

ON THE ART OF SPACING



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Contrary to what the title suggests, Kojin Karatani's *Architecture as Metaphor* is not 'directed toward architects and has but little relevance to architecture in a narrow sense' (p.xlv). The 'architecture' of Karatani is - Arata Isozaki confers in the introduction - 'irrelevant to the building-as-concrete-edifice that concerns architects' (p.vii). However, in addition to being forwarded by a Japanese architect, the translation of the text has had the support of a well known American architect and others associated with the field of architecture. Also, architecture as metaphor plays, as the title suggests, a pivotal role in the text. It is called on time and again in support of the text's central thesis. Nevertheless, the architecture that Karatani calls on to lend support to the text has an illusive presence in it. It is perpetually referenced in absence.

Karatani's genial distance from architecture, despite its pivotal role in the text, coupled with the unmitigated embrace of individuals for whom the text is admittedly not intended, form a riddle at the outset of the making of architecture as metaphor.

It is not 'architecture with a capital A' that interest Karatani as a metaphor. Rather, he is interested in using 'the most pedestrian understanding of architecture as a metaphor' to 'deconstruct the self-sufficient formal system based on architecture as a metaphor' (p.xl). Architecture in its metaphoric dimension is, Karatani believes, a potent critical tool. With it he proposes to dismantle a formal philosophical system whose roots he traces back to Plato. This may expeditiously and perhaps too easily explain the text's appeal to individuals within the field of architecture. In the aftermath of a serious external challenge to architecture's theoretical foundation from the post-structuralist discourse, Karatani's critical recourse to architecture as metaphor promises to reverse the tide of influence by putting architecture to the task of removing the ground from under a formalist edifice in philosophy. However, the actual task of deconstructing the self-sufficient formal system based on architecture as metaphor is delegated in the text not to architecture but to other metaphors, i.e., 'language, number, money.'

Through a chain of metaphors that extends from architecture to credit, the theme that persists in Karatani's text is 'exchange or communication

with the other.’ There is an inherent crisis, Karatani contends, in every ‘exchange or communication with the other,’ inasmuch as this exchange or communication entails an ‘asymmetrical relationship’ that ‘cannot be sublated’ (p.182). This is evident in the teacher/student or the seller/buyer relationship as pointed out by Wittgenstein and Marx respectively. The ‘subordinate’ and contingent positions of the teacher and the seller on acquisition by the other point out a ‘fundamental precondition for communication’ (p.116). Exchange in its various forms takes place not between sovereign subjects or fixed and equal entities, but dependent subjects and contingent entities. Exchange requires, in Marx’s term, a ‘fatal leap.’ It is possible only through surrender to contingency and external measure against a ‘relative’ other as the ‘equivalent form’ in an asymmetrical equation (p.163). The asymmetrical relationship between the ‘equivalent form of value’ and the ‘relative form’ on two sides of the equation in each ‘exchange or communication with the other’ presents an inevitable crisis to any formal system seeking to ground itself in autonomy as opposed to contingency, self-sufficiency as opposed to dependency, or ‘making’ as Karatani opposes it to ‘becoming.’

Karatani swiftly divides Western thought into two distinct streams with respect to individual stances on the crisis of exchange with the other. The dominant stream, which tries to ‘overcome the crisis and maintain its ground by erasing the asymmetry,’ takes recurrent recourse, following Plato’s example, to architecture as metaphor. In the metaphor of architecture, Karatani contends, ‘Plato discovered a figure that under the aegis of “making” is able to withstand “becoming”’ (p.5). Ever since Plato’s discovery, the will to architecture, ‘understood as the will to construct an edifice of knowledge on a solid foundation’ (p.xxxii) has pervaded Western thought. It is ‘renewed with every crisis’ (p.18) in order ‘to resist or withstand all “becomings” by reconstructing them as “makings”’ (p.xxxi). This will is, Karatani tells us, ‘nothing but an irrational choice to establish order and structure within a chaotic and manifold becoming, a will that is only one choice among many’ (p.18).

To the tradition that by a persistent will to architecture insists on realizing the ‘impossible,’ i.e., the ‘being of the ideal,’ (p.xxxv) Karatani proposes an alternative. This other is, however, no less driven to

architecture as a cogent metaphor than the first. Convinced as Karatani is that it is only through 'persistent formalization or construction' that formalism 'would reveal its own ungroundedness and thus reveal its own becoming,' he asks us to push formalization past structure to event and see in architecture as metaphor, not a well grounded edifice, but an asymmetrical and contingent relationship with the 'other,' i.e., the relationship between the architect and the client, the staff, and others involved in the design process. Karatani asks us to see architecture - at the clear risk of mixing metaphors - not as a product, but as a process or 'a form of communication.' This is assuming that 'the dialogue with and the persuasion of the client and the collaboration with other staff members' are by far the 'more dominant factors' in the design process.

Communication with the client is, Karatani speculates, 'conditioned to occur without common rules because it takes place with the other, who does not follow a commensurable set of rules (the client)' (p.127). The entire process is similar to, in Wittgenstein's term, 'a game "where we play and - make up rules as we go along"' (p.127). Architecture is, in other words, an 'event par excellence in the sense that it is a making or a becoming that exceeds the maker's control' (p.xxxix). It is also a cogent and privileged metaphor for Karatani because 'contingency insures that no architect is able to determine a design free from relationship with the other.' This other architecture Karatani terms 'secular architecture' after Edward Said's 'secular criticism.'

Karatani pursues architecture as metaphor no further. Assuming that 'if one wants to discard architecture as metaphor, one can simply substitute secular architecture as metaphor' (p.127), he turns his attention to practices that fulfill this premise by abandoning the 'will to construct an edifice of knowledge on a solid foundation' in favor of a practice that 'reveals its own ungroundedness and thus reveals its own becoming.' He focuses in particular on Wittgenstein's reflections on Language, Godel's on Mathematics, and Marx's on Money, and meticulously outlines how each criticism exposes a suppressed contingent and asymmetrical relationship with the 'other.' Through these and related readings, Karatani demonstrates how - the formalist suppression of 'the otherness of the other' notwithstanding - every system of exchange, inclusive of every

system of representation, is a form of 'becoming' founded on contingency.

If, as Karatani contends, 'making' is 'nothing but an irrational choice to establish order and structure within a chaotic and manifold becoming' (p.18), we may readily wonder about making's formidable perseverance in the face of a perpetual crisis in its unavoidable and constant confrontation with the 'otherness of the other.' What makes the systematic and prolonged suppression of 'becoming' possible? The suppression clearly involves more than a metaphoric recourse to architecture, as much as discarding it is likely to require more than the substitution of 'secular architecture as metaphor.' Architecture may indeed be a convenient excuse or metaphor for 'making,' but as metaphor it is not an entirely effective tool for the suppression of the otherness of the other.

Karatani's reading of Marx on credit in the last chapter illustrates how the metaphor of 'making' is augmented by a host of other tools and technologies that allow us to avoid the crisis immanent in exchange or communication with the other. Credit, Karatani recounts, permits us to circumvent 'the crisis inherent in the selling position,' by 'an incessant deferment of the settlement to the indefinite future' (p.179). Credit is, however, only one mechanism of suppression among a host of intricate and multifaceted tools and technologies. Among these, architecture outside its metaphoric dimension is a powerful and persuasive tool. Whereas credit provides a temporal solution to the crisis of exchange, architecture is always poised to provide a powerful spatial solution to the crisis in the wider context.

Space, of which architecture is a vehicle of articulation, is intimately implicated in the constitution of the other as such. To begin with, the conception of the otherness of the other is closely linked to the question of its place and placement outside. The other is conceptualized by distance. It is, by definition, spatially distanced. Conversely, spacing can fabricate alterity, and one can never be certain whether alterity is the prior term or a function of spacing. To space is, in a manner, to sublimate contingency, since contingency is, in effect, a distortion of space and a collapse of distance. The other whose place is clearly marked on the outside is always already a sublated or absolute other.

The subversive role of space vis a vis contingency is acutely exemplified by Karatani's rigorous though problematic distinction between communal and social space. Community is, Karatani argues, the place of 'making.' It is 'a space enclosed within a certain system of rules, irrespective of its actual scale' (p.144). This 'monologic' space is exclusive of the relative or contingent other. Karatani locates contingency and the relative other in the 'social' or 'intercrossing space.' The game 'where we play and - make up rules as we go along' (p.127) is given to be played out in this other 'dialogic' space. This 'invisible entity' is constituted outside community and in-between communities. It is the space of 'dialogue' as distinct from communal 'monologue.' It is, among others, the place of commerce: the 'market place.'

Karatani insists on communal and social spaces having to be 'unequivocally distinguished,' in part, to underscore his unequivocal distinction between making and becoming by adding a vital and persuasive spatial dimension to it. The exchange of the conceptual difference between making and becoming with the spatial difference between communal and social space is, however, as problematic as it is persuasive. In this commerce with space, Karatani is in the subservient selling position. Space, as the 'equivalent form' of difference, does not merely facilitate distinction. Like money, it imposes its logic to the point of subversion. The social space that shelters becoming, also sublates it. It imposes a conceptual distance that Karatani is not able to overcome, so long as he conceives of the difference between making and becoming in spatial terms, i.e., an inner communal space and an outer social space. The introduction of social space localizes the crisis of exchange outside the place of making. This is precisely where making has traditionally localized becoming. The crisis of exchange with the other has traditionally found its resolution in the delegation of exchange to an other space, e.g., 'the market place.' This is to say that the becoming we are to find or locate in the social space is always already a sublated or absolute other because of its unequivocally distinct place outside. Contingency has, in a manner, no place. It fits into no one place. Its appearance points to the failure of spacing. The crisis of exchange is a crisis of space. It is the loss of critical distances and boundaries meant to keep the otherness of the other at bay.

To assign a place to the contingency that defies spacing and separation, is tantamount to an exorcise and a sublation by exile. The subversive impact of spacing on becoming in turn marks the parameters of what is troubling and problematic in Karatani's disinterest in architecture on the one hand, and his use of secular architecture as metaphor, on the other.

Compelling and cogent as the main trust of Karatani's argument is, his acknowledged disinterest in addressing architecture except metaphorically and through other practices allows him to construct an ideal and to an extent heroic image of architecture that is not only delusive, but one that gives architecture the chance to unravel much of what Karatani hopes to accomplish. Karatani allows himself to reconstruct architecture as a critical practice metaphorically by keeping architecture outside and at a distance from the text. In the process, he unwillingly exonerates architecture of its forceful participation in the sublation of the 'other.' The greatest appeal of Karatani's text to architects may be his portrayal of architecture as a practice that is open to contingency and dialogue with the other. As the practice on which other practices are to be modeled, architecture is absolved of any rigorous critical self-evaluation, including its participation in the sublation of the other. As a metaphor of becoming, its practices assume an aura of critical infallibility with respect to the other. This portrait is appealing because it masks a contrary practice. This contrary practice succeeds only when it is masked.

The dialogue between the architect and the client, the architect and the staff, the architect and the critic, the architect and the theoretician, and all the others involved in the process of architectural production are not dialogues, but monologues in the sense that Karatani defines these terms. Far from opening the process of design to contingency, these dialogues constitute so many checkpoints that serve to overcome contingency and potential slippage in the design and production processes. This particular game is played according to specific rules and strict guidelines. The dialogue is meant to ensure that the intended building adheres to established cultural patterns and assumes appropriate cultural form. In the cultural sublation of the 'other,' architecture has not been merely a metaphor, but a forceful participant.

In the remainder of this work, I will try to illustrate how the relationship that is to serve as metaphor for 'secular criticism' acts to undermine its agenda and suppress the crisis of exchange or communication with the other. My intent is not to argue that in the cause of becoming Karatani's metaphoric appropriation of architecture is flawed. Rather, reflecting on architecture as metaphor and from a distance, shields it from critical scrutiny. Behind every metaphoric reconstruction, architecture is afforded greater reign in the domestication of the other.

Architecture is, from a certain vantage point, an impossible practice. Faced with multiple possibilities, the architect has no ground for the delimitation of his or her formal options to the ultimate one. There is no one lead to follow. The functions of an edifice suggest no one form and much less a direction. They are, in deference to biological needs, nebulous and multi-directional. Function assumes a trajectory on the other hand and becomes highly prescriptive, when it is appropriated by culture and transformed into a ritual. The latter, though by no means singular, is distinct and unidirectional. It has unique spatial requirements and demands a specific setting. Sleeping for instance suggest little by way of an appropriate setting. Appropriated, however, as an instrument for the communication and enforcement of, for instance, a culture's sexual mores and taboos, and transformed into a ritual, it becomes highly prescriptive architecturally. A case in point is the single family house with its hierarchy of master and individual bedrooms. The dialogue between and the details of these delimited and controlled domains or rooms form, among others, a comprehensive essay on proper sexual norms. Without such essays, design is a virtual impossibility. Architecture is not, in other words, like a 'game where we play and - make up rules as we go along' (p.127). Rather, as the point of departure, it has to be played according to rules established external and prior to the game. What makes Architecture possible as a practice, is its external and instrumental appropriation by a culture.

The cultural motivation for the instrumental appropriation of architecture is vividly, though tangentially described by Clifford Geertz (1973) in his description of religion as a 'cultural system.' Sacred symbols function, Geertz notes:

...To synthesize a people's ethos - the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood - and their world view - the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practices a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life. (Geertz 1973: 89-90)

Although Geertz's description does not pertain to architecture, we can readily read into his account a compelling description of the role of ecclesiastical buildings as 'sacred symbols' and by extension, the role of architecture as another 'cultural system.' We can read the evidence of 'confrontation and mutual confirmation' between the dominant world view and ethos of, for instance, the Gothic, the Renaissance, or the Baroque period, respectively, in the translucent world of a Gothic Cathedral, the proportional harmonies of a Renaissance Chapel, or the unfolding, infinite universe of a Baroque Church. In each instance, it is possible to detail how the specifics of individual designs objectivized 'moral and aesthetic preferences by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure, as mere common sense given the unalterable shape of reality,' and how the experience of each building served to support 'received beliefs about the world's body by invoking deeply felt moral and aesthetic sentiments as experiential evidence for their truth' (Ibid.: 90).

In this and similar historical readings, we have the advantage of temporal distance and a markedly different world view. Both permit us to assume the probing role of the 'mythologist,' as Roland Barthes (1972: 128) described it years ago. Focusing, as we may, on the 'distortion,' or the mechanics of universalizing the particular, it is not likely that we will experience the culture under study assume the guise of inevitability through the agency of its architecture. We will not experience the confrontation and mutual confirmation of the world view and ethos that ecclesiastical edifices were erected to affect. Such a confirmation, when and if it occurs, goes for the

most part unnoted. An edifice plays its cultural role effectively, when we do not see in it the passage of culture into objectivity. It succeeds when we do not take note of the edifice as an ideological construct, or the explicit embodiment of a metaphysic. It succeeds when we take its peculiarities either for granted, or else attribute them to pragmatic concerns, and proceed as though the latter were immune to ideological conditioning. This is to say, that those aspects of an edifice that appear to be the most objective, i.e., impervious to ideological and metaphysical conditioning, are often the parts more thoroughly conditioned by such considerations, and at that the most successful from culture's perspective.

Although it is not with great difficulty or much resistance that we may trace the 'confrontation and mutual confirmation' of a culture's world view and ethos in the design and experience of its ecclesiastical architecture, past or present, the same does not hold for secular buildings. The latter are far more resistive to such explorations, particularly the closer they are to us in cultural space and time. The more immediately familiar the building-type, the greater is the likelihood of its appearing as no more than a pragmatic response to very real, practical needs and requirements. The library as a secular building-type does not readily appear to be much more than a response to the need for storage and dissemination of books, the school to the education of the novice, or the museum to the preservation and public presentation of art, etc. It is not evident how the design and the experience of these buildings could lend themselves to a confrontation and mutual confirmation of a culture's world view and ethos or to what specific cultural variables they tactfully give the guise of the objectively inevitable.

If our secular institutional buildings do not appear as patent ideological constructs, this is not, of course, for want of participation in the construction and objectification of culture. Michel Foucault, in his study of prisons, schools, and hospitals, outlined the modalities of this participation long ago. If, however, the link between the formal and spatial properties of secular institutional buildings and a particular view of the world, or a pervasive metaphysic is rarely, if ever, explicit, this may well be because these buildings manage all too well in formulating 'a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often,

implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other' (Geertz 1972: 90). Their opacity silently betrays their success.

The virtual or cultural reality that architecture helps fabricate is both powerful and persuasive. It is also a fragile and volatile representation. Its greatest challenge does not come, however, from other world views or competing realities. Although these challenges can affect profound changes in the world view and ethos of a culture, they only amplify the call for Architecture, among other tools and technologies, to forge a new synthesis and constitute a new reality, where our assumptions about the world, changed as they may be, are again transposed into our experience of it. The reality that a culture forges can successfully undergo radical change, so long as all traces of fabrication can be perpetually erased from it. The greatest challenge that this reality faces is not, in other words, to its shape or content, but to its authority and its ability to assume the guise of inevitability. The challenge where it is faced is to the reality of the real. Construed as it is in the West to appear as the non-contingent other of representation, the virtual or cultural reality that architecture helps fabricate faces a constant challenge to its authority as a self-referential or nonrepresentational inevitability from its contingent representational other. This making, in Karatani's terms, faces an inherent crisis in every confrontation with its non-self-referential or 'relative other.' The intermingling of reality and representation in the West, is a fatal affair. John Ruskin's experience on the steps of the British Museum is a tangential, though pertinent case in point.

Discussing the 'utterly base and inadmissible' practice of 'painting of surfaces to represent some other material,' Ruskin (1849: 51) writes:

I have made it a rule in the present work not to blame specifically; but I may, perhaps, be permitted, while I express my sincere admiration of the very noble entrance and general architecture of the British Museum, to express also my regret that the noble granite foundation of the staircase should be mocked at its landing by an imitation, the more blameable because tolerably successful. The only effect of it is to cast suspicion upon the true stones below, and upon

every bit of granite afterwards encountered (Ibid.)

What forces Ruskin to voice a blame is the undemarcated presence of the real and the copy, or the self-referential and the representational in the same space. He directs his blame at the imitative representation not for being a bad representation, but for being 'tolerably successful.' He condemns it not because it deceives or hides anything from him, but because it reveals too much of itself and in effect too much about its other. The successful mock loosens Ruskin's grip on the reality of the real. It casts suspicion on the authenticity of the original. What distinguishes for Ruskin the reality of the real from its mere representation is an original and causal link between the appearance and the substance of the real, e.g., between, as he puts it, 'glitter' and 'gold.' What Ruskin loses in the company of the mock is this link. What he loses is the presumed dependence in 'real presence' of appearance on being.

If the 'real' stone could become suspect in the company of its mock, if its stone appearance could be taken for an imitation in this company, then this appearance must necessarily have nothing to do with the 'real presence' of stone or else suspicion as much as imitation would not be possible. What the 'effect' of the successful mock indicates, what in effect is the condition of its possibility and at that the possibility of repetition, imitation, or representation, is the independence of representation from the presence or absence of the signified referent in 'reality' as it is in representation. What it indicates is that 'real presence' is itself a representation, that only as a representation can 'real presence' ever be subject to suspicion. Reality offers no greater hold on its appearance and no greater link to its substance than the mock. The company of the mock turns the 'absolute other,' in Karatani's terms, into the 'relative other' that it has always been.

Considering that it is the cohabitation of the real and the mock and not the individual appearance of either that loosens our grip over appearance, Ruskin suggests that we take recourse to the art of spacing to regain control. He recommends that we contain the 'effect' of the mock by framing and separating it from the real. The framing can be either conceptual or literal. What is imperative, Ruskin tells us, is to either

conceptually distance the copy by making its appearance fall noticeably short of the real and as such inexchangeable with it or else to literally distance the copy by framing it.

In the Campo Santo at Pisa, Ruskin writes, 'each fresco is surrounded with a border composed of flat colored patterns of great elegance - no part of it in attempted relief.' Having 'secured' the 'certainty of flat surface' with a border, the framed 'figures,' Ruskin tells us, 'though the size of life, do not deceive' (Ibid.: 49). Segregated, and placed within a secured domain, representation ceases to 'effect' our hold on the appearance of the real and the mock as two diametrically opposed appearances. In fact, the spacing, literal or conceptual, constitutes our only hold over these appearances.

Ruskin's recommended spacing is not, of course, unique. It follows a widespread and time-honored practice. Our encounters with representation in the wider cultural realm are left no more to chance than they are at Campo Santo in Pisa. These encounters are equally mediated, carefully controlled, and spatially segregated. We find the logic of spacing and a multi-layered demarcation of the place of representation not only in the picture frames and book covers that mediate our experience and condition our access to their representational content, but of greater supplemental force in institutional building-types that serve as exclusive domiciles to various forms of representation, e.g., libraries, museums, theaters, and cinemas.

The specifics of the design and the particular experience of these building-types, from inception and through every stage of their permutation, play a vital role in rendering the modalities of our assumptions about the nature of the relationship between reality and representation into an objective experience of it. As vital cultural mechanisms, these building-types see to the proper dispensation and consumption of representation in a world of their own making where the reality outside as self-presentation retains its privileges and remains impervious to the challenge of representation, in no small measure because of these spatial constructs. A case in point is the library whose processional organization and spatial characteristics have remained, despite various manifestations and numerous stylistic

discontinuities, essentially the same through time. This similarity stems, in part, from a common aim or logic that is perhaps best summed up by Michael Brawne (1970) in 'Libraries: Architecture and Equipment.'

Brawne tells us that the purpose of the library is not only to afford shelter and protection to books, but also 'to aid the communication between the book and its reader.' To this end, Brawne contends, it is necessary to manipulate 'the furniture, enclosure, space, light, and outlook,' to create 'an individual and particular space delineated and in some measure separated from the greater space beyond' (Brawne 1970: 9). A successful library, he tells us, allows the reader to make not only 'a place for himself,' but at the same time 'detach himself,' from the world outside. Crucial to this placement are a heightened sense of transition from the exterior to the interior and a clear perception of confinement, order, and control within the library (ibid.). Henry James had a specific term for this requisite experiential separation: 'penetralia,' i.e., 'the sense of penetrating out of the everyday hustle and into the shadowy preserve of learning' (Jordy 1976: 354).

Brawne's and James' summations typify the discourse that guides the design process through the requisite delimitation of options. It is important to note that they are, on the one hand, strategically concerned with the question of how and not why, and they are, on the other hand, based on the evaluation of precedent following a distinct set of criteria that are rarely, if ever, expressly articulated. The tacit communication of criteria through a discourse concerned with what and not why is vital to the establishment and perpetuation of the tradition. These dialogues, far from being 'conditioned to occur without common rules,' follow distinct ground rules without which there would be no library definable as a building-type. It is dialogues as these that see to the perpetual realization of the requisite delineation, separation, and particularization that Brawne identifies as characteristics most need in a library. We find this realization in each of the four distinct phases of the library's transformation from the Medieval book-cupboard to the modern stack-system library (see Clark 1901).

From the outset, the book as we know it was placed in a particular

place. The Medieval book-cupboard or press was the implement of delineation, separation, and definition of the particular place of books. Transition and access to this segregated place was subject to a simple, though effective ritual of retrieval and return, i.e., of locks and doors that insofar as they regulated access to the books, effectively constituted this library's 'penetralia.'

In the post-Medieval library the delineated shell of the medieval book-press assumed human proportion, while the shelves of the old press took on the form of lecterns. In place of the locks of the old press, the books in the post-Medieval library were chained in place, less, it appears, they venture out of their new delineated and detached place.

Along with the shell, the doors of the old press also assumed a new spatial dimension in the post-Medieval library. They gave way to a new heightened sense of procession and transition to the world of books in the form of elaborate entry ways, vestibules, and monumental staircases. A telling example is Michelangelo's Laurentian Library (Florence, 1523-71), where a spatially tense and complex vestibule with a dramatic and monumental staircase detaches the particularized place of the book behind from its greater monastic context.

The heightened sense of transition to the world of books, with an emphasis on a clear perceptual and experiential separation, in place of the literal separation of the medieval press, was to remain a requisite part of the library in each of its future modifications. The bureaucratic and technological apparatus overseeing access to the Modern stacks is, in a manner, a contemporary supplement to this experiential separation.

In the 'Saal' or 'wall-system' libraries of the 18th and 19th centuries the books were withdrawn from the middle to the inner edges of the reading room, and there having shed the chains that literally tied the books to their place in the previous example, they become an integral part of the frame that delineated and defined their place. The watchful gaze of the librarian at the circulation desk, i.e., the 19th century equivalent of the key to the medieval-press, took over the function of the chain first at the edge and in later examples and with greater economy at the center stage of what

Boullée referred to as a supreme amphitheater (Rosenau 1976: 105).

The ritual procession to the place of books, or the library's 'penetralia,' took the form of a dramatic and multistage journey in the 'wall-system' library. A good example is Henry Labrouste's Bibliothèque Ste.-Geneviève (Paris, 1842-50) where the participant is led past the thick frame of the outer wall of the library, through the entire width of the building, before leading up to a vestibule filled with light and a characteristic monumental staircase. In journeys like this, the staircase in effect detached the place of the book from the ground, as the corridor divorced it from the greater space in the background. The double gesture of exclusion displaced and then re-placed the participant, past the transverse axis of the landing and through the gates into what by then was a well delineated and detached place for the book.

The modern stack-system library is both an extension of the 'Wall-system' library and a reversion to the lectern and stall-system libraries. It assumes and further delineates the three operational parts of the 'Wall-system' library: the circulation space, the reading space, and the stack space. However, the modern Stack-system library achieves its predecessor's end, not by integrating the books within its protective frame, but by separating and enveloping itself around the books, in a manner reminiscent of the post-Medieval library, with its clear divorce between the books and the library's enveloping frame.

As exemplified by virtually all modern university libraries, the reading space and the resting place of the books exchange position in the Modern Library. In a variation on the theme of center and edge that are the building blocks of a well delineated and detached place, the books move away from the edge to the center stage of the old amphitheater, now multiplied and stacked one on top of the other. Having returned the books to the center-stage, in the post-Medieval fashion, the modern library, in turn, substitutes the decimal system in place of the post-Medieval chain. As opposed to a literal chain, the modern library inscribes the identity of each book within a figural chain. Although the books may readily leave their sanctified and entombed place within the modern library, pending the elaborate ritual of circulation and discharge, their identity never does.

My intent in summarily pointing out a common thread in the diverse manifestations of the library through time is not to decry the significance of the differences and the important transformations in the history of this building-type. In a different context, one may readily trace the specifics of these differences and transformations to - among other factors - the specific modalities, shifts, and changes in the cultural perception and definition of what constitutes knowledge, how and where it is located (localized), and in what relationship it is placed with respect to its manifestation(s) and/or representation(s). Within the limited scope of this work, I only wish to note that each example in its own unique way seeks to assure the participant that the books are in place and under control. This common aim reflects, in no small measure, the ambivalence of Western culture toward the representation that the library seeks to place and keep in place: writing.

Writing has been, Jacques Derrida (1976, 1981) points out, the subject of simultaneous condemnation and praise throughout the history of Western culture for being the purveyor of life and the agent of death at the same time. It has been commended and censured for immortalizing and supplanting the author by preserving and dispensing with living thought at once.

Regardless of its immortalizing virtue, or rather because of it, writing has been consistently assigned a secondary, subservient role with respect to speech and condemned for being, among others, a bastardized form of speech, a 'dangerous supplement,' or in Plato's term, a *Pharmakon*: neither simply a remedy nor simply a poison, but both at once.

If writing is deemed to be a precarious and pernicious drug, it is in part because its effect cannot be delimited in space and to its assigned place and role as the dead imitation of a living speech. If it is deemed to be a dangerous substitute for speech, it is in part because writing does not simply insinuate itself in the place of speech from outside. In the process, it also permanently dis-places living thought and the speech that is presumed to be the privileged locus of its presence.

Writing can take the place of speech as a poor substitute and a dead

imitation of it, if speech itself is a form of writing, that is, if speech itself functions by virtue of the same difference and deferral that is presumed to be peculiar to writing. Speech can only be substituted, imitated, or represented by writing, if it has a repeatable, imitable or re-presentable form whose signifying function is not governed, or determined by what it signifies. If the seemingly transparent face of speech was indeed linked to the features of the landscape of thought it designates, it could never be substituted, imitated, or represented. If, on the other hand, the landscape of thought can only be located in the space of representation, if speech itself must necessarily defer the presence that it can only represent, then the living thought itself must forego its privilege as a simple presence in order to appear in representation, that is, to appear at all. In short, 'what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence' (Ibid. 1976: 159) along with, we might add, the disappearance of a decidable place within whose demarcated boundaries writing may be put to rest as a substitute representation of speech.

Writing has, in other words, no decidable place. It cannot be readily placed, because what we shall find outside every assigned place is, Derrida (Ibid.) points out, only more writing. It at once exceeds and defies any sense of place or any act of placement, predicated upon, in the simplest terms, a clear boundary separating two opposite terms, e.g., an interior and an exterior.

Should one wish, however, to retain the privilege of speech as the locus of a living, present thought - all the metaphysical, theological, and sociopolitical implications of this assumption withstanding - then one must indeed make every effort to delimit the dangerous effect of this paradoxical drug to a decidable place. One must make every effort to place writing: be this in a subservient supplemental position with respect to speech or within the protective cover of the book, held well within the bounds of the library. One must substitute a clear sense of place for the missing place of this dangerous pharmakon: a place from which speech can be withdrawn to the outside, safe and untouched by writing's effects.

The book is, of course, one such place. The library constitutes another place: a supplemental, immobile, and generalized doubling of the book,

encompassing and placing the written word in place. This is to say that the logic at work in the formation of the library is, to a measure, an ideological response and an institutional solution to the enigmatic place of writing. It is, in a manner, a defensive measure against the disruptive effect of writing.

As much as writing confounds and defies a sense of place, the library systematically seeks to delineate, order, and place. In the space of a non-place - the undifferentiated space of representation - the library insinuates a defensive outpost. Mindful of the pernicious nature of the drug it is given to administer, the library, as a cultural institution, substitutes a formal, spatial, and experiential clarity of place for what writing fundamentally lacks and denies: a decidable place. This is not only a place for itself, but also and of greater concern, for the presence it defers. Within the delineated, distinguished, and highly elaborated confines of the library, writing assumes a spatial dimension. It assumes an outside. As the library localizes and brackets the book, it also renders what lies outside its assigned spatial limits, immune to the disruptive energies of writing.

As a building-type, informed by the cultural and/or ideological agenda of the institution it serves, the library provides the participants a conceptual vehicle for thinking the resolution of the paradox of writing in binary terms. It offers the participant - by design - a spatial experience that is profoundly alien to writing as the space of a non-place.

The careful delineation, separation, and processional transition that are the hallmarks of a successful library, put the relationship between writing and all that one may wish to escape its grip, in the proper cultural perspective. Following a totemic logic, within the confines of the library as a requisite 'individual and particular space,' writing is given to stand in the same relationship to the presence it defers, as inside stands to outside, path to place, foreground to background, open to closed, upper to lower, center to periphery, and all other binary spatial and formal terms that are called on to create 'an individual and particular space.' Should one even wish to conceive of the relationship between writing and the presence it defers, in any terms other than binary terms, one must confront and contradict the immediate experience of the library. As much as writing

resists a sense of place, the library successfully resists its defiance of a sense of place, to the point of invisibility.

If within the confines of the library writing is given to assume a spatial dimension, outside the delineated boundaries of this cultural and institutional construct, writing assumes a temporal dimension. There, it is a figure in transition and/or circulation by virtue of that 'individual and particular' place to which its identity is irrevocably tied: the library. The production and consumption of this pernicious drug outside the bounds of the library have the assurance of a destination that keeps the malevolent and disruptive energies of writing in check and under control.

If writing is a pharmakon, the library is a pharmacy and the institution the pharmacist who sees to the proper dispensation of the drug. The cultural participant is, in turn, the consumer of the myth of writing as a pure remedy, in search of a decidable verity, kept in proxy, deep within the cover of the book, well within the bounds of the library.

Of course, architecture's participation in erasing traces of fabrication - or 'becoming' in Karatani's term - from our construed cultural reality far exceeds the library's reach. Museums, cinemas, and theaters, among a host of other building-types, also institute distinct realms to which fabrication or more specifically representation is exiled as 'other.' The specifics of the design and the experience of each building-type vary considerably in response to the modalities and the particular challenges of the specific mode of fabrication or representation housed. A case in point is the experiential difference between the library and the art museum.

Writing, problematic as it is from a certain vantage point, retains a polite formal distance from the speech it is said to duplicate. The relationship between the signifier and the signified in writing is, at the denotative level, blatantly conventional. In art, it is not. The materiality of the work of art cannot be readily idealized as a mere means to an end in the way that writing is, without having to attribute the same to the real. Ruskin's dilemma on the steps of the British museum is a case in point. The segregation and containment of this other mode of representation require a different strategy.

Unlike the library that forms a defensive outpost and offers us an inward journey to a clear and secure inside, the art museum fabricates an outside and offers us an outbound journey to an other, parallel space or universe to which art is exiled on the condition of authenticity. This space or rather this spacing of art is predicated, not on the experience of penetration as the library is, but on the experience of disjointment and distance, of leaving one world behind and entering another as Paul Valery (1956-75) describes it in the opening passages of his 'The Problem with Museums.' The clarity of the library's interior is effectively replaced in the museum with a seemingly boundless space of intertwining rooms ad infinitum. Here everyone is, by design, a tourist away from home in search of the authentic in an other space (see MacCannell 1976).

Between the seemingly infinite world that contains art and the 'real' world from which it is sequestered, the museum insinuates an elaborate and deep threshold that mediates and oversees the passage to and from the worlds it fabricates as such. As much as the library tries to encircle writing, the museum tries to disjoin art by variously disjoining itself from its context. We find the gesture of disjointment in every successful museum as far back as Altes Museum (Berlin 1823-30). The latter was the first of its type, specifically designed as a public monument for holding art.

Altes museum was the product of long and heated dialogues between the architect, the royal client, the critics, and other concerned parties regarding the point and purpose of the museum and the specific cultural rituals that were to inform its design (see Moyano 1990). Although Karatani idealizes this type of dialogue as opening architecture to contingency, what these particular dialogues established were the ground rules for the museum as a building-type and thereafter the effective sublation of contingency in art through architecture.

The building that was to inform and delimit subsequent dialogues and museum designs was carefully placed, after much deliberation and numerous modifications, away from the fabric of the city, on an island opposite the royal palace. The ritual procession out to the world of art took the participant away from the city, past the bridge, and on a transverse axis across the immense void of the plaza, terminated by a long

monumental colonnade behind which the main body of the museum was carefully withdrawn. Past this monumental threshold and through the depth of the colonnade the participant was led, beneath a grand staircase, through a constricted passageway into a large rotunda and from there past another passageway into the galleries branching out in transverse and opposite directions.

The forms have since varied immensely, but the requisite experience of disjointment has remained essentially the same in subsequent realizations. The gestures have been as dramatic as those in Philadelphia art museum (Traumbauer, Borie, and Zatzinger, 1928) which is carefully placed on top of a hill, at the edge of the city, and the end of a long ceremonial parkway leading away from the city's center, to the moat in front of Whitney museum (Marcel Breuer, New York, 1966) that economically, though effectively, separates the museum from the city fabric.

Another vivid example is the recent corrective renovations and additions to the Louvre (I.M. Pei, 1989). These in effect turn the Louvre that initially was not designed as a museum into a proper museum. One can no longer enter the building through the exterior walls, since they have been sealed off and turned into an impenetrable limit and a tableau to be looked at from a distance. Having marked and sealed the boundaries, the ritual of disjointment and the journey out now begin with the pyramidal glass entry that leads the participant down twisting stairs beneath the court and through a sequence of mediating thresholds up into the main body of the museum.

Much as compliance with museum's ground rules is expected, deviations from the norm are severely criticized and condemned. Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim museum (New York, 1959) is a case in point (see Huxtable 1959). Criticized from inception as an unsuitable place for art, Guggenheim fails on crucial counts. It fails to distance itself from the fabric of the city and thereafter it fails to simulate the experience of an other, distinct, and separate world for art behind its facade. Guggenheim's is a journey in as distinct from the requisite journey out. It approximates the experience of the library more closely than the requisite experience of the museum. Suggested corrections have thus included the relocation of

the building across the street, away from the city fabric, in central park, where the Metropolitan museum is located (ibid.: 16). Corrective actions have included the separation of the work of art from the body of the museum, i.e., the hanging of art works at a distance from the walls, as if to divorce the work from its place in compensation for the latter's failure to sufficiently distance itself from the world outside. When and if the dialogue between the client and the architect fails to produce the expected results, other dialogues intervene to remedy the problem and prevent the duplication of the mistake.

At the risk of repetition, what I have tried to outline thus far is how institutional building-types such as libraries and museums condition and contextualize our reception of the 'other,' and how they allow us to conceive of the relationship between other modes of representation and the real not as an 'asymmetrical relationship' that 'cannot be sublated,' but an oppositional relationship that as such is already sublated. On the construed line between the self-referential reality and the contingent representation, between making and becoming, there is architecture systematically removing the trace of the other. It is with recourse to architecture among other tools and technologies that we overcome the crisis of exchange and communication with the other. The architect/client dialogue sees to its perpetual implementation. To idealize it as metaphor is to afford it greater reign. Architecture is, in the cause of becoming, a subversive metaphor.

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