



1 **Israhel van Meckenem**, *Amorous Couple*, c. 1480.
In the new space of sexuality, the wife literally holds all the keys.

Untitled: The Housing of Gender

Mark Wigley

People are in general not candid over sexual matters. They do not show their sexuality freely, but to conceal it they wear a heavy overcoat woven of a tissue of lies, as though the weather were bad in the world of sexuality. Nor are they mistaken.

Sigmund Freud¹

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1 Sigmund Freud, "Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1959), vol. 11, p. 41.

I

WHAT IS IT to talk of sexuality and space here, in this space, or rather spaces, this room but also the space of architectural discourse and that of the university, to name but two? Sexuality is not so easily accommodated here. The subject is still without title in architecture, that is, it is still without a proper place.

Of course, this displacement of sexuality occurs within every department of the university, even, if not especially, those in which it appears to be addressed in the most rigorous terms. Through the intricate and oblique operations of each disciplinary apparatus, sexuality is privatized without being housed. Institutional practices transform it into some kind of object that appears to be controllable inasmuch as it can be hidden inside or excluded. This is more than simply the defense of a conservative institution in the face of the convoluted topology of desire that threatens to destabilize it. Rather, it is to do with the constructions of sexuality implicit in the constitution of those very institutional practices, constructions whose strength is produced in the moment of denial.

The exclusion of sexuality is itself sexual. The university is an elaborate system of representation, a mechanism that sustains a system of spaces, an architecture, by masking the particular constructions of sexuality that make those spaces possible. Thus the word "sexuality," when it is spoken of in the university, when it can be passed from one space to another, marks only that which does not threaten the architecture of the institution, the construction of those very spaces. Our concern today cannot simply be to make a place for sexuality here, to give it a title, but rather to pay attention to what would be excluded by such a title: the sexuality of place itself. The space of the university is made possible by masking the exclusion of particular sexualities that makes certain theoretical constructs exchangeable, whether overtly or covertly, within it. The exclusive architecture of these constructs, which are organized around that of gender, has to be interrogated.

To talk of "Sexuality and Space" here, within the academic space of architectural discourse, is therefore complicated. After all, this is the discourse that advertises itself as concerned primar-

ily with space. In a sense, this is the space of space. The question of sexuality must be as much about the space of the discourse as with what can be said within that space.

In these terms, my concern here is to trace some of the relationships between the role of gender in the discourse of space and the role of space in the discourse of gender. That is to say, with the interrelationships between how the question of gender is housed and the role of gender in housing.

* The active production of gender distinctions can be found at every level of architectural discourse: in its rituals of legitimation, hiring practices, classification systems, lecture techniques, publicity images, canon formation, division of labor, bibliographies, design conventions, legal codes, salary structures, publishing practices, language, professional ethics, editing protocols, project credits, etc. In each site the complicity of the discourse with both the general cultural subordination of the "feminine" and the specific subordination of particular "women" can be identified, often explicitly but usually by way of covert social mechanisms that sustain bias at odds with overt formulations. Such readings would reproduce in architecture readings that have been made of other discourses. This work is necessary and overdue. But at the same time it is equally necessary to think about why it is overdue, why this discourse has been so resistant, its silence getting louder, such that the question of "Sexuality and Space" is being asked in this way, now, here. What specific forms of resistance to this inquiry does the discourse employ? And to what extent was it established as precisely such a resistance?

Since these particular forms of resistance mark the disciplinary role of architecture in our culture, the question becomes what exactly is being protected here, in this space, for whom? To simply reproduce the analyses of other discourses may be to preserve this secret. Architectural discourse is clearly defined more by what it will not say than what it says. But what it cannot say may bear a relationship to what can be said in those discourses. Architectural discourse plays a strategic role in guaranteeing assumptions that are necessary to the operation of other discourses. It is precisely these assumptions, whose protection defines its identity, that it addresses most obliquely, if at all. Their very need for protection, their vulnerability, prohibits their exposure. They are exemplified

in architectural discourse rather than examined. Indeed, the discourse routinely applies to itself the very concepts that it unwittingly guarantees. Its institutional limits are defined by its capacity to mask its complicity in the construction of the concepts it employs. Gender is such a concept, underpinned by a spatial logic that is masked in the moment of its application to architecture, as an extra-, or rather, pre-architectural given. The question of sexuality and space here is that of the structure of this mask.

To interrogate this institutional mask necessitates running the risk of returning to the all too familiar scene of the patriarchal construction of the place of woman as the house precisely at the moment in which the many dangers of such a return are being articulated. The introduction to a recent anthology on feminism and psychoanalysis, for example, describes how feminist theory domesticates itself inasmuch as it both assumes a familial relationship to other discourses, like psychoanalysis, and focuses within that theoretical couple on "private relations." In so doing it occupies a "stereotypically feminine space," "situating" itself "in the sexualized, emotionalized, personalized, privatized, erratic sphere of the home and bedchamber rather than in the structured, impersonal, public realm."² This domestic space is maintained by not engaging critically with "third terms" (like "theory, philosophy, history, language, and law") which despite being (in the Lacanian sense) constitutional in any binary relationship, are traditionally identified with a public sphere outside the private world of the theoretical couple. Such terms are said to have been increasingly problematized in contemporary work in order to avoid this habitual withdrawal into a "comfortable," "safe" space which "insulates" critical theory from the very political effectivity it seeks:

In recent years, feminist psychoanalytic critiques have passed beyond these issues ... Emerging from the household, shifting from the illusion of privatized and public spheres, from the family to the acknowledgement of an open confrontation with the interlocutory terms of cultural mediation.³

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2 Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof, eds., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 2.

3 Ibid., p. 3.

While such a move from domestic space to the "patriarchal grid within which it fits" seems necessary in order to resist the domestication of theory, certain questions about space remain unasked. The implied familial narrative of feminism growing up and leaving the secure private domain of the house for the public sphere exempts the house itself from analysis. While the new space of feminist theory is seen to be beyond the distinction between public and private, that distinction is restored inasmuch as that space is seen to be simply "beyond" that of the house. Consequently, the boundaries that define the house are at once left behind as an "illusion" and restored. Domestic space can only pose a danger inasmuch as the illusions that sustain it, like all enfranchised cultural images, are real. Indeed, the spatial rhetoric employed—"passed beyond," "emerging from," "situates," "fitting within," "closed," "open," "insulates"—restores the very space being critiqued. It reconstructs the house as the paradigm of the definition of space in the very gesture of leaving it behind. The house is literally left behind, intact, as if innocent of the violence it appears to frame. But the house is itself a third term. The specific mechanisms with which it constructs space need to be interrogated before its effects can be resisted.⁴

But even though the definition of space is ostensibly the subject of architectural discourse, it cannot simply be interrogated by that discourse. On the contrary, it is protected from analysis by that very discourse. Buildings, as such, are not simply available either to the critical theories that uncritically leave them behind nor to the discourse that claims them as its own. It is precisely in this uncanny inaccessibility that the house is produced as a cultural artifact. This sense that buildings precede theory is a theoretical effect maintained for specific ideological reasons. Likewise, and it is the relation between them that is the issue here, the sense of a building's detachment from sexual politics is produced by that very politics.

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4 Such a complication of the "home" can be seen in some current revisions of identity politics, but still the question is not yet architectural—home, not house. The house remains unrevised.

II

Take, for example, a canonic text like Alberti's fifteenth-century treatise, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, which was crucial to architecture's promotion into the liberal arts and therefore eventually into the academy and, more recently, into the university and finally into this room. Its fifth book, when discussing the design of "private" houses, contains an overt reference to architecture's complicity in the exercise of patriarchal authority by defining a particular intersection between a spatial order and a system of surveillance which turns on the question of gender. Women are to be confined deep within a sequence of spaces at the greatest distance from the outside world while men are to be exposed to that outside. The house is literally understood as a mechanism for the domestication of (delicately minded and pathologically embodied) women:

I recall reading in the historian Memilius Probo that it was the custom in Greece for women not to be admitted to table, except for meals with relatives, and the custom too for certain parts of the house, where the women resided, to be out of bounds to all but closest kin. And certainly, to my mind, any place reserved for women ought to be treated as though dedicated to religion and chastity; also I would have the young girls and maidens allocated comfortable apartments, to relieve their delicate minds from the tedium of confinement. The matron should be accommodated most effectively where she could monitor what everyone in the house was doing. But in each case we should abide by whatever may be the ancestral custom.

The husband and wife must have separate bedrooms, not only to ensure that the husband be not disturbed by his wife, when she is about to give birth or is ill, but also to allow them, even in summer, an uninterrupted night's sleep, whenever they wish. Each room should have its own door, and in addition a common side door, to enable them to seek each other's company unnoticed. ... Off this should be the strong room; here the boys and young men should pass the night, the girls and maidens in the dressing room, and next to them the nurse. Guests should be accommodated in a section of the house adjoining the vestibule, where they are more accessible to visi-

tors and less of a disturbance for the rest of the family. The young men of over seventeen should be accommodated opposite the guests, or at least not far from them, to encourage them to form an acquaintance.⁵

This passage participates in the production of the artifact "woman" by high discourse and therefore has, at best, a complicated relationship to the historically, geographically, and class-specific regimes of social control and forms of resistance to them.⁶ But within that discursive scene of production it plays a strategic role. It occupies Alberti's treatise in a symptomatic way. It is insulated from the main body of the text, framed three times by the first sentence. Firstly, it is presented as but a recollection, then it is of another writer who in turn is referring to ancestral custom. Responsibility for the argument is successively passed from Alberti to the ancestors. In a familiar circle, the exercise of patriarchal authority is authorized by the fathers. By being insulated in this way, the passage is located within some pre-architectural domain of social order. Alberti only reinserts himself ("And, certainly, to my mind ...") in order to offer additional isolated spaces and levels of comfort to reinforce an unquestionable "custom." The house enforces a preexisting law. The law of the house precedes the house.

This pre-architectural law is spelled out in Alberti's earlier dialogue, *Della Famiglia*, in its third book entitled "Liber Tertius Familie: Economicus" (literally, the law [*nomos*] of the household [*oikos*]) which, other than discussing the siting of the family house, does not appear to address architecture:

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5 Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988), Book V, p. 149.

6 On the specific relationships between ideology and behavior in the Renaissance throughout the geographical space over which Alberti's writing exercised such influence, see Judith C. Brown, "A Woman's Place Was in the Home: Women's Work in Renaissance Tuscany," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses on Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret Ferguson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 206-224.

I agree, for you are, indeed, precisely of the opinion of the ancients. They used to say that men are by nature of a more elevated mind than women ... The character of men is stronger than that of women and can bear the attacks of enemies better, can stand strain longer, is more constant under stress. Therefore men have the freedom to travel with honor in foreign lands. Women, on the other hand, are almost all timid by nature, soft, slow, and therefore more useful when they sit still and watch over things. It is as though nature thus provided for our well-being, arranging for men to bring things home and for women to guard them. The woman, as she remains locked up at home, should watch over things by staying at her post, by diligent care and watchfulness. The man should guard the woman, the house, and his family and country, but not by sitting still.⁷

Here, in opposing male mobility in the exterior to female stasis in the interior, Alberti's text closely follows Xenophon's fifth-century treatise *Oeconomicus*, which at once naturalizes and spatializes gender: "The gods made provision from the first by shaping, as it seems to me the woman's nature for indoor and the man's for outdoor occupations."⁸ Xenophon prohibits any confusion of this gender-space division, whether it be the man's occupation of the interior or the woman's occupation of the exterior.⁹ Such a spatial reversal does not just go against their respective natures. The spaces literally produce the effect of gender, transforming the mental and physical character of those who occupy the wrong place: "compelled to sit indoors, the body becomes effeminate and mind loses its strength."¹⁰ This claim is enthusiastically repeated by Alberti:

It would hardly win us respect if our wife busied herself among the men in the marketplace, out in the public eye. It also seems some-

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7 Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, trans. Renée Neu Watkins as *The Family in Renaissance Florence* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), Book III, p. 207.

8 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, trans. H. G. Dakyns as "The Economist," in *The Works of Xenophon* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1897), vol. 3, p. 229.

9 "Thus for a woman to bide tranquilly at home rather than roam abroad is no dishonor; but for a man to remain indoors, instead of devoting himself to outdoor pursuits is a thing discreditable." Ibid., p. 231.

10 Ibid., p. 213.

what demeaning to me to remain shut up in the house among women when I have manly things to do among men ... Those idle creatures who stay all day among the little females or who keep their minds occupied with little feminine trifles certainly lack a masculine and glorious spirit. They are contemptible in their apparent inclination to play the part of women rather than men. ... if he does not shun trifling occupations, clearly he does not mind being regarded as effeminate. ... I believe that a man who is the father of a family not only should do all that is proper to a man, but that he must abstain from such activities as properly pertain to women.¹¹

Such a spatial confusion is explicitly understood as sexual and is identified with femininity. The threat of being in the wrong place is not just the feminization of the man, but the feminine per se. If the woman goes outside the house she becomes more dangerously feminine rather than more masculine. A woman's interest, let alone active role, in the outside calls into question her virtue.¹² The woman on the outside is implicitly sexually mobile. Her sexuality is no longer controlled by the house. In Greek thought women lack the internal self-control credited to men as the very mark of their masculinity. This self-control is no more than the maintenance of secure boundaries. These internal boundaries, or rather boundaries that define the interior of the person, the identity of the self, cannot be maintained by a woman because her fluid sexuality endlessly overflows and disrupts them. And more than this, she endlessly disrupts the boundaries of others, that is, men, disturbing their identity, if not calling it into question. In these terms, self-control for a woman, which is to say the production of her identity as a woman, can only be obedience to external law. Unable to control herself, she must be controlled by being

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11 Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 207.

12 "I often used to express my disapproval of bold and forward females who try too hard to know about things outside the home and about the concerns of their husband and of men in general ... wise men say a woman who spies too much on men may be suspected of having men too much on her mind, being perhaps secretly anxious whether others are learning about her own character when she appears too interested in them. Think for yourself whether either of these passions is becoming to a lady of unblemished honor." Ibid., Book III, p. 209.

bounded. Marriage, understood as the domestication of a wild animal, is instituted to effect this control. As the mechanism of, rather than simply the scene for, this control, the house is involved in the production of the gender division it appears to merely secure.

In these terms, the role of architecture is explicitly the control of sexuality, or, more precisely, women's sexuality, the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife. Just as the woman is confined to the house, the girl is confined to her room. The relationship of the house to the public sphere is reproduced on its interior. In Alberti's account, the boys are positioned near the guests, the outsiders, to encourage contact and mobility while the girls are positioned at the other end of the house.

In Xenophon, the social institution of marriage is naturalized on the basis of the spatial division of gender. This division is written into the concept of marriage even as it is defined as a couple "under the same roof." The purpose of the institution is reproduction, which requires a shelter, a "roofed homestead."¹³ Marriage is the reason for building a house. The house appears to make a space for the institution. But marriage is already spatial. It cannot be thought outside the house that is its condition of possibility before its space. The word *oikos* refers to the identity between the physical building and the family it houses. Equally, it refers to their hierarchical division. The word for the dweller of the house becomes "husband," such that the art of economy which orders the *oikos* is literally that of "husbandry." While the house protects the children from the elements, its primary role is to protect the father's genealogical claims by isolating women from other men. Reproduction is understood as reproduction of the father.¹⁴ The law of the house is undoubtedly no more than the law of the father. The physical house is the possibility of the patriarchal order that appears to be applied to it.

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¹³ "Too much cold or too much sun, rain, and the wild blowing of a storm are harmful to children. Woman, therefore, did first find a roof under which to nourish and protect herself and her offspring. There she remained, busy in the shadow, nourishing and caring for her children. And since woman was busy guarding and taking care of the heir, she was not in a position to go out ..." Ibid., Book II, p. 111.

¹⁴ The house emerges from the first of the precepts that provide a "sound and firm foundation": "In the family, the number of men must not diminish but augment," Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 227; and Alberti prays for "many male children," *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 212.

In fact, it is the man that is immobile, fixed to the house—in the sense of both family and building. The woman is mobile. Her "natural" immobility in the interior is enforced in the face of her mobility between houses. The apparent mobility of the man is produced by the confinement of the woman, who is, as Ann Carson argues, at once necessary to the maintenance of the house and the greatest threat to it:

From birth the male citizen has a fixed place in the *oikos* ("household") and *polis* ("city-state"), but the female moves. At marriage a wife is taken not just (and perhaps not at all) into her husband's heart but into his house. This transgression is necessary (to legitimate continuation of the *oikos*), dangerous (insofar as the *oikos* incorporates a serious and permanent crisis of contact), and creates the context for illicit varieties of female mobility, for example that of the adulteress out of her husband's house, with attendant damage to male property and reputation.¹⁵

The house can only operate as such if the woman's sexuality, which threatens to pollute it (pollution being, for the Greeks, no more than things out of place), is contained within and by it. The convoluted spatiality of a violation of the house necessary to its integrity as such is dealt with by the complex social rituals around thresholds, rooms, streets, veils, beds, hygiene, etc., that constitute the marriage ceremony. Only when these rituals domesticate the perceived threat to spatial integrity can the house literally provide the boundaries which control female sexuality. The house then assumes the role of the man's self-control. The virtuous woman becomes woman-plus-house or, rather, woman-as-housed, such that her virtue cannot be separated from the physical space.¹⁶

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¹⁵ Ann Carson, "Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt, and Desire," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. David M. Halperin et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 136. On the relationship between the questions of gender and architecture in Greek mythology, see Ann Bergren, "Architecture, Gender, Philosophy," in *Strategies of Architectural Thinking*, ed. John Whiteman et al. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).

¹⁶ The spatial order of the house is understood as the control of sensual "appetites": "managing one's own possessions, ruling and moderating the affections of the spirit, curbing and restraining the appetites of the body" (Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 207), in the same way as the "bringing-up" of a girl: "For in control of her appetite, Socrates, she had

At the same time, that space is insufficient. Boundaries are only established by the intersection between a walled space and a system of surveillance which monitors all the openings in the walls. The spatial structure of the house is maintained by both the systems of locks, bars, bolts, and shutters that seal the openings and a controlling eye. In this way, the woman can be held to the thresholds of the house, the doors and windows. Likewise, the girl is confined to an inner room away from even the windows, guarded by a "watchful eye" (like that of the "matron," the women outside the economy of reproduction, that Alberti installs in a strategic position as a security device to "monitor what everyone in the house was doing") and is only brought formally to the window in order to attract a suitable husband to whose house she will then be ceremonially escorted. The word for raising a female child being literally that for "surveillance."

But this surveillance is not simply carried out by the eye, and the spaces it controls are not simply physical. The capacity of the house to resist the displacing effects of sexuality is embedded within a number of systems of control—mythological, juridical codes, forms of address, dress codes, writing styles, superstitions, manners, etc.—each of which takes the form of surveillance over a particular space, whether it be the dinner table, the threshold, the church, the fingertips, the bath, the face, the street. These apparently physical spaces requiring supplementary control in turn participate in a broader ideological field.

Xenophon's argument about the role of the physical space of the house, for example, is framed, and apparently subordinated, by a more general argument about the house. His text begins by defining "house" as a man's estate rather than a physical building and "economy" as the management of such a house, as distinct from its construction. The economist is explicitly defined in contrast to the architect-builder. The house is the collection of useful possessions, of which the building is but one, that need to be managed.

Nevertheless, the law of the father, which governs this broader

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 been excellently trained, and this sort of training is, in my opinion, the most important to man and woman alike" (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 227).

sense of house, is already architectural. It is itself understood as the intersection of a spatial system and a system of surveillance. When identifying the role of the father as the center of the family ("head" of the household established by controlling the "body" that is woman), Alberti employs the analogy of the spider whose house is a system of surveillance:

You know the spider and how he constructs his web. All the threads spread out in rays, each of which, however long, has its source, its roots or birthplace, as we might say, at the center. From there each filament starts and moves outward. The most industrious creature himself then sits at that spot and has his residence there. He remains in that place once his work is spun and arranged, but keeps so alert and watchful that if there is a touch on the finest and most distant thread he feels it instantly, instantly appears, and instantly takes care of the situation. Let the father of a family do likewise. Let him arrange his affairs and place them so that all look up to him alone as head, so that all are directed by him and by him attached to secure foundations.¹⁷

The "residence," the physical house, is at the center of the network in the same way that the man is the center of the family. The man must "place" his affairs such that he both is, and is at, the center. But ironically, unlike the spider, he cannot simply occupy the center of his web, the interior of the physical house, without losing his masculinity. The woman literally stands in his place. But she does not simply look outside. While Alberti, citing Xenophon's recommendations on siting the house, specifies the need for it to have extensive views over its site, it does not command a view of the "outside," the public world beyond that site. And yet, it is not simply cut off from that world either. On the contrary, Alberti's whole argument turns on the claim that public life follows from, and depends upon, the domestic.¹⁸ The virtuous public figure is one who simply tries to be a "good householder." The surveillance of the exterior depends upon the surveillance of the

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¹⁷ Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 206.

¹⁸ "Do not abandon your private concerns to guide public affairs. I remind you of this; for if a man finds that he has less than he needs in his home, he will find still less outside; nor will the public power he has redeem his private necessity." *Ibid.*, Book III, p. 179.

interior. The wife assumes this burden of internal surveillance as the "overseeing eye" monitoring the house, which is no more than a nested system of enclosed spaces, each with a lock, from its one locked front door down to the small locked chests at the foot of the beds, which contain the most valued possessions. As the "guardian of the laws" responsible for this elaborate system, she literally holds all the keys, guarding the house in the same way that her husband guards her (figure 1).

The "rule of the household" she enforces is no more than the law of place itself: "each thing in its place." Alberti closely follows Xenophon's account of "training" a girl-bride to be a wife by taking her around the house on a tour of inspection, identifying the "appropriate place" for each possession, starting with the rooms, and then the "classes" or "divisions" within them down to the subdivisions of the smallest chest.¹⁹ Everything is "assigned to separate places" which are then given the husband's seal of approval: "he will write over each as it were, 'examined and approved.'"²⁰ The spaces are classified. But his classification is not simply added to the spatial system. On the contrary, it is seen to be already inscribed into it: "everything is orderly arranged, not in the first chance place, but in that to which it naturally belongs."²¹ There is a "natural" relationship between the system of classification, the spaces, and that which is being classified. The wife learns her "natural" place by learning the place of things. She is "domesticated" by internalizing the very spatial order that confines her. Having been "trained" as an inspector of the house who can read its signs, the girl ironically becomes a woman by assuming some of the masculine virtues of a military commander—"a brave and masculine intelligence she has"²²—and is given command over the interior spatial order.

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19 On the brutality of Alberti's "training" method (which dehumanizes the wife through a process of humiliation and "turns on the inculcation of pervasive feelings of guilt ... forgiven when she behaves like a dog: scolded, she lowers her eyes; after an appropriate interval, she raises them again in a chastened attitude"), see Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary and Political Models* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 52.

20 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 236.

21 Ibid., p. 209.

22 Ibid., p. 244.

For Xenophon this spatial order is itself a thing of beauty. The gaps between spaces, the "interspace," which is no more than the spatial structure, the "neat array" within which possessions may be placed, becomes a beautiful figure, which "owns a separate charm." In fact, it is more beautiful than any of the possessions it orders.²³ Indeed, nothing can be more beautiful.²⁴ But this beauty is not simply independent of the possessions it exceeds. The spaces it defines visually represent what is proper to them: "The very look of them proclaimed what suited each chamber best,"²⁵ and so reveal the status of the estate. When something is missing, the "gaping space will cry out." The structure is therefore a mechanism of detection: "the mere look and aspect of things will detect what needs attention."²⁶ The house is itself a way of looking, a surveillance device monitoring the possessions that occupy it. It is really the house, provided by the man, that stands in his place. It is his eye. The wife merely maintains the very surveillance system she is placed in and by.

Indeed, she is one of the possessions whose status the house monitors and is exposed by the structure of the house she maintains. It is this exposure by a system of classification, rather than a simple enclosure by walls, that entraps her. Just as the gap between spaces, the divisions of the house, represent both the order and that which is ordered, Alberti monumentalizes the space between genders by differentiating between male and female spaces in terms of location, access, and levels of comfort.

This reaches its extreme in his division between the husband and wife's bedroom. But while the separate doors to the bedrooms publicize the split between genders, the door between them is privatized: "Each room should have its own door, and in addition a common side door, to enable them to seek each other's company

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23 When discussing an estate, Xenophon prefers the beauty of "The accuracy of the spacing, the straightness of the row, the regularity of the angles" to the possessions it orders: "I really do admire these lovely things, but I am more impressed with your skill in measuring and arranging everything so exactly." Ibid., p. 217.

24 "After all, my wife, there is nothing in human life so serviceable, nought so beautiful as order." Ibid., p. 234.

25 Ibid., p. 240.

26 Ibid., p. 236.

unnoticed."²⁷ Sexuality is privatized in the very gesture which makes the difference between the sexes public. This double gesture marks Alberti's contribution to the emerging ideal of the family based around the physical and psychological privatization of the sexuality of the married couple with "visible and invisible walls"²⁸—what Philippe Ariès refers to as the "invention" of the family²⁹—which originated in the fifteenth century but was not established until the nineteenth century.

Alberti's text does not simply occupy the traditional art historical categories that have been used to frame it, especially that of the "Renaissance," a category that is not only indebted to the reading of Alberti's texts but is built into the constitution of art history, organizing its operations rather than simply being one of the subjects it examines. Alberti's text cannot easily be separated from the systems of distinctions that are applied to it.³⁰ As responsible for the logic of historical placement as it is for that of spatial placement, it cannot itself be easily placed. It employs late medieval arguments to stitch together fragments of classical texts into a structure which carries within its seams traces of critical displacements that would be instituted in the following centuries. The text is strangely suspended between the classical arguments it appropriates and those identified with the nineteenth century.

While Xenophon makes a space for sexuality—the house—Alberti veils that space within the house. This veiling is not simply the demarcation of a space for sexuality, a private domain in which

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 27 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book V, p. 149.

28 "In the civilizing process, sexuality too is increasingly removed behind the scenes in social life and enclosed in a particular enclave, the nuclear family. Likewise, the relations between the sexes are isolated, placed behind walls in consciousness." Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Vol. 1: *The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 180.

29 "Not that the family did not exist as a reality ... But it did not exist as a concept." Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), p. 405.

30 As Michael Ann Holly argues, the position of the art historian is that of the Albertian spectator located in perspectival space, a "totalizing scheme of spatial construction" which is appropriated "not just as a painterly divide that permits the artist to locate objects spatially in a certain manifest scheme of relationships but also as a kind of cognitive map for the cultural historian whose directive is to relate events, attitudes, and

the couple is free from external restraint. On the contrary, it is a resistance to sexuality as such. Alberti is everywhere opposed to sensual pleasure, describing it as a "vile appetite," "lascivious and brutish," "shameful and immodest," "bestial and merciless lust." Sexual desire is natural in animals but in humans it is unnatural because it goes beyond the honorable work of procreation into the degenerate realm of erotic play. Alberti condemns excess pleasure or, more precisely, pleasure understood as excess. Such pleasure is dangerous because it makes men lose their reason and become the "effeminate" servants of women.³¹ Desire is itself a woman that masters men—"truly she is a master to be fled and hated"³²—and can only be controlled by the strict enforcement of masculine reason. Alberti distinguishes "erotic life" from "friendship" and identifies marriage as a form of friendship which resists sexuality rather than houses it: "A most appropriate reason for taking a wife may be found in what we were saying before, about the evil of sensual indulgence."³³ Marriage is an institution of reason which transforms sexual play's confusion of gender roles into the virtuous work of procreation, which is seen to depend upon the maintenance of those roles.

But Alberti's house even veils this virtuous labor of procreation by veiling the opening in the wall between the bedrooms. It is precisely such unsupervised openings that make possible the new sense of privacy, beyond that of a closed room, on which the emerging ideology of the individual subject depends.

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 personalities in a coherent temporal architectonic. ... the works of art of the period rhetorically prefigured their own historiographical response."

Michael Ann Holly, "Vision and Revision in the History of Art," in *Authority/Vision/Politics*, ed. Martin Kreiswirth and Mark A. Cheetham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 160.

31 "We might add that an overindulgence in anything concerned with pleasure is, according to Crates, harmful to old and young alike: it makes the old cruel and the young effeminate." Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book IV, p. 95.

32 Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book II, p. 105.

33 Ibid., Book II, p. 112. Constance Jordan points out that the friendship Alberti promotes "is an emotion felt by men primarily for men, and it is expressed by agreements about how women are to be shared and exchanged. In practice it has nothing to do with feelings that a husband and wife have for each other." *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 42.

The invention of personal privacy is marked by a new attitude to the body which is written into Alberti's argument. The body now needs to be cleansed. Or, rather, social order has to be cleansed of the body. Architecture is established as such a purification. It must be sited, organized, and maintained with technical strategies like drains, windows, and cremation, which preserve the "purity of the air." The body itself emerges as a threat to the purity of space, the "cleanliness of buildings." This cleanliness is more than simply a resistance to the infections of the plague that Alberti repeatedly warns against. He is concerned to control the refuse of the body by isolating it from the building because it literally threatens the structure of the building, both its physical structure (urine, for example, is to be channeled away from walls because it deteriorates them³⁴) and its abstract order. The devices that control the refuse are the servants of that order. By detaching architecture from the body, these services make the representation of immaterial order possible.³⁵ Before it can defend the body, architecture must defend itself against the body by ordering it. The body threatens only inasmuch as it is mismanaged: "although the sweat or breath is itself not the least bit bad, it may be infected by the odor of the garments, and smell foul."³⁶ It is the clothing that smells, exposing the space to the disorder latent within the body it covers. Purification must begin with the outer coverings, starting with the building itself. The mechanisms of this detachment, from sewers to toilets, would become known as "closets." They literally closet away the abject domain from the spatial representation of pure order. This masking of the abject cannot be represented as such. It is a subordinate system which makes space for the dominant representation.

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 34 "I would recommend that drains for the disposal of urine be kept well away from the walls, as the heat of the sun may corrupt and infect them very much." Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book IV, p. 114.

35 In describing Serlio's displacement of the high architectural mode canonized by Alberti into the inferior phenomenal realm of the "ordinary," the "poor," the "abnormal," etc., Tafuri notes that "The idealization of architecture, which had found exceptional exponents in Marsilio Ficino and Leon Battista Alberti, collapsed when it came into contact with human feces." Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance*, trans. Jessica Levine (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), p. 69.

36 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book X, p. 322.

Alberti's discomfort with the smells of the "secret privies" located "almost below our beds"³⁷ points to the desire to establish a new sense of privacy in the house, literally a secret privacy. The smell gives away the presence of that which should be hidden. Like the other bodily functions in the bedroom, it must be doubly privatized. Architecture no longer simply reveals what it houses. This new sense of privacy was gradually produced throughout the next centuries by redefining the spaces of the house into a complex order of layered spaces and subdivisions of spaces that map a social order by literally drawing the lines between hierarchies of propriety. Eventually, the supplementary closet that had made the order of the house possible became the new order of the house. A new kind of space emerged in which distance is no longer the link between two visible objects in space but is the product of a mask whose surface is scrutinized for clues about what lies beyond it but can never simply be seen. An economy of vision founded on a certain blindness. Without such vigilant control of the surface, the disorder of the body can infect ethical, aesthetic, political, and juridical regimes. Order in general depends upon an ordering of the body, which is to say, a detachment from it. It is this detachment that makes the individual subject possible. Architecture was used to effect it as the agent of a new kind of modesty and in so doing played an active part in the constitution of the private subject. It clothed the body in a way that redefined it, at once constructing the body as dangerous and containing that threat.

This disciplining of the body is an extension of the traditional disciplining of the cultural artifact "woman," authorized by the claim that she is too much a part of the fluid bodily world to control herself. The privatization of sexuality, where sexuality is understood as feminine, is used to produce the individual subject as a male subject and subjectivity itself as masculine. This subject is specific to that privatization. The new conditions of privacy mark a new subjectivity rather than simply modify a preexisting one. While ancient texts like Xenophon's identify that sexual activity needs to be subjected to an economy which would control its excesses, by literally identifying it with a marriage-house, this is not simply the sexuality that would later be veiled within that

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 37 Ibid., Book V, p. 151.

house with similar arguments. What is common to the arguments is not the sexuality whose space is being defined but that their respective spaces are instituted to construct their specific senses of self. As Foucault argues:

The way in which sexual activity was constituted, recognized, and organized as a moral issue is not identical from the mere fact that what was allowed or prohibited, recommended or discouraged is identical. ... The sexual austerity that was prematurely recommended by Greek philosophy is not rooted in the timelessness of a law that would take the historically diverse forms of repression, one after the other. It belongs to a history that is more decisive for comprehending the transformations of moral experience than the history of codes: a history of "ethics," understood as the elaboration of a form of relation to self that enables an individual to fashion himself into a subject of ethical conduct.³⁸

The interrelated terms "sexuality," "body," and "privacy" are fundamentally historical. Alberti's design should not be understood as the privatization of a preexisting sexuality. Rather, it is the production of sexuality as that-which-is-private. The body that is privatized is newly sexualized.³⁹ Indeed, it is a new body. The new sexuality is produced in the very moment of its privatization. All of the ensemble of strategic mechanisms that define and constitute the house are involved in the production of this sexuality as such.

These mechanisms appear to exceed the physical space of the house which is unable to expose and legislate against the sexual excess on whose elimination its very structure depends because it veils sexuality. This veiling marks a spatial and moral limit to the architecture of reason. The new privacy creates the possibility of an illegitimate sexuality that must be controlled by other means.

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³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 2: *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 251.

³⁹ The medieval body being displaced by Alberti is not simply sexual: "The recent outpouring of work on the history of the body, especially the female body, has largely equated body with sexuality and understood discipline or control of the body as the rejection of sex or of woman. We must wipe away such assumptions. Medieval images of the body have less to do with sexuality than with fertility and decay." Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practices in the Later Middle Ages," *Zone: Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Part 1, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone, 1989), p. 162.

Theoretical texts and religious institutions must take over the responsibility of supervising a space whose openings are no longer visible.

But these systems of representation cannot be separated from that space. The mechanisms that define the house cannot be divided into those that are spatial and those that are representational. The space in which the privatization of sexuality could occur is literally produced by transformations in representational systems and, equally, those systems are made possible by that space.

The space depends, for example, on the production of new kinds of writing, the necessary spatial conditions of which are written into the very passage of Alberti's treatise on the subordinate place of woman in the house. An even more extreme form of privacy is inscribed in the spatial system in order to supervise the space of sexuality it at once produces and veils.

While one of the first signs of the growing desire for privacy for the individual, such that "a privacy *within* the house developed beyond the privacy of the house,"⁴⁰ was the separation of the bedrooms that Alberti prescribes, which established a masculine space, this space is not completely private, since women can enter it, albeit only when allowed. The first truly private space was the man's study, a small locked room off his bedroom which no one else ever enters, an intellectual space beyond that of sexuality.⁴¹ Such rooms emerged in the fourteenth century and gradually became a commonplace in the fifteenth century. They were produced by transforming a piece of furniture in the bedroom—a locked writing desk—into a room, a "closet" off the bedroom.⁴² Indeed, it was the first closet. The space of writing could now be

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⁴⁰ Charles de La Ronciere, "Tuscan Notable: on the Eve of the Renaissance," in *A History of Private Life*, Vol. 2: *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 212.

⁴¹ "He passed from chambre to chambre cyle he come yn to hir secreet study where no creature used to come but hir self allone." *Life of St. Kath*, 1430 (Roxb), p. 14, cited *O.E.D.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), Vol. X, p. 1181.

⁴² The word "closet" was used in this way in the sixteenth century but became a commonplace in the seventeenth century: "We doe call the most secreet place in the house appropriate unto our owne private studies ... a closet." A. Day, *English Secretary* (1586), p. 103, cited *O.E.D.*, Vol. II, p. 520. On the study, see Orest Ranum, "The Refuges of Intimacy," in *The*

entered. In Alberti's account, the husband is given this space of immaterial knowledge while the wife is given a dressing room, space of material masks, off her bedroom. But her space is not private, as the young children, girls, and nurse sleep in it. The study is the true center of the house. This new space marks the internal limit to the woman's authority in the house. She does not command the whole space. Her disciplinary gaze operates between the inner locked door of the study and the outer locked door of the house.

Having given his wife apparent authority over the house on which his public authority depends, the *paterfamilias* consolidates his control by secreting the family documents—the interrelated financial and genealogical records—in a locked chest in his study. The whole economy of the household is literally written down at the hidden center of the space it organizes. The image of the house is hidden within it, just as the image of the public space is hidden within the house. The woman maintains a system without access to its secrets. "Locked up and arranged in order,"⁴³ these documents are subjected to the very spatial order they at once represent and authenticate. But they are not just stored in this space. They are literally produced there. The private space is the space of private writing. It makes available the new literary form of the *memoir* which began as a record and consolidation of the family but increasingly became a celebration of the private individual. Originally the man withdrew from the family into this space in order to reconstruct that family through elaborate records: collecting documents, contracts, records, family trees, anecdotes about, and prescriptions for, good family life, details of private relationships, ancestors, etc., to be passed on to the oldest male child, and kept away from the woman because her convoluted boundaries prevent her from keeping a secret and she is in any case the representative of another patriarchal line.⁴⁴ But these private records were

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History of Privacy, Vol. 3: *Passions of the Renaissance*, pp. 225–227; W. Liebenwien, *Studiolo: Die Entstehung eines Raumtyps und seine Entwicklung bis zum 1600* (Berlin: Mann, 1977); and Patrick Mauries, "Il teatro dell'errore," in *Il progetto domestico: La casa dell'uomo: Archetipi e prototipi*, ed. Georges Teyssot (Milan: Electa, 1986), pp. 52–55.

⁴³ Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 209.

⁴⁴ "Memoirs of a lineage, these albums (*ricordanze, ricordi*) helped to create an informed and personal appreciation of the family past, thus extending the private realm backward in time." De La Ronciere, "Tuscan Notables," p. 257.

increasingly transformed into a confirmation of the status of the individual rather than the family. When they started to become public, the representations literally constructed the private individual as a new cultural artifact with more influence over the very public world from which it appears to be withdrawn than those who simply occupy that world.⁴⁵ This new form of privacy was produced, and only then could it be in any way "occupied," when it was inscribed in the public domain.

Alberti's writings played a crucial role in this inscription, at once prescribing and exemplifying it. His dialogue on the family, for example, is at once a memoir of his own family and a prescription for private life which he claims resulted from him "withdrawing" for ninety days to write.⁴⁶ Throughout his texts, he repeatedly specifies the need for the writer to isolate himself from the public world by withdrawing into the house, and from the domestic world by withdrawing into the study: "they should close themselves up at home and keep away everything that is elegant, pleasurable, and admired, so as to confine themselves to knowledge of literature."⁴⁷ Detached from bodily pleasure, particularly the "noxious influence of Venus," the writer is free to "marry literature" in secret.

But even then, the writing that results from this secret romance is not simply produced within a private space. It is responsible for producing that very sense of privacy. The construction of private space as such cannot be separated from the construction of the ideology of privacy. The possibility of that space is inscribed into the written texts that circulate in public,

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⁴⁵ "The tension between the desire to withdraw from the crowd while at the same time maintaining control over the world is, probably symbolic of the absolute liberty made possible by commerce with books, hence of the possibility of complete self-mastery without constraint or supervision ... Thus there emerges a strange alliance between reading, that most private and hidden practice, and true effective power, power far more effective than that of public office." Robert Chartier, "The Practical Impact of Writing," in *A History of Private Life*, Vol. 3: *Passions of the Renaissance*, pp. 135–137.

⁴⁶ Anicio Bonucci, *Opere Volari di Leon Battista Alberti* (Florence: Tipografia Galileina, 1843), part 1, p. xciv, cited by Mark Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti: His Literary and Aesthetic Theories* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), p. 88.

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⁴⁷ Leon Battista Alberti, *De commodis litterarum atque incommodis*, cited in Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, p. 7.

whether or not such spaces exist. The new sense of privacy depends upon that inscription. The space is therefore as much the product of the texts as its condition of possibility. The new forms of writing both depend on, and assist in, the cultural construction of those spaces. They are literally part of the spaces.

The complicated history of this sense of privacy, leading up to its formal establishment in the nineteenth century, involves this kind of convoluted exchange between spatial and ideological transformations. The new spaces of everyday life cannot be understood as either the physical consequence of new forms of representation or their condition of possibility. Rather, they are themselves forms of representation. Each shift in the emergence of private space involves transformations of such systems (private correspondence, portraits, the bellcord, the diary, the corridor, the novel, the cabinet). The house is never a self-sufficient spatial device. It requires a multiplicity of systems which are not simply added to a physical form. Architectural discourse, the theory offered by Alberti, for example, is but one of these systems.

Place is not simply a mechanism for controlling sexuality. Rather, it is the control of sexuality by systems of representation that produces place. The study, like all spaces, is not simply entered. Rather, it is (re)produced. As such, the issue here is not simply the existence of studies in houses but the ideological construction of the study which is at once the construction of a gendered subjectivity that "occupies" it.

These systems can never be separated from what they represent. The ideological constructions which make available the building as a social agent are transformed by the very privacy they make possible. Alberti's discourse, for example, does more than define the ways in which architecture can veil sexuality. Sexuality is also privatized in his very discourse. Even where *Della Famiglia* explicitly addresses sex in order to transform it from feminine erotic play to masculine work, that is, to desexualize it by specifying the appropriate time, mood, and temperature for intercourse, the text becomes cryptic. In the face of the uncontrollable enigma of having to make public that which should be hidden precisely in order to hide it, he introduces a veil into his own writing, approaching sex as:

a topic which one might perhaps skip over on account of certain considerations. I shall, however, discuss this vital subject in so veiled and so compressed a manner that for anyone who does not like it it will be as if I had not spoken.⁴⁸

Enclosed by this way of speaking silently, sexuality is privatized from both the emerging intellectual discourse that at once defines and constitutes a new public realm and from the private household inscribed within that realm. The masculine self-control that the texts promote as a bounding of sexuality through the maintenance of order is exemplified by the structure of those very texts. They repress the traces of sexuality on their own surfaces. This repression is even greater in the text on architecture in which sexuality is not even named but has its space defined in a marginalized passage. The discourse remains outside the locked space it names. It literally locks that space. Desire only surfaces by way of prohibition. In this way, the text itself is able to assume the architectonic condition it prescribes, presenting itself as an orderly structure of proper places.⁴⁹ It uses the same language to describe its own structure as it uses to describe architecture.

This detachment of space from sexuality, such that space can be used to house sexuality and theories of sexuality can leave the house behind, is crucial to Alberti's claim that the capacity for a building to define place precedes representation. The sense of a physical space independent of representation is precisely an effect of veiled representational strategies turning on the question of sexuality. The arguments about sexuality which underwrite the explicit but apparently marginal passage on gender in Alberti's treatise which we have been following here can be traced throughout that treatise.

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⁴⁸ Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book II, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Even Alberti's choice to write his treatise on the family in the less ornate vernacular is a sign of this prohibition. His aesthetic treatises assume an architectonic structure by sustaining the very veiling of sexuality they prescribe.

III

Alberti's celebrated theory of harmony—every part in its “proper place”—for which he was canonized by the tradition, is no more than an elaboration of the beauty of domestic order, the discrete charm of domestication. Xenophon's claim that the look of a domestic space represents what it “husbands” sustains Alberti's promotion of architecture as a public articulation of difference which both embeds architecture in, and enables it to act as a privileged figure for, cultural life. This capacity to both maintain and represent social order cannot be separated from the general control of the feminine nor from the attempt to control specific women in cultural life. The aesthetic ideal with which architecture was elevated above the mechanical arts depends upon particular mechanisms of domestication. The aesthetic eye cannot be detached from the woman's confinement by the eye. The rhetoric of the “proper place” is that of husbandry. In order to assume cultural status by defining place, the elements of architecture must be themselves placed with “moderation.” The role of the architect is:

to consider whether each element has been well defined and allocated its proper place ... to take care that nothing is included except what is choice and well proven, and that everything fits together so well, in terms of dignity and grace, that were you to add, change, or take anything away, it would be to the detriment of the whole.⁵⁰

This is, after all, no more than the principle of economy. The propriety of place derives from the elimination of all excess.⁵¹ As in the house, excess is understood as sensuality, an improper pleasure to be regulated and displaced into the intellectual pleasure of the regulations themselves: the architect should “condemn unruly passion for building; each part should be appropriate and only in the end is pleasure provided for, while pleasure itself never fails to shun every excess.”⁵² The building itself is subjected to the economic regime it enforces. Just as the house is a mechanism for the

50 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book II, p. 37.

51 On the architectural chains binding family, proper, propriety, and property, see Catherine Ingraham, “The Faults of Architecture: Troping the Proper,” *Assemblage*, no. 7 (1988): 7–14.

52 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book I, p. 24.

domestication of women, it is itself understood as a domesticated woman. Just as the woman whose excessive sexuality is transformed into economic work can become a surrogate figure of control for the man, the house is itself feminine, and can only become a surveillance mechanism when its excesses have been controlled by the architect.

Alberti's text begins with its well-known division of architecture into “lineaments,” which derive from the mind, and “matter,” which derives from nature. The lineaments are the order of lines that prescribes the “appropriate place” for the building and all its parts. Formulated in the masculine mind of the architect, this geometric order controls the feminine body of the building that has been appropriated from Mother Nature. While describing architecture as the imitation of nature, Alberti argues that “the building is very like an animal” and uses the example of men who choose their wives on the basis of the shape of their bodies. The beautiful body, whether it be of a building or a woman, is “regulated” in a way that immediately “arouses,” “provokes,” and “excites” the reasoning faculty of the mind. It is man's “nature to desire the best and cling to it with pleasure.”⁵³ Such a beauty, which derives from the rules whose control of nature makes her “the spouse of the soul and of reason,” is “the main object of the art of building, and the source of her dignity, charm, authority and worth.”⁵⁴ The arousal here comes from the order that controls the sensuous surface. The source of her dignity is his law, the beauty he desires is his own.

Of course, the role of the text is to provide the rules with which the building can be controlled, regulations which define the place of every part and control every surface. In so doing, Alberti defines a place for architecture in the academy. The institution of architectural discourse is made possible by the subordination and control of the feminine that detaches it from the inferior bodily realm of the mechanical arts.

Arguing that architecture began with simple buildings that provided material shelter, in the form of roof and walls, before gradually entering the realm of “pleasure” through the successive

53 Ibid., Book IX, p. 302.

54 Ibid., Book IX, p. 303 (author's emphasis).

addition of decoration, the treatise begins with the construction of the basic building as a form of shelter, its siting, foundations, its division into rooms, materials, etc. It describes how to organize the materials in order to define secure space. The building elements which constitute the basic body of the building are then to be covered with a "skin" made up of "coats of plaster." He describes in detail the production of this skin. The last and thinnest "coat should gleam like marble: for this a finely crushed white stone is used instead of sand."⁵⁵ This white skin is a pure surface, a thin screen, like the white cloth Alberti describes earlier in the text through which water is passed because it leaves a mark if it is contaminated.⁵⁶ It is a mechanism of purification, a filter.⁵⁷ Its unmarked surface screens off the bodily condition of the body and yet reveals its formal order.

The feminine materiality of the building is given a masculine order and then masked off by a white skin. The skin effaces the transformation from feminine to masculine and maintains a division, a visible line, between structure and decoration as a gender division. This overt difference veils the fundamental ambivalence of the building's identity. The white surface both produces gender and masks the scene of that production, literally subordinating the feminine by drawing a line, placing the ornament just as the walls place the possessions in the house. The ornament becomes a possession of the structure, subject to its order. Like the woman in the house, it is given responsibility for sustaining the very structural order that restrains it.

Alberti argues that the body of the building is "constructed naked, and clothed later." After putting on its thin white layer, it is "dressed with ornament." The white skin divides the body from its clothes, isolating the representational system of ornamentation from the presence of the building. But precisely because ornament is representational, it is dangerous. The building can dress up in a way that leads the eye away from the inner order, producing disorder.....

55 Ibid., Book VI, p. 175.

56 Ibid., Book I, p. 14.

57 The purity of the whiteness can again be found in Alberti's account of the principles of hygiene associated with the founding of a city and the marking of the "line of the intended wall with a trail of powdered white earth, known as 'pure.'" Ibid., Book IV, p. 101.

der by dissimulating, like the improper decoration of an architectural model which has been

colored and lewdly dressed with the allurements of painting ... striving to attract and seduce the eye of the beholder, and to divert his attention from a proper examination of the parts to be considered ... the architect ... is one who desires his work to be judged not by deceptive appearances but according to certain calculated standards.⁵⁸

The threat of ornament is its sensuality, which distracts the proper eye. The need to appropriate architecture from the feminine domain of pleasure has its risks, the risk precisely of seduction. The deception of superficially "pleasing appearance" interferes with the truth of the "proper place." The risk of ornament is an impropriety in which the sensuality of the body confuses the mind that seeks to control it. As always, reason is threatened by the fantasized sexual mobility of the feminine.

These arguments reproduce those of *Della Famiglia* in which ornament is explicitly identified with sexuality. The woman's use of decoration and makeup is condemned because its dissimulation calls into question her chastity. It "excites numerous lustful men" until she inevitably "falls into real disgrace." In the intimacy of marriage, the husband cannot be deceived by makeup. Being on the inside, he can see through it. Privacy here, for the man, is access to inner secrets. Repeatedly arguing that outer appearances should be subordinated to inner truth, he argues that "your real adornment and your real beauty are found in your modesty and virtue."⁵⁹ The wife's beauty is that of moderation. Instead of wearing makeup, she should "just wash and keep clean with water alone."⁶⁰ Visible cleanliness becomes a mark of her inner cleanliness. The white surface of a building effects that same purification.

In this, Alberti is again closely following Xenophon, who condemns feminine makeup in favor of masculine transparency which discloses "our belongings just as they are, without boasting

58 Ibid., Book IV, p. 34.

59 Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 227.

60 Ibid.

of imaginary possessions or concealing any part of what we have, or by trying to trick you with an exaggerated account."⁶¹ The wife is treated as a possession to be exposed as much by her own surfaces as by those of the house. The principle of economy requires the subordination of exterior surfaces to inner purity: "For it is not through outward comeliness that the sum of things good and beautiful is increased in the world, but by the daily practice of the virtues."⁶² Even when the wife "was much enamelled with white lead, no doubt to enhance the natural whiteness of her skin," she is seen to be wearing a dissimulating mask as sexually provocative as the red rouge she added to it.⁶³ All disguise, of which the "painted counterfeits of womanhood" is the paradigm, is sexual. The beauty of a "human body undisguised" is opposed to the woman "painted like a fraudulent hussie." Xenophon's whole argument turns on economy as a form of resistance to the "despotic mistress" of desire whose pleasure is but a pain in disguise: "deceitful mistresses that pretend to be pleasures ... really pains concealed beneath a thin veneer of pleasures."⁶⁴ Economy is no more than the control of the veneer, the representational surface exposed to the eye. Gender in ancient Greece is independent of anatomy and is produced on the external surfaces of the body, which are closely monitored for signs of eye movement, grooming, shaving, posture, gait, etc.⁶⁵

This applies to the house itself, which must not be decorated. Indeed, when first arguing for the basic necessity for economy, Xenophon uses the "useless house" as his first example, comparing it to a house which does not have "everything neatly arranged

61 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 447.

62 Ibid., p. 233. "So human beings find the human body undisguised most delightful. Tricks like these may serve to gull outsiders, but people who live together are bound to be found out, if they try and deceive one another." Ibid., p. 246. Alberti refers to "ancient authors" on the question of makeup as a question of virtue, arguing that nothing is as important as a wife's chastity: "her purity has always far outweighed her beauty." *Della Famiglia*, Book III, p. 213.

63 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 244.

64 Ibid., p. 371.

65 See Maud W. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," in *Before Sexuality*, ed. David M. Halperin et al., p. 411.

in some place ... not just anywhere."⁶⁶ The capacity for a house to place things is related to its utility, its efficiency rather than its excess, its lack of ornamentation. It should "contain few elaborate decorations ... but the rooms are designed simply with the object of providing as convenient receptacles as possible for the things that are to fill them, and thus each room invited just what was suited to it."⁶⁷ In so doing, it acts as a resistance to the despotic queen of desire. The rule of the house is explicitly set up in opposition to the "rule of the passions" she enforces.

Symptomatically, when addressing architecture Alberti prohibits a "well-known harlot" from building a monument for her husband whereas a virtuous woman is allowed to. The woman can represent the man only when virtuous, immobile, nonexchangeable. The task of architectural theory becomes that of controlling ornament, restricting its mobility, domesticating it by defining its "proper place" (bondage to the ground, faithful representative of the presence of a building) in opposition to the impropriety of the prostitute (mobility, detachment from the ground, independence, exchangeability). The practices of ornamentation are regulated so that ornament represents and consolidates the order of the building it clothes, which is that of man. It is used to make that order visible. The domesticated woman is the mark of man, the material sign of an immaterial presence.

In fact, classical architectural theory dictates that the building should have the proportions of the body of a man, but the actual body that is being composed, the material being shaped, is a woman. Clothes maketh the man, but they are woman. Man is a cultural construction which emerges from the control of the feminine.

It is not that the building is being thought of as a body with the classical analogy. Rather, the body is thought of as a building. The discourses of space and sexuality cannot be separated. The Christian sexual morality formulated in the fourth century which Alberti is elaborating in spatial terms was itself originally spatial. The public spatial rituals of marriage were desexualized and to abstain from sexual play within marriage was understood to

66 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 383.

67 Ibid., p. 439.

"build a wall for the city."⁶⁸ Having closeted sex within the house, resistance to it is seen as architectural long before architectural discourse attempts to detach architecture from sexuality.

Such "metaphors" can be traced all the way up to the time Alberti was writing, when the body was itself thought of as a building. The first treatise on the interior of the body, which is to say, the treatise that gave the body an interior, written by Henri De Mondeville in the fourteenth century, argues that the body is a house, the house of the soul, which like any house can only be maintained as such by constant surveillance of its openings. The woman's body is seen as an inadequate enclosure because its boundaries are convoluted. While it is made of the same material as a man's body, it has been turned inside out.⁶⁹ Her house has been disordered, leaving its walls full of openings. Consequently, she must always occupy a second house, a building, to protect her soul.⁷⁰ Gradually this sense of vulnerability to the exterior was extended to all bodies which were then subjected to the kind of supervision traditionally given to the woman. The classical argument about her lack of self-control had been generalized.

The link between the treatment of the body as a building and the attempt to privatize bodies with buildings can be traced throughout the history of privacy. The body was increasingly sub-

68 Musonius Rufus, fr. 14, cited by Peter Brown, "Bodies and Minds: Sexuality and Renunciation in Early Christianity," in *Before Sexuality*, ed. David M. Halperin et al., p. 488. Brown also identifies this moment in which the body becomes the "temple of the holy spirit," the "sacrosanct dwelling place" housing the spirit, with the increased identification of the body with sexuality, such that "nudity, also, ceased to be a form of dress," and with the fixing of gender divisions which are literally spatialized, as in the "high wooden railing [that] now stood between the men and the women in the great church of Antioch." Ibid., p. 490.

69 The material of the body, considered as a house, is seen as feminine but its physiological structure is male. Maleness is the structuring of the body. See Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practices in the Later Middle Ages," p. 187. "Perhaps as early as the third or fourth century B.C.E. and certainly from the time of Galen, it was a medical commonplace that men are—anatomically—women turned inside out ... Masculinity in the ancient world was an achieved state, radically underdetermined by anatomical sex." Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender," p. 390.

70 "The surveillance of women concentrated upon three specific areas: the mouth, chastity, the threshold of the house. These three areas were frequently collapsed into each other." Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal

jected to the very same regimes of hygiene, order, discipline, and prohibition as buildings. The arguments for the propriety of white surfaces employed by Alberti, for example, became the basis of the arguments about the cleanliness (*propre*) of the body that played such an important role in the constitution of private space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The dominant figure for the body remained that of the house. But with the plague, the very walls of that house are seen as porous. As any kind of opening constituted the possibility of a medical "disorder," the monitoring of the body's multiplying openings demands a greater vigilance against infiltration. This necessitates social isolation achieved through the addition of a smooth, supplementary layer of clothing. White linen took over the role of the porous surface it protected. It literally became the body. Its cleanliness stood for the purification of the body. The surfaces it did not cover, the face and hands, were cleansed by being wiped with a white cloth and the exposed hair was covered with a white powder. The white surface was a critical device with which a detachment from the body, understood as a feminine surface, a discontinuous surface vulnerable to penetration, could be effected. In introducing a distinction between the body and its decoration, it literally produced the distinction between inside and outside as a cultural artifact. Gradually becoming more and more visible as private space was established, the white surface is bound into the concept of the interior. But it was only able to do so inasmuch as it was placed within a particular economy of vision:

But, above all, the white introduced depth to clothes, and testified to an "underneath." It was as if, through it, the surface of the skin was delegated to the surface of the clothes. What had been hidden now emerged. What was not seen became partially visible. The material that touched the skin became a witness, discrete or emphatic, on the borders of clothing. It revealed what clothes concealed. The white, in this case, signified a particular cleanliness, that of the inside. This additional attribute made it possible to invoke the intimate.⁷¹

.....
Territories: The Body Enclosed," in *Rewriting the Renaissance*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson et al., p. 126.

71 Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France Since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 62.

This architecture of vision was already in place in Alberti's text in which the status of the white wall depends upon "the keenest of the senses" with which the rational mind (which is to say, the masculine eye) is said to "immediately" comprehend the immaterial order within a material object. But the wall is not simply looked at, inspected by a detached eye. Its white surface actively assists the eye by erasing its own materiality, its texture, its color, its sensuality, as necessarily distracting forms of dirt. The smooth surface exposes the condition of both the structure behind its walls and the status of things in front of it; which is to say, both the status of the building and whatever is inside or outside it. It frames a view rather than simply submits to one, directing the eye through all the representational layers. A way of looking, a "witness," it is itself not simply seen. Neither material nor immaterial, it is meant to be seen through. By effacing itself before the eye it makes possible, it produces the effect of an eye detached from what it sees. The white surface is crucial to establishing the by now familiar sense of the building as an object available for appropriation by a detached eye that made architecture's claim for a spot in the liberal arts, and eventually its establishment as an academic discipline, possible. Its visuality liberated architecture from the feminine domain of material by enabling institutions to see through the materiality of buildings. It is the white surface, the thin white line between structure and decoration, that domesticates building in order to make a place for the discipline of architecture.

IV

But despite the fact that the discipline of architecture domesticates building by submitting it to the visual order of man, that discipline remains itself a woman, a woman giving pleasure:

uniting use with pleasure as well as honor ... architecture, if you think the matter over carefully, gives comfort and the greatest pleasure to mankind, to individual and community alike; nor does she rank last among the most honorable of the arts.⁷²

.....

72 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Prologue, p. 2.

The discipline of architecture, organized by man for man, is feminine.

This is consistent with Xenophon's description of the very art of "husbandry" as a woman: "the mother and nurse of all the other arts."⁷³ The art of the house is itself housed while preparing the other arts for the outside world. Like the wife it houses, it is shaped into a man. Indeed, it is based on the "stores of knowledge" preserved by nature, that good woman, the "sweet mistress who keeps open house for the stranger" but who "suffers not her gifts to be received effeminately."⁷⁴ The feminine knowledge of the art of order, housed within and by nature, must be appropriated in a masculine way. But while the public dignity of the other arts depends upon it, it must loyally remain "in the shadows."

Likewise for Alberti, architecture is bound to natural order and is explicitly the mother of the arts. The pleasure she gives is precisely not sexual. It is the repressive pleasure of the image of the modest wife, a representation of purity that is necessarily violently enforced. The iconographical figure of architecture in all the Renaissance treatises was the figure of a virtuous woman, literally, the "queen of virtues." The discipline is itself disciplined, given and confined to a place, literally domesticated in the academy.

The academy is a system of such places that is not only organized by a particular theory of vision but understands theory, the means by which the academy's own place is established, as itself a kind of vision. Architecture is subordinated by the very look that gives it a place. Exercising limited control over and from this place, it is able to theorize itself but only within certain limits. There are spaces it cannot enter and spaces it cannot leave. This institutional confinement of architecture is effected when the organizing theory of vision is identified with the other arts its mothers. Indeed, this theory is explicitly identified with Alberti's earlier text on painting, *De Pictura*, a handbook for students which introduced and codified the theory of perspective and identifies painting as "the master art" from which architecture is even said

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73 Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, p. 405.

74 Ibid., p. 219. As a good woman, nature maintains a "house" by refusing masks in favor of transparency. She "never plays tricks, but reveals frankly and truthfully what she can and what she cannot do ... she conceals nothing." Ibid., p. 283.

to have taken "architraves, bases, capitals, columns, facades and other similar things" such that "whatever beauty is found [in architecture] can be said to be born of painting."⁷⁵ Architecture is again subordinated to a prior text which presents a theory of vision that is seen to precede it. But it is a theory that cannot be separated from the overdetermined space of the study (or "studio") which detaches the theorist-father-husband-artist from the world precisely in order that he can master that world by viewing it through some kind of disciplinary frame, whether a painting, a theoretical manuscript, memoir, or account book (figures 2, 3, 4).

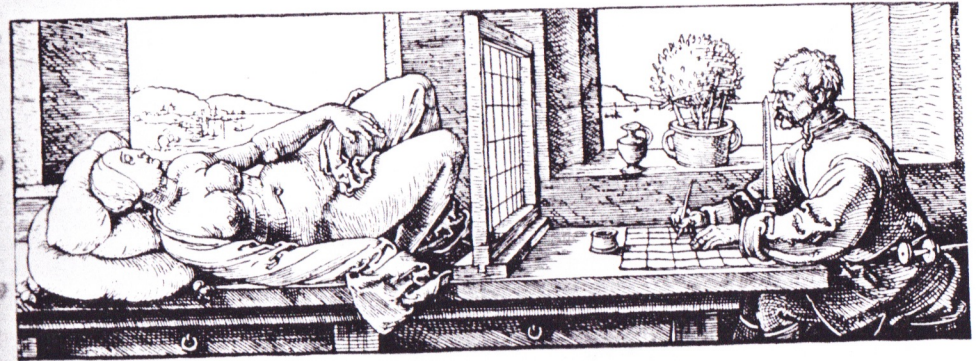
This economy of vision is of course written into the more recent institutions of art history, the philosophy of art, art criticism, the museum, and the gallery, and continues to locate architecture institutionally.⁷⁶ Architecture is understood as a kind of object to be looked at, inhabited by a viewer who is detached from it, inhabited precisely by being looked at, whether it be by the user, visitor, neighbor, critic, or reader of architectural publications.⁷⁷ This general model of visibility still dominates current critical, theoretical, and historical discourse even by those that claim to have abandoned it, usually in favor of the "political." The assumptions about visibility and architecture which are written into the construction of theory remain unexamined and usually return to tacitly organize theoretical work. But, of course, as contemporary feminist discourse has demonstrated, the political lives precisely within the socially constructed mechanisms of representation, of which vision is often the most privileged.

The particular economies of desire sustained by the instability

75 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 64. As D. R. Wright demonstrates, *De Pictura* is not a treatise on the theory of painting, as it is conventionally described, but a pedagogic manual for students based on Quintilian's course of instruction in Rhetoric. See "Alberti's *De Pictura*: Its Literary Structure and Purpose," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 47 (1984): 52-71.

76 Clearly this account of vision undergoes historical transformations which are necessarily institutional transformations, but the perspective model does not simply go away and architecture is implicated in each transformation.

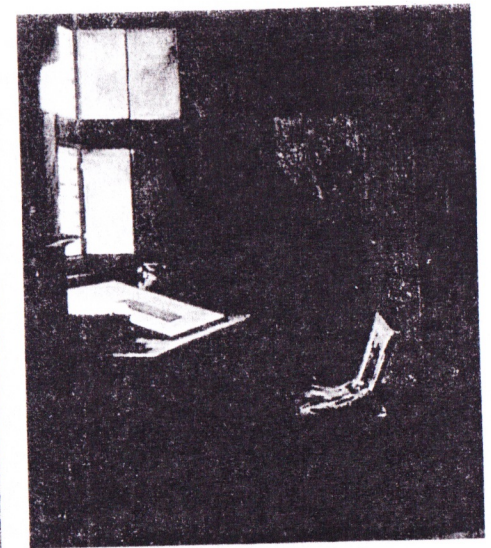
77 On the construction of architecture within the spaces of different systems of representation, see Beatriz Colomina, "L'esprit nouveau: Architecture and Publicité," in *Architecture/Production*, ed. Colomina (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), pp. 56-99.



2 Albrecht Durer, *Draftsman Drawing a Reclining Nude*, c. 1527.
A representation of Alberti's perspective apparatus.



3 Albrecht Durer, *Saint Jerome in His Study*, c. 1514. St. Jerome was the standard subject of Renaissance representations of the study.



4 L. Ch.A. Steinheil, *Durer's Studio*, undated (Louvre, Paris). The gendering space of perspective presupposes the space of the study.

of the visuality written into architectural discourse could clearly be analyzed in terms of the readings of the politics of the image that have been made in other discourses. The gaze that places the subject (or, rather, divides and displaces the subject) in a sexual economy can be identified with the view at, through, of, and from places that are inscribed within most institutional discourses. Certainly, as a scene, it seems all too familiar.

But here we must hesitate. The theory of vision that defines institutions like architecture cannot simply be equated with theories of subjectivity in a psychoanalytic sense. At the same time, it is not coincidental that so much of the respective scenes, and the language used to construct them, is common. Some kind of relationship operates here which can be explored in a way that neither simply imposes recent psychoanalytic accounts of visuality onto architectural discourse nor simply demonstrates that those accounts are somehow already embedded within that discourse. Rather, it involves engaging with the specific constructions of vision inscribed within the architectural tradition, and that constitute it as such, in some unresolvable process of multiple translation.

This spatialized vision can be found written into every discourse but occupies architectural discourse in a unique way. Covert aspects of the discourse are involved in the production of that vision while more overt aspects import it as a readymade that is available to all discourses. To read the question of visuality in architecture involves tracing the fine and convoluted lines that divide the veiled scene of the production of an account of vision from that of its appropriation. It is the geometry of this line that defines the institutional role of the discourse.

The question becomes, what precisely is that role? How, for example, is architecture inscribed in that common element between architectural and psychoanalytic discourse? The visuality inscribed within architectural discourse not only produces the architectural "object" as such but cannot simply be separated from it. Logics of vision depend on theories of the object sustained and culturally guaranteed by architectural discourse. Vision cannot be separated from the construction of space, which in turn cannot be separated from the constructions of gender upon which sexuality is mapped, usually violently.

Alberti's canonic text on perspective codified the experiments of the architect Brunelleschi which were themselves clearly architectural. An architectural sensibility is everywhere written into the argument. The theory emerges from a certain thinking of, which is to say construction of, architectural space, which is then applied back onto architecture when particular building forms are used as primary examples.⁷⁸ An architectural theory of the object underpins the theory of vision which is then applied to architecture in order to construct an account of painting before an overt theory of architecture is constructed.

This theory is bound to the ideology of the white surface which Alberti also appropriated from Brunelleschi's practice. And it is this construction of a look at a white surface which is written into each of the institutions that frame architecture in the following centuries, whether it is the white surfaces of classical statues that produce the art historical eye, the walls of the gallery space that sustain the aesthetic eye, the white coats of the student in the Beaux-Arts Academy, the white walls of "modern" architecture, or even the white surface of the pages on which the theoretical eye is produced.

The dominant economy of vision turns on the white surface ideologically protected by the convoluted lines drawn by the institution architecture. Before defining this economy in psychoanalytic terms, it is necessary to identify the nature of that protection by tracing the way architectural discourse has attempted to resist the displacement of that ideology.

V

The form of this resistance can be partially sketched here by looking at the response to the writing of the nineteenth-century architect Gottfried Semper, who attempted to displace the institutional location of architecture by displacing the theories of ornament and

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⁷⁸ Beyond being primarily concerned with a certain kind of space, such that particular architectural spaces constitute the primary examples, the concepts it employs are explicitly architectural. Perspective itself is understood as the "construction" of a "pyramid" that is framed by an "open window," etc.

vision sustained by the emerging institutions of art. His texts even describe the operations of the very institutional mechanisms that would be used to resist them.

Semper opposed the hegemonic tradition of the white surface, whether it be in the practice of white buildings that he argues was instigated by Brunelleschi (in whose work "we find for the first time an unpainted, naked architecture"⁷⁹) or in art history's dependence on the white surface, which he identifies with Winckelmann's canonic writing. But where the tradition following Brunelleschi made an "error" in its reconstruction of antiquity by "seeking Greek purity in the plain and unadorned,"⁸⁰ Winckelmann is seen to deliberately repress the evidence that was by then available: "The former masters had suppressed the truth with their error; he simply did not give truth its due."⁸¹ Art theory constructs itself by actively repressing the structural role of decoration.

Semper's argument was based on the emerging archaeological evidence that the ancient buildings of antiquity only appeared to be "naked" white stone because their layers of colored paint had been weathered off. He interpreted this in a way that undermined the status of the building's structure to that of a mere prop for the layer of paint, arguing that white marble was only used by the Greeks precisely because it was a better "base material" for painting. The marble is transformed from the traditional paradigm of authenticity and exposure of the truth into a "natural stucco," a smooth surface on which to paint. Its smoothness is no longer identified with the purity of its forms, but as the possibility for a certain texture. Architecture is no longer the decoration of a naked structure. The sense of the naked is only produced within the supplementary layer itself. The body of the building never becomes visible, even where it coincides with the decorative layer: the places "where the monument was supposed to appear white were by no means left bare, but were covered with a white paint."⁸² Difference is literally inscribed in the surface,

79 Gottfried Semper, "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity," in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 56.

80 Ibid., p. 54.

81 Ibid., p. 57.

82 Ibid., p. 59.

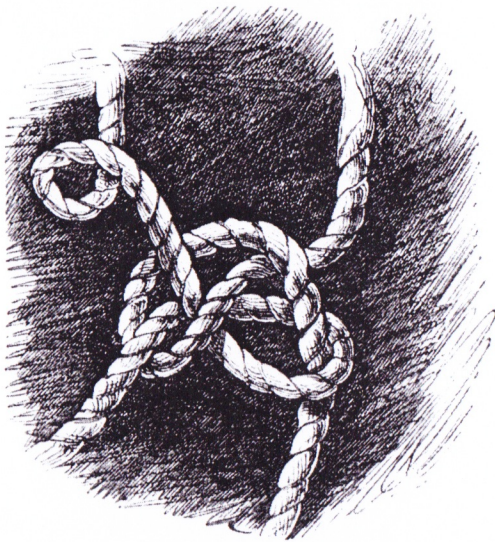
This reading involves a fundamental transformation of the account of the origin of architecture on which traditional architectural discourse bases itself. Architecture is no longer seen to begin with naked structures gradually dressed with ornament. Rather, it begins with ornament.

Building originates with the use of woven fabrics to define social space (figures 5, 6). Specifically, the space of domesticity. The textiles are not simply placed within space to define a certain interiority. Rather, they are the production of space itself. Weaving is used "as a means to make the 'home,' the inner life separated from the outer life, and as the formal creation of the idea of space."⁸³ Housing is an effect of decoration. It is not that the fabrics are arranged in a way that provides physical shelter. Rather, their textuality defines a space of exchange. This primordial definition of inside and, therefore, for the first time, outside, with textiles not only precedes the construction of solid walls but continues to organize the building when such construction begins. Solid structure follows, and is subordinate to, what appear to be merely its accessories.⁸⁴

The textile is a mask which dissimulates rather than represents the structure. The material wall is no more than a prop, a contingent piece of "scaffolding," "foreign" to the production of the building, merely a supporting player, playing the role of support, supporting precisely because it does not play. Architecture is located within the play of signs. Space is produced within language. As its origin is dissimulation, its essence is no longer construction but the masking of construction. Just as the institution of the family is made possible through the production of domestic space with a mask, the larger community is made possible

83 Gottfried Semper, "Style: The Textile Art," in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, p. 254.

84 "Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence and so on. Wherever the need for these secondary functions did not arise, the carpets remained the original means of separating space. Even where building solid walls became necessary, the latter were only the inner, invisible structure hidden behind the true and legitimate representatives of the wall, the colorful woven carpets." Gottfried Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture," in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, p. 104.

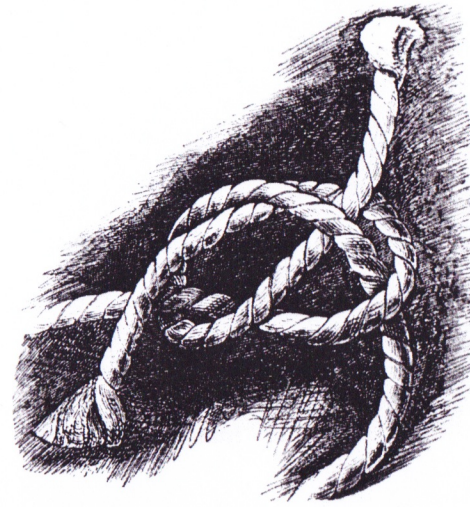


5 **Gottfried Semper**, Illustration in *Der Stil in der Technischen und Tektonischen Künsten oder Praktische Aesthetik*, 1860–63.

through the production of public space through masquerade. Public buildings, in the form of monumental architecture, are seen to derive from the fixing in one place of the once mobile “improvised scaffolding” on which hung the patterned fabrics and decorations of the festivals that defined social life. The space of the public is that of those signs. Architecture literally clothes the body politic.

Semper identifies the textile essence of architecture, the dissimulating fabric, the fabrication of architecture, with the clothing of the body. He draws on the identity between the German words for wall [*Wand*] and dress [*Gewand*] to establish the Principle of Dressing [*Bekleidung*] as the “true essence” of architecture. But architecture does not follow or resemble clothing. On the contrary, clothing follows architecture. The definition of domestic interiority precedes the definition of the interiority of the body.⁸⁵ The clothing of the individual follows the clothing of

85 “The art of dressing the body’s nakedness (if we do not count the ornamental painting of one’s own skin discussed above) is probably a later invention than the use of covering for encampments and spatial enclosures.” Semper, “Style: The Textile Art,” p. 254. “Tribes in an early stage of their development apply their budding artistic instinct to the braiding and weaving of mats and covers (even when they still go around completely naked).” Semper, “The Four Elements of Architecture,” p. 103.



6 **Gottfried Semper**, Illustration in *Der Stil in der Technischen und Tektonischen Künsten oder Praktische Aesthetik*, 1860–63.

the family. The body is only defined by being covered in the face of language, the surrogate skin of the building. The evolution of skin, the surface with which spatiality is produced, is the evolution of the social. The social subject, like the body with which it is associated, is a production of decorative surface. The idea of the individual can only emerge within the institutions of domesticity established by the construction of the textured surface that is the house. The idea of a speaker with an interior life only emerges within language. Interiority is not simply physical. It is a social effect marked on the newly constituted body of the individual. Culture does not precede its masks. It is no more than masking. The highest art form is not that which detaches itself from the primitive use of decorative masks but that which most successfully develops that practice by dissimulating even the mechanisms of dissimulation:

I think that the dressing and the mask are as old as human civilization ... The denial of reality, of material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous creation of man. Let us make forgotten the means that need be used for the desired artistic effect and not proclaim them too loudly, thus missing our part miserably. The untainted feeling led primitive man to the denial of reality in all early artistic endeavors; the great, true masters of art in

every field returned to it—only these men in times of high artistic development also *masked the material of the mask*.⁸⁶

Semper's whole argument turns on the status of a coat of paint. He produces a history of paint within which the addition of a coat of paint to the surface of building is the way in which the original textile tradition was maintained in the age of solid construction. In this way, architecture, the "mother art," gives birth to the art of painting. This simulated textile, the painted text, becomes at once the new social language, the contemporary system of communication, and the new means by which space is constructed. Architecture is literally in the layer of paint which sustains the masquerade in the face of the new solidity because it is "the subtlest, most bodiless coating. It was the most perfect means to do away with reality, for while it dressed the material, it was itself immaterial."⁸⁷

In so doing, he inverts the traditional architectonic, subordinating structure to decoration by demonstrating that the "false" accessories are the "true" essence of architecture. This inversion necessarily distorts the economy of vision based upon a certain figure of architecture in which what is seen on the outside articulates, and is subordinate to, some inner unseeable truth. The truth of architecture is now located in its visible outside. The inside is completely subordinated to that outside following the Greek "conviction ... that inner content should conform to outer beauty."⁸⁸ The inside is at most a construction of the surface. The seductions of the surface displace the formal proportions worshipped by the institutions of art, producing a visibility so entangled with a sensuality that the feel, tactility, and smell of the cladding materials become part of the essence of a building.⁸⁹ The "visible spatial enclosure," the surface texture that constitutes the

86 Semper, "Style: The Textile Art," p. 257.

87 Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil*, vol. 1, p. 445, cited by Henry Francis Mallgrave, "Gottfried Semper: Architecture and the Primitive Hut," *Reflections* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1985): 65.

88 Semper, "Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture," p. 55.

89 "To complete the image of an oriental residence one has to imagine the costly furnishings of gold-plated couches and chairs, divans, candelabras, all kinds of vases, carpets, and the fragrance of incense." Gottfried Semper, "Structural Elements of Assyrian-Chaldean Architecture," trans. Wolfgang Herrmann in *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture*

architecture of the mask, is produced by this convolution of vision and sensuality. Architecture no longer simply occupies the visual. Its sensuality is not screened off by a white surface in the name of the uncontaminated eye. Visuality becomes a construction of necessarily sensuous social transactions.

This disruption of vision subverts the institutional placement of architecture which turns on its division by the regime of distinctions that all turn on the originary distinction between essential object and inessential accessory, structure and decoration. Semper argues that not only is architecture subordinated by being detached from its accessories and identified with its materiality, but that it becomes the paradigm of materiality while the arts that emerged from it are elevated to high art. Hence its "organizing and at the same time subordinate role" in the "household of the arts."⁹⁰ Architecture, the mother of the arts, is domesticated. But in order to be subordinated within the high arts, it first has to be detached from, and elevated above, the crafts from which it developed. Like the wife, it is at once confined, purified of its sensuality and given limited authority. Purified of its sensuous basis in the crafts, it is given the lowest place in the arts. Or, more precisely, it is literally suspended in the gap between the low crafts and the high arts. But clearly this is a strategic location. Just as the whole patriarchal order is traditionally seen to depend on its enforcement within the limited space allocated the wife, architecture assumes responsibility for the very division that at once places and subordinates it. To expose the flaws in the traditional account of architecture would be to subvert the whole system. This is precisely Semper's objective.

His texts everywhere oppose this division between high and low art by systematically inverting it. Craft, for example, is traditionally subordinated as merely "applied" but, for Semper, the

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(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), p. 216. Semper cites Bruno Kaiser on speculative aesthetics: "If form, color, and quantity can only be properly appreciated after they have been sublimated in a test tube of categories, if the sensual no longer makes sense, if the body (as in this aesthetics) must first commit suicide to reveal its treasures—does this not deprive art of the basis for its independent existence?" Semper, "Style: Prolegomenon," p. 194.

90 Ibid., p. 183. Semper is referring to the title "Household of Art" that von Rumohr uses for his introduction in *Italianische Forschungen*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1827). See editorial note, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, p. 304.

crafts are not "applied" art. He elaborates on the first craft, weaving, which is neither applied to something (it precedes that on which it is propped) nor is it detached from something else (it does not precede the enclosure it establishes). Weaving simply originates as building.⁹¹

Semper bases his theory of architecture on the low decorative arts, explicitly understood as feminine arts, rather than the monumental high arts—plaiting, for example, being "one of the earliest and most useful symbols of the technical arts that architecture borrowed" from "the mother of the human race," who "probably chose it as a hair adornment."⁹² Indeed, in perfecting the techniques of plaiting appropriated by architecture, "hair stylists ... have thereby controlled the taste of whole centuries."⁹³ The institutions of art and their theories are preceded and exceeded by the feminine practices they subordinate:

Before this separation [of high and low art] our grandmothers were indeed not members of the academy of fine arts or album collectors or an audience for aesthetic lecturers, but they knew what to do when it came to designing an embroidery. There's the rub!⁹⁴

But this subordinated femininity is produced historically. The institutions do not simply appropriate the feminine domain they subordinate. When decoration originates, it is not even a domain, let alone feminine. Semper's account of the origin of decoration is not gendered. While the model for the historical transformation of decoration is the "primordial matriarch" of nature, she is not the source of its forms. Before the constitution of high institutions like "architecture," the adornment of the body followed that of building. The gender division only emerges with the institutions. Their gesture of appropriation is only possible when a certain gap has opened up, the gap between masculine and feminine, art and craft, form and color, structure and decoration ... The feminine term in each case is produced as such in the very moment of its subordination by the other term which both depends upon it and upon a veiling of that dependence.

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⁹¹ Semper, "Style: The Textile Art," p. 234. "It remains certain that the origin of building coincides with the beginning of textiles." Ibid., p. 254.

⁹² Ibid., p. 220.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 221.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 234.

Unsurprisingly, Semper's position was completely intolerable to the tradition. Significantly, the main attack on his arguments was launched by Franz Kugler, the first person to assume a chair in art history.⁹⁵ In 1835 Kugler responded with an elaborate defense of the white surface, arguing that the "effect" of Greek buildings was "produced by a rich white marble in its own natural brilliancy: and when the materials employed were of a baser description, by a coating of stucco, which in its outward appearance did not much differ from the marble."⁹⁶ He concludes that the buildings exhibited this whiteness in their "essentials," the "principle parts," with color only being added to the "subordinated details."⁹⁷ This colored "embellishment" acts in a way that is either in support of the basic order of the forms, making its lines more "visible to the eye," or it is isolated from that order with some kind of frame as an "accessorial" decoration.⁹⁸ Semper engaged directly and systematically with each of Kugler's arguments⁹⁹ but already by 1843 Karl Schnaase had announced that the debate was over and presented its conclusion in basically Kugler's terms.¹⁰⁰ Semper is extensively criticized and dismissed by the

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⁹⁵ According to Nicholas Pevsner, Kugler "is the first man whom we can call an art historian, and who was [also] Professor of the History of Art," in "An Un-English Activity? Reflections on Not Teaching Art History," *The Listener* 48 (1952): 715, cited in David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 8.
⁹⁶ Franz Kugler, "On the Polychromy of Greek Architecture," *Transactions of the Institute of British Architects of London Sessions* 1 (1835–1836): 73–79, 84.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 94. Kugler attempted to sustain the "fundamental maxim in the doctrine of Aesthetics, or the principles of taste, that the essential character of the architecture and plastic art of the Greeks was based singly and exclusively on form" (ibid., p. 7) rather than texture or color, employing a range of philological, etymological, and logical arguments to counter Semper's displacement of the aesthetic privilege of white, but concluding that "if a white marble temple is at once to be pronounced an ugly object, all we can say is, that it is a matter of taste." Ibid., p. 92.

⁹⁸ Even then, Kugler subdivides decoration itself into "ground color" and "ornamentation laid on it" (ibid., p. 96) in a way that reproduces at a smaller scale the same binary logic he uses to subordinate decoration itself.

⁹⁹ See particularly the arguments in "On the Study of Polychromy, and its Revival," *Museum of Classical Antiquities* 1 (1851), which are reproduced in Semper, "The Four Elements of Architecture," pp. 81–101.

¹⁰⁰ "The temples that were built of a noble material, especially of beautiful pentelic marble, appeared on the whole and in their essential parts

end of the nineteenth century and is largely effaced from the canon.

But this effacement takes a pathological form, whether within architectural discourse, as in Otto Wagner's *Modern Architecture*, or within art historical discourse, as in Alois Riegl's *Stilfragen*. In each case, an apparent defense of Semper is actually his displacement. Wagner presents his argument as an extension of Semper's original position, from which Semper is said to have "deviated." But the extension actually reverses Semper's central thesis.¹⁰¹ Likewise, Riegl protects Semper from disciples ("Semperians") that misread him, and then goes on to reproduce the same misreading and to counter Semper with the very arguments that have been appropriated from him.¹⁰² In each case, the relationship is

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as white. To be sure, color was applied to individual smaller members, but never out of mere propensity for variegation, always for the definite reason of allowing the architectural form or its plastic expression to stand out." Karl Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Alten*, vol. 2 (1843), cited in Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, introduction to *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, p. 16.

101 "Need, purpose, construction, and idealism are therefore the primitive germs of artistic life ... No less a person than Gottfried Semper first directed our attention to this truth (even if he unfortunately later deviated from it) ... EVERY ARCHITECTURAL FORM HAS ARISEN IN CONSTRUCTION AND HAS SUCCESSIVELY BECOME AN ART-FORM ... It is Semper's undisputed merit to have referred us to this postulate, to be sure in a somewhat exotic way, in his book *Der Stil*. Like Darwin, however, he lacked the courage to complete his theories from above and below and had to make do with a symbolism of construction, instead of naming construction itself as the primitive cell of architecture." Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica: Getty Center Publications, 1988), pp. 91-93.

102 "The new theory of the techno-material origin of the most ornamental and artistic forms is commonly derived from Gottfried Semper, which is, however, as unjust as identifying modern Darwinism with Darwin. ... But we must distinguish clearly between Semper and the Semperians ... Whereas Semper asserted that in considering the realization of an artistic form materials and techniques must be accounted for, the Semperians simplistically state that every artistic form is the product of material and technique ... This surely did not come about in the spirit of the teaching of Gottfried Semper, who would certainly not have wanted a purely mechanical and material imitative impulse to supplant the creative free will of the artist. But the confusion had already taken hold which made this concept appear as the precise idea of the great art historian Semper." Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen* (Berlin, 1893).

complex. Wagner's theory and practice exemplify both the Semperian weaving motif and the modern white wall, while Riegl sustains both the Semperian commitment to decoration and anti-Semperian arguments (like the teleological progression from haptic to optic perception and the privileging of representational art). Through such complex gestures, Semper is at once appropriated and rejected.

These ambivalent gestures are repeated in almost every subsequent reference to Semper, including those more recent texts that note the ways in which his arguments were misread at the turn of the century. Semper is repeatedly identified with the very positions he criticizes. His work is rarely cited in accounts of the formation of twentieth-century architecture as either a proto-modernist or a counterfigure. It is effectively detached from the tradition and subjected to detailed but relatively autonomous monographical research. The few references in such a monumental body of literature employ variations of the institutionalized misreadings.

The resistance to Semper is therefore symptomatic. It takes more the form of repression than rejection. His work is not so much written out of the institutional discourse as buried within it. It is swallowed, neither to be digested nor to be thrown up.

This convoluted form of resistance is required because of the particular structure of Semper's argument. The deepest threat it poses is precisely that it does not simply articulate the antithesis of the tradition it critiques. Rather it develops certain details of the tradition in a way that calls it into question. Because the institutions constitute themselves by repressing the evidence of surface texture in favor of the smooth white wall, that texture is inscribed into their subconscious formation. The thought of architecture as masquerade articulated by Semper is the unconscious of the tradition. Traces of his arguments can be found within the very texts he undermines.

VI

Such traces can be found in Alberti. Despite his rejection of all excess, Alberti is more critical of an unornamented building than an excessively ornamented one. Ornament is only forced to speak of the presence of order because there is some kind of absence in

the visual field. It is this visual absence of order that makes the inessential excess of ornament "necessary":

There is a natural excellence and perfection that stimulates the mind; it is immediately recognized if present, but if absent is even more desired. The eyes are by their nature greedy for beauty ... Indeed, they sometimes find it impossible to explain what it is that offends us, apart from the one fact that we have no means of satiating our excessive desire to gaze at the beautiful. In view of all this, surely it is our duty to strive with all enthusiasm ... to make what we build as ornate as possible.¹⁰³

What is being desired here which produces this pleasure and whose absence would be so painful, is precisely the regulation of ornament, the sense of order, which somehow is insufficient in the building itself. What is so attractive in the feminine is the advertised presence of the masculine. What the man is attracted to is his myth of himself.

This myth is a representation that can only be sustained by concealment. The necessity for such a concealment surfaces in Alberti's text in a small passage that defines ornament in a way that appears to contradict the overall thesis by approving of the use of ornament to mask rather than expose the building it is added to in order to reproduce the ideal beauty necessarily absent in a flawed world:

Had ornament been applied by painting and masking anything ugly, or by grooming and polishing the attractive, it would have had the effect of making the displeasing less offensive and the pleasing more delightful. If this is conceded, ornament may be defined as a form of auxiliary light and complement to beauty.¹⁰⁴

Order cannot simply be exposed. Rather, disorder is concealed, removed from the eye as "unsightly." The representation of exposure depends on a veil. Transparency is an effect of masking.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰³ Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book IX, p. 312.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., Book VI, p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ This argument can also be traced in Alberti's *De Pictura*, which presents itself as a thesis of transparency. Everywhere it insists that the outside surface must articulate the inner order. Arguing against cross-

This subtext can be traced throughout the treatise by drawing on Manfredo Tafuri and Mark Jarzombek's revisions of the canonic reading of Alberti which places *De re aedificadore* in the context of all of Alberti's other writing, from which it is usually detached. Alberti's *Momus*, for example, which was written during the same years as the architectural treatise, argues that all of the humanist ideals are just that, impossible ideals in the face of the realities of the Renaissance politics of dissimulation. Its central character—Momus—literally descends to teach men and women the arts of dissimulation as the arts of human survival.¹⁰⁶ In these terms, Alberti's texts can be understood as themselves a specific form of dissimulation which produces the figure of the writer, the authorial subject, as a cultural artifact by promoting themselves as the expression of a private individual who has withdrawn from the dissimulating worlds of politics and sexuality to the ideal detached space of the study. Privacy is a public construction. In the public space of masks, that which is beyond that world and hidden from it, the private space and subject, can only be produced with a mask, the mask of that which is beyond masking. But this mask can never be removed to expose that which it represents. The writing and writer are pure artifice, constructed, as Jarzombek

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 dressing, the text specifies that not only must the clothes represent the body they cover, but that the skin of the body must represent the structure beneath: "Before dressing a man we must first draw him nude, then we enfold him in draperies. So in painting the nude we place first his bones and muscles which we then cover with flesh so that it is not difficult to understand where each muscle is underneath." *On Painting*, p. 74. But this commitment to transparency is juxtaposed with one of veiling—a principle of "shame and modesty" is added to that of "truth" in order to cover over the body's unsightly condition, its flaws, and its sexual marks: "But always make use of shame and modesty. The parts of the body ugly to see and in the same way others which give little pleasure should be covered with drapery ... these flaws which they wished to leave unnoticed they 'corrected' as much as they could while still keeping a likeness. Thus I desire, as I have said, that modesty and truth should be used in every *historia*." Ibid., pp. 76–77.

¹⁰⁶ "What a splendid thing to know how to hide the most secret thoughts through the clever artifice of a painted and beguiling make-up." Leon Battista Alberti, *Momus*, cited in Manfredo Tafuri, "Discordant Harmony from Alberti to Zuccari," *Architectural Design* 49 (1979): 36.

suggests, by a "bizarre dance involving masking and counter-masking,"¹⁰⁷ as must be the spaces they "occupy."

Within this world of dissimulation, architecture is given a privileged role. It is implicated in the very economy of masks it appears to stand against. The architectural treatise which attempts to construct architecture as an effacement of masks that exposes an order which precedes representation is itself a mask which covertly prescribes a certain masking. Defining the ways in which architecture should be ordered, its own order, its architectonic appearance as a rationally subdivided treatise, is itself a mask. Its apparent unmasking of architecture, both by theorizing its essential condition and legislating against any masking practices, operates as the most sophisticated form of the mask described by Momus:

There is no feeling that one cannot cover with perfection under the appearance of honesty and innocence. Adapting our words, we will brilliantly attain our image, and whatever particular externality of our persona, in a manner that seems similar to those who are believed to be beautiful and moderate.¹⁰⁸

The image of aesthetic and ethical purism can cover anything. The treatise on architecture is produced in the newly reconstituted public sphere "as if society were functioning properly."¹⁰⁹ It presents the illusion of the very order that cannot be sustained. In similar terms, Tafuri has argued that this architecture of "as though" is "a 'theater' of rationality"¹¹⁰ inserted into the reality of a Renaissance world in which "dissimulation and masks are openly seen as weapons of action, resistance and survival in relations with power."¹¹¹ Such an insertion is understood as an ethical assertion (a mark of the individual's self control) which assumes a strict and active relation with political power.

107 Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, p. 4.

108 Momus, cited in Manfredo Tafuri, "Cives esse non licere: The Rome of Nicholas V and Leon Battista Alberti: Elements Towards a Historical Tradition," trans. Stephen Sartarelli, *Harvard Architectural Review* 6 (1987): 69.

109 Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, p. 156.

110 Tafuri, "Cives esse non licere," p. 71.

111 Ibid., p. 69. "It may be that for Alberti architecture is a willed and therefore artificial defense which is in opposition to a subjective and

Buildings, like texts, are inserted into the world of dissimulation to speak of an unattainable order beyond it. The representational system of ornament is made to speak only of that order that exceeds it. In speaking this "truth," the appropriate ornamentation literally assumes the title of "the orders." The building masquerades as order. Order itself becomes a mask. This mask of order uses figures of rationality to conceal the essential irrationality of both individuals and society. Rationality is literally added to the building as the representation of the effacement of representation. In this sense, architecture is precisely not about the transparency it advertises: "Alberti's aesthetic theory does not propose to look behind the mask (it is, after all, a mask in its own right)."¹¹² Writing, the author's signature, the architectural treatise, and the building become figures for that which is beyond the world within which they are placed, the masks of the unmasked, the clothing that produces nakedness.

It is in these terms that the white surface assumes its authority. The white stucco layer is a supplement that speaks about an inaccessible order, an absence of supplements beyond it. It must be remembered that Brunelleschi's practice, which "restored" the ancient tradition of the "naked" building with its unmediated surfaces of white marble that Alberti so closely followed, actually involved the addition of a white layer of stucco (and only occasionally a cladding of thin marble panels) to an inferior stone. It is an architecture of the white shirt rather than the clean body. The fabric that looks more like what it covers than what it covers: "If the final coat of pure plaster is rubbed carefully, it will shine like a mirror. And... will achieve a sheen superior to that of marble."¹¹³

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provisional desire for reason—a defense against the absurdity of existence ... Architecture appears as the imposition of an order known to be fallible, on a life which explodes in nightmarish forms." Tafuri, "Discordant Harmony from Alberti to Zuccari," p. 36.

112 Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, p. 108.

113 Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, Book VI, p. 176. Nevertheless, this art historical tradition founded itself on the privilege of the white block over the decorative surface that simulated it. Burckhardt, for example, begins Book II of his canonic text on Renaissance architecture (entitled "Decoration," which the text everywhere subordinates to "Architecture," the subject of Book I) by asserting: "Although every material has its own proper qualities, which cannot be replaced by surrogate materials, it is important to note that in Tuscany, the center of progress, white marble

But this strategy of masking the mask only becomes possible by elevating the status of the arts and the artist and simultaneously limiting it. Artists, and in particular the architect, can only assume the responsibility for the ideal order, representing it in a disorderly world, if they have no access to the nature of that representation. As Jarzombek argues, "They are the implementors of an elaborately conceived literary strategy which places them in a privileged position. But in order for them to function within the strategy they must not be aware of the artifice."¹¹⁴ Having identified the necessity of theory as the basis for the promotion of the arts, Alberti's texts go to some trouble to limit the artist's access to theory. The institution art is given authority on condition that it cannot inquire into the nature of that authority for fear that it will uncover the implausibility of some of its claims. It is this very innocence of the masquerade that makes possible the artist's mask of unmasking as a counterstrategy, such that "the unsuspecting artists, though maskless, serve as mask for the humanist."¹¹⁵

Practicing simulation openly and as it were naively, they [painters and architects] are not perceived as a threat ... and thus unknowingly import the contraband ethics. They are a Trojan horse left behind by the Albertian humanist—the ultimate counter-deception in a deceptive world.¹¹⁶

Of these naively dissimulating arts, architecture is, as Momus argues, the paradigm. The architect acts as the key agent of the establishment, sustaining a mechanism of political order by both representing the possibility of order itself and enforcing specific orders. In producing this image of order, architecture, like the good wife, is at once elevated and subordinated. It can only guarantee an order by being denied access to its secrets. Just as the wife

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was (and remained) the principal material. ... Only white marble invited continuous refinement of forms and was capable of competing with the marble artifacts of Antiquity. Other types of stone, terra-cotta (whether plain or glazed), stucco, bronze, precious metals, wood, and even decorated painting, all benefitted from the leadership of this incomparable material." Jacob Burckhardt, *The Architecture of the Italian Renaissance*, trans. James Palmers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 193.

¹¹⁴ Jarzombek, *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, p. 152.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 155.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

must wear the "ornament of silence,"¹¹⁷ the building must wear a white coat. The white wall is the mask of unmasking. Its ideological authority is bound to the production-domestication of woman, buildings, and the discipline responsible for them.

In this way, Semper's argument can be traced as a subtext of the historical traditions it critiques and those that would later efface it, whether it be Alberti's own text that apparently gave the space of perspective the transparency of an "open window," but turns on metaphors of weaving,¹¹⁸ or the formative texts of modern architecture that gave the white wall another kind of transparency by explicitly rejecting Semperian masquerade but implicitly redeploy his theory of architecture as clothing.¹¹⁹ The history of the white surface has to be taken in many directions at many levels and followed through its discontinuities in order to trace the role of sexuality in the construction of space.

VII

But the concern here is not to simply import contemporary theories of sexuality, like those of masquerade, which could clearly be employed to reread these architectural texts in a more nuanced way, but rather to point to a certain intersection between questions

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¹¹⁷ Francesco Barbaro, *Directions for Love and Marriage*, G3v., cited in Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 45.

¹¹⁸ In Alberti's text, the surfaces being looked at ("lines, like threads woven together in a cloth, make a plane," *On Painting*, p. 44)—which are identified with the planes of a building—and the mechanism of seeing ("The extrinsic rays, thus encircling the plane, one touching the other—enclose all the plane like the willow wands of a basketcase, and make, as is said, this visual pyramid," *ibid.*, p. 47) and the device for recording that vision ("a thin veil, finely woven ... this veil I place between the eye and the thing seen, so the visual pyramid penetrates through the thinness of the veil," *ibid.*, p. 68) are all woven.

¹¹⁹ These texts redefine the status of clothing in architecture rather than abandon clothing as such. Their particular defense of the white wall redeploys rather than rejects Semper's arguments to place architecture within the new fabrics, the new means of communication in the twentieth century: car, telegraph, radio, telephone, cinema, television, and computer. See Mark Wigley, "Philosophy After Architecture: Le Corbusier and the Emperor's New Paint," *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts*, no. 2 (1990): pp. 84–95.

of space and sexuality which can be exploited, more as a way of understanding the spatiality of theories of sexuality than as a way of reading space sexually. This would involve interrogating the concepts of space in discourses like psychoanalysis and identity theory in the moment of "applying" them. Rethinking them by exposing the tacit spatial arguments they depend on for their own rigor.

For example, while beginning to think of space as another kind of masquerade available for a psychoanalytic reading in which masquerade is understood as the instrument of identity formation, there is a need to trace the layers of overt and covert spatiality inscribed within the concept of masquerade, and to establish their strategic role. In this way, conceptualizing the masquerade of space can be used to rethink both architecture and masquerade and, therefore, identity. Such a reading would repeatedly pass back and forth between architectural discourse and psychoanalytic theory, stitching them together by passing through particular folds whose location can only be pointed to here.

In the Lacanian account, for example, in which gender is understood as the product of masquerade, desire is precisely the extent to which the gaze exceeds the visibility sustained by classical space. Lacan explicitly identifies that classical understanding of vision in terms of a surface suspended between two points "in space" with Alberti and the tradition of architectural treatises from Vitruvius through to Blondel.¹²⁰ He repeatedly identifies this "optical structuring of space," which eventually makes possible the idea of the Cartesian subject, as itself a "construction" which is "simply the mapping of space, not sight."¹²¹ It only deals with "vision in so far as it is situated in a space that is not in its essence the visual,"¹²² such that a blind person is capable of "reconstructing ... everything that vision yields to us of space."¹²³ The essence of the visual exceeds space and so cannot simply be "situated" or even "constructed." It is a product of the sensuous play of surface, a "play of light" rather than a "space of light," an intimate exchange in which the surface fills and overflows the eye, such that the viewer cannot be detached from the surface.

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¹²⁰ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 86.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹²² Ibid., p. 94.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 92.

Indeed, it is the surface that views and, in so doing, no longer simply occupies the preexisting space in which the architectural eye constructs it. Visibility is "not simply a constructed relation ... but something that is an impression, the shimmering of a surface that is not, in advance, situated for me in its distance."¹²⁴ The subject is to be found, if anywhere, within the surface itself, the mask located in space like a Semperian fabric hung on its scaffolding: "the being gives of himself, or receives from the other, something that is like a mask, a double, an envelope, a thrown-off skin, thrown off in order to cover the frame of a shield."¹²⁵ But while this surface is suspended in space, it does not simply have a front and back: "it is not in this dialectic between the surface and that which is beyond that things are suspended."¹²⁶ Lacan is not dealing with the traditional economy of representation in which the marked surface stands in the place of something else, a substitute for a spatially absent unity. Rather, the being is always already split. Its identity cannot be separated from the mask. The subject is not simply "behind" its mask nor in front of those of others. It can only be found "within" the nonplace of the mask itself. While the mask is "that beyond which there is the gaze," this "beyond," and the gaze it refers to, is not spatial. The mask inscribes the limit of space into space.

In this sense, space appears to be exceeded by subjectivity. The traditional gap between space and sexuality seems intact. Space appears as a frame occupied, and yet exceeded by, desire. It is no more than a prop. And yet subjectivity for Lacan is no more than the capacity to produce an effect of distance from the mask, which is to say, an effect of space:

Only the subject—the human subject, the subject of desire that is the essence of man—is not, unlike the animal, entirely caught up in this imaginary capture. He maps himself in it. How? In so far as he isolates the function of the screen and plays with it. Man, in effect, knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which there is the gaze.¹²⁷

The subjectivity that is beyond architectural space is precisely the capacity to define location, to map itself, by isolating itself

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¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 107.

from the mask in order to manipulate it. Lacan detaches the subject position from "real space" only to relocate it in another topography, that of "imaginary space."¹²⁸ The mask is suspended between these spatialities like a hinge. While Lacan keeps these spaces distinct, he explores the complications between them that the mask, understood as a kind of mirror, sustains, whereby the imaginary space not only inhabits the real space but displaces the objects within it into the imaginary.¹²⁹

The ongoing revision of psychoanalysis that explicitly examines the psychic topography of the mask, by rereading the extent to which its manipulation both effects, and is the effect of, the con-

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128 "What is the image in the mirror? The rays which return on to the mirror make us locate in an imaginary space the object which moreover is somewhere in reality. The real object isn't the object that you see in the mirror. So here there's a phenomenon of consciousness as such. ... I hope you'll consider consciousness to occur each time—and it occurs in the most unexpected and disparate places—there's a surface such that it can produce what is called an *image*. ... All sorts of things in the world behave like mirrors. All that's needed is that the conditions be such that to one point of a reality there should correspond an effect at another point, that a bi-univocal correspondence occurs between two points in real space. ... I say in real space—I'm going too fast. There are two cases—either the effects occur in real space, or else they occur in imaginary space." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvanna Tomaselli (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), pp. 46–49.

129 "For there to be an optics, for each point in real space, there must be one point and one corresponding point only in another space, which is the imaginary space ... Here too, the imaginary space and the real space fuse. Nonetheless they have to be conceived of as different ... On the other hand, there is in optics a set of phenomena which can be said to be altogether real since we are also guided by experience in this matter, but in which, nonetheless, subjectivity is implicated at every moment." Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan; Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953–1954*, trans. John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 77. He describes an experiment with a mirror to show how this "real image" can be "stitched onto" real space. Later, he elaborates the same experiment in terms of the "lure," the "false image," the mask which organizes sexuality: "the physical phenomenon of the real image, which can be produced by the spherical mirror, be seen in its place, be inserted into the world of real objects, be accommodated in it at the same time as real objects, even bringing to those real objects an imaginary disposition, namely by including, excluding, locating and completing them." *Ibid.*, p. 138.

struction of gender, has only tacitly engaged with its spatial prop. This leaves open the question of to what extent that prop is the possibility or product of the very economy of desire that appears to exceed it, given that Semperian space can no more be separated from the mask than Lacanian subjectivity.¹³⁰ One of the subtexts of contemporary accounts of masquerade is the possibility of folding psychic space back onto physical space.

Laura Mulvey's seminal essay on visual pleasure, for example, in examining one of the contemporary forms of wall painting—cinema—argues that the gaze is masculine inasmuch as it produces a subject position occupying three-dimensional "Renaissance space" and directing itself at two-dimensional surfaces of which the woman becomes one. In this sense, the feminine position is precisely not a position. The woman is not so much confined within the space as fetishistically flattened into its surfaces. She is the space rather than is in the space. The space is an illusion produced by cinematic conventions and the erasure of the physical space of the theater effected by turning out the lights. The viewer is constructed as a voyeur apparently detached from this illusion, looking into it, but looking precisely in order to see itself, as if in a mirror, occupying and controlling the space, which is to say, controlling its feminine surfaces.¹³¹ Such a spectator is at once in, and looking into, the space.

But if this "illusion of natural space" is made possible by the specific technology of the camera, what is the status of "natural"

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130 For a reading of the way architectural space produces rather than simply houses the subject, see Beatriz Colomina, "Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interior of Adolf Loos," *AA Files*, no. 20 (1990): 5–15: "Architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant" (p. 8).

131 "One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative; it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon, rather than verisimilitude, to the screen ... In contrast to the woman as icon, the active male figure (the ego ideal of the identification process) demands a three-dimensional space corresponding to that of the mirror recognition, in which the alienated subject internalized his own representation of his imaginary existence ... The male protagonist is free to command the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action." Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 12–13.

space before the lights are turned out? To what extent is it always already an illusion produced by specific technologies of representation that are not recognized as such in order to naturalize particular structures for specific ideological reasons?

In developing Mulvey's "alignment" of "spectatorial desire with a certain spatial configuration," Mary Ann Doane's account of masquerade argues that the gaze produces rather than simply occupies space.¹³² It is the confinement of femininity to the texture of a two-dimensional surface like that of the cinematic screen that produces masculine "distance." Confined to that surface, the artifact "woman" has no space. Unable to establish any distance, her resistance to the patriarchal "positioning" by the controlling gaze can only be established on that very surface through the counter-ruses of masquerade which destabilize gender: "the masquerade, in flaunting femininity, holds it at a distance. Womanliness is a mask which can be worn or removed."¹³³ The mechanisms of the production of gender can be exposed as such in order to make a space for woman. The "decorative layer" which produces the space that houses man can equally be manipulated to produce other spatialities, which is to say, other sexualities.

While this account seems limited to discrete representational systems, like those of cinema, photography, painting, makeup, and clothing, these systems cannot be detached from those of architecture. Surfaces are not simply assembled architectonically to form a three-dimensional interior space controlled by the subjectivity that occupies it. The gaze is not simply directed across a space to a surface that is detached from it. Rather, the feminine surface "orchestrates" the very gaze apparently directed at it to produce the effect of interior, the space of masculinity. This "illusory" psychic space cannot be separated from the physical space of the so-called viewer. The viewer's position is itself a surface effect. In this sense, the illusion produced by the representational surface appears in front of it rather than behind it. The surface is more mirror than window.

But even then, the sense of front and behind is its first effect. Masquerade operates by masking the absence of the very identity

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¹³² Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Screen* 23, no. 3/4 (1982): 74-87.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

it appears to mask. The illusion of a presence behind the representational mask is the illusion of space itself. It is the ruse of surface to appear to be framed off as a discrete representational system that simply occupies the space it actually produces. The effect of the mask is that space appears to precede representation and therefore assumes a specific ideological function. The sense that architectural space has to be understood in different terms than representational systems is precisely the effect of such systems. The subject, like the surface, does not simply occupy space. Rather, the image of occupiable space wraps itself around the subject position. It is a kind of clothing.

This Semperian sense of decoration as the production of space is clearly written into Luce Irigaray's identification of the structural role of the mask. It is the woman's confinement to the decorative surface that actually provides the "prop," the "infrastructural" role of space which "underwrites" the patriarchal order and denies her any subjectivity understood as the control of space.¹³⁴ In this sense, the concept of place presupposes the absence of a place for woman: "The maternal-feminine remains the place separated from 'her' place, deprived of 'his' place. She is or becomes the place of the other who cannot separate himself from her."¹³⁵ As she is the house for man she does not have one herself other than the one she constructs with her own decoration. Lacking a "proper place," "it would be necessary for her to re-envelope herself with herself"¹³⁶ by wearing another decorative layer, a supplementary mask that at once produces and houses her own identity through a blurring of the tactile and visual. The imposed mask of femininity

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¹³⁴ "But in fact that 'femininity' is a role, an image, a value imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity. The fact remains that this masquerade requires an effort on her part for which she is not compensated ... So women have to remain an 'infrastructure' unrecognized as such by our society and our culture. The use, circulation of their sexualized bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as 'subjects.'" Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 84.

¹³⁵ Luce Irigaray, *L'Ethique de la différence sexuelle* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1984), p. 18, cited in Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989), p. 174.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

can be reappropriated through masquerade to produce another spatiality, an "elsewhere."¹³⁷ But this "elsewhere" is not so much a place, as a displacement of place. The "distance" produced by the masquerade is necessarily improper and cannot be described with traditional theories of space.¹³⁸

But no matter how improper, the image of the occupation of this supplementary "house," like the political arguments "behind" most theories of masquerade, inasmuch as they presuppose, even if only "strategically," the agency of a subject behind the mask who can manipulate its surface, raises the dilemma of essentialism whose complexity cannot be respected here other than to note that the question of essentialism is no more than the question of interiority. Which is to say that identity theory is necessarily spatial theory.

To rethink identity spatially would involve interrogating the multiplicity of decorative surfaces that produce the sense of sexuality installed, along with the institutions of private space, in the nineteenth century. Sexuality in the age of psychoanalysis is the sexuality of the interior. Each of the new regimes of classification—perversion, fetishism, homosexuality, voyeurism, etc.—presuppose the institution of some kind of "closet" that masks them, a supplementary realm of withdrawal. Like Alberti's space off the bedroom, it is a fold in the surface that defines the overt realm of "normal" (which is to say, compulsorily hetero) sexuality. Sexu-

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¹³⁷ "There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one 'path,' the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it ... to make 'visible' by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means 'to unveil' the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere.*" Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 76.

¹³⁸ The discourse of this spatiality "would privilege the 'near' rather than the 'proper,' but a 'near' not (re)captured in the spatio-temporal economy of philosophical tradition ..." Ibid., p. 153. "For to put the accent back on space was—perhaps—to restore some chance for the sexual pleasure of the other—woman. But to seek once again to make a science of it amounts to bringing it back inside the logic of the subject. To giving an over-and-beyond back over to the same." Ibid., p. 98.

ality becomes a pathology either veiled from the consciousness of the private individual by the censorship of the "surface" that is the ego, or veiled from the public by the dissimulating surfaces of the house and all the other forms of clothing.¹³⁹ As masks cannot be separated from what they mask, each pathology is closeted differently.

The question of sexuality and space becomes that of the multiplicity of mechanisms of representation that establish the subtle architecture of these psychospatial closets and whose contemporary displacement by new mechanisms in the age of electronic reproduction marks the space of new sexualities. An interrogation of these mechanisms is required in order to reread the spatial arguments inscribed within psychoanalytic theory before that theory can be applied to architecture in a way that does not simply reproduce the abrupt separation of space and sexuality on which both institutional discourses currently appear to depend.

But this involves more than simply making space the proper object of discourse by addressing its strategic role "in" theories of sexuality. As Irigaray points out, "the fact that Freud took sexuality as the object of his discourse does not necessarily imply that he interpreted the role of sexualization in discourse itself, his own in particular."¹⁴⁰ Likewise, discourses are spatial mechanisms that construct sexuality before giving either sexuality or space a title. Space is itself closeted. The question must shift to the elusive architecture of the particular closets that are built into each discourse, but can only be addressed with the most oblique of gestures.

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¹³⁹ On the role of the architectural concept of surface in psychoanalytic theory, see Mark Wigley, "Theoretical Slippage: The Architecture of the Fetish," forthcoming in *Fetish, The Princeton Journal: Thematic Studies in Architecture* 4.

¹⁴⁰ Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 152.