The Architectural Edifice and the Phantoms of History
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Starting with the literal and physical role of the "ground," this article attempts to bring this "ground" into a discursive arena. In particular, the author is thinking about the period at the end of a war, the period in between destruction and reconstruction, exemplified in some classic post-war films in which the architecture of the city is in a state of ruin—deformed, eroded, and dark—but there is no further destruction. The article calls this period "a gap of history" and its investigation is set against a claim that architecture is a reconstructive practice, that it is enlightening and aspiring. History, on the other hand, is captured by scenes of the battlefield and dominated by a narrative of war and destruction. The article makes reference to the real and fantasy desire for destruction (war and history) and reconstruction (architecture), and how through the connecting plane of the ground architecture is entangled in war and history of destruction as it figures in reconstruction. Architecture is contingent on history as discursive—history that is not unified, fixed, or evolutionary but rather contested and rewritten within a conflictual battlefield.

Keywords: tomb/grave; war; reconstruction; form; ground

The Architectural Edifice

In a seminal essay of 1910 titled "Architecture," Adolf Loos proposed a definition of architecture:

If we find a mound in the forest, six foot long and three foot wide, formed into a pyramid shape by a shovel, we become serious and something within us says, "Someone lies buried here." This is architecture. (reprinted in Benton, 1980, pp. 41-45)
Loos’s “mound of earth” as a theoretical moment in architecture suggests that “death and burial” are central to the conception of architecture. We also know from the narratives of monuments and tombs that death and burial are central to the practice of architecture, as well as its theory. Another different moment in which a mound of earth is cited is a more recent historical moment that we are witness to: the search for evidence of mass graves in Kosovo. The search for evidence of mass graves (in Kosovo) has an odd and disturbing resonance with the canonical description above (Lozanovska, 1999, 2000). There is the same sense of searching, and the same discovery of the signifier; and also the same silent reverence in the face of death. And yet “the search for evidence of mass graves” is outside the canonical borders of architecture. Observing this uncanny resonance, in this article I want to explore notions of architecture in relation to the form and formlessness of dirt that covers over death, through an association between a central canonical moment in architecture and the moment of a recent history.

There are differences between the two moments. The one that I want to emphasize is that for Loos the signifier is architecture—the distinctly formed mound of earth as a marker of civilization. To uncover this mound is to deconstruct the signifier of the constructed edifice. A reiteration of Hegel’s philosophies on architecture by Hollier (1989) goes like this: “Architecture is something appearing in the place of death, to point out its presence and to cover it up: the victory of death and the victory over death” (p. 6). Paradoxically, the evidence for architecture is its covering over of death; it becomes the signifier in the place of real death. Loos’s statement brings up the question about the relationship between architecture and the ground from which it is made and on which it sits; a question that might be put in Hegelian terms as a relationship between “form and matter” or “form and content” (Zizek, 1993, chap. 4).

We can read the complexity of Hegel into the poetic simplicity of Loos’s statement: Form is nothing except the determination of matter. And yet in that matter are already the properties and the inherent structure that enable that formal determination, that is, a mound is made out of “moundable” dirt. Loos alludes to Hegel’s argument that matter and content are one and the same thing: In Loos’s poetics, the mound is made out of the ground and is also the place where someone lies buried. The ground as matter and the content as a “human burial” become the same thing. To perceive “content” is to extrapolate that matter is activated, as Zizek states, “What is ‘content’ if not, precisely, formed matter?” (Zizek, 1993, p. 135). Architecture is not merely an abstract formalization of passive unformed matter, it is a form in which the matter is intermingled with other content of human history. My argument here is that this definition of architecture differs from the essential idea that architecture is pure abstract form: Architecture is not form without content. It also differs from the essential idea of nature: Architecture is not “formless dirt.” The human story is not merely a narrative layer superimposed onto the form—the form of architecture is constituted through an already animated materiality (matter).

We tend to think about the tomb as an architecture after the fact, after the event and process of death. Loos’s statement above demonstrates that architecture assumes a temporal distance toward death—the mound is identified as geographic location, it is not placed in time. Architecture also assumes a subjective distance—“someone” lies buried here—the significance of the tomb for architecture is not the specific identity of the human subject that lies buried. In the example of Kosovo, there is a confusion between matter/content/form or, as it is sometimes thought, between figure and ground. Each excavation brings us to the uncertain face of death and to an uncertain
subjectivity. What can this moment in recent history offer in the way of another interpretation of the canonical moment in architecture?

The sense of dirt/matter as activated rather than passive appears in post–World War II films, like Rosellini’s *Paisà* (1946) and *Roma Città Aperta* (1945) and Carol Reeds’s *The Third Man* (1949), where the architecture of the city is in a state of ruin. Erosion of the urban fabric is visible in the damage in buildings, mounds of rubble, interiors stripped of inhabitation, and a general dilapidation of the infrastructure. The architecture of the city is a dark matter, deformed and eroded; it merges with the ground rather than appearing as an articulated presence and composed presentation. In this there is an ambiguity about the architecture as an edifice, or the city as a figure against the ground of geology and geography. With such a mixture of architecture and ground, the ground is also not simply passive matter. In the rubble, bits and pieces of mixed identity can be found and are visible. The films present the architecture of the city as a spatial field in which social disintegration, political confusion, and cultural ambiguity take place. Often in the plots and narratives of these films there are unresolved questions of nationality and identity of persons, and these are associated with the redrawing of maps and plans. Interpreting Loos’s mound of earth through the framework of the search for mass graves brings forth this sense that architecture is built on the uncertain ground of social disintegration.

A gravitas, a presence of the ground gives the films a weight that prevents a script about progress. Destruction and the proactive forces of war have ended, and yet reconstruction cannot begin. The films represent a phase in between destruction and reconstruction; the time before a productive future can take shape and after the shape of existing buildings has been eroded. It is the period prior to reconstruction, before this dark, depressive state of architecture turns around toward engineering and again becomes enlightening and aspiring. I have called this period a “gap of history.” Such a gap of history appears through the cinematic representation of the city, revealing that architectural history has not invested seriously in this period. It is as though nothing happens architecturally between destruction and reconstruction. Other forces operate within this phase—political forces that carve up territories, planning forces that generate urban sectors, peacekeeping forces, foreign aide forces, and absent/present media forces. Forces that utilize the time between destruction and reconstruction. In architecture time has collapsed, such a period remains unrepresented. A gap of history is a phase in which history evades the architectural canonical narrative.

I want to think about this gap of history set against the claim that architecture is a reconstructive practice, a role that is highlighted by positivistic accounts about architecture, as well as, by critical theorizations, such as that of Anthony Vidler in *The Architectural Uncanny* (1991). History, on the other hand, is seen as conflictual, captured by scenes of the battlefield and dominated by a narrative of war and destruction. What kind of practice is architectural history, which at the surface seems to suggest a paradox and to open a discourse about the conflict within the discipline between a role that is reconstructive and a history that is cyclically destructive, by containing the positive and the negative of architecture and history? The connecting plane of the ground and the repetition of practices that upturn the ground suggests that architecture is entangled in war and the history of destruction as it is a central force in reconstruction.6

Two issues on historiography emerge at this point: The first concerns us as agents of a history of the present, given by Zizek’s suggestion that “after the fact,” history can always be read as a process governed by laws, that is, as a meaningful succession of stages; however, insofar as we are history’s agents, embedded, caught in the process,
the situation appears—at least at the turning points when “‘something is happening’—open, undecidable, far from the exposition of an underlying necessity” (Zizek, 1993, p. 155). The second issue concerns the distinction between the semantics of a historical text and the situation of a discourse: the need to think about the scene or forum in which the questions are posed (Adams, 1991, pp. 81-96). This is explored in a number of critical theory essays, including Zizek’s anecdote about Freud living in Nazi Germany, responding to the massacres with an essay that Moses was an Egyptian, that is, not a Jew. What matters here is not the historical facts, not only the content, semantics, or etymology, but the structure of the situation of a discourse, as Zizek (1993) argues: “Notwithstanding the historical (in)accuracy of this thesis, what matters is the discursive strategy,” which demonstrates to the Jews that their origin is “decentred” and to the anti-Semites that the Jew does not have an original secret (and threatening) power (p. 220). To speak about the ground as an activated matter on which architecture is built in this academic forum is an attempt to act discursively about ground mines, depleted uranium, and postwar resettlements as the context of architectural constructions.

At the sight of mass grave sites of the Kosovo war, Loos’s mound of earth makes a semantic shift from tomb to grave. Whereas tomb stands for a quintessential formal architecture, grave induces a vision of the shadow side to the form of tomb. It is less constructed, less ritualized, less formed, and perhaps literally a mound of earth (de)shaped by a spade. In the future, a monument or a tomb might be constructed on the site of the graves. In this instance, the grave and especially the search and discovery of mass graves after a war brings death-grave/tomb-architecture into a closer temporal association. Two images from the media, reporting on mass graves in Kosovo, are given to a Western gaze: In one image, we watch a compassionate North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) captain, who has the look of disbelief at the sight of “evidence”; and in the other a Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) commander taking notes, documenting the “facts” of history, the “record of horror,” as the report puts it. Both are confronted by evidence. The perspective has changed: During the war, we watched the view behind a white cross on the video screen of a NATO war plane. Now we are on the ground; the literal ground forms the foreground of this picture plane, where there are burial markers and flowers. It is a comforting reference. During the war, the emphasis was on military strategy, technical display, and combat; now we have returned to compassion (NATO) and rationality (KLA). We have returned to the honorable side of civilization. Ironically, we have founded and recovered architecture after war, in the terms of Adolf Loos.

In this search, the visual is increasingly entangled with the human capacity for horror. Rey Chow’s (1993) analysis of the Tiananmen Square event in June 1989 is informative here, arguing that in such events, “Visuality became not the policing or investigatory order that it aspired to be but a theatrical order and an exchange—not of gazes but of faces” (p. 167), with face being analogous to honor and pride. What is exchanged in the process of “sighting” and visuality, especially in media representations? We ponder on the two faces in these reports. Visibility of the tomb, as a quintessential architectural edifice, might cover over other exchanges—a specific human history—that are cast outside the field of architecture. Visibility of the mass grave as a site of evidence also covers over other exchanges, exchanges that are not given to the media gaze. We are reminded of those images (often in National Geographic) in which the uncovering of a skeleton, perhaps 40,000 years old, is heralded as a highlight of civilization due to the evidence of a ceremonial death. The obsession for evidence is split
between that which is most horrifying about humanity and that which is most symbolic. We sense that this desperate search for evidence effects a fine line between “grave digging,” “grave pillaging,” exhumation, and grave excavation for humanity’s benefits. We are left with a site and place of guilt, and a dislocation of the site and question of truth.

Time (that has not passed) is a disconcerting force in this recovery of humanity and civilization. Unlike the tomb within which time passed that separates the process of death from architecture, the grave is an ambivalent structure with links to war atrocities. The grave is ambivalent as an architectural edifice because it is ambiguous as a form. It thereby hovers between architecture and dirt, producing an uncertain separation. Architecture is not able to achieve what Hegel claims to be its operative role, to cover over death, to be the victory of death. There is a loss of architectural presence in the face of the present uncertainty caused by the sighting of mass graves. We are in that gap of history in which the form of architecture has not represented itself over the formlessness of matter. This phase is between the end of one thing and the beginning of another, and it is characterized by a lack of knowledge, a lack of facts, and a lack of evidence. Architecture is preceded by other practices and other representations, such as journalism, intelligence practices, and empirical documentation, not because these are able to fulfill that gap of history but because they produce ways to leap over that gap of history, to turn the page and move on to another story. We know that in Kosovo war caused this gap of history, and we also know of war as a repeated eruption in the history of civilization that is completely expected (in hindsight) and so unpredictable and unbelievable at its incitement. In this sense, war becomes the critical factor in the appearance of a gap of history.

In investigating the ground we look beneath the surface; we address the subterranean and metaphorically the subconscious. Freud thought that the psychic symptom is correctable through excavation and bringing to the surface a memory that would open the door and release the repressed material. Kosovo offers different motives for excavation, different ways of digging, and a surfacing of the shades of truth. A basic practice in architecture—clearing a site and constructing a building—is one that invariably digs up, albeit unintentionally, a more discursive foundation to the discipline. On the other hand, we are told by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory “that an [subject] individual will not reach any unconscious truth along the path of reminiscence (delving into the past), but along the path of repetition in the here and now . . . [the] idea that the principle of identity is precisely that of repetition” (Ragland-Sullivan, 1987, p. 111). I would like to suggest that between Freud’s emphasis on psychoanalysis as excavation and Lacan’s radical interpretation of it as repetition, what we can perceive is the ways that this central concept of architecture about a mound of dirt reappears in present histories and is thereby linked to the cyclic repetition of war. The specific site of Kosovo is also one fragment of a discourse that is larger than this article. The text’s response to the question, “On what ground do we build an architectural edifice?” is in the form of a chant, answering repetitively, “We build on the ground in which we will lie (buried).” This simple question-answer is a bit like saying, “This stone is heavy on account of gravitational forces,” a formal statement that implies an impasse and a focus of the issues.

What we have excavated in this coincidence is a less than desirable mixture between matter and content, between something purely formless and something that matters to us in that it is a thread to our history, our path, our origins. Bits of human history are enmeshed with the ground. There are different types of human history: In Kosovo,
it is human bodies (in Beirut it is pieces of artifice of past civilization, in Vidler’s citation of Pompeii it is a feminized fragment). But each is problematic for the architectural project. Decay is more horrifying than death (Douglas, 1966). It is this historical phase, this history of mixed identity, this resurfacing of the figurative and of fragments of preceding forms as constituent of the ground that perhaps is most threatening to the architectural project. The architectural dilemma is twofold: (a) we are horrified at the prospect that we build our cities and architectural edifices on those that lie buried here (unless we build them a tomb), and (b) we are discomforted by an architectural history that reconstructs itself by covering over the content, that is, by repressing and concealing the historical content of the site on which we build.

Phantoms of History

In this second part of the article I would like to focus on the turns of history, and in that sense it is a focus on the story, the human story that takes a turn, that reorients reality. The argument here is that evidence in itself is not what makes history, it is the story that goes with the evidence, and indeed that turns matter into evidence. We can see how in the fields in Kosovo, the ground is not just a piece of ground, it is no longer just natural and agricultural—human histories are embedded in the ground. These fictions alter our perception of things. Renata Salecl (1994, p. 15), a psychoanalytic theorist writing on the war in Yugoslavia, notes that a country is not just a piece of land but a narration about this land. It is through stories, legends, and narratives that the idea of the homeland is constructed. Through these fictions about themselves and the land which they inhabit, people construct and reconstruct their cultural and national identity. Salecl and Zizek refer to a field of associations we call “our way of life”; the way people organize their feasts, their mating rituals, their ceremonies. In psychoanalytic terms, it is described as the way people organize their enjoyment or, as Salecl puts it, “the way people structure their desire around some traumatic element that cannot be symbolised.” It is named the “Nation-Thing,” and it suggests that the nation, the city, or an architectural edifice is not merely concrete or a fact of reality—in psychoanalytic terms, it is a fantasy.

The nation/city/edifice exists only as long as it means something to members of a community. Fantasy, psychoanalytic theory argues, crosses social reality; it cannot be explained or articulated, but it is what connects the empty places and inconsistencies in society and fulfills the gaps of social reality. I am suggesting here the idea that fantasy fulfills the gap of history between destruction and reconstruction: Our fantasy about the city and the architectural edifice urges us to fabricate a ground for reconstruction, to fabricate a renewed reality. If war is a traumatic element, then the architectural edifice is a part of the structure of desire and fantasy that enables a link to a new social reality. The traumatic element, however, remains unsymbolized, and therefore undiscursive.

In war, buildings are seen as the same type of objects as human bodies, as the objects of military strategy. This exchange between the body and the building is also perceived in the mixed matter of rubble, the state of architecture in a state of ruin. The very kernel of war, the reality of it, the very thing that makes it real is inscribed in the “wound” of buildings and people—these are the sites that exemplify the deadly penetration of the enemy. This is argued by Slavoj Zizek and Renata Salecl, who have done extensive work around the collapse of communism and the disintegration of Yu-
goslavia, and in Elaine Scarry’s text, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (1985). The aim of war, therefore, materializing in the injury of bodies and buildings, is not to gain territory, not to make money (although these are the social outcomes, the by-products of war). The aim of war is to destroy the fantasy structure of the enemy; to destroy the very way the enemy perceives itself, the way it forms its identity, the network of fictions, legends, and histories it has of itself in relation to its ground. Cultural theorist Edward Said (1999) and architect and academic Darko Radovic (1999) have noted the cultural damage done to the Serbian community due to the bombing of specific buildings and infrastructure. The bridges, the railway lines, television stations, and governmental buildings—these are the objects that construct Serbia’s sense of national identity; it is how the Serbs perceive themselves as a community, notes Radovic. If this is what constitutes Serbia’s fantasy structure, the logic of military strategy against Serbia is to destroy these objects. The destruction of the architectural edifice results in a state of formlessness; the urban fabric and symbols of a nation are turned to rubble. It is this state of formlessness that then produces a gap of history.

What, then, is the significance of the search for evidence of mass graves? What is the fantasy of the West that drives such an investment in evidence? The fantasy narrative of the West given by the Western media turns from a narrative about war to a narrative about power and community. Evidence and, as we shall see, a lack of evidence of mass graves is archaeological material for a new story.

The international media moves on. Other histories can be written. The search for mass graves has not yielded evidence. A recent publication edited by Tariq Ali, *Masters of the Universe? NATO’s Balkan Crusade* (2000), includes essays by Naom Chomsky, Edward Said, and Harold Pinter, all internationally acclaimed public intellectuals and writers. Ali observes the difference in evidence before and after the search for mass graves: before the search, quoting from the British Foreign Office, figures of 10,000 and 11,000 bodies (were to be found in mass graves); and after, the figures released by war crimes investigators and the FBI (all Western investigations) are in the hundreds. The conclusion of the investigators is that there has been no mass graves found. These publications write history differently, stating that the crimes that were committed in Yugoslavia derive from war. We are told that “there is no doubt that after NATO’s bombing campaign” the Serbian aggression against the Albanians increased, but also that the Serbs have been exiled from their homeland in Kosovo due to increased Albanian aggression. The result is that Kosovo has been cleared of the Serb community. Ethnic cleansing (of the Albanian community) was claimed to be the cause for NATO intervention, and yet the resultant ethnic cleansing (of the Serbian community) is not addressed or intervened and remains a by-product of the war.

Rewriting history includes a history of the war waged by NATO against Serbia and the questions about the occidental fantasy that is able to produce analogies to the holocaust based on manufactured evidence and disseminate these through the international media as a “liberal democratic” moral crusade. Such turns are crucial in understanding the volatile relation between fantasy and evidence, especially in present histories where the notion of evidence has become a prominent feature within the West in the process of preserving its dominant place in global economies.

That is however, history after the fact. Reconstruction is symbolic of a new reality (Albanian and Serbian nationalism) that emerges to protect us of from a traumatic shock and disorientation. Through the self-evident presence of the empty tomb (the architectural edifice of reconstruction), the history of war and destruction is covered
over. The scene of the graves, as a primordial scene hovering between architecture and dirt, tells us of a loss that can easily be displaced and repressed in this progressive narrative. To see (mass) graves only as evidence of evil is to not see (mass) graves as loss. Zizek (1993) explains this loss as “the loss of the ground under our feet, caused by the disintegration of the really existing socialism.” Zizek suggests that the breakdown of socialism is not to be underestimated, that “what disintegrated in Eastern Europe was le grand Autre, the Lacanian big Other” (p. 232). How will the Serbs and the Albanians (and indeed adjacent Eastern nations, such as Macedonia) reconstruct a nation, a city, or a building now? On what ground? How will they build on a ground which is not purely dirt, which is disfigured bodies and destroyed buildings, where the figurative mingles with dirt at the ground plane? How will they rebuild on a land that has become a political battlefield, conquered and occupied by a Western fantasy structure? A land where the “wound of their identity” is inscribed in the ground but cannot be symbolized, spoken about, or represented? How can an architecture in the terms of Loos—a monument that presents human tragedy and captures human grief—be reclaimed by a destroyed community of people?

By associating Loos’s tomb with Kosovo’s mass graves, disciplinary boundaries have been contested. The notion of inside/outside is metaphorically blurred through the connecting plane of the ground, opening this issue for further analysis. In Althusserian terms, the search for mass graves as evidence of atrocity is what the new ideology sees in order not to look at them as loss; so that it can overlook them, it scans its horizon in order not to see. Not to see what, we might ask—the Western media tells us, “the heart of darkness.” The heart of darkness has two centers: The first is the heart of darkness for a loss of the fantasy structure of Yugoslavia as a community of people. With this new evidence, the fantasy structure of a united Yugoslavia is further destroyed, the ground on which Yugoslavia was constructed—unity in difference—no longer holds. The war is over but the politics of the Western fantasy and the Nation-Thing continues. Others are able to conquer and colonize the structure of the fantasy narrative. NATO and the Occident turns the narrative of Kosovo against an integrated Yugoslavia, which is eroded through the evidence of mass graves.

The second is the place of darkness within the West. Reiterating the message of the media via Althusser’s theory of vision, we find in Althusser’s words the phrase, “the inner darkness of exclusion,” that which is invisible, not because it is outside the field of vision but because it is the nonobject within vision (Althusser & Balibar, 1970, p. 26). Within the new fantasy of the West, the heart of darkness (as it is represented in the Western media) is its own inner darkness of exclusion. In trying to locate “evil” elsewhere, in searching for evidence of evil, the West overlooks its own fantasy structures. It dislocates its own truth as player in evil practices. The fantasy of the West is to colonize the ground of another nation, to appropriate the people within its own field of fantasy. In a sense, it is not to gain empirically more territory but to gain the territory of their minds. Media representations of military strategy have said as much, that the psychological war is as important as the physical. The agenda is to turn minds metaphorically into rubble, to cause people to forget who they are and with whom they belong. In effect, this constitutes an indifference to the other (the other’s fantasy). The mass graves thus become signifiers of the nonobject within the vision of the West: Reducing them to evidence and excluding meanings of the loss of the other constitutes the inner darkness of exclusion. Terms such as collateral damage and the first casualty of war suggest the rhetoric of this discourse. The other is unable to attend to loss and
grief; it is stolen from them through this psychological colonization. Consequently, loss and grief of the other evades the story that the West repeatedly tells itself.

A literary and fictional ground always crosses the literal ground. The ground is not neutral: Even at the level of foundation (geology) and footings (engineering) are traces of human history. In the practices of writing architectural history, we participate in the fantasy structures of documentation and evidence and how we can turn the story around. In writing history, whether it is of antiquity or modernity, we are writing a history of the present; architectural history is contested and rewritten within a conflicted battlefield. In the situation of this discourse, the scene in which the questions are posed and in which production occurs is often more crucial than the semantic meanings attained.

Architecture and Historical Truths

In the interpretation of a canonical moment in architecture—Loos’s mound of earth—through a moment in recent history—the search for mass graves in Kosovo—a more fundamental gap of history was revealed. It is the phase between the end of destruction (death and war) and the beginning of reconstruction, a phase of a human history that evades the dominant narratives of architecture. A gap of history in architecture is represented by the state of rubble, a matter of mixed and uncertain identity between building, bodies, and dirt. It is this formlessness that indicates that architecture is not merely a pure abstract geometric form or a natural condition but an animated and inscribed form. Loos’s statement that “someone lies buried here” represents the tone of that gap: The forgotten story of those that lie buried becomes a phantom history haunting every architectural erection.

This suggests that history is not merely the catalogues of complete and pristine buildings but also the stories of destruction, demolition, and damage. The ground on which we build the architectural edifice is the discursive field of history. Architecture is therefore contingent on history as discursive; history is not unified, fixed, and evolutionary; rather, it is contested and rewritten in conflicted battlefields. Inherent in architectural history is the contradiction between the positive and negative in the practices of building and construction.

Human history mediates the formation and formulization of architecture. The architectural edifice is constituted through a transformation of the figurative, the memory/loss of human subjectivity and the fragmentation of form. The other (human subject) is seen to constitute this mix of the figure/ground identity. Content becomes matter and constitutes the ground on which we build, but the ground is always the remainder of the other (human subject).

Notes

1. During my research, my gaze was directed to two specific sites: the rebuilding of central Beirut (in conflict with its archaeological sites) and the destruction of Yugoslavia, especially the recent war in Kosovo. I had also become particularly interested in Vidler’s (1991) reference to Pompeii because I read it as a text that addresses the “buried feminine” in architecture. Across
these three fields, the “ground” emerges as a significant terrain for study. Here I refer to the specific site of Yugoslavia and Kosovo (Lozanovska, 1999, 2000).

2. Mark Wigley (1993) develops arguments about the relations between architecture and philosophy and this sense of building appearing in the place of a ground.

3. A number of contemporary authors in architectural theory have addressed the notion of the ground, including Anthony Vidler (1991), Mark Wigley (1990, 1993), and John Rajchman (1997), and have thereby opened a series of theoretical questions.

4. Reference to 1945 signifies the end of World War II and perseveres as an indelible inscription in the writing of modern history. But 1945 was also the beginning of the cold war. The spectre of Berlin as a divided city seen from the perspective of the present reunification is a defined phase in history, a period within the parentheses of historical time. In retrospective writing, we might say that something is returned to its origin, the dismantling of the Berlin wall is the end of a divided city. Recent revisions of this history unfolds onto new narratives which speak of sites other than Europe, dates other than 1945, and political conditions and movements other than European style democracy and capitalism. The nonaligned network between Egypt, India, and Yugoslavia come to mind as a powerful and growing force, as well as Japan and Southeast Asian restructuring. These narratives redress the relations between Europe and others and provide a basis for a historiographic negotiation between 1945 and a history of the present, as well as disciplinary boundaries between architecture, urbanism, and history.

5. Films of recent destruction include Underground by Emir Kosturica (1995) and Blade Runner by Ridley Scott.

6. I am suggesting here that there is a poetic resonance between everyday practice of clearing a site for building and clearing the rubble for reconstruction. Perhaps buildings are demolished or rendered dysfunctional, perhaps land is reclaimed from a tip site, a swamp, and so forth; processes have turned the site into property and have made the site available for building. It is the phase prior to construction that is associated with the gap of history in relation to war.

7. The extent of ongoing damage and suffering that the remains and remainder of war leaves within the ground was explored in a television documentary, “Depleted Uranium and the Politics of Radiation” (SBS, Cutting Edge, April 3, 2001). It noted that the first mass testing of a projectile that left extensive depleted uranium was by the United States in Iraq during the Gulf War. Ten years later, after many millions having died, there is ongoing radioactivity in the air, water, and soil.

8. These notes are from two newspaper front page reports (Mann, 1999; Stevens, 1999).

9. I would not like to simply put Lacan in opposition to Freud, and it is important to remember that Lacan is the significant “reader” of Freud, the father of psychoanalysis. I am investigating this architectural question through the modalities of “excavation” on one hand and “repetition in the here and now” on the other hand, and perhaps how these two modalities are intertwined.


11. See Zizek (1993, pp. 201, 206) and Salecl (1994, p. 15) where they argue that our Nation-Thing is inaccessible to the other; he cannot become like us. But in structuring our enjoyment, Zizek argues that we always impute to the other an excessive enjoyment: Either he wants to steal our enjoyment and/or he accesses some secret perverse enjoyment (which we do not). Thus, our Nation-Thing is threatened by him. Hatred is born out of this volatile sense of the other’s enjoyment, and at the political level the other is construed through the fantasy structure of the nation. In terms of psychoanalytic theory about human subjectivity, this argument culminates in the statement that the hatred of the other is the hatred of our own excess of enjoyment.

12. Scarry (1985) states that the “main purpose of war is injuring,” a statement, as she states, that is so obvious yet often indirectly contested because it is left out. Renata Salecl (1994) adds that although there might be other motives before war and other effects after war, during the war these are secondary. Although death and injury are presented as by-products of war, these two theorists argue that they are “actually its only aim” (Salecl, 1994, p. 14).
13. That the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) should also bomb the Chinese Embassy and the trainload of Albanian refugees reveals something of what constitutes the fantasy structure of the West, its NATO-Thing. We, subjected to the lens of the Western media, were amazed/relieved at the lack of response, the lack of performance from either China or the Albanians.

14. For example, see Althusser and Balibar (1970): "Non-vision, is therefore inside vision," and "the invisible is the theoretical problematic’s non-vision of its non-objects" (pp. 21, 26).

References


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