Andrea Kahn, Editor

Drawing
Building
Text

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theory of identity is also an arrival at a certain theory of space, apparatus, body and structure. Here the body is scaffolded and propped in decisive ways by the materiality—the presence, the armature—we attribute to architecture and then built up as different from architecture within this framework. The body is "architected" according to the scale, not of the body in some natural state, but of the body already built in space as image. Or, rather, the body as subject is built only after a spatial and architectural identification has taken place.

The "line" of representation that allows us to position ourselves outside of the objects designed by us or for us is here seen to be already complicated by the scaffolding that props us up before our own image. It is important to reiterate that, according to Lacan, we do not exist as a consciousness, nor does the visible world exist before our encounter with our own alienated image in the mirror. Whether this mirror-stage refers to a literal mirroring of the self or simply the way we must be mirrored to ourselves through the eyes of the "mother"—the prop must always be present before the visible world is opened to us, before we are able to represent it in any way. One might say that the architect tries to supply the insufficiency of the fragmented whole—the self and the body—by sketching the scaffolding as a web to keep us forever propped upright in front of our own image. Or, rather, the architect tries to hold us, using the force of lines, at the moment of the méconnaissance, the mis-recognition that inaugurates our belief in the possibility of space and inhabitation. Necessarily, this condition is a double one and one in which the architect, too, is caught. It is the condition of Narcissus frozen before his image in the pool and the condition of the child who grows up to see (himself/herself) in (architectural) space.

He's afraid of the way the glass will fall—soon it will be a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace. But coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible crushing.—Thomas Pynchon, Gravity's Rainbow

Contemporary architectural culture is preeminently concerned with the visible: architecture as image; the architectural drawing as aesthetic object; the idea in a vital strain of postmodern design that architecture should look like architecture, and the tenacity to translate theoretical discourse into material constructions illustrate this concern. The relationship of politics to architecture is also considered in visual terms; particular buildings, forms, or styles are seen as potent representations of ruling authority or ideology. Architecture's capacity for explicit political symbolization does not, however, describe the full scope of its power, nor is its power limited to the spatial manifestation of institutional programs (rules and agendas) in physical form. Rather, the political nature of architecture is rooted more deeply in architecture as enclosure and in the manner in which enclosure is perceived.

In simple terms, to enclose is to surround or mark off with a fence, to delineate a particular space within a larger field. By transforming part of a general spatial domain into a specific site for a particular use (public or private), architecture divides, organizes and manages. It orders physical movement and proscribes perception. Architecture is the disciplinization of space, and, by virtue of its capacity to regulate action, exerts control and constitutes a form of power.
The deployment of this power does not depend upon the apparent image of architecture, or upon what it expresses either directly, or by association. It is not allied to form or iconography, but to perception. According to Walter Benjamin, architecture provides an example of an art "the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction." Benjamin saw in this mode of perception art's potential to politically affect an essentially absent-minded public. In his words, it allowed for a "covert control."1

Benjamin's observation renders suspect a preoccupation with the strictly visible in architecture. His remarks also expand the concept of function beyond the program delineating particular actions or rituals like dwelling, working, and studying. The covert power noted by Benjamin exists apart from program, functions independent of specific political agendas (fascist, democratic, etc.), and is distinct from representational formulae that invite conscious focus. It is embodied, instead, in the presentational elements of architecture, each of which constitutes an apparatus of control: walls erect barriers to free movement; windows, in framing given views, determine the scope of vision; thresholds tell us where to go.

The architectural object is not taken in with rapt attention devoted to painting or sculpture. Rather, it is absorbed incidentally. Like the ubiquitous landscape unfolding beyond the windshield of a car, simultaneously seen and not seen by a driver intent upon "watching the road," the politically performatory aspects of architecture slip by or slip into one's consciousness almost unnoticed. Receiving something in a state of distraction implies an indirect act of looking—beyond, through, or past the immediate object. Although not expressly stated in Benjamin's text, to look past is at once to see past—in the sense of overlooking or dismissing. This oversight of architecture's political effects allows for unwitting acceptance of, or submission to, a controlling power hidden or enclosed within the readily seen.

To discern this power one must attend to the invisible in architecture. How is its covert operation effected and what does it impress upon a viewer or user?

THE PALACE: ELUSIONS

The design of the building should be as original as its object.

—W. Bridges Adam

The covert functions or tacit politic (power relations) of architecture are illustrated by Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace. By shedding all remnants of an opaque building skin, it did not obscure, obstruct, or enclose in a typical architectural sense. The Crystal Palace was built in Hyde Park, London to house the first International Great Exhibition of 1851. This monument to consumer capitalism was the product of England's highly developed industry and, according to Siegfried Giedion, was "an application of the most simple and rational system of manufacturing—serial production."2 A slow start on the part of the Exhibitions Building Committee, opposition to a permanent structure in the park, concern for existing trees, and the impossibility of completing the committee's own proposal in time for the event contributed to the consideration of Paxton's late competition entry. Though the structure was suited to its park site, quickly designed, and easily assembled (and disassembled), the Building Committee—particularly engineers who sustained substantial doubts about reliance on iron and glass as the sole materials for such a large structure—still resisted Paxton's building. By leaking his design to the press, Paxton undermined the commission's authority and captivated public interest for his project. By mid July, the Royal Commission had rejected the building committee's proposal in favor of Paxton's plan.

The Crystal Palace marked architecture's entry into an era of increased industrial power, newly developing international econ-
omies, and technological advances in materials and methods of construction. According to Georg Kohlmaier, the building accommodated 17,000 exhibitors, held over 1 million items, and boasted 6 million visitors. It was 1848 feet long and 408 feet wide and required 900,000 square feet of glazing and over 6,500 iron structural columns, pillars, and beams, all mass-produced in standardized dimensions. The method of fabrication allowed for both on- and off-site production in a highly coordinated process that kept costs to a minimum. (The 1851 International Exhibition actually turned a profit.)

The modern materials and construction techniques of Paxton's project resulted in the ideal exhibition hall. The objects on display were framed by the building's structural system and enhanced by the light admitted through its transparent skin. As a monumental vitrine for commodities, the Crystal Palace successfully fulfilled the prophetically modern criteria suggested to the Building Committee by W. Bridges Adam who, in calling for a design "as original as its object," elaborated,

It should not be suggestive of the ideas of a pyramid, a temple or a palace; for it will not be a tomb, a place of public worship, nor a mansion of royalty. The object should determine the design. That is to say, the design should be altogether subordinate to the uses of the building, and should be of the kind that would express them, or at least harmonize with them. Compared with Victorian revivalist architecture, the Crystal Palace offered a potential escape from the uncomfortable tyranny of past styles. It did, however, have programmatic and material precedents in the 19th century, particularly the commercial arcades, which from the early 1800s adopted ever more sophisticated ferro-vitreous roofing systems. These were dependent upon advances in technology that also produced larger shop windows permitting the exhibit of wares even after business hours. The glass-enclosed pedestrian streets provided a protected environment for the flâneur or consumer. In their characteristically interstitial urban sites they enlaced the masses with glimpses of luxury goods ultimately intended for the upper class. The arcades institutionalized "shopping" as opposed to buying, where the act of looking, fostered by and fueling desire, was as important as actually purchasing items.

Where the arcade was reliant structurally upon existing masonry urban fabric and programmatically upon existing retail shops, the Crystal Palace was a freestanding structure housing an independent and temporary trade enterprise. Its location in Hyde Park distinguished it from the architecture of the city and allied it to a tradition of garden structures. Paxton designed the largest glass-and-iron building to date, drawing materially and typologically on orangeries and horticultural glass houses. Commissioned by and for the pleasure of the landed nobility, such buildings operated as micro-climates, machines to protect the works of nature from her own hostile elements. Enclosed plants became "speciality items" displayed like the specialty items of industry in the arcades, their growth enhanced—forced—by the solar properties of glass.

Conflating the mechanistic quality of the orangeries with the commercial program of the arcade, the Crystal Palace superimposed the house of nature and the house of trade. Exhibiting industrial wares in the place of horticultural specimens, the Palace signalled the rising dominance of industrial forces over the natural environment. Its peculiar mechanistic novelty and its artificial materials stripped the Palace of visibly representational architectural iconography; the vistas of the park compensated for the structure's lack of a conventional architectural image. From the exterior, the structural frame doubled as viewing frame, guiding the eye toward the contents of the hall and highlighting the already objectified condition of the commodity. Like the broad sidewalks of Haussmann's Paris boulevards, the Palace created a space of
articulating a critique of social and economic issues through landscape, the other using landscape to obscure those same issues. In the picturesque landscape, what is taken as natural is in fact quite the opposite: cultivated, worked, schemed.

The picturesque landscape depends upon a design strategy geared toward making the act of design—as well as its underlying policies—invisible. Similarly, the Crystal Palace obscured even as it revealed. The act of “seeing through” the iron and glass structure out to the park or in toward the elm trees concealed a simultaneous act of “seeing past” industry's transformation of nature into a marketing device. As Benjamin notes:

- The world exhibitions build up the universe of commodities... Fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish wishes to be worshipped; Grandville extends fashion's claims both to the objects of everyday use and to the cosmos. By pursing it to its extremes he discloses its nature. This resides in a conflict with the organic. It couples the living body to the inorganic world.
The Crystal Palace exemplified architecture's capacity to embody such a conflicted coupling and foster free market economics. Its legacy is obvious in projects like Cesar Pelli's Wintergarden design for Battery Park City in lower Manhattan. A large glass-enclosed space provides the major public amenity amidst a group of private office buildings; the free movement through the Wintergarden contrasts the highly secured thresholds of the accompanying corporate towers. Lined with expensive specialty shops and filled with palm trees specially bred to survive under New York City lighting conditions, this mallcum garden opens to vistas of the Hudson River. It links the financial hub of the city to nature—physically and metaphorically—and so borrows directly from the marketing strategy of the Crystal Palace.

The Palace elided nature and industry. According to Marshall Berman, contemporary accounts of Paxton's building reveal a structure with gentle flowing lines and graceful curves, light almost to the point of weightlessness, looking as if it could float at any instant into the sky. Its color alternates between the color of the sky through the transparent glass, which covers most of the building's volume, and the sky blue of its narrow iron beams; this combination drenches us in a dazzling radiance, catching the sunlight from the sky and the water, shimmering dynamically. Visually, the building feels like a late Turner painting; it particularly suggests Turner's Rain, Steam and Speed (1844) fusing nature and industry in a vividly chromatic and dynamic ambiance. It glazed over the boundary between interior and exterior, denying the solidity and as such the discernible closure of the building and it also obscured disciplinary distinctions. In Paxton's own words:

No single feature, but the structure as a whole, would form a peculiar novelty of mechanical science; and, when we consider the manner of supporting a vast glass roof covering twenty-one acres on the most secure and scientific principles, and filling in a structure of such magnitude with glass, Mr. Paxton ventures to think that such a plan would meet with almost universal approval of the British public, whilst it would be unrivalled in the world. Unlike the greenhouses and arcades preceding it, the Crystal Palace engendered a moment of self-questioning for architecture. Physically, architecture builds distinctions between here and there; spatially it defines limits by erecting enclosures and visible barriers. Epistemologically, as well, architecture delimits itself from other fields of thought and action; acceptable ideas and practices are enclosed and unacceptable ones foreclosed by invisible barriers shaping the discipline.

The Crystal Palace posed visible and invisible threats to architecture: materially, its window-wall did not provide a traditional sense of physical closure and its constantly fluctuating surface denied a certain solidity and permanence previously associated with architectural form; conceptually, disciplinary closure was jeopardized because the mode of construction fused engineering and architectural practices. The unstable images flickering on its glazed surface suggest a prescient visual metaphor for the destabilizing effect of modern theory and polemics on traditional conceptions of architecture.

The building's potential impact on architecture as discipline and on conventional architectural production did not go unheeded by contemporaries. According to Lothar Bucher, "In contemplating the first great building which was not of solid masonry construction spectators were not slow to realize that here the standards by which architecture had hitherto been judged no longer held good." 9

The Palace failed to fit neatly into established typological or disciplinary categories, and historical accounts reflect its uncertain status. In Peissner's Pioneers of Modern Design of 1936 the Crystal Palace is considered as much a feat of engineering as a work of architecture and discussion of the building is set among "testimonies on iron . . . stimulated by structures which were not architecture with a capital A." 10 A year later, in the catalogue introduction to the 1937 MoMA show "Modern Architecture in England," Henry-Russell Hitchcock would describe Paxton's project as a "direct ancestor of modern architecture . . . often hailed with pardonable exaggeration as the first modern building." 11

The Crystal Palace fostered commodification via remarkable mastery of modern capitalist ideals, but its inclusion in the canon as 'the first modern building' arose from its technology and materials, not its program. Of these, its extensive glazed surface was the most conspicuous—literally and metaphorically.

Material Illusions

The whole being covered in with glass, renders the building light, airy and suitable—Joseph Paxton

In "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal" Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky explore the notion of transparency, a concept (as they point out in their introduction) "richly loaded" with meaning. 12 Drawing on the writings of Gyorgy Kepes, the authors distinguish between literal transparency as a function of material attributes and transparency as a phenomenon perceived through spatial organiza-
tion, the former having the physical quality of being perfectly clear and the latter being “clearly ambiguous.” While the qualities of physically transparent materials are not central to the argument, they too pose certain ambiguities. Clear glass is on first sight neutral, dismissive. On closer inspection, however, it reveals “a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations” where space recedes and “fluctuates in a continuous activity,” qualities of phenomenal transparency described by Kepes and essential to Rowe and Slutsky’s distinction.

Transparent glass, in contrast to the constancy of reflective (mirror) glass exhibits a variety of perceivable states. Mirror replaces the physical density of solid building materials with the perceptual opacity of surface images; it does not reveal its interior nor do its reflections generate spatial ambiguity. The images appropriated from surrounding forms to constitute such an architectural skin may change as the atmosphere changes, but their location is always the outer layer of a surface plane. The depth one reads in a mirror reflection is the depth of the space in front of it, not a phenomenal depth created by the glazed surface itself. Clear glass, on the other hand, can disappear, become invisible, and simultaneously be the locus of activity; the reflections in a Richard Estes painting, for example create complex dimensional spaces trapped by and at once transgressing the physical limits of the surface. The view through and beyond the clear glass is inseparable from and informed by the images reflected upon it.
Whether the skin of the Crystal Palace dematerialized matters less than that under any lighting condition its glazed surface served materialistic ends. When transparent, the structure offered immediate views both inside and out. When reflective, the extensive surface planes increased the already massive volume of display space, redoubling the spectacle in a virtual image caught and extended by the glazed skin.

The architecture of the Palace was unclothed and the character as well as the function of its nudity depended upon its alternatively reflective and transparent state. Reflections are like strippers, playing with the act of veiling and unveiling to titillate with a body sometimes covered, sometimes bare. Inciting desire, reflections transform the viewer into the voyeur whose eye has the power of appropriation without purchase. On its interior, the Palace’s reflective surface promoted the voyeuristic gaze attendant to shopping, allowing goods and people to be espied indirectly. On the exterior, reflections afforded a redoubled vision of the surrounding park, diminishing the presence of the building in its midst. By contrast, transparent glass is unselfconscious, naked, pure; it allowed the Palace to be allied with a legitimate morality—permissive without being promiscuous, natural. From the park, the glass skin created the image of an “exclusive” interior realm, while from inside it transformed Hyde Park into a scenographic backdrop enhancing the display of commercial wares.

A potent and critical illustration of glass’s ambiguity appears in Jacques Tati’s Playtime. The film follows a group of American tourists on a visit to Paris that entails a day amidst sleek glass and steel skyscrapers in “Tatville,” an environment that prefigures La Defense. Images of Paris (the Louvre, Montmartre, the Eiffel Tower, etc.) are reflected in the plate glass facades of these modern buildings. Tati’s carefully framed shots through curtain walls sometimes reflective, sometimes clear, lend glass an almost oppressive quality. It is at once disorienting (one character is unable to differentiate between the reflection and the actual location of a wall), alienating (one can see but not reach a destination), deceiving (a doorman opening and closing a nonexistent plate glass door by its brass handle), and voyeuristic (the sanctity of private home life is espied from the street through plate-glass walls). The film is a portrait of a material that in spite of and through its transparency empowers and disempowers by effecting lines of sight.

**The Ideal of Transparency**

“... a person who daily sets his eyes on the splendors of glass cannot do wicked deeds.” —Paul Scheerbart

Glass, which casts no visible shadows, has long been associated in architecture with utopian visions. In the early 1800s Fourier proposed glass enclosed galleries for his phalansteries, whose “warmth and security, exoticism and almost stifling excitement... would also stimulate its inhabitants to experiment endlessly in the forms of sensual pleasure, thus bringing about the Nouveau monde amoureux.” Following the success of the Crystal Palace, Paxton proposed a Crystal Way for London, a heated ring-road complete with underground rail lines, an unbuild urban ideal that spawned other similar proposals, including a commercial Crystal Way shopping loop bordering a central park described by Ebeneezer Howard in his 1898 Garden Cities of Tomorrow. Paul Scheerbart in his “Glass Manifesto” of 1914 called for the replacement of brick and masonry architecture, claiming that to “raise culture to a higher level” would “be possible only if we remove the enclosed quality from the spaces within which we live. This can be done only through the introduction of glass architecture.”

The ascription of architectural meaning is arbitrary, yet, through repeated use, materials and forms acquire conventional connotations. Traditionally, transparency has been allied to social agendas associated with positive ends. No matter how benevolently motivated, however, such agendas are predicated upon programs of power. If architects express these programs uncritically and viewers absorb them without question, conventional “meaning” assumes an invisible, covert power to obscure alternative readings.

For modern architects in general, eschewal of tradition styles and their allied rhetorical forms heightened the symbolic potential of materials. For Scheerbart and the other architects of the Glass Chain (a group assembled around Bruno Taut in 1919, including Gropius, Schramm, Flinsterlin, and Behne) in particular, glass represented a collective purity; its transparent quality had both politically and morally symbolized “cosmic liberation.”

The roots of such thinking can be traced to the Enlightenment. Rousseau believed that crystal was the only innocent stone. Transparency was the opposite of alienation—the unveiling of truth, goodness free from the distorted visions of other men. Similarly, the clear glass skin of Paxton’s Palace “unveiled” the building’s structural system to the eye; the Palace’s “truth” was revealed in a book containing all the construction documents and detail drawings from the building process. As Leiberman notes of this text “We are as far as we can be from the jealously guarded knowledge of medieval masons; the modern age was to replace secret techniques with building methods as publicly known and as universally reproducible as scientific experiment.”
"Invisibility" as Starobinski remarked after citing the above passage, "converts the nullity of being into unlimited power."

The Crystal Palace seemingly does away with material architectural distractions as compared, for example, to the buildings of the Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893) where new technology dressed up in old plaster-of-paris clothes. By virtue of the glass and iron structure, one sees and sees past the Crystal Palace at the same time. The degree of control is heightened by being rendered invisible.

**FROM PALACE TO PRISON**

Lucid transparency was very much to his taste, as is evident from his recollection of a French Fairy Tale in which the heroine had been imprisoned in a palace of solid glass: 'of this archetype the Panopticon was as near a similitude as the limited power of human art could admit."

—Robin Evans on Jeremy Bentham

Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace bears a curious similarity to Jeremy Bentham's Penitentiary Panopticon. The former is linear and the latter centrally organized; the two programs are decidedly opposite—the pleasures of consumption against the pains of incarceration (although Bentham was most intrigued with the use of both pain and pleasure in achieving his reforms); in terms of explicit imagery and primary materials, their affiliation also seems improbable. Yet, as Evans has written, the essential order of the prison, like that of the Palace, is "invisible," an order "not in the least concerned with appearances."

Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, initially conceived in 1787 and finally rejected by Parliament twenty years later, was, in the mind of its philosopher-inventor, the foundation for a stable social system. Even the name of the project—the all-seeing eye—grew out of Bentham's preoccupation with controlling human behavior to improve the human condition, by design.²²

The Panopticon and the Palace each constitute an apparatus of covert control based on the manipulation of lines of sight. Bentham's design limited these lines via solid masonry construction and centralized organization. In his original scheme of 1787 prisoners located in a peripheral ring of cells were illuminated in such a way as to be seen by a governor located at the center of the plan. This light shone down at a precise angle between prisoner and governor preventing the former any view of their overseers. The governor's invisibility was enhanced in the second scheme of 1791,
where circular hallways for turnkeys were located between the cells and the central core. This design allowed the inspectors to be invisible from the prisoners; from a centralized position the governor could watch the movement of both.

In the Panopticon, position was central to the surveillance mechanism. The invisible order of Bentham’s design is predicated on the same principles as perspectival representation. Both depend upon the inscription of a set of fixed relationships between points—relationships of power. The prison utilized the cone of vision to constrain and facilitate observation; the unique station point (in perspective also known as the “viewing point”) was the governor’s privileged location. Like the man in Vignola’s Regola di Perspectiva, the governor was the source of sight lines mapping exclusive power over the objects of his gaze. The anisotropic nature of the Panopticon’s surveillance apparatus clearly sited the locus of control.

The Panopticon exerted its power openly. With solid masonry on the exterior, it signaled an exclusive, private place in an otherwise public realm. The penitentiary did use iron and glass, although only in the interior atrium, where they supported explicit sociopolitical and moral agendas. To cite Evans:

The combination of iron, or steel and glass to create unified, brightly illuminated interior spaces is familiar in modern architecture. What is less familiar is the early appearance of the same combination as part of a scheme to impose an unremitting rule on the patterns of human action. The function of inspection was greatly enhanced by the use of these materials. With masonry nothing like the same panorama could have been achieved. Considerations of economy and aesthetics played their part, but his eminently modern construction was justified primarily in terms of a philosophy of government, based on an idea about the way the human mind worked. In other words it was an essay in the engineering of behavior through the manipulation of architectural form.

The ferro-vitraceous atrium enclosed the interior space of inspection and engineered reformation.

The Crystal Palace engineered power differently; the distinction between the observer and the observed was not clear. Instead of circumscribing a single locus of control, analogous to the recognizable authority of a single ruler or elected political body, it removed all visible and spatial references to the existence of a governing force. Paxton’s design multiplied rather than restricted possible lines of sight. Its power derived from diffusion rather than constraint. The linear organization of the hall did not suggest hierarchically framed views or any one privileged place. The variable surface activity of the glass skin continually deflected or distracted attention and hence “weakened” all eyes equally.

The Crystal Palace dispensed with the fixed relationships essential to the Panopticon. With an infinite number of vanishing points, the Crystal Palace finds its analogue in the object-oriented axonometric rather than the subjectively based perspectival construction. In Paxton’s project and in three-dimensional orthographic projections exact positioning relative to an external point is rendered immaterial. As Giucci has noted, “If perspective was the instrument to manage and organize human space, descriptive geometry is the instrument to manage and organize industrial space.” While descriptive geometry was never wholly embraced by architects (most likely because of its extreme abstraction), its more concrete cousin,
The Invisible Mask

You even begin vaguely to fear something. —Fyodor Dostoevski

In Dostoevski's Notes from Underground we read, "You believe in the crystal edifice indestructible for all eternity, the kind that you could never stick your tongue out at on the sly or thumb your nose at secretly. Well, perhaps the reason I am afraid of that edifice is that it is crystal and indestructible for all eternity and one can't even stick one's tongue out at it on the sly." The ideals of modernity embodied by the Crystal Palace that so enthused Giedion, Hitchcock, and countless others are construed very differently by Dostoevski. If architects praised the Palace for the secrets it brought to light, to Dostoevski it was damned for exactly the same reason. The "Underground Man," despite his parodic intentions, uncovers what the crystalline structure masks: the transparent material's fragility hides an indestructibility rooted in the fact that it offers no place to snoop unnoticed.

A glass building denies the safety of the interior by emptying it; it offers no protection, no place of escape, no space for private reflection. As Richard Sennett has written, such architecture is hostile to the individual: "Far from being neutral, the space created by the architecture of glass is highly charged. It is space in that its hostility to livability, in its very hostility to nature, seeks to consecrate itself—to become sacred, inviolable... an architecture which in its very inhospitableness, creates a privileged position for itself. This is the highest, most arrogant privilege."

Glass architecture erects a divisive barrier between the senses. As Dostoevski observed, its power is manifest in its capacity to silence. Standing on one side of any glazed wall—a café, shop window, or glass office tower—one suffers a peculiar form of sensory deprivation. A glass wall lets one see but not touch, see but not hear, see but not speak. (The final frames of "The Graduate"—with Dustin Hoffman trapped, screaming behind a transparent wall at the wrong end of the wedding chapel—powerfully illustrate the divisive nature of glass.) In the case of the Crystal Palace, this divisiveness was enhanced by the structure's monumentality. Monumentality can be understood as the erasure of scale that leaves viewer and building without common measure. The enormous Crystal edifice acquired authority by virtue of its unapproachableness. Glints to its scale could be discovered in the Palace's modular iron structure: to see a frame is to recognize that which is framed—the glass. When the contents of the frame are transparent—invisible—one looks past or through the absent picture plane. When the number of frames is infinite, no prospect is distinguished over another and the power of the frame to guide the eye is diminished. As the iron framework yields to the park beyond, its function as a scaling device is quite literally overlooked. The glass itself, of course, offers no means of establishing scale. Buchler writes:

We see a delicate network of lines without any clue by means of which we might judge their distance from the eye or the real size; we cannot tell if this structure towers a hundred feet or a thousand feet above us or whether the roof is a flat platform or is built up from a succession of ridges, for there is no play of shadows to enable our optic nerves to gauge the measurements.
In spite of its transparency—through and because of it—the building is not "sightable." This inexplicable quality is the result of a doubling operation: the viewer—empowered on one hand to control the building, to see through the structure, to cut through its skin and view the interior—is stripped of power by the same transparency that makes it impossible to "stick one's tongue out at it on the sly." Using the ambiguity of transparency, the Palace set up a confrontation between two lines of sight: the trajectory into and through the skin is poised against lines of sight emitted out from the same transparent surface. In the isotropic Palace, the ideal of transparency folds back onto itself; the viewer cannot escape the condition of being viewed.

The idealized, pure, and morally correct transparency so important to Rousseau and the Glass Chain architects is shattered by Dostoevski's realization that the palace, far from benign, exerts a covert power. It precludes questioning, and in turn requires total submission. Foreclosing the right to react, the building assumes a political force. Like the wearer of the Ring of Gyges, the Crystal Palace is itself all-seeing. Herein lies its "arrogant privilege."

Gerhard Auer has recently written "Before the other senses assert their rights, it is the eye that takes possession of things." Possessing the world through vision renders the chaotic comprehensible and from this sense of understanding comes a sense of control. Taken together, Dostoevski's reaction and Buechner's description point to an inversion. In the Crystal Palace, the eye cannot take possession of the building. The building takes possession of the eye. This presents a paradox: according to Benjamin, architecture does not absorb its viewers but is absorbed by them. By controlling the eye, on the other hand, architecture determines not only what we see, but how. It shapes a conception of the world and ways of living in that world.

All architecture—transparent or not—configures form and material in spatial constructs with ideological force. All architecture—whether it houses explicitly political programs or not—politicizes space. A uniform grid that flattens differences and a chaotic "strip" marked by extreme difference and the complete lack of an organizing structure are not purely formal orders. They are physical constructs with political analogies.

Architecture allied to institutions of power, like Bentham's Panopticon, is expected to function as an apparatus of control. The acknowledgement of its capacity to reinforce a ruling authority provides the necessary awareness to confront, criticize, and even counteract its power. Despite an equal capacity to regulate and control, architecture with apparently non political programs such as Paxton's Crystal Palace is rarely viewed politically. Overlooking architecture's tacit politic, architects and viewers alike are subject to a covert power; the former by failing to confront the essentially ideological nature of their work and therefore abdicating their political responsibility and the latter by dismissing the regulatory effects of architecture.

The tacit politic of architecture and its capacity to wield covert power raise a number of questions: What constitutes the invisible apparatus of control? What exactly is received incidentally? Why are these politics overlooked and by whom? What is the role of the architect and what are the effects of architectural work?

There is still a profound resistance on the part of architects to the notion that their forms are in fact ideologically and politically loaded; that physical constructs enclose, foreclose, or disclose abstract relations of power. Acknowledging these conditions will not necessarily lead to answers to the above questions; nor will it ensure that architecture becomes politically correct (whatever that might mean). But it will allow architects to proceed ethically, informed by the consciousness that they deploy power and able to question openly the ends to which that power is put.

8. Steven Daniels, "The Political Iconography of Woodland" in Gosgrove and Daniels, The Iconography of Landscape (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 73. It is interesting to note here an arcane usage of "policy" (a term etymologically tied to politics) taken from the Oxford English Dictionary: "The improvement and embellishment of an estate, building, town, etc.; property created by human skill or labor."
ANN BERGREN

BAUBO AND HELEN:
GENDER IN THE IRREPARABLE WOUND

"Is it true that dear God is present everywhere?" a little girl asked her mother, "but I find that indecent"—a hint for philosophers! One should hold in greater honor the shame (Scham), with which nature has hidden herself behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties. Is truth perhaps a woman who has reasons not to let her reasons be seen? Is her name perhaps—to speak Greish—Baubo? —Nietzsche

INTRODUCTION

I would like to examine two elements of the problem Stanley Tigerman has set for our conference: the notion of an "irreparable wound" and that of "rewriting/righting" it.

What wounds cannot be repaired? Death and castration. And one other. The blood-letting gash taken to be the eidolon "image, ghost"—of castration. To gaze as a man upon the irreparable wound

This text was originally written for the 1988 Chicago Forum on Architectural Issues, sponsored by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture. "Looking for America, Part III: Failed Attempts to Heal an Irreparable Wound." The conference was designed by Stanley Tigerman to "examine the intersection between critical theory and architecture in regard to humankind's instinctive optimism that leads us to attempt healing in various, it is hoped, architectural ways." The proceedings will comprise the third portion of the forthcoming book, Looking for America, to be published by Rizzoli. This essay is reprinted here with their permission.