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The Cultural Burden of Architecture

Contemporary architectural discourse mostly assumes an unmediated link between architecture and culture. This is a historical assumption, however, rooted in colonial encounters when the notion of cultural difference first entered the architectural scene. In the first part of my article, I focus on a statement by Vitruvius that provides ways of thinking about architecture outside cultural identity categories. In the second part, I analyze two nineteenth-century texts to show both the cultural inscriptions of architectural discourse and their breaking points. Finally, I argue that recognizing the historicity of the relationship between architecture and culture involves problematizing architecture as an identity category as much as questioning culture as an architectural category.

The fact that house form can now be the domain of fashion suggests the general validity of the concept of criticality and *the primacy of socio-cultural factors*, and all that this implies for the understanding of *house form*, as well as its choice.[1]
— Amos Rapoport

From theology to commerce, from war to private pleasure, from mysticism to technology, the range of *Islamic culture* is expressed in a supremely assured series of *buildings*.[2]
— George Michell

As I have endeavored to show in this book through many examples from across the world, the *dwellings* of mankind represent the complex interaction of many aspects of *culture* essential to specific societies.[3]
— Paul Oliver

To understand each *house;* its form, hierarchy and spatial arrangement, it is necessary to "excavate" through several layers of *cultural influences*.[4]
— Robert Powell

A naturalized link between architecture and culture connects these statements, which come from di-verse scholarly positions in the last four decades of the past century. Such examples can be multiplied. An unproblematic, ahistorical and a priori link between architecture and culture underlies much of contemporary architectural discourse. Questions multiply. What is at stake in architecture's disciplinary obsession with cultural identity? What are the mechanisms that relate architecture to culture? What is architecture, and what is culture in the first place? In posing these questions, I do not intend to invoke historical and geographical differences between building types and architectural styles. What I ask here is to what extent architecture needs cultural identification for its universal legitimization. Is it possible to speak of architecture outside of culture?

Culture as a field of scholarly inquiry is inextricably linked to the disciplines of ethnography and anthropology. Furthermore, from the early nineteenth century on, notions of art and culture have been closely allied. As James Clifford points out, "art and culture emerged after 1800 as mutually reinforcing domains of human *value*, strategies for gathering, marking off, protecting the best and most interesting creations of 'man.'"[5] He also emphasizes that notions of wholeness, continuity, and essence are embedded in Western ideas of culture and art. In the past two decades, a large num-ber of scholars besides Clifford have addressed the colonial agendas that underlie this viewpoint and how it reinforced ethnic and racial hierarchies to consolidate the power of colonial domination.[6] The twentieth-century notion of cultural relativity (rather than hierarchy) that prevailed simultaneously with the historical phenomenon of decolonization hardly challenged the idea of culture as a unified category. It was one of the central preoccupations of postcolonial studies to dismantle this under-standing, largely due to historical circumstances. For, if colonization enabled the production of homogenous cultural identity categories, the post-colonial world staged a different scenario that challenged the colonizer-colonized binary and unsettled fixed notions of identification. The major task of postcolonial theory has been to focus on such notions as hybridity, displacement, decentering, and transculturation to question unifying and hegemonic cultural categories that privilege the Western world. As one of the leading proponents of postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha, put it:

The reality of the limit or limit-text of culture is rarely theorized outside of well-intentioned moralist polemics against prejudice and stereotype, or the blanket assertion of individual or institutional racism — that describe the effect rather than the structure of the problem. The

need to think the limit of culture as a problem of the enunciation of cultural difference is disavowed.[7]

Bhabha calls for the recognition of cultural difference based on the negation of the notion of culture as a stable system of reference. Informed by poststructuralist and psychoanalytical theories, he insists that all cultural systems are constructed in an ambivalent space of enunciation and a discontinuous time of translation and negotiation.

Such work has been and continues to be significant not only to criticize the effects of colonialism and to undo colonial texts but also to make architectural sense out of the postcolonial world, which unsettles given disciplinary and cultural boundaries. However, despite the critical work that problematized the notion of culture, the idea of "architecture as cultural expression" is still dominant in the architectural scene. The critique of this position is inscribed by a double burden because the deconstruction of culture needs to be articulated with the deconstruction of architecture as a similarly problematic identity category. "What is architecture?" is an exhausted question, always connected to an unacknowledged desire to secure a disciplinary boundary. The very question "What is?" assumes an a priori existence to architecture as a definable entity. It is based on the assumption that architecture exists before it is named as such, that there is an ahistorical and universally recognizable domain of architecture, the contents of which can be known. Any answer to "What is architecture?" draws a disciplinary boundary and fixes its contents. It is obsessed with defining exclusions as much as inclusions.

Indeed, the boundaries of architecture and its disciplinary inclusions and exclusions have received critical acclaim in the last decade. Critical theorists scrutinized both the institutional mechanisms that define and constitute architecture as a universal field of knowledge and the underlying assumptions of the disciplinary canon that had been consoli-

dated predominantly in Italy, France, Germany, and England since the sixteenth century.[8] By the nineteenth century, the primacy of vision, the autonomy of architectural form, and the genius of the master subject formed the well-established bases to recite the foundational myths of the architectural discipline.[9] Magali Sarfatti Larson's sociological approach to the institutional bases of the perpetuation of such premises, Mark Wigley's poststructuralist focus on the historical instability of the canon, Elizabeth Grosz's Deleuzian call to think architecture different than a bounded identity category are a few examples to show the diversity of critical angles.[10] Speaking of the location of the architectural canon, Miriam Gusevich mentions that "it spoke Latin, the language of the Church and of the court."[11] In the past decade, themes of race, ethnicity, and sexuality have entered architectural discourse in unprecedented ways. Critics effectively showed that the stability and presumed universality of the canon have historically involved repressions of sexuality, ethnicity, and race.

My question then is, if such themes as sexuality, ethnicity, and race are tied to architecture in historically specific ways, what about the notion of culture? Where and when did culture appear as an architectural category? Postcolonial approaches have clarified how non-Western cultures are repressed by the canon but to what extent can architectural discourse afford to involve cultural identity as one of its ingredients?[12] In posing these questions, I propose to see not only culture but also architecture as an identity category and signification rather than a stable and secure autonomous entity.[13] In doing so, I follow a proposition of psychoanalytical theory: any identity category is constituted both by its relationship to the Other and by an unsymbolizable kernel that cannot be incorporated into the social symbolic order.[14] In other words, an irreducible lack forms the basis of identity. No identity is ever complete. It is only through fantasy that the lack can be covered and a temporary illusion of fullness can be achieved.[15] As identity categories, both

culture and architecture are significatory entities with constructed rather than a priori and stable boundaries.

The articulation of the critique of architecture as a historically founded discipline and the notion of culture as a historically determined constitution call for attention not only to understand the effortlessly naturalized link between architecture and culture but also to undo uncritical architectural generalizations based on cultural and geographical identification. It should be clear by now that my concern here is not to provide a comfortably broad definition of architecture that can account for an infinite range of cultural locations. Instead, I ask how and where the term *architecture* is mobilized and in whose interest? Where does the question "what is architecture" come from? Is cultural difference inherent to this question, or do notions of universality and cultural difference have a history in relation to architecture?

So, What *Is* Architecture?

Every architecture student is familiar with Vitruvius's *firmitas, utilitas, venustas,* which is arguably the most common reference to any definition of the discipline. Clearly, the treatise of the ancient Roman theorist, *Ten Books on Architecture,* has significant implications regarding the search for a timeless definition of architecture.[16] However, I think that the text's relevance today is less due to the architectural certainties that it provides than to the productive ambiguities that underlie some of the arguments. In his treatise, before going into details of the characteristics and use of various architectural materials and elements, Vitruvius includes two sections on the education of the architect and the fundamental principles of architecture. From the outset, he clearly states that "practice" and "reasoning" are two indispensable components of architecture. Whereas practice corresponds to manual labor, reasoning constitutes theory, which he explains as "what can demonstrate and explain the proportions

of completed works skillfully and systematically."[17] To explicate this point further, he continues:

> Thus architects who strove to obtain practical manual skills but lacked an education have never been able to achieve an influence equal to the quality of their exertions; on the other hand, those who placed their trust entirely in theory and in writings seem to have chased after a shadow, not something real. But those who have fully mastered both skills, armed, if you will, in full panoply, those architects have reached their goal more quickly and influentially.

According to Vitruvius, the material substance — that is, building — needs to be authorized by theory — that is, language — to be qualified as architecture. The elements that endow the object with architectural authority are both language and materiality. Vitruvius further clarifies his distinction between theory and practice in the section where he locates the origin of dwelling in shelters assembled by raw materials from nature.[18] According to him, nature allows humans to produce shelters but these are not-yet-architecture. To be qualified as architecture, the production of a building has to involve literary, geometrical, historical, philosophical, musical, medical, legal, and astronomical knowledge. Following his distinction between manual skills and scholarship, Vitruvius makes the following crucial statement:

> Both in general and especially in architecture are these two things found; *that which signifies* and *that which is signified*. That which is signified is the thing proposed about which we speak; that which signifies is the demonstration unfolded in systems of precepts.[19]

I find this an astoundingly astute statement open for interpretation far beyond the scope and aim of Vitruvius's text. The statement "that which is signified is the thing proposed about which we

speak" points to a state prior to architecture. In reference to this state, Vitruvius uses the term *the thing*. The thing is nothing prior to signification. It refers to an irrecoverable state, a pre-architectural plenitude, prior to signification. In other words, Vitruvius's statement does not assume an a priori correspondence between "that which is signified" and "that which signifies." It is the latter that fixes the meaning of the former. Here architecture emerges as an empty category that retroactively fixes the relationship between things and their signification. In explaining the Lacanian theory of signification, Slavoj Zizek asks, "But is not the point of the Lacanian notion of the retroactive temporality of meaning, of signified as the circular effect of the signifier's chain, and so on, precisely that meaning always comes 'later,' that the notion of 'always-already there' is the true imaginary illusion-misrecognition?"[20] In Vitruvius's discourse, the meaning of architecture is fixed only after the *thing* is named as such. There is a certain sense of arbitrariness here. Before being named, the *thing* is open to endless significatory possibilities. By choosing to call it architecture, the theorist endows it with a specific identity. Architecture includes a selected number of things and excludes others. Its boundary not only defines but also is defined by its contents.

The task of architectural discourse then is to fill up that empty space of signification, that is, architecture, by strategic inclusions and exclusions. As an identity category, architecture has to distinguish itself from what it is not. In Vitruvius's scheme, any built object is a thing that awaits signification. It is not-yet-inside architecture so far as it is not signified, but not quite outside either as it holds the potential for significatory propriety. Saying that architecture is an empty category does not mean that it is a neutral one, however. On the contrary, a hegemonic identification of the term always emerges to colonize that negative space. The universal claims of architecture mark but the colonization of that space by a particular content. However,

Zizek states that, "the ultimate question is not which particular content hegemonizes the empty universality (and, thus, in the struggle for hegemony, excludes other particular contents); the ultimate question is which specific content has to be excluded so that the very *empty form* of universality emerges as the "battlefield" for hegemony."[21] Complex historical entanglements of institutions, discourses, and practices determine architecture's exclusions. Most importantly, the architectural grid of inclusions and exclusions is historically constituted and marked by historical shifts. The question then is what specific *things* have been historically problematized in the construction of a disciplinary ground for architecture? And, more importantly perhaps, how do the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion operate, and what are the stakes involved?

For Vitruvius, the threshold between architecture and nonarchitecture is marked by the notion of shelter. In his discourse, shelters built of raw materials hold an ambivalent status in relation to architecture. They are inside as they resemble architecture but outside as they do not involve learned discourse, which is an essential element in his definition of the discipline. Hence, Vitruvius relegates shelters to the status of architectural origin. Interestingly, the notion of cultural diversity is not absent from this argument. He mentions "foreign nations" from Greece to Spain in reference to their use of different building materials. These examples help him explain the origin of architecture.[22] A similar viewpoint appears later in Alberti's writings, too. The renowned Renaissance theorist offers a brief history of architecture in *Ten Books of Architecture* under the subtitle "That Architecture Began in Asia, Flourished in Greece, and Was Brought to Perfection in Italy."[23] For these authors, the fundamental issue is to trace the origins of architecture-as-they-defined-it. Other cultures merely multiply the examples in explaining the development of architecture from primitive beginnings. In Alberti's text, which clearly aims at legitimizing the superiority of

Italian architecture, others enter the scene as its less-developed versions. What is significant for him is the primitiveness of, say, Asian architecture and not the Asianness of primitive architecture. In other words, the naturalized ground of architectural identification is not challenged by cultural difference. In these discourses, differences between various architectural cultures do not call for theoretical elaboration.

Architecture "and" Culture

Vitruvius's stance on the relationship between architecture and culture was hardly challenged until the colonial encounters, which marks a decisive historical moment. It is the moment when cultural particularity enters the scene of architecture in unprecedented ways and marks a potential shift in the structuring principles of the discipline. The notion of colonial moment is an abstraction, of course, which I use in reference to an epistemological rather than a sociopolitical phenomenon. It refers to a shift of knowledge in addressing the problem of cultural difference rather than the historical and contextual conditions of that shift, which would involve the consideration of the unequal development of colonization in different national contexts.[24] I would argue that, from the colonial moment onward, the relationship between "that which signifies" and "that which is signified" was inscribed less by the difference between architecture and shelter than the tension between a universal notion of architecture and the relative status of buildings from different cultural contexts.

The opposition of universality and cultural particularity — that is, the universal space of architecture versus particular architectural cultures — is closely linked to the historical scene of colonial encounters. This duality is inscribed by a destabilizing threat to the boundaries of the discipline. Until colonial encounters Western architectural history and theory did not have to attend to cultural particularity as a sign of architectural difference. In England, France, and Germany, for example, archi-

tectural history was associated with the antiquarian study of the local Gothic past, which resonated with nationalist and religious overtones. In Italy, on the other hand, a rationalist interpretation of neoclassical architectural theory took central stage.[25] In the process of colonization, the West's encounter with its outside also marked its encounter with the known limits of architecture. The tenuous boundary that separated architecture from nonarchitecture was challenged. Thereafter, the accumulated written architectural tradition of the West was articulated with its privileged position as colonizer and successfully established as the disciplinary canon. James Fergusson's work on Indian architecture in which he judges the congruity of ornamentation, construction, and function and Thomas Karsten and Henri Maclaine Pont's assessment of Javanese architecture based on formal, structural, and functional appropriateness are but two examples to illustrate this point.[26] In these and other instances, the Vitruvian criteria of *firmitas, utilitas,* and *venustas* were applied to non-Western architectures with alarming ease. Upon close examination, however, neither Fergusson nor Karsten and Maclaine Pont were totally at ease with their assessments. Whereas the former struggled with ranking the "original and varied" forms of Indian architecture among the "intellectual supremacy of Greece" and the "moral greatness of Rome," the latter chose to remain silent on nontectonic aspects of Javanese architecture.[27] Colonial architectural encounters clearly resulted in an uneasy and often ambivalent relationship between the colonizers and the category of non-Western architecture. How can that ambivalence be theorized?

I would argue that colonial architectural encounters resulted in a critical gap between "that which signifies" and "that which is signified." The architectural field was ridden with a brief moment of anxiety when unfamiliar terms appeared at its door. This is an uncomfortable moment that points to a space that lies beyond the given limits of disciplinary discourse and practice. The presumed com-

pleteness, coherence, and consistency of (Western) architecture are threatened. A new question needs to be addressed: What is architecture in relation to the non-Western buildings that emerge at its limit? But that is a dangerous question because it points to the precariousness of disciplinary premises and boundaries. An even more threatening question that follows is whether architecture can ever be constituted as a complete, coherent, and consistent field. Following psychoanalytic theory's proposal that any identity category depends on a fundamental loss (a state of being that precedes language), we may ask whether the emergence of unfamiliar building forms could have evoked such a state in relationship to (Western) architectural discourse? Paradoxically, the very term *non-Western* as an architectural category reveals the condition of impossibility for the constitution of *architecture* as a bounded totality. It indicates that architecture needs a prefix (that is, non-Western) to accommodate other cultures than the West. At one level, the term *non-Western architecture* symbolizes a fantasy that voices over the silence that enables the term *architecture* to be uttered. It is a cultural category that covers over architecture's lack.

To argue this point further, I will focus on two of the earliest texts from the West and the non-West respectively: Sir Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method for the Student, Craftsman and Amateur* (1901 edition) and *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (The Ottoman Architectural Order, 1873), an edited book published by the Ottoman government for the 1873 world exhibition in Vienna.[28] Both are inaugural texts in their respective fields. Fletcher's book is the first systematic survey of world architecture, and *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* is the first to codify and historicize Ottoman architecture. In confronting the West/non-West divide, these texts reveal the ambiguities involved in the juxtaposition of architectural and cultural categories. They also show the different effects that the *non* of the *non-West* has in this divide. To perpetuate their unequal relationship, the West needs the

license to judge, and the non-West needs to be legitimated. The inequality of these positions has important strategic effects on the vocabulary of architecture.[29]

At one level, *A History of Architecture* and *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* bear unmistakable traces of orientalism and occidentalism, respectively. Fletcher's history is one of the earliest Western architectural surveys to address non-Western architectures in a comparative framework. Appearing toward the end of the colonial era, it clearly reflects the desire to project the supremacy of the colonizers' world. *A History of Architecture* consists of two sections: "Historical Styles," which is a chronological account of western architecture, and "Non-Historical Styles," which includes non-western architectural cultures. According to the author, whereas historical styles are based on the primacy of structure and construction, nonhistorical styles are overly ornamented and lack constructional logic.[30] Fletcher's orientalist approach is most apparent in his renowned frontispiece "Tree of Architecture," where nonhistorical styles branch out from the "western" trunk of the tree with no room to grow beyond the seventh-century mark (Figure 1). Placing Peruvian, Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, and Japanese architecture at the lowest level of the trunk, Fletcher leaves no doubt about the geographical, ethnic, and racial biases that underlie the architectural canon. His approach to architectural hierarchies clearly parallels the obsession of late-eighteenth-century anatomists with constructing the hierarchy of races to assert the supremacy of whiteness.[31] As such, Fletcher's account is in line with the mainstream approach of European orientalists.

Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani appeared in an intense and reformative social and political context. This was the time of the birth of Ottoman nationalism with the aim of providing social cohesion between the various ethnic and religious groups that constituted the empire.[32] By the second half of the nineteenth century, mostly due to European scholarship on Ottoman history, traditional chroniclers based on
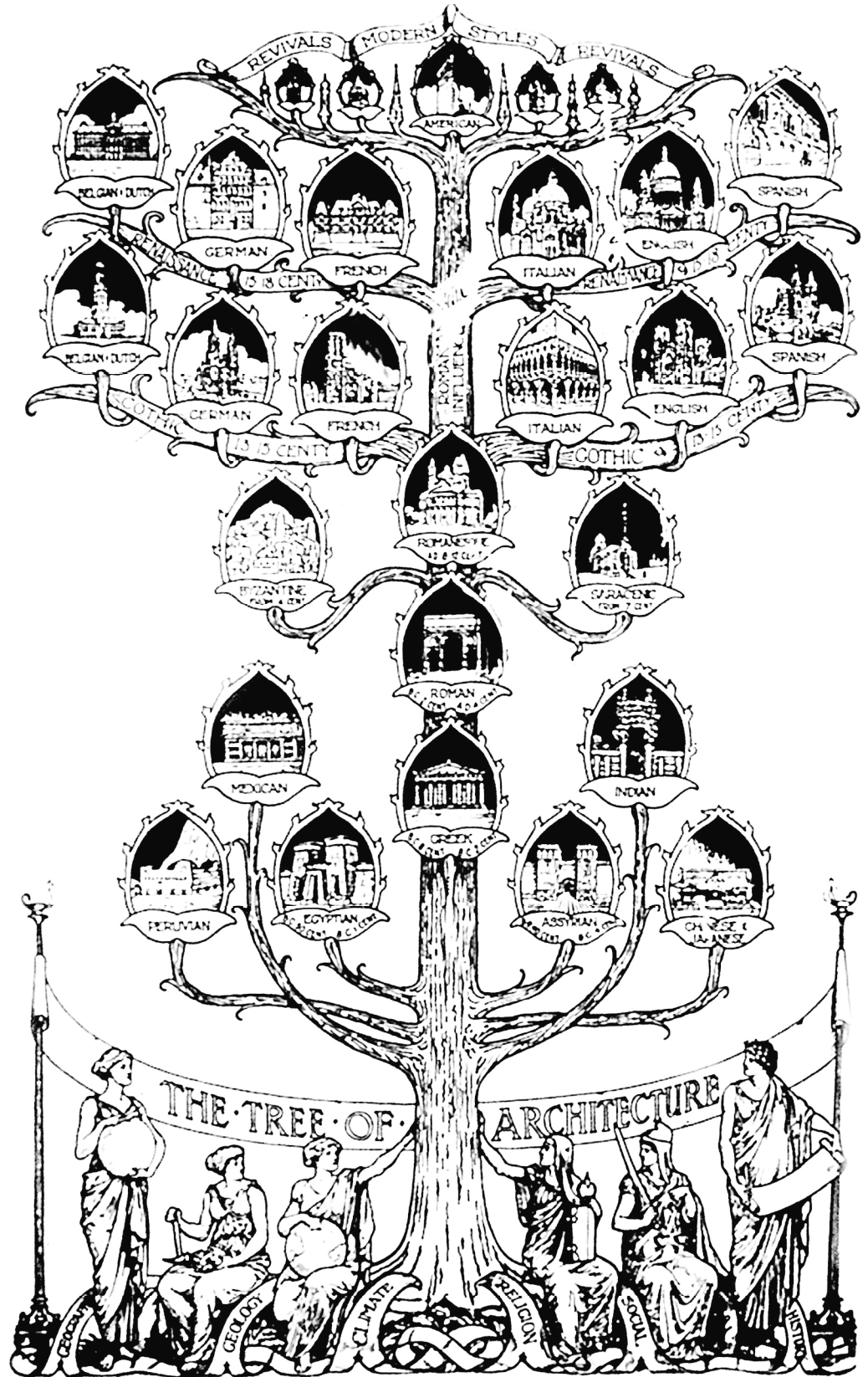
pedigree and divine sanction were replaced by a new focus on race and ethnicity. *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* marks part of a general shift of historiographical focus from an Islamic to a national identity. This book also consists of two sections: "Historical Information" and "Various Orders." The former summarizes Ottoman architectural history from the foundation of the empire. According to this narrative, Ottoman architecture undergoes three successive phases. Following relatively obscure beginnings, it matures until the sixteenth century when it attains perfection. The end of the seventeenth century, on the other hand, marks the beginning of its decline period. This progression is supported by contextual explanations outside architecture. The full realization of Ottoman architecture, that is, its purest state, coincides with the most powerful era of the empire in political and military terms. Its decline, on the other hand, is explained by invasions from outside. According to the authors, Ottoman architecture is polluted by Byzantine and Arabian influences at its early stages and later by French and Armenian architects. Here, the West appears as an undesirable agent whose influence disrupts the purity of Ottoman architecture. This account is unmistakably rooted in the Hegelian historiographical tradition, which emphasizes the divine dignity of art, the role of the collective (that is, nation) in artistic production and historical determinism.[33] The narrative of growth, development, and decline in Ottoman architecture and the notion of architecture as the expression of societal transformations are indicative of the historiographical background of *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani*.

The second section of the book involves aesthetic codification. Parallel to the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders that are codified in Western architecture, the authors recognize three orders in the Ottoman tradition: the Conical order (*Tarz-ı Mimari-i Müstevi*), the Diamond order (*Tarz-ı Mimari-i Mahruti*), and the Crystalline order (*Tarz-ı Mimari-i Mücevheri*) (Figures 2, 3, 4). They then codify the

2. The Conical order. (Halil Edhem et al., *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (Istanbul: 1873), plate II.)
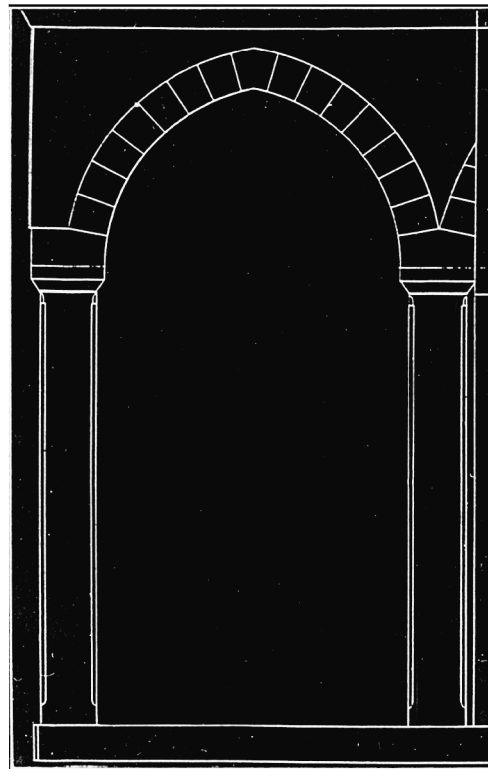
3. The Diamond order. (Halil Edhem et al., *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (Istanbul: 1873), plate V.)
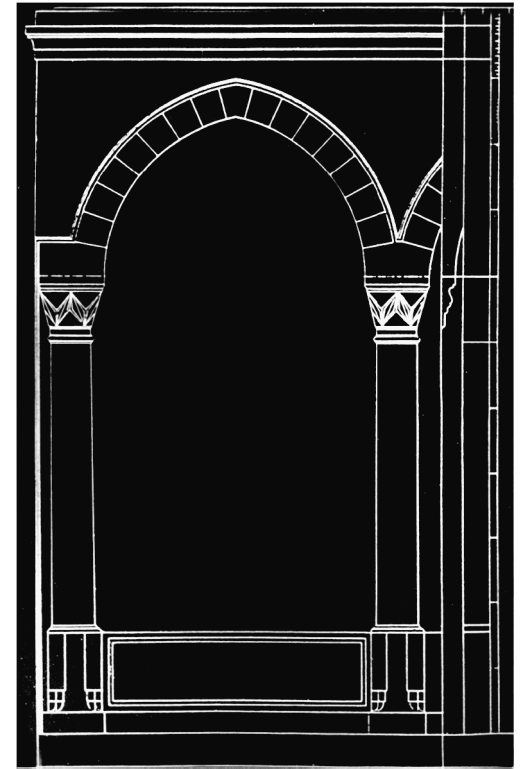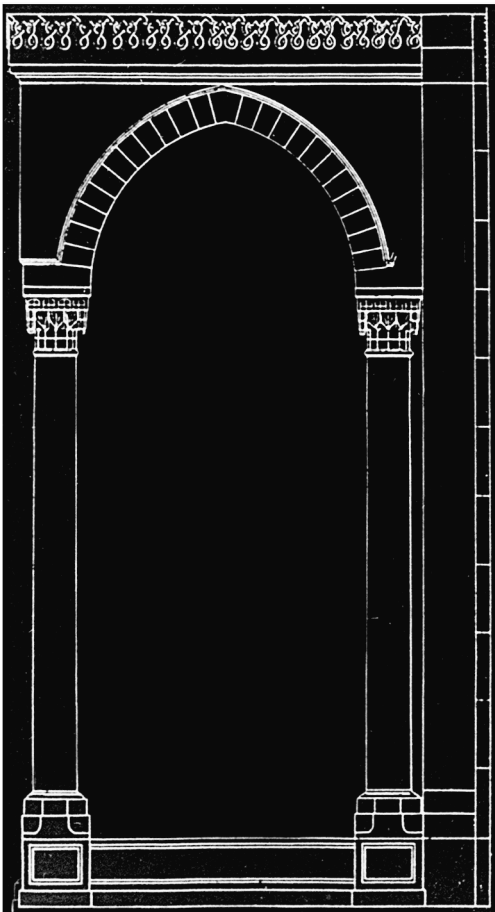
mathematical and proportional relations between the constitutive parts of each order. The Hegelian narrative and the architectural models of *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* bear testimony to its occidentalist inscription. It marks an attempt to defy Ottoman marginality to the West by forging a cultural synthesis using the privileged tools of Western representation.

Although I think that it is extremely important to surface and criticize the orientalist and occidentalist operations in *A History of Architecture* and *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani*, I propose that there are other and more productive ways of reading these texts. At one level, both of them point to a space

to think architecture differently by introducing new terms to the disciplinary discourse as an inevitable yet inadvertent result of the West/non-West divide. Fletcher's use of the term *non-historical styles* in a book on the history of architectural styles reveals the necessary impossibility of the inclusion of other cultures to perpetuate the universalistic claims of the West — necessary because architectural history otherwise remains incomplete, impossible because non-Western styles are nonhistorical. Furthermore, throughout his book, Fletcher simultaneously expresses fascination and contempt for these styles. Paradoxical and ambivalent statements that

4. The Crystalline order. (Halil Edhem et al., *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* (Istanbul: 1873), plate VI.)

the historical narrative is built upon the notion of cultural identity, the stylistic account is based on issues of architectural identity. Even the title, *The Ottoman Architectural Order*, points toward a gap between the notions of Ottoman architecture, which has a cultural emphasis, and architectural order, which has an architectural emphasis. At a broader theoretical level, this gap raises the very question of whether architecture can function independently of homogenizing cultural identifications. Furthermore, by using the Western vocabulary as its basis, the section on the Ottoman architectural order exposes the arbitrariness of the association of architectural orders with the West. The presumed uniqueness and hegemonic superiority of Western architecture is momentarily destabilized.

If, in Fletcher's case, the term *non-Western* burdens the category of architecture, *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* shows how the term *Ottoman* is burdened by architecture. There, Ottoman architecture has to be legitimized by Western standards but is polluted by Western architectural influences. In mimicking Western terms to enable the entry of Ottoman architecture into the grand narrative of the discipline while culturally debasing the West, this text is an astute revelation of the ambiguities that are embedded in the juxtaposition of cultural and architectural identifications. Clearly, the appearance of a cultural element in the architectural scene resulted in strategic adjustments that ultimately consolidated the disciplinary canon. The new element that threatened architecture's dissolution was hardly acknowledged as a pointer toward the possibility of restructuring the founding premises of the discipline.

The Location of Architecture

As *A History of Architecture* and *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* exemplify, the schism between architecture and culture appears most strikingly in architectural history texts. This is hardly surprising, as history plays an irreducible role in perpetuating the canon by means of its narrative structure. Narrativization,

by definition, imposes consistence, coherence, regularity, and fullness on phenomena, which might otherwise be disparate and incommensurable. This imposition requires a common ground, an ahistorical reference that enables the translation of difference into similarity. Slavoj Zizek insists that "every version of historicism relies on a minimal 'ahistorical' formal framework defining the terrain within which the open and endless game of contingent inclusions/exclusions, substitutions, renegotiations, displacements, and so on, takes place."[34] Architecture as a universal signifier becomes the ahistorical reference for historical narratives. Architectures of different cultures are then seen as merely different versions of *architecture*. They are conveniently appropriated into the grand narrative of architectural history without acknowledging that it has been canonized at a particular time and in a particular geographical location. This narrative historicizes architecture, without questioning the historicity of its structuring principles. It involves the narrativization of a naturalized, presumably universal definition of *architecture*.

Zizek's distinction between historicism and historicity is particularly useful here. He states that "*historicism* deals with the endless play of substitutions within the same fundamental field of (im)possibility, while *historicity* proper makes thematic different structural principles of this very (im)possibility."[35] In terms of my own argument, architectural historical narratives deal with increasing numbers of cultures without acknowledging that the structuring principles of architecture are historically constituted and that, as an identity category, the fullness of architecture is always already an impossibility. When architectural difference is reduced to cultural difference, other architectures can be relentlessly incorporated within the established boundaries of the discipline. The question then is what if architectural discourse recognized its own repression in the production of cultural others. What if it recognized its own limits, the conditions of its own construction before naming other *things* simply

threaten the consistency of the text underwrite the derogatory implications of the term *nonhistorical*.

Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani is also marked by a destabilizing moment in its historiographical trajectory. There, the separation of the narrative history of Ottoman architecture from its formal analysis points to the possibility of separating the materiality of architecture from its cultural location. Whereas

as architectures of other cultures? Maybe it will then be possible to see that other architectures do not necessarily exist outside the homelands of ex-colonizers but outside the given boundaries of architecture. Although architectures of other cultures can easily be assimilated into the architectural canon and serve hegemonic cultural hierarchies, other architectures offer the possibility to question the boundaries of the discipline. They may enable the recognition of the impossibility of the fullness of architecture and the historicity of its canonical premises.

Focusing on the historical transformations of the very notion of architecture would enable a shift of focus from cultural diversity to cultural difference. Cultural diversity, according to Homi Bhabha, is a category of comparative ethics and aesthetics that emphasizes liberal notions of multiculturalism and cultural exchange. Cultural difference, on the other hand, "focuses on the problem of the ambivalence of cultural authority: the attempt to dominate in the *name* of a cultural supremacy which is itself produced only in the moment of differentiation."[36] In architectural terms, thinking in terms of cultural difference surfaces the schism between (Western) architecture and its others and renders visible the ambivalence that is inherent in the conception of architecture as a unitary and stable identity category. The architectural canon can afford to parade as universal only to the extent that it relegates historical difference to the cultural field. Once architecture is dissociated from cultural identity categories, one is liberated to see other than what is given-to-be-seen by the canonical premises of the discipline.[37] Questioning the relationship between architecture and culture involves problematizing architecture as an identity category as much as questioning culture as an architectural category. To assume an unproblematical link between architectural and cultural identification means to overlook the dissociation between *that which signifies* and *that which is signified,* which Vitruvius proclaimed two thousand years ago.

Notes

An earlier version of this article appeared in the proceedings of "De-Placing Difference," the third symposium of the Center for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture at the University of Adelaide, Australia, July 3–6, 2002.

1. Emphasis mine. Amos Rapoport, *House Form and Culture* (NJ: Prentice Hall, 1969), p. 135.

2. Emphasis mine. George Michell, ed., *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), p. 7.

3. Emphasis mine. Paul Oliver, *Dwellings: The House Across the World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), p. 232.

4. Emphasis mine. Robert Powell, *The Asian House: Contemporary Houses of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Select Books, 1993), p. 10.

5. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 234.

6. Much of this critical work is informed by Edward Said's paradigmatic book, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), although these are inspired by diverse theoretical approaches ranging from Marxism to psychoanalytical theory.

7. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 34.

8. These regions are the primary focus of Hanno-Walter Kruft's survey, *A History of Architectural Theory: From Vitruvius to the Present* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994). His selection clearly shows the geographical biases in the constitution of a body of knowledge called architectural theory.

9. For an extensive explanation and critique of these premises informed by psychoanalytical and feminist theories, see Mirjana Lozanovska, *Excess: A Thesis on Sexual Difference and Architecture* (Ph.D. diss., Deakin University, Melbourne, 1994), ch. 1.

10. Magali Sarfatti Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Facade: Architectural Change in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 3–20; Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender," in Beatriz Colomina, ed., *Sexuality and Space* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), pp. 327–389; and Elizabeth Grosz, "Architecture From the Outside" in her *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 125–140.

11. Miriam Gusevich, "The Architecture of Criticism: A Question of Autonomy," in Andrea Kahn, ed., *Drawing Building Text* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), p. 9. At this point, it is worthwhile to remember Martin Bernal's controversial contribution to the historiography of Classicism. At a time when scholars began to demand major changes in the canon of works and cultures studied in American and European academic circles, Bernal pointed to the Egyptian and Phoenician roots of Hellenistic Greece and claimed that European scholars have been biased against these influences (*Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, v. 1 (London: Free Association Books, 1987) and v. 2 (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991)). For the controversy surrounding Bernal's claims, see Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

12. For a collection of architectural essays informed by postcolonial theories, see G. Baydar Nalbantoglu and C.T. Wong, eds., *Postcolonial Space(s)* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

13. In exploring the inside/outside boundary of architecture, Karen Burns focuses on architecture as an identity category. Her argument is based on the presumed distinction between building and architecture. See Karen Burns, "Architecture: That Useless Supplement," in the proceedings of the conference *Accessory/Architecture*, Auckland, New Zealand (July 1995), pp. 49–56.

14. Renata Salecl argues this point in "For the Love of the Nation: Ceaucescu's Disneyland" in her *(Per)Versions of Love and Hate* (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 79–103.

15. For an intriguing analysis of the Lacanian notion of fantasy and its application to the social sphere, see Slavoj Zizek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997).

16. Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Ingrid D. Rowland, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

17. Ibid., p. 21. The two terms — *practice* and *reasoning* — appear differently in various translations of Vitruvius. Frank Granger's translation (London: William Heinemann, 1962 [1931]) uses the oldest, eighth-century manuscript, in which the Latin terms appear as *fabrica* and *ratiocinatione*. Granger translates them as *craftsmanship* and *technology* (p. 7). Both translators use the term *theory* for *ratiocinationibus* in the same section.

18. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Rowland, trans., p. 34.

19. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Granger, trans., p. 7. Risking inconsistency, here I use the Granger translation. Rowland's translation reads, "In all things, but especially in architecture, there are two inherent categories: the signified and the signifier," (p. 34). In my following reading, the term "that" in "that which signifies" and "that which is signified" is significant. The Latin text used by Granger uses the terms, *quod significatur* and *quod significat* (p. 6). Deborah Howard also uses this statement by Vitruvius in her work on Renaissance architecture in Scotland to support her argument on the fluidity of the relationship between the choice of architectural language and its ideological content. My concern here is the materiality of building — rather than style — and its relationship to architectural discourse. For Howard's take on Vitruvius, see her "Language and Architecture in Scotland, 1500–1660," in *Architecture and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 172.

20. Slavoj Zizek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes Please," in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek, eds., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 118.

21. Ibid., p. 110.

22. Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, Rowland, trans., pp. 34–35.

23. Leon Battista Alberti, *The Ten Books of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), pp. 114–115. It is important to note that Alberti's statements on architecture in Asia is based on his knowledge of the "Works of the Ancients" and is written in a highly speculative style.

24. I borrow the term *colonial moment* from Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, p. 32. For a critique of the (mis)uses of the terms *colonial* and *postcolonial,* see Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post Colonialism,'" *Social Text* 10 (1992): 84–98; and Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" *Social Text* 10 (1992): 99–113. The articulation of the epistemological and sociopolitical aspects of the use of the term (*post*)*colonial* is addressed by Stuart Hall, "When

Was 'the Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds., *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 242–259.

25. I indicated earlier that the architectural canon was consolidated primarily in Italy, France, and Germany since the sixteenth century. Henceforth, I use the terms *West* and *western* for the sake of convenience with these references in mind. For a survey of architectural historiography in the West, see David Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

26. I have elaborated on Fergusson's work in more detail in "Beyond Lack and Excess: Other Architectures, Other Landscapes" *JAE* 54/1 (Sept. 2000): 21–22. For an analysis of western historiography of Javanese architecture, see Stephen Cairns, "Re-Surfacing: Architecture, *Wayang*, and the 'Javanese House,'" in Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu and Wong Chong Thai, eds., *Postcolonial Space(s)*, pp. 73–88.

27. James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (New Delhi: Sri Devendra Jain for Munshiram Manorharlal, 1972 [reprint of revised 1910 edition; first published in 1876], p. 4. Stephen Cairns argues the latter point in relation to the *pringittan* pavilion of the Javanese house, which remained "most blatantly undrawn, unexhibited, unphotographed, undiscussed." See Cairns, "Re-Surfacing Architecture," pp. 85–86.

28. As the authorship of *Usul-u Mimari-i Osmani* is controversial, I will refrain from references to various authors who contributed to it. For a detailed account of the surrounding controversy, see Ahmet A. Ersoy, "On the Sources of the Ottoman Renaissance: Architectural Revival and its Discourse During the Abdulaziz Era (1861–76)" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2000), pp. 118–201. Ersoy concludes that the French architect Marie de Launay, the official correspondent of the Ottoman commission, wrote the original text in French and the Italian architect Pietro Montani provided the technical documents. Montani and the artists Eugene Maillard and Bogos Sasiyan executed most of the drawings and color plates. Edhem Pasa was in charge of the Turkish text, arguably in collaboration with Ahmed Vefik Pasa.

29. Some of these are widely studied by historians and area specialists. *Westernization* has been a standard term used to explain the architectural transformations in non-Western contexts during colonization. Architecture, as a modern discipline, was born in these places on the basis of Western institutional models such as schools, professional associations, and publications.

30. I focused on various aspects of Fletcher's text in "Towards Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture*," *Assemblage* 35 (1997): 6–17; and "Beyond Lack and Excess: Other Architectures/Other Landscapes," *JAE* (Sept. 2000): 20–27.

31. For a historical study of scientific racism, see Stephen J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981).

32. For classical accounts of nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms, see Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

33. For a detailed explanation of Hegelian historiography, see Ernst Gombrich, "Hegel and Art History" *Architectural Design* 51/6–7 (1981): 3–10.

34. Zizek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism?," pp. 109–110.

35. Ibid., p. 112.

36. Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 34.

37. Kaja Silverman theorizes the potential to see other than what-is-given-to-be-seen within the Lacanian categories of the gaze, the look, and the screen in *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996).