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Scenes of Ambivalence: Concluding Remarks on Architectural Patterns of Displacement

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Displacement provokes disruptions and shifts of meanings and conventions. Patterns of displacement are not confined to highbrow artistic practices, but manifest themselves in everyday environments too. We analyze this by confronting the case studies of this double theme issue with a theoretical framework focusing on the concepts of metaphor, mimesis, modernity, and identity. We argue that architecture can function as a receptacle, as an instrument, or as staging of displacement. Sometimes, architecture manages to generate possibilities to turn contradiction into ambivalence.

THIS AND THE PREVIOUS ISSUE OF *JAE* BRING TOGETHER SEVERAL CASE studies on the effects of displacement in architecture. In the first issue, Hassina Benchelabi discussed cultural displacement with Maghrebi women who reinterpret and reappropriate public and private places in present-day Brussels; Zeynep Kezer's article on Ankara in the thirties highlighted the emergence of a squatter settlement as a "third city," neither traditional nor modern, on the disputed site of a former cemetery; and Bruno De Meulder dealt with the heterotopian character of the Jesuit Kwango Mission in Congo (1895–1911). This issue contains Shih-wei Lo's unraveling of the troubled story of the Chinese Road, one of Taipei's historical avenues; Pat Morton's analysis of the hybrid architecture of the pavilions of Madagascar and Morocco at the Colonial Exposition of 1931 in Paris, and André Loeckx's interpretation of the ambivalence that can be recognized in the divergent building and dwelling practices that mutilate towns and villages in Kabylia, Algeria. This article traces a few theoretical threads through this heterogeneous series of case studies in order to offer a framework within which to illuminate displacement as an instigator of creative practices and of cultural change, operating in many different registers of architecture.

Displacement could easily join a set of key words such as *dislocation*, *disruption*, *deconstruction*, and *otherness*. These are favorite terms with which a part of the architectural neo-avant-garde differentiates its design practice and its theoretical investigations from more orthodox, mainstream ones.¹ There is a tendency among the neo-avant-garde to conceive of their approach as the sole trajectory for the highly valuable pursuit of "the Other." We want to challenge that assumption, however, because we agree with Mary McLeod that this "tourism of otherness" has followed too narrow a path and has failed, for instance, to take into account spaces and practices of otherness that belong to the everyday world of common people.² Neo-avant-gardism in architecture is associated with poststructuralist authors such as Derrida, Lyotard, or Baudrillard

but loses itself in an artistic and elitist understanding of their theories that removes it from any investigation of the complexity and otherness of daily life. Whereas the poetics of everyday reality are prominently present in the work of other French philosophers and sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel de Certeau, the influence of these authors on the architectural debates remain modest.³ Moreover, recent tendencies in architectural history and theory that focus on common things and everyday environments, are rarely recognized as important contributions to the overall field of architecture.⁴

Phenomena of displacement, however, are not confined to highbrow artistic practices. The tool kit of poststructuralist analysis can, in our opinion, also highlight more mundane manifestations of otherness. With appropriate heuristics and hermeneutics, one can discern complex and intricate practices of negation, negotiating, shifting, and disjunction that are part of everyday reality and nevertheless match the most sophisticated artistic strategies.⁵ Everyday reality is not just made up of simple and banal systems that direct people's habits and preferences in a perfectly clear and straightforward way. Social reality is full of structural conditions of otherness, provoked by phenomena such as migration, (post)colonialism, instant urbanization, and globalization of the world economy. This article traces such conditions through a few of their architectural manifestations.

The Condition of Displacement

Let us describe a condition of displacement in its most basic form as a situation where a new or alien element is introduced into a more or less stable context. This description applies to a variety of circumstances. Displacement can refer to actual, physical forms of transfer, as in the case of displaced people, or, more generally, of migrants or colonizers. Migration and colonization both cause a confrontation between different cultural systems that seek to appropriate the same space. This brings about situations in which the meaning of things and places—even the most common ones—is not a shared convention, but part of contested territory. Displacement can also have a more metaphorical meaning. For example, it can be used to indicate a situation of unbalance and confusion caused by rapid urbanization (the generic city) or by socioeconomic mutations such as globalization. Displacement, moreover includes all kinds of situations that we label *post*-something: postwar, postrevolutionary, postcommunist, postcolonial. The use of the prefix *post*- implies that a shift, a displacement has occurred that

destabilizes an earlier situation, but that this earlier situation nevertheless in one way or another continues to be of consequence for the present.

All of these situations have in common that the intrusion of a strange factor provokes a disruption, a profound questioning and eventually a reorganization of what before seemed to be self-evident. In that sense, a condition of displacement can be compared with these critical moments in an individual's life when one feels at a turning point. Such moments often result from external circumstances: an accident, an illness, the farewell of a loved one, the loss of a job. They cause a reconsideration of one's perception of life, a reevaluation of what is worthwhile and what is not. In a similar way, a condition of displacement provokes a disruption of the "normal" order, habits, and conventions. The objet trouvé, the alien object accidentally dropped in a place where it was never intended to be, constitutes perhaps the most elementary mode of displacement. In a certain sense, each built environment contains a dose of juxtaposition brought about by haphazard displacement. Urban photographers are keen to catch these poetics of contingency. What we are after, however, are more significant situations of displacement, when the resulting disruption is not just a passing contingency, but rather reveals underlying tensions and ambiguities.

Such a disruption can be provoked by a confrontation between different sociocultural value systems, where a new element implies shifts in meaning and conventions. The existing cultural system no longer manages sufficiently to cover the factual circumstances of daily life. Gaps open up where conventional wisdom gives no clue about how to react in a given situation. Such gaps can occur on different levels: semantic, semiotic, and praxeological.⁶

Semantic vacancies appear when displacement results in a lack of meaning or when the meaning of a particular phenomenon is no longer legible. Such is the case for the awareness of public space in Brussels by Maghrebi migrant women. As Benchelabi points out, Belgian public space means very little to these women because they perceive it most of all as a nonspace—"a realm of the night"—that is to be avoided rather than frequented.

Semiotic gaps emerge when displacement results in a lack of signifiers capable of carrying particular cultural meanings. The Muslim community in Brussels, for example, has a subdued presence in the built fabric because obvious signifiers that could attest to such presence are missing; mosques, public baths, and community halls are often accommodated in unsightly buildings, hidden behind modest, nonostentatious facades. Another example can be found in De Meulder's case study. The Jesuits, dreaming of their own missionary heterotopia, considered the available signifiers of

the native compounds and colonial camps unsuitable for their purpose. Therefore, the new signifier of the chapel farm borrowed from the nineteenth-century poorhouse farms in Belgium was intruded in the Kwango area.

Praxeological gaps can, finally, become evident through the absence of a set of well-defined and operational practices that can guide one's behavior in a new, displaced situation, such as in the nonfitting of Kabyle dwelling habits with a modern apartment layout, as Loeckx describes in his case study of Tizi Ouzou.

Our hypothesis is that a condition of displacement necessitates that people rely on resources of creativity and imagination that they normally would neglect. When no appropriate schemes are available to guide their practical behavior, people are likely to construct new ways of behavior or new modes of signification. The disruption causing shifts and gaps in these cases is not a single shock wave. Displacement is a *condition*; it generates a discursive chain of actions and counteractions motivated by improvisation, intuition, risk, and creative leaps. In the case of Ankara, an impatient young government projects a new capital somewhere in the middle of the country, removed from the age-old center of power. Modern master planners try to erase traditional settlement patterns and behaviors. Villagers migrate to the promising would-be city. Peasants act as craftsmen on the building sites that mutilate the landscape. In the evening, they collect old tins and sheets to assemble a brand new urban village overnight, at a place where they can watch bourgeois horse races held on the vacant land of a former cemetery.

A condition of displacement opens up space for new signifying practices, a need for creativity, and a recodification of signs. Recodification can be based on imitation, mimesis, or the revival of older or alien systems, whereby the mimetical moment implies a shift that destabilizes the former meaning. As such, displacement can have an inherently critical effect: opening up a closed system, enlarging the possibilities for individual expressions through divergent interpretations, creating new, unexpected layers of meaning and use, multiplying the range of acceptable attitudes. It should be clear, however, that a condition of displacement is also prone to being perverted by an all-encompassing and forceful system that seemingly provides an answer to all instability and insecurity. Conservatism or radical nationalism can dominate, resulting in an oppressive environment, whereby the range of possible meanings and attitudes in the end decreases instead of increases. A condition of displacement is thus both unstable and contradictory and can develop in different, unpredictable ways.

Such contradictions emerge in Brussels, for example, where Maghrebi women redefine the relationship between public and pri-

vate places by organizing meetings of women in private living rooms. The highly protected character of the house and the religious form of the meetings open the way as much to a strong fundamentalist grip as to a possibly emancipatory current. In the case of the Jesuit missions in Kwango, the network of chapel farms opposed both the brutality of the official colonial camps and the backwardness of tribal settlements. The self-contained character of the new spatial system, however, isolated people from their traditional social and cultural frameworks and enclosed them into an authoritarian realm. This heterotopia closes itself against the dynamics of displacement and does not stimulate strategies of mediation and hybridization that eventually turn contradiction into ambivalence.

Metaphors

The disturbing and at the same time generating effect resulting from displacement can be compared to how a metaphor works. Strictly speaking, a metaphor in language is a figure of speech in which a word is replaced by another word from a different context but with a certain similarity in meaning (the *foot* of the mountain, the *head* of the party). Metaphors borrow signifiers, meanings, or practices from other fields to produce new layers of meaning. Through such “nonsensical” maneuvers, metaphors help fill a gap in form, meaning, or practice.

Metaphorical transfer plays a key role in the anthropological study of rituals of change, such as rites of passage or healing rituals.⁷ In many of these cultural practices, changes are induced by breaking open an existing situation of crisis and suggesting a possible reordering of reality through a performance that, for instance, subsequently introduces features of erasure (smoke, sound), of possible change (blossom, sunrise), or of a new situation (movements of a fast running animal). Anthropological analysis tries to unravel, on the one hand, the logic of nonsense based on the borrowing of signifying elements from an alien field and, on the other hand, the mimetic efforts (dance, trance, role-playing) of participants in rituals. The ingredients of rituals of change (an unsatisfactory situation, borrowing of features from other fields, disruption preceding reorganization, mimetic performance) are similar to the condition of displacement described here.⁸

In architectural theory and criticism, metaphoric analysis can be found in a less elaborate way. It mainly consists of identifying in an architectural work the multiple references (icons, formal citation, typological links) from “outside” (from another architect, from another style period, from nonarchitectural fields).⁹ Metaphorical

transfers in architecture, however, do not belong exclusively to the realm of grand architecture; they also occur in everyday practices of building and dwelling. They simply imply that new practices (reinforced concrete technology), new forms (apartments), or new meanings (modernity), which in principle belong to a different field (urban real estate versus rural hamlet), are being introduced to a new situation. The insertion of a “borrowed” element creates a contradictory situation that inevitably effectuates a transformation of the form and meaning of both the displaced element and the new context. Such a metaphoric transfer can be recognized in the building practices of returning Berber migrants in the Beni Yenni. They introduce certain building types from their migration career in Paris—shops, garages, apartment buildings—onto the asphalt road that crosses their clan territory and by doing so gradually develop the spine connecting seven old villages into a kind of new urban agglomeration. By introducing these alien elements, returning migrants construct in a rural environment a new, more urban reality, which nevertheless is quite different from urban situations elsewhere. New, often contradictory building and dwelling practices are thus being established that turn the former clan territory of seven traditional villages into something that performs like a modern town without actually being one. Out of a contradictory condition of displacement emerges an ambivalent environment that seems to correspond to an equally ambivalent desire for a modern urban life that does not oblige them to lose the cherished village tradition.

The “third Ankara” that, according to Zeynep Kezer, emerged in the gap opened up between traditional urbanity, considered as backwards, and the newly planned one, unable to achieve a satisfactory urban reality, is also based on metaphoric transposition: relying on traditional settlement patterns but using modern, readily available materials, such as flattened cans, and taking advantage of ad hoc situations such as unoccupied land formerly belonging to a pious endowment, squatters invent a new, informal, and transformative building practice that allows them to inhabit a city that, officially, does not account for them in its master planning. Squatter settlements bear witness to the caginess and imagination with which their inhabitants develop strategies for survival and development. Traditional dwelling habits and new urban sensations, such as watching upper-class horse races, old skills, and new jobs, such as wage labor in the modern building industry, are assembled by trial and error, by a kind of “bricolage” that combines experiences belonging to different fields into a new, not really coherent, whole. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, this kind of bricolage, through a handy play of metaphors, becomes a problem-solving strategy able to reorganize reality and imagination.¹⁰

Metaphoric transfers are also at work in the design of the colonial pavilions of Madagascar and Morocco studied by Pat Morton. The Madagascar pavilion invents a completely new type by combining elements transferred from diverse local sources: a raised stone turned into a tower, which is adorned with skulls of zebras derived from funerary poles and which accompanies a building supposedly mimicking an authentic royal dwelling. Analysis reveals that this royal building in itself is already a westernized, enlarged derivative from an older palace type.¹¹ One is confronted in this case with a series of unstable meanings, made up of vacant signifiers (what do the zebra skulls mean, apart from being tokens of exoticism?), provisional combinations (the ramp, the configuration of tower and building), and ephemeral signifieds (inventing something like Malagasy culture). Metaphors are endlessly superimposed on one another, which results in what Morton calls a hybrid architecture—one that cannot be correctly classified into an identifiable category, such as a particular style or a specific cultural idiom, but is instead “bred from distinct races,” as the dictionary has it. If hybridization is responsible for the appearance of the exterior of the Madagascar pavilion, the interior directly stems from European Art Deco sources with remote reminiscences of Frank Lloyd Wright. It thus forms an ambivalent alliance with the exterior, realizing a factual compatibility between two “languages” that normally would seem to be contradictory. It is this architectural ambivalence, even more than the formal hybridization of the outside composition, that bears witness to the fundamental ambivalence of colonialism—an invented hybrid exterior acts as mediator between a prestigious western presence in the interior and an absent, native environment, considered not worth showing.

The Role of Architecture

The cases described in this double theme issue enable us to identify different roles for architecture vis-à-vis conditions of displacement. Basically, we discern three possibilities: architecture as receptacle, as instrument, and as staging of displacement. These three possibilities are not exclusive, for in many cases different modalities operate simultaneously.

The first possibility—architecture as receptacle—covers those cases where architectural phenomena bear the imprint of developments that mainly happen in other social and cultural fields. Architecture can be seen as a medium that represents and manifests social and cultural changes that occur in conditions of displacement. The present appearance of many traditional houses in Kabyle villages

testifies to the ongoing exodus. Migrants’ departures and their annual return for holidays disrupt the traditional pattern of the daily life cycle of leaving home and returning. The imprint of this disruption is legible in the built fabric: A stable is transformed into a kitchen, cupboards and suitcases replace jars; a weaving loom becomes a decorative object; a room is built and locked, waiting for a visitor. A major cultural evolution thus leaves its traces on architecture. In turn, careful reading of these architectural symptoms helps us understand underlying cultural changes that have no straightforward expression. In Gaston Bachelard’s terms, architectural research becomes “topo-analysis,” a careful search for and interpretation of traces of otherness.¹² In certain Kabyle villages, the never-ending process of modernizing the house apparently announces the return of migrants, which in fact turns out to become at best a holiday stay. Confusing traces allow us to decipher an ambivalent desire for urban *and* village life that leaves no other solution than a final exodus softened by rituals of yearly return and rebuilding.

The Moroccan pavilion at the Colonial Exposition of 1931 can also be analyzed as a construct aimed at representing what the French believed Moroccan culture to be. The pavilion was carefully modeled after specific urban and architectural complexes in Fez, Rabat, and Marrakech—its claim of authenticity thus being more justified than that of the Madagascar pavilion. Nevertheless, it remained the product of French architects whose proper design principles were subtly emerged in the layout of the building, notwithstanding its truly Moroccan-looking decoration and outward appearance. Morton states that the Moroccan pavilion thus can be seen as exemplifying the so-called *arabisation*, the tendency to arabicize European architectural forms.¹³ This tendency is indicative of the ambiguities coloring the colonial relationship between France and Morocco, exemplified by the colonizer’s hesitation between fascination for and denial of the values of indigenous culture, or in the vague dream of certain colonists of an emancipatory symbiosis between the best of East and West. Again, changing aspects of culture missing a direct language to express themselves find a sort of meta-language in the architecture of displacement.

The second possibility—architecture as instrument—engages the built environment in a much more active role as the instigator of cultural change. Architecture functions in this case as a spatial tool for the regulation of behavior and the disciplining of the body. The archetypal and most coercive example in this respect doubtlessly is Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, as described by Michel Foucault.¹⁴ De Meulder interprets the spatial politics of the Kwango missions in the same key, even if they mitigate the coercive rigor of the panopticon with emancipatory purposes and processes of salva-

tion. By carefully inserting new missionary settlements in between the local villages and by setting up a whole new structure of connections, the missions install a new spatial regime intended to force native people to adopt a different relation to territory, movement, and destination.

Another version of this strategic employment of architecture might be recognized in the brutal demolition of Taipei's Wall—source of pride and identity for the Chinese migrants—by the Japanese and its transformation into a spacious boulevard, as described by Lo. Through the imposition of this displaced element on a highly symbolic site of the Chinese city, the Japanese introduced new vistas and patterns of movement that inevitably changed the perception and use of the city and blurred its memory of the homeland. This transformation was instrumental in the de-sinofication of the city as well as in opening it up for more diverse modes of transportation and trade, channeling the development of Taipei into an economic modernization.

The introduction of modern town planning and modern architectural forms often can be understood as the vehicle for a far-reaching pursuit of modernization and emancipation. As Loeckx makes clear in his interpretation of Tizi Ouzou, the massive building of modern apartment blocks on the outskirts of former colonial towns came forth from the young and independent Algeria's quest for a way out of the encumbrances of old traditions and backwards habits. By offering people new dwellings with high levels of modern comfort, it was thought that they would, along with the adoption of a new way of living, also embrace new, modern values and attitudes. At the same time, they would trade their position as clan members, only subject to their father's authority, for the status of citizens, responsible to a powerful state that provides welfare. Building was thus seen as a tool in the struggle for progress and bureaucratic power.

The construction of the new capital of Ankara was also set up as a symbolic gesture of renewal and rejuvenation, which not only represented the government's desire to modernize Turkey, but also was instrumental in the pursuit of this goal. As Kezer points out, the building of Ankara inscribed the structural transformation of the state into the landscape, and aimed at displacing patterns of use and movement embodied in the old urban tissue. The enormous energy and economic effort invested in the new capital implied the migration of countless people who were supposed to adapt seamlessly to the logic of modernist planning. Even if the result of this whole operation was far from purely and simply modern, because other strategies managed to displace the planned ones, the building of Ankara effected a major cultural change.

The third possibility envisages building and dwelling as staging, as creating a theatrical space of negotiation. Because a condition of displacement implies that patterns of behavior and value systems lose their self-evidence, it enhances modes of self-reflection and self-awareness. A sense of theatricality and performance is therefore often much more acutely present than in other circumstances. People perceive themselves as trying out new roles. They tend to modify their given text, change their costume, maybe even alter their body language. Where one can go, how one should walk, whom one can meet and speak to, where it is proper or advantageous to be seen—all of these conventions are being reconsidered due to the condition of displacement. The built environment is literally the scene of this acting out. As such, it is both active and passive. It is active in that its physical forms condition the possibilities of spatial behavior and thus intervene in the play; it is passive in that this staging does not determine the play and sometimes merely becomes a static background for a game that follows its own dynamics.¹⁵

Architecture as a stage for change comes to the fore in the case of the Beni Yenni, described by Loeckx. The transformation of the road connecting seven clan villages into a proto-urban spine that acts as the main generator of spatial and cultural changes is not due to the implementation of a coherent planning purpose. It can be seen as a collective staging of individual actions and trials, allowed by the topographical situation of the seven villages and initiated by occasional initiatives of modernization undertaken by the government (post office, school, bus stop). A multitude of ad hoc bricolages by the villagers combine with the remarkable interventions by returning migrants, who introduce along the road building types and functions displaced from their migration journey. Although the resulting conglomerate is most of all confusing, the road and the buildings, the physical space and the uses it conveys, seem to converge in one way or another, as if an implicit staging turns ad hocism into coherence. The play generated by the staging achieves much more than the countless individual actions that compose it. The emergence of the spine is profoundly urban and theatrical, and so are the uses it induces: the seemingly pragmatic reconnoitering of (male) public space by the women, the show-off walks by young males, the demonstration march for the recognition of Berber cultural identity (an early sign of the forthcoming national crisis).

Another instance of staging is offered by Lo's case of the Chinese road in Taipei. The somehow displaced Japanese boulevard, built on the site of the demolished Chinese wall, was left after the conqueror's defeat as a vacant signifier. It served as vacant land for a squatter settlement that, like many others, originated as a result of the migration flood from Mainland China after the Communist vic-

tory in 1949. The central location and the particular layout of the settlement, with its linearity imposed by the shape of the former wall and boulevard, gave it a special vocation. It became a good place for informal business, popular restaurants in particular, displaying a unique collection of local cuisines from all over the Chinese continent. The make-do-ness of the squatter settlement, its unprecedented intermingling of Chinese dialects and cooking habits, was not only staging a new kind of urban space, it also staged a new cosmopolitan identity, a *pars pro toto* for Taiwan's destiny to forge a state out of what looked like a gigantic refugee camp of people displaced in crisis from territories that hardly shared a language and culture.

Displacement and Modernity

Patterns of displacement enable us to reflect on the role of architecture in a situation of social and cultural change. The condition of displacement can also be seen as an acute and radicalized version of something that is inherent to modernity in a more general sense. According to Marshall Berman, modernity implies a profoundly ambiguous and contradictory condition. In his famous book, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, he states that for the individual, the experience of modernity is characterized by an oscillation between the striving for personal development and the nostalgia for what is irretrievably lost.¹⁶ This characterization can doubtlessly be applied to the ambiguity of displacement too, for it always combines disruption with generative momentum. Modernity implies a conflict with tradition caused by a conscious pursuit of the new, a continuous struggle for change. This condition can be interpreted in different ways, which can also be illuminating with respect to a condition of displacement: One can see modernity either as a programmatic undertaking or as transitory. In both cases, ambiguity and contradiction shine through as inevitable characteristics.

The advocates of a programmatic concept interpret modernity as being first and foremost a project, a project of progress and emancipation. They emphasize its liberating potential, its capacity for growth and development, its vocation to change and improve the world. This programmatic side of modernity finds an outspoken manifestation in colonialism, which clearly shows the interweaving of a longing to better the world and a striving for conquest and domination. The idea of setting up a colony originally had to do with settlement and cultivation. It linked the occupation of new territory with the desire to leave behind old habits and limitations in order to establish another, a new, a better order. The colony supposedly was the locus of a new world in which the old world would be rejuvenated

through its confrontation with purity and virginity. In this sense a colony might be seen as the actualization of a longing for another world, a heterotopic space, as Foucault calls it.¹⁷ The other side of this coin, however, is that the new land is seldom pure or unclaimed, and the establishment of a colony thus means violation and oppression of another culture—something that in the factual elaboration of colonialism by imperialist powers was, of course, the dominant theme.

This internal contradiction is by no means an unhappy coincidence brought about by historical circumstances. Rather, it is inherent to colonialism. Even in those rare cases where the idea of violence seemed to be utterly foreign to the intentions of the colonizers, it was implied in its very logic. The Kwango mission in Congo was to function as a model for its surroundings, setting in motion a reshaping of the whole territory along the same lines. In that sense, it headed toward subsuming what was different under the logic of the same. Displacement here was seen as one-way replacement and abolition, not as metaphoric interaction.

A similar logic of replacement dominated the radical modern housing policy of the Algerian government and the planning of a new capital by the Turkish republic. In both cases, rhetorics of emancipation were closely associated with the abolition of tradition. Programmatic modernism behaves like a displacement that refuses to interact with the context into which it intrudes. In many cases, the affected context, after a period of disturbance, will enforce such interaction. After all, God's kingdom on earth did not last for long in the Kwango region, and the Ankara squatters definitely displaced the master planners.

In contrast to the programmatic concept of modernity, the transitory view stresses its transient or momentary aspects, following the lead of Charles Baudelaire, according to whom "modernity is the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art, of which the other half is the eternal and the immutable."¹⁸ Observers of modernity have indeed been fascinated by the ephemerality it evokes. Although modernity, in its programmatic appearance, usually provides a clear-cut, well-organized set of codifications about how the modern world should function and look, its actual manifestation leaves ample room for a diversity of unexpected, unintentional, and fascinating phenomena—from lines drawn by planes in the blue sky to the rhythm of light and dark provoked by publicity signs at Times Square.

Another scene in Lo's story of the Chinese road reveals the involuntary side effects of straightforward programmatic interventions. Regardless of the vibrant urbanity of the squatter settlement on the Chinese road, the Nationalist government, in search of a modernist image, cleared the site and replaced it with monotonous

blocks of shops and apartments. Within a few years, however, the boring facades disappeared under a flood of commercial signs while immense three-dimensional advertisements crowned the roofs. Again the Chinese road staged a new identity: the sparkling neon lights enhanced a powerful image of Taipei as a generic Asian metropolis, caught in the ephemerality of restless vehicular movement and hyperkinetic economy. Displacing the boulevard squatters and replacing them with equally displaced modern-looking blocks did not stop the urban dynamics. On the contrary, the new project lacked heterotopic ambition and thus dropped in the middle of a nervous urban quarter a vacant, uncomplicated, and receptive signifier that immediately started to convey all kinds of ephemerality.

One can argue that the most interesting and contradictory aspects of modernity can be found in the margins of transitoriness left open by the programmatic processes of codification. The Ankara master plan symbolized the proclamation of Turkey's will to enter a radically new phase in its history. On the site, the impressive construction program of the new capital enforced the rhetoric of modernism. However, the gigantic enterprise, overlaying a new spatial system on a traditional context, implied all kinds of frictions and disruptions. In spite of all efforts, the new capital offered but a skeleton of a new urbanity, enhancing multiple vacancies, gaps, and interstices. It is precisely in these activated margins that one witnesses the coming about of unexpected practices of buildings and dwelling, intended to negotiate between the old way of life, which is forever disrupted, and the new, modern pattern of behavior which still suffers from immaturity and incompleteness. The "third Ankara, lying at the gap between unrealized vision and displaced institutions" (Kezer) is the Ankara that in its very transitoriness and shabbiness enacts in a powerful way the contradictions of modernity: programmatic modernism generating transitoriness.

The condition of displacement and dissatisfaction, inevitably generated by programmatic interventions, provokes counterarrangements that, by their nature of immediacy and bricolage, introduce transitoriness and ephemerality, which in turn challenge and displace the program. The contradiction reaches a climax with the ever accelerating sequence of mainly programmatic interventions affecting Taipei's Chinese Road. The city wall, the boulevard, the modern blocks, and the now-emerging new avenue each represents strong programmatic intentions, and each enforced radical displacements, causing dissatisfaction and sometimes provoking transitory counteractions (the squatter settlement, the neon strip). Somehow in the Chinese road site, solid programmatic urbanism dissolves into the ephemerality of an accelerated urban history.

Cultural Identity

Conditions of displacement and the corresponding displacement patterns in design, building, and dwelling reveal the social and cultural impact of architecture. They especially stimulate a reflection on the contradictory nature of modernity. To conclude these notes, we would like to relate the issue of displacement to the construction of identity. Identity is not a fixed, stable, and self-evident fact, but rather a construct resulting from multiple shifts and displacements.

As Jacques Lacan has shown, self-identity in western culture is the result of a certain displacement. Children are not capable of achieving the status of a subject all by themselves: They have to go through what Lacan calls the mirror stage.¹⁹ Children develop a sense of identity by identifying with roles, names, and behaviors offered by the social environment (parents, relatives, teachers). In this process of identity formation, a twofold displacement can be observed. First, between the "identification of" message and the "identification with" acceptance, the mimetic appropriation produces a certain shift, selection, recombination, interpretation. Second, the inevitably nonmatching of each mirror image results in a dissatisfaction that stimulates a displacement of the search for identity to ever-other mirror images. The identity of the subject is in other words not established in a completely autonomous way, but is formed on the basis of subsequent displacements from elements that come from outside and that are mimetically appropriated.

Enlarging this reasoning from the individual to a sort of collective identity, one could argue that neither self-identity nor cultural identity is the net result of a straightforward, simple, or encompassing historical process. Moments of displacement continually alter the construction of identity and are thus intrinsically part of it. As Stuart Hall argues, cultural identity is not just a matter of shared history, a common background of typical experiences, and cultural codes that could give rise to a collective "self" that can easily be recognized by members of the same group.²⁰ History must not be essentialized. What "we" are is in no way the neat and obvious result of a clear-cut, well-defined past because the narratives describing that past can be subject to manipulations, distortions, loss of memory, or repression. Identity is a process rather than a fact: it is open to transformation and multiple interpretations.²¹

In their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno argue that the rational mode of behavior that is the quintessence of culture turns out only to be possible when one's inner, natural impulses are repressed; the result is an aporetic figure by which people can only fashion an identity for themselves

as rational and cultural beings on the basis of a betrayal of their identity as natural beings.²² Whereas in western thinking it is often taken for granted that the idea of culture is opposed to the idea of nature—culture supposedly implying a sense of liberation, development, emancipation and transcendence of the limits imposed by nature—Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the conception of culture is contradictory throughout because it links the idea of self-realization with aspects of domination and oppression. With its joining of cultivation and violence, colonialism provides only a more outspoken revelation of this logic.²³

Revelations of such contradictory conceptions have been provided over and over by the cases of this double theme issue. Many times, the cultural practices described could not long resist against the antithetic tension raised by contradiction. Especially the heterotopic dreams of radical otherness and purity—the Kwango missions, the modern housing estates—are lacking mediating terms to negotiate between emancipation and oppression. Sometimes, a mimetic gesture of architecture seems capable of turning contradiction into ambivalence—at least for a moment, as in the Malagasy pavilion. It can be reached due to the capacity, inherent to form and space, to juxtapose and overlap contradictory features that otherwise find no medium of interaction. One could also see, in the accelerated alternation of urban facts on the Chinese road in Taipei, a process of mimetic formation of a new urban identity through acceptance and rejection of subsequent urban mirror images. Such a process is driven by the successive contradiction between programmatic intentions and living urban realities but manages at the same time to avoid urban breakdown. A decisive factor in this process is the formal presence and functional capacity of the site of the former wall, which acts as a mimetic device, a counter form that supports the staging of mimetic displacements. A similar hypothesis can be forwarded with reference to the proto-urban spine road that links the Beni Yenni villages in Kabylia. Here again, the formal and functional capacity of the road—referent of a clan territory, landscape feature, morphological backbone, functional support, scene of urban behavior—plays a prime role in a process of mimetic identity formation that seems to succeed in displacing contradiction into ambivalence. Concluding their journeys of migration and removal, the Beni Yenni villages outlined the possibility of another urbanity and rurality, an “otherness” that would enable them to realize their ambivalent desire for both tradition and modernity.

Building and dwelling practices—architecture in its broadest sense—are thus capable of providing a medium for dealing effectively with a condition of displacement. Architecture can manifest,

enforce, or stage displacement. Sometimes it even manages, also in its more mundane appearances, to generate unique patterns that enable people to overcome the contradictions of daily life by allowing ambivalence to transpire—ambivalence matching the desire to be simultaneously at home and away.

Notes

1. The quest for “otherness” that motivates the efforts of the neo-avant-garde is glorified and exemplified in the work of Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi, as it is in the writings of posthumanist authors like Michael Hays and Mark Wigley.

2. Mary McLeod, “Everyday and ‘Other’ Spaces,” in *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. Debra Coleman, Elisabeth Danze, Carol Henderson (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), pp. 1–35.

3. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990); Pierre Bourdieu, *Practical Reason* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: Arche, 1968); and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

4. We refer here to the work of Paul Groth, Dell Upton, and John Michael Vlach, among others. The series *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, for example, testifies to a growing inclination to study not only strictly “traditional” vernacular structures, but also popular “modern” building and dwelling practices. See Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins, eds., *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, vol. 5 of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995); Carter L. Hudgins and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, eds., *Shaping Communities*, vol. 6 of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997); and Annmarie Adams and Sally McMurphy, eds., *Exploring Everyday Landscapes*, vol. 7 of *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

5. See also Steven Harris and Deborah Berke, eds., *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

6. We use the term praxeology (the logic of practices) in reference to Pierre Bourdieu. The best definition of it can be found in Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Geneva: Droz, 1972), p. 163: “La connaissance que l'on peut appeler *praxéologique* a pour objet non seulement le système des relations objectives que construit le mode de connaissance objectiviste, mais les relations *dialectiques* entre ces structures objectives et les *dispositions* structurées dans lesquelles elles s'actualisent et qui tendent à les reproduire, c'est-à-dire le double processus d'intériorisation de l'extériorité et d'extériorisation de l'intériorité.” Unfortunately, the English translation by Richard Nice (Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977]) fails to provide a clear translation of this particular sentence, since it is based on a later, presumably less clear version of the same text. We therefore give our own translation: “The mode of knowledge that can be labeled *praxeological* has as its object not only the system of objective relations constituting the mode of objectivist knowledge, but mostly the *dialectical* relations between these objective structures and the structured *dispositions* in which they are actualized and that tend to reproduce them. Praxeology thus refers to the double process of interiorization of the exteriority and exteriorization of the interiority.”

7. See, for example, Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974); and James Fernandez, "The Mission of Metaphor in Expressive Culture," in *Current Anthropology* 15/2 (summer 1974): 119–45.

8. See also Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

9. See, for example, Geoffrey Broadbent, "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture," *Architectural Design* 47/7–8 (July–Aug. 1977): 474–82. Broadbent compares the concept of icon elaborated by Charles Sanders Peirce with the metaphoric analysis of Gaudí's Casa Battlo by Charles Jencks. Another example is Stanislas Von Moos's analysis of the multiple metaphoric references one can identify in the work of Le Corbusier: Stanislas Von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis* [1968] (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980), pp. 147–63. The way Le Corbusier refers to the grand architectural tradition or to other existing buildings by transforming or contradicting their features is called by Alan Colquhoun a "displacement of concepts." Although Colquhoun qualifies Le Corbusier's Five Points as "a metaphoric set . . . that . . . can only be fully understood with reference to the old, in absentia," he seems to reserve the term *metaphor* for the assimilation into architecture of elements from outside, elements "from the real world," such as machines. See Alan Colquhoun, "Displacement of Concepts in Le Corbusier," in *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change* [1972] (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), pp. 51–66, quotations on pp. 51, 63.

10. Claude Lévi-Strauss illustrates the metaphoric practice of the *bricoleur* commenting on a fragment from Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. In Dickens's story, Mr. Wemmick transforms his boring suburban villa into a kind of fascinating castle with a miniature drawbridge, gunfire at teatime, and a tiny vegetable garden as a strategic survival device in case of enemy siege. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1962), pp. 198–99. English translation: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind: La Pensée Sauvage* (London: Weidenfeld, 1976).

11. For a more complete history of architectural interventions on Madagascar, see Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 235–300.

12. See Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), pp. 10–12, 27–30. English translation: Gaston Bachelard, Maria Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places* (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994).

13. François Béguin, *Arabesques. Décor architectural et tracé urbain en Afrique du Nord, 1830–1950* (Paris: Dunod, 1983).

14. Michel Foucault, "Panopticism (extract)," in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 356–67.

15. For a more general account of the functioning of theatrical notions in

contemporary French thought see, Timothy Murray, ed., *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

16. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1982), p. 15.

17. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in Neil Leach, ed., *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 350–56.

18. Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, n.d.), p. 553: "La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable."

19. Jacques Lacan, "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je," in *Écrits*, vol. 1 (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 89–97.

20. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 392–403. "The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual 'past,' since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break.' It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*" (p. 395).

21. Feminist theory also supports the open and transformative view of identity. Doreen Massey puts forward a notion of "the place called home," which stresses that the home is open and constructed out of movement, communication, and social relations that always stretch beyond its boundaries. She states that it is precisely in part the presence of the outside within that helps construct the specificity of the local place. This notion of the identity of place, she claims, is in a certain sense gender-related. Following Nancy Hartsock, she argues that in societies where child-rearing is a concern of women more than men, boys tend to construct their identities as differentiated from the female one, by relying on counterpositioning and on boundary-drawing. Girls, on the other hand, would rather be able to fashion their gender identity through imitation and connection. Given, however, the dominant place of masculine views in many societies, it is more often the "male" sense of identity—identity based on boundary-drawing—that is operative in many discourses and practices. See Doreen Massey, "A Place Called Home?" in *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) pp. 157–73.

22. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 3–43.

23. One usually does not realize, but etymology makes it clear that the words *culture* and *colony* have the same root. Both terms derive from the Latin verb *colere*, meaning "to cultivate," "to take care," "to look after"—a sense that most prominently transpires in the word *agriculture*.