

I won't now try to summarize my theory of postmodernity – which goes back to the early 1980's – except to say what it tried to do: to correlate a set of psychic and cultural symptoms. If I may put it that way, with an underlying socio-economic periodizing hypothesis. The cultural and psychic symptoms included a growing predominance of the spatial over temporal (which had been the dominant of an older high modernism); a reorganization of the hierarchy of the arts in such a way that the visual image became the central aesthetic phenomenon (a place hitherto reserved for language, and in particular for poetic language); and finally a reduction of experience to the present instant and to the body. These features redefine art and culture just as they reorganize the psychic subject.

The socio-economic hypothesis meanwhile posited a shift from that older moment of monopoly capitalism which Lenin called the "imperialist stage" to a new postimperialist and postcolonial stage, which, following the German usage, I called "late capitalism". This stage is characterized by a shift from the older technology of heavy industrial capitalism to the never cybernetic and informational electronic systems, which has resulted in a conclusive transformation of production and labor. As far as business is concerned, the transformation meant an increasing predominance of finance capital and financial speculation (not least in currency and in land values), and a lightning-like rapidity of money flows all over the globe. These economic effects are I believe primarily what is meant by globalization, and I regret not having been prophetic enough to insist on that aspect of things in my first accounts of postmodernity. Postmodernity and globalization are identical and to insist on the identity between them probably goes a long way towards ensuring a serious social content for a concept – postmodernity – which is often thought to be frivolous and merely cultural. Indeed, one of the originalities of postmodernity itself is to have secured a kind of identity between the economic and the cultural: in the world of global (or as some call it, postmodern) marketing, there is no economic product which is not a cultural object of some kind; while culture today has almost universally become a commodity, sometimes a commodity with a good deal of investment value and profitable returns. Meanwhile, and as a consequence all the older, traditional, classic ideas of the autonomy of the aesthetic have vanished like the snow and glaciers of the ice age. Still, the economic and the cultural perspectives on globalization are rather different from each other, and I want now – after offering a brief "definition" – to outline what I take to be the four essential or logically possible positions on the matter.

The concept of globalization reflects the sense of an immense enlargement of world communication, as well as of the horizon of a world market, both of which seem far more tangible and immedi-

ate than in earlier stages of modernity. Roland Robertson, surely one of the most ambitious theorists of the matter, has formulated the dynamic of globalization as "the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular". This is a valuable lead, even though Robertson is intent on offering something like a Utopian vision of "globality", of some new global ethnic and consciousness in the world today, rather than a structural account of the forms of globalization takes in the various realms of the political, the economic and the cultural. I believe that it is necessary to add a dose of negativity to his formula, and to insist on the relations of antagonism and tension between these two poles. I thus propose to "define" globalization as an untotizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts – mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which however continue to articulate themselves on the model of "national identities" (rather than in terms of social classes, for example). But what we now need to add to the other qualifications implicit in the formulation – binary or point-to-point relations already being rather different than some plural constellation of localities and particulars – is that such relations are first and foremost ones of tension or antagonism, when not outright exclusion. In them each term struggles to define itself against the binary other. We must therefore, now add that such relationship (between a state claiming universality, for example, such as the U.S. or the West, and another claiming local particularity, or between particulars, or between universals) are necessarily symbolic ones, which express themselves in a range of collective imaginaries. This does not of course mean that they are somehow merely cultural, let alone unreal. For such symbolic transmission requires the preexistence of economic and communicational channels and preestablished circuits. What emerges world-wide are then patterns of negative and positive exchanges which resemble those of class relations and struggles within the nation-state, even though, as I have insisted, they do not (yet) define themselves in that way and currently remain fixed and thematized at the level of the spatial and the geopolitical. I should add that, even on this provisional "definition", the status of the older nation-state under globalization remains a topic for heated debate: it will be more productive to keep this matter open, and in particular to insist that the definition does not imply any transcendence of the older form of the nation state, nor even a form which might be thought eventually to replace it (world government, world culture, or whatever).

Four positions on our topic seem logically available. The first affirms the opinion that there is no such thing as globalization (there are still the nation-states and the national situations, nothing is new under the sun). The second also affirms that global-

ization is nothing new, there has always been globalization and it suffices to leaf through the history books to see that as far back as the neolithic trade routes have been global in their scope, with Polynesian artifacts deposited in Africa, and Asian potsherds as far afield as the New World.

Then I suppose one should add two more: one which affirms the relationship between globalization and the world market which is ultimate horizon of capitalism. Only to add that the current world networks are only different in degree and not in kind; while a fourth affirmation (which I have found more interesting than the other three) posits some new or third, multinational stage of capitalism, of which globalization is an intrinsic feature and which we now largely tend, whether we like it or not, to associate with that thing called postmodernity.

Meanwhile, above and beyond all this, there are the judgments: one can deplore globalization or celebrate it, just as one welcomes the new freedoms of the postmodern era and the postmodern outlook, and in particular the new technological revolutions, or on the other hand elegiacally laments the passing of the splendors of the modern: the glories and possibilities of modernism in the arts, the disappearance of history as the fundamental element in which human beings exist, and not least, the end of an essentially modernist field of political struggle in which the great ideologies still had the force and the authority of the great religions of the earlier times. But I do think we have an interest in at least provisionally separating this now familiar postmodern debate from the matter of globalization, all the while understanding only too well that the two issues are deeply intertwined and that positions on the postmodern debate are bound to make their way back in eventually.

Let's start from the principle that we already somehow know what globalization is, and try rather to focus on the concept of globalization, on its ideological structure, if you like (it being understood in advance that this word ideology is unprejudicial, and that a concept can be ideological and also correct and true all at once). I believe that globalization is a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings. We have a sense that there are both denser and more extensive communicational networks all over the world today, networks that are on the one hand the result of remarkable innovations in communicational technologies of all kinds, and on the other have as their foundations the tendentially greater degree of modernization in all the countries of the world, or at least in their big cities, which includes the implantation of such technologies.

But the communicational focus of the concept of globalization is essentially incomplete: I defy anyone to try to think it in exclusively media or communicational terms; and we can find a point of contrast and

distinctions in the images of the media in the earlier twentieth century, that is to say in the modernist period. There did then seem to be a certain semi-autonomy about the development of the media: radio did seem to penetrate for the first time into remote areas (both at home and abroad); the progress of film around the world was both a swift and a startling one, which seemed to bring some new kind of mass consciousness with it, journalism and reporting, meanwhile, were somehow at their outer reaches heroic acts, which shed new light and brought back new information. No one can feel that the cybernetic revolution is like that, if only because it builds on those first, already established, networks. The communicational development today no longer projects the image in all its connotations, but rather simply that of new technologies.

This is why, along with the communicational concept of globalization, one always finds other dimensions smuggled in. Thus, if the newer phenomenon essentially distinguishes itself from the older modern one by technology rather than by information (even though this term is then itself reappropriated and ideologically developed today on a grand scale). What happens is that the technology and what the computer people call information begins to slip insensibly in the direction of advertisements and publicity, of postmodern marketing, and finally of the export of TV programs, rather than the return of startling reports from remote places. But this is to say that the surface concept, the communicational one, has suddenly acquired a whole cultural dimension: the communicational signifier has been endowed with a more properly cultural signified or signification. Now the positing of an enlargement of communicational nets has secretly been transformed into some kind of message about a new world culture.

But the slippage can also take an other direction: the economic. Thus, in our attempt to think this new, still purely communicational concept, we begin to fill the empty signifier in with visions of financial transfers and investments all over the world, and the new networks begin to swell with the commerce of some new and allegedly more flexible capitalism (I have to confess that I have always found this a ludicrous expression). We begin to remembering that the newly flexible production was made possible by computerization precisely a loop back to the technological again). And we also remember that computers and their programs and the like are themselves among the most hotly exchanged forms of goods among the nations today. In this variant then, the ostensibly communicational concept has secretly been transformed into a vision of the world market and its new-found interdependence, a global division of labor on an extraordinary scale, new electronic trade-routes tirelessly plied by commerce and finance alike.

Now I think we are better equipped to understand the flows of debate and ideology around the slippery concept, whose twin and not altogether commensurable faces now seem to produce two distinct types of position, which are however themselves reversible. Thus, if you insist on the cultural contents of this new communicational form, I think you will slowly emerge into a postmodern celebration of difference and differentiation: suddenly all the cultures around the world are placed in tolerant contact with each other in a kind of immense cultural pluralism which it would be very difficult not to welcome. Beyond that, beyond the dawning celebration of cultural difference, and often very closely linked to it, is a celebration of the emergence of a whole immense range of groups, races, genders, ethnies, into the speech of the public sphere, a falling away of those structures that condemned whole segments of the population to silence and to subalternity. A world-wide growth of popular democratization – why not? – which seems to have some relationship to the evolution of the media, but which is immediately expressed by a new richness and variety of cultures in the new world space.

If, on the other hand, your thoughts turn economic, and the concept of globalization becomes colored by those codes and meanings, I think you will find the concept darkening and growing more opaque. Now what comes to the fore is increasing identity (rather than difference): the rapid assimilation of hitherto autonomous national markets and productive zones into a single sphere, the disappearance of national subsistence (in food for example), the forced integration of countries all over the globe into precisely that new global division of labor I mentioned before. Here what begins to infuse our thinking of globalization is a picture of standardization on an unparalleled new scale, of forced integration as well, into a world system from which "delinking" (to use Samir Amin's term) is henceforth impossible and even unthinking and inconceivable. This is obviously a far more baleful prospect than the preceding joyous vision of heterogeneity and difference, but I'm not sure that these visions are logically incompatible, indeed they seem somehow to be dialectically related, at least on the mode of the unresolvable antinomy.

But now, having achieved these first twin positions. Having in some first moment rotated the concept in such a way that it takes on these distinct kinds of content, its surface now glittering in light, and then obscured again by darkness and gloom – now it is important to add that the transfers can begin. Now, after having secured these first initial structural possibilities, you can project their axes upon each other. Now, in a second moment, the baleful vision of identity can be transferred onto the cultural realm: in what will be affirmed, in some gloomy Frankfurt School fashion, in the world-wide

Americanization or standardization of culture, the destruction of local differences, the massification of all the people on the planet.

But you are equally free to do the inverse, and to transfer the joyous and celebratory difference and multiple heterogeneities of the first, cultural dimensions, onto the economic sphere. Where as you may well imagine the rhetoricians of the market pop up and feverishly reassure us as to the richness and excitement of the new free market all over the world, and the increase in sheer productivity which open market will lead to, the transcendental satisfaction that human beings have finally begun to grasp exchange, the market and capitalism, as their most fundamental human possibilities and the surest sources of freedom.

Now I want to offer a few reflections and speculations about the impact on architecture of this new situation. Actually, as far as postmodernity itself is concerned, I have the feeling that it was architecture which offered the first signals and symptoms of the great transformation. It was in architecture that the end of aesthetic modernism, and presumably even of social modernity itself, and also prophetic thoughts such as Frampton's critical regionalism began to become visible. Indeed, we may speculate that the new emergence of a far more thorough going globality than anything hitherto known in human history was registered somehow in the convulsive transformations of spatiality itself. Time is eclipsed in the instant transfers of capital all around the globe, while space becomes a strange new type of living matter, throwing up grotesque new forms which are neither living nor inorganic and imposing hitherto unknown categories and mental forms on a present of time that has shed the reassuring familiarities of an everyday life now rendered obsolescent, if not extinct.

What new kinds of relations can or will emerge from this metamorphosis? This is the central political question, commanding all the others.

It is difficult to think, not merely because of the multiplicity of fields to be interrogated, but above all because postmodernity has become the place of antinomies; in this instance, a sense of increasing, omnipresent standardization and homogeneity, accompanied by an almost equal universal celebration of heterogeneities. In such a situation, the experience and diagnosis of contradiction, which seemed to be the fundamental figure of the modernist period, has seemingly become less serviceable as an instrument of analysis. A contradiction may be unresolvable but it is at least thinkable: an antinomy is however defined in advance as what cannot be properly conceptualized or articulated in thought. I want to follow this process now in the area of architecture by confronting one of the great histories of high modernist architecture, *L'Architettura contemporanea* (modern architecture) by Manfredo Tafuri

and Francesco Dal Co, with some rather different postcontemporary problems.

Uniquely among architecture historians, however, the opposition is not one between stylistic features – around which Tafuri and Dal Co organize their narrative – such as rationalism and expressionism, or technology versus aesthetics, or baroque extravagance versus ascetic minimalism – although these are all real oppositions which must be subsumed in the scheme somewhere. Rather it is between two realities, the building over against the city, and it is in particular this urgency of the city and the dilemmas with which it confronts architecture which marks out the central contradiction of this work and also the most interesting area on which to confront it with present-day realities and concerns. From a philosophical standpoint, the opposition between the city and the individual buildings replays the ancient and perennial problems of the universal and the particular and also of the totality and the individual. But from a concrete standpoint it admits of many meanings. Thus the city is for these authors the context in which the central theme of planning appears, so that its more purely architectural opposite would then be the anarchy of the individual commission, or even the fluctuation in the value of land and site.

At the same time, the city sets in place the question of political power, in which case its opposite is surely the pure aestheticism of architecture as style, as aestheticism or paper architecture. In the light, however, of other canonical descriptions – for the authors, as for many of us, the central text will still be Simmel's *Die Großstadt und das Geistesleben* – the city is also chaos and anxiety, which in this case its aesthetic opposite is one or another form of order or at least of allaying or coming to terms with that anxiety. Yet if the new industrial city is a more standardized form of chaos or alienation, its opposite number might just as plausibly be the regional or the national, as in Holland, Scandinavia and Catalonia. But if the city is degeneracy and a flood of degraded messages and images, including new dead architectural styles – remember that for Loos the riot of ornament and ornamentation in Vienna made it a "tattooed city" – then its opposite could be the purism and the purity of a Loos even of a Corbusier. But perhaps the city also means sheer industry and engineering, and in that case – as for the very history of the emergent Bauhaus itself – its opposite can be, not only mysticism, but another form of mystique art. And this is the place to observe that for Tafuri and Dal Co the contradiction is concretized in social life and even more specifically in the role of intellectuals, so we have engineers versus artists, and eventually, as the artistic pole gathers moment and begins to fight back, we have the emergence of avant-gardes, as opposed the politicians and planners, or to engineers.

Now there is no time to read this immense and complex narrative in detail: I will merely characterize its perspective as one in which no real solution, no genuine synthesis, no concrete overcoming or transcendence of this basic contradiction, is possible. The history of modern architecture is the history of so many failed attempts to resolve it, or if you prefer, so many purely symbolic gestures of resolution. Yet this otherwise depressing series of failures does according to the authors know the luminous climaxes, which correspond, not merely to the two poles of the opposition – the building and the city – but also to its negative and positive valences respectively.

The exemplary "symbolic solution" which corresponds to the pole of the individual building is the work of Mies van der Rohe, which also, for the authors, embodies absolute negativity: the zero degree of building, an icy Mallarmean silence, a void at the very center of the city, on whose glass surface all the trash and detritus of the real city is collected as in a Schwitters Merzbild (their comparison). What is exemplary about Mies is thus not his attempt to resolve the contradiction, but rather his implacable espousal of it: he cleaves to the contradiction itself and keeps it alive: this is the sense in which he is the purest of architects.

The other pole – the city itself – is for the authors occupied by what seems to be a positive realization, namely the *great Siedlungen*, of the 1920s and 30s, and in particular in Vienna the *Karl-Marx-Hof* of 1927, which constitutes for Tafuri and Dal Co "a most complete 'Magic Mountain' of Austrian Marxism". But this success is only apparent, and if about Mies, we could deploy the Sartrean Paradox, "Loser wins!", to Karl Ehn's immense working-class monument, we could sound its correlative and its inverse: Winner loses! For to the degree to which the *Siedlungen* are successful as projects, in other words to that very degree to which they marry affordable housing of real architectural quality with the whole panoply of urban services (including proximity to the work place) – to that very degree they become attractive to middle-class dwellers as well, their prices go up along with the value of the land and the rate of taxation, and the *Siedlungen* in question ceases, by virtue of its very success, to offer a solution to the problem of workers' or low-cost housing. The *Siedlungen* attempted to solve the dilemma of the city, but in an enclave inside the larger totality: just as the city is an enclave within the nation, so the *Siedlung* is one within the city. The *Siedlung* is thus merely allegorical of a radical transformation which would have to be realized concretely throughout the social totality first in the surrounding city, then in the nation itself: it cannot persist within the hostile context of a surrounding capitalism and is quickly reabsorbed within it.

Now it is time to turn from the modern to the postmodern period. I hope I've made it clear that the

contradiction around which Tafuri and Dal Co organize their history – that between the individual building as an aesthetic creation and the city as an anarchy of forces and styles – was an intractable one. None of their architects or planners were able to solve it; nor in a certain sense could it ever be solved, for all kinds of very different reasons – philosophical, empirical, political ones. Now I want to suggest that in the postmodern epoch, the period of nascent globalization, this contradiction no longer exists as such. But it no longer exists, not because in the intervening break it has somehow miraculously been solved, but rather because the two terms which made it up, in their very opposition – those two terms has been modified beyond recognition. In other words, the city in the form it took in the modernist period, with all its impending crises of various kinds, no longer exists, and the building as a locus of artistic and functional possibilities no longer exists either.

This does not mean that the "crisis" no longer exists: I'm sure everyone will agree that things are far worse today than in the period in which Le Corbusier reflected on the future and the destiny of the city, only it may not be right to use the word "crisis" for this new state of things. Perhaps I can put all this in a different way by suggesting that the logic of the crisis presupposes an order which has been thrown into instability for a longer or shorter period of time, if not indefinitely. But supposing one confronts a permanent instability, a permanent chaos, from which briefly, from time to time, a kind of order emerges, only to vanish again. Can that still be called a crisis? As for the notion of contradiction, it presupposes that you can articulate a troubled or conflictual situation, that you can posit oppositions and force fields within it such that its tensions become thinkable, even if you are unable to resolve them. I'm suggesting that we have to do today with something closer to an antinomy than a contradiction, since within it even those conflictual oppositions our historians posited for the modern period are no longer detectable in that form. And what I want to suggest is that the notion of the contradiction offered the hope of a solution even when it might have seemed Utopian or fantastic, and this owing to the very structure of the contradiction itself – for when you have two opposing terms, it becomes irresistible to speculate on possible mediations or synthesis between them. (On some level, of course, I am repeating current doxa about the disappearance of Utopias and the waning of the political itself in our time.) Still, the narrative of Tafuri and Dal Co reminds us that the modernist situation did not only provide the space for the elaboration of Utopias alongside this or that pragmatic but non-dialectical program it also suggested that another form of dialectical authenticity lay, as in the case of Mies, with a lucid and implacable commitment to the contradiction itself, beyond any hope of solution

or resolution. In Adorno's words "Gleich ihrem Gegenstand bleibt die Erkenntnis an den bestimmten Widerspruch gefesselt." This possibility also, I believe, disappeared from the scene in postmodern times.

But let me now outline the reasons for the disappearance both of the classical building and the classical city. Those reasons lie deeply embedded in the logic of globalization itself. In the Third World, one of the poisoned gifts of the new late stage of capitalism has been the Green Revolution, which destroyed the self sufficiency of the older peasant mode of agricultural with hybrids and chemical fertilizers (not to speak of current genetic experimentation), and set those peasant countries on the path to the ratios of the advanced countries in which on the whole no more than seven percent of the population is still engaged in agricultural pursuits. The mass of unemployed peasants then moved in desperation to the cities, where staggering demographics now defy very political solution or form of urban planning. Oddly, there is a structural resemblance of these enormous agglomerations with the equally desperate structures of the First World, whose problems are in effect caused from the other end of the social spectrum, and in particular by the upper-class strategies of gentrification and land speculation which have driven the poor and the unemployed out of the cities into peripheral areas.

The fiscal crisis of the Western cities – as it is so often described – merely underscores the fundamental point I want to make here, namely, that in our time the city's problem cannot be solved by means of the city form, by any purely urban mechanisms; and that therefore older modernist visions of planning, zoning, immanent urban solutions of all kinds, are no longer thinkable. This does not mean that the dilemmas of the postmodern city can be solved by extra-urban means, or by the state itself: probably they cannot be solved at all. But the older modernist urbanisms are no longer on the cards – which is to say that even the concept and image of the city that used to be available in the modernist period is not longer present. There is no such thing any longer as what used to be designated by that word "city": true postmodernity would probably mean being able to invent a new one. In any case, I trust the relationship between this dissolution of the urban and globalization has also become clear: the Green Revolution as a world-wide capitalist development on the one hand, the land speculation which has accompanied the new global finance industry on the other. Meanwhile, as globalization is generally celebrated under the rubric of some new contradiction of the local and the global, or some conflict between the old fashioned-state and the decentralization on a political as well as a social basis, I want to dispel that thought as well. Saskia Sassen has discredited the new celebrations of decentralization, pointing out, in her latest book, that the finance industry must very

definitely occupy crucial centers, even if the relationship of those world centers to the individual cities in which they are housed is problematic, at least for the categories of the modern. As for the local and the regional, what was meant by that once upon a time had to do with nature, that is to say, with older agricultural modes: the local in the older sense has disappeared along with them, leaving in its place so many tourist images for the delectation for a new world-wide society of the spectacle. To oppose non-Western to Western values is to be taken in by old culturalist ideologies and the propaganda of contemporary religious (which is to say, fundamentalist) movements. The world today is standardized and at least tendentially postmodernized. What were formerly "non-Western cultures" are merely the ingredients of an immense image hybridity, it being understood that there is no "Western" culture either and that global modernity – better to call it global post-modernity – is neither Western nor non-Western.

About the survival today, of the other pole of the former contradiction – the individual building – I want for the moment only to quote a remark made by Peter Eisenman in private conversation: "You could build the most remarkable building in the middle of Tokyo and no one would pay any attention." I don't know whether architects build private homes any longer today (they would need, like Koolhaas' Bordeaux villa, to have unique specifications in order to generate some kind of symbolic value), but one has the impression that innovation in office buildings – if any are still needed – is today simply a matter of greater and greater height. So only museums are left, which already have some purely lateral or marginal relationship to the city fabric: black holes of the past into which the new urban crowds eagerly implode, as Baudrillard remarked a number of years ago. I will come back to the individual buildings in a moment.

First, I want to see whether we can find any equivalent today for the purity of the Miesian contradiction. Such an equivalent would then necessarily have to be radically impure, and welcoming of chaos as enthusiastically as Mies' glass repels it. I believe that alone of the architects who have come after modernism, Rem Koolhaas has succeeded in providing a program for what Venturi, Brown and Rauch only described as a situation: and I want to add at this point that Rem offers the image of the first truly global architect, the first true architect of globalization: not because he builds buildings all over the world – lots of great architects do that, but because – as in his *Pearl River delta Project* – he eagerly seeks out urban and architectural difference, not for culturalist or pluralist-humanist reasons, but because such fresh collisions "cause epidemics... Globalization destabilizes and redefines both the way architecture is produced and that which architecture produces."¹ For Koolhaas, whose experience thus

ranges from Japan to Los Angeles, from China to the former Berlin Wall, from Singapore to Atlanta, globalization brings "the return of Babel", whose exhilarating program established "an infrastructural project to change the world, its aim a montage of maximum possibility collected from any point, lifted from any context, pilfered from any ideology. It promises the final installment of the Promethean soap opera."²

Rem's Culture of Congestion, then, to return to that – illustrated in *Delirious New York* – marks a first articulation of a new postmodern, truly globalized approach to chaos and demography. It asks us to revel in the new situation and to affirm it in such a way as to derive enthusiasm and energy from it. I quote – but now from that labyrinth which is S, M, L, XL (an extraordinary spatial book which would have gone a long way towards helping print culture overcome the cd-Rom had it not compromised itself by agreeing to number its pages) – from S, M, L, XL I quote a characteristic passage, this time about the Forum des Halles in Paris: "Here an entire urban region is now a seamless, almost Babylonian amalgam of destruction, kitsch resurrection, authentic historical particles, a delirium of infrastructures, a mass grave of both good and bad intentions that crawl out of the pit like the rejected species of an alternative evolution... What about the culmination at La Defense, where all the geometric rigor of a city collapses in a maelstrom of randomness and incoherence, made more pathetic by a profusion of roads, ramps and other "connections" that resemble a wind-tunnel test accidentally executed in concrete? Yet it mysteriously works or, at least, is full of people."³

"Full of people": this is the crux of the Koolhaas aesthetic, and his immense megastructures are planned, not to channel or to organize city crowds, but to augment and magnify them, to increase the chaos: to let it happen, if one can imagine reading this expression as the sign of an active rather than a passive operation. So it is clear that what used to be negative in the older modernist era has now become positive in the era of globalization, and marks the place of a first affirmation on Koolhaas' part. Yet so far there does not seem to be any opposition at work here, even allowing for the obsolescence of contradiction, an antinomy also demands some kind of binary tension: with what kind of term does Congestion seem incompatible and somehow irreconcilable.

I believe that it is to be found in the image of the act of levelling, bulldozing, clearing away, flattening out: the true gestural equivalent of the end of nature in which the "Tabula Rasa" of late capitalism and its speculators and developers finds its active embodiment, The razing of all the qualities of a former "site" offers all the exhiaration of an new kind of reduction: something one senses in Koolhaas' cele-

bration of the American "typical plan" (the "plan without qualities"), and in his manifesto for an abstract "generic city" as the emergent form of the new globalized world. But his evocation of Singapore is more vivid. I will rather quote from it. Singapore is unique in being a one time-only combination of late capitalist anarchy and communist planning and regimentation, as Koolhaas puts it, it installs a condition of permanent instability, not unlike the "permanent revolution" proclaimed by the students of May '68".⁴

"Its motto, the new republic's blueprint, its dystopian program (becomes): displace, destroy, replace. In a delirium of transformation the island is turned into a petri dish: gigantic clearances, levelings, extensions, expropriations create laboratory conditions for the importation of social and architectural cultures that can be grown under experimental protocols, without the presence of anterior substance. Singapore is turned into a test bed of tabula rasa. The transformation of the entire island in the name of an apocalyptic demographic hypothesis is in apparent contrast to its smallness and its permanent land shortage... a regime like the one in power in Singapore is a radical movement: it has transformed the term urban renewal into the moral equivalent of war..."⁵

I have no more time to explore the extraordinary ways in which the work of Koolhaas and OMA project and develop this persistent and virulent antinomy between Congestion and Tabula Rasa. But as I've suggested I must feel myself this productivity is somehow dependent on positing these two terms, which others might still relate dialectically, as an antinomy or as what de Man called an aporia.

Now I want to turn to the status of the individual building in our newly globalized and postmodernized era, and for this I turn to the work of Peter Eisenman and in particular to his Aronoff Center (at the University of Cincinnati), surely one of the most extraordinary buildings of the last decade. I want to think about it in terms of a phenomenon that has lately been a matter of fascination for me: namely the way in which a building which does not and cannot fit into the city fabric is capable, not merely of separating itself out and turning away from that fabric altogether, but at one and the same time of replicating that entire city fabric within itself, becoming itself a miniature city and a microcosm of its external context. Remember that Mies' buildings remained events within the city: even if they constituted black holes or an icy void at its center. Nonetheless, they did something to it. For Tafuri in much the same fashion the skyscraper is considered a kind of unique event within the metropolis: a strike, an interruption, a sudden touch-down, which is necessarily made to comment on the city and to emit a message about it.

The kind of building I am thinking of will no longer be an event inside the city, it will no longer

comment, its exterior will neither allure nor repel: something paradoxical enough to say about a very large form disposed across a hill on the order of Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase*, or better still (Eisenman's own image, and the alleged inspiration of Aronoff in the first place) the interlocking of those conveyor-belt plates that move your baggage out along the airport display ramp. But perhaps Aronoff's parasitic relationship to the remnants of the two older already existing structures it so unexpectedly "completes" and incorporates can be thought to be some kind of protective concealment from the logic of the urban fabric outside it.

What I want to stress here, however, is the way in which the interior of the building, through which hundreds of students stream every day. Offers a unique and somehow self-contained experience: this is the way in which it substitutes for the city, which in its disaggregation today can no longer offer the classical spatial-urban pleasures. It is useful to contrast this temporal experience with the one Le Corbusier so carefully planned out in advance for his visitors: – Villa de Roche – "This house ... will be rather like an architectural promenade. One enters and the architectural vista presents itself immediately to view; one follows a set route, and a great variety of perspectives present themselves: there is a play of light, highlighting the walls or casting shadows. Bays open onto perspectives of exterior, and one rediscovers architectural unity..."⁶

"One follows a set route": what intervenes between this dictate of the modernist demiurgic act and the aleatory pathways of the Eisenman center is not only the aesthetic of chance, but above all the computer. Eisenman delights in those computer-generated variants of space in his building which he himself could not consciously have planned or predicted. Far from a new or neo-classical sense of order, it is a chaos, indeed a Koolhaas "culture of congestion", which is simulated within this miniature city, this mimesis, not of a traditional city center, but of an underground post-World-War-III warren of corridors and ancillary spaces of all shapes and kinds. Pedestrian bridges and misplaced monumental staircases trace out a kind of miniature indoor Venice, whose campus surge without warning out of artificial alleyways and stairwells, down upon which the windows of offices gaze. The equally aleatory multiplication of vistas and points of view, perspectives and gazes, projects some new role for sight in these spaces of the urban future, a free-floating sight and visibility abstracted from the familiar humanist supports. If the skyscraper remains the emblem of a heroic modernism, perhaps just such underground cities can lend their image and their concept to the styles and production of a globalized future.

But the two "poles" of our present opposition – congestion on the tabula rasa of a bulldozed surface, congestion in movement underground – do not

seem to add up to a contradiction in the modernist sense. So their problem whatever it is, cannot really be articulated. Perhaps the Utopian approach today is not the older modernist one, of projecting a possible solution to an impossible contradiction; but rather reconstructing the problem and producing the new contradiction itself in the first place.

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Notes:

- 1 Rem Koolhaas, *Pearl River delta Project* p. 367 f.
- 2 Koolhaas, p. 367–368.
- 3 *ibid*, p. 205
- 4 Rem Koolhaas, *manifesto for an abstract "generic city"*, p. 1035.
- 5 *ibid*, p. 1035
- 6 *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. I 1910–1929, Zürich: Boesiger 1929, p. 60.