

Charles A. Jencks "Post-Modern Architecture" From *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*
(London: Academy Editions, 1977; New York: Rizzoli, 1977)

Architecture theory owes the concept and category of postmodern to Charles Jencks. Though the theoretical "inhibitions" of modern architecture against past forms and the actual plurality of its modes had already been developed by Paolo Portoghesi, Jencks, and others,¹ it was the convergence of Jencks's search for a multivalent or multicode architecture with certain design practices of the 1970s that enabled the theorization of postmodern architecture as a distinct, articulate, and affirmative position rather than as merely a reaction formation against modernism or a synonym for the contemporary.

In his *Modern Movements in Architecture* (1973) Jencks had already formulated what would become the foundational condition of postmodern architecture—an antideterministic, self-sustaining "multivalence"; Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation was his primary example. Following the precepts of the New Criticism (particularly the new critical readings of I. A. Richards), Jencks finds architecture to be fundamentally about human experience and the *organization* of such experience obtained through perception and reflection. The use and configuration of a self-conscious architectural "language"—an analog of the New Critics' poetic language—involve structure and pattern together with rhetorical devices such as metaphor, paradox, and irony, all of which serve to organize the complexity of human experience. A multivalent architecture is thus emotive *and* cognitive. Jencks:

The more one analyses [Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation], the more one finds link after link between the different levels of experience and the more experience becomes self-validating as one discovers not only Le Corbusier's intentions, but more possible meanings which are latent within the architecture. It is this power of the multivalent work to engage the perceiver's powers of creation which is significant here. Not only does this allow the architecture to become alive in different ways to each generation and thus result in a lasting architecture, but it also stimulates each generation to reach beyond its familiar abstractions. Multivalent architecture acts as a catalyst on the mind, provoking wholly new interpretations which, in however small a way, affect the individual. The range, delicacy and complexity of meanings which exist in a multivalent work have an analogous effect on the mind that interacts with them. Ultimately, we are transformed by what we experience, and the quality of a work is transferred, even if indirectly, into organizational states of the mind.²

It is one of the paradoxes of the modern/postmodern relation that the concept of multivalence can then be transferred to the proposed postmodern architectural language, where it is modulated by a notion of double-coding: "A Post-Modern building is . . . one which speaks on at least two levels at once: to other architects and a concerned minority who care about specifically architectural meaning, and to the public at large, or the local inhabitants, who care about other issues concerned with comfort, traditional building and a way of life."³ Such "schizophrenia" was surely part of modernism's historical condition as well, but it must be self-consciously and ironically exacerbated in order for Jencks to arrive at his semiotics of the nonsynchronous.

Postmodern architecture is concerned with the complex texture of reality ("It can include ugliness, decay, banality, austerity, without becoming depressing"), yet it avoids all stance-taking ("The particular motivation or 'interests' of men are momentarily dropped") in order to reach its "disinterested fulfillment." Its function is to create meaning in a balance of irresolvables through related structured levels and a density of connotativeness rather than the random heterogeneity or neat arrangement of individual elements. Meaning must be forged always in tension with other potential meanings, employing explicit denotations, everyday associations, reference to other buildings, and inherent or contrived simile or "seeing-as," all of which aids communication.

While Jencks's manner of reading buildings as similes and metaphors sometimes results in a kind of architectural Rorschach text ("Now tell me what this reminds you of"), his work also initiated a powerful new mode of perception that Fredric Jameson later summarized as "difference relates."⁴ Together with other efforts like Portoghesi's 1980 exhibition "The Presence of the Past" and Heinrich Klotz's *The History of Postmodern Architecture*,⁵ Jencks helped popularize and institutionalize a label that would dominate architecture journals and the academy for a decade.

Notes

1. Paolo Portoghesi, *Le inibizioni dell'architettura moderna* (Bari: Laterza, 1974); Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (New York: Anchor, 1973). See also Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966).
2. Jencks, *Modern Movements*, p. 26. Charles Jencks, "The Rise of Post-Modern Architecture," *Architectural Association Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (October–December 1975), also contains many of the constitutive characteristics found in the 1977 book.
3. Charles Jencks, introduction to the third edition of *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), p. 6.
4. Fredric Jameson, "Architecture and the Critique of Ideology," in *Architecture, Criticism, Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), p. 86; reprinted in this anthology.
5. Heinrich Klotz, *Moderne und postmoderne: Architektur der Gegenwart 1960–1980* (Braunschweig: F. Vieweg, 1984), published in English as *The History of Postmodern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988); *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture*, ed. Gabriella Borsano (Venice: Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, 1980).

Recent Departures

Several architects are moving beyond modern architecture in a tentative way, either adapting a mixture of modernist styles, or mixing these with previous modes. The results as yet are not convincing enough to speak of a totally new approach and style; they are evolutionary, not a radical departure. And it is in the nature of the case that practicing architects now in their forties and trained in modernism can only make hesitant, evolutionary changes. When the present students of architecture start practicing, we should begin to see much more convincing examples of radical eclecticism, because it is only this group which is really free enough to try their hand at any possible style—ancient, modern, or hybrid.

A few Japanese architects, Kurokawa, Kikutake and Isozaki among them, have on occasion produced work in several different styles, and single buildings which use various aesthetic systems in a semantic way. Also they have been able to incorporate a traditional language without necessarily being coy or ironic. Why they, unlike Westerners, have been able to be modern and traditional without compromising either language remains something of a mystery. Partly it is explained by the persistence of traditional Japanese culture in all areas, and the absence of a revolutionary avant-garde which establishes its credentials by inverting those of the previous generation. But also it is due to the Japanese sophistication towards signs: they have traditionally absorbed alien cultures, or modified the Chinese to their own purposes. Whatever the explanation, the results are there as a lesson to pluralist societies. The architect can design tea-ceremony rooms in a straightforward, sensitive way, or push the latest technology to its expressive limits.

Kikutake, in his Tokoen Hotel, has used a version of the Torii gate to acknowledge the entrance, and has employed traditional bracket construction—but in concrete not wood—to articulate the main public areas. The hotel rooms near the top mix tatami proportions and modern architecture; while the restaurant on the roof is under a gentle curve, in blue tile, that manages to recall traditional roof forms and modern hyperbolic parabolas (which in fact it is). Two different structural systems and two aesthetics thus give a legibility and dynamism missing in Western modern architecture.

Kurokawa's Odakyu Drive-In Restaurant is similar in its use of mixed systems. Again the traditional bracket construction is a departure point for the joint, but here the joint has exploded to such prominence that it has swallowed the building and, conversely, the building has swallowed the joint. This witty piece of advertising architecture is in the best roadside tradition—a gigantic metaphor proclaiming its function. The red tent, slung under the top joints, signifies outdoor activities, in this case a beer garden, while the plug-in capsule of brown steel signifies the main dining room.

Minoru Takeyama, another young Japanese architect, has pushed the use of popular, commercial codes even further in what is perhaps the most convincing Pop building yet designed from within the architectural tradition.

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His Ni-ban-Kahn makes use of gigantic supergraphics, optical patterns, written signs, and combines these commercial codes with a geometric discipline and volumetric expression more common in the high game of serious architecture. Architect's architecture and commercial motifs can be combined without compromising either code: in fact their mutual confrontation is a positive gain for both sides. The resultant hybrid, like all inclusive architecture, is not easily subverted by an ironic attack, an unsympathetic viewpoint, because it balances and reconciles opposed meanings. Instead of gaining a tenuous integration by denial, by excluding inharmonious meanings in a search for consistency, this inclusive architecture absorbs conflicting codes in an attempt to create "the difficult whole."

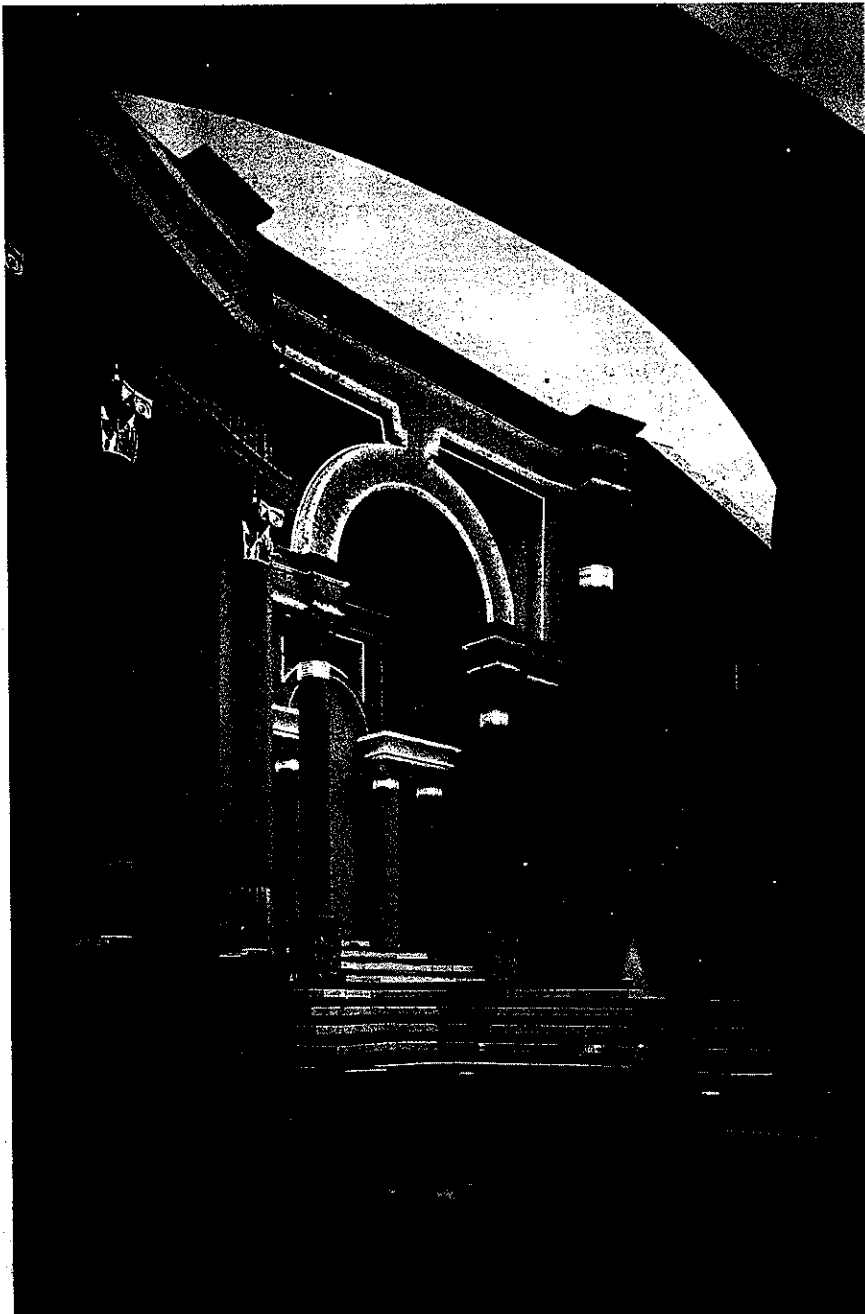
This phrase, borrowed from Robert Venturi, should not be regarded as a facile panacea, as his own work shows. It is considerably more difficult to design works which unify disparate material than to unify already homogeneous meanings and styles; just as it is more difficult to write a tragedy than a farce. By the same token, an inclusive architecture brings much more of our personality and behavior into focus; just as tragedy articulates a greater wealth of experience than any other genre.¹ The rare, inclusive building—as rare as the true tragedy (most are melodramas)—does not sublimate unattractive aspects of the world. It can include ugliness, decay, banality, austerity, without becoming depressing. It can confront harsh realities of climate, or politics without suppression. It can articulate a bleak metaphysical view of man—Greek architecture and that of Le Corbusier—without either evasion or bleakness.² The extraordinary power of tragedy when it is really tragic, or inclusive architecture when it really unifies disparate material, is its disinterested fulfillment. The particular motivation or "interests" of men are momentarily dropped as they watch a configuration of particularly disturbing events unfold—murders, betrayals slow disintegration—they watch these monstrosities with detached pleasure, as long as they are balanced or reconciled within an overall tragic pattern. The catharsis this can produce, irrespective of whether it is looked at psychologically (I. A. Richards), or metaphysically (Nietzsche), is of a higher order than the reactions produced by other genres. Inclusive architecture and tragedy, simply, are the pinnacles of expressive modes: there is nothing else as rich, mature and honest towards the complexities of life.

Having staked out grandiose claims for such work, it is unfortunate not to be able to illustrate it with convincing modern examples. But, again, only the first steps have been taken in this direction, and one doesn't expect them to be accomplished or perfect. Certain buildings of Le Corbusier definitely articulate this kind of experience, but they do so with a Purist language purged of symbolic signs, writing and vulgarity. By contrast, the buildings of Venturi and his team use an inclusive language without attempting much of a reconciliation between opposed meanings. Only one architect manages to be convincingly profound with a hybrid language, Gaudí; but before discussing him, I'd like to instance

several examples of this language itself since it is the precondition for an inclusive architecture.

In general terms it can be described as radical eclecticism, or adhocism.³ Various parts, styles or sub-systems (existing in a previous context) are used in a new, creative synthesis. Radical eclecticism stresses the aspect that these parts must find a semantic justification; eclecticism in itself is a senseless shuffling of styles, as incoherent as Purism, its opposite. Adhocism stresses the aspect that these parts must be unified creatively for a specific purpose (the definition of *ad hoc*). Several recent architectural examples make it clear what this language looks like. It is variegated rather than homogeneous, witty rather than somber, messy rather than clean,

Charles Moore (with Perez Associates, Inc., U.I.G., and Ron Filson), Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, 1976-1979



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picturesque but not necessarily without a classical, geometric order (usually it is made from several orders in contrast).

A key *ad hoc* building group, perhaps the largest built to date, is the students' residence and social zone at Louvain University, just outside Brussels. Designed with the aid of Lucien Kroll (who acted as orchestra leader for the various design groups), this set of structures resembles a child's building-block hill town more than a traditional group of university buildings. The reason is simply that many students participated in its design, and they used small bits of plastic foam in working out a model. They shuffled these bits around, combining various functions, such as individual rooms with restaurant. But disputes arose and the inevitable specialization of teams led to an impossible fragmentation. Kroll reorganized these teams several times, letting them become more familiar with each other's problems, until a possible solution was in sight. Not until then did he draw up the plans and sections which made it workable.

The resultant buildings show a complexity and richness of meaning that usually takes years to achieve and is the result of many inhabitants making small adjustments over time. The fact that a simulation of such piecemeal tinkering and pluralism can be built in from the beginning through such a process, should not be underrated. It takes, of course, the commitment and understanding that Kroll and his group had from the start; but the process is definitely generalizable, and similar results have been achieved elsewhere with similar processes of consultation, if not participation—Ralph Erskine and his team at Byker, for instance.

Kroll's orchestration even went so far as allowing the builders a certain improvisation while constructing. They changed the siding of one building from rough rubble stonework to brick and tile as the work progressed, so this building seems to grow up from the ground like a variegated tree. The students wished to combine functions while distinguishing them visually, so five different building systems were used—tile, plastic, aluminum and glass, wood, and concrete—in a finely-grained patchwork. No explicit semantic modeling was used, as far as I know, but the parts bespeak their use with a certain eloquence and mutual toleration. Perhaps this was due to Kroll himself, as participation won't automatically produce such sensitivity. There was clearly an aesthetic intention consciously brought to bear on the scheme at some point; and it is this skill, which has been delicately keyed into the process without dominating it, that distinguishes this result of participation from others, and from the very large self-build movement.

Perhaps participation has been oversymbolized. Kroll boasts that no two bedroom windows next to each other are the same; and when I was there in 1976 I found parts of the building had graffiti and political slogans written on them before they were being used. It was as if the street art of May '68 was being preapplied down at the factory. Perhaps the scheme may be overarticulated and somewhat too fussy in its insistent attempt to humanize and individualize.

Nonetheless, the spirit of the place really captures the feeling of what *ad hoc* design can be—a continually renewed improvisation on themes coming from every possible source. There are pitched roofs here which tumble about the roof-scape of an amoeboid community building; other popular signs, such as trellis-work, greenhouse sheds, and primitive figurative sculpture, punctuate the main blob of the scheme (one has to apply new architectural terms to these units—perhaps "hills" is a better word). The syncopation of various materials over the surface of these blob-hills can only be described as rich and riotous; tumultuous in the detail and violent in the whole—and yet still very personal and small-scaled. It is a kind of language very appropriate to student life and desires (at least some desires). I'm sure certain critics are going to condemn this as the totalitarianism of enforced participation, where there is no normalized architectures for the student who just wants to

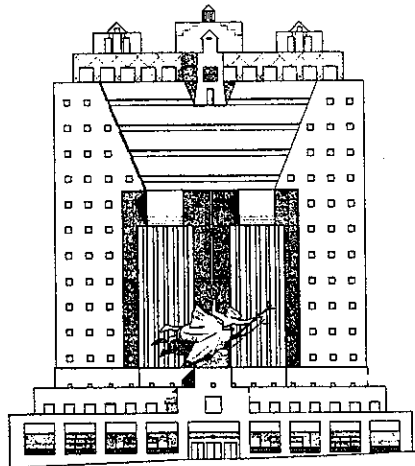
be his ordinary, privatized self. Indeed, perhaps improvisation has gone too far spread all over the site in every detail. But this excess is the price often paid for innovating a new process of design, and there is nothing inherent in the process which precludes ordinary building for those who really want it. They will just have to make their voices heard in the future as the university continues to expand.

Multivalent Architecture

The direction that Kroll and these other architects are moving towards is a pluralistic language which incorporates traditional and modern elements, vernacular and high art meanings. The Japanese designers, Charles Moore, the Venturi team, Bruce Goff, and countless individuals building their own handmade houses, do not yet constitute a single coherent tradition; but they have enough in common to make a very loosely defined group departing from the orthodoxies of the modern movement. They find support, if not identity of approach, in the emergent philosophies of the ecological movement "small is beautiful," intermediate technology, and the general trend towards decentralization which is being called for around the world. These last movements are neutral concerning a new language of architecture, they aren't concerned with the way buildings communicate one way or another, but their underlying pluralism is to be welcomed.

If this pluralism is going to amount to anything it will really have to become more tough-minded. The architect will have to be trained in four or five different styles and trained as an anthropologist, or at least a good journalist, to learn and be able to use the particular architectural codes that prevail among the subcultures that persist in any large city. He will have to learn the particular metaphors and symbolic signs which have a short-lived potency, and the slow-changing traditional signs, and use all these with wit and precision. This is not going to be an easy thing to do because the other part of his training, in the new technologies and abstract methodologies of planning, will inevitably remove him, as they have done in the past, from the users of his buildings. He will continue to have a professional ideology induced by the modern movement on a world-wide scale; he will respond to formal inventions coming from Italy and Japan, theory that emanates from London and New York, and individual practice coming from everywhere. He will build for multinational and large corporations and indefinable clients; he will still love the manipulation of pure form and the high game of Architects' Architecture. All these

Michael Graves, The
Portland Building, 1980



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forces will alienate him from the people who ultimately use his buildings and there is little hope of changing these forces (barring the collapse of international communications and all economies, not a very happy solution).

A realistic assessment of the situation suggests that schizophrenia is the only intelligent approach. The architect should be trained as a radical schizophrenic (everything must be radical today), always looking two ways with equal clarity: towards the traditional slow-changing codes and particular ethnic meanings of a neighborhood, and towards the fast-changing codes of architectural fashion and professionalism. If he doesn't make this schizophrenia quite explicit and incorporate it as part of his basic training, then he will be an inadvertent victim of one pressure or the other.

On the other hand, if he does adopt this dual approach, his enjoyment of architecture might actually increase, as he becomes more responsible for its various meanings. The more he can know about how people will react to the forms he uses, the more he can confidently use and decode them. The pleasure of manipulating various languages will easily repay the effort at learning them.

Ultimately however, it is the way a language is used that matters, the actual messages sent as much as the particular language used. Obviously if an architect has nothing important to say, his facility with communication is just going to advertise this fact clearly; so ideology, and ideas, are also preconditions for effective discourse. A multivalent architecture, opposed to a univalent building, combines meanings imaginatively so that they fuse and modify each other. A multivalent architecture, like the inclusive building, makes use of the full arsenal of communicational means, leaving out no area of experience, and suppressing no particular code (although of course any building is inevitably limited in range).

The only architect I could say really uses a pluralist language to produce multivalent works, Antonio Gaudí, has sometimes been classified as an Art Nouveau designer. The problem with this classification is that it obscures Gaudí's universality, not to say peculiarity. He was a man deeply committed to Barcelona's separatist movement, and to "modernismo," its artistic expression, as well as more general social issues, such as workers' control and Christian humanism.

Gaudí's version of Art Nouveau was highly inclusive, even cannibalistic: it swallowed Moorish elements, tiles and domical vaults; it absorbed Gothic motifs, buttresses, pinnacles, and stained glass; it borrowed nature's plants and animals, metaphors of any living creature; and incorporated emergent forms of engineering (the parabola and hyperbolic parabola were practically invented by Gaudí). Spatially it flowed and curved around solid elements, while structurally it not only articulated the lines for force, but dramatized them as twisting muscles and tendons. Symbolically, his work followed the local Christian and social meanings existing in Barcelona at the time. And Gaudí was not even intimidated by vulgarity—he'd write various slogans across the tops of his building, early Cubist advertisements. There wasn't a communicational mode Gaudí didn't use at least once.

His Casa Batlló, finished in 1907, is a particularly multivalent work, where meanings modify one another. You come upon it near the corner of a main boulevard in Barcelona, past a phalanx of plane trees on the Paseo de Gracia. On one side is a typical nineteenth-century apartment block in the classical style; on the other, the stepped shops and polychromy of another Art Nouveau building. Gaudí has filled this hole with a building that respects the street facade and unites the two adjoining structures (or at least did until one of them was added to). He also adopts a variation of the window treatments on either side.

On inspecting the entrance facade, you can discover a series of metaphors and symbolic signs. The balconies stare back like so many death masks or

skulls. The middle part of the architecture also recalls vegetable and marine metaphors, with some people seeing it as a violent blue sea breaking over rocks, which then turn into kelp (the codes of Barcelona are, after all, sensitive to the sea).

The lower two floors adopt a related organic metaphor of skeletons and bones (the architecture was known as "the house of bones"), and you can see this exoskeleton go internal on two sides of the third floor. A recent designer has incorporated a wandering, blue neon sign suggesting, if we continue the metaphor, that the "legs have varicose veins"—a rather ludicrous example of the way multivalent architecture forces meanings to modify each other.

It is quite possible to see these "bones" as tendons, or a ductile metaphor of wax or lava. If a mixed metaphor is more dramatic than a single, obvious one, then it is Gaudí's particular strength to find a multiplicity of meanings for these mixtures.

For instance, they divide the architecture into three main functional parts (following the classical convention): a base of two floors with the bone/wax metaphor which can denote "shops," "entrance" and "main apartment"; a shaft of four floors in the marine/mask metaphor which can denote "similar apartments of a lesser nature"; finally a capital, a roof in the dragon metaphor which can denote "roof garden, water tanks, skylight, mechanical equipment." Thus strange, regional codes are used to signify different functions and break up a large apartment block into identifiable and personal areas. How far this is from the recent practice of anonymous slab blocks it is not necessary to emphasize.

The pre-eminent role of the architect is to articulate our environment, not only so we can comprehend it literally, but also so we can find it psychologically nourishing, create meanings we hadn't even imagined were possible.

In this sense the overall message, or symbol, of the Casa Batlló is truly extraordinary: it articulates meanings which are much more profound than the surface metaphors of which it is composed. For a long time I puzzled over the meaning of the roof dragon—that sleeping monster sprawled out at the top who looks down on the passerby with one eye lazily half open. The ceramic tile of what appears at first its tail (the three-dimensional cross) shades slowly from golden orange on the left to blue green on the right. Gaudí was a very devout Christian and he announced the fact with the cross and initials of the Holy Family encrusted on the cylinder. But what sort of Christianity is this? I had assumed the dragon was a typical Art Nouveau conceit, taken perhaps from Chinese garden walls which undulate this way, but I couldn't see its relation to a religious message. Was it a kind of Tao-Christianity, a form of nature-worship akin to pantheism? I assumed this until I was told the conventional reference to these signs. The missing clue was supplied by the architect David Mackay, and the correct interpretation came into focus with all the vividness of a suddenly solved crime.

St. George, it turns out, is the patron saint of this city, and Barcelona has always been the center of a separatist, Catalanian movement. It has its special Catalan dialect and has always sparked off regional groups and extreme individualists. Anarchism has had a foothold there: Picasso, Sert, Salvador Dalí, Miró, are some of the more pronounced individualists. When you walk along the back streets and main commercial avenues and eat the highly sophisticated seafood, you realize that this city is European, not just Spanish; it has had Mediterranean roots (and routes) for several thousand years. The nationalist movement to which Gaudí belonged was trying to assert independence from Spanish domination. The Casa Batlló then apparently represents this struggle in its metaphors: the dragon—Spain—is being slain by that three-dimensional cross wielded by Barcelona's patron saint. The bones and skulls refer to the dead martyrs who have been victimized in the struggle.⁴ All this in an apartment building! But coded with enough subtlety to be apparent only to those

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who care to read it in depth. The deeper symbol, the knowledge of which transforms your whole view of the building, is not absolutely necessary in order to grasp its more obvious meanings. But like multivalent works in other fields it speaks to many different people on different levels.

These kinds of work, the six major tragedies of Shakespeare for instance, have the power to engage the mind and open our imaginations to new meaning. They are catalytic, provocative and creative, stimulating each generation to reach beyond its familiar abstractions and discover new interpretations; whereas the univalent work is reductive, dull, and ultimately repressive. A multivalent architecture remains alive because its meanings are so related as to allow new paths to be discovered between them. Finally, then, it is because of its effect on us that such architecture is mandatory—because it will shape us in multiple ways and speak to various groups, to the whole spectrum of society rather than just one of its elites. In the long run we are transformed by what we experience and inhabit; and the quality of architecture affects the quality of our minds at least as much as any other artifact we make.

No doubt many architects are now as disenchanted with modernism as the public, and a new paradigm, or theory, is beginning to form. This paradigm is still loosely defined and it doesn't yet enjoy a large consensus, but the outlines of what it is becoming are clear, particularly to the generation of architects now in their thirties. The next five years promise to be extremely interesting for architects, as the paradigm takes shape—but also probably confused and uncertain. The adage "may you be cursed to live in interesting times" is good warning for the architect now about to practice, because he will invariably spend a large part of his time fighting battles of taste, with differing publics. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. After all, the modern movement itself came into existence through struggle, and it won't exit without a fight. Every change in paradigm entails struggle, and the paradox facing our generation of architects is that it has to go backwards to previous theories, and reweave several strands which have been cut away, in order to go forward.

We must go back to a point where architects took responsibility for rhetoric, for how their buildings communicated intentionally, how "decorum" and *bien-séance* were consciously achieved, and then combine insights from such a study with a relevant theory of semiotics, so that an updated rhetoric can be consciously taught along with other specialties—no, as the unifying agent of these other disciplines. For an architect's primary and final role is to express the meanings a culture finds significant, as well as elucidate certain ideas and feelings that haven't previously reached expression. The jobs that too often take up his energy might be better done by engineers and sociologists, but no other profession is specifically responsible for articulating meaning and seeing that the environment is sensual, humorous, surprising and coded as a readable text. This is the architect's job and pleasure, not, let us hope, ever again his "problem."

Notes

1. The organizing powers of tragedy and its pre-eminence is discussed by I. A. Richards in his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1925; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961), pp. 245–250.
2. I have partly explored this notion in *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), but my discussion of tragedy there was severely curtailed.
3. In *Adhocism* (New York: Doubleday, 1972), Nathan Silver and I showed many examples of various styles and building systems being lifted from their former contexts and being put together *ad hoc* in a new synthesis. Arthur Koestler has illuminated the general principle involved in his *Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).

4. This is third-hand information, and a guess on my part. Gaudí told the architect Martorell that the roof represented a dragon being slain; Martorell told his son, Josep Maria, who told his partner, David Mackay, who told me. Given the separatist ideals of *Modernismo* it then seems logical to me that the dragon would represent Spain, the bones and skulls becoming veiled symbols of the Catalan martyrs. Surely many Catalans must have seen it this way, since St. George and the dragon appear on other separatist buildings, and Catalan Nationalism was very closely associated with *Modernismo* (for a while its style).

Some critics might say that Gaudí's work is too highly wrought to act as a model for the present city—a veritable zoo of animalistic and other meanings—but the basic lessons are there to follow: a full use of the expressive means, all the modes of communication. In one sense, Gaudí had it easy. He was in a rich traditional society, immersed in everyday Catholic faith, and working at a time (during the *Renaixença* and *Modernismo*) when architects could use metaphors and symbols as a matter of course, without reflection. Animal and vegetable metaphors cover many *Modernismo* buildings—not just mythic beasts such as the dragon, but domestic ones such as cats and dogs. Thus this culture did a lot of work for Gaudí, something which we can't expect today. And yet in the mass culture of the West, there are many of the same values and forces at work, even if they are finely spread out across society, and operative in a commercial and debased form. They are there, and it is theoretically possible that some individual and group can reweave these disparate aspects together and achieve something as deep and intense as *Modernismo*.