

The End of the Classical:

the End of the Beginning, the End of the End

¹

Jean Baudrillard, «The Order of Simulacra,»
«Simulations,» New York City, Semiotext(e)
1983 p83.

Jean Baudrillard portrays the period beginning in
the fifteenth century by three different simulacra:
counterfeit, production, and simulation. He says that
the first is based on the natural law of value, the
second on the commercial law of value, and the third
on the structural law of value.

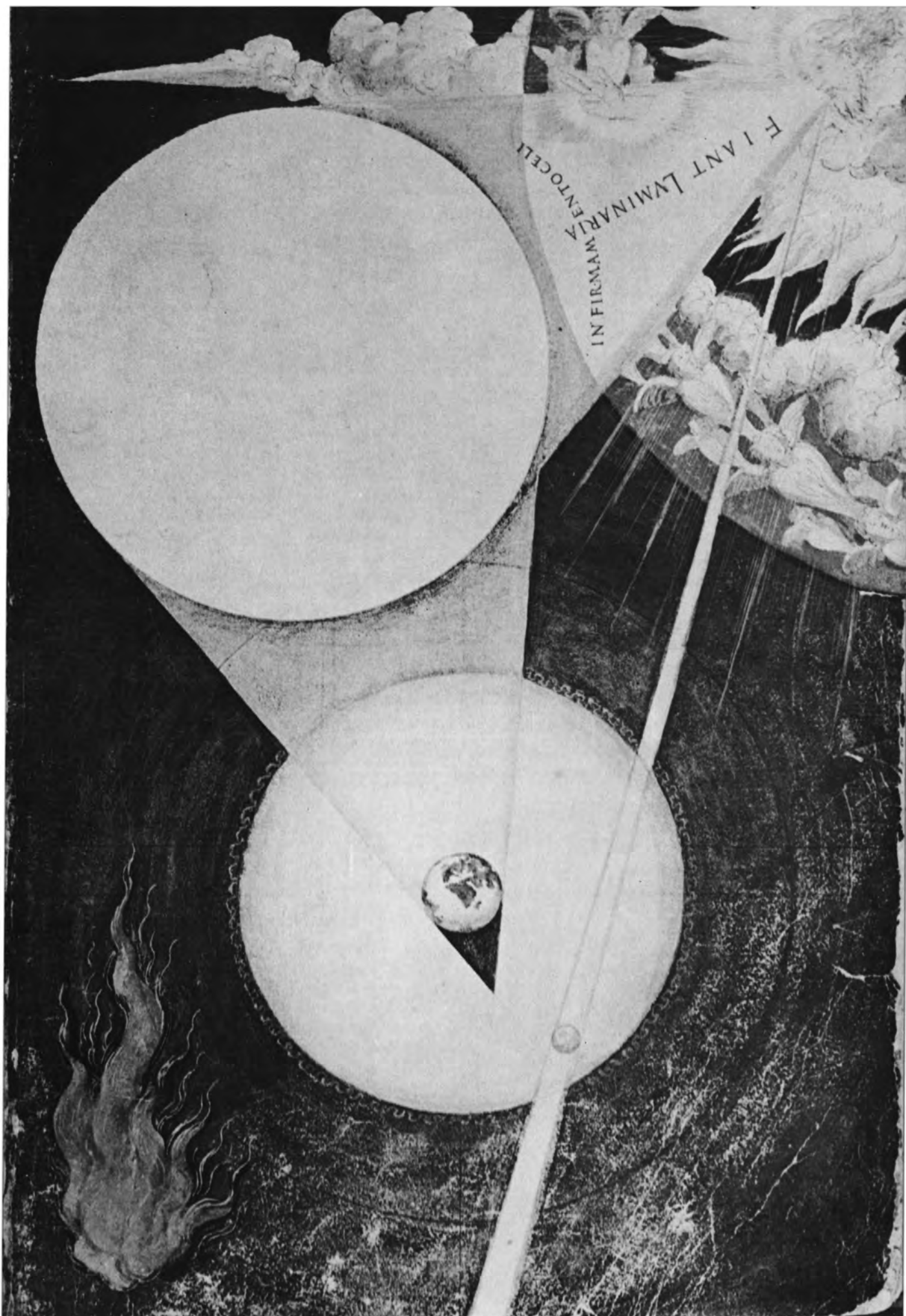
²

The term «classical» is often confused with the idea
of the «classic» and with the stylistic method of
«classicism.» That which is classic, according to
Joseph Rykwert, invokes the idea of «ancient and
exemplary» and suggests «authority and distinction»;
it is a model of what is excellent or of the first rank.
More importantly, it implies its own timelessness, the
idea that it is first rank at any time. Classicism, as
opposed to the classical, will be defined here as a
method of attempting to produce a «classic» result by
appealing to a «classical» past. This accords with the
definition given by Sir John Summerson, for whom
classicism is not so much a set of ideas and values as
it is a style. He maintains that while much of Gothic
architecture was based on the same proportional
relationships as the «classical» architecture of the
Renaissance, no one could confuse a Gothic cathedral
with a Renaissance palazzo; it simply did not have
the look of classicism. In contrast, Demetri Porphyrios
argues that classicism is not a style, but instead has
to do with rationalism: «as much as architecture is a
tectonic discourse, it is by definition transparent to
rationality . . . the lessons to be learned today from
classicism, therefore, are not to be found in
classicism's stylistic wrinkles but in classicism's
rationality.» Porphyrios here confuses classicism with
the classical and the classic, that is, with a set of
values privileging the «truth» (that is, rationality) of
tectonics over «expression» and error. The fallacy of
this approach is that classicism relies on an idea of
historical continuity inherent in the classical;
therefore it does not produce the timelessness
characteristic of the classic. The classical, by
implication, has a more relative status than the
classic; it evokes a timeless past, a «golden age»
superior to the modern time or the present.

Architecture from the fifteenth century to the present has been under the influence
of three «fictions.» Notwithstanding the apparent succession of architectural styles,
each with its own label—classicism, neoclassicism, romanticism, modernism,
postmodernism, and so on into the future—these three fictions have persisted in one
form or another for five hundred years. They are *representation, reason, and history.*¹

Each of the fictions had an underlying purpose: representation was to embody the
idea of meaning; reason was to codify the idea of truth; history was to recover the
idea of the timeless from the idea of change. Because of the persistence of these
categories, it will be necessary to consider this period as manifesting a continuity
in architectural thought. This continuous mode of thought can be referred to as
*the classical.*²

It was not until the late twentieth century that the classical could be appreciated as
an abstract system of relations. Such recognition occurred because the architecture
of the early part of the twentieth century itself came to be considered part of
history. Thus it is now possible to see that, although stylistically different from
previous architectures, «modern» architecture exhibits a system of relations similar
to the classical.³ Prior to this time, the «classical» was taken to be either
synonymous with «architecture» conceived of as a continuous tradition from
antiquity or, by the mid-nineteenth century, an historicized style. Today the period
of time dominated by the classical can be seen as an «episteme,» to employ
Foucault's term—a continuous period of knowledge that includes the early twentieth
century.⁴ Despite the proclaimed rupture in both ideology and style associated with



the modern movement, the three fictions have never been questioned and so remain intact. This is to say that architecture since the mid-fifteenth century aspired to be a paradigm of the *classic*, of that which is *timeless*, *meaningful*, and *true*. In the sense that architecture attempts to recover that which is classic, it can be called «classical.»³

The «fiction» of representation: the simulation of meaning

3
Michel Foucault, «The Order of Things,» New York City, Random House, 1973.

It is precisely Michel Foucault's distinction between the classical and modern that has never been adequately articulated in relationship to architecture. In contrast to Foucault's epistemological differentiation, architecture has remained an uninterrupted mode of representation from the fifteenth century to the present. In fact, it will be seen that what is assumed in architecture to be classical is, in Foucault's terms, modern, and what is assumed in architecture to be modern is in reality Foucault's classical. Foucault's distinction is not what is at issue here, but rather the continuity that has persisted in architecture from the classical to the present day.

4
Foucault, pxxii.
While the term «episteme» as used here is similar to Foucault's use of the term in defining a continuous period of knowledge, it is necessary to point out that the time period here defined as the classical episteme differs from Foucault's definition. Foucault locates two discontinuities in the development of Western culture: the classical and the modern. He identifies the classical, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, with the primacy of the intersection of language and representation: the value of language, «its meaning,» was seen to be self-evident and to receive its justification within language; the way language provided meaning could be represented within language. On the other hand, Foucault identifies the modern, originating in the early nineteenth century, with the ascendancy of historical continuity and self-generated analytic processes over language and representation.

5
«The End of the Classical» is not about the end of the classic. It merely questions a contingent value structure which, when attached to the idea of the classic, yields an erroneous sense of the classical. It is not that the desire for a classic is at an end, but that the dominant conditions of the classical (origin, end, and the process of composition) are under reconsideration. Thus it might be more accurate to title this essay «The End of the Classical as Classic.»

The first «fiction» is representation. Before the Renaissance there was a congruence of language and representation. The meaning of language was in a «face value» conveyed within representation; in other words, the way language produced meaning could be *represented within* language. Things *were*; truth and meaning were self-evident. The meaning of a romanesque or gothic cathedral was in itself; it was *de facto*. Renaissance buildings, on the other hand—and all buildings after them that pretended to be «architecture»—received their value by representing an already valued architecture, by being simulacra (representations of representations) of antique buildings; they were *de jure*.⁶ The *message* of the past was used to verify the *meaning* of the present. Precisely because of this need to verify, Renaissance architecture was the first simulation, an unwitting fiction of the object.

By the late eighteenth century historical relativity came to supersede the face value of language as representation, and this view of history prompted a search for certainty, for origins both historical and logical, for truth and proof, and for goals. Truth was no longer thought to reside in representation but was believed to exist outside it, in the processes of history. This shift can be seen in the changing status of the orders: until the seventeenth century they were thought to be paradigmatic and timeless; afterwards the possibility of their timelessness depended on a necessary historicity. This shift, as has just been suggested, occurred because language had ceased to intersect with representation—that is, because it was not *meaning* but a *message* that was displayed in the object.

Modern architecture claimed to rectify and liberate itself from the Renaissance fiction of representation by asserting that it was not necessary for architecture to represent another architecture; architecture was solely to embody its own *function*. With the deductive conclusion that form follows function, modern architecture introduced the idea that a building should express—that is, look like—its function, or like an *idea* of function (that it should manifest the rationality of its processes of production and composition).⁷ Thus, in its effort to distance itself from the earlier representational tradition, modern architecture attempted to strip itself of the outward trappings of «classical» style. This process of reduction was called *abstraction*. A column without a base and capital was thought to be an abstraction. Thus reduced, form was believed to embody function more «honestly.» Such a column looked more like a *real* column, the simplest possible load-carrying element, than one provided with a base and capital bearing arboreal or anthropomorphic motifs.

This reduction to pure functionality was, in fact, not abstraction; it was an attempt to represent reality itself. In this sense functional goals merely replaced the orders of classical composition as the starting point for architectural design. The moderns' attempt to represent «realism» with an undecorated, functional object was a fiction equivalent to the simulacrum of the classical in Renaissance representation. For what made function any more «real» a source of imagery than elements chosen from antiquity? The idea of function, in this case the message of utility as opposed to the message of antiquity, was raised to an originary proposition—a self-evident starting point for design analogous to typology or historical quotation. The moderns' attempt to represent realism is, then, a manifestation of the same fiction wherein meaning and value reside outside the world of an architecture «as is,» in which representation is about its own *meaning* rather than being a *message* of another previous meaning.

Functionalism turned out to be yet another stylistic conclusion, this one based on a scientific and technical positivism, a simulation of efficiency. From this perspective the modern movement can be seen to be continuous with the architecture that preceded it. Modern architecture therefore failed to embody a new value in itself.

6

Franco Borsi, «Leone Battista Alberti,» New York City, Harper and Row, 1977

The facade of the church of Sant' Andrea in Mantua by Alberti is one of the first uses of the transposition of ancient building types to achieve both verification and authority. It marks, as Borsi says, «a decisive turning away from the vernacular «to the Latin»» (p272) It is acceptable in the «vernacular» to revive the classical temple front because the function of the temple in antiquity and the church in the fifteenth century was similar.

However, it is quite another matter to overlay the temple front with the triumphal arch. (See R. Wittkower, «Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism,» New York City, W. W. Norton, 1971, and also D. S. Chambers, «Patrons and Artists in the Renaissance,» London, MacMillan & Co., 1970) It is as if Alberti were saying that with the authority of God in question, man must resort to the symbols of his own power to verify the church. Thus the use of the triumphal arch becomes a message on the facade of Sant' Andrea rather than an embodiment of its inherent meaning.

7

Jeff Kipnis, from a seminar at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, 28 February 1984.

«Form cannot follow function until function (including but not limited to use) has first emerged as a possibility of form.»

For in trying to *reduce* architectural form to its essence, to a pure reality, the moderns assumed they were transforming the field of referential figuration to that of non-referential «objectivity.» In reality, however, their «objective» forms never left the classical tradition. They were simply stripped down classical forms, or forms referring to a new set of givens (function, technology). Thus, Le Corbusier's houses that look like modern steamships or biplanes exhibit the same referential attitude toward representation as a Renaissance or «classical» building. The points of reference are different, but the implications for the object are the same.

8

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour,
*«Learning from Las Vegas: the forgotten symbolism of
 architectural form,» rev. ed., Cambridge, Mass.
 MIT Press, 1977 p87*

9

See the film «Beyond Utopia: Changing Attitudes in
 American Architecture,» New York City
 Michael Blackwood Productions, 1983

The commitment to return modernist abstraction to history seems to sum up, for our time, the problem of representation. It was given its «Post-Modern» inversion in Robert Venturi's distinction between the «duck» and the «decorated shed.»⁸

A duck is a building that looks like its function or that allows its internal order to be displayed on its exterior; a decorated shed is a building that functions as a billboard, where any kind of imagery (except its internal function)—letters, patterns, even architectural elements—conveys a *message* accessible to all. In this sense the stripped-down «abstractions» of modernism are still referential objects: technological rather than typological ducks.

But the Post-Modernists fail to make another distinction which is exemplified in Venturi's comparison of the Doges' Palace in Venice, which he calls a decorated shed, and Sansovino's library across the Piazza San Marco, which he says is a duck.⁹ This obscures the more significant distinction between architecture «as is» and architecture as message. The Doges' Palace is not a decorated shed because it was not representational of another architecture; its significance came directly from the meaning embodied in the figures themselves; it was an architecture «as is.» Sansovino's library may seem to be a duck, but only because it falls into the history of library types. The use of the orders on Sansovino's library speaks not to the function or type of the library, but rather to the representation of a previous architecture. The facades of Sansovino's library contain a message, not an inherent meaning; they are sign boards. Venturi's misreading of these buildings seems motivated by a preference for the decorated shed. While the replication of the orders had significance in Sansovino's time (in that they defined the classical), the

replication of the same orders today has no significance because the value system represented is no longer valued. A sign begins to replicate or, in Jean Baudrillard's term, «simulate» once the reality it represents is dead.¹⁰ When there is no longer a distinction between representation and reality, when reality is only simulation, then representation loses its a priori source of significance, and it, too, becomes a simulation.

The «fiction» of reason: the simulation of truth

The second «fiction» of postmedieval architecture is *reason*. If representation was a simulation of the meaning of the present through the message of antiquity, then reason was a simulation of the meaning of the truth through the message of science. This fiction is strongly manifest in twentieth-century architecture, as it is in that of the four preceding centuries; its apogee was in the Enlightenment. The quest for origin in architecture is the initial manifestation of the aspiration toward a rational source for design. Before the Renaissance the idea of origin was seen as self-evident; its meaning and importance «went without saying»; it belonged to an a priori universe of values. In the Renaissance, with the loss of a self-evident universe of values, origins were sought in natural or divine sources or in a cosmological or anthropomorphic geometry. The reproduction of the image of the Vitruvian man is the most renowned example. Not surprisingly, since the origin was thought to contain the seeds of the object's purpose and thus its destination, this belief in the existence of an ideal origin led directly to a belief in the existence of an ideal end. Such a genetic idea of beginning/end depended on a belief in a universal plan in nature and the cosmos which, through the application of classical rules of composition concerning hierarchy, order, and closure, would confer a harmony of the whole upon the parts. The perspective of the end thus directed the strategy for beginning. Therefore, as Alberti first defined it in *Della Pittura*, composition was not an open-ended or neutral process of transformation, but rather a strategy for arriving at a predetermined goal; it was the mechanism by which the idea of order, represented in the orders, was translated into a specific form.¹¹

10

Baudrillard pp8, 9.

In referring to the death of the reality of God, Baudrillard says, «... metaphysical despair came from the idea that the images concealed nothing at all, and that in fact they were not images, . . . but actually perfect simulacra. . . .»

11

Leone Battista Alberti, «On Painting,» New Haven Yale University Press, 1966 pp68–74

Reacting against the cosmological goals of Renaissance composition, Enlightenment architecture aspired to a rational process of design whose ends were a product of pure, secular reason rather than of divine order. The Renaissance vision of harmony (faith in the divine) led naturally to the scheme of order that was to replace it (faith in reason), which was the logical determination of form from a priori types.

Durand embodies this moment of the supreme authority of reason. In his treatises formal orders become type forms, and natural and divine origins are replaced by rational solutions to the problems of accommodation and construction. The goal is a socially «relevant» architecture; it is attained through the rational transformation of type forms. Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, function and technique replaced the catalogue of type forms as origins. But the point is that from Durand on, it was believed that deductive reason—the same process used in science, mathematics, and technology—was capable of producing a truthful (that is, meaningful) architectural object. And with the success of rationalism as a scientific method (one could almost call it a «style» of thought) in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, architecture adopted the self-evident values conferred by rational origins. If an architecture *looked* rational—that is, *represented* rationality—it was believed to *represent* truth. As in logic, at the point where all deductions developed from an initial premise corroborate that premise, there is logical closure and, it was believed, certain truth. Moreover, in this procedure the primacy of the origin remains intact. The rational became the moral and aesthetic basis of modern architecture. And the representational task of architecture in an age of reason was to portray its own modes of knowing.

At this point in the evolution of consciousness something occurred: reason turned its focus onto itself and thus began the process of its own undoing. Questioning its own status and mode of knowing, reason exposed itself to be a fiction.¹² The processes for knowing—measurement, logical proof, causality—turned out to be a network of value-laden arguments, no more than effective modes of persuasion. Values were dependent on another teleology, another end fiction, that of rationality.

¹²
Morris Kline, «Mathematics, The Loss of Certainty,»
New York City, Oxford University Press, 1980 p5

Essentially, then, nothing had really changed from the Renaissance idea of origin. Whether the appeal was to a divine or natural order, as in the fifteenth century, or to a rational technique and typological function, as in the post-Enlightenment period, it ultimately amounted to the same thing—to the idea that architecture's value derived from a source outside itself. Function and type were only value-laden origins equivalent to divine or natural ones.

In this second «fiction» the crisis of belief in reason eventually undermined the power of self-evidence. As reason began to turn on itself, to question its own status, its authority to convey truth, its power to prove, began to evaporate. The analysis of analysis revealed that logic could not do what reason had claimed for it—reveal the self-evident truth of its origins. What both the Renaissance and the modern relied on as the basis of truth was found to require, in essence, faith. Analysis was a form of simulation; knowledge was a new religion. Similarly, it can be seen that architecture never embodied reason; it could only state the desire to do so; there is no architectural image of reason. Architecture presented an aesthetic of the experience of (the persuasiveness of and desire for) reason. Analysis, and the illusion of proof, in a continuous process that recalls Nietzsche's characterization of «truth,» is a never-ending series of figures, metaphors, and metonymies.

In a cognitive environment in which reason has been revealed to depend on a belief in knowledge, therefore to be irreducibly metaphoric, a classical architecture—that is, an architecture whose processes of transformation are value-laden strategies grounded on self-evident or a priori origins—will always be an architecture of restatement and not of representation, no matter how ingeniously the origins are selected for this transformation, nor how inventive the transformation is.

Architectural restatement, replication, is a nostalgia for the security of knowing, a belief in the continuity of Western thought. Once analysis and reason replaced self-evidence as the means by which truth was revealed, the classic or timeless quality of truth ended and the need for verification began.

The «fiction» of history: the simulation of the timeless

The third «fiction» of classical Western architecture is that of history. Prior to the mid-fifteenth century, time was conceived nondialectically; from antiquity to the middle ages there was no concept of the «forward movement» of time. Art did not seek its justification in terms of the past or future; it was ineffable and timeless. In ancient Greece the temple and the god were one and the same; architecture was divine and natural. For this reason it appeared «classic» to the «classical» epoch that followed. The classic could not be represented or simulated, it could only be. In its straightforward assertion of itself it was nondialectical and timeless.

In the mid-fifteenth century the idea of a temporal origin emerged, and with it the idea of the past. This interrupted the eternal cycle of time by positing a fixed point of beginning. Hence the loss of the timeless, for the existence of origin required a temporal reality. The attempt of the classical to recover the timeless turned, paradoxically, to a time-bound concept of history as a source of timelessness. Moreover, the consciousness of time's forward movement came to «explain» a process of historical change. By the nineteenth century this process was seen as «dialectical.» With dialectical time came the idea of the *zeitgeist*, with cause and effect rooted in presentness—that is, with an aspired-to timelessness of the present. In addition to its aspiration to timelessness, the «spirit of the age» held that an a priori relationship existed between history and all its manifestations at any given moment. It was necessary only to identify the governing spirit to know what style of architecture was properly expressive of, and relevant to, the time. Implicit was the notion that man should always be «in harmony»—or at least in a non-disjunctive relation—with his time.

In its polemical rejection of the history that preceded it, the modern movement attempted to appeal to values for this (harmonic) relationship other than those that embodied the eternal or universal. In seeing itself as superseding the values of the preceding architecture, the modern movement substituted a universal idea of relevance for a universal idea of history, analysis of program for analysis of history. It

presumed itself to be a value-free and collective form of intervention, as opposed to the virtuoso individualism and informed connoisseurship personified by the post-Renaissance architect. Relevance in modern architecture came to lie in embodying a value other than the natural or divine; the zeitgeist was seen to be contingent and of the present, rather than as absolute and eternal. But the difference in value between presentness and the universal—between the contingent value of the zeitgeist and the eternal value of the classical—only resulted in yet another set (in fact, simply the opposite set) of aesthetic preferences. The presumed neutral spirit of the «epochal will» supported asymmetry over symmetry, dynamism over stability, absence of hierarchy over hierarchy.

The imperatives of the «historical moment» are always evident in the connection between the representation of the function of architecture and its form. Ironically, modern architecture, by invoking the zeitgeist rather than doing away with history, only continued to act as the «midwife to historically significant form.» In this sense modern architecture was not a rupture with history, but simply a moment in the same continuum, a new episode in the evolution of the zeitgeist. And architecture's representation of its particular zeitgeist turned out to be less «modern» than originally thought.

One of the questions that may be asked is why the moderns did not see themselves in this continuity. One answer is that the ideology of the zeitgeist bound them to their present history with the promise to release them from their past history; *they were ideologically trapped in the illusion of the eternity of their own time.*

The late twentieth century, with its retrospective knowledge that modernism has become history, has inherited nothing less than the recognition of the end of the ability of a classical or referential architecture to express its own time as timeless. The illusory timelessness of the present brings with it an awareness of the *timeful* nature of past time. It is for this reason that the representation of a zeitgeist always implies a simulation; it is seen in the classical use of the *replication* of a *past time* to invoke the timeless as the *expression* of a *present time*. Thus, in the zeitgeist argument, there will always be this unacknowledged paradox, a simulation of the timeless through a replication of the timeful.

Zeitgeist history, too, is subject to a questioning of its own authority. How can it be possible, from within history, to determine a timeless truth of its «spirit»? Thus history ceases to be an objective source of truth; origins and ends once again lose their universality (that is, their self-evident value) and, like history, become fictions. If it is no longer possible to pose the problem of architecture in terms of a zeitgeist—that is if architecture can no longer assert its relevance through a consonance with its zeitgeist—then it must turn to some other structure. To escape such a dependence on the zeitgeist—that is, the idea that the *purpose* of an architectural style is to embody the spirit of its age—it is necessary to propose an alternative idea of architecture, one whereby it is no longer the purpose of architecture, but its inevitability, to express its own time.

Once the traditional values of classical architecture are understood as not meaningful, true, and timeless, it must be concluded that these classical values were *always* simulations (and are not merely seen to be so in light of a present rupture of history or the present disillusionment with the zeitgeist). It becomes clear that the classical itself was a simulation that architecture sustained for five hundred years. Because the classical did not recognize itself as a simulation, it sought to represent extrinsic values (which it could not do) in the guise of its own reality.

The result, then, of seeing classicism and modernism as part of a single historical continuity is the understanding that there are no longer any self-evident values in representation, reason, or history to confer legitimacy on the object. This loss of self-evident value allows the timeless to be cut free from the meaningful and the truthful. It permits the view that there is no one truth (a timeless truth), or one meaning (a timeless meaning), but merely the timeless. *When the possibility is raised that the timeless can be cut adrift from the timeful (history), so too can the timeless be cut away from universality to produce a timelessness which is not universal.* This separation makes it unimportant whether origins are natural or divine or functional; thus, it is no longer necessary to produce a classic—that is, a timeless—architecture by recourse to the classical values inherent in *representation, reason, and history*.

The not-classical: architecture as fiction

The necessity of the quotation marks around the term «fiction» is now obvious.

The three fictions just discussed can be seen not as fictions but rather as simulations.

As has been said, fiction becomes simulation when it does not recognize its condition as fiction, when it tries to simulate a condition of reality, truth, or non-fiction. The simulation of representation in architecture has led, first of all, to an excessive concentration of inventive energies in the representational object.

When columns are seen as surrogates of trees and windows resemble the portholes of ships, architectural elements become representational figures carrying an inordinate burden of meaning. In other disciplines representation is not the only purpose of figuration. In literature, for example, metaphors and similes have a wider range of application—poetic, ironic, and the like—and are not limited to allegorical or referential functions. Conversely, in architecture only one aspect of the figure is traditionally at work: object representation. The architectural figure always alludes to—aims at the representation of—some *other* object, whether architectural, anthropomorphic, natural, or technological.

Second, the simulation of reason in architecture has been based on a classical value given to the idea of truth. But Heidegger has noted that error has a trajectory parallel to truth, that error can be the unfolding of truth.¹³ Thus to proceed from «error» or fiction is to counter consciously the tradition of «mis-reading» on which the classical unwittingly depended—not a presumed logical transformation of something a priori, but a deliberate «error» stated as such, one which presupposes only its own internal truth. Error in this case does not assume the same value as truth; it is *not* simply its dialectical opposite. It is more like a *dissimulation*, a «not-containing» of the value of truth.

¹³

Martin Heidegger, «On the Essence of Truth» from «Basic Writings,» New York City, Harper & Row Publishers, 1977.

«Errancy is the essential counter-essence to the primordial essence of truth. Errancy opens itself up as the open region for every opposite essential truth. . . . Errancy and the concealing of what is concealed belong to the primordial essence of truth.»

Finally, the simulated fiction of modern movement history, unwittingly inherited from the classical, was that any present-day architecture must be a reflection of its zeitgeist; that is, architecture can simultaneously be about presentness and universality. But if architecture is inevitably about the invention of fictions, it

should also be possible to propose an architecture that embodies an *other* fiction, one that is not sustained by the values of presentness or universality and, more importantly, that does not consider its purpose to reflect these values. This *other* fiction/object, then, clearly should eschew the fictions of the classical (representation, reason, and history), which are attempts to «solve» the problem of architecture rationally; for strategies and solutions are vestiges of a goal-oriented view of the world. If this is the case, the question becomes: What can be the model for architecture when the essence of what was effective in the classical model—the presumed rational value of structures, representations, methodologies of origins and ends, and deductive processes—has been shown to be a simulation?

14

Gilles Deleuze, «Plato and the Simulacrum,» «October,» no. 27, Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, winter 1983.
Deleuze uses a slightly different terminology to address a very similar set of issues; he discusses the Platonic distinction between model, copy, and «simulacrum» as a means of assigning value and hierarchical position to objects and ideas. He explains the overthrow of Platonism as the suspension of the a priori value-laden status of the Platonic copy in order to: «raise up simulacra, to assert their rights over icons or copies. The problem no longer concerns the distinction Essence/Appearance or Model/Copy. This whole distinction operates in the world of representation. . . . The simulacrum is not degraded copy, rather it contains a positive power which negates both original and copy, both model and reproduction. Of the at least two divergent series interiorized in the simulacrum neither can be assigned as original or as copy. It doesn't even work to invoke the model of the Other, because no model resists the vertigo of the simulacrum.» (pp 52, 53) Simulation is used here in a sense which closely approximates Deleuze's use of copy or icon, while dissimulation is conceptually very close to his description of the pre-Socratic simulacra.

15

Baudrillard p2.
In the essay «The Precession of Simulacra» Baudrillard discusses the nature of simulation and the implication of present-day simulacra on our perception of the nature of reality and representation: «Something has disappeared; the sovereign difference between them (the real and . . . simulation models) that was the abstraction's charm.»

It is not possible to answer such a question with an alternative model. But a series of characteristics can be proposed that typify this aporia, this loss in our capacity to conceptualize a new model for architecture. These characteristics, outlined below, arise from that which can *not* be; they form a structure of *absences*.¹⁴ The purpose in proposing them is not to reconstitute what has just been dismissed, a model for a theory of architecture—for all such models are ultimately futile. Rather what is being proposed is an expansion beyond the limitations presented by the classical model to the realization of *architecture as an 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.

The meaning-free, arbitrary, and timeless creation of artificiality in this sense must be distinguished from what Baudrillard has called «simulation»:¹⁵ it is not an attempt to erase the classical distinction between reality and representation—thus again making architecture a set of conventions simulating the real; it is, rather, more like a *dissimulation*.¹⁶ Whereas simulation attempts to obliterate the difference between real and imaginary, dissimulation leaves untouched the difference between reality and illusion. The relationship between dissimulation and reality is similar to the signification embodied in the mask: the sign of pretending to be *not* what one is—that is, a sign which seems not to signify anything besides itself (the sign of a sign, or the negation of what is behind it). Such a dissimulation in

architecture can be given the provisional title of the *not-classical*. As dissimulation is not the inverse, negative, or opposite of simulation, a «not-classical» architecture is not the inverse, negative, or opposite of classical architecture; it is merely different from or other than. A «not-classical» architecture is no longer a certification of experience or a simulation of history, reason, or reality in the present. Instead, it may more appropriately be described as an *other* manifestation, an architecture *as is*, now as a fiction. It is a representation of itself, of its own values and internal experience.

The claim that a «not-classical» architecture is necessary, that it is proposed by the new epoch or the rupture in the continuity of history, would be another zeitgeist argument. The «not-classical» merely proposes an end to the dominance of classical values in order to reveal other values. It proposes, not a new value or a new zeitgeist, but merely another condition—one of reading architecture as a text. There is nevertheless no question that this idea of the reading of architecture is initiated by a zeitgeist argument: that today the classical signs are no longer significant and have become no more than replications. A «not-classical» architecture is, therefore, not unresponsive to the realization of the closure inherent in the world; rather, it is unresponsive to representing it.

The end of the beginning

An origin of value implies a state or a condition of origin before value has been given to it. A beginning is such a condition prior to a valued origin. In order to reconstruct the timeless, the state of *as is*, of face value, one must begin: begin by eliminating the time-bound concepts of the classical, which are primarily origin and end. The end of the beginning is also the end of the beginning of value. But it is not possible to go back to the earlier, prehistoric state of grace, the Eden of timelessness before origins and ends were valued. We must begin in the present—without necessarily giving a value to presentness. The attempt to reconstruct the timeless today must be a fiction which recognizes the fictionality of its own task—that is, it should not attempt to simulate a timeless reality.

16

Baudrillard p5.
Distinguishing between simulation and what he calls dissimulation, Baudrillard says that «to dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't. . . . Someone who feigns an illness can simply go to bed and make believe he is ill. Someone who simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms. (Littre). Thus feigning . . . is only masked; whereas simulation threatens the difference between «true» and «false,» between «real» and «imaginary». Since the simulator produces «true» symptoms, is he ill or not?» According to Baudrillard, simulation is the generation by models of a reality without origin; it no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. While this sounds very much like my proposal of the not-classical, the not-classical is fundamentally different in that it is a dissimulation and not a simulation. Baudrillard discusses the danger in the realization of the simulacra—for when it enters the real world it is its nature to take on the «real» attributes of that which it is simulating. Dissimulation here is defined differently: it makes apparent the simulation with all of its implications on the value status of «reality» without distorting the simulacra or allowing it to lose its precarious position, poised between the real and the unreal, the model and the other.

As has been suggested above, latent in the classical appeal to origins is the more general problem of cause and effect. This formula, part of the fictions of reason and history, reduces architecture to an «added to» or «inessential» object by making it simply an effect of certain causes understood as origins. This problem is inherent in all of classical architecture, including its modernist aspect. The idea of architecture as something «added to» rather than something with its own being—as adjectival rather than nominal or ontological—leads to the perception of architecture as a practical device. As long as architecture is primarily a device designated for use and for shelter—that is, as long as it has origins in programmatic functions—it will always constitute an effect.

17

What is at issue in an artificial origin is not motivation (as opposed to an essential or originary cause, as in an origin of the classical) but rather the idea of self-evidence. In deductive logic reading backward inevitably produces self-evidence. Hence the analytic process of the classical would always produce a self-evident origin. Yet there are no a priori self-evident procedures which could give one origin any value over any other. It can be proposed in a not-classical architecture that any initial condition can produce self-evident procedures that have an internal motivation.

18

The idea of arbitrary or artificial in this sense must be distinguished from the classical idea of architecture as artificial nature or from the idea of the arbitrariness of the sign in language. Arbitrary in this context means having no natural connection. The insight that origins are a contingency of language is based on an appeal to reading; the origin can be arbitrary because it is contingent on a reading that brings its own strategy with it.

19

Jonathan Culler, «On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism,» Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982.

This is basically similar to Jacques Derrida's use of graft in literary deconstruction. He discusses graft as an element which can be discovered in a text through a deconstructive reading: «deconstruction is, among other things, an attempt to identify grafts in the texts it analyses: what are the points of juncture and stress where one scion or line or argument has been spliced with another? . . . Focusing on these moments, deconstruction elucidates the heterogeneity of the text.» (p150) The three defining qualities of graft as it is used in this paper are: (1) graft begins with the arbitrary and artificial conjunction of (2) two distinct characteristics which are in their initial form unstable. It is this instability which provides the motivation (the attempt to return to stability) and also allows modification to take place. (3) In the incision there must be something which allows for an energy to be set off by the coming together of the two characteristics. Culler's discussion of deconstructive strategy contains all of the elements of graft: it begins by analysis of text to reveal oppositions. These are

But once this «self-evident» characteristic of architecture is dismissed and architecture is seen as having no a priori origins—whether functional, divine, or natural—alternative fictions for the origin can be proposed: for example, one that is *arbitrary*, one that has no external value derived from meaning, truth, or timelessness. It is possible to imagine a beginning internally consistent but not conditioned by or contingent on historic origins with supposedly self-evident values.¹⁷ Thus, while classical origins were thought to have their source in a divine or natural order and modern origins were held to derive their value from deductive reason, «not-classical» origins can be strictly arbitrary, simply starting points, without value. They can be artificial and relative, as opposed to natural, divine, or universal.¹⁸ Such artificially determined beginnings can be free of universal values because they are merely arbitrary points in time, when the architectural process commences. One example of an artificial origin is a *graft*, as in the genetic insertion of an alien body into a host to provide a new result.¹⁹ As opposed to a collage or a montage, which lives within a context and alludes to an origin, a graft is an invented site, which does not so much have object characteristics as those of process. A graft is not in itself genetically arbitrary. Its arbitrariness is in its freedom from a value system of non-arbitrariness (that is, the classical). It is arbitrary in its provision of a choice of reading which brings no external value to the process. But further, in its artificial and relative nature a graft is not in itself necessarily an achievable result, but merely a site that contains *motivation* for action—that is the beginning of a process.²⁰

Motivation takes something arbitrary—that is, something in its artificial state which is not obedient to an external structure of values—and implies an action and a movement concerning an internal structure which has an inherent order and an internal logic. This raises the question of the motivation or purpose from an arbitrary origin. How can something be arbitrary and non-goal oriented but still be internally motivated? Every state, it can be argued, has a motivation toward its own being—a motion rather than a direction. Just because architecture cannot portray or enact *reason* as a value does not mean that it cannot argue systematically or reasonably. In all processes there must necessarily be some beginning point; but the value in an arbitrary or intentionally fictive architecture is found in the *intrinsic* nature of its action rather than in the direction of its course. Since any process must necessarily have a beginning and a movement, however, the fictional origin must be considered as having at least a methodological value—a value concerned with generating the internal relations of the process itself. But if the beginning is in fact arbitrary, there can be no direction toward closure or end, because the motivation for change of state (that is, the inherent instability of the beginning) can never lead to a state of no change (that is, an end). Thus, in their freedom from the universal values of both historic origin and directional process, motivations can lead to *ends* different from those of the previous value-laden *end*.

The end of the end

Along with the end of the origin, the second basic characteristic of a «not-classical» architecture, therefore, is its freedom from a priori goals or ends—the end of the end. The end of the classical also means the end of the myth of the end as a value-laden effect of the progress or direction of history. By logically leading to a potential closure of thought, the fictions of the classical awakened a desire to confront, display, and even transcend the end of history. This desire was manifest in the modern idea of utopia, a time beyond history. It was thought that objects imbued with value because of their relationship to a self-evidently meaningful origin could somehow transcend the present in moving toward a timeless future, a utopia. This idea of progress gave false value to the present; utopia, a form of

juxtaposed in such a way as to create movement, and the deconstruction (graft) is identifiable in terms of that motivation. This paper, which concentrates on transposing these ideas from a pure analytic framework to a program for work, is more concerned with what happens in the process of consciously making grafts than finding those that may have been placed unconsciously in a text. Since a graft by definition is a process of modification, it is unlikely that one could find a static or undeveloped moment of graft in an architectural text; one would be more likely to read only its results. Graft is used here in a way that closely resembles Culler's analysis of Derrida's method for deconstruction of opposition: «To deconstruct an opposition . . . is not to destroy it. . . . To deconstruct an opposition is to undo and displace it, to situate it differently.» (p150) «This concentration on the apparently marginal puts the logic of supplementarity to work as an interpretive strategy: what has been relegated to the margins or set aside by previous interpreters may be important precisely for those reasons that led it to be set aside.» (p140) Derrida emphasizes graft as a non-dialectic condition of opposition; this paper stresses the processual aspects which emerge from the moment of graft. The major differences are of terminology and emphasis.

20

Culler p99.

«The arbitrary nature of the sign and the system with no positive terms gives us the paradoxical notion of an «instituted trace», a structure of infinite referral in which there are only traces—traces prior to any entity of which they might be the trace.» This description of «instituted trace» relates closely to the idea of motivation as put forth in this paper. Like Derrida's «instituted trace», motivation describes a system which is internally consistent, but arbitrary in that it has no beginning or end and no necessary or valued direction. It remains a system of differences, comprehensible only in terms of the spaces between elements or moments of the process. Thus, motivation here is similar to Derrida's description of difference—it is the force within the object that causes it to be dynamic at every point of a continuous transformation. Internal motivation determines the nature of modification for the object and is rendered readable through trace.

fantasizing about an «open» and limitless end, forestalled the notion of closure.

Thus the modern crisis of closure marked the end of the process of moving toward the end. Such crises (or ruptures) in our perception of the continuity of history arise not so much out of a change in our idea of origins or ends than out of the failure of the present (and its objects) to sustain our expectations of the future. And once the continuity of history is broken in our perception, any representation of the classical, any «classicism,» can be seen only as a belief. At this point, where our received values are «in crisis,» the end of the end raises the possibility of the invention and realization of a blatantly fictional future (which is therefore non-threatening in its «truth» value) as opposed to a simulated or idealized one.

21

Jeff Kipnis, «Architecture Unbound,»

unpublished paper, 1984.

Modification is one aspect of extension which is defined by Kipnis as a component of decomposition. While extension is any movement from an origin (or an initial condition), modification is a specific form of extension concerned with preserving the evidence of initial conditions (for example, through no addition or subtraction of materiality). On the other hand, synthesis is an example of extension which does not attempt to maintain evidence of initial conditions but rather attempts to create a new whole.

With the end of the end, what was formerly the process of composition or transformation ceases to be a causal strategy, a process of addition or subtraction from an origin. Instead, the process becomes one of *modification*—the invention of a non-dialectical, non-directional, non-goal oriented process.²¹ The «invented» origins from which this process receives its motivation differ from the accepted, mythic origins of the classicists by being *arbitrary*, reinvented for each circumstance, adopted for the moment and not forever. The process of modification can be seen as an open-ended tactic rather than a goal-oriented strategy. A strategy is a process that is determined and value-laden before it begins; it is *directed*. Since the arbitrary origin cannot be known in advance (in a cognitive sense), it does not depend on knowledge derived from the classical tradition and thus cannot engender a strategy.

In this context architectural form is revealed as a «place of invention» rather than as a subservient representation of another architecture or as a strictly practical device. To invent an architecture is to allow architecture to be a cause; in order to be a cause, it must arise from something outside a directed strategy of composition.

The end of the end also concerns the end of object representation as the only metaphoric subject in architecture. In the past the metaphor in architecture was used to convey such forces as tension, compression, extension, and elongation; these were qualities that could be seen, if not literally in the objects themselves, then in the relationship between objects. The idea of the metaphor here has nothing to do

with the qualities generated between buildings or between buildings and spaces; rather, it has to do with the idea that the internal process itself can generate a kind of non-representational figuration in the object. This is an appeal, not to the classical aesthetic of the object, but to the potential *poetic* of an architectural text. The problem, then, is to distinguish texts from representations, to convey the idea that what one is seeing, the material object, is a text rather than a series of image references to other objects or values.

This suggests the idea of architecture as «writing» as opposed to architecture as image. What is being «written» is not the object itself—its mass and volume—but the *act* of massing. This idea gives a metaphoric body to the act of architecture. It then signals its reading through an other system of signs, called *traces*.²² Traces are not to be read literally, since they have no other value than to signal the idea that there is a reading event and that reading should take place; trace signals the idea to read.²³ Thus a trace is a partial or fragmentary sign; it has no objecthood. It signifies an action that is in process. In this sense a trace is not a simulation of reality; it is a dissimulation because it reveals itself as distinct from its former reality. It does not simulate the real, but represents and records the action inherent in a former or future reality, which has a value no more or less real than the trace itself. That is, trace is unconcerned with forming an image which is the representation of a previous architecture or of social customs and usages; rather, it is concerned with the marking—literally the figuration—of its own internal processes. Thus the trace is the record of motivation, the record of an action, not an image of another object-origin.

In this case a «not-classical» architecture begins actively to involve an idea of a reader conscious of his own identity as a reader rather than as a user or observer. It proposes a new reader distanced from any external value system (particularly an architectural-historical system). Such a reader brings no a priori competence to the act of reading other than an identity as a reader. That is, such a reader has no preconceived knowledge of what architecture should be (in terms of its proportions, textures, scale, and the like); nor does a «not-classical» architecture aspire to make itself understandable through these preconceptions.²³

22

The concept of trace in architecture as put forward here is similar to Derrida's idea in that it suggests that there can be neither a representational object nor representable «reality.» Architecture becomes text rather than object when it is conceived and presented as a system of differences rather than as an image or an isolated presence. Trace is the visual manifestation of this system of differences, a record of movement (without direction) causing us to read the present object as a system of relationships to other prior and subsequent movements. Trace is to be distinguished from Jacques Derrida's use of the term, for Derrida directly relates the idea of «difference» to the fact that it is impossible to isolate «presence» as an entity. «The presence of motion is conceivable only insofar as every instant is already marked with the traces of the past and future . . . the present instant is not the past and future . . . the present instant is not something given but a product of the relations between past and future. If motion is to be present, presence must already be marked by difference and deferral.» (Culler p97) The idea that presence is never a simple absolute runs counter to all of our intuitive convictions. If there can be no inherently meaningful presence which is not itself a system of differences then there can be no value-laden or a priori origin.

23

We have always read architecture. Traditionally it did not induce reading but responded to it. The use of arbitrariness here is an idea to stimulate or induce the reading of traces without references to meaning but rather to other conditions of process—that is, to stimulate pure reading without value or prejudice, as opposed to interpretation.

24

Previously, there was assumed to be an a priori language of value, a poetry, existing within architecture. Now we are saying that architecture is merely language. We read whether we know what language we are reading or not. We can read French without understanding French. We can know someone is speaking nonsense or noise. Before we are competent to read and understand poetry we can know something to be language. Reading in this context is not concerned with decoding for meaning or for poetic content but rather for indication.

The competence of the reader (of architecture) may be defined as the capacity to distinguish a *sense of knowing from a sense of believing*. At any given time the conditions for «knowledge» are «deeper» than philosophic conditions; in fact, they provide the possibility of distinguishing philosophy from literature, science from magic, and religion from myth. The new competence comes from the capacity to read per se, to know how to read, and more importantly, to know how to read (but not necessarily decode) architecture as a text. Thus the new «object» must have the capacity to reveal itself first of all as a text, as a reading event. The architectural fiction proposed here differs from the classical fiction in its primary condition as a text and in the way it is read: the new reader is no longer presumed to know the nature of truth in the object, either as a representation of a rational origin or as a manifestation of a universal set of rules governing proportion, harmony, and ordering. But further, knowing how to decode is no longer important; simply, language in this context is no longer a code to assign meanings (that *this* means *that*). The activity of reading is first and foremost in the recognition of something as a language (that *it is*). Reading, in this sense, makes available a level of *indication* rather than a level of meaning or expression.

Therefore, to propose the end of the beginning and the end of the end²⁵ is to propose the end of beginnings and ends of value—to propose an *other* «timeless» space of invention. It is a «timeless» space in the present without a determining relation to an ideal future or to an idealized past. Architecture in the present is seen as a process of inventing an artificial past and a futureless present. It remembers a no-longer future.

This paper is based on three non-verifiable assumptions or values: timeless (originless, endless) architecture; non-representational (objectless) architecture; and artificial (arbitrary, reasonless) architecture.

The author wishes to thank the following people who have helped in the preparation of this article: Carol Burns, Giorgio Ciucci, Kurt Forster, Judy Geib, Nina Hofer, Jeff Kipnis, Joan Ockman, and Anthony Vidler.

25

C. F. Franco Rella

«Tempo della fine e tempo dell'inizio»

(*The Age of the End and the Age of the Beginning*)

«Casabella», 489/499 Jan/Feb 1984 pp106–108

The similarity to the title of Franco Rella's

article is coincidental, for we use the terms

«beginning» and «end» for entirely different purposes.

Rella identifies the present as the age of the end, stating that the paradoxical result of progress has been to create a culture that simultaneously desires

progress and is burdened with a sense of passing and the chronic sense of irredeemable loss. The result is a culture which «does not love what has been but

the end of what has been. It hates the present, the existing, and the changing. It therefore loves

nothing.» Rella's article poses the question of whether

it is possible to build today, to design in a way that is with rather than against time. He desires the return

to a sense of time-boundedness and the possibility of living in one's own age without attempting to return

to the past. The mechanism by which he proposes to re-create this possibility is myth. He differentiates

myth from fiction, and it is this difference which illuminates the opposition between his proposal and

the propositions of this paper. Myth is defined as a traditional story of ostensibly historical events that

serves to unfold part of the worldview of a people in the traditional value-laden sense, giving history

and thus value to timeless or inexplicable events. Rella dismisses fiction as verisimilitude, merely

creating the appearance of truth. Instead of

attempting to return to the past, myth attempts to create a new beginning merely situating us at an

earlier, and less acute, state of anxiety. But a myth cannot alleviate the paradox of progress. Against both

of these, «The End of the Beginning and The End of the End» proposes dissimulation, which is neither the

simulation of reality as we know it nor the proposal of an alternate truth, which appeals to the identical

verifying structures of belief—that is, origins, transformations, and ends. «The End of the

Classical» insists on maintaining a state of anxiety, proposing fiction in a self-reflexive sense, a process

without origins or ends which maintains its own fictionality rather than proposing a simulation of

truth.

