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The Migrants’ Daughter’s Study

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The migrants’ daughter’s study is a space within the house of immigrants in which the daughter fulfils her tertiary education. Referring to the study, long inscribed and imagined as the place of a masculine individual subject, the article extends theoretical investigations of a discourse on gender and sexuality in architecture. It examines the relations between body, space, and language through the daughter’s struggle to make and inhabit an individual space, a study. It signals the lack of private space within the migrant house and the lack of public place in terms of subject positions accessible to migrants’ daughters outside the house. The study is proposed as a space of exchange between otherwise disparate cultural fields and as a space for the theatrical staging of provisional identities and possible agencies for the migrants’ daughter. The article speculates on the study as a threshold for a female ethnic imaginary and subjectivity.

The Study of Architecture

The study has long been historically inscribed and imagined as the place of a masculine individual subject, implicitly written as the man’s study. In “Untitled: The Housing of Gender,” Mark Wigley (1992) investigated gender and sexuality in architectural discourse and how the man’s study as architectural space affects the concept of individual subjectivity. Wigley’s essay referred to “an explicit but apparently marginal passage on gender” in Alberti’s architectural treatise of the 15th century, On the Art of Building in Ten Books, a passage that for Wigley alters Alberti’s text, such that gender and sexuality occupies the treatise “in a symptomatic way” (Wigley, 1992, pp. 351, 333). Wigley proposed that woman’s subordinate role is both prescribed and exemplified in Alberti’s text, and the study is one site of evidence. Looking at the architectural plan, the man of the house occupies the study, and the woman occupies the dressing room. If this has a sense of symmetry and equality, it soon dissolves into dissymmetry.
and sexual difference in the way that each of these spaces participates architecturally and socially within the order of the house. Wigley described the study as a quintessential space of privacy. Separate bedrooms and a lockable writing desk precede it, but the man’s study, “a small locked room off the man’s bedroom which no one else ever enters,” is “the first truly private space” (Wigley, 1992, p. 347). The study in the 15th-century house, Wigley argued, “is the true centre of the house” because all the records (words) are kept there, secretly: “But they are not just stored in this space. They are literally produced there. The private space is the space of private writing” (Wigley, 1992, p. 348). The essay negotiates the boundaries of the architectural canon and rewrites the study as a site for a discourse on the relation between architecture and gender and sexuality.

What is the “migrants’ daughter’s study”? Initially, it is an idea that was generated through conversations with women who are from non-English-speaking backgrounds and who are tertiary educated. In these discussions, “the study” had not yet been named as such; it was not yet an explicit topic, and it had not been perceived as an architectural object. It was, however, a significant background. Even if passive and silent, it is a spatial setting, or as it is termed in cultural theory, a spatiality, around which activities, stories, and events had taken place. For me, through my theoretical interest in the relations between the body and space—between corporeality, spatiality, and subjectivity—the migrants’ daughter’s study started to emerge from the background. It has not become foreground or figure, but a certain definition and projection has dislodged the space from its conditional role. In one sense, the study is simply the space within the “migrant house” in which the daughter fulfils her function of studying for school, especially in the later years of secondary school, and then for her tertiary education.

There is a specificity about the topic; its theoretical point of departure are the personal histories of working-class immigrant families arriving in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s. Having exhausted the more “desirable” postwar immigrants from northern and central Europe, new immigration policies had now opened doors to southern European countries, including Yugoslavia (especially Macedonia, Croatia, and Serbia), Italy, and Greece. Still in operation was the White Australia Policy, which denied access to Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants. The daughters arrived either as very young children or were born in Melbourne, Australia, in the early years of their parents’ settlement. The specific can enfold the universal through the replication of the same unit, the building block of the migrant house. In many parts of the Diaspora, and especially in the New Worlds (Canada, the United States, New Zealand, and Australia), the stereotypical migrant house, contingent on the already established suburban patterns of settlement and the expedient construction processes, can be recognized for its sense of order and clean lines, the durability of its materials or its high level of maintenance, and its austere façade that ensures a cultivated presentation of nature (Lozanovska, 1997, p. 113). The interior of the house and the space to the rear of the house, the backyard, is also similar in structure, organization, and hierarchy. Thus, at the level of the built environment produced by immigration, it is possible to speculate that the migrants’ daughter’s study is an edifice of global phenomena, potentially articulated within the building block of the migrant house.

Within the migrant house, the migrants’ daughter’s study is a space marked by her individual needs, struggles, and desires for a fragile and tentative separateness from the familial household space and from the scene of domesticity filtered through tradi-
tion and custom. Thus, the study is a response to the lack of private space in the migrant house, the lack of space for individual subjectivity. Just as significantly, it also signals the lack of place in terms of subject positions accessible to migrants’ daughters in the public domain, the world at large outside the migrant house. Wigley (1992) noted a complicity between the man’s study and the world that is not perceivable in the association between the migrants’ daughter’s study and the public domain. Her subjectivity is not affirmed by either the order of the house or reproduced through an affinity of house/world. However, her study is potentially a productive site; it temporarily displaces her lack of space and place. Although to call the study “a room of her own” is to give it unrealised architectural geometry and presence, I do want to invest the study as an architecture. I want to bring an architectural sense to it as the ethnic daughter’s space/place within the Diaspora. In this article, I speculate on the study as an architectural threshold for an impossible female eth(n)ic imaginary.

The lack of specific space (within the house) and the lack of universal place (in the world) for the migrants’ daughter is what ties this investigation to that of Wigley (1992), in that both have an agenda to investigate the relationship between an architectural configuration and the constitution of a gendered human subject, and also what unties this investigation from it, departing from a revision of the canonical text of Alberti and reorienting its theoretical investigation. Wigley argued that the concept of the study or the house or architecture is not merely a discrete spatial configuration but an edifice constructed through a number of intersecting systems:

Place is not merely a mechanism for controlling sexuality. Rather it is the control of sexuality by systems of representation that produces place. The study, like all spaces, is not simply entered. Rather, it is (re)produced. As such, the issue here is not simply the existence of studies in houses but the ideological construction of a gendered subjectivity that “occupies” it. (p. 350)

A paragraph that opens onto the possibility of writing about a study that is occupied by a subject that is not masculine, not middle class, not privileged, not Western.

The uncanniest similarity between the Eurocentric merchant man of the 15th century, the subject of Alberti’s treatise, and the daughter of working-class immigrants in the Diaspora of the late-20th century is that they both have a secret space, a study. This secret space is crucially significant for the subjectivity of the man of the house, the paterfamilias, and crucially significant for the subjectivity of the immigrants’ daughter, “the daughter of Diaspora,” each with their specific history. This article, then, has an ideological or speculative impulse, at times more aligned with Alberti than Wigley. Beyond that similarity are rational and irrational reversals and enlightening differences.

A study is not architecturally inscribed into the design or plan of the working-class immigrants’ house as it was for the 15th-century merchant in Alberti’s treatise. Not for the father, the mother, or the migrants’ daughter. The daughter’s secret space is at a point in which interests of privacy intersect uncomfortably within a tight house space dominated by other immediate processes. These are, as for the merchant, both global and domestic processes. One is the accommodation of the extended family and the accommodation of others beyond the extended family. Grandmothers, uncles, aunts, single cousins, and family friends arrive and reside in the house, each family within a room or in the bungalow and other outbuildings. Temporarily, the migrant house becomes a transient node in the process of immigration. Although also involving travel
and journey, the 20th-century immigration of this article is a reversal of that of the 15-century merchant. The other side of immigration is emigration, departure, not a departure that seeks to return with all the newfound knowledge and goods of the discovered other worlds but a departure that is an eternal rift between space and time. To return is to return backward, to fall into an incapacity, to be unable to move forward or progress. Emigration/immigration is accompanied by a negativity of being left behind in the global sense.

Wigley (1992) noted that Alberti is concerned with the construction of the ideal humanist subject—a masculine self-knowing and knowledge producing, collecting, recording kind of figure. The study as architectural inscription in Alberti’s treatise acts as a presubjective spatial condition for the ideal subject, the *omo universale*, the Vitruvian universal man. The migrants’ daughter’s study comes after the fact, after architectural delimitation of boundaries and spaces defined by other functions, occupations, and practices. Her space is squeezed out of and within existing expeditiously and tightly built dwellings. His space is a part of the contract with the architect’s imagination and with the architectural theorist’s ideology. Both the client and the architect participate in this contract to inscribe spatial geometries for the production of hierarchies across gender, class, and race. The eth(n)ic daughter has no architect to work with; she must negotiate her space on the ground with the contradictory and conflicting interests of several dominant (and other equal) parties. In the most crucial sense, her space is not architecturally designed. There is no architectural intention or inscription of a spatial condition for an (im)possible subjectivity for the daughter. It is not legitimated or proposed by the discipline, nor is it cited within its body politic. Her study is a treatment of a preexisting architectural order, a physical labour that moves to make use of a place for an activity for which it was unintended. It is provisionally her private space within a territory that is not hers and that she has no authority over.

The spaces of study take on many physical shapes and realities: the change of use of a closet, the storeroom under a stair, a kink in the hallway, a bedroom that is divided between siblings, a conversion of an unused laundry, a shed in the far end of the backyard, or the kitchen table in the wee hours after everyone has gone to bed. The significance here is the distinction between space as provisional inhabitation, space as property and territory, and space as citation in architectural and critical theory. The use of the term space across the disciplines often suggests something that is mystifying, unknown, and unrepresentable. A term often called on to play the role of transcendental signifier and deployed as a way to overcome what is not resolved theoretically. A look at the migrants’ daughter’s study evokes an intricacy about the relations between space, subjectivity, body, and language and opens a critical perspective of the use of the term space. It might begin to unravel, not the mystery or transcendental capacity, but a revision of what we call the “background,” space as condition, as medium, as construction, as frontier.

Wigley (1992) is interested in the ways we “read,” or perceive and interpret architecture, and his attention to the study exemplified the kind of questions investigated in contemporary architectural theory. Although both architectural theorists, Alberti and Wigley gave attention to the study, there is a difference in what they had to say about it and a distinction in its polemical role within each text. Alberti inscribed the study as part of an ideological framework about the subject of the Renaissance and in
that sense wrote architecture into the structure of that ideology. For Wigley, the study is already inscribed into the architectural canon, and his revision of it rewrote the role of gender in architecture. Through Wigley’s investigation, the architectural canon reveals itself as more porous than we might have imagined. It is not only the architectural treatise that Alberti is cited for but also Alberti’s nonarchitectural treatise, *Della Famiglia*, a text that is often read dialogically with it. This is further traced through a treatise of the 5th century, Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, constituting, Wigley argued, a historical account of the forefathers and canonical ancestors crucial to Alberti (Wigley, 1992, pp. 333-334). We find that Alberti is possibly as “interdisciplinary,” to use a contemporary cultural term, as Wigley and that the representation of the “canon” as strictly bounded or not depends more on historiography than essential concepts. Wigley’s is a long complicated essay, difficult to pin down. It introduced theories from other disciplines and preserved some of the frames within Alberti’s ideology. For example, it introduced gender in relation to architecture, but class, ethnicity, age, or race are not investigated or theorized as factors that complicate a gender-architecture relation. Such a “feminist” position is now extensively critiqued by cultural theorists including Gayatri Spivak (1988, 1990), Edward Said (1978, 1993), and Stuart Hall (1996). To theorise gender only through the construct “woman” is to leave uninscription the other woman, the mistress, the servant, the daughter, the representation of the divisions between women. Wigley’s text, like Alberti’s (and like this article), has its own “symptomatic” preoccupations.

What incites the tactical operation, the reading, analysis, and the making of space, that inscribes the migrants’ daughter’s study? Is it the pain of constriction within existing architectural paradigms that she is inserted into, the pain that might be spoken as a shrinking of the self in the world; is it imagination that leaps forth out of a bodily resistance to spatial oppression, imaging a way to valorize its needs in and through space? Her study is built through the use of her and her families’ practical dwelling skills, but in this “building” is the body’s projection and production, a corporeal counter attack against the “technics of space”? Perhaps there is a transformation of pain, need, imagination into a materiality and extension of an existing local space-time frame. There is a power in building that in this example is intrinsically linked to shifting embodiments and a process of becoming subject. The man’s study is an edifice out of the network of productive forces and contractual relations between the agents that produce the world and the systems of production and representation. There is a logic to its idealization and to its realization. It is proposed, authorized, manifest, and self-evident. Not so for the migrants’ daughter’s study. It is irrational in that its construction depends on adopting the gaps, the loopholes in contractual relations.

Thus, this article valorizes building practices in addition to, but also against, the interpretation of canonical texts. Its enquiry includes the practices of making space and how the making of space might constitute subjects of difference, subjects that are not inscribed through Alberti’s treatise. In search of a historiography that does not fall just behind the present, it presents visibility and empirical observation, not as facts but as fictive truths. Although Wigley’s essay might be described as strategic in that it framed its scope through the institutional limits of the canon, this article is tactical in that it uses the intellectual labour of his reading but all the time looking elsewhere and attempting in that way to steal a glimpse of a history of a present that often escapes representation.
Body—Self—Space

Sneja Gunew (1994) works with poetic and fictional texts of non-Anglo and migrant female writers. Gunew interpreted these works because they produce innovative and complex networks between speaking positions, linguistic traditions, and subject constructions, noting that those able to think from the beginning in more than one language find it impossible to consider language as a "natural" and unproblematic expression of experience. And those who have experience of more than one culture may find it more difficult to regard one culture as universal. (p. 73)

I am interested in the space that is occupied/inhabited for writing: Where did they write, and what surfaces there? Gunew noted one theme that surfaces in writing is "imagined identities":

the absent story of the self we would have been had we stayed in the old country. This comes through for me very clearly in stories by Canadian-Chinese writers. (Lee & Wong-Chu 1991). Often the siblings who remain in China represent an imagined self. Haven’t we all fantasized in this way, wondering what our histories would have been in Bulgaria. (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993, p. 12)

The immigrant’s daughter’s study is a physical/architectural site for potential relationships with other selves and her imaginary selves left elsewhere, between place, space, time, culture. They are the imagined identities that may be otherwise forgotten or sterilized, the present selves that engage with political and hegemonic structures, and the future, secret, or perverse selves that delimit the fixedness of any possible truth claims. They insist on the "foreigner within the self," different and yet uncannily linked to the foreigner as imposed identity.

Body-space, as joined word, opens the possibility of the body in relation to something of itself and at the same time something not of itself and, perhaps, outside itself. The relations of the body and space are not simply that the body is contained as a discrete form within the object domain of space. A bounded system of measurable attributes cannot totally codify the relations between the body and space. The materiality of the body and of space cannot be reduced to an opaque empiricism. Her body literally engages in the production of a solitary space in that she must imaginatively and physically construct her space; she must “put up,” corporeally, the acoustic, visual, and other screens that are architecturally inadequate. Her body must overcome the existing architecture to make her space. These constructions enable her to redirect her gaze, shutting out the other background and enwrapping her space in her own fabrics and fabrications. The intimacies of the body and its space are suggested by Henri Lefebvre (1991) in The Production of Space, in his poetic gesture that “production” is forever occurring:

How does a body "occupy" space? . . . To criticize and reject absolute space is simply to refuse a particular representation, that of a container waiting to be filled by a content—i.e. matter, or bodies. According to this picture of things, (formal) content and (material) container are indifferent to each other.
We are thus obliged to consider a contrary hypothesis. Can the body with its capacity for action, and its various energies, be said to create space? Assuredly, but not in the sense that occupation might be said to "manufacture" spatiality; rather, there is an immediate relationship between the body and its space, between the body’s deployment in space and its occupation of space. . . . Each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space. This is a truly remarkable relationship. (p. 170, italics added)

The migrants’ daughter’s work and practices in her study are cerebral, creative, theatrical, and corporeal. Her corporeal occupation/inhabitation of the study conditions possibilities of knowledges and enables the performance of subversive identity practices. The migrants’ daughter’s study urges a sense of thinking through the body and a sense of thinking through space, a sense that might trace the threads between the body and subjectivity and the trajectories between language and architecture. Seen as architectural production, it intervenes discursively in the problematic of the body in architecture and contests a canon that is built on revisions of Alberti’s treatise, which proposes to simultaneously protect itself from the impurities of the body and to restrain the body against its own impurities.

Wigley (1992) proposed that the space of architecture and the production of knowledge are intertwined; that is, architecture provides the space, literally, for the production of knowledge. Knowledge is thus not produced outside of architecture or outside of the architectural production of space. It is sometimes assumed that this gives architecture a subservient role as the prop for knowledge, in a similar way that space is assumed to be subservient to the architectural object. Architecture is perceived as the stage set for the theatricality of other cultural productions or the body for the housing of the human mind. I think Wigley presented a more subtle and complex conception of architecture in relation to knowledge. Architecture is perceived for its ontological sense, and although this might be reduced to an experiential sense of being, it is rather complicated by the sense in which specific spaces allude to certain functions, and to an extent the functions are enabled or suggested by the space and by the projections of identity onto specific spaces. Space and knowledge are thus mutually productive. The study illustrates the ways in which the field of ontology and the field of epistemology might overlap and that the human subject mediates or is the corporeal medium of this overlap.

Her study, like his space of “writing and recording,” is also a space by and through which production takes place—of language, of identity, of sexuality. It is a rewriting of traditions and a production of knowledge and thus also “the true centre of the house.” But “centre” is already to fall into humanist geometry; let’s say, it is a site of production that will eventually cast its focus on the incommensurable difference between the houses. The house of Alberti is not the house of her father. In A Seventh Man, John Berger (1975) encapsulated the tragic emasculation suffered by the father in the process of migration. Her father’s house strangely territorial is founded on the symbolic loss of language. Law and territory/property are discordant. Alberti’s house is the law of the father, the house of institutions and publicity. It is both the architectural house that circumscribes the domestic domain and the house of language that is circumscribed by the study. It divides subjects within and between houses, between one house and another house. The privileged private house thus becomes an archetypal imperialising force of the West. It appears in architectural history in Palladianism, curiously a movement generated by the landed gentry in England (not Italy), and in the

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colonnaded white domestic architecture that gives colonization its architectural image throughout the world. In relation to the privileged private house, the migrant house is the deprivileged house (though not essentially so). The study, a quintessentially privileged space, is potentially a site of tension between Alberti’s house and the migrant house.

Neither house belongs to the daughter. Alberti constructed the house of the family, *Della Famiglia*, and the house of the discipline of architecture, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, the house of canonization. The house that Alberti “canonizes” is not her house. Neither is her father’s house. She is not centred or central in either house but neither is she outside the houses. By and through her study, she will create a circuit of exchange between otherwise estranged cultural fields, identities, languages, and corporealities. Her study, half rational and half imaginary, half textualised and half unrepresentable, is a house of illogical associations, a house in which language is always nuanced by the proximity of others, by the erotics of the body, by the subconscious memory of a lost language. In so many ways, it is a dangerous and risky space within her father’s house, and it is an illicit and forbidden space in relation to Alberti’s house.

It is important to note that for the daughter of immigrants in the Diaspora, the study is not a property she can own for herself. The study is a way for her body to produce its space. Although the daughter develops a grasp of (at least) two languages and become a translator between the houses, two things make her fragile in relation to the symbolic law of the father: first, the sense of her own father’s subjective lack in relation to the new language, culture, class, and race; and second, her own “foreignness” in relation to language. Kristeva (1998) proposed that language is all connoted as paternal and masculine. Studying puts the daughter in a direct relation to language and in a direct possibility to courting new fathers as a way of crossing over laws and languages (Gunew, 1985, p. 106). A danger is that contracts with new fathers of law may constitute relationships of debt and that these may perpetuate the daughter’s sense of illegitimacy that keeps her in a position of subjective lack. Institutional studying, the act of study and engaging intellectually and publicly, is a point of coincidence between her study and Alberti’s house. But what is the role of her study in relation to Alberti’s house? Is it a preparatory entry visa, does it tempt her with the lures of architectural monumentality, does it enable her to postpone taking her place in Alberti’s house, is she given an opportunity to experiment, to “build” her space and rebuild herself, all or none of these? The study is the site of becoming subject, and this turns to questions of ethics, in addition to functional and institutional capacities.

In Alberti’s house, the study is a space of immaterial knowledge, a space insulated from the kitchen (women-servants), from the bedroom (woman-wife), a space beyond and removed from sexuality and from familial reproductions like the rearing of children. Not so simple for the daughter. Although intended to be separate, her study is not so securely isolated from the entry of siblings and parents. Her space might be a study, but it is never merely this; it is never *one* space, or rather “study” and “knowledge” are not necessarily immaterial. For the daughter, often, her study is her bedroom. The convolution of knowledge, *alterity*, and sexuality is by way of her secret space. Wigley (1992) differentiated between the man’s study and the woman’s dressing room, spaces that in Alberti’s house reproduce masculinity and femininity through architectural differentials. The daughter’s study may also be her dressing room. It is a space for ad-dressing and redressing the shifts in her identity. Her secret space is imbued with metonymic layers of different cultures, different languages, different architectures, different aesthetics, and different sexualities. Not only cloth(e)s, posters, me-
mentos, souvenirs, diaries but also screens, spatial enclosures, mirrors. In this, it is also an experimental and improvised staging of identities, skins, masks—a masquerade and a laboratory for possible subject positions. My suggestion is that the secret space of the migrants’ daughter is a way of preserving “her relation to spatiality,” in the Irigarayan sense that becoming subject is constituted through the spatial envelopes of identity (Irigaray, 1993, p. 11).

Not all daughters need, imagine, or construct a study. From the perspective of her study, asymmetries between female siblings and relatives place the daughter in a difficult relation to knowledge and its imperialising force and consequence. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1993) spoke about the division within the figure “woman” as it is essentialised within phallocentric and white-feminist systems of representation and theorisation, arguing that the woman that names and speaks is not the same woman that is talked about (p. 139). The migrants’ daughter’s study enables the daughter to produce, be part of, and witness this division within and between her own familial members. How can she speak about them, and how can she not speak about them? Through the study, the immigrants’ daughter is both close/familiar and distant/strange to her female relatives. Tensions with her male relatives are further complicated through the gendering of demarcation lines between the public domain, language, and work. Through this struggle of identity, a resistance to either a “marginal” unnamed place or an authorial naming place may be articulated. The study is a threshold space through which the immigrants’ daughter has to make judgments and decisions. She learns the effects of words. To name may mean to objectify, to annihilate, to expose, to disavow, to condemn to a lack of self-representation. Her study signals the ethical. In the term I have proposed for the immigrants’ daughter, “eth(n)ic,” the ethnic as a distinction that is not fixed, that can be deployed to contest fixed borders, (but that is also not a fetishisation of the borderline) and that is potentially discursive.

It appears that the space of the study mediates the division and confusion about private and public, both in the history of architecture and in the history of Western philosophy. The nuance of the private/public division that I am particularly interested in here is that the purpose of the study is that it is spatially private and yet intellectually public. Although the private/public division can be completely nonsensical and useless in theory these days, it is important to present it and, at the very least, resist some misinterpretations. The study is thus a private space, private from the other domestic spaces. In a fundamental sense, it is, however, linked to the public sphere of knowledge and its dissemination, its reading and publication (whether this be philosophical knowledge, economic, or the curiosity of artefacts from far-off lands). Presumably, both Alberti’s and Wigley’s texts were written in a study, and we also read them in a study. From Alberti’s private act of writing in the study, we witness its outcome, the seminal treatise on architecture. The act of privacy thus here has an agenda for publicity; it is not simply a withdrawal into a private world. It is the kernel of liberalism, a state in which through one’s private act of writing, one can become an agent in the world; one can have agency. And also that one’s public role depends on this specific privatisation. It is this liberal ideology of the individual as a discrete being that is preserved in Wigley’s analysis. But it is an important preservation because crucial to the mythical image of the 15th-century “man of the world,” a merchant, a subject whose extension is unlimited and propelled by trade and colonization, is this idea of a kernel, a space that is private, a space in which he can document, collate, analyse, and act on what he has found and found out. Ethics thus intervenes in both the man’s study and the migrants’ daughter’s study.
The study is not a safe place for the daughter—it is not a cell in which she can disembody or keep herself—forever. It is only effective if provisional. A permanent occupation of the study is dangerous for the daughter entailing a politics of identity as fixed representation. Also, the migrants’ daughter as an “identity” of the marginal can only deploy and distribute itself through the misrepresentation of her own disavowed margins (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993, p. 11). For the daughter, it would entail the appropriation of her other selves and a disavowal of the other women (and men) that she knows. It is ethically dangerous to perceive the migrants’ daughter’s study as an architectural configuration of the marginal subject. The study is a possible threshold for the subject of the margins; once inhabited, the subject is no longer marginal.

Dwelling in the migrants’ house without a provisional occupation of a study, a private space, means that she may be subsumed within her father’s mythical reign. I have argued elsewhere that the migrant house is potentially infused with abjection, both from the outside in the form of the dominant cultural reaction to its aesthetic sensibility and within as a space of confusion and improper mixtures between words, foods, and hierarchies. Her father’s house is an enclave within a foreign territory; he has his own frontiers, constructions, and bodybuilding to produce. Her father is not the symbolic father (Lozanovska, 1997). Her father’s house is a site of the motherland in which traditionally feminine labours and practices preserve its metonymic relations to lands of ancestral histories. The daughter can be swept up with the memories and grief of separation from the motherland, psychically carried by her mother and symbolically by her father (Lozanovska, 1995, pp. 212-214). Her dilemma is to keep the abject at bay, to turn confusion into words, to name things, to practice and produce. But the danger is sacrificing her motherland (her fatherland and her mother) in this process. How to separate without cutting off violently is a problematic that is faced by all daughters (and sons); for the immigrants’ daughter, it is intersected by gender, language, culture, class, and race. Its specificity illuminates the unconscious architecture of the subject. The temporary dwelling in her study is a way for her to preserve and produce her spatiality within her father’s house. Without the architectonics of a provisional private space, she might disown her father and sever her mother tongue. Subjectivity is always edged by the abject for the eth(n)ic daughter, but the enaction of eth(n)ic violence is also always a probability.

In this real and utopian imaginary of body-space relations with and through the eth(n)ic daughter’s study, architecture is seen as constructing and constructed. The Diasporic daughter’s study is a space for mimetic practices of provisional subjectivities.

Notes

1. See Wigley (1992) in Sexuality and Space, an interdisciplinary publication that has found a niche in the architectural canon.

2. Non-English-speaking backgrounds is the term for the category of women I am referring to. The choice of terms is always a kind of supermarket that does not have the type of product you really need, and therefore you settle for something that is available on the shelf. Other terms such as ethnic, migrant, culturally different, and non-Anglo-Celtic each have a specific potential and limitation, and I oscillate in the article from one to the other, according to which best fits
the specific context. I use the negative term here to suggest the kind of subjective lack that this term implicates and as a point of departure through the writing of the article. I would like to thank Blaga L. Fakos, Teresa Capetola, Liljana Tasevska, Silvana Tuccio, Eleni Kondos, Panayioti Romios, Sophie Widdop (nee Kourtis), Ana Hayes (nee Lioukas), and Angie Potsch for their invaluable conversations.

3. An early version of this article was presented at the Cultural Studies Association of Australia conference, titled Post Coloniality/Cultural Studies: Representing Difference, in Adelaide, Australia, December 1998. A number of texts investigating physical space in relation to a capacity to write (or draw) have come to the foreground since that writing: Woolf (1977), hooks (1995), and Cairns (1995). Scenes in the film The Fringe Dwellers, directed by Bruce Beresford (adapted from the novel by Nene Gare), show a young aboriginal boy sitting at the table with his family, but unlike them, he draws houses rather than participates in the conversation going on around him. These texts/scenes are not directly engaged in this article, but the images of a “study” represented bears an impact on the theory proposed in the article. They also indicate the extensiveness of the theme of the study as a site for investigating the relation between architectural space and the “unmasterful” but masterly human subject.


5. Preliminary documentation of migrant houses built between 1950 and 1975 are not yet conclusive, but my speculation is that there is innovative and skilled contributions by the immigrants who often participated in the building of their houses. These houses are now being eroded by the “heritage hysteria” that is propelled by real estate value, medium-density development, and second- and third-generation descendents who are not keen to preserve the existing dwellings of their parents.

6. For an investigation of the migrant house as a spatial enclave in which languages and cultures are renegotiated between familial members and the fence boundary, see Lozanovska (1997). The fence, sometimes marked by lions and eagles, is a boundary between cultural and linguistic frontiers and territories.

7. This term is formulated as a gesture toward a “difference” within “ethic” that is signified by an “ethnic” component, a component that is irreducible, undecidable, “impure,” multilayered, and changeable. See Lozanovska (1995, p. 288).

8. Berger and Mohr (1975) described the decision to leave the homeland as a choice between remaining in the stasis of a dying environment or embarking on an unknown road—but in the least, one of life and movement.

9. Ongoing empirical research on this project will offer a more substantial material history. An analysis of very specific materialities will enable further exploration of the nuances of agency, identity, and subjectivity in relation to architectural space.

10. Foucault’s interest in space and in architecture is informative because it perceives the significance of architectural space outside architecture as a discipline. See Foucault (1984, p. 243). See also Foucault (1980, pp. 146-165), which discusses the historical changes to the interior organization of the house.

11. Sneja Gunew’s comprehensive work on the fiction writing of non-Anglo female writers in Australia is significant both in its recognition of the value of the work as literature and in negotiating the institutional borders of English literature in Australia. See Gunew (1994) on the writings of four female ethnic writers: Antigone Kefala, Ania Walwics, Rosa Cappiello, and Anna Couani.

12. Virginia Woolf’s memorable phrase, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,” resonates throughout this investigation. See Woolf (1977, p. 6). It must be remembered that the printed essay was based on two papers presented as lectures that Woolf was asked to present on women and fiction. Beyond the initial statement, Woolf told a story of encounters, obstacles, and pleasures in the process of a woman (herself) writing (the lectures).
13. Julia Kristeva commented on a sense of women perceiving language as illusory and not having a “full” commitment to it and on “women’s foreignness” in relation to language and how this might allow a kind of productive disbelief. See Kristeva (1998, pp. 93-94).

14. There is potentially another story about the 15th-century merchant. His subjectivity is not really as it is represented. He might also return altered by his travels; he might also not return and become caught in the eternal process of the traveling subject. He might become other to that proposed and planned in Alberti’s treatise. The study might also be a space for illicit and undisclosed practices, thereby deconstructing the idea of a space as a site for “immaterial knowledge.” This is a theme for a different article. The merchant is not the subject investigated in the article at hand; he is a referential image, a subject represented in and through the (man’s) study.

15. See also Judith Butler (1990, pp. 79-91) for a critique of the problematic and limitations to Kristeva’s (1998) concept of “poetic language.”

References


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