

Flight from the Enchanters

Nearly all of architectural practice, and most of architectural teaching in the academies, is situated firmly beneath the sway of what could be generally called neo-liberal capitalist ideology. By promoting democracy publically but supporting plutocracy privately, the system of the so-called advanced nations continues to exercise a post-modern version of colonialism, but not the territorial colonialism of the 19c. but a “vertical” colonialism involving, as Althusser might put it, the interpellation of every individual, every act, every perception, to the extent that the sway of ideology can be resisted only by great effort. In this context, any project of awareness or awakening amounts, not to a “consciousness of reality” but rather an understanding of how consciousness itself has been constructed by the authoritarian Other so efficiently through the process of interpellation.

Architecture pedagogy and theory, which have been historically close, fall within the sway of ideology and are assigned to support it. Escape from this “consciousness” is, as Miguel Cervantes cast it in the 17c., a “flight from evil enchanters” who have magicked the world into a reality that is illusory but highly effective. Resistance must, within this illusion of consciousness, adopt the strategies of the negative, of fiction, of narratology. The “unconscious” does not offer an alternative world to consciousness, but its means of constructing subjectivity is a model and basis for any successful “flights from the Enchanter.”

Mladen Dolar has argued that the process of interpellation by ideology is not, as Althusser claimed, a “clean cut” subverting all of subjectivity.¹ There is a small remainder, and this remainder is co-extensive with the psychoanalytical project. For architecture theory and pedagogy, this project begins with the remainder as the basis for a “horizontal” mentality that is tangibly evident in the landscape and uses of architecture, space, and time — uses that defy the “zenithal arrogance” of the interpellative “view from above.” Literally, this is a “space *within* a space” and a “time *within* a time,” and so the themes and techniques of virtual space and virtual time come into play.

The main form of virtuality employed in architecture is set to the task of connecting unseen spaces with visible ones: rotating objects so that hidden sides can be seen, flying the viewer through architectural spaces so that every part of a project may be made visible. Contiguity employs laws of perspective and optics — the inheritance of Cartesian rationality — to construct a world that is dimensionally consistent and open to inspection. Two other significant forms of virtuality exist, primarily in relation to fictional literature: the virtuality of detachment, e.g. the independence of shadows and reflections apart from their sources (as a model of the idea of a soul that survives the mortal subject); and the virtuality of attachment “at a distance,” the contamination of reality by the dream, the coincidence of events widely separated in time and/or space, the parallel lives of twins, etc.

These alternative virtualities of detachment and attachment should not be viewed simply as techniques of fantasy fiction. They hold the key to the structure of the horizontality that Stefano Boeri has cited as the antidote to “zenithal arrogance” of ideology, and thus any escape that architecture theory and pedagogy intends to make from ideology involves a break from the virtuality of contiguity and a deployment of these two alternatives.²

Dolar describes the remainder of interpellation through the metaphor of falling in love, and cites its importance as a threat to the success of psychoanalytical treatment (i.e. if the analysand is not able to get past falling in love with the analyst, treatment collapses). The key is the structure of love itself. While love demands the full functionality of personal choice, it simultaneously engages the logic of the “forced choice” — a set of three (Hegelian) negations that “lock in” fate (“automaton”), using free choice (*tuchē*) to fuel the process. The two alternative virtualities give spatial and temporal body to these negations, which are the experiential aspect of Lacan’s idea of *extimacy* — the “intimate externality” that is the logic of the Thing, the Kantian-Hegelian “thing in itself,” the partiality of the “partial object,” able to survive the interval known as “between the two deaths.”

Anxiety is the key to the power ideology maintains by setting, as Todd McGowan has argued, pleasure (“Enjoy!”) as the mandate of neo-capitalism.³ This essay argues that anxiety can be viewed *only* through a Lucretian model that seemingly inverts the “normal” relations between motion and rest, seeing the stability of the three-dimensional world as an illusion maintained by the continual parallel movement of this world “through a void” created by the (ideological) separation of aim from goal, demand from desire. Because this separation is not easily understood outside of the Lacanian-Freudian field, and because extimacy is the primary logic behind the virtualities of detachment and attachment, and because the only escape from ideology is personal and psychoanalytical, a “psychoanalytical” understanding of the unconscious is mandatory for architecture theory and teaching.

Modeling horizontal realities within the zenithal mandates of ideology can be done, I would argue, *only* in the Lucretian flow model, where “clinamen” (swerve) creates mappable and constructable differences of velocity. New maps can be made that document the effects of the clinamen. Within the set of critical terms developed by Harold Bloom to “map” anxiety of poets, these maps can be used to construct an “eccentric atlas” to replace the ideological atlas of neo-capitalism.⁴ Bloom’s terms map precisely over Dolar’s account of the “stages” of ideology and recovery of the psychoanalytical subject. *Demon* accounts for both the interpellation of ideology (eclipse of the subject) as well as escape through identification with *eros*, whose function in psychoanalysis draws from models developed by Plato and Apuleius (“Cupid and Psyche”). *Clinamen* and *tessera* describe the methodology of halves that is evident in the virtuality of detachment and the *mi-dire* employed by Lacan to understand the function of the Symbolic in relation to the Real. *Askesis*, detachment, is the project of escape; but it draws from historic precedents of withdrawal and contraction: monasteries, pilgrimage sites, battlefields, travel landscapes. *Kenosis*, a form of “knowledge by halves,” defines itself as an *apophrades*, a return of the “dead” to their former abode — the impossible/Real of the uncanny links

between life and death, and in effect a Rosetta stone translating the language of the unconscious as a communication of the dead.

This is not a project of obscure references and technical terms. Rather, as Bloom's terms reveal, awareness of culture's natural susceptibility to ideology has been long recognized and accurately described. Its antidotes have been exceptionally consistent: *eros*. The spaces and times of the "escape route" have been planned and mapped, using the virtualities of detachment and attachment, since at least the fifth century b.c.e.⁵ This is not a "minority report"! But, because ideology is thorough in its imposition of a "regime of the normal" and management of anxiety to support its illusions, any "escape" seems both futile and intellectually/technically impossible.

Poetry, true poetry (*poiesis*) says otherwise; and this *poiesis* is about the virtuality of the unconscious.

1 Mladen Dolar, "Beyond Interpellation," *Qui Parle* 6, 2 (Spring/Summer 1993): 75–96.

2 Stefano Boeri, *L'anticittà* (Roma: Laterza, 2011).

3 Todd McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction?: Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

4 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence; A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

5 Elsewhere I have argued that the traditions connecting extimacy and *eros* derive from shamanistic traditions, especially those that leaked into Greek culture *via* the cults of Apollo and Asklepius. Paul Friedländer has documented the subtle program of *eros* woven into Plato's philosophy through Socrates' as a dramatic figure. Paul Friedländer, *Plato*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton: Princeton University, 1973). It is important to go beyond Friedländer to append the lore of extimacy implicit in demon and connect this with dramatic and cultural practices.