ISSUES

IN ARCHITECTURE ART AND DESIGN

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ISSUES
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CONTENTS

On The Logic of Encampment

Sepulchrorum ritu in perpetuum Clasis [1]

Amir H. Ameri

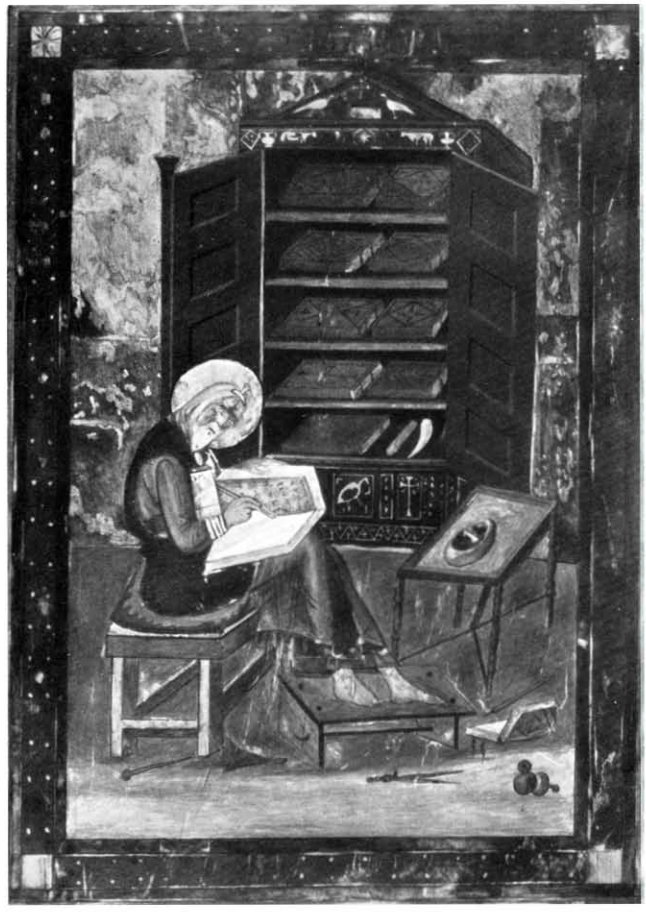


Fig. 1 - 'Ezra writing the law', Frontispiece to the codex Amiatinus. Sixth Century A.D.

What I wish to explore in this paper is the link between the formal and spatial properties of the library as a building-type and the ideological demands of the cultural institution it serves, i.e., the link between space, form, and ideology. The premise guiding this exploration is that architecture - paraphrasing Claude Levi-Strauss - is not only good to live in but also good to think with. This is to say that edifices, intended or not, are ideological constructs, that there is a direct, historic link between the specific formal and spatial properties of our various building-types (museums, libraries, theatres, schools, prisons, etc.) and the specific ideological demands of the cultural institutions they each serve. [2]

To illustrate this link, I will begin with an overview of the history of the library as a building type. In time, I will broaden the scope of the investigation to reflect on the modern university campus, where the library has occupied the conceptual, if not the literal focal point, since the inception of the modern campus in the late 18th century.

I hope to demonstrate that the logic of encampment that has seen to the formation of the modern campus is not fundamentally different from the logic that sees to the encampment of the book (writing) within the library at the conceptual centre of the campus. Furthermore, I hope to point out that the logic at work constitutes a formal and spatial reaction to the inherent supplemental and paradoxical character of each subject matter: writing in the case of the library and education in the case of the campus.

"There is a small painting by Antonello da Messina which," Michael Brawne in introduction to "Libraries, Architecture and Equipment," tells us: "shows St. Jerome in his study; the Saint is sitting in an armchair in front of a sloping desk surrounded on two sides by book shelves" (fig. 2). [3] The desk and the shelves are part of a wooden structure raised three steps off the floor of a great vaulted Gothic hall that overlooks an anonymous Italian landscape of hills and buildings. In this picture, the author writes, "we have an accurate and brilliant portrayal of the characteristics most needed if there is to be a successful communication between the accumulated

store of knowledge and the reader." [4] Here, condensed into a single picture, we have a summation of "the problems and the solutions" that are unique to the library as a building type. [5]

Fig. 2 - St. Jerome in his study, Antonello da Messina (c. 1430-79).

A primary purpose of the library is, the author contends, "to aid the communication between the book and its reader," i.e., to give the reader access to the accumulated store of knowledge, expressed in written form, placed within the protective cover of the book, held well within the bounds of the library. To create a library, the author argues, it is necessary to manipulate, as the painter has done, "the furniture, enclosure, space, light, and outlook," to create "an individual and particular space delineated and in some measure separated from the greater space beyond." A successful library allows the reader to make not only "a place for himself," but at the same time "detach himself," as Saint Jerome has done, from an inhospitable ground that is in turn clearly delineated and separated from the greater landscape in the background.

This prerequisite detachment, it is important to note, is augmented in this picture by a heightened sense of transition from the anonymous landscape in the background, past a set of doors whose absence from the picture heightens both the perception of separation and processional transition, through a vaulted arcade to the right, up a flight of steps, from a patterned mosaic floor onto a plain wooden platform, into an enclosing chair, within reach of the books, kept well within the delineated boundaries of this individual and particular space, in shelves.

Therefore, what is required of a library, the constitutional formal gesture, as well as the primary condition of the library's success is, as the author aptly points out, a clear processional organization and transition to "an individual and particular space" delineated and detached from its place, in that perspicuous manner centre stands detached from the periphery, foreground from the background, inside from outside, wood from stone, open from closed, light from dark, upper from lower, etc.

The library, we may conclude from this account, is analogous to a thick frame that one must traverse from its fortified outer edges through the sanctified inner borders that define and protect "an individual and particular space." What is framed, the object of this ritual frame-up, it is important to keep in mind, is the book or rather what the book itself keeps well within its own thick frame: Writing. The difference between the library and

the book is, in a manner, none. Each sees to the repetition of the other as same: a delineated and detached space keeping the written word in place.

Why, we may ask, should these particular, if not peculiar, processional and formal characteristics be required of a building whose primary purpose is to hold books? Why must this elaborate ritual of detachment and separation be put in place "to aid the communication between the book and its reader?"

We find a potential answer, interestingly, though not peculiarly, in John Ruskin's discussion of ornamentation, as it appears in the Seven Lamps of Architecture of 1849. [6] In an attempt to distinguish between proper and improper ornamentation for architecture, Ruskin argues that there are certain "false forms of decoration which are most dangerous in our modern architecture as being legal and accepted." He feels compelled to warn against these dangerous and false forms of decoration "rather for the barren satisfaction of bearing witness against them, than with hope of inducing any serious convictions to their prejudice."[7] One such hopelessly dangerous form of decoration is the motto. Ruskin writes:

> ... If any one part of heraldic decoration be worse than another, it is the motto; since, of all things unlike nature, the forms of letters are, perhaps, the most so.... All letters are, therefore, to be considered as frightful things, and to be endured only upon occasion; that is to say, in places where the sense of the inscription is of more importance than external ornament. Inscriptions in churches, in rooms, and on pictures, are often desirable, but they are not to be considered as architectural or pictorial ornaments: they are on the contrary, obstinate offences to the eye, not to be suffered except when their intellectual office introduces them. Place them, therefore, where they will be read, and there only; and let them be plainly written, and not turned upside down, nor wrong end first. It is an ill sacrifice to beauty to make that illegible whose only merit is in its sense. [8]

As frightful as letters may appear to Ruskin, he can suffer their presence, for the sake of their sense, so long as they are *placed* and in that place, bereft of any aesthetic appeal, they are clearly seen as obstinate offences to the eye, introduced solely for the sake of their sense. Letters become frightful and dangerous, on the other hand, when they are not in place, i.e., in a place where the sense of the inscription is of greater importance than external ornament. When the materia' form of the inscription is allowed to assume any role but that of a transparent conveyer of sense, when with a "dash" or a "tail", turned "upside down or wrong end first," the inscription is allowed to assume a decorative role, it turns at once frightful and dangerous. [9] This danger against which Ruskin so emphatically warns is, of course, the danger of losing the primacy of the sense or the signified to the form of the signifier, i.e., the danger of becoming conscious of the materiality of the signifier, of reading the form and not the sense. The danger is the letter not standing apart and being transparent and subservient to its sense, but assuming aesthetic appeal and merging with its background as a form of decoration at the expense of its sense.

Fig. 3 - Adam And Eve. Albrecht Dürer.

To obviate this frightful danger, Ruskin asks us to always place writing in a place where, plainly written, it "will be read, and there only." This singular place, Ruskin tells us, is not on a "scroll" or a "riband," but "a tablet or book, or plain roll of paper."[10] The difference between an "honest and rational" tablet or book or plain roll of paper and "the riband, or the flying scroll" is that neither of the former three is "considered as an ornament, and the riband, or flying scroll is."[11] Whereas "the tablet, as in Albert Durer's Adam and Eve, is introduced for the sake of the writing, understood and allowed as an ugly but necessary interruption," the riband, or the flying scroll is not an interruption, but a form of decoration that readily merges into its background (fig. 3).

What Ruskin hopes to prevent by the placement of the inscription on a tablet or a book is the loss of its detachment from its ground or background. The proper place of writing is a place marked by an "interruption," i.e., in Michael Brawne's term, "an individual and particular space delineated and in some measure separated from the greater space beyond." So long as inscription is placed where its "only merit is in its sense," so long as we do not focus on its materiality or see any merit in it other than its sense, so long as it is placed on a ground which Ruskin can readily detach from the background, it can remain. When it is not part of the architecture, when it clearly appears as an "interruption" and an addition, the inscription is acceptable. Else, it is a frightful and dangerous form, in the least, to those particularly concerned with the aesthetic performance of forms, e.g., Ruskin.

Why writing should be a frightful and dangerous form outside its particular place, is a question that we shall have to address later. For now we should note that although Messina's picture was not construed in response to Ruskin's demand, the inward layering of space, leading to a well delineated and detached centre where the book is safely kept in place, clearly meets it. Michael Brawne's emphasis on delineation and separation as the inaugurating formal gestures in every successful library does as well. This is in part because the same logic is at work in each of these formulations, as well as in the formation of the library as a building-type. This logic is what I earlier referred to as the logic of encampment, whose manifestations can be as diverse as the medieval book-press and the modern stack-system library.

By the logic of encampment, going back to the military root of the word camp and campus, I mean the demarcation of a place on a ground that defies a sense of place. I mean the imposition of a protective boundary - literal or conceptual - on an otherwise undifferentiated ground with the intent to put in place of this non-place, a confined, ordered, and controlled interiority as distinguished and opposed to what lies beyond the demarcated boundary. Crucial to this placement are a heightened sense of transition from the exterior to the interior and a clear perception of confinement, order, and control within, i.e., the two processional and spatial characteristics of the library as a type, aforementioned.

Fig. 4 - Book-Press in the Church of Obazine, Central France.

The medieval book-cupboard or press is a simple, though not a simplistic example of the logic of encampment at work in the formation of the library as a type (fig. 4). Here the book, as we know it, is not given to any place, but confined to a well delineated, separated, and defined place. Transition and access to this particular place are subject to a simple, though effective ritual of retrieval and return, i.e., of locks and doors that need be opened and closed. It is interesting to note that writing here is endured only upon occasion of reaching its sense or endowing it with sense, as in the case of Ezra, the inscriber of law, depicted in the frontispiece to the Codex Amiatinus, dating back to 6th century A.D. Else, writing remains in place, hidden from the gaze that may otherwise be subject to, insofar as Ruskin is concerned, its fright and danger.

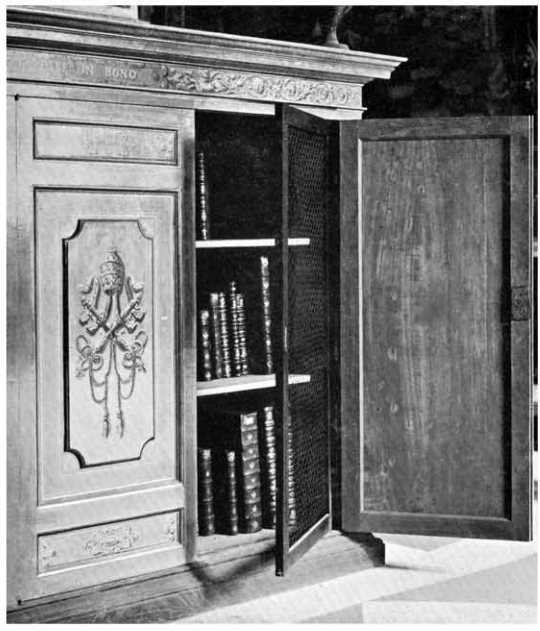


Fig. 5 - Book-Press, Vatican Library.

The practice of keeping books in locked cupboards or presses was to continue, as evidenced by Domenico Fontana's Vatican Library, well into the sixteenth century, and to an extent, beyond (figs. 5 & 6). The book-shelf, as we know it, is, in a manner, an extension of the logic that informs the medieval book-press. It too is a delineated and defined place, that though open to the gaze, nevertheless, retains the book in place, by affording it a particular place.

In the above example as well as in the following genealogical overview of the library as a type, my intent is not to diminish the value of shelter and protection, that are clearly the overt reasons for the formation of the library as a type, but to focus on the consequences of each particular solution adapted to shelter and protect, as well as, in Michael Brawne's term, "to aid the communication between the reader and the book." I am, in other words, concerned with the surplus value of the shelter and the protection afforded the book, with the communication between the reader and the book in mind.

Fig. 6 - Vatican Library.

The post-medieval chained book, lectern and later stall-system library is a literal, if not an exaggerated example of the logic of encampment at work in the formation of the library as a type. In this particular example, best represented by Leiden University Library (Leiden, 16th Century,) and Michelangelo's Laurentian Library (Florence, 1523-71), the shell of the medieval book-press assumes human proportion, as the shelves of the old press take on the form of lecterns arranged in rows on two sides of a central aisle (fig. 7). The books are no longer locked away, but being exposed to the gaze, they are now chained in place, less, it appears, they venture out of their new delineated and detached place (figs. 8 & 9).

Should these chains appear to be a simple safeguard against theft, reflecting the high material value of the book at the time, it is important to admittedly cumbersome and to an extent self-defeating practice continued well into the 18th century (fig. 10). [12] This is nearly three hundred years after the invention of the printing press that radically diminished the material value of the book. The perceived value of the chain, in other words, may

well have exceeded the protection it afforded the book against theft. The chain not only kept the book in place, but it also literally tied the book to its new, though equally "delineated" and "particular" place.

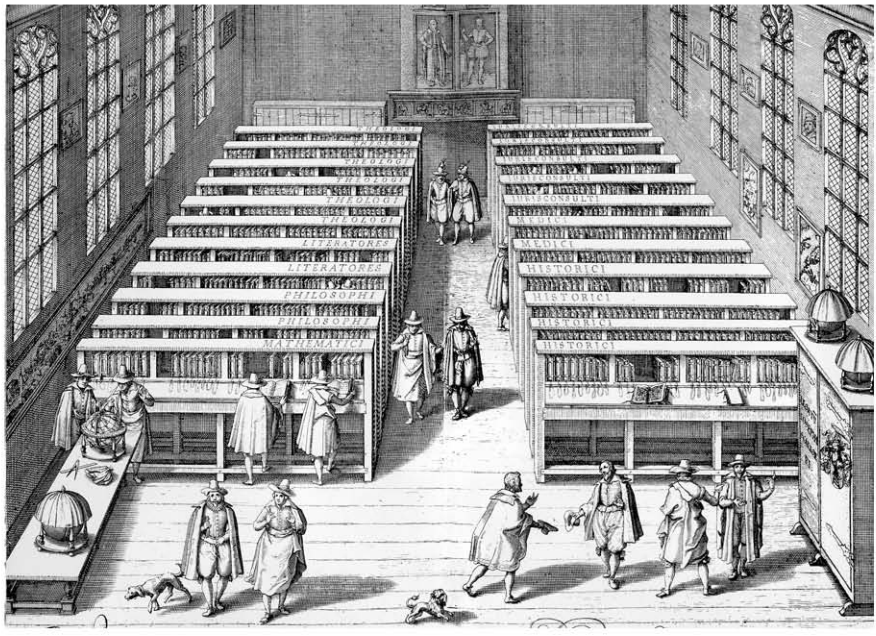


Fig. 7 - Leiden University, Library.

As the shell of the medieval book-press assumes human proportion in the post-medieval library, the doors and the locks of the old press also assume a new spatial dimension. They give way to a new heightened sense of procession and transition to the world of books. A telling example is the Ricetto of the Laurentian Library (fig. 12). The sole purpose of this tense and complex space is to detach the particularized place of the books behind from its greater monastic context.

Entering below what appears to be the floor line, articulated by string courses and recessed columns, one is confronted with a monumental staircase whose highly articulated form offers as much resistance to transition, as it gives access to the reading room from which it cascades down into the vestibule. The drama of delineation, separation, and processional transition

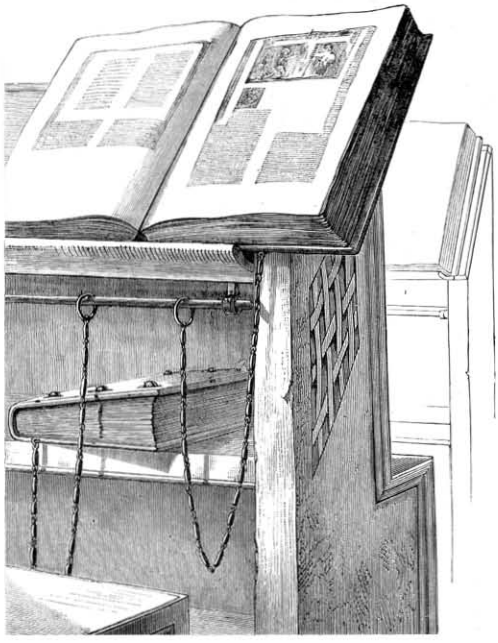


Fig. 8 - Biblioteca Malatestiana, Cesena.

Fig. 9 - Laurentian Library, Michelangelo, Florence.

can hardly be given to greater exaggeration, and for that matter greater economy of space and form, than it is here. The processional experience from the monastic context to the reading room is analogous to an apprehensive leap over a void separating two mutually exclusive worlds. One enters this tense and contradictory space only to depart without ever having

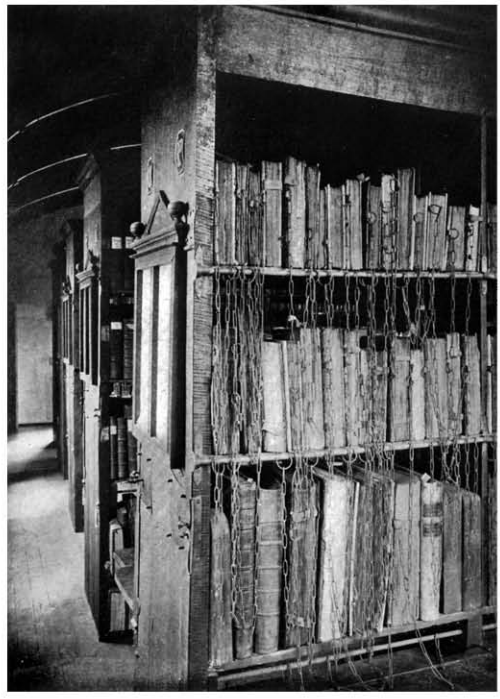


Fig. 10 - Chapter Library, Hereford.

had a chance to occupy it. The staircase that leads to the upper level, also leads out of the vestibule to a space that cannot be any different in articulation (fig. 11). Here, in the resting place of the book - having had to earn the privilege of access - order, and clarity prevail in glaring contrast to the slithery vestibule behind. As opposed to the preceding contradictory movements of the receding columns and the projecting aediculea, in competition with the overlapping upper thrust of the vestibule and the lateral movement of the staircase, here all is resolved and in place, well within a highly articulated frame. As compared to Michelangelo's library, Messina's delineation and articulation of Saint Jerome's reading room may well appear subdued, if not anticlimactic. Both are, however, equally effective.

The heightened sense of transition to the world of books, with an emphasis on a clear perceptual and experiential separation, in place of the literal separation of the medieval press, was to remain a requisite part of the library as a type in each of its future modifications.[13] The bureaucratic and technological apparatus overseeing access to the stacks of the modern library is, in a manner, a modern supplement to this experiential separation.

Fig. 11 - Laurentian Library, Michelangelo, Florence.

In the next phase of its development, the reading room of the post-medieval library became the subject of greater subdivision as the lecterns of the early phase were replaced by book stalls (fig. 13). Adding another layer of definition, delineation, and separation to the existing layers, the greater interior space of the reading room was divided into smaller, more individualized spaces. The reader is now literally surrounded by walls of books, often in close, if not overwhelming proximity. The books, still in chain, are now not only in place, but they also constitute the boundaries that define their individualized and particular place. We have here, in a manner, a cross between Messina's reading room and Michelangelo's library, all with the greater good of communication between the reader and the book in mind.

Although from the stall-system to the 'Saal-System' libraries of the 18th and 19th centuries, with their impregnated walls of books en masse, we witness at once a simple extension and a major transformation of the post-medieval book-stall library, the informing logic remains fundamentally the same. In the 'Saal-System' library, the books, withdrawn from the middle to the inner edges of the reading room, and in the process having shed the chains that literally tied them to their place in the previous example,

Fig. 12: Laurentian Library, Michelangelo, Florence.

become an integral part of the frame that delineates and defines their place (fig. 14). The chains are, to an extent, no longer necessary, as the books are now well entombed within their own protective boundary and subject, not individually but collectively, to the gaze of the spectator.

Fig. 13 - Trinity College Library, Christopher Wren, Cambridge.

In this "superb amphitheatre" of books, as Boullée referred to his own proposal for a library, the book is as much the subject of spatial manipulation as the reader (fig. 15). [14] Whereas the focus of the medieval and the post-medieval libraries was on the book, in the 'Saal-system' library, the books assume the position of the spectator and the reader is forced to perform the role of an actor who, at the open expanse of the centre stage of this "superb amphitheatre," is given to the performance of reading, in place.

Fig. 14 - Ambrosian Library, L. Buzzi, Milan.

As opposed to the medieval book-press that hid the book from the gaze and the post-medieval library that exposed it, chained in place, the 'Saal-system' library celebrates and opens the materiality of the book to public spectacle as a sublime self-enclosing frame. Superimposing the logic of sublimity on the logic of encampment, the 'Saal-system' library sacrifices the individuality of the book to the sublimity of a collective expression. The sheer number of books amassed at the self-enclosing inner edges of the new library present the viewer with an image that is at once impenetrable and incomprehensible, less one withdraws from the edge to the centre stage, where the ritual of reading is given to performance.

If the chains of the old library are superfluous to the new, this may be in part because, what is now held inescapably in place within the renewed bounds of the library is, with greater economy, the identity of the book, as

opposed to its individual expressions. Along with the chains of the old library, what has also disappeared from the new is any literal or presumed line separating the book from the library. As an integral part of the frame that delineates and defines its particularized place, the book, whose identity is now indiscernible from the library's, no longer requires a chain, in part because it is now chained to itself.

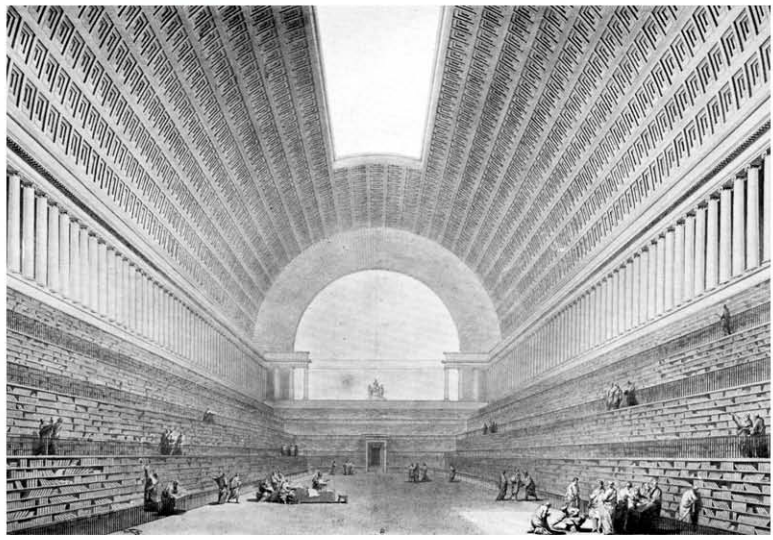


Fig. 15: Bibliothéque du Roi, Etienne-Louis Boullée, Paris.

A telling, though late example, of the 'Saal' or 'wall-system' library is Henri Labrouste's Bibliotheque Ste.-Geneviéve (Paris, 1842-50). Consciously modelled after a book, the building presents itself to the viewer from the outside as a free-standing, inwardly layered, masonry shell that wraps around a well-delineated interior space (fig. 16). The content of this space, like a book, is announced on the cover. The title of this edificial book is inscribed on a series of panels bearing the names of the authors whose books are kept safe within the masonry cover. The placement of these panels within the arcade of the upper level is reminiscent of the flank of Alberti's Tempio Malatestiano (Rimini c.1450), where the sarcophagi of Malatesta's courtiers are held within a similar arch on pier structure. The reference here is not accidental. As we shall see later, the themes of writing and death are intimately connected.

Fig. 16 - Bibliothéque Ste.-Genevieve, Henri Labrouste, Paris.

In this particular expression of the logic of encampment, the ritual procession to the world of books takes the form of a relatively dark corridor that takes the participant, from the front entry, through the entire width of the building, before leading up to a vestibule filled with light and a characteristic monumental stair-case (fig. 17). This processional arrangement, though not as dramatic as Michelangelo's, is equally effective in divorcing the participant from the world behind, before leading the participant up and around, through another set of doors, into the reading room on the second level. The processional move up into the place of writing is a well-precedented gesture of delineation, found not only in Messina's picture or Michelangelo's library, but in numerous other examples as well. In effect, the stairs detach the place of the book from the ground, as the corridor, in this instance, divorces it from the greater space in the background. This double gesture of exclusion, in effect, displaces and then re-places the participant in the delineated and detached place of writing.

Entering the reading room, past the watchful gaze of the librarian at the circulation desk, i.e., the gaze of the guardians of the gate to the place of writing, or the 19th century equivalent of the key to the medieval-press, one is surrounded, at the centre stage of this superb amphitheatre, with

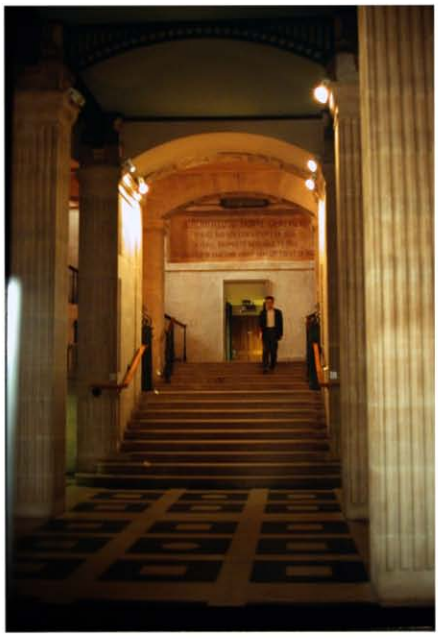
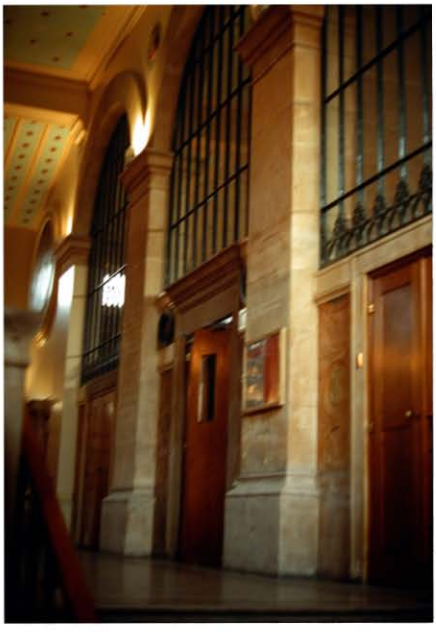


Fig. 17 - Bibliothéque Ste.-Geneviéve, Henri Labrouste, Paris.



rows upon rows of books on shelves, whose outward layering from the first through the massive piers of the second level is counteracted by the light penetrating through the shell from above and an unseen beyond, in anticipation, one may venture to guess, the sense awaiting its return to light, pending the performance of reading at the centre stage of this well delineated and sealed space (fig. 18). The books here form a sublime cover to the light that readily gives one the assurance of a greater presence beyond the solid materiality of books en masse. In this place, where any presumed line between aiding and dictating communication between the reader and the book becomes at best thin, Ruskin, I presume, would have no difficulty seeing that the only merit of this frightful mass is in the sense it hides behind its cover, pending the ritual performance of the act of reading.

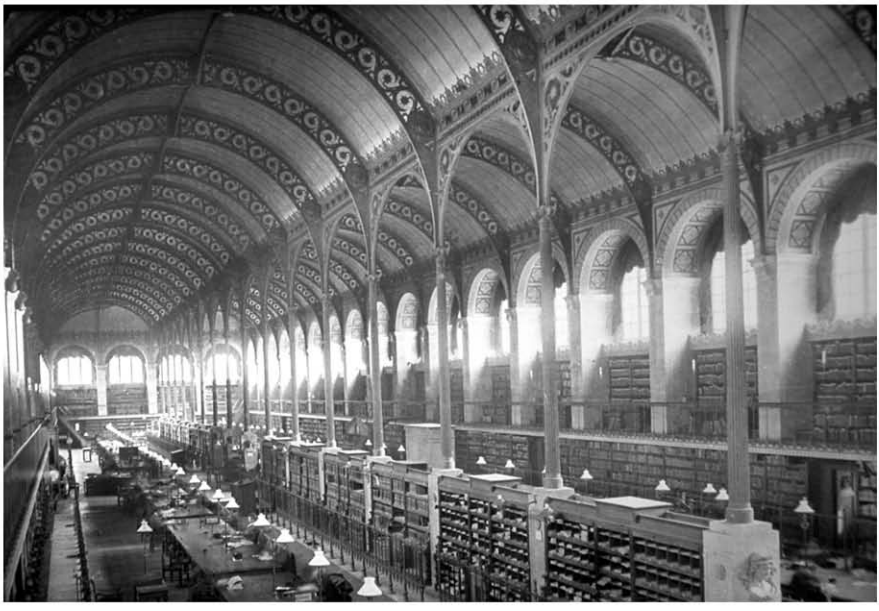


Fig. 18 - Bibliothéque Ste.-Geneviéve,
Henri Labrouste, Paris, 1843 - 50

As a reinforcement and a variation to the above theme, the circulation desk was to find its way from the gates, now de-emphasized, to the centre of the reading room. This is best seen in Sydney Smirke's radial reading room of the British Museum (London, 1854-56). The entombment of the book at the edge is now subject to the watchful gaze of its guardian, placed at a centre to which it must return and from which it radiates back to its resting place at the boundary (fig. 19).

Fig. 19 - Reading Room. British Museum. Sydney Smirke.

The modern stack-system library is both an extension of the 'Wall-system' library and a reversion to the lectern and stall-system libraries. It assumes and further delineates the three operational parts of the 'Wall-system' library: the circulation space, the reading space, and the stack space. However, as yet another manifestation of the logic of encampment, the modern

Fig. 20 - Exeter Academy Library. Louis I. Kahn. Exeter.

Fig. 21 - Exeter Academy Library, Louis I. Kahn, Exeter.

Stack-system library achieves its predecessor's end, not by integrating the books within its protective frame, but by separating and enveloping itself around the books, in a manner reminiscent of the post-medieval library, with its clear divorce between the books and the library's enveloping frame.

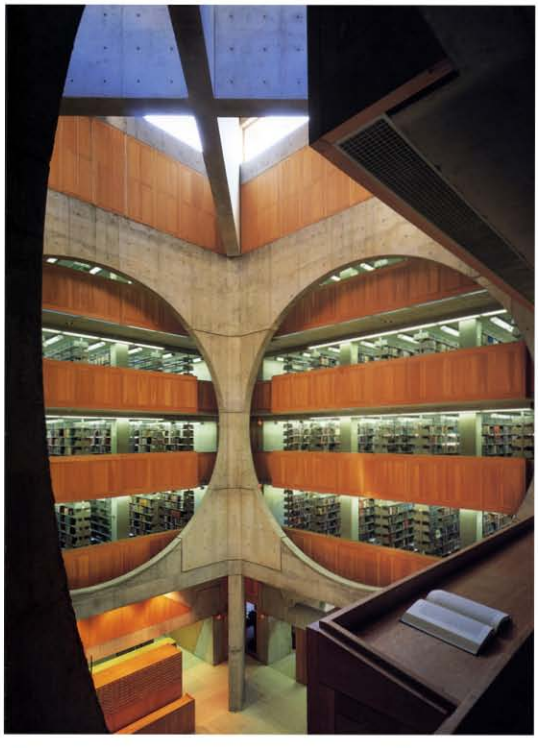


Fig. 22 - Exeter Academy Library, Louis I. Kahn, Exeter.

Although the reading room retains its central position in most early examples of the type, e.g., Asplund's Public Library (Stockholm, 1920-28) and Aalto's Municipal Library (Viipuri, 1930-35), in most later examples, including most modern university libraries, the reading space and the resting place of the books exchange position. In a variation on the theme of centre and edge that are the building blocks of a well delineated and detached place, the books move away from the edge to the centre stage of the old amphitheatre, now multiplied and stacked one on top of the other. The outer edges are, in turn, given to fragmented and individualized reading spaces or carrels that together form a chain around the new resting place of the book: the modern stacks at the conceptual, if not the literal centre of the modern library.

Having returned the books to the centre-stage, in the post-medieval fashion, the modern library, in turn, substitutes the decimal system in place of the post-medieval chain. [15] As opposed to a literal chain, the modern library inscribes the identity of each book within a figural chain. Although the books may readily leave their sanctified and entombed place within the modern library, pending the elaborate ritual of circulation and discharge, their identity never does. It remains in place within the protective cover of the stack space.

Along with the reading space and the stack space, the circulation desk also assumes a more autonomous and detached position within the modern library. In a manner reminiscent of the Ricceto of the Laurentian Library, the circulation space takes on the form of an additional layer of physical and ritual separation that sees to the detachment of the book from both the library's ground and background, employing the supplemental aid of all the bureaucratic a nd technological apparatuses presently afforded it.

A telling example of this reformulation is Louis I. Kahn's Exeter Library (Exeter, New Hampshire, 1965-72). Here, past the doors and a low vestibule, one enters a second vestibule with the requisite monumental staircase that leads, on axis, through a central atrium to an equally monumental circulation space (fig. 21). The stacks, placed characteristically above,

remain divorced from the ground, though exposed to the librarian's gaze from its new mediating position between the world without and the stacks delineated and held above, within the open concrete frame of the inner atrium and the punctured masonry frame of the library (figs. 20 & 22).

In the above, as well as numerous other examples, the exposure of the materiality of the book to public spectacle in the stacks of the modern library, is conjoined to a view out. The modern library is, in a manner, a delineated room with a view. Here, light, coupled with a view out, no longer shines from a presumed and mysterious beyond through a self-enclosing frame amassed with books, as it was in the previous model. Rather, it readily penetrates the opened frame of the library to illuminate the enveloping outer boundary of the stacks, given to the performance of reading (fig. 23). Surrounded by a ring of light, the books en masse appear in the centre stage of this delineated and detached place as the holders of a hidden secret that one must decipher at its illuminated edges, caught in between the sublime spectacle of the books piled in repetitive rows of stacks to one side and the enveloping frame of the library with a view out, to the other.

Fig. 23 - Exeter Academy Library, Louis I. Kahn, Exeter.

The view out from the library, as James Siegel explains in "Academic Work: the view from Cornell," offers a "stable" image whose lines and curves "seem to be linked to the features of the landscape they designate."[16] In contrast, the view in is an unfathomable representation dominated by "the straight lines of the rows of books" that "repeat themselves regardless of the particular books they stand for." In the face of this "profusion of impressions," of "books that have lost their identity because of their great numbers," as indicated by virtually every one interviewed, there is, "a feeling of incomprehension," "inaccessibility," and "chaos," coupled as they are with a sense of being "trapped" or "caged in" by the books. "This sense of being in forced proximity to the books," James Siegel explains, "is an expression of being in the grip of language over which one has no hold." A language, one might add, whose lines and curves in written form are not linked to the features of the landscape of sense they are meant to summon.

The choice here is "either to be controlled by repetition or to sense that something is hidden" and "the urge to figure out the 'mysteries' of what is felt to be obscured," i.e., as Ruskin would have it, either to confront this frightful and dangerous mass of books as form or to assume that there is a hidden merit to it - its sense - which one must yet decipher, locate, and place. "It would be by interpretation, by reading the books," that one is freed of the sense of being "trapped" by form, in proximity to the view out which "offers the reassurance of an outside to which one can always turn for escape."[17]

"The condition of academic work", however, is not to escape, but to "remain turned toward the books." From the vantage point of the reading space, one may safely turn to the books, assured of the distance and the difference between the surrounding two images: the comprehensible image of a landscape on the outside and the incomprehensible material mass of the books on the inside. In this delineated and illuminated place of reading, one may safely seek authorial intentions in a landscape of letters whose lines and curves are not linked to the features of the landscape of sense they summon in absence, all the while assured of the presence of another, distant and different landscape whose forms readily coincide with the features of the sense they summon without delay or deferral, i.e., the transparent and

immediate landscape of speech, of which the place of reading is an exclusive space by an "ancient rule."[18]

In the space of reading, one may safely summon the absent intentions of the author, having the means to *locate* their presence, at a distance, outside the opaque materiality of the book that is kept safe within the confines of the modern library. Else, one may have no place to locate the deferred presence of what the letters summon in absence. This may well be the fright and the danger Ruskin foresaw in the form of the letters that are not detached and well placed, i.e., the fright and danger of losing the line that safely separates presence from absence, and reality from representation. The perception of an exterior presence, whether literal as it is the case in the modern library, or presumed as it is the case in the Wall-system library, is, in other words, crucial to the communication between the book and its reader, which after all, as Michael Brawne put it, is a primary purpose of the library as a building type.

Thus far I have tried to point out that despite various manifestations and numerous stylistic discontinuities, the processional organization and the spatial characteristics of the library as a building type have remained essentially the same from the Medieval Book-press to the modern stack system library. This is not to decry the significance of the differences and the important transformations in the history of the library as a building type. In a different context, one may readily trace the specifics of these differences and transformations to - among other factors - the specific modalities, shifts, and changes in the cultural perception and definition of what constitutes knowledge, how and where it is located (localized), and in what relationship it is placed with respect to its manifestation(s) and/or representation(s). Within the limited scope of this work, I only wish to note that these diverse manifestations have a common logic. Each, at a certain level, is a different expression of the logic of encampment and as such an attempt to purvey to the viewer a sense of confinement, control, and order, i.e., to assure the participant that the books are in place and under control. This latter is, in no small measure, a reflection of the ambivalence of Western culture toward what the library seeks to place and keep in place: the written word.

Inscribed in between reflections on the Coliseum - the locus of the ephemeral body and the "celebration of life" - and the Cenotaph - the locus of the immortal soul and the consecration of death - we find Boullée's reflections on the library. [19] This seemingly innocuous siting is neither accidental nor altogether arbitrary. It marks a step on a much traversed historic path and ascribes to the pervasive logic of a powerful myth that the library as a cultural institution and a building type at once embodies and promotes.

Time and again, we find reflections on the library intertwined with questions of mortality and immortality, body and soul, life and death, and relatedly, order and chaos. [20] Yet, the library is the locus of neither of the polar opposites it appears to evoke in reflection. It falls as Boullée's siting already indicates somewhere in between the two. It marks their meeting place where Boullée tells us: "one experiences ... those noble transports, that sublime impetus that seem to draw forth soul from body." It is, in other words, the place of a forced displacement, of body and soul enjoined and disjoined at once, i.e., the place of writing.

Writing, Jacques Derrida points out, has been the subject of simultaneous condemnation and praise throughout the history of Western culture for being the purveyor of life and the agent of death at the same time. [21] It has been commended and censured for immortalizing and supplanting the author by preserving and dispensing with living thought at once.

As a device, deemed external to the normal functions of language and thought, writing allows the living thought to leave of itself a material trace that though inanimate and dead, unattended and intractable, nevertheless immortalizes the life it supplants and/or substitutes. Whereas speech functions in the immediacy of thought as a transparent and seemingly immaterial realization of its presence, writing entombs and defers thought. It makes the absent present, though devoid of the immediacy and the pliancy that are its distinguished marks.

Regardless of its immortalizing virtue, or rather because of it, writing has been consistently assigned a secondary, subservient role with respect to

speech and condemned for being, among others, a bastardized form of speech, a "dangerous supplement," or in Plato's term, a *Pharmakon*: neither simply a remedy nor simply a poison, but both at once.[22]

If writing is deemed to be a precarious and pernicious drug, it is in part because its effect cannot be delimited in space and to its assigned place and role as the dead imitation of a living speech. If it is deemed to be a dangerous substitute for speech, it is in part because writing does not simply insinuate itself in the place of speech from outside. It also permanently displaces living thought and the speech that is presumed to be the privileged locus of its presence.

The "alleged derivativeness of writing, however, real and massive," Derrida notes, is "possible only on one condition: that the 'original,' 'natural,' etc. language had never existed, never been intact and untouched by writing, that it had itself always been a writing."[23] Writing can take the place of speech as a poor substitute and a dead imitation of it, if speech itself is a form of writing, i.e., if speech itself functions by virtue of the same difference and deferral that is presumed to be peculiar to writing. Speech can only be substituted, imitated, or represented by writing, if it has a repeatable, imitable or re-presentable form whose signifying function is not governed, or determined by what it signifies. If the seemingly transparent face of speech was indeed linked to the features of the landscape of thought it designates, it could never be substituted, imitated, or represented. If, on the other hand, the landscape of thought can only be located in the space of representation, if speech itself must necessarily defer the presence that it can only represent, then the living thought itself must forego its privilege as a simple presence in order to appear in representation as a deferred presence, i.e., to appear at all. In short, "what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence,"[24] along with, one might add, the disappearance of a decidable place within whose demarcated boundaries writing may be put to rest as a substitute representation.

Writing has, in other words, no decidable place. It cannot be readily placed, because what we shall find outside every assigned place is only more writing,

i.e., an "arche-writing" always older than the speech of which writing is said to be a poor and dangerous imitation. [25] The writing that "opens language and meaning," at once exceeds and defies any sense of place or any act of placement, predicated upon, in the simplest terms, a clear boundary separating two opposite terms, e.g., an interior and an exterior. Writing is, in a manner, that undifferentiated ground that precedes the act of encampment.

Should one wish, however, to retain the privilege of speech as the locus of a living, present thought - all the metaphysical, theological, and socio-political implications of this assumption withstanding - then one must indeed make every effort to delimit the dangerous effect of this paradoxical drug to a decidable place. Should one wish to heed the imperative call of a world view that assumes presence and absence, life and death, reality and representation, speech and writing, etc., to be mutually exclusive terms, separated by a line, or what amounts to the same, by various shades of grey, then there is little choice but to resort to the logic of encampment. One must make every effort to place writing: be this in a subservient supplemental position with respect to speech or within the protective cover of the book, held well within the bounds of the library. One must substitute a clear sense of place for the missing place of this dangerous pharmakon: a place from which speech can be withdrawn to the outside, safe and untouched by its effects.

The book is, of course, one such place. The "idea of the book which always refers to a natural totality," Derrida notes, "is profoundly alien to the sense of writing. It is the encyclopaedic protection of theology and of logocentrism against the disruption of writing, against its aphoristic energy, and, ..., against difference in general."[26]

The library is another place: a supplemental, immobile, and generalized doubling of the book, encompassing and placing the written word in place. This is to say that the logic of encampment at work in the formation of the library is, to a measure, an ideological response and an institutional solution to the enigmatic place of writing. It is, in a manner, a defensive measure against the "disruption" and "aphoristic energy" of writing: a

defensive measure that sees to the encampment of the book in a "heterotopic space,"[27] that is construed to keep in place that which has no decidable place.

As much as writing confounds and defies a sense of place, the library - the institution and the building type - systematically seeks to delineate, order, and place. In the space of a non-place - the undifferentiated space of representation - the library insinuates a defensive outpost. It differentiates an otherwise undifferentiated ground into two distinct and separate realms: the realm of writing and a realm for all that one may wish to safely withdraw and oppose to writing, i.e., a realm for the presence, the sense, or the living thought that writing defers.

The concerns of the library are, in other words, as much external as they are internal. Mindful of the pernicious nature of the drug it is given to administer, the library, as a cultural institution, substitutes a formal, spatial, and experiential clarity of place for what writing fundamentally lacks and denies: a decidable place. This is not only a place for itself, but also and of greater concern, for the presence it defers. Within the delineated, distinguished, and highly elaborated confines of the library, writing assumes a spatial dimension. It assumes an outside. As the library localizes and brackets the book, it also renders what lies outside its assigned spatial limits, immune to the disruptive energies of writing.

As a building type, informed by the cultural/ideological agenda of the institution it serves, the library provides the participants a conceptual vehicle for thinking the resolution of the paradox of writing in binary terms. It offers the participant - by design - a spatial experience that is profoundly alien to writing as the space of a non-place.

The careful delineation, separation, and processional transition that are the hallmarks of a successful library, put the relationship between writing and all that one may wish to escape its grip, in the proper cultural perspective. Following a totemic logic, [28] within the confines of the library as a requisite "individual and particular space," writing is given to stand in the

same relationship to the presence it defers, as inside stands to outside, path to place, foreground to background, open to closed, light to dark, upper to lower, centre to periphery, and all other binary spatial and formal terms that are called on to create "an individual and particular space," delineated and detached from its greater place. Should one even wish to conceive of the relationship between writing and the presence it defers, in any terms other than in binary terms, one must confront and contradict the immediate experience of the library. As much as writing resists a sense of place, the library successfully resists its defiance of a sense of place, to the point of invisibility.

If within the confines of the library writing is given to assume a spatial dimension, outside the delineated boundaries of this cultural and institutional construct, writing assumes a temporal dimension. There, it is a figure in transition and/or circulation by virtue of that "individual and particular" place to which its identity is irrevocably tied: the library. The production and consumption of this pernicious drug outside the bounds of the library has the assurance of a destination that keeps its malevolent and disruptive energies in check and under control.

If writing is a *pharmakon*, we may conclude, the library is a pharmacy and the institution the pharmacist who sees to the proper dispensation of the drug. The cultural participant is, in turn, the consumer of the myth of writing as a pure remedy, in search of a decidable verity, kept in proxy, deep within the cover of the book, well within the bounds of the library, at the conceptual centre of the modern campus.

Turning away from the centre to the boundaries of the modern campus itself, we find ourselves, once again, within the bounds of a well defined camp. Although the subject of this particular encampment is not writing, but education, the logic of this encampment is not fundamentally different from the logic that has seen to the encampment of the book within the library at the conceptual centre of the campus.

"While designing the University of Virginia," Paul Turner points out, "Thomas Jefferson described his goal as the creation of an 'academical village'."[29]

Although "this term expressed Jefferson's own views on education and planning," Turner argues, "it also summarized a basic trait of American higher education from the colonial period to the twentieth century: the conception of colleges and universities as communities in themselves - in effect cities in microcosm."[30]

Since the inception of the modern campus, and through each modification, what has remained virtually constant in the design of the campus is the assumption that the pursuit of higher education is best confined to a well defined and distinct camp whose clarity of outline is best summed up by analogies that bring to mind distinct boundaries and a clear sense of place, i.e., a "village," a microcosmic city, or a community in itself (figs. 24 & 25). Even though, over time, most campuses lose the clarity of their original boundaries to growth, University of Virginia being a case in point, the presence of these boundaries remain, in part, assumed and implied by the word campus that "sums up," Turner tells us, not only "the distinctive physical qualities of the American college, but also its integrity as a self-contained community."[31]

Fig. 24 - University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, Charlottesville.

Fig. 25 - University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, Charlottesville.

The desire and the attempt to give education a distinct place, i.e., to localize it within the spatial bounds of a "self-contained camp" is, as compared to the library at the centre of the campus, yet another cultural and institutional response to the dilemmas and the paradoxes of the subject of the encampment: in this instance, the dilemma of education, commonly viewed as an external, cultural supplement to human nature.

Education as a supplement, Derrida points out, is neither a pure addition nor a simple accretion.[32] If education as a supplement adds to and completes human nature, it also speaks of a fundamental gap and an internal deficiency in that nature. The supplemental education makes it impossible to identify an internal human nature that is not burdened by the weight of things external to it. If education supplements and completes human nature, it also displaces it, i.e., the supplementation denies the nature it completes a location or place within or without, inside or outside the human subject.

It is in place of this displacement that the logic of encampment substitutes a clear sense of place in the form of a campus. If the modern university seeks to encompass education as supplementation to nature within the bounds of a well defined place, the motivating concerns are as much

practical as they are ideological. The campus is the formal and spatial vehicle that allows us as participants to conceive the deficiency to which education points as having temporal and spatial boundaries, i.e., not endemic but specific to time and place. It allows us to conceive of a complete nature residing, not within, but outside the boundaries of the university as the place of supplementation. If the library tries to withhold its subject within, we may conclude, the campus tries to keep it without, only to have an ideal to reflect back on from within.

Footnotes

1. Ammianus Marcellinus, 375 A.D., quotation from: Nikolaus Pevsner, A History of Building Types, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1976, p.91.
2. This link is perhaps best demonstrated by Michel Foucault's studies of prisons, hospitals and schools.
3. Michael Brawne, *Libraries*, Architecture and Equipment, Praeger Publishers, New York, 1970, p.9.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. The connection here is not peculiar as there is a link between writing and ornamentation that I have traced in an earlier work. Please see: Writing on, the Margins of Architecture, Art History, London, vol.16, No.2, 1993, pp.336-48
7. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London, 1849, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1977, p. 112.
8. Ibid., pp.106-107.
9. Ibid., p. 107.
10. Ibid., p.108.
11. Ibid.
12. The following quotation by John W. Clark is a telling case in point:
I would have you know that in the year 1617 the library was completely altered and made to assume an entirely new appearance. This alteration was rendered necessary by the serious damage which, to our great sorrow, we found the books had suffered - a damage which was increasing daily - partly from the sloping form of the desks, partly from the inconvenient weight of the chains.
John Willis Clark, *The Care Of Books*, C.J. Clay and Sons, London, 1901, p.160
13. Henry James had a specific term for this requisite experiential separation: "penetralia, i.e., "the sense of penetrating out of the everyday hustle and into the shadowy preserve of learning." See William H. Jordy, *American Buildings and their Architects*, vol.3, Anchor Books, New York, 1976, p.354.
14. Etienne-Louis Boullée, *Architecture, Essay on Art*, in *Boullée & Visionary Architecture*, Helen Rosenau ed., Harmony Books, New York, 1976.
15. This is not to imply that the invention of the decimal system coincides with the formation of the modern library, but that the system is an effective aid to the modern library.
16. James Siegel, *Academic Work: The View From Cornell*, Diacritics, vol. 11, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp.82.
17. Ibid. pp.82-83.
18. "It was required, by the ancient rules of the library," Claude Hemere, the librarian at the Library of Sorbonne from 1638-43 tells us: "that reading, writing, and handling of books should go forward in complete silence." Quoted in John Willis Clark, *The Care Of Books*, C.J. Clay and Sons, London, 1901, p.160.
19. Etienne-Louis Boullée, *Architecture, Essay on Art*, in *Boullée & Visionary Architecture*, Helen Rosenau ed., Harmony Books, New York, 1976, pp. 100 - 107.
20. For an insightfull discussion of this subject please see: James Siegel, *Academic Work: The View From Cornell*, Diacritics, vol. 11, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Also a poignant case in point is Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose, where the themes of life and death are intimately connected to a labyrinthine library and the book posed as the literal agent of death. Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose, Warner Books, New York, 1983.

21. Please see:

Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1981

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976.

22. Ibid.

23. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1976, p.56.

24. Ibid. p.159.

25. Ibid. p.56

26. Ibid. p. 18.

27. Please see: Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces*, Diacritics, vol. 31, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986, pp. 22-27.

28. Please see: Claude Levi-Strauss, *Totemism*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1963.

29. Paul Venable Turner, *Campus, An American Planning Tradition*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.3.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p.4.

For a well illustrated account of the development of the American Modern Campus please see:

Paul Venable Turner, *Campus, An American Planning Tradition*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1990.

32. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Johns Hopkins University

Press, Baltimore, 1976, pp.141-164.