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# OPPOSITIONS

READER

**L'Architecture dans le Boudoir:  
The language of criticism and the criticism of language**

Manfredo Tafuri

Translation by Victor Caliandro

One of the recent and serious developments of theoretical work—the Italian movements during the sixties—is paradoxically one of the least known in the States. OPPOSITIONS begins the presentation and discussion of this important body of ideas with the publication of "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir" by Manfredo Tafuri, one of the more representative figures of this period.

Tafuri's work, profoundly marked by his philosophical position within the dialectic materialist approach, has been developed by means of modern theoretical concepts drawn from French and Italian structuralism. With this basis he has developed a personal position which he calls a "productive criticism," which is rigorously grounded in history. Within his perspective, he is able to develop a critique of more traditional approaches to theory, this has led him from a central focus on a criticism of architecture to a criticism of ideology.

This initial presentation is important for the fact that it contains some of Tafuri's central ideas, discussed not only with respect to an Italian context but also in relation to the latest tendencies in American architecture. Tafuri develops and discusses a typology for different approaches to criticism, in which he distinguishes three possibilities for criticism. The first is the consideration of language as a technical neutrality; the second, the consideration of the dissolution of language, and the third is the consideration of architecture as irony

and criticism. A fourth possibility which is in essence his own position, recognizes the importance of the attempts to organize intellectual work in general and "architecture" in particular within the social process of production. For Tafuri the "general organization of the building process" becomes then the only valid object of analysis for a criticism that aims in this way to integrate itself within that process.

Manfredo Tafuri was born in Rome in 1935. He graduated in architecture in 1960, and has taught the history of architecture at the Universities of Rome, Milan and Palermo. Since 1968 he has been Chairman of the Faculty of the History of Architecture and the Director of the Institute of History at the Architecture Institute in Venice. He is a member of the Scientific Council at the International Center of Studies of Architecture "Andrea Palladio" of Vicenza and on the committee of editors of the magazine *Archithese*. His published works include: *Teorie e storia dell'architettura*, Bari 1968; *L'Architettura dell'Umanesimo*, Bari 1969; *Progetto e utopia*, Bari 1973; *La città americana dalla guerra civile al New Deal* (in collaboration), Bari 1973. He is presently working on a book on the study of the relationship between the avant-garde and contemporary architecture.

*This essay, published here for the first time, was originally a presentation in Italian, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: il linguaggio della critica e la*

*critica del linguaggio," part of the lecture series "Practice, Theory and Politics in Architecture" held at Princeton University in April 1974.*

292 To work with leftover materials, with the garbage and throwaways of our daily and commonplace existence, is an integral aspect of the tradition of modern art, as if it were a magic reversal of the informal into things of quality through which the artist comes to terms with the world of objects. No wonder then that if the most heartfelt condition today is that of wishing to salvage values pertinent to architecture, the only means is to employ "war surplus" materials, that is, to employ what has been discarded on the battlefield after the defeat of the Modern movement. Thus, the new "knights of purity" advance into the realm of the present debate waving as flags the fragments of a utopia which they themselves cannot see.

Today, he who is willing to make architecture speak is forced to rely on materials empty of any and all meaning: he is forced to reduce to degree zero all architectonic ideology, all dreams of social function and any utopian residues. In his hands, the elements of the modern architectural tradition come suddenly to be reduced to enigmatic fragments, to mute signals of a language whose code has been lost, stuffed away casually in the desert of history. In their own way, those architects who from the late fifties until today have tried to reconstruct a common discourse for their discipline, have felt the need to make a new morality of content. Their purism or their rigorism is that of someone driven to a desperate action that cannot be justified except from within itself. The words of their vocabulary, gathered from the desolate lunar landscape remaining after the sudden conflagration of their grand illusions, lie perilously on that sloping plane which separates the world of reality from the magic circle of language. It is precisely with a sense for a certain salvage operation that we wish to confront the language of criticism: after all, to historicize deliberately such antihistorical attempts only means to reconstruct single-mindedly the system of metaphoric ambiguities which are too openly problematic to be left isolated as disquieting beings.

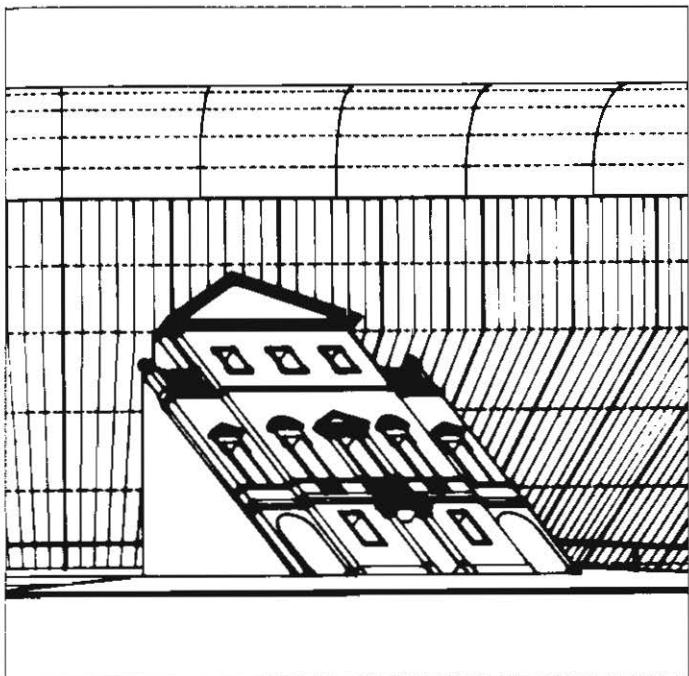
We must immediately warn the reader that we have no intention of reviewing recent architectural trends. Instead, we would like to focus attention on a set of particularly important attitudes, asking ourselves which role criticism must take. We will therefore examine: (1) those trends which re-

spond to language as a purely technical neutrality, which set themselves against the destruction of language as it is generated by a bureaucraticized architecture; this will allow us to reveal the answers offered by the profession and on that research which tries to renew an awareness of linguistic processes and to link up with the experiments of the avant-garde which have been influenced by formalist methodologies; (2) research based on the dissolution of language itself, on the systematic destruction of form that is aimed at the total control of the technological environment; (3) research which interprets architecture as criticism and irony, as well as that which deliberately denies the possibility of an architectonic communication in favor of a neutral system of "information"; and (4) the emergence of an architecture which aims to redistribute the capitalistic division of labor, which moves towards an understanding of the technician's role in building—that is, as a responsible partner in the economic dynamics and as an organizer directly involved in the production cycle. All this we will do to locate with precision, yet without an easy optimism, the role of the difficult exchange between intellectuals and class movements.

We must, however, keep in mind that any analysis which attempts to grasp the structural relationship between the specific forms of the architectural language and the world of production of which they are a part must do so by violating the object of the analysis itself. Criticism, in other words, sees itself constrained to adopt a "repressive" character if it wishes to free that which is beyond language; if it desires to bring upon itself the cruel autonomy of architectural writing, and if, after all, it wishes the "mortal silence of the sign" to speak. As has been acutely pointed out, to Nietzsche's question "Who speaks?" Mallarmé has answered, "The word itself."<sup>1</sup> This would apparently exclude any attempt to question the language as a system of meanings whose discourse it is necessary to reveal. And where contemporary architecture poses, ostentatiously, the problems of its meaning, we must look for the signs of a regressive utopia, even if these signs mime a struggle against the role of language. This struggle is apparent if we see how, in recent works, the compositional strictness oscillates precariously between the forms of "comment" and those of "criticism." The best example of this is seen in the work of James Stirling, Kenneth Frampton, Marc

Figure 1. Derby Civic Center competition, Derby James Stirling with Leo Krier, architects, 1970. An historic facade preserved at an angle as a bandstand shell roof.

Figure 2. S. C. Johnson & Son office building, Racine. Frank Lloyd Wright, architect, 1936. Bridge of Pyrex tubes over driveway.



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Girouard, Joseph Rykwert, and Charles Jencks have distinguished themselves in their attempts to give meaning to the enigmatic and ironic usage of "quotation" in Stirling's work.<sup>2</sup>

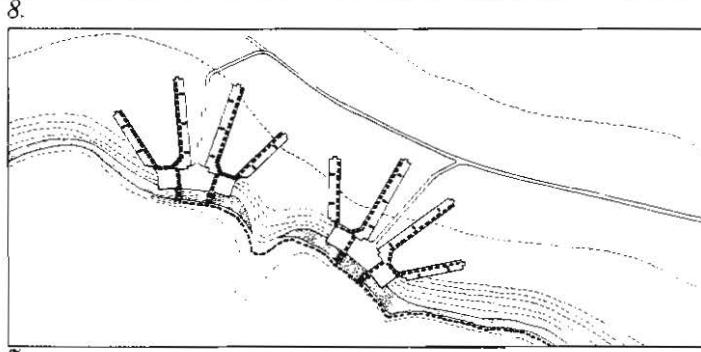
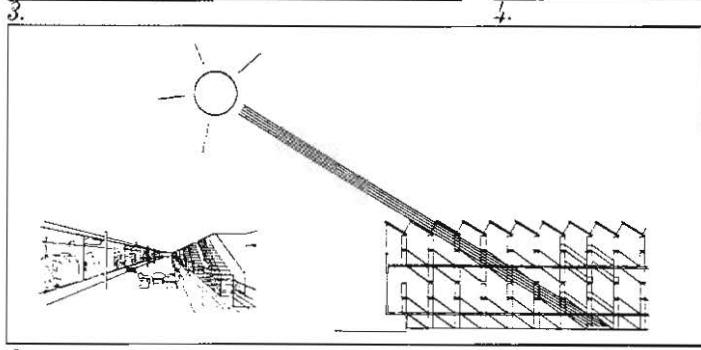
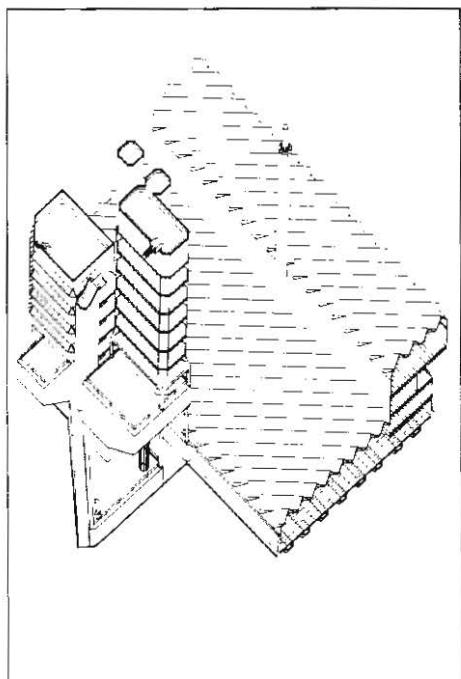
In his more recent works, including the Siemens AG Headquarters in Munich, the Olivetti training school at Haslemere and the housing for Runcorn New Town, we have wished to see a change of direction, a break with the disquieting composition of Constructivist, Futurist, Paxtonian, Victorian memories of his university buildings at Leicester, Cambridge, and Oxford, and of the Civic Center (fig. 1) designed with Leo Krier for Derby.<sup>3</sup> The parabola which Stirling has followed has a high degree of internal consistency. It indeed reveals the consequence of a reduction of the architectural object to pure language, yet it wishes to be compared to the tradition of the Modern movement, to be measured against a body of work strongly compromised in an antilinguistic sense. Stirling has "rewritten" the "words" of modern architecture, building a true "archeology of the present."

Let us look at the design for the Civic Center at Derby. An ambiguous and amused reference to history is spelled out by the facade of the old Assembly Room, inclined by 45° and serving as a proscenium to the theater which is defined by the U-shaped gallery. The entire work of Stirling possesses this "oblique" character. The shopping arcade recalls the Burlington Arcade in London. It also brings to mind the bridge of Pyrex tubes at the Johnson Wax building (fig. 2) by Frank Lloyd Wright, and perhaps even more strongly recalls an unbuilt as well as undesigned architecture—the shopping arcade modeled on a sort of circular Crystal Palace which, following the description by Ebenezer Howard, was to have surrounded the central area of the ideal Garden City. The Civic Center in Derby is in fact an urban "heart." It is, however, part of a real city and not a utopian model, and consequently the memory of Joseph Paxton takes on a flavor of a disenchanted but timely *repêchage*.

Unlike Paul Rudolph, for whom every formal gesture is a hedonistic wink at the spectator, Stirling has revealed the possibilities of an endless manipulation of the grammar and syntax of the architectural sign. He employs with extreme

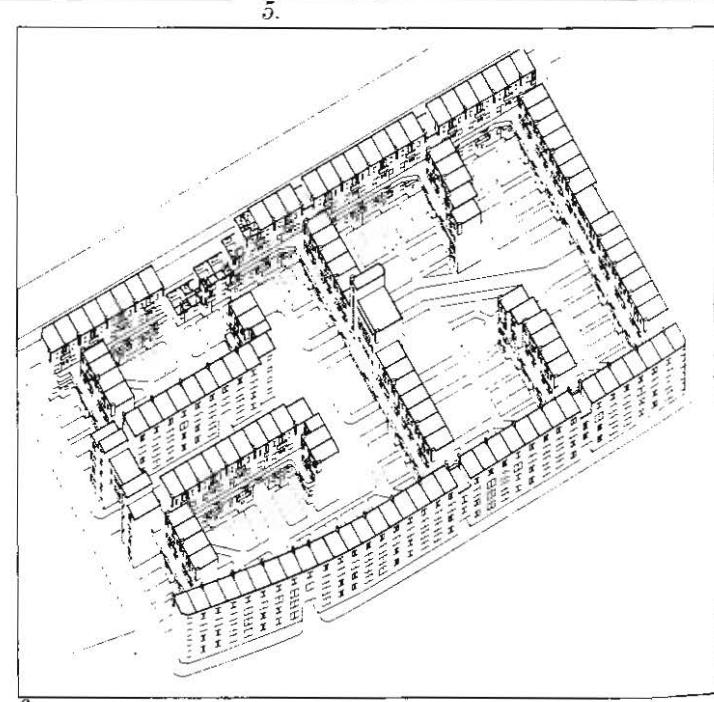
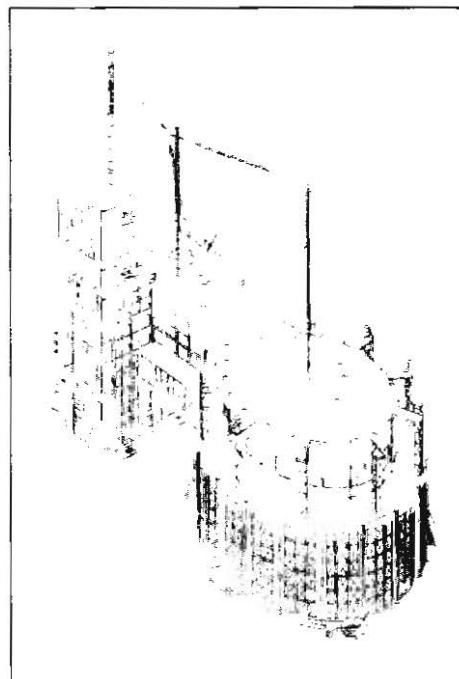
*Figure 3. Leicester University Engineering Laboratory, Leicester. James Stirling, architect, 1959-63. Axonometric.*

*Figure 4. Palace of the Soviets competition, 3rd prize, Moscow. A. and V. Vesnin, architects, 1923. Axonometric.*



*Figure 5. Cambridge University History Building, Cambridge. James Stirling, architect, 1964-67. Axonometric.*

*Figure 6. Spangen Housing, Rotterdam. Michael Brinkman, architect, 1921. Axonometric.*



*Figure 7. St. Andrews University residential expansion, Scotland. James Stirling, architect, 1964-68. Site plan.*

*Figure 8. Housing commune, Munich. Moses Ginsburg, architect, 1927.*

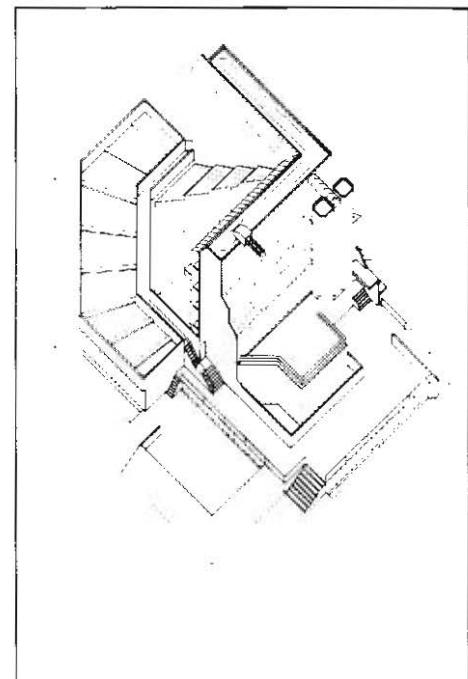
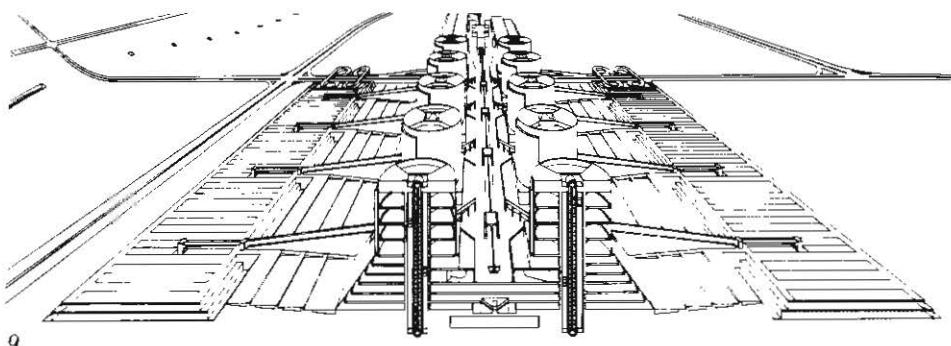


Figure 9. Siemens AG. headquarters,  
Munich. James Stirling, architect.  
1969. Sectional perspective.



9.

coherence the formalistic laws of contrast and opposition of his language's elements: the rotation of the axes, the use of antithetic materials, and technological distortions.<sup>4</sup> The result of such controlled *bricolage* is a metaphorical reference to something very dear to the English architect: the architecture of ships. "A dream with marine references"<sup>5</sup> is the way Kenneth Frampton has accurately labeled the Leicester University Engineering Laboratory (fig. 3), a true iceberg sailing in the sea of the park into which it is casually set down, following an enigmatic course. Yet insofar as Stirling does not appreciate such "fishing for references," the porthole, which ironically comes up from the base of the laboratories at Leicester (next to the jutting Melnikovian halls), seems to confirm that constructivist poetics are a primary source—an almost too obvious reference to the design for the Palace of the Soviets (1923) by the Vesnin brothers (fig. 4). Yet the theme of the ship comes back, this time with proper literary references, in the terracing, the general organization and the common access ways of the Andrew Melville Hall at St. Andrews University (fig. 7). Again, it is Frampton who notes that here the marine metaphor takes on a more precise meaning: the ship, like the phalanstery, symbolizes an unattainable community will.<sup>6</sup> The ship, the monastery and the phalanstery are thereby equivalent. From a desire to achieve perfect communal integration, they isolate themselves from the world. Le Corbusier and Stirling themselves appear, at La Tourette and St. Andrews, to pronounce a painful discovery: social utopianism can only be discussed as a literary document and can only come into architecture as a linguistic element, or better, as a pretext for the use of language.

The charged atmosphere of the young rebels of the 1950s and of the Independent Group, of which Stirling was a member between 1952 and 1956, has thus a coherent result. The affirmation of language, here understood as an interweaving of complex syntactic valences and ambiguous semantic references, also includes the "function," the existential dimension of the work. Yet it only deals with a "virtual function" and not an effective function. The Andrew Melville Hall represents theatrically the space of communal integration which—from the time of the Spangen block (1921) of Michael Brinkman (fig. 6) to the housing commune (1927) of Moses Ginsburg (fig. 8), the postwar plans of Le Corbusier and

Alison and Peter Smithson, and the building of Park Hill and Robin Hood Gardens<sup>7</sup>—the orthodoxy of the Modern movement had hoped to make operable as spaces of social precipitation.

295

Suspending the public destined to use his buildings in a limbo of a space that ambiguously oscillates between the emptiness of form and a "discourse on function"—that is, architecture as an autonomous machine, as it is spelled out in the History building at Cambridge (fig. 5) and made explicit in the project for Siemens AG (fig. 9)—Stirling carries out the most cruel of acts by abandoning the sacred precinct in which the semantic universe of the modern tradition has been enclosed. Neither attracted nor repulsed by the independent articulation of Stirling's formal machines, the observer is forced in spite of himself to recognize that this architecture does indeed speak its own language, one that is perversely closed into itself. It is possible only to sink or swim, forced into a swinging course, itself just as oscillating as the perverse play of the architect with the elements of his own language.

As we have said regarding comment and criticism: the form of comment is a repetition in the desperate search for the genesis of the signs; the form of criticism is the analysis of the function of the signs themselves, a task possible only after one has renounced the search for the hallowed meaning of the language. The operations carried out by Stirling are exemplary; they point out the utopia intrinsic in the full realization of architecture as a discourse. In this light, the functional criticisms which are constantly leveled at Stirling are at once correct and unjust;<sup>8</sup> once having artificially reconstructed an independent structure of language, the criticisms are inevitably resolved into a surreal play of tensions between the universe of signs and the domain of the real.

We are therefore led back to our initial problem; that is, in which manner may criticism become compromised in such a "perverse play" under whose ambiguous sign the entire thrust of modern architecture flickers? At the origins of the critical act are always found the acts of distinguishing, separating and disintegrating a given structure. Without the act of disintegrating the object under analysis, it is impossible to rewrite it. It is self-evident that there does not exist a criti-

cism that does not follow the process which generated the work itself, one which does not redeploy the elements of the work into a different order, if only for the sake of constructing typological models. Yet it is here that there begins what might be called the doubling of the object under critical examination. The simple analysis of architecture, which obliges one to speak of it in terms of its language, would be description pure and simple. Such an analysis would be unable to break the magic circle that the work in question draws around itself, and it would therefore only be able to manipulate within set limits the selfsame process that generated the work, thereby repeating its axioms. The only external referent of such an "internalized" reading would be found in the gaps inherent in the linguistic object itself. Thus this "doubling" created by criticism must go beyond merely constructing a "second language" to float above the original text, as Roland Barthès speaks of it.<sup>9</sup> The creation of typological models, which Emilio Garroni has correctly seen as the only possible way to single out systems and codes of reference for architecture,<sup>10</sup> may therefore have meaning if the models prove capable of: (1) defining a series of structural constants to form a base upon which to measure the degree of innovation in each architectural experiment (the typology of the Palladian villa as developed by Rudolf Wittkower is a prime example); and (2) allowing a dynamic comparison between the series of constants and those structures which determine the possibility of the very existence of architecture. In the above method there is no ordinary subdivision between structure and superstructure. There is only insistence upon completion of the analysis of a test of the "function" of the communications system. Yet the discourse on language requires further clarification. Criticism must point out with precision its role in relation to involuted architectural proposals, if only because these are today the most apparent.

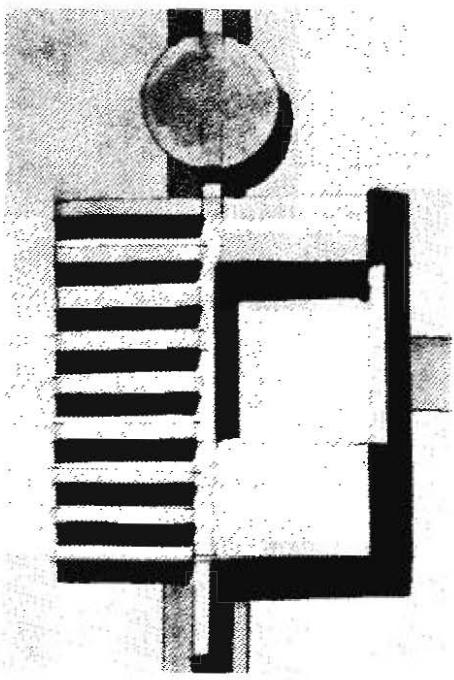
At the borderline, the linguistic residues—that is, those aspects of the real which have not been resolved in form, as in the architecture of a James Stirling, a Louis Kahn, or a Victor Lundy—are suddenly eliminated; it is there that the absolute presence of form makes "scandalous" the existence of the casual, even in that casual behavior *par excellence*, human presence.

The research by Aldo Rossi provides an excellent example to illustrate a theme which inexorably divides the entire course of modern art.<sup>11</sup> Rossi answers the poetics of ambiguity of a John Johansen or a Robert Venturi with the liberation of architecture from any embrace with reality, from any interruption by chance or by any empiricism in its totally structured sign system. The "scandal" of Stirling's architecture is man, held as he is in an ambiguous suspension between architecture as a pure object and a redundancy of hermetic communications. The architecture of Rossi suppresses such a scandal. The invocation of form that it calls forth excludes all external justifications. The specific qualities of architecture are set down into a universe of carefully selected signs, within which the law of exclusion dominates, and in fact is the controlling expression. Beginning with the monument of Segrate (1965) to the designs for the City Hall of Muggio (1972) (fig. 13) and the cemetery of Modena (1971) (fig. 11), Rossi declaims an alphabet that rejects all articulation. As the abstract representation of its own arbitrary laws, it makes artifice its own realm. By this means such an architecture falls back to the structural nature of language itself. Exhibiting a syntax of empty signs, programmed exclusions, rigorous limitations, it reveals the inflexible nature of the arbitrary and the false dialectic between freedom and norms that are characteristic of the linguistic order. "Pure Art," the object of a famous discussion between Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, sets forth in such works its own principle of legitimacy.

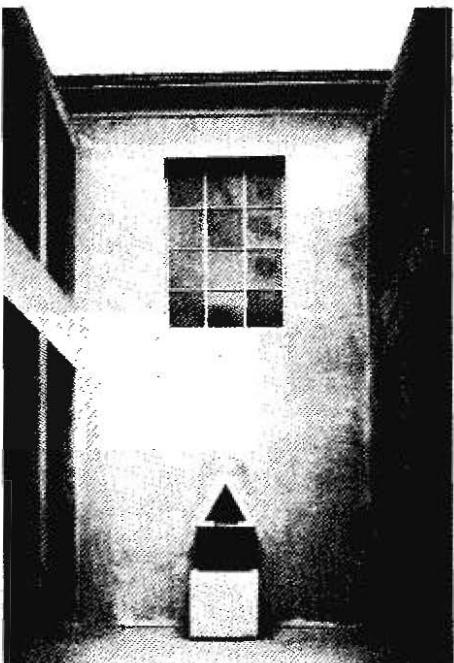
The emptied sign is also the instrument of the metaphysics of De Chirico, of the dream-like realism of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, and of the astounded enigma projected onto objects by the school of the Nouveau Regard.<sup>12</sup> With these, Rossi shares only a sort of frustrated nostalgia for the structure of communication. But for him, it is a communication that has nothing to speak about except the finite quality of its closed system, wherein the cyclone of the "Angelus Novus" has passed, freezing words into salt pillars.<sup>13</sup> Mies van der Rohe had already experimented with the language of emptiness and silence. Yet for Mies the translation of the sign still occurred within the presence of the real, that is to say, by contrast with the city itself. In Rossi, however, the categorical imperative lives as the absolute alienation of form, to the

*Figure 10. Fagnano School, Olona.  
Aldo Rossi, architect, 1973. Sketch of  
site plan.*

*Figure 11. Cemetery competition,  
Modena. Aldo Rossi and Gianni  
Braghieri, architects, 1971.  
Perspective.*



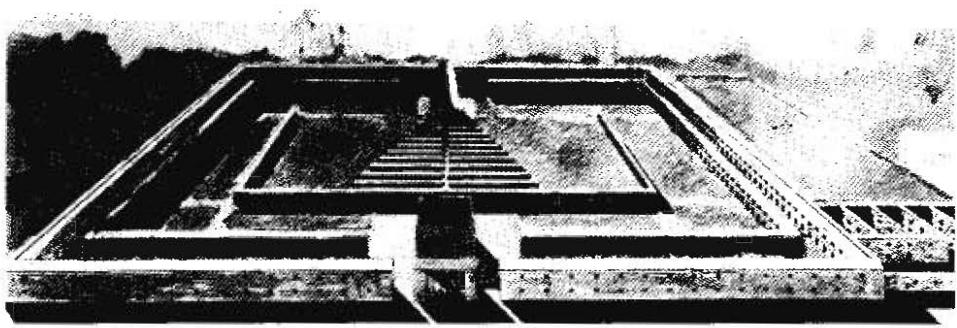
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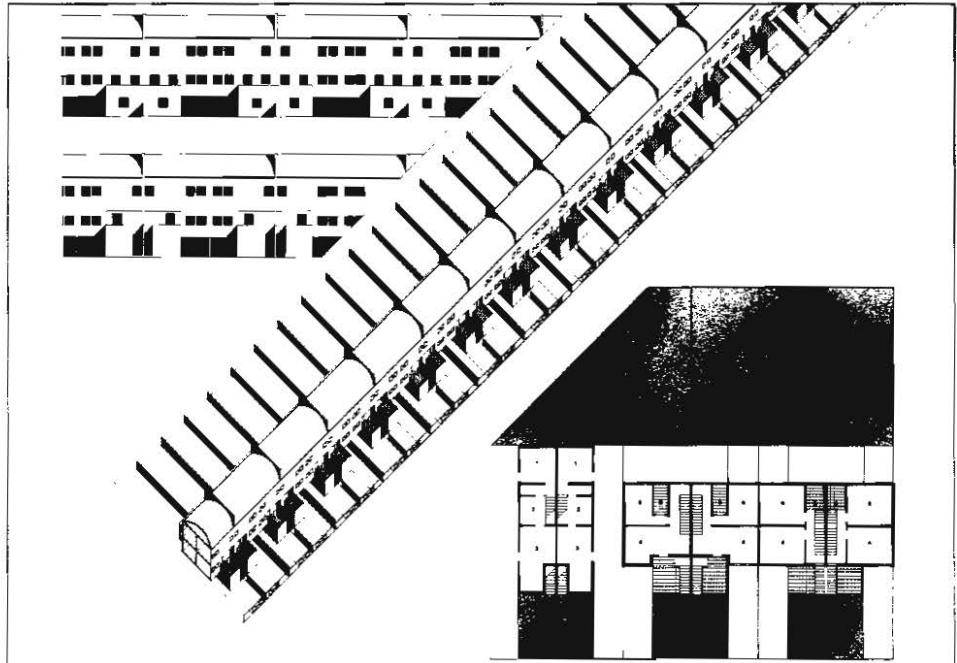
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*Figure 12. Single family housing  
project, Broni. Aldo Rossi, architect,  
1973. Elevation, axonometric, plans.*

*Figure 13. Muggio City Hall  
Competition, Muggio. Aldo Rossi,  
architect, 1972. Axonometric.*



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*Figure 14. Elementary School, Broni.  
Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Detail of  
courtyard.*

*Figure 15. Gallaratese 2 neighborhood, Milan. Carlo Aymonino and Associates, architects, 1967-73. View across plaza over the garages, showing the open air theater surrounded by residential blocks A2,B.*

*Figure 16. Gallaratese 2. Residential block A1.*

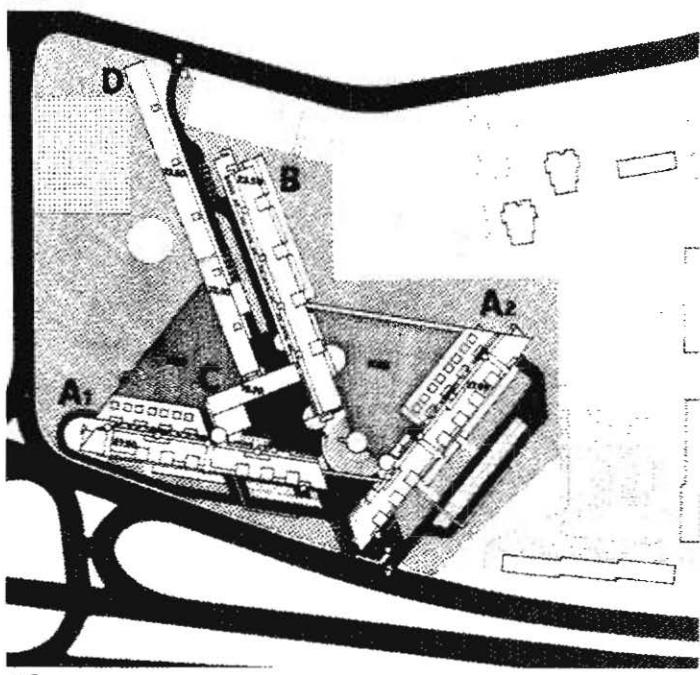


*Figure 17. Gallaratese 2. View of entrance and residential blocks A1,A2.*

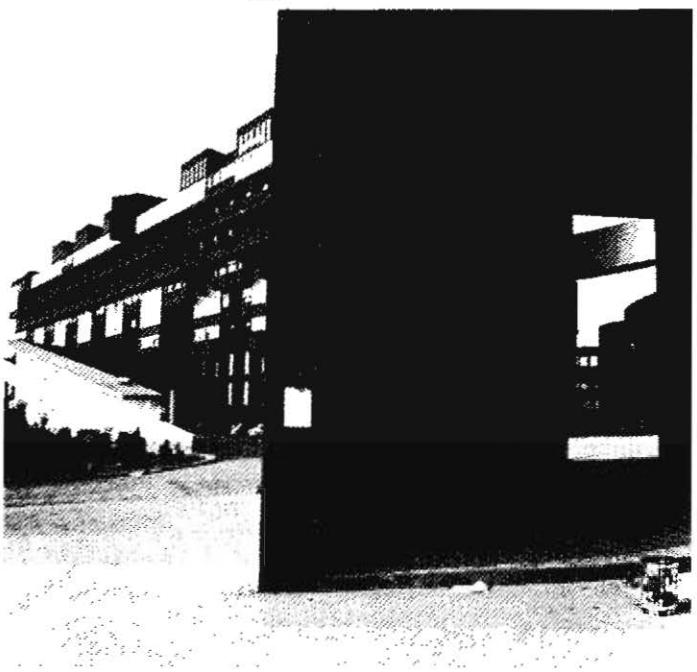
*Figure 18. Gallaratese 2. General plan.*



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point of achieving an emptied sacredness—an experience of the immovable and of the eternal return to geometric emblems reduced to being mere ghosts.<sup>14</sup>

There is a precise reason for this phenomenon. The result that Rossi approaches is that of demonstrating, without any chance of further appeal, that by his removal of form from the domain of daily experience, he is continually forced to circumnavigate the central point from which communication springs forth, yet is unable to draw from the source itself. This is not because of any inability of the architect, but rather because this "center" has been historically destroyed. If an attitude of neo-Enlightenment is found in Rossi, it is to be understood as a recovered example of an irreversible act of the eighteenth century—the fragmentation of the "order of discourse." Only the ghost of that lost order can today be waved about. Yet the accusations of fascism hurled at Rossi mean little, since his attempts at the recovery of an ahistoricizing form exclude verbalizations of its content and any compromise with the real.<sup>15</sup>

In this manner such research loses itself in its extreme attempt to save the institution of architecture. The thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his work does not reestablish the discipline, but rather dissolves it, thereby making true the tragic acknowledgement of Georg Simmel, "a form which is open to life, serves it, cannot give it itself."<sup>16</sup>

A fundamentally important result springs forth from this, one which has in fact already been taken for granted in our contemporary culture, but which is continually cast aside. The refusal to manipulate forms, as Rossi maintains, in fact concludes a debate that was personally fought first by Adolf Loos, and which has in Karl Kraus its highest exponent.

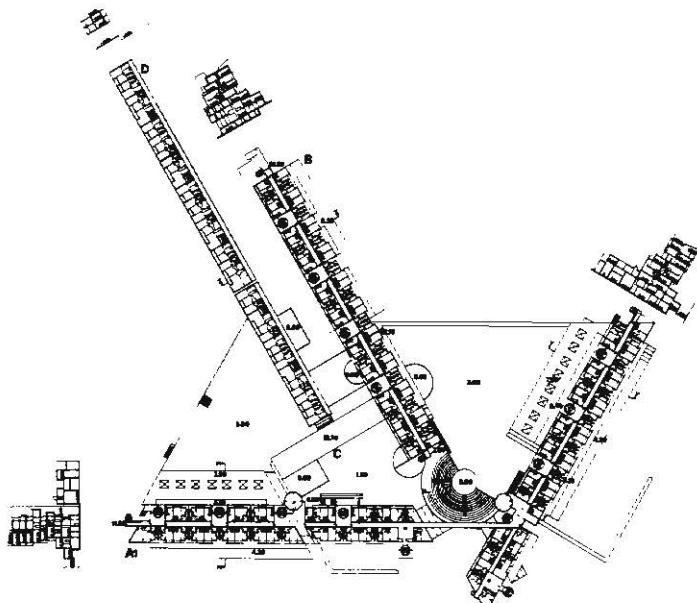
In this great epoch which I have known when it was still so small and which will again become small, if there is any time left . . . in this noisy epoch which resounds from the horrendous symphony of facts which yield news and news which is to be blamed for the facts. In this epoch one should not wait for any particular words from me, none aside from this one, which barely serves to preserve the silence of misunderstanding. Too deeply rooted in me is the respect for the immutable, the subordination of language to fate. With-

in the realms of the poverty of fantasy, where man dies 299 from spiritual starvation without ever discovering his spiritual hunger, where pens are dipped in blood and swords in ink, that which is past ought to be fact, but that which is only thought is ineffable. Let them not await from me my word. Nor would I be able to speak any new word, for within the room where one writes the noise is so loud and if it comes from animals, babies or only trench guns, is not now important. He who adds words to facts defaces the word and the fact, and therefore is doubly despicable. This profession has not extinguished itself. Those who now have nothing to say, because facts have words, continue to speak. He who has something to say, step forward and be silent."<sup>17</sup>

If facts possess the word, then nothing remains but to have facts speak and preserve, in silence, the spectrum of great values. Of these—and here Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos, and Ludwig Wittgenstein agree—"we cannot speak," that is, without contaminating them, Loos expresses clearly. Yet to refuse to speak with architecture we may miss only that which evades life: the *monument*—that is, the artificial creation of a collective memory, true "parallel action" of "man without quality"—and the *tomb*—the illusion of a universe beyond death.<sup>18</sup> Only in the service of illusory functions, virtual ones, that is, is it now possible to build virtual spaces.

The aforementioned statement by Simmel is thus now inverted and thereby confirmed: the space of life excludes that of form, or at least keeps it constantly in check. In the Gallaretese neighborhood in Milan, to the moderated expressionism of Carlo Aymonino, who articulates his residential blocks as they converge into the fulcrum of the open-air theater in a complex play of artificial streets and nodes (figs. 15-19), Rossi creates an opposition in the sacred precision of his geometric block which is held above ideology and above all utopian proposals for a "new lifestyle."

The complex as designed by Aymonino wishes to underscore every resolution, every joint, every formal artifice. Aymonino apparently wants to speak the language of superimposition and complexity, within which single objects violently strung together insist upon displaying their individual role within the entire "machine." Yet, and quite sig-



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nificantly, Aymonino, by assigning to Rossi the design for one of the blocks within this neighborhood (figs. 20-22), must have felt the need to confront himself with a proposal radically opposed to his own. And it is here that we find, facing the aggregation of Aymonino's signs, the absolute sign of Rossi.

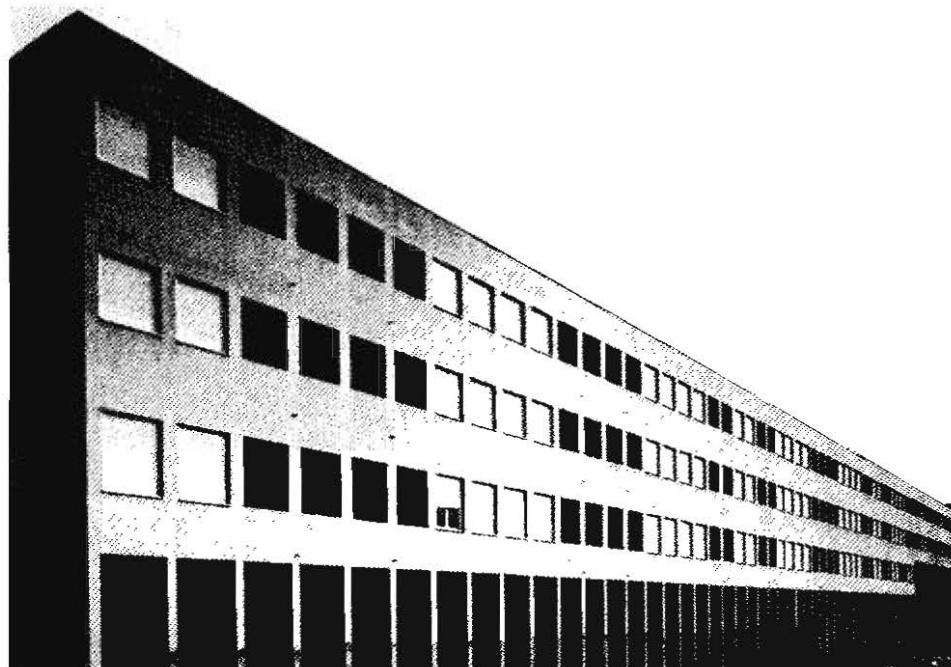
The position taken by Kraus and Loos is not negated: it is, however, made more ambiguous. Because facts have words, form may be silent. The simultaneous presence of objects constructivistically aggregated, obstinately forced to communicate messages or modes of behavior, and a mute object closed in its equally obstinate timidity, "narrate" in an exemplary fashion the drama of modern architecture. Architecture, once again, has made a discourse on itself. But this time, in an unusual way: as a colloquy, that is, between two languages which approach the same result. The complexity of Aymonino and the silence of Rossi: two ways to declaim the guttural sounds of the yellow giants—we recall here the expressionist drama *Der gelbe Klaug* in which Wassily Kandinsky had personified the "new angels" of mass society.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout this discussion, we have deliberately established the analysis of a specific phenomenon with reference to a correct use of criticism. The examples of Stirling and Rossi have proven useful precisely because in their presence the very function of criticism is called into question and because, in part, we are dealing with those extreme situations which are important to the current debate on the architectural language, as seen in the work of Louis Kahn, Denys Lasdun, the "Five," and the Italian experimentalists, such as Vittorio De Feo, the Stass group or Vittorio Gregotti.<sup>20</sup>

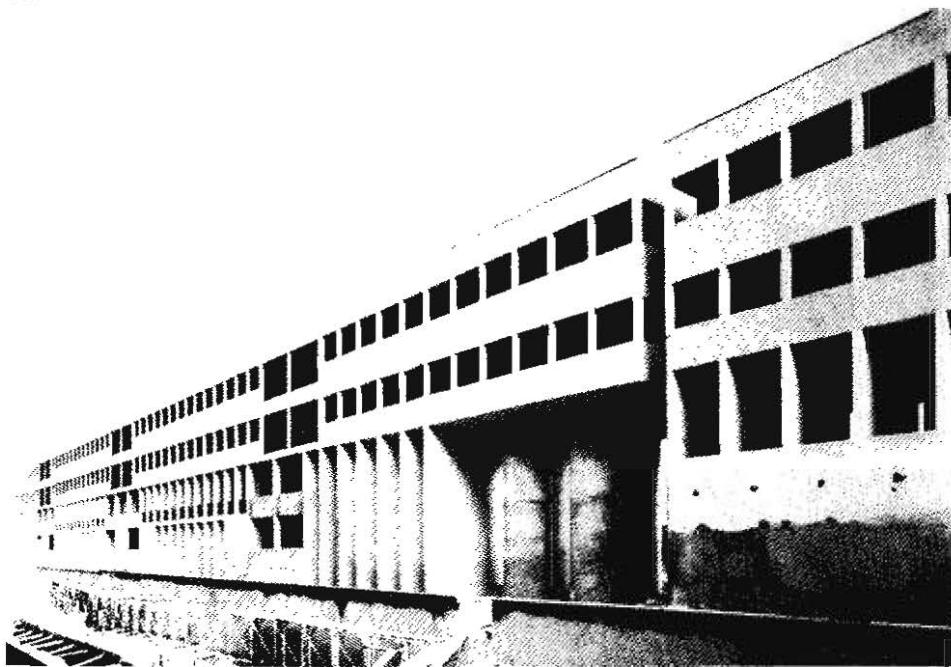
In writing about De Feo, Francesco Dal Co speaks of a "suspended architecture."<sup>21</sup> And in fact, the works of De Feo—among the most remarkable of recent Italian work—oscillate between the creation of entirely virtual spaces and typological research at the level of the organism. The experimentation with the deformation of geometric elements is predominant, as seen in the project for the new House of Representatives in Rome, planned with the Stass group (1967); the Technical school at Terni (1968-74) (figs. 25-27); and the competition for an Esso service station (1971) (figs. 28,29). Here, De

*Figure 19. Gallaratese 2 neighborhood, Milan. Carlo Aymonino and Associates, architects, 1967-73. Site plan.*

*Figure 20. Gallaratese 2 neighborhood, Milan. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1970-73. Residential block D.*



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*Figure 21. Gallaratese 2. Entrance to residential block D.*

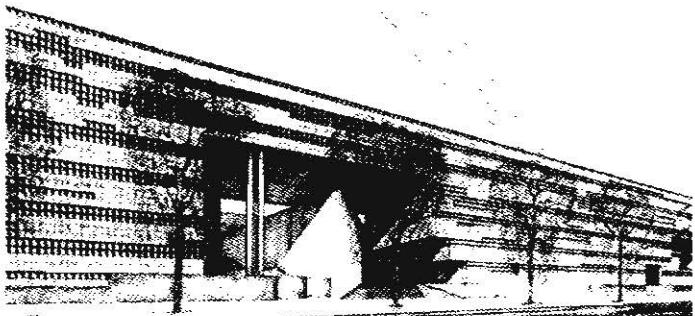
*Figure 22. Gallaratese 2. Residential block D.*



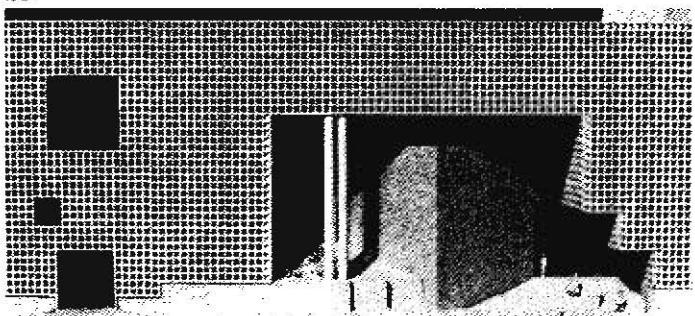
21.

*Figure 23. Regional offices competition, Trieste. Vittorio De Feo and Associates, architects, 1974. Perspective.*

*Figure 24. Regional offices competition. Detail of model.*



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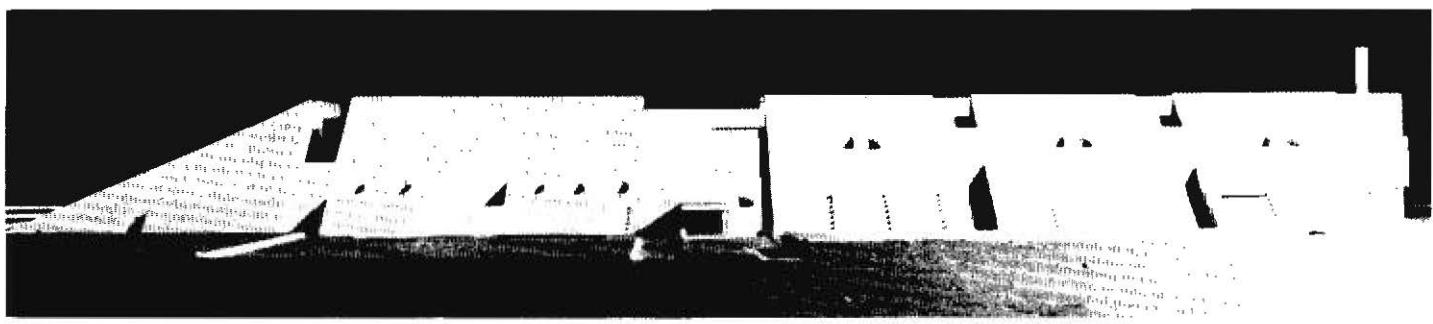
*Figure 25. Technical school, Terni. Vittorio De Feo and Errico Ascione, architects, 1968-74. Model.*

*Figure 26. Technical School. Model in plan.*

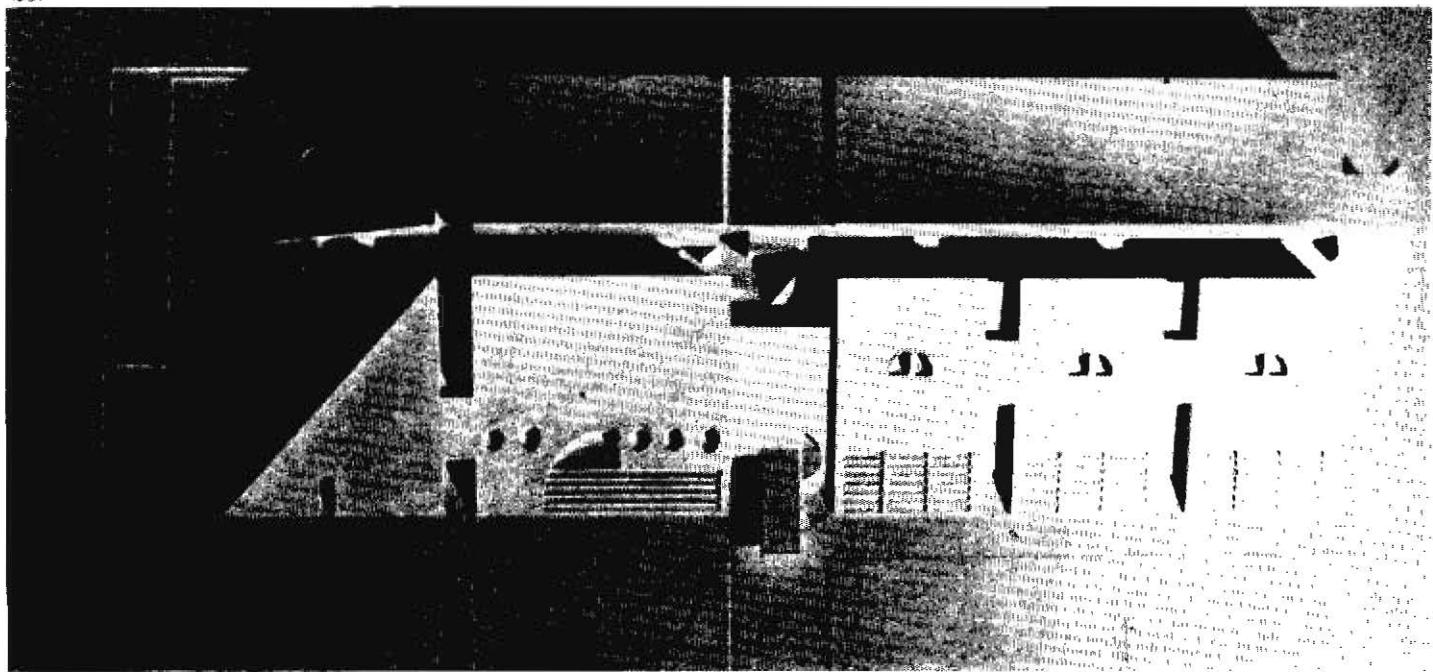
*Figure 27. Technical School. Detail of building, near completion.*

Feo treats geometry as a primary element, to be juxtaposed with the chosen functional order. Compared to the purism of Rossi, the architecture of De Feo, or for that matter of Georgio Ciucci and Mario Manieri-Elia, appears more empirical and casual. However, within its search for the pure and intrinsic qualities of form, it possesses qualities at once self-critical and self-ironic, which are revealed as a disenchanted pop image (and wherein the exasperated geometric play of the Esso station is resolved). It is possible here to find a warning: once the "form is made free;" the geometric universe becomes an uncontrollable "adventure." Without doubt, similar studies are historically born upon reflections on the themes introduced by Kahn; yet, for Italians in particular, each study of linguistic tools loses the mystic aura and simple faith in the charismatic power of institutions. We are therefore faced with an apparent paradox. Those who concentrate on linguistic experimentation have lost the old illusions about the innovative powers of communication. Yet by accepting the relative independence of syntactic research, we are then confronted with the arbitrary qualities of the reference code. Thus neither De Feo nor Manieri-Elia are able to link their choice of reference code to a suitable act of *engagement* (which in itself may have other means of self-expression).

To what point then is this attitude comparable to that of the "Five Architects" who, in the panorama of international architecture, appear closest to conceiving of architecture as a reflection upon itself and upon its internal articulations? Is it indeed possible to speak of their work as "mannerism among the ruins"?<sup>22</sup> Mario Gandelsonas has correctly singled out the specific areas of interest in the work of Michael Graves—the interest in the classicist code, cubist painting, the traditions of the Modern movement, and nature.<sup>23</sup> Yet we should be wary. We are again dealing with "closed systems," within which the themes of polysemy and pluralism are formed and controlled, and within which the possession of the aleatory is resolved in an institutional, or at best "monumental," format. (The only source which appears to defy such an interpretation is that which refers to the Modern movement: nevertheless, this is read by Graves as only signifying "metaphysical" and "twentieth century," thus permitting our schema to remain valid.) Having established a system of



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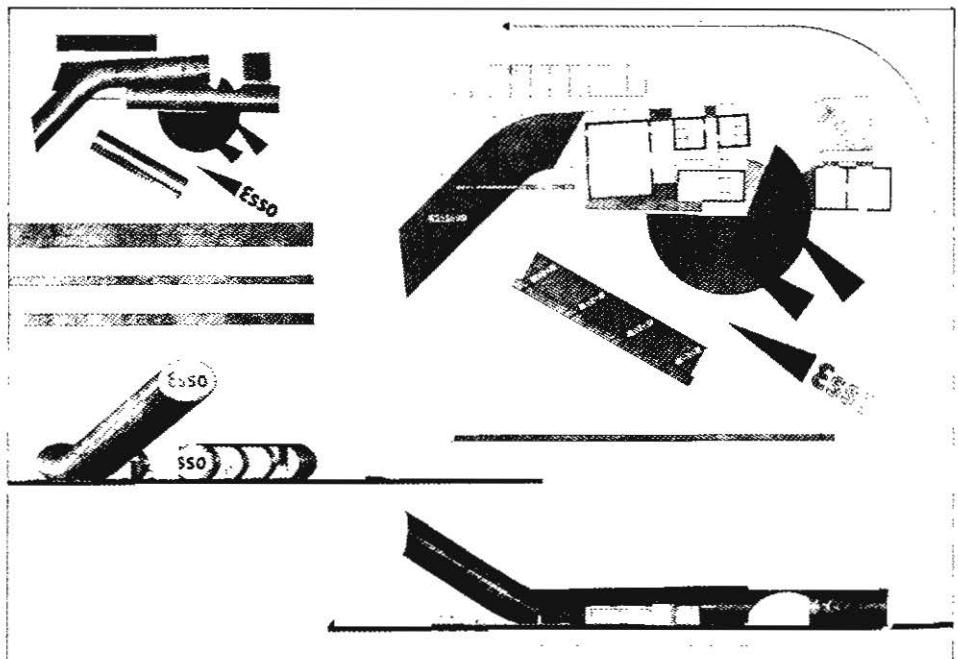


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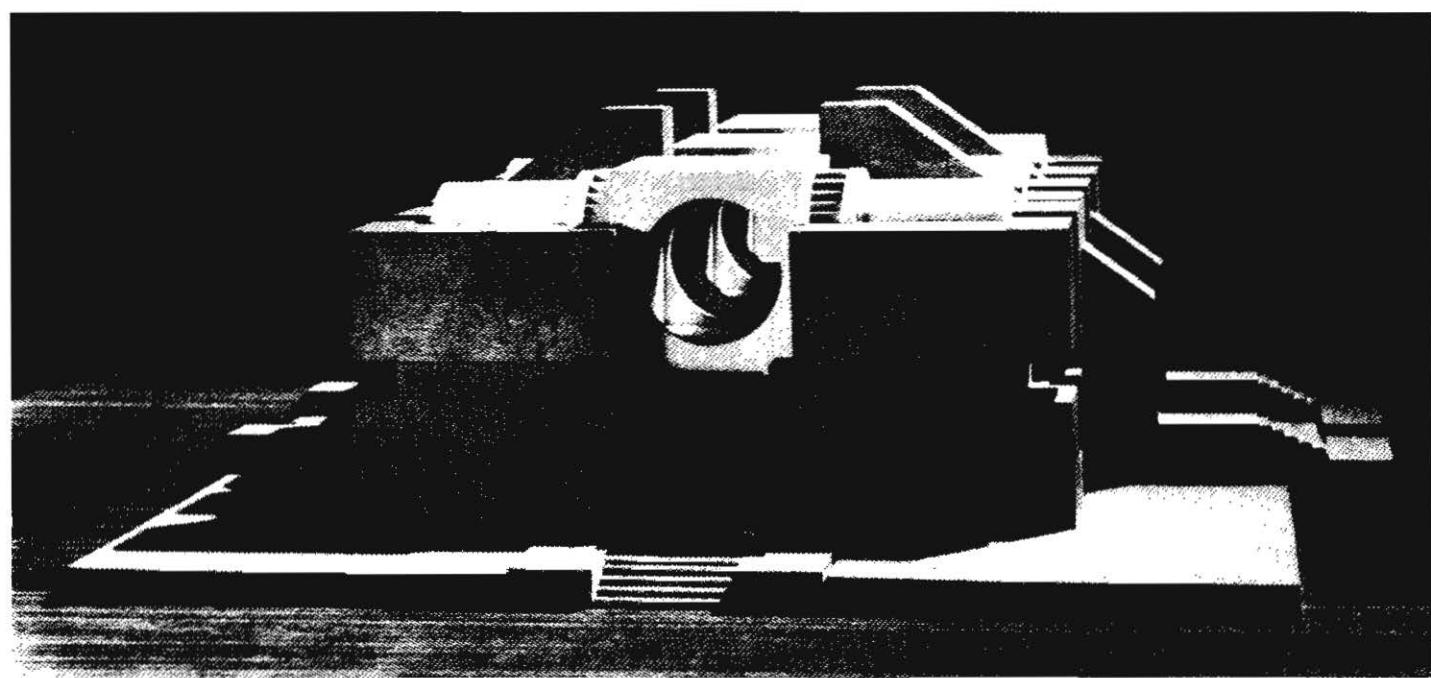
29.

*Figure 28. Esso Service Station, project. Vittorio De Feo and Associates, 1971. Perspective.*

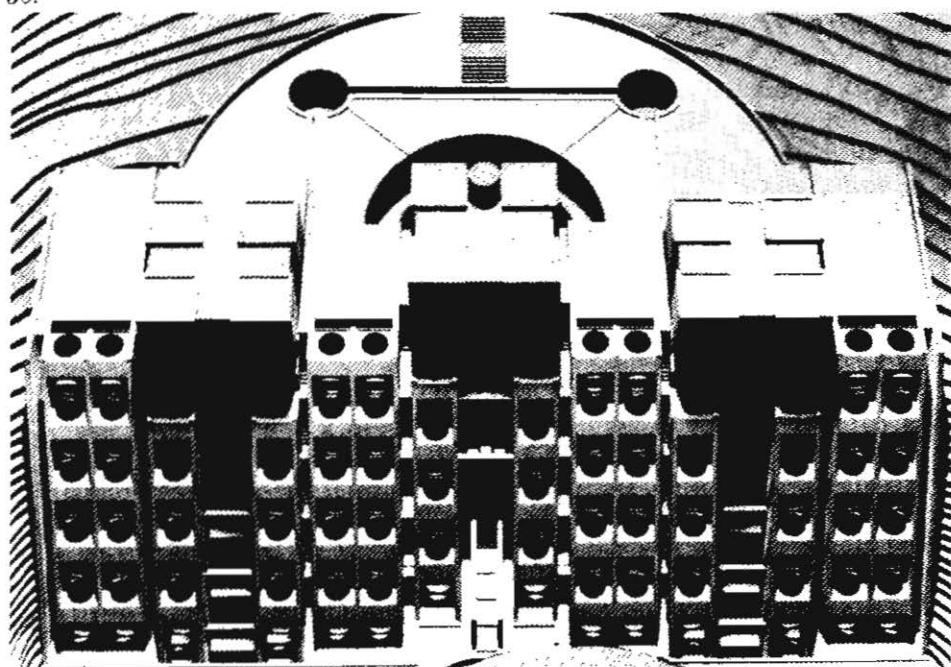
*Figure 29. Esso Service Station. Plans and elevations.*

*Figure 30. Project for a house, Fregene. Gruppo Stass, architects, 1968. Model.*

*Figure 31. Hotel, Santa Caterina, Nardo. Gruppo Stass, architects, 1970. Model.*



30.

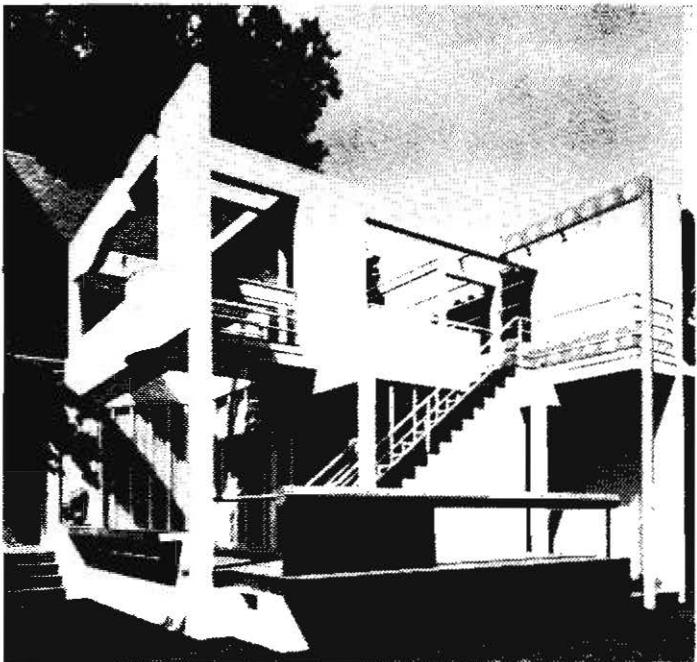


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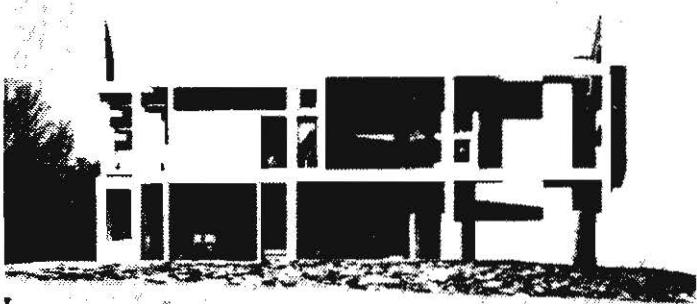
306 limitations and exclusions, Graves is able to manipulate his materials in a finite series of operations; at the same time this system allows him to show how a clarification or an explication of linguistic processes permits an indirect control over the design, *always within the predetermined system of exclusions*. In other words, Michael Graves, Peter Eisenman and Richard Meier give new life to a method which springs from the classification of the syntactic processes. It is the sort of formalism, in its original guise, which is perpetuated through their work (figs. 32-34). "Semantic distortion," the pivotal point of the Russian formalists, is thus brought to life again in an obvious manner at the Benacerraf House by Graves. Within this work, as well as in the more hieratic and timeless syntactic decompositions of Eisenman, we may see a sort of analytic laboratory devoted to experimentation upon highly select forms, rather than just a mere penchant for Terragni or a taste for the abstract.

It is of little interest to us to ask how such works may appear as a heresy within the American culture. However, their objective role is without doubt to provide a selected catalogue of design approaches applicable to predetermined situations. It is then useless to ask if their "neo-purist" tendencies are or are not effective.<sup>24</sup> As examples of linguistic structures, we can only ask that they be rigorous in their absolute ahistoricism. Only in this fashion can their nostalgic abandon be neutralized, and thereby acknowledge their need to remain in isolation (an acknowledgement, by the way, which would never be apparent from the self-satisfied stylistic gestures of Philip Johnson).

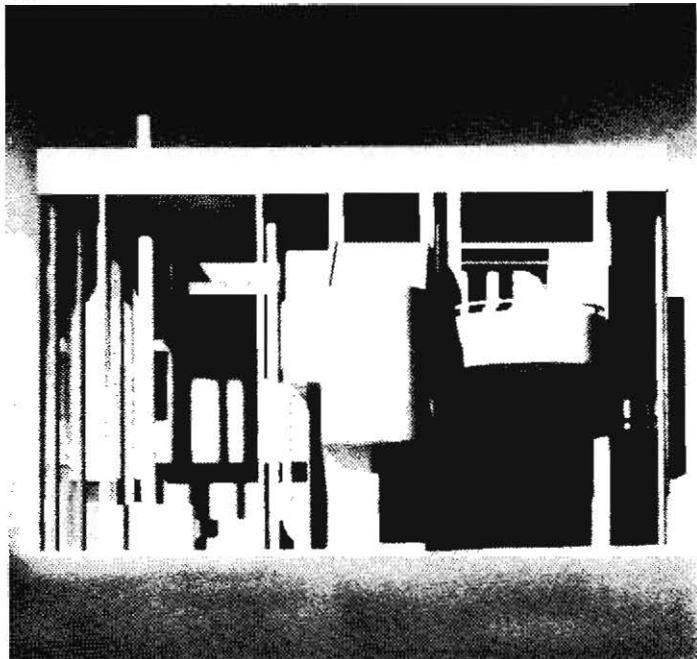
Let us attempt to reconstruct the analysis to date. It requires a specific reading of the languages employed as well as the use of different modes of approach to their analysis. To understand Stirling's work it is necessary to refer to the technological aesthetic and the theory of information. Only by so doing will it be possible to become completely aware of the rationale behind his semantic distortions. But the theory of information reveals little to us about Rossi's study of typological constraints. Indeed, Rossi's formalism appears to want to challenge even the original formulation of the linguistic formalism of Viktor Sklovsky or of Vsevolod M. Eichenbaum.



32.



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34.

*Figure 32. Benacerraf House,  
Princeton, New Jersey. Michael  
Graves, architect, 1967.*

*Figure 33. House II, Hardwick,  
Vermont. Peter Eisenman, architect,  
1969.*

*Figure 34. House in Pound Ridge,  
Connecticut. Richard Meier and  
Associates, architects, 1969.*

We do not wish to put forward a theory of critical empiricism. We rather intend to point out that every critical action is seen, in fact, as a composite of itself and the object being analyzed. Today then, a highly specialized analysis of an architecture, strongly characterized by linguistic sense, can have only one result—a tautology.

To dissect and rebuild the geometric metaphors of the “compositional rigorists” may prove to be an endless game which may eventually become useless when, as in Eisenman’s work, the process of assemblage is altogether explicit and presented in a highly didactic manner. In the face of such products, the task of criticism is to begin from within the work only to escape from it as soon as possible so as not to be caught in the vicious circle of a language that speaks only of itself. Obviously the problems of criticism lie elsewhere. We do not believe in the artificial “New Trends” within contemporary architecture.<sup>25</sup> Yet there is little doubt that there exists a widespread attitude that is intent on repossessing the unique character of the object by removing it from its economic and functional contexts and highlighting it as an exceptional event—and hence a surrealistic one—by placing it in parentheses with the flux of objects generated by the production system. It is possible to speak of these acts as an “*architecture dans le boudoir*.” And not only because we find ourselves faced with an “architecture of cruelty,” as the works of Stirling and Rossi have demonstrated with their cruelty of language-as-a-system-of-exclusions, but also because the magic circle drawn around linguistic experimentation reveals a pregnant affinity with the structural rigor of the literature of the Marquis de Sade. “There, where the stake is sex, everything must speak of sex.” That is, the utopia of Eros in Sade—resolved within the discovery that maximum freedom springs forth from maximum terror—where the whole is inscribed within the supreme constraint of a geometric structure in the narrative. To regain an “order of discourse” may today prove to be a safeguard for certain subjective liberties—particularly after its destruction by the avant-garde through questioning the techniques of mass information and with the disappearance of the work of art into the assembly line. There are two contradictions, however. On the one hand, as with the Enlightenment utopia, such attempts are destined to reveal that liberty serves only to make a silence speak; that is, one

307

cannot bring voluntary action to oppose a structure. On the other hand, the “orders of discourse” are an attempt to go beyond this impasse and propose a foundation for a new statute of architecture. Such contradictions are actually theorized in the work of Kahn since the mid-fifties. Yet we have not escaped the hermetic play of language.

The questions criticism must now ask are: What makes such studies and research possible? What are the contexts and structures within which they operate? What is their role within the present day production system?

Some of these questions have already been answered in our discussion. We can add, however, that they are cast-offs of a production system which must: (a) renew its forms, submitting to peripheral sectors of professional organizations the task of experimenting with new models (in fact it would prove useful to follow the way in which the new form models, brought forth by the isolated form-makers, are to be introduced into mass production); (b) bring together a highly differentiated public by assigning the role of “vestals of the discipline” to figures whose task is to preserve the concept and role of architecture as a traditional object, an object that preserves intrinsic qualities of communication. Thus we abandon the object itself and move into the system which, in itself, gives meaning. And criticism thereby explicitly moves its inquest from a specific task to the structure that conditions the total meaning of the object. Our statement concerning the role of criticism as the violation of the object in question now becomes clear. From the examination of those opposing attempts which aim to bring architecture back into the realm of discourse, we have come to single out the role of the architectural discourse, thereby seriously questioning the place and scope of those attempts. We must now move further.

On several occasions we have tried to show that, in the vicissitudes of the historical avant-garde, the alternatives that appear as opposites—order and disorder, laws and change, structure and chaos—are in reality entirely complementary.<sup>26</sup> We have seen this exemplified in the Gallaratese neighborhood in Milan, within which the dialectic between purism and construction is made entirely obvious. But the

308 historic import of such a complementary system goes beyond the specific example. To degrade the materials out of which communication is made by compromising them with the commonplace and forcing them to be mirrored in the anxious swamp of merchandising, thus reducing them to astonished and emptied signs, is the process which leads from the tragic clownings of the Cabaret Voltaire, to the Merzbau of Kurt Schwitters (fig. 35), to the pictures composed by telephone of Lazlo Moholy-Nagy. Yet there is a surprising result. This desecrating immersion into chaos becomes the premise for the existence of a new means, which having absorbed the logic of that chaos is now ready to dominate it from within.

Thus we have the *form of the informal*—as a victory. On the one hand we have the manipulation of pure signs as foundations to an architectural constructivism; on the other hand, the acceptance of the indefinite, of dissolution. The control of the chaos and of the casual requires this double attitude. As Rudolf Arnheim has accurately observed, “The precocious insistence on minimal forms of the maximum precision (as in the works of Jean Arp, which are for us entirely symptomatic) and in the subsequent manifestation of disorder appearing at opposite points, are in reality symptoms of the very same abandonment.”<sup>27</sup> The *papiers déchirés* of Picasso belong to this logic. But it is the testimony of Arp which makes clear the process that ties together the affirmation of the forms to its own destruction.

About 1930 pictures of hand torn papers were born. . . . Why worry about achieving perfection, purity, when it can never be reached? I now welcomed the decay which begins no sooner than when the work is ended. The dirty man with filthy hands points and smudges a detail of the picture. . . . He is overcome by a savage enthusiasm and smears the painting with saliva. A delicate collage of watercolored paper is lost. Dust and insects are also efficient in destruction. Light wastes the colors. The sun and heat produce blisters, disintegrate the paper, crack the paint, disintegrating it. Humidity creates mould, the work falls to pieces, it dies. The death of a painting no longer drives me to despair. I had made my pact with its passing on and now it was for me part of the painting. But death grew, devouring both the painting and life. . . . The form had become formless, the Finite Infinite, the Individual the All.<sup>28</sup>

The formlessness, that is, the risk of existence, then no longer creates anxiety if it is accepted as linguistic “material.” And vice versa, language may thus speak of the indeterminate, the casual, the transient. The happening gives credence to the observation by Jean Fautrier that art today “. . . may only destroy itself, and only by destroying itself can it continually renew itself.”<sup>29</sup> Yet this is but an attempt to give meaning to the phenomenon of mass consumption. It is not by chance then that a great many such celebrations of the formlessness take place under the banner of a technological utopia. The irritating and ironic metaphors of Archigram or of the Archizoom group, or of architecture conceived as an explosion of fragments by John Johansen, sink their roots deep into the technological myth. Technology can thereby be enslaved in the configuration of an entirely virtual space. It may be read, in a mystic manner, as “second nature,” the object of mimesis; it may indeed become the subject for formalist chit-chat, as in the part of the work of Soviet constructivism wherein the form self-destructs to make way for messages originating from the same self-destructive process. And there are those who, like Bruno Zevi, attempt to compile a code of such programmed self-destruction.<sup>30</sup> What remains hidden in all of these abstract furors is the general sense of their own masochistic disintegration. And it is precisely with reference to these experiences that a critical method, as inspired by the technological aesthetic of Max Bense or by the information theory of Abraham Moles, may be fruitfully applied. This is only possible because, in a manner even greater than Stirling’s, they seek a language truly fitting of the technological realm; they attempt to invest the entire physical setting with enlarged quanta of information in an effort to reunite “the word and the object,” and contribute to daily existence an autonomous structure of communication. It is not aleatory then that the already outworn images of Archigram, or the artificial and willful ironies of Robert Venturi or of Hans Hollein simultaneously amplify and restrict the field of intervention of architecture. They amplify it insofar as their goal is the dominance of all visible space, and restrict it insofar as they understand that space solely as a network of superstructures.

There is, however, a result to this which emerges in projects such as that by Venturi and Rauch for the American Bicen-

Figure 35. Kurt Schwitters. Merz Construction, 1921. Collage.

tennial Celebration (fig. 36) in Philadelphia.<sup>31</sup> Here, there is no longer a desire to communicate; the architecture is dissolved into an unstructured system of ephemeral signals. Instead of *communication*, there is a flux of information; instead of an architecture as language, there is an attempt to reduce it to a mass-medium, without any ideological residue; instead of an anxious effort to restructure the urban system, there is a disenchanted acceptance of reality, becoming an excess of purest cynicism. (Excess, after all, always carries a critical connotation.) In this fashion, Venturi, placing himself within an exclusively linguistic framework, has reached a radical devaluation of the language itself. The meaning of the *Plakatwelt*, of the world of publicity, is closed in on itself. He thereby achieves the symmetrically opposed result of that reached by the compositional rigorists. For the latter it is the metaphysical retrieval of a "being" of architecture, extracted from the flux of existence. For Venturi, it is the non-utilization of language itself, having discovered that its intrinsic ambiguity, once having made contact with reality, makes illusory any and all pretexts of autonomy.

A warning to all: in both cases, the language does not deceive itself. If the protagonists of contemporary architecture at times take on the mask of Don Quixote, it is as an act that has a less superficial meaning than is readily apparent, for in fact it constitutes unconsciously, a veritable "language of disillusion." Language has thus reached the point of speaking about its own isolation, as it may wish to trace anew the path of rigorism focusing on the mechanism of its own writing, or as it may wish to explode into the problematic space of existence. Yet does not such a path, which historically spans the last two decades, repeat a previous event? Is not the answer by Mallarmé, "It is the word itself which speaks,"<sup>32</sup> analogous to the tragic realization by Kraus and Loos, ". . . facts have words, and it is only that which has been meditated that is ineffable"? And, after all, has not the destiny of the historical avant-garde been that of destroying itself over the plan—a historically frustrated one at that—of the intellectual management of reality? The return to language is a proof of failure. It is necessary to examine to what degree such a failure is due to the intrinsic character of the architectural discipline and to what degree it is due to a still unresolved ambiguity.



35.

Figure 36. Project for the American Bicentennial, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1972. Elevation.

310

Michel Foucault has observed how there exists a sort of unevenness among the ways of employing language: "The discussions 'which are spoken' throughout the days and exchanges which pass away with the very action which pronounced them; and the discussions which are at the origin of a certain number of new acts, of words which pick these up, transform or tell of them; in other words, discussions which remain indefinitely beyond their own formulation, and which *are said*, have been said, and remain still to be said."<sup>33</sup> This is a displacement which is apparently not absolute, yet strong enough to be a functional discriminant among the levels of linguistic organization. The Modern movement had, in its entirety, attempted to eliminate such displacement (we are referring specifically to the polemical position of Hannes Meyer, to the precise rationalism of Hans Schmidt, to the stance taken by periodicals such as *ABC* or *G*, and to the aesthetic formulations of Karel Teige, Walter Benjamin and Hans Mukarovsky).<sup>34</sup> But it is Foucault himself who recognizes the outcome of such an approach. "The radical repeal of this displacement can only be a game, utopia or anxiety. A game after Borges, of a commentary which will be nothing more than the reappearance, word for word (yet this time solemn and long-awaited) of the object of the comment itself: the game, once again, of a criticism which speaks endlessly about a work which does not exist."<sup>35</sup>

By no chance are we dealing with an approach upon which converge those whom Jencks has called the "Supersensualists"<sup>36</sup>—that is, Hans Hollein, Walter Pichler or Riccardo Bofill—preceded as they were (and this Jencks does not bring out) by much of the late work of Lloyd Wright and the impotent prefigurations of the technological avant-gardists. The elimination of the displacement between those discussions "which are spoken" and those "which are said" cannot be realistically accomplished at the level of the language itself. The explosion of architecture out towards reality has within it a comprehensive goal which becomes evident if we understand the areas of research upon which the work of such men as Raymond Unwin, Barry Parker, Clarence Stein, Charles Harris Whitaker, Henry Wright, Fritz Schumacher, Ernst May and Hannes Meyer, is based.

to the works just analyzed, is the preeminent position of structural considerations in this work. It is always possible to analyze linguistically the urban models of New Earswick, Pullman Town, Radburn or of Battery Park City. But we would have to be aware that it would be an artificial act: such as in the case of one who upon analyzing an assemblage of Rauschenberg would readily lose himself in cataloging the origins of each piece. In reality, and this can be proved historically, the current to which we are referring interprets architecture as an altogether negligible phenomenon. Of primary concern, however, are typological analyses—the introduction of the concept of the economic cycle as the determining variable for any proposed structure, and the completion of the intervention by a marshalling of productive capacities as well as by the development of a regional plan.

In all this there is an attempt at a radical modification of the social division of labor, and therefore of the task of planning and design. The abandonment of professional practice and the assumption of the post of Chief Architect in Rebuilding and Town Planning at the Ministry of Health (1918) by Raymond Unwin, the introduction of a new professionalism by Martin Wagner as Stadtbaurat of Berlin between 1925 and 1933, the technical-political activity of Rexford Tugwell within the Resettlement Administration during the New Deal era, and the technicians which today choose to work in contact with cooperative organizations or public agencies, without doubt make for alternatives other than those followed by people desirous of preserving a linguistic "aura" for architecture.

The latter do not fall into political misunderstandings and ambiguities, and they pay dearly for their wish for purity with an untimeliness—a not-altogether secondary reason for their charm. The second ones ask to be judged in terms of their political results, even if they have not been altogether successful. This is because in their work they have followed a logic which ambiguously straddles capitalistic development, the organizations and class movements. Under the best conditions they have tried to postulate an immediate coincidence between the objectives of urban and productive reform and the claims of the embattled strategies of workers' movements and their organizations.



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Quite justifiably, this is the ideological side of these approaches, a mystifying aspect against which any polemic must undertake political characteristics. There exists, however, an underground current, which as such is removed from the architectural discipline—from form to reform—which perhaps may overcome certain ambiguities. In fact, at least one new tendency is discernible among all these various attempts—a role for the “new technician” immersed within those organizations which determine the capitalistic management of building and regional planning, not as a specialist in language, but rather, as a *producer*.

To think of the architect as a producer is to renounce almost entirely the traditional baggage of values and judgments. As an entire production cycle rather than a single work is desired, critical analysis must be directed towards the material constraints which determine the production cycle itself. Yet this is not enough. The specific analysis must be made compatible with the dynamics of the entire economic cycle, not to generate those misunderstandings brought about by an economic vision subordinated to the needs of architecture. In other words, to change the scope of what architecture wishes to be, or wishes to say, towards that which building construction is in reality, means that we must find suitable parameters which will allow us to understand the role of construction within the entire capitalistic system. It may be objected that such an economic reading of building production is other than the reading of architecture as a system of communications. We can only answer that, wishing to discover the tricks of a magician, it is often better to observe him from behind the scenes rather than to continue to stare at him from a seat in the audience.

It is clear then that to place architectural ideology into the production cycle, albeit as a secondary element, is quite simply to overthrow the pyramid of values which are usually accepted in the consideration of architecture. Once such a judgment standard has been accepted, however, it will be quite ridiculous to ask in which way a linguistic choice or an element of structural organization will express or anticipate “more free” ways of life. That which criticism must ask of architecture is in what way will it, insofar as it is a precise organization, be able to influence the relations of production.

We therefore find it important here to grasp certain questions which Benjamin posed in one of his more important essays, “The Author as Producer.”

Now instead of asking what is the position of a work with respect to the relations of production of an era, if it is in accord with them, if it is reactionary or if instead it aims at their overthrow, if it is revolutionary; instead of asking this question or at least before asking it, I would like to ask another. Therefore, before asking what is the position of a poem with respect to the relations of production of the era, I would like to ask what is its position within them? This question directly concerns the function of the work relative to the relation of literary production of an era. In other words, it is a question immediately aimed at the literary techniques of these works.<sup>37</sup>

This viewpoint is for Benjamin, in fact, a radical step ahead of his own more ideological positions, such as those expressed in the conclusions to *Opera d'Arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*. Among the questions posed in “The Author as Producer,” there are no concessions to proposals for salvation by means of an “alternative” use of linguistic elements, no ideology beyond a “communist” art as opposed to a “fascist” art. There is only a structural consideration—authentically structural—of the productive role of intellectual activities, and therefore certain questions regarding their possible contribution to the development of the relations of production. There are certainly many obscure points in Benjamin’s text concerning the political value of certain technical innovations—we are thinking of the connections traced between Dadaism and the content of a political photomontage by Heartfield<sup>38</sup>—considered “revolutionary” by Benjamin. Yet the substance of his argument is vital today, so much so as in fact to lead to a radical revision in the recognition of fundamental turning points in the history of contemporary art and architecture. Keeping in mind the central question—that is, what is the position of the work of art within the relations of production—many “masterpieces” of modern architecture take on a secondary if not altogether marginal significance, while a great deal of the current debates will be relegated to the periphery.

Our concluding evaluations concerning the present research

311

aimed at bringing architecture back to its original "purity" are therefore valid. These studies, whose sincerity is not to be faulted, are seen as "parallel actions," that is, as proposals intended to build an uncontaminated layer floating above (or below) the truly determining forces. Art for art has been in its own fashion a form of upper class protest against the universe of *Zivilisation*. In defending *Kultur* against *Zivilisation*, Thomas Mann was formulating ". . . the thoughts of an impolitic man," which, if followed to their conclusions, would but reaffirm the identification between art and play as set forth by Schiller—the "courage to talk of roses" may then be appreciated only as a confession of a radical anachronism.

Going beyond such anachronisms, the history of modern architecture will be rewritten, thereby favoring the moments and attempts which answer best to the questions set out by Benjamin. A new historical sweep will connect figures such as Friedrich Naumann, Henry Ford and Walter Rathenau—men whose intent has been to impose on architects a series of new organizational tasks within the capitalistic production cycle—with men such as Martin Wagner, Parvus, and Ernst May who have given concrete meaning to the Social Democrats' plan to manage housing and attempts to practice land policies with lobby groups, such as those centered on Frederick Law Olmsted or on the Regional Plan Association of America. With these emerge a new attitude towards the role which intellectual work may undertake in its efforts to remove the capitalistic contradictions in building and in the planned utilization of resources.

Certainly, all these attempts are still held back by strong ideological ties. In the first place, they are inhibited because they aim towards the "solution" of unresolvable contradictions without reckoning with the concrete class movements (which are the only forces which may give meaning to the struggles for institutional reforms), secondly, because they consider intellectual work as autonomous, being an instrument which can only influence structural reforms by means of preserving and strengthening its own utopian character. This becomes apparent, as when the nature of the problem undergoes a change and creates a crisis of implementation, as seen in the impact between radical European architects and the

first Soviet Five Year Plans, or between the members of the RPAA and the contradictory politics of the New Deal, as well as when the very process of proposed development calls into question the role of ideology or of its utopian models. There remains, nonetheless, the fact that, notwithstanding all the possible distortions and ideological vices which these approaches convey, there does indeed exist a history of attempts towards a comprehensive organization of intellectual work within the relations of production. The task of criticism is then to recognize those attempts, to favor them in the field of historical analysis and to cruelly reveal their deficiencies and ambiguities, thereby making it readily known that those unanswered problems are the only ones worthy of "political" action. It is logical that the question criticism poses to that which we can no longer name architecture but rather a general organization of building processes, must be the same one it asks of itself; that is, in which way does criticism enter into the production processes? What indeed does it have to offer for itself at that level? How must it transform itself (once it has singled out as its own reference the class organizations)? And how has it chosen to identify itself as an instrument of these organizations?

These questions cannot be readily answered without seriously challenging the present-day crystallization of intellectual work and therefore without challenging our capitalistic division of labor. Yet these questions give us a precise sense of direction in action, a field of encounter and confrontation directed towards a greater knowledge of reality. The criticism of ideology—an ever useful weapon in overcoming the rearmost positions and in chasing away the danger of following as "revolutionary" those false paths laid out by the enemy that lead into the desert—may at this point be translated into an analysis of concrete techniques which will favor capitalistic development. And it may become a premise to further select topics to be used as weapons of an all encompassing struggle. In this context, the General Strike, which in 1969 marked a new phase in the Italian workers' claims centered on the city and the house, becomes a fundamental chapter in the historical method we are proposing. It becomes so much more than the ideological contortions of the technicians who, "curved over the drawing boards continue to extract the wrong sums," as Brecht would say.

The conclusions of our discussion cannot but be fraught with difficulties. Once again, the questions posed by Benjamin are the ones which, as obstacles along our way, must be confronted. And to the architect who accepts the new role which the difficult present-day reality proposes, we shall not tire from asking:

Will he be able to promote the socialization of the spiritual means of production? Does he foresee the way to organize the intellectual tasks within the production processes themselves? Has he any suggestions for transforming his work and role? However thoroughly he will be able to channel his work towards the end, then so much more just will be this tendency, and so much higher will be the technical quality of his work. On the other hand, the better informed he is of his position within the production process, the less willing will he be to pass himself off as an exponent of the spirit . . . . For the revolutionary struggle is not between capitalism and the spirit, but between capitalism and the proletariat.<sup>39</sup>

1. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). Note, however, that the phrase "The mortal silence of the sign . . ." is attributable to Nietzsche.
2. See Kenneth Frampton, "Leicester University Engineering Laboratory," *Architectural Design*, vol. XXXIV, n. 2, 1964, p. 61; idem, "Information Bank," *Architectural Forum*, vol. 129, n. 4, 1968, pp. 37-47; idem, "Andrew Melville Hall, St. Andrews University, Scotland," *Architectural Design*, vol. XL, n. 9, 1970, pp. 460-2; Mark Girouard, "Florey Building, Oxford," *The Architectural Review*, vol. CLII, n. 909, 1972, pp. 260-77; this article, aside from the references set forth by Frampton concerning the images of Sant'Elia, Constructivism, Wright, Chareau, Brinkman and Van der Vlugt, establishes a definite relationship between the artificial geometricizing of Stirling and the Victorian impracticality of Butterfield. See also Joseph Rykwert, "Un Episodio Inglese," *Domus*, n. 415, 1964, p. 31; idem, "Stirling a Cambridge," *Domus*, n. 471, 1969, pp. 8-15; idem, "Stirling in Scozia," *Domus*, n. 491, 1970, pp. 5-15; Charles Jencks, "James Stirling or Function Made Manifest," *Modern Movements in Architecture* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973), pp. 260-70. In his personal statement Stirling avoids dealing directly with questions concerning his sources, preferring to talk about the invention of the organism as a single complete structure: see in particular Stirling, "An Architect's Approach to Architecture," *RIBA Journal*, vol. 72, n. 5, May 1965, pp. 231-40 also in *Zodiac*, n. 16, 1967, pp. 160-9; idem, "Anti-Structure," *Zodiac*, n. 18, 1968, pp. 51-60.
3. This opinion is expressed, for example, by Frampton, "Andrew Melville Hall," pp. 460-2, and by Rykwert, "James Stirling, 4 Projects," *Domus*, n. 512, 1972, pp. 1-20.
4. We are referring, for example, to the "Melnikov-like" hall, tied sideways to the pilasters as well as to the girders in the tower of the Engineering Laboratory, Leicester University. But Rykwert has rightly observed that there exists a structural dissonance within the Olivetti Center in Surrey created by the truncation of the metal vaults as they come to rest on brackets in the wedged-shaped foyer. See Rykwert, "Lo Spazio Policromo: Olivetti Training Center, Haslemere, Surrey 1968-72," *Domus*, n. 530, 1974, pp. 37-44.
5. Frampton, "Leicester Engineering Laboratory," p. 61.
6. Frampton, "Andrew Melville Hall," pp. 460-2.
7. See Peter Eisenman, "From Golden Lane to Robin Hood Gardens; or if you follow the Yellow Brick Road it may not lead to Golders Green," *Oppositions* 1, 1973, pp. 28-56.
8. See Alan Johnson, Stephen N. Games, "Letters to Editors: Florey Building, Oxford," *The Architectural Review*, vol. CLIII, n. 910, 1972, pp. 384-5.
9. Roland Barthès, *Critiques et vérité* (Paris: Ed. Du Seuil, 1964). See also Serge Doubrovsky, *Pourquoi la nouvelle cri-*

tique: critique et objectivité (Paris: Mercure de France, 1967).

10. Garroni has severely criticized the attempts by Konig, De Fusco and Eco at reconstructing an architectural "language." He has however proposed an analytic model based on the identification of array on constant typologies. This model is in our opinion one of great interest. See Emilio Garroni, *Progetto di Semiotica* (Bari: Laterza, 1972), p. 95.

11. We shall consider Aldo Rossi only as an architect, and hereby point out that his theoretical works are but "poetics" in the strictest sense. It is perhaps useless to challenge his literary works: they have but one usage, to help follow the spiritual autobiography which the architect inscribes within this formal composition. The bibliography of Rossi suffers in all ways from partiality; we therefore will mention only three texts: Ezio Bonfanti, "Elementi e costruzione: note sull'architettura di Aldo Rossi," *Controspazio*, 11, n. 10, 1970, pp. 19-42; Massimo Scolari, "Avanguardia e Nuova Architettura," *Architettura Razionale: XV Triennale di Milano, Sezione Internazionale di Architettura*, ed. Franco Angeli (Milan, 1973), pp. 153-87; introduction by Martin Steinman, "Architektur," *Aldo Rossi, Bauten, Projekte*, catalogue for exhibition, Zurich Nov./Dec. 1973.

12. "The play of contradictions and the withholdings of meaning from the network of common relationships of and by objects is not just an ordinary technical expedient: it is the expedient par-excellence, the ritual that is, with its detailed and evocative preparations, the Epiphany as sublimation, the goals healing and miraculous. Sublimation par-excellence, as play hides further play and each slowly reveals the other, and painting stands by itself as a counterpoint to the crisis between appearance and matter, as an alternative as well.... Having broken the line between reality and its objects the game is drawn: faith in action, in knowledge, in analysis becomes an object which is far more objective than the objects which it ought to come into play with, a truth more true than any emerging or of any relation—a thing in itself." Paolo Fossati, *La pittura a programma. De Chirico metafisico* (Padua: Ed. Marsilio, 1973), p. 24.

13. We are, of course, referring to the well-known passage from Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940) used by Frampton as a heading to his essay in *Oppositions 1*, 1973. Yet the theme of Klee's "Angelus Novus" is present throughout the mature works of Benjamin: "the average European has not been able to reconcile his life with technology because he has remained faithful to the matrix of a creative existence. It is necessary to have followed the struggle of Loos with the ornament dragon, it is necessary to have heard the astral cry of Scheerbart's creatures or have escorted Klee's new angel—who would prefer to liberate mankind by taking from them what they have, rather than to

make them happy with gifts—to be able to understand a world which affirms itself through destruction . . . Out of the infant and the cannibal is born he who rules (the demon): not a new man, but an inhuman being—a new angel!" Walter Benjamin, "Karl Kraus," *Frankfurter Zeitung* (10, 14, 17 and 18 March 1931), reprinted in *Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), pp. 155-95; *Avanguardia e rivoluzione* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973), pp. 100-33.

14. It may, in fact, achieve notable poetic results as at the Muggio City Hall (1972) where the "magic" bursting through of a truncated cone into the grid thereby forces it apart. This design perhaps begins to explain what Rossi is striving for when speaking of an "analogous city": a sort of "magical realism," based on a conceptual experience replete with echoing memories: "We can employ references from the existing city by placing them on a vast and smooth surface, and allowing architecture to slowly partake of new events."

15. See Aldo Rossi et al., eds., "La Triennale modello Starace," *Parametro*, n. 21-22, 1973, dedicated to the XV Triennale of Milan (Starace was a notable fascist henchman). See also Glaucio Gresleri, "Alla XV Triennale di Milano," *Parametro*, n. 21-22, 1973, p. 6; Giovanni Klaus Konig, letter to *Architettura: cronache e storia*, XIX, n. 8, 1973, pp. 456-7; Joseph Rykwert, "15 Triennale," *Domus*, n. 530, 1974, pp. 1-15; for similar criticism with which we cannot agree. The IX Triennale is vulnerable from positions much more concrete than those taken in the above mentioned articles; no one, as far as we can ascertain, has noted how objectively "reactionary" were the city scale projects for Rome or Venice presented obviously by "non-academic" architects. Yet to attack the Triennale, to wound Rossi is to us intolerable, although the same cannot be said for his school. The historian's profession has little to do with that of a sports fan. It is a while since we have worried about skeletons in the closet, or since we have inveighed against too partial a judgement; even if Rykwert, with a superficiality which he does not employ in his research into Adam's paradise, is guilty of a double philological error, attributing to us ideas and preferences which we never expressed. (But why ever try to understand Tafuri through the texts of Scolari?) The point is quite another! If fascism is thought to be the dedication to the "scandalous" autonomy of the arts, then one should have the courage to break with such ambiguous and schlerotic judgements which directly influence the destiny of the modern movement. Yet once having accepted such a lower level of discussion, we should really remember that it was Gropius who tried to explain to Goebbels that only modern architecture would prove capable of expressing the supremacy of the Germanic race. And why has no one suspected that if the amazing symmetries of Rossi may be defined "after

Starace," then the constructivist volumes of the Kennedy era—of Kallman and Roche—ought to be viewed as the symbol of American democracy and its civil colonization of Vietnam? Only by refusing to employ such puerile parallelism is it possible to make history. We would certainly not prevent Rossi from teaching architecture: but not because of the fear of any historical and conformist ostracism, but rather to help him become more coherent in his fascinating, though superfluous, silence.

16. Cf. Gyorgy Lukacs, *Georg Simmel* (1918) reprinted in *Buch des Dankes an Georg Simmel* (Berlin, 1958), p. 173. See also Massimo Cacciari, *Metropolis: Saggi sulla grande città di Sombart, Endell, Scheffler e Simmel* (Rome: Officina, 1973), pp. 66-8.

17. Karl Kraus. *In questa grande epoca* (Vienna: 1914): cf. Walter Benjamin, *Karl Kraus*, pp. 103-4.

18. Cf. Adolf Loos, "Architektur," (1910 conference paper), in *Trotzdem* (Innsbruck: 1931), reprinted in *Samtliche Schriften, Adolf Loos* (Vienna and Munich: Herold Verlag, 1962), vol. I., p. 302. But Loos's place is anything but an isolated one: in a certain fashion it is tied to the teachings of Theodor Fischer and to the elementarism of his students, but much more so to the anguished purism of Heinrich Tessenow. Heinrich Tessenow, *Hausbau und dergleichen* (Berlin, 1916). Italian translation and introduction by Giorgio Grassi, Franco Angeli (Milan, 1974). Yet the position of an artist such as Georg Muche within the Weimar Bauhaus is very close to that of Loos: see Georg Muche, "Memorandum of 8.2.1922 to the college of professors of the Bauhaus," and "Bildende Kunst und Industrieform," in *Bauhaus*, vol. I., n. 1., 1926, pp. 5-6, in English translation *The Bauhaus*, ed. H. M. Wingler (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 113-4. See also Marcel Franciscono, *Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar* (University of Illinois Press, 1971). For a study of the relationships among Loos, Kraus and Wittgenstein, see Basil Blackwell, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein* (Oxford: 1967).

19. Wassily Kandinsky, *Der Gelbe Klang* (1909?), in the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1912): reprinted in critical edition by Klaus Lankheit (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1965).

20. It is clear then that a union of such disparate research work is simply a matter of convenience. Yet instead of a tendency they form today a rather ambiguous field, or climate of work.

21. Francesco Dal Co, "L'Architettura come forma sospesa," to be published in *Controspazio*.

22. Cf. Bruno Zevi, "Manieristi fra le macerie," *L'Espresso*, n. 15., 1973. Concerning the work of the "Five," see also essays by Colin Rowe and Kenneth Frampton, *Five Architects* (New York; George Wittenborn, Inc., 1972); Mario

Gandelsonas, "On reading architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, n. 3., 1972, pp. 68-87; Robert Stern, "Stompin' at the Savoy," Jaquelin Robertson, "Machines in the Garden," Charles Moore, "In similar states of undress," Alan Greenberg, "The Lurking American Legacy," Romaldo Giurgola, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," *Architectural Forum*, vol. 138, n. 4, 1973, p. 46.

23. Gandelsonas, "On reading architecture," pp. 78-9. We may note that what Argan has seen fit to recognize in the work of Louis Kahn is perhaps better suited to the work of the "Five": "The most profound currents today, those which are most aware of the crisis move towards a methodic analysis, almost scientific and always critical, of the structural components of the artistic phenomenon: to thereby establish whether it is possible for art to still become phenomenized, critically questioning why a surface is a surface, a volume a volume, a building a building, a painting a painting. By so doing they recognize that art cannot be defined by its placement or position, and from its role in the system they then try to see if it can be defined as a closed system, an autonomous structure." Giulio Carlo Argan, "I due stadi della critica," *Ulisse: Dove va l'arte*, vol. XII, n. 76, Nov. 1973.

24. Cf. Walter Segal, "The Neo-Purist School of Architecture," *Architectural Design*, vol. XLII, n. 6, 1972.

25. We are referring here to the "Nuova Architettura" (with a capital N and A) in Nino Dardi, *Il gioco sapiente* (Padua: Marsilio, 1971) and to the "Nuova Tendenza" (note the persistence of capital letters) of Massimo Scolari, "Avanguardia e nuova architettura," ibid. If the objective is to define a continuity with the abstract movements of the twenties and thirties, rather than defining what is "new," one ought to have the courage to speak of revival or of survival. If the intention is to establish the importance of linguistic consideration greater care should be exercised in the selection or exclusion of examples.

26. Cf. Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Bari: Laterza, 1973); idem, *Progetto e utopia* (Bari: Laterza, 1973); idem, "URSS/Berlin, 1922: du populisme à l'Internationale Constructiviste," *VH* 101, n. 7/8, 1972, pp. 53-87.

27. Rudolf Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order* (USA: University of California Press, 1971); ibid., (Turin: Einaudi, 1974), p. 74.

28. Jean Arp, *On my way: Poetry and Essays 1912-1947* (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1948), p. 77.

29. Jean Fautrier, *Teorie della Pittura contemporanea*, ed. Jurgen Claus (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1967), p. 314.

30. Bruno Zevi, *Il Linguaggio Moderna dell'Architettura: Guida del Codice Anticlassico* (Turin: Einaudi, 1973).

31. *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, n. 169, 1973, pp. 63-9.

32. See Note 1.
33. Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Turin: Einaudi, 1972), p. 19. Inaugural lecture at the College de France, Dec. 2, 1970.
34. Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura e rivoluzione* (Padua: Marsilio, 1973). Frontispiece to the Italian edition of the writings of the Swiss architect Hannes Meyer, is basic to an evaluation of his position. For an opposing position, see Massimo Scolari, "Hannes Meyer e la pretesa negazione dell'arte," *Controspazio*, I, n. 7, 1969. See also the well-known monograph by Claude Schnaidt. Cf. Hans Schmidt, *Beitrage zur Architektur, 1924-1964*. (Berlin and Basle: 1965); *Werk*, 10, 1972, partially devoted to the work of Schmidt.
35. Michel Foucault, *L'Ordre du Discours*, p. 20.
36. Charles Jencks, "Dolce Vita or The Supersensualists," *Modern Movements in Architecture*, pp. 51-9.
37. Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent, *Versuche über Brecht* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971); idem, *Avanguardia e rivoluzione*, p. 201. This same essay was used by Paolo Portoghesi to answer our argument concerning the loss of function within architectural ideology. Paolo Portoghesi, "Autopsia o vivisezione dell'architettura?" *Controspazio*, 1, Nov. 1969, pp. 5-7. In fact, even here Benjamin is ambiguous and may lend himself to several interpretations. But it would be misleading to limit oneself, as Portoghesi does, to consider only the more traditional aspects of this text. In referring to the *neue Sachlichkeit* school, Benjamin says: ". . . this school has made a great deal over its poverty. In this fashion it has avoided the most important task of the contemporary writer: that of recognizing just how poor he is and how poor he must be so that he may be able to begin anew . . . Nothing will be stranger to the author who has pondered over the conditions of today's production, than the idea of expecting or even wishing new masterpieces which demonstrate the wealth, now adulterated, of the creative personality. His work will never be aimed at the ends but always towards the means of production. In other words: his products must contain *an organisational function above and beyond their character as works* (author's italics). Benjamin himself warns that such an organizational function goes far beyond any propagandistic intention.
38. Cf. Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," p. 208. A critical and acute examination of the contradictions in Benjamin's thoughts is to be found in Giangiorgio Pasqualotto, *Avanguardia e tecnologia: Walter Benjamin, Max Bense e i problemi dell'estetica tecnologica* (Rome: Officina, 1971). However, an unacceptable criticism of the above essay by Benjamin is found in the text of Jürgen Habermas, *Zur Aktualität Walter Benjamin* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972) translated in *Communita*, XXVIII, n. 171, 1974, pp. 211-45.
39. Ibid., pp. 218-8.

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