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When does a sentiment become an architectural concept? *Otherness* in Hejduk's *Wall House 2*

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Specifically architectural poetic sense

When we talk about architectural design we often draw a distinction between what is designed and how it is designed. The object of design can then be recognised as of a given function type, such as a house, while the manner of design can be treated in terms of style or design idiom. In some cases, however, the manner of design leads us to intuit that more is at stake than style, at least if by style we mean a particular set of formal and compositional principles that can be applied to a variety of designs. A design can communicate a specific idea or feeling over and above satisfying the requirements associated with a function type or a style. Such is the case with 'otherness' as it applies to the design of Hejduk's Wall House 2. In the overall work of Hejduk, otherness is a sentiment explicitly evoked when he speaks of his understanding of works of architecture as well as works in other media, most notably painting. It is also a sentiment implicitly embedded in his poems. This paper discusses otherness as an idea that permeates the design of Wall House 2 so systematically that we can treat it as an architectural concept. Thus, what follows is a case study in the broader question of how a poetic insight, or feeling, that may originate in a variety of media can be transformed into an architectural design concept and be communicated as specifically architectural poetic sense. By implication, the relation between poetic insight and the inherent logic of the symbolic media in which it is expressed is fundamental to the argument.

Twenty one of the poems in Hejduk's collection *Such Places As Memory*[1] are descriptions of specific paintings. One hypothesis, regarding the significance of these poems within the overall body of his work, is that they function as a language for articulating architectural intentions. If this is the case, then the poems can also serve as lenses through which we can better understand his architectural designs. To propose this is not equivalent to accepting that meaning can be translated from one symbolic medium to another. The meaning of each mark or symbol used in a symbolic system depends on the relations it sustains to other symbols and marks. Thus, there can be no dictionary for directly translating symbols and marks that belong to one system into symbols and marks that belong to another.[2] Instead, using a work in one symbolic system as a point of departure for constructing a work in another provides an opportunity for becoming more explicitly aware of the manner in which meaning is constructed in each. Hence, the partial re-stating of ideas, insights or feelings across symbolic systems can function as a trigger for an almost experimental interrogation of the systems themselves. The tension between works in different symbolic systems makes it less likely that a designer will manipulate their own symbolic system uncritically and automatically; thus, the design will be less fettered by stereotypes.

In the case of Hejduk we can postulate that the insights gained from looking at the paintings can be used to explain parts of Hejduk's brief for

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designing buildings. The term 'brief' is used here in the sense proposed by Baxandall[3]: the brief comprises the design intentions introduced by a designer in the process of design and is to be contrasted to the 'charge', that is the set of requirements that are given to a designer at the outset. Paintings are of course visual forms. Architecture is also a visual form, at least in part. To treat insights gained from the appreciation of paintings as elements of an architectural design brief could lead to a direct transfer of visual motifs from paintings into architecture. This could easily become too literal, and too iconic; it could lead to a more superficial treatment of architecture's own mode of constructing space. The poems mediate this relation. They allow the placing of a distance between the paintings and architecture, and a more abstract rethinking and re-structuring of spatial and formal motifs.

Thus, seeking to establish relationships between works in different symbolic media does not imply that the meaning of each work is taken to reside in its ability to refer to another. Each work will be considered in its own right. The tension between works in different media must be studied not from the point of view of reference, but rather from the point of view of design language. How does a designer construct a language that can respond to specific intentions, drawing inspiration from the manner in which language is deployed in other media?

Otherness

In *Mask of Medusa*[4] the term 'otherness' occurs three times. First, Hejduk relates otherness to the tension between the straightforwardness of the elements deployed in the design of Wall House 2 and something about the whole thing that is not straightforward.[5] In the same discussion Hejduk defines otherness as the attribute of being 'inexplicable'.[6] Second, when talking about the 1/4 House, the 1/2 House and the 3/4 House, Hejduk relates otherness to the ambiguity of the extended connector between the bedroom and the living elements.[7] As we know, these houses were designed at the same time as Wall House 2, which also has an extended circulation space. Third, 'otherness' is the keyword of a title on page 127 of *Mask of Medusa.* Although the word itself does not appear within the text, Hejduk offers a description of Le Corbusier's Villa La Roche which exemplifies the idea of otherness. He proposes that the house can be read as a church: The three-storey entrance could be read as the congregation area; the balcony on the second floor as the pulpit; the black marble table might be the altar; and the little garden stones outside, under the living room, are like tombstones…[8] We can, therefore, suppose that otherness refers to the feeling or sense of something 'else' being present in a work—another programme, another quality, or another space, which does not conventionally belong to it. In Hejduk's own words, it is the 'undertone'. Therefore, otherness is a particular sentiment whose cause may be relational: something inexplicable in the relationship between elements.

Given this working definition, we can identify otherness in other writings, and specifically in poems. One poem of the collection *Such Places as Memory*, namely *To Madame D'Haussonville*, unambiguously refers to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' painting, *Louise de Broglie, Comtesse*

D'Haussonville.[9] This is of special significance because elsewhere Hejduk has explicitly linked this particular painting to his designs for the Wall Houses:

> Isn't that strange? Look at the mirror—there's no reflectivity. It's absolutely opaque. It's impossible. And that arm . . . cannot belong to that person. I mean, the hand is the size of the face. It's all disjointed, all the parts are separated. It's Cubism, 60 years before Cubism. There's no depth, right? No perspective. This painting is in my work — in the Wall Houses. The separation of the elements, the opacity of the wall, the lack of depth . . . it's a very important work for me.[10]

The painting is a portrait of a young lady. In the poem, words such as 'no reflections', 'sink', and 'hidden' underscore the opacity of the mirror, the cloth, and the body respectively, to create a sense of innuendo. The sense of opacity, in what otherwise appears as a very clear image, alerts the viewer to the idea that something else is going on. At the same time, the relationships among body parts are aberrant. The woman's hands are too large, the breasts seem to be confined to too small a space between her arms, and her belly is oversized. Thus, it becomes poetically necessary to state that this young lady will not scratch the earth with her hands or use the tip of her tongue for infusion, as we would expect of monsters. As Donald Wall said after discussing a similar subject with Hejduk, 'if the malignancy doesn't lie in the parts, then it must reside in the way the parts are being assembled.'[11] This is exactly how otherness is depicted in this poem. It derives from the unusual relationships among the seemingly normal parts, with the added provision that aberrant relationships are set between the literal clarity of form and the opacity of the condition depicted (Fig. 1).

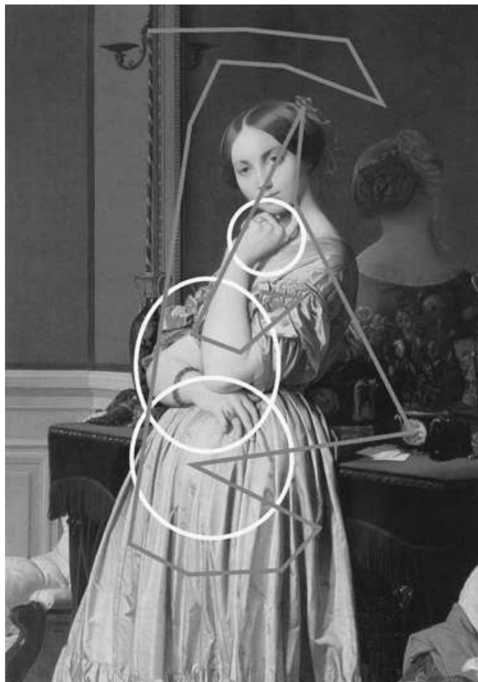

Figure 1. Hejduk's descriptive trajectory upon *Louise de Broglie, Comtesse D'Haussonville*, by Ingres.

Nature Morte, describes another unusual condition, depicted in two paintings[12] by Georges Braque (Fig. 2), which Hejduk also links to the designs of the Wall Houses.

> In Braque's painting *Studio III* (1949)[13], the bird of death flies through the wallpaper of a room. The bird is caught within the wallpaper's pattern on the wall. It is caught in the patterns of many layers of peeled wallpapers, oblivious to the death entanglement of the surfaces. In his

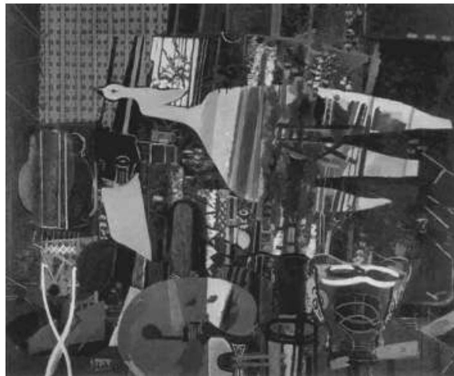
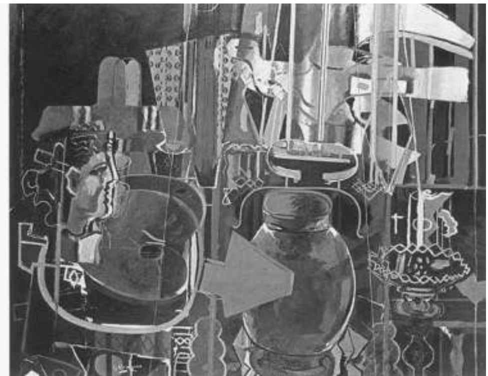

Figure 2. *Studio II* and *Studio III* by Georges Braque. (Copyright 2005 Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York/ADAGP, Paris.)

> *Studio II* (1949), the bird is observed by a man's head or even perhaps a cast head—we are not sure. The bird is agitated and can be seen as moving into and parallel to a window about to be entwined in the wallpaper of the room. Another viewing of the painting could be that the former head of the painter, instead of being on the pewter platter of Salomé, is placed on the wood palette of the painter. In any case, the bird in the paintings desires entry into the room to be finally enmeshed, as a shark is enmeshed in an undersea net. The painter attempts to capture death, or at least a fleeting thought.[14]

In the poem, Hejduk describes this moment when the gull enters the room from the point of view of the three major senses—hearing, touch, and sight. The barely audible sound of the gull entering suggests a boundary around the space; feeling the greens and browns permeate it suggests its interior volume; the interweaving of the gull's wings with the vertical stripes of the wallpaper suggests a fracture of the boundary. Thus, as with *To Madame D'Haussonville*, the senses in *Nature Morte* are confronted with uncertainty and unusualness. The sound of the gull is almost imperceptible. The greens and browns are so vague that one does not know if they are supposed to be seen, touched, or smelled. The sight of the lone gull silently flying is abnormal since there should be noise from the wings' fluttering within the vertical stripes of the wallpaper. The poem thus reconstructs a collection of sensations that run against our normal expectations.

Hejduk has not explicitly linked *France is Far*, another poem from the same collection, to his architectural designs. One link to Wall House 2 will be suggested in a later part of this paper. The poem juxtaposes twenty one paintings and a photograph by Hopper[15] in the sequence in which they were printed in the Abrams 1972 volume on Hopper's work.[16] The poem is permeated by a strong and multiple sense of detachment and fragmentation. The people mentioned seem isolated or unrelated to other people in the same

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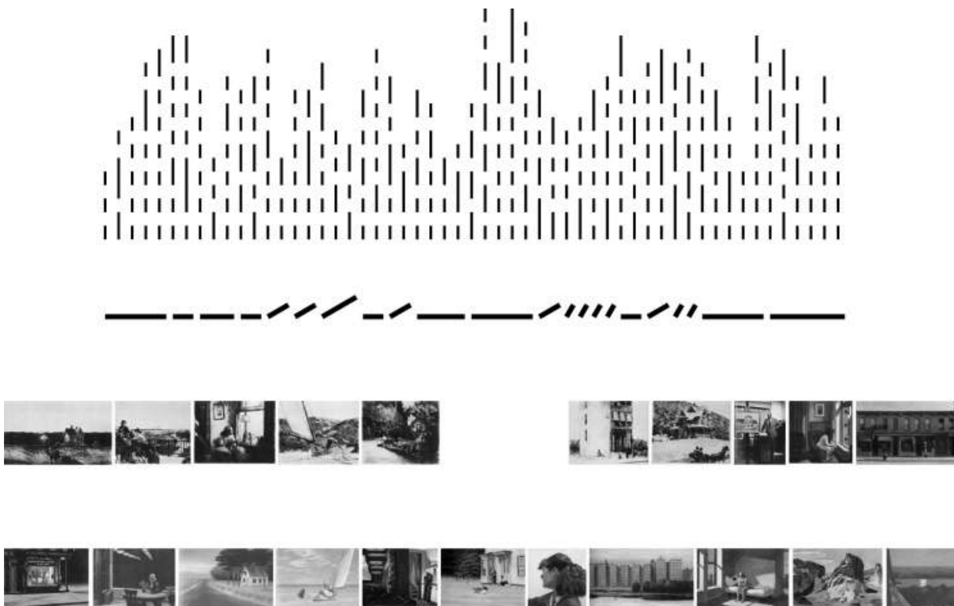

Figure 3. Rhythm in *France is Far* (drawings by the author).

scene, with the exception of two lovers kissing. The settings themselves are strongly discontinuous. In addition, the action described is often paradoxical. For example, 'he read the paper in the park at 10 p.m.' defies common sense, as reading the paper rarely takes place in a park at night. More importantly, as the poem provides a very selective and short description of each painting, often in one or two verses, and as the order of the paintings is not linked to a narrative, readers of the poem are likely to be disoriented. There is no possibility of predicting what follows, or of retrospectively reconstructing the relations of descriptions already read.

Narrative discontinuity is complemented by the construction of a discontinuous rhythm (Fig. 3). Each word is represented in a vertical straight line whose length is determined by the number of vowels. A horizontal strip is used to notate descriptive pace. Each bar along the strip corresponds to the description of a painting. 0-degree-bars are assigned to descriptions involving multiple sentences in multiple lines. They mark the verses where the pace is slower. 30-degree-bars are assigned to descriptions involving one sentence in multiple lines. 60-degree-bars are assigned to descriptions involving a single sentence and line. Where the scenes are in quick succession a feeling of anxiety

is generated. In three places—at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end—the poem alludes to paintings in more detail and the pace of description conveys more tranquility. The opening scenes are pastoral, they involve a landscape, cows and a house but no people. The middle scenes describe a naked woman sitting alone with arms crossed under the evening lights; also a deserted Sunday morning. The end scenes speak of abandoned quarries and an island.

Thus, when the pace slows down the feeling of anxiety turns into loneliness and emptiness. The presence of people is more directly stated in the first half of the poem. Nearer the end, it wanes or is indirectly inferred by the use of expressions such as 'Vermeer was looked at', 'at first she could be from Rouen yet some Canadians look American', or 'Léger could have painted her'. Conversely, the distant presence of France emerges three times, at the end of the second and the third slow interval and in the middle of the second faster sequence. The first time France is associated with a memory evoked by a barber's pole, the second time it is referenced by the appearance of a person coming from Rouen and finally the third time it is referenced by sailing boats that are said to come from Le Havre. Thus, the distant presence of France fills a progressive gap created by the gradual disappearance of direct descriptions of people. Otherness, therefore, bears on more than the disjunction between parts. It also bears on the interspacing of loneliness and anxiety that arises due to the structure of the poem rather than as a direct consequence of the descriptions.

The definition of otherness as an inexplicable relation between elements places the emphasis on the syntactic characteristics of a design. The brief preceding discussion shows that the purely syntactic characteristics become charged in particular ways. Thus, the opposition between the clarity of figure and the opacity of condition, or the enmeshing of feelings of anxiety, detachment and isolation, appear as semantic orientations which drive syntactic relationships in particular ways. The analysis that follows seeks to identify a similar link between syntactic relationships and semantic charge in architectural design.

Wall House 2

Wall House 2, also known as the Bye House, was designed in 1973 for A. E. Bye in Ridgefield, Connecticut, but was not built on the original site. Instead, the house was realised in Groningen, the Netherlands, in 2001. The design remained the same although the size of the house was scaled up by twenty percent in order to meet code requirements. The house is dominated by a three-storey-high concrete wall (Fig. 4). On one side of the wall the three major living spaces, bedroom, dining and living room respectively, are stacked upon one another. The circulation, services spaces and an elongated entrance corridor are on the other side of the wall. A study room is located off the corridor, near the entrance.

For Hejduk, the wall registers the moment of the present.[17] On the side of the wall with the living spaces is the future; on the other side is the past. The past becomes a passage; the future is speculated upon; the present is just a fleeting moment. In Wall House 2, the past, the present and the future are notated as a spatial structure.

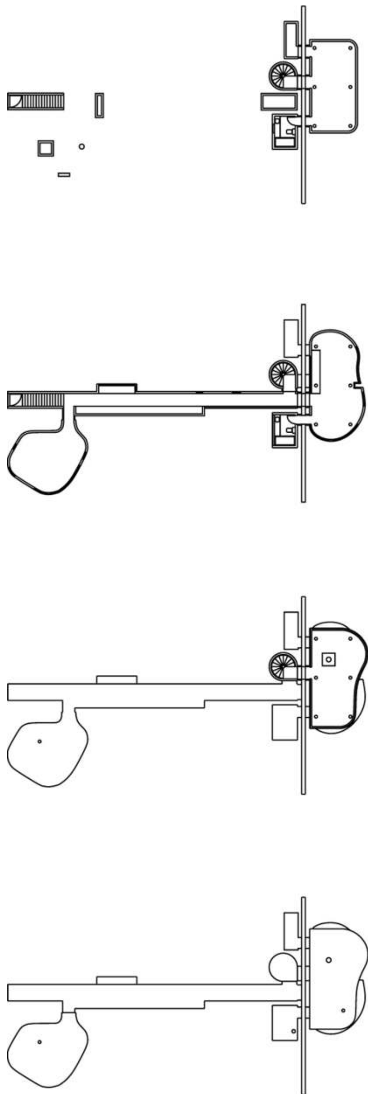

Figure 4. Plans of Wall House 2 (drawings by the author).

> The wall is a neutral condition. That's why it's always painted grey. And the wall represents the same condition as the 'moment of the hypotenuse' in the Diamond houses—it's the moment of greatest repose, and at the same time the greatest tension. It is a moment of passage. The wall heightens that sense of passage, and by the same token, its thinness heightens the sense of being just a momentary condition . . . what I call the moment of the 'present'.[18]

We will return to a discussion of the notation of time in a later section. But first, some of the spatial patterns and structures that underlie the potential experience of the house are to be identified.

Patterns of embodied spatial experience

Building design is unavoidably linked to patterns of embodied spatial experience which arise according to the manner in which buildings situate subjects within a structured field of spatial relationships. Here, Wall House 2 will be described in terms of certain patterns of spatial experience that it engenders, to prepare a subsequent discussion of whether these patterns result from the architectural concepts that govern the deployment of design language. The aim is not to describe experience as a whole, a task which is in principle unachievable, but rather to identify some of the spatial structures that inhere to experience and charge it in particular ways. The description is, therefore, explicitly selective.

Spatial experience can be described in terms of elementary conditions and also in terms of the relationships or sequences of these conditions as subjects move in space. In the following discussion

the emphasis will be placed upon the structure of visual fields as an aspect of experience. Elementary conditions are associated with a constant point of reference. Thus, there are three kinds of pure elementary conditions. The simplest is when a fixed form or visual domain is viewed from a fixed position. Alternatively, we can have a variable visual domain seen from a fixed position, or a fixed form seen by a subject moving in a setting. But a fourth kind of elementary condition can also be admitted, when the subject moves and the visual field changes but the change involves no crossing of threshold or discontinuities, as for example when a subject moves and changes orientation inside a simple room. A sequence involves several elementary conditions of variable duration. Thus, a sequence describes relationships among these conditions. In this discussion sequences will be literally continuous; no montages of views taken from discontinuous locations or at discontinuous moments are allowed.

Wall House 2 in Groningen, the Netherlands, was visited in 2003 but the analysis will be based on three-dimensional computer animations which reconstruct possible experiences. The reason why animations rather than onsite shots are used is not only practical convenience; animations help to emphasise the spatial structure of the visual environment by muting other aspects of experience such as colour or material. For the purposes of this article, videos will be replaced by individual shots.

The camera shots used represent a tiny fraction of the possible views engendered by the design; they document not only (specific) perceptions, but also insights, depending on the choice of viewing positions, angles and frames. The selection of shots is evidently subjective, in that it is not governed by an a-priori method. Still, more neutral shots that depict more evident conditions will precede shots which focus upon significant details. The function of the shots, however, is to lead to a reconstruction of the principles of possible experience which, granting the initial selection of the shots, is open to scrutiny. What is fundamental to the argument is that the structure reconstructed inheres in the object; no claim is made that it exhausts the object or that it is not open to qualification depending on the selection of alternative viewing frames and trajectories. The discussion starts from the elementary conditions surrounding the major wall that dominates the design, as seen from the interior. This will become the main focus of the argument in the final sections of the paper. The elementary conditions associated with the wall are then followed by accounts of other conditions and sequences in the intuitively expected order.

The wall

The key elementary condition in the design of the house is the threshold as one goes through the wall when making the transition from the elevated access corridor into the dining room, on the second floor. A similar transition is repeated for each of the floors as one enters 'use' spaces, coming in from the circulation core. Figure 5 shows successive shots taken at eye level. Vertical visual elements dominate. The free-standing major wall mediates between the boundaries of the stairwell and the dining area, with two open slits intervening. The treatment is sectional. A clear sense of cutting

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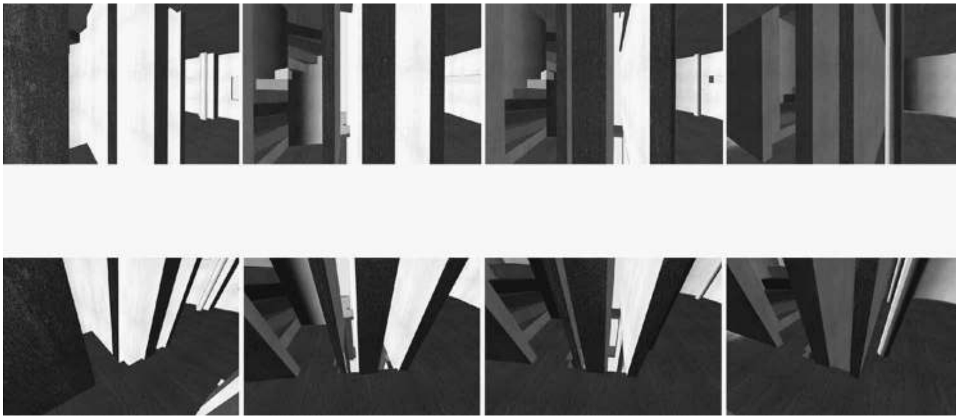

Figure 5. The wall (filmed images by the author).

through the major wall arises according to the predominance of transverse narrow views at the threshold which is reached only after a rather long movement between the lateral walls of the narrow access corridor. What begins as a very narrow and deep frontal perspective, is suddenly extended to an extremely wide and shallow one, with the major wall acting as the picture plane. The wall appears to come through the space of the corridor so that the subject is placed in an unfamiliar position, at the intersection between a boundary and a path. A modified view is obtained by placing the camera in a different position to target the floor, as shown in Figure 5. Within this view, what one sees overlaps what is touched by the feet. The full height of the vertical slits and the manner in which the boundaries are cut leads to an impression that the threshold is crossed through a suspended bridge. The whole body thus becomes acutely aware of the special condition of the threshold.

Closure

Figure 6 documents a path around the house, which appears to negate any possible involvement of the viewer. The walls create a sharp definition of the exterior, with no mediating or bridging elements. Some views are afforded through the horizontal windows at the sleeping area, but there is no point of entry. The exterior is not claimed as a garden connected to the bedroom space. The vertical openings on either side of the major wall correspond to so narrow a space that there is no possible anticipation of a human body approaching. The closure of the interior is underscored by the elevated approach corridor and the minimal manner in which the entrance touches the ground.

Protracted entrance

The movement from the entrance to the dining area is depicted in Figure 7. The entrance space is narrow and relatively dark. A single steep flight of stairs

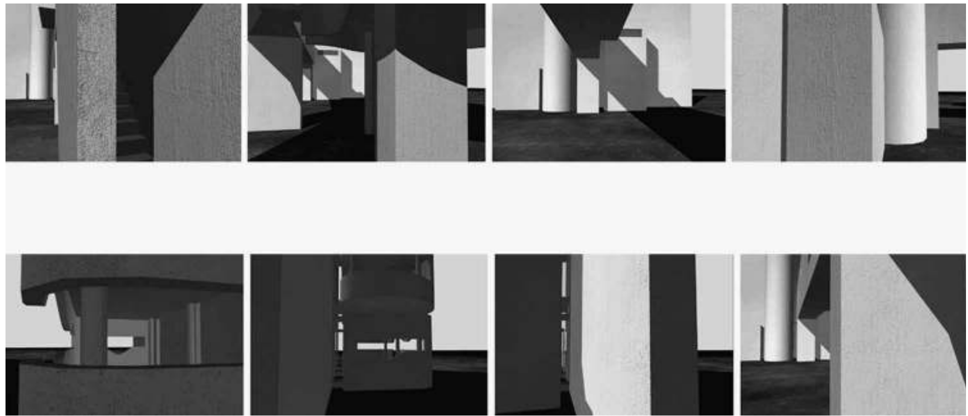

Figure 6. Closure (filmed images by the author).

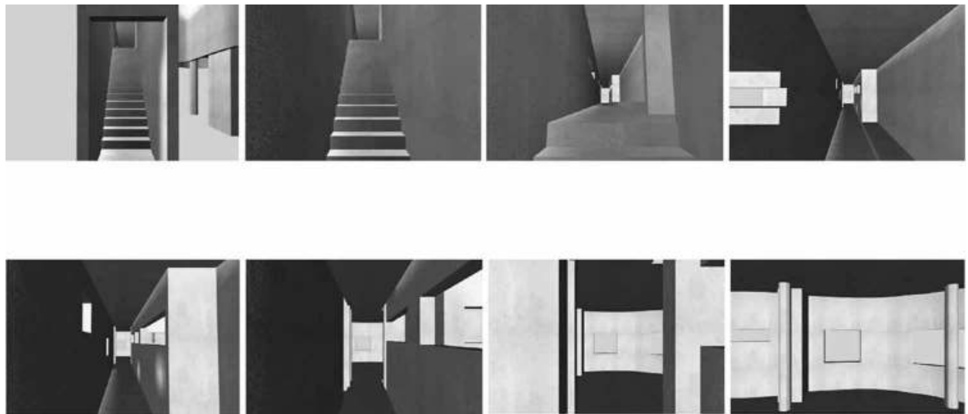

Figure 7. Protracted entrance (filmed images by the author).

immediately confronts the visitor with a requirement for physical effort. At the same time the visual horizon is limited to the steps themselves rendering it impossible to predict the nature of the space one is ascending towards. At the top of the stairs the long narrow corridor is revealed, dimly lit on the sides and brightly illuminated at the end. The vertical slits, either side of the major wall, provide a major source of lateral light just before entering the dining room; in the dining room the forced directionality of movement is relaxed for the first time. Entering is therefore turned into a challenge for

the body. The combination of poor intelligibility and intense effort at the very beginning is succeeded by a protracted but constrained axial movement. Just before reaching the destination space, there is a strong transverse truncation of space, arising from the treatment of the threshold discussed earlier. During this prolonged prelude there is scarcely any invitation to linger. Duration is experienced more as delay.

The boundaries of procession

Two cameras are set up at waist level facing towards each of the side walls of the entrance corridor. As shown in Figure 8, the visual boundary remains constant during the ascent. There are significant changes during the subsequent progression towards the dining room. On the left, an extruded window provides an asymmetrically framed thin horizontal opening with an open side towards the dining room and a closed one towards the entrance. The opening fundamentally negates any orienting view of the site, because the cantilevered frame blocks any visibility of the ground, and points to the horizon. This is followed by two small rectangular openings, one at eye level, the other much lower. On the right, there is a long recess intended for a cupboard. This is followed by three horizontal openings at eye level in close succession. The openings never occur simultaneously on both sides of the corridor, until the threshold to the dining room is reached; this, as was previously shown, is defined by the two pairs of vertical slits facing each other. The dining room itself provides a generous horizontal strip window. Overall, the corridor negates transverse transparency at all points, except at the rapid succession of vertical slits dominated by the major wall. With the exception of the three horizontal windows on the right, most openings provide light but afford extremely limited views. The main function of the openings is to underscore the presence of the walls and their close proximity to the body, rather than to open up connections beyond.

Fragmentation

In contrast to the restricted and protracted entrance sequence, the main 'use' spaces can be read as statements of formal freedom. The bedroom, on the lowest floor, is essentially a rectangular space with rounded corners; freedom is mostly exemplified by the profile of the windows. The dining room, on the second floor, is a more freely shaped space with numerous openings, inviting movement around the edge. The living room, on the highest level, has a curved roof in addition to a curvilinear perimeter. Figure 9 captures the main characteristics of these spaces. However, regardless of how freedom may be exemplified in the shaping of each individual space, their isolation from one another is the main feature of the design. Transitions between them require the use of circulation which is designed to emphasise the separateness of spaces, not their connectivity. The relation between circulation and use is played out as a contrast between darkness and light, opacity and transparency, elongation and compactness. More specifically, the spiral staircase imposes a tedious circular journey in the darkness, and produces a perceptual and affective detachment from one space before one moves into another, almost acting as a 'resetting' mechanism. The generous views through the windows of

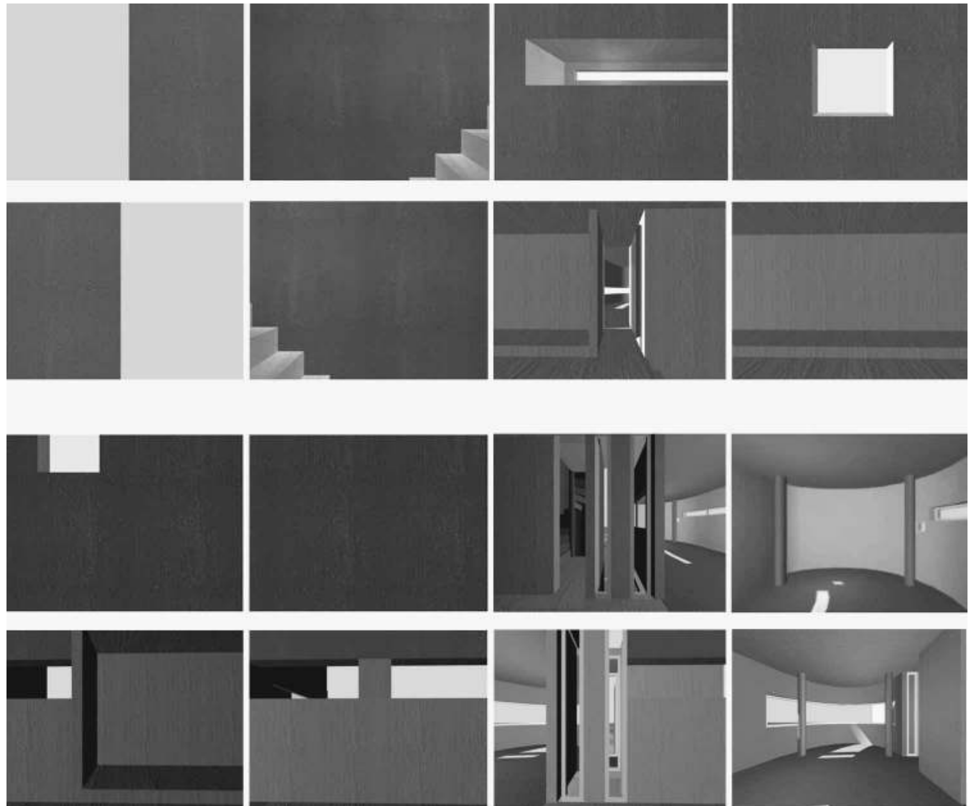

Figure 8. The boundaries of procession (filmed images by the author).

the main habitable spaces act as reminders of and counterpoints to the intense separation which is the dominant condition of the house.

Expression

Hejduk has talked about Wall House designs in terms of occupying the threshold and this is certainly a main characteristic that makes Wall House 2 unusual. The vertical stacking and separation of the living spaces requires that inhabitants frequently cross the major wall thus becoming exposed to the threshold condition and the opposition between the experiential qualities described earlier. There is an additional sense of detachment since the gener-ous views offered from the living spaces, coupled with the reduction of connections to a strongly

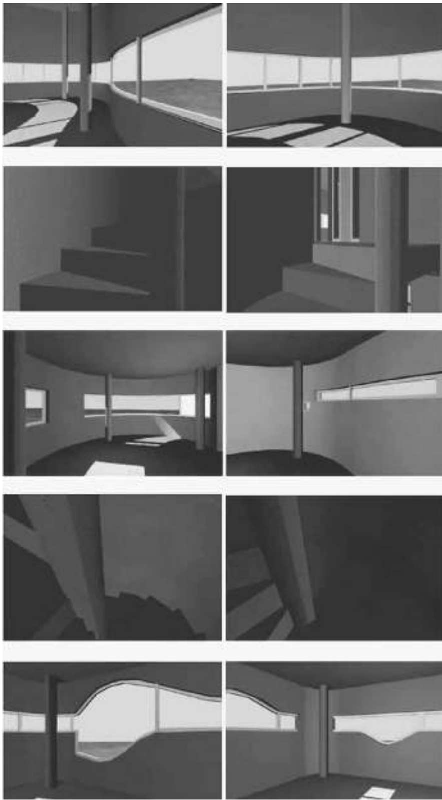

Figure 9. Fragmentation (filmed images by the author).

controlled minimum, sets them into the spatial equivalent to monologues. The entire structure of 'circulation—boundary/threshold—living spaces' is reached through a protracted movement initiated at a conspicuously unrevealing entrance, essentially a boundary one has to climb over, and subsequently extended to permit a minimum anticipation of where one is going and a maximum awareness of being bounded and framed. Anxiety is thus built into the manner in which the structure is first approached.

Over time, the entire arrangement is likely to generate more than just an awareness of the flow of time between a past, represented by the circulation spaces, a future represented by the views from the living spaces, and a present represented by the experience of the threshold. In this house, remembrances of everyday life cannot be stitched together into a single image whose experiential scaffolding would be provided by the interplay of cross views between spaces or the setting up of a dialogue between one view of a relation and another. The alternative most likely here is a collage of discrete images in the mind, images of spaces remembered either entirely present or entirely absent, but hardly ever seen from a different point of view. Rather than merely associating the past with circulation, therefore, we might associate the whole house with a particular structure of memory, one that foregrounds discrete episodes rather than flow, framed images rather than multiple points of view. To discuss the consequences of this regarding the interplay between the more literal and the more imaginative dimensions of memory, its more recollective and its more reconstructive moments, is beyond the scope of the present argument.

Parallels between the house and the poems can, therefore, easily be drawn. The relation of clearly delineated parts is imbued with a certain experiential opacity, much as with *To Madame D'Haussonville.* The continuous stacking of polarised spatial conditions over time would create the sense of an ambiguous interpenetration of spatial frames of

reference as described in *Nature Morte*; if in the latter death is connoted by the gull getting trapped in a painter's studio, here a lesser sense of loss would continuously be connoted by the irrevocable perceptual absence of living spaces hardly left behind. As with *France is Far*, it is the space between episodes that is negated. In addition, as with *France is Far*, three moments of tranquility, the living spaces, are separated by moments of more rapid change. The ensuing tension between embodied experience and mental image would be similar whether we take the house or the poems as our point of departure.

Such parallels confirm that otherness can be expressed in different symbolic media in a way which potentially preserves its specific connection to feelings such as loneliness or anxiety. In the case of Wall House 2, we can at least say that otherness is associated with a quality of uncanniness arising from the simultaneous encounter with the familiar and the unfamiliar. The parallels also lead us to become aware of the alternative means of expression associated with different media. However, they still do not bring us closer into understanding how the architectural sense of otherness got formulated in this particular instance. Better to understand this, we have to turn to another body which may be taken as the raw material of the design, its starting point. This is the body of architectural precedent, and more specifically some buildings by Le Corbusier.

Reconfiguring an architectural body

Hejduk read Le Corbusier's Salvation Army Building (Cité De Refuge) (Fig. 10) as a unique composition

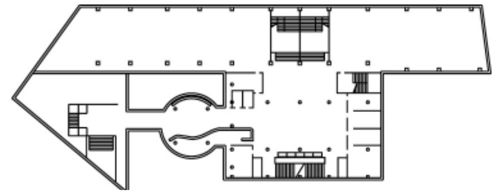

Figure 10. Le Corbusier's Salvation Army Building (Cité De Refuge) (drawing by the author).

of foreground and background: a vertical dormitory slab was seen to act as background to several dynamic and smaller volumes (incomplete cube and cylinder) in the front. In Hejduk's own words: 'I felt the necessity that the wall be freestanding, acting as a tableau upon which the biomorphic elements should be suspended. The element should float, up in the air playing off the geometric flat wall.'[19] These principles clearly resonate with the composition of the Wall House. Hejduk admits that 'certain Wall House issues began to clarify' themselves as he looked at this building.[20] The elementary forms used in the composition can themselves be recognised in the Villa La Roche (Fig. 11), which, as we have seen, Hejduk read in terms of otherness. Thus, the raised organic solid corresponding to the study room echoes the solid above the garden at the villa. The crossing over of the corridor reminds us of Le Corbusier's bridge hovering across the hall. The irregular openings of the corridor as well as the continuous openings on the organic volumes resonate with Le Corbusier's windows. However, Wall House 2 is not merely an elaboration of Le Corbusier's language. Something else is happening, which reconfigures the language and redirects it towards the expression of otherness.

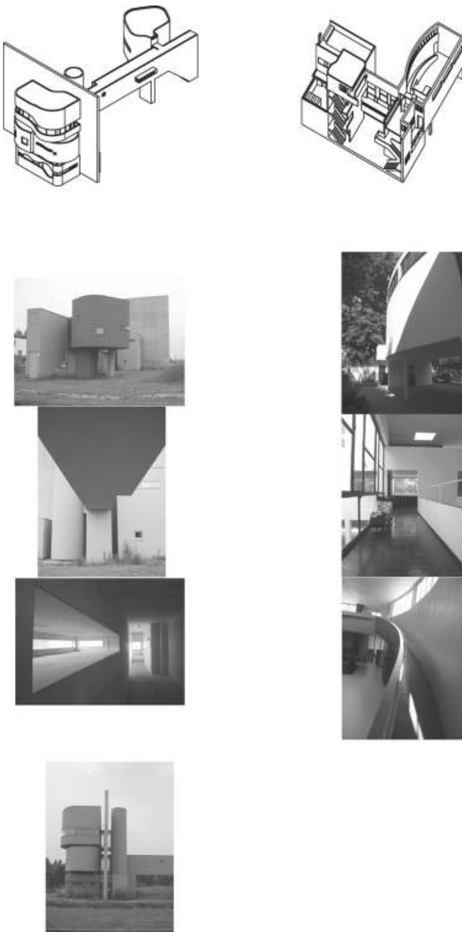

Figure 11. Wall House 2 compared to Villa La Roche (drawings and photographs by the author).

A starting point for discussing the deflection of the vocabulary of Le Corbusier towards Hejduk's own design intentions can perhaps be provided by the idea of promenade which is important to Le Corbusier. With Le Corbusier, movement provides continuously changing visual fields within an architectural visual horizon which is constant over at least part of the trajectory. Thus, variety is set within one or more clearly perceived organising frameworks. In the Wall House movement is associated with a visual field that changes only minimally within a given horizon, as in the approach corridor, or with abrupt changes of the horizon of reference, as when the wall is crossed. The interplay between the changing shapes of visual fields according to incremental changes of local position and a relatively constant horizon is negated. One might argue that the landscape outside the house is the horizon of reference from the three living spaces. However, even this horizon is dissociated from the spaces that channel movement. The Wall House can indeed be read as a handling of movement which is equivalent to an anti-promenade. If Le Corbusier's design invites us to understand how controlled changes of views are produced as local variations of an underlying structure, Hejduk provides us with an aggregation of segmented views which defy synthesis instead. To achieve the qualities of promenade, Le Corbusier works with fundamentally three-dimensional space. To constrain movement into an anti-promenade, Hejduk works with two-dimensional space, alternatively horizontal and vertical. When advancing down the entrance corridor, the dining room appears as a 2-D image framed by the door; at closer range the forthcoming perception of the 3-D volume of the room is countered by a potentially stronger perception of the 2-D vertical plane of the wall instead; the planar threshold is set as if momentarily to override the forthcoming volume.

Another deflection occurs with regards to the treatment of the ground. The garden underneath *Villa La Roche* invites the viewer to get close to the building. The garden connects the house to the ground and in turn the house claims part of the ground as its own space. In the Wall House the ground is not treated as a garden, nor claimed as a space. On the contrary, even the space under the overhanging corridor seems abandoned. As noted earlier, the entrance meets the ground as little as possible. The canal around the house underscores discontinuity. The relation of the house to the ground evokes otherness by appearing consistently unusual. But the manner of occupying the ground is associated with another issue which is important in its own right. Even when Le Corbusier does not adopt traditional distinctions of front and back, there is always a deliberate orientation of the house to the site. With Hejduk, the relation of front and back is both stated and remaining ambiguous. Wall House 2 provides a strong sense of a front corresponding to the three stacked major spaces and of a back encompassing circulation and the study room. This reading, however, is paradoxical, because it places the entrance at the back, as if the house is approached from the back to arrive at the front.

More is at stake. The clear distinction between front and back is yet again challenged by a potentially more important view looking at the house from the direction of the thinnest side of the wall (Fig. 12). This is the view that not only brings the two parts together, but also captures the moment when an inhabitant crosses the wall. The view also resonates with a sequential section drawn for the Wall House 1 (Fig. 13). In that drawing there is progression from sections that capture most of the elements of the building to a final section which only captures the wall itself. Traveled from left to right, the sequence leads from the full richness of the design to a residual wall as impoverished skeleton. Traveled in reverse from right to left, the sequence starts with the wall as structural principle, and ends with the whole composition as an elaboration of relationships potentially implied by the wall. By comparing the third view of Wall House 2 and the sequential section by Hejduk, one realises that the third view offers a perception linked to a theoretical insight. And yet, the theoretical primacy of the third view is attenuated by its fleeting character.

Thus, the design of the Wall House deflects the vocabulary of Le Corbusier towards a new configuration of spatial relationships, illustrating different principles of organisation, sometimes opposed to those adopted by Le Corbusier. Otherness inheres in the manner in which the house refers to its own architectural raw material.

At the right angle

The main move that sets the stage for the design of the Wall House 2 can now be identified as the creation of an intersection between the major wall and the entrance corridor. The intersection defines a potential centre for the composition (Fig. 14). This is conceptually present: the structure of experience of the house is very much linked to the manner in which the intersection is being handled. Experientially, the centre can be occupied, but only fleetingly; it is critical to the overall effect, but it is not at all the focus of habitation. The critical nature of the

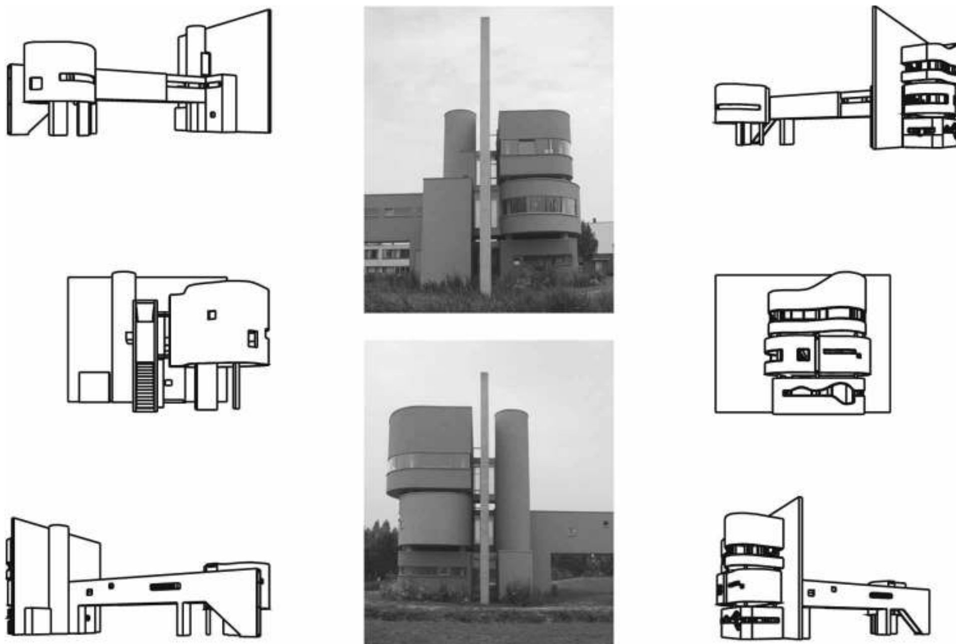

Figure 12. The third view (drawings by the author).

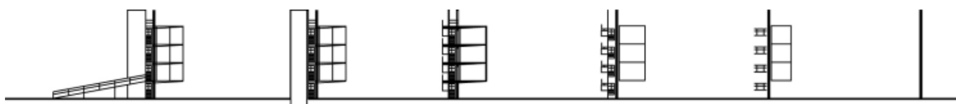

Figure 13. The section of the wall (drawing by the author).

intersection has to do with the handling of optical syntax, specifically the definition of three perspective views. The corridor confines the viewer's perspective in width and limits it to an acute viewing angle, while drawing it forward. At the moment of crossing the wall and turning 90 degrees to face the gap, a deep perspective is formulated powerfully subsuming the wall itself as if to thrust it towards the viewing point. Or, when facing forward rather than sideways, the deep and narrow perspective of the corridor suddenly turns to be the extremely expanded, flattened wide-angled perspective that takes the wall as picture frame. Other experiential polarities mentioned earlier, for example between

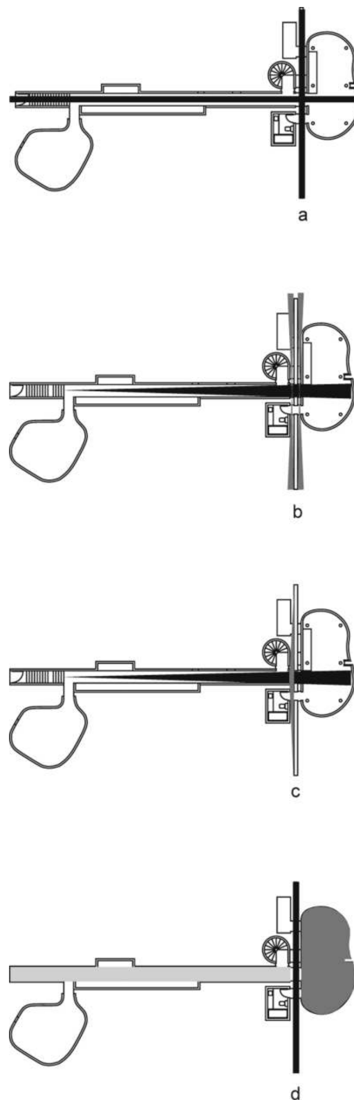

Figure 14. The key design move: the right angle (drawing by the author).

light and dark spaces, get woven around this basic optical syntax.

The paradoxical effect of the cross, therefore, is to define a conceptual centre which results in cutting the house into pieces. This becomes a programmatic aim that drives subsequent syntactic moves. And this is why the perception that the major wall 'cuts' through the threshold is so emblematically important. The succession of vertical elements, solid and void, acts as if densely to punctuate the time of crossing, and to arrest attention long enough as to suggest that the threshold functions both as centre and as severance.

Otherness as an architectural concept

The trajectory whereby otherness has been traced in works in other media, in patterns of experience engendered by Wall House 2, in the manner in which Wall House 2 deflects the architectural precedents that it takes as raw material, and the main moves that determine the design is now complete. An explicit argument has been advanced to recognise the formal properties that carry the burden of expressing otherness, thereby linking what otherwise is more of a sentiment to the description of particular designs. The completion of the trajectory, however, does not answer the question that was asked at the outset: when does otherness become an architectural concept? In practical terms, having understood a particular design does not yet suggest what alternative designs could be explored. It does not yet clarify in what sense we can retrospectively recognise, in the particular design, a formulation of new possibilities, if not yet of a fully fledged set of design principles.

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The preceding analysis, however, permits at least the first steps towards answering this much harder question. All architecture, with the exception of the tomb, is about the creation of connected space. Life is accommodated not merely in a collection of connected spaces but in a configuration of connections, a relational structure of space. The most fundamental architectural otherness that inheres in the design of Wall House 2, is the creation of an architecture which, while providing the minimum necessary connections, speaks continuously of disconnection. If this reading is correct, the way in which otherness is transferred from works in other media into architecture touches upon the fundamental nature of space as the primary architectural medium.

The effect of conceptualising otherness in this way is fundamentally to alter the manner in which architecture notates the experience of time. All architecture is viewed sequentially, from multiple points of view which can only be synthesised into a single image in the mind. The fundamental perceptual thresholds that are crossed as one changes points of view always mark time, whether they are explicitly designed as notations of time or not. Hejduk's design foregrounds architecture as a deliberate notation of time in a way which emphasises discontinuity and discreteness over continuity and flow, but also periodicity and return over seemingly open possibilities. The raw material for this deeper conceptualisation of otherness is not merely the overt formal vocabulary of specific architectural precedent but the deeper intuitions about space that have underpinned modern architecture.

Acknowledgement

This paper is a result of my working with Dr John Peponis many of whose insights have been too pervasive to be acknowledged in detail. Special thanks to Dr Kenneth Knoespel and Dr Sonit Bafna for their generous and constructive criticism, as well as to Dr David Shapiro for much guidance and encouragement.

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1. John Hejduk, *Such Places as Memory: Poems, 1953–1996* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).
2. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 96.
3. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intension* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).
4. John Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa: Works 1947–1983* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
9. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Ingres* (London: Phaidon Press, 1954).
10. Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
12. *Nature Morte* refers to figures and settings which provide evidence of a link between the poems and the paintings. This paper supposes that *Studio II* and *Studio III*, the two paintings discussed by Hejduk in *Adjusting Foundations* (14 below), are the ones described in this poem.
13. This painting is also known as *Studio V.*
14. John Hejduk, *Adjusting Foundations* (New York, N.Y.: Monacelli Press; in collaboration with The Cooper

Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, 1995), p. 48.

15. Edward Hopper, *Edward Hopper* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1971). The painting corresponding to the line 'a wreath nailed to the door of an isolated brownstone' has not been identified and a blank has been left in its place.
16. Renata Hejduk pointed out, in conversation with the author, that John Hejduk had looked at this particular volume.
17. Hejduk, *Mask of Medusa, op. cit.*, p. 59.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 59.