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# On Life, by Analogy: Architecture and the Critical Discourse on Extrinsic Constraints: A Historic Perspective

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**Abstract**    The recent critical discourse in the fields of philosophy, history, and literary criticism presents a disquieting challenge to many fundamental and historically pervasive hypotheses in the field of architecture. The premises in question include those concerning originality, imitation, signification, representation, and intention. The response to the current challenge from outside the field has been twofold within it. A number of architects, theoreticians, and critics have tried, for better or worse, to grapple with this challenge. Others discount their efforts either as an irrelevant fashionable exercise — a "new fad" — or, worse, as a "tortured or incomprehensible" exertion. What I examine here is the manner in which the field of architecture traditionally responds to external challenges to its presumed internal and autonomous concerns. This response, more often than not, takes the form of critical recourse to life, by analogy; that is, it draws parallels between buildings and animate objects by way of posing a critical distinction between a theory/praxis that is internally focused, hence original, meaningful, and productive, and one that is externally focused in space or time, hence, imitative, incomprehensible, and inherently destructive. Using the same "extrinsic" critical methodologies that instigate, in part, the current desire to redraw the line between the autonomous and the extraneous concerns in architecture, I point out, through a close analysis of John Ruskin's and Frank Lloyd Wright's recourse to the life analogy, the inherent paradoxes and contradictions that riddle the attempt to isolate, identify, and enumerate the signs of life in architecture. I take issue with the use of the life analogy as a critical and ultimately ideological tool for delimiting practice to a specific mode of design. I point out that the direct or the indirect use of the life analogy is related to a desire for control over

signification and that the desire for life in architecture, by analogy or otherwise, bears the seeds of its dissatisfaction within and/as without.

## Looking On, The Signs of Life

The recent critical advances in the fields of philosophy, history, and literary criticism present a disquieting challenge to many fundamental and historically pervasive hypotheses in the field of architecture. The premises in question include those concerning originality, imitation, signification, representation, and intention. These issues have traditionally taken center stage in architectural criticism and have played a critical role in delimiting the practice of architecture at various times.

The response to the current challenge from outside the field has been twofold within it. A number of architects, theoreticians, and critics have tried, for better or worse, to grapple with the cross-disciplinary challenge facing them. The responses extend from a reevaluation of the traditional humanist assumptions about architecture to a search for formal and spatial expressions that address the critical questions posed from outside the field (Eisenman 1989, 1993; Johnson and Wigley 1988; Papadakis 1988, 1989, 1990; Papadakis, Broadbent, and Toy 1992; Papadakis, Cooke, and Benjamin 1989; Tschumi 1987, 1990; Wigley 1993). Others, by contrast, discount the responses to the questions and challenges posed from outside the field either as an irrelevant fashionable exercise—a "new fad"— or, worse, as a "tortured or incomprehensible" exertion (Ghirardo 1985: 195). To the critics of the "new fad," its proponents appear to be raiding "contemporary philosophical and literary theories," seeking, not a response to the critical questions posed from outside the field, but validation for their theoretical exertions "by reference to theories current in other disciplines" (ibid.). This is a troublesome matter, considering that "the influence seems not to run the other way, either: literary critics and philosophers do not avail themselves of constructs derived from architectural theory" (ibid.).[1]

The critics of the "new fad" allege that the one-sided imitation and the "more or less rigorous imposition of rigid systems from literary theory" result in "unreadable and obscure" texts, where "important issues are not even addressed" and "architecture's unique character remains unexamined" (ibid.), or else in projects that are so "private" and "personal" that only the architect "understands and controls" them (Jencks 1988: 22).

The charge of producing works and texts that are "unreadable and obscure," "tortured or incomprehensible," may well hold true of specific efforts made by the proponents of the "new fad." Individual authors and architects representing the "new fad" may indeed "fail to understand the models" they are said to imitate (Ghirardo 1995: 195). However, the

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1. For an eloquent counterclaim see Wigley 1993.

critics of the "new fad" do not attribute its alleged failings to individual shortcomings, but assume these failings to be inherent in the exercise, that is, in the crossing of the disciplinary boundaries and imitation of models that have their *origin* outside the field of architecture. The alleged failings of the "new fad" stem, in other words, from the imposition of "the borrowed fineries of another discipline" on the "distinctive subject matter of architecture," which "does not lend itself to such Procrustean beds" (Ghirardo 1985: 195). To critics, the entire enterprise seems an exercise in futility, given that

> philosophy cannot generate a praxis contemporaneous with it. The true im-
> pact of Jacques Derrida, for example, cannot possibly be felt in the domain of
> architecture for at least several decades, maybe centuries, until it has under-
> gone a process of adjustment, infiltration, and contamination similar to that
> of Hegelian or Kantian ideas that began to touch architectural praxis over
> a century after their inception. Any theory that envisions a direct relation-
> ship between contemporary thought and contemporary praxis can only be a
> theory in the weakest and most trivial sense of the word. . . . Philosophy has
> never impacted architectural praxis directly. Theories that function on that
> assumption can only address the intellectually and culturally naive.   (Jarzom-
> bek 1991: 154)

To some critics of the "new fad," the vision of "a direct relationship between contemporary thought and contemporary praxis" is not only trivial and naive but also dangerous and destructive.[2] In their view, the attempt to establish such a relationship has led the field into a state of crisis, where

> artificial and extrinsic agendas for producing form have overpowered intrin-
> sic motivations. We have neglected those characteristics that set architecture
> apart, and have become enamored of and intimidated by related fields of phi-
> losophy, sculpture, painting, cinema, writing, linguistics and music. Ironically,
> by trying to mimic the strengths of these other disciplines, I think we have
> only weakened our own capable enterprise. . . . We have exchanged our role
> as "mother of the arts" for the far less central position of stepchild.   (Speck
> 1992: 113)

The current cross-disciplinary challenge to the field is, therefore, on the whole discounted on two grounds. Either it is denounced as alien and irrelevant, since it is posed from outside the field — "intellectual styles, like semiotics or deconstruction, brought into architecture" (Hil-lier 1993: 9) — or else it is castigated as destructive to the "unique" and "distinctive" character of architecture that is or, rather, should be im-pervious to external impositions and constraints. "Intellectual styles, like

2. A case in point is the collaboration between Jacques Derrida (1986, 1990) and Peter Eisenman (1990) on a garden at the Parc de la Villette in Paris, commissioned by Bernard Tschumi; see also Papadakis 1989: 67–69.

semiotics or deconstruction," are dismissed because they are "external abstractions" that cannot lead to "a proper understanding of the processes and products of architecture" (ibid.).

What I wish to focus on in this essay is not the validity of the criticism leveled against the "new fad" but the historicity of the critical model used in this criticism and its presuppositions. I wish to examine the manner in which the field of architecture traditionally responds to external challenges to its internal and autonomous concerns, regardless of the fact that these concerns have been and, in spite of innumerable attempts, are likely to remain, at best, difficult to identify and define. The traditional recourse to external analogies, in particular the life analogy, I will argue, serves as a critical strategy to render what are variously defined as the field's internal motivations and concerns immune to external as well as internal challenges, questions, or doubts.

A case in point is the topical choice of "life" for the 1990 annual meeting of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA). The chosen theme for the conference, "Architecture: Back . . . to . . . Life," is, the preface states, a response to the "internal or autonomous aims" of the field being of late "constrained or influenced from outside the field" (*ACSA News* 1990: 17).

Although it may seem peculiar to reflect on the "life" of architecture, which for all intents and purposes is the collective referent to a body of inanimate objects, the chosen theme is nevertheless a topic that has played an important critical role in the history of theoretical discourse on Western architecture. From Alberti's (1986 [1450]: 194) assertion that an edifice is "like an animal, so that in the formation of it we ought to imitate nature," to Wright's (1949, 1957, 1958, 1975 [1908–52]) search for a living or organic architecture, the conviction that edifices are potentially living, animate objects is as commonplace in the history of theoretical discourse on Western architecture as the assumption that the purpose of theoretical inquiry is to enumerate the ways and means of giving life back to architecture, in particular, at the onset of constraints or influences from outside the field.

The question of life enters the discourse on architecture primarily by analogy. Edifices are not said to *be* living beings but only like them, that is, only *essentially* the same. Yet, even though it is by way of analogy that life enters the discourse, the analogy is neither simply one among others nor altogether innocent or accidental.

The supposition of life, by analogy or otherwise, presumes the presence of an intrinsic *animating* force and an extrinsic animated form whose relationship as such is never neutral. The concept of life in/of architecture inevitably assumes an inner vital force, or else an intrinsic meaning, taking on or giving itself an extrinsic form. The life (im)posed, even by analogy, averts any potential relational ambiguity between the

intrinsic and the extrinsic aspects of architecture. A living architecture forms itself from within as opposed to being de-formed from without; as Frank Lloyd Wright (1975 [1914]: 122) put it, it is one that "develops from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that is applied from without." Wright's formulation, it is important to note, was in response to mimicry not across disciplinary lines but across the time line. His recourse to the life analogy was a reaction to "living on the past, irreverently mutilating it in attempting to modify it—creating nothing . . . taking the soul out of the thing in the process and trying to be content with the carcass, or shell or husk—or whatever it may be, that we have" (Wright 1975 [1927]: 132). Wright's reaction, in other words, was to the mimicry of external forms that were once in-formed by the "spirit" of an "age" or "civilization" that is no longer extant. Viollet-le-Duc (1987 [1877]: 446) had expressed a similar sentiment some forty years earlier: "Our public buildings appear to be bodies destitute of a soul, the relics of a lost civilization, a language incomprehensible even to those who use it."

Although Wright's, and by extension Viollet-le-Duc's, objection is not to the imposition of "the borrowed fineries of another discipline" but to the borrowed fineries of a different "civilization," their critical model and its presuppositions are fundamentally the same as the contemporary model. The criticism in each instance is predicated upon the supposition of a critical difference between a theory/praxis that is internally focused, hence original, meaningful, and productive, and one that is externally focused in space or time, hence imitative, incomprehensible, and inherently destructive.

It is important to note that what various authors propagate as a living architecture dramatically changes from one formulation to the next as a reflection of an ever-changing cultural context. However, it is equally important, though not sufficiently noted, that the propagated mode of architectural production is critically legitimized in each formulation by recourse to the life analogy. This is to say that where we find the concept of life in the theoretical discourse of architecture, it is linked to the critical determination of the proper relationship between the internal and the external aspects of the subject. This includes the relationship between inner intentions and outer expressions, intrinsic meanings and extrinsic forms, as well as questions pertaining to originality and imitation. The life analogy makes its critical debut each time the relationship in question becomes a problematic issue, due to outside threats, constraints, or influences.

A prominent case in point is the preeminence given the concept of life in the discursive practices of the mid–nineteenth century. A certain external threat then, as now, gave the question of life a new critical dimension. The external threat then was the emerging mechanical mode

of (re)production. Its threat was to the adequacy of the life analogy, which had gone fundamentally unchallenged up to that time. At issue was new machinery, in particular, cast-iron machinery, mass-producing building components that had hitherto been produced individually by hand, using basic tools. This included structural components—posts, lintels, trusses, girders, and the like—and a gamut of architectural details, from classical columns to Gothic tracery. The mechanical mode of (re)production, specifically the mass (re)production of aesthetic forms apart from the immediate, animating intentions of an individual artist/creator, problematized, if not disallowed, the type of idealization that the "work of hand" had readily lent itself to before the advent of mechanization.[3]

The external influences and constraints that today appear to justify a renewed interest in the life of/in architecture bear an uncanny resemblance to the effect of mechanical (re)production a century and a half ago. They too threaten the adequacy of the life analogy and the assumption of a causal relationship between intention and expression, meaning and form, and so forth. As mechanical (re)production instigated a search for the signs of life in architecture more than a century and a half ago—in spite of, or perhaps because of, the questions it raised—similar external constraints now appear to lead us again in the same direction. With this in mind, what I propose is a reexamination of the previous search for life, best exemplified by Ruskin's (1979 [1849]: 142–67) reflections on the life of architecture in the fifth chapter of his Seven Lamps of Architecture, appropriately entitled "Lamp of Life."[4] Ruskin's search for the signs of life in architecture is of particular interest to the present debate about extrinsic constraints on architecture, given Ruskin's interdisciplinary works as a literary figure and an art critic.

At the outset, it is important to note that although Ruskin's polemics against the use of machinery in architectural production can readily be attributed to and analyzed as a reaction to the immediate social and political context of his life and times (see Garrigan 1973; Kirchhoff 1984; Landow 1971, 1985; Sawyer 1985; Unrau 1978; Wihl 1985)—Ruskin himself is quite candid on this point—his recourse to the life analogy in defense of the prohibition is an inherited critical strategy passed down to our own generation. The argument goes, in other words, beyond the bounds of the immediate social and political context of Ruskin's life and times. A reexamination of Ruskin's specific use of the life analogy within

3. For a comprehensive discussion of the effect of mechanical reproduction on the work of art see Benjamin 1978.
4. My decision to refer to the reprint of the 1849 edition of The Seven Lamps of Architecture, as opposed to the E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, The Works of John Ruskin, 1903–12, is based on the fact that the former edition enjoys a much wider circulation and is readily available, if not already familiar, to many readers.

the broader context of theoretical discourse on architecture, where the analogy is a recurrent theme, can further our understanding of the problems and the paradoxes of this critical methodology. Where appropriate, I will make comparative references to the writings of Frank Lloyd Wright, who, half a century after Ruskin, resorted to the same critical methodology not to condemn the machine but to defend its use within limits, in the cause, no less, of a living architecture.

## Looking on the Signs of Life

I noted that the currency of the life analogy in the language of architectural criticism dates back to the Renaissance, if not earlier. Ruskin, however, may be the first architectural critic to give the analogy the status of a distinct law and to discuss it in detail. The impetus for devoting one of the seven lamps to the question of life may well have been what Walter Benjamin (1978: 217–25) refers to as the loss of the aura of the work of art, that is, its authenticity and historicity, in the age of mechanical reproduction. Nonetheless, Ruskin attributes his offering the "lamp of life" to the immediacy of a need, not felt before the nineteenth century, for a clear, qualitative distinction between two very different modes of production in architecture: the one relying on hand, the other on machines; the former producing authentic, individual forms or building components, the latter generic, spurious forms.[5] He argues that even though we may suppose "the abstract beauty" of "forms" to be "the same whether they come from the hand or the machine," the use of machines in the production of architectural forms is impermissible, because along with the abstract beauty of form there is another, equally important source of "true delightfulness" in all works of art (Ruskin 1979 [1849]: 55–56).

> Things in other respects alike, as in their substance, or uses, or outward forms, are noble or ignoble in proportion to the fullnesses of life which either they themselves enjoy, or of whose actions they bear the evidence, as sea sands are made beautiful by their bearing the seal of the motion of the waters. And this is especially true of all objects which bear upon them the impress of the highest order of creative life, that is to say, of the mind of man: they become noble or ignoble in proportion to the amount of the energy of that mind which has visibly been employed upon them. But most peculiarly and imperatively does the rule hold with respect to creations of Architecture, which being properly capable of no other life than this, . . . depend, for their dignity and pleasurableness in the utmost degree, upon the vivid expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned in their production.   (Ibid.: 142)

Works of architecture are imperatively noble or ignoble, pleasing or not, in proportion to the amount of the energy of that mind that has

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5. This is not to imply that machines had no role in architectural production before the nineteenth century but that their profusion and prevalent use in the nineteenth century took on a critical dimension.

*visibly* been employed upon them, that is, in proportion to the creative or intellectual life of which they bear a visible *impress* or *seal* as sea sands bear the seal of the motion of the waters. The "true delightfulness" of a work of art, Ruskin asserts, "depends on our discovery in it the record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heart-breakings—of recoveries and joyfulness of success." This is "the worth of the thing, just as the worth of anything else we call precious" (ibid.: 56).

It may thus be evident why Ruskin considers the formal products of machines "worthless." It is the presence of "human labor" in one and the "absence" of it in the other that makes "a piece of terra cotta, or of plaster of Paris, which has been wrought by human hand, . . . worth all the stones in Carrara, cut by machinery" (ibid.: 57). There is, however, more at stake here than the question of worth. The "substitution of cast or machine work for that of hand," Ruskin (ibid.: 55) tells us, is "an imposition, a vulgarity, an impertinence, and a sin." There is "no hope of the progress of the arts of any nation which indulges in these vulgar and cheap substitutes" (ibid.: 58). If Ruskin deems the condemnation and deprecation of "cast or machine work" imperative to the progress of the arts, it is not simply because they are "worthless" but also because they fracture the "seal" that "bears" the "evidence" or "impress" of the "highest order of creative life." They break the chain of cause and effect that typifies the work of hand. Lost to the reproductive capability of the machine and its formal products is the causal link between the "thoughts, and intents" that Ruskin presumes to animate, in-form, and direct the human hand to leave a visible, external "record" of their immediate presence in the mind. This link is not present in cast or machine work, even though the external form—the visible "record of thoughts, and intents, and trials, and heart-breakings"—is. This is the impertinence and the sin of machine products against the "mighty law" of life. Their only "effect" is, Ruskin (ibid.) tells us, "to cast shame and suspicion over every part of the building" to which they are affixed as substitute for the work of "hand."

Ruskin's rejection of machines has been interpreted by numerous Ruskin scholars as a reaction to the social ills of industrialization, to the loss of morality in an industrial civilization, and/or to a general aesthetic preference for things made by hand in the medieval fashion (see Garrigan 1973; Kirchhoff 1984; Landow 1971, 1985; Sawyer 1985; Unrau 1978; Wihl 1985).[6] Although I do not disagree with the common

6. The following excerpt is a case in point: "Ruskin's abiding concern for the happiness of the workman caused him to place severe restrictions as well on the respective roles of men and machines in architecture. Great buildings are those which declare in every line the freedom and devotion of the individual worker who labored on them. . . . The worker, to be happy and productive, must thus be allowed maximum creative latitude as well as variety in his labor; machine work cannot be substituted

attribution of Ruskin's use of the life analogy to these motives—he is quite candid on both accounts—nevertheless I do not believe them to be the sole concerns and issues. My contention is that Ruskin's rejection of machines is also a reaction against threats to age-old critical suppositions. I will return to this subject later. For now we should note that, using approximately the same line of reasoning, the use of machines—Ruskin's total rejection notwithstanding—can just as readily be defended as condemned. A case in point is Frank Lloyd Wright's (1975 [1927]: 135) position on the use of machines a half century after Ruskin:

> John Ruskin and William Morris turned away from the machine and all it represented in modern art and craft. They saw the deadly threat it was to all they loved as such—and eventually turned again to fight it, to the death—their death. . . . They did, however, remind us of what we were losing by using the machine or, as they might have said, letting the machine use us. . . .
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> The Machine Ruskin and Morris believed to be the enemy of all life. It was and is still, but only because the artist has shirked it as a tool while he damned it; until now he has been damned by it.

The machine for Wright is, in hindsight, "the architect's tool—whether he likes or not." It is "an engine of emancipation or enslavement," the agent of "life" or "death," a "savior" or a "monster," "according to the human direction and control given it, for it is unable to control itself." The machine, Wright argues, is similar, if not superior, in function to our "hands and arms and legs and feet." Its worth, like that of hands and arms, depends on "the mind that drives it or puts it to work and stops it" (ibid.: 131). Therefore, "how foolish," he argues, "to take a prevalent abuse of any thing for the thing itself" (ibid.: 136). The "deadly threat" to the life of architecture, as Wright envisions it, is not the machine but the lack of "creative-imagination" (or, in Ruskin's terms, of "thought, and intents") in those who have put it to use. The "imaginative artist's" unwarranted, if not foolish, deprecation of the machine has left it to the abuse of those whose "'technique' may therefore be said to consist in reproduction, imitation, ubiquity. A form of prostitution other ages were saved from, partly because it was foolish to imitate by hand the work of another hand. The hand was not content. The machine is quite content. So are the millions who now have as their human understanding, things

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for the inspired expression of the whole man. Worse still, the acceptance of machine work, besides deadening the spirit of the individual workman, also desensitizes the visual perception of everyone who looks on it, which in turn breeds tolerance of all manner of architectural evil" (Garrigan 1973: 148). Similar passages are to be found in ibid.: 205; Wihl 1985: 169, 181; Landow 1971: 81; 1985: 10, 40, 48; Kirchhoff 1984: 48; Sawyer 1985: 84–85. For summarized statements, indicating the pervasiveness of such interpretations, see Curtis 1987: 15, 148; Trachtenberg and Hyman 1986: 488–89; Pierson 1970: 278, 359; Wodehouse and Moffett 1989: 390–91.

that were once the very physiognomy of the hearts and minds — say the souls of those whose love of life they reflected" (ibid.: 132).

As different as Wright's and Ruskin's positions on the use of machines in architectural production are, it is important to keep in mind that they are motivated by the same goal in their specific exclusionary prescriptions and are driven by the same vision in their particular delimitation of the modes of production in architecture. They are both, in their unique ways, looking for the signs of life and the impress of mind on an architecture whose external forms are "the very physiognomy" of the internal creative thoughts and intents of those who produce them. Imitation and reproduction are, for both, "an imposition, a vulgarity, an impertinence, and a sin." Whereas Ruskin, cognizant of the "deadly threat" of machines, took no chances with them, for Wright the gamble is not a matter of choice. The machine is here to stay, and we may rest assured that there is little chance of losing our gamble with machines, because "to the extent that creative-imagination takes concrete form in the human fabrications," regardless of the mediation of the hand or the machine, "it makes the fabrication live as a reflection of that life any true man loves as such — spirit materialized" (ibid.: 145).

The difference between Wright's and Ruskin's visions of the imagination's role in machine production is not so great as Wright would have it appear. After his vehement condemnation of "cast or machine work" and his apparently clear distinction between two different modes of "production" in architecture, the one by hand bearing the "impress" of mind and as such the sign of "life," the other by machine bearing only the *appearance* of "life" as a sign of "death," Ruskin gives an interesting twist to the argument Wright was to advance in defense of the use of machines. Ruskin (1979 [1849]: 57–58) informs us that the deprecation of the machine does not by itself guarantee "life" in human production, because "it is, indeed, possible, and even usual, for men to sink into machines themselves, so that even hand-work has all the characteristics of mechanism."

The line separating what we were told to be two distinct modes of "production" in architecture is not, therefore, as sharp and clear as one might have hoped. The "deadly threat" to the life of architecture, which otherwise might have been readily delimited and dismissed as peculiar to a new and foreign mode of production, is, it turns out, an endemic threat. The work of hand does not always and necessarily bear the "impress" of "mind." It is possible to find in the work of hand the very mindless reproduction that is characteristic of machines. It is possible for men — Wright may well have agreed — to sink into machines, to break the "seal" of "life," and to reproduce the "impress" without the engraving "seal." However, Ruskin assures us that this perilous possibility is a form of "disease and decrepitude" (ibid.: 68) — a form of infection and

extrinsic imposition—that he can diagnose and cure with recourse to the "mighty law" (ibid.: 118) of life.

Ruskin's attempt to diagnose the "disease" at issue comes in an argument that anticipates Wright's contempt for the abuse of machines. Ruskin (ibid.: 143) tells us that "when we begin to be concerned with the energies of man" that are "visibly" employed in the "production of things,"

> we find ourselves instantly dealing with a double creature. Most part of his being seems to have a fictitious counterpart, which it is at his peril if he do not cast off and deny. Thus he has a true and a false (otherwise called a living and a dead, or a feigned or unfeigned) faith. He has a true and a false hope, a true and a false charity, and, finally, a true and a false life. His true life is like that of lower organic beings, the independent force by which he molds and governs external things; it is a force of assimilation. . . . His false life is, indeed, but one of the conditions of death or stupor, even when it cannot be said to animate, and is not always easily known from the true. It is that life of custom and accident in which many of us pass much of our time in the world; that life in which we do what we have not purposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is molded by them, instead of assimilating them.

"Man" is, therefore, a "double creature." He is capable of leading two distinct and mutually exclusive lives: one assimilating, unfeigned, true, and living; the other, "at his peril," assimilated, feigned, false, and dead. The latter is to the former "what an arborescence is to a tree," what the real is to the fictitious, the original to its imitation (ibid.). The distinction between these two lives and their respective modes of production, we should note, supposes a *true* and a *false* relationship between the inside and the outside, the internal and the external, mind and matter, the "seal" and the "impress." In the "true" life, the inside assimilates the outside; it affects it and yet remains unaffected by it. Here the mind of "man" "molds and governs." Therefore, all "things external" bear the "impress" of the internal, the "seal" of the highest order of creative life, the mind of man. Here signification proceeds from the inside. Hence, what is said is what is meant, and what is done is what is intended to be done. This is the state of the normal, of life "living" and "true." Characteristic of production in this life is what Wright would call, in the abstract, an architecture that "develops from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that is applied from without," or "spirit materialized."

By contrast, in the "false" life, the life of death marked by accident and custom, all is feigned. The internal in this life—the mind of "man"— is molded by things external to it. Signification here proceeds in spite of any intention, whereby what is said or done is neither what is meant,

said, nor intended to be done. This fictitious life is, Ruskin would have us assume, nothing but a "feigned" image of the true, bearing all the "impress" without the engraving "seal," all the effect without the cause. The "recent trend" in architecture "to raid contemporary philosophical and literary theories," to produce "tortured or incomprehensible" works that are molded by "things external" to them, Ruskin might have argued, exemplifies the mode of production characteristic of this life.

It is perhaps needless to point out that for Ruskin the only "healthy and vital" (ibid.: 146) mode of production in architecture is the one that "molds and governs" things external to it, as opposed to being "molded by them." His critical quest, similar to that of our contemporary critics, is to restore architecture to this state of health and vitality. Yet there is an impediment. There is a form of "disease and decrepitude"—that other mode of production—that is not peculiar to the machine but is characteristic of all mechanistic production, whether it is implemented by the human hand or by the irredeemable machine. The task of diagnosis and cure is not, Ruskin informs us, without its difficulties. Whereas the works of machines are, for the most part, "always distinguishable, at a glance" (ibid.: 58), the difference between the formal products of the two mutually exclusive modes of *human* production "is not always"—if ever—"easily known." The formal product of the "fictitious" production has the same external appearance as that of the real or the "true." The disease does not readily manifest itself on the surface. Nevertheless, Ruskin insists that it is imperative to make a clear distinction between the two modes of production, supposing an undivided "seal" in the "true" production borne by "external things" of internal *forces*, by matter of "mind," appearance of being, signification of intention. It is to facilitate this admittedly difficult distinction—to shed light on the undivided "seal" found in origin before imitation and before the divide that is assumed to be characteristic only of the work of machines or of men sunk into machines—that Ruskin offers us the lamp of life.

To the light that Ruskin offers us I shall turn shortly. First, however, it is important to note that if the difference between the two modes of production in question "is not always"—if ever—"easily known," it is not for want of illumination. No amount of light, as we shall see later, is likely to clarify the distinction, in part because the condition of the possibility of the "false" production is, in a manner, the impossibility of the "true" conceived as one engraving a "seal" or leaving an "impress" on the outside. The formal product of the true production can be imitated only if its external appearance is imitable. This is to say that it can be "feigned" only if its external appearance was not molded or governed by an internal force, if this appearance never bore the undivided "impress" or "seal" of that internal force. The condition of possibility of signification, true or false, is the absence of a causal relationship between intention

and signification, the "impress" and the engraving "seal." Or else, sig-
nification would necessarily and always depend on the presence of an
assimilating intention, and "impress," on an engraving "seal." Humans
would then never be able to "speak" what they "do not mean" or "do"
what they "have not purposed."[7]

The impossibility of a "true" life marked by productions impressed
and sealed from the inside should not imply that humans cannot, for
instance, "speak" what they "mean" or "do" what they intend but that
meanings or intentions do not *intervene, assimilate, mold,* or *govern* signi-
fication. Their presence or absence neither simply commences and halts
signification nor constitutes a critical difference between a true and a
false production. The only implication is that a gap persists between the
internal and the external, intention and signification, the "seal" and the
"impress," as the condition of possibility of the original and its "feigned"
imitation; a gap in signification or representation in between "the vivid
expression of the intellectual life which has been concerned" in its "pro-
duction" and the "intellectual life" concerned. This gap, we should note,
is precisely what Ruskin here wishes to seal by appeal to a "seal." The
professed "seal" in "living" production is not, however, so much a "seal"
borne as a seal bridging a gap and fulfilling a wish: a gap in between
intention and production, and a wish for its absence or closure.

The gap in production that, once exposed in reproduction, resists
closure as an attribute of life in architecture is the "deadly threat" of
mechanistic production to which both Ruskin and Wright repeatedly al-
lude. If Ruskin sees this gap as a deadly threat, if he deems the "false"
production to be at man's "peril," if he urges him not only to separate it
from the "true" but to "cast off" and "deny" it as well, it is not so much
because it is a perilous threat to "man" as because it is a threat to the ade-
quacy of the life analogy and to the authority of Ruskin's exclusionary
critical model.

What is at stake in the question of living production for both Ruskin
and Wright is the power of exclusion that is imperative to the delimi-
tation of practice in the field. What prompts both to condemn and
deprecate mechanistic production is the desire for authority to delimit
architectural practice not in the name of ulterior—cultural, social, or
political—motives but in the name of truth, not arbitrarily but according
to "immutable laws."

What Ruskin and Wright propagate as a living architecture—Venetian
or High Victorian Gothic by Ruskin and Organic-Modern by Wright—
could not be more different formally, and to a large extent conceptually.
Each is a reflection of the cultural and historical context within which it

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7. For a comprehensive discussion of this issue see Jacques Derrida's (1982: 307–30)
article "Signature Event Context."

was formed. However, both Ruskin and Wright use the weight of their authority to proscribe other modes of design, and for that matter each other's, on the life analogy. Both justify their preferred mode of design as the only acceptable mode, not on ideological grounds but because its external forms are professed to be assimilated, molded, and governed internally as opposed to externally. Each is "spirit materialized," which is "not a matter of seeming but of being" (Wright 1975 [1927]: 149).

The critical distinction that each author makes is based on the assumption of authoritative control over external form and its potential for signification. At issue for both Ruskin and Wright, as well as for other authors who resort to the life analogy, is not a mode of design that allows one to say what one means or do what one has purposed. It is difficult to envision a mode of design that does not. What is critically at stake for each is an architecture whose potential for signification can be brought to a definitive closure in the name of what is meant and what has been purposed. Each seeks to tie signification not to context but to intent and purpose. An architecture imbued with the signs of life is not subject to interpretation or changes in signification. It says what it was meant to say, and it is what it was purposed to be. It is not a "carcass, or shell or husk." It bears its meaning within as a seal. This is its exclusionary privilege vis-à-vis the others. It is this privilege, however, that is threatened in the age of mechanical reproduction.

There is, therefore, a great deal at stake in maintaining the viability of the life analogy. The difficulty that confronts any author who may wish to maintain the viability of the life analogy in the age of mechanical reproduction lies, on the one hand, in identifying the signs of life in a living architecture and, on the other hand, in making the external manifestation of this life immune to the threat of reproduction.[8] What indeed are the signs of life in the age of mechanical reproduction? How does the seal borne by external forms of internal intents manifest itself in any age? What justifies the preference for one mode of design over others, short of ulterior motives?

It is these admittedly difficult questions to which Ruskin tries to provide answers under the lamp of life. Whereas those before him could readily evoke the life analogy in critical defense of their preferred mode of design, without necessarily having to enumerate its signs, Ruskin is not afforded the luxury in the age of mechanical reproduction. He is obliged to enumerate the signs of life while trying to account for imitation and mechanistic reproduction in ways that others before him were not. Wright, of course, faced a similar problem in turn.

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8. This is so whether in the end the machine is totally rejected or conditionally accepted.

## The Signs of Life

To be imitated, repeated, or reproduced, the original must itself be marked by the very characteristics that are assumed peculiar only to imitation, repetition, or reproduction. The original, once produced, must already be in the position of the reproduced. On this point, however, we may seem in agreement with Ruskin (1979 [1849]: 102), who tells us, "I suppose there is no conceivable form or grouping of forms but in some part of the universe an example of it may not be found." Every human "production" is an imitation or a reproduction because an example of its form or grouping of forms already exists somewhere. Furthermore, every example, Ruskin (1843: 24, 85) tells us, bears "a certain seal, or impress of divine work and character, upon whatever God has wrought in all the world," as "the necessary consequence of the perfection of God's working." Human "production" begins with reproduction, be it dead or alive, true or false, "noble" or "ignoble." Although this supposition renders the work of humans derivative, a matter of imitation, nevertheless it is founded on the supposition of an original production, of which human work is an imitation. That original production bears the undivided "seal" of the "mind" of its creator, that is, the "expression of divine mind," the "signature of God," or the "inevitable stamp of his image on what he creates" (ibid.: 30, 36, 86).

In origin, therefore, as a certain theological/creationist model of production would have it, there is "life" and "production," that is, a "true" life and a sealed, signed, and stamped "production." Reproduction follows as a form of "disease and decrepitude." Therefore, the latter, regardless of its "feigned" appearance, cannot place in question the "seal" of the living production or the possibility of a causal relationship between intention and production in origin. The authoritative voice of the theological model speaks against it. The supposition of a seal in origin appears, however, to render the imitative work of humans "worthless," as the reproduction of a sealed "production" that by definition bears the very mark of "death and stupor" that Ruskin here wishes to "cast off and deny." However, Ruskin (1979 [1849]: 145) tells us, "it is no sign of deadness in the present art that it borrows or imitates, but only if it borrows without paying interest, or if it imitates without choice." Ruskin thus reassimilates imitation within the confines of his theoretical construct as a source of "true delightfulness." He renders the diseased "imitation," as he puts it, "healthy and vital," subject to the payment of "interest" or the expression of a "choice," that is, subject to the signs of life that we shall consider shortly.

In defense of the life analogy, what began as a simple distinction between the work of hand and that of machine turned into a distinction between mechanistic and living production because of difficulties con-

tingent upon the former distinction. The latter has its own difficulties. Imitation, it now turns out, is not unique to mechanistic reproduction. It covers the entire field of human production. At every turn, the deadly threat that Ruskin has tried to set aside and to keep outside the realm of architectural production turns out to have already come from within. The deadly threat has thus far refused to be externalized in the name of machine or mechanistic production. Now, in a final defense, privileging healthy and vital imitation as submitted to the questions of "choice" and "interest," Ruskin offers the same argument Wright would later advance in defense of machines. Despite the similarity of the arguments, imitation is, we should note, a point of contention between Wright and Ruskin. Whereas Ruskin in his search for the signs of life took no chances with the machine, Wright took no chances with formal imitation. Whereas for Ruskin every formal production is a form of reproduction, Wright assumes man's "creative-imagination" to be the "divine in him" that "differentiates him from a mere reasoning animal into a God himself." A "creative being," Wright (1975 [1927]: 145) argued, "is a God" that produces forms anew as testimony to his creative-imagination at work. Ruskin (1843: 4), on the other hand, tells us that "men's use and function (and let him who will not grant me this follow me no further, for this I purpose always to assume) is to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness."

For Wright the novelty of form constitutes the sign of life; for Ruskin the evidence is in "reasonable obedience" and the interest paid. Both, however, try to overcome the "deadly threat" of reproduction by recourse to an established theological model of creation that readily lends its authority to the "seal" that is presumed to bind production to intention in origin. The difference is that for Ruskin vital human production is an imitation of divine production; for Wright it is a reenactment of it. The critical model is, nevertheless, the same, and its inevitable recourse to theology speaks not solely of the critic's religious disposition but of a strategic necessity as well. Without recourse to a theological model of production (creation), neither Ruskin nor Wright can posit a clear distinction between living and dead production predicated upon a seal between intention and production in origin.

Whereas for Wright all formal imitations constitute dead production, for Ruskin imitation, covering the entire field of human "production" or reproduction, is a sign of "deadness" if and only if it does not or cannot give more than what it receives, if and only if no interest is or can be paid in return. The latter is, we should note, the only type of imitation that Ruskin considers "an imposition, a vulgarity, an impertinence, and a sin." When there is a choice to pay more and an interest is indeed yielded in return with what has been borrowed, when the imi-

tator is more than the imitated, then imitation is both "healthy" and "vital," "living" and "noble." The more in question here is that "impress" of "mind," that "seal" of "the highest order of creative life" on whose presence, we have been told, depends the "life," the "worth," and the "true delightfulness" of the imitative work of men. So long as men produce their reproductions, so long as they mold, impress, and seal their imitations in "interest," their work shall bear "no sign of deadness." This is the supposition. The problem, however, is how to decipher the difference that Ruskin has told us "is not always easily known": the difference between "vital" and "dead" imitation, regarded as two mutually exclusive modes of production in architecture. What are the signs of life as distinguished from the signs of death, or disease? In short, as Ruskin asks, "how is imitation to be rendered healthy and vital?" He answers:

> Unhappily, while it is easy to enumerate the signs of life, it is impossible to define or communicate life; and while every intelligent writer on Art has insisted on the difference between the copying found in an advancing or recedent period, none have been able to communicate, in the slightest degree, the force of vitality to the copyist over whom they might have influence. Yet it is at least interesting, if not profitable, to note that two very distinguishing characters of vital imitation are, its Frankness and its Audacity.   (Ruskin 1979 [1849]: 146)

We may well sympathize with Ruskin and with every other intelligent writer on art with regard to the impossibility of defining or communicating life and the *inability* to communicate the difference between "dead" and "vital" imitation. The subject, *unhappily*, is not easily framed. It does not readily lend authority to qualitative, judgmental distinction between what is advanced and what is "recedent." The dividing line is indeed difficult to identify. Frankness and audacity, however, so Ruskin tells us, are "two very distinguishing characters" of the right form of imitation.

Frankness as a sign of "vital" imitation is that absence in imitation of "any effort to conceal the degree of the sources of its borrowing" (ibid.). Audacity is the "unhesitating and sweeping sacrifice of precedent when precedent becomes inconvenient" (ibid.). Neither, however, Ruskin realizes, can give us a sure hold on the line separating living and dead imitation. Both could be imitated, and one may never know whether the presence of either is a sign of "vital imitation" or the product of a dead reproduction. Hence: "Nobler and surer signs of vitality must be sought—signs independent alike of the decorative or original character of the style, and constant in every style that is determinedly progressive. Of these, one of the most important I believe to be a certain neglect or contempt of refinement in execution, or, at all events, a visible subordination of execution to conception, commonly involuntary, but not unfrequently intentional" (ibid.: 147). The most important sign of "life" in imitation is, therefore, a visible subordination of execution to

conception. The sign of "life" is the "struggle toward something unat-
tained, which causes all minor points of handling to be neglected" (ibid.:
148). It is the "contempt of exact symmetry and measurement which in
dead architecture are the most painful necessities" (ibid.: 149). The sign
of "life" resides in those "variations" that are not "mere blunders nor
carelessnesses, but the result of a fixed scorn, if not dislike, of accuracy in
measurements; and . . . a determined resolution to work out an effective
symmetry by variations as subtle as those of Nature" (ibid.: 159).

These are the "nobler and surer" signs of "vital imitation." When we
confront them, we may rest assured that the architecture says what is
meant and is what it was purposed to be. There is, however, a paradox in
this enumeration. If a "nobler and surer" sign of "life" is indeed a "visible
subordination of execution to conception," a "contempt of exact sym-
metry and measurement" or "variations as subtle as those of Nature," if,
in fact, "life" has a "sign" or "signs" that can be marked, enumerated,
stated in a text and given the status of a law that can then be inten-
tionally applied—and has been applied—to architectural "production"
with uniform result or signification, then would not the "sign" or the
"signs" of "life," marked and then reproduced, at once bear the very
mark of "death" they are meant to efface?[9] Would not the application of
the law of "life" as such necessarily amount to and indeed require dead
imitation? Is it not in fact only through dead imitation or machinelike
reproduction of the "signs" of "life" that the imitation or reproduction
of a thing or anything is rendered "healthy" and "vital," as long as the
recognition of life is dependent on the presence of specific signs?

Once Ruskin is caught between the desire for "life" and the stated
impossibility of defining or communicating "life," of separating "life"
from "death," "vitality" from "stupor," without resort to a number of imi-
table, imitated "signs," the paradox is unavoidable. The "signs" of "life,"
enumerated, become the "signs" of "death" that were cast off and de-
nied. Enumerated, these "signs" at once point to a certain gap or lack,
a certain missing "seal" in "life" that mandates the supplementary re-
inforcement of those "signs" without which the difference between "life"
and "death" cannot be easily marked. If "vital" imitation did indeed bear
the "impress" of the "mind" of its producer as "sea sands" bear "the seal
of the motion of the waters," if "living" imitation was not already in the
position of "dead" imitation, this enumeration, if not impossible, would
at best be superfluous. Once enumerated, however, the "signs" of "life"
in the same gesture efface the very dividing line they produce or repro-
duce. The latter two amount, in a manner, to the same. The desire for

9. The intention to reproduce "life," we should note, does not save the reproduc-
tion of "life" from the realm of dead imitation, because it is simply an intention to
reproduce an original. This intention is assumed to be present in all dead imitations.

"life" and the exclusionary authority of an undivided "seal" bears within it the seeds of its own dissatisfaction here under the lamp of life.

As a matter of course, we should note that Wright and the other proponents of modernism fared no better than Ruskin. Their condemnation of formal imitation and their emphasis on the novelty and originality of form as the sign of life could not succeed in overcoming the deadly threat of imitation any more than Ruskin's condemnation of machines and his emphasis on "a visible subordination of execution to conception" as a "nobler and surer" sign of vitality. Wright's bitter article of 1914 is a vivid testimony. After every effort to ground his forms in intention and more specifically in function, Wright finds himself witnessing in "dread" the originality that he took for a sign of life, traded on and sold as "mere form" by "disciples, neophytes, and brokers." These acts of "piracy, lunacy, plunder, imitation, adulation," Wright (1975 [1914]: 123) tells us, "endanger the cause, weaken the efficiency of genuine work, for the time being at least; lower the standard of artistic integrity permanently; demoralize all values artistically; until utter prostitution results." As a final defense he asks us to "let his forms alone," lest they be robbed of their authority as the bearers of the signs of life (ibid.: 129).

### Looking On

What I have tried to point out thus far is not that Ruskin or Wright want certainties that the terms of their own arguments prevent them from having. I do not believe the problem to be one of argumentation. I do not see Ruskin or Wright as having somehow failed to achieve what they wanted. I do not presume that a better critic might somehow overcome the obstacles they faced in trying to enumerate the signs of life. Nor has it been my intention to argue that Wright is as much a romantic as Ruskin. If nothing else, it is the rational outlook of the one and the romantic outlook of the other that make the similarity of their struggle noteworthy.

What I have tried to point out are the difficulties contingent upon the search for the signs of life, which I do not believe to be unique to either Ruskin or Wright. This difficulty does not stem from the terms of the arguments presented; rather, it speaks of an inherent conflict between the critical model used and what the critic hopes to accomplish. At issue is not the role of intention and purpose in formation and production but the attempt to establish a causal link between them with recourse to the life analogy.

What I have tried to take issue with is the use of the life analogy as a critical and ultimately ideological tool for delimitation of practice to a specific mode of design. I have tried to point out that the direct or the indirect recourse to the life analogy is related to a desire for control over signification. It seeks to establish a causal link between intention

and formation or meaning and form, because this link is the condition
of control over signification. The attempt to bring signification to a de-
finitive closure requires the exclusion of every threat, that is, of every
other mode of production or every other mode of design but the one
that through exclusion gives the illusion of control.

The use of the life analogy as a critical exclusionary tool does not in
the end produce the desired effect. I have tried to point out in this essay
ways in which the inherited critical methodology at issue subverts the
very end it is employed to achieve, be the employer Ruskin, Wright, or a
number of contemporary critics. In the end, the closure is not achieved,
and the seal does not hold, because the desire that motivates it bears
within it the seeds of its own dissatisfaction. The threat, past or present,
does not disappear, because it comes not from without but always from
within.

This brings us in turn to our point of departure, to those "borrowed
fineries of another discipline," those "intellectual styles, like semiotics
or deconstruction," whose imposition today on "the distinctive subject
matter of architecture" appears to threaten, once again, the integrity and
the autonomy of the field in its continuing search for the signs of life in
an architecture impervious to external constraints and influences.

Although the cause for concern within the field of architecture today
is not mechanical reproduction but "intellectual styles" like "deconstruc-
tion," the concerns raised today are fundamentally the same as those
raised in the age of mechanical reproduction.[10] At issue are, once again,
the boundaries of architecture and the integrity of the borderline sepa-
rating what is integral to architecture from what is foreign to it, whether
a new "intellectual style" or, as it were, a new mode of production. In
question, once more, is not the place of this borderline, much less its
clarity, but the ways and means of defending it against infiltration and
contamination from outside. In turn, the remedy that is called for today
is yet another purge from within the field, designed to insure the in-
tegrity of the external boundaries protecting architecture's "distinctive"
character.

The presumed borderlines of architecture, beyond which "intellec-
tual styles, like semiotics or deconstruction," are to be expelled today,
may well be drawn differently by the various contemporary critics of the
"new fad" (see Ghirardo 1985; Hillier 1993; Jarzombek 1991; Jencks 1988;
Speck 1992). The actual place of these borderlines has been and will
likely remain the subject of considerable debate among these and other
critics, as it was, for instance, between Ruskin and Wright. However,

10. Mechanical reproduction has long been idealized as a tool subject to the dic-
tates of the artist's imagination in Wright's fashion. The threat that it posed earlier,
however, is now subsumed and amplified by the "new fad."

what today unites these otherwise contending points of view in collective opposition to a new "intellectual style" is the style's disruptive effect on the debate over the location of the field's boundaries. The new "intellectual style," like mechanical reproduction before it, presents a disquieting challenge to the traditional debate over what is and what is not integral to architecture, not because it directly or even indirectly engages in the debate but because it questions the discursive strategies and assumptions that make this debate possible; for example, construing/imposing boundaries on architecture by analogy as the condition of debate over their location.[11] The problem with the "new fad" is that it places in question the authority to delimit architectural practice by recourse to—by analogy or otherwise—such hierarchical distinctions as those between originality and imitation, presentation and representation, living and dead production, and all other hierarchical distinctions whose clarity "intellectual styles" like "deconstruction" have systematically placed in question.[12] This is to say that the unifying cause for concern within the field of architecture today is not a threatened autonomy or, for that matter, a violated territory but, to the extent that these concerns can be differentiated, a threatened delimitational authority. At stake are, once again, the ways and means of exerting authoritative control over architectural production and/or signification.

The desire to retain this authority may well explain why the current discourse on the "new fad" circumvents the issues, the concerns, and the challenges that the "new fad" poses, by focusing on the ways and means of keeping deconstruction outside the boundaries of the field, that is, by focusing on deconstruction's transience (a "new fad"), its exteriority ("the borrowed fineries of another discipline"), and its malevolent effects on the "distinctive subject matter of architecture." The consensus among our contemporary critics appears to be that "intellectual styles, like semiotics or deconstruction," do not mandate closer scrutiny because they are foreign and ill fitted, dangerous and destructive to the field. The "new fad," it is believed, infects and disfigures. Its presence within marks the disappearance of an architecture in-formed by "intrinsic motivations," as opposed to "artificial and extrinsic agendas," or, in more traditional terms, of a living architecture, as opposed to a dead architecture. It is to an architecture impervious to external constraints and influences that we are urged to return today: "architecture . . . back to . . . Life." Other-

11. A case in point is, of course, Ruskin's and Wright's use of the life analogy to impose boundaries that were at one point exclusive and at another inclusive of mechanical reproduction in architecture.
12. This refers to the work of Jacques Derrida in particular, and not only the pieces addressing architecture specifically but the more threatening and troublesome *Dissemination* (1981) and *Truth in Painting* (1987). These works do not engage architecture specifically, and yet they thoroughly disturb the field's internal assumptions.

wise, we let our field be "enamored," "weakened," and "overpowered" by the "fineries of another discipline," thereby allowing it to lose its "distinctive" and "unique character," to exchange its position of authority "as 'mother of the arts' for the far less central position of stepchild," and producing forms guided by "theory in the weakest and most trivial sense of the word," which in the end will appeal only to "the intellectually and culturally naive." The new addition is nothing but a subtraction.

If, however, the history of the search for an architecture impervious to external constraints and influences has any object lessons to offer us today, it is that the new "intellectual style," like mechanical reproduction before, is not able, much less likely, to take away from an in-formed or living architecture anything that it ever possessed: a sign or a seal. If "the borrowed fineries of another discipline" appear to cause alarm today, as mechanical reproduction did a century and a half ago, what is again placed in question is not "the distinctive subject matter of architecture" per se but the power and the authority of its exclusionary critical tools, such as the adequacy of the life analogy and the assumption of a causal relationship between intention and expression, meaning and form, and so on. If the "new fad" poses any threat, it is only to the exclusionary authority of an in-formed or living architecture, however this architecture is defined.[13] What "intellectual styles, like semiotics or deconstruction," take away from the field, if they can be said to take anything away, is what the field was never given but always desired: the power and the authority to delimit and curtail its production to meet the formal/spatial demands of a given political and ideological agenda under the guise of an in-formed or living architecture. It is important to note that to assume and exercise this exclusionary power and authority, one must resort to, the irony notwithstanding, "the borrowed fineries" of other disciplines, in other words, the borrowed authority of external analogies and metaphors, be they biological, or fundamentally theological.

The problem today, in other words, does not necessarily lie in the external origins of "intellectual styles" like "deconstruction," or in seeking validation for one's theoretical exertions "by reference to theories current in other disciplines." In the continuing search for an architecture impervious to external constraints and influences, such references, by analogy or otherwise, are not only commonplace but to an extent essential to the imposition of boundaries protective, if not productive, of architecture's "internal and autonomous concerns." Rather, the problem is that the current external reference exceeds analogy. The "new fad" does not liken architecture to an other from a safe distance. The foreign is, in this instance, intimately familiar, as was the mechanical mode of

13. This is the reason why opposition to the "new fad" is a cause that unites so many diverse points of view.

reproduction. Like the latter, "intellectual styles" such as deconstruction raise concerns that are not external but disturbingly internal. If these styles can be said to threaten the field from the outside, the threat is not to the external boundaries of the field but to the foundation on which the delimitational authority and the desired claim to universality, truth, life, and reality—by analogy or otherwise—rest within the field. The "new fad" does not force an external focus on the field; on the contrary, it forces the field to take note of its internal operations and limitations in ways that the field has consistently sought to avoid by recourse to external analogies, such as the life analogy. This "new fad" is not ill fitted but too intimately fitted for comfort.

Nor is the borrowed voice of this "new fad," as it appears to some, "obscure" and "incomprehensible." What it lacks is not necessarily and always lessons in grammar or stylistic clarity, predicated upon the desire for the transparency of form to intention, the motivating desire behind the search for an in-formed or living architecture. The problem with this borrowed voice is that it speaks *of* the "incomprehensible." What is voiced outside the field defies the logic of the comprehensible, the evident, the living, and the sealed. The attempts to prevent this external voice from being heard within the field, to exclude it as a fad, result from the view that the place of this voice within the field is best filled with silence, lest the dream of in-formation and sealed production be disturbed.

Finally, much as one needs to be aware of the difficulties involved in the exclusion of the "new fad" as an external imposition—Ruskin's endeavor being an object lesson—it is important to be equally aware of the difficulties involved in its appropriation, for example, the kind of appropriation to which Wright subjected the mechanical mode of reproduction. Any attempt to forestall the disquieting challenge of deconstruction through its incorporation and idealization is not likely to meet the challenge better than Wright's incorporation and idealization of the machine as a substitute "hand" subject to the engraving dictates of the artist's imagination. The inclusive approach to the machine did not overcome the threat of mechanical reproduction any more than the exclusive approach did. Likewise, any attempt to appropriate deconstruction as a substitute foundation for the one that it places in question may have in the end a different trajectory from the exclusive approach, but not necessarily a different destination.

Hence if criticism is to be directed against the recent formal/spatial responses to deconstruction's challenge, that is, the deconstructivist architecture (see Johnson and Wigley 1988; Papadakis 1988, 1989; Papadakis, Broadbent, and Toy 1992; Papadakis, Cooke, and Benjamin 1989), it is not that this architecture is an external imposition, a "new fad," but that it addresses itself to deconstruction from a safe distance, by analogy.

This architecture addresses deconstruction's challenge by distilling it to a set of "qualities" (Johnson and Wigley 1988: 11), which it then seeks to capture and exhibit formally, giving us "an architecture of disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion" (ibid.: 17), an architecture that exhibits the "qualities" or signs of deconstruction, as opposed to, for example, the signs of life. This architecture, too, works by analogy, only a different one. In the process, deconstruction assumes an image that can readily be appropriated, internalized, idealized, mastered, and/or discarded as fashion. As an architecture analogous to deconstruction, deconstructivist architecture substitutes a stable image of "disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion" for a destabilizing effect. It thus allows deconstruction to be appropriated by analogy, via an appropriation of the image in place of a subject that cannot easily be appropriated—a digestible image in place of an indigestible challenge. This may or may not be the overt intent of this architecture. It is, however, an avoidable consequence of its attempt to address deconstruction by analogy.

We may not at this point assume as a matter of course either the continuation of the search for the signs of life or the abandonment of it in favor of a production immune to its motivations. We may not assume as justification for our specific formal preferences, whatever they may be, the missing seal in signification as a replacement for a living sign. The external voice of deconstruction, heard from within the field, is not a substitute voice of authority, sanctioning our specific formal preferences in the name of an infinite potential for signification. It is important to keep in mind that our formal/spatial choices are always motivated, and it is the motivation or the link between form, function, and ideology that we need to carefully and critically reexamine, instead of seeking old or new exclusionary critical tools for forgetting or disguising the ideological agenda that conditions architectural production.

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