New Europe College Yearbook 1998-1999

RADU BERCEA
DANIELA RODICA JALOBEANU
KÁZMÉR TAMÁS KOVÁCS
MIRCEA MICLEA
MIHAELA MIROIU
MIHAI-VLAD NICULESCU
RADU G. PĂUN
IOANA POPESCU
MONICA SPIRIDON

Tipărirea acestui volum a fost finanțată de
Published with the financial support of

Copyright © 2001 – New Europe College

ISBN 973 – 98624 – 8 – 9

NEW EUROPE COLLEGE
Str. Plantelor 21
70309 Bucharest
Romania
Tel. (+40-1) 327.00.35, Fax (+40-1) 327.07.74
E-mail: nec@nec.ro

KÁZMÉR TAMÁS KOVÁCS

Born in 1955, in Arad

Ph.D., University of Architecture and Urban Planning "Ion Mincu", Bucharest
Dissertation: *Time Limits of Historical Monuments*

Associate Professor at the University of Architecture and Urban Planning "Ion Mincu", Bucharest

Post-graduate student at the Central European University, Prague (1992)
Research Fellow at the Corpus Christi College, University of Oxford (1996)
Ph.D. scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest (2000)

Member of the Romanian Order of Architects
Member of the Romanian National Register of Architects
Board member of the "Malom" Foundation for Vernacular Architecture
Member of the "Keöpeczi Sebestyén József" Society for Monument Protection
Member of the Romanian Union of Architects

Participation in international conferences, symposia and seminars.

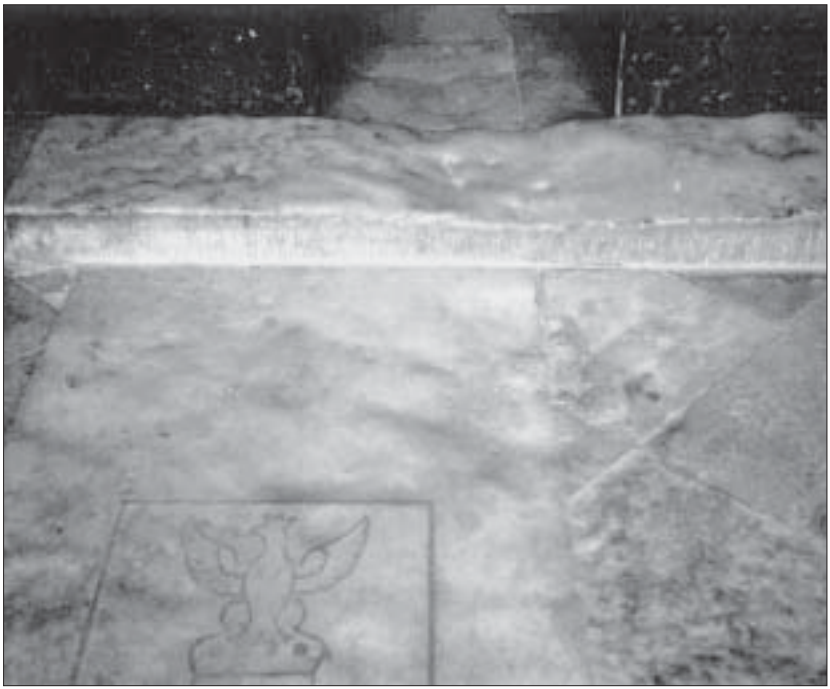
Books in joint authorship, papers, articles, as well as translations on urban planning, historical monuments and the theory of built heritage.

Rehabilitation and restoration projects in Daia, Sfîntu Gheorghe, Sighișoara, Valea Crișului, Micloșoara, Baraolt, Ilieni, several urban and building designs.

Thresholds
A Look at a Few Stages of Architecture

"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as
six impossible things before breakfast."

The White Queen[1]



THRESHOLD, CATHEDRAL, AVIGNON

Thresholds

It is not jokes the White Queen is telling. This fragile character, no more queen than Alice, is pointing out the necessity of exercising our imagination. Nothing in Looking Glass country is what it seems to be, so you need to believe things to make them exist. The only *being* the artifact environment can pretend to is such a fictitious one that its objective existence cannot, in itself, achieve anything beyond its artificiality. A few chapters further in the same book, Humpty-Dumpty falls off the wall and no earthly power can restore him to life. Two essential features of man-made world are expressed here. First, creation by humans is but illusion[2] as nothing we make *lives*; second, once the spell is broken, we can do but little to "put [it] in his place again".[3]

On the one hand, the reason why we fabricate things is not to fool ourselves. It is a necessity for our survival. Still, no artifact has ever come to life. Galatea, the Golem or Nutcracker have, but only with the essential and fairly exceptional help of some divinity. Of all, E.T.A. Hoffmann's version is the most bitter: everything is merely a deceiving play of our imagination as is Nathanael's love for Olympia. Nonetheless humankind never ceased trying, the results of this effort being often spectacular. Yet, the failure to grasp the ontological difference between divine creation and human making ends in perdition. Faust is the emblem of such misunderstanding: his tragedy is already consumed before the play begins. It consists in not putting up with the limits of his condition: "I am no wiser than when I began [...] No longer can I fool myself / I am able to teach men / How to be better, love true worth." As a consequence: "I've turned to magic..."[4] Compared to this all the following (melo)drama – recovered youth, wealth, Margarita or her brother – is mere anecdote. It is Faust's irreducible arrogance that conjures Mephistopheles to carry him along all the troublesome way towards understanding.

On the other hand, an artificial environment that is *alive* would turn out to be quite a nuisance: houses searching for food, fighting or copulating with each other; therefore speaking of *living* architecture hides defective imagination. Nevertheless, this evidence does not prevent architects to do so: "We want [...] architecture that bleeds, that exhausts, that whirls and even breaks, cavernous, fiery, smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate, colorful, obscene, voluptuous, dreamy, alluring, repelling, wet, dry, throbbing."[5] Indeed, the human body has been used as a metaphor for building all along architectural history, but always with a precise culturally determined meaning. More recently, terms related to organicity have spread and penetrated all the architectural jargon, so one has to put

up with its usage while never forgetting that, yet again, talking is always about an *imitation* of organicity.

Surviving for humans means inhabiting and there is no doubt that architecture is produced with the purpose of adapting environment to this need. The primeval architectural gesture is the act of delimiting a space that thus becomes the *inside* separated from the *outside*. The most emphatic part of such *limit* is the place where its crossing is permitted: the *threshold*. If one starts from these – simplest of all – four elements that establish architecture, one might put together an elementary scheme capable of identifying, underneath the gigantic heap of history, of stylistic analysis, ideological framework or technological experience, architecture.

No one has yet produced a satisfactory definition of all *architecture*. In this paper we shall use this term as designating human activity, be it material or imaginary, that fulfills the following minimal conditions:

1. Operates some kind of *penetrable delimitation* between the *inside* and the *outside*;
2. It is projected from the imagination, that is, it emerges as the issue of a preceding *project*;
3. It is meant to be *inhabited* truly or potentially.

In his book on freedom, limits, limitations and delimitation[6] , Gabriel Liiceanu investigates the matter in connection with human responsibility and decision. He argues that our essential, primary limitation is to be free by the nature of our species. Yet, our individual freedom cannot be assumed or achieved without comprehensive limitations pending on the freedom of others. Discussed in these terms, architectural boundaries – and thresholds – reveal their anthropological importance.

Unlike all the other arts, architecture never had a pre-existing natural model to mimic. Architecture is, by its very nature, self-referential. Hence, it performs all through its history a constitutive, anxious searching for patterns, ideologies and myths that should legitimate architectural forms. While omnipresent in human culture as one of its fundamental products, architectural space suffers of an incurable lack of self-confidence (often dissimulated by its being boldly overstated). The way out of this circle is always some sort of external reference.

The excursus undertaken in this paper will attempt to sketch an understanding of architecture by borrowing something of its character: a patchwork of bits and pieces of architectural phenomena reflected as they are in different cultural places idiosyncratically chosen, composed almost at random. It proposes a *promenade architecturale* that could turn *architecture*, its own object and setting, into something familiar to look at.

One

The Maze

Architecture seems today to have lost the way. Reified and turned into a mass product, it is striving to re-found its identity as one of the essential competencies of humankind. Semantic or phenomenological investigations are theoretical attempts made during our ending century to respond to this task.

Hampton Court Maze, Richmond, Virginia

Crisis in Architecture

There has been much debate around what is currently called the contemporary crisis of architecture – enough to turn it into commonplace. The crisis matter itself is as old as to have a history of its own that can be traced back at least to the end of the Middle Ages and the emergence of historical perspective in the European culture. Today, Françoise Choay speaks about the world wide "patrimonial syndrome" as resulting from the progressive loss of what has once been an anthropological feature: our edifying competence[7] . What is produced today to respond to architectural functions is rather the outcome of industrial design than that of architectural demeanor. Architects and their commissioners do not know what an edifice should really be like. Indeed, what architecture is made of, what stylistic mark it bears, or what pattern it refers to come to matter little.

The way seems lost. We, the edifying species, are *amazed*. Such statement cannot but ironically refer to the forefather of all architects, Daedalus, son of Metion (younger brother of Cecrops, hence a royal). Choay again, calls for us to

> go across the mirror [of architectural heritage]. Then only would tombs, temples and cathedrals, dwellings and castles strip off their iconic, ludicrous and nostalgic seduction. Thus architecture shall recover their initial weight and thickness, those subtle joints emblematized by Daedalus' work.[8]

Besides the loss of his son Icarus in the first air crash ever (around the sixteenth century BC), Daedalus' career is full of fascinating details. He is of course the author of the maze called *labyrinth* (name certainly connected to the *labrys*, the sacred axe of the Cretans), but also of the hollow cow, the only device through which queen Pasiphae (the All-Shining) could mate with the sacred bull[9] . The story truly has some relevance with regard to the deceptive quality of all architecture. Still more interesting, from our point of view, is that the royal palace of Cnossus, probably the model, "with its many passageways and endless series of rooms"[10] of the mythical maze, is the only capital city in ancient times that has no fortifications. It is thus *open* to permanent alteration and *growth*. We may never know whether ultimately the destruction of Cretan civilization was due to disastrous earthquakes resulting from the decaying relationship with the gods, or whether such serene and sophisticated architectural openness

made it too much an easy prey to conquerors from the sea. The palace was destroyed around 1425 BC.

It seems that Daedalus took over the maze theme from elsewhere. The basis of some Egyptian pyramids is labyrinthine, and Herodotus describes an Egyptian maze, perhaps the oldest one (which Tesauro called "the seventh miracle of the World"), said to have contained three thousand rooms. The central chamber, almost impossible to find, sheltered the tombs of kings and of sacred crocodiles[11]. The location of this most ancient maze was the city of Shetet by the lake Moeris (north from Faiyum), named Krokodilopolis by the Greeks, and later renamed Arsinoë by Ptolemy II Philadelphus after his sister. She then became the new goddess of the temple to replace the crocodile god of the ancient, Sobek. It may be significant that the latter teamed with Seth to murder Osiris and to dismember his body[12], thus inaugurating death and the everlasting fragmentation[13] that seems to accompany all inventions of human mind since.

It has been discovered that the basements of the Acropolis in Athens and also those of the house of Augustus in Rome are labyrinthine. Maze-shaped mosaics abound all through European Antiquity and Middle Ages (from the pavement of the old Greek theater in Athens to the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral). The same topos can also be identified in the Mandala representations of the world[14]. Hocke supposes that this architectural pattern follows the primeval representation of the cavern; imperial Roman and then Baroque *groteschi* seem to be re-interpretations of this model on a second level. Labyrinths "reappear 'with explosive force' in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and between 1880 and 1950".[15] Certainly the garden maze has achieved a solid career during the last five or so centuries throughout Europe. Jerome K. Jerome's story on the one in Hampton Court[16] is probably the most memorable account we have on the role played by the maze during the Victorian age.

One must notice the semantic blur surrounding the ancient maze. It is either an openly composed, luxuriously decorated palace of the god-king, which then survives in the legend as the fearful dwelling of the Minotaur from whose chambers no human being ever comes back to life; or the secret space, made intricate with the purpose of keeping unwanted visitors away from the sacred places. The theme of the labyrinth appears thus as the most elaborate of thresholds, once emblems of the passageway, composed by human ingenuity to be representations of the intricacy of the created world. Mazes are still built today, as old fashion attractions in

fairgrounds. Their place as sites for architectural wanderings, like that of traditional towns also, tends to be taken by Cyberspace.[17]

A Space Full of Meaning

Obviously enough, human beings share the experience of all living creatures that space is not homogenous. Indeed, space appears to be discontinuous. There are breaks and slits in it.

> Do not come any closer – says God to Moses – take your shoes off, for the earth you are standing on is holy earth." (*Exodus*, III, 5) There can be sacred, that is 'powerful', meaningful spaces, or other, non-consecrated, [...] *amorphous* ones...[18]

The difference that lies between the two is essential. When Le Corbusier writes that

> architecture [...] gives the measure of an order one can feel in harmony with that of the Universe[19]

his formulation overlaps quite unexpectedly with the ideas of Mircea Eliade for whom, well away from the Corbusian concept of the *machine à habiter*, the *house* means cosmos in sacred opposition to chaos. Only where the place of incidence of the axis of the world is, can the *opening towards the high* be operated. Not only is the temple center of the universe, but also every single house must have the same quality. There is no geometrical logic to be sought here. By extension, the palace, the city, become the *center*.

> Every oriental city was situated at the center of the world. Babylon was a *Bab-ilani*, a "gate of the gods"...[20]

Istanbul means "the gate of happiness" being, in its heyday, the center of the Ottoman world. The *center* is conceived as a threshold to cosmic order; thus the founding of a temple, a city, or the building of the humblest hut must be the expression of a similar endeavor: a cosmological discourse that provides access to an inhabitable world.

The *good* place is to be identified by certain criteria and signs. Once found, it must be sacred to become *cosmic* – appropriate for inhabiting. Beyond sacred space, there lies the realm of the chaotic, the alien, the un-created. According to Eliade, the religious dimension is a fundamental feature of humankind. Yet, one could hardly deny that in contemporary European culture religiousness only survives in rudimentary fragments. Certainly, we have not stopped edifying for that reason. What is then left to replace our forgotten skills to connect our built environment to a world that already bears far too many marks of civilization?

A semantic investigation of architecture leaves few doubts that *meaning* remains an essential quality of apprehended space. Although Le Corbusier claims the necessity to

> wrench off our hearts and brains our ossified image of the house [...in order to] arrive to the tool-house,[21]

his own buildings

> *are* the very thing they were not supposed to be, which is hardly surprising because, like it or not, *all* buildings symbolize, or at least carry meanings. Even Pevsner admits this now [...] whilst insisting that the International Modern "conveys clarity, precision, technological daring and a total denial of superfluity". There is no getting away from it; just as Chartres Cathedral carries meanings, so does the meanest garden shed. That is why the functionalists' dream of a machine-like and meaning-free architecture never was anything more than a dream.[22]

The closer to "meaning-free" architectural achievements of the post-war period, the more they look like built nightmare.

Perhaps the most important point Broadbent makes is the one concerning the unavoidable semantic function of architecture. Consequently, if "all buildings carry meanings, then we should do well to see how they do it".[23] So he outlines the framework of a Peircean semiotic applied to architecture. According to that, buildings can be in turns or even simultaneously, in their totality or through various parts indices, symbols and icons depending on the referent or the reference.[24] Although perfectly coherent, Broadbent's demonstration leaves little hope that semiotic investigation alone can prove sufficient for understanding meaning in architecture. On the contrary, it becomes only the more obvious that

architectural meaning, though omnipresent, is extremely versatile even within the same culture or epoch. Different from language, levels and means of expression are far too numerous to be ordered in a syntax, while architectural pragmatics simply escapes rationalization. The author admits it himself:

> At this pragmatic level, architecture probably is the most interesting and complex sign-system of all. [...] Anything, which conveys information physically – a telephone line, a book, a drawing, or a building – is an information channel. Any building is constantly sending out "messages" – visual, acoustic, thermal, and so on – which can be received by one of the senses and "decoded" according to the observer's personal experience.[25]

Somewhat emphatically, Umberto Eco asks: "Why is architecture a particular challenge to semiotics?" After formulating an answer (already free of functionalist ties in 1980) concerning architecture's main subjects – that of *functioning* and not of *communicating*[26] –, he goes on discovering features and nuances that are encouraging indeed with respect to where one can get with semiotics in architecture. However, for doing so Eco introduces *stimulus* and *communication*[27] in the discussion before studying the character of the architectural sign.[28] He identifies architectural *denotation* and *connotation*. Then he makes a point (calling to no less an authority than that of Aristotle's *Poetics*) in restating the principle of indispensable support given by a certain amount of redundancy for any moment of high information-content.[29] According to the binary distinction above, he differentiates between *primary* and *secondary* functions to make explicit – and to classify – the kinds of semantic changes architecture (and artifacts in general) undergo through use. In this way, architectural *function* is liberated at last from the reductionism that has crippled it all along the hegemony of *post-vanguard* functionalism. And once again, the amazingly protean nature of architectural sign is revealed.

Eco is probably right when he claims "the entire culture can be better understood if approached from a semiotic point of view".[30] Certainly, the semiotic approach is not to be dismissed when theoretically investigating architecture. Another, perhaps more comprehensive answer to Eco's emphatic question cited above could be found in the essentially double nature of architecture. On the one hand, it is meant to fulfill the most trivial of needs; on the other, it must be opened to references strictly outside

its technical domain to escape reification, that is, to be inhabitable. However, such an answer leads away from semiotic talk towards phenomenology and beyond.

How to Inhabit According to Heidegger

Human intervention is required to tame natural space, that is, to provide it with significance. It is not only a matter of constructing an artificial environment, which should formulate an appropriate response to more or less precise needs. Artificial space works as an intermediary structure that *filters* natural space by providing meanings for what is transfigured, through this *coding* process, into content. That is where the difference between *natural* and *artificial* space appears. Religious or semantic acknowledging of this difference is inseparable from the exclusively human action of inhabiting. It is a matter of consciously entering, stepping over the threshold of a particular space, which is thus transformed, and will, in its turn, transform those who enter. Human *presence* within a space produces an evaluative perception of it. A complex set of operations takes place, involving our whole being, through which the apprehended place is situated in a scale of cultural values. The more powerful the space, the more important the encounter with it will be for the apprehending person, who will also grow different through the new spatial experience. Once *touched*, natural space will bear man's marks in order to *mediate* communication between the man, the world and the gods.

A verse written by Hölderlin allows Heidegger to undertake an investigation for finding the essence of inhabiting.[31] "*... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch...*" is his threshold for commencing the argument. Man "inhabits poetically". Or rather, his nature is to do so, in the sense that *inhabiting* the Earth (as opposed to just *dwell* on it) is a distinctive character of our species. The purely human way to exist, of which inhabiting is a fundamental feature, rests on poetry – the creative play of imagination being part of it. While human existence is conceived as starting from the essence of inhabiting, the essence of poetic creation is thought of as a privileged kind of constructing that allows inhabiting to take place.[32] Further, Heidegger warns against confusing the material fabrication of shelters or tools with the basis of inhabiting; fabrication is merely an outcome of the essence of the latter. After making a point of the difference between one-and-the-same (*das Selbe*) and even-ness (*das Gleiche*), thus

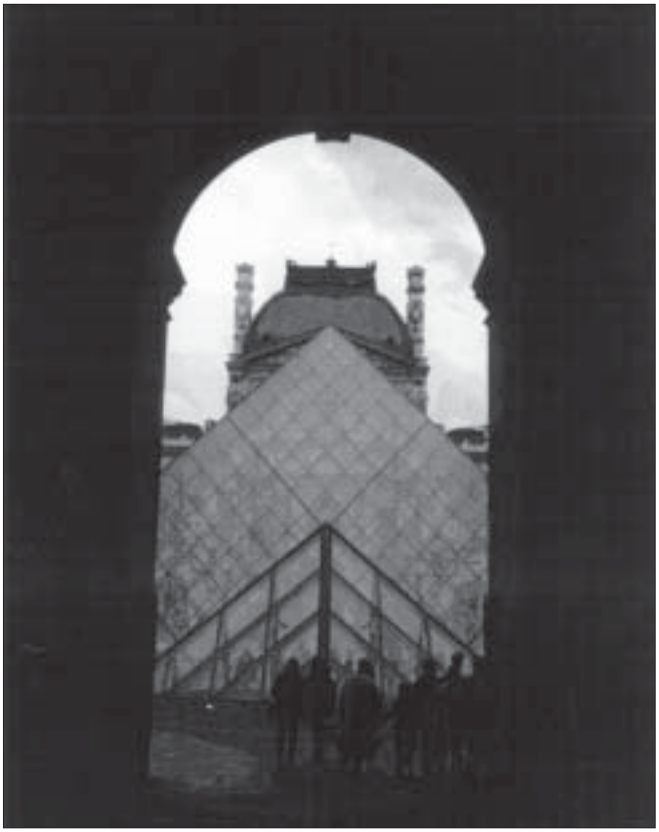
distinguishing compatibility (harmony) from uniformity, he comes to speak about the Measure of humankind as being the way to reach the sublime from the bottom of pure striving. The essence of the Measure is that it offers the interval of human existence, its two limits being Earth and Heaven. This is where inhabiting finds its basis and endurance.[33] How? Through Good Will (χαρις [*charis*]) nurtured "around the heart".[34]

Heidegger uses poetic image and the generous potentials of German and Greek languages to approach the essence of inhabiting. In his discourse he re-creates – poetically, one should say – the complicated and paradoxical gestures accomplished by everyone who inhabits: he carefully chooses his materials, involves his fantasy, creates a structure and ceaselessly encompasses all the distance between the trivial and the sublime. That is how he expects to find his specific place – and ours – in the world. This place means: the Limits (Measure), the Site (Earth), the Roof (Heaven), the Structure (Poetry), the Means (Good Will).

Two

The Parthenon

Making a Place does not necessarily involve complicated technical means. Often the Center is enough to determine the boundary of the inhabitable place. Founding must be accomplished according to the rites to ensure the best auspices. A Hindu temple wall encounters the Dogon version of inhabiting a metaphor of the human body.



The Pyramids, Louvre, Paris

The Achilpa Axis

Mircea Eliade tells the story of the Achilpa's "cosmogony": their god, *Numbakula*, once descended from the sky raised a stake (*kauwa-auwa*) made of the wood of a rubber tree which then he sacred with blood. This was the *Axis Mundi*. At the end of his mundane presence, he climbed the holy mast and vanished back into the sky. Any time the Achilpas had to move their village, they simply took the Axis with them and replanted it during a ritual ceremony, which repeated, as did all their actions, the primary gestures of the god.

> Spencer and Gillen report that the whole community was caught by deadly despair once when the holy stake broke: the members of the tribe turned in circles for a while, then sat down on the ground waiting to die.[35]

There is no question of *built space* here (the way we understand it today) but this certainly is *edification* in the initiatory sense of the concept. It is the very center that determines the boundaries of the cosmic – hence inhabitable space.

According to Maya Kitché cosmogony, the world is pyramid-shaped. *Q'ahau*, Our Lord, inhabits the point while the sun, the moon and the constellations occupy their respective places in the celestial hierarchy. In the four corners there are four *kah tchè*, that is, masts of the sky. The two major axes intersect in the middle crossing called *chalquat be.*[36] Hence the initial pattern most pre-Columbian American temples repeat, and so do the Egyptian pyramids.

It has been argued that Egyptian pyramids are hardly to be considered architecture because they practically do not have any *inside*. Surely, after the entrance would have been walled up, their inner space was not meant to be entered by any living ever – the threshold being annulled. This argument however has no consistence if one agrees that, for the ancient Egyptians at least, the dead were true inhabitants of the tombs – all the elaborate effort to properly furbish the funeral chambers should be enough to prove it. The conceptual threshold is merely displaced to a different trajectory, accessible only to the dead and to the gods. Yet this idea brings forward the case of another famous building, the one that, to my knowledge, has never been threatened by disqualification from being *architecture*: the Parthenon.[37]

The most famous edifice of classical Greece was erected in Doric style to host the chryso-elephantine statue of Athena Parthenos by Phidias. The idol was placed in the *Cella*, the most sacred chamber of the temple, accessible only to the initiated. The worshipping mortals only surrounded the peristyle during their ritual procession, without ever actually penetrating inside the building. So, for most people this temple had no inner space. Nevertheless it was *inhabited* by the virgin goddess to whom the city was consecrated and thus ensured, as center, the cosmic order around the Acropolis. By performing this function, the Parthenon can be thought of as the equivalent of the Achilpa mast. We cannot help mentioning that the access to the closer neighborhood of this *axis* consists of an elaborate system of successive thresholds: the Propylaea.

Boundaries and Founders

The founding of Rome on *Mons Palatinus* (traditionally in 753 BC, but more likely earlier, around the tenth century BC) followed a deeply meaningful ritual. Romulus traced the boundaries of the new city by cutting the first furrow (*sulcus primigenius*) with his bronze plough, surrounding the perimeter of the new town anti-clockwise, by following the inspiration of local *genii*. This was not as much a physically impenetrable wall as it was a sacred place uniting earth and heaven – again similar to the Achilpa mast – which was not to be violated unless breaking the strictest of conventions. Faithful to an Etruscan rite, the founder

> took the plough out of the ground and carried it over the span of the gate; [...] it is this carrying (*portare*) which provides the root of *porta*, the gate. Also, the walls [...] were sacred, while the gates were subject to civil jurisdiction.[38]

Otherwise no passing could ever be permitted across the instituted boundary.

> The furrowed earth was called "moat" and the ridge (thrown up by the plough) was called "wall". [...Varro's] text makes explicit [...] the nature of the "wall", which Remus had jumped.[39]

He jumped over it and therefore had to be put to death. Titus Livius, in a book published as early as 27 BC, tends, rather dryly, to take Remus'

mockery of the walls for a legend, attributing the fratricide to a banal fight for supremacy.[40] Rykwert however, who takes his story from Plutarch, finds several more obscure legends that all make allusion to a forgotten ritual:

> ... Oeneus, the Calydonian wine-god, killed his son Toxeus for jumping over the ditch he had dug round his vineyard, and [...] Polimander aimed a stone at the cynical architect Polycrithos who jumped over the new walls of his fortress. [...] Remus then was killed for sacrilege.[41]

In remote hamlets of Transylvania, Székely peasants used to bury a clay pot with fresh eggs, or money, under the eastern corner of a new house, as recently as the first half of this century. Rudiments of ancient founding rituals still survive to be identified in the superstition that concerns the measuring of the shadow cast by a human being, to be built in the new walls. The person whose shadow got *measured* would die within a year because every new building claims the sacrifice of a living.[42]

In all these cases architectural action is quite unlike what is thought of building in our times. In fact such action already seemed extravagant in the times of Titus Livius. Yet traces of ancient founding ritual may, to some extent, be closer to architecture as discussed here than are most of today's high-tech accomplishments. If more authority is required to support this judgment, we can cite Hegel with his definition of the place as "time situated in space", or Aristotle who defined the same as "the first limit of the resting content".[43]

Understandable in the context of the fatigue shown by the historicist architecture of the nineteenth century (even if enlivened shortly by the turn-of-the-century Modern Style), the noisy announcement made by CIAM[44] activists of *functionalism* looks today of pathetic simplicity. Nonetheless, at the time of plaster architecture, their manifesto seemed quite a discovery. Unfortunately, what was then meant by standard *function* was mainly a set of elementary needs of an abstract human being. As such, it was far from exhausting the wide spectrum of implications due to the complexity of human inhabiting. Moreover, everything was reduced to a bare technical and aesthetic task, interpreted with self-sufficient belief in the omnipotence of technology. The achievements resulting from such *Ars Poetica* have proved disastrous world wide, therefore the claim, today, for an "architecture as independent discourse, free of external values – classical or any other; that is, the intersection of the meaning-free, the

arbitrary and the timeless in the artificial"[45] is quite surprising. However, such a discourse is articulated by star-architect Peter Eisenman, champion of architectural deconstructivism. His correspondence with Jacques Derrida has been made public in glamorous circumstances and his designs are ordered, built and published in architectural magazines of spotless reputation. If in the case of the Coop Himmelblau manifesto, quoted earlier, one can grasp the humorous overtone suddenly revealing it as a late descendant of futurism (with inverted sign though), with Eisenman one cannot escape the impression that architecture is somehow misplaced both in his spoken and built discourses.

Of course technological progress has always played a powerful role in the business. There is an early account of a purely technological building adventure in the *Bible*:

> Go, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had *brick for stone*, and slime had they for mortar. [...] Go, let us build *us* a city and a tower, whose top may *reach unto heaven*.[46]

Obviously burnt brick was a new technology leaving much more room for invention than row brick or stone (in Mesopotamia, where stone was scarce). The Lord disapproves the initiative of

> the *children* of men; [...] they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now *nothing will be restrained from them, which they imagined to do*.[47]

It is interesting to compare the extent given in the Scripture to this episode, a mere anecdote (nine versets altogether), although resulting in a great deal of trouble for humankind –scattered "abroad upon the face of all the earth" – with the gigantic passage dedicated to the divine design of the Tabernacle. It takes no less than four chapters (25 to 28), a total of 141 versets from the *Exodus*, dealing even with the smallest detail of the garments to be used inside this fragile, transient, tent-like temple structure. I believe it useful to establish, according to these two biblical stories, two edifying traditions in human history:

1. *Babelian*, centered on technological prowess, closed and self referential – the building as object;
2. *Tabernacular*, the cosmological enterprise, centered on meaning, open to external reference – the building as content.

According to this classification, very few known edifices (such as King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, for instance) can be listed in the second category. However, many of the examples seen in books of architectural history incorporate an *external reference*, be they sacral buildings or not. On the other hand, toy-like achievements of technological prodigy end up with the time by being integrated to the realm of architecture through gradual semantic enrichment (e. g. the Eiffel Tower in Paris). There seems to be an irresistible urge to provide "independent discourse" with ties, boundaries and thresholds that would root it into time and space.

The Hindu Temple and the Dogon

Walls are the commonest partition element between the inside and the outside, and between the different grades of the inside as well. Their structural role in supporting the roof is not to be disregarded either. However, it would be difficult to tell – for instance in the case of Japanese wooden, or West European Mediaeval *Fachwerk* building systems – how important their structural role is in comparison to the *separation* part they perform in all cultures of all times.

In Hindu temple building tradition, the *material thickness* of the walls is important in itself as a *uniting* medium, and so are both wall surfaces as support for iconographic representation. While describing the erotic sculptures on two ¯aiva shrines in Kajuraho, the KandariyŸ MahŸdeva (mid-eleventh century) and the Vi¿vanŸtha, Devangana Desai mentions the *maithuna* (couple in coitus) on the door as an auspicious decoration. Moreover,

> the manner of presentation of erotic motifs in Kajuraho temples is connected to a certain extent to the architectural plans...

For instance, at the KandariyŸ, there is a

> display [of] a particular presentation of erotic themes on their wall junctures [...] which join the *mahŸmandapa* (hall) and *garbhagrha* (womb house).[48]

Thus walls not only separate the sacred chamber from its neighboring spaces, they also unite them (*juncture*); among others, these walls bear with predilection the *maithuna* representations of ritual union.[49]

The human body as analogy for building has been a lasting theme in architecture. Either in its wholeness, with arms stretched out to fit into the limits of a geometric square, diagonals intersecting on the genitalia, or through different parts of his or her body, our own image was projected on the built world all through architectural history. Moreover, human body can be the representation of the whole world.[50] All through Christian church building tradition the crucified body of Christ proved the most wide spread canonical pattern – eventually yet another Christian conversion of a pagan theme.

The conceptual distinction between the interior and the exterior is the most elementary spatial dichotomy. It also pertains to human consciousness, and its origin should perhaps be sought in the nostalgic (Freudian) longing for the womb. The Dogon dwelling tradition certainly assumes this analogy as identity. Both the village and the house are configured following a precise representational canon based on the human body.

> The vestibule [...] represents the male partner of the couple, the outside door being his sexual organ. The big central room is the domain and symbol of the woman; the storerooms on each side are her arms, and the communicating door her sexual parts.[51]

The more or less explicit recurrence of sexual or body symbolism in architectural representations certainly denotes an enduring preoccupation to maintain ties with the pre-architectural world, well before *contextualism* was invented. However, the translation of fertility rites to founding and building in traditional cultures should not create confusions regarding any presupposed *living* or *organic* quality of these artifacts. Anthropomorphic symbolism merely meant the acknowledging of the necessary coherence between the inside and the outside.

In such imagery, whose examples are innumerable, inside (as artificial) and outside (as natural) are separated *and* united in the same time by the limit. The threshold, as the permissive point of the boundary, is the very place where the contact – melting together – of the inside and the outside takes place. It is the threshold that provides sense for the three other elements to make them work as a universally intelligible spatial system of infinite variability.

Three

The Mirror

No fiction can do without architectural staging. Vidler makes a romantic survey to explain post-modern architectural trends. Alice goes to Wonderland and through the looking glass. Borges lives between mirrors and labyrinths. The image of infinity shines reflected in the mirror of patrimonial syndrome.

NURSERY, ŽIŽKOV, PRAGUE

Alice

> ... it is almost impossible to communicate without using spatial referents [... in relation...] to the limits of the body senses [...] ranked in the order of the spatial information they provided: vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste.[52]

This is of course also true for fictional reality in literature, theater or cinema. One can go to almost any epoch or any literary *genre* to initiate fascinating *promenades architecturales* made to associate particular feelings, emotions. The journey is certainly rewarding for someone discussing architecture metaphorically.

An immediate observation that can be made while looking at the architectural production of the last five decades is that it lacks homeliness. Neither special professional skills nor exceptional viciousness are required to globally dismiss the urban developments of the post-war period, with eventually mentioning the exceptions and at the same time deploring their scarcity. Yet when it comes to specify the causes and possible ways of improvement, the discourse gets confused, no longer satisfied with plain common sense and professional acuity.

In order to introduce his analysis, and identify some of the cultural origins of a few – weird – contemporary architectural tendencies – bearing as suggestive a title as *The Architectural Uncanny* –, Anthony Vidler begins by making a fascinating survey of the presence of the architectural un-homeliness in nineteenth century literature. Not only are houses the perfect surrounding for unusual and often dramatic events, they also somehow induce a sense of strangeness through their sheer appearance as innocent dwellings. They have by definition, it seems, the vocation to hide mysteries (*Ge-heim-nis*) and uncanny events. One would say that tragic fate is the necessary share of both the makers and the inhabitants of architecture – at least in the amount of fiction writing the author makes reference to. Romantic authors are the main object of his analysis – Poe, Hugo and, most of all, E.T.A. Hoffmann, a conscious and conscientious inventor of uncanny places (beyond "can", says Freud) where he stages his estranged characters and bizarre tales.[53] Councilor Krespel's extravagant way of building his home is analyzed in detail,[54] with a point on how the external oddity of the resulting house hides a familiar interior, thus performing a mimetic mediation with the hostile world.

Commenting *The Sandman*, Vidler follows Freud's respective comments regarding the importance of the eyes. Thus, one significant thing in the story of Nathanael and Olympia is the *willingness* of the former to buy and use the spyglass that allows him to deceive himself. Thus mechanical Olympia becomes alive in his *eyes*. Perhaps we are dealing here with an early manifestation of what today would become the overwhelming primacy of *sight* over all the other senses in our relationship with architecture. Beyond the attraction exerted by its novelty, Cyberspace allows individual and arbitrary manipulation of merely *seen* virtual reality. For instance, during the Alberti exhibition in Venice a few years ago, visitors could see (even inside) buildings never actually built, although planned by Alberti. Necessary architectural deception is replaced in this case by deception on a second level. According to Choay, by our progressive advancement through the "electronic agora [...], fundamentally and deeply anti-spatial [as it is]", corporeality in our relation with built environment tends to be replaced by mere virtual contact.[55] Thus our whole conception of the urban realm is about to change irreversibly.

Although he quotes at some point Lewis Carroll,[56] Vidler does not discuss the quite remarkable architectural spaces in the *Alices*, constructed with the ease of a daydream. To come to Wonderland, Alice has to cross a first threshold marked by the narrow entrance to the rabbit hole – another allusion to the womb. The thing is done quite easily, as she does not have much time to think about it. Crossing becomes more difficult when she tries to come out again to the beautiful garden. Either the door is too small or it is locked. Alice will learn quickly enough that you can never come to any place in Wonderland the usual way. Finally it will be enough to open a door cut in the bark of a tree to get to the garden – inside a tree – which, nevertheless is not mentioned any more to be such an outstanding spot, once it is within reach. Spaces and places are ceaselessly changing shape, and Alice herself soon stops being amazed about this. The worst comes when she is caught inside the White Rabbit's house: the place turns into a claustrophobic nightmare. Alice only overgrows her environment once more, this time for good, and that is the end of the story. Growing up is an inexorable process in children's lives and its result is about always the same: the loss of the capability of assuming miracles.

Once more Alice goes beyond plain adult-world. This time it is by crossing the mirror to an inverted – more perverse – realm. Events there are quite hopeless and, after witnessing Humpty-Dumpty's irreplaceable passing away, Alice has to become queen for a little while – another

ghost of adulthood projected ahead (although the jeopardy is now far more serious than that of being beheaded in Wonderland by the Queen of Hearts). The White Queen unconsciously articulates the verdict when she claims that sometimes she has "believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast". It can be understood as a warning against things fancied in childhood, which become possible in a dangerous way once we grow up. Touched (built), they easily proliferate as technological monsters: gigantic Mickey-mice made of latex or fake vegetation blossoming endlessly in the dimly lit depths of air-conditioned atriums.

The mirror endures as an everlasting symbol for fantasy, but also for infinity and madness. Its literature encompasses the epochs, changes according to fashion. In his book,[57] Jurgis Baltrušaitis makes a survey of the legendary history of mirrors in order to create the background for a discourse on the history of catoptrics. The text is yet well marked by technological optimism and also by the unawareness of what will, during the following decades of this century, become an entirely different vision of the *visual*. Again today, the mirror raises more interest in the meta-scientific domains of witchcraft, metaphor and fiction.

The mirror is (through its natural readiness for *mimesis*) also a fundamental element in representation, hence an architectural element too. It cannot be dealt with without referring to prince Hamlet's all too famous metaphor of theater.[58] Like the garden in Alice, wrapped inside a tree, the whole world fits into the stage of a *playhouse* by the magic potential of a mirror. At the same time artificial illusion and natural phenomenon, the mirror has wide possibilities as symbol. Borges makes of it one of the redundant, most powerful elements of his prose. With the labyrinth and the book, mirrors create in his literature a cobweb of mystery that stands for an image of the world inhabited, but not to be known by humans. A mirrored image, of course. Architectural themes are, however, more present in Borges' oeuvre than that. In *The Parable of the Palace* (1960),[59] the labyrinthine world is entirely built and inhabited to end up as a metaphor for the Verb. It is an upside-down representation, for the *project* is preceded by its physical embodiment, thus revealing the reversibility of architectural processes. *Utopia of a Tired Man* (1975)[60] sketches a future world built and inhabited by anonymous individuals, each inventing his or her own technology. Perhaps the most powerful as architectural staging, the gaol in *The Scripture of the God* (1949)[61] becomes, dark and closed, the shelter of the infinity of the universe. The uncertainty of spatial extension as well as its illusionist effect on our senses

are everywhere in the stories of Borges. *Paracelsus' Rose* (1977)[62] is a plea for the faith in miracles, the only chance to find our place in this world – to inhabit it successfully.

Narcissus and Us

It is said in the *Bible*:

> They [...] collected a great amount of money. The king and Jehoiada gave it to the men who carried out the work required for the people of the Lord. They hired masons and carpenters to restore the Lord's temple, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the temple. The men in charge of the work were diligent, and the repairs progressed under them. They rebuilt the temple of God *according to its original design* and reinforced it.[63]

It is, to my knowledge, the earliest account we have of an operation bearing the marks of a *restoration*[64] . However, we cannot be mistaken: there is no question of a restoration in our sense of the concept. Was the temple re-founded, rebuilt, or just repaired? No trace in the biblical text of any preoccupation to conserve an architectural witness of past epochs, nor of concern for the authenticity of the historical document, even less for the recording of the aesthetic elements of the temple the way they were in "its original design". Our obsession for the continuity in time of the material body of architectural objects is entirely absent and so is the unanimous fascination exerted today by historical heritage. Françoise Choay labels this fascination "narcissistic" and warns against the dangers of remaining frozen into it.[65]

The biblical tale is rather a symbolic time reference. Closer events are at hand to be theoretically approached. If the phenomenon of built heritage is a relatively recent one, more or less synchronic with modern history, its unprecedented expansion both in time and in space is a strictly contemporary evolution.

While contemporary building activity results in objects belonging more to the field of industrial production than to that of edifying, we also have a conservationist preoccupation powerfully spreading worldwide. The two domains compete each other and tend to divide the built universe in two, apparently incompatible camps.

Already in the title, Alois Riegl's major book[66] indicates the somewhat *unhealthy* feature of the then emerging institutionalized monument protection. There is a visible tendency, with fetishist overtones, of reifying monuments. Cultural tourism is often alike to the commerce with relics still flourishing today around pilgrimage places. Choay discusses the phenomenon in detail as related to the post war evolution of the European society and calls it, significantly, "patrimonial syndrome".[67]

The cultural attitude that would give birth later on to all the practices aiming to study and preserve built heritage appeared in Italy around the year 1420. The reinvestment of Rome[68] as capital city of the Christian world was simultaneous with a new perception of its antique ruins. The sense of historical progression had just been invented.

It was the spirit of humanism that did it all. The new interest shown in antique remains was first sustained, in the second half of the fourteenth century, by the relationship between written documents and the architectural and artistic marks left over by Greek and Roman Antiquity. Almost one generation later, it was the turn of artists to recognize and assume the artistic heritage of the same epoch. Then, around 1420, scholars and artists began an unprecedented dialogue to build up a first idea of the historical monument.[69]

Beyond the scholar and artistic interest however, there was something that urged the majority of Renaissance scholars and artists to share the preoccupation for the preservation of antiquities: their progressive disappearance. As in every later period, when theory and practice related to the protection of historical monuments were to make a crucial step forward, it was the conscience of an irretrievable loss that made their value so poignantly evident.

Paradise Lost

It can be said that the industrial revolution has reshaped all the major features of the European culture. According to Gellner's seducing theory,[70] industrial revolution should also be held responsible for the structure of modern nation-states. The functioning of the latter rests on an instituted and maintained mass culture ensuring the high mobility of the members of society. Small local cultures and, with them, a certain sense of rootedness in time and space tend to be swallowed by this entropic process. Hence another explanation for the "patrimonial syndrome".

At the same time the vanishing of the immediate relationship between artifact and artisan accelerates. The goods become products; the edifice becomes construction, and the craftsman industrial worker. The industrial revolution appears at the crossroad of the de-sacralization of edifying – understood as anthropological activity that founds not only edifices, but also identities – and of the progressive reification of the built object. In this new era of fabrication the built space needs new resources in order to fulfill its initial purpose, presently in ontological errancy.

The unprecedented phenomenon of the worldwide extension of the practices related to conservation and restoration of the built heritage has for good reason been called "patrimonial inflation".[71] There are an increasing number of international documents dealing with the matter, adopted by an increasing number of countries. Questioned in its details but accepted as a whole, the *Venice Charter*[72] was followed by a series of documents that continue its articulating enterprise, turning it into an institutional one.

At times, apparently incompatible positions emerge regarding crucial matters of monument conservation, among which authenticity is perhaps the most intricate one. The causes are to be found in the ambivalence of architecture – a domain artistic as much as utilitarian -, but also in what I earlier called the *unhealthy* feature of conservationist attitudes.

Any building today, if it belongs to a technological past, has chances to become part of the *built heritage*. Such generalization of the *process of monumentification* tends to annihilate the consecrated sense of the idea of historical monument. If every finished building is potentially protected, then the conservationist attitude re-becomes what it once was: the economic use of extant buildings. The difference lies in the fact that today we acknowledge and assume as such the cultural identity value represented by the built environment. Parallel to that, initially non-architectural constructions (such as bridges or factories) undergo a spontaneous *process of architecturification* through their progressive loading with strata of architectural significance. Of course this phenomenon does not relieve architects from conscientiously searching for meaning already in the project phase of their buildings to be.

Conservationist doctrines will have to be integrated to an overall architectural theory. Such a corpus will have to have a pragmatic side regulating the maintenance, repair and reuse of buildings, while establishing a detailed hierarchy of their respective value.

The matter of protected natural areas has to be mentioned here. Although not artifacts in themselves, these vast natural *enclosures* are *inhabited* in the sense that they are subject to aesthetic and economic evaluation. With few exceptions there will hardly be any *un-inhabited* area on Earth in a few decades. The process called "anti-urbanization" or "de-urbanization"[73] would be closed. The post-urban age would have begun.[74]

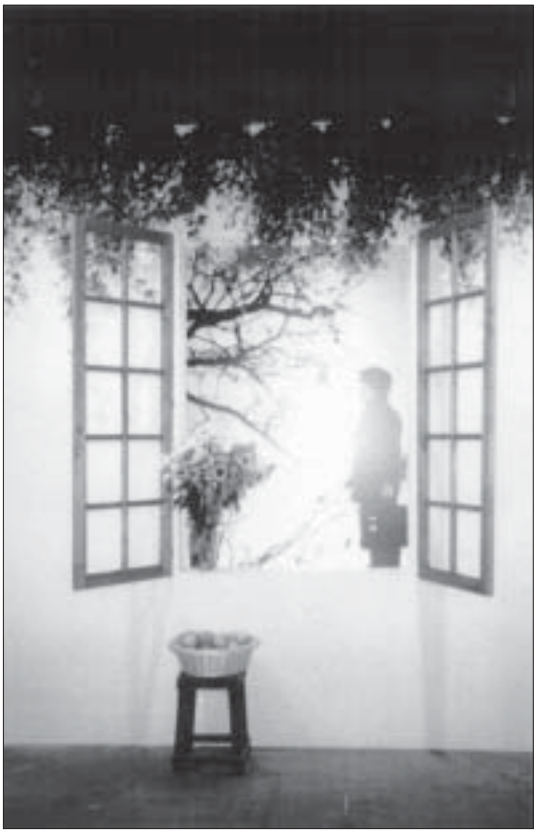
Once we accept the idea of the "patrimonial syndrome", and that the globalization of the patrimonial mentality is the sign of a crisis in our edifying competence, the re-evaluation of the built environment as a whole can constitute the basis of a renewed edifying competence. Such knowledge should comprise the whole range of building activities. It will make the distinction between heritage of universal value, vernacular architecture or "infra-ordinary"[75] urban textures and will provide specific approach for each category. New architecture will know how to integrate within the context and how to properly demolish what is useless.

It is necessary that our edifices recover a sense of dignity. Archaic founding rituals are now forgotten. Instead, assuming artificial space as the adequate continuation of the natural one in an ecological contextualism can be a fruitful approach. It is obvious that *disposable* architectural products have nothing to do with the built environment. Unless they are also *recyclable*, but this is another story. A post-architectural one.

Four

The Bell

Contemporary visual culture has severely reduced our idea about the complexity of architectural perception. However, films like those made by Andrei Tarkovsky offer in compensation powerful re-interpretations of the built environment. Theatrical space helps limits become immaterial and thus to re-institute architectural convention.



Tarkovsky Exhibition, Petit Palais, Paris

Tarkovsky's Films[76]

There is little doubt that Andrei Tarkovsky is one of the most outstanding filmmakers of what will probably be accounted for as the classical period of cinematography. His oeuvre is closed as far as its making is concerned, but the interpretation of his motion pictures will be an open matter for quite a while. Besides uniquely picturing human drama, he constructs imaginary worlds of his own, which appear to belong equally to the rest of us.

As representation is not to be imagined outside the artificial environment, it can be a rich experience to have a look at the stage-designed spaces he proposes in his films.[77] They are of a large variety and meaningful: very much like *real* man-made space, except that, referring to artistic reality, their intensity is overstated and always elaborate. In some ways, because it is assumed in its wholeness, built environment eventually becomes a character of Tarkovsky, and often a major one.

The Sacrifice is the very last work of the late artist. He was soon to die from homesickness and cancer. It can be called a film of the impossible shelter and one of violent revolt against architectural delusion (the evidence comes strikingly: the reduced scale model in the woods with the original in the background, appearing equally small and fragile – one cannot but think of the breathtaking rising of the tiny blue Earth beyond the bare horizon of the Moon). Not only proves the villa inadequate to heal the pains of the exile; it is even more so when it comes to protect the dweller from his own apocalyptic nightmare. Man destroys the House and loses his mind with it. The only survivor of his gone sanity is the parable of the dead tree, which may perhaps blossom one day. The site of the villa is on high seashore. Water and earth meet under the uninterrupted, mute canopy of the sky. Three of the elements are touching each other: when the hour comes the house burns, the fourth element is restored and thus harmony is re-established.

Solaris is the picture of impossible communication and of the eternal longing for home. The irreducible loneliness of man and the eternally re-made attempt to bridge it over by trying to establish contacts with the Other (*Das ganz Andere*), condemned being as lonely as ourselves. The place the film constructs is the utmost artificial one, it seems, for it is the space-laboratory stationed far away from Earth. And it looks indeed like the worst of such images one can fancy, almost abandoned and hardly maintained by its inhabitants. Yet a further stage is still made possible: a

tiny fragment of *real* earth – a full-scale model – miraculously synthesized to embody the object of unlimited longing. Man, a poor lost child, dreams about the returning home of the prodigal son. The realm where the journey takes him is at the margins of the physical universe; the attempt to reach the Other takes place at the furthermost limit of sanity. No wonder that the encounter occurs on the threshold of the impossible house of the father – in its turn built initially to follow the pattern of the grandfather's house.

Probably the least hopeless of the three movies discussed here is *Andrei Rublev*. Unlike the two other films – the story of *The Sacrifice* happens today while the events in *Solaris* are set in the future – this one is clad in a history picture situated far back in time (around 1400 AD). It is also an *Ars Poetica* dealing with the eternal artistic dilemma of to be or not to be expressive. Tarkovsky's answer is affirmative. The metaphor he uses is a space of a quintessential quality: the limits of it are those produced at hearing distance by the sound of a bell. Out of a sudden a wonderland-like earthly paradise of safety and happiness emerges from the troublesome times of high Middle Ages, when the newly *made* bell first sounds. It stands, like the Achilpa mast, as the axis of an ordered universe. There is little comfort to be found in the rest of the film. The wanderings of the genial monk turn into some sort of ontological pilgrimage, experiencing in turns different techniques of salvation – or perdition. All of them prove to be vain (the Flight, the Jester, the Witches, the Castle-builders, even the Church-painters). Where there is no hope left, just the inconsiderate human adventure of the imitation of Creation, the ultimate attempt to replicate the divine model is to try to produce, within corruptible material objects, the ineffable. The last pictures of the film show what has survived of Andrei Rublev's endeavor to accomplish this impossible task. The colors are as clear and volatile as the sound of the bell: a tiny moment in the endless, indifferent flow of time. Yet it is just through their magnificent and ephemeral existence that humans can hope to remain in touch with the heaven.

Porches and Gates

Theater people speak about an invisible curtain separating the stage from the audience. In some respect this immaterial membrane is similar to Alice's looking glass: everything behind this threshold responds to different rules, and reality is read according to different conventions. This

is particularly obvious in the case of an Italian stage (the audience peep into a box with one side missing, like a doll house), but it is no less effective in all the different stage-systems invented and re-invented all along the history of theater.

It is Hamlet again who, in connection with the artistic transfiguration of the actor,[78] identifies with some precision the means that make theatrical convention coherent. Following Polonius' remark (who is obviously out of the game):

> Look! wh'er he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes,

Hamlet bursts out:

> ... this player here, / But in fiction, in a dream of passion, / Could force his soul so to his own conceit / That from her working all his visage wann'd, / Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, / A broken voice [...] and all for nothing! For Hecuba! What's Hecuba to him?[79]

Beyond the paradox of the actor's tears, it is interesting to note how, in the play sequence from *Hamlet*, theater within theater re-enacts the infinity instituted by parallel mirrors. King Claudius is trapped in the maze, but so are cunning Hamlet and candid Ophelia. This time once more the threshold leads to a lethal labyrinth.

Actors and audience meet in the performance hall in order to participate to the theatrical event. They are all ready to yield to the special rules of a place imagined and built for this purpose. Once they step in, they change their behavior to such extent that they are ready to weep for Ophelia while knowing all the time that *it's just a play*. How and when does the mutation become effective? In the single moment of crossing the threshold of the play house, gradually, from the entrance during the passage through the foyer and stairs, while performing the familiar gestures before reaching their seats, or putting on their costumes? An approximately similar process takes place each time we enter built environment. Signs and previous experience, learnt codes, even instinct influence our changing of attitude.

Therefore the physical shape of the entrance is important. Architects used to know this and hence the rich variety of doors, porches, gates, porticoes, triumphal arches,[80] in a word, of thresholds, all through architectural history. The act of entering can be a matter of a second or,

instead, an elaborate process preparing the behavioral shift in every detail, like in the case of Egyptian temples with successive courtyards, but also in the case of sacral architecture in general.[81] The comparison of the ritual display in any sacral service with playing, beyond commonplace, is the subject of Huizinga's investigation in chapter one of his book arguing for the fundamental role of games in culture.[82]

The Power of Convention

Those of us who have beards growing on our faces may try the following experiment. It has to be set in a Balkan country, because it is unlikely that today conditions can be good enough in post-industrial welfare places of the West. Enter a barbershop in some remote townlet you have never been before, take a seat and ask to be shaven. In a short while, a stranger will approach your neck, which you offer with complete trust and docility, will begin touching it repeatedly with a very sharp, long blade made of steel. If you are lucky, the gesture is preceded by the elaborate sharpening of the blade on a thick leather strip by the stranger who, meanwhile, considers your neck with a professional gaze. Now, in any other place everybody would experience and express an extreme state of panic, but not in the old-fashion barbershop.

When establishing the determining features of *game*, Huizinga insists on the strictness of rules [1]. As soon as one of the participants breaks them, the game is over, its *magic* collapses. A game is, according to Huizinga: free [2], limited in time [3], repeatable [4], gratuitous [5], aesthetic [6].[83] Immediately we recognize the relatedness of games to artistic creation, on the one hand, and to the claims of breakaway manifestoes of the twentieth century architecture, on the other. However, we can easily dismiss the assimilation of architecture to a formative game or to visual arts, temptation that is foolishly followed by people like Coop Himmelblau or Peter Eisenman:

[1] Conventions truly play an immense part in the way we inhabit architecture. Yet unlike those governing a game, "absolutely compulsory and incontestable"[84] architectural convention is subject to permanent, sometimes cyclic changes, within the same epoch, according to the person involved, season, time of the day and so on.

[2] No matter how *free* a deconstructivist building may be, it cannot, for instance, afford to have floors other than horizontal.

[3] Of course, edifices do not last eternally. Yet they are seldom built for a precise duration in time (exhibition pavilions, camps, festivals, etc.).

[4] Functionalism has claimed the validity of their *Habitation Units* in any climate and on any topography. Experience has proved the contrary with no exception.

[5] There is a small range of *gratuitous* buildings, usually labeled extravaganza, certainly not enough to make the rule.

[6] Aesthetics are with no doubt part of architectural design. No matter how furtive a look on architectural history, however, shows the versatility of taste, style and techniques, enough to decline any claim of aestheticism in architecture.

Architecture, though playful, is certainly not a game. Emerging from a project, it escapes control almost immediately. Therefore any struggle to pursue the design up to the smallest detail ends in *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Any attempt to keep firm control over the formal or semantic afterlife of built structures closes them, thus making them inappropriate for inhabiting.

Five

The Obelisk

The case of Slovene architect Jože Plečnik (1872-1957) can stand as a contemporary example of someone who has obviously escaped the much-deplored disintegration of architecture. Discussing architecture proper also helps finding a few of those specific means still available to restore the dignity of architecture as profession.

The Monolith, Third Courtyard, Prague Castle

Plečnik and His Commissioners

Until recently the name of Jože Plečnik did not mean too much to the architectural history of the twentieth century except for a small spot: Slovene architecture. If mentioned at all, his oeuvre was labeled as nostalgic or classicist. Fashions change, however. Today Plečnik is re-discovered,[85] celebrated as post-modernist *avant la lettre*, acclaimed by Slovene national revival as a founding father. Monographs have been published and, in spite of the difficulties issuing from the immovability of architecture, traveling exhibitions of his life and work have been organized.[86] He is equally well sold by the tourist enterprise. His effigy ornaments the banknote of 500 Slovene tolars. A truly post-modern career follows to the oblivion of a quarter of a century.

So Plečnik no longer needs rehabilitation. Much more interesting appears an interpretation of his architecture from a perspective little touched by research so far: which are the elements in Plečnik's oeuvre that make his heritage to have a quality different from the mass of post-vanguard construction? The discussion is set in the context, first, of the much-talked about *death of Functionalism* as a result of the wearing out of the illusions regarding a limitless scientific progress and of the disappointment due to its semantic poverty. Second, as a reaction to the side effects of industrial revolution and in counter-balance to its functionalist architectural offspring, our end-of-the-century witnessed the consecration and globalization of the cult of built heritage. Plečnik stands as an exception from both these trends.

The young joiner's apprentice from Ljubljana went to work in the furniture factory of J.W. Müller in Vienna. He was encouraged to ask for admission in Otto Wagner's studio. Intimidated first by the evidence of his lack of preparation, he comes back to receive his diploma in 1898 after only four years of studying. Upon Wagner's retirement in 1912, of all his pupils it was Plečnik who was recommended to become his successor both by the board of the *Akademie der Bildenden Kunst* and Viennese specialized public opinion. Had it not been the opposition of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, he might have remained in Vienna. As it turned out, he went to teach at the school of Decorative Arts in Prague. His style would not integrate from the early times at the *Wagnerschule* but a few – important – reminiscences such as freedom in reinterpreting historical elements,[87] careful elegance of the surface and respect paid to technical details.

> Architectural specialists give all the credit [for the architectural achievements at Prague Castle] to Plečnik, which amounts to a risky underestimation of Masaryk, who appears to have been one of the most thoughtful politicians in that or any other age.[88]

Ian Jeffrey adds to this remark biographical data and quotations from writings of the first Czechoslovak president.[89] It is clear that Masaryk the philosopher would want a public architecture

> premeditated to the last detail, [through which] the whole nation might be elevated aesthetically and morally, and general education might be spread.

Like Ruskin before him, Masaryk believes that humankind can be improved by aesthetic means. There is no doubt that his influence on the new configuration of the *Hrad*, Acropolis[90] of the restored state in search for a modern identity, was crucial. It is important, from our point of view, to note that the outstanding architecture invented by Plečnik in Prague is also the result of the spiritual co-operation with his commissioner.

Where did the encounter between the philosopher president and the architect take place? One a Freemason, the other a fervent Catholic, belonging to different generations and classes, they might as well never have met. Precepts like "*Maul halten und weiterdienen*"[91] , or "turn towards yourselves" seem to have been leading (meta-architectural) principles all along Plečnik's career. The modesty of his approach is one of the resources of the openness of his architectural conceptions – in this case, openness towards the ideas of his commissioner. A commissioner who wrote that a man (considered also by him to be ζον πολιτικν [*zoon politikon*][92]) who wanted "to think must make a bid for isolation, must be something of a hermit".[93] Plečnik seems to be the embodiment of such a "hermit" living a life built on Masaryk's precepts such as "love, humanity must be positive" or "what humanity, our family, our party, our comrade needs from us is work".[94] The architect and his commissioner met on the firm ground of shared moral values.

The spiritual friendship between Plečnik and *Alice* Masaryk has to be mentioned here. The devoted president's daughter admires the art of the architect. Alice writes to him in 1922:

> You were my teacher and in these tumultuous times I have been very grateful for the quality of your art.[95]

Then, in 1923:

> Father entrusted me with the supervision of the Castle, to watch over it, to think it.

She will never stop caring for the Castle and will keep corresponding with Plečnik about it until his death:

> I hope the obelisk will bear the words: truth, love and life, nothing else, and the golden cap – a precise and perfect pyramid.[96] (November 13, 1956)

Nor is the importance of formal influences in Plečnik's interventions on the Castle to be disregarded. The new democracy needed an adequate style. Imperial monumentality was out of question while vanguard modernism could associate the autocratic *régime* of soviet Russia. Masaryk understood Marxist collectivism[97] too well to favor such an expression.

The publishing of *The Palace of Minos at Crete* (London, 1921) by Sir Arthur Evans revealed a formal and spiritual universe that would stir Plečnik's imagination.[98] Mediterranean overtones were already present in the mythical imagery of the Slovene architect as symbolic tools for his moderate Pan-Slavism (limited as it was to Western Catholic Slavs).[99] His obelisks, pyramids, cornices and archaic columns could have remained in the realm of *pastiche*, had they not been melted together in a coherent style by the modernity[100] of Plečnik. A well-balanced functionality structures the semantic load and the monumentality of his compositions, that otherwise could easily have slipped into extravagance or anachronism. The openness of Cretan spaces, the absence of fortifications and the free play of stylistic elements not yet restrained into classical order were also appropriate for an expression willing to detach itself from Austrian imperial rigor.

As a result to this interference, Plečnik produced an elaborate architecture in Prague Castle, where the concern for every detail does not, however, end up in *Gesamtkunstwerk* due to the multi-fold *openness*. It is precisely this *communicative* character of architecture pursued by Plečnik all through his long and industrious life that motivates his creativity and constitutes the most valuable part of his heritage.

Aged sixty-three, Plečnik moved back to Ljubljana for good in 1935. His release from the position of the Architect of the Prague Castle was

asked more and more insistently by voices considering him as an architect "alien in his nationality and taste". There were "enough native specialists who observe with love and piety the monuments of the nation".[101]

The works undertaken after this date in the Slovene capital city cover a wide variety of tasks. Not only do they develop further the themes invented in Prague. Due to the scarcity of funds, Plečnik often has to find cheap materials for carrying out his monumental designs. We are witnessing yet another *opening* of architecture towards the specific social command of an emerging society. There is an outstanding coherence in Pleènik's entire oeuvre ranging from grand scale urban planning[102] to the design of small objects. The sources of this coherence are to be found in the early professional biography of the architect and in the solidity of the ethical basis of his whole creation.

Plečnik found his inspiration in Cretan palaces when he had to invent architecture to symbolize newly installed democracy. A careful analysis of a few Slovene creations of the architect[103] reveals three traditions that melted together, were the source of most of his architectural vocabulary. These are the *Wagnerschule*, the vernacular peasant tradition and the Mediterranean classicism.

This sketchy ideological basis[104] (Pan-Slavism and democracy) incarnates in forms gathered from remote areas of architectural history. Yet the words of this eclectic vocabulary are each time reinvented. They fit quite well in the Bachelardian scheme,[105] proposing in themselves, within this reference, a splendid example of poetics in architecture. Not only is the accent unusual: the whole syntax is created anew thus producing an architecture of unique expression.

The invention of architectural *riddles* is combined with *unfinished* composition. Found objects are inserted to the buildings to express respect for the forerunners. Creative perception of architecture is encouraged to ensure continuous re-inventing. Plečnik knew that architecture exists only if it is actively approached, involving the body and soul of its *inhabitants*. Therefore he *opened up* his buildings to changes – both semantic and physical. In this sense his grandiose final achievement, the reshaping of the Križanke monastery in Ljubljana can be interpreted as his artistic testament.

The Church in Bogojina

A look at Plečnik's new-old church of the Ascension in Bogojina (1925-1927) reveals, finally, the uncommon relationship of his work with the built heritage and introduces some conclusions.

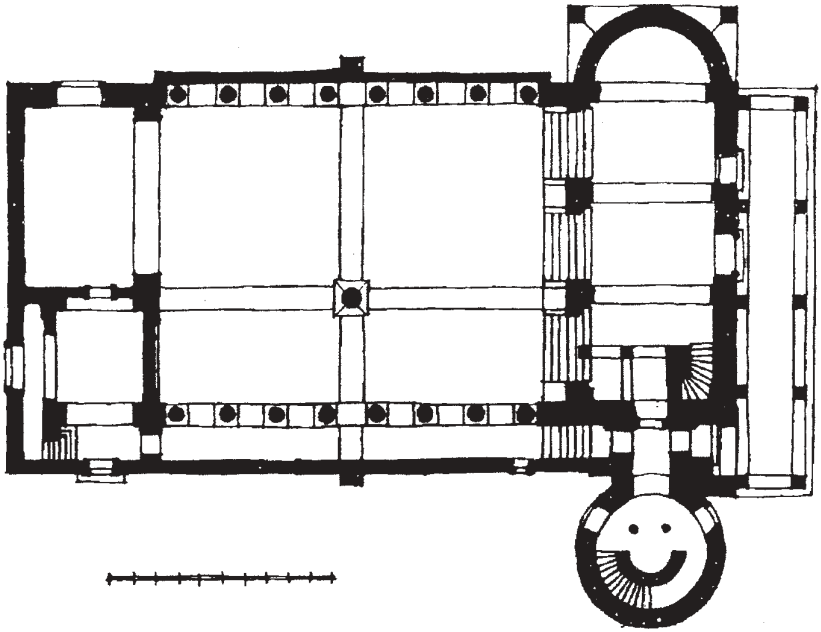
Initially the small Mediaeval-Baroque village church was to be replaced by a larger building. Instead, Plečnik decided to extend the space of the old church. The way in which he solved this task has created an exemplary pattern of architecture, open to numerous levels of perception.

Plečnik began by opening three arches on the northern side of the old nave. The two uneven naves of the new church comprise two and one of these arches. The old, lower nave becomes the vestibule of the new sacral space, its apse sheltering a side altar. Symmetrically to this semicircular apse a new, cylindrical belfry is built. The ensemble is covered by one monumental roof covering both church naves.

One can enter the new church by crossing the old one and by climbing the six steps separating the two liturgical spaces. The new altar is left behind for reaching the new one. The access to the tower, and to the gallery installed above the vaulting of the old-church-vestibule, is also ensured through this *space of passage*. The pre-existent church is integrated structurally, functionally, spatially and symbolically. It becomes threshold, measure and foundation for the new sacral building.

Modernist treatment of the volumes and surfaces matches with the simplicity of the village community. Ornaments are scarce and always semantically purposeful. Cheap materials are made to look to their best. Painted peasant plates hang on the wooden ceiling as stars for the *imago coeli*; on the main façade the Savior is raised on the top of a column in front of a modernist rose window.

According to today's conception, the small old church from Bogojina would be held as a historical monument of modest value. Not a restorer himself, Pleènik understood to keep the old building without giving it a museum sort of conservation. On the contrary, his intervention hides the volume of the monument, *melts* it into the architecturally balanced main composition while leaving enough marks for its identification. The new ensemble has conserved the old construction, which would otherwise have disappeared. The value of the historical monument is enhanced by the later intervention.



CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, BOGOJINA

Architecture is open at both ends: towards past and future. Generations to come are invited to follow the example set by Pleènik. They should in their turn approach freely yet respectfully the work of past generations and their environment, while leaving the way open for those who will follow.

Such approach to the context[106] offers an alternative to contemporary patrimonial attitudes. Most of these are stoned in a paralyzing respect, essentially *non-aedificandi*. Besides that, Corbusian doctrines that dominated building activities in the second half of this century have contributed to enlarge the gap between pre- and post-industrial built environment. They also spread a pretended ideological incompatibility between the fields of building anew and the preservation of built heritage. In exchange, Plečnik's architectural discourse works in a coherent reference system that integrates the whole range of constructive attitudes. The features personalizing his architectural creation are all subsumed to a

set of specific values associated to architecture understood as an anthropological activity. These are:

1. Respect shown to the work of past generations (*vertical* openness in time);
2. Permissiveness towards later – inevitable – interventions (openness in time, equally *vertical*, although of opposite sense);
3. Creative intercourse with the commissioners (*horizontal* opening towards his neighbors);
4. Modesty in front of the environment – be it natural or built – in which new architecture needs to be integrated (*spatial, spherical* openness).

   To answer these requirements, Plečnik uses simple strategies, independent from the *style* of the architectural undertaking, therefore adaptable to any morphological system:
5. Economical use of material means without giving up semantic maximalism;
6. Care and understanding for the materials used and their adequacy to the functions they are meant to fulfill; materials are not necessarily expensive but they are made to look their best;
7. Observance of hierarchies in the mutual relationship of spaces, volumes, materials, surfaces and details.

We can note that the above precepts are entirely translatable to the domain of the preservation of historical monuments. Or, *vice versa*, it can be said that the principles contained in the *Venice Charter* are present in Pleènik's architectural procedures. Once we admit this idea, it becomes evident that both museifying conservationism and intolerant progressivism do wrong to architecture considered as anthropological activity. Plečnik's lesson, readable even in the smallest of his architectural gestures, is this: we are capable of creating architecture in continuity if we act towards existent architecture with non-inhibited respect. In other words, we can build new architecture as if we restored historical monuments, and we can preserve built heritage as if we created new architecture by showing in both stages the same caring concern towards the edifying gesture, renewing and conserving in equal share.

Reaching Heaven

Between the extremes of feckless destruction and unlimited conservationism, Plečnik somehow keeps the sensitive balance of demolition and edifying. Ironically his architecture, listed today as architectural heritage, finds itself sharing the company of the oeuvre of the chief figures of functionalism.

I intended to point out some of the elements that make of Plečnik's work a unique contribution to architectural history by the fact that it somehow ignores the gap[107] between pre-industrial and post-industrial built environment. Such approach can give a clue to understanding today's worldwide cult of built heritage. The way Plečnik creates architecture in historical continuity challenges the announced "death of architecture"[108] and points out the dimension where the recent interest shown to his oeuvre goes beyond being a mere fashion. In this realm of edifying continuity the preservation of built heritage loses its sickly composure without, for that, missing its anthropological sense. I believe that this integrative feature is precisely the core of Plečnik's art.

The continuous invention that has accompanied social and technical history has brought about an overwhelming confusion of criteria. Producing the unbelievable is therefore thought to be similar to believing in what cannot be produced. Bold statements of supreme technological prodigy – in the best *Babelian* tradition – have emerged in all times, following the invention of new building techniques. The result is, more often than not, disappointing. There is always room to build something even higher without, for that, reaching heaven.

As a reaction, attempts are made to return to legitimate patterns. This phenomenon is also a recurrent feature of architectural history. Surprisingly enough, as long as this counter-tendency creates Architectural Models, it remains caught in the same – *Babelian* – descent: architecture remains self-referent. It is only through involving the outer reference that human artifacts can join the *Tabernacular* line and thus become embodiments of "inhabiting poetically".

However no *revival* of any ancient religion or building tradition (let aside techniques) is possible. Nor has it ever been – the fate of the *Arts and Crafts* movement is enough proof for that. If we need to go back at all, it is in search for some kind of lost knowledge (combined with a lost lack-of-knowledge – or *innocence*), which enabled ancient cultures to keep their links with the world lying outside the boundary of their *cosmic*

settlements. If language is within our reach, its grammar can easily be adapted to our present taste and technology. Yet only morphology and syntax cannot alone stand for a language, either surviving or reinvented.

Obelisks[109] have been reinvented in ancient Egypt on the grounds of "the pre-dynastic cult of a *miraculous* stone erected in an upright position, on the top of which the sun would rest at dawn".[110] Later they were taken up by Baroque urban planning and held, till recently, a – not always merely decorative – modern role.

It is by accident[111] that Plečnik's Obelisk in the Third Courtyard of Prague Castle remained unfinished, without the gilded pyramid tip on its flat top. The thorough doing up that accompanied the grand Plečnik exhibition in 1996 undertook its completion by a – theoretically correct – scheme: a hollow gilded pyramid is crowning the *Monolith* since. Yet its magic works rather through the enduring, polished granite surfaces which, when looked at properly, vanish in the air. Thus the function of the first obelisks ever is being accomplished: a threshold uniting earth and heaven.

Six

The Trompe L'Oeil

The built surface still keeps some important potential. How did the Baroque times manage their disenchantment? Windows disappear with curtain walls. Residual spaces are acquiring architectural quality with graffiti. Art and architecture are to be together again. What can an architect do?

LUFTSCHUTZRAUM, ŽIŽKOV, PRAGUE

Dame Rose's Wanderings

> Who shall say which experience the greater pleasure, these innocent viewers or the diligent scholar peering at fragments of wall? Both are happy. And there is room for all approaches in that ruin-wilderness, where the antiques lie sunk like galleons in a heaving sea.[112]

Like a complacent Alice of the 1950s, Dame Rose loses her way amidst the out-of-date picturesque-ness of ruins. Once again walls perform, in her late testimony, a function different from the initial one. In their process of disarticulation, walls put on show the undoing of the boundary, thus revealing the cultural importance of edifying. Hence the charm exerted by ruins for most of the modern times.

Not only has architecture of the twentieth century joined the built heritage of pre-industrial times in the realm of listed monuments. It also provides modern ruins in abundance, such as, for instance, the first Olympic size swimming pool in the outskirts of Prague, built of reinforced concrete during the 1930s. A special category of *modern ruins* is made of the residual spaces associated to multi-level motorways, underground pedestrian passages, and tunnels of all sorts. Their treatment is often entirely neglected by the designers pressed by the *function* on the one hand, cheap building costs and short-term execution, on the other. These rough concrete surfaces have become, during the last decades, most favored support for a contemporary, urban, anonymous vernacular art: *graffiti*. As rich and diverse as it is universal, this *new*[113] urban folklore offers a response to the (dis)illusion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: planning cannot achieve perfection. Out of control and beyond the interest of planners, these places develop their specific jargon[114] and behavior, together with a population of *habitués*: homeless people, skate-boarders & blade-rollers, run-aways and, of course, the new generation of post-modern *flâneurs*. Such recovering techniques remain powerless, however, when facing the semantic disaster of glass curtain-walls. Both window and wall are confounded in its surface. With their disappearance scale, texture, as well as a traditional sense of the enclosing boundary are also lost.

With industrial revolution came also mobility. Settling today often means being un-settled, while settlements grow spontaneously to surround parking areas. The *machine to inhabit* has become reality, although one quite different from the Corbusian idea. In *Crash*, J. G. Ballard's characters

inhabit motorcars: not only do they spend most of their life inside them, always on the road. Their loves, miseries and even daydreams are set in this non-settlement. Even memory is refueled by traces of the subsequent passage of other people:

> the residues of the previous drivers clung to their interiors – the heelmarks on the rubber mats below the driving pedals; a dry cigarette stub, stained with an unfashionable lipstick shade...[115]

Thresholds, in their physicality, tend to become obsolete. They will nonetheless survive as a metaphor of inhabiting, no matter how *un-thought-of* shapes architecture will adopt.

The Return of the Prodigal Son

On the one hand, it has become unusual to speak about architecture as an art. It is almost embarrassing to speak about *the art to build*; let alone the emphasis, it seems as if the word *art* itself was submitted to a semantic shift when applied to architecture. While architectural debate often takes the shape of boxers' showing off their muscles before matches, nearly every new theoretical or built discourse is continuously eroding architecture's authority.

On the other hand, there is an important spatial display performed in the field of visual arts. This evolution resurrects the hope that beyond the economic and technological facets, for not to mention the ideological errancy of architecture, there is a realm of authentic *artificium* which can provide a response to a certain sort of human needs related to inhabiting. Response that once was the self-evident matter of architecture. Baroque architecture, with all its plethora of invention, playful effects and *trompe l'oeil* can still offer a good lesson for a culture whose secular character is ceaselessly growing stronger. Deprived of its transcendent reference, whose best embodiments have presumably been achieved, at least in European history, in the heyday of the Gothic Cathedral, architecture produced today is more like a prodigal son in the deepest of miseries. What is to be done?

If it is difficult to talk about architecture as art, it can be a fair alternative to talk about visual arts as architecture. Indeed, major artists like Donald Judd, Richard Serra, and Christo or, perhaps most of all, James Turrell

inscribe an important part of their work within a domain, which once seemed the un-alienable territory of architecture. To attempt a survey of the causes, which led to such situation, would go beyond the limits of this paper. The point is not to question their *legitimacy*, but to find those features, which allow us to speak about Serra's sculptures or Turrell's light-compositions in architectural terms. Identifying these constants would perhaps offer the framework to the possible status architecture could re-*build* for itself, but not its lost aura and authority, which seem to be gone for good with the more-than-obvious (sometimes even physical) failure of post-world-war-two mass-produced architecture. What is to be looked for is not so much a new style: the victorious announcement of each past *classical*, including the purest of all (I named functionalism), was invariably followed by its proving incapable to offer a satisfactory representation of human world, impure by definition. Each time the Style had to re-integrate the *dark side* of things[116] to overcome its own limits and was thus dissoluted in its attempt to imitate nature.

Christo's wrapping installations talk about the spatial event; the artificially delimited spot, which begins by *happening* itself and which, then, offers the *place* for human happenings. It opens the gate to an unusual apprehension of space. Thus it re-creates the desire to inhabit which major trend architecture failed to appeal to – at least for the past few decades. Christo's work is a homage to the human content, the affirmation of humanity as the only factor that can make *dead* objects valuable from no matter what point of view. With *Surrounded Islands*, though, the installation embraces natural *fragments* instead of built ones. The pink wrapping, while "a profanation of accepted thoughts",[117] is a loving signal towards the so much harmed natural environment.

As for James Turrell, his – to a large extent – utterly immaterial (finally is light a radiating or a corpuscular form of energy?) oeuvre is not even for one moment the announcement of the *TV screen architecture* so noisily acclaimed by irreducible believers in technological progress. It is a magnificent proof that space is a powerfully determining element for human apprehension of the world and that no effort can be judged too hard in order to restore our capacity of building places proper for both the world and its inhabitants.

A Few Hat Tricks

What is left for an architect to do? On the one hand, engineering and industrial designing of *ready-made-machines-à-habiter* tend to take over most of the tasks that, traditionally, belonged to his or her profession. On the other, commissioners react in their turn to the *Zeitgeist* by taking up the latest fashion in building as if they were buying a new pair of shoes. Or, the other way around, they join the *greens* and refuse, in the extreme case, any technological arrangement within their living quarters. So the profession tends to disappear along with towns that *sprawl* in stripes along motorways, and houses replaced by camping vans or inflatable tents.

We are of course integrated to the flow of history. Architecture as an art, art as τεχνη [*techne*], used to be proper to an epoch where the status of art was subsumed directly to a pre-existing world to be continued. Craftsmanship was sliding quite naturally into the aesthetic realm. Semantic load, like functional adequacy, was also implicit; therefore old treatises do not discuss the matter of significance.

If today we produce *recyclable* architecture, we do not proceed in any different way from our predecessors who built houses of mud (always achieving maximal standards of comfort for their epoch) that, abandoned, would disappear in the *context* with almost no trace left behind. The ancients were usually satisfied to construct enduring structures (like Stonehenge) for sacral purposes. Our *modern* amazement consists in an ontological confusion, whose most triumphant embodiment is perhaps the palace-looking apartment house of the nineteenth century. It should be enough to recover a simple hierarchy of significance: after all, we could quite well live in environmentally friendly tents connected to the network of hygienic and energetic facilities. Monumentality would then be kept for symbolic functions, no matter what they will be. When at the beginnings of the *great confusion*, the palace of the king-god copied the temple of the god proper, *faute de mieux*, our temples of the future could look like palaces of culture, where artistic events would recall to memory that human production is and must remain open to the *reference beyond*. Natural space is integrated to mediate our relationship with our own artificial environment. National parks, survivors of what has once been natural environment, are limited and thus can be entered – future thresholds to our old selves.

The sublime in architecture escapes the rationalization of planning control. Architecture as *absence* means precisely the move towards this

territory, which cannot, however, be functionally defined, materially configured. The somatic and visual impact of architecture is in this way to be completed by another *imaginary* one, based on somatic and visual experience. By its immaterial nature, this expectation induces the sense of the absence, origin and motif of all architecture to come.

Notes

1 Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, p. 166.

2 As Prospero's words utter it, with infinite sadness: "... We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep. " William Shakespeare, "The Tempest", Act IV, Scene I, 156-158, in *The Complete Works*, p. 19. Also, for the role played by illusion in art, see Ernst Gombrich, *Artă și iluzie*.

3 "Humpty-Dumpy sat on a wall: / Humpty-Dumpy had a big fall. / All the kings horses and all the king's men / Couldn't put Humpty-Dumpy in his place again. ", Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter VI, p. 173.

4 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust*, 368 seq.

5 Claim formulated in 1980 by Coop Himmelblau in connection with the "Hot Flat Project", cf. Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, p. 75.

6 *Despre limita*.

7 Françoise Choay, *Alegoria patrimoniului*, p. 184 seq.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

9 Mark Morford, *Classical Mythology*, p. 425.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Gustav René Hocke, *Lumea ca labirint*, p. 177.

12 Georges Posener, *Enciclopedia civilizației și artei egiptene*, p. 84.

13 For the architectural implications of fragmentation see Dalibor Veselý, *Architecture and the Ambiguity of Fragment*.

14 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, p.163.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

16 Jerome K. Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat*, p. 56 seq.

17 Cf. Françoise Choay, "Patrimoine urbain et Cyberspace".

18 Mircea Eliade, *Sacrul și profanul*, p. 21, (my emphasis).

19 Le Corbusier, *Új építészet felé*, p. 11.

20 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, p. 14.

21 Le Corbusier, *Új építészet felé*, p. 193.

22 Geoffrey Broadbent, "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture", p. 474.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 475.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 480.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 476.

26 Umberto Eco, "Function and Sign: The Semiotics of Architecture", in G. Broadbent, *Signs, Symbols and Architecture*, p. 12.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 15 seq.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

30 Umberto Eco, *Tratat de semiotică generală*, p. 43.

31 Martin Heidegger, "... În chip poetic locuiește omul... ", in *Originea operei de artă*, p. 199 seq.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 201.
33 *Ibid.*, p. 208.
34 *Ibid.*, p. 218.
35 B. Spencer & F. G. Gillen *The Arunta*, London, 1926, p. 388, cf. Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*
36 Adrián Chávez, *Pop Wuh*, pp. 9-10.
37 "Parthenon" is also the ancient Greek term for the "girls' chamber" in dwelling houses (cf. *Révai Nagy Lexikona*, Budapest, 1922, vol. 15, p. 214). Our concern here is the temple built on the Acropolis of Athens by the architects Ictinus and Callicrates around 440 BC.
38 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, p. 65.
39 *Ibid.*, p. 136.
40 Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe condita*, pp. 14, 15.
41 Joseph Rykwert, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
42 Attila Zakariás, *Vernacular Architecture of the Székely-land*, I, manuscript, p. 15.
43 Geoffrey Broadbent, *Semnificație și comportament în cadrul construit*, București, Editura Tehnică, 1985, p. 176.
44 *Congrès International de l'Architecture Moderne.*
45 Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, The End of the End", p. 166.
46 "Genesis" 11.3-4, (my emphasis).
47 *Ibid.*, 11.6, (my emphasis).
48 Devangana Desai, "Placement and Significance of Erotic Sculptures at Kajuraho", p. 144.
49 The traces of similar symbolism can also be found for instance in the Hindu conception of "the self (*atman*) is the limit separating the different worlds so that they do not melt together. " (Chandogya Upanishad VIII,4).
50 For the human body in architectural representation see Joseph Rykwert, *The Dancing Column*, particularly chapters II and III.
51 Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town*, p. 177.
52 Steve Pile, *The Body and the City*, p. 25.
53 Anthony Vidler, *op. cit.*
54 It would be perhaps interesting to compare Vidler's comments with Christopher Alexander's recipe to design one's own house, cf. Christopher Alexander, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form.*
55 Cf. Françoise Choay, "Patrimoine urbain et Cyberspace", p. 99.
56 "I don't think they play at all fairly"Anthony Vidler, *op. cit.* p. 101.
57 *Oglinda.*
58 "The purpose of playing, whose end [...] was and is to hold, as it were, a mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,

and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.", William Shakespeare, "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark", Act III, Scene II, 24-28, in *op. cit.*, p. 960.

59 Jorge Luis Borges, *Cartea de Nisip*, p. 168.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 315.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 343.

63 "Chronicles II", 24, 11-13, (my emphasis).

64 Between 900-600 BC, cf. Benedek Marcell (editor), *Irodalmi Lexikon*, Győző Andor, Budapest, 1926, p. 123.

65 Françoise Choay, *Alegoria patrimoniului*, p. 185.

66 *Le Culte moderne des monuments.*

67 Françoise Choay, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

69 *Ibid.* p. 42.

70 Ernest Gellner, *Națiuni și naționalism*, , especially pp. 201 seq.

71 Choay, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

72 *The Venice Charter* of the ICOMOS from 1964 was followed in 1972 by the *Paris Convention* of the UNESCO, *The Declaration from Amsterdam* of the European Council in 1975, *The Nairobi Recommendations* of the UNESCO in 1976, *The Toledo Charter* of the ICOMOS in 1986, *The Granada Convention* in 1985 and the *La Valetta Convention* – revised in 1992 of the European Council. The list is not exhaustive but it nevertheless gives a good idea on the magnitude of international concern for safeguarding the cultural heritage.

73 Gustavo Giovannoni, *L'Urbanisme face aux villes anciennes*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1998, cf. Choay, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

74 Melvin Webber, "The Post-City Age", *Daedalus*, New York, 1968, cf. *Ibid.*

75 Cf. Georges Pérec, *L'Infra-ordinaire*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1989.

76 We do not discuss here *The Mirror* and *The Stalker*. The first one, because there, the relationship between mirror and the home of childhood is immediate (one of *Gleich*-ness), thus leaving little room for further architectural speculation (*Speculum*). The second, because the *Zone* in it is the non-architectural space *par excellence*, the realm of what comes after.

77 Cf. *supra*, note 31.

78 William Shakespeare, "Hamlet Prince of Denmark", Act II, Scene II, 550 seq., in *op. cit.*, pp. 956, 957

79 *Ibid.*, p. 957.

80 These are "thresholds" without a boundary to be crossed. Their function is purely symbolic, as they mark the act of "stepping in" without needing the explicit presence of an "inside" or an "outside".

81 The palace of the Celestial Dragon, in Marguerite Yourcenar's short story, "How Wang-Fô Was Saved" is imagined like a succession of rooms and

corridors bearing high concentration semantic details. The procession through them has a sort of initiatory quality. In *Povești orientale* pp. 18-20.

82 Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, p. 56 seq.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

85 The first studies on the most fertile period of Plečnik's life, the Ljubljana sequence, appeared abroad as late as 1983 by the publisher of the Polytechnic School in Headington, Oxford.

86 Prague Castle hosted in 1996 a gigantic *show*. Besides the restored (or eventually reconstituted) buildings and gardens of Plečnik in the *Hrad* documents, plans, photographs and archive films were put on show together with small scale models and a spectacular collection of chalices designed by him.

87 Cf. Damjan Prelovšek, "Ideological Substratum in Plečnik's Work", p. 94.

88 Ian Jeffrey, "Architectural and Earthly Delights", p. 78.

89 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, born in 1850 in Moravia, philosopher and sociologist, professor at the universities of Vienna (1879), Prague (1882) and at King's College in London (1915), president of Czechoslovakia between 1918-1935.

90 Damjan Prelovšek, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

91 A saying of Plečnik [Hold your tongue and keep serving] from his Viennese period, cf. Klein Rudolf, *Jože Plečnik*, p. 9. It comes perhaps from his past as a carpenter's apprentice expressing humbleness and his incapability to theorise.

92 Tomáš G. Masaryk, "How to Work", in *The Ideals of Humanity*, p. 179.

93 *Ibid.* p. 158.

94 *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

95 Veřa Beňalová, "Alice Masaryk, Plečnik and the Castle", p. 82.

96 *Ibid.*, p. 87; Plečnik dies on January 6, 1957.

97 Cf. Tomáš G. Masaryk, *The Ideals of Humanity*, chapter II. His criticism shows similarities to Karl Popper's, cf. *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei*, București, Humanitas, 1993, second volume. Also by Masaryk: *Die philosophischen und sociologischen Grundlagen des Marxismus*, Wien, 1899.

98 "The Crete of the new State art", cf. Damjan Prelovšek, *op. cit.*, p. 92, phrase from a letter of Alice Masaryk.

99 Cf. Klein Rudolf, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

100 On this matter see Boris Podrecca, "Modernité de Plečnik", in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, No. 305.

101 Cf. Klein Rudolf, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

102 For the analysis of the urban planning for Ljubljana, see especially Damjan Prelovšek, – Andrej Hrausky, – Janez Koželj, *Plečnik's Ljubljana*, Dessa, Ljubljana, 1997, Damjan Prelovšek, – Vlasto Kopač, *Zale by Architect Jože Plečnik*, Delo, Ljubljana, 1992, Đurda Gržan Butina, "Ljubljana, master

Plan and Spatial Structure", in *Plečnik*, Urban Design, Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford, 1983.

103 Cf. Ian Bentley, "Design for a Common Cause", especially pp. 44-46.

104 For a detailed analysis of the ideological basis of Plecnik's architecture see Damjan Prelovšek, *op. cit.*

105 Cf. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space.*

106 For an analysis of the role of the context in Plečnik's architecture see Wolfgang Kemp, "Context as a field of reference and as a process. "

107 Françoise Choay, *op. cit.*, p. 99, "the frontier of the irretrievable".

108 Cf. Rem Koolhaas, "After architecture", in *Preston Thomas Lectures*, Cornell University, 1997, quoted by Françoise Choay, "L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui au miroir du *De Re Aedificatoria*" in *Albertiana*, 1998, p. 10.

109 "The volume of any obelisk is calculated according to the following formula: V = [(A+F) : 2 + 2K] x m:3, where A and F are respectively the surfaces of the base and of the top, m is the height and K is the surface of the median cross-section. ", *Révai Nagy Lexikona*, Budapest, 1916, vol. 14, p. 628.

110 Georges Posener, *Enciclopedia civilizației și artei egiptene*, p. 210.

111 Two obelisks broke between 1923 and 1925, before the third one, now in place, was successfully brought all the way from the quarry of Mrákotín to Prague. Cf. Vladislava Valchářová, "Technical and Material Features of Plečnik's Work", p. 322.

112 Dame Rose Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, p. 212.

113 The *genre* is in fact ancient, revealing features of a universal cultural (urban) phenomenon.

114 For a survey of contemporary graffiti culture in the case of Bucharest, see Delia Verdeș, "O cercetare graffitică asupra urbei București la 1997".

115 J. G. Ballard, *Crash*, p. 49.

116 On the "dark side" see Andrei Pleșu, "Mannerism or on Our Side of Shadow", in Gustav René Hocke, *op. cit.*

117 Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida, 1980-1983, 6.5 million square feet of pink woven polypropylene fabric, cf. Werner Spiess, *Christo, Surrounded Islands*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1985.

Selected Bibliography*

ALEXANDER, Christopher, *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1979.
BACHELARD, Gaston, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994 (1969).
BALTRUŠAITIS, Jurgis, *Oglinda*, București, Meridiane, 1981.
BALLARD, J. G., *Crash*, London, Paladin, 1990.
BĚHALOVÁ, Veřa, "Alice Masaryk, Pleènik and the Castle", in *Josip Plečnik, an architect of Prague Castle*, Prague, 1996.
BENTLEY, Ian, "Design for a Common Cause", in *Jože Plečnik*, Urban Design, Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford, 1983.
BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Cartea de nisip*, București, Univers, 1980.
BROADBENT, Geoffrey, "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture", *Architectural Design* No 7-8, 1977.
BROADBENT, Geoffrey – editor –, *Signs, Symbols and Architecture,* Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 1980.
BROADBENT, Geoffrey – editor –, *Semnificație și comportament în cadrul construit*, București, Editura Tehnică, 1985.
CARROLL, Lewis, *Alice's adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*, London, Everyman, 1996.
CHÁVEZ, Adrián, *Pop Wuh – Le Livre des évènements*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990.
CHOAY, Françoise, "Patrimoine urbain et Cyberspace", in *La Pierre d'angle* No. 21-22, Octobre 1997.
CHOAY, Françoise, *Alegoria Patrimoniului*, București, Simetria, 1998.
ECO, Umberto, *Tratat de semiotică generală*, București, Editura Științifică și Pedagogică, 1982.
ECO, Umberto, *Hogyan írjunk szakdolgozatot?*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1992.
EISENMAN, Peter,"The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, The End of the End", *Perspecta* No 21, 1984.
ELIADE, Mircea, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, London, 1989.
ELIADE, Mircea, *Sacrul și profanul*, București, Humanitas, 1992.
GELLNER, Ernest, *Națiuni și naționalism*, București, Antet - CEU, 1997.
GOETHE, Johann Wolfgang, *Faust*, Gesamtausgabe, Leipzig, Inselverlag, 1950.
GOMBRICH, Ernst H., *Artă și iluzie*, București, Meridiane, 1973.
HEIDEGGER, Martin, *Originea operei de artă*, București, Humanitas, 1992.
HOCKE, Gustav René, *Lumea ca labirint*, București, Meridiane, 1973.
HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo ludens*, București, Humanitas, 1998.
JEFFREY, Ian, "Architectural and Earthly Delights", in *London Magazine*, April-May 1998.
JEROME, Jerome K., *Three Men in a Boat*, London, Wordsworth, 1993.
KEMP, Wolfgang, "Context as a Field of Reference and as a Process", in *Josip Plečnik, an architect of Prague Castle*, Prague, 1996.
KLEIN, Rudolf, *Jože Plečnik*, Budapest, Akadémiai kiadó, 1992.
MASARYK, Tomáš G., *The Ideals of Humanity*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1938.

MORFORD, Mark P. O., LENARDON, Robert J., *Classical Mythology*, New York & London, Longman, 1985.
Le CORBUSIER, *Új építészet felé*, Budapest, Corvina, 1981.
MACAULAY, Dame Rose, *The Pleasure of Ruins,* London, 1953.
PÉREC, Georges, *L'Infra-ordinaire*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1989.
PILE, Steve, *The Body and the City*, London, Routledge, 1996.
POSENER, Georges, *Enciclopedia civilizației și artei egiptene*, București, Meridiane, 1974.
PRELOVŠEK, Damjan, "Ideological Substratum in Plečnik's Work", in *Josip Plečnik, an architect of Prague Castle*, Prague, 1996.
RIEGL, Alois, *Le culte moderne des monuments*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1992.
RYKWERT, Joseph, *The Idea of a Town*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, MIT Press, 1988.
RYKWERT, Joseph, *The Dancing Column*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, MIT Press, 1996.
TARKOVSKY, Andrei, *Andrei Rublev*, USSR, Mosfilm, 1966, 011 Artificial Eye, 1991.
TARKOVSKY, Andrei, *Solaris*, USSR, 1972, Connoisseur Video, CR 044.
TARKOVSKY, Andrei, *The Sacrifice*, Sweden / France 1986, 026 Artificial Eye, 1991.
TITUS Livius, *Ab Urbe condita*, București, Minerva, 1976.
VALCHÁŘOVÁ, Vladislava, "Technical and Material Features of Plečnik's Work", in *Josip Plečnik, an architect of Prague Castle*, Prague, 1996.
VERDEȘ, Delia, "O cercetare graffitică asupra urbei București la 1997" in *Secolul 20*, No. 4-5-6, 1997.
VESELÝ, Dalibor, *Architecture and the Ambiguity of Fragment*, manuscript.
VIDLER, Anthony, *The Architectural Uncanny*, Cambridge, Mass. & London, MIT Press, 1991.
SHAKESPEARE, William, *The Complete Works*, London, Henry Pordes, 1993.
YOURCENAR, Marguérite, *Povești orientale*, București, Humanitas, 1993.
ZAKARIÁS, Attila, *Vernacular Architecture of the Székely-land*, I, manuscript, 1996.