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Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey¹

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In recent years, our inherited architectural culture, which privileges the autonomy of form and the paradigmatic status of the western tradition, has been contested from a range of critical perspectives. In this article I address some of the new challenges that architectural history faces today and contemplate two questions with important implications for teaching survey courses. First, how does one make architectural history less Eurocentric and more cross-cultural without either naturalizing the cultural difference of "others" or essentializing these differences into incommensurable categories? Second, how does one talk about the politics of architecture without reducing architecture to politics?

IN THE LAST TWO DECADES, THE IMPACT OF WHAT IS BROADLY DESIGNATED as postcolonial theory and criticism has been rapidly growing in almost every discipline, urging each discipline to rethink its premises. In architecture too, many of the foundational assumptions of our discipline are being questioned.¹ We hear increasingly more vocal demands for the inclusion of works by hitherto excluded and marginalized others (women, minorities, and nonwestern cultures in particular). Simultaneously, the great masters, masterpieces, and master narratives of the western architectural tradition have been placed under critical scrutiny. The result has been that our awareness of the *politics* of architecture—i.e., the complicity of architecture with structures of power and dominant ideological agendas in society—is heightened, calling into question our inherited architectural culture, which privileges the autonomy of form and form-making. The contents of recent publications, conferences, and symposia, or any cursory survey of Ph.D. topics in architectural history currently underway in American universities, effectively illustrate the increasing visibility of these critical and revisionist trends in the culture at large. In fact, postcolonial theory and criticism has been the departure point for a series of recent international conferences held in Singapore (1993), Chandigarh (1995), and Australia (1997), a fourth one being planned to take place in Beirut.² In the 1998 Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, there were at least three theme sessions on the topics of colonial architecture, Islamic city, and women's spaces. In *JAЕ* itself, in addition to the already published articles on topics related to gender, multiculturalism, and women in the architectural workplace, the forthcoming theme issues will be devoted to Islamic architecture, politics of Eastern European architecture, and Latin American modernism.

Whether postcolonial criticism is still marginal or whether it already constitutes the new mainstream in architectural history, theory, and criticism is something that can be debated. On one

hand, it is not difficult to observe that at least in American academia, these new critical perspectives have put even the most conservative defenders of the uniqueness and superiority of the western canon on the defensive. On the other hand, there is also no question that the battle is far from over. Received notions about the autonomy of form and the ethos of individual creativity, as well as the canonic status of works by great masters of the past and/or the celebrity designers of the present, continue to shape the dominant culture of the architectural community in most places. It is enough to consider, for example, the cult status of architects such as Frank Gehry, whose celebrated Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, has been hailed by Herbert Muschamp in *The New York Times Magazine* as nothing less than "a miracle"—a miracle that has rendered everything else, other than itself, irrelevant. For Muschamp, architecture, which is "an art form that has long depended upon appeals to external authority—history, science, context, tradition, religion, philosophy or style—has at last come to the realization that nobody cares about that sort of thing anymore."³ From such a perspective, recent postcolonial challenges to architecture can only be seen as irrelevant at best and damaging to the internal coherence and excellence of the discipline at worst.

What we thus see is a widening gap between an architectural history that is increasingly more interested in culture, context, and politics and an architectural design culture (and an architectural design criticism) that privileges form-making and creativity. This unnecessary dichotomy needs to be problematized. It is true that architectural history is a distinct discipline with its own intellectual and analytical tools, its own scholarly community (of art and cultural historians) and, most significantly, without any direct instrumentality or operative charge for design. It is no longer a service discipline for professional programs in architecture, nor a justificatory account of the past from a privileged vantage point or theoretical position. Yet, precisely because of this critical distance, architectural history is even more important for the education of the architect today. It is a critical exposition of how buildings, projects, and architectural ideas are produced and reproduced in historically specific times and places, within given cultural, political, and institutional contexts. It is the exposition of why, for example, even Gehry's Bilbao Museum has *everything* to do with politics, culture, and context.

The burden of that split is felt most strongly by those of us who teach history of architecture *within* departments of architecture and in conjunction with *professional* programs, rather than in art history departments, humanities, and/or cultural studies. As historians or critics usually with a professional degree and some amount

of experience in studio teaching, we find ourselves ambiguously and precariously located between our primary discipline (i.e., architecture) and our scholarly communities (such as humanities, art history, cultural studies, and area studies). How can we begin to incorporate the insights of postcolonial theories and revisionist histories into the education of the architect? How can we expose the biases and exclusions of the western canon without discarding it altogether? How can we include the hitherto excluded and marginalized “others” without either neutralizing their differences or essentializing these differences into incommensurable and timeless categories? How can we study the “great masters” without reifying their formal and aesthetic mastery into something above and beyond history, context, and politics?

These are very big and difficult questions that are being extensively debated everywhere. In this paper, I offer some general and unsystematic observations derived from my own experiences of teaching the survey of modern architecture, as well as courses on the extensions and legacies of modern architecture beyond Europe and North America. I suggest that there are two basic principles that can allow us to embrace the insights of postcolonial theory while avoiding its possible pitfalls. The first principle is not to lose sight of the *provisional nature of identity politics* if it is not to be turned into a new orthodoxy. The point, after all, is not to replace the western canon with the cultural production of the marginalized “others” but to show the historical connections, exchanges, and confrontations between them. The second principle is not to lose sight of the *absence* of any necessary and/or automatic connection between the work of art/architecture and its politics. The point is not to dismantle the myth of the architect as autonomous and creative genius by replacing it with an equally problematic notion of architect as a mere instrument or agent of historical forces, ideologies, and politics. Rather, I wish to show how both the architect’s own agenda and the larger context inform the work in complex ways. What follows is an elaboration of these two principles and, through them, a contemplation of the challenges posed by postcolonial criticism to teaching the history of modern architecture—a course that is the primary, and often, the only required encounter of the professional degree student with history.

On Cultural Difference

Many of us teaching courses such as “Orientalism and Representation” have used, as a way of introducing the topic, the well-known image of Sir Bannister Fletcher’s “Tree of Architecture,” the fron-

tispiece to his classic *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method* first published in 1896.⁴ This image, affirming many of Edward Said’s compelling arguments in his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978), was a good illustration of the Eurocentric biases of architectural historiography, periodization, and classification. As is well known, “the tree of architecture” depicted evolution and progress (in this case from classical Greek architecture to modern revivalisms of the nineteenth century) as exclusively western attributes. The architectures of other cultures were designated as “nonhistorical styles” without any real impact on the History of Architecture with capital letters. More significantly, the idea informing “the tree” became the dominant paradigm for other architectural surveys, granting a uniqueness, continuity, and a dynamic internal to the evolution of western architecture while withholding these from non-European traditions. The classical surveys of modern architecture, too, epitomized by Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941), had simply perpetuated the same construct by representing twentieth-century European modernism as the unique and rational expression of modern industrial society and the teleological destiny of architectural development everywhere else.⁵ Even more recently, many comprehensive surveys of architectural history continue to view the western tradition as “. . . sharply self-contained and surprisingly immune to outside influences.”⁶

A hundred years after the original edition and more than thirty years after the death of its author, Bannister Fletcher’s book is still being republished, but not without some significant changes.⁷ Not only has the notorious frontispiece been removed, but also the sharp separation between “historical” and “nonhistorical” styles has now been dissolved into a new classification by regional and thematic clusters. However, in their eagerness to politically correct the original text, these subsequent re-editings avoid addressing the real issues pertaining to the politics of historiography.⁸ More symptomatic of recent changes in outlook is the late Spiro Kostof’s *A History of Architecture* (1985).⁹ Coinciding with the growing interest in rethinking the western canon, Kostof’s book was rightly recognized and celebrated as a monumental step in the direction of including nonmonumental and nonwestern traditions in the architectural survey.¹⁰ Similar changes of attitude have permeated histories of modern architecture as well. The earlier zeitgeist theories which, for a long time, had served to legitimize modernism have been abandoned for quite sometime now. Modernism is now a topic of specific historical and cultural analysis, no longer linked to a universal project of Enlightenment. Modern architecture is no longer “above and beyond” history in its claims to a scientific and universal rationality, and western modernism is no longer the only history that

matters. Having long replaced Giedion's book as the primary survey of modern architecture, Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980) includes in its latest 1996 edition a new section on "world architecture and reflective practice" with examples from Japan, Scandinavia, and Spain.¹¹ In the introduction to the revised edition, with a glance to the current debate, Frampton makes an apology for not having included recent work from India, Australia, Canada, Latin America, and the Middle East. Likewise, William Curtis acknowledges in the 1995 edition of *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (1983) that "a historiography based upon the cultural biases and power structures of the North American region cannot be justified when dealing with world-wide dissemination of modern architecture in places like Latin America and the Middle East."¹² Yet, introducing his book with the terminology of postcolonial criticism, Curtis still adopts some of the very same categories that are questioned by postcolonial theory. A chapter heading like "Modernity and Tradition in the Developing World" still operates with binary oppositions (modernity versus tradition) and linear models of history (developed versus developing) that are no longer tenable as identifiers of postcolonial and nonwestern trajectories in the twentieth century.

As important as it has been in breaking through the western canon, Kostof's book too does not escape the difficulty and dilemmas of the challenge. In her article in this issue of the *JAE*, Panaiyota Pyla observes that Kostof's inclusion of "other cultures" is a form of "enlightenment cosmopolitanism" in which the western tradition is still the primary point of reference with respect to which nonwestern architectural traditions acquire significance and become eligible for inclusion. For example, she points out that the work of sixteenth-century Ottoman architect Sinan is discussed and appreciated in the book only through Renaissance spectacles and in the terminology of western architectural history, without a historical discussion of what was different or "untranslatable" in Ottoman society of the time. Indeed recent critical scholarship on Sinan's architecture also touches upon this tendency among architectural historians to discuss the work of Sinan as a rationally evolving series of formal experiments by a creative genius—a "renaissance architect" who happens to be in the service of the Ottoman Empire. What is lost in this perspective are the specific characteristics of Ottoman society, culture, patronage, and local history without which it is not possible to understand the work fully in its historical specificity.¹³

Such critical scrutiny of even sympathetic accounts of nonwestern architectural traditions brings to mind the lamentations of the prominent orientalist and historian of the Middle East, Ber-

nard Lewis, who is also one of the major critics of Edward Said and his theories. In an essay titled "Other People's History," Lewis bitterly complains, on behalf of western scholars, that nowadays, "if we don't study and teach other cultures we are called arrogant and ethnocentric, and if we do, we are accused of spoliation and exploitation."¹⁴ What these words unwittingly illustrate is precisely what makes postcolonial criticism so disturbing for the traditional western paradigm in major humanistic disciplines such as architectural history. For postcolonial criticism, the objective for criticizing Eurocentric biases in the constitution of knowledge is not a simple matter of seeking inclusion or claiming a space for hitherto excluded others while leaving the existing hierarchies intact. Rather, in insisting on the difference shown by other cultures (of women, blacks, orientals, and so forth) and resisting the naturalization of this difference by a benign inclusion, postcolonial critics seek to unsettle the canon itself and expose the relations of power that are integral to its initial constitution as the canon.¹⁵ In other words, an emphasis on cultural difference becomes a powerful strategic position from which to tackle the western canon. Hence, postcolonial critics emphasize cultural *difference* rather than cultural *diversity*. As Gulsum Nalbantoglu explains, *difference* implies "the impossibility of containing the other in one's own terms of reference," whereas *diversity* suggests "conveniently commensurable and hence comparable categories," blunting the critical edge of cultural difference.¹⁶

But if difference is the powerful critical tool of postcolonial theory to pry open the western canon and to show what is wrong with it, the next step can only be either getting rid of the canon or trying to reconfigure it in a better way. Assuming that it is the second option we are after, it seems to me that an emphasis on *both* difference *and* diversity is necessary—an emphasis as much on what can be shared across cultures as on what is different. To hold these two seemingly contradictory impulses together is our only way out if we don't want cultural difference to be reified into essentialist and timeless discourses of identity. In many of his essays, Edward Said emphasizes the provisional nature of identity politics and warns against perpetuating discourses of otherness and victimization too far beyond the moment of insurgence. He suggests that in the initial stages of the struggle, discourses of difference play an important role for mobilization against oppressive structures of power, as for example, the concept of negritude becoming the point of departure for anticolonial independence struggles in Africa. Or we can think of how, more recently, women's narratives and their experiences as women became vehicles for feminist insurgence against patriarchy. However, as Said proposes, over time it is necessary to transcend particularistic discourses of difference toward a broader and more

inclusive social consciousness. "Just to be an independent Arab, or black or Indonesian is not a program, nor a process, nor a vision," writes Said. "[I]t is no more than a convenient starting point from which the real work, the hard work might begin. No race possesses the monopoly of beauty, of intelligence and of force."¹⁷ Indeed, it is enough to look at various forms of nationalist, ethnic, and tribalist discourses in the contemporary world to see the danger of essentialist and exclusionist identity politics. It is this prospect of postcolonial criticism turning against itself that underscores the urgency of what Edward Said calls the need for a "methodological vigilance."¹⁸

A major task of this methodological vigilance has to be contesting portrayals of nonwestern cultures as bounded domains, i.e., as authentic and timeless traditions with internally consistent essences. As is well known, such portrayals have been at the center of the initial constitution of the discipline of ethnography, as well as the so-called area studies. Nonwestern architectures, like other forms of nonwestern cultural production (art, literature, and music in particular) have typically been viewed only as topics in area studies, as expressions of some authentic identity outside western norms. For example, India offers a classic case of this tendency to include and appreciate the work of other cultures *only in so far as* they talk about their otherness, i.e., in so far as they reaffirm western self-consciousness through the contrasting image of the other. Generations of European architectural historians have been fascinated by Indian architecture as a spiritual tradition rooted in Hindu mysticism, i.e., as the other of western rationalist traditions. More interestingly, the same characterizations of Indian architecture have been employed by Indians themselves to promote the distinctness of Indian identity. In the well-known case of the prominent Indian architect Charles Correa, for example, it was not until Correa resorted to Hindu symbolism as an explanation of his work that this otherwise western-trained and committed modernist architect was able to receive the recognition he deserved in western architectural circles.¹⁹

It is precisely this tendency to "ghettoize other cultures" into neat compartments that Salman Rushdie objects to in his pointed criticism of the category "commonwealth literature"—a category invented to define Indian authors writing in English and, in most cases, living outside India. In dismissing the "myth of authenticity" as the "respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism," Rushdie reminds the reader of how the "identity" of India is in fact a myriad of identities irreducible to any single one of them, nor to any spiritual essence. He writes that the identity of India is: "a melange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American, to say nothing of Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Jewish, British, French, Portuguese, Marxist, Maoist,

Trotskyist, Vietnamese, capitalist and of course Hindu elements. Eclecticism [or] the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and leave the rest has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition and today, it is at the center of the best work being done both in the visual arts and in literature."²⁰

Salman Rushdie's insistence on hybridity—his refusal to be trapped within a binary opposition between the West and its other—is highly instructive for avoiding any confusion of postcolonial criticism with discourses of oppositional and/or antiwestern identity. Postcolonial criticism reminds us to be wary of any essentialist construction of other cultures, regardless of whether they are sympathetic or not and regardless of whether they are employed by westerners or by orientals themselves. This is not to contradict my earlier point that discourses of cultural difference may indeed be powerful strategic devices in challenging the biases and exclusions of the western canon in teaching architectural history. Few would deny the initial progressiveness of discourses of identity as a form of "academic affirmative action" to redress the balance of traditional exclusions and to contest the Eurocentric accounts of traditional architectural historiography. Yet, discourses of identity that are centered on a single identifier (be it race, religion, gender, or nation alone) are seriously inadequate for defining what are, in fact, complex and multiply constituted identities, which, in turn, make the cultural, artistic, or architectural product irreducible to such identifiers. As much as we criticize, for example, the exclusion of Indian architecture from what constitutes the main trunk of Bannister Fletcher's "tree of architecture," we must also be wary of the inclusion of an Indian architect only insofar as he or she is "Indian." We must be wary of the inclusion of his or her work only because the work embodies "Indianness"—a category that can never explain the work in its full.

The naturalizing of cultural difference within the terms of the dominant society and the essentializing of difference into distinct and incommensurable cultural identities are thus the two sides of the same coin that postcolonial criticism seeks to contest. The point in architectural history is not to incorporate Indian, Chinese, Islamic and other architectures into the western canon in some form of benign tokenism, nor to discard the western canon and replace it with the works of nonwestern others. Rather, the point is to show what Said calls "intertwined histories," that is, to show that contrary to the basic assumption of traditional Eurocentric historiography, the western canon and the cultural production of societies outside Europe and North America are not separate and independent. For one thing, the western canon has been too deeply imprinted in the culture of the nonwestern world for so long as to become as much

their property as that of the West. At the same time, other cultures have been essential to the very definition of the western canon: rational versus sensual qualities, tectonic versus decorative, evolutionary versus stagnant, among others. As a recent commentator on postcolonial theory observes, “the East is located intimately within the West, as an integral, if generally unacknowledged part of its own constitution and identity.”²¹ That neither the West nor its nonwestern other is a complete and bounded cultural entity or a hermetic tradition on its own is a seemingly obvious fact frequently forgotten in attempts to define a pure western tradition or an authentic Indian architecture.

Naturally, colonial architecture and urbanism, a topic of much recent interest and scholarship, offer a wealth of material on how intertwined histories find their expression in architecture. It is however, not only in the more obvious case of colonial encounters, but in subtler instances of cross-cultural exchange through travel, trade, and diplomacy as well that such intertwined histories unfold. History of architecture is a particularly fertile ground for new interpretations that problematize distinct and mutually exclusive boundaries between the western canon and other cultures. For example, it is now much more widely recognized that, contrary to traditional assumptions about the Modern Movement being grounded exclusively in the industrial revolution in Europe, other cultures and vernacular traditions had significant formative influences on major modernist architects. Encounters like those of Bruno Taut and Japan or Le Corbusier and Latin America are no longer merely accessories to an official history of modern architecture but are important constituents of a more plural and heterogeneous history. As recent contributions to the still inexhaustible scholarship on Le Corbusier argue, the sources of inspiration for Le Corbusier’s canonic villas were not just the airplanes, ocean liners, and grain elevators, but a whole range of influences from Swiss lake dwellings and traditional Turkish houses to central European and Balkan vernaculars.²² These newer interpretations of Le Corbusier do not directly address issues of power and politics, but I believe they still contribute to the problematization of traditional explanations of modernism in exclusively European terms.

On the Politics of Architecture

The example of Le Corbusier leads me to my second principle pertaining to the relationship between art/architecture and the issues of power and politics embodied in the work and of which postcolonial criticism has heightened our awareness. Le Corbusier,

after all, is the paradigmatic figure in modern architecture in whose person the construction of the canon, the concept of the avant-garde, and the myth of the creative genius are all embodied. Numerous new readings of the modernist canon informed and inspired by recent postcolonial and feminist perspectives have dealt with Le Corbusier extensively in recent years. Zeynep Celik has written on the orientalism and colonialism of Le Corbusier—his “feminization” of the orient in his encounter with Algeria in particular.²³ Beatriz Colomina has offered critical readings of Le Corbusier’s canonic villas from a feminist perspective—the villas as the site of the relationship between the male architect/producer/voyeur and the female object of the gaze.²⁴ These new critical readings inevitably pose new dilemmas and challenges for covering Le Corbusier in architectural history courses in professional programs. Many architects or architectural historians who work exclusively within the discipline of architecture consider, for example, the orientalism, colonialism, and sexism of Le Corbusier irrelevant to the discussion of his work and ideas.²⁵ Can these works and ideas, which have undoubtedly transformed the course of architecture and urbanism in the first half of the twentieth century, be understood in isolation from their author’s orientalist, colonialist, and patriarchal politics? Or as feminist art historian Griselda Pollock asks in her compelling critique of the race and gender biases of the painter Gauguin’s work and career, can we let the masters of the western canon off the hook because they are great avant-garde artists?²⁶

The debate on whether one can look at the work of art/architecture only *as* art/architecture—whether there is any direct correlation between the identity of the artist/architect and the nature or quality of the work—is nowhere near being concluded within postcolonial and feminist theory. Edward Said is once again exemplary in illustrating the complexity of the issue. As well known, since writing *Orientalism*, he has been continuously accused by western scholars and conservative literary critics of undermining the western canon by linking it to the political projects of colonialism and imperialism.²⁷ Yet, ironically, he has been blamed, equally forcefully, by other postcolonial critics for privileging the western canon and, for example, enjoying opera and classical English literature more than Third World cultural production.²⁸ Many commentators have observed the ambivalence in the writings of Edward Said, between reading texts as the manifestations of dominant structures of power and, alternatively, as individual works with aesthetic and even critical properties within the literary and artistic conventions of the time. One recent commentator puts it as follows: “Is one to approach Kipling, for instance, simply in terms of how he reflects the dominant ethnographic, anthropological and political

thought of his period and in terms of the way in which he reinforces the vision of India in earlier fictional representations of the subcontinent? Or is one to approach him as a writer whose 'unique' personal style and vision question and even challenge the dominant ideologies of imperialism and the received traditions of writing about the empire? Said never quite solves the problem."²⁹

This ambivalence of Said toward Kipling resonates with the feelings many of us have about Le Corbusier, the cult figure of our discipline. More than ten years ago, while discussing Le Corbusier's sketches in his *Journey to the East* (1911) within the tradition of other orientalist travelers, I had argued that these sketches departed from prevailing norms of orientalist representation by virtue of their experiential (rather than pictorial) quality.³⁰ What was then criticized by a number of architectural historians and critics as letting Le Corbusier off the hook was, I still believe, my ambivalence regarding the slippage between architecture as subject of cultural history/criticism and the work itself with respect to the *architectural* debates of its time.³¹ For me, Le Corbusier was just one example of how works of architecture, while reproducing the existing structures of power within society and culture at large, could still be critical within the discipline and challenge the received conventions of the discipline. In the case of Le Corbusier's *Journey*, it was a critique of European academicism in architecture through an appreciation, via his sketches, of non-European traditions and cultural artifacts. Today, with the hindsight of more recent critical work on the politics of Le Corbusier's work—his urbanism in particular—I, too, am less willing to let him off the hook of postcolonial criticism on the merits of his architectural sensibilities at the time.³² However, the general point that still remains is the absence of a direct one-to-one correlation between the work of art/architecture and the critique or appreciation of its politics. As much as artists/architects are not creative geniuses working in full autonomy, neither are they unequivocal instruments of the politics or ideologies they may serve or chose to operate within.

This principle regarding the slippage between the work of architecture and its politics—between what is critical within the discipline and what is critical in the larger society and culture-works in both ways. In the same way that exposing the eurocentricism, orientalism, and colonialism of the canon does not diminish the value of the canonic works, the fact that a work of art/architecture is produced by groups hitherto excluded from the canon, does not automatically and uncritically endorse these works. As interesting as they may be for the cultural historian or critical anthropologist, it is only when these works reach the level of skill and sophistication commensurable with the western canon that they ac-

tually begin to transform the canon. It is not, after all, works of popular Indian literature or folk architecture from India that ultimately reconfigure the canon and claim a space in it, but rather authors of Salman Rushdie's skill in mastering the English language or architects of Charles Correa's talent in contextualizing modernist sensibilities. On this point, Edward Said writes in unequivocal terms that a critique of gender biases, orientalism, and colonialism of great works of art and culture does not diminish the value of these classics. Nor is it enough, he argues, for a work of art to be produced by women, orientals, and the ex-colonized in order for that work to offer an effective critique of patriarchy, orientalism, and colonialism, respectively. Rather, a truly effective critique is a matter of transcending the tendency to essentialize cultural difference and confronting the canon in its own terms. Thus the discussion comes full circle back to my earlier comments concerning cultural difference. In Said's eloquent words:

It is only through the scrutiny of these works [works produced by women, blacks, orientals, and others] *as literature*, as style, as pleasure and illumination, that they can be brought in so to speak and kept in. Otherwise, they will be regarded only as informative ethnographic specimens, suitable for the limited attention of experts and area specialists. Worldliness is therefore, the restoration to such works and interpretations, of their place in the global setting; a restoration that can only be accomplished by an appreciation, not of some tiny, defensively constituted corner of the world, but of the larger, many windowed house of human culture as a whole.³³

Whether the ambivalence of criticizing the western canon for its exclusions while endorsing its classic status is a weakness that needs to be eliminated or an irreconcilable but productive tension that we have to live with is an open question. Leaving the theoretical debate aside, however, I suggest that the latter offers us a more viable pedagogical strategy for teaching architectural history to professional design students. We can offer accounts of buildings that do not privilege either the *politics* of architecture or the *autonomy* of the architectural object, but are more interested in the connections and slippages between the two. This allows us to differentiate between individual works and discuss them with architectural criteria (such as space, structure, materials, texture, and light) at the same time that we talk about how they are part of the larger power relations and ideological practices of the time. Consider, for example, Le Corbusier's urban strategies in his Algiers projects of the 1930s, particularly the segregation of the *casbah* from the new co-

lonial development with a *cordon sanitaire* or the dwarfing of the *casbah* with the gigantic scale of plan Obus imposed above it. It is important to see these decisions in connection with colonialist and orientalist politics as in the separation of the colonizer from the colonized and the visual imposition of the dominance of the former over the latter. It is also important, however, that they were not devised for the exclusive purposes of colonial domination in Algeria. As part and parcel of Le Corbusier's larger ideas of modern urbanism and functional zoning at the time, they were not very different from, say, the violation of Paris's historical urban fabric by the skyscrapers of Plan Voisin.

There is always a margin of indeterminacy between the work and the political forces that inform it, not to mention the possibility that the work may in fact contest and transcend its own political premises or be used for and appropriated by completely different ends than the ones intended. The history of modern architecture and urbanism in nonwestern contexts (like those of Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America) offers ample evidence of how modern architectural and urban forms have been capable of both serving colonial governments and symbolizing anticolonial and/or nationalist agendas of independence. In the same way that the nonwestern other was already part of the constitution of western self-consciousness, the West too has been an integral, albeit resented part of the consciousness of these other cultures in the modern world. For the colonized others, the West was both the categorical other, colonizer, and oppressor and at the same time, the locus of material wealth, knowledge, and culture for which they longed. As is well known, intellectuals like Franz Fanon, an Algerian, and Alberto Memmi, a Jewish Tunisian, have beautifully expressed these complex feelings of hatred and envy that they experienced under French colonial rule in North Africa.³⁴ In architecture, the appropriation of western modernism as the symbol of anticolonial struggle and national independence—the paradoxical aspiration “to be western in spite of the west”—has been a hallmark of twentieth-century nation-building in many places, from Ataturk's Ankara to Nehru's Chandigarh.³⁵ Modern architecture as adopted by postcolonial and/or nationalist regimes can be read as the expression of the desire of the other to contest its otherness and to claim subjectivity in the making of its own history.

Another different and highly illustrative case of the shifts and reversals of meaning between form and politics is the range of works and positions within what is broadly categorized (and criticized) under the rubric of orientalism. A contemplation of, say, the paintings of two nineteenth-century painters, Jean Leon Gerome and John Frederick Lewis, reveals that the appropriation and objectifi-

cation of the orient as Europe's exotic other by the former is conspicuously absent from the latter's paintings of everyday scenes in Cairo or Istanbul. In her recent commentary on the western canon debates, Zeynep Celik also draws attention to this possibility of subverting the meaning and hierarchies underlying the orientalist genre, illustrating her argument with the paintings of the Ottoman orientalist painter Osman Hamdi Bey. The orientalist paintings of Osman Hamdi Bey, while replicating the technique that he learned in the atelier of Jean Leon Gerome in Paris, depict a different kind of orient in which people are not exotic, violent, or erotic, but instead are simply reading, working, or walking in tranquillity. As Albert Hourani had cogently reminded us as early as in 1979 in his mostly sympathetic review of Edward Said's book, “not all orientalist are as orientalist.”³⁶ While the contrary example of individual orientalist does not invalidate Said's larger point about the connections between orientalist representation and the political project of colonialism, it does complicate it in important ways.

To conclude, we can speculate briefly about the ways in which the recent revisionist trends in rethinking the western canon inevitably implicate the architectural history survey, a course that is predicated on the idea of the canon. This is especially true for the survey of modern architecture, “1750 to Present,” as it is taught in many architectural schools, since the history of the modern world (nineteenth and twentieth centuries) is the history of intertwined histories par excellence, with numerous colonial, imperial, and cross-cultural encounters. There is now a new and rapidly growing field in architectural history, namely the history of modern architecture beyond the confines of Europe and North America, in societies outside the West, in Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. These are societies where modernity (and modern architecture as an expression of it) was not an indigenous development resulting from profound social, technological, and industrial transformations as in the industrialized West. Rather, they experienced modernization (rather than modernity) as a political and ideological program introduced from above, either by colonial interventions, and/or by the nationalist elites of postcolonial or postimperial states. Until recently, these other modernisms were doubly marginalized in scholarship by both the canonic historiography of modern architecture (the focus of which is the West) and by area studies (the focus of which is the past, i.e., the premodern periods of “authentic” cultures anterior to modern transformations). Today there is much wider recognition that these other modernisms are neither simple extensions of western developments, nor completely independent of them. By definition, these other modernisms defy essentialist categorizations of other cultures as static and

nonhistorical and they historically situate, contextualize, and politicize modernism, rather than assuming a linear, homogeneous, and universal history to it. They challenge the assumption that other cultures were simply passive recipients of dominant western discourses without any capacity to appropriate, transform, and reproduce them for different ends. They compel us to go beyond formal analysis (discussion of forms, origins, influences, and so on) into the historical and political context within which forms acquire meaning. This context, in turn, may be very different from the original meaning of the same forms in the West. They are the historical sites upon which the two points discussed above (i.e., on cultural difference and on the politics of architecture) come into sharpest focus.

Hence, one immediate way in which the insights of postcolonial theory can enter the education of the architect via the modern survey is devoting more space to how metropolitan architectural debates of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were reproduced, transformed, or contested in distant lands and overseas territories. For example, how and under which historical and political circumstances does the nineteenth century "battle of styles" in England play itself out in the Levant and the Middle East?³⁷ How does the decline and dissolution of empires on the margins of Europe (Austria-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman) inform the history of early modern architecture?³⁸ How does an early modern stylistic trend like art nouveau travel across national and cultural boundaries from Brussels through Vienna to Istanbul? What are the connections between colonial architecture and urbanism in overseas territories and the prevailing metropolitan discourses in Europe? What are the major differences in the culture and politics of colonial architecture as practiced by the French, the British, the Italians, the Dutch, and so on? What are the architectural and urban expressions of national/postcolonial identity that many nonwestern nations have adopted after independence? What are the connections between the dissemination of architectural discourses and the specific histories of emigration and/or exile? Many such questions now have answers in new scholarship and publications; these await incorporation into architectural history surveys of the modern period. As I have ruminated in this paper, the challenge is first, to make the modern survey *more cross-cultural* without either neutralizing or reifying the difference of other cultures, and second, to make it *more political* without reducing architecture to politics. There is no way of knowing how this new challenge will work itself out in the curricula of different schools of architecture. There is, however, no question that after postcolonial criticism, the survey course, like the western canon on which it is predicated, can no longer remain what it once was.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was first presented in the theme session "Postcolonial Challenges to Architectural Education," cochaired by Sibel Bozdoğan and Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu in the International Conference "Forum II: Architectural Education for the Third Millennium," 22–24, April 1998. The Conference was jointly organized by Eastern Mediterranean University and Istanbul Technical University and was hosted in Gazimagusa, North Cyprus.

2. The proceedings of the first two conferences were published as G.B. Nalbantoglu and C.T. Wong, eds., *Postcolonial Space(s)*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997) and V. Prakash ed., *Theaters of Decolonization* (Seattle: University of Washington, School of Architecture, 1998).

3. H. Muschamp, "The Miracle in Bilbao," *The New York Times Magazine*, (Sept, 7, 1997): 82.

4. When in 1992, together with Nasser Rabbat, my colleague at MIT, we started teaching a new course on the "Making of the Discourse on Islamic Architecture," we too used Bannister Fletcher's "tree" as a way of introducing the Eurocentric biases of architectural history. In subsequent years we retitled the course as "Orientalism and Representation" to mark the broader significance and implications of the issues discussed in the course, beyond the specific case of Islamic art/architecture.

5. S. Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941).

6. M. Trachtenberg and I. Hyman, *Architecture from Prehistory to Postmodernism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Harry N. Adams, 1986), p. 2.

7. J. Musgrove ed., *Sir Bannister Fletcher's History of Architecture* (London: Butterworths, 1987) followed by the most recent 20th edition, D. Cruickshank ed., *Sir Bannister Fletcher's A History of Architecture* (London: Architectural Press, 1996).

8. On this topic see G.B. Nalbantoglu, "Toward Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Bannister Fletcher's 'History of Architecture,'" *Assemblage* 35 (April 1998): 7–17. In this article, Nalbantoglu argues that, Bannister Fletcher's original book was unresolved between viewing nonwestern architecture as "incommensurably different" (i.e., "non-historical styles") and at the same time, framed within the same western framework of architectural analysis (i.e., a "comparative method," suggesting cultural diversity rather than cultural difference). She suggests that, starting with the 1961 edition of the book, subsequent editions eliminated this unresolved tension, thus erasing all traces of potentially critical openings in the original.

9. S. Kostof, *A History of Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

10. For example in Z. Celik, "Colonialism, Orientalism and the Canon," *Art Bulletin* (June 1996): 202.

11. K. Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

12. W. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1983 and 1995): 10.

13. For this awareness of the historiographic questions pertaining to the scholarship on Sinan, I am indebted to Gulru Necipoglu for sharing with me the introduction to her manuscript in progress, *Ottoman Architectural Culture in the Age of Sinan: Mosque Complexes as Sites of Collective Identity, Memory and Decorum*.

14. B. Lewis, "Other Peoples' History" in *Islam and the West* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 123.

15. For example, the criticism of the exclusion of blacks, natives, and others from the grand narratives of American history coexist with other arguments explaining how the inclusion of others is frequently no more than a benign gesture that does not alter the paradigmatic nature of America's white history. These argu-

ments claim that such benign gestures serve to conceal the inequalities, asymmetries and the relations of power involved in the encounter. Some black intellectuals oppose the politically correct term *Afro-American* because it equates blacks with, say, Polish-Americans and other hyphenated immigrant groups, thereby concealing histories of slavery and bondage. See D.W. Fields, "A Black Manifesto," *Appendix 1* (1993): 18–45.

16. G.B. Nalbantoglu, "Toward Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*," *Assemblage* 35 (April 1998): 12.

17. E. Said, "Politics of Knowledge," *Raritan* (summer 1991): 30–31.

18. In rejecting the appropriation of his work by nativists, nationalists, and Islamic fundamentalists, Edward Said emphasized the importance of "a methodological vigilance that construes Orientalism less as a positive than as a critical discipline and therefore makes it subject to intense scrutiny." E. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Race and Class* (autumn 1985): 5 and *Cultural Critique* (fall 1985): 95.

19. For a critical discussion of the discourse accompanying Charles Correa's recent work see R. Bhatt and S. Bafna, "Postcolonial Narratives of Indian Architecture," *Architecture+Design* (Nov.–Dec. 1995): 85–89 and V. Prakash, "Identity Production in Postcolonial Indian Architecture: Re-covering What We Never Had," in G.B. Nalbantoglu and C.T. Wong, eds. *Postcolonial Space(s)*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997): 39–52.

20. S. Rushdie, "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist," *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Penguin Books, 1992): 67.

21. B. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 44.

22. For example, in A. Max-Vogt, *Le Corbusier: The Noble Savage* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998) and F. Passanti, "The Vernacular, Modernism and Le Corbusier," *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians* (Dec. 1997): 438–451.

23. Z. Celik, "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," *Assemblage* 17 (April 1992): 59–77.

24. B. Colomina, "The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism," in B. Colomina ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: The Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 98–128.

25. As in F. Passanti, "The Vernacular, Modernism and Le Corbusier," *Journal of Society of Architectural Historians* (Dec. 1997): 438–451.

26. See G. Pollock, *Avant-Garde Gambits 1888–1893: Gender and the Color of Art History* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992).

27. In a line of criticism directed at cultural studies in general and represented most prominently by A. Bloom, E. Gellner, and B. Lewis.

28. For example, in A. Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992).

29. B. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 43.

30. S. Bozdogan, "Journey to the East: Orientalism and the Question of Representation," *JAE* (summer 1988): 38–45.

31. My article was criticized by Richard Ingersoll in "Letter to the Editor," *JAE* (summer 1989): 61 and also by Zeynep Celik in "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism," *Assemblage* 17 (April 1992): 74 endnote 6.

32. In one particularly informative and inspirational recent work, the politics of Le Corbusier's technocratic urbanism is treated as a paradigm of High Modernist social engineering, which has wreaked havoc in the twentieth century as the ideology of the State for many nonwestern governments. See J.C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

33. E. Said, "Politics of Knowledge," *Raritan* (summer 1991): 28.

34. See F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963) and A. Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (New York: Orion Press, 1965).

35. For the contradictory nature of nationalist projects in the postcolonial world, see P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed Publications, 1986). For the politics of architecture and urban design in designed capitals of the twentieth century the basic reference is L. Vale, *Architecture, Power, National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

36. A. Hourani, "The Road to Morocco," *The New York Review of Books* (8 Mar. 1979): 27–30.

37. On which a very informative recent source is Mark Crinson, *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (London: Routledge, 1996).

38. On the connections between architecture and politics in the domains of Austro-Hungarian Empire, see A. Moravansky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998).