when faced with the theme of the inflexibility of the limit. Their vivisections are performed after they have skillfully anesthetized the patients. The torturer now works in padded operating rooms; the *boudoir* is aseptic and has too many safety exits. The recovery of the “order of discourse,” after its destruction by the historical avant-gardes in their struggle against the techniques of mass communication and the dissolution of the work of art into the assembly line, serves today to safeguard the possibility of salvation for the “nouvelles Justines” attracted by the recesses in which “gentle tortures” are consummated.

There are two contradictions, however. On the one hand, as with the Enlightenment utopia, such attempts to recover a discursive order are forced to discover that those exists from the castle serve only to make silence speak. On the other hand, they try to go beyond this aporia by offering themselves as the foundation for a new institutional format for architecture. These contradictions are actually given theoretical form in Louis Kahn’s work from the mid-fifties on. But, with his work, we have already exited from the hermetic game of language that collapses upon itself.

The questions that criticism ought to ask at this point are: what makes these “gentle tortures” possible? In what contexts and in what structural conditions are they rooted? What is their role within the present-day system of production? We have responded in part to these questions in the course of our discussion. But we can add, however, that these works are the by-products of a system of production that must, simultaneously: (a) renew itself on a formal level, by delegating to marginal sectors of its professional organizations the task of experimenting with and developing new models (in fact, it would prove useful to analyze the way in which

the models devised by the isolated form makers come to be introduced within the process of mass production); and (b) consolidate a highly diversified public, by assigning the role of “vestals of the discipline” to figures bent on preserving the concept and the role of architecture, in its accepted meaning as a traditional object endowed with certain permanent and inalienable powers of communication.

As you see, we pass from the object itself to the system that gives meaning to it. What we meant in affirming that the task of criticism is to do violence to the object under analysis now becomes clear. From the examination of the most contrary attempts to bring architecture back into the realm of “discourse,” we have passed to pinpointing the role of architectural discourse itself, thereby casting serious doubt on the overall function of those attempts. Now, we must even go further.

On several occasions, and also in the course of this book, we have tried to demonstrate that throughout the adventures of the historical avant-gardes the alternatives that appear as opposites—order and disorder, law and chance, structure and formlessness—are in reality completely complementary. We have seen this exemplified in the Gallaterese Quarter, within which the dialectic between purism and constructivism is fully manifest. But the historical significance of such complementarity extends well beyond this specific example. To degrade the materials of communication by compromising them with the commonplace, by forcing them to be reflected in the agonizing swamp of the world of merchandise, by reducing them to emptied and mute signs: this is the process that leads from the tragic buffoonery of the Cabaret Voltaire to the *Merzbau* of Kurt Schwitters, to the constructivist pictures of László Moholy-Nagy, and to the false constructions of Sol Le Witt. Yet the result is surprising. The desecrating immersion into chaos permits these artists to reemerge with instruments that, by having absorbed the logic of that chaos, are prepared to dominate it from within.

Thus we have the *form of formlessness* as both conquest and project. On the one side, the manipulation of pure signs as the foundations of an architectural constructivism; on the other, the acceptance of the indefinite, of dissolution. The control of chaos and of chance requires this twofold attitude. As Rudolf Arnheim has keenly observed, “the earlier insistence on minimal shapes of the utmost precision [in the work of Jean Arp, which is illustrative of our argument] and the subsequent display of corrosion, seemingly at extreme opposites, were in fact symptoms of the same abandonment.”⁴¹ But it is the testimony of Arp himself that makes clear the process binding the affirmation of form to the “death wish” of form itself:

About 1930 the pictures torn by hand from paper came into being. . . . Why struggle for precision, purity, when they can never be attained. The decay that begins immediately on completion of the work was now welcome to me. Dirty man with his dirty fingers points and daubs at a nuance in the picture. . . . He breaks into wild enthusiasm and sprays the picture with spittle. A delicate paper collage of watercolor is lost. Dust and

*insects are also efficient in destruction. The light fades the colors. Sun and heat make blisters, disintegrate the paper, crack the paint, disintegrate the paint. The dampness creates mould. The work falls apart, dies. The dying of a picture no longer brought me to despair. I had made my pact with its passing, with its death, and now it was part of the picture for me. But death grew and ate up the picture and life. . . . Form had become Unform, the Finite the Infinite, the Individual the Whole.*⁴²

The formlessness, the risk of existence, no longer generates anxiety once it is accepted as linguistic material, as in the "combine-paintings" of Rauschenberg, as in *Homage to New York* by Jean Tinguely (1960), as in the corrosive manipulations of sound by John Cage. And vice versa: language can speak of the indeterminate, the casual, the transient, since in them it greets the advent of the Whole. Yet this is but an endeavor to give a form of expression to the phenomenon of *mass consumption*. It is not by chance that a great many of such celebrations of formlessness take place under the banner of a technological utopia. The ironic and irritating metaphors of the Archigram and Archizoom groups, or Johansen's and Gehry's notion of architecture as an explosion of fragments (not to mention the cynicism of the Site group) have their roots in the technological myth. Technology can thus be read mystically, as a "second nature," the object of mimesis; indeed, it may even become the object of formalist small talk, as in some of the work of Russian Constructivism in which the form self-destructs in order to emit messages stemming from the same process of self-contestation. There are even those who, like Bruno Zevi, try to construct a code for such programmed self-destruction.⁴³ What remains hidden in all of these "abstract furors" is the general sense of their agreeable masochism. And it is precisely to such experiences that a critical approach inspired by the technological aesthetics of Max Bense or by the information theory of Abraham Moles may be fruitfully applied. But this is only possible because, much more than Stirling, these architects attempt to convert into discourse the indeterminacy of the technological world: they attempt to saturate the entire physical environment with excessive amounts of revved-up information in an effort to reunite "words and things" and impart to commonplace existence an autonomous structure of communication. It is no accident, then, that the already outmoded images of Archigram and the artificial and deliberate ironies of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown or of Hans Hollein simultaneously expand and restrict the sphere of architectural intervention. They expand it insofar as they introduce the theme of dominating visible space in its entirety; they restrict it insofar as they interpret that space solely as a network of superstructures.

A definite result, however, emerges from projects like the one designed by Venturi and Rauch for Benjamin Franklin Avenue in Philadelphia.⁴⁴ Here, the desire to communicate no longer exists; architecture is dissolved into a deconstructed system of ephemeral signals. In place of *communication*, there is a flux of *information*; in place of architecture as language,

there is an attempt to reduce it to a mass medium, without any ideological residues; in place of an anxious effort to restructure the urban system, there is a disenchanting acceptance of reality, bordering on extreme cynicism.

In this manner, Venturi, placing himself within an exclusively linguistic framework, has arrived at a radical devaluation of language itself: the meaning of the *Plakatwelt*, of the world of publicity, cannot be sought in referents external to it. Venturi thus obtains a result that is the exact opposite of that reached by the compositional rigorists. For the latter, it is the metaphysical recovery of the "being" of architecture extracted from the flux of existence; for Venturi, it is the process of rendering language useless, having discovered that its intrinsic ambiguity, upon contact with reality, makes any pretext of autonomy purely illusory.

Note well: in both cases, language undecides itself. We shall return to this problem in the next chapter. It should now be observed that if the protagonists of contemporary architecture often take on the role of Don Quixote, such a posture has a less superficial meaning than is readily apparent.

Language has thus reached the point of speaking about its own isolation, regardless of whether it chooses to retrace the path of rigorism by focusing on the mechanisms of its own writing, or to explode outward toward the Other, that is, toward the problematic space of existence. But does not such a journey, which was originally undertaken in the period that extends from the early fifties to the present, simply repeat an adventure already lived out? Is not Mallarmé's reply to the question regarding the subject of discourse, "It is the Word itself that speaks," complementary to that at once tragic and comforting recognition of Kraus and Loos, "it is the turn of deeds to speak, and that which is only thought is inexpressible"? And furthermore, has not the destiny of the historical avant-gardes been to dissolve into a project—a historically frustrated one at that—for the intellectual management of the Whole? The homecoming to language constitutes a roof of failure. But it remains necessary to determine the extent to which such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the discipline of architecture and the extent to which it is due to uncertain causes not yet fully understood.

Michel Foucault has pointed out the existence of a kind of gradation between different types of discourses:

Discourse 'uttered' in the course of the day and in casual meetings, and which disappears with the very act which gave rise to it; and those forms of discourse that lie at the origins of a certain number of new verbal acts, which are reiterated, transformed or discussed; in short, discourse which is spoken and remains spoken, indefinitely, beyond its formulation, and which remains to be spoken.⁴⁵

It is a question of a gap clearly not absolute, but sufficiently defined to permit a distinction between levels of linguistic organization to be made. The Modern Movement, overall, had tried to eliminate that gap: here we

are thinking specifically of the polemical position of Hannes Meyer, the radicalism of Hans Schmidt, the stances of magazines like *ABC* and *G*, and the aesthetic theories of Karel Teige, Walter Benjamin, and Hans Mukar-hovsky.⁴⁶ But it is Foucault himself who recognizes the final results of such an attempt:

*The radical denial of this gradation can never be anything but play, utopia or anguish. Play, as Borges uses the term, in the form of commentary that is nothing more than the reappearance, word for word (though this time it is solemn and anticipated) of the text commented on; or again, the play of a work of criticism talking endlessly about a work that does not exist.*⁴⁷

Is this not, in fact, the position upon which not only Stirling and Kahn converge, but also those whom Jencks has called the "Supersensualists"⁴⁸—namely Hans Hollein, Walter Pichler, and Ricardo Bofill—who were preceded, however (and Jencks makes no note of this), by much of the late work of Frank Lloyd Wright and the imposing prefigurations of the technological avant-gardists (Leo Ludwig and Piano & Rogers)? The elimination of the gap between the discourses "which are uttered" and those "which are spoken" cannot be realized at the level of language. The tight-lipped humor that emanates from the architecture of Hollein or from the formal paradoxes of Arata Isozaki—the Fujimi Country Clubhouse (1972–74), the Kitakyushu Central Library (1973–75), and even the chair *Marilyn on the Line* (1972)⁴⁹—may contrast with the equally sophisticated but more genuine humor of Carlo Scarpa; but for all of them, it is a question of the "comical that does not make anyone laugh," of "play as utopia and anguish."

On the other hand, the explosion of architecture outward toward the real contains within it a comprehensive project that becomes evident once we take into consideration that the tradition of this sector of research is based on the activity of such figures as Raymond Unwin, Barry Parker, Clarence Stein, Henry Wright, and Martin Wagner. There is, nevertheless, a certain undercurrent in such a shifting of the discipline of architecture from *form* to *reform* that might lead to a possible overcoming of its own equivocations. In fact, at least the start of a trend is discernible in this body of attempts: the premise for a "new technique," submerged within the organizations that determine the capitalistic management of building and regional planning.

But this forces us to abandon almost entirely the paraphernalia of the traditional categories of judgment. Since an individual work is no longer at stake, but rather an entire cycle of production, critical analysis has to operate on the material plane that determines that cycle of production. In other words, to shift the focus from what architecture wishes to be, or wishes *to say*, toward what building production represents in the economic game means that we must establish parameters of reading capable of penetrating to the heart of the role played by architecture within the capitalist system. One could object that such an economic reading of building pro-

duction is *other* than the reading of architecture as a system of communication. But we can only reply that it will never be repeated too often that, when wishing to discover the secret of a magician's tricks, it is far better to observe him from backstage than to continue to stare at him from a seat in the orchestra.

Clearly, however, to interpret architectural ideology as an element—secondary perhaps, but an element nonetheless—of the cycle of production results in the overturning of the pyramid of values that are commonly accepted in the treatment of architecture. Indeed, once such a criterion of judgment is adopted, it becomes absolutely ridiculous to ask to what extent a linguistic choice or a structural organization expresses or tries to anticipate "freer" modes of existence. What criticism ought to ask about architecture is, instead, in what way does it, as an organized institution, succeed or not in influencing the relations of production.

We regard it, then as absolutely crucial to take up the questions that Walter Benjamin posed in one of his most important essays, "The Author as Producer":

Instead of asking, 'What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time? Does it accept them, is it reactionary—or does it aim at overthrowing them, is it revolutionary?'—instead of this question, or at any rate before it, I should like to propose another. Rather than ask, 'What is the attitude of a work to the relations of production of its time' I should like to ask, 'What is its position in them?' This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary technique of works.⁵⁰

This viewpoint, by the way, represents for Benjamin a radical surpassing of the more ideological positions he had expressed in the conclusion to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In the questions posed in "The Author as Producer," there are no concessions made to proposals for salvation by means of an "alternative" use of linguistic techniques; there is no longer any ideological distinction between a "communist art" as opposed to a "fascist art." There is only a genuinely structural consideration of the productive role of intellectual activities and, consequently, a series of questions regarding their possible contribution to the development of the relations of production. Certainly, Benjamin's text still contains many dubious points concerning the political value of certain technological innovations—here we are thinking of the connections drawn between dadaism and the content of a political photomontage by Heartfield,⁵¹ considered by Benjamin to be "revolutionary." But the substance of his argument remains profoundly valid today, so much so as to point the way to a radical revision of the criteria for determining the fundamental problems of the history of contemporary art and architecture. By keeping in mind the central question—what is the position of a work of art *in* the relations of production—many of the so-called masterpieces of modern ar-

chitecture come to take on a secondary or even marginal importance, while a great many of the current debates are relegated to the status of peripheral considerations.

The judgment we have advanced regarding the present research aimed at restoring to architecture its original "purity" therefore proves to be valid. These attempts are confirmed as "parallel actions," bent on building an uncontaminated limbo that floats above (or below) the real conflicts in the social formation of which it only picks up a distant echo.

L'art pour l'art has been, in its own way, a form of blasé upper-class protest against the universe of *Zivilisation*. In defending *Kultur* against "civilization and its discontents," Thomas Mann found it necessary to formulate "the reflections of a nonpolitical man," which, if carried to their extreme, reassert the kinship between art and play posited by Schiller. After all, "the courage to speak of roses" can always be appreciated, provided that the courage is true enough to confess and to bear witness to a deeply felt inadequacy.

We do not, however, wish to be misunderstood: the critic is also an "angel with dirty hands." The very same questions that criticism puts to architecture it must also put to itself: that is, in what way does *criticism* enter *into* the process of production? How does it conceive its own role within that process? As is evident, the knotty problems set out in the introduction to this book return intact and with full force. Only with great difficulty can such questions be answered *theoretically*. They are beyond any "general theory." The "project" that they designate places the present-day formation of intellectual work on trial, even if, for the time being, only a line of march can be pointed out, one that lacks a fully formed and expressible *telos*.

The conclusion of our discourse can only be problematic. Once again, it is the questions posed by Benjamin—by the same Benjamin, mind you, who wrote about his experiences with hashish—that present themselves to us as an obstacle to be confronted. And to the architect (or to the critic) who accepts the new roles that today's difficult reality proposes, we shall never desist from asking:

Does he succeed in promoting the socialization of the intellectual means of production? Does he see how he himself can organize the intellectual workers in the production process? Does he have proposals for the Umfunktionierung [transformations] of the novel, the drama, the poem? The more completely he can orient his activity toward this task, the more correct will the political tendency, and necessarily also the higher technical quality, of his work.⁵²

"The disenchanting avant-garde," completely absorbed in exploring from the comfort of its charming *boudoirs* the profundities of the philosophy of the unexpected writes down, over and over again, its own reactions under the influence of drugs prudently administered. Its use of hashish is certainly a conscious one: but it makes of this "consciousness" a barrier, a

defense. Of the "perfidious enchantment" of the products that come out of the new laboratories of the imaginary it is good to be distrustful. With a smile, we have to catalogue them in the imaginary museum of the bad conscience of our "small age," to be used as rearview mirrors by whoever recognizes himself to be caught in the midst of a crisis that obliges him to remain stuck in the minefield of the "evil present."

The Ashes of Jefferson

New York, 1978: few large buildings under construction, a competition like that for Roosevelt Island almost certainly slated to enrich only the archives of public agencies, the activities of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) practically blocked, the program for the urbanization of Manhattan Landing cancelled, the construction of the Battery Park City Project proceeding slowly, while an economic crisis of uncommon proportions grips the "capital of the twentieth century."*

Nevertheless, it is the very same city that, at the beginning of the 1970s, appeared destined to undergo a gigantic process of transformation; the very same city that Peter Blake, when considering the projects relative to the systematization of the waterfronts, which were expanding according to a fragmented yet unitary plan of rehabilitation, had characterized as the "new Venice" of the future.

We do not intend to expose the ironies of this optimistic forecast clamorously contradicted by the facts. But, in truth, New York is—at least from the 1890s onward—an allegory of the Venice of modern times. It may prove useful to recall the words of Nietzsche: "One hundred profound solitudes form the whole of the city of Venice—this is its spell. An image for the man of the future."¹ It is not the history, not the images pregnant with meanings, not the peace of a refound "community"—nor the slow decay of values—that constitute for Nietzsche the fascination of Venice. This resides instead in the prophecy that the city of lagoons launches to the future: the city as a *system of solitudes*, as a place wherein the loss of identity is made an institution, wherein the maximum formalism of its structures gives rise to a code of behavior dominated by "vanity" and "comedy."² From such a viewpoint, New York is already a "new Venice." The fragments of the future contained in the *Serenissima* of Nietzsche have already exploded into the metropolis of total indifference and *therefore* of the anguished consumption of multiplied signs.

There needs to be forged a history of the American intellectual—or of the European who has chosen Manhattan as a fatherland—vis à vis this gigantic process of the rationalization of formalized behavior. Pasqualotto has written:

To identify oneself completely with the hundreds of persons that metropolitan life imposes would signify the annihilation of one's own ego. But even if this were plausible or possible, the rapidity and the relative evanescence of the social "encounters" would exclude by their very nature the opportunity of knowing something beyond its appearance, beyond the apparatus of conventional gestures and words that 'protects' the subject: vanity, insofar as it is the 'skin of the soul,' is thus necessary for survival.³

Why should it come as any surprise then if in New York the "skin of the soul" oversteps the limits of quotidian existence and translates itself in languages? Formalism—employing the term in its strictest sense, that is, as the process of reducing the sign to its pure function—is, in this light, much less divorced from the structures of the metropolitan universe than may appear at first sight.

Nevertheless, no formalism was in the passionate social denunciations made by Jacob Riis and Lawrence Veiller at the turn of the century; still no formalism in the controversies surrounding the urban planning of Werner Hegemann or in the measures taken by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright in support of the policy of Governor Al Smith; and still no formalism in the attempts made by the Regional Planning Association of America between 1923 and 1933. It is, perhaps, no accident that in America the very idea of forming intellectual pressure groups is regarded as containing something "too European" about it. Anyone who observes, today, the neighborhoods constructed in New York by the members of the RPAA, and in particular the Phipps Garden Apartments, will have the impression of seeing fragments of the Vienna or the Amsterdam of the 1920s projected into a context unsuited to receive their messages. Such discrepancies have caused a large segment of American culture to pass judgments upon the impotence of both the teachings of European *Kultur* and those of the strongest branch of Americanism: Melville's Billy Budd sets the absolute authenticity of the naïf against the universe of conventions; but his destiny is death. The "innocents" of Twain can only withdraw—like Louis Sullivan—into nature: but only to wait for nature to be invaded by the *non place*, which inexorably overwhelms the universe of expanding production.

It is perhaps the very organizational structure of intellectual work in America, so strongly subdivided according to the stratifications of the public toward which it turns, and so "protected" from the real centers of decision making, that produces an attitude that we could define as *the exaltation of its own apartness*.

This phenomenon is widespread in the America of the 1970s, but it appears to have its focal point in New York. In the same city that had

experienced, in the 1920s and 1930s, a collective architectural "adventure," which enjoyed the lively interest of the public and of an aggressive clientele that pursued with lucidity its own expansionistic designs, today an intellectual elite aims to remove its own work from all structural conditioning to give birth to controversies completely internal to the limbo in which it confines itself. That this has occurred signifies that, once high levels of comprehensive integration in the determining sectors have been reached, it becomes possible to maintain well-defined cultural spaces, entrusted with the task of pleurably entertaining a highly select public. All that is necessary is to make sure that the area given over to "pure play" does not compromise the efficiency of these determining sectors. For their part, the new players seated around the green table laboriously won for themselves, linger at a game of poker whose stake is simply survival. Nevertheless, in such a way, new circuits of production and use do come to be created: architecture comes to be exhibited in its own *cinémas d'essai*. But there is no hope for architecture to influence structures or relations of production: no reformative hypothesis appears to have the right of sanctuary in the new monasteries in which patient monks transcribe and comment upon the codices of the modern tradition. An equilibrium, threatened only by the cloudburst of institutional crises observed with fatalistic detachment, establishes itself between the architectures of the "system" and the formal experiments of the "avant-garde."

Certainly, even the latter are the "skin of the soul" and cannot merely be interpreted as phenomena confined to New York. But in the milieu of New York many of the ferments circulating within the architectural culture of America become condensed. And from the "New Babylon" there now emerge hermetic appeals calling for "futile rigors." In other words, in the debate presently taking shape in the United States, one question appears to galvanize attention: that is, the pervasiveness of the teachings of Kahn and Venturi and of the two opposing hypotheses for the refounding of modern architecture that they represent. It is not an insignificant problem for not by chance both Kahn and Venturi have acted in a mode more destructive than constructive.

Or better: both of them, by allowing no room for the mythology of the eternal return of the "sacred principles" of the tradition of the new, have opened ineffable spaces for the narration of a nostalgia: nostalgia for a sign that retraces its own adventures in search of the moment, forever lost in the labyrinth of an unspeakable history, in which it loses its own referent; nostalgia for universes of discourse that architecture can no longer frequent without renouncing its own presence in the world; nostalgia for a reassuring relationship between norm and deviation, capable of making gush forth, from the alembic through which ruptures and lacerations are distilled, a "circularity" and fullness of the word, the word in its entirety.

Yet, this search for the lost word is resolved, necessarily, by dint of a further loss. What European observers have almost always undervalued in the work of Kahn is the profound "Americanness" of his desperate attempt to recuperate the dimension of myth. That it may be a question of a myth

without a collective foundation is only one of the disquieting aspects of the Kahnian operation. His work, as in a sort of propitiatory rite, has proceeded—full of paradox—to bind the regeneration of the architectural word to the artificial creation of a mythology of the institution. Reproposing (but with absolute authority and without the control of external referents) a new blood pact between architectural word and institutions, Kahn has maintained that he can respect the pivotal point of the poetics—*malgré soi*—of “radical architecture.” From the Yale Museum to the Dacca Assembly Building, we have thus witnessed a repeated pursuit of an *architecture of analogy*, wherein what constituted the principal objective to overcome was the central aporia of the Modern Movement: the status of architecture “as a negligible object.”

Midway between the fifties and the sixties, the breaking wave of history that the operation of Kahn, not by chance, insists on riding makes of that attempt something emblematic. *Avant le déluge*, it is logical that one fits out a number of Noah’s Arks: and the attributes of the Ark are, as is well known, a pregnant symbolism and a proud estrangement from that which is on the verge of being submerged by the purifying wave. But both for those who had read in 1968 the feared and anxiously awaited *déluge* and for those who when face to face with the storm had realized that it was sufficient merely to open an umbrella or to construct dams to control the run off, the entire enchanted castle into which Kahn had forced his way appeared too fragile: too fragile even as a refuge for priests in the habit of hermitage.

To the promise of Kahn—communication is possible by giving voice to institutions—Robert Venturi has responded with the following objection: *the only institution is the real, and only the real speaks*. The present writer has been among the few to consider infantile the enthusiasm of Vincent Scully for a text like *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, which did nothing other than reveal facts already established.⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of the snobbish element of Venturi’s operation, the alliance between Pop Art in decline and the new Architectural Realism contains a nucleus, that, by wishing to be the exact inverse of the rigorism of Kahn, comprehends many of its deepest motives. If Kahn could have produced a school of mystics without religions to defend, Venturi has in fact created a school of the disenchanting without any values to transgress. Nevertheless, both are part of one and the same ideology of self-reflection. Both, that is, surpass the limits of their own historic situation by embodying an attitude widespread among the fringes of expatriated intellectuals, who have made a country out of their exile. Like Bataille, but in a completely different manner and with other instruments, they have upturned the globe of the eye toward its cavity, in order not to become blinded by a universe in which the glance risks being extinguished. The eye of the constructivists and of the radical artists had assumed as its own duty remaining wide open behind the mechanical apparatus that governs the world, in the hope of being able to guide the movements of that apparatus. But faced with the discovery that on the set in which one thought

oneself able to operate independent of external influences the true directional control was exerted by uncontrollable forces, "the archer with an eye and a half"—or, what amounts to the same, "the man with a movie camera"⁵—is transformed into the man with half-closed eyes destined to end up in the limbo of somnambulism, wherein action remains action, despite the semiunconscious state of the actor. One can, however, maintain that such action without a subject is the only real action, the only real "repatriation," the only action that reconciles one with the world: it is not only the Gropius of the Pan Am Building and of TAC (The Architects Collaborative), but also Grosz for whom "the little yes is a big no" has exactly the same meaning as "the big yes is a little no."⁶

The flight in the face of the "big yes" is exactly that of the eye that refuses to look and turns inward in its orbit. Here it can explore the source of the subject, turn to the center of thought, explore, by means of a "comic process" (still the words of Bataille), the origin of language. In the operation of overturning performed by Kahn and Venturi, it makes little difference whether the material of their new image-system is made up of dreams of nonexistent institutions or of nightmares dominated by the crowding together of the ephemeral icons of cosmic merchandization. Both pursue an operation worthy of the exorcist of the Holy Inquisition. The architect-inquisitor is always in confidence with Evil: the order without center of Kahn and the ambiguous, "too ambiguous" of Venturi find in this their fluctuating point of convergence.

The fact remains that, within the panorama of American architecture, these two protagonists have created escape hatches, emergency exits for whoever is willing (and able) to accept what lies at the heart of the matter: their turning architecture upside down renders legitimate the sinking into the bottomless well of the autonomy of form. But one should keep in mind that, as Foucault has acutely remarked, this attitude

indicates the moment when language, arriving at its confines, overleaps itself, explodes and radically challenges itself in laughter, tears, the overturned eyes of ecstasy, the mute and exorbitated horror of sacrifice, and where it remains fixed in this way at the limit of its void, speaking of itself in a second language in which the absence of a sovereign subject outlines its essential emptiness and incessantly fractures the unity of its discourse.⁷

Nevertheless, the recourse to that "second language" has become habitual for whoever—especially in the United States—attempts to shatter the ambiguous rapport between myth and language reposed by both Kahn and Venturi, and to trace anew the primitive path taken by their two extreme proposals for the regeneration of impossible orders and for the cunning games of doubling with the masks of the real.

New York, 1969: at a meeting organized at the Museum of Modern Art by the Conference of Architects for the Study of Environment (the CASE group), Kenneth Frampton presents the work of five architects—Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, John Hejduk, Charles Gwathmey, Richard

Meier—whose consecration as a group comes three years later with the volume *Five Architects*, published by Wittenborn, with a preface by Arthur Drexler, texts by Colin Rowe, Frampton, William la Riche, and the architects themselves. In Drexler's preface there is enounced, lapidarylike that which appears to bind the research of the five: the rejection of the New Brutalism as well as of every reductive or content-oriented interpretation of architecture, in order to arrive at an absolute purity, a rigorous semantic specificity.

The works presented—almost all residences for an upper-class clientele—and their formal solutions appeared to justify the publicity apparatus put into motion to launch the group, provided that one discounts the substantial homogeneity among the experiments of its members. Opposition to the architecture of the big corporation, to the mysticism of Kahn's school, to the eclectic mannerism, oscillating between an unbiased professionalism and an experimentalism based on linguistic disdain, of Rudolph or Pei, to the artificial vitalism of the young Californians, to the refined reminiscences of Philip Johnson, to the extreme exercises of Venturi, to the commercialization of the typological research of a Portman or of a Kevin Roche, to the various survivals sprouting in the United States, appeared to express itself, in the rarefied and precious compositions of the Five, in the form of an offering made to an elite public capable of appreciating the new "poetics of nostalgia" pursued by them.⁸

It is a nostalgia, above all for the magic circle of the historic avant-gardes and, in particular—or at least as it appeared to American criticism—for the Purism of the *Esprit Nouveau* and for the pictorial and architectural products of Ozenphant and Jeanneret from the 1920s. In this connection, it is not coincidental that Eisenman is a passionate collector of reviews and documents related to the European avant-garde: his collection, which the Princeton Library exhibited in 1968,⁹ is such as to constitute a source of great philological value. But the Five do not pursue any philology. Rather, insofar as they are exponents of the post-Kahnian generation, they clearly occupy—despite their declarations to the contrary—one of the spaces opened by the work of Kahn; even though they pursue a ruthless operation of selection and exclusion of linguistic instruments.

Above all, the Five cut out a precise niche: "architecture as such" should not indulge in any populism; its ideal patron is the collector. Graves will work for Rockefeller, but planning, not, like Harrison & Abramovitz, explosive urban initiatives (we are thinking of Battery Park City), but rather a house-sculpture. Even here, nostalgia predominates the ideal patron of the first style of the Five is a new Visconte di Noailles—the patron of Mallet-Stevens, Man Ray, and Buñeul—or a new Madame de Mandrot.

There was enough nostalgia for what the American press was quickly to label "the new school of New York" to be regarded by "engaged" architects like Giurgola and by the practitioners of what Scully has recently called the New Shingle Style as a group of incurable snobs, bent on catering to the most elite tendencies of the affluent society. In fact, Giurgola entitled his polemical article on the Five, "The Discrete Charm of the

Bourgeoisie,"¹⁰ It is somewhat odd that such a polemic should have occurred within a climate that, in different ways, had internalized the turning back of the "eye of architecture" onto itself. The "noncommitment" of the Five appeared provocative only because they had caught a glimpse of what would result from carrying to its very limit the reduction of architecture to a "second language."

And it is exactly for this experience of the limit, that is to say, for their *excesses*, that they interest us: excess is always a bearer of consciousness.

This means that nothing would be more of a mistake than to take literally whatever the Five declares or to hold them up as a flag signifying radical renovation. They—like Kahn and Venturi—are only emblems of a "condition" of intellectual work; or better, of the remnants of an intellectual work that believes itself capable of constituting itself as a closed space defended from intolerable encounters, a bridge spanning abysses that resound with noises whose mere echo seems deafening.

Recovering the "concreteness" of intellectual work, stopping it at the edge of the abyss that could smash to bits its skeleton, petrifying its image on that edge (deceiving oneself of having saved its body, by now decomposed): in this manner, the Five participate in an effort shared by all of the last bearers of "unspeakable spaces," and not only in architecture. The *rigor* of all of them—whether it be a question of the "suspended tonalities" of Aldo Rossi, the "disseminations" of Derrida, the magic eye of Straub—irremediably borders upon the *frivolous*. Has not Derrida himself demonstrated that the origin of the "frivolous" lies in the separation of the sign from its referent?¹¹

But, having said this, one has not yet explained anything. In the first place, it is necessary to contest the image that, until now, the Five have given to themselves and that American criticism has confirmed. As always, that criticism has placed its research in a void, overlooking origins and outcomes.

Therefore, it is important to recall that Eisenman and Graves appeared associated, in 1967, in the show "The New City," with an urban design proposal for the restructuring of the Upper West Side of Manhattan, rich in utopian suggestions, just as Richard Meier was organically linked to the most progressive agency in the field of public housing in New York State, the Urban Development Corporation.¹² In essence, for the Five (but not necessarily for each of them), the enclosure in which they confine the linguistic thematic appears in great part the result of a *desengaño*. For this reason, too, our five New York architects can be taken as emblems of a general malaise.

Once this has been said, it is immediately necessary to point out that the first thing to challenge is the notion of "group" with which they launched themselves onto the market; and, in fact, the five architects are today well aware of the artificiality of their fame tied to the formula of the Five. Nevertheless, forming a group is required in the professional jungle of America. It may have been nothing more than a means of creating an instrument of self-promotion and of identification, a sort of makeshift life

raft. Even so, like every life raft, this one was also destined to sink and to permit transfer to a more solid craft: for Hejduk, Cooper Union; for Eisenman, The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the journal *Oppositions*; for Meier, the UDC; for Graves, his own isolation at Princeton. These affiliations are more solid reference points than the occasional grouping, a precedent set by the exhibition of 1969 that the exhibitions in London (1975) and in Naples and Palermo (1976) tend, for better or worse, to reconfirm.

But once it is recognized that from their distillation in a retort there issues forth, like an ultrarefined product, an unequivocally nostalgic dimension, does it really make good sense to contrapose the Five—identified as “Whites”—against the heirs of eclecticism, identified as “Greys”? Does not, in fact, the *inclusivism*, which Charles Moore has theorized *versus the exclusivism* of Kahn and the Whites, represent a further sundering of the sign from its referent? And are not—once again—the intellectualistic linguistic mixtures of Robert Stern and John Hagemann, of Diana Agrest, of Mario Gandelsonas, of Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti, of Emilio Ambasz serious incursions into the area of the “frivolous,” as defined by Derrida?

The *bricolage* theorized by Venturi certainly has little to do with the refined and hermetic populism of Charles Moore.¹³ It is no accident that Machado and Silvetti defend a “progressive elitism” against a “regressive populism” and that Stern hails the exhibition of Parisian Beaux Arts projects, held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as an occasion for a confrontation between contemporary trends toward pluralism and nineteenth-century eclecticism. Let us begin therefore by establishing a fact as a fixed point. Both the Whites and the Greys attempt to come to grips with an intentionally paradoxical assumption: for both camps, the theme of “resemantization” is central; only the instruments employed to reach such an objective vary. But what does the “recovery of the semantic” mean? Why establish, today, such an objective? And of what, ultimately, must the architectural signs “speak of again.”

Robert Stern and his followers would respond to such questions in a different manner than would Charles Moore. For the former, language speaks about its own history, and allusion is its principal instrument. And since there is no given history that is not multiple, the pluralism evoked by the rarefied contamination generated by baroque remembrances or by the revisitation of the architecture of a George Howe or of a Raymond Hood is part of an “open” system, which becomes counterposed to the asceticism of the Whites.

“More is more”: but this is also a tautology. And, on the other hand, has not Wittgenstein already taught us that every sign possesses its own past *only because it is a sign*? But “Grey buildings have façades that tell stories”: nothing remains but to gather around the hearth to listen to the fables of the new grannies. Certainly, these are stories set in the present; nevertheless, from these new *architectures parlantes*, from these modern *bijoux indiscrets*, it would be futile to expect the libertine malice of a

Diderot. They speak, rather, of the uncertain existential situation experienced by the citizens of the "Venice of the 20th Century." Is it then a mere coincidence that, from a position independent of Moore's populism as well as of the rigorism of Eisenman and the pluralism of Stern and Hagmann, the most lucidly "tragic" experiments of the New York scene have been conducted by émigré architects—exiles to a T, that is—like Agrest, Machado, Silveti, Gandelsonas, Ambasz? And while the irony of Ambasz is often resolved with devices that are too simple, how are we to evaluate projects like *Les Echelles* by Agrest, the project for Roosevelt Island by Agrest and Gandelsonas, the *Façade/Mask House* or the *Fountain House* by Machado and Silveti?

Machado has thoroughly analyzed the meaning of the experiments of the "Argentine group" that revolves around the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. He writes regarding *Façade/Mask House*:

*This object tells a story about the notion of a façade . . . of a mask within a mask, the reader-user scans line by line, as on the page of a text, empty and silent spaces.*¹⁴

"Masked Architecture" equals disguised language, which may be "other" than what it appears to express. The "other" is not the unutterable of Le Corbusier; rather, it is the domain of play only explorable through a cruelty that confines itself to masochism, through the naughtiness of a "young child," too shrewd to let himself go completely, too crafty to reveal himself through his destructive impulses. For Simmel, Venice is again the essence of the mask—and the mask is a category of the spirit. In the "new Venice"—allegory of a general human condition—it is necessary to wear a mask to "save one's soul." A series of screens hide an architectural reality that reveals itself ultimately as dissolved in that play of screens: this applies to the *Façade/Mask House*, but also—in Agrest and Gandelsonas's Project for Roosevelt Island—to the apodeictic truncated columns that act as a proscenium to the blockwall standing behind, a remembrance of the apocalyptic silence of the urban schemes of Ludwig Hilberseimer in the twenties.

But since resorting to pure language means defining rigorously the area of one's "games," there is an enigmatic building by Gandelsonas that serves to render explicit the "system of cruelty" worked out in Olympian fashion by Peter Eisenman: *Un édifice comme classificateur du corps humain*. In this project by Gandelsonas, a rectilinear structure joins, vertically, a series of corridors of diverse lengths, offering three possibilities of descent: a spiral ramp that screws right into the subsoil; a double ramp of tortuous going that terminates in a red circle drawn on the ground; an "impossible" grand staircase, with stairs one and a half meters high and placed at a forty-five degree angle. A fourth possibility is present, suggested but not enounced: that the user of this "monument to the progressive nature of Western secular architecture," as its creator defines it,¹⁵ throw himself into the void, thereby making real and forcing to exit from the realm of metaphor the large spot of blood symbolically represented by

the red circle mentioned above. Routes alone—dangerous, hallucinating, interrupted—are the real protagonists of this piece by Gandelsonas: an authentic system for testing the psychological resistances of the potential user, cunningly taken by the hand and obliged to contend with a Kafkaesque machine. And besides, did not Kafka teach that the Law remains indecipherable only to those who persist, while interrogating it, in considering it external to themselves? Here sadism is explicit: the specter of the “120 days of Sodom” roves about among the astonished dreams of the heirs of an Enlightenment resurrected from its ashes.

All of this demonstrates that the “domestic” propositions of Thomas Jefferson, aimed at placating the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* [the dialectic of the enlightenment] no longer have any place in an America that nevertheless seeks consolation from them, among the *repêchages* of the Bicentennial. The solitary games of the intellectuals fascinated by the cobra on the verge of striking them down no longer know what to make of the “ashes of Jefferson.”

Not by chance, Italy appears as a naïve symbol both in Moore’s competition project for the Downtown Renewal Area of New Orleans and in the *Fountain House* by Machado and Silvetti. For different reasons, the scene of the crime is insistently reevoked along with the hermetic screens of the “piazzas” of De Chirico. Here, the exhibition of one’s own neuroses replaces the Puritan anguish and the modesty of form of Richard Meier.¹⁶ *Et pour cause*: because here where every hope of designing through building has vanished and where there is no longer anything but architecture on paper, sincerity is maximum.

Perhaps Colin Rowe was right in speaking of the work of the Five as a “series of simulacrum,” as too perhaps is Alberto Cuomo, who, more recently, has read their work as a kind of “repetition compulsion.”¹⁷ But is not this “over and over again” of the same a prerequisite for whoever attempts to reread operatively the results of the New York avant-gardes with eyes opened wide to the shipwreck of their initial motives? The formal terrorism of Eisenman, the polysemia of Graves, the rigorism of Meier, the linguistic cruelty of Agrest and Gandelsonas, the metaphysical games of Machado and Silvetti, the constructivism of Giurgola, the ingenious aphorisms of Robert Stern, the “jokes” of Koolhaas, do they not actually represent broad trends that wind through the panorama of the architectural work of the last decade?¹⁸ The “wall” exorcized by Hejduk in his Wall Houses is doubly symbolic: upon it is reflected the phantasm of the unquiet silence of Mies.

And yet, Eisenman’s will to abstraction, his anxiety of “precision”—*House VI* is symptomatic in this regard¹⁹—does not really have much to do with a research, similar to his only on a superficial level, like that of Aldo Rossi. This holds true even if we take into account the common destiny of architectures as *didactic* as those of the New York school and that of our poet of memory: it would be enough to compare the products of the pupils at Cooper Union with those of Rossi’s “school.”

But since we are speaking of a “state of mind” shared by elites engaged

in defending a discipline burdened by expectations turned toward an unfathomable past, we must emphasize that in this state of mind there returns completely to life that fear in the face of reality, in which Worringer discerned the archaic origin of abstraction. It is a fear that in the United States has origins both remote and immediate.

There exists, in other words, a widespread trend concerned with experimenting with private languages [*lingue private*] of function, extracted, paradoxically, from the area of languages [*linguaggi*]. The reference point of such a game of hide-and-seek with language [*lingua*] is the "heroic years" of the Modern Movement. With this result: such manipulations of linguistic materials, whether we are dealing with Eisenman or Venturi, proclaim a real event: "the war is over."

On the basis of this confrontation the fable of Post Modernism has gained a footing as a liberating act accomplished at the expense of an ulterior fable, of a "historical construction" exhausted yet paradoxically kept alive as a false past, adopted as a stepmother to whom are offered ill-concealed neuroses. Pirouetting on only one foot, the Post Modern tight-rope walkers endeavor to play their game with a history whose meaning and limits they skillfully keep hidden from themselves. With respect to the tragedy experienced at Weimar, the multiplication of winks and high signs made by these manipulators of the imaginary appears as an attempt to make a text of impotence. The "rapid voyages to where we are not yet" live on that impotence. They are ignorant of the passage covered by the long voyage from the iconoclastic rite to the discovery of the "many techniques," which, by taking careful soundings, we have attempted to renegotiate in the second part of this volume.

If the war is over, it is good to remember that it was merely a war of words in confrontation with other words, a struggle of restricted languages for an impossible rule over that which possesses *other* languages. But that convulsed territory has become surrounded by those who make of Post Modernism a new flag. For them, the only preoccupation is to remain on the stage agitating themselves in an ever more grotesque manner, in an effort to entertain an audience in the pit both bored and in need of sedatives.

On the other hand, is it not Barthes who declares polemically and insidiously that "there can be tranquil moments in the war of languages, and these moments are texts"?²⁰ The languages of the 1920s and 1930s were, in one way or another, "languages of battle." As is always the case in the experimental areas of the neo-avant-garde, those languages of battle are now transformed into "languages of pleasure." The war has ended, but with a checkmate imposed by the enemy. All that remains to be done is to declaim with affectionate irony, with a nostalgia barely disguised, the verses of a Marseillaise badly decomposed and frozen. (Is not freezing a safe form of conservation?) Barthes writes:

Still far too much heroism in our languages; in the best . . . an erethism of certain expressions and finally a kind of insidious heroism. The plea-

sure of the text (the bliss of the text) is on the contrary like a sudden obliteration of the warrior value, a momentary desquamation of the writer's hackles, a suspension of the 'heart' (of courage).

To insist on the *pleasure of the text*, as Barthes does, signifies the updating of one of the least remembered propositions of Brecht. But Barthes continues:

How can a text, which consists of language, be outside languages. How exteriorize the world's jargons without taking refuge in an ultimate jargon wherein the others would simply be reported, recited? As soon as I name, I am named: caught in the rivalry of names. How can the text 'get itself out' of the war of fictions, of sociolects?—by a gradual labor of extenuation. First, the text liquidates all metalanguage, whereby it is text: no voice (Science, Cause, Institution) is behind what it is saying. Next, the text destroys utterly, to the point of contradiction, its own discursive category, its sociolinguistic reference (its 'genre'): it is 'the comical that does not make us laugh,' the irony which does not subjugate, the jubilation without soul, without mystique (Sarduy), quotation without quotation marks.

Exactly: *a Marseillaise without Bastilles to take by storm*. Precisely this, on the other hand, permits us "to enjoy" Cardboard Architecture and neoelectic *pastiches* as theoretical experiments; the "pleasure" that derives from the reading of the works of Hejduk, Eisenman, and Venturi is all intellectual. The pleasure of subtle mental games that subjugate the absoluteness of forms (whether they are designed or constructed matters little, at this point): there is clearly no "social" value in this. And, in fact, is not pleasure perhaps on the whole egotistic and private? It is too easy to conclude that these architectures perpetrate a "betrayal" vis à vis the ethical ideals of the Modern Movement. They register, rather, the state of mind of someone who feels himself betrayed; they reveal to the very depths the condition in which he who still wants to make "Architecture" is confined.

Once again, it is a question of a state of mind that is difficult to attribute exclusively to the Whites or the Greys. Not by accident is the interview granted by Venturi and Denise Scott Brown to Stani von Moos in October 1974 titled, *Laughing not to Cry*.²¹ identification made in it between "neopopulism" and leftist positions, which is justified by, to say the least, an absurd recourse to the American context. The real problem lies completely in that title: why does the alternative between laughing and crying never get listed? Why, in other words, identify architecture with an "object of feeling"? And furthermore, why identify pleasure with a masked ball? (Machado's text cited above is indicative in this respect.)

Instead of responding, we go back in our minds to the New York situation treated at the beginning of this chapter, and we let Barthes continue:

The pleasure of the text does not prefer one ideology to another. However: this impertinence does not proceed from liberalism but from pervers-

sion: the text, its reading, are split. What is overcome, split, is the moral unity that society demands of every human product. We read a text (or pleasure) the way a fly buzzes around a room: with sudden, deceptively decisive turns, fervent and futile: ideology passes over the text and its reading like the blush over a face (in love, some take erotic pleasure in this coloring); . . . in the text of pleasure, the opposing forces are no longer repressed but in a state of becoming: nothing is really antagonistic, everything is plural. I pass lightly through the reactionary darkness.

In moments of ecstatic solitude, to follow hypnotically the deceptively decisive flight of the fly, fervent and futile, can produce the illusion of recuperating an experience of "interior time." Upon awakening, the world of fact takes on the responsibility of reestablishing a ruthless wall between the image of estrangement and the reality of its laws.

Notes

Introduction: The Historical "Project"

1. Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza: Un seminario sul "Beneficio di Cristo"* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), p. 84. The reference to this exceptional volume, which, in its fitful progress, its meanderings, its false starts and errors overcome, exposes the doubts and accidents that characterize historical research, is not casual. The first part of the present study, like the work of Ginzburg and Prosperi, is the result of a joint effort, that of the author together with Franco Rella and the students of architectural history at the Istituto universitario di architettura in Venice. They are, in some way, coauthors. Franco Rella has set forth his conclusions from the team-taught seminars, given in the academic year 1976–77, in the article "Il paradosso della ragione," *Aut aut* 161 (1977): 107–11.

2. Here we are in agreement with the reflections on the theme of artistic language that Emilio Garroni has elaborated over the years. See especially Garroni, *Progetto di semiotica* (Bari: Laterza, 1972); idem, *Estetica ed epistemologia: Riflessioni sulla "Critica di giudizio"* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1976); idem, "Per Marcello Pirro: Sul sentimento, la bellezza, le operazioni e la sopravvivenza dell'arte," in

Pirro (Udine, 1977). It seems of particular interest that Garroni, starting from Kant, arrives at conclusions similar to our own on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* and on Freud's *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. Garroni writes: "The problem is precisely here: *in this particularity and the infinity of modes in which particularity presents itself*. Things do not offer themselves up as already clear and simple to those who set out to know them . . . the world becomes intelligible and synthesized only after a cognitive and analytical operation has taken place . . . from this point of view, things are, in fact, 'inexhaustible' (*unerschöpflich*, says Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*), in the sense that they can be determined and organized, to cognitive ends, only if we assume a proper 'point of view,' an 'organizing principle,' adequate with respect to a certain scientific consideration" ("Per Marcello Pirro," p. 2).

3. See in this regard the article of Massimo Cacciari, "Di alcuni motivi in Walter Benjamin (da 'Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels' a 'Der Autor als Produzent')," *Nuova corrente* 67 (1975): 209–43.

4. The passage cited is in *Wille zur Macht* (Leipzig: Naumann, 1911), p. 489; and in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, ed. K. Schlechta, vol. 3 (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1969), p. 860; English ed., *The Will to*

- Power, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1976), p. 270.
5. Franco Rella, "Dallo spazio estetico allo spazio dell'interpretazione," *Nuova corrente* 68–69 (1975–76): 412. But see also his "Testo analitico e analisi testuale," in Rella et al., *La materialità del testo: Ricerche interdisciplinari sulle pratiche significanti* (Verona: Bertani, 1977), p. ii ff., and his introduction to *La critica freudiana* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977).
 6. Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 140. "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire" first appeared in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971).
 7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Umano troppo umano* in *Opere*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. 4, book 2 (Milan: Adelphi, 1965), p. 17; English ed., *Human, All Too Human* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).
 8. Foucault, "Nietzsche," p. 154.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
 10. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Aurora*, 429, in *Opere*, vol. 5, book 1, pp. 215–16; English ed., *Daybreak* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
 11. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Aldi là del bene e del male* (Beyond Good and Evil), 39, in *Opere*, vol. 5, book 1, pp. 45–46; English ed. *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1968).
 12. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* vol. 1: An Introduction (New York: Random House, 1978), in particular beginning p. 92; original ed., *La volonté de savoir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976).
 13. Georg Simmel, translated into Italian, in *Arte e civiltà*, ed. Dino Formaggio and Lucio Perucchi (Milan, 1976), p. 67; original ed., "Zur Metaphysik des Todes" (1910).
 14. Georg Simmel, "Fashion," in *On Individuality and Social Forms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 294; original ed., "Zur Psychologie der Mode, Soziologische Studie," *Die Zeit* (12 October 1895).
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 295.
 16. Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France*, in *Surveys from Exile* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 73.
 17. Nietzsche, *Aurora*, p. 40.
 18. Massimo Cacciari, "Il problema del politico in Deleuze e Foucault: Sul pensiero di 'autonomia' e di 'gioco,'" mimeographed report to the seminar on the analytical method of Michel Foucault (M. Cacciari, F. Rella, M. Tafuri and G. Teysot), held in the Department of History at the Istituto universitario di architettura in Venice on 22 April 1977. (But now published as *Il dispositivo Foucault*, Venice, 1977, pp. 57 ff.) Cacciari's criticism is based principally on the Foucault of *Surveiller et punir* and on the dialogue between Deleuze and Foucault contained in the volume *Deleuze* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1977). For further discussion of the theme, see the introductory and final essays of Cacciari's *Pensiero negativo e razionalizzazione* (Padua: Marsilio, 1977). Departing from the considerations of Cacciari, which deserve further elaboration, the theses expounded by Jean Baudrillard in his pamphlet *Oublier Foucault* (Paris: Galilee, 1977) seem to be in large part arbitrary.
 19. Jean-Michel Rey has written: "Philosophic language has not been able to define itself as 'autonomous' or 'univocal,' because of a greater omission, that is, because of a decisive repression, that of its production, of its metaphorical texture, of its borrowings, of its debts, of the whole of its design. It is the effects of this massive omission that Nietzsche reinscribes in his text, by means of a *double inscription*, a redoubling/recasting, a productive translation. This work is wholly analogous to the decipherment carried out by Freud." Jean-Michel Rey, "Il nome della scrittura," *Il Verri* 39–40 (1972): 218.
 20. Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey, vol. 23 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), p. 43.
 21. We feel obliged, however, to reject too linear an interpretation of the pro-

cesses by which many themes characteristic of expressionist and late romantic ideologies are translated into the practice of National Socialist propaganda, such as that maintained in the essay by John Elderfield, "Metropolis," *Studio International* 183, no. 944 (1972): 196–99, or in the nonetheless admirable volume of George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movement in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Fertig, 1975). Richer and more articulated is the reading executed by Giancarlo Buonfino, *La politica culturale operaia: Da Marx e Lasalle alla rivoluzione di novembre, 1859–1919* (Milan, 1975), which is discussed in this volume, pt. 2, chap. 4, pp. 149–50.

22. Sigmund Freud, *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, in the *Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 23, p. 209, and the comment on it by Franco Rella in his introduction to *La critica freudiana*, pp. 45 ff.

23. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Rhizome (Introduction)* (Paris: Minuit, 1976). "The rhizome," write Deleuze and Guattari, "is an antigenealogy. The rhizome proceeds by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, implantation. Unlike writing, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome relates to a map, which must be produced or constructed, and is always capable of being connected and disconnected, turned upside down, modified; a map with multiple entrances and exits, with its lines of flight . . . the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical and nonsignifying system, without a General, without any organizing memory or central automaton, uniquely defined by a circulation of states" (*Rhizome*, p. 56). An accurate criticism of the fetishism of theory in Deleuze and in his "school" is to be found in the article by M. Cacciari, "'Rationalità' e 'irrazionalità' nella critica del politico in Deleuze e Foucault," *Aut aut* 161 (1977): 119–33.

24. A further observation of Foucault's underlines in its way the above: "We must conceive of discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them; it is in

this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity. Another principle, that of *exteriority*, holds that we are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it; instead, taking the discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, that we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits." Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 229; original ed., *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1971).

25. Consider, for example, the text of Yury Tynyanov and Roman Jakobson, *Voprosy izuceniya literatury iazyka, Novyi lef* 12 (1927). The two authors affirm that the correlation between the literary series and the other historical series has definite structural laws, subject to separate analysis. In comparison with Shlovskian formalism, we have here a recognition of the autonomy of the analysis of the "system of systems," to be correlated to the discovery of the value of the dynamic integration of materials as a foundation of the work. Cf. Y. Tynyanov, "O Literaturnoy evolucii," in *Archaisty i novatory* (Leningrad, 1929), pp. 30–47, now in Tzvetan Todorov, ed., *I formalisti russi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1968), pp. 127 ff. Also see Stephen Bann and John E. Bowlt, *Russian Formalism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973). The link between the thinking of Mukarhovsky and that of Tynyanov and Jakobson has been pointed out also by Sergio Corduas in his introduction to Yan Mukarhovsky, *La funzione, la norma e il valore estetico come fatti sociali* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971). Also see Mukarhovsky, *Il significato dell'estetica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973); original ed., *Studie z estetiky* (Prague, 1966). It should be borne in mind, however, that in these works (and in those of Karel Teige, still too little known in Italy) the range given to the concept of the "extra-aesthetic series" is extremely limited and traditional (*ibid.*, pp. 259 ff.). Even more limited, it seems to us, is the utilization of Gestalt psychology and the theories of

Piaget, Bense, and Ehrenzweig by Norberg-Schulz, in his attempt to define a comprehensive analytical method for the architectural work. See Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Intentions in Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966.)

26. See Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), and Serge Doubrovsky, *Pourquoi la nouvelle critique: Critique et objectivité* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1966). But the limit (and, at the same time, the maximum expression) of Barthes's "sinking" into the metaphors of the text can be seen in the "all-too-true" truths expressed in another volume by Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1973); English ed., *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

27. Relative to this, see the chapter "Architecture as 'Indifferent Object' and the Crisis of Critical Attention," in Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980); original ed., *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, 4th ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1976).

28. See Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Reflections* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978); originally published as "Der Autor als Produzent," in *Versuche Über Brecht* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966). An unacceptable critical reading of Benjamin's essay can be found in Jürgen Habermas's *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972).

29. See Viktor Shklovsky, *Khod konya* (Moscow-Berlin, 1923). We would like to stress the significant observation of Shklovsky regarding the "obliqueness" of the artistic process: "the knight is not free; it moves sideways, because the direct road is closed to it beforehand."

30. See, in particular, Max Bense, *Aesthetica* (Baden-Baden: Agis Verlag, 1965), and his *Geräusch in der Strassen* (Baden-Baden and Krefeld, 1960). See the excellent volume by Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, *Avanguardia e tecnologia: Walter Benjamin, Max Bense e i problemi dell'estetica tecnologica* (Rome: Officina, 1971).

31. Franco Fortini, "Due avanguardie," in the volume by various authors, *Avanguardia e neoavanguardia* (Milan: Sugar, 1966), pp. 9–21. The contradiction and conflict embodied by the avant-garde artist, writes Fortini, "do not enter into a dialectical relationship." They are the "juxtaposition or polar alternation between absolute subjectivity and absolute objectivity, between abstract irrationality—that is, rejection of the discursive, dialogical moment in favor of free association, involuntary memory, and dream—and abstract rationality, that is, intelligibility achieved by discursive and rational means, in the particular naturalistic and positivistic meaning of the idea of 'reason.' The avant-garde takes refuge in one or the other of the extremes, or lives them both simultaneously, in a way well known to all the mystical tradition." "Due avanguardie," pp. 9–10. See also F. Fortini, "Avanguardia e mediazione," *Nuova corrente* 45 (1968): 100 ff. We do not agree with all of Fortini's argument, but we believe that his interpretation of the avant-garde as the absence of mediation—a reprise of one of Lukács's themes—can be expanded still further. For the avant-garde, refusal and assent not only do not enter into a dialectic (often one is hidden under the disguise of the other), but they also avoid any mediation with respect to the real, into which, nonetheless, they claim to "erupt." This consideration can give rise to important methodological redimensioning in the study of the historic avant-gardes.

32. Robert Klein, *Form and Meaning* (New York: Viking, 1979), p. 186; original ed., *La forme et l'intelligible* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1970). On the Klein-Benjamin relationship, see André Chastel's introduction to the above-cited volume, pp. XI–XII.

33. A masterly diachronic analysis, in this sense, can be found in the essay by Massimo Cacciari, "Vita Cartesii est simplicissima," *Contropiano* 2 (1970): 375–99.

34. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 66; original ed., *Aesthetische*

Theorie (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970).

35. *Ibid.*

36. One should recall, however, what Kristeva wrote some years ago regarding semiological research; even starting out from a much less teleological Marxism than hers, one can well agree that “semiological research remains a discipline that finds nothing more at the bottom of its investigations (no key to no mystery, Lévi-Strauss would say) than its own ideological gesture, having to recognize it as such, to negate its own results, and to start all over again. By positing a precise knowledge as its final goal, it arrives upon completion of its itinerary at a theory that, being itself a signifying system, sends the semiological research back to its starting point—to the model of semiology itself, to criticize it and overturn it.” Julia Kristeva, “La sémiologie comme science critique” in *Théorie d’ensemble* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1968), p. 83. Furthermore, that semiological activity is “creative” is taken for granted by a large segment of French criticism. Such an awareness is less evident in the attempts at a literal translation of the linguistic model into the field of the analysis of architectural texts. See again Garroni, *Progetto di semiotica*. Agreeing with some of his theses on the inappropriateness of speaking of “language” when dealing with architecture is the essay by Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelonas, “Semiotics and Architecture: Ideological Consumption or Theoretical Work,” *Oppositions* 1 (1973): 94–100. An assessment of the recent research in architectural semiology can be found in Patrizia Lombardo’s article, “Sémiotique: l’architecte s’est mis au tic,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 179 (1975): xi–xv. But see also Tomás Maldonado, “Architettura e linguaggio,” *Casabella* 41, no. 429 (1977): 9–10; Omar Calabrese, “Le matrici della semiotica dell’architettura in Italia,” *ibid.*, pp. 19–24; and Ugo Volli, “Equivoci concettuali nella semiotica dell’architettura,” *ibid.*, pp. 24–27. Interesting, as the testimony of a working architect, is the interview with Vittorio Gregotti, “Architettura e linguaggio,” *ibid.*, pp. 28–30.

1

The Wicked Architect

1. See M. Roethlisberger, “Da Bril a Swanewelt: Tondi olandesi di paesaggio. 1600–1650,” in *Palatino* 12, no. 4 (1968): 387 ff. The subject is further discussed in Maurizio Fagiolo dell’Arco, *Il Parmigianino: Un saggio sull’ermetismo nel Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1970).

2. Calvesi has found a Vichian influence in the structures of the *Carceri* (Prisons) and a concrete reference to the Rome of the kings, conveyed by the evocation of the Mamertine prison. Although the connection with Vichian thought and the ancient Roman *cella* may seem forced, it is undeniable that one of Piranesi’s theses is—as Calvesi writes—“that the grandeur of Rome was founded on civil virtues and on the equity and intransigence of its laws, which came about in the heroic Rome of the kings. A subsequent thesis is that Roman law is independent of Greek law, and that its nucleus decidedly dates from before the reform which Livy speaks of . . . ; a coordinate thesis is that clearly set forth by Piranesi in his writings, to the effect that Roman architecture, like all of Roman culture, developed independently of its Greek counterpart. At the origin of these developments is the nucleus of the Rome of the kings, that is, of the Rome that reaped its Etruscan heritage.” Maurizio Calvesi’s introduction to Henri Focillon’s *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, ed. M. Calvesi and A. Monferini (Bologna: Alfa, 1967), p. xvii; original ed., *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: essai de catalogue raisonné de son œuvre* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1918). Plate 16 of the *Carceri*, especially after the elaboration of the second state, serves as a key to help the reader find the political metaphor concealed therein. The inscription *Ad terrorem increscentis audaciae* derives from Livy’s description of the Mamertine Prison in the life of Ancus Marcius (1.33); the inscription imprinted at the top of a column, *Infame scelus . . . ri infelici suspe*, can be integrated, according to Calvesi, with *Arbori infelici suspende*, connecting it to the episode of Horatius’s murder of his sister, under the reign of Tullus Hostilius. New relevant details

have been supplied by Silvia Gavuzzo Stewart in her essay, "Note sulle *Carceri* piranesiane," *L'Arte* 4, nos. 15–16 (1971): 55–74, in which she recognizes in plate II, added to the second edition, precise references to passages in Tacitus regarding Nero's cruelty; she then finds multiple meanings in the *Carceri*, in particular considering the transformation that it underwent in the second edition and questioning an interpretation based solely on plate XVI. See also Patricia May Sekler's "Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri*: Etchings and Related Drawings," *The Art Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1962): 331–63, for confirmation of Piranesi's reference to Livy; whereas Phillip Dennis Cate's essay, "Piranesi's Imperial Vision of Rome," *Art News* 72, no. 7 (1973): 40–44, proves to be of little use, despite its promising title.

3. See Ulya Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi's "Carceri"* (Zurich: Origo Verlag, 1958). See as well Augusta Monferini's catalogue in the appendix to Focillon's *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, where certain philological inaccuracies contained in the cited volume are pointed out. Among the romantic-existential interpretations of the *Carceri*, apart from De Quincey's *Confessions*, the prototype of them all, see J. Adhémar and A. Huxley, *Prisons, with the "Carceri" Etchings, by G. B. Piranesi* (London: Trianon Press, 1949); M. Yourcenar, "Les Prisons imaginaires de Piranèse," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 9, no. 7 (1961): 63–78; idem, *Le cerveau noir de Piranèse* (Paris, 1962); G. Poulet, "Piranèse et les poètes romantiques français," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 13, no. 160 (1966): 666–71, and 14, no. 161 (1966): 849–62, and reprinted in *Sensibilità e razionalità nel Settecento*, Atti del convegno della Fondazione G. Cini, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 2 (Florence: Sansoni, 1967), pp. 629–58; Luzius Keller, *Piranèse et les romantiques français: Le mythe des escaliers en spirale* (Paris: J. Corti, 1966)—a work the original draft of which, later expanded into a degree thesis, served as the basis for the above-cited articles by Poulet. Note, in all these essays, the insistence upon the theme of the labyrinth and the staircase

as symbols of consciousness sinking into itself and of the "eternal recurrence." The relationship that Brusatin sees between the *Carceri* and the Arsenal of Venice is without foundation. See Manilo Brusatin, *Venezia nel Settecento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), pp. 333–48. In addition see William L. MacDonald, *Piranesi's "Carceri": Sources of Invention* (Smith College, Northampton, 1979).

4. "In the *Carceri*," writes Ulya Vogt-Göknil, "Piranesi clearly shows that Euclidean geometry does not represent for him the only architectural solution. The artist's definitive break with the laws of central perspective is here evident. Piranesi not only shifts the vantage point of the painting, but even adopts several vantage points, thus literally causing the Euclidean space to collapse. . . . [In plate XIV] the open staircase to the left ascends, bends toward the right at a right angle, at the base of the pier, to form a bridge whose width completely fills the space between the two piers. The bridge finishes upon the central pier. When we give an upward glance at the arch which joins the central pier to that on the left, it makes us dizzy because at the bottom the distance between the two piers is barely that of a flight of stairs. At the level of the base, in front of the staircase going to the right, we suddenly notice that that branch does not at all remain between the two piers, since it ends in a platform situated just in front of the pier itself. The second part, rising steeply to the right, begins at the edge of the pier. If we follow the joinings of the two piers higher up, we become more disoriented than ever: we suddenly realize that this vast interior has only two naves, rather than three. The two piers that we had viewed from the bottom as parts of two parallel arcades, observed from above belong to the same group. The space that the flight of stairs going to the right occupies, in reality, then, does not exist." Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, pp. 34–35. Cuomo has interpreted the *Carceri* as a kind of homage to the "absolute space" theorized by Newton—that is, to an empty and indefinite space in which bodies gravitate—and to the corpuscular the-

ory of light, emphasizing Newton's relationship with the English hermetic-cabalistic tradition and with deism, as well as Piranesi's possible assimilation of Newton's ideas through works of a popularizing nature such as that of Algarotti. See Alberto Cuomo, "G. B. Piranesi e l'archeologia per 'frantumi' come scienze della città," in (various authors), *Dalla città preindustriale alla città del capitalismo*, ed. Alberto Caracciolo (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975), pp. 103–20, esp. pp. 108–10.

5. See in particular the British Museum catalogue, with preface by Edward Croft-Murray, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi, his Predecessors and his Heritage* (London: The British Museum, 1968), which lists among Piranesi's predecessors Bramante, Salviati, Riccio, Guercino, the Parigis, Monsú Desiderio, Claude Lorrain, Salvatore Rosa, G. Benedetto Castiglione, Valeriani, Bibiena, Canaletto, Tiepolo, and Juvarra. On the Piranesi-Juvarra relationship, see also John Harris, "Le Geay, Piranesi and International Neoclassicism in Rome (1740–1750)," in *Essays in the History of Architecture presented to Rudolf Wittkower* (London: Phaidon, 1967), and Carlo Bertelli, "Le parlanti rovine," in *GRAFICA grafica*, vol. 2, no. 2 (Rome, 1976).

6. See May Sekler, "Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri*," p. 335. According to Sekler, the observer of the *Carceri* is left unsatisfied and often frustrated: "In the description of the prison, a stimulation much more effective than allusions to the diabolical aspect is the substitution and, even, the destruction of what the observer is led to believe and suppose." Thus for Sekler the fragmentation of details and the distribution of structural logic play an important role. "What seems coherent at first sight, upon closer examination disintegrates; the mind is finally defeated in its attempt to rationalize the irrational. The important element therefore is not the perception of the whole but the perception of the particular limits that induce one to seek an order that is not there" (*ibid.*). On Piranesi's fragmentism, see Pane's negative view, expressed in the name of a metahistorical organic unity,

Roberto Pane, *Le acqueforti di G. B. Piranesi* (Naples: Ricciardi, 1938); reprinted in *Architettura e arti figurative* (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1948.)

7. See May Sekler, "Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri*," pp. 335 ff.

8. See Vincenzo Fasolo, "Il 'Campo Marzio' di G. B. Piranesi," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di storia dell'architettura* 15 (1956): 5, in which he comments on the "Tempio," and Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, p. 20, which gives a perspective rendering of the ground-plan of plate X of the *Prima parte di architettura e prospettive*. A typical example of Piranesi's perspective distortion can be seen in drawing 1945, 10 of the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University. In it the statuary group inspired by *I Trofei di Mario* (The Trophies of Marius), when one observes only the right half of the composition, seems to stand at the center of the rotunda supported by a continuous row of coupled corinthian columns, while, when observed from the left half, it is seen to be external to the rotunda: in fact, the rotunda itself proves to be spiral-shaped. On this drawing, see Agnes Morgan, "Una fantasia architettonica di G. B. Piranesi," *Arte Veneta* 5, nos. 17–20 (1951), and Hylton Thomas, *The Drawings of G. B. Piranesi* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954).

9. See Monferini's catalogue in Focillon, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, pp. 292–94 n. 121. *L'ampio magnifico Collegio* is one of the two plates added to the *Prima parte* when it was reprinted in the *Opere varie* of 1750.

10. See Harris's essay, "Le Geay," pp. 189–96. The neomannerist anticlassicism that Harris—following up a brief comment by Kaufmann—finds in the Le Geay-Piranesi-de Wailly current (see Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955], pp. 105–11) had already been touched on by both Körte and Wittkower. See W. Körte, "G. B. Piranesi als praktischer Architekt," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 3 (1933): 16 ff.; R. Wittkower, "Piranesi's *Parere su l'architettura*," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*

2 (1938–39): 147–58; idem, “Piranesi as Architect,” in *Piranesi* (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College Museum of Art, 1961), pp. 99–109. A contestation of Harris’s thesis is found in J. M. Pérouse de Montclos, *Etienne-Louis Boullée, 1728–1799, de l’architecture classique à l’architecture révolutionnaire* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1969); and in the chapter on Le Geay in the catalogue *Piranesi et les Français, 1740–1790*—for an exhibition originating at the Académie de France in Rome, then shown in Dijon and in Paris, May–November 1976—(Rome: Edizioni dell’Elefante 1977), pp. 179–200, with notes by Gilbert Erouart, Werner Oeschlin, and Pierre Arizzoli. See also Georges Brunel, *Introduction à Piranèse*, p. 20.

11. See Bertelli, “Le parlanti rovine,” pp. 90–107.

12. In this regard see also Calvesi, *Introduzione*, p. xx.

13. G. B. Piranesi, *Prima parte di architetture e prospettive* (Rome, 1743), dedicatory letter to sig. Nicola Giobbe. The italics are mine.

14. See Focillon, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, pp. 127–33, and Jonathan Scott, *Piranesi* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975), *passim*.

15. See C. Bertelli, “Visita a Santa Maria del Priorato,” *Paragone-Arte* 317–19 (1976): 180–88.

16. Piranesi, *Prima parte*. “Apropos of the kindnesses that you have shown me, I shall not finish this letter without reminding you, to my infinite pleasure, of the friendship which, through your good graces, I have struck up with the two renowned architects of our time, Nicola Salvi and Luigi Vanvitelli, the merits of whom will be confirmed by posterity for their distinguished Works—most of all for the Fountain of Trevi, which the former is about to complete, and for the Port and for the Lazzaretto (fever hospital) of Ancona, just completed by the latter. . . .” Piranesi thus favors the eighteenth-century reformers whom Benedetti—including in his definition the taste of the Bottari school—recently termed “Arcadian.” See Sandro Benedetti,

Roma 1730, situazione culturale, a report presented at the conference on *Bernardo Vittone e la disputa fra classicismo e barocco nel 1700*, Turin, 1972; and idem, “Per un’architettura dell’Arcadia, Roma, 1730,” *Controspazio* 3, nos. 7–8 (1971): 2–17. On the personality of Bottari and on Roman Jansenism, see Enrico Dammig, *Il movimento giansenista a Roma nella seconda metà del secolo xviii* (Vatican City, 1945), pp. 62 ff.; as well as Ernesto Codignola, *Illuministi, giansenisti e giacobini nell’Italia del Settecento* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1947); and G. Pignatelli and A. Petrucci, the entry “Bottari, Giovanni,” in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 13 (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1971), pp. 409–18. In any event, note that both Piranesi and Milizia belong to the Bottari circle: Bottari’s ethical rigorism and his program of cultural reform seem to act as catalysts for studies of markedly diverse natures.

17. See G. B. Bottari, *Dialoghi sopra le tre arti del Disegno* (Lucca, 1754), see in particular dialogue 2, pp. 68 ff., and dialogue 3, pp. 143 ff. On Pascoli and his *Testamento politico* of 1733, see Eugenio Battisti, “Lione Pascoli, Luigi Vanvitelli e l’urbanistica italiana del Settecento,” in *Atti dell’VIII Congresso nazionale di storia dell’architettura* (Caserta, October 1953), pp. 51–64, and in *L’antirinascimento* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), pp. 327 ff.

18. In his *Homme-machine* of 1747, La Mettrie states: “Who knows whether the reason for human existence is not existence itself. Perhaps chance has deposited man on a given point of the earth’s surface without our knowing how and why. . . . We know nothing of nature: it may be that all things have been produced by causes hidden in nature itself.” The atmosphere of the “machine” culture of the eighteenth century—one thinks, in addition to La Mettrie, of Condillac and of D’Holbach—with its antinaturalism and its skepticism, appears to have been critically screened by Piranesi; there is no doubt, however, that any cultural influences that he may have absorbed were thoroughly shaped by an autonomous and specific figurative ideology. On these

themes, see Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

19. "Whenever the wisdom of our Creator intended that we should be affected with any thing, he did not confide the execution of his design to the languid and precarious operation of our reason; but he endued it with powers and properties that prevent the understanding, and even the will, which seizing upon the senses and imagination, captivate the soul before the understanding is ready either to join with them or to oppose them." E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756; reprint, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958; Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968).

20. On this theme see G. May, "Diderot et Burke," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* (1960): 527–39; S. Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England*, 2d ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1960); Rosario Assunto, "Il trattato 'del sublime' dello pseudo-Longino nella cultura artistica del Settecento inglese," in *Stil und Überlieferung in der Kunst des Abendlandes*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Mann, 1967), pp. 169–91, and in *Stagioni e ragioni nell'estetica del Settecento* (Milan: Mursia, 1967), pp. 63–108; and Georges Tyessot, *Città e utopia nell'Illuminismo inglese: George Dance, Jr.* (Rome: Officina, 1974), pp. 81 ff.

21. William Chambers, *Dissertation sur le jardinage de l'Orient* (1772; issued the same year as the English edition), pp. 32–33. See also note 36 below.

22. See Werner Oechslin, "Premesse all'architettura rivoluzionaria," *Contropazio* 2, nos. 1–2 (1970): 1–15; and the two volumes of P. Marconi, A. Cipriani, and E. Valeriani, *I disegni di architettura dell'Archivio storico dell'Accademia di San Luca* (Rome: De Luca, 1974). On Piranesi's *Collegio*, see Paolo Melis, "G. B. Piranesi: un Ampio magnifico Collegio per l'architettura: Intenzionalità iconologica in un documento storico dell'Illuminismo," *Psicon* 2, no. 4

(1975): 85–99. Melis assumes that Piranesi's project is in some way connected to the competition of the Academy of Saint Luke proclaimed by Benedict XIII in 1750, thus advancing an extremely debatable iconological interpretation.

23. See Scott, *Piranesi*, pp. 50–52.

24. Modern criticism has paid a good deal of attention to the figures inserted by Piranesi into his engravings—and into the *Carceri* in particular—stressing his representation of a degraded humanity and establishing a stylistic relationship with the works of Callot and of Salvator Rosa. (Piranesi had the opportunity to study the Corsini collection in Rome, which contains works by Callot, Della Bella, and Rembrandt.) Bianconi notes how the Piranesi figure studies, which he saw in the Rezzonico collection in Rome at the end of the eighteenth century, depict cripples, hunchbacks, and the lowly in general; his rejection of the idealized humanity of Winckelmann is explicit (see Kurt Cassirer, "Piranesi disegnatore di figure," *Roma* 2 [1924]: 180–81). The depiction of a sick and miserable humanity next to the vestiges, in an equal state of decay, of the ancient "splendor" has an explicit meaning. Just as the architectural fragmentation is the denunciation of a linguistic absence, so the excessive human degradation is a call for a social reform that can no longer be put off. The figures of the tortured and their torturers in plate II of the *Carceri* (2d ed., 1751) is an exception, however. Here the triumph of justice is twisted into the constraint to torture, meted out and undergone at the same time by a Promethean humanity; the indissolubility of the *Contrat social* and *dominion* is represented as an absolute. (Note the difference in size between the figures of the tortured and the torturer, and those of the public looking on from the upper level; but consider as well Gavuzzo Stewart's observations in her "Note sulle Carceri piranesiane.") Salamon and Lopez-Rey have compared the *Carceri* of Piranesi with Goya's *Prisoners*. Lopez-Rey, maintaining the worlds of Goya and Piranesi to be at opposite poles, observes that the human figures in the *Carceri* are present more to accentuate

the functioning of the machines than to communicate the experience of torment: the machines of torture, "gathered together as in a collectors' gallery," thus become the means of alienating the subject from "civil society." See José Lopez-Rey, "Las Cárceles de Piranesi, los prisioneros de Goya," in *Scritti di Storia dell'Arte in onore di L. Venturi*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1956), pp. 111–16; Ferdinando Salamon, "G. B. Piranesi," *Goya* 66 (1965): 365–75. The Piranesi-Goya comparison has also been adopted by Philip Hofer in the introduction to the edition of the *Carceri* published by Dover Publications, New York, in 1973.

25. See note 10 above.

26. See W. Knight Sturges, "Jacques-François Blondel," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 11, nos. 1–4 (1952): 16–19; Kaufmann, *Architecture*; and Wolfgang Hermann, *Laugier and the 18th Century French Theory* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1962).

27. G. B. Piranesi, *Della magnificenza ed architettura de' Romani* (Rome, 1761), chap. 35, p. liii.

28. See also note 68 below.

29. Piranesi, *Della magnificenza*, chap. 58, p. xciii.

30. *Ibid.*, chap. 61, p. ci. The Etruscan revival began, as we know, with the work by the Scottish architect Thomas Dempster, *De Etruria regali* (1723–26; but written between 1616 and 1619), which was followed by works by Gori, G. B. Passeri, and M. Guarnacci; Lucchesi, Piranesi's uncle, also dealt with the Etruscans, attacking Scipione Maffei in *Riflessioni sulla pretesa scoperta del sopraornato Toscano espostaci dall'autore dell'opera: Degli anfiteatri*, in 1730. For an attack on Etruscan supremacy, see Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Dresden, 1764). On the theoretical value of the "magnificenza," see R. Wittkower, "Piranesi's *Parere*"; Kaufmann, *Architecture*; *idem*, "Piranesi, Algarotti and Lodoli: A Controversy in xviii Century Venice," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 46 (1955): 21–28, reprinted in *Essays in Honor of Hans Tietze* (New York, 1958), pp. 309–16; Lorenza Cochetti, "L'opera

teorica del Piranesi," *Commentari* 1 (1955): 35–49; and Calvesi, *Introduzione*. On the "Egyptian taste" in Piranesi and on the history of this taste itself, see R. Wittkower, "Piranesi e il gusto egiziano," in *Sensibilità e razionalità nel Settecento* 2: 659–74. New documents about Piranesi have been published in Alessandro Bettagno, ed., *Piranesi fra Venezia e l'Europa* (Florence: Olschki, 1983).

31. Fasolo, *Il Campo Marzio*. The graphic aspects of the *Campo Marzio* have been analyzed by Hofer. See Philip Hofer, "Piranesi as Book Illustrator," in *Piranesi*, pp. 81–87. See also Franco Borsi's introduction to the reedition of the *Campo Marzio* (Florence: Colombo Ristampe, 1972); John Wilton-Ely, "Vision and Design: Piranesi's 'Fantasia' and the Graeco-Roman Controversy," in (various authors) *Piranèse et les français*, pp. 529–44; and Silla Zamboni, "Il Campo Marzio dell'Antica Roma (1762)," in *Piranesi: Incisioni, rami, legature, architetture*, ed. Alessandro Bettagno (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1978), pp. 44–48.

32. Massimo Cacciari, "Vita Cartesii est simplicissima," *Contropiano* 3, no. 2 (1970): 375 ff.

33. This type of zoning in the northern area of the Tiber anticipates the projects of Valadier and of the French administration in the creation of a vast public park in the same area. See Fasolo, *Il Campo Marzio*, p. 3.

34. Note that in his fanciful restorations of the elevations, shown in bird's-eye view, Piranesi accentuates the historical inauthenticity of his reconstruction. For example, in the trapezoidal area formed by the Tiber and the Euripis to the right of Hadrian's Tomb, one sees the insertion of a building that has two angular turrets, vaguely reminiscent of aristocratic Roman architecture of the eighteenth century.

35. The erotic theme in the art and architecture of the period of the Enlightenment is worthy of particular study; the works of Lequeu offer an especially rich area for research.

36. Castell, in his 1728 work on ancient villas, interprets the garden described by Pliny as based upon a beauty consisting

of a "close Imitation of Nature; where, although the Elements are arranged with the greatest of Art, the Irregular is also respected; so that their style may justly be defined as an artful Confusion, where there is no sign of artifice and in which the Rocks, the Cascades and the Trees maintain their natural Forms," successively linking that "artful Confusion" to the characteristics of Chinese gardens (Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients*, 1728, dedicated to Lord Burlington). On the significance of Castell's treatise and its historical position in the sphere of the culture of Enlightenment, see the fundamental article by R. Wittkower, "English Neo-Palladianism, the Landscape Garden, China, and the Enlightenment," *L'arte* 6 (1969): 18–35. It is significant that, less than thirty years later, we find these basic principles of the landscaped English garden transported to the area of urban theory (see M. A. Laugier, *Essai sur l'architecture* [Paris, 1753], pp. 258–65, and also his *Observations* [Paris, 1765], pp. 312–13). The breaking of the laws of perspective vision passes, with Laugier, Piranesi, and later with Milizia, to the "compositional" law of the modern city (see also F. Milizia, *Principi di architettura civile*, 3d ed. [Bassano, 1813], 2: 26–27, in which Laugier's passage [*Essai*] is paraphrased in its entirety). In 1757 William Chambers, who in a number of ways knew the work of Le Geay and of Piranesi, had described three types of Chinese gardens—"pleasing, horrid, enchanted," revealing how the third, which he also termed "surprising," was populated with exotic plants and flowers, monstrous animals, ruined buildings, raging waterfalls, and mysterious caves, and also how these scenes were rendered more terrifying by sounds of unidentifiable origin, amplified by "artificial and complicated echoes." Chambers saw that the Chinese were well aware of how "powerfully contrast operates in the mind": the theme of the *Carceri* and later of the *Campo Marzio* is applied to nature, bending it to the subjective laws of the sublime (William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings* [London, 1757], pp. 15 ff.). See Eileen Harris, "Burke and Chambers on the Sublime and Beautiful,"

in *Essays*, pp. 207 ff.; Dora Wiebenson, "'Architecture terrible' and the 'jardin anglo-chinois,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 27 (1968): 136–39; idem, *Sources of the Greek Revival Architecture* (London: A. Zwemmer, 1969); Teyssot, *Città e utopia*, pp. 81–82, 97 n. 32.

37. M. Cacciari, "Dialettica e tradizione," *Contropiano* 1, no. 1 (1968): 133. "In a certain way," Cacciari continues, "the transcendental inquiry only serves to extend the interpretive possibilities of the intellect of the Enlightenment, basing upon it the a priori necessity. But this also involves abstracting it from any demand for practical verification. The determination of the autonomous sphere of reason calls into question the Enlightenment synthesis, the 'critique,' instituting a new distance between reason and rationalization, a distance that by no means signifies opposition to *Zivilisation*, but extreme dependence of the latter upon the cultural apriority and upon spiritual teleology."

38. "This [area] from the very beginnings of Rome, dedicated to Mars, from which it took its name as well, remained open, for the teaching of the youth, as long as the Republic lasted, and for military exercises; but then luxury began to emerge, in particular when the Empire was given to one individual, and that site was no longer used by the military troops, but served to acquaint the populace with pleasure, and buildings of every type began to be erected there, so that the Campo no longer seemed to be an appendage of Rome, but rather Rome, the sovereign of all cities, an appendage of the Campo, as Strabone has attested." G. B. Piranesi, dedicatory letter to R. Adam, *Il Campo Marzio dell'antica Roma* (Rome, 1762), p. b2; on the same theme, see also the introduction to chap. 6, p. 49.

39. *Ibid.*, p. b2. The italics are mine.

40. Note that this judgment of *inoperativeness* is clearly expressed by Piranesi: "If one possessed of creativity to an extraordinary degree, and an adventurous spirit ready to undertake the greatest enterprise, should, with the blessing of

Heaven and mankind, appear and invent new rules and new ideas for adorning and enriching architecture: this will be the quickest route for him to bring fame and glory to his name. . . ." Piranesi, *Della magnificenza*, p. cxcix.

41. Scott, *Piranesi*, p. 173.

42. See G. C. Argan, *La pittura dell'illuminesimo in Inghilterra da Reynolds a Constable* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1965).

43. See Thomas, *The Drawings* (which dates the Piranesi drawing at 1743); Vogt-Göknil, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, pp. 19, 86 n. 7. See also F. Stampfle, G. B. Piranesi: *Drawings in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: Dover, in association with the P. Morgan Library, 1978); and Faison Lane, Jr., "Rococo Innovator: The Protean Piranesi," *Art News* 4 (1959): 45–47, 56.

44. The relationship between *monadology* and Leibniz's aesthetic ideas in general, and baroque figurative culture is analyzed in detail in Rosario Assunto's article, "Un filosofo nelle capitali d'Europa: la filosofia di Leibniz tra Barocco e Rococò," *Storia dell'arte* 3 (1969): 296–337, which further develops the themes contained in Hans Barth's article, "Barock und die Philosophie von Leibniz," in *Die Kunstformen des Barockzeitalters* (Bern: Francke, 1956).

45. His Veneto origins and his many connections with English culture are factors to be considered in determining the historical moment of this aspect of Piranesi's poetics. As we shall note further on, Piranesi is well aware of the "semiotic quality" [*segnicità*] of Palladian architecture, as can easily be seen in the engravings of the *Prima parte di architettura*; the absolute accessibility of architectural "signs" is a necessary element in the creative process of the *invenzione*. It is thus unsurprising that the English architectural tradition, whose beginnings date from the work of Inigo Jones, can find in Piranesi a stimulus *internal* to its own thematics: one thinks of Adam and of George Dance, Jr., and even more of Soane.

46. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon, 1970), pp. xviii

ff.; original ed., *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

47. Scott, in his volume *Piranesi*, analyzes at length the self-promotional activities of Piranesi, who even in his choice of residences in Rome—first in front of the French Academy on the Corso, next to Wagner's shop and near Bouchard's bookstore, and then at the Spanish Steps, a cosmopolitan center par excellence in 1761—proves to be an astute manager of his own wares (his controversy with Lord Charlemont offers further evidence of this fact). "In the chaos of the *Caduta di Fetonte* (*Fall of Phaethon*)," observes Abruzzese, ". . . do we not find . . . the productive characteristics of an engraver who works to sell, that is, who in his specific form of technical reproduction achieves an ever-stronger rapport with the public, a public which is also that of the antiquarians of the eighteenth century? Was it not this growing comprehension of the mechanisms of perception on the part of the buyer that gave rise to the second version of the Prisons . . . , incredibly 'deeper,' more hypnotic and richer in chiaroscuro?" Alberto Abruzzese, "Editoria della illustrazione," *Rinascita* 21 (1976): 26.

48. See G. B. Piranesi, *Parere su l'architettura*, together with the *Osservazioni di Giovanni Battista Piranesi sopra la Lettre de Monsieur Mariette*. . . (Rome, 1765), p. 2. On the *Parere*, see Wittkower, "Piranesi's *Parere*," in which the diversity of this text compared with the text of the *Magnificenza* is linked to the "new manner" of Piranesi's architecture and to his anticlassical interpretation of Roman monuments after 1761. (We have tried to show, however, the coherence that links the project of the *Ampio magnifico Collegio* to the *Carceri*, to the *Campo Marzio*, and to the succeeding works—in partial disagreement with Wittkower's interpretation.) Vogt-Göknil has found in the *Parere* the origin of a skeptical attitude, which validates every architectural language, connected to the *Stilpluralismus* of the plates annexed to the *Parere* itself and to the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini*. See Vogt-Göknil, "Parere su l'architettura und Piranesis Praktische

Architektur-Tätigkeit," in *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*, pp. 673 ff. See also Kaufmann, *Architecture*, pp. 105–11, and idem, "Piranesi, Algarotti and Lodoli" (in which he repropose his theses of the preceding volume); Cochetti, *L'opera teorica*; Maria Grazia Messina, "Teoria dell'architettura in Giovanbattista Piranesi," *Controspazio* 2, nos. 8–9 (1970): 6–10, and 3, no. 6 (1971): 20–28, which adds practically nothing to the texts cited. See in addition Carlos Sambricio, "Piranesi y el Parere," *Revista de Ideas estéticas* (1972): 81–101.

49. Piranesi, *Parere su l'architettura*, p. 2.

50. Ibid.

51. Carlo Andrea Rana, *L'alfabeto in prospettiva, ventuno abbozzetti, . . . architettura per ricreamento* (Turin, nd.). See as well the architectural alphabet of Johann David Steingruber (Schwabach, 1773); the volume *La lettre et l'image*, ed. Massin (Paris, 1970); and the article by Virgilio Vercelloni, "Costruire a chiare lettere. (Da Goethe ai Pop)," *Psicon* 7 (1976): 97–106.

52. "You would like us to stay," Didascalò exclaims, "in those huts from which the Greeks had gotten their ideas for decorating their own architecture"—with an evident reference to Le Roy and to Algarotti, the latter having disagreed with Lodoli precisely with regard to the normative meaning of the primitive hut. "The sophist is you," continues Didascalò, "who dictate rules to architecture, something which it has never had. What would you say if I proved to you that the severity, the *raison d'être*, and the imitation of the huts are incompatible with architecture? That architecture, far from wanting ornaments derived from the parts necessary to construct a building and keep it standing, consists of ornaments which are totally extraneous?"

53. In a significant passage in the *Parere*, Protopiro and Didascalò agree that it is "the use which makes the law" (even if the former adds, "but not the abuse"). The Piranesian *use* is conceptually totally similar to the *arbitrary principle* of architectural beauty that Perrault had recog-

nized in the *Autorité* and in the *accountumance*, and that Wren in turn had called "Customary Beauty." See Claude Perrault, *Les dix livres d'architecture de Vitruve* (Paris, 1673; 2d ed., 1684), p. 13 n. 12; and Christopher Wren, *Tract I*, p. 352. On the same theme, see M. Tafuri, "'Architectura artificialis': Claude Perrault, Sir Christopher Wren e il dibattito sul linguaggio architettonico," in *Atti del convegno internazionale sul Barocco* (1969) (Lecce, 1972). Piranesi's antinaturalism is totally accepted by the Adams, who write in their *Works* (I, 1, pp. 6–7): "Unlike other arts, architecture does not have a model to be found in nature to which the artist can always refer. . . . In architecture this model must of necessity be formed and perfected on the basis of an educated taste and an exacting study of the beautiful in the work of the great masters . . .," thus founding the empirical tradition of English culture, the results of the eighteenth-century debate on the subject of taste, and the teaching of Piranesi. See Damie Stillman, "Robert Adam and Piranesi," in *Essays*, pp. 197–206.

54. Piranesi, *Parere su l'architettura*, p. 2.

55. Ibid.

56. See Calvesi, *Introduzione*, pp. xx–xxi.

57. The italics are mine.

58. Pierre Klossowski, *Sade prossimo mio* (Milan: Garzanti, 1975), pp. 15–16; original ed., *Sade mon prochain: Le philosophe scélérat* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

59. Ibid., pp. 50–51.

60. Körte, "G. B. Piranesi," and Wittkower, "Piranesi as Architect." On Santa Maria del Priorato, besides the hagiographic and incorrect article of G. Brigante Colonna, "G. B. Piranesi e la chiesa del Priorato sull'Aventino," *Rivista dell'ordine de Malta* 6, no. 6 (1942): 8–11, see Giulio Pediconi, "Un particolare piranesiano," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di storia dell'architettura* 15 (Rome, 1956): 15 ff. (a comment upon the base-relief of the altar of San Basilio); Renzo U. Montini, "Santa Maria del Priorato sull'Aventino," *Capitolium* 30 (1955): 103–12; idem, *Santa Maria del Priorato*,

(Rome: Marietti, 1960); Bruno Molajoli, "Piranesi architetto," *Bollettino del centro A. Palladio* 5 (1963): 212–14 (taken entirely from Wittkower's article, "Piranesi"); Heinrich Brauer, "G. B. Piranesi verwirklicht einen Traum: Eine Zeichnung zum St. Basilius Altar in S.ta Maria del Priorato," *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Hertzianae* (Munich, 1961): 474–77. Körte in 1933 had partially clarified the problem in construction faced by Piranesi, establishing 1568 as the date of the original construction of the church and the palazzo of the Knights of Malta; the eighteenth-century restorations involve only the vault, the decorations, the apse and the façade of the church. To the five drawings of details for these works, conserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library (see Felice Stampfle, "An Unknown Group of Drawings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi," *The Art Bulletin* 30, no. 2 [1948]: 122–41, and *idem*, the catalogue *Giovanni Battista Piranesi, An Exhibition of Drawings* [New York, 1949]; also see now her catalogue of Piranesi's drawings conserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library), the research of James Grote van Derpool has added to our knowledge an unpublished volume of accounts, conserved in the Avery Library of Columbia University in New York. Wittkower, in *Piranesi*, has closely examined the manuscript relative to the works of the master mason Giuseppe Pelosini (2 November 1764–31 October 1766), establishing—against the opinion of Körte—that the vault of the church, too, remains that built in the sixteenth century, except for the decoration and the roof, the latter having been restored for technical reasons. The symbolic themes used by Piranesi for the church and the square on the Aventino have been carefully studied by John Wilton-Ely, who observes how the sarcophagus containing the sixteenth-century eye of the façade alludes to the church's function as a tomb and recalls the rite of the *Armilustrium*, described by Varro and by Livy, in reference to the steles and obelisks of the piazza. See John Wilton-Ely, "Piranesian Symbols on the Aventine," *Apollo*, n.s., 170 (1976): 214–27. New critical interpretations of Piranesi's work at the Priory have been set

forth in the articles by Sylvia Pressouyre, "La poétique ornamentale chez Piranèse et Delafosse," in *Piranèse et les français*, pp. 423–34, and by M. Tafuri, "Il complesso del Priorato sull'Aventino," in *Piranesi*, ed. Bettagno, pp. 78–87.

61. See Manfred F. Fischer, "Die Umbaupläne des G. B. Piranesi für den Chor von S. Giovanni in Laterano," *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 19 (1968): 207–28. Piranesi's projects have been discussed by Stampfle in "An Unknown Group," *Giovanni Battista Piranesi, and Piranesi, Drawings and Etchings at Columbia University*, exhibition catalogue (New York, 1972), esp. pp. 13–68, and the notes by Dorothea Nyberg.

62. NI. 6331-3440 f., Kunstbibliothek, Berlin (circa 1764), published in A. Hyatt Mayor, *G. B. Piranesi* (New York: H. Bittner, 1952), p. 92; see also Brauer, *G. B. Piranesi*.

63. Pinelli has attempted to question our interpretation of the altar of the Priory—presented in outline form in *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1968), p. 40—on the basis of a simplistic reading of the *Parere*, not realizing that the dualism of the altar itself is the final expression of the "agonizing dialectic of history," which he himself has recognized as central in Piranesi. See Antonio Pinelli, "Dialettica del revival nel dibattito classico-romantico," in G. C. Argan, ed., *Il revival* (Milan: G. Mazzotta, 1974), p. 74. For an interpretation of Piranesi's poetics radically different from that proposed here, see J. Wilton-Ely, *The Mind and Art of Giovanni Battista Piranesi* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978).

64. On this theme and its consequences in the transformation of architectural discipline in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see G. Teyssot's notable article, "Illuminismo e architettura: saggio di storiografia," introduction to the Italian translation of the work by E. Kaufmann, *Tre architetti rivoluzionari* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1976), pp. 7–73; original ed., *Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952).

65. Piranesi, *Parere*.

66. The hypothesis advanced by Calvesi, that Piranesi belonged to a hermetic-masonic circle of English origin, seems perplexing—not because traces of hermetic symbolism can not be found in Piranesi's works, but because the use that he makes of these symbolic motifs should be considered in the light of the dialectic we have attempted to clarify. It is true that many of the artists influenced by Piranesi's example are linked in varying degrees to Rosicrucian and Masonic sects. In Piranesi's case it is clear that, although certain elements of those ideologies may have influenced his works—the decoration of the Caffé degli Inglesi must have lent a decidedly esoteric touch to the establishment—the value of his utopia is surely not to be found in the vague proposals of brotherhood and of an aristocratic *gradus ad Parnasum*, elitist and private, which is really all that the Masonic contribution amounts to here. The last point is well illustrated in René Le Forestier's encyclopedic work *La Franc-maçonnerie templière et occultiste aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, published by Antoine Faivre, with an introduction by Alec Mellor (Louvain-Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1970); (on Roman Freemasonry, see also William Horgan, "The Jacobite Lodge at Rome, 1753–1757" [1910], in *La Franc-maçonnerie templière*). As far as Piranesi's emphasis on Egyptian art is concerned, it seems to us that Calvesi's hypotheses are already refuted in Wittkower's article "Piranesi e il gusto egiziano." Wittkower, in fact, observes that as far back as 1741 William Warbercon was poking fun at A. Kircher's hermetic Egyptology, and that Piranesi adhered rather to the school of scientific historicism based on archaeological detachment, which had been introduced by Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf*. On this theme, see also Nikolaus Pevsner, "The Egyptian Revival," now in *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, vol. 1 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968). On the architecture linked to Masonic rites, see Anthony Vidler's notable article "The Architecture of Lodges: Ritual Form and Association Life in the Late Enlightenment," *Oppositions* 5 (1976): 75–97, plus

an ample bibliography, which notes, among other things, the Masonic faith of Laugier. Calvesi's thesis has been refuted by Scott, without adequate discussion (see Scott, *Piranesi*, p. 306 n. 9) and by Bertelli, who observes how certain symbols that Calvesi interprets as hermetic—*la dextrarum junctio* of one of the *Capricci*, for example—are merely memories of gems or Roman funeral cippises, while the hand that pours the wine, in another of the *Capricci*, is one of the ironic notations frequently found in Piranesi's work. See Bertelli, "Le parlanti rovine," p. 101. It is also necessary to reflect on Piranesi's political ambiguity, keeping in mind his ties with the Jesuit world and with Father Contucci in particular. Piranesi's political ambiguity is evident in any case: his ties with Bottari—who from 1722 was interested in Jansenist ideas, from 1730 was a ferocious anti-Jesuit, and from 1749 was active as a recognized leader of the filo-Jansenist movement, always in an anti-Jesuit role—is hardly in keeping with the defense in favor of the Jesuits that Piranesi made to Clement XIII Rezzonico, according to Legrand's testimony.

67. G. B. Piranesi, *Ragionamento apologetico in difesa dell'architettura egizia e toscana*, dedicatory letter, attached to the *Diverse maniere d'adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli edifici* (Rome, 1769). It is interesting to note how in this work Piranesi, in addition to coming to the defense of Chinese art (p. 10), introduced a vague naturalism as the origin of particularly bizarre decorative forms, comparing marine fossils and shells with ancient decorative motifs. Regarding hieroglyphics, he observes: "In some stones we see certain horizontal rows, one divided from the other by lists, and in whose compartments we see a row of buttons, or pointed and hollowed-out bars. In my opinion, these were surely not symbols, but pure ornaments of those stones which belonged to architecture more than to anything else" (p. 10). After stating that "the great number of ornaments is not harmful to the works which they decorate . . . [except] with regard to the character and the ways which one desires to imitate," and that "every

nation has its own [ways] from which it is wrong to depart," Piranesi immediately proposes his theory of the *contaminatio*, contradicting the conclusions of his theoretical reflections. On the *Diverse maniere*, see Alvar Gonzáles Palacios, "Diverse Maniere d'adornare i Cammini . . .," in *Piranesi*, ed. Bettagno, pp. 56–61.

68. Piranesi, *Ragionamento apologetico*, pp. 3–4. The citation of the passage by Montesquieu and Piranesi's observations regarding it can already be found in the *Parere*. In the *Ragionamento apologetico*, Piranesi attributes the entire orientation expressed in the engravings of the *Diverse maniere* to the taste and the wishes of Monsignor Rezzonico, to whom the volume is dedicated. "I perceived," he writes, "in your approval of my work, Sire, that, unhappy with the modern fashion of decorating architectural works, you would prefer that our Architects use not only the Greek ways, but the Egyptian and Etruscan as well, and with wisdom and discernment take from them that which they offer us of what is graceful and beautiful and of noble intellect, and only that. Thus in fact did the Romans, who after centuries of using Etruscan architecture, then adopted that of Greece, and used them together . . ." (*Ragionamento apologetico*, dedication). "Such delicacy of taste," Piranesi continues, "such cultivated discernment, could only, and in fact did, disgust you with the strange ways of modern architecture, and make you desire that we abandon that path and take up that which was followed by the ancients, both Romans and Greeks, and whose monuments we so admire." Throughout the dedicatory letter, Piranesi shows his disapproval of the "strange ways of modern architecture"—a criticism of the Baroque that, after Didascalò's reevaluation in the *Parere* of Bernini and Borromini, will seem contradictory only to one who has not understood the constant presence of the affirmative and the negative in Piranesi. It is not by chance that precisely in the *Diverse maniere* we find drawings of tables and sedan chairs in pure rococo style. See Wittkower, "Piranesi e il gusto egiziano"; Eugenio Di

Castro, "G. B. Piranesi e i mobili del Settecento italiano," *L'Urbe* 24, no. 2 (1961): 23–28 (a comment on the drawings of furniture for Lord Exeter and for Cardinal Rezzonico); and Francis J. B. Watson, "A Side Table by Piranesi, a Masterpiece of Neo-Classic Furniture," *The Minneapolis Institute of Arts Bulletin* 54 (1965): 19–29, in which, in addition to the fireplaces for Thomas Hope (today at the Rijksmuseum) and for Burleigh House, Watson describes a table for Cardinal Rezzonico (*Diverse maniere*, pl. LIV), in the collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and an unpublished preparatory drawing relative to it, at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. (See as well in the appendix to Watson's article, Anthony Clark's note, "Brief Biography of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Rezzonico," pp. 30–31.) In addition, William Rieder has identified two drawings at the Pierpont Morgan Library as studies for two fireplaces that Grimston had previously attributed to Piranesi, at Gorhambury (Charlotte Grimston, *The History of Gorhambury* [London, 1821], p. 90). He has also published four Piranesi drawings relating to the *Diverse maniere* in three folios of the Sven Gahlin collection, London. See William Rieder, "Piranesi's *Diverse maniere*," *The Burlington Magazine* 115, no. 842 (1973): 309–17, and idem, "Piranesi at Gorhambury," *The Burlington Magazine* 117, no. 870 (1975): 582–91. On the influence of Piranesi's models on Roman goldsmiths, bronze workers, and stonecutters, other than on the Valadiers, see Alvar Gonzáles-Palacios, "I mani del Piranesi. (I Righetti, Boschi, Boschetti, Raffaelli)," *Paragone-Arte* 27, no. 315 (1976): 33–48. Reference is made to the meaning of rococo for Piranesi in Andrew Robison's article, "Piranesi's Ship on Wheels," *Master Drawings* 11, no. 4 (1973): 389–92.

69. Piranesi, *Ragionamento apologetico*, pp. 4–5.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 33. The passage cited reveals once again Piranesi's wavering between a yearning for the new and untried and an adherence to historically proven laws. "It is my desire to show," he had written at the beginning of the *Ragionamento* (p. 2),

"that medals, cameos, intaglios, statues, bas-reliefs, paintings, and other such antiquities, can be of use not only to critics and scholars in their studies, but in an equal measure to craftsmen for their work, incorporating into the latter, with artistry and skill, all that they admire and commend in the former. One who has even a slight acquaintance with the study of antiquity can see what a broad field I have opened up to the ingenuity of our artisans. . . . It seems that architecture, which was brought to the highest peak of perfection by our finest artists, is in decline, and headed back to that barbarous state whence it began. Such disregard for the rules—in the columns, in the architraves, in the tholuses, in the cupolas, and above all such eccentricity in the ornaments! One might almost say that they decorate architectural works in order to deform them rather than to beautify them. I know that often the cause is more the whim of the contractors, who do the building, than of the architects, who create the design. . . ." The polemic against licence and the yearning for freedom of the imagination recall once again the themes of the circle of Monsignor Bottari: a rigor tempered by freedom is in that sense one of the postulates of the Piranesian utopia.

71. Cited in Scott, *Piranesi*, pp. 243–44.

72. For certain particulars relating to this theme, see Mario Praz, "Classicismo rivoluzionario," in *Gusto neoclassico*, 2d ed. (Naples, 1959), pp. 97 ff., even though the author persists in finding a connection between Piranesi's etchings and the taste for Walpole and for the Gothic novel.

73. Jean Fautrier, "Parallelen zur neuen Malerei," *Blätter & Bilder* 1 (1959), and in Jürgen Klaus, *Teorie della pittura contemporanea* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1967), p. 314; original ed., *Theorien zeitgenössischer Malerei in Selbstzeugnissen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963).

2

The Historicity of the Avant-Garde

1. In his writings, Eisenstein frequently refers to the works of El Greco and Piranesi. See his detailed analysis of the *View*

and *Plan of the City of Toledo* in the essay "Synchronization of Senses," in *The Film Sense*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942), pp. 69–109; original ed., "Vertikal'nyi montazh, stat'ya pervaya," *Iskusstvo kino* 9 (1940), or the reference to Piranesi's compositional technique, "built from the movements and variations of counter-volumes," in "Form and Content: Practice," *ibid.*, pp. 157 ff.; original ed., "Vertikal'nyi montazh, stat'ya tret'ya," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1941). The essays "El Greco" and "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms" are in volume 3 of Eisenstein's complete works, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), p. 145 ff. and 156 ff. respectively.

2. S. M. Eisenstein, *Lessons with Eisenstein* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1962), p. 124; original ed., *Na urokach rezhissury S. Eyzenshteyna* (Moscow, 1958). Note that the passage cited follows an earlier reference to the dynamic composition of Piranesi's *Carceri*.

3. *Ibid.*

4. S. M. Eisenstein, "Methods of Montage" (1929) in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), p. 82.

5. Viktor Shklovsky, *La mossa del cavallo*, and *Sulla teoria della prosa* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), esp. pp. 12 ff. and 24 ff.; original ed., *O teorii prozy* (Moscow-Leningrad: KPVR, 1925). The "making strange" or "defamiliarization" of the object theorized in this fundamental text of Shklovsky's leads inevitably to an interpretation of poetry as "impeded, tortuous language."

6. See Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité* (Paris: Editions Du Seuil, 1964), p. 64.

7. In fact, the relationships that Doubovsky rejects are those with the formalism of Anglo-Saxon criticism. What is important to our argument here is the statement of the *Nouvelle Critique* regarding the "primacy of the work": "Every aesthetic object is the work of a human project." Serge Doubovsky, *The New Criticism in France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 106;

original ed., *Pourquoi la nouvelle critique: Critique et objectivité* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1966).

8. Eisenstein, "The Filmic Fourth Dimension," in *Film Form*, p. 65; original ed., "Kino chetyrëch izmereniy," *Kino* (27 August 1929). He writes: "The film-frame can never be an inflexible letter of an alphabet, but must always remain a multiple-meaning ideogram. And it can be read only in juxtaposition, just as an ideogram acquires its specific significance, meaning, and even pronunciation . . . only when combined with a separately indicated reading or tiny meaning—an indicator for the exact reading—placed alongside the basic hieroglyph" (ibid.). On this theme, see M. Levin, "Ejzenštejn e l'analisi strutturale," *Rassegna sovietica* 2 (1969): 102–10; original ed., "S. Eÿzenshtejn i problemy struktural'nogo analiza," *Voprosy literary* 2 (1969). See also Eisenstein's "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today" (1941–42), in *Film Form*, pp. 195 ff.

9. "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram" (1929), in *Film Form*, p. 28.

10. See for example the article "Montazh 1938," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1938).

11. On these subjects, see in the present volume the chapter "The Stage as 'Virtual City.'" It is interesting to compare Eisenstein's enthusiasm for Piranesi with the harsh condemnation of him expressed by the young Le Corbusier in an unpublished note, circa 1929: "Toutes les reconstructions de Piranèse, plan de Rome, et compositions funambules qui ont terriblement servi à l'école des Beaux Arts: que de Portiques, de colonnades, d'obélisques!!! C'est fous, c'est atroce, laid, imbecile. Ce n'est pas grandiose, il ne faut pas s'y tromper" (Le Corbusier, *Fondation Le Corbusier*, boîte B. N., c. 1919). This comment bears out Le Corbusier's extremely coherent and negative attitude toward the avant-garde, in contrast with his interest in the celebration of the limit, characteristic of Greek art, and in the urban theories of Laugier.

12. See Alberto Asor Rosa, "Rivoluzione e letteratura," *Contropiano* 1 (1968):

216–36, and "Lavoro intellettuale e utopia dell'avanguardia nel paese del socialismo realizzato," in (various authors) *Socialismo, città, architettura: Urss 1917–1937* (Rome: Officina, 1971), pp. 217 ff. On these themes, see as well the chapter "Toward the 'Socialist City'" in the present volume.

13. Eisenstein, "Through Theater to Cinema," in *Film Form*, pp. 12–13; original ed., in *Sovetskoe kino* 11–12 (1934).

14. Ibid., p. 14. My italics.

15. Boris Eichenbaum, "Problems of Cinema Stylistics," in *Russian Formalist Film Theory*, ed. Herbert Eagle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Slavic Publications, 1981), p. 57. Originally in *Poetika kino* (Moscow, 1927).

Appendix: Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms

1. Sergei M. Eisenstein, "ili tekuchest' form" (1946–47), reprinted in Eisenstein, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), pp. 156–87. This translation of "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Form" by Roberta Reeder originally appeared in *Oppositions* 11 (1977).

2. Albert Geisecke, "Meister de Grafik, IV," *Giovanni Battista Piranesi*. I shall also refer to this work later on.—S.M.E.

3. Although they do not undergo that savage violence that the disintegrating (exploding) line possesses in, for example, the pen drawings of Van Gogh.—S.M.E.

4. This citation was introduced by me on another occasion in a corresponding section of "Non-indifferent Nature."—S.M.E.

5. We will return to the problem of Picasso's ecstasy in a section of "Non-indifferent Nature."—S.M.E.

6. Portal tower of Indian temples richly decorated with sculpture.—M.T.

7. An ancient city located in the northern part of the Yucatan peninsula.—M.T.

8. A Japanese painter and poet of the seventeenth century.—M.T.

9. Muslim religious procession with autoflagellation.—M.T.

The Stage as "Virtual City"

1. Adolphe Appia, "L'opera d'arte vivente," in *Attore, musica e scena*, ed. Ferruccio Marotti (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), p. 176; original ed., *L'œuvre d'art vivant* (Geneva-Paris, 1921). Regarding critical writings on Appia, from Jacques Rouché's work (1910) to that of Heinz Kindermann (1968), see Giancarlo Marchesini, "La 'figura di Appia': il problema dello studio dei fondatori della regia," *Biblioteca teatrale* 8 (1973): 45–56.
2. See Georg Fuchs, *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft* (Berlin-Leipzig, [1905]); Peter Behrens, *Feste des Lebens und der Kunst: Eine Betrachtung des Theaters als höchsten Kultursymbols* (Leipzig, 1900); and idem, "Ein Dokument deutscher Kunst." *Ausstellung der Künstlerkolonie Darmstadt 1901* (Darmstadt, 1901). On Fuchs, see Antonella Ottai's unpublished degree thesis, *Die Revolution des Theaters di G. Fuchs* (Rome, 1969–70). On the Fuchs-Behrens relationship and on Behrens's activity as set designer, see Fritz Hoerber, *Peter Behrens* (Munich 1913), pp. 216–18; Janet Leeper, "Peter Behrens and the Theatre," *Architectural Review* 144, no. 858 (1968): 138–39; and Stanford Anderson, "Behrens's Changing Concept," *Architectural Design* 39, no. 2 (1969): 72–78.
3. György Lukács, *Scritti di sociologia della letteratura* (Milan: Sugar, 1964), p. 299. But see now György Lukács, *Il dramma moderno* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976).
4. *Ibid.*, p. 303.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
6. Behrens, *Feste des Lebens und der Kunst*, p. 15.
7. Fuchs, *Die Schaubühne der Zukunft*, p. 47.
8. Maurice Maeterlinck, *La jeune Belgique* (Paris, 1890). Mallarmé retorts that "the dancer is not a woman who dances . . . it is not a woman, but a metaphor that takes on the shape of one of the basic elements of our form—a sword, cup, flower, etc.—and it does not dance, but rather suggests by the marvel of flashes

- or leaps, with a bodily writing, the paragraphs necessary in prose, be it dialogue or description, to express poetry freed from every device used by the scribe." See Albert-Marie Schmidt, *La letteratura simbolista*, 2d ed. (Milan: Garzanti, 1956), p. 85; original ed., *La littérature symboliste*. Mallarmé refers to the dancing on a bare stage of Loïe Fuller, who recognized the need for a "scène . . . extrêmement libre," given that "la première chose à réaliser c'est l'espace." Loïe Fuller, *Quinze ans de ma vie* (Paris, 1908).
9. Georg Fuchs, *Die Revolution des Theaters* (Munich-Leipzig, 1909), p. 65.
 10. See Max Littmann, *Das Münchener Künstler Theater* (Munich, 1908). On Littmann's theatre in Munich, see also Pierre Sonrel, *Traité de scénographie* (Paris, 1943), p. 101.
 11. Adolphe Appia, second preface to *Die Musik und die Inszenierung* (1918), Italian translation cited, p. 161.
 12. Kurt Hiller, "Das Cabaret und die Gehirne Salut: Rede zur Eröffnung des Neopathetischen Cabarets," *Der Sturm* 44 (1910): 351. See Paolo Chiarini, *Caos e geometria* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1964), p. 144.
 13. On futurist theatre, see in particular issue no. 260 (1967) of *Sipario*; Mario Verdone, *Teatro di tempo fascista* (Rome: Lerici, 1969); idem, *Teatro italiano d'avanguardia* (Rome: Officina, 1970); Franco Mancini, *L'evoluzione dello spazio scenico* (Bari: Dedalo, 1975); and Paolo Fossati's fundamental work, *La realtà atrezzata: Scena e spettacolo dei futuristi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), with an ample bibliography in the footnotes. A useful repertory can also be found in Mario Verdone's *Poemi e scenari cinematografici d'avanguardia* (Rome, 1975). The debt owed by European avant-garde theatre to early futurism was eloquently expressed in Russia by Yury Annekov, who in September 1919 attempted a production in a clownish key of Tolstoy's *Pervy vinokur*, at the Hermitage Theatre in St. Petersburg. In 1921 Annekov writes: "During the days of the theatrical October, the words of Marientti acquire a particular

meaning, not only because of the violence of their rebellion against antiquated theatrical convention and literary-theatrical routine, but above all because at their base lies an exact conception of the roots of theatrical art, of the authentic element of theatre. With regard to the theatrical October, Marinetti's manifestos are like 1871. Modern theatrical researchers have divided up among them Marinetti's precepts, and on a technical level we see them broken up into fragments in the wake of the theatrical October: Tairov dyes bodies and wigs, Meyerhold and Bebutov inject into a text of Verhaeren revolutionary speeches and a flood of leaflets, Meyerhold and Max Reinhardt involve the spectator in the scenic action, the directors of crowd scenes in St. Petersburg show the menacing grandeur of that crowd, Radlov resorts to *varyagi* in the guise of circus performers, to the music hall, to film technique." Yury Annenkov, "Teatro senza finalità," partial Italian translation in Cesare G. de Michelis's *Il futurismo italiano in Russia, 1909–1929* (Bari: De Donato, 1973), pp. 178–81 (the passage cited is on p. 179); original ed., "Teatr beza prikladnichestva," *Vestnik teatra* 93–94 (1921): 3–6. We note, incidentally, that De Michelis's book is extremely precise in its analysis of the true relationship between Italian futurism and the Russian and Soviet avant-gardes.

14. Fossati, *La realtà attrezzata*, p. 41.

15. Giuseppe Bartolucci, *Il gesto futurista* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1969).

16. On Ball and the activity of the Cabaret Voltaire, see Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (New York: Abrams, 1965); original ed., *Dada: Kunst und Antikunst* (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1964); Luisa Valeriani, *Dada a Zurigo: Ball e il Cabaret Voltaire* (Turin, 1970); Annabelle Henkin Melzer, "Dada Performance at the Cabaret Voltaire," *Artforum* 12, no. 3 (1973): 74–78; idem, "The Dada Actor and Performance Theory," *Artforum* 12, no. 4 (1973): 51–57. See also Henri Béhar, *Il teatro dada e surrealista* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976); original ed., *Etude sur le théâtre dada et surréaliste* (Paris, 1967). Notable critical comments on Ball as an intellectual figure are contained in Laura

Mancinelli, *Il messaggio razionale dell'avanguardia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1978).

17. Hugo Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 2d ed. (Lucerne, 1946), p. 91.

18. The painting was the property of Lili Brik, Moscow.

19. On Ekster as a scenic designer see J. Tugenkhold, *Aleksandra Ekster* (Berlin, 1922); Andrey B. Nakov, *Alexandra Ekster* (Paris, 1972); J. E. Bowlt, "A Veritable Amazon of the Russian Avant-garde," *Art News* 73, no. 7 (1974): 41–43.

20. Kurt Schwitters, "Die Merzbühne," *Sturm-Bühne* 8 (1919): 3; English trans., *The Dada Painters and Poets* (New York: Wittenborn, 1951), pp. 62–63. Schwitters's position regarding scenic spatiality would undergo a marked change after 1923. On this area of his activity, see Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne, 1967); English trans. (New York: Abrams, 1967), pp. 188–92.

21. Kate Trauman Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life* (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 62.

22. On the experiments of the constructivist theatre, see Abraham Efros, *Kamernyi Teatr i ego ksudozhniki* (Moscow, 1934); J. Gregor and R. Fülöp Miller, *Das russische Theater* (Vienna, 1928); Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Majakovskij e il teatro russo di avanguardia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1959); idem, *Il trucco e l'anima* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965); *Rassegna sovietica* 4 (1965) (monographic number, ed. Giorgio Kraiski); Vieri Quilici, *L'architettura del costruttivismo* (Bari, 1969), pp. 79 ff; John Elderfield, "On Constructivism," *Artforum* 9, no. 9 (1971): 57–63; E. Braun, "Costruttivismo nel teatro," in *Art in Revolution* (Bologna, 1971); and Mancini, *L'evoluzione dello spazio dei futuristi*. On the FEKS, see *Cinema e avanguardia in Unione Sovietica: La Feks, Kozincev e Trauberg*, ed. Giusi Rapisarda (Rome: Officina, 1975). By and on Meyerhold, see, in addition to his previously unpublished works that appeared in *Rassegna sovietica*, James S. Symons, *Meyerhold's Theatre of the Grotesque: The Post-Revolutionary Productions, 1920–1932*, 2d ed. (Miami: University of Mi-

ami Press, 1971); Marjorie L. Hoover, *Meyerhold: The Art of Conscious Theater* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974); and the volume of his writings, *L'Ottobre teatrale, 1918–1939*, ed. Fausto Malcovati (Milan, 1977). See as well *Majakovskij, Mejerchol'd, Stanislavskij*, exhibition catalogue (Milan, 1975).

23. See Andrey B. Nakov, *2 Stenberg 2: La période laboratoire (1919–1921) du constructivisme russe* (Paris, 1975).

24. Vsevolod Meyerhold, "Il maestro Bubus" e il problema dello spettacolo con musica ("Maestro Bubus" and the problem of the performance with music), a report read on 1 January 1925, now in his *L'Ottobre teatrale*, p. 217. "Stepanova," writes Meyerhold, ". . . spoiled everything for us by designing totally inappropriate costumes. She wanted to outdo the late L. S. Popova: 'Ah, if she created the *prozodezhka* [workers' overalls], I want to use them, too, and I will also use the *mossel'prom*.' She played this dirty trick on us, she ruined everything for us." Note that in 1926 Meyerhold writes (in *Note sulla scenografia* [Notes on scenic design], now in *L'Ottobre teatrale*, pp. 192–93) that "the first attempt at scene design according to the principles of constructivism was the construction of the bridge for the second part of Blok's *The Unknown Woman* on the stage, stripped bare of any other decoration, of the Tenshev auditorium in St. Petersburg in 1914 (the joint work of Meyerhold and Bondi)."

25. V. Meyerhold, "Review of the book *Zapiski rezhisëra* [Notes of a director], by A. Ya. Tairov," *Pechat i revolyuciya* 1 (1922); Italian trans. in *L'Ottobre teatrale*, p. 69.

26. Idem, "The reconstruction of the theatre" (Moscow, 1930); Italian trans., "La ricostruzione del teatro," in *L'Ottobre teatrale*, pp. 95 ff. After citing at length Carlo Gozzi's preface to *La donna serpente* (The snake woman), performed in Venice on 29 October 1762, Meyerhold writes that the everyday quality brought into the theatre by the Italian author has not been made use of since then except by the Vatican, which has transformed it-

self into "a laboratory of the art of directing" guided by the pope, "the most inventive of directors, the cleverest of them all" (*ibid.*, p. 102).

27. See Pietro Montani, "L'ideologia che nasce dalla forma: il montaggio delle attrazioni" *Bianco e nero* 718 (1971): 9–10. See also A. Fevralskij, "Eizenštejn e il teatro" *Rassegna sovietica* 3 (1969): 44 ff.

28. See Georg Simmel, "Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben" (The metropolis and mental life) in *Die Grossstadt* [Jahrbuch der Gehe-Stiftung] 9 (1903), shrewdly discussed in M. Cacciari, *Metropolis* (Rome: Officina, 1973), to compare with the "naïve" interpretation of metropolitan culture in Simmel, contained in Roy Pascal's *Dal naturalism all'espressionismo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977), pp. 48 ff.; original ed., *From Naturalism to Expressionism* (London, 1973).

29. El Lissitzky, preface to the portfolio of lithographs *Victory Over the Sun* (Hannover, 1923); Italian trans. in *La ricostruzione dell'architettura in Russia*, 1929 (Florence: Vallecchi, 1969), p. 120.

30. Filiberto Menna, "Teatro totale e catacomba grottesca," appendix to *Il teatro del Bauhaus* (Turin, 1975), p. 99; original ed., *Die Bühne im Bauhaus*, ed. Oskar Schlemmer, *Bauhausbücher* 4 (Munich, 1925). The screenplay of the film *Dynamic of the Metropolis* is in László Moholy-Nagy's *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, *Bauhausbücher* 8 (Munich, 1925); English trans. in L. Moholy-Nagy's *Painting, Photography, Film*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969). See also Gianni Rondolino's *László Moholy-Nagy: pittura, fotografia, film* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975). Moholy-Nagy, too, as Lucia Moholy informs us, admitted his debt to futurist theatrical ideas. See Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy* (Krefeld, 1972), p. 13.

31. The text of Bruno Taut's *Galoschen des Glücks* is published in an English translation in the appendix following the present chapter. For historical data regarding this singular motion picture experiment, see the introductory note that precedes Taut's text.

32. László Moholy-Nagy, "Teatro, circo, varietà (Theatre, circus, variety) in *Il teatro del Bauhaus*, p. 46.

33. See Jacques Guillerme and Jan Sebestik, "Les commencements de la technologie," *Thalès* (Recueil des travaux de l'Institut d'histoire des sciences et des techniques de l'Université de Paris, année 1966, tome 12, Paris, 1968): 16 n. 1; for the significance of the increasingly frequent exhibitions of the "ingenious machines" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, within the history of modern technology, see *ibid.*, pp. 15 ff.

34. Oskar Schlemmer, "Uomo e figura artistica" (Man and art-figure), in *Il teatro del Bauhaus*, p. 3.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

36. Oskar Schlemmer, "Le due figure epiche" (The two epic figures), in *Il teatro del Bauhaus*, p. 19. Schlemmer announces the idea of this piece of theatre in his letter of 30 March 1923, from Weimar, to Otto Meyer. See O. Schlemmer, *Briefe und Tagebücher* (Munich: Langenmüller, 1958); English ed., *The Letters of Oskar Schlemmer*, ed. Tut Schlemmer, trans. Krishna Winston (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972) p. 138. "The evening in Jena went well. The whole business ended theatrically. I said I had a mental image of two larger-than-life heroic figurines, masks, personifying such abstracts as Energy and Strength, or Pride and Courage. I said I pictured their gestures and had a vague sense of their words, but that the poet who would write the poem of our times had not yet been found. That aroused great interest, and it seemed as if the result of the evening might be that one would come forward. The students were fascinated to see that an optical conception can develop out of a dramatic one. Here, too, I have searched for a poet and found none. That is how I would imagine a Bauhaus play" (English ed., p. 138).

37. Schlemmer, "Uomo e figura artistica," p. 20.

38. *Ibid.*

39. See Heinrich von Kleist, *Il teatro delle marionette* (Florence: Sansoni, 1959); original ed., *Über das Marionet-*

ten-Theater. See also Schlemmer's remarks in *Elementi scenici* (a conference held in Dessau in 1929, translated in the catalogue *Mostra, arte e scena: Mostra di studi teatrali di Oskar Schlemmer* [Venice, 1965]) and in *Briefe und Tagebücher*. See also H. Curjel, *La produzione teatrale di Oskar Schlemmer, 1888–1943*, catalogue of the exhibit at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna in Rome (Rome, 1962), pp. 16–21. With regard to the *Triadic Ballet*, Schlemmer writes in his diary on 5 July 1926: "Why 'triadic'? Because three is a supremely important, prominent number, within which egotistic one and dualistic contrast are transcended, giving way to the collective. . . . Why Hindemith? Because here a musician who creates 'directly from the imagination and mystic depths of our soul' has found a theme with which he can range from the cheerful grotesque to full pathos, and he has attained such mastery over his musical handiwork that he adds a spiritual dimension to everything he touches. . . . One might ask if the dancers should not be real puppets, moved by strings, or better still, self-propelled by means of a precision mechanism, almost free of human intervention, at most directed by remote control? Yes! It is only a question of time and money. The effect such an experiment would produce can be found described in Heinrich Kleist's essay on the marionette" (*The Letters and Diaries of Oskar Schlemmer*, p. 196–97). But already in September 1922 Schlemmer had noted in his diary: "The 'Triadic Ballet': dance of the trinity, changing faces of the One, Two, and Three, in form, color, and movement; it should also follow the plane geometry of the dance surface and the solid geometry of the moving bodies, producing that sense of spatial dimension which necessarily results from tracing such basic forms as the straight line, the diagonal, the circle, the ellipse, and their combinations. Thus the dance, which is Dionysian and wholly emotional in origin, becomes strict and Apollonian in its final form, a symbol of the balancing of opposites. . . . The 'Triadic Ballet' flirts coquettishly with the humorous, without falling into grotesquerie; it brushes the conventional without sinking to its dismal

depths. Finally, it strives for dematerialization, yet without seeking salvation in the occult" (ibid., 127–28).

40. Kleist, *Il teatro delle marionette*.

41. Walter Benjamin, *Angelus Novus* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962) pp. 108 ff.; original ed., *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: SuhrKamp Verlag, 1972 ff).

42. "In the midst of the plastic values of the real factory," Eisenstein writes in "From Theatre to Cinema" (1934; now in *Film Form*, p. 16), "the theatrical apertures seemed ridiculous. The element of 'spectacle' was incompatible with the pungent odor of the gas. The poor stage was simply lost among the real stages of the working activity."

43. Massimo Castri, *Per un teatro politico: Piscator, Brecht, Artaud* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), pp. 74 ff. See also the essay by Castri in the volume edited by Paolo Chiarini, *Erwin Piscator* (Rome: Officina, 1978), which served as the catalogue of the exhibit presented by the Akademie der Künste of Berlin, in Rome in March–April 1978.

44. Erwin Piscator, *Il teatro politico* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960), p. 29 (but see also p. 133); original ed., *Das politische Theater* (Berlin, 1929). On the relationship between Piscator and the expressionist and dadaist poetics, in addition to Castri's *Per un teatro politico*, see Claude Sebisch, "Erwin Piscator, l'Expressionisme et le Dadaïsme," *Obliques* 6–7 (1976): 211–17 (a special issue dedicated to *L'Expressionisme allemand*, edited by Lionel Richard). On the German theatre of the Weimar era, see the exhibition catalogue *Teatro della Repubblica di Weimar* (Rome, 1978), rich in critical and philological contributions as well as iconographic material.

45. Bernard Dort, "Pedagogia e forma epica nel teatro di Brecht," *Partisans* 36 (1967): 43.

46. V. Meyerhold, "La rivoluzione dell'edificio teatrale," conversation with a group of young architects, 11 April 1927; Italian trans. in *L'Ottobre teatrale*, p. 93. Among the many projects for "total theatres" designed in the 1920s and 1930s, worthy of mention are the ones

presented by the Japanese Rencicro Kawakita at the contest for the State Theatre of Kharkov (1930), the one designed by the Czech Josef Chocel (1927), and the People's Theatre by the Belgian Renaat Braem (1933), who in 1934 would collaborate with Le Corbusier on a project for a theatre with a ring stage. On the evolution of the theatre, from the tripartite stage of Van de Velde at the Werkbund Exposition in Cologne, to the Totaltheater, see, among others, the pamphlet "Henri Van de Velde: Theatre Designs, 1904–1914" (London, 1974), with an introduction by D. Sharp and an essay by Maurice Culot, "From the Tripartite Stage to the Total Theatre," pp. 11 ff. See also Marcel Breuer's article, "Das aktive Theater," *Die neue Stadt* 1 (1932): 9–12, in which the principles of the Gropius Totaltheater are represented. The projects presented at the contest for the theatre of Kharkov have been discussed in Vittorio de Feo's article, "Architecture et théâtre: concours pour un théâtre d'État à Charkov, 1930," *VH 101* nos. 7–8 (1972): 89–110. On the entire thematic of the theatre of the avant-garde, see Dirk Schepers' "Theater zwischen Utopie und Wirklichkeit," in *Tendenzen der Zwanziger Jahre. 15. Europäische Kunstausstellung Berlin 1977*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1977), pp. 192–98. See, finally, Fabrizio Cruciani, "Lo spazio teatrale," *Casabella* 431 (1977): 13–20, which concisely places the avant-garde spectacle in its historical context.

47. Meyerhold, *La rivoluzione*, pp. 98 ff.

48. Ibid., pp. 92–93.

49. On the film *Aelita*, see Michael Louis's article, "Aelita, ou le rêve de l'homme ridicule," *Archives de l'architecture moderne* 11 (Brussels, 1977): 34–49.

50. See Tony Thomas and Jim Terry, *The Busby Berkeley Book* (New York: A & W Visual Library, 1975), with a preface by Ruby Keeler.

51. The "metaphysical" character of the Barcelona Pavilion, as a place of the *exposition of nothing*, was perceptively grasped in N. M. Rubio Tuduri's article, "Le Pavillon d'Allemagne à l'Exposition de Barcelone par Mies van der Rohe,"

Cahiers d'Art 4 (1929): 408–11. Despite the impressive bibliography compiled, it does not seem that the significance of Mies's work has been captured by Juan Pablo Bonta's *An Anatomy of Architectural Interpretation: A Semiotic Review of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1975), text in English, French, Spanish, and Russian.

Appendix: The Galoshes of Fortune

1. English translation of *Die Galoschen des Glücks* by Karin Barnaby.

4

U.S.S.R.-Berlin, 1922

1. We use here the terms "bridge" and "door" with the metaphorical significance attributed to them by Georg Simmel in "Ponte e porta," in *Saggi di estetica* (Padua, 1970), pp. 3–8; original ed., "Brücke und Tür," in *Der Tag* (15 September 1909).

2. *Die Aktion*, no. 3 (1911). See Giancarlo Buonfino, *La politica culturale operaia: Da Marx e Lassalle alla rivoluzione di Novembre, 1859–1919* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), pp. 170 ff.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

4. "Let us traverse the arena of art!" Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde would write in 1925, "Movement, publicity, noise; but also noble isolation, resignation, and escape from the world, individual versatility even in the halls of Academe. . . . Who has the true idea of art? *Der Sturm*; *Der Kunstwart*; *Der Cicerone*; or *Kunst und Künstler*; *G*; *Das Kunstblatt*? . . . No era has been as hostile to art as that of today, and if one, referring to the average man of today, were to state that he can live without art, he would be exactly right. . . . Today's artist, if he doesn't want to be an idler, someone who is obsolete and wandering blindly, can only choose between technique and the propaganda of the class struggle. In both cases he must give up pure art. Either siding, like the architect, engineer, or designer of advertising posters, with the army—organized, unfortunately, in a very feudal manner—which develops the forces of industry and

exploits the world; or showing the face of our time, representing it and criticizing it, as a propagandist and defender of the revolutionary idea and of its supporters, and siding with the army of the oppressed, who struggle for their rightful share of the world's goods, for a judicious, social organization of life." George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde, "Die Kunst ist in Gefahr" (Berlin, 1925), now in Diether Schmidt, *Manifeste, Manifeste 1905–1933* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1965). Note, however, that Grosz's attitude toward the U.S.S.R. and the Soviet avant-gardes is extremely ambiguous and changes with time. See Irwin Beth Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Milwaukee-London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971).

5. Ludwig Meidner, "An alle Künstler, Dichter, Musiker," in the pamphlet *An alle Künstler*, edited by the W. Simon art gallery (Berlin, 1919), with essays by J. R. Becher, L. Meidner, Bernhard Kellermann, Max Pechstein, Walter Hasenclever, Kurt Eisner, Konrad Haenisch, Kurt Erich Meurer, and Paul Zech, and reproductions of works by César Klein, Hans Richter, Lyonel Feininger, Georg Tappert, etc.

6. Kurt Pinthus, "Rede an die Weltbürger," in *Genius: Zeitschrift für alte und werdende Kunst* (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1919), p. 167.

7. Karl Jacob Hirsch, "Novembergedanken," in the pamphlet published by Will Grohmann, *Kunst der Zeit: Zehn Jahre Novembergruppe*, special number of the review *Kunst der Zeit: Zeitschrift für Kunst und Literatur* 3, no. 1 (1928): 18. On the history of the Novembergruppe, see the documentation in the volume of Helga Kliemann, *Die Novembergruppe* (Berlin: Mann, 1969), and Rudolf Pfefferkorn, "Die Novembergruppe, Programme und Weg," in *Die Novembergruppe* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 5–23. On the artistic environment of postwar Germany, see John Elderfield's essay, "Dissenting Ideologies and the German Revolution," *Studio International* 180, no. 927 (1970): 180–187; and the essays by Aaron Scharf, "John Heartfield, Berlin Dada and the Weapon of the Photomontage," *Studio Interna-*

- tional 176, no. 904 (1968): 134–139; Manuela Hoelterhoff, "Heartfield's Contempt," *Artforum* 15, no. 3 (1976): 58–65; Eckhard Siepmann, *Montage: John Heartfield vom Club Dada zur Arbeiter-Illustrierten Zeitung* (Berlin, 1977); and, naturally, the documentary inventory published in the *Almanacco Dada*, ed. Arturo Schwartz (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976). See also the volumes of Benjamin Goriely, *Le avanguardie letterarie in Europa* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1967), pp. 234 ff. (the chapter "Dada in Germania"); and Luigi Forte, *La poesia dadista tedesca* (Turin, 1976). Among the autobiographical memoirs, it is interesting to compare the one from the conference held on 1 October 1971 by Huelsenbeck at the ICA—Richard Huelsenbeck, "Dada or the Meaning of Chaos," *Studio International* 183, no. 940 (1972): 26–29—with Raoul Hausmann, *Courrier Dada* (Paris, 1938). Finally, see Hanne Bergils's article, "Dada Berlin," in *Tendenzen der Zwanziger Jahre*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1977), pp. 65–74.
8. Appeal of the Vereinigung für neue Kunst und Literatur, in Kliemann, *Die Novembergruppe*, p. 59.
 9. Appeal of the group Der Wurf, Bielefeld, *ibid.*, p. 59.
 10. Catalogue of the group Rih, Karlsruhe, *ibid.*
 11. "Manifesto dei novembristi" (draft), in Grohmann, "Kunst der Zeit," p. 16.
 12. See Barbara Miller Lane, *Architecture and Politics in Germany, 1918–1945* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); Kurt Junghanns, *Bruno Taut, 1880–1938* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1970).
 13. *Die Aktion* 2 (1911).
 14. Ludwig Rubiner, "Der Dichter greift in die Politik," *Die Aktion* 21–23 (1912).
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. On the Le Corbusier-Teige dispute regarding the Mundaneum, see George Baird, "Architecture and Politics: A Polemical Dispute. A Critical Introduction to Karel Teige's 'Mundaneum,' 1929, and Le Corbusier's 'In Defense of Architecture,' 1933," *Oppositions* 4 (1974): 80 ff. But also compare Marcello Fagiolo, "Mundaneum 1929: La nuova Babilonia secondo Le Corbusier," *Ottagono* 4 (1978): 22–29.
 17. See Wolfgang Peht, "Gropius the Romantic," *The Art Bulletin* 3, no. 3 (1971): 379–92; Heinrich Klotz, "Materialen zu einer Gropius-Monographie," *Architectura* 2 (1971): 176–96.
 18. Walter Gropius, Inaugural Conference of the Arbeitsrat für Kunst, typescript in the Bauhaus-Archiv, in Peht, "Gropius the Romantic," p. 380.
 19. See W. Gropius, "Neues Bauen," in *Der Holzbau*, supplement to no. 22 (1920) of the review *Deutsche Bauzeitung*.
 20. Buonfino, *La politica culturale*, *passim*.
 21. Karl Kautsky, *La questione operaia*, 2d ed. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1971), p. 365.
 22. Buonfino, *La politica culturale*, p. 129.
 23. *Dada-Almanach* (Berlin: Eric Reiss, 1920), now in Schmidt, *Manifeste, Manifeste*, p. 192, and in *Almanacco Dada*, p. 201.
 24. In *La politica culturale*, p. 197, Buonfino writes that "Dada was . . . a modern version of Schiller the educator (circuses for the illumination of the proletariat); dada was the Platonic operation of a plastic imitation of the perfect form of the god; the non-significant *Erlebnis*. The accidental was no longer wicked (as Vischer had said) except with regard to the reality of the *formal revolutionary idea par excellence*, and Lassalle had already emphasized this in his *Sickingen*."
 25. Raoul Hausmann, "A Jef Golyscheff," *Phases* 11 (1967), quoted in Eberhard Steneberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin 1919–1932* (Berlin: Mann, 1969), p. 11.
 26. Adolf Behne, "Werkstattbesuch bei Jefim Golyscheff," *Der Cicerone* (1919), quoted in Steneberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin*.
 27. The reference to the famous manifesto of Balla and Depero, *Ricostruzione futurista dell'universo*, is intentional. It is undeniable that there are notable affinities between the work of early futurism and that of the immediate postwar period in Germany. Taut's experiments in Magde-

burg and, still earlier, the excessive utopianism of the *Gläserne Kette* and of the *Unbekannte Architekten* have their historical origins in the work of prewar futurism. See, for example, Gino Severini's manifesto, *Le analogie plastiche del dinamismo: Manifesto futurista*, of September–October 1913, now in *Archivi del futurismo*, vol. 1 (Rome, 1958), pp. 76–80.

28. Note that the project presented by Golyscheff at the Exhibition of Unknown Architects was preserved in Magdeburg by Bruno Taut. See Steneberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin*, p. 12. On Golyscheff, see also the catalogue of the exhibition dedicated to him by the Museum of São Paulo, 1965; and D. Goyowy, "Golyscheff, der unbequeme Vorläufer," *Melos, Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 1 (1975): 188–93.

29. See Bruno Taut, "Nieder der Seriosismus," *Frühlicht*, supplement no. 1 of the review *Stadtbaukunst alter und neuer Zeit*, (1920). Now in Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), p. 57; original ed., *Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt-Berlin: Ullstein, 1964).

30. Steneberg, *Russische Kunst*, p. 9.

31. See Francesco Dal Co, "Hannes Meyer e la 'venerabile scuola di Dessau,'" introduction to Hannes Meyer, *Architettura o rivoluzione* (Padua: Marsilio, 1973); Walther Scheidig, *Bauhaus, Weimar, 1919–1924* (Liepzig: Edition Liepzig, 1966); the essays of Ezio Bonfanti and Massimo Scolari in the special issue of *Controspazio* dedicated to the Bauhaus (2, nos. 4–5 [1970]); Marcel Franciscano, *Walter Gropius e la creazione del Bauhaus* (Rome, 1975), with an introduction by F. Dal Co; original ed., *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar* (Carbondale, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 1971); Karl Heinz Hüter, *Das Bauhaus in Weimar: Studie zur Gesellschaftspolitik: Geschichte einer dt. Kunstschule* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1976); (various authors), "50 Jahre Bauhaus Dessau," *Wissenschaftliche Zeit-*

schrift der Hochschule für Architektur Bauwesen Weimar 23, nos. 5–6 (1976).

32. See Kurt Junghanns, "Die Beziehungen zwischen deutschen und sowjetischen Architekten in den Jahren 1917 bis 1923," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität* 3 (1967): 369–70. As further evidence of the interest shown by German intellectuals in the new Soviet institutions, it may be useful to cite the letter sent to Lunacharsky in the spring of 1920 by Professor G. Kornelius, director of the Munich School of Art, together with the proofs of his book *La nuova pedagogia artistica*. Kornelius wholeheartedly commended the social renewal of the world and stated that, knowing full well Russia's problems at that moment, he would nevertheless willingly accept an invitation from the Narkompros as a teacher in the State Higher Studios. See A. Lunacharsky, "Novaya khudozhestvennaya pedagogika," *Khudozhestvennaya zhizn* 4–5 (1920): 17. However we must also take into account the inverse influence, that of the German avant-gardes on the Russian ones, after 1917. Starr has revealed that Melnikov owned a handwritten translation of Bruno Taut's *Stadtkrone* (1919) and of Paul Scheerbart's *Glasarchitektur* (1914), observing that the semireligious ceremonial planned for the burial vault designed by the Russian architect in 1919 is rightly included within the expressionist current; while the project for the glass sarcophagus for the body of Lenin (1924)—rejected by the Committee—draws its origins from "crystal architecture." Melnikov himself was to praise the vital energy contained in the acute angles of his project for the sarcophagus. See S. Frederick Starr, "Kostantin Mel'nikov, architetto espressionista?" *Lotus International* 16 (1977): 13–18. Naturally, one can also read in Melnikov's symbolism the legacy of Russian millenarianism, by no means unknown to artists such as Khlebnikov or Malevich. Melnikov's expressionism in the Rusakov Club was recognized as derived from Mendelsohn in Mikhail Il'in's article "L'expressionisme en architecture," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 2 (1930): 29–31. See also S. Fr. Starr, *Melnikov: Solo*

Architect in a Mass Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

33. Bruno Taut, *Die Auflösung der Städte* (Hagen: Folkwang Verlag, 1920). Note that the Leninist law on land was also published in W. C. Behrendt's review *Die Volkswohnung* in 1919.

34. Walter Gropius, "Baukunst im freien Volkstaat," in *Deutscher Revolutionsalmanach für das Jahr 1919* (Hamburg-Berlin, 1919).

35. See the leaflet published in *Der Zweemann* 2 (1919): 18–19 (now in *Almanacco Dada*, p. 130); and Richard Huelsenbeck, *En avant Dada: Eine Geschichte des Dadaismus* (Hannover-Leipzig-Vienna-Zurich: P. Steegemann, 1920). The positions of Huelsenbeck and Hausmann with regard to political commitment were, however, anything but consistent: "Dada," wrote Huelsenbeck in *Dada-Almanach*, p. 3 (*Almanacco Dada*, p. 243), "is the American side of Buddhism; it shouts because it is able to keep quiet, it acts because it is at rest. Dada is thus neither politics nor an artistic tendency, it votes neither for humanity nor barbarity, 'it contains in its toga war and peace, but it chooses the Cherry Brandy Flip.'" For his part, Hausmann wrote in *Der Dada* 1 (1919): 3 (in the *Almanacco Dada*, pp. 159–60): "There isn't one damned man of letters who isn't already independent and a communist. Communism is like shoe polish—ten pfennigs a liter, and this guarantees you a safe-conduct pass. It is the masses that compel these wretches, who formerly went to the greatest extremes in their self-discipline. Certainly the masses are materialistic, not spiritual. We are against the spirit. Thanks, in the name of the worms. . . . The masses don't give a damn about art, or about the spirit. Nor do we. Which doesn't mean that we are trying to look like a temporary commercial company of communism. The atmosphere of the cattle market (the German revolution) is not for us." It should further be noted that Huelsenbeck's article "Der neue Mensch," written for the *Neue Jugend*, marks a temporary break with dadaism, extolling the strength of one's own soul (perhaps ironically) in terms of sexual strength.

See *Dada: Monographie einer Bewegung*, ed. W. Verkauf, M. Janco, and H. Bollinger (Teufen, n.d.), p. 61; and Forte, *La poesia dadista tedesca*, pp. 81–82.

36. See Kenneth Courtts-Smith, *Dada* (London: Studio Vista, 1970).

37. Walter Mehring, *Berlin Dada* (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1959), pp. 68–69.

38. In 1921 Yvan Goll wrote two fundamental articles "upon the death" of expressionism, which offer an eloquent testimony of the transformations undergone between 1921 and 1922 by the German movements whose aim was humanitarian revolution and cosmic pathos. "Expressionism," Goll wrote, "an amusement park of papier-mâché and stucco, with all its enchanted castles and human seraglios, is dismantled. The owner of the merry-go-round counts up his receipts. The revolutionary hangs himself behind the palisade. Soon, within an hour, nothing will remain but a heap of beams, dust, and rubbish. Expressionism is an old, abandoned barricade. The expressionist is a failed warmonger: too many stars have risen for peace." According to Goll, what expressionism lacked was *form*—as a result of which there was nothing to do but review all the *isms* to which the avant-garde gave life, precisely as Lissitzky and Arp would do. Yvan Goll, "Das Wort an sich," *Die neue Rundschau* 2 (1921): 1082–85; see Paolo Chiarini, *Caos e geometria* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1969), pp. 28–29. In a second article, Goll saw the old passwords ("Demand. Manifesto. Appeal. Accusation. Evocation. Ecstasy. Struggle. Man shouts. We are. One for the other. Pathos.") crushed by the civilization of the masses and the machine: sentimental pathos had given way to mechanical-cerebral strength. "New peoples step forward in the history of the world: the first word they address to us is electric." Y. Goll, "Der Expressionismus stirbt," *Zenit* 8 (1921): 8 ff. Cf. Chiarini, *Caos e geometria*, p. 29. A further phenomenon, parallel to the demise of expressionism, was the change brought about in 1919 in the dada movement by Arp, Baumann, Eggeling, Giacometti, Janco, and Richter, who founded the movement of dada radicals

operating in Zurich until 1922 under the name "Das neue Leben" (see Marcel Janco, "Schöpferischer dada," in the volume *Dada, Monographie . . .*, pp. 45 ff.). The program of the new group called for participation "in the ideological evolution of the state," affirming that the spirit of abstract art implied an enormous extension of the human sense of freedom; the new objective was an art that was fraternal and clear in its abstractness, as well as openly interclassist. We have cited these examples in order to document a further aspect of the context of the European avant-gardes, upon which the activity of Lissitzky and van Doesburg were to be fundamental.

39. See Herman Berninger and Jean-Albert Carter, *Pougny*, vol. 1: *Les années d'avant-garde, Russie-Berlin, 1910-1923* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth, 1972), pp. 50 ff. and 153-58.

40. *Ibid.*, 167-68.

41. See Nikolai Tarabukin, *Ot molberta k mashine* [From the easel to the machine] (Moscow: Proletkult, 1923), now in French translation, ed. Andrey B. Nakov, in the volume *Le dernier tableau: 1. Du Chevalet à la machine. 2. Pour une théorie de la peinture* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972). On the Puni room in the gallery Der Sturm, see also Germano Celant, *Ambiente-Arts: Dal futurismo alla Body Art* (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1977), p. 20.

42. See Hans Richter, "Begegnungen in Berlin," in *Avantgarde, Osteuropa 1910-1930* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 13-21. On the Berlin art world, see also the catalogue *Paris-Berlin 1900-1933* (Paris: Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1978).

43. Ilya Ehrenburg, *Uomini, anni, vita* (Rome: Edizioni Riuniti, 1972), p. 18; original ed., *Lyudi, gody, zhizn.*

44. See Ossip K. Flecktheim, *Il partito comunista tedesco (Kpd) nel periodo della Repubblica di Weimar* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1970), p. 198; original ed., *Die Kpd in der Weimarer Republik* (Offenbach, 1948; new ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1969).

45. "History," Lenin wrote in the pamphlet *On the Tax on Nature* (1921), citing

an article he wrote in 1918, "behaved in such a singular fashion that in 1918 it gave birth to socialist twins, separate from each other, which, like two future neophytes of a world socialist economy, found themselves in the same egg of international imperialism. Germany and Russia in the year 1918 achieved in the most distinct manner the material premises of the economic postulates of socialism—of the economy in general and of production in particular, on one side, and of the political conditions of socialism, on the other. . . . If the birth of the revolution in Germany," he continues, "is delayed still further, it will be up to us to learn from the state capitalism of the Germans, to use all forces to transplant it to our Soviet state, and not to overlook any dictatorial measure to hasten the adoption of this product of Western civilization on the part of barbarous Russia, nor to shrink from any barbarous methods in the struggle against barbarity."

46. The 1922 exhibition at the van Die-men Gallery was organized by the official commissar David Shterenberg, with the collaboration of Marianov (Cheka), Natan Altman, Gabo, and Dr. Lutz, director of the gallery. Lissitzky, as Gabo has recently pointed out, had nothing to do with the organization of the exhibition; according to Gabo, even the cover of the catalogue, usually attributed to Lissitzky, was the work of Altman. See Naum Gabo, "The 1922 Soviet Exhibition," *Studio International* 182, no. 938 (1971):

171. Shterenberg wrote the official text of the catalogue, and Arthur Holitscher the German text; the catalogue, edited in a hasty manner (as was, for that matter, the entire exhibition), contains many oversights and errors: Savyalov's *Construction in Relief* is credited to Tatlin, and Mansurov is spelled "Makurov," for example. See Shterenberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin*, pp. 19-20. The English translation of the texts by Shterenberg and Holitscher, and of the introduction to the catalogue, *Erste russische Kunstausstellung, Berlin 1922*, is in the volume *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bann (New York: Viking, 1974), pp. 70-76. On the 1922 exhibition, see also An-

- drey B. Nakov, "A Dialogue of the Deaf," *Studio International* 186, no. 960 (1973): 175–76. Among the negative reviews of the 1922 exhibition, notable is that contained in Paul Westheim's article, "Die Ausstellung der Russen," *Das Kunstblatt* (1922): 493 ff.
47. Vladimir Mayakovsky, *Una goccia di fielle* [A drop of bile], published in the almanac *Vzyl* [He seized] of December 1915; now in V. Mayakovsky, *Poesia e rivoluzione* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1968), pp. 74–77.
48. See Pehnt, *Gropius the Romantic*.
49. Mention should also be made of the contrasts within the Russian "colony" in Berlin. Ehrenburg speaks of the Café Leon as "a place similar to Noah's Ark, where the pure and the impure meet peacefully. . . . At a lecture given by the painter Puni," he continues, "the storm broke out; arguing furiously among themselves were Archipenko, Altman, Shklovsky, Mayakovsky, Shterenberg, Gabo, Lissitzky, and yours truly." Ehrenburg, *Uomini*, pp. 20–21.
50. Ernst Kállai, "Lisickij," *Das Kunstblatt* 6, no. 1 (1921).
51. See Franz Marc, *I "Fauves" tedeschi* (Bari, 1967), pp. 24–28; original ed., "Die 'Wilden' Deutschlands," *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich, 1912): 5–7.
52. Kállai, "Lisickij."
53. Ernst Kállai, "El Lisickij," *Der Cicerone* 16, no. 2 (1924): 1058–63.
54. Anatoly Lunacharsky, "L'esposizione russa a Berlino," *Rassegna sovietica* 1 (1965): 110–16; original ed., in *Izvestiya* 273 (1922). In order to understand the reasons for Lunacharsky's attitude toward the avant-garde intellectuals and the role he assigned to the organization of culture, a fundamental work is Sheila Fitzpatrick's *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organisation of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). See also Giovanna Spindel, *Gli intellettuali sovietici negli anni '20* (Rome, 1979), for the political-literary debate carried on in the Soviet cultural journals that were more or less directly linked to party organizations.
55. Lunacharsky, "L'esposizione."
56. See Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).
57. V. Mayakovsky, "La mostra di arte figurativa della Rsfr a Berlino," *Rassegna sovietica* 1 (1965): 108–9; original ed. in *Krasnaya nov* 2 (1923).
58. *Ibid.*
59. Mayakovsky went so far as to identify conservative tendencies with the political and counterrevolutionary right: "The conservatives," he wrote, "arriving in a foreign country, often allow themselves to be enticed by the plate of lentils of the American millionaires, and try to make themselves agreeable by making insinuations regarding the new regime. This type of trick was pulled by the noted painter Malyavin, for example. Treated with kid gloves in Russia, sent abroad with our consent and assistance, he then proceeded to grant an interview to the white 'rag' *Rul*, an interview of recrimination against Soviet Russia, where—are you listening?—they prevented him from working" (*ibid.*). It is evident that the incident provoked by Malyavin—who was later to steal his own paintings and hand them over to the speculator Kogan to send to the United States—and the letter sent to the same *Rul* by Sinezubov (another "right-wing" painter) were used by Mayakovsky to try to break down the ever more cautious official line of the Commissariat for Public Instruction regarding avant-garde tendencies. "The Americans," Mayakovsky continued, "acquire the sculptures, paintings, and samples of applied art of these [right-wing] artists. The newspapers assert that they are the ones who will give birth to the pictorial art of the future Russia."
60. See J. Tugendkhold, "Stile 1925," *Rassegna sovietica* 3 (1967): 107–9; original ed., "Stil 1925," in *Pechat' i revolyutsiya* (1925).
61. Osip Brik, "Into Production!" *Lef* no. 1 (1923).
62. El Lissitzky, "The Blockade of Russia

Moves toward Its End," *Veshch* 1–2 (1922).

63. Ibid.

64. El Lissitzky, "Exhibitions in Berlin," *Veshch* 3 (1923). Compare this article with the other one published in *Veshch* (1–2, 1922), under the pseudonym of Ulen, "Die Ausstellungen in Russland," pp. 18–19, in which he points out the significance of the exhibition of the Obmoku group in Moscow (1921), as well as that of the Unovis group. It is interesting to recall Ehrenburg's opinion, even more negative than Lissitzky's, on Berlin expressionism of the twenties: "I visited several exhibitions of the Sturm, and beheld not paintings, not art, but rather the hysteria of those who, instead of pistols or bombs, had taken up paintbrushes or tubes of paint" (Ehrenburg, *Uomini*, p. 11). Furthermore, the most politicized expressionist circles after 1921 claimed that they had lost all faith in the Russia of the NEP; Ehrenburg himself (p. 15) cites in this regard the poets of the group Die Aktion and the collaborators of the Rote Fahne.

65. On the theme, which is really rather pointless, of the invention of the photomontage, see, among others, Hausmann, *Courrier Dada*; Richter, *Dada*; Scharf, *John Heartfield*; Steneberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin* (the chapter "Film Foto Montage"); Dawn Ades, *Photomontage: Photography as Propaganda* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), an extremely informative work, with an ample bibliography. Interesting as a historical document is Louis Aragon's article, "John Heartfield et la beauté révolutionnaire," *Commune* 21 (1935): 985–91, in which, having made a clear distinction between cubist collage and dadaist collage, Aragon presents surrealism as an attempt to synthesize humanism and dada negation. Furthermore, he draws a parallel between Heartfield's collage and Rimbaud's *Saison en Enfer*.

66. Kurt Schwitters, "Merz," *Der Ararat* 2, no. 1 (1921): 3–9, in which Huelsenbeck's position (which Schwitters calls that of the "husk Dada") is harshly attacked.

67. See the "Manifest Proletkunst," *Merz* 2 (1923): 24–25 (now in *Almanacco Dada*, p. 481). See also in the same number of *Merz* Kurt Schwitters's article "War." In *Merz* 1 (1923): 7–8, Schwitters wrote, "We hope that our activity, the purpose of which is to show the enormous lack of style of our culture, will arouse a strong desire and a great nostalgia for style. Then our most important activity will begin. We will turn against dada and will fight further only for style. . . . Style is the result of collective work." On Schwitters's approach to abstract elementarism, starting from the poetic experiments of August Stamm and from Herwarth Walden's *Wortkunsttheorie*, up to his contacts with van Doesburg, see Forte, *La poesia*, 104–18 (the chapter "Merz-Schwitters: universo 'irrelato' e ipotesi manierista").

68. Sergey Tretyakov, "Buon anno, buon 'nuovo Lef,'" in Giorgio Kraiski, *Le poetiche russe del '900* (Bari, 1968), pp. 238–42; original ed., "S novym godom, S novym Levom," *Novyi lef* 1 (1928). On the history of the reviews directed by Mayakovsky, from *Iskusstvo kommuna* to *Novyi lef*, see *L'arte dopo la rivoluzione*, ed. Luigi Magarotto (Rome, 1976).

69. Viktor Shklovsky, *Rozanov* (Petrograd, 1921), p. 4. The italics are mine.

70. On the conflicts between Schwitters and Huelsenbeck, see, among others, Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (Cologne: DuMont Schläuberg, 1967).

71. Moholy-Nagy wrote, "With the enormous development of technics and large cities, our organs of perception have increased their capacity to carry on optical and acoustical functions simultaneously. . . . Berliners cross Potsdamer Platz; they speak, and at the same time they listen: automobile horns, streetcar bells, the horns of the bus, the cabman's shout, the noise of the subway, the newsboys' cries, the sounds issuing from a loudspeaker, etc., and they can distinguish all these acoustical stimuli. A poor provincial, on the other hand, finding himself by chance in the same square, is so shaken by the great number of impressions received that he stops frozen in his tracks in front of

- an oncoming streetcar." L. Moholy-Nagy, "Pittura, fotografia, film," in Gianni Rondolino, *László Moholy-Nagy: pittura, fotografia, film* (Turin, 1975), p. 110; original ed., *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, Bauhausbücher 8, 2d ed. (Munich: A. Langen, 1927), p. 41.
72. See "Nyilatkozat," *Egyseg*, no. 4 (1923): 16. On the early years of Moholy-Nagy's artistic activity, see, in addition to Rondolino, *László Moholy-Nagy*, the essay by Krisztina Passuth, "Debut of László Moholy-Nagy," *Acta Historiae Artium* 19, nos. 1–2 (1973): 125–42.
73. L. Moholy-Nagy and Alfréd Kemény, "Dynamisch-konstruktivistisches Kraftsystem," *Sturm* 12 (1922): 186.
74. Erich Buchholz, "Begegnung mit osteuropäischen Künstlern," in *Avantgarde Osteuropa*, p. 26.
75. *Ibid.*
76. From *Veshch* 1–2 (1922), programmatic platform. On *Veshch's* position with relation to Lef and to the political climate of the NEP, see Giorgio Kraiski's "Lef contre Nep," *VH* 101 7–8 (1972): 157–64, even though the author's conclusions are, in my opinion, highly debatable.
77. *Veshch* 1–2 (1922).
78. I. Ehrenburg, *And Yet It Moves!* (Moscow-Berlin, 1922).
79. Boris I. Arvatov, "Critique of *Veshch*," *Pechat' i revolyutsiya* 7 (1922). On the *Veshch* affair, see also K. Volodin's article, "La rivista *Vešč*," *Rassegna sovietica* 2 (1969): 264–68; original ed., "Zhurnal *Veshch*," in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo* 5 (1968). See also Kestutis Paul Zygas, "The Magazine *Veshch*-Gegenstand-Objet," *Oppositions* 5 (1976): 113–28.
80. El Lissitzky, "Proun," *De Stijl* 5, no. 6 (1922): 81–85. In considering Lissitzky's work of the early 1920s, it is, however, necessary to keep in mind his ties with Jewish culture and the mysticism that he consequently attributes to signs and to letters of the alphabet. In this regard, Birnholz emphasizes the ties between Lissitzky's culture and Malevich's, considering *Proun* 99 as the culmination of a search for a dematerialization of geometry similar to the synthesis of the Hegelian spirit, and the self-portrait *The Builder*, of 1924, as an early symptom of uncertainty as to the reality of the messianic role of the artist. See Alan C. Birnholz, "El Lissitzky, the Avant-Garde and the Russian Revolution," *Artforum* 11, no. 1 (1972): 70–76. On Lissitzky's relationship to Hebraic culture, see Chimen Abramsky, "El Lissitzky as Jewish Illustrator and Typographer," *Studio International* 172, no. 822 (1966): 182–85, and A. C. Birnholz, "El Lissitzky and the Jewish Tradition," *Studio International* 186, no. 959 (1976): 130–36. The weight of primitivism and of millenarianism in the formation of the Russian avant-gardes has been emphasized by Markov in his well-known work on Russian futurism (*Russian Futurism: A History* [London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1969]), and has been discussed in (among others) Kenneth Frampton's essay, "Constructivism: The Pursuit of an Elusive Sensibility," *Oppositions* 6 (1976): 25–43. See also in this regard A. C. Birnholz, "The Russian Avant-Garde and the Russian Tradition," *Art Journal* 32 (winter 1972–1973): 146–49. On the artistic climate of the early 1920s in Russia, see Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Le Retour à l'ordre en Urss 1920–1923," in *Le retour à l'ordre dans les arts plastiques et l'architecture 1919–1925* (Saint-Etienne, 1975), pp. 168–202.
81. R. Hausmann, H. Arp, I. Puni, and L. Moholy-Nagy, "Aufwurf zur Elementaren Kunst," *De Stijl* 4, no. 10 (1921): 156.
82. See the final manifesto of the Düsseldorf congress, dated 30 May 1922, in *De Stijl* 5, no. 4 (1922). The clash that took place in Düsseldorf between the "unionists"—comprising the Novembergruppe, the Dresden Secession, the Young Rhineland group, the groups l'Albatros and Les Compagnons, and artists such as Däubler, Kokoschka, Rohlf's, Romain Rolland, Kandinsky, Prampolini, Kubicki, etc.—and the constructivist group (Lissitzky, Richter, van Doesburg) is documented in the same number of *De Stijl*, and, in an English translation, in Bann, ed., *The Tradition of Constructivism*, pp. 58–69. See also Joost

Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg* (London, 1974), pp. 49–51 (the chapter “The International Congress of Progressive Artists, Düsseldorf 1922”).

83. T. van Doesburg, H. Richter, K. Maes, Max Burchartz, and Lissitzky, “Konstruktivistische Internationale schöpferische Arbeitsgemeinschaft,” *De Stijl* 5, no. 8 (1922): 113–15. The same number of *De Stijl* contains Prampolini’s report on the Weimar congress (199–25) as well as that of the MA group (125–28). Numbers 10–11 (1922) of *De Stijl* are dedicated to Lissitzky’s *Story of Two Squares*.

84. Steneberg, *Russische Kunst in Berlin*, p. 35. Rondolino (*László Moholy-Nagy*, pp. 23–24) points out that the position of the Hungarian constructivists was considerably more politicized than that of Egeling or Hausmann, citing the text of the MA group presented at the Düsseldorf meeting, in *MA* 7, no. 8 (1922): 64, and a letter of 1969 from Hausmann to Louise O’Connor.

85. The most significant work of van Doesburg the dadaist is the pamphlet *What Is Dada?* (The Hague, 1923). On Dutch dadaism, see K. Schippers (Gerard Stigter), *Holland Dada* (Amsterdam, 1974), in which, in addition to profiling the work of Otto van Rees, A. C. van Rees Dutilh, and Paul Citroen, he dates van Doesburg’s earliest interest in dadaism to 1920, citing the article in *Die Nieuwe Amsterdammer* of 8 May 1920, in which van Doesburg wrote, significantly, “Dada wants nothing . . . but a nothing in a positive sense.” In Baljeu’s *Theo van Doesburg*, on the other hand, a letter from van Doesburg to Tzara of 8 December 1918 is cited, in which I. K. Bonset is described as a Dutch dadaist; Baljeu believes that the pseudonym used by van Doesburg to sign his dadist output was coined between 1916 and 1918, and he posits a direct influence of Hugo Ball (see the chapter “I. K. Bonset: Van Doesburg as a Dadaist and Poet,” *ibid.*, pp. 38–39). Van Doesburg’s poetry has been published in I. K. Bonset, *Nieuwe Voorbeelden: De gedichten van Theo van Doesburg*, with an essay by K. Schippers (Amsterdam, 1975). On van Doesburg and the avant-garde movements involving

him, the most authoritative source is the recent volume of van Doesburg’s own *Scritti di arte e di architettura*, ed. Sergio Polano (Rome, 1979). On Citroen, see the work by various authors, *Paul Citroen en het Bauhaus* (Utrecht-Antwerp, 1974).

86. See in particular the “Manifestocontrolarteelারণipura,” *Mécano* 2 (1922), Italian trans. in *Almanacco Dada*, p. 391; as well as the “Cronaca scandalosa dei Paesi Piatti,” original in *Der Sturm* 10 (1922); and “Arcachitettonica” (an attack against Berlage’s museum in the Hague), in *Mécano* 1 (1922), Italian trans. in *Almanacco Dada*, pp. 390–91.

87. Van Doesburg, “Konstruktivistische.” The italics are mine.

88. On the fortunes of the review *ABC* (1924–1928), see Jacques Gubler, *Nationalisme et internationalisme dans l’architecture moderne de la Suisse* (Lausanne: L’age d’homme, 1975), pp. 109 ff. Of great interest is the story of Polish constructivism, particularly for the work of artists such as Henryk Berlewi and Mieczyslaw Szczuka, who were linked to German circles in the early 1920s, or of Wladislaw Strzeminski and Katarzyna Kobro, who were close to Malevich and to the Soviet postrevolutionary debate. See the documentation in the volume edited by Ryszard Stanislawski, *Constructivism in Poland, 1922–1936*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Folkwang Museum, Essen, and at the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, 1973, partially reprinted with additional material in the catalogue *L’avanguardia polacca* (Milan, 1979).

89. In this regard, I consider highly important Ludwig Hilberseimer’s article, “Anmerkungen zur neuen Kunst” (1923), reprinted in the pamphlet *Zehn Jahre Novembergruppe*, pp. 52–57, which I reproduce in its entirety: “Now we need barbarians. Now it is necessary to have lived very close to God, not to have studied him through books. One must be able to look at natural life in a magical way; one must have strength and even rage. The time of delicacy and of pleasure is past. The time of passion begins.” With these words Charles-Louis Philippe characterizes clearly the spiritual aspect of

early expressionism. The barbaric was a means of rejuvenation for art. Or, as Gauguin once said of himself: we went way, way back, even farther back than the horses of the Parthenon, we went back as far as the wooden horses of our childhood. Parallel to expressionism and stimulated by it, the science of art has advanced to the farthest point. To the most primitive, to the most original. To grasp prehistoric art and exotic art and their parallel phenomena contemporaneously, the creative productions of children and of the insane. The most extraordinary and most bizarrely grotesque forms in prehistory and in the world of the exotic are the manifestations of the magical. Manifestations of the metaphysical. In children and in the insane, interpretations of spiritual landscapes of the world. Of the unshakable belief in one's own face. Primitive and infantile artistic elements have steadily determined the formal world of expressionism. Even if with the elementary expressionists we can by no means speak of imitation, they are nonetheless strongly influenced by those suggestive elementary forms.

But for the expressionists, an element much more determining than form is color. It is their domain. Following in the tradition of medieval painting with its strong colors, the expressionists use color as an element of psychological effect. The Russians in particular carried it to its extreme consequences. Using the psychological element of color, expressionism has created a transformed world, a world almost completely new. For it, color is music. It is a source of infinite possibilities of variation. It uncovers the most profound secrets. It illuminates the optical image of the world.

Cubism is essentially a structure of planes mediating contrasting subdivisions. It has recognized the particular ordinance of the work of art, like an extraordinary organism with iron-clad laws of structure. It has consciously touched on the elements of all formations, returning to geometric-cubic form. It has recognized the identity between matter and form. In cubist works, in fact, one sees the contrasts of manufacture and varied materials forced into unity by compositional points

of view. An artistic principle, which the *Merzkunst* has systematically elaborated.

Notwithstanding its inclination to objectivity, cubism ended up, like expressionism, in subjective speculations. The problem of anthropomorphic figuration continued to occupy too much of its time.

In addition to color, the means to the realization of any artistic interest is form. It dominates chaos. It creates organisms. If the process of forming is also transformed into a game, into mere determination of static functions and of beautiful relationships, a certain uprooting takes place. A rigidifying of the formal structure. The disappearance of intensity. A certain self-suppression. A reaction takes place. A conscious inclination toward the past. Thus primitivism, exoticism, and infantilism arose within expressionism. In response to a rigidified cubism, a turning to classicism. All these intentions that link themselves to the past are but attempts to substitute an intellectual rapport with the past for the lost tradition. But it is far from a return to nature. Expressed in all these aspirations is the search for the law that the art of the past manifests in almost all of its works. But every link to the past is destined to lead to eclecticism. The true work of art will always be born only from the chaos of time. Only in this way can its image take on sense.

Dadaism brought with it a general activity that had a vivifying effect on art. Its effect in Germany has been essentially political. In Switzerland and France it led to the continuation of cubism, to a purely abstract art. A phenomenon parallel to Russian suprematism.

Suprematism carried non-objective to its ultimate possibilities. The fact that a suprematist could cover a square uniformly with paint applied flatly meant the end of abstractionism. The complete nullification of materiality. But at the same time, also the maximum concentration. The will straining to the maximum, toward final unity. Suprematism breaks up the stereometric figurative elements of cubism into planimetric elements. Thus it creates a resulting painting of surfaces. The suprematists seek the point of nothingness in art. They close the process of

analytical reduction. They are waiting for synthetic forms still to come. With great resolve, the constructivists have traveled a new path. That of reality. In their first constructions, which were not yet utilitarian, one can recognize a very clear will to take possession of the real. From construction in painting the constructivists have moved on to the construction of objects. To architecture in the broadest sense of the word. Constructivism is the logical consequence of methods of work that are based on the collectivity of our time. Thus it has a base that is of a general rather than a subjective nature. It perceives the subordination of art to society without reserve, as of all of life. It seeks its elements in the expressions of our mechanized and industrialized time. Mathematical clarity, geometrical rigor, functional organization, extreme economy, and the most exact possible constructiveness are problems that are not only technical but also eminently artistic. They determine what is properly essential in our epoch. The constructivist method brings any object into the ambit of formation. Not suppressing liveliness, but forming a reality.

The works of the constructivists are, when all is said and done, nothing but experiments with materials. They consciously work toward a solution to the new problems posed by material and by form. Theirs are merely works of a transition toward functional architectural constructions. The ultimate goal is a well-disciplined preparation for architecture."

5 Toward the Socialist City

1. See *Iz istorii sovetskoy architecturey 1917–1925: Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 37 ff. See also V. Chazanova, *Sovetskaya arkhitektura pervykh let oktyabrya* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 43 ff.; Vieri Quilici, *Città russa e città sovietica* (Milan, 1976), pp. 176 ff.; and various authors, *URSS 1917–1978: La città, l'architettura*, ed. Jean-Louis Cohen, Marco de Michelis, and Manfredo Tafuri (Rome-Paris, 1979). On the early phases of Soviet city planning, see also the well-

documented introductory essay by George Collins to N. A. Milyutin's *Sotsgorod: The Problem of Building Socialist Cities* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1974), pp. 1–42.

2. On Semënov, see V. N. Belussov, "V. N. Semënov," in O. A. Shvidkovsky, *Building in the U.S.S.R. 1917–1932* (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 67–71. See also B. G. Knatts, *Goroda-sady v svyazi zhilishnym voprosom* (The garden city in the light of the problem of housing) (St. Petersburg, 1917); G. B. Barkhin, *Rabochy dom i rabochy poselok-sad* (The worker's house and the garden city) (Moscow, 1922); V. F. Ivanov, *Goroda-sady i poselki dlya rabochikh: Planirovka. Vodostroitel'stvo. Kanalizatsiya* (The garden cities and the working-class districts: planimetry. water system. sewer system) (Leningrad, 1925). See also the bibliography in *Iz storii*. A thorough philological analysis of the movement for garden cities in Russia can be found in Catherine Cooke's essay, "The Garden City Movement in Russia," in *Transactions of the Martin Centre for Architecture and Urban Studies*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1976).

3. See Chazanova, *Sovetskaya arkhitektura*, pp. 44–45.

4. See P. Martell, *Wohnungswirtschaft* 23 (1928): 140–43.

5. See Massimo Cacciari, "Preobrazenskij e il dibattito sull'industrializzazione durante la Nep," in M. Cacciari and Paolo Perulli, *Piano economico e composizione di classe* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1975), pp. 11 ff.; and E. H. Carr, *L'interregno* (Turin, 1965). See also the monographic issue of *Contropiano* 1 (1971), dedicated to the beginnings of Soviet city planning.

6. V. I. Lenin, *Opere scelte*, 2d ed. (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1968), p. 333.

7. See I. Zholtovsky, "V Tysiacha Devyat'sot Vosemnadtsatom" (1918), *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy* 2 (1970):

3. On Lenin's directives regarding the restructuring of Moscow, see also M. Posochin, "Na perednem Krae Sovetskogo Gradostroitel'stva" (In the avant-garde of soviet city planning), *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy* 10 (1967): 12 ff. A wholly ideological interpretation of Len-

inist thought in this regard is found in the article by V. Rabinovich and A. Ryabushin, "V. I. Lenin o problemach Novogo Byta i Zhilishcha" (V. I. Lenin on the problems of the new way of life and of housing), *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura Moskvy* 2 (1970): 1–2.

8. The Ugorselstroy is the organ responsible to the general superintendence for the planning of residential housing and of city improvement.

9. Duglach M. Astafeva, in *Arkhitektura Sssr* 6 (1970): 14–17.

10. B. V. Sakulin, *Tekhnika, stroitel'stvo im promyshlennost'* 1 (1922): 20.

11. On these models, see Giorgio Piccinato's well-documented *La costruzione dell'urbanistica: Germania 1871–1914*, 2d ed. (Rome, 1977).

12. B. V. Sakulin, *Tekhnika, stroitel'stvo i promyshlennost'* 3 (1922): 13 ff.

13. On the significance of the GOELRO plan, see Henri Chambre's fundamental *L'aménagement du territoire en Urss (s' Gravenage, 1959)*, pp. 21 ff.; and Paolo Ceccarelli's introduction to the volume by various authors, *La costruzione della città sovietica, 1928–1931* (Padua, 1970), pp. XIX–XXX.

14. The regions of European Russia established by the GOSPLAN in 1921 are those of: 1. the northwest region (Leningrad); 2. the northeast region (Arkhangel'sk); 3. the western region (Smolensk); 4. the central industrial region (Moscow); 5. the region of the Vyatka-Vetluga (Vyatka); 6. the Ural region (Ekaterinburg); 7. the southwest region (Kiev); 8. the southern mining region (Kharkov); 9. the region of the central Black Lands (Voronezh); 10. the region of the mid-Volga (Samara); 11. the southeast region (Saratov); and 12. the Caucasus region (Vladikavkaz). The debate between the GOELRO and the GOSPLAN centers around the theme of autonomy and on interregional collaboration, tending toward the creation of poles of development. See Chambre, *L'aménagement*, pp. 44–45.

15. Sakulin, *Tekhnika, stroitel'stvo i promyshlennost'* 3 (1922): 21.

16. See *Iz istorii*, documents 28, 35, 41, and 42 (articles in *Pravda* and bulletins from *Izvestiya*). See also Chazanova, *Sovetskaya arkhitektura*.

17. In *Izvestiya* for 22 November 1925 there is an article by N. F. Popov directed against Shchusev's plan, entitled "The new Moscow is not a museum of antiquities." Shchusev replies, in the same publication, with the article "The new Moscow, center of new culture," on 26 November 1925. See *Iz istorii*, documents 44 and 45.

18. In October 1925, the new regulations for the reconstruction of Moscow were presented for approval. We cite the relative communiqué published in *Izvestiya*: *The office of technical management of the Governorship has drawn up the temporary regulations for the restructuring of the city of Moscow and has presented them for the approval of the Presidium of the Mossovet.*

The purpose of these regulations is to establish the most correct and economical use of land, in compliance with sanitary and technical requirements, and to conserve the basic form, historically established, of Moscow.

From the point of view of the constructions, Moscow is divided into five areas: 1. the Kremlin; 2. the Chinese city; 3. from the Chinese city to the line of the boulevards and along the Moskva (ring A); 4. from the line of the boulevards to the ring of the garden streets, including its internal side; 5. from the external side of the ring of the gardens to the Kamer-Kolleszky Wall; 6. from the Kamer-Kolleszky Wall to the city boundaries.

As a general rule, the maximum height of constructions in Moscow is fixed at eleven sazhen [Russian unit of measure equal to 2.13 meters] with six storeys above the surface.

Within the Kremlin, the erection of buildings of any type is permitted only with the approval of the government of the U.S.S.R. Within the perimeter of the Chinese city, the construction is permitted of commercial-industrial and administrative buildings of various types, with a maximum height of eleven sazhen, and not

more than six storeys, in continuous construction.

The construction of buildings of fewer than three storeys is not permitted. In the Chinese city it is prohibited to construct new residential buildings. Only the utilization for residential purposes of part of the new buildings of a commercial and industrial nature is permitted. In the part of the city situated within the perimeter of the boulevards it is permitted to construct buildings not higher than ten sazen with five storeys above ground and in continuous construction, providing that the height of the building does not exceed the width of the adjacent streets.

The erection of buildings on the street of less than three storeys is not permitted. It is forbidden to reconstruct and make repairs on a capital account in buildings facing the boulevards, destined for demolition. In the part of the city beyond the boulevards it is permitted to construct buildings no higher than three sazen, with no more than four storeys above ground. It is not permitted to construct on the street buildings having fewer than two storeys.

In the part of the city beyond the ring of gardens, it is permitted to construct buildings up to six sazen in height and up to three storeys. [Izvestiya no. 238 17 October 1925]; see *Iz istorii*, p. 49.)

19. A. Erlich, *The Soviet Industrialization Debate, 1924–28* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960); N. Spulber, *Soviet Strategy for Economic Growth* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964); E. H. Carr and R. W. Davies, *Le origini della pianificazione sovietica 1926–1929*, vol. 2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1974); Cacciari, *Preobraženskij*.

20. See *Sovetskaya arhitektura* 4 (1931); L. Kaganovich, *L'urbanistica sovietica* (Soviet city planning), report presented to the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., June 1931, chap. 4; Mikhaylov, "Dalla Mosca feudale alla Mosca socialista" (From feudal Moscow to socialist Moscow), *Krasnaya nov' 9* (1935). Schchusev replies to Mikhaylov's article in *Stroytel'naya promyshlennost' 3* (1925). On this polemic, see Quilici,

Città russa, pp. 176–78. On the affair of the Moscow plan in the overall scheme of Soviet planning, see also the detailed volume by Marco de Michelis and Ernesto Pasini, *La città sovietica 1925–1937* (Venice, 1976).

21. See *Iz Istorii*, doc. 20.

22. On this theme, see again de Michelis and Pasini, *La città sovietica*.

23. See Rabinovich and Ryabushin, "V. I. Lenin."

24. See *Iz Istorii*, doc. 46.

25. But on the significance of the accomplishments at Ivanovo-Voznesensk, in which an advanced policy of services and equipment is developed, one that would later be enriched by the notable residential complexes of D. Fridman (*Dom-korabl*, 1929–30), V. Pankov (complex for 102 apartments, 1930), I. Golosov (*Dom kollektiva*, 1929–30), see V. Quilici, "Un polo dello sviluppo discontinuo: Ivanovo-Voznesensk," in *Esperienze ed orientamenti dell'edilizia abitativa sovietica* (Bologna, 1976), pp. 109–18, with the account of the process of reconstruction taken from I. Khlebnikov's article in *Arhitekturnoe tvorchestvo Sssr*, ed. Y. Yaralov (Moscow, 1974). A complete analysis of the experiment carried out at Ivanovo can be found in I. Khlebnikov's essay, "L'architettura della comune operaia: la formazione dell'architettura sovietica nella regione industriale di Ivanovo," in *URSS 1917–1978*, pp. 249–67.

26. See "Notes on the Building in Petergrad-Leningrad Between 1919 and 1934" (in Russian), in *Pamiatniki arhitektury Leningrada* (Leningrad, 1968), Italian trans. (Note sulle realizzazioni a Pietrogrado-Leningrado tra il 1919 e il 1934) in *Rassegna sovietica* 1–2 (1972): 138–43, and in Quilici, *Città russa*, pp. 181–89.

27. *Rassegna sovietica* 1–2 (1972): 140.

6 The New Babylon

1. See Winston Weisman, "New York and the Problem of the First Skyscraper," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 12, no. 1 (1953): 13–21, and idem, "A New View of Skyscraper His-

- tory," in *The Rise of an American Architecture*, ed. K. Kaufmann (London-New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 115–60.
2. The role of New York in defining the typology of the skyscraper has for the most part been underestimated in favor of mythologizing the "Chicago School." We will not attempt here a historical revision of the problem; however, at least a re-reading of Montgomery Schuyler's "classic" essay, "The Evolution of the Skyscraper," *Scribner's Magazine* 46 (1909): 257–91 (now in *American Architecture and Other Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 200–20, can serve as a first step in a reappraisal, along with H. Croly's significant article, "New York's Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 61, no. 4 (1927): 374–75. See also Leopold Arnaud, "The Tall Building in New York in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 11, no. 2 (1952): 15–18, and W. Weisman, "The Chicago School Issue," *The Prairie School Review* 9, no. 1 (1972): 6–30.
 3. See W. Weisman, "The Commercial Architecture of G. B. Post," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31, no. 3 (1972): 176–203.
 4. Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton, 1900), p. 494.
 5. Karl Scheffler, *Die Architektur der Grossstadt* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1913), on which see Massimo Cacciari, *Metropolis: Saggi sulla grande città di Sombart, Endell, Scheffler e Simmel* (Rome: Officina, 1973).
 6. See Eric Mendelsohn, *Amerika, das Bilderbuch eines Architekten* (Berlin, 1926). On Mendelsohn's attitude and that of other European architects in America, see Mario Manieri-Elia, "Trois architectes européens en Amérique: Eliel Saarinen, Mendelsohn, Neutra," in *Archithese* 17 (1976): 15–22.
 7. Kurt Schwitters, "Castello e cattedrale con fontana," in Bruno Taut, *Frühlicht 1920–22* (Milan, 1974), p. 173; original ed., "Schloss und Kathedrale," *Frühlicht* no. 3 (1922): 87.
 8. M. Cacciari, *Krisis: Saggio sulla crisi del pensiero negativo da Nietzsche a Wittgenstein* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), p. 137.
 9. See Otto Kohtz, *Gedanken über Architektur* (Berlin, 1909). On the theme of the skyscraper in German culture of the 1920s, see Joachim Schulz, "Hochhäuser und Citygedanke in Deutschland, 1920–1923," *Deutsche Architektur* 12, no. 12 (1964): 750 ff., and Wolfgang Pehnt, *Expressionist Architecture* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 159–62, with a bibliography on pp. 221–22 (to which, however, should be added at least Walter Curt Behrendt's article, "Skyscrapers in Germany," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 11, no. 9 [September 1923]: 365–70). Pehnt (*Expressionist Architecture*, p. 159) recalls Josef Ponten's novella, *Der babylonische Turm*, published in 1918, in which the protagonist plans to unite in a single building every possible cultural and religious function, from a library and a Trappist monastery to a hermit's cell at the top of the tower. The Babylonian theme, here taken literally, is significant to our discourse: the Babylonian metaphor runs through both the German plans for skyscrapers (also Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis*) and the actual American buildings. Marcello Fagiolo attempted an iconological interpretation of the expressionist skyscraper in his two essays, "La cattedrale di cristallo: L'architettura dell'Espressionismo e la 'tradizione' esoterica," in (various authors) *Il revival* (Milan, 1974), pp. 225–88, and "La piramide in espansione: Architettura espressionista e 'comunismo cosmico,'" *Psicon* 2, nos. 2–3 (1975): 18–37. Bletter dwells upon the influences of German expressionistic architecture on the poetics of New York skyscrapers in Cervin Robinson and Rosemarie Haag Bletter's *Skyscraper Style: Art Deco New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); see also Werner Oechslin's article, "Mythos zwischen Europa und Amerika," *Archithese* 20 (1976): 4–11.
 10. Gerhard Wohler, "Das Hochhaus in Wettbewerb der *Chicago Tribune*," *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 58, no. 57 (1924): 328.
 11. T. Wijdeveld, "Inleiding voor de To-

renhuis-Projecten," *Wendingen* 3 (1923): 3; Adolf Behne, "De Duitse Torenhuis Bouw," *ibid.*, pp. 15–17. In addition to the well-known plans of Mies and of Mart Stam, the issue includes the plans of Häring, Poelzig, Scharoun, H. W. Krueger, Walter Fischer, and those of the Luckhardt brothers for a skyscraper on the Friedrichstrasse in Berlin. On the competition for the skyscraper on the Friedrichstrasse, see Walter Curt Behrendt's "Das erste Turmhaus in Berlin," *Die Woche* 9 (1921), in which he states that the typology of the skyscraper is the direct consequence of the logic of the metropolis.

12. See "Kölner Hochhaus-Carneval," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* 3 (1926): 90–120, and Dryssen-Averhoff, "Grunde gegen das Kölner Hochhaus," *ibid.*, pp. 120–24.

13. Alongside of Scharoun's project, a place should be made for that of Adolf Rading, which in the number cited of the German review had been confused with the former; see the precise information contained in the note "Weitere Teilnehmer am Kölner Hochhaus-Wettbewerb," *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst* 4 (1926): 145. Interesting also is Schumacher's embarrassed self-justification, contained in the letter published in the same number of the review, "Fritz Schumacher zum W. M. B. Bericht über den Kölner Hochhaus-Wettbewerb."

14. See Bruno Möhring, "Über die Vorzüge der Turmhäuser und die Voraussetzungen, unter denen sie in Berlin gebaut werden können," *Stadtbaukunst alter und neuer Zeit* 22 (1920): 353 ff.; 23: 370 ff.; 24: 385 ff.; Max Berg, "Der Bau von Geschäftshochhäusern in Breslau zur Linderung der Wohnungsnot," *Stadtbaukunst alter und neuer Zeit* 7 (1920): 99–104; 8: 116–18; and A. L. Pasternak, "Urbanizm," *Sovremennaya architektura* 1 (1926): 4–7. Möhring's plan, drawn up for the Prussian Academy of Architecture, provided for a ring of twenty skyscrapers along the Spree River, on land belonging to the city.

15. See A. L. Pasternak, "Polemiche sulla città del futuro," in *La costruzione della*

città sovietica, ed. Paolo Ceccarelli (Padua, 1970), pp. 51–63; original ed., "Spory o buduscien góroda," *Sovremennaya architektura* 1–2 (1930): 57 ff.

16. Regarding the competition, see Manfredo Tafuri, "The Disenchanted Mountain: The Skyscraper and the City," in G. Ciucci, F. Dal Co, M. Manieri-Elia, and M. Tafuri, *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1979).

17. Raymond Unwin, "Higher Building in Relation to Town Planning," in *RIBA Journal* 31, no. 5 (1924): 125–40.

18. See *Regional Plan of New York*, vol. 2, pt. 2: *Guidance of Building*, pp. 159 ff.; Frederick A. Delano, "Skyscrapers," *The American City* (January 1926); and the *Journal of the Real Estate Board of New York* (August 1930).

19. Werner Hegemann, "Das Hochhaus als Quelle von Verkehrsschwierigkeiten," in *Amerikanische Architektur und Stadtbaukunst* (Berlin, 1925), pp. 44–54. It may be useful to compare Hegemann's analyses with Anglo-Saxon editorial writings on the skyscraper in the 1920s and 1930s, fluctuating between total and moralistic rejections, generic observations, chauvinistic praises, and bland criticisms. See P. Buitenhuis, "Aesthetics of the Skyscraper: The Views of Sullivan, James and Wright," *The American Quarterly* 9 (1957): 316–24; Vernon Howe Bailey, *Skyscrapers of New York*, introduction by Cass Gilbert and W. E. Rudge (New York, 1928); Francisco Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper* (Paris, 1929); H. Croly, "New York's Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 41, no. 4 (1927): 374–75; Douglas Haskell, "The Development of the Skyscraper," *The Studio* 102, no. 463 (1931): 263–66.

20. In 1912 Hegemann, after the 1910 exposition in London, began a campaign for the decentralization of Berlin; Käthe Kollwitz drew up a manifesto denouncing the conditions in Berlin, and Hegemann himself was harassed by the Prussian police. From 1913 on Hegemann visited America several times, as a result of the request made by the People's Institute of New York to Mayors Adickes of Frank-

- furt and Marx of Düsseldorf that an expert be invited for a series of lectures on German city planning. From 1924 to 1933 he was city planning consultant to Leipzig and Münster, and in 1933, when his property was confiscated by the Nazis, he took up residence in America, where he died in 1936. A work of the utmost importance—even more than *American Vitruvius* of 1922 or the fundamental *Das Steinerne Berlin* of 1930—is Hegemann's last book, *City Planning Housing* (New York, 1936–38), completed after his death by William R. Forster and Robert Weinberg. On Hegemann, see the introductions to the Italian editions of *La Berlino di pietra* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1975), and the *Catalogo delle esposizioni internazionali di Berlino, 1910 e Düsseldorf, 1911* (Milan, 1975), and Donatella Calabi's essay, "Werner Hegemann, o dell'ambiguità borghese dell'urbanistica," *Casabella* 41, no. 428 (1977): 54–60.
21. See Harvey Wiley Corbett, "The Influence of Zoning in New York's Skyline," *The American Architect and the Architectural Review* 123, no. 2410 (1923): 1–4, in which Corbett recalls the proposals formulated in 1908 by David Knickerbocker Boyd (*The American Architect*, 18 November 1908), and "Zoning and the Envelope of the Building," *Pencil Points* 6, no. 3 (1923): 15–18. See also Corbett, "Effect of the New York Zoning Resolution on Commercial Buildings," *The American Architect* 125, no. 2448 (1920): 547–51, and Carol Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist: The Skyscraper City in the 1920s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 45, no. 1 (1986): 47 ff.
22. On the structural significance of the Zoning Law, see Franco Mancuso's well-documented essay, "Lo zoning: l'esperienza di New York," in *L'urbanistica del riformismo: Usa, 1890–1940*, ed. Pier Luigi Crosta (Milan, 1975), pp. 89 ff., and Willis, "Zoning and Zeitgeist."
23. Corbett, "Zoning," p. 18.
24. See Giusi Rapisarda, "Die Stadt und ihr Doppelgänger: Von 'Metropolis' zu 'King Kong,'" *Archithese* 17 (1976): 29–35.
25. See "The Rockefeller Building Project in Mid-Town New York," *Pencil Points* 12, no. 10 (1931): 776–77; William H. Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 4: *The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), pp. 1–85; and Tafuri, "La montagna disincantata," pp. 496 ff.
26. Claude Bragdon, "Skyscrapers," in *The Arch Lectures* (1940) (New York, 1942), pp. 103–15.
27. See "Dr. John Wesley Kelchner's Restoration of King Solomon's Temple and Citadel, Helmle & Corbett Architects," *Pencil Points* 6, no. 11 (November 1925): 69–86; Robinson and Haag Bletter, *Skyscraper Style*, pp. 11–12. Helmle and Corbett's project was also exhibited at the forty-first show of the Architectural League of New York. See *The American Architect* (20 February 1926).
28. Walter Benjamin, "Zentralpark," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 677. The passage by Benjamin has been justly compared to aphorism 105 of Adorno's *Minima Moralia*: "Man's life becomes a moment, not by suspending duration but by lapsing into nothingness, waking to its own futility in face of the bad eternity of time itself. In the clock's over-loud ticking we hear the mockery of light-years for the span of our existence. The hours that are past as seconds before the inner sense has registered them, and sweep it away in their cataract, proclaim that like all memory our inner experience is doomed to oblivion in cosmic night. Of this people are today made forcibly aware." *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 1974), p. 165. See Elvio Facchinelli, "Minima (im)moralia," *L'Erba voglio* 26 (1974): 16–17.
29. Paul Robertson, "The Skyscraper Office Building," *The Architectural Forum* 2, no. 6 (1930): 879–80.
30. See Delano, "Skyscrapers," and the *Journal of the Real Estate Board of New York* (August 1930). An outline of the historical reconstruction of the economic significance of the skyscraper in relation to the phenomena of concentration of fi-

nancial capital can be found in Heinz Ronner's article, "Skyscraper: à propos Oekonomie," *Archithese* 18 (1976): 44–49, 55.

31. Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper*, p.

33. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Hastings himself, cited by Mujica (*ibid.*), identifies in his *Modern Architecture* artistic socialism and avant-gardes, totally rejecting both: "Surely modern architecture should not be constituted by the deplorable creations of aspiring inventors of styles, the socialists who have penetrated the world of art more than that of politics, who are more interested in promulgating some innovation or other than in achieving a concrete improvement, the so-called futurists, the new thinkers, the cubists, the followers of *art nouveau*, all of them lacking in ties with the past, without any knowledge of tradition."

32. Lewis Mumford, "American Architecture to-day, I," *Architecture* 58, no. 4 (1928): 181–88. Note that Mumford's entire essay refutes the above-mentioned theses of Helmle and Corbett as well as Ferriss's rendering; his main hypothesis is that, after the dormant period from 1890 to 1920, the new experiments were linked to the great tradition of J. W. Root, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Perceptive passages on Mumford's position with respect to the "original values" of the American experience are contained in Francesco Dal Co's essay, "La forza della tradizione," the introduction to the Italian edition of L. Mumford's *The Brown Decades* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1931), entitled *Architettura e cultura in America dalla guerra civile all'ultima frontiera* (Venice, 1977), pp. 7–21.

33. Mumford, "American Architecture to-day," p. 185.

34. See Ely Jacques Kahn, "On New York: Past, Present and Future (1926)," in Arthur Tappan North, *Ely Jacques Kahn* (New York-London: McGraw-Hill, 1931), pp. 25–27; Raymond Hood, "A City under a Single Roof," *Nation's Business* 12 (1929): 18–20, 206–9; H. W. Corbett, "Design in Office Building,"

The Architectural Forum, no. 52 (June 1930): 779.

35. Leon V. Solon, "The Park Avenue Building, New York City," *The Architectural Record* 63, no. 4 (1928): 289–97.

36. See E. J. Kahn's essay, "Schools of Europe and America," in *Design in Art and Industry* (New York, 1925), in which the author examines the contribution of the Paris Exposition of 1900 and that held in Turin in 1902, and the research of the Wiener Werkstätte, of Otto Wagner, Hoffmann, Klimt, Behrens, the Werkbund, and the Dessau Bauhaus. According to his later recollections, Kahn, as a youth in Paris, had learned to appreciate Leon Bakst's Russian ballets and the collections of paintings of Matisse and Picasso, by striking up a friendship with Gertrude Stein. See the unpublished manuscript by E. Kahn in the Avery Library of Columbia University, New York, chap. 3.

37. See the above-cited unpublished manuscript by Kahn, chap. 2, pp. 4–5.

38. E. J. Kahn, "On the Use of Color (1928)," in North, *Ely Jacques Kahn*, p. 24.

39. See Henry H. Saylor, "Ely Jacques Kahn," *Architecture* 64, no. 2 (1931).

40. See E. J. Kahn, "Sources of Inspiration," *Architecture* 9, no. 5 (1929): 249–56; and chap. 11 of Kahn's unpublished manuscript.

41. Rose Henderson, "A Primitive Basis for Modern Architecture," *The Architectural Record* 54, no. 2 (1923): 189–96 (the citation is on p. 189).

42. On the sculpture of John Storrs (1885–1956), see E. Bryant, "Rediscovery: John Storrs," *Arts in America* (May 1969), an article written on the occasion of the retrospective exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery; Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America* (New York: Crowell, 1968); and, principally, Abraham A. Davidson, "John Storrs, Early Sculptor of the Machine Age," *Artforum* 13, no. 3 (1974): 41–45.

43. See H. Croly, "The Scenic Function of the Skyscraper," *The Architectural Record* 63, no. 4 (1928): 77–78; and Kenneth M. Murchison, "The Spires of

Gotham," *The Architectural Forum* 52 (1930): 786, 878. The "scenic function" of the skyscraper was carried to its extreme at the ball at the Astor Hotel in New York on 23 January 1931, at which the most prominent architects of the city represented "The New York Skyline," with costumes and headgear evoking their own works: Leonard Schultze appeared dressed as the New Waldorf Astoria, Ely J. Kahn as the Squibb Building, William Van Alen as the Chrysler Building, Ralph Walker as One Wall Street, and so forth. Architecture expresses itself as theatre; its creators unconsciously close the cycle opened by the expressionist and dadaist cabarets. On the 1931 ball, see Rem Koolhaas, "The Architect's Ball: A Vignette, 1931," *Oppositions* 3 (1974): 92–96. Two symbolic interpretations of the American skyscraper are presented in the articles by Diana Agrest, "Le ciel est la limite," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 178 (1975): 55–64, and by Dolores Hayden, "Skyscraper Seduction, Skyscraper Rape," *Heresies* 2 (1977): 108–15.

44. Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper*, p. 32.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

48. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–53.

49. R. H. Bletter, "Metropolis réduite," *Archithese* 18 (1976): 26–27.

50. See Thomas and Terry, *The Busby Berkeley Book*, pp. 88–90.

Appendix: A City under a Single Roof

1. Raymond Hood, "A City under a Single Roof," *The Nation's Business* 17, no. 12 (November 1929): 18–20, 206, 208, 209.

2. The article came from an interview granted to F. S. Tisdale. The original text was accompanied by Hood's drawing illustrating the project, reproduced in the present volume, by a photograph of the American Radiator Building in New York City, and by an imaginary scheme of the metropolitan congestion.

3. He is referring to the initial project for what will become Rockefeller Center.

7

Sozialpolitik and the City in Weimar Germany

1. On the Weimar communist party, see Ossip K. Fleckthorn, *Die Kpd*. On class composition and the problems of political organization of the KPD and the SPD, see Massimo Cacciari, *Sul problema dell'organizzazione: Germania, 1917–1921* (Padua: Marsilio, 1972); Sergio Bologna, "Composizione di classe e teoria del partito alle origini del movimento consiliare," in (various authors), *Operai e Stato* (Milan, 1972); and Guido de Masi and Giacomo Marramao, "Consigli e Stato nella Germania di Weimar," *Problemi del socialismo* 2 (1976).

2. No valuable contribution to a knowledge of the organization of culture in the Weimar Republic is offered by Peter Gay's *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), and Walter Laqueur's *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918–1933* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974). Better organized, if nothing else, are the articles by Gordon A. Craig, "Impegno e neutralità nella Germania di Weimar," *Dialoghi del XX* 2, no. 6 (1968): 50–66, and John Elderfield, "Dissenting Ideologies and the German Revolution," *Studio International* 180, no. 927 (1970): 180–87. See also Ferruccio Masini, "'Rivoluzione conservatrice' e ideologia della tecnica nella Repubblica di Weimar," in (various authors), *Weimar: Lotte sociali e sistema democratico nella Germania degli anni '20*, ed. Lucio Villari (Bologna, 1978), pp. 137–51, and in the same volume, Tomás Maldonado, "Le due anime della cultura di Weimar," pp. 153–61. For the area of interest to us, the most complete study remains Barbara Miller Lane's *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918–1945*. See also Ronald V. Weidenhoeft, "Housing and Socialism in Weimar Germany," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33, no. 3 (1974): 328, and John Willett's disappointing *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New So-*

briety, 1917–1933 (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978). Of particular interest, finally, are the articles contained in *Social Housing in the Weimar Republic*, a monographic issue of *Architectural Association Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1979).

3. Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), p. 279. See also Erich Matthias, *Kautsky und Kautskyanismus: Die Funktion der Ideologie in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie vor dem ersten Weltkrieg* (Tübingen, 1957).

4. Tronti, *Operai e capitale*, p. 280.

5. Gian Enrico Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar: Crisi di sistema e sconfitta operaia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977). "The quality and the extent of these compromises"—Rusconi writes, referring to the Ebert-Groener agreement between the General Staff and the SPD, to the Legien-Stinnes agreement between unions and entrepreneurs, and to the political pact between the SPD, the Zentrumspartei and the DDP—"are not contingent and accidental, but concern the very structure of the system. *They hold the system together.* They are diverse and complementary, they are positioned at different depths and act at staggered intervals. And yet they hold up only jointly. . . . Regarding political compromise, which is expressed in its most visible form in the reciprocal relationship of the parties, in their ability to enter into coalitions, in the formulas of government and in general in parliamentary life, it must be admitted that it consists merely of functioning as a simple register and formalizer of the other compromises. This serves to explain the structural weaknesses of the Weimar political system. Weimar's is a *contract democracy* in the literal sense of the word. . . . Contract democracy means that the democratic institutional form, instead of being the accepted political framework within which social forces move and compete, becomes itself an object of permanent contracting, by turns explicit, ideologically camouflaged, or only latent."

6. Karl Korsch, *Consigli di fabbrica e socializzazione* (Bari, 1970), pp. 60–61; original ed., *Arbeitsrecht für Betriebsräte*

(Berlin: Vereinigung Internationaler Verlagsanstalten, 1922). The italics are mine.

7. See Martin Wagner, "Gross-Siedlungen der Weg zur Rationalisierung des Wohnungsbaues," *Wohnungswirtschaft* 3, nos. 11–14 (1926): 81–114. Wagner, former collaborator of Muthesius in Berlin, then an official in the administrations of Weissensee-Berlin, Hamburg, and Rüstingen (1911–14), was head, together with Roman Heiligenthal, of the territorial group of Teltow and, from 1914, a member of the league for the Gross-Berlin; in 1915 he was awarded a degree in engineering from the Technische Hochschule of Berlin, with the dissertation "Das Sanitäre Grün der Städte, ein Beitrag zur Fleißflächen Theorie." On his work, see Klaus Wachter, "Wagner, Martin," in *Handwörterbuch der Raumforschung und Raumordnung*, vol. 3, 2d ed. (1970), pp. 3665–71, and Jochen Kempmann, "Das Ideengut Martin Wagners als Beispiel für die Entwicklung der Städtebaulichen: Gedankengängen seit 1900," degree thesis (Berlin, 1968). See also Ludovica Scarpa, *Martin Wagner e Berlino: Casa e città nella Repubblica di Weimar 1918–1933* (Rome: Officina, 1983), and the catalogue *Martin Wagner 1885–1957: Wohnungsbau und Weltstadtplanung. Die Rationalisierung des Glücks* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1986).

8. See, among others, the following articles by Martin Wagner: "Die Raumkunst im Stadtbau und Ihre gestzlichen Grundlagen," *Technisches Gemeindeblatt* 18, no. 14 (1915): 201–5, in which he advocates a revision of the 1875 law and gives as examples the workers' settlements built by the city of Rüstingen with public funds; "Bebauungsplan und Verunstaltung des Stadtbildes," *ibid.*, 19, nos. 5–4 (1916): 1–4; "Generalbebauungspläne," *ibid.*, 19, no. 23 (1917): 285–88, in which, criticizing the zoning technique and the waste resulting from the attitude of the German municipalities toward city planning, Wagner augurs the institution of an urbanistic viewpoint that considers the urban body as a productive machine. Also see *idem*, *Neue Bauwirtschaft, ein Beitrag zur Verbilligung der Baukosten im Wohnungsbau* (Berlin, 1918).

9. M. Wagner, *Die Sozialisierung der Baubetriebe* (Berlin, 1919). Wagner returns to this theme with the articles "Die Abschaffung der Baupolizei für den Wohnungsbau," *Die Volkswohnung* 1, fasc. 20 (1919): 258; "Die Abbüderung der Baukostenübersteuerung, ein Beitrag zur Sozialisierung des Wohnungswesen," *ibid.*, fasc. 21, pp. 261–66; "Die Akkordlohn im Baugewerbe," *ibid.*, 2, fasc. 6 (1920): 77–80. Among the attacks arising from Wagner's "Sozialisierung," we cite the one contained in Georg Haberland's article, "Offener Brief an Herrn Dr.-Ing. Martin Wagner," *Die Volkswohnung* 1 (1919): 312–13, which defends free capitalistic development for the purpose of economic recovery. Wagner replies on p. 313 of the same issue of the review.
10. The opportunity to conserve piecework is also upheld in Wagner's article, "Die Akkordlohn im Baugewerbe."
11. See Wagner, *Die Sozialisierung*, p. 4.
12. On this subject, see Wagner, "Stadtkultur und Siedlungswirtschaft," *Die Volkswohnung* 2, fasc. 11 (1920): 156–58, and "Das Siedlungsproblem," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 56, no. 1 (1921): esp. p. 185.
13. See Massimo Cacciari, "Utopia e socialismo," *Contropiano* 3, no. 3 (1970): 563–686.
14. Cacciari, *Sul problema dell'organizzazione*, pp. 18–19.
15. See Rolf Spörhase, *Wohnungsunternehmen im Wandel der Zeit* (Hamburg, 1947); Miller Lane, *Architecture*, p. 88.
16. The opposition between the big cartels of the mining and coal-and-steel industry directed by Stinnes, Krupp, Thyssen and Klöcker, and the sectors of light and electrical mechanics (Siemens, AEG), together with the chemical industry, quickly dominated by IG-Farben, has been clearly outlined in Rusconi's *La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 78 ff.
17. See J. Lador Lederer, *Capitalismo mondiale e cartelli tedeschi tra le due guerre* (Turin, 1959). See also L. Villari, "La razionalizzazione capitalistica nella Repubblica di Weimar," in (various authors), *Weimar*, pp. 71–91.
18. Arthur Rosenberg, *A History of the German Republic*. (London: Methuen, 1936), p. 201; original ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Republic* (Karlsbad, 1934).
19. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
20. See (various authors), *Die Wirtschaftliche Unternehmungen der Arbeiterbewegung, ein Blick in die Gemeinwirtschaft* (Berlin, 1928). The volume publicizes the activity of the ADGB and the AFA-Bund, publishing the results of the union convention held in Berlin on 28 and 29 December 1927. Among the articles contained therein, of particular interest are W. Simmermacher's "Verband sozialer Baubetriebe im Bezirk Brandenburg," pp. 52 ff., illustrating the work of the Deutsche Bauhütte GmbH—which built the *Siedlungen* of Britz and Zehlendorf for the GEHAG—of the Bauhütte Berlin GmbH, of the Berliner Topferhütte, of the Glaserhütte GmbH, etc., and the description by R. Linneke, director of the DEWOG, of the activity of the DEWOG itself and of its shareholders (the ADGB, the AFA-Bund, the ADB, the Arbeiterbank, the Volksfürsorge of Hamburg, the Verband sozialer Baubetriebe). The DEWOG's duties were the foundation and the reorganization of building societies and cooperatives; the location of capital for the Reich, the Länder, and the communes, and the subdivision of funds among the branch companies; the finding and redistribution of credits; the management of mortgages and of capital paid into insurance funds by the workers; the urbanization of land earmarked for residential purposes; the finding of low-price construction materials; the amalgamation of material-producing factories and of building firms into the communal economy; the drawing up of project prototypes and of norms for rendering the building site functional; and organizational, technical, commercial, and financial consultation to local firms. In the same volume, see Franz Gutschmidt's "Die gehag," pp. 67 ff., and Bern Meyer's article on the significance and the development of the Arbeiterbank, pp. 88 ff. The Arbeiterbank gathers together the funds of the unions, the workers, and the cooperatives, organizing itself as a company for nomi-

nal stocks, collaborating closely with the cooperatives and carefully protecting itself from the infiltration of interests of private capital. See also Otto de la Chevallerie, "Die Gewerkschaften als Kapitalistische Unternehmer," *Gewerbefleiss*, fasc. 10–12 (1929): 181–92; 30. *Jahre Wohnungsreform 1898–1928* (Berlin, 1928); and "Fünf Jahre Derweg," *Vorwärts* 147 (28 March 1929). On the building economy in Weimar Germany, see Mechtild Stratmann's article, "Housing Policies in the Weimar Republic," in *Social Housing in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 16–23.

21. Enzo Collotti, "Il Bauhaus nell'esperienza politico-sociale della Repubblica di Weimar," *Controspazio* 2 (1970): 8–15 (the citation is on p. 14).

22. Fritz Naphtali, *Wirtschaftsdemokratie: Ihr Wesen, Weg und Ziel*, 2d ed. (Berlin, 1966), p. 107.

23. Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, p. 154.

24. Naphtali, *Wirtschaftsdemokratie*, p. 83.

25. Max Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Collected papers on social and economic history) (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1924), p. 411.

26. On Bruno Taut's experience in Magdeburg, see *Frühlicht 1920–1922* (Berlin, 1963); the introductory essay by Giuseppe Samonà in the Italian ed. (Milari, 1974); Ulrich Conrads, "Bruno Taut e la rivista Frühlicht," *Edilizia moderna* 86 (1955): 39–41; Kurt Junghanns, "Die deutsche Städtebauteorie unter dem Einfluss der Novemberrevolution," *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte* (Weimar, 1968): 154–71; and idem, *Bruno Taut, 1880–1938*. On Haesler's activity in Celle, see Otto Haesler, *Mein Lebenswerk als Architekt* (Berlin, 1957); Henry de Fries, *Junge Baukunst in Deutschland* (N.p. 1926); idem, "Organisation eines Bauge-dankes," *Die Form*, fasc. 7 (1927), now in the volume *Die Form: Stimme des Deutschen Werkbundes, 1925–1934*, ed. Felix Schwarz and Frank Gloor (Gütersloh, 1969), pp. 127–31. On Taut, see principally Iain Boyd White, *Bruno Taut and the Architecture of Activism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Important, to understand the agi-

tations in German architectural culture after the First World War, is the essay by Marco de Michelis, "The red and the green: Park and city in Weimar Germany," *Lotus International* 30 (1981): 105–17.

27. On this subject, see Werner Hegemann, *La Berlino di pietra* (Milan, 1975), with introductory essay by Donatella Calabi; original ed., *Das steinerne Berlin* (Berlin, 1930). On Hegemann's particular position in the city-planning debate of Weimar Germany, an understanding of which is needed to evaluate the cited volume, see Donatella Calabi's two articles, "Werner Hegemann, o dell'ambiguità borghese dell'urbanistica," *Casabella* 428 (1977): 54–60, and "Werner Hegemann: Der gerettete Christus," *Casabella* 437 (1978): 57–60. Peripheral though it may be to our argument, it is intriguing to note Benjamin's appreciation of Hegemann's *Fridericus*. See Walter Benjamin, *Briefe*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1966), letter to Gerhard Scholem dated 25 July 1925.

28. On the Garden City experiment in Germany, see Kurt Junghanns and Joachim Schultz, "Die Gartenstadt im deutschen Städtebau," *Deutsche Architektur* 16, no. 1 (1967): 58–60; Kristiana Hartmann, "Die Architekturkonzeption der deutschen Gartenstadtbewegung," degree thesis, Berlin, 1973; Franziska Bollerey and K. Hartmann, "Wohnen im Revier: Siedlungen vom Beginn der Industrialisierung bis 1933," *Bauwelt* 24 (1975); K. Hartmann, *Deutsche Gartenstadtbewegung: Kulturpolitik und Gesellschaftsreform* (Munich, 1976).

29. Ludwig Landmann, "Das Siedlungssamt der Grossstadt," in *Kommunale Wohnungs- und Siedlungsämter* (Stuttgart, 1919).

30. On May's work in Frankfurt, in addition to the anthology from the review *Das neue Frankfurt* see, in particular, *Das Wohnungswesen der Stadt Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt am Main, 1930); Joseph Gantner, "Frankfort et l'urbanisme," *Revue d'Allemagne* 3, no. 44 (1931): 505–16; idem, "L'activité architecturale et urbanistique de Francfort, 1925–1930," *La*

Cité 6 (1931); W. Bangert, *Baupolitik und Stadtgestaltung in Frankfurt am Main* (Würzburg, 1937); Justus Buekschmitt, *Ernst May* (Stuttgart, 1963); M. Tafuri, "Ernst May e l'urbanistica razionalista," *Comunità* 123 (1964): 66–80; Miller Lane, *Architecture*, pp. 90–103; Bianca Bottero Raboni, "Metodo e proiezioni urbane del Razionalismo attorno agli anni '30," in Silvano Tintori, *L'individualità urbana* (Bari, 1968), p. 233 ff. (but see also pp. 259 ff.); Giorgio Grassi, "Das neue Frankfurt e l'architettura della nuova Francoforte," introductory essay to *Das neue Frankfurt 1926–1931* (Bari, 1975), the anthology, in Italian, from the review *Das neue Frankfurt*; Martin Steinmann, "Il secondo Ciam e il problema del *minimum*: Organizzazione dell'alloggio e taylorismo," *Psicon* 2, nos. 2–3 (1975): 61–70; Jean Castex, Jean-Charles Depaule, and Philippe Panerai, *De l'îlot à la barre: Contribution à une définition de l'architecture urbaine* (Versailles, 1975), pp. 121–50, 181–89; Emilio Battisti, *Architettura, ideologia e scienza* (Milan, 1975), pp. 61–65; M. Tafuri, "Francoforte anni '20," in *Paese sera-Arte* (8 May 1976): 13; Christian Borngräber, "Les prétentions sociales de la Nouvelle Architecture et leur échec dans le Nouveau Francfort," in *Paris-Berlin 1900–1933* (Paris, 1978), pp. 373–79; Ferdinand and Lore Kramer, "Sozialer Wohnbau der Stadt Frankfurt am Main in den 20er Jahren," in *Kommunaler Wohnbau in Wien: Aufbruch 1923–1934: Ausstrahlung* (Vienna, 1978); Ferdinand Kramer, "Das neue Frankfurt: Viewpoint," in *Social Housing in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 44–49. Landmann was president of the Aktienbaugesellschaft für kleine Wohnungen from 1923 until 1927; May was vice-president from 1925 and president from 1927. Both the AKW and the Mietheim A. G. Gartenstadtgesellschaft were ninety-three percent controlled by the municipality of Frankfurt. See *Das neue Frankfurt* 7–8 (1928): 114, and 2–3 (1930): 26. For the application of the *Trabantenprinzip* in Breslau, see E. May, *Denkschrift zur Eingemeindung von Vorortgemeinden in die Stadt Breslau* (Breslau, 1925). On the activity of Martin Elsaesser in Frankfurt (projects for the

general markets, 1927; for the school in Römerstadt, 1928; for the faculty of psychiatry, 1930), see Martin Elsaesser, *Bauten und Entwürfe aus den Jahren 1924–1932*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1933).

31. E. May, "Fünf Jahre Wohnungsbau-tätigkeit in Frankfurt am Main," *Das neue Frankfurt* 1–2 (1930): 21–70; Italian trans. in *Das neue Frankfurt 1926–1931*, pp. 189–209.

32. See Borngräber, "Les prétentions sociales," p. 377.

33. Lion Murard and Patrick Zylberman, "Esthétique du taylorisme: L'habitat rationnel en Allemagne: De la stabilisation du mark à la stabilisation d'Hitler (1924–1933)," in *Paris-Berlin 1900–1933*, pp. 384–90 (esp. p. 390).

34. Giancarlo Buonfino, "Teatro totale: Massenspiel e Chorspiel," in *Avanguardia, Dada, Weimar* (Venice, 1978), pp. 31–48.

35. On Stam's work in Frankfurt, see the catalogue *Mart Stam: Documentation of his work 1920–1965* (London, 1970), pp. 16–17, and the article by Stam himself in *Das neue Frankfurt* 3 (1929).

36. See Murard and Zylberman, "Esthétique," p. 390.

37. Karel Teige, "Il problema degli alloggi dei ceti al minimo livello di vita," report presented to the Third CIAM Convention, 1930; now in Carlo Aymonino, *L'abitazione razionale: Atti dei Congressi Ciam 1929–1930* (Padua, 1971). In 1931 Hilberseimer also denounced the indiscriminate rise in the cost of building materials, auguring a suitable restructuring of production instead of studies for the further reduction of habitable spaces; mass production and "Fordism" are once again referred to as instruments favorable to the economic situation.

38. Franco Mancuso, *Le vicende dello zoning* (Milan, 1978), chap. 5, pp. 157–219, 405–24. One principal virtue of Mancuso's analyses is that he has pointed out the premises—apart from the ideology of the Modern Movement—of the urbanist policy of Landmann and May, establishing a line of continuity starting with the earliest provisions taken by the

Miquel union and culminating in the new Frankfurt building regulation of 23 March 1931. Mancuso observes (*ibid.*, pp. 415–16): “Clearly visible is the fundamental continuity with the conception, with the city model, followed by the administrations that had governed before the war. This is obviously due to the importance of the *de facto* situation: the city is by now strongly structured in its fundamental parts by a regulating system that has existed for years, and the postwar architects—espousing the realism of the municipal administrations—in applying their analytical and scientific approach, wish to start from the existing conditions, even though they may be viewed as having a restrictive effect upon the final plans. . . . It was, in fact, still along the line of the expansion of the *Grossstadt*, and therefore not of decentralization and of autonomy, that in 1928 the municipality of Frankfurt annexed those districts to the west for which the 1925 plans already provided the development of residential areas and an expansion—albeit curtailed—of the industrial zones.” We can agree only in part with Mancuso’s thesis, as we will attempt to explain further on.

39. Giorgio Grassi has sought to demonstrate that in May’s Frankfurt there exists a “tenacious bond . . . linking the extreme outskirts to the historical center of the city.” He cites in support of his hypothesis both Gärtnersiedlungen Teller and Strahlenberger Lehen, rural in character and yet in contact with the town, as well as the works for the embankment of the Main (see Grassi, *Das neue Frankfurt*, pp. 34 ff., 44 ff.). On the basis of these examples, we cannot share Grassi’s opinion—particularly when comparing the urban model with the examples of the works carried out on the historic center between the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in Frankfurt, or with the recycling of the old urban fabric proposed by Martin Wagner in Berlin, as we shall have occasion to point out shortly. May himself writes in 1930 that the “redevelopment of the dwellings of the old city . . . can be properly dealt with only after 1935. With the purpose of presenting a program of

thorough renewal, a cadaster is now being compiled which will determine the necessary scope of the renewal program” (May, “Fünf Wohnungsbautätigkeit,” p. 190 of the Italian translation).

40. May, “Fünf Wohnungsbautätigkeit,” pp. 191, 193.

41. See August Endell, *Die Schönheit der Grossstadt* (Stuttgart, 1908), and Karl Scheffler, *Die Architektur der Grossstat* (Berlin, 1913), partially translated into Italian in Cacciari’s *Metropolis*, pp. 121 ff., 165 ff.

42. Once again Grassi upholds the thesis of a continuity between the “classic” approach and “Das neue Frankfurt” (Grassi, *Das neue Frankfurt*, pp. 13 ff.), not drawing attention to the profound difference that separates the texts of Baumeister, Stübben, and Eberstadt on the one hand, and those of Scheffler and Wolf on the other. A thorough analysis of the German manuals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be found in Georgio Piccinato, *La costruzione dell’urbanistica: Germania 1871–1914* (Rome, 1974), with an anthology edited by Donatella Calabi.

43. Peter Behrens, “Risposta all’inchiesta sul futuro del centro di Berlino,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, 27 November 1912.

44. See Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Grossstad-tarchitektur* (Stuttgart, 1927), pp. 99–100. Hilberseimer writes, “Like every discipline, architecture, too, is confronted with the pressing need to define its fundamental principles and the means at its disposition. In this regard, painting has carried out a valuable preliminary task, by focusing attention for the first time on the fundamental forms of every art: geometric and cubic elements, which represent a maximum of objectification. The simple solid bodies—the cube, the sphere, the prism, the cylinder, the pyramid, the cone—pure compositional elements—are the fundamentals of all architecture. The exactness of their definition requires formal clarity and imposes order on chaos, in the most concrete of ways.” Compare this passage of Hilberseimer’s with the article by him translated in chap. 4, n. 89 of the present volume.

45. Bruno Taut, "Wesen und Ziel der Architektur," *Bauwarte* 4 (1928): 621.
46. M. Wagner, "Vorwort," in *Amt für Stadtplanung der Stadt Berlin* (Berlin, 1928), and idem, *Der Städtebaugesetzentwurf und der Berliner Städtebau* (Berlin, 1929). The plan provided for, in the 87,800 hectares of the territory of Berlin, ten million inhabitants in fifty to seventy-five years, without revisions of the administrative boundaries; only 52 percent of the land was destined for housing: 31,710 hectares (equal to 33 square meters per inhabitant) were destined for park space. See also Roman Heiligenthal, "The Zoning of Berlin," *Garden Cities and Town Planning* 16 (November 1926): 224–26.
47. Wagner, *Der Städtebaugesetzentwurf*, p. 5. Wagner's position should not, however, be confused with those that enlivened the German architectural culture of the 1920s under the banner of a confused vitalism. See for example Adolf Rading's article, "Stadt, Form, Architekt," *Die Form*, fasc. 1 (1925), now in *Die Form* pp. 115–21, in which Simmelian and Spenglerian themes blend: the "laws of life" are here exalted against city planning, with appeals to both an unspecified economic planning and to the free action of "responsibilized individuals."
48. See M. Wagner, "Das neue Berlin: Die Weltstadt Berlin," in *Das neue Berlin Grosstadtprobleme* (Berlin, 1929), pp. 4–5.
49. Ibid.
50. M. Wagner, "Volkswohnung oder Ringhaus: Offener Brief an Professor Bruno Möhring," *Die Volkswohnung* (1923): 57–58. To the model of expansion for low-density *Siedlungen*, Möhring had objected that the transportation costs would cause the prices of these installations to rise; Wagner, in addition to appraising Berlin's transportation system as highly efficient, in his open letter to Möhring, raises overall economic considerations concerning residential housing. In the same article he reaffirms the need of a disenchanting and realistic approach to the urban problem, stating significantly that if "higher ethereal values prevail at the present historic moment," the "mysticism" of Bruno Taut will be appreciated inasmuch as it is "authentic" (that is to say, inasmuch as it is completely ineffectual). This judgment may explain the future collaboration between Taut and Wagner, at the moment in which the latter will find it necessary to give a propagandistic value to the achievements of the Social Democratic cooperatives.
51. Wagner, *Der Städtebaugesetzentwurf*, pp. 21 ff. But see also, idem, "Um die Zukunft des Deutschen Städtebaus," *Vortwärts* 8 May 1930, and in *Wohnungswirtschaft* (1930): 191 ff., in which Wagner cites the case of Hamburg, which before the war had already put into effect a 78-million-mark renewal project for the old city.
52. Wagner, *Der Städtebaugesetzentwurf*, pp. 27–29.
53. M. Wagner, "Das Reichsausstellungstakt Berlin," in *Das neue Berlin* 1 (1929): 7 ff.
54. On this last subject, see Wagner, "Freiflächenpolitik," *Das neue Berlin* 6: 109–10, in which he praises the relationship between work and leisure time, made possible by a policy of vast public spaces for recreation, gymnastics and relaxation. Wagner enumerates triumphantly the results of ten years of healthy management of the land in Berlin: 20,000 free hectares of communal property; 20,000 hectares of forest safeguarded by the 1922 law for the protection of trees; 2,000 hectares of small gardens; 45,000 hectares of woods situated by the shores of lakes outside the city boundaries; and 950 playing fields in 1929 compared with 152 in 1921.
55. On the Berlin *Siedlungen*—in addition to the catalogue *Die Gehag-Wohnung* (Berlin, 1931), Miller Lane, *Architecture*; C. Aymonino, "La città di Berlino," in *L'abitazione razionale*, pp. 35–65; and Junghanns, *Bruno Taut*—see the following: Bruno Taut, *Siedlungsmemoiren* (manuscript published in Japan in 1936; Italian trans. in *Lotus* 16 [1977]: 26–34); Alfred Schinz, *Bauen in Berlin, 1900–1964* (Berlin, 1964); Vieri Quilici, "Contributo alla lettura di un organismo metropolitano: Berlino," in *L'architettura*

- tura. Cronache e storia*, XII (1965), pp. 330–33; Norbert Huse, “*Neues Bauen*” 1928 bis 1933: *Moderne Architektur in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1975); Heinrich Klotz, “Funktionalismus in Berlin: Ein Querschnitt 1920–1930,” *Werk-Archithese* 3 (1977): 5–15; Julius Posener, “Salvisberg in Berlin,” *Werk-Archithese* 10 (1977): 23–25. For an interesting account of the Berlin architectural world in the 1920s, see W. Gaunt, “A Modern Utopia? Berlin—The New Germany—The New Movement,” *The Studio* 98, no. 441 (1929): 859–65. See also Günther Uhlig, “Town Planning in the Weimar Republic,” in *Social Housing in the Weimar Republic*, pp. 24–38.
56. See Quilici, “Contributo,” and Aymonino, “La città di Berlino,” in addition to an earlier article “Una città ‘aperta,”” *Casabella continuità* 288 (1964): 53–54.
57. This aspect of the “rationalization” of German industry is perceptively discussed in Rusconi’s *La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 75 ff.
58. See E. Weber, “Die Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen e. V. Ihr Werden und Wollen,” *Schlesisches Heim* 8 (1927): 425–34; *Tätigkeitsbericht der Reichsforschungsgesellschaft für Wirtschaftlichkeit im Bau- und Wohnungswesen für das Geschäftsjahre 1927* (Berlin, 1928); Alexander Schwab, “Zur Tagung der Reichsforschungsgesellschaft,” *Die Form*, fasc. 11 (1929), now in *Die Form*, pp. 137–39; and Junghanns, *Bruno Taut*, p. 153. Regarding the role played by Klein’s typological analyses within the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft, see Alexander Klein, *Lo studio delle piante e la progettazione degli spazi negli alloggi minimi: Scritti e progetti dal 1906 al 1957*, ed. Matilde Baffa Rivolta and Augusto Rossari (Milan, 1975).
59. L. Hilberseimer, “Städtebau und Wohnungsbau auf der Technischen Tagung der Reichsforschungsgesellschaft (Aszug),” *Die Form*, fasc. 11 (1929), now in *Die Form*, pp. 140 ff. (the excerpt cited is on p. 144).
60. Walter Dexel, “Why is Gropius Leaving? (On the Bauhaus Situation),” in Hans Maria Wingler, *The Bauhaus*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 136–37; original ed., “Warum geht Gropius? (Zur Situation des Bauhauses),” *Frankfurter Zeitung* 209 (1928).
61. Hilberseimer, *Grossstadtarchitektur*, pp. 1–2.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
68. See, for example, M. Wagner’s article, “Weg und Ziel der Planwirtschaft,” *Der rote Aufbau* 10, fasc. 22 (1932): 1036–39.
69. A. Schwab, “Ist die Genossenschaftsstadt möglich?,” *Die Form*, fasc. 11 (1929), now in *Die Form*, pp. 145–46.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
71. *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik*, no. 182, pp. 235, 237. See Erich Eyck, *Storia della Repubblica di Weimar, 1918–1933*, 3d ed. (Turin, 1966), pp. 466–67; original ed., *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik*, 2d ed. (Zurich, 1956). See also the little volume *Zahlen, sehen euch an! Steuereinzahler, wo bleibt dein Geld?* (Berlin, 1930), which violently attacks the policy of public spending in Weimar Germany, comparing with one another the budgets of the years 1916, 1926, and 1930. Particularly criticized are the fiscal system, the “waste,” and the “mismanagement” of the city of Berlin, in debt for a thousand million marks (pp. 25 ff.). In this context, the *Hauszinssteuer* is defined ironically as “a triumph of the new system” (p. 10). Among right-wing texts against the *Hauszinssteuer*, see W. Rademacher, “Die kalte Sozialisierung,” *Flugschriften der Dnvp* 251 (1928). A chart of building activity in Germany from 1924 to 1933 is given in Bruno Schwann’s article, “Deutschland Wohnungswesen,” in (various authors), *Städtebau und Wohnungswesen der Welt*, ed. Bruno Schwann (Berlin, 1935), p. 122. See the results in table A. In 1933 the public funds were exhausted. The 200 million marks that

Table A

	<i>Building activity</i> Net increment of the number of housing units	Total capital invested (millions of marks)	<i>Private capital</i> Mortgages of credit institutions	Private mortgages and private capital	Total	<i>Public capital</i> Mortgages relative to tax on rents	Communal capital	Public loans	Total
1924	106 502	1100	83	383	466	270	145	219	634
1925	178 950	1550	237	281	518	460	285	287	1032
1926	205 793	2400	601	223	824	720	554	302	1576
1927	288 635	2750	1080	46	1126	850	447	327	1624
1928	309 762	3550	1500	520	2020	850	200	280	1330
1929	317 682	2850	1250	310	1560	850	180	260	1290
1930	310 971	2635	1335	250	1585	800	100	150	1050
1931	233 648	1350	650	200	850	300	100	100	500
1932	141 265	700	220	330	550	50	70-100	—	120-150
1933	200 000	800	150	450	600	—	—	—	200

appear in the last column relative to the chart of public capital were furnished by the Reich for suburban housing and for the protection of small family properties.

72. Rusconi, referring to the resignation of Hilferding, writes: "The government crisis had been avoided with the passage of the finances to a people's Germany, but the prestige of the Great Coalition was in pieces. The union review published in its first issue [*Gewerhaftszeitung* 1 (4 January 1930): 4] the balance sheet of the past year. If 1928 had finished with the 'revolt of the entrepreneurs against law and order,' 1929 closed with a balance sheet of expectation. The incontrovertable phase of economic depression had an unfavorable effect upon union action. Unemployment, particularly in the building sector, reached serious levels, also due to the effect of the restrictive credit policy imposed by Schacht. But the financial difficulties were

closely tied to the problems of foreign policy. The government's attitude of inaction on financial reforms until negotiations on reparations had been positively concluded, had forced it into a domestic policy that was totally advantageous to the line supported by capital. "What Silberberg is aiming at is the tyranny of capital over the State. But what his plan implies could impose itself only with a constitutional change, that is to say, a republic in which state power came not from the people but from money" (Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 278-79).

The unions' accusation that the financial circles wanted to impose a negative economic policy, blocking credit to the public sector, with Naphtali's demands on the issue, is published in *Gewerkschaftszeitung* 4 (25 January 1930).

73. Cited in Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 84-85.

74. Martin Wagner, "Sterbende Städte? Oder Planwirtschaftlicher Städtebau?" *Die neue Stadt* (1932): 50, 53.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 53 ff.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.
77. M. Wagner, "Mein Austritt aus der Spd," *Das Tagebuch* 14, fasc. 13 (1931): 568–70; fasc. 16, pp. 611–17.
78. See Ernst May, "Der Bau neuer Städte in der U.d.S.S.R.," *Das neue Frankfurt* 7 (1931): 117–34, and Hans Schmidt, *Contributi all'architettura, 1924–1964* (Milan, 1974), esp. pp. 86 ff.; original ed., *Beiträge zur Architektur* (Berlin, 1965).
79. Wagner, "Mein Austritt," p. 613.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 615. The italics are mine.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 616.
82. Wagner, "Sterbende Städte?"
83. Wagner, "Um die Zukunft des Deutschen Städtebaues." The article cites, first of all, the minister of labor, Rudolph Wissel, who, in the April issue of *Die Arbeit*, had expressed the fear of a bogging down of the *Sozialpolitik*, going on to attack the Brüning government, viewed as the restorer of a right to ownership of land even more backward than that of Germany under the Kaiser. Wagner, as the editorial note prefacing his article informs us, had already published the small volume *Das Reichsgericht als Scherbengericht gegen den Deutschen Städtebau*, concerning the verdict of the Supreme Court of the Reich on obligatory compensation for the expropriation of land.
84. M. Wagner, *Das Wachsende Haus: Ein Beitrag zur Lösung der Städtischen Wohnungsfrage* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1932). An interesting analysis of Martin Wagner's book can be found in Christian Borngräber's essay, "Les maisons grandissent, les villes meurent: Ecologie de construction de centres d'habitations dans l'Allemagne des années 1930 à 1933," in *Architectures en Allemagne 1900–1933* (Paris, 1979), pp. 68–78.
85. See Ursula Hüllbüsch, "Die deutschen Gewerkschaften in der Weltwirtschaftskrise," in *Die Staats- und Wirtschaftskrise des deutschen Reiches 1929–1933*, ed. W. Conze and H. Raupach (Stuttgart, 1967), p. 154; cited in Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, p. 288 n. 5
86. Wagner, *Das Wachsende Haus*, chap. "Neues Wohnen."
87. *Ibid.*, p. 23 (chap. "Haus und Garten"). In the same chapter Wagner cites Leberecht Migge's favorable opinion of his hypotheses of minimal housing and of the use of glass as an element of communion between home and nature.
88. See Bruno Taut, "Die Erde, eine Gute Wohnung," *Die Volkswohnung* (1919), 45–48.
89. See Wagner, *Das Wachsende Haus*, pp. 32 ff., on the calculation of the costs of urbanization and on their rationalization. Three years later, a "poor" technique based on "straw, air, and wood" as construction materials is called for, in the name of an economic electrification of the home, in G. Sandow's article, "Das Elektro-Haus," in *Deutsche Bauzeitung* (1925): 43–44, which Kempmann attributes to Martin Wagner, the author's husband.
90. Wagner, *Das Wachsende Haus*, p. 36.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
92. See Miller Lane, *Architecture*, pp. 165–66. The letter from Wagner to Lörcher, cited on p. 166 of Miller Lane's book, is dated 8 June 1934 (Gropius Archive, "Eigner Kampf mit Nazis").
93. See Gay, *Weimar Culture*.
94. See, among others, Siegfried Kraucauer, "Sozialistische Städte: Zu einen Vortrag von Ernst May," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 419 (8 June 1931); Wagner, "Sterbende Städte?"; idem, "Die Ussr baut Städte"; Bruno Taut, "Zum Problem der Zukunftstadt: Sowjetrusslands architektonische Situation," *Das neue Russland* 7, nos. 1–2 (1930): 11–13; idem, "Russlands architektonische Situation," *Moderne Bauformen* 29 (1930): 57–67. As an example of the attacks of the right-wing press on the work of Ernst May in the Soviet Union, we cite the article, "Baudirektor der Sowjet-Union, Generalissimus des russischen Wohnungswesens," *Frankfurter Nachrichten* 198 (19 July 1930), with its derisive verses and satirical car-

toons. May's motives for leaving Frankfurt on 30 September 1930, together with twenty-one collaborators, are found in his own article, "Warum Ich Frankfurt Verlasse," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 1 August 1930, p. 1.

95. M. Wagner, "Die Ussr baut Städte," *Das Tagebuch* 30 (25 July 1931).

96. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London: New Left Books, 1977); original ed., *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Berlin, 1928).

97. In 1932, Martin Wagner wrote, "There are three categories of pioneers committed to the salvation of humanity: the builders of the economy, the builders of life, and the builders of the cities. . . . The goal of all of them should be the harmonic realization of the forces for the creation of a new vital space; the means for achieving it should be planning and programming" (M. Wagner, "Städtebau als Wirtschaftsbau und Lebenbau," *Die neue Stadt*, fasc. 8 [1932]).

98. Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, p. 217. But on the evolution of Hilferding's thought and his reflections on the theses of the SPD, see chap. 9 of Rusconi's book, pp. 176 ff.

99. At the Heidelberg convention, Hilferding stated: "We live in a revolutionary time, because there is no greater tergiversator, no greater revolutionary, than capitalism itself and its necessary counterpart, the working class, which out of intrinsic necessity and by internal law, rises up against capital in order to bring about politically and socially that revolution which capital has only begun. . . . And so on the one side we use a determined *political* category, on the other a determined *social* category, which thus indicates the *de facto* reality, of a capitalist economy. The best way to eliminate this capitalist economy is to conquer the state power in the democratic republic" (*Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Spd—Parteitags Heidelberg 1925*, pp. 295–96). See Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 204–5.

100. *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des SPD—Parteitags Kiel 1927*, p. 168.

101. Rusconi, *La crisi di Weimar*, p. 221.

102. *Umbau der Wirtschaft: Die Forderungen der Gewerkschaften* (Berlin, 1932). The union document states: "In the present economic system there are already measures that must be taken for a planned economy. In particular, the unitary direction of the economy of the public sector must be assured. A central organ must be entrusted with the creation of a planned economy and of its direction. Working in close collaboration with the banking office, cartels, monopolies, and with the organs of the commercial monopoly and of public administration, it must supervise the activity of the single sectors and act so as to further their planned development." Rusconi, commenting on the *Umbau der Wirtschaft (La crisi di Weimar*, pp. 396–97), points out that "the basic weakness of the union proposal is the absence of effective tools with which to carry it out," observing further that in its reasoning, "unconsciously present . . . is the postulate that the State is an institution above everything," having primarily technocratic functions.

103. On this subject, see K. Junghanns, "Die Beziehungen zwischen deutschen und sowjetischen Architekten in den Jahren 1917 bis 1933," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt Universität zu Berlin* 9 (East Berlin, 1967): 369 ff.; Hans Schmidt, "Die Tätigkeit deutscher Architekten und Spezialisten des Bauwesens in der Sowjetunion in den Jahren 1930 bis 1937," *ibid.*, no. 3, pp. 383–99; Marco de Michelis and Ernesto Pasini, *La città sovietica 1925–1937* (Vienna, 1976) (fundamental); Konrad Püschel, "Die Tätigkeit der Gruppe Hannes Meyer in der Udssr in den Jahren 1930 bis 1937," in *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Hochschule für Architektur und Bauwesen Weimar* 5–6 (1976); Christian Borngräber, "Ausländische Architekten in der Udssr: Bruno Taut, die Brigaden Ernst May, Hannes Meyer und Hans Schmidt," in *Wem gehört die Welt: Kunst und Gesellschaft in der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 109–38; *idem*, "Hans Schmidt und Hannes Meyer in Moskau, Veränderung eines funktionalistischen Be-

wussteins," *Werk-Architektur* 23–24 (1978): 37–40.

Appendix: The Socialization of Building Activity

1. Wagner's text was originally published as *Die Sozialisierung der Baubetriebe* (Berlin, 1919).

8

"L'Architecture dans le boudoir"

1. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 382. original ed., *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Note, in any case, that the expression "mortal silence of the sign" is Nietzsche's.

2. See principally Kenneth Frampton, "Leicester University Engineering Laboratory," *Architectural Design* 34, no. 2 (1964): 61, and idem, "Information Bank," *Architectural Forum* 139, no. 4 (1968): 37–47; "Andrew Melville Hall, St. Andrew's University, Scotland," *Architectural Design* 40, no. 9 (1970): 460–62, and "Transformations in Style: The Work of James Stirling," *A & U* 50 (1975) 135–38; Mark Girouard, "Florey Building, Oxford," *The Architectural Review* 152, no. 909 (1972): 260–77, in which, in addition to the references that Frampton makes to the images of Sant'Elia, constructivism, Wright, Charreau, Brinckman, and van der Vlugt, a relationship is established between the contrived geometricism of Stirling and the Victorian unreality of Butterfield. See also Joseph Rykwert, "Un episodio inglese," *Domus* 415 (1964): 3 ff.; idem, "Stirling a Cambridge," *Domus* 491 (1969): 8–15; "Stirling in Scozia," *Domus* 491 (1970) 5–15; Charles Jencks, the chapter "James Stirling or Function Made Manifest," in *Modern Movements in Architecture* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973), pp. 260–70; Reyner Banham, "History Faculty, Cambridge," *The Architectural Review* 146, no. 861 (1968): 329 ff., which lists the poetics of Scheerbart among Stirling's sources; and idem, "Problem $\times 3 =$ Olivetti," *The Architectural Review* 155, no. 926 (1974): 197–

200; John Jacobus, introduction to *James Stirling, Buildings and Projects 1950–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). In his article, "Stirling 'Dimostrazioni,'" *Architectural Design* 38, no. 10 (1968): 454 ff., Alvin Boyarsky presents Stirling as a typical member of an "angry generation" that was quickly disillusioned, thus explaining his "apocalyptic" architectural structures, mixtures of "succulent memories." In his personal statements, Stirling avoids dealing with the question of his sources, constantly bringing the discussion back to the invention of the organism as a unitary structure; see Stirling, "An Architect's Approach to Architecture," *RIBA Journal* 72, no. 5, (May 1965): 231–40; also in *Zodiac* 16 (1967): 160–69; and idem, "Anti-Structure," *Zodiac* 18 (1968): 51–60. See also nn. 8 and 9 below.

3. This opinion is expressed, for example, by Frampton in "Andrew Melville Hall," pp. 460–62, and by Rykwert in "James Stirling, 4 progetti," *Domus* 516 (1972): pp. 1–20. On the residential complex built by Stirling in Runcorn, see Werner Seligman's article, "Runcorn: Historical Precedents and the Rational Design Process," *Oppositions* 7 (1976): 5–22, with a postscript by Anthony Vidler, p. 23.

4. Think, for example, of the Melnikov-like hall, fastened sideways to the pillars, and of the beams supported by the weight of the tower above, both in the Engineering Laboratory at the University of Leicester. But Rykwert has rightly observed that there is a structural dissonance in the Olivetti building in Surrey caused by the truncated metal trusses on brackets in the wedge-shaped foyer (see J. Rykwert, "Lo spazio policromo: Olivetti Training Centre, Haslemere, Surrey, 1968–1972," *Domus* 530 (1974): 37–44). On the Olivetti building at Haslemere, see also Charles Jencks, "Stirling's Olivetti Training Centre," *Archithese* 10 (1974): 41–46. Regarding the opening out of the wings of Stirling's building, Jencks writes: "A comparable feeling in music would be the suspensions and tensions of Stravinsky, in art the distortions of Francis Bacon."

5. Frampton, "Leicester University," p. 61. But see also William Curtis, "L'université, la ville et l'habitat collectif," *Archithese* 14 (1975): 32–34.
6. Frampton, "Andrew Melville Hall."
7. See Peter Eisenman, "From Golden Lane to Robin Hood Gardens: Or If You Follow the Yellow Brick Road, It May Not Lead to Golders Green," *Oppositions* 1 (1973) 28–56.
8. James Stirling, "Appunto per la Hornbostel Lecture alla Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, aprile 1974," in the catalogue *James Stirling* (exhibition at the Castel Nuovo, Naples, 18 April–4 May 1975) (Rome: Officina, 1976).
9. Stirling, however, contradicted himself when he stated at the Second International Iranian Architectural Congress (Persepoli-Shiraz, September 1974): "It seems essential to me that a building contain a whole series of forms, which the general public can *relate to, be familiar with, and identify with*. These forms will stem from staircases, windows, corridors, statues, entranceways, etc., and the entire building will be thought of as a composition of everyday elements which can be recognized by the average man and not only an architect" (see the catalogue *James Stirling*, pp. 28–29). This contradiction is not in itself significant, but rather shows how, for architects like Stirling, formal writing follows laws that cannot be verbalized or translated into other writings.
10. Peter Eisenman, "Real and English: The Destruction of the Box. I," *Oppositions* 4 (1974): 6–34.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–31.
13. On these projects, see *Lotus International* 15 (1977): 58 ff. See also David Stewart, "Three Projects by James Stirling," *A & U* 67 (1976): 55–56, with graphic and photographic documentation on pp. 22 ff. Stewart examines the Town Centre Housing of Runcorn New Town, as well as the projects for the new Gallery on Grabbeplatz in Düsseldorf, and for the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, finding in them echoes of Schinkel and of Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli.
14. See Cesare De Seta, "La storicità dialettica di Stirling," in *James Stirling*, pp. 22–24.
15. See, for example, Alan Johnson and Stephen N. Games, "Florey Building, Oxford" (Letters to the Editors), *The Architectural Review* 152, no. 910 (1972): 384–85.
16. Roland Barthes, *Critique et vérité*.
17. We shall consider Aldo Rossi here only as an architect, pointing out that his theoretical works are but "poetics" in the strictest sense. It is useless to contest a literary work of his: it has but one use, that of helping to understand the spiritual autobiography that the author inscribes within his formal compositions. The bibliography on Rossi suffers in general from partiality; we will thus cite only these texts: Ezio Bonfanti, "Elementi e costruzione: Note sull'architettura di Aldo Rossi," *Controspazio* 2, no. 10 (1970): 19 ff.; Massimo Scolari, "Avanguardia e nuova architettura," in (various authors) *Architettura razionale: XV Triennale di Milano, Sezione internazionale di architettura* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1973), pp. 153–87; the catalogue *Aldo Rossi, Bauten Projekte* (with Martin Steinmann's introduction "Architektur") of the exhibition held in Zurich in November–December 1973; Renato Nicolini, "Note su Aldo Rossi," *Controspazio* 4 (1974): 48–49; Vittorio Savi, *L'architettura di Aldo Rossi* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1976), with an ample bibliography; the special issue dedicated to Rossi by the Japanese magazine *A & U* 65 (1976): 55 ff.; and the catalogue *Aldo Rossi* (Florence: Centro Di, 1979).
18. Fossati writes of the "metaphysical" De Chirico using words that could also be applied to the architecture of Rossi: "The play of contradictions and suspensions of meaning from the network of common relationships by and of objects is not just an ordinary technical expedient: it is the expedient *par excellence*, the ritual, with its preparatory and evocative minute details, the epiphany as sublimation, its healing and miraculous effects. Sublima-

tion *par excellence*, the play hides the game, and each slowly and deliberately reveals the other, with painting as a thing in itself, as a counterpoint to the crisis between appearance and substance, and as an alternative as well. . . . The line having been severed between reality and its objects, the game is completed; faith in making, in knowing, in concealing, becomes an object more objective than the real objects at stake with which it should concern itself, a truth truer than actual exigencies and relationships, a thing in itself" (Paolo Fossati, *La pittura a programma: De Chirico metafisico* [Venice: Marsilio, 1973], pp. 24–25).

19. We are obviously referring to the noted passage by Walter Benjamin in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," which Frampton places at the beginning of his essay in *Oppositions* 1 (1973). And yet the theme of Klee's *Angelus Novus* is found throughout Benjamin's mature works: "The average European has not succeeded in uniting his life with technology, because he has clung to the fetish of creative existence. One must have followed Loos in his struggle with the dragon 'ornament,' heard the stellar Esperanto of Scheerbart's creations or have escorted Klee's New Angel, who preferred to free men by taking from them, rather than make them happy by giving to them, to understand a humanity that proves itself by destruction. . . . Like a creature sprung from the child and the cannibal his conqueror stands before him: not a new man; a monster, a new angel." Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," in *Reflections*, pp. 272–73; originally in *Frankfurter Zeitung* (10, 14, 17, and 18 March 1931), reprinted in *Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), pp. 159–95.

20. This can achieve notable poetic effects, as in the "magical" bursting through of a truncated cone into the grid, forcing it apart, at the City Hall in Muggiò in 1972. This project perhaps explains what Aldo Rossi means when he speaks of an "analogous city"—a kind of "magical realism," related to a conceptual experience, resonant with memories: "We can utilize the reference points of the existing

city, placing them on a vast, illuminated surface: and thereby let architecture participate, little by little, in the creation of new events."

21. Numbers 21–22 (1973) of the magazine *Parametro*, dedicated to the XV Triennale of Milan, and edited by Rossi, Franco Raggi, Massimo Scolari, Rosaldo Bonicalzi, Gianni Braghieri and Daniele Vitale, bears the title *La Triennale modello Starace* [Starace was a leading Fascist party official]; harsh criticism in the same vein appears in Glauco Greslieri's article, "Alla XV Triennale di Milano," on p. 6 of the same issue; in the letter sent by Giovanni Klaus König to the magazine *Architettura: cronache e storia* 19, no. 8 (1973): 456–67; and in Joseph Rykwert's article, "XV Triennale," *Domus* 530 (1974): 1–15. We cannot agree with these criticisms. There are far stronger reasons for criticism than those found in the above-mentioned articles: evidently no one has observed how objectively "reactionary" were the city-scale projects drawn up by obviously "nonacademic" architects for Rome and Venice. But to attack the Triennale to strike at Rossi—his "school" is something else again—is simply inadmissible. The enthusiasm of the historian has nothing to do with that of the sports fan. We have long ceased to wonder about whose body is buried in the cellar, or to hurl curses at a too-partial referee—even if our friend Rykwert, with a superficiality that oddly enough we do not find in his studies on nudist paradises, attributes to us ideas and preferences that we have never expressed. The point is another. If "fascism" is thought to mean dedicating oneself to the "scandalous" autonomy of art, then one should have the courage to break with sclerotic and ambiguous criteria of judgment, which directly influence the destiny of the Modern Movement. But once having agreed to descend to infantile criteria of judgment, is it really necessary to recall that it was Gropius who explained to Goebbels that modern architecture was the only kind capable of expressing the supremacy of the Germanic race? And why has it not occurred to anyone that if the mute symmetries of Rossi can be la-

beled "a la Starace," then the constructivist products of the Kennedy era—of Kallmann and Kevin Roche, for example—should be thought of as symbols of American democracy and of its "civil" colonization of Vietnam? Only by avoiding the use of such puerile parallels is it possible to make history. Personally, we feel obliged to advise Rossi not to teach architecture: not out of a hysterical and conformist desire to ostracize him, but rather to help him to be more consistent in his fascinating, albeit superfluous, silence. On the XV Triennale, see also the issue of *Controspazio* dedicated to it (no. 6, 1973), especially the estimable article in defense of the basic choices of the exhibit, by Renato Nicolini, "Per un nuovo realismo in architettura," pp. 12–15. From today's vantage point, however, we may thank the XV Triennale for having instigated the debate, and affording the occasion for international criticism to reveal its inhibitions and its naïveté. A prime example of this is Charles Jencks's article, "Irrational Rationalists: The Rats since 1960. Part 1," *A&U* 76 (1977): 110–13, with its simplistic concept of "rationality" and of the epistemological debate on the crisis of dialectic thought.

22. See György Lukács, "Georg Simmel," 1918, reprinted in (various authors) *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt Gassen (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1958), p. 173.

23. Karl Kraus, *In These Great Times* (Montreal: Engendra Press, 1976); "In dieser grossen Zeit . . ." was originally given as a speech on 19 November 1914. See Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," pp. 242–43.

24. See Adolf Loos, *Spoken Into the Void* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982); original ed., *Architektur*, 1910 (conference), reprinted in *Sämtliche Schriften, Adolf Loos*, vol. 1 (Vienna-Munich: Herold Verlag, 1962), pp. 302 ff. But Loos's position is anything but an isolated one; in a certain way it is linked to the teachings of Theodor Fischer and to the elementarism of his pupils, and even more so to the deeply felt purism of Heinrich Tessenow (see Heinrich Tessenow, *Hausbau und dergleichen*, [Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1920]; Italian trans., introduction by

Giorgio Grassi (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1974). On the other hand, the position of an artist like Georg Muche, in the midst of the Weimar Bauhaus, proves to be very close to that of Loos: see Georg Muche, Memorandum of 18 February 1922 to the college of professors of the Bauhaus, and "Bildende Kunst und Industrieform," *Bauhaus* 1, no. 1 (1926): 5–6; English trans., Wingler, ed., *The Bauhaus*, pp. 113–14. See also Franciscano, *Walter Gropius*; and, on the relationship among Loos, Kraus, and Wittgenstein, the volume *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein: With a Memory by Paul Engelmann* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), as well as Francesco Amendolagine and Massimo Cacciari, *Oikos: Da Loos a Wittgenstein* (Rome: Officina, 1975). Useful only as a documentary source is Bernhard Leitner, *The Architecture of Ludwig Wittgenstein* (New York: New York University Press, 1976).

25. We refer to Albert Janik and Serge Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), which, with disconcerting naïveté, connects Kraus's preservation of "values", once they are separated from the "facts", to the solipsism of the early Wittgenstein; and, conversely, to the too-hasty dismissal of Kraus on the part of Cacciari, in *Krisis* and in the article "La Vienna di Wittgenstein," *Nuova corrente* 72–73 (1977): 59 ff., but particularly in the passage "American Kraus," pp. 101–6. Benjamin's essay "Karl Kraus," on the other hand, seems to be a highly reflective text, in which the new "messengers of the old engravings" can find infinite material upon which to meditate.

26. The ultimate referent of this coexistence of real and imaginary spaces, which Rossi symbolizes by invoking a "world rigid and with few objects," is the *museum*. In *L'architettura di Aldo Rossi*, pp. 126–27, Savi writes: "For Rossi, the word museum conveys a carefully ordered arrangement, in which all the elements converge in a single direction. Rossi has not designed a project for a museum. . . . He has made numerous sketches on the subject and its installations for the XV Triennale. The basic scheme in the design

is the skeleton. A cutout dividing wall—already seen along the one side of the piazza of Segrate used as a quint, and in the axonometric drawing of the project, similar to a stele—is repeated along the entire wing of the palazzo of the Triennale. Even Zevi in *L'Espresso* noted that the cells divided by the walls were reminiscent of the cells of a convent. In fact, typologically, there is little difference between a convent and a museum. The only difference: Rossi places an opening in the center of the single wall, obtaining, by repetition, an effect of central perspective, Weinbrunner-like. The cross axis that intersects the partitions is analogous to the spinal cord. From one partition to the next, the exposition space is eaten up. The exhibitors cannot fill the exhibition structure. The result is disconcerting for everyone when it is realized that the iconographic model of the skeleton dominates the installations. Thus, if in the House of the Dead Rossi portrays architecture abandoned by life, here he shows architecture abandoned by things. Only the row of rooms of a deserted house gives the same sensation. Rossi feels that a true museum is a void and that therefore a museum symbolizes isolation, and that every time we think of a museum, in reality we are thinking of museification, that is, of a void, of squalor." Savi's observations can be compared with the two essays by Aldo Rossi, "Adolf Loos, 1870–1933," *Casabella continuità* 233 (1959): 5–12, and "Architettura per i musei," in (various authors) *Teoria della progettazione architettonica* (Bari: Dedalo, 1974), pp. 122–37. This comparison confirms how "Krausian" is the musing upon the void that Rossi proposes, and how far it is, by contrast, from Mies's "theater of absence," as we described it in chapter three of the present volume.

27. See Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); original ed., *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1973).

28. Carlo Michelstaedter, "Dialogo sulla salute," (1910) in *Opere* (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), p. 356.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 366. See Alberto Abruzzese,

"Da Trieste a Firenze: Lavoro e tradizione letteraria," in (various authors) *La classe dei colti* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), pp. 236 ff.

30. See Savi, *L'architettura di Aldo Rossi*, pp. 150–52.

31. Aldo Rossi, introduction to Hans Schmidt, *Contributi all'architettura: 1924–1964* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1974), p. 17; original ed., *Beiträge zur Architektur* (Berlin: Verlag für Bauwesen, 1965).

32. See Massimo Scolari, "Les apories de l'architecture," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 190 (1977): 82–93. Extremely unconvincing is the interpretation of Scolari's watercolors found in M. Gandelsonas, "Massimo Scolari: Paesaggi teorici," *Lotus International* 11 (1976): 57–63.

33. We are obviously referring here to the dispute between Breton and Bataille, the latter accusing Breton, in the name of the "spirit of the old mole" of "baseness" and "dirtiness," of gross and physical corporeity, of having an "Icarus complex," of wanting to fly to a lofty spot where the "full word," unsullied and pristine, flies toward a happy but nonexistent land, where "the words make love" in ecstatic moments far from the physicality of the real.

34. It is obvious that we mention these widely dissimilar experiments in the same breath merely for convenience's sake. More than a mere trend, today they are part of a vaguely defined "climate," examined in F. Dal Co and Mario Manieri-Elia, "La generation de l'incertitude," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 181 (1975): 48 ff.

35. Francesco Dal Co, "Architettura come forma sospesa," in Vittorio De Feo, *Il piacere dell'architettura* (Rome: Magma, 1976), pp. 13–17. A useful, if somewhat schematic, summing-up of the most recent tendencies in Italian architecture, can be found in the volume by Cina Conforto, Gabriele De Giorgi, Alessandra Muntoni, and Marcello Pazzagli, *Il dibattito architettonico in Italia 1943–1973* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1977), particularly pp. 177 ff. On Purini's projects, see Franco Purini, *Luogo e progetto* (Rome: Kappa, 1976); the catalogue of the exhibition of

his engravings published by the "Centro Di" (Florence, 1977); the article "Doppio tempo," *Controspazio* 9, nos. 4–5 (1977): 54–55; and the article by Paolo Melis, "Il 'timore' e il 'bisogno' dell'architettura," *ibid.*, pp. 61–63.

36. See M. Tafuri, "Les 'muses inquiétantes,' ou le destin d'une génération de 'Maîtres,'" *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 181 (1975): 14–33.

37. See the report concerning the project for the Zen Quarter in Palermo in *Controspazio* 3 (1971): 12–17: "This reduction to elementary clarity of the general structure of the design of the district is in marked contrast to the attempt . . . to complicate, stratify, and differentiate the image of the district itself, to actually create a historical depth, a Biblical story, an interior monologue . . . established by means of a critical reflection on its own condition of social utilization, of its distance from and immersion in the present model of culture and its contradictions" (*ibid.*, p. 12. The italics are mine). See also the article by Massimo Scolari, "Tre progetti di Vittorio Gregotti," *Controspazio* 3, no. 3 (1971): 2–6, in which he offers an early interpretation of Gregotti's "turnabout in his projects." The Zen Quarter is illustrated extensively in *Lotus International* 9 (1975): 6–27, and the designs for the University of Calabria appear in the same magazine in issue 11 (1976): 146–53, with a note by Pierluigi Cerri. There is a vast documentary bibliography on the works of Gregotti, but we know of no critical study on them worth mentioning. Observations of a general nature can be found in Oriol Bohigas, "Vittorio Gregotti," in *Once Arquitectos* (Barcelona: La Gaya Ciencia, 1976), pp. 67–82. See also M. Tafuri, "Le avventure dell'oggetto: Architetture e progetti di Vittorio Gregotti," in the catalogue of the traveling exhibition dedicated to the artist (Milan: Electa, 1982).

38. M. Gandelonas, "On Reading Architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 3 (1972): 68–87. On Graves's architecture, and particularly on the Gunwyn Office in Princeton (1971–72), see also Peter Carl's article, "Towards a Pluralist Architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 2

(1973): 82–89; on one of his most notable works, the Medical Office of Ear, Nose, and Throat Associates, in Fort Wayne, Indiana (1971), see C. Ray Smith, "Painterly Illusion and Architectural Reality," *Interiors* (September 1974). Finally, see the chapter "Michael Graves: l'immagine e il suo doppio," on pp. 20–22 of the essay by M. Tafuri, "Les Bijoux indiscrets," in the catalogue *Five Architects*, New York (Rome: Officina, 1976). We might point out, incidentally, that what Argan has sought to identify in the architecture of Louis Kahn is perhaps more applicable to this type of research:

"Today, the currents that are most strongly committed, most aware of the crisis, adopt a methodical, almost scientific, and in any event, critical, analysis of the structural components of the artistic 'phenomenon': in order to establish whether art can still 'phenomenize' itself, they try to discover why a surface is a surface, a volume a volume, a building a building, a painting a painting. Recognizing that art cannot be defined by its position and its function within the system, they ask whether it can be defined as a system unto itself, an autonomous structure" (Giulio Carlo Argan, "I due stadi della critica," in "Dove va l'arte," the special issue of *Ulisse* 13, no. 76 (1973): 14–26; citation on p. 25). On these topics, see also Filiberto Menna, *La linea analitica dell'arte moderna: Le figure e le icone* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975).

39. See Walter Segal, "The Neo-Purist School of Architecture," *Architectural Design* 42, no. 6 (1972): 344–45.

40. We refer here both to "Nuova Architettura," defined with a capital N and A, if not with valid arguments, in Nino Dardi's *Il gioco sapiente* (Padua: Marsilio, 1971), and to the "Nuova Tendenza" (note the persistence of the capitals), discussed by Scolari in "Avanguardia e nuova architettura." If the problem is to establish a continuity with the abstract tendencies of the period from 1920 to 1930, one ought to have the courage to speak not of something new, but rather of revival or survival; if the intent is to emphasize the importance given to linguistic considerations, greater care should be

taken in indicating what is included and what excluded.

41. Rudolf Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 53–54.

42. Jean Arp, *On My Way: Poetry and Essays 1912–1947* (New York: Wittenborn, 1948), p. 77. A perceptive analysis of Arp's poetics is found in L. Mancinelli, *Il messaggio razionale dell'avanguardia*, pp. 50–73.

43. See Bruno Zevi, *Il linguaggio moderno dell'architettura: Guida al codice anticlassico* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974).

44. See *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 169 (1973): 63–69.

45. Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," inaugural lecture at the College de France, 2 December 1970, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, p. 220.

46. On the views of the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, see the fundamental preface by Francesco Dal Co to the Italian edition of his writings, *Architettura e rivoluzione*, 2d ed. (Padua: Marsilio, 1973); for a contrasting opinion, however, see Massimo Scolari's "Hannes Meyer e la pretesa negazione dell'arte," *Controspazio* 1, no. 7 (1969): 58–59, in addition to the noted work by Claude Schnaidt. See also Hans Schmidt, *Beiträge zur Architektur*, and *Werk* 10 (1972), an issue devoted in part to the work of Schmidt.

47. Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," p. 220.

48. Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, pp. 51–59 (the chapter "Dolce Vita or the Supersensualists").

49. Among the many publications concerning the work of Arata Isozaki, perhaps the most complete and anthologylike is the issue dedicated to him of the Japanese magazine *SD (Space and Design)* 140 (1976), which contains articles by Hans Hollein, "Position and Move: The Architect as a Work of Art, or Mr. Isozaki Marries the Fresh Window," pp. 4–9; Kazuhiro Ishii, "A Guide to the World of Arata Isozaki," pp. 11–23; "28 of Isozaki's Works with Notes by the Architect

Himself," pp. 24 ff; and a "Chronological Review," pp. 179–88. See also the article by Kenneth Frampton, "The Japanese New Wave," in the catalogue *A New Wave of Japanese Architecture* (New York: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1978), pp. 2–13.

50. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Reflections*, p. 222. This essay of Benjamin's was cited by Paolo Portoghesi to refute our thesis concerning the loss of function of architectural ideologies (see Paolo Portoghesi, "Autopsia o vivisezione dell'architettura," *Controspazio* 1 [November 1969]: 5–7). Actually, here, too, Benjamin is ambiguous and open to diverse interpretations. But it would be misleading to consider, as Portoghesi does, only the more traditional aspects of the essay. On the subject of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, Benjamin writes: "This school made a great display of its poverty. It thereby shirked the most urgent task of the present-day writer: to recognize how poor he is and how poor he has to be in order to begin again from the beginning. . . . Nothing will be further from the author who has reflected deeply on the conditions of present-day production than to expect, or desire [new masterpieces in which to display the long-since-counterfeit wealth of creative personality]. His work will never be merely work on products but always, at the same time, on the means of production. In other words, *his products must have, over and above their character as works, an organizing function* (p. 233; the italics are mine). Benjamin himself points out that this organizational function goes beyond any propagandistic intention.

51. See Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," p. 238.

9

The Ashes of Jefferson

**Postscript*, 1986. These pages were written by a European observer between 1976 and 1978, and thus it will be obvious to the reader that they document a period of history, and do not reflect the present-day situation. Today, Battery Park is a reality, a temporary solution has been found for

the crisis of New York City, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the journal *Oppositions* no longer exist, and many important talents, such as Graves, have embraced insubstantial, albeit successful, formulas. Meanwhile, we are witnessing the process of the flight of the lower, middle, and upper-middle classes from Manhattan, a flight cynically formulized by Mayor Edward Koch. The social cost of what is termed "the return to the city" has been assessed by Peter Marcuse in his essay "Il futuro della città di New York: Un ritorno alla città? (Da parte di chi? Con quali conseguenze?)" [The future of New York City: a return to the city? by whom? and with what consequences?], in (various authors) *Roma, Parigi, New York: Quale urbanistica per la metropoli?* [Rome, Paris, New York: what kind of city planning for the metropolis?] (Rome-Reggio Calabria: Gangemi, 1986), pp. 36–46. Prominent architects are called upon to give favorable publicity to gigantic construction projects (such as the Westway Project of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown) or to the shameful manhandling of historical landmarks (the case of the Guggenheim Museum being exemplary). An accurate and timely critique of these phenomena can be found in Richard Plunz's article "Modelli e tipologie residenziali a New York: [Residential models and typologies], in *Roma, Parigi, New York*, pp. 225–35. For a detailed critique of the so-called Post Modernism, see Manfredo Tafuri's *Storia dell'architettura italiana, 1944–1986*, pp. 230–43.

1. See Nietzsche, *Aurora*, p. 296. See also on this topic Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, "Nietzsche: considerazioni attuali," *Nuova corrente* 68–69 (1975–76): 422–63.

2. "Thus that fundamental conviction, according to which, on the waves of society, we have a good crossing or we are shipwrecked much more for what *we are considered* than for what *we are*—a conviction that must be the rudder for every action executed in relation to society—is designated and stamped with the all-too-general word 'vanity'" (Nietzsche, *Hu-*

man, All Too Human, vol. 2, pp. 167–68 of the Italian ed.).

3. Pasqualotto, "Nietzsche," pp. 429–30. Note that the expression "vanity as the skin of the soul" is also Nietzsche's (*Hu-*
man, All Too Human, p. 62).

4. M. Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, p. 213. Continuing his discussion of the work of Venturi and Rauch, Vincent Scully traces a direct line between Louis Kahn and Venturi, comparing this relationship to that between Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Scully, too, feels that Venturi has carried out a destructive operation: "He has destroyed the precious subromantic myth of the 'invention,' to which the less imaginative among us have become so pathetically attached. . . . It is this sterile world of illusions that Venturi has rejected." The American critic, then, goes on to maintain that the symbolism of Venturi touches "the heart of the social and psychological structure of America." See Vincent Scully, *Venturi and Rauch*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Whitney Museum, New York, 1971, and "Zur Arbeit von Venturi & Rauch," in *Werk-Archithese* 7–8 (1977): 4–7. We admit, however, that Scully confuses us when, in part 3 of the above-cited article, he accuses European "Marxist" critics (*which ones?*) of attacking the work of Venturi and Denise Scott Brown for being opposed to the *International Style*, "considered the sole embodiment of socialist ideas." It would be interesting to know just what sources Scully had at his disposition to lead him to make such a statement. An intriguing, if debatable, interpretation of Venturi's work can be found in Stanislaus von Moos's article, "Zweierlei Realismus," *Werk-Archithese* 7–8 (1977): 58–62.

5. We refer, obviously, to Benedikt Livshits's *The One-and-a-Half-Eyed Archer* (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1977); original ed., *Polutoraglazyi strelets* (Leningrad: Izd-Vo Pisatelei, 1933), and to the famous film by Dziga Vertov.

6. See George Grosz, *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz* (New York: Dial Press, 1946).

7. Michel Foucault, English trans. in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, pp. 29–52, esp. p. 48; original ed., “Préface à la transgression,” *Critique* (August–September 1963).

8. The reader will understand why the article on the Five that we edited for the magazine *Oppositions* 5 (1976) was given the title “European Graffiti.”

9. See *Modern Architecture 1919–1939: Polemics, Books, Periodicals and Ephemera from the Collection of Peter D. Eisenmann*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Princeton University Library, February–April 1968, and R. J. Clark, “Library Notes,” in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 29, no. 3 (1968): 216–18.

10. The article by Romaldo Giurgola appeared in a number of *Architectural Forum* (May 1973): 56–57 in which five architects were asked to judge the Five. The other four articles, all violently polemic, in varying degrees, with regard to the group, are by Robert Stern (“Stompin’ at the Savoye,” pp. 46–48), Jacquelin Robertson (“Machines in the Garden,” pp. 49–53), Charles Moore (“In Similar States of Undress,” pp. 53–54), and Alan Greenberg (“The Lurking American Legacy,” pp. 54–55). Paul Goldberger answered them in his article, “Should anyone care about the ‘New York Five’? . . . or about their critics, the ‘Five on Five’?” *The Architectural Record* (February 1974): 113–16. See also the catalogue *Five Architects, New York*.

11. See Jacques Derrida, *The Archaeology of the Frivolous: Reading Condillac* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1980); original ed., “L’archéologie du frivole,” introduction to Étienne Condillac, *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* (Paris: Galilée, 1973).

12. On the building policy of the UDC, see Robert Jensen’s article, “Urban Housing,” *The Architectural Record* (April 1971): 115 ff., esp. pp. 124–31; in addition to Kenneth Frampton’s “U.D.C., Low Rise, High Density Housing Prototype,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 186 (1976): 15–19; and Marie-Christine Gagneux’s “Derrière le miroir,” on pp. 2–3 of the same number. The causes of the eco-

omic crisis in New York and its effect on the building sector in particular are analyzed in Brian Brace Taylor’s article, “Self-Service Skyline,” *ibid.*, pp. 42–46, in which he examines the consequences of the policy of reconcentration for special districts announced by the Urban Design Group. See as well the article by Diana Agrest and Alessandra Latour, “Svillupo urbano e forma della città a New York: Note critiche sul Concorso per Roosevelt Island,” *Controspazio* 7, no. 4 (1975): 4–7.

13. Perhaps the most complete exposition of the basic principles of this poetics is to be found in Charles W. Moore’s article, “Autoportrait: Moore vs Moore,” *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui* 184 (1976): 2–4. Moore writes: “Principle one. That buildings can and should speak. . . . Principle two. They must therefore have freedom of speech. . . . Principle three. That buildings must be inhabitable by the minds and bodies of human beings. . . . Principle four. That the physical spaces which lie in and around buildings should be based not on a set of abstractions like Cartesian coordinators, but on the human body, on our own sense—everybody’s sense—of what’s what. . . . And the fifth, last principle, is that the psychic spaces and the shapes of buildings should assist the human memory in restructuring connections through space” (*ibid.*, p. 2). Moore’s words reveal a complete return to neorealism, which is further seen in his works and in his writings, and which constantly collides with the limits of what is “utterable,” with, as Diana Agrest has pointed out, a tension toward the aggregation of signifying chains made up of fragments referring to codes derived from sources both oneiric and cultural (see Diana Agrest, “Portrait d’un artiste: Form Diggers,” *ibid.*, pp. 54–57). This *inclusivism*, this obsession with the “narrative” in any case, might it not be a kind of armor common to many American architects of the 1970s, called upon to play a defensive role in the face of the unsettling discovery that the narrative is dragged along by words “which are uttered” without mediations with respect to the *fabula*? Is not Moore’s “realism” simply a kind of

inverted formalism, and thus all the more insidious? Was not all that already tried out in Italy by Mario Ridolfi, and without the affectations of the blasé and unsatisfied sophisticate? It is not "broad avenues" that are opened up by such neohumanistic utopias, but rather narrow paths lined with small artificial saplings, ready to collapse when confronted by those who mistake them for something to lean on.

14. Rodolfo Machado, "L'architecture manquée," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 186 (1976): 79.

15. Mario Gandelsonas, "Un édifice comme classificateur du corps humain," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 186 (1976): 77. See as well D. Agrest and M. Gandelsonas, "Architecture Architecture," *ibid.*

16. On the work of Richard Meier, finally isolated and rendered independent of the Five, see the volume *Richard Meier, Architect: Buildings and Projects 1966–1976*, with introduction by Kenneth Frampton and postscript by John Hejduk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). See Francesco Dal Co's review of this work in *Casabella* 430 (1977): 61–62. For interesting comments written prior to the above-cited texts, see Joseph Rykwert, "The Very Personal Work of Richard Meier and Associates," *Architectural Forum* (March 1972): 30–36; Charles Hoyt, "Richard Meier: Public Space and Private Space," *Architectural Record* (July 1973): 89–98; Silvio Cassarà, "Richard Meier: Intrinseche qualità delle rimembranze," *Parametro* 48 (1976): 16–18, 59.

17. See Colin Rowe's introduction to the volume *Five Architects* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972), and Alberto Cuomo, "La morte dell'artistico," *NAC* 12 (1974): 18–20.

18. See Richard Pommer, "The New Architectural Suprematists," *Artforum* (October 1976), and Fulvio Irace, "Le ricerche di architettura più attuali ed insolite," *Op. cit.* 28 (1977): 5–44.

19. "The diagrams for House VI are symbiotic with its reality; the house is not an object in the traditional sense—that is, the end result of a process—but

more accurately a record of a process. The house, like the set of diagrammed transformations on which the design is based, is a series of film stills compressed in time and space. Thus, the process itself becomes an object; but not an object as an aesthetic experience or as a series of iconic meanings. Rather, it becomes an exploration into the range of potential manipulations latent in the name of architecture, unavailable to our consciousness because they are obscured by cultural preconceptions.

In such a process the architect becomes detached from the object. He is no longer the originating agent, but merely acts discursively to excavate and interpret this latent nature" (Peter Eisenman, "House VI," *Progressive Architecture* 6 (1977): 59). In the same number see also the articles by William Gass (pp. 60–64) and Robert Gutmann (pp. 65–67). Often, however, Eisenman's architectural theorems betray the programmatic intentions of their author: an "involuntary semantics" secretly takes possession of the "speaking" nucleus of the controlled manipulations of his formal material. It may be useful to compare the concrete results of *House VI* with Eisenman's article, "Post-Functionalism," *Oppositions* 6 (1976).

20. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, pp. 29–31.

21. See "Rire pour ne pas pleurer: Interview avec Robert Venturi et Denise Scott Brown," *Archithese* 13 (1975): 27–32.

But see also the important theoretical stand taken by Denise Scott Brown, "On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern: A Discourse for Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects," *Oppositions* 5 (1976): 100–12. It may be useful to compare this article with Robert Stern's "Gray Architecture: Quelques variations post-modernistes autour de l'orthodoxie," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 186 (1976): 83. It is at any rate important to keep in mind one of the latest theoretical statements of Venturi, who, going back to the themes of *Learning from Las Vegas*, reaffirms his definition of architecture as "shelter with symbols on it." In fact, considering his latest works—the Brant-

Johnson House in Colorado (1976–77), the Tucker House in New York (1975), the Penn State University Faculty Club (1976), the Dixwell Fire Station in Connecticut (1974), and the noteworthy Marlborough-Blenheim Casino-Hotel project in Atlantic City (1977)—the thread of coherence running through Venturi's poetic seems extremely significant: the slogan "Scarlatti and the Beatles" resounds throughout these works as an appeal not wholly consonant with Denise Scott Brown's "Rire pour ne pas pleurer." See Robert Venturi, "A Definition of Architecture as Shelter with Decoration on It, and Another Plea for a Symbolism of the Ordinary in Architecture," *A&U* 87 (1978): 3–14 (the documentation of the works cited can be found on pp. 21 ff.). See also the comment of Shinichiro Kikuchi, "Symbolism Reversed by Negative Interpretation," *A & U* 87 (1978): 16–20, in which he sees Venturi's architecture as a continuation of the tradition of the "spirit of Philadelphia" expressed by Frank Furness, George Howe, and Louis Kahn: a tradition defined as "perverse, distorted and solecistic." Regarding the latest tendencies of American architecture, however, it may be useful to reflect upon comments made by Harold Rosenberg some years ago: "Art movements in America challenge each other on dogmatic grounds, with a challenge to the death and with a poverty of sensibility that is often appalling. . . . Americans tend to substitute recipes for the fluctuations of thought and Proust's 'intermittences of the heart.' Geldzahler's stars of the sixties [displayed at the exhibition of "New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940–1970" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art]—Louis Kelly, Noland, Olitski, Stella—are all recipe painters" (Harold Rosenberg, *The De-definition of Art: Action Art to Pop to Earthworks* [New York: Horizon Press, 1972], p. 197). "The Oklahoma Nature Theatre," Rosenberg ultimately concludes, "is a vision of America as a place where anyone can begin again with himself as he is. There, art imposes no forms on life. In the Nature Theatre each must create his own part and his style of performing it. The Nature Theatre is the democratic alternative

to the New Order—Marcuse's and anyone else's. The future of art in America has become perfectly clear. 'Everyone is welcome! Set out for Clayton!'" (p. 250). In this passage Rosenberg is obviously referring to the poster read at a streetcorner by Karl Rossman, the hero of Kafka's *Amerika*.

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