MASCULINE CONSTRUCTIONS

GENDER IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY
ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

‘Gods’, ‘Gospels’ and ‘tall tales’ in Architecture

Deborah White

A thesis submitted to The University of Adelaide in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

October 2001
# Contents

Statement of authorship .......................................................... xi
Acknowledgments ................................................................. xiii
Abstract ................................................................................. xv
Thesis Summary .................................................................. xvi

Prologue ................................................................................. xix

Chapter 1: Introduction .......................................................... 1

The project of the thesis ......................................................... 1
  Tracing the gendering of architectural discourse .............. 1

Theoretical background .......................................................... 2
  Themes from feminist theory .............................................. 2
  The male world of architecture ......................................... 3
  The epistemological role of the exclusion of the feminine .... 4

Architectural discourse and masculinity ............................... 4
  The centrality yet invisibility of the masculine ................. 5

The discursive construction of meaning ................................. 5
  Techniques of reading ....................................................... 6

The texts examined ............................................................... 6
  ‘Gods’, ‘gospels’ and ‘tall tales’: Le Corbusier and Glenn Murcutt 6
  Architectural discourse and national identity ....................... 8

Gender in architecture and related disciplines ....................... 8

Alternative approaches to feminist work on architecture ........ 9
  Recuperative, compensatory and emancipatory feminist research 11
  A feminist-critical reading of architectural discourse .......... 11

The structure of the thesis ..................................................... 11

Chapter 2: Women and (discourses of) the built environment 13

Effects on women of the built environment ......................... 13
  Women and the city in Australia ........................................ 14
  Some urban history .......................................................... 14
  Urban activism and women .............................................. 15

The role and importance of architecture ................................ 16
  The ‘nature of architecture’ .............................................. 16
The gender(ing) of architecture 17
  The gendering of architecture and the ‘nature of women’ 18
  Barriers to women 18
  Habitus and exclusion 19
  The habitus of architecture 20
  Cultural capital in the habitus of architecture 20
  Symbolic power in architecture — class and/or gender? 21
  History of a gentleman’s profession 23
  A man’s profession — taken for granted 24

The architect in fictional discourse 24

Why have there been no great women architects? 25

The invisible woman 26
  Invisible women architects 27
  Invisible inhabitants and clients 28

The uses of ‘the feminine’ 29

Modernism, postmodernism and architecture 30
  Modernism 30
  Postmodernism 31

Standard twentieth-century texts on architecture 31

Postmodernism, feminism and architecture 38
  Interpretations of postmodernism 38
  Postmodernism and feminism 39

Issues for the history of women in architecture 39

Women and Australian culture 40
  The unrecognised women in Australian cultural production 40
  ‘Australian identity’ 40

Women and the profession in Australia 40
  History 40
  A cultural dissonance? 42

Chapter 3: Women and the built environment: the literature 45

Introduction 45

Early writing on women and the built environment 46
  Early utopian-socialism and feminism 46
  Early twentieth century feminist writing on the built environment 47
  Jane Jacobs and the city 47

‘Second-wave’ feminism and research into the built environment 48
  Addressing women’s issues in the built environment in Australia 48
  The National Women’s Housing Conferences 48
  Second-wave feminism, activism and critiques 49

The city, ‘woman’s place’ and the public / private distinction 50

The multi-disciplinary nature of gender / built environment research 51

Chapter 4: Women, feminism, gender and architecture 53

Introduction 53

Feminist research on architecture — a late arrival 53
  Histories of women architects — the UK and USA 54
  Architecture and the woman client 55
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historiography of women architects — Australia</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensatory history</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women architects’ brushes with fame in Australia</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The view from the 1970s: raising the issues</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Room at the Top?’</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s experiences of architecture</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and architectural education</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘female’ and the ‘feminine’ in architecture</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The problems of essentialism and stereotyping</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture: art and/or technology</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Feminism confronts technology’</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture as art</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?’</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, creativity and genius</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The contradictory gendering of genius</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impediments to ‘female genius’</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A feminist aesthetics?</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A feminist architecture?</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gender of knowledge</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural discourse in Australia and ‘the woman question’</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist anthologies: space, architecture, gender and sexuality</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality and Space</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sex of Architecture</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Architect: Reconstructing her Practice</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Feminism</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, Space, Architecture</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and architecture: gender and masculinity</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading architectural texts</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist readings of visual ‘texts’</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist texts on Le Corbusier</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ‘feminist’ apologia for Le Corbusier</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Corbusier, representation and ‘the male gaze’</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism evaluates Australian architecture?</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: On methodology and feminist theory</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intertextuality</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture as metaphor for philosophy</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of feminist theory in architecture</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divided loyalties</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues in feminist reading</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism and postmodernism</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalism, essentialism and gender-scepticism</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism and radical theory</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Using’ Foucault and Derrida</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculism in Foucault and Derrida</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foucault’s ‘analytics of power’</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derrida and deconstruction</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist theory and cultural practice</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Le Corbusier, the City of Gentlemen and the Architecture of Man

Introduction

Le Corbusier: paradigmatic Man of Architecture and Planning

Why Le Corbusier?

Le Corbusier and the discourse of architecture

Reading the texts

Le Corbusier's language

Setting the scene: history, art and politics

Le Corbusier, politics and the ‘woman question’

Le Corbusier and the city

The City in principle

The essence and function of the City

Man living in the city

Man, scale, order and civilisation

The Architecture of ‘Man’

The Modulor

The mystic mathematics of the Modulor

Le Corbusier and women — in his city, in his office and in his life

The feminine ‘other’

Le Corbusier, ‘Woman’ and nature

Chapter 7: ‘Le Corbusier’, Architect of the Century

Writing on Le Corbusier

Early criticisms

Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs

Devotees of Le Corbusier

Peter Blake ... first impressions

Blake ‘born again’

Reynier Banham

Charles Jencks and the tragic hero of architecture

Jencks on the triviality of women

Revisiting the tragic hero: Liberty, asses and earth goddesses

Le Corbusier as Lucifer

Anthologies on Le Corbusier

The Open Hand

The centenary: Raeburn et al.

Responses to Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women and ‘woman’, 1987

Reception of the Modulor, 1985-87
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Later critiques</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoffreay Baker 1996</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolf Max Vogt and the 'noble savage'</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Cool Corb’: Le Corbusier as style</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8: Wizards of Oz</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenn Murcutt</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques of Murcutt</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murcutt and Le Corbusier</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, place and myth</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian architecture and aboriginality</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves of Iron</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A patrilineage of architectural creativity</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male culture and 'female' nature</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH Lawrence and Australia</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature as woman — good and evil</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia as woman — wanted and unwanted</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence and masculinity</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The reception of <em>Leaves of Iron</em></td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fromont on Murcutt</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murcutt in collaboration</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other texts on Australian architecture</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations on the theme of ‘the hero’ in Australian architecture</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian spirituality and an antipodean mystic</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The larrikin</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The status quo</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9: Conclusions</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Corbusier and ‘Le Corbusier’</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to Le Corbusier</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing on Murcutt</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected findings</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General conclusions</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of illustrations</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement of authorship

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of the thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

1. viii. 2003

Deborah White
Acknowledgments

I should like to thank the following people
who have helped and encouraged me in the production of this thesis.

Professor Tony Radford, my supervisor, who tried to keep me on the straight and narrow when other duties and desires intervened.

The School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Adelaide, which gave me the experience, and finally the time, to think, read and write,

Dr Daniel Kortschak, who rescued me from the difficulties of incompatible computers and bibliographic databases.

Professor Judith Brine and Associate Professor Anna Rubbo, assiduous readers of the text when the draft finally arrived.

Sharon Mosler, who encouraged me along the way.

Dottor Piero Tagliaferri and his family, who gave me a corner in their Tuscan farmhouse and the tranquillity to (nearly) finish the writing.

Professoressa Sandra Batoni, who gave me another corner in her Florence artist's studio, where the writing was actually completed.

The remarkable resources of the Barr Smith Library and its electronic databases, and in particular Kay Leverett, the Architecture Librarian.

My parents, who assumed I would finish it eventually.
Constructing ‘Masculinity’: Gender in architectural discourse.


Abstract

The task of this thesis is to explore from a feminist standpoint and in a number of texts, the gendered nature of discourse in contemporary Western architecture from an Australian perspective. The starting point for the thesis was an examination of Australian architectural discourse in search of some explanation for the continuing low numbers of women practitioners in Australia. However, given the cultural location of Australian architecture as a marginal participant in the wider arena of contemporary Western / international architectural discourses, the thesis focuses on writing about two iconic figures in Western architecture; one, Le Corbusier, of international renown, the other, Glenn Murcutt, of predominantly local significance. Both have attained almost mythical status as architects; Le Corbusier over almost the entire twentieth century through both his own self-promotional endeavours and the efforts of his disciples, Murcutt since the 1970s, at least at the outset almost entirely without his own active participation.

It is the hypothesis of the thesis that while many disciplines and professions have in recent decades made significant changes in response to issues of gender, contemporary Western architecture is imbued with a pervasive and dominant masculinity; and that this is deeply embedded in its discursive constructions. Feminist interrogations of architectural discourse have not (yet) significantly influenced mainstream architectural writing. Recent postmodernist theory has opened the field of architectural writing to a recognition and even a celebration of cultural difference and the significance of ‘marginal’ cultural production, and to the transgression of canonic discourses. However, the theory and practice of Western architecture still appear almost entirely oblivious not only to the existence and agency of women, as either designers or inhabitants of built environments, but to the questions posed by feminist and postmodernist theory, and remains masculist in outlook and masculine in expression; and many female writers on architecture participate in presenting these masculine meanings. I show in the thesis that this situation is not merely a consequence of socio-economic ‘facts-on-the-ground’ or the demography of the profession (the historical absence of women from the profession and their continuing under-representation in it), or of women’s relative rarity as clients, but is a deeply embedded epistemological and institutional phenomenon: the body housed by architecture is assumed to be male, the mind which produces architecture is assumed to be masculine.
Thesis Summary

This thesis is an examination of some texts influential in the discourse of Australian architecture in the twentieth century. The texts I examine are both primary and secondary, both international and Australian, circulating in the architectural professions and architectural academia. I take the discourse surrounding the international figure of Le Corbusier as emblematic, focussing on Le Corbusier as producer of projects and buildings, as writer and polemicist, as historical figure, and as productive myth. I examine both writing by Le Corbusier himself, as emblematic of International Modernism, and recent writing on ‘Le Corbusier’, as archetype of the Modernist notion of the architect and, since the centenary of his birth, ‘the Architect of the Century’. The corbusian canon is particularly fruitful of the metaphors of masculinity; however the later writing on Le Corbusier demonstrates the persistence of a gendered epistemological apparatus in spite of the decline of ‘classical’ modernism. In the Australian context I focus on historical-descriptive, critical and hagiographical writing about the locally significant, and now internationally recognised, Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, but make some contextual reference to writing on other Australian architects. The readings demonstrate that even in writing engaging with architectural regionalism, a postmodernist concern, the universalist tropes of masculinity remain central.

In my readings I show that Western architectural discourse assumes that the ‘normal’ human is masculine — not only that the human body which inhabits architecture is a male body, but that human subjectivity itself is gendered masculine, in particular as it is manifested in the genius and creativity of the Architect. I demonstrate the ways in which masculinity is constitutive of the nature and ethos of Western architecture, but show that the use of the masculine to stand for the human has been so ‘naturalised’ that it is seldom acknowledged.

Furthermore I show how the hierarchical binary oppositions (male/female, masculine/feminine, culture/nature, reason/emotion, public/private, mechanistic/organic, dominant/muted ...) which have been and remain pivotal to the symbolic apparatus of Western epistemologies, are presented and re-presented in the texts of architecture. The world of architecture, as discursively constituted, appears to be a world constructed for men and inhabited by men. Women appear in the discourse, if at all, as marginal figures, and ‘the feminine’ is called on only as support, foil or muse to the masculine.

I explore the ways in which, to establish ‘Western’ architecture’s claims to cultural significance, its ‘heroic’ generative programs and narratives, and the histories of its protagonists / creators, have appropriated patriarchal constructs, myths and narratives: the ‘Gods’ and ‘gospels’ of architectural discourse. Their implicit assumption is that human creativity is paradigmatically masculine: texts employ patriarchally inflected conceptualisations of genius, knowledge, reason, order, mastery, authority, hierarchy — and rebellion.
Acknowledging the cultural particularity of manifestations of such myths, I investigate the ways in which Australian discussions of architecture, often produced in the context of a socio-cultural quest for a national identity itself still chiefly constructed in stereotypically masculine mode, accompany conventional images of patriarchy with a discourse of radical dissidence. These I characterise as the ‘tall tales’ of Australian architectural discourse, the appropriation to architectural narratives of the flavour of vernacular bush story-telling. In their culturally diverse ways, in spite of the derivative or evolutionary nature of architectural invention, and the inevitably collaborative nature of its practice, the texts present the great architect as a creative and solitary (male) individual.

In the Prologue I declare the polemic agenda of the thesis and outline the history of personal, political and professional experience which led to its writing. Chapter 1 is introductory, setting out the hypothesis of the thesis, outlining the themes which arise in the reading of the discourse, and explaining the choice of texts examined. To provide context for the argument, I set out in Chapter 2 a broad range of factors which continue to have an impact on women in the built environment in general and in architecture in particular. Chapters 3 and 4 present a literature review of the non-feminist and feminist literature. The theoretical background of the thesis is provided in Chapter 5, in which I discuss the theoretical conceptual insights of contemporary feminist theory. I also acknowledge insights into the nature of masculinity provided by recent work in men’s studies. In Chapters 6, 7 (on Le Corbusier) and 8 (on Glenn Murcutt) I trace in a number of emblematic architectural texts the gendered tropes which circulate through the discursive constructions of ‘Architecture’ and ‘the Architect’, interrogating their multiple manifestations of masculinity, and the uses to which implicit and explicit constructions of ‘man’/masculinity as central and dominant, and ‘woman’/femininity as literal and symbolic ‘other’ are put in the texts. The exegetical reading of the texts draws on aspects of ‘deconstruction’, in its aim to destabilise the ‘natural’ in language, and of Foucauldian ‘archaeology’, in its focus on uncovering the traces of the institutional construction of meaning. Chapter 9 summarises my conclusions, and in the Epilogue I propose questions which might form the basis for further investigation of architecture as a gendered and gendering cultural practice.
Prologue

This thesis is constructed on overtly polemic ground. The assumption that academic enquiry must be in tension with political agency could be seen to reflect a patriarchal delineation of the 'epistemological economy', safeguarding the boundaries of academic disciplines. However presumptions about the validity of some forms of knowledge and the spuriousness of others, the centrality of some groups and the marginality of others, and positivist claims about reality, knowledge and objectivity, have been challenged on many fronts. In academia, disciplinary boundaries shift and dissolve, and the authority of conventional distinctions between the academic, the experiential, and the political is no longer uncontested. Acknowledgment of the cultural, social and political embeddedness of knowledge permits, and even requires, that the standpoint (see Smith 1990a; Weeks 1992) of the researcher be made manifest. The purpose of this Prologue is to identify the background to my engagement with the issues discussed in this thesis.

In architecture, Modernist assertions of universality are confronted by claims for regional and other signifiers of value and identity. In spite of the truth claims of science, and the commitment to objectivity implicit in 'the scientific method', feminist critiques of science have recognised that 'who does science affects the kind of science that gets done.' (Schiebinger 1993, p3) Who 'does' architecture, and whom they assume they do it for, affect the type of architecture that gets done. However, this thesis goes beyond the gender of the practitioners of architecture to examine the discursively constructed gender of the discipline itself. The thesis has grown from a conviction that Architecture is gendered, that the gendering is both male and masculine, and that this gendering has consequences.

The immediate provocation for my embarking on research into the gendering of Architecture and its discursive practices was the continuing and apparently intractable under-representation of women in the practice of architecture in this country. It is a common experience for feminists that aspects of the lived world which are at one moment so 'normal' or 'natural' as to be taken for granted and hardly noticed, over time and through experience become at a later moment so obvious, so glaring, that it is impossible to believe that the problem is not immediately apparent to everyone else, like the Emperor's New Clothes.¹

It is likely that the gendered nature of the discourse of architecture is in fact noticed and absorbed at a subliminal level. The masculinity of the image of the Architect and the androcentricity of 'his' work has been naturalised, but its effect on women considering entering the profession is probably implicated in the under-representation of women in the profession, and may be one reason why architecture in Australia has not shown the shift towards gender inclusivity that has characterised other professions, in the past equally male-dominated, such as law and medicine. (Some other European cultures, Scandinavia particularly, apparently harbour different cultural and institutional representations of architecture, and for decades women have exceeded 30% of architects.)

The issue is deeper than a 'mere' matter of equal rights to and in employment, or even to representation in a culturally and economically significant activity, on the analogy of politics. Possibly causally related (I make no sociological or statistical claims in this thesis) is the almost total absence of women in the discursive universe of Australian architecture. Discourse and practice are mutually constitutive, so given the history of male domination of the profession it is perhaps not surprising that the number of women architects mentioned in histories or monographs, or set as subjects of academic
study in courses, is still vanishingly small; or that there are seldom any representations of the work of women in the typical Faculty slide collection.

The specific impetus for writing the thesis in the form of a study of discourse was an acknowledgment that my undeniable identification with ‘being an Architect’ entailed the simultaneous recognition of two vectors of difference — in fact of ‘Difference’ in the postmodern sense (see Deleuze 1968; Gatens 1994; Bacchi 1990). In discussion with groups of architects I am very consciously a feminist; in groups of feminists I am equally consciously an architect. “Why don’t they see the world the way I do?”

The secondary impetus for the thesis was concern at the implications of Le Corbusier’s pervasive influence on architecture: in fact in many ways the thesis is a sort of exorcism. His presence had remained with me, my attitude to it changing, since my student days in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Le Corbusier’s presence in my architectural universe was much like that of Marx in my political one: ‘to criticize Marxist conceptions of class one must stand in the space that Marx cleared’ (Teresa Amott in Payne 1997, p105), while ‘[w]hen standing in the space Marx has cleared, we continue to feel his presence’ (Amott p107). During my architectural education in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Melbourne, Le Corbusier, like Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and to a lesser extent Gropius, was a taken-for-granted, effectively ahistorical phenomenon and object of reverence. There was then almost no critique of his buildings as environments in use, little analysis of either the obsessive repetition or the internal contradictions in his writings or discussion of his reluctance to change his mind about town planning in the face of evidence. And no discussion, in those ‘innocent’ days, of sexism or masculism. ‘Cob’’s status as unchanging Archetype offered no space in those days for discussion of his ideas in relation to changes in the socio-political context over his long working life, or of their implications for architecture in general outside the European or colonial milieux in which he worked.

In those pre-Theory days, the unspoken contradiction between a declared ‘functionalist’ architectural philosophy (which in Australia was to remain dominant late into the 70s and even later), and the iconic status of the buildings of the Masters, was, as far as I remember, never an issue. Le Corbusier was not generally a source of useful theory beyond the level of aphorism. (I remember assessing his duplex multi-storey housing sections as interesting but irrelevant to the Australian situation, and his dictum that a multi-storey housing building should be oriented an axis of 190 degrees anti-clockwise of north-south as a questionable piece of over-simplification based on a misunderstanding of the implications of the solar path.) The ‘Cob’ who haunted and inspired us all was the maker of ‘forms in light’ known to all of us through photographic images.

My rebellion against Le Corbusier’s messianic simplifications began as a student with resistance to a fourth year project in which we were required to assume the demolition of all the existing buildings in 52 acres of our beloved inner suburb of Carlton, and the design of high-rise public housing in a combination of slab and tower blocks reminiscent of the Ville Radieuse, whose three dimensionality was required to be starkly demonstrated in indian ink with black shadows at 45 degrees on an assumed flat site. Later in the 1960s community-based battles against the Victorian Housing Commission were to begin; they eventually led to a re-evaluation of the wisdom of such developments, a commitment to human-scale urban infill, and the disestablishment of the Commission itself.

Unease about the messages about the nature of cities in Le Corbusier’s writing then combined with a developing feminist consciousness, and in particular an eco-feminist consciousness. I had become sharply aware of the naivety and excess which characterised the writing, but even more struck by the gendered nature of the texts, and their at times even misogynous tone, which tends to the extreme even if the ‘normal’ sexism of the time is take into account. So when a number of feminist and women’s studies groups at the University of Adelaide invited me to discuss architecture from a feminist perspective, I produced a paper (‘Why no La Corbusière?’). These
presentations often resulted in great hilarity: the absurdity of the masculist assumptions underlying clearly wrong-headed decisions about the built environments was all too clear to a feminist audience innocent of architectural history or theory — although they 'had not thought about it before'. I revised the paper and presented it at the Second National Women's Housing Conference. A copy of the revised paper reached the editors of Transition and was published in 1988 with the addition of a Postscript, under the title 'Half the Sky but No Room of Her Own' (White 1988), later to become a nucleus of this thesis (see Appendix B).

* * * * *

My earliest published writing on the subject of women and architecture, in 1975, commenced with a rudimentary proto-feminist analysis of the problematic nature of the 'man-made' built environment from a 'women's perspective', but its focus was architecture. I discussed some women architects and their experiences in professional education and in architectural practice, and mused on what a feminist architecture might be like. I sub-titled the article 'A personal reflection' (White 1975); the political was at that time more safely categorised as personal (see Appendix A). The article followed the then current feminist approach of discovering and documenting women's work and experience to 'fill the gaps' in conventional history, with a little interpretive — and utopian — discussion of 'difference'; the differences between the work and working experience of women and of men, and the possible differences the entry of more women into the profession might make. However this 'innocent' article represented in embryo the usual range of approaches to feminist research into the built environment in general and architecture in particular. Commencing with a critique of the failings of the built environment from a feminist perspective, it referred to difficulties experienced by women in the built environment professions, and provided some 'compensatory' feminist history, ending with some reflections on the potential of a 'feminist' architecture, engaging with the possibilities of both a 'feminist aesthetics' and a politically aware 'feminist practice'.

However I have probably been 'writing the thesis' ever since I decided to study architecture at Melbourne University in the late 1950s. I had attended a fashionable all-girls' private school which firmly discouraged any academic activity, and put special barriers in the way of anything as un-ladylike as science or mathematics, which I assumed would be necessary for architecture. In fact no teacher in either mathematics or physics was available in my first Matriculation year. Being 'too young to go to the University', I returned to school for a second year, the School was prevailed upon by my father to provide (inadequate) teaching in General Mathematics and Physics.

I do not remember actually deciding to 'do Architecture' — as far as I know I had never yet met an actual architect, although I had heard of a few. I had never heard of a woman architect, and was certainly not aware that the prolific Julia Morgan, architect of the Hearst architectural extravaganza at San Simeon (see Boutelle 1977; Boutelle 1988), had died the year I completed school.) I was lucky that in my family it was taken for granted, in the 1950s, that my sister and I would go to the University, and use the knowledge gained to earn a living. Architecture seemed to offer a smorgasbord of more or less everything, from the creative to the technical, from the intellectual to the manual and practical. Not unimportantly, my choice of profession appeared to satisfy both my father, who would probably have liked me to follow in his footsteps as an engineer, and my mother, who had immaculate Georgian taste in house decoration. I was not overtly aware of the problematic nature of the conventional gender dualities manifest in 'Father the Engineer' and 'Mother the Home-maker'.

The scarcity of women in the architecture course was at the time both taken for granted and not noticed. As one of five female students among 55 male students (it was an unusually good year for females)\(^3\), I simultaneously 'knew' and yet did not accept that I was not 'one of the boys', and competed with them on the basis of a sort of gender
chauvinism, only subliminally aware of pushing the boundaries of the acceptable ‘feminine role’. Before the advent of second-wave feminism sex discrimination was simultaneously ignored, noticed, resisted and taken for granted. It was not yet theorised or discussed.

My personal experience in the architectural profession has included being turned down when applying for employment in one architectural office on the grounds that “this office does not employ women”; and having been told in confidence by a colleague in another office which *did* employ me that the principal preferred women “because they are cheaper”.4 I have also lost my job in an architect’s office on marriage, and at another following the birth of a child.5 On site I have at times been subjected to hostility, slight and scepticism, on the unspoken but equally unmistakable grounds that a ‘lady architect’ was an oxymoron. (However I have also experienced very good working relations, enthusiasm and co-operation with builders and sub-contractors on the job, often the ‘salt of the earth’.) In architectural academia, I have always found myself in a gender minority.

I have also experienced my own invisibility. The Wilms Street Co-operative Child Care Centre and Italo-Australian Education Foundation Child Care Centre, designed in a fruitful collaboration with Gregory Burgess, whom I called in to join me for a number of commissions as my full-time post at the University of Melbourne left me little time, are credited in the text of Jennifer Taylor’s *Australian Architecture Since 1960* to Burgess alone. The caption to the photograph of the Italo-Australian Centre says ‘Gregory Burgess with Deborah White’ (Taylor 1990, p161). My name appears neither in the text nor in the Index. (The working drawings of the projects were title-blocked ‘DEBORAH WHITE WITH GREGORY BURGESS’, so there should have been no confusion.)

The personal impact of revisioning the profession from a feminist angle can be difficult. Architecture is a *pro-fess-ion* in the original sense of the word, but it has a characteristic in which it tends to differ from law, medicine and engineering. It combines technique / technology, commerce and professionalism with pretensions to Art (including Art’s claims in Western culture to self-expression), so it can resemble other fields of art practice, such as literature, theatre and the visual arts, in that it can engage the whole person, at the level of cultural, emotional and spiritual identity, beyond the more or less impersonal demands of technical, intellectual and professional competence.

I now work in architectural education, where women are still in a minority. Specialising in ecologically sustainable design, I experience myself as simultaneously both inside the profession and outside it. I often feel more at home among architects of either gender than among some gatherings of eco-feminists, for instance some who profess hostility to science, ‘on principle’. In my work in ‘permacultural’ architecture in Nepal during the 1990s I was declared an honorary man, to avoid with grace the cultural proscriptions against a woman working on the construction of a building. To participate in plastering the walls, I then conveniently become a woman again: such work would dishonour a man.

Educational practice entails some responsibility for the future. The underlying rationale for feminist critical studies is dissatisfaction — even anger — at ‘business as usual’, and the necessity for subversion, transgression, and ultimately change. The possibility of change is dependent on an understanding of context, and an analysis of the obstacles to constructive action; so I have turned my attention from feminist enquiry into the ‘feminine’ to a study of the (re-)production of masculinity and the powerful hold it has on the Western human experience in general, and on the nature of Architecture in particular.

I dedicate this thesis to my Father.
1 Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan 1963) is the obvious example.
2 I have been able to integrate my work as an architect and as an academic with my environmental activism — the personal, the professional and the political. I practise and teach the design of environmentally responsive buildings, and have worked for many years with a non-government organisation in permaculture in Nepal.
3 All of whom, unusually, went on into practice, and all of whom, not so unusually, married architect. It appears to be a characteristic of architecture that it is seen by those within it to be more a 'culture' than a profession.
4 The office was in fact congenial, and the work interesting and not allocated along gender lines.
5 This was not due to overt sexism, or to any specific office policy. But work in small architects' offices is demanding of time and commitment, and requires continuity of personnel: it would have required unusual commitment to affirmative action for a position to be held open, or perhaps shared to allow for part-time employment for a period, for a different outcome to have been possible.
'Gods', 'Gospels' and 'tall tales' in Architecture
Chapter 1

Introduction: the gendering of architectural discourse

Dissatisfaction is the provocation of every thesis.
(Moore 1957, p.iv)

I tell this tale, which is strictly true,
Just by way of convincing you
How very little, since things were made,
Things have changed in the building trade.
(Kipling, A Truthful Song)

The project of the thesis
Tracing the gendering of architectural discourse

According to the architectural theorist Mark Wigley,

the complicity of [architectural] discourse with ... the general cultural
subordination of “the feminine” and the specific subordination of particular
“women” can be identified. ... Such readings would reproduce in architecture
readings which have been made of other discourses. This work is necessary and
overdue.
(Wigley 1992, p329)

This thesis is intended to contribute to that ‘necessary and overdue’ work¹, in
particular from an Australian perspective: the texts studied, whether ‘exotic’ or
‘indigenous’², have been influential in Australian architectural discourse.

It is the hypothesis of the thesis that the discourses of Western architecture — its
narratives and histories, its concepts and vocabulary, its preoccupations and programs,
its practices and processes — are imbued with a pervasive masculinity, and that this
masculinity is discursively constructed in opposition to, and by subordination of, the
feminine. Further, that this masculine orientation is so deeply embedded in the

¹ Wigley remarks on the resistance of architecture to such inquiry, as exemplifying the ‘disciplinary
role of architecture in our culture’ and asks ‘why [this work] is overdue, why this discourse is so
resistant... what exactly is being protected here, ... for whom?’ (Wigley 1992, p329). In
Chapters 3 and 4 I demonstrate how little acknowledgment this issue receives from mainstream
architectural theory, and review the research which has been undertaken within a specifically
feminist context (activist and theoretical). The capacity of mainstream architectural writers to
ignore issues of gender reminds me of the old tale of the elephant in the living room, which all the
family is too embarrassed to mention — ‘if no-one else has mentioned it, perhaps only I can see
it’. A literature search in late 2000 shows that the situation has not changed (see Chapter 4).

² These terms are borrowed from Australian characterisations of flora and fauna. Early European
inhabitants of the continent were assiduous introducers of familiar plants and animals from
Europe, while the more recent national preoccupation with Australian identity has led to a
reappraisal of the local environment and its indigenous flora and fauna, and distrust in some circles
of 'exotics'.
discourses of contemporary architecture that in contrast with changes in many other disciplines and professions, it has not been fundamentally changed either by the challenges of postmodernism or by the insights of 'second wave' feminism during the latter part of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the transactions between cultural discourses are reciprocal. Not only does architecture assume and appropriate the meanings of other discourses, but according to Wigley, '[a]rchitectural discourse plays a strategic role in guaranteeing assumptions that are necessary to the operation of other discourses' (Wigley 1992, p329).

Theoretical background

Themes from feminist theory

The theoretical background of the thesis is provided by the conceptual insights of contemporary feminist theory. I also acknowledge insights into the nature of masculinity provided by recent work in men’s studies. I mobilise these ideas in reading selected twentieth century emblematic texts to trace the themes which have been identified by feminist theory as evidence of the ‘phallo-logo-centric’ nature of mainstream Western culture. Discourse can take many forms; in this thesis I read exemplars of various genres of polemic, interpretation and chronicle to explore the interactions between Western narratives and conceptualisations of masculinity, and mainstream Western discourses of architecture, viewed both as discipline / theory and as practice / profession. I trace ways in which architectural discourse recapitulates and privileges tropes (concepts, narratives and metaphors) associated in Western culture with men, maleness and masculinity, and can be said both implicitly and explicitly to speak to men, of men and of ‘Man’. In the terminology of postmodernism, and as

---

3 The term ‘second wave’ feminism should not to be taken to imply that there was no feminist activism or theorising between the time of Mary Wollstonecraft’s Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792 and the struggle for ‘woman suffrage’ during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the rise of women’s liberation movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. For instance, International Women’s Day started in Europe in 1911, and reached Australia in 1928 (see http://www.isis.aust.com/wd/stevens/contents.htm).

4 ‘I was convinced that I must once for all... commence to build anew from the foundations, if I wanted to establish any firm and permanent structure in the sciences. ... I waited until I had attained an age so mature that I could not hope that at any later date I should be better fitted to execute my design.’ (Descartes 1997 [1641], p29)

5 This term combines the concepts of the domination of Western culture by the metaphysical phallus as privileged signifier of masculinity (‘phallocentrism’), and the domination of post-Enlightenment western thought by the concept of (a narrowly defined) reason (‘logos’) as the site of truth (‘logocentrism’); see Chapter 5. Henceforth in this thesis when referring to these two concepts in their combined manifestation I shall adopt the common, compressed version of the term — ‘phallocentrism’.

6 The term frequently used in the literature is ‘masculinist’. I find the linguistic asymmetry with ‘feminist’ (as opposed to ‘femin-in-ist’) awkward; it is presumably due to a misunderstanding of the role of the diminutives ‘ul’ and ‘in’ in the two terms. However the formulation ‘masculinist’ is ubiquitous, in spite of its linguistic ineptitude.

7 The cumulative effect of postmodernist relativism and the contemporary globalisation of culture is to make terms such as ‘Western’ and ‘mainstream’ problematic. However meaning and communication depend on a certain level of generalisation and shared coding - without it meaning would dissolve into as many categories as their are readers.

8 It is generally accepted in feminist theory that ‘male’ and ‘female’ relate to sex and are predominantly biological, while ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are socially and discursively
Wigley points out, architectural discourse is paradigmatically 'intertextual'\(^9\), its discourses both dependent on and influential in other spheres of cultural production.

I interrogate the discursive constructions both of 'Architecture' and of 'the Architect' to show the uses to which writers about architecture have put discursively constructed, implicit and explicit, notions of man, 'Man', and 'masculinity' as Subject — central and dominant — and woman, 'Woman', and 'femininity' as object — literal and symbolic 'Other'. I examine in the texts the manifestations of the hierarchically valued dualisms, pivotal to the symbolic apparatus of Western epistemologies (male / female, masculine / feminine, culture / nature, reason / emotion, public / private, dominant / muted ...), which exclude, derogate and/or appropriate women and the 'feminine'. And I trace in the texts the claims of domination and control, whether pragmatic, iconographic or metaphysical, and the 'economy of vision' / 'visuality' in the institutional codification of representation.

I aim to show how these architectural texts mobilise constructs, images and metaphors of the 'masculine' to define the ethos, programs and practices of the profession, to explain the creativity of practitioners, and to interpret the meanings of buildings. I examine how such Western architectural discourses make frequent claims to universality, while assuming that the 'normal' human is male / masculine. In particular I examine the circulation in architectural texts of patriarchally inflected conceptualisations of genius, knowledge, reason, order, mastery, authority and hierarchy as masculine, and the symbolic deployment of masculine 'archetypes' such as Hero, Pioneer and Prophet, Father and (rebellious) Son; and compare these with recurrent stereotypical characterisations of women and 'the feminine' as 'Other' — and even hostile — to the masculine, and the symbolic deployment of conceptualisations of 'the feminine' as Nature, in contrast to (masculine) Culture.

I aim to demonstrate that in terms of the place of women and the assumed meanings of femininity in the imaginations, agendas and programs of mainstream Western architecture, in spite of the revolutionary manifestoes and progressive self-imaginings of Modernism, very little has changed over the course of the twentieth century, whether as a result of the declared progressive politics of (early) modernism, the challenges of feminism to the status quo, or of the cultural pluralism of dissident post-modernism.\(^10\)

**The male world of architecture**

The world of architecture, as discursively constituted, appears to be a world constructed for men and inhabited by men. The assumption that the 'normal' human is male implies not only that the human body which inhabits architecture is a male body, but that human subjectivity itself is gendered masculine, in particular as it is manifested in the creativity of the Architect. The theory and practice of Western architecture still appear almost entirely oblivious to the existence and agency of women, not only as designers, but as inhabitants of built environments. Women are effectively absent as protagonists in the history of architecture and appear in the discourse only as

\(^9\) Intertextuality, a central notion in postmodern thought, is the notion that no individual text is a self-contained entity, but always exists in relation to others. A text is thus inscribed within a mesh of textual systems, by absorption and transformation of other texts on which it depends for its legibility, and borrowing from other types of discourse and mingling other types of text. I discuss intertextuality further in Chapter 5.

\(^10\) As Cottingham points out, although the late twentieth century has seen compensatory history and proposals for a feminist / feminine practice from feminist writers and practitioners outside the mainstream, such work is significantly more common than critique of the masculinity / masculicism of architecture from within the mainstream (Cottingham 1994, p134).
peripheral and marginal figures. Whether as individual subjects or as a group they are almost entirely invisible in most mainstream texts in any capacity, even as presumed inhabitants of built environments. ‘The feminine’ is called on only as support, foil, or muse to the masculine, or as symbolic figure for Nature and the exotic.

I argue that this is not merely a consequence of cultural ‘facts-on-the-ground’ or the demography of the profession (the historical absence of women from the profession and their continuing under-representation), or of women’s relative rarity as clients. It is a deeply embedded epistemological and institutional phenomenon. History is a pre-eminent transmitter of hegemonic culture and tradition: the stories it tells serve to legitimate standards of signification and value, and define the boundaries of cultural action. Women have often been chroniclers and interpreters of the history of the architecture of men. However, until recently, with the arrival of feminist writers such as Beatriz Colomina and Mary McLeod, discussed in Chapter 4, they have shared, or at least not questioned, the perspectives of male writers, and have generally been implicit in presenting masculine meanings. In fact a number of the texts I discuss in the thesis were written by women; notably Evenson on Le Corbusier (1970), Fromonot on Glenn Murcutt (1985, 1995) and Taylor on Australian architecture 1960-1990 (1986).\footnote{Other examples are Françoise Choay (1960) and Marguerite Guiton (with Jacques Guiton, 1981) on Le Corbusier, Jennifer Taylor on John Andrews (Taylor 1982), and Jennifer Towndrow on Philip Cox (Towndrow 1991).}

\textbf{The epistemological role of the exclusion of the feminine}

The masculine voice which dominates the discourse ignores, excludes, marginalises and even disparages women, femaleness and the feminine, whether ‘the feminine’ is interpreted as an essential given of half of humanity, a socially constructed set of characteristics imposed upon the subjectivities of actual women, or a constellation of metaphorical attributes conceived in antithesis to ‘the masculine’. Architectural discourse does call on ‘the feminine’, but appropriates it as metaphorical foil in opposition to the ‘masculine’ as marker of culture; in fact masculinity in the texts of architecture is often defined in terms of distance / difference from and opposition / hostility to the ‘feminine’. So the cultural maintenance of the nature, role and dominance of masculinity depends on the construction of femininity as its opposite. The concepts of ‘Woman’, ‘the feminine’ and ‘the female’ bear a fundamental epistemological burden in Western thought in general and in architectural discourse in particular. ‘Woman’ may also be conscripted as muse to the creative male, most visibly in the pictorial arts, where ‘she’ is a constant object of representation, often in depersonalised symbolic roles (as Justice, Chastity, France — even Architecture). In architectural histories a woman may be viewed as helpmeet; she assists the man professionally in the office, or supports him emotionally and practically in her ‘proper place’ at home.

\textbf{Architectural discourse and masculinity}

My original thesis proposal had a generic and overly ambitious program, as implied by its provisional title, ‘Women and the built environment’. During my work on the thesis, I have narrowed my focus to engage with the specific sphere of architecture, and shifted the site of analysis from the ‘real world’ of the built environment to the discourses of architecture. An impetus for directing the focus of the thesis in this direction was the general impression from texts encountered in my reading that the discourse on architecture neglects or ignores the existence of actual women, that it trivialises and denigrates the female / feminine, and that it frequently appropriates and deploys representations and cultural constructions of ‘the feminine’ in the interests of men and the cultural domination of the masculine.
I set out in the thesis to put flesh on the skeleton of this impression, to trace the circulation of gendered ideas, assumptions and representations, within the conceptual fabric which informs the ‘political economy’ of the built environment, and the way people practice, experience, interpret and value architecture. An inevitable outcome of this approach, given the nature of architectural discourse, was that the focus of scrutiny, rather than women or ‘femininity’, or even feminism, shifted to the markers and metaphors of masculinity, and the discursive and institutional symbols of patriarchy, as they circulate in architectural writing.

I argue that the construction of masculinity has been necessary to, and is actually constitutive of, the ethos and nature of Western architecture, and that this masculinity has been so ‘naturalised’ that its invisibility is as marked as its centrality. The gendered dualisms opposing feminine to masculine are everywhere presented and re-presented in the texts of architecture. This reciprocal ‘inter-scription’ means that the issue of the masculinity of architecture extends beyond narrow questions of professional participation, or politically peripheral issues of personal aesthetics and cultural expression. Its role in the delineation and definition of the human environment, and in the experience of everyday living, engages architecture in profound epistemological — even ontological — questions. Architecture’s ‘intertextuality’, its discursive links with other discourses, is particularly potent, given its multiple intersections of the material with the symbolic, the social with the technical, the pragmatic with the artistic. It is an underlying assumption of the thesis that the gendering of architectural discourse, as traced in the texts examined here, not only is detrimental to women, but limits and distorts the quality and value of architecture itself.

The centrality yet invisibility of the masculine norm

In *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, Mosse claims that ‘the manly ideal deserves to hold the center of the stage … for it … [not only] played a determining role in fashioning ideas of nationhood, respectability and war, but it was present [in] and influenced almost every aspect of modern history’ (Mosse 1996, p4). Masculinity in varied guises plays a central role in fashioning ideas about architecture and the architect. However, as Mosse points out, it ‘has been so ubiquitous that historians have usually taken it for granted’ (p3). The use of the male or the masculine to stand for the human is also taken so much for granted in mainstream architectural writing that the invisibility of this masculinity is as marked as its centrality.12

The discursive construction of meaning

In the thesis I take as a given the formative roles of language and discourse in the construction of meanings. The programs of Modernism encapsulated in emblematic texts a new way of seeing and making architecture, and embedded the role of the architect in a revolutionary discourse (see Conrads 1970) quite different in scope and intent from the arcane stylistic discussions of the nineteenth century, the socio-political treatises of the Renaissance, or the liturgical-theological concerns of the Middle Ages. More recently with the advent of postmodernism and the ‘theoretical / linguistic turn’, the discipline of architecture has seen an increased interest in epistemological and discursive issues, and writing on architecture has effectively taken on a life of its own outside the profession and practice of the discipline.

There is always a danger in any socio-cultural critique of discursive formations which brings a revisionist or dissident agenda to reading and re-interpreting foundational and

12 The masculinity of architectural discourse is invisible in the same way as the thief in the G K Chesterton ‘Father Brown’ story, who dressed as a waiter in the gentlemen’s club, and so was never seen or noticed, either ‘below stairs’ or in the salon, because he was so ‘naturally’ part of the scene.
institutional texts. In seeking to unearth, dis-cover or reveal continuing patterns of discrimination or bias, subordination or misrepresentation, such a hermeneutics of continuity runs the risk of being a-historical, and of discounting the effects of chronology and geography. This thesis does not have a historical orientation. It does not specifically aim to trace differences in texts, or changes over time.\textsuperscript{13}

Techniques of reading

In my reading of the texts, as in much contemporary feminist textual / cultural analysis, I draw on approaches to the interrogation of texts put forward by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Derridean ‘deconstruction’ aims to destabilise the ‘natural’, the ‘taken-for-granted’, in language, in particular the structuring of Western thought in terms of dichotomies and binary oppositions, one dominant over the other. Foucault’s work focuses on uncovering the traces of the institutional and disciplinary construction of meanings and knowledge, and their deployment in relations of power based on claims of truth and authority (see Grosz 1990a, pp82-103). In Chapter 5 I discuss in more detail issues raised by my adoption of aspects of these approaches.

The texts examined

The texts which are the focus of this thesis are mainstream texts published in English in the twentieth century (1923 to 2000). In them architectural Modernism remains a given; in the earlier texts it is a revolutionary statement of position, in the ‘middle period’ the received wisdom, and more recently, within a context of postmodernist cultural theory it has become the new orthodoxy against which dissidence measures itself. The texts chosen represent two sites of investigation, between which there are both similarities and differences of culture and period, and in which intertextuality is manifest.

The starting point for the thesis was an examination of Australian architectural discourse in search of some explanation for the continuing low numbers of women practitioners in Australian architecture. Given Australia’s cultural location as a marginal participant in the wider arena of contemporary Western / international architecture, the thesis focuses on writing about two iconic figures: one, Le Corbusier, of international renown, the other, Glenn Murcutt, of predominantly local significance. Both have attained almost mythic status as architects: Le Corbusier over almost the entire twentieth century due to his own efforts and those of his disciples, Murcutt since the 1970s, almost without his participation.

‘Gods’, ‘gospels’ and ‘tall tales’: Le Corbusier and Glenn Murcutt

As a paradigmatic site for exploring the nature of mainstream Western architectural discourse I focus on the international figure of Le Corbusier. I examine not only writing by Le Corbusier himself, as universalist writer and polemicist on architecture and as producer of projects and buildings, but on the construction of ‘Le Corbusier’ as productive myth, as ‘the Architect of the Century’ (Raeburn and Wilson 1987), as archetype of traditional yet enduring images of the Architect, as emblematic architect of International Modernism (but recently claimed by Charles Jencks as a precursor of Postmodernism (Jencks 2000)).

In a way that has happened to no other architect, he has been used to personify the ideas, ideals, and the architecture of Modernism; as a result his name has been used, sometimes as a talisman, sometimes in the place of Lucifer himself

\textsuperscript{13} In fact it is the apparent absence of change over the twentieth century in relation to gender which gave impetus to the writing of the thesis.
... because of what he has been taken to represent in the debate about modern architecture.

(Forty 1987, p35)

I explore in these texts the circulation of theories, ideologies, metaphors and images, the production of a canon of received history, the generation of icons (in the form of buildings and their images, personages and their narratives), and the diffusion of myths — male 'gods' and masculist 'gospels'. The writing of Le Corbusier, both during the heroic early period of Modernism and even later in its 'middle age', could perhaps be interpreted as reflecting now out-moded gendered attitudes. However I set out to show that the reception of his texts in the mainstream literature still reflects similar gender attitudes and still deploys similar conceptual schemas.

'Corb' is a non pareil, and there is of course no Australian 'Le Corbusier'. There could be no equivalent figure to Le Corbusier in a regional, post-modernist world, and no equivalent corpus of designed and built work and writing. Furthermore, grand narratives are awkward things, the nature of gospels has changed with the advent of postmodernism, and the Australian version of patriarchy is generally a more 'laid-back' and larrakin affair than that of twentieth century Europe. Australia's culture is a newly emerging thing, still marginal to the European 'centre'. There has not been time for a similar response to the life and work of an Australian architect14, and there has been little critical or theoretical work on recent Australian architecture which extends beyond the merely descriptive or the hagiographical.

However, acknowledging the particularity of manifestations of myths, and the postmodernist concern for regionalism in architecture, I explore a number of Australian architectural texts which mark the recent arrival on the international scene of the rhetoric of an 'Australian' architecture.15 I focus on the locally significant, and now internationally recognised16, Australian architect, Glenn Murcutt, 'whom many consider the father of an 'Australian architecture' (Baird 1997, p202). 'Murcutt is the first Australian architect whose work has attracted such international interest.' (Fromonot 1995, p7)17 Murcutt's influence on both practitioners and students of architecture in Australia is great, his client waiting list long, Philip Drew's Leaves of Iron (1985a), the central text of my reading, has been republished four times since its first publication in 1985, while its popularity among students is attested by the history of borrowings from the University of Adelaide's Barr Smith Library of the multiple copies of the book, all frequently borrowed and well-used, and many illicitly annotated.18

---

14 Since Robin Boyd (1960; 1965; 1968) there has been no architect-critic whose buildings and writing engaged with the broad issues relevant to the development of Australian culture (see Callister 1991).

15 But see Day for a critique of the partiality (in both senses) of a characterisation of 'Australianness', and an 'idea of an Australian Way in Architecture', which concentrates on a particular interpretation of the particular physical characteristics of the sub-tropical east coast, ignoring other bio-climatic regions and natural eco-systems, and above all ignoring the city and suburbs, and everyday Australian 'ways of life' as sources of national identity (Day 1986).

16 Murcutt was awarded the Alvar Aalto Medal in 1992.

17 In the context of this thesis it is interesting that the influence of Le Corbusier can be read both implicitly and explicitly in texts on Murcutt.

18 Multiple copies are placed in the library at the request by academic staff in the School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Urban Design.
Chapter 1  Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse

Australian architectural discourse and national identity

The discourse engaging with a specifically ‘Australian architecture’ should be read in the context of a quest for a generic ‘national identity’\(^{19}\), often in search of international (Western) recognition. This national identity tends still to be constructed in stereotypically masculine mode. Texts can accompany conventional images of patriarchy with a more egalitarian discourse of radical, dissident, larrikin fraternity. In architectural discourse I characterise these as the masculine ‘tall tales’ of Australian architectural narratives; perhaps a kind of intellectualised appropriation of a tradition of vernacular bush and war-time (‘digger’ and POW) story-telling. (These tall tales have a more directly literary history in Australia, in particular in the ballad (AB ‘Banjo’ Paterson) and the short story (Henry Lawson), and the little magazines connected with the Old Left and the Australian Legend, such as Meanjin, Overland and the Communist Review.)

As counterpoint to the texts on Murcutt, I refer to writing on other Australian architects, and in particular the emblematic ‘characters’ in the chronicles of Australian architecture, Peter Corrigan and Gregory Burgess. The masculinity evoked by the writing on these three Australian architects is more complex than the almost mythic heroic status conferred on Le Corbusier. Murcutt appears in a dual, even ambivalent, role. The claim to heroism in Australian culture oscillates between the Father and the Son: so Murcutt’s image of non-conformist larrikinism (the rebellious Son) has been transformed over years of success and publicity inside and outside the profession into the authority of the Father, the patriarch of the ‘Australian vernacular’. The role of larrikin ‘Son’ is occupied — and cultivated — by Corrigan. The trinity is completed with Burgess, whose almost spiritualist approach to architecture appears to strike a chord in sympathy with a relatively recent turn in Australian culture to a concern with the Land and in particular its significance in indigenous cultures. They can be understood as taking up relative positions in the Australian architectural pantheon as ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Ghost’.

Gender in architecture and related disciplines

Architecture occupies a problematic space between art, craft and technology; cultural and historical factors often determine where it finds itself, for instance, in University faculties, whether alone, or in conjunction with visual arts, design, engineering, building and/or environmental studies. Many faculties of architecture in Australian Universities and Technical Colleges evolved out of engineering courses; other tertiary courses developed from diploma courses in Mechanics’ Institutes and Working Men’s Colleges offering qualifications as supplements to traditional apprenticeships (Freeland 1971, p202-230).

The emphasis in the discourse and practice on the claims of architecture to recognition as an art have been changeable over time, and differ in different cultures. The distinction between the ‘masculine’ profession of architecture and the ‘feminine’ occupations of interior decoration and interior design is reflected not only in popular stereotype but in the proportions of male and female students in tertiary courses.\(^{20}\)

---

\(^{19}\) That is, a cultural identity extending far beyond questions of architectural expression to art, literature, film, cuisine, and inevitably to advertising and (international) tourism.

\(^{20}\) Similarly, the territorial divisions which preserve the masculinity of ‘serious’ art as distinguished from ‘tasteful’ occupations conventionally considered suitable to women — watercolours, still lifes, embroidery and quilt-making — have also varied, but the distinguishing criterion remains the discursively produced masculinity of the creator (see Broude c1982; Greer 1979; Heller 1987; Parker 1981). It has been a major project of feminism in the visual arts to claim the status of art for such ‘women’s’ creative practices, paralleling recent changes in attitudes to ethnic and
Engineering is stereotypically masculine ground. In its diversity of fields it combines images and realities of knowledge, technology, power, strength and control. But the masculinity of architecture is not such a simple matter. It calls upon neither the aggressively ‘macho’ image of the shearer or the footballer, nor the stereotyped ‘rationality’ of the civil engineer or the mathematician. In popular culture the architect seems to be called upon to fill a range of masculine niches, from the respectable père de famille of The Brady Bunch, the popular US television series of the 1980s (more interesting than an accountant, even a romantic figure, with a tinge of the artistic and bohemian, but with the income and inclination to support a family), to the Romantic hero with a hint of obsession. The film of The Fountainhead (Rand 1961) (see Chapter 2) starred Gary Cooper, the flawed architect hero of Towering Inferno was Paul Newman. Alternatively the architect may provide a useful sensitive new age hero, and the possibility of interesting settings to boot (Harry Seidler’s office was used as a set in the film of Robert Drew’s The Bodysurfers). Wasserstein explores male architects’ ‘appeal at the box office’ (Wasserstein 1995), while Chavkin and Pinsler (Chavkin and Pinsler 1994) identify twenty four films in which an architect has featured as the leading man.

However ‘sensitive’ and ‘new age’ the masculinity inscribed in the popular image of the architect may be, the overt masculinity presented by the discourses of the discipline and the profession of architecture tends not to be so circumspect. At times it claims the transcendentalist voice of Enlightenment rationality. At others it seems to aspire to the passionate, even mythic, maleness propounded by DH Lawrence. I explore in Chapter 8 the appropriation of Lawrence’s ‘Australian’ imagery by Philip Drew, author of Leaves of Iron, the major text on Murcutt (Drew 1996).

The relationship of architecture with technology as marker of masculinity is not as simple as the obvious nexus between engineering and technology. Except in secretarial and related capacities, or as wife-partners in small family building firms (doing the secretarial, accounting and public relations work), women are even rarer in the construction industry than in architecture. The manual technological skills of the builder and the more industrialised competences which have developed around construction are as stereotypically masculine as any branch of engineering, but there is a firm class distinction between the trade of building and the profession of architecture which matches Pevsner’s distinction between the concept of a building (‘a bicycle shed’) and Architecture (Lincoln Cathedral) (Pevsner 1945, pxvi).21 The distance assumed here between building and architecture rests upon concepts of art and science, creativity and rationality, finesse and sensitivity which are not so simplistically gendered. In fact the ‘masculinity of architecture’ is a complex affair, subtended by the discursive formulations which are the subject of this thesis — a protean web of historical and social imperatives, intertwined with myths and concepts.

Alternative approaches to feminist work on architecture

There is a range of potential avenues for feminist research into the architectural profession and its context. I present an overview of the variety of such research as background to this thesis in the literature reviews in Chapters 3 and 4. Early work, generally based in activism or at least political commitment, tended to attempt to ‘cover the ground’, so historical work on ‘missing’ architects was often combined with socio-cultural analysis and attempts to develop theoretical interpretive strategies; the category ‘women’ was seldom unpacked, and ‘women’ and ‘feminism’ were often conflated.

---

21 This class distinction intersects in complicated ways with the gendered distinction between art and craft.
My own 1975 article (White 1975; see Appendix A) is an example from this naive period. Now that the feminist literature is more extensive and more epistemologically sophisticated, such a generic ‘portmanteau’ approach is probably no longer tenable. A feminist sociological critique of the failings of the built environment in general would spread its net too widely to focus specifically on the discipline and practice of architecture. A feminist social anthropology could explore the difficulties experienced by women attempting to operate within the built environment professions. The anthropological approach offers a range of options. Many of these have the potential to illuminate the puzzle which prompted this thesis — the absence of women from architecture, the apparent reciprocal ‘refusal’ of women by architecture, architecture by women. It could entail studying women’s knowledge and attitudes to and experiences of architecture, whether as a profession in which to participate, as a set of practices, techniques, theories and philosophies, as a discipline into which one is inducted by education and various forms of ‘apprenticeship’, or as a corpus of work, buildings, precincts and environment.

Alternatively, research could take an ethnographic or even psychosocial turn, studying for instance the perceptions and achievements of women architecture students, or comparing the situations and attitudes of women architects with those of women graduates who chose not to enter the profession. Subjects might be randomly selected from the population, or be chosen from prospective architecture students, students at present studying architecture, graduates in practice, graduates who have decided not to practise architecture. Such research could be statistical and quantitative, employing control groups of ‘similar’ males. Probably more productively, given the small numbers involved, and more appropriately, given feminist critiques of empiricist paradigms (see, for example Hubbard 1993), and pioneering work in feminist contextualised qualitative research, it could be ethnographic and participatory (see Bell, Caplan et al. 1993; Skeggs 1995).\footnote{Many of these options would meet with the logistical difficulties of locating subjects who have decided not to commence architectural studies, or who have decided not to enter the profession (added to the patriarchally-constructed difficulty of finding women identified only by their ‘maiden’ names). Furthermore, a causal link would be difficult if not impossible to establish, and is probably beyond the capabilities of the most exhaustive sociological / anthropological research.} An example in architecture is Susan Shannon’s work on architectural education with students at Adelaide University (Shannon 1995).

Recuperative, compensatory and emancipatory feminist research

Most published feminist work specifically focussed on architecture has taken one of a small number of alternative approaches. In the 1970s ‘recuperative’ feminist history (finding lost or forgotten protagonists) or ‘compensatory’ feminist history and historiography (making up for their absence) was an early turn. In the 1980s there followed explorations of the potential of a ‘feminist’ architecture, with emphasis on the one hand on ‘feminist aesthetics’ (how buildings appear and are interpreted), and on the other on more radical feminist and ‘emancipatory’, politically grounded, historiographies and epistemologies of architecture, and on developing feminist alternatives to conventional modes of practice (how buildings are produced). As this work develops, we may arrive at the point at which art history has already arrived: ‘we no longer think of a feminist art history but a feminist intervention in the histories of art’ (Smith 1997, p12).

As Giddens points out, ‘[t]he women’s movement has clear emancipatory objectives. ... Its aims are to free women from traditional forms of constraint and allow them to participate on an equal level with men in areas of social activity formerly dominated by males’ (Giddens 1991, p229). Even with a modest ‘equal-opportunity’ liberal agenda, this in itself may have the effect of altering cultural, social and political realities. However, feminist research is generally based in activism, or at least in political
commitment, and radical cultural / theoretical feminism often proposes a more pro-active, discursively dissident approach. (It could be said that at this stage in the evolution of the ‘disciplines of gender’, dispassionate and ‘objective’

A feminist-critical reading of architectural discourse

This thesis does not take any of these approaches, whether based in anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, aesthetics or ethnographies of practice. My approaches in this thesis are hermeneutic, epistemological (and ideological), and my competence lies in understanding architecture from ‘within’. Rather than running the risk of semantically circular and potentially essentialist ‘readings’ of works of architecture or the work of architects, I focus on a feminist-critical reading (the narratives in) the discourse(s) of architecture — Wigley’s ‘necessary and overdue’ work. Dualist simplifications, essentialist formulations, gendered stereotypes, gender-b(i)ased omissions and silencings, prejudicial attitudes to gender entwined in class, race or ethnicity, are here the object of study, rather than potential theoretical and methodological snares for my own writing.

The structure of the thesis

To provide the context for the argument of the thesis, I outline in Chapter 2 the place of women in the creation and interpretation of the built environment, in the past and the present, and set out a broad range of factors which continue to have an impact on women, with specific reference to Australia. In Chapters 3 and 4 I provide an extensive literature review of texts on the built environment and architecture which illuminate a feminist perspective. Chapter 3 presents research on women in the built environment and in architecture, Chapter 4 more theoretical work relating feminist theory to architecture.

In Chapter 5 I present the theoretical and methodological background of the thesis. I explore the conceptual insights of contemporary feminist theory, which challenge the ‘phallogo-centrism’ of the symbolic order of Western culture, and the implicitly gendered hierarchical dichotomies which allocate higher value to the masculine over the ‘other-ness’ of the feminine. I also examine the complex relationships between feminist theory and postmodernism (in all their diversity) in the context of such a reading of architectural discourse.

In Chapters 6 to 8 I examine the texts which are the specific subject / object of this study. These come from a narrow band of the range of genres, both primary and secondary, both international and Australian, circulating in the architectural profession and academia. I also refer to a number of other texts which colour the general image presented by architecture.

In Chapter 6 I examine writing by Le Corbusier, as emblematic of International Modernism, and in Chapter 7 writing on ‘Le Corbusier’. The Corbusian canon, spanning fifty years from 1911, is particularly ‘rich’ in the metaphors of masculinity, while later writing on Le Corbusier demonstrates the persistence of a gendered epistemological apparatus in spite of the decline of ‘classical’ modernism.

---

23 The notions of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ are examples of the hierarchical dualisms characteristic of patriarchal discussed in Chapter 5; according to feminist theory the assumption of ‘objectivity’ is often granted to the subjectivities of the dominant group.

24 All the texts examined in detail are in the Undergraduate section of the University of Adelaide Barr Smith Library, and have been frequently borrowed by students.

25 In particular following the 1987 centenary of his birth.
In Chapter 8 I focus on texts on Glenn Murcutt with some contextual reference to writing on other Australian architects, in particular Peter Corrigan and Greg Burgess. Between them these three encapsulate three aspects of Australia’s ‘radical, dissident fraternity’ in architecture: Murcutt now almost the patriarch of the Australian ‘vernacular’, and Corrigan still the larrikin, with Burgess perhaps providing a ‘New Age’ spiritual element. The readings demonstrate that even in writing engaging with architectural regionalism, a postmodernist concern, the tropes of masculinity remain central.

Chapter 9 draws the thesis to a conclusion, and proposes questions which might form the basis for further investigation of architecture as a gendered and gendering cultural practice.
Chapter 2

Women and (discourses of) the built environment

Architecture is too important to be left to architects alone.
Like crime, it is a problem for society as a whole.
(Berthold Lubetkin, RIBA President's Invitation Lecture, 1985,
quoted in Wates and Knevitt 1987, p149)
(And like crime, it is a field of activity dominated by men.)

Effects on women of the built environment

The built environment is a powerfully determining human creation which both reflects
and conditions the life experiences of its inhabitants and the relationships between
them. The vectors of inequality and difference are multiple — class, gender, race,
culture, age, sexuality intersect in a complex matrix. Marxist analyses of the city such
as that of Manuel Castells (Castells 1977) concentrate on class as the determining
factor in the inequalities and inequities of access to a reasonable quality of life. But
gender is at least as powerful. Due to perceptions of women’s ‘nature’, and the social
roles to which they have been on the whole restricted, combined with economic and
structural inequalities similar to those of class, women are more restricted in and by
urban space than men (see Harman 1983).

The development of our cities and suburbs is influenced directly and indirectly by
systems and mechanisms of power and control from which women have been and
remain almost totally excluded. The economic bases of public and private patronage,
the commercial / industrial systems involved in the production of buildings and the
urban infrastructure, the intersecting political frameworks at all levels of government of
resource allocation and building / planning regulations, and the professional
freemasonry within which commissions and competitions are won and lost, are all
overwhelmingly masculine. This often results in buildings, precincts and spatial
relationships which respond to the prevailing, often gender-biased assumptions about
the nature of the family, the relationship of home to work and of domestic space to
public space, and the appropriate character of the places in which we live and work —
but which are inappropriate, inadequate and limiting if ways of life are viewed from
perspectives other than those of male middle class businessmen, professionals and
politicians, and the construction industry.

Since the advent of ‘second-wave’ feminism, activists and theorists deploying the tools
of feminist analysis have remarked on the generic neglect by the built environment
professions of the needs, experiences, and perceptions of women. Women tend to
inhabit different cultural and economic social ‘niches’ from men, and researchers have
presented an implicit or explicit critique of the specific effects of the built environment
on women as a group, or on particular groups of women. They have identified how, at
the utilitarian level, the interests (in both senses of the word) of women are in many
ways and on a number of levels different from the interests of men, and how the built
environment facilitates, expresses, legitimates and perpetuates the dominance of men’s
interests over those of women.
Women and the city in Australia

The manifestations in urban form and organisation of masculine perceptions and interests take different forms under different cultural regimes. Zoning of the city into residential and non-residential areas is a fundamental premise of conventional Australian city planning which has particular effects on women, given their continuing responsibilities for family welfare (see statistics from the Australian Office of the Status of Women at its website (accessed April 2000: www.pmc.gov.au/osw/content/resources/facts). It means, for instance, that child-care centres and schools, intrinsic to any holistic view of the living environment, were for many years defined in Victoria as ‘non-conforming uses’¹ in residential areas, and that work-places tend to be far from home: the dormitory suburb and the almost compulsory maternal chauffeuring of pre-independence children² are a function of intentional planning strategies by those who in general do not have to contend with the consequences (see Saegert 1981; White 1988, see Appendix B³). Always more ‘cosmopolitan’ than other Australian cities, Sydney has a long tradition of walk-up flats, especially in the inner and ‘middle’ suburbs, however these were incorporated into the suburban zoning schema.

Some urban history

It is no accident that before the inroads of the gentrification that has occurred since the 1970s, single mothers and other disadvantaged groups such as newly-arrived immigrants congregated in the inner suburbs of Australian cities, where they found relatively cheap housing, familiar social and cultural infrastructures, and reasonable access to employment and amenities for the car-less (see White 1978). In the nineteenth century the inner suburbs of all large Australian cities had been mixed-use areas, where industry, commerce and residential uses cohabited. Zoning into residential and non-residential areas was a twentieth century response to new ideas about physical amenity and the good life, and the process of segregation of functions has continued throughout the century for both regulatory and logistical reasons, and in particular due to the impact of modern means of transport of goods and people. Paternalistic scrutiny of and intervention in poorer areas, by state governments and banks, dates from the late 1930s (for example, Colonel Light Gardens in Adelaide, Garden City in Melbourne); all were predicated on the ‘conventional’ nuclear family and the place of women in the home.⁴

Large tracts of asbestos-cement-sheeted houses were constructed in south-western Sydney in the 1940s. In Melbourne after the Second World War many inner urban areas were defined as slums by well-meaning patriarchs of the Methodist church. Their advice was followed by the state government and the ‘slums’ were replaced during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s with well-intentioned, technologically daring, but inhumane, Victorian Housing Commission tower blocks (Hargreaves 1975). Similar developments occurred in Sydney. If the new developments had taken into account the needs and experiences of women and children, the outcomes would surely have been different.

The years following the Second World War saw the development of car-based cities in the developed world, of which Australia provides paradigmatic and even recalcitrant

---

¹ A term used in the Victorian planning system.
² As women increasingly enter the paid work-force, women with children are significantly more likely to be employed part-time than either men or childless women: an attempt to integrate work with family responsibilities and the implications of urban arrangements.
³ In an almost Freudian typographical slip, the Transition editors transformed ‘car-less mothers’ into ‘careless mothers’ (White 1988, p24).
⁴ I am grateful to Conrad Hamann for this insight (personal communication 2002)
cases. This development preceded by decades the general extension of car ownership to women, with the result that women with children commonly were confined to dormitory suburbs with inadequate infrastructure while their husbands took 'the car' to the office or factory. Long before access to a car had crossed the gender — and class — divide, universal car-ownership was taken for granted in planning policy, by extension perhaps from the personal experience of those in command in the middle-class-male-dominated planning and engineering professions and the construction industry, and the political world of decision-making. This has biased priorities and distorted the allocation of resources.\(^5\) Newman and Kenworthy among others have documented the situation in Australia (Newman and Hogan 1987; Newman, Kenworthy et al. 1999).

In the last quarter of the century many large cities have instituted policies of 'urban consolidation' in response to concerns about suburban alienation, to the related issues of traffic congestion, air pollution and energy conservation, and to the loss of arable land under urban development (see White 1978). However, even with the introduction of mixed-use zoning in some areas, encouragement of higher residential densities, and fiscal incentives for inner urban apartment developments, residential suburbs at densities which are very low by international standards, remain the living environment for the majority of Australians. Furthermore, as Hamann has pointed out, 'one of the greatest single causes of the chauffeuring shackles has been the [recent amalgamation], dispersal and widespread closure of communal and public facilities' such as schools (Hamann 2002, pp4-5).

**Urban activism and women**

Leonie Sandercock has pointed out that the form and organisation of cities are not solely the outcome of the agendas and actions of the planning profession and institutions (or of the commercial pressures for development and speculative housebuilding). The outcomes often result from urban social movements deriving from urban dwellers' defensive reactions, and citizens' confrontation with the planning institutions, challenging elected governments and demanding community consultation and participation ('The Good Citizen', ABC Open Learning: www.abc.net.au/ola/citizen; see also Sandercock 1975; Sandercock 1990). It is not surprising that women participated significantly in the resident activism of the 1970s, resisting unwelcome demolition and redevelopment for public housing and urban freeways.

Women have also participated in large numbers in agitation for neighbourhood houses, women's half-way houses and rape crisis centres, local parks, heritage conservation, and popular movements such as 'Reclaim the Night' (overtly feminist in its objectives), and 'Reclaim the Streets' and 'Critical Mass' (often cyclist-based). The philosophical and political underpinnings of these movements generally lie in the social practices of everyday life. The resident activism in the inner suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne eventually led to the cessation of wholesale 'urban renewal' by Housing Commissions.\(^6\) Since then women's participation in local government has reached a level far exceeding that in the other two levels of government in Australia. Given the close relationship between local government and people's lived experience in the urban environment, this gives a clear indication that women recognise the importance to their lives of aspects of the built environment in which they live.

---

\(^5\) In the USA the freeway system has been called 'the largest infrastructural enterprise in the history of humanity' (ABC 'Life Matters' 6.8.98).

\(^6\) A comprehensive archive of documentation of this activism and its theoretical and ideological underpinnings can be found in the Crow Collection, held at the Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428, Melbourne City.
The role and importance of architecture

Architecture is not merely shelter or dwelling or lodging. Architecture matters, in ways which have epistemological, ontological and political implications. Its significance lies both in itself and in what I see as its metaphoric status as symbol / synecdoche for the masculinity of culture in general. In discussing 'architecture' we are dealing with a slippery notion which operates across a wide field and at a number of levels — occupation, profession, vocation; process, art, craft, technological system; product, object; environment; style, image, source of prestige.

The building industry within which architecture operates is a central element of national economic life, and is often used as a barometer of economic health. The built environment it helps to produce and interpret has direct material effects on the lives of all people. The built environment as 'ground' and architecture as 'figure' represent / reflect and enforce / perpetuate class- and race / ethnicity-bound social, cultural and political imperatives, and are specific to time and place. It can delineate power relations. As Foucault, a philosopher much concerned with the workings of power, says, '[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental to any exercise of power' (Foucault 1984b, quoted in Rabinow, 1984b, p252). At a more metaphysical level, it can mediate, frame and circumscribe experience, and influence both perceptions and actions, standing as it does at the intersections of cultural memory, art, craft, science, technology, industry and commerce.

Though architecture is inextricably bound into the economic, commercial, technological and political infrastructure of post-industrial capitalist society, its practitioners nevertheless claim the status of Artist, and invent heroic myths to justify their exploits. At times it still lays claim to heroism and sublimity, Nikolaus Pevsner's dictum, mentioned in Chapter 1, that 'a bicycle shed is a building while Lincoln Cathedral is a piece of architecture' (Pevsner 1945, pxvi) is quoted approvingly in 1990 by Mitchell (Mitchell 1990, pix), while at a conference in Sydney in 1995 Joseph Rykwert declared that 'housing is not architecture' (Rykwert 1995).

The 'nature of architecture'

Architecture carries a heavy cultural burden. Multiple discourses define and explicate the contexts and processes of architectural production, legitimate and defend the status of particular works of architecture as works of Art, define the role of the Architect 'himself', and represent and interpret his image and status, and narrate the history of Architecture. These discourses are heterogeneous, reflecting the ambivalent status of architecture. The term 'architecture', even in its most literal sense of the design and production of buildings and precincts, and the physical outcomes of that enterprise, is a multivalent concept almost as contentious — for those engaged in doing or thinking about it — as the 'most contested word in the language', culture (Williams 1988, pp87-93).

In different historical, cultural and political contexts Architecture has been viewed, or used, or promoted, as historical-hermeneutic exegesis (Pugin and Viollet-le-Duc), as Art (Ruskin), as technique (Frascariant), as craft (Morris); as commercial enterprise (Lapidus and Portman), as profession (Kostof 1977), as technological experiment (Foster); as gentlemanly diversion (see Saint 1983), as historical institution (Kostof 1995); as distillation of all the arts (Vitruvius), as intellectual discipline (Mies van der Rohe), as mathematical game (Eisenman 1989), as metaphysical engagement with mathematics as the manifestation of the sublime (see James 1979 on Chartres), as stand-in for metaphysics itself (Heidegger); as machinery and symbol of oppressive power (Foucault), as carrier of emancipatory ideology (Soleri), as the only alternative to revolution (Le Corbusier 1970); as 'symbolisation of customary use' (Derrida, according to Eisenman, reported by Kipnis (1991, p34); as symbol of civilisation (Pevsner), as flag-bearer for Empire (Lutyens), as monumental manifestation of...
logic of majesty and authority' (Bataille 1991), as expression of national, 'racial' or ethnic identity (from one extreme of the political spectrum — Speer and Hitler — through Chandigarh and Brasilia, to the other — for instance Piano's Jean-Marie Tjingbo Kanak Cultural Centre in Nouméa); as dialectic between culture and nature (Hundertwasser); as site of solipsistic self-expression (Jencks's Garagia Rotonda), as purveyor of image (Moore's Piazza d'Italia), as container for corporate self-promotion (Rogers' London Millennium Dome), as screen for virtual reality (Bill Gates' mansion as represented on the world wide web), as demonstration of status, wealth and prestige (Getty's 'Pompeian villa') — or as unnecessary luxury (the attitude apparently of 95% of Australia's householders, as fewer than 5% of houses are designed individually by an architect).

The complexity of the material, cultural and metaphysical roles taken on by architecture in the public mind (if and when it is turned to the matter) is probably simplified, in the abstract, to an ambivalent and simplistic dualism — to rationality and technology on the one side, and art and creativity on the other, while in the pragmatic terms of everyday life the architect is seen as a relatively inconsequential yet respectable functionary. But whatever the complexity or the simplicity of the roles ascribed to architecture there is effectively no variety in the assumption that it is a masculine activity.

The gender(ing) of architecture

Concerned with producing living and working environments for everyone, architecture is carried out in the West almost exclusively by white middle-class men. There is an intersection of issues here, questions of social and economic justice, and of cultural representation. The easy issue is the egalitarian liberal feminist question: why should not women have the opportunity to participate in such a rewarding and fulfilling profession, and the status and economic security it may offer? The other major issue is more complex: does it matter to the whole community that the built environment is produced by representatives of less than one half of the population, and that in the design, funding, production, regulation and even the public interpretation of the built environment, women (and children and many minorities) are almost totally absent?

Beyond the instrumental, lie the ontological, epistemological and hermeneutic. Du Plessis discusses the aesthetic / psychic implications of women's 'insider-outsider social status' — an outsider by her sexual position ...; an insider (if middle class) ... by her social position' — and quotes Virginia Woolf in A Room of Her Own ("If one is a woman one is often surprised at a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical" (Woolf 1929).) Du Plessis continues, "[t]hat shifting focus, bringing the world into different perspectives, is the ontological situation of woman because it is our social situation, our relationship to power, our relationship to language" (Du Plessis and Workshop 99 1980, p149).

In my experience, the reasons prospective students most often give for choosing architecture are that the students are considered either 'artistic' (generally girls), or 'good at mathematics' (generally boys). Seldom do their answers reflect a comprehension of the socio-cultural, experiential or environmental implications of the work of the architect. It is precisely these aspects of architecture which are the focus of feminist architects and architectural theorists. Three complexly related characterisations of the nature of architecture are at play here, all with gender implications: Art, even Genius, engaging with Geometry and the arcane mysteries of Mathematics, with the utilitarian intervention of technical competence.
The gendering of architecture and the ‘nature of women’

An example of the power of such an interpretation is to be found in a book published under the auspices of the Oxford University Women’s Studies Committee, an unlikely site for unreconstructed masculism. In fact the book addresses ‘the structural, or social position of women, and asks how the category ‘women’ is defined, and is related to others in society. It suggests that perceptions of the nature of women affect the shape of the categories assigned to them, which in turn reflect back upon and reinforce or remould perceptions of the nature of women, in a continuing process’ (Ardener 1978, p9). A chapter entitled ‘The Female Brain: A Neuropsychological Viewpoint’, is concerned with sex differences in cognitive and spatial abilities as identified in neuropsychological experiments, and concludes ‘in summary [that] the weight of evidence points to the existence of sex differences in cognitive ability’ (Newcombe and Ratcliff 1978, p194).

Significant for this discussion is the author’s implied understanding of the nature of architecture and the roles and practices of architects. Following a discussion of ‘spatial ability’ (‘shown in a variety of tasks including the setting of a rod to the vertical, the detection of geometrical figures embedded in a complex pattern, and the learning of a maze’) the authors remark

it is likely that genuine sex differences in cognitive skill are reflected in choice of career and professional achievement. The absence of women among the ranks of great composers and mathematicians, master chess players and famous architects is interesting. It can hardly be attributed solely to cultural prescription.

(Newcombe and Ratcliff 1978, p195)

The juxtaposition of the four activities is unlikely to be coincidental. Architecture appears to be conceptualised here as a visual, mathematical, organisational, perhaps puzzle-solving activity, probably carried out by a specially creative, isolated, individual. In a culture which subscribes to hierarchical binary oppositions, male/female, culture/nature, reason/emotion, it is clearly a profession appropriate only to men.

This view of architecture ignores the fact that buildings and precincts are not merely geometrical or spatial phenomena, but exist in a socio-cultural context, and respond to functional and experiential programs. Moreover, the practice of architecture and the workings of the building industry are deeply embedded in the political economy\(^7\), and require not only access to material and financial resources and to clients, but entree into the ‘corridors of power’ — and money — and acceptance by the pre-existing ‘guild’ of architects, while fame also probably requires a capacity for self-promotion. Even now none of these is easy for women, and of course not until well into the twentieth century was architectural education or entry into the profession open to women. In fact until the mid-nineteenth century women could not legally own intellectual property. Given the achievements of present-day female architecture students in design and technical subjects, it is not so obvious that either individual choice or lack of skill is the principal barrier to women’s success in the profession, however that may be measured.

**Barriers to women**

In the light of the persistent domination of the ‘traditional’, officially sanctioned and regulated architecture profession by (actual, biologically identifiable) men, and the apparent inability or reluctance of many women to enter it, in spite of academic success in architectural education, I can only infer the continued existence of significant barriers to the participation of women. These are likely to combine the material and the symbolic; some will lie within the profession, others outside it. Some will result from

\(^7\) An extreme example here is Albert Speer’s relationship with Hitler.
the perceptions of prospective women architects themselves, both about the profession and about their own capacities.

What might be called ‘professional inertia’ may be due to the residual resistance, overt or perhaps unconscious, of (older) male architect ‘gatekeepers’ — those with the power to ‘hire and fire’ — understandably protecting masculine solidarity; they in turn may foresee resistance on the part of clients, or difficulties with various elements of the overwhelmingly male-dominated construction industry. Women themselves may fear conservative and gender-biased reactions from potential clients, builders, prospective employers and colleagues. They may make a rational choice not to participate in the conventional profession based on their perceptions of the nature of the work of the architect and the professional and academic culture of architecture — what Pierre Bourdieu (1990) calls its ‘habitus’.8

All of these barriers have their origins in perceptions and attitudes, and for the most part these are likely to derive from ‘image’ in the advertising sense, the accumulation of impressions from the culture — literature, education, the media, combined with the inevitably conservative influence of the ‘conventional wisdom’. Few people have direct experience of architecture as a profession, so an important factor in constructing perceptions for both the lay public and prospective practitioners are the varied discourses produced within and about the profession.

Habitus and exclusion

The institutional exclusion of women from the architectural profession in the past does not suffice to explain the continued under-representation of women in the profession now that those barriers have been removed. There are presumably still social and material impediments to women’s participation, while the ‘image’ of architecture as produced in discourse, the subject of this thesis, may well have a significant impact. The concept of habitus may also provide a fruitful area for investigation.

The notion of ‘habitus’ is a complex one, developed in particular by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a central concept within his general sociology of culture (see, for example Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu 1990; Bourdieu 1993). Bourdieu has developed the model of habitus (the italics are Bourdieu’s) to explain and explore the process of enculturation into families, life-style groups, occupations, and other collective cultural formations, whereby ‘social patterns can be produced and persist even when the people in them are unaware of their existence and [perhaps] do not want them’ (Stevens 1995, p106). Bourdieu describes the habitus as ‘acting as a system of cognitive and motivating structures’, arising out of the conditions of the material and social world, ‘a world of already realized ends ... and ... objects’ (Bourdieu 1990, p53), to produce outcomes in practice — actions, strategies, processes, products.

The habitus includes the taken-for-granted symbolic order that operates either in a society as a whole, or in a particular domain. It generates a set of perceptions, attitudes and practices which together with the accumulation of knowledge, skills and human contacts constitute the culture of the field in which it operates, and reproduces the social structure and cultural modus operandi of a profession or discipline. Bourdieu compares the cognitive and motivating structures of the habitus — in effect the

8 Of course women’s work choices are inevitably influenced by the world beyond work. Architecture as a profession has advantages and disadvantages: the well-documented pressures on women combining participation in the paid work-force with family responsibilities can be extreme in a profession which can make immoderate demands on time and commitment, while the choice of a married partnership in domestic architecture practised from a ‘home-office’, often in the company of children, can (seem to) offer the best of both worlds.
'collective personality' of a field (a 'field' for Bourdieu denotes the various arenas which constitute a society) — with the individual 'unconscious'. The ubiquity of the symbolic apparatus of the habitus is what makes those within it accept it as normal and natural — taken-for-granted.

**The habitus of architecture**

According to Bourdieu’s model, the *habitus* of architecture as a profession consists in the constellation of collectively orchestrated systems of 'structured and structuring dispositions' which generate, organise and limit practices within the profession. The possibility of action within the *habitus* of a creative practice such as architecture lies in the dialectic between the potential and skills of the individual, and the historically constituted, institutionalised matrix of 'permitted' expressive possibilities. 'The habitus — embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history — is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.' (Bourdieu 1990, p56)

In other words their inertia, or resistance to change. This may throw some light on the paradox that architecture, which over the twentieth century has presented a progressive, even at times revolutionary, image in its agenda and programs, remains so conservative in its collective culture. The profession's historical dependence on wealthy individual clients and powerful institutions, and now more significantly on the corporate world, is clearly partly responsible for this: masculine dominance of these areas of power is reflected in the self-image of the profession. Such considerations must have a direct influence on commercially driven professional and trade publications on architecture; however it is difficult to explain the socially conservative attitudes of supposedly disinterested academic and critical writers, whether male or female.

**Cultural capital in the habitus of architecture**

In 'Struggle in the Studio' Garry Stevens points out the symbolic power relations between professor and student in the architectural school, and the domination of the 'star' architect, replete with architectural cultural capital, over the discipline and the profession. He then proceeds to employ the notion of habitus to discuss the reproduction of the culture of the architect in terms of class. There is an irony here; Stevens illustrates the power of habitus to naturalise the characteristics of the field in which it operates. In spite of his careful and even self-conscious use in the paper of the generic 'she', probably as a marker of feminist consciousness, Stevens does not see the issue of gender, and does not overtly read masculinity as a characteristic aspect of the habitus of architecture (Stevens 1995).

Stevens quotes 'the AIA Committee on Education ... in 1906, “An architect is a man of culture, learning and refinement”, and the purpose of architectural education was “the breeding of gentlemen of refinement”' (here Stevens quotes Draper, as quoted in Kostof 1977, p32). For Stevens the habitus of architecture is apparently so strongly masculine that he remarks on these comments only in terms of the 'class origins of architects' (Stevens 1995, p112) and makes no mention of the gender of the 'gentleman'.

---

9 The concerns of early Modernism included affordable mass housing and issues of power and participation in built environment decision-making.

10 This was the theme of Tom Wolfe's book on the Modern Movement *From Bauhaus to Our House* (1983).

11 As a comparison, see Shannon's discussion of the gender-blindness of Schön, otherwise a sensitive and responsive teacher of design (Shannon 1995).

12 Stevens criticises researchers MacKinnon and Williamson for their reluctance to face the class implications of their findings on the factors leading to success and fame in architecture (Stevens 1995, p116), but himself seems equally unable to 'see' gender.
In his later book, *The Favored Circle*, Stevens further develops his sociological analysis of the workings of class in the production of social meanings in architecture in modern anglophone countries.

What I have to say in this book is extremely simple: there is a social basis for intellectual development. By this I mean both the development of the individual over the course of a single life, and the development of an entire arena of thought — architecture — over a period of five hundred years.

(Stevens 1998, p2)

Here again much of Stevens’s argument is based on Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. He sets out to demonstrate that ‘there is a social genesis to architectural creativity, [and that architects’] creativity owes at least as much to their social background and to the social structures within which they are embedded as to their native talent’ (p2). He examines what he calls ‘the field of architecture’ not in terms of buildings designed, constructed and interpreted, but as a profession, the people involved in it, the ‘social structures within which [they] are embedded and the discourses they participate in’ (p3).

**Symbolic power in architecture — class and/or gender?**

Stevens identifies seven themes running through Bourdieu’s work:

- Power and domination ...
- The symbolic world ... mechanisms of domination ... largely effected through ... culture [which] reproduces social structures that maintain inequality ...
- Misperception of practices ...
- Culture [as] used to reinforce the stratification system ...
- Symbolic and economic capital ...
- Practices ... understood economically ...
- Society [as] relational space

(Stevens 1998, pp46-47).

These are all implicated in the operation of gender. However, although in his introductory discussion of the scarcity of sociological work on architecture, Stevens refers to Ahrentzen and Groat’s (1992) feminist critique of the profound sexism of architectural education, and he has read Toril Moi’s “Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist Theory and Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociology Culture” (Moi 1991, cited in Stevens 1998, p233, note 24), his own ‘treatment’ of gender is extremely cursory.13 The term ‘women’ does not appear in the Index, and under ‘Gender Studies’ the reader is directed to a separate magazine-style shaded text-box, which attempts to ‘absolve’ Stevens from the necessity to address gender as an issue:

There is no doubt that women suffer particularly from [hidden forms of domination] but I do not treat women separately in this text. This book looks at the general instruments that operate at the level of class on all persons, male and female. [T]here are several ... conducting ... work on gender studies. I concede the floor to them.14

(Stevens 1998, p24).15

---

13 He makes some unconvincing attempts at non-gendered language; for example ‘To criticise a Master’s works is to assault his or her very being’ (p74).

14 However, Bourdieu himself has seen fit recently to venture into feminist territory (Bourdieu 1998), perhaps to stake a pre-emptive claim in an expanding field.

Stevens appears to see the ‘woman question’ in architecture in strictly utilitarian liberal terms, in relation to pragmatic issues of discrimination and economic inequality. However the major part of the book deals with the social, the cultural and the symbolic.

It is Bourdieu’s contention that the logic of the cultural field is such that it operates to create, legitimate and reproduce the class structure, a system of inequality. ... Prime among [the mechanisms] is the inflicting of what he calls symbolic violence, the use of symbolic power. ... Symbolic power is ... essentially misperceived ... as perfectly legitimate and perfectly natural. (Stevens 1998, pp60-61)

Stevens derides the psychologist DW MacKinnon who ‘found that all his great architects came from artistic families but affected to see no significance in this, preferring his complex psychological explanations over the simpler social one’ (Stevens 1998, p77), yet Stevens’s own indifference to the socio-cultural implications of gender is just as striking. He discusses at length the operation of symbolic power in culture and recognises that cultural capital has more to do with who one is than what one does (p80), yet fails to acknowledge the power of the ‘natural’ dominance of men and the masculine in such cultural fields as architecture.16 The boundaries of class can be, and often are, crossed. The boundary of gender is much less permeable17 and its socio-cultural markers much more fundamental and universal.

Many of Stevens’s arguments parallel mine, and I agree with his at times virulent criticisms of the profession’s continued allegiance to Romantic notions of creative genius, the frequent reduction of architecture to the purely visual18, the class-consciousness which is at the base of much of architecture’s cultural capital, the continued capacity of so-called dissident movements in architecture to ally themselves ‘after the revolution’ once more with the dominant class, and in particular the deterministic arrogance of the ‘heroes of the Modern movement’ (p95). ‘As Spiro Kostof notes, none of the heroes had any intention of actually consulting the people.’ (p96) However, his manifest contempt for the architectural profession, and what he calls its ‘essential autocratism’ (p111)19, presumably an effect of the particular circumstances in the divided architectural academic situation at Sydney University which he describes in his first chapter20 (‘My Puzzled Career’21, pp4-5), leads to him to set up a man of straw in the ‘great man syndrome’ of architecture (‘[in architecture ... architects compete for status as great creators’ (p75)). His book is sub-titled The Social Foundations of Architectural Distinction, but he apparently shares the

---

16 Stevens provides a visual image of the masculinity of the profession in his graphic representation of the ‘relations between major architects and others’, chains and networks of masters, colleagues and pupils (p157). The numbers in each group are represented by faces — all male faces.

17 I know of no transsexual architects.

18 ‘[D]rawings of buildings are at least as important as the objects they depict. An unexecuted project has virtually the same symbolic force as an actualised building, and so the drawings of those in the avant-garde are valued as much as the built products. Indeed, ... drawings are more distant from the vulgar realities of the functional.’ (p97)

19 ‘Intelligence, in any absolute sense, is not a major factor in the production of distinguished architecture. Arrogance coupled with a sense of competition and a pleasure in the fashionable and exotic, are much more important.’ (Balfour 1987, p2, quoted in Stevens 1998, p188)

20 The Department of Architecture, Planning and Allied Arts (DAPAA) is separate from the Department of Architectural and Design Science (DADS), in which he taught, leading to strange divisions such as those between construction (DADS) and structures (DAPAA), or between building design and environmental sciences. Stevens’s dislike of the ‘other side’ of this design / science divide is reflected in his reference to ‘the everyday discord among the design staff’.

21 Ironically this would appear to be a reference to Miles Franklin’s autobiographical novel My Brilliant Career, a book written by a woman frustrated by the operations of gender in her own professional life.
assumptions about architectural distinction of those he attacks, and is preoccupied with the notion of genius; he extrapolates from the 'stars' to the profession in general, ignoring the many architects and teachers of architecture who engage with issues such as client participation, socio-cultural and historical context, and environmental sustainability, and whose professional responsibility leads them to produce beautiful and sound buildings on time and on budget. This is unfortunate, and weakens his argument, given that his project is to produce a sociological analysis of the field of architecture (‘both a battlefield and a field of force’ (p75)).

History of a gentleman’s profession

In The Image of the Architect Saint points out that in seventeenth and early eighteenth century Britain, architects ‘tended to belong to one of two classes’.

There were the talented amateurs[,] gentlemen with architectural proclivities, whether literary or mathematical, ... and there were the craftsmen, generally masons or carpenters by background, who had amassed a reputation for design: ... The latter class ... were the profession proper, whose expertise was essential to the amateurs ... they were also superior surveyors, builders, measurers, house agents, carpenters, masons, suppliers of materials and so on.

(Saint 1983, p57)

Women were precluded both directly and indirectly from all participation in architecture; generally confined to the domestic realm, they were excluded by law or custom from trade guilds and the public service, and by social norms, deprivation of education and/or the laws of inheritance from the possibility of architectural dilettantism whether in the context of the civil service, the church, or the monument-building of the gentry. Over the next century specialisation led to ‘the master craftsmen [becoming] master builders and the amateurs professional architects’ (Saint 1983, p57). Many of the amateurs came out of family traditions in the crafts and building trades, and much of the work of the architect consisted in tasks now generally carried out by other professions or trades in the building or real estate sectors. Naturally architects strove to distinguish their profession from these ‘peripheral’ activities, and their quest for professional standards established the tradition of the independent scholarly gentleman-designer, ‘heir to the values of Alberti and Wren’. An alternative route was to become an architect-developer in the mould of John Nash and the brothers Adam (p58).

The social, economic and legal structures of the time effectively precluded women from any of these means of entry to the profession until the end of the nineteenth century. The first woman member of the American Institute of Architects, Louise Blanchard Bethune, was granted admission in 1888 (Berkeley 1989, pxv). In Britain, Ethel Mary Charles became the first woman member of the RIBA in 1898 (Conway and Roensisch 1994, p13). University courses in architecture were inaugurated towards the end of the century; the first women to graduate in architecture from MIT were, in 1890, Sophia Hayden and, in 1894, Marion Mahony (later Marion Mahony Griffin) (Weirick 1988, p49). I outline aspects of the history of women in Australian architecture later in this chapter.

---

22 The text-box entitled ‘Architects Design to Please Themselves’ gives as examples two stories of leaking roofs. The culprits? Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright.

23 Saint does not find it necessary to specify that these amateurs were men, but of course they were (his examples are Wren, Vanbrugh and Burlington). Their capacity to design and construct buildings arose from their positions of patrician, political, economic, social or ecclesiastical influence. ‘The amateurs shaped only a small fraction of what was built: churches and public works, where dignity of appearance or symbolic requirement called for a level of scholarship hard to find among building tradesmen.’ (Saint 1983, p57)
A man's profession — taken for granted

That architecture has been in the past a totally masculine enterprise is neither a novel idea nor a surprising one. In The Image of the Architect Saint explores a diversity of architectural personae — Hero and Genius, Professional, Businessman, Gentleman, Entrepreneur — all culturally gendered in the masculine (Saint 1983). For Saint, writing in the mid 1980s, the masculinity of the architect is not merely a historical fact, it is an unexamined given; nowhere in The Image of the Architect does he mention the absence of women.

A 1980 survey by sociologist Judith Blau is reported by Niels Prak in Architects. The Noted and the Ignored. Blau presented a list of fifty names (architects, designers, planners) to 420 New York architects, asking which they knew of and whether they liked the contribution to modern architecture of those they knew. According to the table presenting the results of the survey, the woman who rated highest was Rae Eames (not in fact an architect), at number 14. She is listed in combination with her husband Charles; they were renowned for their collaborative work not in architecture but in interior and furniture design, in particular chair design. (Prak c1984, p89) The only woman listed without a male partner is also not an architect: Jane Jacobs is ‘rated’ number 31, above Robert Venturi, who is listed at number 34 — with no mention of his collaborator (and wife) Denise Scott Brown. Perhaps because she is not an architect (‘one of us’), perhaps because of her role as ‘conscience’ of the modern movement, although her name was known to almost half of the respondents, Jacobs achieved a low ‘like : know’ ratio (‘like their contribution to modern architecture’ relative to ‘know their names’), exceeding only eleven of the designers listed.24 Among the almost six hundred architects listed in Contemporary Architects, edited by Muriel Emanuel (c1994), only 15 are women.

The architect in fictional discourse

The Architect is a useful fictional character. A twentieth century Mr Darcy could very likely have been an architect. The fictional (mythic) Architect combines virility with sensitivity, social acceptability with hidden — and possibly dangerous — depths, the mystique of the artist, but with a respectable income. In the Punch May 1987 Architecture Special which acknowledged the centenary of Le Corbusier’s birth25, Roy Hattersley observes ironically

I have always thought of the distinction between architects and builders as similar to the difference between Gentlemen and Players. Architects are romantic. Irene Forsyth [sic26] could never have fallen in love with a builder.

(Hattersley 1987)

Ayn Rand’s novel The Fountainhead provides probably the most well-known fictional representation of an architect.27 Rand possibly intended her character to represent The Architect as the archetypal figure of the Romantic creator. In The Image of the Architect Saint describes the ‘runaway success’ of The Fountainhead as ‘not hard to understand, for it deals in heroism: more precisely, with the single-minded life-struggle

---

24 A reflection of the politico-architectural orientation of the times, these eleven included Minoru Yamasaki, Robert Venturi, Bruce Goff, Edward Stone, and Albert Speer, who came in at number 50, with an approval rate of 4 out of 420. Not surprisingly, Le Corbusier achieved a recognition (‘know’) rate of 100% and a ‘like : know’ ratio of 0.95 (Prak c1984, p89).

25 The issue was ‘respectfully dedicated to HRH The Prince of Wales’ (p5).

26 He refers to John Galsworthy’s novel sequence The Forsyte Saga (1906-1928).

27 Andy Pressman titled his recent book on ‘the politics of architect-client relations’ The Fountainheadache (Pressman c1995).
of a young architect of genius' (Saint 1983, p1). Here we have the stereotypical characterisation of the Romantic male hero — single-mindedness, heroism and genius. For Rand such a scenario represents a virile masculine archetype necessary to her fictional purposes, while the masculinity of the architect — of all architects — is also taken for granted, so never remarked, by Saint.28

Masculinity requires its foil, the feminine. Saint's description of the role of the heroine in the story of The Fountainhead is instructive. '[At] her father's country estate [Dominique] ... encounters Roark who ... is working incognito in the ... family quarry nearby. Stirred by the silent virility of this unknown workman, she invites him to repair a fireplace in her bedroom where he proceeds, in an act condoned by the author, to rape her.' (Saint 1983, p4) There is perhaps a warning for feminist critics in the story. 'She writes violent denunciations of his buildings in her [newspaper] column and then presents herself for his use at nights; words hardly pass between them.' (p4)

Why have there been no great women architects?

In 1994 Linda Nochlin wrote her influential article 'Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?' (Nochlin 1994). The same question can be asked of architecture. Any attempt at a recuperative or compensatory history of women and architecture finds few unknown women architects, although it is generally true that even those unusual women who have made their name in the profession during their lifetime disappear almost entirely from the received history after their death. The now most famous example of this is the American Julia Morgan (1872-1957), architect to the eccentric tycoon William Randolph Hearst. Morgan studied engineering at Berkeley from 1890, the third woman to do so (Boutelle 1988, p23), and in 1898 became the first woman admitted to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (Boutelle 1988, p20).

Apart from her commissions for Hearst, Morgan designed about seven hundred buildings in the course of a career that spanned forty-seven years, and was 'the most successful woman architect in the history of the profession' (Hines 1995), but has effectively disappeared from history. Her style was eclectic, and she did not participate in the modernist 'revolution'. She was overtaken by the modernist turn to theory and iconoclasm; her 'theory' was practice, at which she excelled, running a complex business including overseas commissions. It is interesting to speculate whether she would have been quite so comprehensively forgotten if she had not been a woman. The first substantial book dedicated to her work was published in 1988 (Boutelle 1988).

Women have been historically excluded from the profession of architecture. The role of architect, as distinguishable from master-builder or mason or carpenter, arose during the Renaissance in Italy, where architecture was generally just one of the services expected of the artist / artisan by his powerful, noble or ecclesiastical patron. No place for women here, even as painters, whose work generally demands far fewer resources than does that of architects (see Greer 1979; Parker and Pollock 1981; Nochlin 1994). Nochlin describes the 'romantic, elitist, individual-glorifying, and monograph-producing substructure' which then constructed 'the myth of the Great Artist — subject of a hundred monographs, unique, godlike — bearing within his person since birth a mysterious essence ... Genius or Talent ...' (Nochlin 1994, p98).

---

28 The possibility of ironic intent in Saint's account is denied by the rest of his book, which explores images of the architect of unremitting maleness (the Architect as ... Hero and Genius, Gentleman, Professional, Businessman, Entrepreneur ...).
The invisible woman

In architecture the almost total textual invisibility of women extends beyond the fact of their historical absence from the profession, their continuing under-representation in it, or their relative rarity as clients recorded in the histories of architecture. They are not only absent as protagonists in the mainstream history of architecture. Whether as individual subjects or as a group they are almost entirely invisible in most mainstream texts in any capacity, even among the presumed inhabitants of built environments. The work of architecture as constituted discursively in the West neglects, occludes or excludes consideration of women, and addresses implicitly or explicitly the concerns, experiences and dreams of (middle-class? white? heterosexual?) men. Women have appeared, if at all, as peripheral and marginal figures, or as chroniclers and interpreters of the architecture of men.

Women writers on architectural theory have become more visible since the advent of postmodernism and the increasing openness of cultural theory to otherness and diversity. I discuss overtly feminist work on architectural theory in Chapter 4. However, mainstream architectural theory (‘Theory’) since the 1980s, in spite — or perhaps because — of its roots in French post-structuralism and postmodernism, still demonstrates little acknowledgment of the importance of gender as a cultural construct, or of the power of feminist theory as a tool for thought. The situation at the end of the twentieth century can be represented by two large recent retrospective anthologies published at the end of the century, covering the period of the ‘turn to theory’.

Among the 51 republished articles in Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture. An Anthology of Architectural Theory Since 1968 (Nesbitt 1996) the editor, Kate Nesbitt, included only three by women writers, Diana Agrest (once with Mario Gandelsonas) and Diane Ghirardo, but only one addresses gender. Chapter 13, ‘Feminism, Gender and the Problem of the Body’, includes Diana Agrest’s 1998 Assemblage article, ‘Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex’ (Agrest 1996c); unsurprisingly the other two articles in the chapter, by Bernard Tschumi and Peter Eisenman, do not deal with gender or feminist theory.

Architecture Theory Since 1968 (Hays 2000a) is arranged chronologically rather than thematically. Of the 59 contributions only 6 were written by women, and only two make significant reference to gender, although all the women are known as feminist theorists (Diana Agrest, Jennifer Bloomer, Beatriz Colomina, Catherine Ingraham, Mary McLeod, Denise Scott Brown), and Mark Wigley is one of the contributors (see Chapter 1 of this thesis). The 1988 articles of Colomina (Colomina 2000) and Ingraham (Ingraham 2000) both deal with Le Corbusier, as writer, polemific and publicist; ironically, Ingraham’s article deals with Le Corbusier’s opposition of “the orthogonal state of mind” to “the Pack-donkey’s Way” (pp645-646) in The City of Tomorrow which I discuss in Chapter 6, but employs a postmodernist discursive strategy without feminist nuance.

McLeod’s 1989 Assemblage article (McLeod 2000), a critique of the de-politicisation of postmodernism, deals obliquely with gender and patriarchy and the silencing in recent architectural theoretical debates of the voices of ‘women, blacks, and other minorities [sic]’ (p695): ‘by precluding issues of gender, race, ecology, and poverty, postmodernism and deconstructivism have also forsaken the development of a more vital and sustained heterogeneity’ (p697). Jennifer Bloomer’s 1992 Assemblage article (Bloomer 2000) is a characteristically abstruse and solipsistic treatment of the metaphorical duality structure / ornament and its resonances with the cultural positioning of femininity as ‘alterity to the dominant’ (p763). Hays’s introduction presents the text almost as a manifesto for ‘l’architecture feminine ... following the model of l’écriture feminine’, ‘an architecture that enunciates, against phallocentric thought, the sexual embodiment of woman as a general model of signification’ (Hays
2000b, p.258). By implication, as the only overtly feminist text in the collection, this piece is to stand for all feminist theory.

So mainstream architectural discourse continues to maintain the alterity of the feminine, and feminist writing in architecture remains marginal. In Chapter 4 I explore specifically feminist theoretical work on women, the built environment and architecture, and the metaphoric and political issue of gender.

**Invisible women architects**

Prak’s *The Noted and the Ignored* presents a cultural analysis of one aspect of the architectural *habitus*, the ‘social support-system which creates and maintains an architectural elite’ (Prak 1984, p.1), the distinctions between the ‘stars’ of architecture and their less distinguished colleagues, and the reciprocal relationships between the work of well-known architects and that of their unknown colleagues. The theme of his book is the gulf between those practitioners who achieve fame and those who do not, in a profession in which ‘many are called, few are chosen’ (Prak 1984, p.1). In spite of his recognition that ‘[o]f the huge number of buildings built every year, only a few attain a worldwide reputation, and even fewer are finally canonised in architectural history’ (p.1), Prak does not address the issue of gender as a major vector of differential ‘success’. His language implies that he assumes all architects are male. ‘It is not only the architect who sees his design as a work of art. His client often takes the same view, and expects him to present it as such, in attractive drawings, renderings and models.’ (p.90)

The effective invisibility of a woman as architect can be seen starkly in Prak’s discussion of Robert Venturi’s architectural philosophy. Referring to what he calls Venturi’s ‘requirement that architecture should use conventions and be “ordinary”’, Prak quotes the transcript of part of an interview with ‘Denise Scott Brown (Mrs Venturi)’ (Prak 1984, p.203).29 Denise Scott Brown is apparently a transparent medium for the transmission of what are viewed as her partner’s ideas, with no acknowledgment of her having had any part in their formulation. I discuss ‘Mrs Venturi’’s account (Scott Brown 1989) of the experience of being the wife/partner of an architectural ‘star’ in Chapter 4.

Marion Mahony (‘Griffin, Marion Mahony’) is the only woman in the list of ‘Architects in the Index of Fame and Their Rank’ compiled by Roxanne Kuter Williamson from citations in major books on architecture (Williamson 1991, pp.26-27). Seven women appear in the index to her book *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame*.30 Williamson is aware of the absence of women: ‘[Mahony] is one of the very few women in American architectural history to be mentioned in text-books (though never as often as her husband).’ (p.46) ‘[W]ith the help of his wife’s astonishing ability as a renderer [sic: the effect of such a description is to diminish Mahony’s skills and contribution], Griffin won the international competition for a plan for the city of Canberra.’ (p.47) ‘It was surprising to find that Edward Larabee Barnes and Julia Morgan were mentioned so rarely in surveys.’ (p.14) ‘[I]t was through [Maybeck] that Julia Morgan made the spectacular contact that resulted in her major Hearst commissions.’ (p.73) However, although the focus of her book is the

---

29 Prak’s gender-blekered view is not only evident in the almost total invisibility of women in his narrative, or the absence of gender among the socio-cultural and professional issues he discusses, but in the hint of his world view given in the dedication at the front of the book itself: ‘For the people who made this book possible’ — a teacher, two theorists, two students (all men), and his wife, who ‘cheered me on from the sidelines’ (Prak c.1984, p.7). (The interview was originally published in Cook and Klotz’s *Conversations with Architects* (Cook 1973).

30 Catherine Bauer, Anna Hicks, Maya Lin Ying (designer of the Washington Vietnam Memorial), Marion Mahony, Elizabeth Mock, Julia Morgan, Denise Scott Brown and Anne Griswold Tyng; Rae Eames is (probably) subsumed in Gray and Eames.
constellations of factors which appear to be implicated in the achievement of fame (career links and family/social connections, prestigious architecture schools attended, apprenticeships, role models, architectural ‘dynasties’, self-promotion and ‘fame-makers’), Williamson does not mention gender in her analysis. She can explain without comment that ‘marriage to a woman from a prosperous and socially placed well-placed family is a frequent occurrence in the lives of famous architects’ (p152).31

**Invisible inhabitants and clients**

Women are not only absent from the rolls of the profession; they appear only infrequently even in the role of client. Even the inhabitants of buildings are generally assumed to be male, whether as generic users or as individual clients. As inhabitants of the constructed environment, women are invisible, or they are paradoxically assumed for generic practical *design* purposes to be identical to men.32 Le Corbusier claimed that he would ‘do a house for everybody, or, if you prefer, the apartment of any gentleman who would like to be comfortable in beautiful surroundings’ (Le Corbusier 1971, p231), combining neatly a double blindness, to class and to gender. (I examine Le Corbusier’s writing in detail in Chapter 6.) Discussing the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Peter Blake refers to ‘clients’ wives’, and trivialises their attitudes and contribution to the design process (Blake 1960).

I read Boyd’s drawing in *The Australian Ugliness* of ‘Vitruvian man’, based on Leonardo’s geometically circumscribed male figure, but provided with a neat suit and hat, as a commentary on blandness, featureless, and intellectual and architectural apathy (Boyd 1960), rather than on gender. Given the stereotype of suburbia as the domain of women, I originally found it surprising that Boyd chose a male figure, and that critics found this unremarkable. Hamann however suggests that with ‘his softened countenance and lack of upper body muscle’ ‘Vitruvian Austral man’ may be read as ‘feminised in 1960s terms, perhaps [with] the intention of unsettling ‘comfortable’ assumptions about Australian male virility, and he sees it as ‘clearly a jibe’ at the aggressive masculinity of Le Corbusier’s formulaic Modulor Man (2002, pp3-4). However it did not occur to Boyd to replace, or to complement, *homo suburbanus* with a female figure. Is this extreme gender blindness, or a conscious subversion of the stereotype?

In *The Failure of Modern Architecture* Brent Brolin discusses the movement towards public participation in the built environment (Brolin 1976). Brolin’s progressive attitudes to class and cultural/ethnic difference is exemplary, and in fact he is not blind to the existence of women, but his language infers that they are implicitly marginal to his generic discussion. In discussing tenant participation in public housing, Brolin elides the significant, even paramount, contribution of women to urban activism, and the greater proportion of women among public housing tenants. ‘In using the tenant’s participation, it also makes him feel that he has more at stake and consequently he may take better care of the property.’ (Brolin 1976, p83) He discusses the impact of poor environments on family life and social cohesion in these terms:

[T]he woman, who spends much of her time in the kitchen, must be able to monitor who comes and goes from the apartment ... In many working class

---

31 Williamson at times adopts gender-inclusive language, often in strangely inappropriate contexts ('the promising young architect, who would later produce works featured in architectural history texts, was an employee at the time the senior designer was in the process of creating his or her first really important work' (Williamson 1991, p6, my italics); '[I]f the younger member ... can imagine himself or herself in the same role, a generative spark passes from the master to the apprentice' (p228, my italics)).

32 Ergonomics now provides data on differences in physical dimensions. However its beginnings were in military environments, and depended on averages taken from male military and convict populations.
families, the woman is more in charge of running the household than the man. ... Yet to try to express this symbolically, by subordinating all other space of the apartment to the kitchen for example, could infringe on another requirement, the respect for the man as bread-winner and titular head of the family.

(Brolin 1976)

For the social and architectural historian Alice Friedman,

The persistence of a naturalized social history [and criticism] of architecture which proposes that typical forms are an inevitable, logical response to natural conditions and preexisting structures, has obscured the role that architecture — as representation and as convention — plays in the cultural system. ... [t]he representation (or, more accurately the marginalization) of women in the established order has come to appear inevitable. Images of women as essentially recessive, nurturing, and domestic or as complicit, masquerading objects of narcissism and desire persist unchallenged.

(Friedman 1992, p43)

Friedman has examined the roles of an unexpectedly large number of exceptional women clients in the development of ideas about domestic space (Friedman 1992), in particular in the production of some iconic houses of the Modern Movement (Friedman 1996; Friedman 1998) (see Chapter 4). However her texts are unusual — and very recent. It is a characteristic of the mainstream discourse of architecture that not only is the presence of women ignored, but the very absence of women from the accounts of buildings is itself unremarked, itself invisible.

The uses of ‘the feminine’

Actual women are generally absent, but ‘woman’ and ‘the feminine’ find a place in architectural texts as metaphorical foil to the masculine. Masculinity in the texts of architecture is often defined in terms of distance / difference from and opposition / hostility to the ‘feminine’. In fact ‘Woman’ as mythological being, and ‘the feminine’ and ‘the female’ as necessary ontological categories, bear a fundamental epistemological burden in western thought in general and in architectural discourse in particular. ‘Woman’ may also be conscripted as muse to the male, with the doubtful legitimation of classical mythology, although this is more immediately, and visibly, evident in the pictorial arts (see Pollock 1988). More frequently in architectural histories she may be defined as helpmeet, in the office, or at home. ‘The feminine’, seen as symbol or metaphor, has a wider brief. Given the implicit assumption in conventional western texts that the human being — the civilised (western) human — is masculine, the ‘otherness’ of the ‘feminine’, its opposition to the masculine, is also appropriated as surrogate or symbol for nature (often effectively personified as Nature and given the pronoun ‘she’), and/or the primitive, or even the ‘oriental’. I discuss some of the forms these tropes take in Chapters 6 to 8.

33 In Greek mythology the nine muses were the daughters of Mnemosyne (Goddess of Memory) and Zeus, and were trained in music as handmaidens to Apollo. (In accordance with the cultural mores of the day there was a muse for Poetry, for History, for Music, for Dance, for Astronomy ... but there was no muse for painting, sculpture or architecture.) In their intercourse with the Gods they produced stories — and sons.

34 Walter Burley Griffin’s wife Marion Mahony, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s wife Margaret Macdonald are classic examples.

35 In Chapter 7 I discuss the attitude of some critics to Le Corbusier’s wife Yvonne Gallis.
Modernism, postmodernism and architecture

There have been many fundamental shifts in the ways architecture has been conceptualised in the past centuries; in particular the revolutions or pendulum shifts in attitudes since the mid nineteenth century. Until the twentieth century western architectural discourse reflected generic social assumptions based on conventional distinctions of class, sex/gender and ethnic-national provenance. Architecture was an exclusive institution, assumed to be concerned with the production of monuments of the civic public realm. The building styles of other cultures, viewed either as alien curiosities outside the purview of high architecture, or as a source of styles and motifs for the rejuvenation of the well-springs of creativity. Those who were excluded from civic life, by class or sex or race, had no place in the discourse, and their exclusion was considered too ‘normal’ to be remarked upon.

Modernism

The advent of modernism saw the beginning of a revolutionary shift in the forms and agendas of architecture; rejection of the styles of the past and the classical principles of type, form, proportion and detail, in favour of a preoccupation with technology, housing and urban form. The Modern Movement was predicated on what the ‘Brutalist’ Modernist Peter Smithson ‘perceived as an historical given: the fundamental and irrevocable differences between the twentieth century and all other ages’ (Johnson and Lewis 1996, p97). However, in spite of the real faith of early modernist architects in the redemptive potential of art, and their commitment to the power of architecture to enrich the lives of the masses, the architecture remained the preserve of an élite, the core of its aesthetic in many ways based in hostility to contemporary popular mass culture. And this élite remained a freemasonry not only of class but of gender. Those who formulated the dreams and dicta of architectural modernism, in spite of their professed commitment to Progress, industrialisation, urban renewal and housing for the people, were heirs to the earlier narratives and well-established discursive habits, which not only reflected the almost total absence of women from the practice of architecture, but mirrored the conservative political economy of the sex/gender system of the time.

I argue in this thesis that in architecture, the ‘revolutionary energy’ with which modernism had earlier presented its ‘challenge’ to the status quo did not in any way contest the naturalised and institutionalised patriarchal nature of architecture. To judge from their writings, the issues of gender being raised by feminism in the early years of the century were invisible to the ‘revolutionaries’ of modernism, of whom Le Corbusier is a paradigmatic example. However politically progressive the early

---

36 ‘Gender’ is the cultural definition of behaviour defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time. The current use of the term ‘gender’ to stand for both biological sex and culturally constructed gender has the unfortunate effect of confusing the difference. The use of the term ‘sex-gender’ coined by the feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1975) is an attempt to avoid this.

37 Ironically, but not surprisingly, Johnson’s text is itself an example of the ‘disappearing’ of women from the texts of architecture. Discussing the ideological differences which led to CIAM holding its last meeting at Otterlo in 1959, he says, ‘Some of the sharpest battles at CIAM were between a group led by Alison and Peter Smithson, who continued to reject all historical architectural forms in their search for new ones, and a group of Italians ... who were trying to integrate new structures into old urban situations.’ (my italics) Although Alison and Peter Smithson worked as a team, she disappears from the narrative and Johnson later states that ‘Peter Smithson took a moral stand ...’ (Johnson 1996, p98).

38 I use the capital initial letter as a reference to the aggrandisement of the concept of Progress common in many Modernist texts. Le Corbusier himself used capital letters in this way — another example is ‘Architecture or Revolution’.

39 Challenges for instance to earlier divine or providential narratives of human destiny, replacing them with more secular but no less universal narratives or ‘metanarratives’ (Lytard c1984).
modernist architects were — or declared themselves to be — in terms of class consciousness and technological advancement, and however imaginatively they attempted to formulate technical, spatial and aesthetic responses to the conflicting demands of urban renewal and social change (‘architecture as a means of cultural uplift for the masses’ (Johnson and Lewis 1996, p97)), the women’s movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the very public upheavals in the perceptions and roles of women, especially after the First World War, even the struggles of the suffrage movement throughout Europe, appear to have made little if any impression. (See Conrads 1970 for an anthology of the programs and manifestoes which record these attempts to come to terms with the Modern Age.)

Postmodernism

Postmodernism in its turn has overturned the utopian ideology and the ascetic aesthetic of Modernism. This has extended to nearly every form of artistic expression and area of cultural practice, in particular to the visual arts, architecture and literature. Its proposal of ‘hybridity’, difference and regionality replaces Modernism’s claims for an architectural ‘universal’. The challenge posed by postmodernism to the practices and theories of modernism has been strongest in those areas in which Modernism itself had been most clearly and visibly defined; architecture is paradigmatic in this regard.

Central to the influential claims on behalf of postmodernism articulated by writers such as ... Charles Jencks [on architecture] ... was a sense that the challenge or revolutionary energy of earlier forms of modernism had hardened over the twentieth century into conventional artistic procedures and respectable institutional forms.

(Payne 1997, p428)

A postmodernist discourse of architecture adopts a position of suspicion towards meta-narratives (Lytotard’s ‘grands récits’ (Lytotard c1984)), and dissolves distinctions, attempting to collapse the antithesis between élite / high art and popular / mass culture. Postmodernism in architecture has been read in various ways: as a response to popular resistance to High Modernism, a change of style in response to the demands of capital for obsolescence to promote profit, an aesthetic shift promoted by the cultural avant garde, or a response to the perceived failure of the avant-gardes to subvert the cultural high modernism. The dismantling of meta-narratives can provide the opportunity for alternative positions and meanings to be enunciated. ‘Discursive practices offer a number of subject positions from which it is possible for a specific individual to write, to think or to direct their gaze.’ (Young 1988, p182)

Standard twentieth century texts on architecture

The masculine tenor of general architectural texts varies in degree and in kind. In relatively theory-free chronicles of buildings and architects the chief symptoms are the implicit or explicit assumption that the inhabitants of buildings and cities are male, and the absence of women as practitioners. Women in partnership and/or marriage with a man are very much more likely to be acknowledged than lone female practitioners, while some influential women clients may be mentioned. In books with an interpretive and/or polemic agenda, not only are the ideas and work of women frequently absent, but masculine assumptions and biases underlie the analysis and interpretation of architectural programs and projects. Extreme cases employ overtly gendered metaphorical and symbolic language. It is interesting that although many of the texts discussed below are explicitly engaged in an exploration of social, ideological and philosophical ideas — in fact in revolutions — none refers to feminism, by any measure an important twentieth century phenomenon.
Criticism of the gendered language, and the absence of women, especially in early texts on architecture, is often countered with the arguments that one should not judge the past by the standards of the present, that in normal usage 'he' includes 'she', and that there are few women active in architecture to be mentioned. However the gender blindness of writers on architecture often extends beyond linguistic usage, and the absence of women in the texts extends to the apparent invisibility of women in the world, not merely in the built environment professions. Furthermore, in more recent texts, the masculine / masculinist assumptions and imagery from earlier texts are frequently quoted uncritically; writers either do not notice the gendered nature of earlier texts, or share their implicit bias.

In *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1960, originally published as *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* in 1936) Nikolaus Pevsner compares Schiller’s ideas about creativity in terms of the artist as ‘high priest’ and as ‘king’ (p21), with the later Arts and Crafts ideal of the artist as craftsman in ‘brotherhood’ (p22): all exclude women. He quotes Morris’s definition of art (Morris 1915, p147) as “‘the expression by man of his pleasure in labour’” (Pevsner 1960, p23). The masculine viewpoint is also implicit in his quotation from Sullivan’s polemic against ornamentation: “‘it would be greatly for our aesthetic good if [we produced] buildings well formed and comely in the nude’” [Sullivan 1947, p187] (Pevsner 1960, p28).

According to Pevsner, ‘We owe it to [William Morris] that an ordinary man’s [sic] dwelling-house has once more become a worthy object of the architect’s thought’ (Pevsner 1960, p22-23). In the ordinary man’s dwelling-house there is however a woman — but not unusually she is defined by her conventional role: Pevsner discusses Alfred Lichtwark’s lectures in England at the end of the nineteenth century, in which he proposed the proto-Modernist idea of *Sachlichkeit*, calling for ‘practical, unadorned furniture convenient to housewives’ (p33). Pevsner does acknowledge the collaboration with Charles Rennie Mackintosh of his wife Margaret Macdonald and her sister Frances (‘Mrs’) McNair in interior design, in particular of tearooms (p166) — a decorous line of work for a genteel woman. However even these projects are generally referred to elsewhere in the book as ‘Mackintosh’s’ (for instance p174, p175).

Sigfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture* was first published in 1941. Modernism was still a living movement, and for Giedion, a historian in the lineage of Burckhardt and Wolfflin, the history of architecture is a dramatic and heroic, even agonistic, story of men of ‘courage and energy’ (Giedion 1967, p5) engaged in the organisation of forms in space, and the manipulation of structure and technology. A believer in the *zeitgeist* (pp5-6), he sees technology as potentially giving ‘expression to desires which lay slumbering in the subconscious of ... architecture’ (pxxxix); however ‘original creation [comes] out of a universal point of view’ (p7). This universality for Giedion is an implicitly masculine universality, which relates to ‘the formation of the man of today’ (pix): ‘the artist shows that an inner affinity exists between the expressions of primeval man and contemporary man’ (px).

Le Corbusier is a central figure in Giedion’s exploration of the nature of architecture. Giedion weaves a heroic story from both his successes and failures. For Giedion, the blame for the failure of a corbusian project, such as the Harvard Center for Visual Arts (p559-563), lies not in the architect but in inadequate clients, either those who gave Le Corbusier an inadequate brief or insufficient architectural liberty, or those who impeded

---

40 Taking into account the attitudes of the past does not require that such texts not be examined; they constitute the history of the discourse, and many have been and remain influential.

41 Pevsner has a developing consciousness of issues of class, with his appeals to ‘the common man’, but this is not matched by his awareness of issues of either gender or race: he asks ‘Would Gauguin have ... started a new life amongst the savages of Pacific islands ...?’ (p73)
the commissions going to him at all (pp564-567). 'Clients are unable to recognize instinctively those who carry the germs of the future and are thus able to solve new problems[,] because their judgment often remains generations behind.' (p563) 'The tragic note that sounded throughout the life of Le Corbusier was the note of obstruction. He was a man who bore a message and cried it aloud only to be pushed aside again and again.' (p563) This theme was later to be taken up by Charles Jencks (Jencks 1973a).

There are only three women in Giedion's story: one a patron of artists, Hélène de Mandrot, one the painter Berthe Morisot, one the architect Jane Drew. Giedion was secretary of CIAM during its entire existence (1928-1956), but he makes no mention of either Alison or Peter Smithson, although they were among the Team X group who were instrumental in CIAM's demise. Both Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew are mentioned as collaborators with Le Corbusier, but Giedion does not mention Charlotte Perriand, who worked with Le Corbusier, or Lilly Reich, who worked with Mies van der Rohe. Not only is Eileen Gray absent from the text, but Giedion 'confiscates' her house at Cap St Martin: Le Corbusier's imposition of a mural in her house is described thus: 'he painted only on the walls of a few of his friends' houses ..., such as the Badovici house' (Giedion 1967, p581).

It is sometimes claimed that the reason women architects find no place in texts on the history of architecture is that they and their work are not sufficiently important. Richards's An Introduction to Modern Architecture, first published in 1953, provides a list of architects: 'the architects who helped [Modern architecture] to become [established] should be named' (p85). Of the 51 names, fewer than half are well known; but all are men except 'the Syrkus's [sic]' . One of 'the Syrkus's' is Helena Syrkus, who worked with her husband Symon in Poland; hers is the only female name in the Index. Richards discusses Mackintosh's work without Margaret Macdonald, Maxwell Fry's without Jane Drew, Charles Eames's without Ray Eames. We find in the text an assumption of the masculinity not only of the Architect, but of the public of architecture ('the man in the street' (p10, p11). Richards uses the language of early Modernism: 'the simple but noble engineer's architecture' of a Telford warehouse (p128+1); 'Wright is ... a solitary figure ... spreading his gospel of an 'organic' architecture' (p93). Although Richards appears to have incipient doubts about Modernist planning (for example, 'The brilliant achievement of the modern architects of Brazil ... have largely been individual ones, in which social planning has played but little part' (p157)), these doubts do not extend to the invisibility of the concerns of women.

The Europe of Reyner Banham's Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (first published in 1960) is an almost entirely male universe. It is a feisty and argumentative book, and tackles many of the icons of the International Style, but Banham is blind to the gendered nature of the revolutionary movements of twentieth century architecture. He devotes three chapters and many quotations to the Futurists, the most overtly male of movements; but their call to masculinity evokes no comment from him. He recounts Futurism's extremist macho agenda (for instance, 'We will hymn the man at the steering wheel, whose ideal axis passes through the centre of the earth' (Banham 1967, p103)). Identifying a 'curious streak of Puritanism' in the Futurists, he ascribes their opposition to 'Femme-Beauté idéal et fatale', luxury, adultery, incest, the sense of sin as subjects for literature (p122) to 'an anti-romantic attitude to woman [sic]' (p122). According to Banham, 'equality of the sexes is urged, the Suffragettes are

42 Heidi Weber, patron of Le Corbusier's posthumous Pavilion in Zurich, appears in the Index but strangely, not in the text. There are more Index entries for architectural elements 'used by Le Corbusier', such as ramps and terraces, than for women. Giedion's concerns are with form and space, generally in the public realm, traditionally not the place for women.

43 See Chapter 6.
encouraged by the Futurists, because giving the vote to women would ‘destabilise comfortable liberal parliamentarism’ (p103).

With the aid of many quotations Banham discusses in detail the intricacies of the reciprocal relationships and influences, and the debates and battles, between the various movements which made up early Modernism. He brings a sceptical, even scathing attitude to many aspects of the International Style, such as its claimed rationalist efficiency, and what he sees as the symbolic impoverishment of Functionalism (p320). He is not convinced by Le Corbusier’s Towards a New Architecture (‘It enabled men ... to find ... justifications for their most ingrained prejudices’ (p246)). However, his critiques never address his protagonists’ shared masculist perspectives — for him as for Le Corbusier, to talk of ‘men’ is natural. He is critical of the Futurists’ ‘idea of the engineer as a form of noble savage’, which he also ascribes to Loos and Le Corbusier (p123), but his scepticism is gender-blind: ‘In Vers une Architecture Le Corbusier wrote an extraordinary eulogy of engineers as “healthy and virile, active and useful ...” as if they were the uncorrupted aborigines of an imaginary land’ (p123, n13). However, discussing ‘the Berlin school’, he does identify (without comment) one of the major reasons for the male domination of the architecture, the male freemasonry of the profession: ‘Men changed their attitudes but not their friends’ (p269).

At times vestiges of ‘the feminine’ do appear in Banham’s text, and in the texts he quotes, but they tend to be metaphorical or allusive — and often negative; Banham represents them without comment. He quotes the Futurists’ Technical Manifesto: ‘We COMBAT ... 4. The nude in painting, just as tiresome and depressing as adultery’ (p108). He also quotes, as I do in Chapter 6, Le Corbusier’s analogy for zoning industrial uses away from residential (‘the servants’ stairs do not go through the drawing-room — even if the maid is charming’): for Banham this means only that ‘the circulation planning ... is generous’ (p253). No actual woman’s name appears in the Index, although the Princesse de Polignac is referred to as a ‘munificent’ client (Banham 1967, p216). Furthermore Banham attributes the ownership of the Le Corbusier house ‘Les Terrasses’ at Garches to a ‘Charles de Monzie’ (p257), while according to Tim Benton ‘[t]he villa ‘Les Terrasses’ was built for Madame Gabrielle de Monzie, the estranged wife of the politician Anatole de Monzie’ (Benton 1987, p60).

Things had not changed significantly by 1965. Collins’s Changing Ideas in Modern Architecture, ‘is intended to be a history of thoughts about architecture’ (Collins 1965, p16). Collins’s aim is to provide ideas to assist an architect to develop a ‘theory of architecture, which can only be studied in philosophical and ethical terms ... [so] the type of history he [sic] needs is ... a philosophical history of architecture’ (p16). Only five women’s names appear in the Index: three are nineteenth century Gothic novelists (a further three referred to in the text do not appear in the Index), one is Simone de Beauvoir. The other is Jane Jacobs; however the ‘ideas’ with which Collins is concerned are philosophical, aesthetic, formal and technical, so for him Jacobs’s criticism of Modernism deals with ‘problems which fall more within the domain of sociology and city planning than of architectural history’ (p235). Norberg-Schulz’s Meaning in Western Architecture, first published in English in 1975, has similar aims. ‘Architecture ought to be understood / in terms of meaningful (symbolic) forms. / As such it is part of a history of existential meanings. / Today man feels an urgent need / for a reconquest of architecture / as a concrete phenomenon.’ (Norberg-Schulz 1986,
The only woman architect mentioned in the text is Alison Smithson (Allison in the Index); Queen Victoria is the only other mortal woman.\(^{46}\)

In *Modern Movements in Architecture*, Charles Jencks characteristically deals with the history of architecture in the first seven decades of the century in terms of traditions and categories, trends and interweaving influences. The visibility of women has marginally improved: Jane Jacobs's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* is acknowledged as a 'seminal book on urbanism' (Jencks 1973b, p355); Franca Helg is acknowledged with Franco Albini, however only in a photograph caption, and her name does not appear in the Index; Alison and Peter Smithson ('the Smithsons') are extensively discussed, as architects and polemists, while 'the Eames' [sic] are mentioned as a couple.\(^{47}\) However neither Margaret Macdonald nor Denise Scott-Brown is mentioned; the Index entry for 'Mrs Robert Venturi' adds '(mother of R.V.)'\(^{48}\).

Lady Chatterly and Marilyn Munroe receive flippant mentions; Jencks's characteristic misogynist tone was to develop further in later texts (see Chapter 7). Surprisingly for a book written in the 1970s the city-dweller (in Los Angeles) is assumed male: 'he was inevitably a traveller in space and time ... It made less and less sense to speak of a man living where his house happened to be located' (p331).

Tafuri and Dal Co's *Modern Architecture* is an exhaustively detailed and erudite book, in the rather over-formal language that is natural to Italian and difficult to transform into relaxed English. Their aim is to deal with the great questions about the relationships between architectural language and the human experience during a time of technological and social change. It is a clearly masculine world evoked by the text: various myths are given voice, but the effect is gentlemanly: Mies 'the impenetrable sphinx' (p151); Le Corbusier, who '[i]n the peregrinations of Zarathustra ... recognized his own solitary voyage through the labyrinth of the real' (p146); Frank Lloyd Wright, for whom '[g]eometry and technology had to be sublimated in supreme testimonies to the victory of the act that manipulates them' (p352). The authors adopt at times a sort of a deferential scepticism to deal with the myths of the protagonists of Modernism, in particular in their later years (see p352), and they generally avoid quoting its protagonists in their own words, instead proposing their own interpretation and analysis, often in abstract terms of form and symbolism, so also avoiding some of the more absurd masculist statements with which early twentieth century texts were often laden.

However by comparison with the other texts I have discussed the authors are punctilious in acknowledging those women who do have a place in their story. They are interested in what they see as 'Copernican' revolutions in the languages of architecture and its relationship with the collective realm (Tafuri and Dal Co 1979, p9), and such an aim, it is not surprising that few women architects appear in the text, but those who are treated with appropriate seriousness, and where in partnership with a man are not assumed of lesser interest, even when being criticised. 'More even [sic] than the diligent mannerism of Marion Mahony, it was chiefly in Griffin's work that the Prairie School found its own goal.' (p81) Le Corbusier 'left the entire realization of the new city to Jane Drew, E. Maxwell Fry, and Pierre Jeanneret' (p351).\(^{49}\) They acknowledge

\(^{46}\) The other female names in the Index are Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Hera, Juno and Minerva and the Delphic oracle Pythia. Joseph Paxton's (nameless) little daughter figures in a story of the genesis of Paxton's lightweight iron-framed glazed structures (p178).

\(^{47}\) Strangely the entry in the Index is 'Eames, Charles and Ray (or Kay)': it is unlikely that there would be confusion as to a man's name; however, the entry for the writer Camilla Gray is similar: 'Gray(or Grey), Camilla'.

\(^{48}\) The publication of *Learning from Las Vegas* was almost contemporary with Jencks's book.

\(^{49}\) Perhaps the authors aim to exempt Le Corbusier from criticisms of the rigidity of the planning of the city in the shadow of the great monumental governmental buildings which occupied Le Corbusier's mind for over a decade.
'the creativity around the architects Alison (b. 1928) and Peter (b. 1923) Smithson' (Tafuri p371).

In Modern Architecture Since 1900, Curtis proposes to handle 'the problem of origins ... through ... tracing the way inherited strands of thought came together in various individual minds' and presenting 'the range of personal approaches and ideological persuasions at work' (Curtis 1982, p11) Following the conventional wisdom, for Curtis the task is a heroic one, and such things are apparently almost entirely men's work.51 'One is struck by the confidence of men like Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe that they had, so to say, unearthed the central abstract values of the medium of architecture itself.' (p19) 'This period [the 1920s] has understandably been called the 'heroic age' of modern architecture. During it Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, Gerrit Rietveld ... created a series of master-works.' (Curtis p11) Curtis accepts without comment that the beneficiaries of the new architecture were also men: 'time and again we shall hear the rallying cry that a new modern man is emerging, whose character an avant-garde is best able to intuit' (p21).

Curtis takes a conservative position in defence of what could be called 'archaic modernism', with its preoccupations with order, the essential and the monumental — in particular in his response to the various strands of Postmodernism, which he characterises as 'eclectic candy-floss' (p379), 'chic cynicism' (p383), and 'intellectual noise ... [which did not penetrate] anywhere near the sources of inventive power which had led Le Corbusier, Wright, Aalto, Kahn and the rest' (Curtis p377). He dismisses classicism of modernist urban planning with the same simplifications of which he accuses its critics (p382), and dismisses alternatives to La Ville Contemporaine as 'sentimental revivalism' and collagism (p382). He describes the work of Louis Kahn as having 'the quality of a beacon towards timeless architectural values in an era otherwise beset with the extremes of meaningless formal gymnastics or arid functionalism' (Curtis 1982, p312); 'Kahn believed that any architectural problem had an 'essential' meaning which far transcended a mere functional diagram' (p313). Curtis agrees: in relation to Kahn's Richards Medical Laboratories, 'one has to accept that a work which does not function properly may be architecture of a high order' (p312)

Kenneth Frampton's Modern Architecture: A Critical History brings an intelligent irony and critical edge to his subject. 'With bombastic rhetoric, Italian Futurism announced its iconoclastic principles to the complacent bourgeoisie of the Belle Epoque.' (Frampton 1980, p84) Frampton's response to Buckminster Fuller's masculine approach to architecture is: 'The rugged reductive ethic of the pioneering individualist is evident from [Fuller's] doggerel chorus ...

Roam home to a Dome
Where Georgian and Gothic once stood
Now chemical bonds alone guard our blondes
And even the plumbing looks good.'

(Frampton 1980, p239)

It is obvious who sees the blondes as 'our'. But it is difficult to object to such gentle sexism.

---

50 Alison Smithson is given an Index listing of her own parallel with her partner Peter Smithson, although as is usual 'the Smithsons' are generally in the text treated as a sort of collective noun.
51 Few women receive a mention. Jane Drew, Jane Jacobs, Alison Smithson and Denise Scott-Brown appear in the book, Margaret Macdonald and Ray Eames do not. Although unusually Walter Burley Griffin is mentioned as part of the Prairie School and in a short section on Australia, unsurprisingly Marion Mahony is absent.
There are echoes of feminist critiques in Frampton’s critical stance on what he calls ‘the tragedy of Chandigarh’ (p231), and on urban sprawl and the alienation of outer suburbia (p342). However what principally distinguishes Frampton’s book from the others I have discussed is the large number of women referred to in the text and listed in the Index. Of these, twenty-seven women practise or practised as architects, designers, artists or writers on architecture, and three were female patrons/clients. (Only six of the practitioner women do/did not work in collaboration with a man also mentioned in the book; most are married to their professional partners.)

Some writers since the 1970s have responded to feminist criticisms of the gendered nature of ‘ordinary’ language; some attempt to include ‘or she’ and ‘and women’ with more or less consistency. In Towards a Humane Architecture, an incisive critique of Modernism, Bruce Allsopp demonstrates a sensitivity to differences between people at different ages and stages of life (Allsopp 1974, p57), and there is evidence of some influence of the contemporary demand for gender-inclusive language. Discussing the fundamentals of humane design he refers to clients as ‘men, women and children’ (p57). In the same chapter, ‘[b]y being an architect a man or woman does not cease to be an average typical person. ... He [sic] is normally an ordinary person serving a community of ordinary people, ... few [are the] men and women of genius who are capable of contributing to the evolution of architecture’ (p59). Elsewhere throughout the book the conventional usage prevails, and Allsopp uses the linguistic generics ‘he’ and ‘man’ to refer to the architect, the architecture student (p68) and the client, even the domestic client (p79).

At times Allsopp’s use of ‘man’ is appropriate to the historical context, although he makes no comment on the exclusion of women (and slaves and barbarians) from Greek citizenship, and the text slips unremarked from ‘individual’ to ‘human being’ to ‘man’ to ‘person’.

[The] sense the Greeks had of the individual as a human being and the clear distinction [between] man and the gods ... was an important factor in their own greatness as a civilisation. ... Renaissance humanism, while it idealised man at the conceptual level, had scant respect for him as a person. Compassion played no part in it.

(Allsopp 1974, p69)

52 Due to Frampton’s organisation of the Index, in which only initials are given, it is impossible to identify the sex of the listed people from their names alone.

53 Gae Aulenti, Eileen Gray, Zaha Hadid, Laurinda Spear (from Arquitectonica), Maria Reitta Norri, the Director of the Finnish Architectural Museum, and the landscape designer Gertrude Jeckyll. Leni Riefenstahl is also mentioned.

54 I discuss specific questions relating to the gendered language of individual writers in Chapters 6 and 8. However, some general notes on more ‘trivial’ aspects of gendered language are relevant here. The assumed masculinity of most of the protagonists represented in architectural texts cannot be justified simply by the fact that most architects have been men; clients and others, the generic person assumed to inhabit buildings, are also almost universally referred to as ‘he’ and ‘him’. Nor can it be explained as an example of the generic use of ‘he’ and ‘man’ to signify everyone, assuming apparently innocently, as in grammar since the seventeenth century, that ‘man embraces woman’. In fact the durability of the pretentious formulation ‘man’ is perhaps a sign of the blindness to gender of mainstream architectural texts; it appears to persist long after expectations of style, linguistic fashion and ‘political correctness’ in relation to non-sexist inclusive language have made the practice archaic in the literature of most other fields (Lawrence 1982). It is striking how often even progressive critics, who would otherwise appear to be responding in part to feminist and other social critiques, are or remain captive of the conventional language of ‘he’, ‘man’, and even ‘Man’. Echoes of the epic linguistic style so characteristic of Modernist writing remain in many more recent texts; for instance the common use of the singular ‘the Architect’ (requiring the use of the singular pronoun — ‘naturally’ ‘he’).
In the Chapter titled 'The Architect and His Ego’, he declares that

We should look back into history not to see how to do things but to see the
things architecture can do ... and we should look at the stimuli of the present,
and above all the needs of modern man, to see what else needs to be achieved.
(Allsopp 1974, p74)

A quotation from Ruskin does not appear out of place in the text (p75); little appears to
have changed in terms of linguistic gender awareness in the intervening century.

Postmodernism, feminism and architecture

In the past three decades post-structuralist, deconstructivist and postmodernist modes
of critique have colonised architectural theory and practice in the West. Postmodernist
theory has opened the field of architectural writing to the recognition and celebration of
cultural difference and the transgression of canonic discourses, challenging the
hegemony of mainstream Western discourses in many disciplines and professions.
Postmodernist critiques of the taken-for-granted in architecture, and the hegemony of
universals, in particular in modernist architecture, which have flourished since the
'death of the Modern Movement' in 1972 (see Jencks 1981), run in parallel with
feminist theorising, and resemble the tangential view brought by feminist theory to the
institutions of power.

Interpretations of postmodernism

Interpretations of postmodernism are themselves multiple, because philosophical,
ideological and strategic problems arise from its disruption of stable conventions and
its experimentation with alternative representations of the world. For some working in
art criticism and practice, the postmodernist refusal of Kantian aesthetic ‘autonomy’
and the institutional formalism of modernism permitted a return to the necessary
connections between art and the socio-political realm from which modernism had
eventually abstracted it. Still others see poststructuralism and postmodernism as
relativist (Sweetman 1999), and even nihilistic (Freeman 1991). They perceive a ‘Catch
22’ in claims for social change based on grounds of ethics or justice if ‘objective’
discourses of ethics and justice are replaced by merely subjective and contingent social
constructions. Others suggest that emancipatory postmodernism can endorse
epistemological relativism while rejecting judgmental relativism, so principled political
action is still possible (for instance Brown 1994).

However for some the visionary enthusiasm and optimism of the late 1960s and early
1970s have effectively dissipated; they see postmodernism as complicit in the forces of
commodification (for example Eagleton 1986; Jameson 1991). For them architectural
postmodernism’s early promise of a new philosophy and praxis, more inclusive of
racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and sexual difference, more sensitive to regional
‘inflections’, more responsive to ecological concerns, has largely been found illusory,
lost in ‘style’ and narcissism, and split into factions. Many architectural texts now
celebrate difference, hybridity and iconoclasm, and vernacular and regional
architectures are now seen as fruitful subjects of examination, but the gendered
character of architecture has been slower to gain attention.

What the ‘stars’ of practice, critique and Theory have in common is what McLeod
characterises as an ‘atmosphere of machismo and exclusion’ (McLeod 1996c, p22).

---

55 See above re Progress. A similar comment applies to the use of the term Theory ('with a big T') to
distinguish it from 'mere' theory. In much postmodernist writing a distinction is made between
'theory' in general, and 'Theory', a particular approach to cultural analysis which owes much to
French post-structuralism:
The grounds on which postmodernism in architecture has generally challenged ‘classical’ modernism still ignore gender as a paradigmatic vector of ‘difference’. Gender bias or gender blindness shows little change from the past, and the androcentric bias has remained effectively intact. Cottingham points to the irony of the conservatism of the ‘progressive’ avant-garde of the twentieth century from this point of view — whether modernist or postmodernist (Cottingham 1994, p133).

Postmodernism and feminism

The reciprocal interactions between postmodernism and feminism, and the debts one may owe to the other, are contested (see for instance Owen 1983; Bordo 1990; Flax 1990; Nicholson 1990; Ferguson and Wicke 1994). However, architectural theory and practice in the latter part of the twentieth century have been significantly less influenced by feminism, with its intrinsically political project, than by the challenges of postmodernism to the authoritarian style and sensibility of modernism, its claims of universality and its faith in progress, which have permitted an opening up of architecture to a diversity of styles and functions, without significantly challenging its relationship to the cultural, social and political realms within which it operates.  

Issues for the history of women in architecture

In the visual arts, literature and music, an important early move of feminist scholarship has been a sort of cultural archaeology, ‘unearthing’ the work of women in the past, and locating them in the history of their art. The project of revisioning the nature of artistic and cultural production draws much of its energy from this shifting of the centre of gravity of cultural discourse. Recuperative or compensatory history, the task of re-writing the narratives of a domain to take into account the existence, experience and contribution of women, is substantially different in architecture from the situation in other disciplines and professions.

Feminist historians of medicine can find the evidence of women’s agency and leadership in the history of healing and knowledge of the body, midwives, herbalists and wise women, and their displacement by the developing masculine institutions of the academic profession of medicine with its priestly and clerical foundations. Feminist art historians can trace, though sometimes with difficulty, the work and careers of past women artists, professional and amateur, many of whom had achieved success and even international reputation despite social pressures to marry, to mother, and to remain in the domestic sphere, and their systemic exclusion from education, artistic training, studio space, access to materials and models, membership of artistic associations, space for exhibition and official recognition. Research also frequently demonstrates their later virtual disappearance or even erasure from the record (see Petersen and Wilson 1976; Greer 1979; Parker and Pollock 1981; Parker and Pollock 1987). Feminist critics of literature find the evidence of women’s writing over centuries, though often in what have been categorised by the masculinist mainstream as minor genres, and in the case of the novel, can claim that women were in fact the inventors of the genre. A novel can be written in the drawing room or on the kitchen table, and painting can be done in poverty in a garret, but architecture needs capital and a client.

Historical research into women who have participated in the profession has also been undertaken by feminist researchers in architecture; however, unknown ‘great women architects’ will not be found. The end of the nineteenth century saw the first women architects. Few women have worked on large public commissions and the commissions granted to women architects in private practice have tended to be small, and generally

56 I discuss this issue further in Chapter 5.
domestic. So important buildings by unrecognised women architects are likely to be very few.

Women and Australian culture

The unrecognised women in Australian cultural production

To be relevant and effective, critiques of cultures and meanings must always be context-specific. With the general change in attitudes towards the complex relationships between women, culture and the public realm, the situation of women in society, in employment in general and in the architecture profession in particular now varies markedly between countries of the western tradition. Patriarchy has its cultural inflections. In Australia the ‘absence’ of women in cultural production is a double absence. The short history of ‘European’ Australia, with its ‘frontier’ history of occupation and domination of a ‘new’ land is a particularly masculine affair. Women are absent from the dominant collective narratives of the present, and effectively invisible in the records of the past; the part they play in the historical construction of notions such as ‘national identity’ is at best that of foil, or supporting role to the central characters. The issue of gender is also absent from the discourses which claim to construe Australian cultural production. Richard White’s *Inventing Australia. Images and Identity 1688–1980* provides a perceptive and exhaustive treatment of the issue of national identity. However Kay Schaffer (Schaffer 1988, p4) points out that Richard White’s list of concepts around which an Australian communal identity is fabricated (White 1981) does not include gender.

‘Australian identity’

The invisibility of women is itself invisible, even to an innovative, even radical, cultural analyst such as White. Both popular and academic texts affirm an overt masculinity as central to Australian identity, but seldom acknowledged its dependence on ascriptions of its opposite, ‘femininity’. Australian culture, both official and popular, appears to find no difficulty in reconciling claims to egalitarianism and commitment to democratic principles, with a continuing dependence on foundational masculine myths for its national identity (Hodge, Fiske et al. 1987). Australian culture is wary of overt patrician declarations of authority or demands for deference, so the declension of patriarchy in Australia is fraternal. Iconic characters in Australian architecture, as in Australian popular culture generally, are the unassuming Everyman, the larrikin, the friendly non-conformist: and these stereotypes can be found frequently in the discourses of Australian architecture. However masculinity remains dominant.

Women and the profession in Australia

History

In Australia, which followed the British nineteenth century articled pupillage system, the first woman to gain admission to an architectural institute was Beatrice May Hutton, who gained entry in 1916 into the Queensland Institute, following three years as articled pupil in an architect’s office (McKay 1988, p58). Florence Parsons Taylor’s 1907 application for admission into the Institute of Architects of New South Wales was rejected ‘on the grounds of [her] sex, and she was not finally admitted as a

---

57 In the light of stereotypes of Australian culture as egalitarian and democratic, unequal gender-based power relations persist after decades of feminist action on many fronts. For example, as pragmatic signifiers of the state of affairs, Australian women’s parliamentary representation is still low in international terms, and Australia continues to have the most gender-divided workforce in the OECD.

58 I discuss the variations of Australian masculinity in detail in Chapter 8.
Associate until ... 1920’ (p58). She proceeded to practise with distinction and great local contemporary renown; with her husband George Taylor she also founded and edited a number of influential professional and business journals serving the building industry. Her battle for acceptance had its effect. ‘Miss Emma Good ... was admitted, without any fuss, to the R.V.I.A. on the twenty-eighth day of the same month’ (in 1929) as Florence Taylor (Freeland 1971, p77).

Over the next few decades article work in an office, as training for entry into the profession, was increasingly combined with studies in technical colleges and mechanics’ institutes, offering women the opportunity to gain more objectively assessed qualifications. This marginally reduced the effect of some of the barriers to women’s entry — social opprobrium, and the reluctance of the established profession to offer places, and permitted some women to avoid the gatekeeping practices and prejudices of most of the established profession. The difficult route to professional status via ‘articles’ in an architect’s office combined with night classes was followed by a slowly increasing number of number of determined women, such as Muriel Stott, Ellison Harvie and Mary (Mollie) Turner Shaw in Victoria (see White 1975; May 1988; McKay 1988; Schoffel 1988; Willis 1996; Willis 1997; Willis 1998; Hanna 1999).

The complex, even tortuous, history of the evolution of architectural education in Australia is chronicled by Freeland in his history of the Architects Institutes (Freeland 1971, pp202-230). Freeland records a version of Florence Taylor’s unsuccessful application for admission to the NSW Institute (p77). However, in spite of having described Florence Taylor’s struggles with the Institute, listed (some) of her remarkable achievements, and having reported the State luncheon reception ‘to acclaim her as the “The Empire’s Most Remarkable Woman”’, he makes no mention in his book of the gender imbalance in architecture schools or the profession. For Freeland, ‘[t]he Taylors were possibly the most amazing couple in Australia’s history’, but ‘Florence Taylor’s husband ... was even more remarkable than his wife’ (p78).59

As architecture’s status improved, night-classes and part-time diploma courses, generally provided within engineering faculties, became full-time, and then were generally superseded by degree courses at both Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Advanced Education and Universities. The first university to offer a degree course in architecture was Sydney University in 1918, followed by Melbourne University in 1945 (Freeland 1971, p217-219). Freeland describes the social change and intellectual evolution marked by the institution of university degree courses in architecture — from the “duly qualified gentleman” [to the] “artist architect”. ‘In the 1880s the best architects were masters of the whole field of building. ... Such a man could turn his hand to engineering, surveying, constructing, and man of the trades if need be.’ (p220) ‘With the incursions of other professions ... [t]he architect’s own special skill became restricted to the artistic side of the profession.’ (p221) However,

At the same time, ... the architect’s concept of his own dignity expanded. ... Robert Haddon ... could tell students and young architects ... that each of them should be “first of all a gentleman in general education, manners and demeanour” and only secondly “a man skilled in technical knowledge and design”.

(Freeland 1971, p221)

59 Freeland also reports ‘the formidable Florence Taylor’ transcribing lectures by Wilkinson, the founding Professor of Architecture at Sydney University and publishing them in her magazine Building, ‘with the advice that readers could obtain a university course by buying the magazine instead of paying ... fees’ (Freeland 1971, p221). Taylor was an early dissident within the ranks of the profession, although her polemics were seldom feminist in orientation.
Paradoxically, given the emphasis on the 'gentleman', the shift to University-based architectural education opened a less male-gendered avenue for women to enter into the profession. However, throughout Australia the numbers of women students and graduates increased only slowly, the proportion of students generally reaching 10% by the end of the 60s.\textsuperscript{60} Surprisingly, the proportion of registered Australian architects who are women is now increasing only extremely slowly. 'In 1984, 19.5% of graduates, 23% of architectural enrolments and 7% of successful A.P.E. candidates\textsuperscript{61} were women.' (Shannon 1994, p1) However 'women remain vastly under-represented as a proportion of all registered architects in Australia. In 1990 6.45% of all registered architects in Australia were women, despite forming 30% of all graduating architects, 39% of all architecture school enrolments, and 18% of all successful A.P.E. candidates.' (Shannon 1994, p1: italics in original)\textsuperscript{62} By 2001, Australian architecture schools reported that 54% of their domestic first year enrolments were women (616 out of 1133)\textsuperscript{63}, while among domestic graduates of professional architecture courses the proportion of women had risen to 39% (208 out of 538) (extracted from individual course statistics in RAIA 2001). However in 2000 the percentage of registered architects who were women was still only 10% (Caulfield 2000).

A cultural dissonance?

The small numbers of women in the architecture profession in Australia remain a puzzling and apparently intractable phenomenon. Although the percentage of female architecture students in Australia continues to increase, the proportion of women who register as architects remains very low, and they earn on average 10% less than equivalent men (Quinlan 1995). Unlike the situation in Medicine (see AMWAC 1996), Law (see Dixon and Davies 1985)\textsuperscript{64}, and even in Engineering (see Byrne 1985), where the statistics of participation are changing rapidly, this under-representation appears to be singularly resistant to change (Barrett 1985; Cuff 1988; Olley 1990; RAIA 1991; Shannon 1993; Shannon 1994).

That the participation of women in the profession is related to culturally constructed attitudes both to women and to architecture can be inferred from the differences between the professional situations in different countries. In Scandinavia, where architecture is assumed to play a significant social role in private and community life, women make up about 20% of the profession (Lorenz 1990, p8). In the former USSR, where both medicine and architecture had low status, women out-numbered men in both professions (Sacks 1976).

Shannon proposes a number of interrelated pragmatic and experiential factors leading to this situation, concluding with the hypothesis that 'more women than men do not see

\textsuperscript{60} Adelaide University's first woman architect (Carolyn Wigg) graduated only in 1962; by 1975 9.6% of graduates and 14.3% of enrolments in Australia were women.

\textsuperscript{61} The APE is the Australian Practice Examination, the requirement for professional registration without which graduates may not legally describe themselves as architects.

\textsuperscript{62} It must be remembered that the statistics available refer only to registration. Many women work in architects' offices without themselves registering, and we have no statistics on either these or the number of female architecture graduates working in the broad church which Architecture now encompasses (urban design, landscape design, community design, heritage conservation ...); many of these women may be implicitly rejecting the institutional profession to apply their knowledge and capacities in related spheres.

\textsuperscript{63} The 'domestic' figure excludes overseas students, and the first year figure includes students who may choose to proceed to professional courses other than architecture.

\textsuperscript{64} Given the extreme level of control by men not only over the disciplines of Medicine and Law but actually over the bodies and even the lives of women until relatively recently, the entry of women into the two professions is remarkable. 'Those in the position to judge, compel, extract, question, punish, forgive, decipher, interpret, treat and cure have always been men.' (Bleier c1984, p179)
themselves during their studies, and upon graduation[,] as practising, professional architects' (Shannon 1994, p1). An important reason for this may well be that during and after their studies women graduates become aware that they are generally excluded from the socio-economic and political apparatus that determines what gets commissioned, built, published, critiqued and rewarded. The matter goes deeper than the pragmatic. Burgher discusses women’s exclusion from masculine networks, the lack of female role models, and the issue of prejudice against women on the basis of their continually re-theorised ‘natural’ incapacity (Burgher 1997). These attitudes are not merely anachronistic prejudices based on out-dated sexist stereotypes, capable of easy overturning. Architectural discourse both informs and reflects the assumptions and expectations of ‘the profession’, reflecting the perceptions, agendas and creativity of a group of people which is manifestly unrepresentative in terms not only of gender, but of class and ethnicity.

Feminist theory resists the notion of women as mere victims of masculist actions and patriarchal institutions, and emphasises the (potential) agency of women. However women must often act against the grain and within the interstices of the restrictive matrix established by patriarchy. There are patterns of expectation and recognition within the profession and the wider world which ignore, neglect — and misattribute — the work of women (see for instance Scott Brown 1989). However it is also likely that many women architects have rejected the criteria currently assumed for recognition and success in the profession, in favour of a more inclusive, participatory approach to practice (see, for instance, Matrix 1984; Franck 1989; Walker 1989; Weisman 1996). The situation in architecture differs from the history of the visual arts and literature, where many forgotten or rejected women creators and their work can be (re)discovered. However,

Women are not just outside cultural traditions. They structure the spaces that lie between the bold lines picked out by previous generations of art critics and literary critics. Now after a lengthy period of sustained effort by feminist historians and critics, we are at last learning to see the depths of these spaces. (Battersby 1989, p152)
Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse
Chapter 3

Women and the built environment: the literature

Make that arrogant A\textsuperscript{1} share the universe.

(Frye 1996, p998)

Introduction

In this Chapter I present a discussion of research on women in the built environment, and writing exploring the gendered nature of the built environment itself — the practical and socio-cultural effects on women of built environments and the built environment professions, and the operation of the institutional structures which produce them. In this overview of the literature I commence with early socio-political writings on the built environment with a ‘proto-feminist’ orientation, and proceed to the broad range of studies on the gendered effects of built environments on women. (In the following chapter I discuss feminist work on architecture. However, given the increasing concern amongst architectural practitioners and theorists with context and the wider issues of the setting of architecture, much of the work presented in Chapter 4 covers the areas of architecture and urban planning together.)

Much of this literature has its origins in political activism outside the domain of theory, and furthermore outside the sphere of the built environment professions and disciplines. The epistemological context to this thesis is inevitably given a socio-political inclination by the recognition that the combination ‘gender + built environment’ (or ‘gender + architecture’) is not value-free. So the majority of feminist writing on the built environment has understandably concentrated on the political economy, the sociology and the history of the built environment from a pragmatically defined, and generally specifically located, ‘women’s perspective’, while writing on women and architecture has generally followed a path from preoccupation with the exclusion of women from both practice and from consideration as presumed inhabitants of buildings, through recuperation of the few lost or hidden women protagonists in the profession, to a theoretical reassessment of the gendered nature of architecture as theorised, practised and taught.

However, little work has been done on built environment discourses as such. Postmodernism has found its most visible form in architecture, and the multiple discourses which map out the terrain of architecture as discipline and profession have been significantly modified by postmodernism (see, for instance, Jencks 1981). However the response in writing-about-architecture to the ‘linguistic turn’ which characterises postmodernism has been reflected more in a reconceptualisation of architecture itself as ‘language’ (Jencks 1981 is the most obvious example), than in analysis of the written texts of architecture. Until the last decade there has been little mainstream work specifically focused on the language which articulates the conceptual

---

machinery of architecture.2 ‘Talk about architecture’ has generally been taken as transparent, and there have been few mainstream attempts at ‘deconstruction’ (in a generic sense of the term) of the discursive formations which produce and articulate the domain of ‘Architecture’ and police its boundaries.

On the other hand, the academic feminist literature (represented by such journals as Hypatia, Signs, Women’s Studies Quarterly, Feminist Studies, and Australian Feminist Studies) very seldom addresses the built environment per se. The relationship between feminist theory and postmodernism is often problematic (see Owen 1983; Nicholson 1990; Ferguson and Wicke 1994), but most feminist theoreticians acknowledge the discursive construction of knowledges, of cultures, of socio-political structures — of gender itself — and so are of necessity interested in language, discourse and representation (in particular the representational power of the visual media, and especially advertising and film, and their effects on women). However feminist theorists of discourse and language tend to concentrate on history, literary criticism, sociology and politics, reflecting the usual origins of women’s studies, feminist studies and gender studies departments in Arts or Humanities faculties. Such theorists, in their attempts to understand the effects of cultural, social and political formations on women, have been pioneers in investigating in many contexts the connections between ‘words’ and ‘things’ so powerfully theorised by Foucault.3

Early writing on women and the built environment

Early utopian-socialism and feminism

The earliest writing (in the modern Western tradition) with a feminist theoretical stance to address the specific effects on women of the built environment came out of utopian socialism. The British manufacturer Robert Owen (1771-1858) and the Frenchman Charles Fourier (1772-1837), both communitarian socialists, were influential in what Dolores Hayden identifies as the ‘material feminist tradition’ in the nineteenth century. Their influence spread to the United States and inspired many secular multi-family community residential experiments, providing collective nurseries, dining rooms and kitchens. This tradition has been documented in evocative detail by Hayden (Hayden 1981a).

In 1883 the German August Bebel (1840-1913) published Woman under Socialism (Bebel 1971); the book reached the USA in translation in 1904. ‘Bebel believed that the home should foster the implementation of perfect gender equality.’ (Allen 1988, p84) He called for the construction by the state of apartment houses for workers (male and female), to be designed without individual kitchens — to remove all domestic ‘industries’ from the home — as streamlined adjuncts to the industrial workplace.

2 Given the gendered nature of architecture and its discourses, ‘mainstream’ writing about architecture almost by definition excludes feminist texts: a critique by the marginalised of their marginalisation has difficulty penetrating the boundaries.

An exception to the disregard of language among mainstream theorists may well be Adrian Forty’s Words and Buildings (Forty, 2000), not available during the writing of this thesis. Its pre-publication information promises a section on “masculine and feminine”; his contribution to Rüedi’s anthology Desiring Practices may give an indication of its content and is discussed later in this Chapter in the context of the whole anthology; but perhaps Forty’s very inclusion in this anthology excludes him from the ‘mainstream’. Thames and Hudson, the publishers of Words and Buildings, state in their publicity material, ‘[t]his original and thoughtful study provides the first thorough examination of the relationship between architecture and language as complex social practices’ (www.amazon.com).

3 Foucault’s Les Mots et les choses (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), literally ‘Words and things’, was retitled in English The Order of Things (1970), disguising the very basis of his argument about discursive formations. In Chapter 5 I discuss issues arising from appropriation of Foucault’s theories and approaches in this thesis.
Utopian novels enjoyed remarkable popularity at the end of the nineteenth century. The ideas of Bebel, Owen, Fourier, and Edward Bellamy’s socialist-utopianism (*Looking Backward, 2000-1887*, 1888) inspired Charlotte Perkins Gilman to write her own fictional evocations of overtly feminist utopias, *Moving the Mountain* (Gilman 1911), and in particular *Herland* (Gilman 1919), in which her vision of the future was defiantly separatist (Allen 1988, pp83-102).

The struggle for black emancipation in the USA was also a catalyst for other spheres of emancipatory thinking. In the last half of the nineteenth century ideas about women’s rights, women’s suffrage, the design of dwellings and cities, and the advantages of cooperative housekeeping for women, circulated in the USA. Writing by Harriet Beecher Stowe (better known popularly as an abolitionist), Melusina Fay Peirce and other distinguished feminists addressed the issues facing women in the conventional domestic setting (see Hayden 1981a).

**Early twentieth century feminist writing on the built environment**

Virginia Woolf’s awareness of the restrictions imposed on women by the built environment, and the enforced gendering of the way people are permitted to inhabit it and even to interpret it, resonates with later feminist work in addressing the utilitarian and social (‘a room of her own’ (Woolf 1929)) and the semiotic (men and women ‘do not see with same eyes’ (Woolf 1988)). Difference, in terms of both the material conditions of life and the perceptions of experience in the built environment, has been a continuing theme in feminist literature and theory.

**Jane Jacobs and the city**

Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs 1961) was a milestone in writing on the built environment, an effective and influential critique of the oversimplifications of modernist planning and design.\(^4\) Drawing on her own experiences as a mother in her New York neighbourhood, she identified the disastrous impact of abstraction and ‘the remote telescopic view’ on urban living diversity, on neighbourhoods and on the lives of their inhabitants. The book was similar in its immediate impact to the effect on environmental consciousness of Rachel Carson’s *The Silent Spring*. It became a best-seller (see Montgomery 1998), and has remained — or perhaps become again — influential to this day, especially in planning and urban design (see Knack 1998; Wilson 1998).\(^5\)

Predating the rise of ‘second-wave’ twentieth century feminism, the book does not focus on women in particular — in fact it is gender-impartial, giving emphasis to neither conventionally masculine nor stereotypically feminine activities or interests. This contrasts with the overt but unrecognised masculine bias of most writing on cities contemporary with her work. Jacobs’s open-minded gender-impartiality made women and their concerns visible, and as a critique of the ‘verities’ of the master narratives of urban planning as they applied to the destructive ‘re-development’ of inner cities, the book presaged many of the critiques which would arise out of the women’s movement, in particular from the urban activism of the 1970s and 1980s. The gender implications of Jacobs’s critique, in particular in relation to the public / private dichotomy, are specifically discussed in Rosenberg (Rosenberg 1994). As Bronwyn Hanna has pointed out, Jacobs ‘singlyed out Le Corbusier for special attention’ as the ‘mastermind of the Modern Movement’ (Hanna 1988, p34).

---

\(^4\) In the conventional language of patriarchy the book might be described as a ‘seminal work’.

\(^5\) A conference was held in Toronto in 1997 to honour Jacobs’s work (Braitman 1998; Rochon 1998).
‘Second-wave’ feminism and research into the built environment

Addressing women’s issues in the built environment in Australia

Since the advent of ‘second-wave’ feminism, activists and theorists deploying the tools of feminist analysis have found that women — as women — encounter specific practical and psycho-social disadvantage in the built environment. Researchers have examined and attempted to understand the ways in which the systems, institutions and practices involved in the design, production, operation and use of the built environment, in which architecture and urban planning participate, are often grounded in gendered, conservative and inflexible socio-cultural assumptions inimical to women and to women’s interests, and frequently dismissive of women’s experiences and particular needs and opinions. This is not to legitimize patriarchal definitions of the ‘essence’ and ‘natural role’ of women, but to accept the current reality — the generic differences between the life experiences of women and those of men, and the gendered societal expectations (their own and others’) which encircle and often circumscribe their lives.

By the 1980s in Australia issues confronting women in the built environment were being identified as requiring a multi-disciplinary approach. Alliances were being developed between people engaged in community-based political advocacy and ‘on-the-ground’ activism, professionals in public housing departments (at that time a site for socially valuable work in the social sciences), in social work and the allied professions, and academics in such fields in planning and architecture, urban studies, sociology, social planning and social work, urban and human geography, law and economics.

The National Women’s Housing Conferences

The First National [Australian] Women’s Housing Conference was held in Adelaide in 1985. The issues canvassed at the conference present a useful overview of late twentieth-century feminist and/or woman-centred concerns relating to the design and provision of housing accommodation in particular and the built environment in general. In the main, the papers presented addressed socio-political and economic questions such as co-operative housing (Brosan 1985), public housing and tenant control (Christopher and Perry 1985; Wall 1985), community management and participation in public housing (Brosan 1985; Moore 1985; Sarkissian 1985), crisis accommodation and homelessness (Rose 1985), the political economy of the housing market relating to women (Cass 1985; Hill 1985; McClelland 1985; Richards 1985; Rossiter 1985; Watson 1985a), and specific issues facing lone single women (Sinclair 1985; Spouse and Flynn 1985), single mothers (Watson 1985b), battered women (Rowan 1985), immigrant women (Seitz, Dunbar et al. 1985) and older women (Slade 1985), and children in public housing (Ozturk 1985). According to Scutt’s analysis of ‘Women, Housing and Patriarchy’, the situation for many women was in crisis (Scutt 1985). Papers were also presented exploring the relationships between the design of domestic space and behaviour (Baker 1985), and the potential for different, more ‘woman-friendly’ design of cities, suburbs and dwellings (Baum 1985; Kennedy 1985; Rubbo 1985). A Second National Women’s Housing Conference was held in Sydney in 1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The issues raised in the first conference were again examined, and others also received attention, such as general economic issues, sex discrimination in consumer lending and alternative financing measures, women’s refuges, the special needs of non-English-speaking immigrant women and women with disabilities, housing for rural and isolated women, and aboriginal housing.

There was some discussion of architectural design with specific attention to women’s needs and perceptions, their frequent economic disadvantage, and environmental
sustainability. Presentations reported from all states and territories on the impact on women's housing of the unequal distribution between men and women of domestic wealth and income, generally and within the household. A focus of the second conference were reports from state co-ordinating committees on issues such as public housing, tenancy law reform, community housing, and access to housing finance. State Housing Commissions / Trusts were the focus of research and policy formation, with the aim of facilitating a national women's housing policy. Issues affecting public housing have now been overtaken by time, as governments withdraw from the provision of affordable housing.

Since that period, collaboration between activists 'on-the-ground', researchers and public instrumentalities has declined. Government is more likely to turn to research consortia such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute for housing and urban research, 'to devise and implement new policies which reflect the new economic, demographic and cultural conditions' arising from globalisation, changes in employment, and economic and environmental constraints on urban sprawl (www.ahuri.edu.au/ahuri). Gender and specific women's issues must of course take their place among the multiplicity of factors relevant to housing and urban environments. However, researchers with a background in women's studies and feminist theory, such as Louise Johnson, Margo Huxley — and Jane Jacobs — have participated in research under its aegis. 'Dimensions of difference that are part of wider structural changes include gender, family and household type, race and ethnicity, lifestyle preferences, access to informal and community support networks and processes of social regulation.' (Gibson, Huxley et al. 1999)

Second-wave feminism, activism and critiques

Few architects participated in the National Women's Housing Conferences. And until very recently most feminist research on the effects of the built environment on the lives of women, on 'women and/in the built environment', 'women and/in planning', and even on 'women and/in architecture', has come from outside the built environment professions per se; certainly very little has been produced within the institution of architecture. In a review article in the feminist journal, Signs: Women in Culture and Society, Dolores Hayden and Gwendolyn Wright point out that '[w]omen as designers and users of environments have been the focus of more work by feminist historians and sociologists than by architects, planners, or environmental historians' (Hayden and Wright 1976, p923). However, with 'second-wave' feminism, researchers in history and sociology, and also cultural studies and of course women's studies, closest in political and pragmatic terms to women's 'life-on-the-ground', have produced an increasing volume of feminist research exploring the proposition that the built environment and the processes of its production, consumption and representation are, like all politico-cultural phenomena, profoundly gendered.

The orientation and approach of the early work, like the presentations at the National Housing Conferences, were often overtly based in an activist, or at least an instrumentalist agenda, seeking change 'on the ground', and tended to reflect its ideological background — whether marxist, socialist or liberal. Many researchers identified the built environment as one of the most significant factors in the material and social conditions of women's lives. In a multitude of domains they investigated the ways in which it interacts with women's low level of social, economic, and technological self-determination, and the resulting relative economic and cultural powerlessness and subordination (see, for example Saegert 1981; Hayden 1981b; Johnson 1989). These effects can be both direct and indirect, both pragmatic and

---

6 In the way of much work done in an activist paradigm, the papers presented at these two conferences were not published as a whole, but were distributed as photocopies 'on the day' to interested participants.
symbolic (Bernard 1981; Birch 1985; Weisman 1992). Researchers cite as important issues the evaporation of a sense of community, and the alienation and loneliness experienced by many women in suburbia (Baldock and Cass 1983; Matrix 1984); the gender inequality of access and mobility in car-dependent cities (Coutras and J 1978; White 1978; Huxley 1988; White 1988); and the inappropriateness to many women of much standard housing aimed at the conventional ‘nuclear’ family (Chabaud and Pougeyrolles 1978; Gamarnikov 1978; Birch 1985).

The city, ‘woman’s place’ and the public / private distinction

Fowler (Fowler 1984) argues that the public / private dichotomy forms a principal epistemological basis of mainstream architectural theory. Frampton distinguishes architecture from mere building in an analogous way (Frampton 1985). Architecture finds its archetypes in the cultural institutions of the agora and the polis, historically the public realm of men. Such a definition excludes all women from connection with the values represented and symbolised by architecture as an Art, reinforcing the equally socially constructed alienation of women from building seen as a practical and technological affair, and thus traditionally in the West a male domain. It also appears to have led to disdain among built environment professionals for the social and humanist concerns of architecture attuned to the needs of the users (in public housing principally women and children), and discouraged many women from participating in the institutionalised production of the built environment; a paradox in the light of ‘Woman the Home-maker’.

The conventional patriarchal distinction between the public (the domain of men) and the private / domestic (woman’s place), and the resulting expectations of the organisation of both cities and the dwellings within them — and how they are to be lived in — have had consequences which have a major impact on women. Hayden and Wright (Hayden and Wright 1976) provide a review of (chiefly US) historical and sociological work on the effects of the domestic environment on women, charting ‘changes in housing form, in industry’s approach to the domestic market, and in women’s attitudes towards their place in the home’ (p928). They also point out the scarcity of work on women’s workplaces outside ‘the home’ (p932-933). In Australia, Oakley (Oakley 1974) has described the unequal burdens of housework and childcare, while Richards and Harper (Richards and Harper 1986) report that while the men they studied regarded their home as a ‘haven’, their wives saw it as the place of ‘work’.

Many of the difficulties faced by women in gaining access to appropriate housing derive directly or indirectly from their conventional roles in the family, and the cultural restriction of women’s ‘natural’ role to the domestic sphere. The public / private distinction is not merely a symbolic matter. The power relations it legitimates can have serious material consequences. The home is now recognised as the site not only of inequality but of violence (see Gavron 1966; Pizzey 1983). The mystique of the private sphere until recently meant that in ‘a mans castle’ levels of violence to family members, which would attract a gaol sentence if inflicted in public on a stranger, had virtual immunity from the law (or at least the enforcement of the law) (see Scutt 1985). Outside the private sphere, there are intermittent calls for a curfew on women as a response to violence against them in public; the absence of calls for a curfew on men is an indication of how ingrained is the assumption that the public realm is the ‘natural’ domain of the masculine, the private that of women. In fact most male violence in public

---

7 In Chapter 5 I put this dichotomy into the context of the pivotal place such hierarchical dualisms hold in western culture.

8 Though not for instance among many indigenous African people or among the American First Nations of the Southwest and Great Plains (see Cole 1973, pp.1-27).
is inflicted on other men; women are more likely to experience violence in the private domain of the home.

Saegert (Saegert 1981) identifies the patriarchal public / private dichotomy and its translation into the definition of the ‘feminine’ domestic realm as fundamental to the realities of the oppressive character of the built environment for women (see also Reiger 1985; Harper and Richards 1986). The sociologist Elizabeth Harman sees cities as ‘shaped to keep women confined to their traditional roles in the family as wives and mothers’, and describes the CBD/suburb pattern and its radial public transport and freeways geared to the needs of male commuters, generally with access to a car but without the complications of part-time jobs, children-chauffeuring, and other household/family responsibilities (Harman 1983). Harman describes the dichotomous separation of public and private, home and work, as a ‘concrete expression’ of the intellectual dualism ‘taken for granted ... [in] the cognitive systems of western culture’. The politico-spatial dichotomy distinguishing the public from the private, with its overt gendering, mirrors the more metaphysical dyad culture / nature, manifested in the urban / rural ‘split’. Elizabeth Wilson argues that one argument for the development of garden cities in the nineteenth century was the necessity to keep women away from the city (Wilson 1991). The shadow of this argument permeates Le Corbusier’s enthusiastic descriptions of his ‘City of Tomorrow’ (Le Corbusier 1971), which I discuss in Chapter 6. In Chapter 5 I explore further the implications of the dominance in Western culture of such dualist concepts, in particular in relation to architecture.

The multi-disciplinary nature of gender / built environment research

In 1981 Signs published a compilation exploring ‘the many ways in which the fates of women and cities are intertwined’ (Stimpson, Dixler et al. 1981, pix). The contributors to the book came from a variety of disciplines including women’s studies, journalism, education, economics, sociology, planning, and architecture. Gerda Wekerle identifies the themes which were then emerging in feminist research in urban studies. She discusses in particular the conventional dichotomy between the private and the public, the feminist contention that given the restrictive effects of that dichotomy on women in the domestic realm, for them ‘the personal is political’, and the influence of marxist theoretical emphases on the means of production on analyses of housework; the mismatch between the organisation of the built environment and the needs of women, in particular in relation to changing roles in family and employment; and the issues of environmental equity in access to housing, transport and public services (Wekerle 1981, p185).

Until the advent of ‘second-wave feminism’ in the late 1960s and 1970s, with the honourable exception of Jane Jacobs’s work, the disciplines in the ‘constellation’ of urban studies were as gender-blind — or androcentric — as other disciplines. But by the late 1970s, issues relating to the women in urban environments began to receive attention (for a bibliographic survey see Diner 1979). Generally speaking, this research was carried out in such disciplines as urban sociology (Balock and Cass 1983), anthropology, geography (Johnson 1987; Johnson 1989; Johnson 1994) and planning (Hayden and Wright 1976; Hayden 1981b; Hayden 1986; Huxley 1988; Wilson 1991; Greed 1994), which have tended to reflect an overtly socio-political (often activist) and/or ethical agenda.

Feminist writing often reflects a characteristically feminist-postmodernist dissolution of boundaries not only between disciplines but between polemic, critique, academia, and art practice. For example, Rosser’s 1994 article ‘There’s No Place Like Home’ (Rosser 1994) combines a discussion of feminist political art dealing with domestic violence and the oppressive effects on women of the domestic myth, with reflection on the personal impact of Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique (Friedan 1963) and
other feminist writing. Polemic art provides a site for the public exposure of feminist social critique which accentuates the origins of feminism as a practice from the margins, and the paradox of the entry of a dissident practice and theory within the boundaries of the traditional disciplines.

By the late 1980s the issue of gender (at first generally conflated with the marked gender — the feminine) as problematic in the built environment had extended the interrogations of gender and sexuality beyond feminist theoretical examinations of 'the woman question' and the 'feminine', and had begun to interrogate of the previously unmarked gender — to call masculinity itself into question. Acceptance of the social or discursive construction of gender problematises masculinity, previously taken for granted as a natural given. In the context of the built environment 'gender', as distinct from women's issues or feminist studies, was recognised institutionally first in urban sociology and urban geography. Recently founded journals are *Gender and Society* (sociology, founded 1987) and *Gender, Place and Culture* (geography, founded 1994).

Architecture in the academy is more constrained than sociology and geography not only by its historical background, but by the profession's economic and industrial context, and the institutional demands of professional education. The Avery Index of periodicals in art, architecture, planning as yet lists no dedicated journal in the area of gender and architecture.
Chapter 4

Women, feminism, gender and architecture

[Women and politics (perhaps the two greatest threats to all doctrines)
(Jencks 1973a, p13)

Introduction

In this Chapter I review the literature on feminist research on architecture; the scope, range of genres and variety of this writing extends from the historical/(auto)biographical to the epistemological/hermeneutic, and from the pragmatic to the theoretical. The broad sweep of this literature review identifies, and provides a context for, the themes and epistemological concepts, based in generic feminist theory, which have their particular manifestations in architectural discourse. It is a basic tenet of feminism that theory be firmly based in the political economy of the everyday and the experiential. Over the past three decades, theoretical feminism has ‘deconstructed’ conventional (patriarchal) socio-political structures, institutions and systems of signification, distinguishing a constellation of concepts and tropes which structure my discussion of the ‘masculinity’ of the discourses of architecture.

I commence by discussing recuperative and ‘alternative’ research in the history of women in architecture, and studies on the experiences of women in the architectural profession and in architectural education. I refer to analogous feminist research on technology, the visual arts and aesthetics, and the professions in general, and discuss the validity and efficacy of attempts to propose a ‘feminine’ architecture, and/or feminist modes of practice. I then explore recent theoretical developments, generally arising out of feminism, which have widened the scope of the concept of gender beyond a concern with women and ‘woman’ to include the conventionally ‘unmarked’ gender term, masculinity. I conclude with an investigation of critical writing on the construction of gendered meanings in architecture in general, and in particular of recent feminist research on Le Corbusier.

Feminist research on architecture — a late arrival

Since the advent of the twentieth century women’s movement, feminist theory, whether pragmatic, political, polemic, theoretical or philosophical, has proliferated ‘in the real world’, generated by and informing feminist action on the ground, but mainstream architectural discourse has remained largely impervious. Theoretical work on gender within the discipline/profession of architecture, or indeed the built environment professions in general, has lagged far behind the development of feminist consciousness in politics, anthropology, history, philosophy and literature.

Dale Spender’s Men’s Studies Modified: The Impact of Feminism on the Academic Disciplines (Spender 1981), which may be taken as representative of the general feminist literature on the disciplines/professions, did not include architecture. Among the disciplines she does discuss are medicine, law, economics, anthropology,
philosophy, literary criticism and media studies: given its multi- and inter-disciplinary nature, architecture shares aspects in common with each of these. Had Spender commissioned an article on 'the impact of feminism on architecture' it would have had to be an exercise either in polemical agenda-setting (what should happen), or wishful thinking (what might happen). The situation is little changed at the end of the twentieth century. In terms of significant increases in the participation by women, critiques of architectural practice and theory from a feminist standpoint, manifest shifts in the agendas and practices of the profession, or even serious negative reactions / responses to feminism in the mainstream discourse, there would have been little to report.

**Histories of women architects — the UK and USA**

In spite of the continuing lack of gender awareness in the mainstream writing on architecture, since the mid 1970s feminist architects and architectural historians and critics (until very recently all women) have begun to publish. The most frequent avenue chosen by feminist researchers to date has been 'recuperative / compensatory' historical research into those women who have participated in the profession.

In the UK, the collaborative women's architectural practice Matrix, founded in the early 1980s, combined feminist activism in architecture with research into women's past roles in the profession (Matrix 1984). Walker documents more fully the entry of women into the UK profession (Walker 1986), and in a later text provides a more philosophically engaged discussion, distinguishing between women architects and 'women who are architects and feminists', and placing her historical study of women architects in the UK in the context of 'patriarchal assumptions about women's role in society' (Walker 1989). However in 1995 Conway, in her overview of the architectural profession, mentions Ethel Mary Charles, the first woman member of the RIBA (1898) (Conway and Roenisch 1994, p13), but has little to say about other women architects.

Work on women architects in the USA is more extensive, although in their *Signs* review article, Hayden and Wright needed only a couple of pages to outline the recuperative work on mainly American women architects to date (Hayden and Wright 1976, pp924-927). They mention as 'the only ... book that treats this subject' Doris Cole's *From Tipi to Skyscraper* (Cole 1973), which brought a long-term historical perspective to bear on the development of built environments throughout the world. Wright herself was at the time about to publish 'On the Fringe of the Profession: Women in American Architecture' (Wright 1977), while the collection of papers edited by Susana Torre (Torre 1977) combined histories of forgotten and hidden women in architecture with theoretical analysis and some exploration of alternatives to the masculine domination of architecture. There is now an exhaustive archive of US women architects, the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA).1

The anthology *Architecture: A Place for Women* 1989 (Berkeley 1989) was published to celebrate one hundred years of women in architecture in the USA. (Various articles from this anthology are discussed elsewhere in this chapter (Favro 1989; Franck 1989; Martin 1989; Scott Brown 1989; Tyng 1989; van Zanten 1989).) An exceptional example of historical research in its comprehensiveness is Boutelle's work on the American architect Julia Morgan (Boutelle 1977; Boutelle 1988). Morgan, architect for William Randolph Hearst's fabulous complex of buildings at San Simeon, is hardly known outside specialist circles; Boutelle's 1988 book is the result of years of dedicated work by a single 'devotee'.

---

1 Established in 1985 as a joint program of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies and the University Libraries at Virginia Tech.

(<http://scholar2.lib.vt.edu/iaawaspec/iaawaguid.htm#constructive>)
Architecture and the woman client

An interesting variation on the issue of women’s contribution to the history of architecture is provided by the work of Alice Friedman. Friedman has brought to critical attention the role of a number of exceptional women clients, asking (rhetorically) why these women have received so little attention in mainstream architectural history. In her Assemblage article ‘Architecture, Authority and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern House’ (Friedman 1992), Alice Friedman explores the history of gender relations as expressed in domestic space, in particular late sixteenth century England. In 1590 the widowed Bess, Lady Hardwick, commissioned Hardwick Hall², which ‘represents a watershed in English architecture, not only because its patron was a woman but because it radically altered the typology of the English country house’ (p50). Friedman explores ways in which developing preoccupation with the body, and concern with privacy and personal space, and authority and personal power, were mediated by control over physical experience. The English Palladian country house, of which Hardwick Hall was the earliest example, and which represented a fundamental change in both planning and stylistic terms, became an iconic English type.³

Elsewhere Friedman narrates the stories of the women clients who commissioned a number of houses now viewed as icons of the early Modern Movement, notably Mme. Stein of the Stein-de Monzie House by Le Corbusier, and Edith Farnsworth, long-suffering client of Mies van der Rohe.⁴ The complex and at times conflictual relationships between architect and woman client that Friedman documents can be interpreted in many ways. There are often conflicts between the architects’ programs and concepts and the life-style requirements of the female proprietors. At times the women appear to have been exploited, financially and/or emotionally, by the ‘great Architect’ in the interests of Architecture; at others there existed genuinely shared ideals, and their collaboration resulted in innovative approaches to domestic space. Friedman’s discussion of issues of the delineation and organisation of domestic space which arose in the sometimes travailed relations between these client-architect pairs is illuminating (Friedman 1996; Friedman 1998). In every case it is clear that the gender (sex) of the client was a significant, if unstated, factor in the architect’s conceptualisation of the building, in his attitude to his client, and in the relations between them. In effect they represent paradigmatic narratives of gender conflict which until recently have been repressed, contained in the ‘sub-conscious’ of the Modernist myth.

---

² From Robert Smythson, architect also of Longleat and Wollaton.
³ '[A]nother example of Palladian planning, Houghton Conquest ... (1616-20), was also commissioned by a woman, Mary Sidney, dowager countess of Pembroke.’ (Friedman 1992, p55)
⁴ Ironically Farnsworth was a successful doctor (fortunately, as she had to pay in fees and building costs nearly 10 times the cost of a standard speculative house of the period.) In fact the difficulty of relaxing in the house after a hard day’s work was one of her objections: ‘exhausted and drained by ... professional work’ (quotation from Farnsworth herself, in Friedman 1998, p143). ‘Despite pronouncements about freedom, Mies let it be known that the provision of a “guest bathroom” at the Farnsworth House was meant to keep visitors from “seeing Edith’s nightgown on the back of the bathroom door.” Ultimately this piece of women’s clothing, this emblem of femaleness, sexuality, and the body, had to be hidden away precisely because it served as a reminder of the very things that Mies (and mainstream architecture) wanted to forget.’ (Friedman 1998, p143: the quotation from Mies is referenced as ‘reported by Myron Goldsmith in conversation with Alice Friedman.’) In Mies’s view, it seems, Farnsworth has very little of a “private life” to conceal: as a single woman the only thing that could possibly be worth hiding was her nightgown’. (p144) Friedman herself equates femaleness — and implicitly ‘the body’ (clad in a nightgown) — with sexuality, that is a sexuality from the viewpoint of the heterosexual male gaze. Edith Farnsworth’s objections to the house could be (and were) ridiculed in the élite architectural press as bourgeois and ‘feminine’.

55
Friedman’s text poses the question why an unexpectedly large number of the most significant and original houses of the twentieth century — houses that stand out not only as examples of modern design but also for their innovative approaches to domestic space — were commissioned by female clients. Her thesis is that a women client could have the effect of destabilising the conventional patterns, and could ‘open the way for the unexpected, including experiments in design’ (Friedman 1992, p42). In ‘Not a Muse: The Client’s Role at the Rietveld Schröder House’, she points out that ‘by neglecting the role of convention and gender relations, historians not only overemphasize individual creativity, but they also perpetuate the false notion that buildings are to be valued primarily as art objects’ (Friedman 1996, p217).

**Historiography of women architects in Australia**

In Chapter 2 I presented a summary of the developing field of the history of women’s participation in the architectural profession in Australia, the UK and the USA, and of interpretations of their participation, and non-participation. Here my discussion relates to the contexts, intentions and approaches of historical research.

Before the renewal of second-wave feminism, writing on women in architecture in Australia had usually belonged to the genre of human-interest stories in women’s magazines, such as an article published in *The Australian Home Beautiful* in 1936, and reprinted in *Transition* in 1988. ‘There are several women architects in Melbourne, and the first thing which strikes one instantly about all of them is their entire freedom from any sex-consciousness or sense of competition with men. ... In fact I should say that there is probably no other profession in the world in which difference in sex is taken so little into account.’ (Cooper 1988, p44) The article proceeded to argue against the ‘misconception’ that ‘women, by some subtle feminine alchemy, make better domestic architects than men’, claiming that given the same education as men, they would be ‘successful in any field of architecture’ (p44). At the very beginning of the history of women in the professions, such confident protestations of women’s equality with men, and declarations that what is now recognised as sexism did not exist in the profession, are understandable. It was not to be foreseen that the expectations of women’s increasing participation and success in the profession would be so slow to be realised.

**Compensatory history**

From the early days of Australian ‘architectural feminism’ in the 1970s and 1980s, both feminist activists and women architects, in search of a tradition, a context and a philosophical framework for their own work, have undertaken ‘compensatory’ history (see White 1975; May 1988; McKay 1988; Schoffel 1988; Schoffel 1989; Willis 1992; Willis 1996). Most of this work was based on undergraduate or postgraduate research work, and motivated by a commitment to change.5 Bronwyn Hanna’s unpublished PhD thesis extends the field beyond the narrative and chronological to explore feminist theoretical aspects of the historiography of women in architecture with specific reference to NSW (Hanna 1999). This work follows on from Hanna’s previous essay discussing the diversity of academic feminist analyses of the relations between sex / gender / bodies and space / place / design (Hanna 1996).6

---

5 A similar commitment has led to the development of an archive of Australian women architects, under construction since 1995 by the collaborative feminist group Constructive Women in NSW; it produces an occasional newsletter, *Constructive Times, A Newsletter of the Association of Women Architects, Landscape Architects, Planners and Women in the Building Industry*.

6 Hanna identifies three main approaches: liberal humanist feminist; critical theory feminist; and postmodern feminist. Some theorists would question the ‘marriage’ of feminism and postmodernism (for example, Nicholson 1990; Ferguson 1994; Bordo 1990); others, for instance Tong (1989, 1998), would add many categories to the list. I discuss the diversity of feminism, and in particular Tong’s work, further in Chapter 5.
Willis asks: ‘[w]hat is it about mainstream architectural history that makes the inclusion of professional women so difficult?’ (Willis 1998b, p57), and ‘seeks to explore the critical question of why women have remained invisible in architectural history [by] examining the construction and concerns of architectural discourse’ (p58). She points out the paradox that ‘[g]ender analysis of the work of [individual women] architects essentially relies upon [the assumption of] ... a single designer ... and therefore adheres to the traditional [masculine] conception of success in architecture’ (p59-60).

Compensatory historical work clearly provides a necessary antidote to the apparent absence of women in the professional past, which may be an important factor in changing the ‘received wisdom’ on the nature of the profession, but from the point of view of a researcher with politically motivated epistemological interests such work lies closer to social history than to architectural theory. As Willis points out, architecture is a collaborative process, and a woman architect is likely to have worked in a team consisting mainly of men. Few architects, men or women, reach a status recognised as meriting critical appreciation as individual designer: given the undeniable visibility of buildings, it is unlikely that there are previously unrecognised distinguished women architects to be found. The commissions granted to women architects in private practice have tended to be small, and generally domestic; domestic architecture has generally been unlikely to excite critical or public attention. Many women have worked in the public service, where generally both men and women disappeared from the public stage (see for instance Luscombe and Jackson 1994), on ‘the invisible women of public architecture’. Before the 1970s in Australia only Marion Mahony (see Rubbo 1996), and perhaps Phyllis Murphy, had produced buildings which achieved critical architectural success (in both cases the contemporary credit went to their husbands), while as ‘journeywoman’ professionals, Florence Parsons Taylor, Muriel Stott, Ellison Harvie and Berenice Harris were well-known in the profession during their working lives (White 1975; Willis 1998a), but like men in the same situation, have been all but forgotten by mainstream histories of architecture.

Women architects’ brushes with fame in Australia

Probably the most famous female figure in Australia’s architectural history is Marion Mahony (Griffin) (1871-1961), whose work was for many years either ignored or subsumed into that of her husband Walter Burley Griffin (1876-1937). By 1970 Van Zanten (1966, 1970) argued for recognition of Mahony’s work as an architect, as did Brooks in 1972 (Brooks 1972), and Berkon in Susana Torr’s pioneering Women in American Architecture (Berkon 1977). Hamann addressed Mahony’s work in Australia in 1983 in a lecture at Melbourne University (Hamann 1983). In 1988 Anna Rubbo’s ‘Marion Mahony. A Portrait’ (Rubbo 1988) formed part of the catalogue publication for the Monash University Gallery exhibition ‘Walter Burley Griffin: A Re-View’ (Duncan and Gates 1988). 1988 also saw the publication of the Transition issue devoted to them both, with articles by James Weirick (1988a), Karen Burns and Michael Markham. Weirick discusses the Griffins’s achievement in particular in relation to their work on Canberra, for which, together, they ‘developed a complete design vocabulary’ (p11), and explores the effect of their radical social and political ideas on both their architecture and its reception in Australia. Burns (1988) refers to the early ‘prophet’ and ‘rebel’ images of Walter Burley Griffin, and then examines the complex and changing responses to (both) the Griffins’ work, philosophical positions and public pronouncements, from a nationalistic and conservative Australian public and architectural profession. The following issue of Transition on ‘Women and Architecture’ included an article by Weirick on ‘Marion Mahony at M.I.T.’. Weirick

---

7 As David Saunders remarks in relation to Robin Boyd’s work, ‘[h]ouses remain curiously half-remembered from a single appearance in a popular magazine or professional journal, if at all’ (Boyd 1970, p147). Glenn Murcutt’s fame is clearly an exception to his rule.
remarks on an ‘appalling record of scholarship on Marion’, replete with inaccuracies and negative interpretations, ‘demonstrating ... the precarious position of a woman isolated in a patriarchal world’ (Weirick 1988b, p49).

Mahony’s position remains precarious. 1996 saw the publication of Rubbo’s article ‘Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin: A Creative Partnership’ and of Maldre and Kruty’s Walter Burley Griffin in America. They describe Mahony’s status in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright as that of draftsman (Maldre and Kruty 1996, p18), although she was engaged in Wright’s temporary absence to ‘design entire buildings for which Wright had not left sketches’ (p26), and place Mahony in the feminine role: ‘[i]t was apparent that her work on details, decoration, and fireplaces was integrated beautifully in her husband’s work’ (p8). In 1998 Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin: America. Australia. India was published in conjunction with an exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum (Watson 1998). Anna Rubbo’s appreciation of Marion Mahony (Rubbo 1998) in the collection contrasts with Paul Sprague’s article (Sprague 1998) in which he claims that ‘she seemed unable to develop an independent style of her own’ (p32): ‘As renderer, muralist and designer of fireplaces ... and other essentially two-dimensional accoutrements, Marion was supreme’ (p36). Sprague attacks bluntly the ‘myth’ of her influence on her husband’s work which ‘threatens to continue to cast doubt on Walter Burley Griffin as originator of his mature architectural style’ (p36).

Florence Parsons Taylor, whose illustrious place in the profession and business of Australian architecture led to a jubilee celebration in her honour in the Sydney Town Hall in 1959, memorialised in a special volume (Giles 1959), then effectively disappeared from the memory of the profession, in spite of Freeland’s enthusiastic account of her qualities and achievements (and those of her husband George Taylor) in his history of the Australian Institutes of Architects (Freeland 1971).

Hanna provides a more nuanced interpretation of the situation of women in the profession in the early part of the twentieth century. Exploring in detail aspects of Florence Taylor’s career, she implicates in the hostility of the architectural establishment not only sex (gender) but sexuality, and the conservative masculine investment in masculine domination of public affairs and the ‘natural’ place of women in the private sphere. Hanna ‘argue[s] that [the rejection of the application] happened because she was a single woman whose sexuality could be constructed as a threat’ (Hanna 1999, p6). Willis points to the disappearance from chronicles of Australian architecture of both Mollie Turner Shaw (Frederick Romberg’s partner in Romberg and Shaw) and Ellison Harvie (‘whom [Arthur] Stephenson referred to as his ‘right hand’’ (Willis 1998a, p268)).

The view from the 1970s: raising the issues

Feminist critiques in architecture have followed a trajectory from a concern for gender inequalities, through historical recuperation (‘herstory’), to more sophisticated and pluralist feminist analyses, which examine the nature and effects of patriarchal and masculist concepts and stereotypes of women, ‘woman’ and ‘femininity’ (and of men, ‘Man’ and masculinity), while acknowledging and celebrating gender and other difference(s). The late 1960s and early 1970s saw the beginnings in the west of the ‘second wave’ of women’s activism and of feminist critiques of women’s situation in the world. My own article in the literary journal Meanjin (White 1975) reflected the

---

8 Writing of the influence of the Chicago School, Peisch is of the opinion that the Griffin marriage was ‘an artistic union so perfect that to distinguish or separate their careers after this date becomes impossible’ (Peisch 1964, p57).

9 The intersection of gender difference with differences based in race, ethnicity, class and sexuality produces complexities in any politico-cultural analysis.
situation in Australia. (It is included in this thesis as Appendix A.) The intersection between community and feminist activism, often literally ‘in the streets’, and the non-hierarchical participatory philosophies of many young architects claiming architecture ‘for the people’ were characteristic of the time.\textsuperscript{10}

In the article I made reference, with due acknowledgment of the socio-cultural context, to what is now theorised as ‘difference’: to women’s situation ‘closer to the realities of human existence by their traditional direct involvement at the family and neighbourhood level’ (p403), and to their endowment (at least in terms of the conventional wisdom) with ‘qualities of intuition, perception, common sense and a strong sense of social orientation’ (p403).

The article foreshadowed later concerns in current discussions of ‘women and architecture’, although with varying emphases: overt and covert discrimination, the barriers to women’s entry into and acceptance and success, and their resulting minimal numbers, in the institutionalised profession, the issue of the career / marriage choice for women, and its variant the option of the professional marriage / partnership, and the ‘disappearing’ of women from the chronicles of architecture. I pointed out that many women, ‘increasingly disenchanted with the elitist irrelevance of the conventional architectural practice’, were using their professional skills ‘on the peripheries of architecture’ (White 1975, p403).

Many of the concepts in this article are now theoretically contested. From the perspective of current feminist theory, the tensions between liberal and radical feminisms, the politico-theoretical implications of appeals to women’s difference, and the acceptance of the notion of ‘periphery’ / margin, with its implications of an unchanging centre, would all now lead to difficulties in setting out the case so simply. However, one aspect remains current. ‘The heroic myth of the gentleman architect elegantly pursuing a personal legend while producing great monuments at the behest of an admiring client, dies hard.’ (White 1975, p403) The article was diplomatically titled ‘Women and Architecture’, and sub-titled ‘A Personal Reflection’.\textsuperscript{11}

‘Room at the Top?’

Denise Scott Brown’s enlightening discussion of her experiences of discrimination and misrepresentation during her joint career with her husband Robert Venturi, ‘Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture’ (Scott Brown 1989), was also originally written, but not published, in 1975. Scott Brown’s ‘stories include social trivia as well as grand trauma’ (p237). Her experience as collaborator of a ‘star’ (‘we joined our professional lives just as fame ... hit him ... I watched as he was manufactured into an architectural guru before my eyes and, to some extent, on the basis of our joint work and the work of our firm.’ (p237)) was much more extreme than mine, however neither she nor I was prepared to publish the ‘full story’. According to Scott Brown, ‘I decided not to publish it at the time, because I judged that strong sentiments on feminism in the world of architecture would ensure my ideas a hostile reception, which could hurt my career and the prospects of my firm’ (p243).

As Scott Brown points out, ‘[w]e have no sociology of architecture’ (Scott Brown 1989, p243). She ventures a set of ‘speculative interpretations’ (p242) about why

\textsuperscript{10} A commitment to socially and environmentally responsible action in the built environment professions remains important in much feminist work in the built environment (see Kennedy, 1981; Vale, 1996; Weisman, 1996).

\textsuperscript{11} The political was at that time more safely categorised as personal, and declarations of a ‘feminist’ perspective or implicit claim to theoretical generality could be seen as hazardous, in particular to an aspiring academic in the male-dominated field of architecture.
As Scott Brown points out, ‘[w]e have no sociology of architecture’ (Scott Brown 1989, p243). She ventures a set of ‘speculative interpretations’ (p242) about why architects need to create stars, and why those stars are inevitably men. Architecture ‘deals with unmeasurables’, so the criteria for judgment are ill-defined, and in such situations ‘people steer their way by magic’, and follow the guru as ‘architectural father-figure’ (p241). She points to the authoritarian structure and class-based exclusivity of the Beaux-Arts tradition in architectural education; and ‘the strong similarities ... between the architecture profession and a man’s club’ (p241). She sees the ‘heroically original, Modern architectural revolutionary with his avant-garde technology, out to save the masses ... [as] a macho image if ever there was one’ (p242). In later comments added to the 1989 (post-postmodernism) published version of her article she sees that ‘

Architecture ... has changed since I wrote. Architects lost their social concern; the architect as macho revolutionary was succeeded by the architect as dernier cri of the art world; the cult of personality increased. This made things worse for women because, in architecture, the dernier cri is as male as the prima donna.

(Scott Brown 1989, p244).

**Women’s experiences of architecture**

Since the 1980s many have written on the specific experiences of women in architectural education, professional practice and the academy. In her comprehensive work on the practice of architecture Dana Cuff points out the social, interactive nature of the work of the architect and the architect-in-training (Cuff 1989; Cuff c1991), and its implications of unequal power and status differences based on gender, ethnicity, race and class. Bussel focuses on women’s experience of direct and institutional discrimination, and the diversity of ways such problems are being addressed (Bussel 1995). Kingsley and Glynn (Kingsley and Glynn 1992) report on surveys of the ‘perception of discrimination in the professional environment, family issues, career goals, and women’s networks’ (p14). Their surveys aimed to find whether the observed general reluctance to address the issues arose because the problems have been solved, or because the problems were intractable; they found that a significant majority of women reported discrimination by employers, colleagues, clients and contractors, while the majority of male respondents denied its existence (pp15-16), and some appeared even to fear the possibility of gender equality (p17).

‘In the face of significant shifts in the global economic and business climate, the architectural profession has increasingly been forced to confront the shape of its future.’ (Groat and Ahrentzen 1996, p166) By the late 1980s a number of writers are making connections between feminist critiques of architecture and the need for a response to what they see as architecture’s ‘current identity crisis’ (Weisman 1996, p273), or ‘theoretical cul-de-sac’ (Groat 1993a, p3). Groat discusses the possibility of an approach to architectural practice which rejects both ideological extremes, the romantic notion of the ‘architect-as-artist’ and the mercantilist view of the ‘architect-as-technician’ and service provider. Groat sees that

these two conceptual models of the practicing architect ... exert a powerful influence on the way in which the profession is inculcated in prospective students and practitioners. ... [and] have a ... profound effect on the ability of the profession to attract and nurture those who have not typically been part of the profession: women and people of color.

(Groat 1993a, p4)
Women and architectural education

In Chapter 2 I introduced Bourdieu’s concept of habitus.12 Lovell interprets habitus as the ways of doing and being which social subjects acquire during their socialization. Their habitus is not a matter of conscious learning, or of ideological imposition, but is acquired through practice ... the ability to function effectively within a given social [or professional] field, an ability which cannot necessarily be articulated as conscious knowledge: ‘knowing how’ rather than ‘knowing that’.

(Lovell 2000, p12)

The connection between the habitus of practice and that of architectural education is ambivalent. Donald Schön’s 1987 discussion of studio teaching, otherwise thoughtful and progressive, sets the scene with a description of the masterful male professor admonishing the admiring but wayward female student (Schön 1987); Schön is apparently unaware of the gendered character of his scenarios. Writing as late as in 1993 Ahrentzen and Anthony point out that in US schools, studio ‘masters — those who teach the upper level (that is prestigious) studios — are almost always misters’ (Ahrentzen and Anthony 1993). Groat characterises the situation in architectural education as ‘sex, stars and studios’ (Groat 1993b). These papers, and a later paper by Groat and Ahrentzen (Groat and Ahrentzen 1996) reporting results from extensive questionnaires and focus interviews, present a picture of gender- and race-based discrimination in architectural academia (by staff and students) which is happily inconsistent with my experience in Australian architecture schools, where I have found overt gender discrimination to be rare, sexual harassment even rarer, and many schools make sincere efforts at gender-impartiality. The gendered nature of the curriculum, however, is not so easily overcome. Few architecture courses in Australia for instance have either core or elective programs which deal in depth with gender issues; ironically such courses are much more common in the USA.

Ahrentzen and Groat propose ‘alternative visions’ to the ‘patriarchal conventions’ of current architectural education (Ahrentzen and Groat 1992). Ahrentzen and Anthony claim that ‘[t]he exclusion of the female from architectural mastery is ... a result of limiting the definition of what architecture and architectural practice is [sic]. ... Architectural gatekeepers focus their lens on the single, shining stars and not the constellations composed of planets’ (Ahrentzen and Anthony 1993, p15). Tyng discusses women’s potential for creativity beyond the conventional role of muse (Tyng 1989). Sutton is optimistic about the possibility of change — of ‘resisting the patriarchal norms of professional education’ (Sutton 1996), while Martin proposes a ‘new kind of professional’ (Martin 1989), and Vytlacil asks ‘what new possibilities and potential benefits may result from the participation of more women students and faculty in design education?’ (Vytlacil 1990, pp261-262). By the 1990s feminist critiques of the built environment had made sufficiently headway for the Journal of Architectural and Planning Research to publish an overview of the field of women’s studies and feminist critique in architecture and urban planning since late 1980s: ‘Revisiting knowledge and practice: Women’s voices in architecture and urban planning’ (Després and Piché 1992).

Though the ‘gender-inertia’ of architectural practice is not changing significantly, the numbers of female students in architecture schools reach and pass 50% in some cases, and gender, if not in the curriculum, is now firmly on the agenda of architecture schools in terms of teaching and pastoral practice. Given the self-reflective habit of most

12 Bourdieu has recently extended the concept to provide an explanation of ‘la domination masculine’ (Bourdieu, 1998).
architectural educators and their recognition of the increasingly complex nature of the wider society, and the expectations of their 'constituencies', gender takes its place amongst the related socio-pedagogical issues of inclusivity, diversity and multiculturalism, and the pressing issue of ecological sustainability. However themes such as regionalism, post-colonialism, the architectures of the (geographical) 'other', and ecological sustainability, are more likely to find a place in the curriculum than a conceptual schema which questions the institution of architecture itself, as does critique based in feminist theory.

Weisman's critique of the patriarchal character of architectural practice and education is linked to her commitment to social justice and environmental responsibility (Weisman 1996). Brenda Vale also sees a link between the gendering of architecture and the possibility of a more ecologically responsible practice in the future (Vale 1996). The 1993 articles by Groat and by Ahrentzen and Anthony are published in JAE in an issue presenting 'a collection of articles that examines [sic] gender and multiculturalism in architectural education in the nineties. ...[T]his is the first subtheme issue devoted to a deeper exploration of this complex and timely topic' (Anthony and Grant 1993, p2).

In Australia in 1990 a report on 'the male and female experience of architecture' was commissioned by the RAIA Status of Women Steering Committee, RAIA National Education Committee (Olley 1990). Journal articles on the issue have been published (for instance Veale 1994, 'Deconstructing the Boys' Club', in the RAIA journal Architecture Australia), and conference papers (Shannon 1994; Shannon 1995), and a PhD thesis produced on 'The Studio Critique in Architectural Education' analysed from a feminist perspective (Shannon 1995).

The 'female' and the 'feminine' in architecture

Dolores Hayden has been a pioneer in historical research into alternative approaches to the design and management of living environments. As well as her work on utopian communitarian settlements in the nineteenth century with much in common with a feminist perspective (Hayden c1976), she has published research on historical examples of overtly feminist designs for living environments in the USA of the nineteenth century (Hayden 1981a). She has also produced speculative work on the potential for feminist architecture and urban planning (Hayden 1981b; Hayden 1986).

In the early days of second-wave feminist consciousness-raising, a comprehensive and coherent account of a unitary and united feminist approach to architecture was considered possible. In fact some writers in the 70s and early 80s attempted to identify the characteristics of 'feminine architecture'. Margrit Kennedy, a German architect-planner, provides an representative example of the attempt to address the dilemma, and the epistemological problems that arise. In an effort to avoid essentialism, rather than proposing exclusive sex-linked categories, she identifies 'for discussion' a set of spectra of semantic differences in relation to a series of characteristics (analogous to the semantic differentials employed in sociological and psychological research). She identifies the opposite ends of each spectrum as 'male and female principles in architecture' (Kennedy 1981).[^13]

[^13]: In her essay Kennedy does not distinguish between 'male' and 'masculine', or 'female' and 'feminine'. The essay was an early contribution to the debate, and predates the now generally accepted distinction between the dyads male / masculine, female / feminine, and sex / gender, one biologically given, the other socially constructed (and even that distinction is now coming under scrutiny, with issues of gender assignment and transsexuality).
The problems of essentialism and stereotyping

Kennedy recognises that her list of gendered pairs, for instance her assimilation of curved and ‘organic’ forms with ‘the female’, and ‘unnatural’ and ‘geometrically ordered and systematically divided towns and cities’ with ‘the male’, mirrors patriarchal stereotypes and is theoretically and ideologically problematic.\(^{14}\) However she extends her difference-pairs beyond simplistic notions of shape and form to epistemological issues of design approach and the pragmatics of production, and states that ‘[t]he intention here is not to state that one approach is ‘good’ and the other is ‘bad’, but it is solely the one-sided dominance of the ‘male’ principle which is at the root of the problem.’ ‘These [principles] may be used by men and women alike. Under equal opportunities for their application ... women would tend to put more emphasis on the use of ‘female’ principles and men would tend to put more emphasis on the use of ‘male’ principles.’ (Kennedy 1981, p79)

However her implicit conflation with women of attributes that she categorises as ‘female’ undermines her attempt to avoid essentialism. Her work has been criticised by Wajcman, who acknowledges that the view that ‘male subjectivity is expressed in tall phallic towers, [while] female buildings are round, enclosing, curving and low-rise’ is not ‘the prerogative of feminists alone’ (Wajcman 1991, p121), but identifies ‘problems with the radical feminist position ... [with its] emphasis on universalized feminine and masculine traits’ and the ‘temptation to regard women as a homogeneous group’. ‘Women’s experience is very diverse, especially in terms of class’ (p124).\(^{15}\)

Recent gender theory has rejected biological definitions of sex as essentialist and offering no possibility for women’s emancipation, in favour of the social and cultural construction of gender. The terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ have now been almost universally replaced by ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in such contexts — but the epistemological and strategic issues are not thereby avoided.\(^{16}\) As feminist theory has become more sophisticated and polyvocal, more responsive to developments on cultural theory and anthropology, it has become clear that if ‘female’ is a problematic term so too, in a different way, is ‘feminine’, bearing as it does the marks of patriarchal inscription of the “other” gender. Such formulations can seen as accepting and even legitimising oppressive definitions of ‘woman’ and ‘the feminine’.

Kennedy’s paper was an early and at the time influential text, and the appeal to ‘male’ and ‘female’ as givens in terms of form, symbol and approach is still attractive (see Hein and Korsmeyer 1993). She refers to the earlier work of Cole and Torre, whose historical / anthropological account of the development of building over the centuries pointed out that ‘rather than exotic intruders in the field ... women in nearly all the early civilizations have been the original builders’ (Kennedy 1981). This remains the case in many indigenous cultures, for instance in Africa. Generally, as building becomes more highly technological it is likely to shift from the domain of women to that of men. She points out that as well as being a reflection of a society’s technological development, architecture also reflects its ‘social [and cultural] priorities’, and that building being increasingly ‘a specialized activity dominated by men and male values the result is a growing discrepancy between real social and psychological needs and the planned and built environment’ (p75).

In her critique of Kennedy’s work Wajcman points out that the characteristics of urban architecture often identified as masculine are often the result of ‘market pressure[:]

\(^{14}\) In my chapters on Le Corbusier the notion of ‘geometrical gender’ — ‘curves are feminine, straight lines are masculine’ — arises again. However the conflation of the straight line with men and ‘Man’ is explicitly Le Corbusier’s own.

\(^{15}\) I would add the term ethnicity.

\(^{16}\) Later in this chapter I discuss the issue of essentialism in relation to the development of a feminist aesthetics.
investment calculations, capital flows, global property markets and the private
ownership of land' (Wajcman 1991, p124). However, she quotes Huxley's proposition
that investments in high-rise buildings can depend on 'the perceptions of (male)
corporate directors of the prestige and power ... reflected in ... the latest high-rise, high-
tech office tower' (Huxley 1988, p41). Wajcman argues that 'the cultural association
between high-rise towers and male power is not only or primarily about their physical
shape but is also because they represent the triumph of advanced technology' (p124).

A very recent text, written by a man whose other publications deal with the newly
theorised notion of 'queer space', also takes a surprisingly literal, even simplistic,
approach to the relationship between architectural forms and culturally determined
gender roles (Betsky 1997). For Betsky, spires, towers and skyscraper are phallic
forms which echo the male body, while building interiors reflect the female body with
its internalised reproductive organs and its role in containing and nurturing life. Tracing
the evolution of Western architecture and urban design from the camps of nomadic
peoples to modern industrialised cities and suburbs, Betsky relates their design to the
culturally defined roles and activities of men and women.

Architecture: art and/or technology

Given the complex intersections between architecture ('mother of the arts'), technology
and art 17, feminist critiques of architecture share aspects of feminist critiques of these
spheres of human activity. Modernism in architecture in particular engaged with the
questions raised by the collision / collusion of art and technology brought by the
Industrial Revolution. The hierarchical distinction between art and craft is seen to
mirror the gendered dualisms which pervade Western culture; the fine arts have
generally been seen as a masculine domain, while (hand)crafts and the lesser, decorative
arts are appropriate to the feminine. Over recent centuries there has been a significant
shift in the meaning of the term 'art' from the sense of knowledge, skill and experience
(for example the 'art of medicine') to refer to the transcendent expression of individual
insight and experience, and of assumptions about artistic production from collective
meaning-making to individual accomplishment and creativity and the (gendered)
concept of the genius. The spectrum of evolved meanings co-exist, while issues of
beauty, uniqueness, collaboration, appropriation remain intractably unresolved, in
particular in the face of challenges from women, indigenous people and multi-
culturalism.

'Feminism confronts technology'

The application of feminist theory to the history and philosophy of (pure) science is
relatively recent; the study of applied science and technology even more so. As with the
history of architecture, early feminist work in science tended to emphasise biographical
work and the recuperation to history of women scientists; only later did the nature of
the project of science itself, and the character of scientific knowledge, come into
question, in particular the immediate effects on women (and nature) of the uses and
abuses of the biological and medical sciences (Harding 1986). By the 1980s science
itself was being identified as gendered (Keller 1985; Harding 1986) and inherently

Technology reflects the activities, attitudes and priorities of the people who make and
use it. Feminist researchers in technology examine not only the gendered nature of
technology itself (Faulkner and Arnold 1985; MacKenzie and Wajcman 1985; Bijker,
Hughes et al. 1987; Wajcman 1991), and the relationships between science, technology,
masculinity and dominance (Cockburn 1985; Hubbard 1993), but the masculine bias of

17 Discussion of the intersections and potential conflicts between the multiple 'faces' of architecture
is important in the readings of the texts in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
definitions of what constitutes ‘technology’ (Rothschild c1983). They see this as leading to the reluctance of women to enter conventionally male-dominated technological occupations in the developed world (Hacker 1981; Griffiths 1985; Swords-Isherwood 1985; Hacker 1989), to the continuing exclusion of women from access to technology and from influence in its priorities, in particular in the developing world (Shiva 1989), and the almost total lack of recognition of women’s contributions to technological development. ‘Women have never lived without technology. Yet we have barely a toehold in the discourse and direction of it.’ (Hynes 1991, pix) A start has been made on recuperative history which includes women as craftspeople, inventors and technologists (for example Stanley 1995). Feminist historians and theorists have also explored the impact on women’s lives of such technologies as medical — and in particular reproductive — technology (Donnison 1977; Gordon 1979; Pringle 1998), communications and digital technology (SPRU 1985; White 1994a; Hawthorn and Klein 1999).

As Cockburn has pointed out, ‘[f]rom the very early days of human civilization, ... occupations ... have come to be gendered’ (Cockburn 1985, p171, italics omitted). As part of a detailed ethnographic study of male and female workers and managers in a range of companies involved in computer-based engineering and related technologies, examining the destabilising effects of technological change, she has chronicled the way ‘men appropriate the technological sphere for masculinity’ (p175). She found that ‘although occupations themselves may have been transformed, the relations of technology continue’ (p8).

Architecture as art

‘Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?’

Linda Nochlin’s article ‘Why Have There Been no Great Women Artists?’ (Nochlin 1994) is one of the most anthologised texts in the literature of feminist interventions in art theory. Germaine Greer however claims that although it does raise ‘true questions’, the title question itself is a false one (Greer 1979, p6). Parker and Pollock point out that posed thus the question ‘can only be answered by defensive explanations’, and declare that

The most signal omission of feminist art history to date is our failure to analyse why modern art history ignores the existence of women artists, why it has become silent about them, why it has consistently dismissed as insignificant those it did acknowledge.

(Parker and Pollock 1981, p49)

Nochlin herself recognises that the addition or incorporation of women into art history ‘provid[es] a paradigm for other kinds of internal questioning’ (p94). For Nochlin the feminist critique of art history ‘is validated because it sets off long-needed reforms’, while for Parker and Pollock the situation is reversed — the reconfiguration of the discipline ‘is needed in order to arrive at a true understanding of the history of women and art’ (Parker and Pollock 1981, pp47-48, my italics).

The visual arts differ from technology and architecture in the role women have in fact been able to play. As with literature, painting and to a lesser extent sculpture can be carried out with relatively few resources and without patronage, a clientele or significant private means. So participation in some form of visual art practice, unlike architecture or civil engineering, has always been possible for women — possible, though difficult, and restricted to acceptably ‘feminine’ genres, domains and audiences. However the obstacles have always been enormous, whether actual economic and social constraints on the up-bringing, education, work and life-activities of women individually and collectively, or ‘the psychological, economic and even aesthetic reasons for the virtually
unchallenged patriarchalism of all our artistic establishments’ (Jong 1981). In The Obstacle Race Germaine Greer chronicles the effects of oppressive cultural attitudes — and women’s internalisation of them — which have confined ‘female creative power’, and points out that most evidence for that creativity is to be found in what the art establishment and popular prejudice defines as ‘the minor arts’ (Greer 1979, p7).

Petersen and Wilson’s encyclopaedic coverage of women artists from the early middle ages to the twentieth century (Petersen and Wilson 1976) commences with a discussion of the issue of representation, and calls on examples of women’s self-portraits to focus simultaneously on the exclusion of women from the institutions of mainstream art (art schools with nude models provided), the muting of women’s ‘voices’ in the history of art18, and differences between masculine and feminine ways of seeing. However, recent feminist art practice and theory have combined with broader changes in the general understanding of what constitutes ‘art’ (for instance environmental, conceptual and performance art) to shift and elide the boundaries to include practices such as ‘women’s’ crafts and autobiographical and activist work.19 However ‘equality’ of representation in the arts has yet to be achieved.

Gender, creativity and genius

Gendered social attitudes and practices, and assumptions as to appropriate gender roles, have led to the denial of women’s capacity for creative action, to the assumption that women would be ‘unsexed’ by participation in masculine activities, and to the lack of appreciation and even contempt for artistic endeavours by women (and/or the paradox of work by women being misattributed to fathers or brothers). Women were seen at best as objects of representation, as symbolic figures, or as inspirers of art by men — woman as muse. John Berger was one of the first to examine the uses masculine art makes of women (Berger 1972). This simultaneous visibility of Woman (as metaphysical or stereotypical object of representation), and invisibility of women (as individual creators) in art is discussed by Brooks (Brooks 1987).

In Gender and Genius Christine Battersby traces the history of the idea of creative genius. She shows how myths associating divinity with male (pro)creativity20 have effectively survived into our own time, to inform cultural assumptions about creativity which, while changing over time and place, are consistent in denying to women the potential for genius. Underlying the assumption that only men were capable of the transcendent power of genius was the association of the masculine with Culture itself, in opposition to women as Nature. Women participated directly and physically in the fecundity of Nature, while to men was granted the capacity for human intellectual and artistic creativity.

18 ‘[S]elf-portrait as self-identity: like diaries, one of the few ways women have [had] to leave their side of the story.’ (Petersen 1976, p1)

19 Cottingham points to the impact of the counter-culture on shifts in the perception of what constitutes art. ‘The art community in the United States was not just tangentially affected by the activist movements ... from the mid-60s into the late ’70s. [Compared with] the civil rights and Black Power movements, the anti-Vietnam War campaigns, and the emergence of Gay Rights, the Women’s Liberation Movement had the most immediate impact because, unlike the other political mobilizations, it spawned an immediate visual arts movement. ... The legacy of the Movement continues on in the work of younger (women) artists. ... But it also informs the production and reception of numerous other contemporary artists, not because they are working within an appreciation of the insights of feminism, but because they are working against them.’ (Cottingham 1994, p138)

20 For Aristotle only the male could be said to procreate: the male seed contains the formative principle that produces offspring — the woman provides only matter and the incubator in which it develops.
No women can be blamed for getting trapped by the tradition that denies women the title of ‘artist’. Historically the dialects of exclusion have been so varied and so inconsistent, that almost every move made by a woman creator will find her presented with another spurious argument that denies or misrepresents either her sexuality or her artistry.

(Battersby 1989, p46)

The contradictory gendering of genius

Battersby points out the epistemological ‘Catch 22’: ‘Rousseau declar[ed] that women lack genius because they are deficient in passion. ... [while f]or Kant women are passionate creatures; genius is a matter of reason and women lack reason’ (Battersby 1989, p78). Paradoxically, many of the characteristics associated with genius in the Romantic paradigm have little in common with the ordinary male, and in fact are those generally associated with women and feminality, such as sensitivity, intuition, emotion, passion, melancholy, even unreason. However since the eighteenth century the cultural consensus has been that these ‘female’ traits can denote genius only in a male. Masculine genius by the nineteenth century had become associated with degeneracy and insanity; but women were warned that

Nature had provided them with a physique that would punish them if they attempted to rival the males. Throughout the nineteenth century the figure of the mad woman would haunt the texts of women poets and novelists.

(Battersby 1989, p90)

Being recognised as a genius involves being perceived as a part of a tradition, yet disrupting the very traditions which provides the cultural and artistic/scientific background. The development of genius requires acknowledgment and nurturing, but given the social consensus that attributes genius only to men, women are less likely to be encouraged or assisted to develop their potential. ‘The love of fame in men is encouraged by education and opinion: to “scorn delights and live laborious days” for its sake is accounted the part of “noble minds” ...; while to women ... the desire of fame [is] itself considered daring and unfeeminine.’ (John Stuart Mill, On the Subjection of Women, quoted in Greer 1979, p12)

Impediments to ‘female genius’

However, as histories such as Greer’s and Parker’s (Parker and Pollock 1981) make clear, those ‘laborious days’ for a male artist would often be mitigated by the self-sacrificial love of a woman (or women). As daughters, sisters, lovers and wives women have often given their affections, their time, their efforts, their identities and often literally their lives (in childbirth) for the nurturance of Great Men. Such committed support has very seldom been available to women artists — nor before the twentieth century was the opportunity often given to women to develop skills, talent or possible genius, the independent life of an artist being deemed inappropriate in women.

Greer points out that almost without exception ‘women who made names for themselves as painters before the nineteenth century were related to better-known male painters, ... for a woman in whose family circle painting was not practised there was no

---

21 ‘Professional art critics and academics like to pretend that Romanticism is a disease that has been cured by the hygiene of history. Not for the 1980s the mythology of the artist as hero, creating in a state of ecstasy that often crosses the boundaries into clinical madness. Post-structuralists assure us that the author is dead, adding their voices to previous generations of Marxist critics who have undermined the authority and isolation of the lone author. But in popular culture we find the old vocabulary, and the figure of the artist as hero, as alive and well as ever.’ (Battersby 1989, p15)
possibility of training’ (Greer 1979, p12). However the possibility of the embryonic woman artist’s developing an independent artistic identity was then captive of the male relative’s attitudes to women’s social, economic — and artistic — independence. Amongst many cautionary tales Greer relates as example the story of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s artistically gifted sister Frances, who according to her contemporary Fanny Burney ‘made throughout her life the great mistake of nourishing a singularity which was her bane’ (p31).22

The cultural myths defining masculinity and femininity continue to haunt definitions of art and the artist. Their restrictive effects of women have led feminist artists and theorists in various directions. Some resort to essentialism, either as a matter of passionate commitment, or as a strategic claim of identity in terms of sexual difference. Others have chosen to claim strategic similarity with men; many early women artists denied the relevance of their sex (in the sense of ‘gender’) to their work, either because they themselves subscribed to conventional notions of female inferiority, or because they recognised that the art market did so.

A feminist aesthetics?

Feminist theorists must be conscious of epistemological dangers, and wary of the sort of simplistic essentialism which pretends to identify a specifically and exclusively ‘male’ and a ‘female’ — or even a ‘masculine’ and a ‘feminine’ — architecture in terms of aesthetics, forms and spatial relations. Apart from their questionable ground in experience and theory, such formulations are strategically dangerous. Western culture abounds in definitions, characterisations and stereotypes of women, the female, and the feminine; ‘femininity’ itself is a patriarchally inflected notion. The language of essentialist formulations, even when based ideologically in radical feminism, calls upon the familiar dualisms — hard / soft, curved / straight, exterior / interior, horizontal / vertical. Overtly aesthetic formulations of ‘women’s architecture’, even when inspired by radical feminist claims for difference, can seem to mimic or legitimate patriarchal stereotypes, which are also based on the assumption of a ‘natural’ (divinely or biologically determined, and thus inevitable) difference, but are taken to demonstrate the inferiority of the female and her rightful domination by the male. The development of a discourse of feminist aesthetics in which such issues play out is very recent (Ecker 1985; Hein 1990; French 1993; Hein and Korsmeyer 1993). ‘Hypatia 5:2 (Spring 1990) was the first philosophy journal issue in English devoted to feminist perspectives in aesthetics.’ (Korsmeyer 1993, pxv)

A feminist architecture?

There continue to be sporadic attempts to explicate a feminist architecture which extends beyond ‘feminist aesthetics’ (Erlemann 1985). Deborah Fausch explains with great clarity the dilemma that faces feminism: if defining an ‘essential’ female nature is impossible or strategically dangerous, is a feminist viewpoint only possible ‘in the contingent sense that where oppression, exploitation, objectification, or marginalization of women occurs, there a feminist position can be taken’? (Fausch 1996, p38). She acknowledges that ‘the feminine’ is a metaphor, ‘a label applied with ideological intent to certain aspects and practices of human being and action’ but declares that ‘eschewing essentialism ... deprives not only the patriarchy but feminism of an important tool to think with’ (p39).

22 Unlike her brother, though her ‘facility surpassed his’ (Greer 1979, p31), Frances was given no art training. Unmarried and therefore her brother’s dependent, she was sent away from London to the country where her gifts could not blossom, until her brother’s death and her return to London where she exhibited her work until her death.
Fausch proposes a strategic use of the term feminist, 'as a designation for stances that women may endorse as valuable, without necessarily claiming for them an essential relation to "the feminine"' (Fausch 1996, p39); a central element of her strategy would be an insistence on concern with the bodily, the material, the empirical — in contrast with Western culture's long association of vision and light with mind and intelligence. 'Philosophers have employed vision as a metaphor for thought, and light for the faculty of reason' (p40), and the Enlightenment entailed 'the separation of sight from its bodily integument' (p41). For Fausch 'an architecture that requires that it be experienced by senses other than vision ... could be claimed as strategically feminist' (p41-42).23

Proposals for a 'feminist practice' in architecture have generally been a response to the perceived neglect of women's interests in the built environment, to the lack of women in the built environment professions, and to a view of conventional architectural practice as hierarchical and elitist. What is now principally engaged with in discussions of a feminist architecture are the political implications, in particular for women and other subaltern groups, of the unacknowledged (masculine) gendered assumptions underlying both the production and the interpretation of the built environment. Many early texts were accounts of actual feminist practice in context; women activist-architects described and explained the principles informing their choice of clients and projects, their attitudes to design and practice — collaboration, participation, non-hierarchical office and architect/client relationships, based on a declared politics of inclusivity, social engagement and environmental responsibility. These accounts deal with theoretical and ideological issues in the context of lived experience in practice in a particular setting (see, for example Boys 1984; Matrix 1984; Franck 1989; Grote 1992). It is a sign of another of the versions of 'Catch 22' which bedevil feminist work in any field that these critiques-in-practice reverse yet mirror the terms of conventional patriarchal disparagement of stereotyped 'women's work'.24

The gender of knowledge

For Franck, the differences between men's and women's life experience lead to different ways of knowing; 'women's underlying relationship to the world is one of connection while men's is one of separation' (Franck 1989, p202). She identifies 'the tendency to see only division and separation' as taking 'its most extreme form in dualistic thinking, where only two categories are posited in opposition to each other' (p203), and proposes in contrast a catalogue of 'feminist ways of knowing', which emphasise connectedness, inclusiveness, complexity, acknowledgment of the value of everyday life, care for others, and acceptance of subjectivity, flexibility and change (p203). More recently, Jos Boys, a member of the Matrix co-operative, provides a critique of conventional architectural knowledge as grounded on 'masculinist'25 rationality which ignores its own positioning and believes in an ability to

---

23 Ironically, given one of the objects of scrutiny of this thesis, she proposes Le Corbusier's chapel at La Tourette, experienced primarily by sound and movement, as feminist in this way (Fausch 1996, p42).

24 There is a spectrum of ways of being an architect, the extremes of which in the western tradition can be, and frequently are, identified with the opposed limits of a presumed ontological (but demonstrably epistemological) polarity, which is customarily assimilated to the 'primal' dyad male/female (reason/emotion, culture/nature, public/private). But there is no simple match between the biological or chromosomal sex or even the socially constructed gender of an individual, and that person's architecture, whether in terms of its aesthetic or its practice, although socially constructed gender is a powerful condition of individual subjectivity, and extreme manifestations of gender stereotypes are unlikely to flourish in the 'wrong gender'. ('Boys will be boys', and until recently little in the way of intellectual creativity or technical expertise was expected of — or acknowledged in — women.)

25 See note on this term in Chapter 1.
create/interpret form' through binary associative chains purporting to 'describe[e]' society' (Boys 1996, 42). She proposes 'more appropriate forms of practice', which would disrupt this masculinist knowledge, allow form to 'have its own language', use the culturally specific and variable 'potential associational [object / space] languages' accepted as 'metaphors for aspects of social life articulated by different social groups' (p43), and would pay attention to process, regaining 'a concern with disrupting existing patterns of power and control across the whole development, design, building and regulatory process' (p44). By contrast with the universalising pretensions of mainstream architecture, '[a]rchitectural professionals need to accept, and be explicit about, the partiality of their own gaze, and the very minor importance of issues of representation compared to economic and political processes in affecting building form' (p44).

Architectural discourse in Australia and 'the woman question' 26

The first comprehensive acknowledgment of feminism in Australian architectural discourse was the Transition ‘Women and Architecture’ issue (Winter 1988). It included a reprint of an article by cultural studies practitioner Meaghan Morris (Morris 1988); a discussion of feminist urban theory by a lecturer in public policy (Huxley 1988); a number of historical pieces on women architects (and a landscape architect) including Marion Mahony; a theoretical / critical piece (van Schaik 1988) on student work by women students at Melbourne’s RMIT — which evidenced in the opinion of the editors no sense of coming 'from a position defined as that of women' — accompanied by the students' representations of their own work; a theoretical article on the differences between women's and men's ideas of the House in nineteenth century Australian fiction (Martin 1988); and a book review of Peter Adam's biography of the architect Eileen Gray (Adam 1987). In the diversity of provenance and approach of its articles it reflected the increasing diversity and adventurousness of feminist incursions into the histories and theories of the built environment.

The issue also included a feminist dissection of Peter Eisenman's House X by a researcher into the psychoanalytic study of art (Marshall 1988), and two articles examining that architectural Patriarch par excellence, Le Corbusier (Hanna 1988; White 1988). Both Bronwyn Hanna’s paper and my own on Le Corbusier dealt with the ways in which the agendas and mythologies of the Modern Movement, exemplified in exaggerated form by the buildings, writing and paintings of Le Corbusier, manifested the dominance of the masculine in Western architecture and planning. I discuss them both later in this chapter. Ironically, the Transition issue was criticised by Stanislaus Fung and others on that grounds that 'the cover could have read “Men and Architecture”' (Fung 1989, p173).

Feminist anthologies: space, architecture, gender and sexuality

Since the late 1980s feminist theoretical discourse around the built environment has extended beyond a focus on 'women's place', whether past, present or future, and gender as a discursive construct has begun to enter architectural discourse.27 It is not merely fortuitous that the most adventurous and theoretically rewarding books dealing with the broader range of theoretical work on gender, sex, sexuality to date are all anthologies. The multifarious and 'interstitial' nature of feminist investigations into the built environment continues to defy normalisation or incorporation into a 'single-

26 During the nineteenth century the issues of women's suffrage and other aspect of 'woman's role' were so described.
27 The site of the most theoretically and discursively exciting work in English is not surprisingly in the USA, where the participation of women in the higher levels of academia in the arts and the built environment is significantly better developed than in Australia and the UK.
minded' text presenting a single argument from a single perspective. They demonstrate the resistance of feminist theory to 'grand unified theories' in the diversity of the disciplinary provenance of the writing, and the diversity of political and theoretical positions it represents.

However given the multiplicity of subject matter, approach and voice collated into each volume, and the complexity of many of the individual contributions (Lavin describes a Beatriz Cololina paper as '[c]atching within [an] ensnaring net a complex combination of hitherto unmentionable issues' (Lavin 1996)), these anthologies make any logical categorisation of topics problematic, and incompatible with a simple chronological catalogue of texts. The 1990s have produced a number of such anthologies.

**Sexuality and Space**

*Sexuality and Space* (Cololina 1992a), the first in the series 'Princeton Papers on Architecture', collects papers presented at a symposium at Princeton University in 1990. The (male) Dean of the School describes the intention of the series as to 'inspect the limits of architectural discourse, uncover hidden possibilities for better understanding of architecture and architects, and to document discussions and images generally left out of the architectural mainstream' ('Preface', unnumbered page).

'The concern of this symposium was to identify ... [the] close relationships between sexuality and space hidden within everyday practices.' ('Introduction', unnumbered page) The emphasis of the book extends beyond questions of gender to explore wider issues of sexuality: 'the politics of space are always sexual' ('Introduction', unnumbered page).

The book received the International Architectural Book Award of the American Institute of Architects. However this recognition is not a reflection of general acceptance of the ideas it presents within the mainstream of American architecture; recognition of issues of gender are still rare in mainstream architectural publications.28

In her introduction Cololina points out the continuing reluctance of architectural theorists to address issues of gender and sexuality, in spite of the developing reciprocal discursive traffic between contemporary critical theory and architectural theoretical work:

> In recent years much contemporary critical theory has been appropriated by architectural theorists. At the same time, a number of leading critical theorists have focused on architecture. But in spite of the ... exchange of ideas, the issue of sexuality remains a glaring absence. ... To simply raise the question of "Sexuality and Space" is ... to displace Architecture.

(Cololina 1992a, Introduction)

And in fact 'architecture' does not appear specifically in many of the papers; notions of sexuality and space are explored in the context of photography, film and television, and in popular formulations of 'the city' and 'the body'. However Cololina continues her idiosyncratic and illuminating historical researches: in 'The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism' she explores, by examining drawings, photographs, film and text, the complex and gendered relations between interior space, the body, the viewer and the designer, in houses by Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier (Cololina 1992b); her analysis of the immanent masculine presence in the published photographs of Le Corbusier's buildings echoes Carranza's (Carranza 1994) (see below).

---

28 An exception is the chapter on 'Gender and the city' in Borden and Duster's *Architecture and the Sites of History* (Borden, 1995).
Mark Wigley’s paper, quoted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, is an early enterprise in critical reading of architectural discourse,

trac[ing] some of the relationships between the role of gender in the discourse of space and the role of space in the discourse of gender ...

[T]he complicity of the discourse [of architecture] with both the cultural subordination of the “feminine” and the specific subordination of particular “women” can be identified, often explicitly but usually by covert social mechanisms that sustain bias at odds with overt formulations. This work is necessary and overdue. But at the same time it is equally necessary to think about why it is overdue, why this discourse has been so resistant ... such that the question of “Sexuality and Space” is being asked in this way, now, here.’

(Wigley 1992, p329)

Wigley examines Alberti’s influential fifteenth century treatises — one architectural, the other socio-political — The Art of Building and Della Famiglia, and their precursor the treatises of Xenophon, to explore concepts central to feminist theoretical understandings of Western culture. He traces the distinction between the public and the private and their relation to the dichotomy male/masculine / female/feminine, the sexualised / gendered hierarchies of authority, control and in particular the disciplining of the (female) body. He explores interpretations and ideologies of architecture and its representation, and points out the only apparently paradoxical fact that the discipline of architecture domesticates building by remaining itself a woman, a woman giving pleasure ... [For Xenophon and] for Alberti, architecture is bound to natural order and is explicitly the mother of the arts. The pleasure she gives is precisely ... the repressive pleasure of the image. ...

[A]s feminist discourse has demonstrated, the political lives precisely within the socially constructed mechanisms of representation, of which vision is often the most privileged.

(Wigley 1992, pp360-362)

Wigley’s text is dense and complex, raising a constellation of questions about sexuality, representation, visuality, identity, history, discourse, resistance, and the muting of actual women by their positioning in culture as domesticated muse to the creative pleasure of men. I discuss many of these issues in Chapter 5. The complexity of his text itself is a reminder of the often uncomfortable relationship between what could be called the ‘pragmatics’ of doing architecture, and the fluid spaces of postmodernist and feminist writing.

The Sex of Architecture

The Sex of Architecture is a collection of papers selected for their perspective on gender, among many presented at a conference entitled “Inherited Ideologies: A Re-Examination” held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1995. It is described by its editors as ‘a dialogue among women theorists, historians, educators, and practitioners’, and ‘the first all-woman academic assembly on architecture in the United States’ (Agrest, Conway et al. 1996, p8). The conference was constructed around one of the archetypal themes explored by feminist theoreticians, ‘public place and private space’ (p8), but the anthology reflects not only the heterogeneity of themes, concerns, and approaches which now characterises the ‘field’ (if that is not too inclusive and comfortable a term), but the complex interactions between them. The fruitful collaboration of women of diverse backgrounds of culture and race is increasingly characteristic of feminist research, although the realities of academia of necessity mean
that the political resonance of the writing is to a degree modified by the middle class freemasonry of US academia.

The articles include discussions of women and architectural practice (Weiss 1996); women and architectural education (Sutton 1996; Weisman 1996); women and urban space / place (Da Costa Meyer 1996); the implicitly gendered symbolism of images of American architecture as either (in the public realm) the manifestation of technology in productive action, or (in the private realm) of domesticity, conservatism and consumerism (Ockman 1996); the influence on the Modern Movement of women as clients, using the example of the Rietveld Schröder house (Friedman 1996); the uses and meanings of private space and the concept of ‘home’ (Hermanuz 1996); the theoretical and political lacunae (the everyday, the developing world, women) in postmodernist and ‘avant garde’ architectural formulations of the ‘Other’ and ‘otherness’ (McLeod 1996); colonialism, orientalism and sexism (Celik 1996); attitudes to Nature (Balmori 1996; Agrest 1996a); and Le Corbusier’s dealings with Algiers and with Eileen Gray (Lavin 1996; Colomina 1996b). The boundaries of the domain of ‘architecture’ are challenged by an article on the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (Torre 1996), and a discussion of women and the Internet (Vinciarelli 1996).

Favro’s article on ‘writing on architecture 1850-1940’ (Favro 1996) continues her concern with the discursive construction of identity in relation to architecture. Her examination of the gendered image of the architect in magazine advertisements was an early exercise in analysing the discourse of contemporary architecture (Favro 1989). She found that non-architectural journals have more women ‘ad-architects’ than do professional journals; perhaps surprisingly the popular image of the architect is more ‘gender-flexible’ than the profession’s own view of itself.

**The Architect: Reconstructing her Practice**


The absence of women from the profession of architecture remains, despite the various theories, very difficult to explain and very slow to change. It demarcates a failure the profession has become adept at turning a blind eye to, despite the fact that it places architecture far behind the other professions with which architects frequently seek to align themselves. If we consider architecture a cultural construct, both vessel and residue, we can but wonder what this symptomatic absence suggests about our culture and the orders that govern the production of its architecture.

(Hughes 1996, px)

Hughes’s contribution explores a number of tropes of gender which figure in this thesis: the body, the female body as symbolic container related to nature and the earth, the feminine as muse available to the male creative spirit. Her brief to contributors was broad — ‘to do something of what we usually do and at the same time to reflect on that very practice’ (Colomina 1996a). She encouraged the contributors to frame their responses in self-reflexive autobiographical terms, but most contributors appear reticent to write in overtly personal mode. They responded variously, with critiques, with histories, with theoretical / metaphysical / narrative excursions, with descriptions and discussions of their own work (built and unbuilt / unbuildable). Some contributions raise provocative challenges to architecture’s disciplinary boundaries and conventional definitions, although not all make overt reference to women, gender or feminist theory /
practice. Colomina’s and Agrest’s essays are versions of work published in *The Sex of Architecture*, exploring aspects of Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women and nature (or Woman and Nature).

Ingraham, in an essay also published in *The Sex of Architecture*, points out that ‘[t]he proposal was that women had more cause to invent an architectural practice because they hold an ambiguous position with respect to architecture’ (Ingraham 1996, p151). Richter presents work from her practice which responds to Hélène Cixous’s demand to write oneself into a world apart from the one that certain white Western males have constructed for us ... a critical architectural practice: a writing, drawing, model-building practice where critical discourse can evolve, where the boundaries of the discipline are tested.

(Richter 1996, p99)

Bloomer intersperses anecdotes of her experiences of the ‘fishbowl’ of gender bias (sexism? misogyny?) that circumscribed her early career as student and architect within her exploration of theoretical and even metaphysical aspects of architecture as material in conversation with text / meaning (Bloomer 1996b).

**Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary**

Katerina Rüedi’s anthology *Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary*, also published in 1996 (Rüedi, Wigglesworth et al. 1996), includes articles (in alphabetical order of author) which develop a broad range of aspects of feminist thought in the context of architecture and the visual arts. A number of them deal with the gendered language of architectural discourse: in particular Bloomer, Boys, Burns and Forty.

Jennifer Bloomer, starting from a quotation by Ruskin, presents ‘a discussion of the politics of architectural discourse’; in a characteristically evocative and personal exploration of difference — the ‘simple and familiar pattern of correspondence that structures so much of the tradition of philosophical, social, artistic and literary discourse: the pattern of the gendered pair’ (Bloomer 1996a, p20). Jos Boys, of Matrix (see Matrix 1984), dissects in more matter-of-fact fashion ‘the masculinist structures of architectural knowledge’ (Boys 1996), following ‘a brief history of masculinist rationality in architectural thought’ (p37) with ‘an analysis of Modernism and masculinist rationality’ (p40), asking how might new forms of architectural practice be construed that are not framed around the assumption of a neutral gaze and an ultimately knowable object, defended through this simplistic logic of abstract socio-spatial concepts and binary oppositions?

(Boys 1996, p36)

Adrian Forty’s research is into the metaphorical and symbolic role of gender in representations of architecture since the Renaissance, in written language and image (Forty 1996). He generally takes his examples of explicitly sexualised language and imagery from architecture before Modernism. According to Forty,

Even if gender metaphors are no longer a normal part of the language of criticism, gender distinctions still apparently structure our thought processes. The absence of the metaphor does not mean that the distinction has ceased to exist.

... Conventionally the best architecture was always masculine. The characteristics of masculine architecture were there for all to see: they fulfilled a
ideal; feminine architecture on the other hand, was not only always inferior, but it generally lacked any specific qualities, positive or negative, of its own. Feminine architecture, generally speaking was merely the inexplicit otherness of the esteemed qualities of masculine architecture. None of this should surprise us, for as others have pointed out, the feminine is simply an invention of male [sic] discourse.

(Forty 1996, p153)

Gender metaphors in contemporary discourse are perhaps less overt — and less ‘innocent’ (in the sense that they reflect conventional pre-feminist assumptions) — but Forty himself points out that the language of architecture continues to assume a ‘masculine ideal’ (p152). When Forty mentions Modernism, the example he uses is a quotation from Vincent Scully’s *Modern Architecture* on Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh.

Up through this projection ... rise the great piers as purely upward thrusting forces. Between these, men enter, and ramps of almost Piranesian violence rise behind them. Their physical power can be grasped ... [The entrance demands to be read as] analogous to the confident human body, assuming position in a place.

(Scully 1968b, p48, quoted in Rorty, p152)

Karen Burns’s article (Burns 1996) explicitly uses ‘feminism as a motive force rather than a given object of inquiry’ (p74); she contrasts the ‘systematic closure of meaning’ by the institutions of architecture (for instance the production in canonical texts of architectural history of the notion of the binary opposition between ‘architecture’ and ‘building’\(^{29}\)), with the work of feminist theoreticians on women and built space, identity and experience. She constructs a nuanced discussion of the intersections of gender, ethnicity and identity in architectural discourse, referring to the work in aboriginal housing of an Australian (male, non-indigenous) architect, Peter Myers.

Other articles explore a wide range of aspects of the gendering of architecture. Jane Rendell’s article brings to bear a Marxist feminist historical perspective on the gendering of architectural space and its representation (Rendell 1996); Diane Ghirardo asks ‘Cherchez la Femme: Where are the Women in Architectural Studies?’ (Ghirardo 1996b). Rüedi (Rüedi 1996) and Wigglesworth (Wigglesworth 1996) both explore the nature of architectural practice in the light of changes in the political economies of gender and sexuality. In ‘Architecture and Obstetrics: Buildings as Babies’, Judi Farren Bradley makes a complex and provocative analogy between female experience — birth, mothering, access to previously ‘masculine’ knowledge — and the problematic nature of the profession and the role of architects in the contemporary world. ‘The architect as hero, male or female, must be rejected. ... The recognition of the particular, the experiential and the actual should be seen along with the interconnectivity of the political and the environmental.’ (Bradley 1996, p58) Brenda Vale, an architect and writer with a distinguished history in environmental theory, practice and activism, relates concepts of gender, and the particularity of women’s experience and traditional roles and skills, directly to environmentally responsible design (Vale 1996).

The article most directly addressing the gendered political economy of the architectural profession is written by a man; Paul Finch discusses the barriers to women’s participation in the profession in Britain (Finch 1996). According to Finch, ‘it is surprising that after two decades of the feminist movement in this country, so little energy and enthusiasm has been translated into hard research about the role of women.

\(^{29}\) See my reference for example to Pevsner in Chapter 1 (p11).
in architectural practice" (p138). As this literature review suggests, historical research on the participation of women in architecture has been carried out, despite the difficulties involved in finding individual women who were often attempting the ‘blend in’ to a masculine professional world and reluctant to ‘stand out’, or who were kept in subservient positions in a male-dominated office, or who saw their names omitted from the records of the buildings their firms designed, or who may have changed their names on marriage and were difficult to locate for a survey — and who were always few in number.

However the really difficult research is not inquiry into the women who ‘made it’ but the issue of the absence of the missing others. Finch concludes his article with questions similar to my own, discussed in Chapter 1.

Why do so many women students give up architecture? Is it because they realise they could be employed more profitably in other areas? Is it because of real or perceived discrimination in the profession? How does architecture compare with other professions?

(Finch 1996, p138)

**Architecture and Feminism**

1996 also saw the publication of the first book actually to combine the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘architecture’ in its title, Coleman’s *Architecture and Feminism*. An anthology with a spread of discursive genres and approaches, it does not propose to present a unitary theoretical position, but reflects the multiplicity of feminist voices, concerns and approaches, even within the circumscribed realm of middle class (by professional definition) American architects.

According to the cover notes the anthology ‘addresses the intersection of these two seemingly disparate fields through a lively and diverse collection of essay and projects, including interdisciplinary investigations of literature, social history, home economics, and art history’ (Coleman, Danze et al. 1996a). The anonymous writer of this description describes the ‘fields’ of feminism and architecture as disparate. To a feminist architect such an observation is troubling; it represents a position which would relegate both architecture and feminism to irrelevance — ‘academic’ in the populist sense of mere scholasticism. Architecture is not only a ‘discipline’ but a sphere of activity in the material world, dealing directly with the lives of women and men — and with important consequences for the natural environment. Feminism is not strictly a discipline, unlike ‘women’s studies’ or ‘gender studies’, both recently (if reluctantly in some quarters) acknowledged as disciplines in academia (see Bowles 1989; Stimpson 1990). Like Marxism, it is a system of thought, and signifies not only a field of epistemological (ontological) inquiry, but a political stance, which at its most basic level claims human subjectivity for women on the same terms, if not in the same configurations, as men. Unfortunately the implied surprise at the conjunction of feminism with architecture still reflects the situation in the mainstream profession.

George Wagner’s ‘The Lair of the Bachelor’ ventures past the discursive construction of the binary oppositions between the spatial and experiential worlds of ‘men’ and ‘women’ seen through a feminist (women’s) lens, to apply some of the conceptual insights of feminism to bring men and masculinity to the foreground, an unusual move given the conventionally ‘natural’ status of masculinity as the human ‘norm’. With readings of *Playboy* articles on ‘bachelor pads’ he explores notions of identity, domesticity and control, space and vision, sexuality and gender — and misogyny (Wagner 1996).
Gender, Space, Architecture

A recent text, Gender, Space, Architecture (Rendell, Penner et al. 1999), provides a useful and comprehensive anthology of texts, ranging from historical pre- and 'proto-feminist' writing to more recent and more theoretically developed texts (many of which have found a place in this literature review, compiled before the publication of the book). Some texts are classics, all are emblematic. The perspective of the book is traditional feminism; it opens with a Prologue by Lesley Kanes Weisman, 'Women's Environmental Rights: A Manifesto'. However there are contributions which address masculinity as a contested cultural construct.

The first section of the book, entitled 'Gender', includes (excerpts from) classic texts by Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Michèle Barrett, Audre Lorde, Nancy Chodorow, Luce Irigaray, Joan Wallach Scott, Judith Butler, and re-present and represent for the reader aspects of the development of feminist theory (perhaps Kristeva is lacking, and of course de Beauvoir declared herself not a feminist). The last excerpt in the Gender section of Gender, Space, Architecture is taken from Harry Brod's 'The Case for Men's Studies' (Brod 1987).

The second, 'Gender, Space' provides sociological and historical texts dealing with the partition of space (Shirley Ardener), the contemporary workplace (Daphne Spain), the relationship between space and place in the context of gender analysis (Doreen Massey), and resistance to oppressive power by women's intervention in public space ('Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo' by Susana Torre, also published in The Sex of Architecture); more theoretical contributions include articles by Griselda Pollock ('Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity'), Mary McLeod — ('Everyday and “Other” Spaces'), and two much anthologised texts, one by philosopher Elizabeth Grosz ('Woman, Chora, Dwelling') and Meaghan Morris ('Things to Do with Shopping Centres'). Rosalyn Deutsche's article 'Men in Space' represents the broadening of space/gender studies to include the masculine.

The third section, 'Gender, Space, Architecture' includes nine texts or excerpts from feminist texts already referred to in this Chapter: (Boutelle 1977; Hayden 1981b; Franck 1989; Scott Brown 1989; Walker 1989; Çelik 1992; Friedman 1992; Colomina 1992b), an article by Frances Bradshaw, a member of Matrix (Matrix 1984), two characteristically esoteric and complex texts (one by Jennifer Bloomer, one by Elizabeth Diller), and a new text from the developing genre of work on masculinity, sexuality and space — one on (male) queer space, fashion and disclosure, the other on 'Cadet Quarters, US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs' by Joel Sanders (Sanders 1996).

Men and architecture: gender and masculinity

The work of Brod, Deutsche, Sanders and Wagner makes clear that gender is not merely a 'women's issue'. However, masculinity is not often subjected to scrutiny. Adrian Forty quotes Michael Sorkin's critique of a Richard Rogers' building (Sorkin 1991):

'the ensemble does participate deliberately in an historical machine culture, overwhelmingly masculine. One has read in the pages of Architectural Review theories of 'British high tech.' which pin its prominence on the early childhood training of its progenitors ... Meccano toys and scale replicas of Sopwith Camels. ... The point is simply this: it's a history of the machine that stands
outside the history of architecture and which brings with it special prejudices about the social environment.'

(Forty 1996, p154)

Forty continues:

From the point of view of the history of masculinity of architectural thought, Sorkin's article could be the first occasion that a 'mainstream' critic has used 'masculine' not to signify a superior ideal, but rather to draw attention to small minded misogyny. It is a precedent we might learn from.

(Forty 1996, p154)

Just as the various manifestations of the political 'Men's Movement' have received their impetus (both positive and negative, as response or reaction) from the women's movement, theorising gender and sexuality in the masculine has been both provoked and nurtured by feminist theory. Architecture and Feminism included Wagner's 'The Lair of the Bachelor' (Coleman, Danze et al. 1996a, pp183-220) mentioned above. However until recently masculinity had been critiqued within the 'confines' of feminist discursive sites, and almost solely not only from a feminist theoretical position, but from a women's political — ideological — perspective.

In his paper 'Male Space' Joel Sanders agrees with feminist theorists that architecture reinforces gender stereotypes and thus has direct and indirect effects on women, but points out that this can also have unfortunate consequences for men (Sanders 1996). The 'subtle' reinforcement of stereotypes is generally unlikely to have the oppressive consequences for the culturally and economically dominant sex that it has for the 'muted' sex. However transgression of the dominant political economy of masculinity by men, whether transvestites, transsexuals, homosexuals, or 'effeminate' men, can often be violently punished, and a complex culture of resistance and even defiance has developed in the West. Sanders's diverse edited collection of articles on masculinity, Stud: Architectures of Masculinity (Sanders 1996), includes explorations of what has come to be termed 'queer space', while Betsky has published Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire (Betsky c1997).

Reading architectural texts

Mark Wigley (Wigley 1989; Wigley 1991) and following his lead Thomas Hannaford (Hannaford 1992), have explored the constitutive role of the architectural metaphor in the very making of discourse in general, and the discourses of philosophy and theory in particular. Wigley points to the circulation of architectural metaphors in the discourses of

the Western philosophical tradition in which theory is understood as the construction of ... theses that stand up. Theory has always described itself as a kind of building. ...

So in thinking about the status of architectural discourse, something as apparently simple as a “theory of architecture” becomes complicated because the concept of theory is itself established with a certain concept of architecture.

(Wigley 1991, p0)

Wigley claims that the 'architectural metaphor is always employed politically as a conservative agent' (Wigley 1991, p26, note 27). One aspect of that conservatism has been the preservation of the masculine character of the profession (Wigley 1992). In fact, in her idiosyncratic exploration of architecture via textual games with Piranesi and Joyce, the feminist architect-critic Jennifer Bloomer is prepared to state that “[a]
feminist architecture is not architecture at all" (Bloomer c1993, p142 and footnote 4, p203).

Architectural interpretation and criticism have understandably dealt principally with the actual buildings themselves, the intentions underlying them and processes of their production, and their reception by their publics. However architectural discourse since the decline of the certainties of Modernism has entered a self-reflexive theoretical phase\(^{30}\), and the written texts of architecture are coming under scrutiny. Postmodernist theory postulates 'intertextuality' as an inevitable characteristic of discursive formations (see Chapter 5). Architecture presents a particularly vivid case of intertextuality, in which the concept of 'language' (with syntax, grammar, quotation) extends beyond the written to include the graphic / pictorial and the spatial (see for instance Zevi 1978; Jencks 1981; Hanson and Radford 1986), and buildings and images are 'read', often in conjunction with the written word, as complex 'texts'.

In her *Assemblage* article 'Architecture from Without: Body, Logic, and Sex' (Agrest 1988), and her book of the same title (Agrest 1991), Diana Agrest discusses the establishment in the Renaissance of the symbolic order of Western architecture, founded on Vitruvius whose work lies 'at the base of every Renaissance text' (Agrest 1988, p30). She discusses the various versions of the celebrated Renaissance figure of the male body inscribed in the Platonic figures of the circle and the square, which displaced the female body as norm for natural proportional beauty, order and logic.

[In] the founding texts of Western architectural ideology, the body in architecture is not only an essential subject, but one, moreover, indissolubly linked to the question of gender and sex, a question that has generated the most extraordinary elaboration of an architectural ideology. The reading of these texts is a fundamental operation in the understanding of a complex ideological apparatus that has systematically excluded women through an elaborate mechanism of symbolic appropriation of the female body.

(Agrest 1988, p30)

But for Agrest the Renaissance ideal of the city as a closed and unitary system has no current validity, and '[t]he system has been broken; architecture cannot be recognized again as a whole' (Agrest 1988, p37), changing the potential for agency of woman, the 'outsider'. 'The city is the social scene where woman can publicly express her struggle.' (p40)

**Feminist readings of visual ‘texts’**

Feminist attention has turned to the dominant semiotic economy of architecture, the visual, in particular in terms of its dissemination and the construction of icons and canons. An early text in this genre is Bonta’s examination of the role of photography in creating the enduring iconic status of Mies van der Rohe’s physically short-lived Barcelona pavilion (Bonta 1979). Beatriz Cololina’s anthology *Architectureproduction* (Cololina c1988) explores the relationships between architecture and the media of publication — imagery, writing and in particular photography — and the changes which developments in the technologies for the reproduction and circulation of images have wrought in the relationships between architecture and its audiences. I discuss later in this Chapter Cololina’s work on Le Corbusier and photography (Cololina 1993).

Other critics and theorists have studied the construction of images of architecture and the architect in professional and trade journals and magazines. Diane Favro examines the images of women professionals in magazine advertisements (Favro 1989).

---

\(^{30}\) Of which this thesis is an example.
Following a generic study of advertising images (Hogben 1996), and of professional journals as historical sources (Hogben and Fung 1997), Paul Hogben finds that

Advertisements have co-ordinated a particular male-centred view of professional practice with both culturally dominant and emergent signs of creativity, rationality and intelligence. ... Ads published in Architecture Australia have almost always cast the figure of the architect as an Anglosaxon male.

(Hogben 1998, p84)

He points out the contrast with imagery of women used in trade advertisements, and cites as an example a 1982 issue of Architecture Australia (volume 71, number 5, page 3): an advertisement for sound insulation shows an image of ‘an elegantly dressed woman tied to a chair with her mouth gagged. ... The caption reads “We have ways of keeping you quiet”’ (Hogben 1998, p5).31

Feminist texts on Le Corbusier

Writing on Le Corbusier has figured throughout the previous discussion. Critics of Le Corbusier with a feminist theoretical stance appear to have come to Le Corbusier as part of their feminist theorising; they are more frequent than theorists who have discovered the gendered character of Le Corbusier’s work in the course of their explorations of architecture.

The vast majority of the hundreds of texts on Le Corbusier are hagiographic, often extreme in their obeisance to ‘the Architect of the Century’ (Raeburn and Wilson 1987), genius (Hoag 1988) and tragic Nietzschean hero (Jencks 1973a). (I refer to many of these texts in Chapters 6 and 7, in which I examine writing by and about Le Corbusier.) Early texts which took a critical stance informed by feminism focussed on the effects of modernist urban developments which had been influenced by Le Corbusier’s town planning ideas, on the inhabitants, and in particular on women. The Transition issue on ‘Women and Architecture’ included two articles on Le Corbusier (Hanna 1988; White 1988). Bronwyn Hanna’s ‘Le Corbusier Who?’ focussed on the androcentrism of both his ‘functionalism’ and his emphasis on the dramatically visual (referring to feminist theorising of ‘the male gaze’); she pointed out how both often act to exclude or trivialise the everyday and experiential (in particular the experience of women) (Hanna 1988). My own article (White 1988, to become a nucleus of this thesis, and included here as Appendix B) addressed the material effects of Le Corbusier’s ‘grandiose, simplistic32 and deterministic’ utopian urban solutions (‘a theoretically water-tight formula’), combined with his preoccupation with ‘the grip of man upon nature’, by means of geometry (the principle) and technology (the practice), metonymically named ‘the machine’, and pointed out the disproportionately negative effects of such theories and practices on women (White 1988, see Chapter 6).

Not all criticism of Le Corbusier’s ideas on town planning and housing was generated by feminism. Scruton refers to ‘the naïve and hysterical propaganda of Le Corbusier’ (Scruton 1981, p140). Stretton’s article ‘Le Corbusier and the Faeces Count’ (Stretton 1985) is an extreme example of the strong emotions felt during the Australian resident activist battles against whole-sale demolition of the inner suburbs for inner city public (Housing Commission) developments. (However other writers claim that Le Corbusier, ‘Master of a misunderstood Modernism’ (Buchanan 1987a), could not be blamed for the misinterpretation and misuse of his ideas by lesser architects and planners; I discuss critiques and apologies for Le Corbusier in Chapter 7.)

31 Given the range of feminist work on the silencing of women in mainstream culture, the symbolic connotations are manifest and multiple.

32 Colomina describes it as ‘non-professional’ (Colomina 1987).
However, feminist historians and theorists have commenced recently to explore the Corbusian archive and have found it a rich site for feminist interpretation. Evans’s discussion of the Modulor (Evans 1993), entitled ‘Le Corbusier and the Sexual Identity of Architecture’, contains only very gentle implicit criticism. However, in ‘The Return of (the Repressed) Nature’, an article published in two versions (Agrest 1996a; Agrest 1996b), Agrest critiques Le Corbusier’s ‘conception of the world as machine in a fetishistic architecture ... [which] allows the double domination (or negation) of nature and woman’ (Agrest 1996b, p211) in the context of an exploration of the conventional dualisms which identify both ‘Woman’ and ‘Nature’ as the ‘Other’ to Man.

This identification extends beyond metaphor or the imaginings of architects: Agrest proposes that [Western] scientific discourse has historically developed an ‘equivalence between nature and woman’.

The ideology of modernist architecture and urbanism is still based on the mechanistic scientific ideology, taking the form of machinism, an ideology that implicitly sanctions the repression / suppression of women. ... The urban realm ... discloses the historical role of the alignment of nature and gender, an identification that is once again key to the struggle for power and the engendering of power. The conception of the world as a machine in a fetishistic architecture that is the result of the application of the principles of modernist urbanism allows the double domination (or negation) of nature and woman.

(Agrest 1996a, p60)

A ‘feminist’ apologia for Le Corbusier

Samuel, apparently familiar with feminist theory, nevertheless comes to Le Corbusier’s defence. In ‘Le Corbusier, Women and Nature’ she declares that Le Corbusier ‘did not have a negative attitude toward women, as frequently thought’. She artlessly defends Le Corbusier by herself conflating ‘woman’ with ‘nature’ and finding that Le Corbusier achieves a ‘harmonious balance’ (Samuel 1998). Ironically, Samuel’s impression that Le Corbusier is thought to have had a ‘negative attitude to women’ appears to be based on an informal ‘grapevine’ or the ‘conventional wisdom’. In fact a search of texts of very recent date, excluding those with an explicit feminist theoretical grounding, finds no texts which call into question Le Corbusier’s attitude to women, whether to actual women (his colleagues / disciples, his wife, his lovers, his clients) or to ‘woman’. The essays by Carranza and Hanna, my own work and Colomina’s account of his relations with Eileen Gray (Colomina 1996a; Colomina 1996b) (mentioned elsewhere in this chapter), appear to be among the very few ‘accusations’ in the literature. In fact, in ‘Le Corbusier as I Knew Him’, Jane Drew’s view of his attitude to women is affectionate, and with no hint of irony she claims that

He ... value[d] affection and women — not in an English way: he spoke to me of his women loves, and although he recognized sex as the force it is and was not respectful of man-made laws, he did respect the women he loved, and his love of his mother was a very great force in his life.

(Drew 1977, p369)

A search of the Avery Index of journals combining the keyword ‘sexism’ with ‘Le Corbusier’ finds no references; searches combining ‘women’, ‘woman’, ‘feminism/ist’ and/or ‘gender’, with ‘Le Corbusier’ bring up very few papers — my

---

33 For instance in the Avery Index, and the over 50 books on Le Corbusier in the Barr Smith Library of Adelaide University.

Le Corbusier, representation and the 'male gaze'

Representation, the 'male gaze' and the cultural dominance of the visual, in particular the visual representation of women and 'woman' for the pleasure of men, are recurring themes in feminist theory. In 'The Publicity of the Private: The Archives of Loos and Le Corbusier', Cololina (Cololina 1993) 'trace[s] some of the strategic relationships between modern architecture and the media by looking at the work of the two canonic figures that articulate our view of the modern movement' (from abstract), Le Corbusier and Loos. In 'Le Corbusier and Photography' (Cololina 1987) she demonstrates the conscious and strategic ways Le Corbusier manipulated photographic images and exploited them to express the conceptual signification of his buildings — the idea or process underlying the architecture — rather than merely to (re)present the physical 'reality'. Cololina discusses his preoccupation with vision and the visual in her essay in Sexuality and Space (Cololina 1992b).

Carranza, in 'Le Corbusier and the Problems of Representation' (Carranza 1994), assuming such intentionality34, examines through the lens of gender the strategic and symbolic uses to which Le Corbusier put photography. Carranza reads the graphic and photographic records of Le Corbusier's work, and his use and manipulation of architectural photography, as a 'window into his subconscious' (p71), which Carranza sees as 'reproduc[ing] ... the language or ideology of patriarchy' (p72), and presents a number of photographs to illustrate his thesis that 'in Le Corbusier's eyes, modern architecture or his own architecture, is the realm of men' (p78). Carranza compares Le Corbusier's representations of women and the feminine with his photographs of 'male' architecture. In a rather internally contradictory discussion he interprets Le Corbusier's depiction in drawings and paintings of women, in particular nude women, as voyeuristic and fetishistic, symbolising male domination and control (pp73-74).35 Le Corbusier published two photographs (one version is reproduced in the essay) of the famous 'Le Corbusier' chaise longue — now almost a talisman of corbusian design, but in fact designed in collaboration with Charlotte Perriand — in which Perriand is 'made into an accessory of the furniture' (p74). Her legs high, her skirt flowing down (exposing more limb in one version than the other), Perriand is shown in a reclining 'odalisque' position, facing away from the viewer, her gaze concealed.

Carranza interprets both the deployment of the images of women in the photographs of buildings ('[t]he woman, whose look is [also] concealed from the viewer, becomes the object of the voyeur's vision' (p77)), and the choice and placement of objects in the views of built spaces, as symbolising the masculinity of modern architecture. According to Carranza, '[b]y claiming his houses were machines [and representing

---

34 A distinctly non-feminist discussion of the intentionality of Le Corbusier’s use of architectural photographs can be found in Lucan’s ‘The Search for the Absolute’ (Lucan 1991). Lucan concludes that Le Corbusier’s photographic ‘compositions are absolutely deliberate on Le Corbusier’s behalf [sic]’ (p201). Discussing the symbolism of the published photographs of Le Corbusier’s buildings, Lucan points out that ‘all of them [present] “objects” left on tables [or benches]; these have not been thrown there accidentally; they are arranged to form some strange, and perhaps disturbing compositions. They are either objects of current use, .... or things that evoke an absence: .... the hat and sunglasses [clearly male — and ‘corbusian’] ... have been abandoned and await to be picked up again. These are compositions that someone has staged’ (pp200-210). Lucan interprets these objects as offerings on an altar, celebrating ‘the sublime dimension of an architecture libre’ (p205). Among Lucan’s example are two of the same photographs interpreted by Carranza (views of the kitchens at the Villa at Garches and the Villa Savoye — “two of the most enigmatic photographs” (Carranza 1994, p75).

35 See also my own discussion of Le Corbusier’s depiction of women later in the chapter — based on my 1988 Transition paper (White 1988).
them photographically as such) Le Corbusier therefore assigned to them a gendered distinction as male (p75). Carranza interprets the objects placed in the photographs of the ‘feminine’ spaces (the kitchens) as fetishistic, and symbolic of masculine intrusion into feminine space: ‘[t]he kitchens are absolutely devoid of any life’ except for these dead or inanimate objects (p78). Conversely the ‘male, or public spaces in the Villa Savoye are ... inhabited by [masculine] fragments’ — hat and glasses, coat and cigarettes (p75). Ironically, in his explicitly feminist, and at times simplistic, analysis, Carranza, like Samuel, conflates women with nature: ‘Le Corbusier follows ... architectural conventions that “privilege[e] the position of men/architecture over women/nature”’ (p71). However the symbolic uses of ‘Woman’ and the ‘female’ / ‘feminine’ in western culture are multiple, ‘She’ can be appropriated to any number of symbolic purposes. She is not always conflated with nature; indeed at times she can represent ‘Culture’, ‘Science’, ‘Justice’, ‘Virtue’, Britannia, France — even ‘Architecture’ — are all symbolically female.

In her two papers exploring the intersection of gender with orientalism and colonialism in the contested and obsessive relationship between France and Algeria (Çelik 1992; Çelik 1996), Çelik points out that ‘metaphors between cities and female figures are quite common’ (Çelik 1996, p128). Çelik describes Le Corbusier’s ‘gendering of Algiers’ in terms similar to my own in my ‘Postscript’ to my Transition article of 1988 (White 1988, p30-32). He

liken[ed] the city of Algiers to a female body: “Algiers drops out of sight,” he noted as he viewed the city from a boat leaving for France in 1934, “like a magnificent body, supple-hipped and full-breasted. ... A body which could be revealed in all its magnificence, through the judicious influence of form and the bold use of mathematics to harmonize natural topography and human geometry” (Çelik 1992, p71, quoting from Le Corbusier, La Ville Radieuse, p260).

Le Corbusier, the naturalised Frenchman, shared a ‘major aspect of French colonialism in Algeria: its obsession with Algerian women’ (Çelik 1992, p71).

In ‘Battle Lines: E:1027’, an article based on the Corbusian archives, and published in two versions, (Cololina 1996a; Cololina 1996b), Cololina also describes Le Corbusier’s fascination with the veiled women of Algiers, and his sketching naked women from life and from postcards, during his trip to Algiers in 1931. Cololina discusses Le Corbusier’s oriental adventures as background and counterpoint to her chronicle of Le Corbusier’s obsessive ‘surveillance’ and ‘quasi-occupation’ of the architect Eileen Gray’s house at Cap Martin (Cololina 1996a, p13), followed by his ‘defacement of the house ... [and] effacement of Eileen Gray as an architect’ (p15), a historical documentation / re-writing of received canonical history, mentioned above. She describes the sketches and postcards as ‘a rather ordinary instance of the ingrained fetishistic appropriation of women, of the East, of “the other”’ (p12), but points out that the female body as image became for Le Corbusier ‘a lifetime obsession’ (p12). I

36 In a letter to the JAE, Shapiro objects to Carranza’s interpretation of some of his more extreme and questionable interpretations, but he does not address the most overt examples of the clearly intentional placing of symbolically masculine objects in specific photographs, nor of the employment in photographs of a woman’s figure as ‘objet perçu’ facing away from the camera; in fact his objections seem to ‘protest too much’. Carranza provides a succinct refutation of many of Shapiro’s points in Carranza (1995).

37 Le Corbusier himself records the event in the chronology of his work in My Work: 1938-1939. Eight mural paintings (free of charge [!] in the Badovici and Helen Grey (sic) house at Cap Martin’ (Le Corbusier 1960). Given that, as Jencks reports, for Le Corbusier “good walls were to remain white’ (Jencks 1973a, p149), Le Corbusier’s implied contempt for the architecture of the house is clear.
discuss in more detail in Chapter 7 Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women and ‘woman’, and the response to these attitudes in mainstream texts. However Le Corbusier is not a focus of any of the contributions to the first major book whose title links the terms architecture and feminism, Coleman, Danze and Henderson’s *Architecture and Feminism* (Coleman, Danze et al. 1996a). Perhaps he is seen as too dangerous, too daunting, too depressing — or perhaps too ‘obvious’ an object of study, for any but the most courageous or the most persistent of feminist architectural theorists.

**Feminism evaluates Australian architecture?**

Apart from the narratives and analyses of the experiences of women in the profession and in architectural education, and the women’s histories and feminist historiographies, discussed above, I have found no feminist critiques of Australian architecture *per se*, or of specifically Australian architectural discourse. Murcutt’s buildings and the myths which have accreted around them appear to have achieved the status of canon. Except for my own paper in the art journal *Artlink* (White 1990-91), I have also been unable to find any feminist texts which propose a critique of either Murcutt’s buildings / projects or of writing on or by Murcutt.  

---

38 In fact Baird’s critique of Murcutt’s work (Baird 1997) is the only critical writing I have been able to find. Baird’s critique interrogates the basis of Murcutt’s status as icon of Australian architecture and the myth of sensitivity to place; gender has no place in his (very thoughtful) analysis. See Chapter 8.
Chapter 5

On methodology and feminist theory

I would say that one must take him! — his mentality, his attitude — into account as well as his projects, in order to understand a certain number of the techniques of power that are invested in architecture, but he is not comparable to a doctor, a priest, a psychiatrist, or a prison warden.

(Michel Foucault in Rabinow 1984, p248)

Masculinism is a much bigger and fiercer monster than any of the little, parochial, monsters with which pragmatists and deconstructionists struggle.

(Rorty 1993, p101)

Introduction

In this chapter I present the theoretical and methodological background to the thesis. The premises underlying the thesis are: the formative role of language and discourse in the construction of cultural and social meanings, which then have material effects in the 'real' world; the 'intertextuality' of architecture — its discursive links with other discourses of meaning, and the exclusion of women and women's meanings from the construction of dominant régimes of significance. The theoretical background of the thesis is provided by the conceptual insights of contemporary feminist theory, which identifies the manifestations of gender at work in discourse (see, for example Merchant 1980; Spender 1981; Spender 1982; Lloyd 1984; Harding 1986; Lerner 1986; Nye 1988; Battersby 1989; Tong 1989; Gunew 1990; Grosz 1990b; Spivak 1994). I also acknowledge insights into the nature of masculinity provided by recent work in men's studies.

Feminist theorists, and other theorists of gender, have examined the operation, in the discursive and non-discursive formations of western culture, of sexism (the material empirical practice) (Grosz 1990b, p149), masculinism (the ideology of masculine domination) (Brittan 1989, p4), patriarchy (the structures and systems of significance which underwrite gender inequalities in cultural and material power — see below) (Grosz 1990b, pp149-150), and phallogocentrism3 (the epistemology — represented in western culture as an ontology) (Grosz 1990b, p150).

1 The architect.
2 This is not to accept the 'strong' postmodernist position, articulated by Derrida, that 'there is nothing outside the text' (Derrida 1976, p158).
3 My footnote in Chapter 1 explaining the term 'phallo-logo-centrism' defined it as a 'term combining the concepts of the domination of Western culture by the metaphysical phallus as privileged signifier of masculinity, and the domination of post-Enlightenment western thought by the concept of (a narrowly defined) reason ('logos') as the site of truth'. It was originally coined by Derrida (1976), and is employed in feminist critiques of patriarchy. The primacy in the symbolic order of the phallus, which connotes a unitary drive toward a single, attainable goal, combines with 'logocentrism', the primacy of language to exclude alternative interpretation of 'reality' (Greek logos = reason, argument, discourse). In Genesis, logos in the Greek translation is translated into English as 'word': 'In the beginning there was the Word ... and the Word was God'.

85
Goodin (Goodin 1977) points to the inertia of linguistic routines which reflect the socio-cultural ‘inertia’ of public institutions, and which persist long after the conditions to which they first responded have given way to new conditions requiring new responses. The substratum of language, of the common core of human ideas, lingers beneath the surface in our idioms and key forms of expression, and new language masks old power relations, still implicit (and at times explicit) in patriarchy’s totalising discourse.

**Intertextuality**

A tenet of postmodernism is the ‘intertextuality’ of all texts. ‘Intertextuality [is] a text’s dependence on and infiltration by prior codes, concepts, conventions, unconscious practices and texts.’ (Lietch 1983, p161) Architectural discourse is a particularly vivid case of intertextuality. It borrows from the discourses for instance of philosophy, politics, art, science and technology, discourses which deal with socio-cultural, intellectual and professional structures, and experiential and representational space. Le Corbusier’s writing is a paradigmatic case; in *Vers une architecture* and *Urbanisme* in particular he deploys, recasts and redeploys fragments from a range of discourses, using historical reference, metaphor and image, in an ‘infinitude of recurrences’ (Barthes 1974).4 Drew’s deployment of literary imagery and cultural interpretation from DH Lawrence is an even more obvious case, crossing borders of discipline (architecture - literature), and genre (architectural criticism - fiction).5

The concept of intertextuality was developed in the late 1960s by Julia Kristeva from a starting point offered by Bakhtin’s ‘dialogism’6 (Bakhtin 1965), at a time when academic literary criticism and other institutions of knowledge production were undergoing a crisis (Plett 1991, p31). Traditional literary scholarship was being challenged by ‘objective’ models of linguistic inquiry (see Seamon 1989), just as traditional modes of architectural design were being contested by the ‘design methods’ movement (see Broadbent and Ward 1969); both claimed authority because of their allegedly ‘scientific’ nature. So the notion of intertextuality can be seen as part of a political strategy in the struggle over significance and cultural meaning (Plett 1991). According to Kristeva, no written (or spoken) work is an autonomously authored self-contained whole, but represents the absorption of other texts in ‘a mosaic of quotations’ (Kristeva 1986, p136). According to Kristeva, ‘[h]istory and morality are written and read within the infrastructure of texts.’ (p36)

Phillips points out, in the context of biblical exegesis, that an approach to textual interpretation based on intertextuality calls into question positivist and instrumental conceptions of language. ‘The critique of patriarchy, power and ideology directed at the institutional practice and production of textual scholarship ... contributes to an undermining of a set of presumptive ideas ... [about] the god-givenness of ... male-dominated thinking and action (Phillips 1991, p81). Derrida seeks to ... bring to light the underlayer [sic] of the western metaphysical system as it operates within the primary literary and philosophical texts of the West.’ (p90)

**Architecture as metaphor for philosophy**

A striking manifestation of intertextuality is the relationship between architectural and philosophical discourse. The philosopher Roger Scruton identifies the significance of architecture used as metaphor to express Rilke’s despair at the loss of traditional meaning in modernity in a poem from *Sonnets to Orpheus*: ‘The experience of architecture is a universal symbol for the spirit’s attempt to find a correspondence between itself and the world’

---

4 See Chapter 6.
5 See Chapter 8
6 In Kristeva’s words, ‘Bakhtin shuns the linguist’s technical rigour, wielding an impulsive ... pen’ (Kristeva 1986, p35): an encouragement to the type of reading I practise in this thesis.
(Scruton 1981, p218). So architecture is a ‘space where the meanings are’, a phrase used by Catherine Stimpson to describe feminism (Stimpson 1990b, pxii).

There is a reciprocal traffic between the literal and metaphorical meanings invested in the concept of ‘Architect(ure)’ (such phrases as the ‘architect of the health-care system’, ‘the architecture of the world economy’ (Background Briefing, ABC 27.7.1998), ‘God the Architect of the Universe’, ‘computer architecture’). Architecture is mobilised as ‘literal’ metaphor to construct philosophical argument; architectural metaphor informs concepts such as ‘grounds for belief’, ‘foundational thought’, ‘structure of argument’, even the spatial imagery implicit in notions such as intellectual depth and higher mathematics, which circulate in philosophical discourse.

Theory has always described itself as a kind of building. The philosopher is a kind of architect who pays attention first to the ground, establishing secure foundations and then applies structural principles in order to construct a sound thesis. (Wigley 1991, p9)

The architectonics of philosophy establishes and legitimates the fundamental conditions of its ground, and architecture ‘always already inhabits philosophy as an intrinsic constituent’ (Wigley 1987, p160), presupposing a dependence on a ‘natural’ vision of order and meaning-making. One of the characteristics of the last years of Modernism was the attempt by adherents of the Design Methods Movement during the 1960s and 1970s to appropriate the status and seriousness of science (see, for example Broadbent and Ward 1969; Broadbent 1973, Chapters 1-3 & 10-12). Architecture currently attempts to claim the aura of philosophy. The intellectual and personal ‘double act’ of Eisenman and Derrida (Derrida 1988) is a paradigmatic case. As intellectual showmen both appropriate legitimating imagery from each other’s disciplines; ‘deconstruction’ as a philosophical technique in effect returns to its metaphorical source in the literal de-construction of the expectations of structural and functional logic in Eisenman’s projects. Technology, science and philosophy — all conventionally masculine domains.

**Issues of feminist theory in architecture**

**Divided loyalties**

The feminist architect writing critically about architecture and its heroes finds herself in an uncomfortable position. The sensual and reflective experience of buildings and precincts, and intelligent interpretive and theoretical writing on architecture, together constitute an experiential, aesthetic and intellectual legacy which often has the power to lift the spirit of the most resolutely feminist analyst. Patriarchal, partial and even pretentious though much architectural writing is, it deals with practices and theories of deep human consequence. My delight in good architecture, my commitment to its potential for the cultural, social, even metaphysical enrichment of human life, its responsibility in the task of finding better ways of ‘dwelling’ in the world and on the earth, in the Heideggerian sense, and my feeling (against all odds) of belonging within the boundaries of architecture, have made the writing of this thesis both necessary and difficult.9

---

7 By the 1980s doubts had appeared (O’ Cathain 1982).

8 The well-known problematic for philosophers in appropriating Heidegger for progressive and/or emancipatory purposes, given his history of engagement with Nazism, is an extreme case of the common feminist dilemma when appropriating male, even overtly masculist, texts, concepts or theoretical strategies.

9 An irony inherent in feminist architectural criticism is that the critic finds herself continually writing about the work of men. A case in point is the criticism of the *Transition* issue on ‘Women and Architecture’ (Winter 1988), mentioned in Chapter 1, that ‘the cover could have read “Men and Architecture”’ (Fung 1989, p173). Given that most architecture has been done by men, this is of course true — and this is the point of this thesis.
There is a particular dilemma involved in a reading of texts from a discipline in which I have felt both a member and an outsider for so many decades — similar to the issues raised by participatory ethnography. The context within which I address the texts and attempt their reading is one in which I am and have been for decades complicit. My formal architectural education took place within the pedagogical and political context of Modernism, as it was construed in the Australia of the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the presence of Masters from a distant Europe, one with the aura of a veteran of the Bauhaus. Students tended to adopt as a model a Hero from the pantheon of Modernist masters — Mies, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and to a lesser extent, Gropius. Women constituted about 10% of the students: no women architects were mentioned in lectures. The proportion of women student numbers has increased since; however, gender studies are still not a recognised part of the curriculum, although gender issues are often central in considerations of pedagogical and pastoral practice (see Shannon 1994; Shannon 1995).

Issues in feminist reading

Methodological and epistemological issues are also raised in the performance of feminist reading.

[F]eminist theory needs to address methodological questions ... It is impossible to maintain or develop a theoretical purity untainted by patriarchy for our ideas, values, terminology, repertoire of concepts are all products of patriarchy ... A viable feminist methodology must be the consequence of an active yet critical engagement with patriarchal methods.

(Grosz 1990a, p60)

Structuralist, formalist and 'objective' methodologies of conventional discourse analysis (see Brown and Yule 1983), such as content analysis, which claims to provide a technique for systematic inference from communications (see Carney 1972), are inappropriate to the aims and philosophy of the project. I do not claim to produce a 'final' authoritative reading. Nor do I attempt to efface the 'I' behind the reading — and writing — which constructs the thesis.

However, I find myself in the usual epistemological difficulty of all feminist theoretical work. I am in effect 'using the master's tools to dismantle the master's house'. In her paper titled 'Dismantling the Master's House ...' Patricia Thompson says, speaking of texts in general,

In simple terms, ... women must read and accept texts presented and legitimated by men, but men do not have to read and accept texts presented and legitimated by women. Women have entered the world of ideas created by patriarchy, but men have

---

10 Professor Fritz Janea from Vienna; other professors of European origin were Professor Zdenko Strizic from Slovenia (then Yugoslavia) and Professor Carl Hammerschmidt from Denmark.

11 In spite of his connections with the Bauhaus he appeared less 'heroic' than the other three.

12 Macdonell (1986) describes a research project which used ‘automatic analysis of discourse’ ... a partly computerized procedure' (pp52-53).

13 Content analysis aims for the 'rigour' and 'objectivity' of traditional science, and often now uses using concordancing computer software to provide an analysis of words and phrases to present a 'demography' of the uses, relationships and frequencies of words and phrases in a text or defined corpus of texts (see Carney 1972). A good example is Inglis's use of statistical analysis of the conjunction of specific terms in the inscriptions on Australian war memorials (Inglis 1998). Computer analysis to uncover such statistical patterns in language use is unlikely to be useful in architecture, given the difficulties in selecting a sufficiently restricted, closed yet valid 'universe' of texts, and the broad, eclectic, specialist and/or metaphorical nature of the language used to discuss architecture, and the further complication of its intertextuality. The use of language in architectural discourse is not 'transparent'. A computer program with a grasp of feminist theory is not on the horizon.
not had to attend to ideas created by women (and some men) that contest patriarchy’s totalizing discourse.

(Thompson 1994, p41)

Thompson quotes Lorraine Code:

when texts are at issue . . . the technique is to read against the grain, beneath the surface, through the gaps . . . The unstated premise here is that no classification, no stipulation, is innocent; every one is selective and hence exclusionary. The task, then, is to learn to see — to perceive — the exclusions, to understand the politics of inclusion that produces them.

(Code 1991, p97, quoted in Thompson 1994, p41)

For Andrea Nye, ‘[p]atriarchal language must be spoken by the feminist but spoken to be exposed, reconstituted only to be shattered again’ (Nye 1988, p207).14

**Feminism and postmodernism**

For feminists a theoretical alliance with postmodernism in its more politically oriented guises can be productive. This is the stance I take in this thesis. But the relationships between feminism(s) and postmodernism(s) are complex and contested, and the legitimation (authority?) offered by postmodernist theory may come at a political price. The potential freedom that postmodernism offers to dissident readings presents epistemological and strategic difficulties for any feminist analysis of patriarchal social constructions (see Nicholson 1990; Ferguson and Wicke 1994). Postmodernism stresses the plurality of possible textual readings. A postmodern recognition of the indeterminacy and heterogeneity of meaning-production can install difficulties in the way of clearing a specifically feminist theoretical space.

Like postmodernists, feminists attempt to find and deploy new paradigms of cultural and social critique independent of traditional philosophical underpinnings. They point out that truths claimed as necessary, universal and ahistorical are on the contrary contingent, partial and historically grounded, and that what is characterised traditionally as objectivity represents the experience, interpretations and interests of particular groups in situations of power. However, appropriation by feminists of postmodernist approaches can be problematic. Some feminists espousing a postmodern stance may be sceptical of totalising theories, even those produced in resistance to patriarchy, and may wish to avoid such formulations as phallogocentrism, patriarchy and sexism, seen as meta-narratives of a foundationalist kind, and considered by many postmodernist theorists to be illegitimate. On the other hand women may see it as more than merely an irony that Barthes’s famous declaration of the ‘death of the author’ (Barthes 1977) has coincided with women’s ‘coming into speech’ after centuries (millennia?) of silencing; out of the misogynist frying pan into the epistemological fire. Barthes questioned cultural investment in ‘the author’ as ‘self’ as the explanatory source of the meaning of texts.

**Universalism, essentialism and gender-scepticism**

The potential pitfalls of feminist theorising are multiple. Much early second-wave feminist writing has been criticised for assuming the uninflected universality of white middle-class women’s experience. Enthusiasm for the explanatory power of gender can lead — and has led — to neglect of other dimensions of social identity, other vectors of marginalisation, exclusion, subordination and oppression — race, ethnicity, class, sexuality. Sensitive to criticism from other ‘subaltern’ groups, feminists have often been their own most assiduous

---

14 'Can feminists take the thread offered by the collaborating Athena and the male gods to whom she has pledged allegiance and make it into an escape?; or will such a thread always lead back to unreflective collaboration?' (Nye 1988, p3)
critics (for example Nicholson and Seidman 1995). In fact, in many ways the self-critical awareness now characteristic of much feminist theory may dissipate the emancipatory potential of gender as an explanatory construct, hinder recourse to useful narratives of women’s experience, and lead to a sort of epistemological — and political — paralysis.15

Bordo (Bordo 1990) provides a thoughtful discussion of the dilemmas of what she calls feminist ‘gender-scepticism’. She asks, ‘just how many axes [of the social constructions of identity and power] can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?’ (Bordo 1990, p139).

(Key) differences distinguish the universalization of gender theory from the metanarratives arising out of the propertied, white, male, Western, intellectual tradition. ... [That tradition] produced no self-generated practice of self-interrogation and critique of its racial, class, and gender biases — because they were largely invisible to it. ... Feminist theory — even the work of white, upper-class women — is not located at the center of cultural power.

(Bordo 1990, p141)

In fact Bordo warns that ‘feminism stands less in danger of the “totalizing” tendencies of feminists than of an increasingly paralysing anxiety over falling (from what grace?) into ethnocentrism or “essentialism”’ (p142). As Foucault has declared, ‘everything is dangerous’ (Foucault 1983, p232).

In this thesis, I take the position that without categories and large conceptual schemas, such as patriarchy and phallogocentrism, political and theoretical thought is impossible. Furthermore,

If there is no aspect of the social world even remotely stable enough to refer to by a variable or to name as a process, then we seem to be left with no ‘social order’ to or against which action can be directed.

(Dixon and Jones 1998, p258)

Feminism and radical theory

Elizabeth Grosz points out that ‘there are ‘complex, reciprocal interactions between feminism and [other forms of] radical theory’ (Grosz 1990a, p103). Feminist theory has arisen out of resistance and activism; however feminists, and the ideas they develop, are also produced out of the philosophical-epistemological structures of mainstream society, in conflicctual yet constructive interaction. The theoretical and ideological positions of non-feminist radical theorists have also arisen out of activism, and movements of resistance and rebellion — including feminism. So

feminists must use whatever remains worthwhile in patriarchal discourses to create new theories, new methods, and values. This may imply taking patriarchal discourses as points of departure, allowing women’s experiences rather than men’s to select the objects and methods of investigation.

(Grosz 1990a, pp60-61)

‘Using’ Foucault and Derrida

In my reading of the texts, I adopt aspects of Derridean ‘deconstruction’, which excavates beneath the ‘natural’ and ‘taken for granted’ in language, and of Foucault’s ‘analytics of power’, in its aim of dis-covering the traces of institutional constructions of meaning, and

---

15 It is difficult to resist the observation that the reticence of feminism to take centre stage is reminiscent of the traditional nurturing self-sacrificial role of the mother who feeds the family first!
the role of knowledge in transactions of power.\footnote{16} Derrida and Foucault focus on the relational character of power and of rhetorically created epistemological categories, whereby the certainties and polarities claimed as ‘natural’ have been discursively transformed from difference into hierarchy by repression and preference. I borrow the concepts of ‘deconstruction’ and the ‘analytics of power’ strategically, and make no attempt to be ‘accurate’ in the use of the ‘techniques’, since, as Spivak says, ‘deconstruction successfully puts the ideology of “correct readings” into question’ (Spivak 1983, p186). ‘Foucault is highly suspicious of claims to universal truths. He doesn’t refute them; instead, ... he examines the social functions ... concepts have played in the context of practices.’ (Rabinow 1984, p4) Foucault himself suggests that the ‘Foreword’ to The Order of Things should perhaps be headed ‘Directions for Use’. Not because I feel that the reader cannot be trusted: he [sic] is, of course, free to make what he will of the book he has been kind enough to read. What right have I, then, to suggest that it should be used in one way rather than another? (Foucault 1970)

Paradoxes arise in deploying for feminist purposes ‘a series of methods that make no claim to everlasting or eternal value (as does truth) but which may be useful at some times’ (Grosz 1990a, p86). In questioning and challenging patriarchal forms of knowledge, on the ground that there is no universal truth, feminist theorists cannot then claim the status of truth for their alternative reading. ‘[Feminist] challenges to phallocentrism do not necessarily aim to replace patriarchal falsehoods with feminist truths, but to reveal the investment patriarchal knowledge have in both representing and excluding women’ (Grosz 1990a, p91).

Foucault does not claim the status of truth or authority for his own work. He considers them ‘useful fictions’, that is, tools or tactics of challenge. They are oppositional discourses to those which aspire to truth, authority and power. Each of his books is an examination of quite specific forms of knowledge.

(Foucault 1990a, p86)

Foucault himself is inconsistent. Having declared that ‘Nothing is fundamental’ (Rabinow 1984, p247), he tells Paul Rabinow that ‘Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental to any exercise of power’ (p252).

Foucault argues that ‘[k]nowledges, truths, and sciences are ... instruments and effects of power’ (Grosz 1990a, p89), but he ‘refuses to equate power with a social structure (such as patriarchy), or with social institutions and practices (such as the family)’ (p87). However, although Foucault declares that there are no general structural formations, he identifies as ‘the continuing object in all his work ... the concept of reason, so highly esteemed in science and philosophy, ... based on the exclusion of unreason, the passions, the body ...’ (Grosz 1990a, p80). So ‘he examines the social functions ... concepts have played in the context of practices. ... Foucault’s aim is to understand the plurality of roles that reason, for example, has taken as a social practice in our civilization’ (Rabinow 1984, p4). This maps well onto my aim of identifying the cultural dominance of the masculine, and of patriarchal dualist schemas, and tracing the ways in which they circulate through architectural texts, influencing the formation of attitudes to the theory and practice of architecture.\footnote{17}

---

\footnote{16} I borrow aspects of both ‘archaeology’ and ‘genealogy’ in Foucault’s work. In my discussion of Foucault and Derrida I draw on the enlightening explication of these thinkers and their relations with feminism provided by the philosopher Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz 1990a; 1990b).

\footnote{17} See later in this chapter for a discussion of the place of ‘unreason, the passions, the body’ in the gendered dualisms which in patriarchal terms structure much of western thought.
Masculism in Foucault and Derrida

I adopt the ambivalent attitude to deconstruction recommended by Gayatri Spivak: she finds it ‘illuminating as a critique of phallocentrism; second, it is convincing as an argument against the founding of a hysteroncentric to counter the phallocentric discourse; third, as a “feminist” practice itself, it is caught on the other side of sexual difference’ (Spivak 1983, p184). Spivak quotes Derrida as saying ‘those women feminists so derided by Nietzsche, they are men. Feminism is but the operation of a woman who wishes to resemble a man, the dogmatic philosopher, claiming truth, science, objectivity, that is to say all the virile illusions’ (Derrida 1979, p64, quoted in Spivak 1983, pp182-183). The irony does not completely camouflage the masculine voice.

Aspects of Foucault’s work also raise questions. On the whole he appears to be either unaware of or uninterested in the workings of gender in the discursive and non-discursive formations he examines. However, his masculine point of view is betrayed in an interview with Paul Rabinow, published under the title ‘Space, Knowledge and Power’. Referring to the film ‘Les Filles de noces’ he says, referring to a more pleasant and sociable past,

‘The brothel is in fact a place, and an architecture, of pleasure. … The men of the city met at the brothel; they were tied to one another by the fact that the same women passed through their hands, that the same diseases and infections were communicated to [sic] them. There was the sociality of the brothel.’

(Foucault, interview in Rabinow 1984, p252)

Foucault elaborates on his thesis that ‘[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental to any exercise of power.’ (Rabinow 1984, p252):

‘from the eighteenth century on, every discussion of politics as the art of the government of men [sic] necessarily includes a chapter or a series of chapters on urbanism, … and on private architecture … [T]he cities … served as the models for the governmental rationality that was to apply to the whole of the territory.’

(Foucault, interview, in Rabinow 1984, pp240-241).

And

‘For me, architecture … [serves] to ensure a certain allocation of people in space, a canalization of their circulation, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations… a plunge into a field of social relations in which it brings about some specific effects.’

(Foucault, interview in Rabinow 1984, p232).

Taking a patrician view of the relations with his architect of the individual client, Foucault ignores the effects of the built environment on those with no influence over the ‘certain allocation of people in space’. He declares that ‘the architect has no power over me. If I want to tear down or change a house that he [sic] built for me, put up new partitions, add a chimney, the architect has no control’ (Foucault, interview in Rabinow 1984, pp247-248). However a comment about Le Corbusier in the same interview seems to contradict his

18 ‘Womb-centred’.
19 As Derrida himself claims (see Derrida 1979).
20 The standpoint is clear: the ‘sociality’ is very much a brotherhood, and women are, as with Lévi-Strauss, objects of exchange, while Foucault assumes that it was the women who communicated the diseases to the men, not the reverse.
21 ‘At the outset, the notion of police applied only to the set of regulations that were to assure the tranquility of a city’ (the Greek polis = city).
22 Rather like Le Corbusier himself, Foucault equates himself with Everyman, who for him means everyone.
assumption of individual freedom; he sees Le Corbusier's authoritarian, even totalitarian, approach to city planning as dedicated to liberating effects, regardless of outcomes.

'Le Corbusier ... is described today — with a sort of cruelty that I find perfectly useless — as a sort of crypto-Stalinist. He was, I am sure, someone full of good intentions and what he did was in fact dedicated to liberating effects. Perhaps the means he proposed were in the end less liberating than he thought, but, once again, I think that it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom.'

(Foucault, interview in Rabinow 1984, p245)

However it can be inherent in the structure of things to impede, frustrate and deny freedom (for instance in harem, ghettos, poverty-stricken Third World barrios and high-rise public estates), and in the event the means prescribed by Le Corbusier were often such as to do just this. In such cases the means are the architecture.

Foucault's 'analytics of power'

In spite of his rather naive view of architecture and its potential for affecting people's lives, and his apparent lack of awareness of the effects of gender, Foucault's 'analytics of power' (Grosz 1990a, p86) focuses on uncovering the traces of the institutional construction of meanings and their deployment in fields of knowledge which have tangible effects on the life of subjects. He argued that discourses do not merely reflect external realities, but that discursive formulations — in particular institutional / professional discourses — constitute economies of knowledge, significance, and power which have their effects in the 'real world' (see Foucault 1972). Foucault saw his writing as taking the form of oppositional discourses examining specific fields of knowledge, which while challenging the claims to truth and authority of the discourses he examined, did not themselves claim the status of truth.

Foucault's approach is particularly relevant to the examination of 'local discursivities' such as that I undertake in this thesis. Architecture is both a discipline and an institution, with a formative role in the delineation and construction of space, the systems which organise its use, and the discourses which influence its interpretation. Given the political impetus for writing the thesis, my concern is not merely with language per se, but with the complicity of language with the workings and effects of manifested, material power and its intersection with gender.

Derrida and deconstruction

In cultural studies and architectural criticism, the post-structuralist practice of 'deconstruction' unravels the 'political economy' of cultural phenomena interpreted as texts (including the 'texts' provided by buildings and built environments). Derrida criticised three aspects of the symbolic order, the construction of meaning in western culture: logocentrism, phallocentrism and dualism. Derrida's aims in deconstruction are to destabilise the 'natural' in language to uncover 'the social power that fixes meanings constructive of identities, — spaces and disciplines' (Dixon and Jones 1998, p255), and to expose the logic, presuppositions and structures which constitute the dominant traditions of western thought.

Deconstruction employs marginal and close readings to seek out traces and marks of textuality and materiality, key images, structures, metaphors necessary for the texts to function in the cultural landscape. It searches out for instance the dichotomies and binary oppositions in western thought — one of the binary terms defining the terrain of the other as Other, opposite, subordinate, inferior — and challenges the structuring role of these unequal dichotomies in discourses of knowledge, and the necessity to such discourses of the muted, suppressed term.23 Grosz's list ('only some examples') of these oppositional binaries,

---

23 See my discussion of dualisms below.
which ‘have figured in our history since ancient Greece, guiding both philosophical and everyday thought’, commences with ‘good/bad’ and concludes with ‘man/woman’ (Grosz 1990a, p93).

A feminist has no difficulty in agreeing with Derrida’s objections to phallocentrism, logocentrism and hierarchical dualism, and with his claim, as presented by Grosz,

that these binary pairs do not define two equal and independent terms ... [but] that the first represents a positive and the second a negative value, a deprived or lacking version of the first. Derrida’s critique consists above all in demonstrating that the positive terms ... are in fact intimately dependent on, and can themselves be defined by, their opposition to the negative terms.

(Grosz 1990a, p93)

For Derrida the ‘excluded’ Other is constitutive of a dominant epistemological category, and leaves traces within its borders; the very existence of Other-ness delineates the boundaries. My feminist analysis will follow those traces of the excluded ‘feminine’ within the body of architectural discourse, which mark the delineation of the boundaries of what/who is accepted within — and what/who is refused by — the institution of Architecture; and the uses to which the Otherness of the feminine are put in the discourse.

**Feminist theory and cultural practice**

In the decades since the initiation of the second-wave women’s movement, feminist theory and practice have increased in epistemological and political diversity. Hanna presents a discussion of the spectrum of feminist approaches to architecture and architectural research: she presents, as a framework for her discussion, three categories, ‘liberal humanist feminist’, ‘critical theory feminist’ and ‘postmodern feminist’ (Hanna 1996). A more generic, more detailed, and more complex philosophical exegesis can be found in Nye (Nye 1988), while Tong identifies a dozen categories and sub-categories, pointing out that the ‘boundaries’ are fluid (Tong 1989).

As Tong points out in *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*, feminism is not a monolithic ideology, but a diversity of ‘partial and provisional’ sets of questions about and ‘answers to the “woman question(s)”, [each] providing a unique perspective with its own methodological strengths and weaknesses’ (Tong 1989, p1), but intersecting with and reinforcing each other. It is a sign of the developing complexity and diversity of feminist thought that in the second edition of her book, *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction* (Tong 1998), Tong amends, adds to, and complicates the list of ‘categories’ of feminism provided in her earlier text, and adds multicultural and global feminism, and ecofeminism. She presents a lucid exposition of each, and presents their strengths and weaknesses, and points of disagreement.

---

24 Her list still includes liberal, Marxist and socialist, radical, psychoanalytic, existentialist, and postmodern feminisms. However she now distinguishes radical-cultural from radical-libertarian feminism, and adds ‘gender’ feminism to psychoanalytic feminism. This taxonomy may be compared with that of Hanna, produced in specific relation to architecture.

25 The politico-theoretical landscape has been further complicated with recognition that gender differences intersect with differences in race, class, ethnicity and culture, and that women’s experiences interests and attitudes should not be generalised and stereotyped, whether by patriarchy or by feminism. The ‘ecofeminist’ is the most recently recognised theoretical / ethical stance; it integrates feminism with a commitment to ecologically responsible action, and clearly has direct relevance to the practice of architecture. It thus combines aspects of the liberal and socialist (engaging different strategies for realising social justice), the radical (celebrating sexual / gender difference and the value of women’s material experience), and the postmodernist (delighting in ‘alterity’). These last three stances in feminism make very clear the inherent contradictions in the apparently coherent systems of thought which in the
The work of the critic implies a political stance, a commitment to the possibility of alternative ways of being. The liberal, equal-opportunity feminist position asks that women be enabled to take an equal place in existing social and economic systems, while leaving these structures effectively unchallenged and unchanged. Any feminist analysis of architecture which extends beyond this will of necessity propose either implicitly or explicitly a feminist approach to architecture, a feminist revisioning of the culture and project of architecture in general. All such work, along the spectrum from the liberal to the radical, whether based in assumptions of similarity or difference between women and men, whether or not predicated on the necessity for revolution, must confront a philosophical and logistic predicament. Egalitarian demands based on claims of women's similarity with men leave little space for specifically feminist interpretations, while emphasis on difference may give rise to a radical feminist essentialism not easily distinguishable from patriarchal stereotyping.

In taking a postmodernist feminist position in my theoretical work I accept the assumption that meta-narratives, such as the Enlightenment story of human progress in reason and freedom, have lost their epistemological privilege (Lytard c1984). However there are political implications in taking as given the postmodernist claim of the discursively constructed, and thus culturally contingent, nature of subjectivity and human values. Rejection of all meta-narratives undermines feminist conjectures about the nature and workings of patriarchy, while critiques which undermine the possibility of an appeal to basic value judgements and truth claims provide unstable ground for emancipatory practice. However, I agree with McNay:

For feminists, then, it is not so much a question... of being for or against metanarratives; rather it is a case of establishing which narratives blunt sensitivity to difference and which narratives are essential to examine and challenge large-scale gender inequality.
(McNay 1992, p126)

Patriarchy

The literal meaning of patriarchy, in anthropological terms, is the rule of the father (see Strathern 1985). In less literal terms it is a synecdoche — standing in for systemic and systematic masculine dominance of culture. The 'meta-narrative' of patriarchy is fundamental to most feminist critiques of gender inequality in society (see Lerner 1986). Patriarchy is a ubiquitous term in feminist writing, often used loosely to signify the structures of masculine authority and dominance in human affairs. In Chapter 2 I discuss ways in which the built environment can be seen to manifest and contribute to the maintenance of a patriarchal social order. The concept of patriarchy circulates within my text and the feminist texts I refer to.

Marxist-socialist feminism views patriarchy as the structure of power relations in society, with a fundamentally material base in men's historical control over women, by analogy with class-based structures of domination and oppression (see Hartmann 1976). For psychoanalytical feminists, drawing on the Oedipal mythologies of Freud and later Lacanian poststructural interpretations, patriarchy is the configuration of paternal authority in the unconscious as the source of the Symbolic Order, and the origin of language and culture. A politicised psychoanalytical interpretation sees patriarchy in terms of power relations, as the internalised ideological form of women's oppression located in each person's

name of ordering human experience and 'improving' human life have led to material oppression of marginalised groups and suppression of their cultures, and severe and possibly irrevocable damage to the earth's eco-systems.

As an architect my position is probably closer to Hanna's 'critical theory feminist', but with a strong ecological base, in which I attempt to avoid the essentialism of much eco-feminism.

Using 'ideology' in the Marxian / Althusserian sense of 'false consciousness': see for example Mitchell (1974)
unconscious. Recent feminist work has suggested that since the Enlightenment, with its
declarations of individual freedom and equality among men, the ‘burden’ of paternal
authority is now shared among all men in a ‘fraternal’ alliance (from liberté, égalité, fraternité
to Big Brother). (See Pateman 1988; MacCannell 1991.)

For an eloquent and comprehensive description of patriarchy I turn to Marilyn French,
writing in the context of a discussion of the possibility of a ‘feminist aesthetics’. French’s
forthright analysis identifies the main themes that I trace in my reading of the texts of
architecture in the twentieth century.

Patriarchy is a way of thinking, a set of assumptions that have been translated into
various structures or ideologies. The assumptions are, first: males are superior to
females. Their superiority may be granted by a deity or by nature, but it is absolute
in conferring on men authority over women. Second: males have individual destinies;
they are promised domination, a surrogate godhead, transcendence over the natural
world through power in heroism, sainthood, or some form of transcendent paternity —
foundings a dynasty, an institution, a religion, or a state, or creating an enduring
work of art or technology. Third: the form taken by patriarchy is hierarchy, a
structure designed to maintain and transmit power from spiritual father to spiritual
son. This form absolutely excludes females unless they “make themselves male”...
Females have only a “natural” destiny; interchangeable parts of nature’s cycles, they
are maids (in both senses), who become mothers, and finally widows (or hags), in
which avatar they are expendable.

Finally: domination is divine, so to pursue it is noble, heroic, glorious. The material to
be dominated is, essentially, nature — all women; the body and emotions; “bestial
men”; and natural processes, the flux and transitoriness of time, material decay, life
itself.

(French 1993, p69)

**Feminist theory and oppositional dualisms in western thought**

It is a major tenet of feminist theory that a defining characteristic of modern western culture
is its dependence on oppositional dualism, and that the archetypal dyad is that which opposes
‘male’ and ‘female’. This is inextricably entwined with the opposition of Culture and Nature.

‘Since its emergence as a separate discipline in ancient Greece, western philosophy has
exerted a powerful influence on conceptions, ideals and values in everyday life as well as in
the production of discourses and knowledges.’ (Grosz 1990b, p147) Ideas and concepts
originating in ancient Greece still pervade western thinking, in terms of academic philosophy
and in everyday life. According to Genevieve Lloyd in her exposition of the gendering of
western culture, *The Man of Reason*,

From the beginnings of philosophical thought, femaleness was symbolically
associated with what reason supposedly left behind — the dark powers of the earth
goddesses, immersion in unknown forces associated with mysterious female powers.
The early Greeks saw women’s capacity to conceive as connecting them with the
fertility of Nature. ...

These symbolic associations lingered in later refinements of the ideas and the ideals of
Reason; maleness remained associated with a clear, determinate mode of thought,
femaleness with the vague and indeterminate.

(Lloyd 1984, p2)
Lloyd presents the Pythagorean table of opposites, formulated in the sixth century BC, which set out ten pairs of principles in hierarchical opposition: ‘limit/unlimited [sic], odd/even, one/many, right/left, male/female, rest/motion, straight/curved, light/dark, good/bad, square/oblong’ (Lloyd 1984, p3). In Pythagoreanism the place of man becomes the conspicuous centre of the cosmos and the cosmogony (the origin story). Following ‘the primary Pythagorean contrast between form and formlessness’, in later Greek philosophy the terms on the male side of the table were construed as superior to those on the other. This distinction extended to the articulation of the contrast between form and mere matter, and reflected the ancient Greek understanding of the different roles of the sexes in procreation, in which they saw the male as providing the active formative principle, the female providing and then nurturing the passive matter (see Lange 1983).

‘Me Tarzan, You Jane’:

With the synthesis of Classical thought and Christian doctrine during the Middle Ages, different interpretations of the nature of the male / female dichotomy, whether or not based on the exclusion of women from reason, were all grounded in the subordination of the female, in her earthly languor, to man, seen as made in the image of God. The figure of the female-Nature allegory changed its emphasis with Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who brought together the concepts of the mind’s domination over matter, male domination over the rest of creation, and the conflation of Nature with the female (Lloyd 1984, p12). Bacon identified ‘knowable Nature’ with woman: ‘the task of science is the exercise of the right kind of male domination over her. ‘Let us establish a chaste and lawful marriage between Mind and Nature’ he writes [in The Refutation of Philosophies]’. (p11)

With the scientific revolution commencing in the sixteenth century, and during the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, European philosophy developed a new conceptual schema relating God, rationality, nature and Man, challenging the basic tenets of Christianity, and substituting a belief in reason as the route to knowledge and fulfillment. They saw history as the record of progress of mankind towards reason and perfection. Descartes (1596-1650), now notorious for his doctrine of the radical separateness of mind and body, claimed in his Discourse on Method (Descartes 1668) to have developed a certain method of arriving at Truth in the sciences, using the cognitive exercise of the mind, in private abstract thought, based on Reason. His method was founded on the distinction between the mind and the body, and the conflation of the bodily and the non-rational, and created ‘a vision of a unitary pure thought, ranging like the common light of the sun over a variety of objects’ (Lloyd 1984, p47). Descartes gives his name to the concept of ‘cartesian dualism’. Feminist studies have shown that supposedly neutral and objective discourses

28 The dualism was configured in various ways. Plato distinguished between Matter and transcendent Ideal Form (the famous allegory of the Cave), which Aristotle saw as difference as lying between reason (the intelligible principles of material things), and sense experience. Aristotle also stated that just as for the good governance of the state, because of their greater powers of reason humans were to rule over animals, citizens over slaves, and fathers over children, men were by nature the rulers of women (Politics Book I).

29 By the late nineteenth century scientific speculation in darwinian biology, genetics and medicine gave a scientific plausibility to this ‘sexual dimorphism’, the supposed evolution of ever greater difference between the sexes, as men achieved ever greater transcendence of mere nature, represented by woman, who remained indelibly linked with Man’s low origins. In Evil Sisters Bram Dijkstra explores how in the early twentieth century these ideas, legitimated by ‘science’, became embedded in the popular culture. Dijkstra points out the combined racism and sexism of the Tarzan narratives, first published in 1912. Far from being the primitive ‘Man of the Jungle’, the Anglo-saxon Tarzan (Lord Greystoke) was ‘a principled, morally and physically superior white man in ... primal Africa, [who] rapidly revealed himself to be the perfect metaphor symbolic representative of higher civilization’s never-ending quest to transcend the limitations placed upon modern man by the brutal demands of predatory nature’ (Dijkstra 1996, p75). See Chapter 6, note 48.

30 Ironically, as Wertheim points out, Descartes’s arguments could be used to further women’s cause. ‘His insistence that mind and matter were utterly distinct challenged the Aristotelian view that women were
are shaped by pairs of dualisms, hierarchical pairs which though value-laden are assumed to inhere in the order of nature. These devalue women, particularly their bodies and their labour, just as they sanction the domination of nature. Social thought reflected the gendered dualist division of reality, applying it to human beings. Rousseau (1712-78), for instance, was committed to the view that 'emotional woman' is the ideal complement for 'rational man'. In Emile, a classic text on educational philosophy, Rousseau declared the development of rationality as the most important goal for boys — but not for girls (Rousseau 1979).

**The pervasive presence of oppositional dualism**

The pervasive presence of oppositional dualisms in the western symbolic order is shown by the range of paired terms in the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right</td>
<td>left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light</td>
<td>dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clarity</td>
<td>obscurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heaven</td>
<td>earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purity</td>
<td>impurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soul / mind</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>unreason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationality</td>
<td>irrationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>order</td>
<td>chaos / disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mental</td>
<td>physical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transcendent</td>
<td>immanent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abstract</td>
<td>concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active</td>
<td>passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominant</td>
<td>muted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strong</td>
<td>weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hard</td>
<td>soft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessor</td>
<td>possessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civilisation</td>
<td>'the primitive'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mentally inferior to men because their bodies were less perfect than men's. If mind operates independently of matter, then nothing about the female body could imply a deficiency of the female intellect. (Wertheim 1995, p101)

31 Even to list these dualist pairs may seem to represent acceptance of their 'truth'. The problem of implicit 'essentialism' haunts feminist analyses of the status quo; a feminist exegesis which sets out the matrix of patriarchal meanings can have the effect of appearing to legitimate and underpin the very patriarchal structures the analysis was intended to destabilise and subvert. In this thesis I take no position on the 'innate' differences between men and women; the thesis is concerned to explore the assumptions about gender (roles, differences, meanings) implicit and explicit in the discursive field of architecture, and the ways in which these are articulated and circulated. The interaction between discourse and 'reality' is complex: but the cultural inertia shown by the extremely slow rate of change in the gendered character of the architecture profession is perhaps evidence of the power of the discursively constructed and almost mythic masculine image of architecture.

32 Had this list been constructed during the classical Greek period, 'human - non-human' would also have appeared. In nineteenth century Australia, 'legal person - legal non-person' could still have been included.

33 The clear difference in meaning between 'master' and 'mistress' is no linguistic accident.
culture: nature
art: craft
‘western’: ‘eastern’ (orientalism)
universal: particular
singular: multiple
unitary: diverse
high: low (metaphorically and literally)
vertical: horizontal
straight: curved
objectivity: subjectivity
separation: integration
exclusion: inclusion
distance: proximity
public: private / domestic
polis (πόλις): oikos (οικός) (home)
exterior: interior
open: closed

These gendered oppositions are to be found in texts and genres which do not thematise
gender but rather purport to portray “the human condition”\textsuperscript{35}, or in the case of architectural
texts, to prescribe for the environment of human life. In Chapters 6-8 I examine their traces
in my selected architectural texts, and explore the role of masculine constructs of reality and
hierarchies of significance.

Critiques of dualism

Feminist theorists are not alone in questioning the reductivism of dualist constructions of
human ‘reality’. For instance, Elizabeth Grosz (1994) interrogates the mind / body
opposition by exploring the work of a number of key philosophers who problematise both
dualism and reductionism, among them Freud, Lacan, Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze.
These philosophers affirm the productivity of bodies, and their inherent or biological
openness to social inscription. (However all ignore the sexual and gendered specificity of
bodies.) On the other hand, Gatens (1994) argues that, by virtue of implicit assumptions of
this kind, much feminist theory itself remains committed to the fundamental dualisms of
modern philosophy — the dualisms of nature / culture, mind / body, public / private. From
Wollstonecraft on, many liberal feminists have associated the liberation of women with the
ability to transcend nature and mere animal functions; some radical-cultural feminists and
eco-feminists claim and celebrate many of the female terms of the dichotomies, while
rejecting their devaluation in phallogocentric thought.

Marilyn Frye prefers to characterise cartesian ‘dualism’ as ‘pseudodualist monistic logic’
(Frye 1996, p997). The terms in opposition have no status of equality; positive value is
ascribed to one term, and negative connotations to the other, so the distinction between
opposites in western thought, rather than A / B, is A / not-A.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, the universal
reach of the A / not-A distinction means that ‘woman’, defined as ‘not-man’, is cast into ‘an
infinite undifferentiated plenum, unstructured, formless’ (p999). So not only are women
’easily associated with disorder, chaos, irrationality and impurity’, but ‘Woman’ is available

\textsuperscript{34} The workings of hierarchy are however complex. For instance during the colonial era in Australia,
women were called upon to provide the civilising influence over the baser tendencies of men – the terms
exchange places, but the gendered hierarchy remains untouched; see Summers (1975).

\textsuperscript{35} For instance Cantrell (1990) examines the dualisms in Samuel Beckett’s Molloy, with its clear structure
of Cartesian divisions, to provide a dramatic example of the presence of a language of gender informing
even a minimalist literary text.

\textsuperscript{36} For a discussion of the difference between A / B and A / not-A, and the implications of this dualism for
feminism, see Jay (1981).
to be used allegorically and symbolically. 'She' can be a car, a boat, nature, a national anthem, or just 'things' (‘she’ll be right, mate’). As the muted side of the cartesian dyad male / female, ‘woman’ as mythological being, and ‘the feminine’ and ‘the female’ as necessary ontological categories, bear a heavy epistemological burden in western culture.

**The claim of masculine transcendence**

Claims for masculine rationality and for a special creativity, appealing to transcendent powers perhaps of divine origin, have a long history in the culture, and with the authority of convention no longer require the support of religion. These claims combine with the conflation / equation of women / woman / the feminine with Nature, whether seen in a conflictual relationship with culture and rational human order, or viewed as (back)ground to architecture, or as source of inspiration, to provide legitimation for masculine domination and control. The contrast between the ‘natural’ and rational human (masculine) order is often seen in terms of geometry and abstraction.

The cultural history of masculine control engages with that of the privileging of vision.

> [The] economy of vision continues to locate architecture institutionally. Architecture is understood as a kind of object to be looked at, inhabited by a viewer who is detached from it, inhabited ... by being looked at, whether it be by the user, visitor, neighbor, critic, or reader of architectural publications. This general model of visuality still dominates current critical, theoretical, and historical discourse. ... Vision cannot be separated from the construction of space ...

(Wigley 1992, p362)

And this user, visitor, neighbour, critic or reader is generally presumed to be masculine. The 'male gaze', ubiquitous in feminist film theory (see Mulvey 1975), finds its way into much of the discourse; the view from a distance, observing, simplifying and controlling; it finds its symbolic expression in geometry and abstraction, often accompanied by claims of transcendence and even approximation to 'the sublime / divine' (see Wertheim 1995).

Underlying the gendered dyads are twin but contradictory assumptions, the assumption of ‘Man’ as universal human, and the assumption of the proximity of the masculine to the transcendent or divine. The association with masculinity of mathematics, as the symbolic measure of the divine order, has had a profound effect on western civilisation. It was based originally in Pythagorean metaphysics which proposed number as the basis of reality. The fulcrum of Pythagorean philosophy was the intersection of mathematics and transcendence with masculinity (Wertheim 1995). With the scientific revolution the symbolic dominance of the masculine and the transcendent has been compounded by the functional significance of numbers in the objective world, also under the control of men. Wertheim recounts the long history of the exclusion of women from the prestigious western institutions of mathematics and its intimately related sciences, physics and astronomy.

**Gender and genius**

Another pre-Romantic translation into the human sphere of the notion of the relation of Man with God was that creativity and genius were the manifestation of the divine in the human (man). Architectural discourse appropriates not only the assumption that creativity and genius are gendered masculine, but the related patriarchal myths of the Sublime, of Authority

---

37 ‘La Marseillaise’.
38 Jeremy Bentham’s model prison the ‘Panopticon’ is the paradigmatic case, and has been taken up by postmodern theorists from Foucault (1979a) on, as symbolic of the disciplinary régime of instrumental reason.
39 Le Corbusier’s youthful obsession with the straight line and the right angle is only an extreme case.
Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse

Chapter 5

and Rationality (see for example Lloyd 1984). The philosopher Roger Scruton describes '[t]he experience of architecture [as] a universal symbol for the spirit’s attempt to find a correspondence between itself and the world' (Scruton 1981, p218).

In *Gender and Genius*, Christine Battersby traces the epistemological shift from Enlightenment to Romantic attitudes to art and life, and genius. She points out that the Romantic myth of the genius attempts to reconcile conventional masculine claims to Reason and Objectivity with the notion of creativity as associated with madness, whether it is seen as originating with the Devil (exemplified in the story of Faust) or in the dark feminine depths of the unconscious, as theorised by Jung. So unconventional, even dangerous and antisocial behaviours are celebrated in the male genius (Byron, ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know’), but find a very different reception in a woman.\(^{40}\) According to Battersby the Romantic inheritance ‘assimilated and transmuted ... the older tradition of cultural misogyny ... [and] ... an older rhetoric of sexual exclusion that has its roots in Renaissance theories of art and sexual difference’ (Battersby 1989, p23). She points out the irony that ‘as a consequence of radical changes in aesthetic taste and aesthetic values’ fundamental to the Romantic vision ‘qualities previously downgraded as “feminine” had become valuable’, and were considered crucial to the creation of the authentic work of art.

**Masculine archetypes and heroic masculinity**

The notion of the genius as masculine voyager in search of intellectual and spiritual truth is manifested in the material world as the hero, the explorer and the pioneer; they appear in the archetypal stories engaged in the quest for knowledge, of the Self, of the antagonist, of woman (‘and Adam knew Eve his wife’), of Nature, of territory. Narratives of heroism deploy metaphors of desire, domination, possession. In what Davis calls the ‘paternal Romance’ (Davis 1993), masculine archetypes populate the narratives of western culture — God, the Hero, the Father, the Son — and continue to configure the locus and vectors of power, authority and reason in the masculine, defined in opposition to the feminine.

In *Archetype. A Natural History of the Self*, a distinctly non-feminist text, Stevens identifies Jung’s archetypes as ‘the Hero, the Anima, the dominance and proprietorial archetypes in the boy, the Haitera [Love Goddess] and Animus archetypes in the girl’ (Stevens 1982, p.149).\(^{41}\) According to Jungians, ‘the feminine’ participates in creativity (as the Anima), but only as mother, muse or (supportive) mate to the Man.

> In no realm of human endeavour is the contrasexual complex more crucial than that of creativity. The achievements of men as prophets, seers, artists and creative thinkers is ... dependent upon the successful adoption of a receptive attitude to ideas and symbols merging from normally unconscious regions of the personality [the (feminine) Anima — Jung’s ‘eternal image of Woman’].

(Stevens 1982, p150)

This archetypal Anima is of course not available to an *actual* woman, who merely *is* female. Her ‘triumphant achievement’, according to Stevens (1982, p.190) is to bear children. Hence ‘the emphasis on ‘gestation’ and ‘incubation’ made by innovative men when they describe ... the manner by which their major insights came to birth’ (pp203-204).

Jung argues that ‘[g]irls in our society share in the masculine hero myths, because, like boys, they must also develop a reliable ego-identity and acquire an education’; and then

\(^{40}\) For a discussion of gendered attitudes to madness and genius, see Battersby (1989), in particular pp13-14, 31-33, 116-119.

\(^{41}\) The tone of Stevens’s text is sexist, even misogynist (see, for example Stevens, pp34-36, 191-2); however an anonymous reviewer from the *British Medical Journal* is quoted on the cover — ‘a major contribution to Jungian studies’. 
proceeds to recount a cautionary tale of an unhappy professional woman patient whom he advised to

sacrifice the “masculine” hero role. ... She began to see that for a man (or the masculine-trained mind in women) life is something that has to be taken by storm, as an act of the heroic will42; but for a woman to feel right about herself, life is best realized by a process of awakening.

(Jung, von Franz et al. 1969, p137).

Jung’s work has been popularised by Joseph Campbell’s writing on myth, which has a wide public and a pervasive influence. Campbell’s work is based on a mystical conviction that all myths, of whatever geographical, cultural or chronological provenance, are fundamentally the same (Campbell 1968), and centres on his favourite mythic personage, the Hero.

Hero myths all have a great deal in common (Campbell, 1949 [1968]). The hero sets out ... and receives the call to adventure. He usually crosses some kind of threshold and is then subjected to a series of tests and ordeals. Eventually he undergoes the ‘supreme ordeal’ ... and his triumph is rewarded with ‘the treasure hard to obtain’, e.g. the throne of a kingdom and a beautiful princess for his bride. ... The hero asserts his masculinity through his combativeveness, his readiness to overcome ... fearful obstacles ..., and he demonstrates his courage by his willingness to conquer the unknown abyss, the terrifying otherness of the female, to penetrate her, to ‘know’ her.

Stevens 1982, p129)43

The stories abound with conflict and courage, and tests of individual strength and perseverance44; for Jung and Campbell — and the conventional wisdom — all the domain of masculinity. Women who enter such myths do so as ‘Other’; as adjuncts to men’s stories in the supportive role (Penelope), as victims of men (Dido, Ariadne), or as monsters who defy masculine requirements of proper womanly behaviour (Medea).

Tracing the trajectories of masculinity

The trajectories within architectural discourse of the logic, metaphors and rhetoric of masculinity, in particular heroic masculinity, are complex and often contradictory. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 I trace these trajectories through my selected texts, exploring their generality and specificity, and the consistencies and differences in their deployment. As counterpoint to these traces I identify the absences of women and femininity, and/or their strategic appropriation to masculine ends.

42 The heroic is a potent idea: Stevens declares that Jung’s ‘main insights were derived from a heroic descent into the deeper reaches of his own personality ... the study of mythology ... and a careful analysis of dreams’ Stevens 1982, p22

43 It is not surprising that a Jungian such as Stevens should complain ‘That women would be forced [sic] by delusory theories to compete with men, on masculine terms and on masculine territory, is a madness generated by a culture whose members have become alienated from their archetypal roots’ (Stevens 1982, p174).

44 With equal, evangelical, conviction Campbell appropriates the Hero to the ideology of American individualism.
Chapter 6

Le Corbusier,
the City of Gentlemen and the Architecture of Man

My house is everyone's, anyone's house; it is the house of a gentleman living in our time.

From the start we had declared: 'Behind the wall, the gods play; they play with numbers, of which the universe is made up.'
(Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p17, on the Modulor)

Introduction

In this chapter and the next I trace the masculine gendering of 'Corbusian discourse', investigating both the writings of Le Corbusier himself, and what Bronwyn Hanna has called 'the many discourses that collide with his name over the course of this century' (Hanna 1988, p38). In this chapter I trace, through Le Corbusier's polemic writing on the built environment and his more 'autobiographical' texts, the themes identified by feminist theory and discussed in Chapter 5. I relate these themes to Le Corbusier's attitudes to the nature of human experience in the world, and by implication to masculinity and femininity, to nature and the Cosmos, to creativity, to technology, to progress, to work, to family life, to urban organisation and to architectural form.

The constellation of presences and absences, ideologies and objectives, concepts and assumptions, metaphors and symbols intersect and interact throughout the texts, so an ordered categorisation is difficult. I identify Le Corbusier as the archetypal, talismanic architect of Modernism, whose writing and buildings have had enormous influence on architectural discourse in the twentieth century. I show how Le Corbusier manifests in his writing, at times in an extreme and even fundamentalist fashion, the oppositional dualism so characteristic of patriarchal western thought. I explore how this dualism, which is manifested at the conceptual level in his ideological oscillation between materialism and idealism, and between rationalism and romanticism, places the 'masculine', the rational human being capable of transcendence and the sublime, in opposition to the 'feminine', whether in the sphere of ordinary life (women), or at the level of the symbolic (interpreted as 'woman' or the culturally constructed concept of 'the feminine'), symbolising nature, the primitive and the irrational. I demonstrate the intrinsic masculine bias of Le Corbusier's view of the world as shown in his proposition of the Modulor as paradigmatic human figure, his radical schemes for the reformation of cities, his proposals for a 'New Architecture', and his declarations on the prophetic and heroic role of the architect — creative Cartesian 'Man', clearly gendered male.

---

1 By contrast with Christine de Pizan's Book of The City of Ladies, a Mediæval utopian text (de Pizan 1998).
Le Corbusier: paradigmatic Man of Architecture and Planning

With my focus on the trajectory of gender, in reading texts by Le Corbusier himself I do not seek new historical, biographical, or political insights into the man or his work. I do not pretend to contribute to Corbusian history or biography, or to present a comprehensive study of Le Corbusier the man, Le Corbusier the artist, or Le Corbusier the architect and planner. Nor do I trace the evolution of Le Corbusier's ideas over time. In part this is because in contrast with his architectural 'language', his rhetoric in fact changed very little. However chiefly it is because the corpus of writing by and on him is now a fact of architectural life in which the dates either of original publication (in French), or of publication in English translation have little relevance. I have no recourse to primary sources other than the selected well-known published texts by Le Corbusier himself.

Le Corbusier has been dead for nearly forty years and (at least according to Charles Jencks) the Modern Movement that he so tenaciously and effectively promoted and archetypally stands for has been dead only a little less long (Jencks 1981, p.9). Architectural discourses and practices have changed radically in many ways, but the phantom of Le Corbusier is still everywhere present. A discussion of the nature of architectural discourse as it has affected the contemporary habitus of architecture could hardly avoid him. No study of the Modern Movement and its aftermath can omit him. As William Curtis has said, '[i]t is impossible to understand architecture in the twentieth century without first coming to terms with Le Corbusier' (Curtis 1986, Preface). Now some Postmodernists resist and react against his influence, while Late Modernists appropriate, mimic or even plagiarise his work (see Jencks 1981, p.7).

Research into his life and work continues, a 'flood of new findings [is] issuing from the Fondation Le Corbusier' (Curtis 1986, Preface'), and revised interpretations proliferate. According to Curtis, 'Le Corbusier needs this shake-up, for there was a tendency in an earlier generation to treat him as an unexamined fact of life' (Curtis

---

2 However I do speculate on his attitudes to women and femininity, as they impinge on the examination of gender in 'corbusian discourse', both by and about him.

3 Architectural historians still struggle to make sense of the dissonance between Le Corbusier's early 'Purist' work and, for instance, the chapel at Ronchamp.

4 See below in this Chapter his comments on the 1960 republication of Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning. His travel journal Journey to the East, originally written when he was 24 years old, was eventually published in 1966, 55 years after his journey. Le Corbusier made few amendments, and his careful annotations in the published version express no reservations about the juvenile text (Le Corbusier 1991a).

5 For most contemporary western architects, the tenets of the early Modern Movement no longer have the quality of doctrine. However 'Modernism' as a mode of putting buildings together, or merely as a style, remains as a potent source of precedent and inspiration. Glenn Murcutt is probably one of the few noted architects for whom Modernism still provides an ethical and aesthetic direction: 'Glenn Murcutt is able to combine a Romantic sensibility with the ethic of Modern architecture without diminishing either' (Drew 1985b, p.3).

6 The power of the myth to penetrate even popular culture is given by a double-page spread in the January 31 2000 issue of Time, advertising a Time / Malaysian Airlines quiz ('Win the trip of a lifetime!). In the context of 'achievements of the century', a quiz question on Le Corbusier was accompanied by a photograph of Ronchamp, with the text, 'Le Corbusier always thought big. Big buildings, big open spaces, big urban highways. This Swiss-born visionary was the most important architect of the 20th century, whose ideas revolutionized the way people regarded structures. Le Corbusier maintained that an industrial age deserved a brand-new architecture. His vision became known as the International Style, reflecting a cool beauty and an airy sense of space. Regarded as modern architecture's conscience, Corbusier [sic] continues to inspire generations of designers.' (Time / Malaysian Airlines PR 2000, p.4)
Books published on Le Corbusier in the 1990s include (Baker 1996; Brooks 1997; Vogt 1998; Etlin 1994) and the exhibition catalogue (Costantino and Ingersoll 1990). Writing about Le Corbusier over more than half a century ranges from the hagiographic to the hostile. Some critics, such as Charles Jencks, have written in both modes — and at times ‘in-between’ (Compare Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture (Jencks 1973a), The Language of Postmodern Architecture (Jencks 1981), and Jencks’s later re-writing of The Tragic View, Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture (Jencks 2000), with ‘Le Corbusier and the Tightrope of Functionalism’ (Jencks 1977). However, in reading writing about Le Corbusier I seek to show that the reception in mainstream architectural discourse produces ‘Le Corbusier’ as an almost mythological phenomenon in the history of architecture and has in essence changed little since his death. Neither the gendered, even misogynist, tenor of his language, nor the gender bias manifest in his ideas, evokes comment, and even recent readings are themselves still imbued with an uncritical, masculist, perspective.

**Why Le Corbusier?**

Le Corbusier’s texts ... have exercised an influence in the history of forms comparable only to that of the great theoretical writings of the Renaissance.’ (Choay 1960, p9) ‘Whatever Corbu planned and built, he tried to make speak in a universal language, applicable to all mankind, understandable in terms of both the past and the present, and prophetic of the future.’ (Blake 1960, p149; Blake 1963, p152) The ingenuous, almost breathless tone of such early writing on Le Corbusier has given way to more sophisticated and measured critique. However Le Corbusier probably remains the most important individual figure in the discourse of contemporary architecture. The 1987 exhibition to celebrate the centenary of his birth, at the Hayward Gallery in London, was entitled Le Corbusier. Architect of the Century — a standard characterisation of Le Corbusier. In his Preface to the 1987 catalogue (Raeburn and Wilson 1987), William Curtis describes Le Corbusier as ‘the most celebrated and the most criticized architect of this century’ and declares that ‘the architecture of the past fifty years here, as elsewhere, would be very different without his example and influence’ (Curtis 1987b, p7). In 1997 H Allen Brooks agrees with Choay that

No individual since the Renaissance, it could well be argued, has influenced our built environment more profoundly than Le Corbusier. Whether as writer, urbanist, or architect, his ideas — although not always his architectural forms — have had a dramatic impact on the world in which we live.

(Brooks 1997, ‘Preface’).

Le Corbusier is also probably the West’s most prolific architect, if unbuilt projects, painting and writing are added to the buildings actually completed (55) as the measure

---

7 As discussed in Chapter 4, only recently has research been published with a feminist theoretical position (see Hanna 1988; White 1988; Carranza 1994; Colomina 1996b; McLeod 1996).

8 Their titles are significant: Le Corbusier, the Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Eudoard Jeanneret (Baker), Le Corbusier’s Formative Years (Brooks), Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: the Romantic Legacy (Etlin), Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage: Toward an Archaeology of Modernism (Vogt): Themes from the patriarchal vocabulary — the quest origins, creativity itself as quest, the romantic hero, the noble savage.

9 ‘But he has remained for me the touch-stone of a great architect and, in spite of his undeniable faults, the standard.’ (Jencks 2000, p9)

10 Here I include his ideas and attitudes, his status as architect, his character as a man, and the mythical personage that has been constructed around his name.

11 A common epithet for Le Corbusier (see also Cohen 1989; Filler 1981). In 2000 Jencks writes, ‘Le Corbusier occupies the position he does, as the architect of the last century [sic], not only for embodying three periods, but for the content of his art, his message’ (Jencks 2000, p11).
of his opus. ‘In 1955 he said he had written forty-five books.’ (Guiton 1981, p.13) The names of the ‘Masters’\(^\text{12}\) — Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies Van Der Rohe, and perhaps Walter Gropius\(^\text{13}\) — form in effect a mantra representing ‘Modern Architecture’. With his projects, built and unbuilt, his thousands of drawings\(^\text{14}\) and his publications, in fact his strategic manipulation of the contemporary media of image-making\(^\text{15}\) (see Colomina 1987; Colomina c1994), ‘he bequeathed an entire imaginative universe combining visions of the future, perspectives on the past and an expanding family of forms’ (Curtis 1987a, p.23)\(^\text{16}\).

Judith Blau’s 1980 research, questioning New York architects on their reaction to a list of fifty noted architects (the questions were identified as ‘know’ and ‘like’, and the ratio of ‘like’ to ‘know’ calculated), produced a table of recognition and admiration in which only Le Corbusier achieved a 100 per cent recognition rating for ‘know’, with a

---

\(^{12}\) The terms ‘Master’, with its resonances of dominance, power and masculinity, circulates prolifically throughout accounts of the Modern Movement. Peter Blake’s *The Master Builders* is perhaps least resonant of Romantic claims, with its echoes of the justified authority of skill, experience and craftsmanship (in Australia the trade association of building contractors is called the Master Builders Association), but nonetheless it does evoke the masculine hierarchies of the medieval church-builders of Europe. First published in 1960, the year after the death of Wright, but within the life-times of Le Corbusier (died 1965) and Mies (died 1969), the book dealt with the architecture of the three men. Banham’s *Age of the Masters: A Personal View of Modern Architecture* (1975) stakes a claim for the greatness of modern architecture; Cresti’s *Le Corbusier* (1970) is in Hamlyn’s Twentieth-century Masters series. John Peter’s *Oral History of Modern Architecture* (1994) presents interviews in which ‘the most renowned modern masters express the ideas and ideals behind their works, which belong to one of the most significant movements in the history of architecture’ (synopsis - library catalogue entry). The interviewees include Wright, Le Corbusier, Mies, Gropius, and Saarinen, Kahn, Johnson, Niemeyer, Sert.

Bhatt and Scriver, surveying the architecture of post-colonial India, with particular reference to the neo-colonial legacies of the modern masters, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn (Bhatt and Scriver 1990) deploy multiple connotations of ‘master’ — a historical echo of the remote authority of the British Raj; the impact, catalytic effect and pervasive influence of the high Modernist tradition brought by the illustrious ‘Western master-builders’ (p.9), for instance the imprint in the planning of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) of ‘the most characteristic and imitated idiosyncrasies of the American master’ (Kahn; p.23); the status of some of ‘Le Corbusier’s Indian followers’ effectively in an ‘intimate apprenticeship with the French master’ (p.16); the current ‘post-colonial’ labour-intensive state of the construction industry in which permits buildings of grandeur and power to ‘maintain an almost ritualistic link with ... [the] heritage [of the temple builders]’ (p.7), reminiscent of the master builders of the medieval church. (I am indebted to Peter Scriver, who now teaches in the Adelaide University Architecture School, for his explanation of the complexity of the intended resonances of the term ‘master’ in this text, in the context of a discussion of gendered language.)

In the Fontana *Modern Masters* series, Le Corbusier (the only architect) finds himself in the company of scientists, philosophers, writers and revolutionaries such as Darwin, Einstein, Nietzsche, Jung, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Russell, Chomsky, Foucault, Derrida, Levi-Strauss, DH Lawrence, Proust, Joyce, Beckett, Marx, Lenin, Gramsci and Che Guevara (Gardiner 1974). The sole woman is Hannah Arendt, while, ironically, the sole non-European is Gandhi, a reminder of the possibility of other, non-Western concepts of (self-)mastersy. As Bhatt and Scriver point out, the grand scale of the projects of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Le Corbusier’s Chandigarh and Kahn’s IIM, was ‘distinctly non-Gandhian’ (Bhatt and Scriver 1990, p.20).

\(^{13}\) Prak (1984, p.87) includes Gropius among those he calls the ‘Four Great Makers’. Banham (1975) commences his preceptive interpretation of ‘the Masters’ with photographs of the four.

\(^{14}\) According to Guiton he produced some 32000 drawings (Guiton 1981, p.11).

\(^{15}\) Wittkower, significantly an historian not an architect, somewhat apologetically describes him as ‘a cross between a prophet and a salesman of rare ability’ (Wittkower 1991, p.11).

\(^{16}\) Curtis’s entry in the catalogue of the Hayward Gallery’s 1987 centenary exhibition ‘Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century’ (Raeburn 1987; see below) borrows extensively from his 1986 publication *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms*. ‘He bequeathed a universe of forms, ideas, images, sagas, cities, visions of the future and perspectives on the past’. (Curtis 1986, p.223)
95 per cent rating on ‘like’ (quoted in Prak 1984, p89). (Louis Kahn and Frank Lloyd Wright rated 99 per cent on ‘know’. ) Prak attempts a measure of the ‘pecking order in architecture’ in terms of the length and number of printed columns exclusive of illustrations dedicated to a number of well-known architects in three texts — Knaur’s Lexicon of 1963, Pevsner’s Dictionary of Architecture of 1975 and Richards’s Who’s Who in Architecture of 1977. Le Corbusier comes second after Mies van der Rohe in Knaur and Richards, but first in Pevsner (Prak 1984). Le Corbusier’s name, his ideas and his iconic buildings are referred to in contemporary texts on architecture more than those of any other architect.17 Given the capacity of the information media to spread both words and images (and of course the size of the world’s population now within reach of Western culture), he has probably been the most influential architect of all time. The Encyclopedia Britannica On-line responds to a search on ‘Le Corbusier’, ‘There are 2084 articles relevant to your search’. So I take Le Corbusier as paradigmatic — even archetypal.

Given the focus of this thesis on discourse, the importance of writing and in particular polemic within his total opus makes him an even more appropriate choice. As an exemplar of the masculine voice of mainstream architecture Le Corbusier remains both extraordinary — even extreme — and representative. He engaged with catholic breadth in the debate at a multiplicity of levels — the personal, the epistemological, the ontological and the instrumental. His writing is at times exemplary, both as generically representative of his times — which straddled two World Wars and a Depression — and as harbinger of the language of Modernism which became the lingua franca of contemporary architecture. But at times it is also extreme, even extremist, due to his almost evangelical fervour for the coming ‘great epoch’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p82) and his cry of ‘Architecture or Revolution’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p269) during the Modern Movement’s originary, agonistic time. His writing, and the Weltanschauung it reflects, in their extravagance and intemperance, illuminate the pervasive masculinity of Western thought in general, and its particular manifestations in architecture.

Le Corbusier and the discourse of architecture

Le Corbusier’s impact on the architecture of the twentieth century is manifest. As a site for demonstrating the operation of gender in contemporary architectural thought, it could almost be said that had he not existed he would have had to be invented — in fact Beatriz Cololina shows us that in many ways he did invent himself (Cololina 1987; Cololina 1993; Cololina c1994). ‘Le Corbusier ... sought to embed himself in discourse more thoroughly than any architect since the turn of the century’ (Green 1987, p110). And he was pre-eminently successful, at least within the sphere of architecture. By the mid 1930s his influence had spread outside western Europe. In spite of setbacks in Algeria and the USSR (see von Moos 1985, pp200-207)18, through the work of CIAM19 and his persistent efforts with bureaucracies and political figures of influence, including the Vichy régime during the German occupation of France, by the 1950s he was regarded as a worthy creator of nationalist symbols by

17 A count of references to Le Corbusier in the Indices of general texts on twentieth century western architecture, or even of texts dealing with the work of individual architects, invariably finds more references to Le Corbusier than to any other architect (except the protagonist in the case of writing on individual designers).

18 Between 1931 and 1942 Le Corbusier put forward twelve projects for the transformation of Algiers. None was carried out. But according to von Moos ‘the actual influence of the Algerian projects could hardly have been more far-reaching if they had actually been realized’ (von Moos 1985, p206).

19 Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne, a grouping of European avant-garde architects convened in 1928 to promote Modernist architecture. Le Corbusier was a founding member.
élites in the Third World (Brasilia and Chandigarh). The international scope of his engagement in the conceptualisation of the built environment has given him the status of a universal presence, and the persona which now circulates in the discourse has attained the status of myth.

Choay declares that ‘[f]or those who want to understand Le Corbusier, knowing his written work is as necessary as knowing his architecture’ (Choay 1960, p9). According to the Guitons, Le Corbusier’s entire work as an architect and urban planner is an attempt to propose a certain way of life, to discover our full human potential and reveal it through his architecture.

Such an architecture cannot be fully explained by drawings. ... Drawings were not enough. Language, which directly communicates with other people, was also necessary. Le Corbusier had to write.

(Guîton 1981, p11)

With the circulation of text and image his influence extended to countries where he designed and built no buildings, for instance Britain, and of course Australia. Forty can state in 1987: ‘[t]o a large extent, the history of Le Corbusier in Britain is the history of modern architecture in this country. In a way that has happened to no other architect, he has been used to personify the ideas, ideals, and the architecture of Modernism’ (Forty 1987, p35). As is the way of provincial cultures, Australian modernism drew somewhat more eclectically from all the icons of the Modern Movement; all had the status of masters from ’elsewhere’. A larger proportion of architecture was carried out in the public sector in Britain than in Australia, with a concomitant emphasis on social and planning issues (see Landau 1968). In Australia Le Corbusier’s planning philosophy had some influence at least in theory in the public housing sector, but on the whole his influence was as the source of an architectural credo, as the creator of memorable architectural forms, and as the Great Architect par excellence. His metamorphosis from the architect of geometrically ‘pure’ platonick forms to the constructor of almost archaic ‘primitive’ plastic forms (see Rowe 1987) permits him to serve as an architect ‘for all seasons’. Robin Boyd comments that ‘Le Corbusier clearly thought of himself as a Leonardo-of-all-trades’ (Boyd 1965, p94).

From the vantage point of western architecture at the end of the twentieth century Le Corbusier’s texts are ‘always already’ there. His books consist of collections of articles, re-used and often mutually and even internally inconsistent and self-contradictory, manifestoes, semi-legal rebuttals, apologias, ‘declarations of war’. Reprints of his original publications in the original and in translation, reconstructions of his texts (such as The Final Testament of Père Corbu and Journey to the East), ‘anthologies raisonné es’ of excerpts (Guîton 1981), interview transcriptions, interpretations, readings such as this one, critiques, all work within a discursive framework already marked by the presence of those original, even ‘originary’ texts, the circulation of aphorisms, the myths, the carefully constructed and arranged images (see Colomina 1987; Colomina 1993).

---

20 In relation to Lubetkin and Tecton’s Highpoint Towers, Banham says, ‘[t]he Corbusian inspiration need cause no surprises: his ideas went everywhere through the agency of intelligent men ... in revolt against their classical training’ (Banham 1975, p130).

21 A credo whose value was as much a result of its internal inconsistencies as of its passion and poetry.

22 In fact Le Corbusier’s Renaissance hero was Michelangelo (see Chapter 7).

23 My own bibliographical data base includes about one hundred texts on ‘Corb’, excluding those written by himself. There are of course hundreds more, probably thousands, if languages other than English and French are included.
Le Corbusier published his programmatic notes for a new architecture and a new city in *L’Esprit Nouveau* in 1920. Collected and published as *Vers une architecture* in 1923 (first published in English in 1929 as *Towards a New Architecture* (Le Corbusier 1970)), and the *City of Tomorrow* (Le Corbusier 1971, first English edition 1929; published in France in 1925 as *Urbanisme* ‘tout court’) these notes presented a manifesto for what was to become Modernism.24 These ‘seminal’25 texts are in effect gospels from the New Testament of early Modernism, while later writing on Le Corbusier as both architect and polemicist often have the character of the Acts of the Apostles.

**Reading the texts**


In the next chapter I concentrate on texts about Le Corbusier. Given the genesis of this thesis in a concern about the influence of the masculinility of architectural discourse, I

---

24 It is perhaps indicative of the reticent character of the British that the English titles show a subtle but meaningful shift from the original French titles; ‘une Architecture’ was translated as an Architecture rather than *One* Architecture, an alternative reading, while the addition of the words ‘New’ in one title and ‘Tomorrow’ in the other distanced the overtly revolutionary intentions of the texts from the present situation. The author of the texts, Le Corbusier himself, had no such reticence.

25 See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the gender implications of the loaded term ‘seminal’. I use the gendered term deliberately here.


27 Originally published as *Urbanisme* by Editions Crès, Paris, in 1925. Brooks reveals that *Urbanisme* was a complete reworking of a text entitled *Des Éléments Constructifs de la Ville*, commenced by Jeanneret in 1910, and developing many of the ideas of Camillo Sitte, with the design of the city ‘predicated on pedestrians’ (Brooks 1997, p207). *Urbanisme*, predicated on the automobile, in effect reversed most of his earlier dicta about the proper layout of cities, ‘with geometry now elevated from devil to deity’ (p207). Brooks sees Jeanneret’s year in Germany 1910-1911 as having ‘converted [him] from a medievalist into a classicist’ (p209). This earlier text does not form part of the influential corbusian canon.


32 See Brady (1985) for a full annotated bibliography.

33 Given that this thesis is primarily concerned with the effects in Australia of gendered architectural discourse, I study these texts in English translation, not in their original language. There can of course be arguments over the ‘correctness’ of translation, but this is not the matter of the thesis. And my reading of the texts in the original French at times reveals only minor differences in the ‘gender of syntax’ between French and English.
focus on relatively well-known texts, using reference to more esoteric writing only to 
emphasise or elaborate a point.34 I refer both to writing on Le Corbusier’s architecture 
and town planning — his ideas and his projects — and to aspects of writing on Le 
Corbusier himself — as man, as ‘philosopher’, as architect — which demonstrate the 
continued vigour of the masculist assumptions and gendered metaphors which inflect architectural discourse.

All Le Corbusier’s writing must now be read through the filter of the intervening 
decades, a period on which Le Corbusier himself has made an indelible imprint. 
However, it is clear from the Preface to the 1947 edition of The City of Tomorrow that 
Le Corbusier did not wish to change any but trivial aspects of his proposals for town 
planning. He affirms the principles of his schemes — ‘[p]rinciples, moreover, which 
have never been departed from.’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p7-11)35 In his 1960 
Preface he wishes to make no amendments at all to the new edition of his Precisions on 
the Present State of Architecture and City Planning, a collection of his Buenos Aires 
lectures ‘improvised in 1929’ (Le Corbusier c1991 [1950], px), yet with his 
characteristic hubris delivered ‘with the unceasing desire to offer certitudes’ (pxv), and 
originally published in French in 1930. ‘[N]ot a punctuation mark or word has been 
changed.’ (pxi)

Le Corbusier’s language

I discuss in a note (54) in Chapter 2 the general issue of language and the gendered cast 
it may give to thought and expression when read at a distance in time and culture. Le 
Corbusier’s writing is partly a function of his character and the particular effects of his 
education, and also reflects his cultural milieu. His first two published books, Towards 
a New Architecture and The City of Tomorrow, resonate with the cultural ambience of 
the early decades of the twentieth century, which produced the Futurists, Cubism, 
Purism, Surrealism, and the tirades of Adolf Loos (see Conrads 1970). At the trivial 
level, his use of the conventional masculine to stand for the generic is of course 
characteristic of the era of unexamined masculine domination in which he lived. He 
died before the advent of second wave feminism in the 1970s.

In fact, given the French commitment to the ‘purity’ of the language, the use of ‘lui’ 
and ‘homme’ remains characteristic of the French language; in Les mots et les 
femmes36 Marina Yaguello, writing in the early 1990s, examines the sexism of the 
French language, at the intersection of etymology, linguistics and national temperament 
(Yaguello 1992). Le Corbusier’s use of the word ‘man’ (‘homme’) transcends 
national syntactical preferences or personal usage. In fact Le Corbusier did not always 
use ‘man’ in the generic. In justifying the crude aesthetic of béton brut he declares in 
Oeuvre Complete Volume V, ‘in men and women do you not see the wrinkles and the

34 Those major texts are: Baker, Le Corbusier, the Creative Search (1996); Blake, The Master 
Builders (1960) and Le Corbusier: Architecture and Form (1963); Brooks, Le Corbusier’s 
Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds (1997); Choay, Le Corbusier 
(1960); Cresti, Le Corbusier (1970); Curtis, Le Corbusier: Ideas and Forms (1986); Evenson, Le 
Corbusier: The Machine and the Grand Design (1970); Gardiner, Le Corbusier (1974); Guiton, 
The Ideas of Le Corbusier on Architecture and Urban Planning (1981); Jencks, Le Corbusier and 
the Tragic View of Architecture (1973); Raeburn, Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century (1987); 
Vogt, Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage: Toward an Archaeology of Modernism (1998); and 

35 He would amend the plan configuration of his skyscraper offices to avoid façades with a north 
orientation (although the climatic problems suffered by the inhabitants of his glazed buildings had 
all had to do with over-heating), and reduce the number of skyscrapers to replace the entire 
business district of Paris to four, located on the plain which stretches towards St Denis between 
the hill of Montmartre and the Buttes-Chaumont. (Le Corbusier, 1971, p11)

36 A reference of course to Foucault’s Les mots et les choses, implying an ironic analogy between 
women (femmes) and things (choises).
birth marks, the crooked noses, the innumerable imperfections?’ (Le Corbusier, quoted in Jencks 1973a, p141, my italics).37

His writing implicitly and explicitly speaks to men, and of ‘Man’ and men.38 His texts are populated with men, ‘briefcase in hand’ (Le Corbusier c1991 [1950], p31v). When women and the feminine do appear in his writing, they are confined and defined in stereotypically patriarchal, even disdainful terms, in ways reminiscent of Alberti’s fifteenth century treatises On the Art of Building in Ten Books and Della Famiglia (see Wigley 1992). Inflected with passion, often couched in extravagant and intemperate language, and at times simplistic almost to the point of caricature, his writing rehearses the tropes which western culture conflates with men, maleness and masculinity.

Both Le Corbusier’s language and his ‘voice’ are now dated, but there is still little comment in mainstream writing about him on the gender bias implicit in his ideas, or the explicitly masculine perspective of his writing. Even to writers — male or female — who are critical of aspects of his life, his work or his writing, the masculinity of Le Corbusier’s world appears to be either invisible, or natural, or both. In terms of gender consciousness, contemporary mainstream texts still generally shows little change beyond the stylistic. The masculine ‘voice’ appears to be an intrinsic characteristic of the nature of architecture itself as envisioned by the majority of architectural writers, and by the public in general.

Setting the scene: history, art and politics

Le Corbusier was born (as Charles-Edouard Jeanneret) in 1887, began his public career as an ‘evangelist’ in the revolt against Academicism which evolved into Modernism and the International Style, and died in 1965, as the destabilisation of the certainties of High Modernism was beginning to take effect. His is the recurrent, insistent, if changeable, voice of architectural modernism, whether in his own words or in the deluge of words written about him during his lifetime and after his death. With his cultural roots in the nineteenth century, and with his consciousness of his (perhaps fictitious) historical origins39, he forms a link between our time and that ‘other world’ of the pre-modern era.40

He spent his first 20 years in Switzerland, his country of birth, leaving it in 1907 to travel in Italy, in 1908 to Paris, and in 1911 to Greece and Turkey. His first five houses and many other un-built designs were located in Switzerland. In 1916 he installed himself in Paris. (He took French nationality in 1930.) Le Corbusier’s recollection of the reasons for his move to Paris is published in his last recorded interview.41:

Then one fine day we went to the Grand Opera of Vienna, ... and they were playing ... Puccini’s La Bohème. ... Puccini made us believe it was Paris: they

37 It is perhaps significant that Le Corbusier is here speaking of the physical aspects of human beings, rather than the transcendent intellectual and spiritual characteristics of ‘man’ which generally preoccupy him in his discussions of urbanism and architecture.

38 In his enthusiastic ‘Introduction’ to Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture Charles Jencks quotes Peter Smithson as saying that Le Corbusier’s work could ‘make a man leave home and start a new life’ (Jencks 1973, p11). The use of the word ‘man’ is not generic here.

39 ‘He continually spoke of the persecution of his ancestors, the [French] Albigensian heretics.’ (Jencks 1973a, p17) His taking French citizenship (having been born just on the Swiss side of the border) was symbolic as well as strategic.

40 Le Corbusier designed his first buildings in his provincial home town of Chaux-de-Fonds in the Swiss Jura in a self-consciously regional idiom, experienced an ‘epiphany’ on the Acropolis and on Mount Athos (see Zápkic 1990), and had gravitated to the centre of European culture in Paris by 1916 (Jencks 1973).

41 The interview, with Hugues Desalle, took place in May 1965 in Le Corbusier’s apartment in Paris, three months before Le Corbusier’s death.
made the Parisians more Parisian than one usually portrays them .... They were very lively Parisians, very much at ease, very alert .... And so, with the friend who was with me, we said to each other: "off to Paris". That was it. (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p106)

Le Corbusier naturally responds to *La Bohème* as a man. He responds to the male characters and to what would now be called their 'life-style'. 'Lively' is certainly an inappropriate description of poor Mimi, the stereotypical *midinette*, the working class *Parisienne*, with her subordinate and passive role in the artistic milieu in which she almost accidently finds herself, and her unhappy but operatically inevitable end.42 Her story is unlikely to attract anyone to emulate her life-style. However at the time the *Parisienne* was generally seen as symbolic, not only of Paris, then the epicentre of urbanity and modernity, but of modernity itself; in painting and literature she was what Nesbit calls 'the necessary figure for thinking the city' (Nesbit 1992, p324).43 To the puritanical44 young man from the provinces such a superficial and frivolous — and feminine — imagining of modernity would have been anathema. In spite of his excitement at Puccini, he had no romantic attachment to attics. And for him the city was not a matter of theatres, cafés, beautiful people and sexual indiscretions, and mythic memories of the *quartiers*. For him, it was an almost metaphysical manifestation of progress and the modern world.

Great cities are the spiritual workshops in which the work of the world is done. The solutions accepted in the great city are those which are singled out in the provinces; fashions, styles, development of ideas and technical methods. That is why the reorganization of the great city carries with it the renewal of the whole country.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p99)

Certainly, his response, in *Towards a New Architecture* and *The City of Tomorrow*, to the 'old Paris' of the *mondaine*, and the boulevards, shopfronts and 'crowded, dusty side-walks' (Descaves 1908) quoted in Nesbit 1992, p310) she inhabited, was almost violent. 'Paris is a dangerous magma of human beings gathered from every quarter by conquest, growth and immigration; she is the eternal gipsy encampment from all the world's great roads ... . The resultant chaos has brought it about that the Great City ... is to-day a menacing disaster, since it is no longer governed by the principles of geometry.' (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p45) '[T]he congestion of buildings grows greater, interlaced by narrow streets full of noise, petrol fumes and dust; and where on each storey the windows open wide on to this foul confusion.' (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p55)

In the late 1920s Le Corbusier 'emerged from [a] twilight world of manifestoes, bravado ... and rented rooms when the publicity resulting from the success of *Vers une architecture* began to bring in its train commissions from outside the wealthy café-society of Paris' (Pawley in Le Corbusier and Pawley 1970, p11). Le Corbusier's influence on avant-garde architecture commenced here, and disciples flocked to his atelier. According to Curtis, 'Le Corbusier had so many followers in his own lifetime because he posed relevant questions about the impact of modernization and was able to

---

42 The moral problem of what to do with the woman who transgressed the boundaries and took for themselves the rights to sexual and experiential freedom allowed unproblematically to men, was often resolved in fiction by her death, usually lingering and painful, and deprived of the epic aspects of (masculine) heroism.

43 See, for example Huyssen (1986).

44 In the section 'The Manual of the Dwelling' of *Towards a New Architecture* he says, 'Never undress in your bedroom. It is not a clean thing to do and makes the room horribly untidy' (Le Corbusier 1970, p114).
In the late 1920s Le Corbusier ‘emerged from [a] twilight world of manifestoes, bravado ... and rented rooms when the publicity resulting from the success of Vers une architecture began to bring in its train commissions from outside the wealthy café-society of Paris’ (Pawley in Le Corbusier and Pawley 1970, p11). Le Corbusier’s influence on avant-garde architecture commenced here, and disciples flocked to his atelier. According to Curtis, ‘Le Corbusier had so many followers in his own lifetime because he posed relevant questions about the impact of modernization and was able to invest his insights with a universal tone’ (Curtis 1987a, p23). For Curtis it was still true in 1986, twenty years after Le Corbusier’s death, that ‘[n]o other architect grappled so comprehensively with the range of problems confronting the modern epoch’ (Curtis 1986, p223).

The twentieth century has been a time of political and social upheaval. In particular, the early years of this century were a time of polemic and adversary politics. Le Corbusier’s early architectural writing reflects the hubris and extremism which pervaded the atmosphere of Paris. Jencks recounts Le Corbusier’s adventure with the polemical journal L’Esprit Nouveau from 1921 and 1925 (Jencks 1973a), articles from which were ‘recycled’ to compose not only Vers une architecture and Urbanisme but L’Art décoratif d’aujourd’hui, and (with his friend and colleague Ozernfant) La Peinture moderne (see Conrads 1970). For Jencks these two tracts were ‘more persuasive than any other architectural manifestoes published in the twentieth century’ (Jencks 1973a, p64).

These biographical notes are significant to a gender-aware reading of the development of Le Corbusier’s ideas about the City and town planning. He proclaims in The City of Tomorrow that ‘[m]odern town planning comes to birth with a new architecture. But with this immense step in evolution, so brutal and so overwhelming, we burn our bridges and break with the past’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p17). And the planner, builder and inhabitant of this new city is Man. In Towards a New Architecture he claims that

Every modern man has the mechanical sense. ....

The Man who is intelligent, cold and calm has grown wings to himself.

Men — intelligent, cold and calm — are needed to build the house and lay out the town.

(Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], pp115-119)

For Le Corbusier, with his passion for the mechanical inventions of the modern era, the motor car, the aeroplane, and grand engineering projects, the ‘mechanical sense’ is fundamental. Describing in hyperbolic language the construction of a huge dam he exclaims, ‘[t]he gods are on earth and touch a lever in the machine room ... You say to yourself; Man is mighty; he assails Heaven itself’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p114).

Even now, with increasing participation of women in traditionally and conventionally male-dominated pursuits, this ‘Man’ with the ‘mechanical sense’ cannot be interpreted as including ‘Woman’. For in Western culture the attributes of intelligence / rationality, coldness and calm remain conventionally opposed to the supposed irrationality, emotionality and excitability of the stereotypical woman. The gendered sensibility out of which this vision emerges, and which colours its expression, reflects the cultural milieu in which was born and grew to adulthood. But it is also more than merely a

---

45 See Chapter 2 for a general discussion of the dominance of the male in spoken and written language. For a detailed discussion of the history of the linguistic concept that ‘man embraces woman’ see Dale Spender’s Man Made Language (Spender 1982, pp145-162). I discuss the gendering of Le Corbusier’s language in more detail later in this chapter.

46 Bram Dijkstra explores the intersections between the misogyny and the racism inherent in twentieth century Western popular culture, which opposed ‘the “she” of nature to the “he” of progress’ (Dijkstra 1996, p391). Dijkstra’s argument is that the declared truths of contemporary medical science and the infant science of genetics had profoundly misogynist and racist effects.
reflection of his time and situation. It constructs itself as a necessary basis for his thinking about architecture and urbanism. It is both instrumental (based on his personal and professional experience, and his judgments of the 'real' world) and symbolic (reflecting his metaphysical world view and his vision of an ordered utopian future), and it will be a focus of my reading of his texts and those about him.

Le Corbusier, politics and the 'woman question'

Le Corbusier's view of the political scene was of course partial. The suffrage struggle went unremarked in his rhetoric in the 1920s and 1930s (much as the re-emergence of feminism has remained almost unnoticed in the literature of postmodernist architectural criticism of Modernism). Le Corbusier did not leave Switzerland for good until he was 29; during his youth and later the suffrage struggle continued western throughout Europe. The status of women was an active political issue in his new country, France. In France ... women have always enjoyed high status not only in the family but also socially and culturally. The country has produced a number of eminent women in literature and politics ... even two women in the Popular Front Government in 1936, before Frenchwomen had the vote.

(Klein 1975, p912)

However masculine influence, social conservatism, and perhaps scepticism as to the significance of suffrage to the actual status of women, combined in France to delay women's suffrage until 1944. It is unlikely during those decades that any intellectually active person would not have been aware of the debate on the status of women. Le Corbusier, moreover, had many female acquaintances from among the French cultural élite, a number of them clients and patrons. Attitudes to women throughout Europe underwent significant change during those years, due to the polemic and public activities of the female suffrage movement, and also because women participated in the war industries and took the places of men removed from the civilian workforce by active war service. The gains were often only temporary, and the disappointment of women who were expected to return to their 'place in the home' after such active participation in the 'public realm of men' meant that the 'woman question' remained alive in the public domain throughout the period. However there is no sign in Le Corbusier's writing, much of which is overtly political, that he considered it important.

That Le Corbusier was aware of contemporary social, economic and technological developments in Europe is evidenced by his publication in *L'Esprit Nouveau* five years later, in 1925, of his fundamental essay on town planning *L'Urbanisme*. According to Conrads, Le Corbusier knew of the investigations of the Deutscher Werkbund into standardisation and industrialisation, and 'had since 1917 travelled all over Europe, and was now, from 1920, evolving an aesthetic of mass-produced building' (Conrads 1970,

---

47 Klein states that 'Switzerland, one of the oldest democracies, did not give women the vote until 1971' (Klein 1975, p912). (The notion that 'democracy' is the appropriate term to describe a twentieth-century polity that excluded from the franchise more than half its adult population, is indicative of the continuing socio-cultural invisibility of women.) However, 'this is ... curious because not only have Swiss women played a considerable part in the economy of their country, but Switzerland was among the first to extend university education to women on a basis of complete equality with men. ... [From 1864] the University of Zurich set the model for the rest of continental Europe in allowing men and women students to sit side by side in the same classrooms... , to take part in the same lectures and seminars, and to sit examinations on equal terms' (Klein 1975, p912). In Britain, while women were first enfranchised, with limitations of age and marital status, in 1918, universal suffrage was eventually granted in 1928, five years after the publication of *Vers une architecture*.

48 Hélène de Mandrot was not only a client (house at Le Pradet, 1931), but as patroness provided her house as the venue for the first CIAM meeting in 1928. And without the long-suffering Mme. Savoye, Modernism would lack one of its defining icons (see below).
p59). However Le Corbusier's approach to politics was quixotic and even opportunistic, as evidenced by his flirtation with Fascism (see Fishman 1977). He was always open to any political movement or point of influence which would advance the cause of his own universal Truths. His politics were couched in aesthetic and 'moral' terms. His vision is distant, impersonal and abstract, dealing in the secular scale; his interest is instrumental.

There are few echoes in his writing from the real events of the outside world — the struggles for women's suffrage and decolonisation, two World Wars, a Depression. In *The City of Tomorrow* the impact the first World War is acknowledged only by a dip in 'the graph showing the increase in motor traffic in France during the last twenty-three years'. 'There was a slight set-back during the years of the War, but the sudden increase in 1920, 1921 and 1922 is astounding.' (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p263) This interpretation of a period of deep social and cultural upheaval in terms of this single variable reflects the particular orientation of his interest in technology — in 'the machine' and speed, paradigmatically 'masculine' concerns. That 'other industrial revolution', precipitated by the impact of technology on domestic life, conventionally the domain of women, does not figure in his messianic visions at all.

**Le Corbusier and the city**

**The City in principle**

Le Corbusier's intention was to set out the programs of town planning for everyone, everywhere, immediately, as a 'scientific' project 'in the manner of the investigator in his laboratory' (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p160).

> My object was ... by constructing a theoretically water-tight formula to arrive at the fundamental principles of modern town planning.

> ... We must have some rule of conduct.

> ... A level site is the ideal site.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp160-161)

A clear site would allow the planners
to replace the "accidental" lay-out of the ground .. by the formal layout.
Otherwise nothing can save us. And the consequences of geometrical plans is Repetition and Mass Production.
And as a consequence of repetitions, the standard is created, and so perfection (the creation of types).
(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p220, italics in the original)

A city!
It is the grip of man upon nature. It is a human operation directed against nature, a human organism both for protection and for work.
... Geometry is the means, created by ourselves, whereby we perceive the external world and express the world within us.

---

49 "[A] very good friend of Le Corbusier ... was the French Fascist Dr Pierre Winter.' (Jencks 1973a, p67) Winter, 'in an article of praise, justified [Le Corbusier's housing scheme at] Pessac as the new architecture for Fascism' (Jencks 1973, p72). Blake's view of the situation is sanguine: 'the authorities at Vichy proved to be impossible to work with. Yet because they were the only authorities potentially interested in postwar reconstruction, Corbu had to deal with them for a while' (Blake 1963, p109). Le Corbusier's frustrated attempts to work with the Vichy government extended to Algeria and the 'Plan Directeur' for Algiers (see Curtis 1986, p128).
Geometry is the foundation. ...Machinery is the result of geometry.
(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p3)

Here we have in almost caricatured fashion an agenda reflecting the quest for universal principles and rules which would apply in all places and at all times, deriving from the masculine cartesian preoccupation with knowledge, control and Progress which has underpinned Western culture since the Enlightenment — and before. The appeal to standards and perfection is older; it is reminiscent of the Aristotelian teleological cosmology in which all things strive for the perfection inherent in their nature, that has been appropriated and incorporated by Christianity. But it is also reflective of the claims of architecture to the status of exclusive and mystical mathematical practice (the occult and secretive rites of freemasonry are a cultural vestige of this masculine past). The appeal to technology (repetition and mass production) is more contemporary; the Modernist faith in a Taylorist future just beginning to make its mark in manufacturing.

The essence and function of the City

His point of view is not merely patriarchal but patrician. His view of the city is a monumental one. In his own opportunity to design and construct an entire city, Chandigarh, his misreading of the scale of the complex mix of activities and movements appropriate to an Indian city centre meant that 'Chandigarh was given its own version of Connaught Place in the business sector, whose vast empty plaza Le Corbusier disingenuously described as the traditional Indian chowk' (Sarin 1977, p279). For Le Corbusier the construction of the great City, the monumental work in which 'civic pride becomes incarnate in the material achievements of architecture', is the product of 'a glowing and harmonious moment of construction and enthusiasm' (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p242). His historical sense is pervaded with the sensibility of the (haut) bourgeois gentilhomme, who enjoys his city with a firm eye to the proper behaviour of the hoi polloi, who were to be policed to ensure the comfort and dignity of the citizens. Here we see a hint of Baudelaire's flâneur, securely male and economically independent.

When [the Romans] arrived at a place, ... they took a square and set out the plan of a rectilinear town, so that it could be clear and well-arranged, easy to police and to clean, a place in which you could ... stroll with comfort ... The square plan was in conformity with the dignity of the Roman citizen. They were, with Louis XIV, the only great town planners of the West.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp13-14)

---

50 Le Corbusier's early ideas on ordering the new city have a strong resemblance to those of Plato as described by Mumford in The City in History (1961); see below.

51 In his Introduction to the 1971 edition of The City of Tomorrow JM Richards claims for Le Corbusier a sympathy with conservation (of built heritage), quoting from When the Cathedrals Were White, 'in which, writing of America, he says, "I like those vast and handsome hotels which ... have acquired a past through their richness and substantiality"' (Le Corbusier 1971, pxiv).

52 See Chapter 7

53 The large formal square in Sir Edwin Lutyens's New Delhi.

54 An open market place at the intersection of streets, where hawkers and street sellers congregate.

55 A woman, of course, could not be a Roman citizen.

56 Hausmann's grand boulevards in Paris — wide, and straight as a cannon shot — were explicitly designed to permit control of the populace in the event of insurrection: in the narrow winding streets of the old city the people could engage in guerilla tactics. There is a hint of the Emperor Napoleon III's political concerns in Le Corbusier's description of Paris as 'a menacing disaster ... no longer governed by the principles of geometry' (Le Corbusier 1971, p45; see above under 'Setting the scene'). Le Corbusier's admiration of such 'bold piece[s] of surgery' as the Boulevard Haussmann, under construction in the 1920s, is manifest (p255).

116
The practical / strategic program underlying the canons of Modernism as propounded by Le Corbusier is also explicitly both androcentric and haut-bourgeois, in spite of its declared project of housing the masses. In the ‘city of tomorrow’ class intersects with gender in his vision of

the different kinds of inhabitants of a great city. As the seat of power (in the widest meaning of the word; for in it there come together princes of affairs, captains of industry, and finance, political leaders, great scientists, teachers, thinkers, the mouthpieces of the human soul, painters, poets and musicians), the city draws every ambition to itself... Great men and our leaders install themselves at the city’s centre. There too we find their subordinates of every grade, whose presence there at certain hours is essential, though their destinies are circumscribed within the narrower boundaries of family life. The family is badly housed in the city. Garden cities satisfy these needs better. Finally there is industry with its factories, thickly grouped, for various reasons, about the great centres: and working in these factories are multitudes of workers who can most satisfactorily be housed in garden cities.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p102)

Le Corbusier envisages a city designed for ‘three main divisions of population: the citizens who live in the city, ... [commuter] workers ... and the great masses of workers who spend their lives between suburban factories and garden cities’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p102). Writing before female suffrage and before bourgeois women in the paid workforce were a commonplace, in classifying these ‘different kinds of inhabitants of a great city’, Le Corbusier makes quite clear his vision of the essence and function of the City — a public world, effectively devoid of women of any class, who are implicitly subsumed in the category ‘family’ and relegated to the ‘garden cities’ (suburbs). Given the time of writing, the conventional dualities of male / female and public / domestic are unquestioned, as is the assumption of the ascendancy of the public world of business over the private world of the home. While men go to their offices in the centre, their wives and children remain in the suburbs, but are not mentioned in the text. Here is the vision of the zoned city so redolent of the division

57 Plato’s city was also divided into three parts — in Plato’s case, one of artisans, one of husbandmen, and a third of armed defenders of the state. According to Mumford, ‘[w]hen Plato turned his back on the disorder and confusion of Athens, to rearrange to social functions of the city, ... he also turned his back, unfortunately, on the essential life of the city itself, with its power to cross-breed, to intermingle, to reconcile opposites, to create new syntheses...’ (Mumford c1961, p205). Plato’s ordering of the world — the separation of reason from passion, and the abstraction of Truth from the merely Real, of Form from Matter — was an antecedent of the androcentric Cartesianism of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth. In his critique, Mumford does not notice the absence of women from Plato’s social categories.

58 The development of suburbs around the central CBD was not yet a phenomenon of French urban planning, although it was already common in the UK, the USA and Australia. Until the 1970s at least, the central business district (CBD) of the typical Australian city appeared to be a translation into the Australian vernacular of Le Corbusier’s vision. Tall office towers in an orthogonal grid were surrounded by a skirt of peripheral ‘dormitory’ suburbs of detached houses, threaded along their ‘pack donkey’ curved streets and cul-de-sacs, reached along urban freeways and inhabited by housewives who were not expected to ‘go out to work’ (see Kemeny 1983). There are of course demographic, typological (and topological) variations on the theme. The older cities have higher density inner suburbs of nineteenth century attached houses. In Sydney and to a lesser extent Melbourne there is a tradition of apartment living in the inner and middle suburbs. In the post-war period the higher density inner suburbs of terrace houses were populated by immigrants who could not (yet) afford a detached house in the suburbs; until the 60s these areas in Melbourne and Sydney were often classified as slums and demolished for high-rise public housing (see Hargreaves 1975). Ironically, as the immigrants and former working class residents moved to the outer suburbs their place in the surviving terrace houses was taken by the ‘upwardly mobile educated
of the world by gender — men (active) in the city and women (passive) at home (see Chapter 2).

Work ... goes on busily in luminous and even radiant offices whose immense windows open full on the sky and the lofty horizon, where the air is pure and the noise far distant. A friend once said to me, ‘No intelligent man ever looks out of the window; his window is made of ground glass; its only function is to let in the light, not to look out of.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp185-186)

This is the ideal city. A model city for commerce! Is it the mere fancy of some neurotic passion for speed? But surely, speed lies on this side of mere dreams; it is a brutal necessity.... Work to day is more intense, and is carried on at a quicker rate. Actually the whole question becomes one of daily intercommunication with a view to setting the state of the market and the conditions of labor. The more rapid this intercommunication can be made, the more will business be expedited. It is likely therefore, that the working day in the sky-scrapers will be a shorter one, thanks to the sky-scrapers.

Then, perhaps, the working day may finish soon after midday. The city will empty as though by a deep breath. The garden cities will play their full part. And, on the other hand, in the city itself the residential quarters will offer new living conditions to these new men of a mechanical age.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp190-192)

**Man living in the city**

The point of view of this vision of the city is a manifestly masculine one, even if we ignore the fact that it was written in the early 1920s when the motor car was very predominantly a masculine preserve. Le Corbusier’s preoccupation with speed — and with cars — is stereotypically masculine. In *Towards a New Architecture*, discussing his proposed remedies to halt what he sees as the decline of the ‘spirit of the worker’s booth’ he uses a significant, almost childlike, example. ‘When the [magazine] *Auto* announces that such and such a car has reached 180 miles an hour, the workmen will gather together and tell one another: “Our car did that!” There we have a moral factor which is of importance.’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p255) The accompanying illustration is a photograph of the “AMERICA”, ‘A Racing car of 250 h.p., capable of over 160 m.p.h.’ (p254) ‘A city made for speed is made for success.’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p179, italics in the original) The ‘radial’ commuter, returning from the office to his home in the garden city, is unlikely to have to contend with the quotidian complications of children and shopping and community activities so common in women’s experience (see Chapter 2). In fact there is a singular lack in any of Le Corbusier’s discussions of the city of his vision of everyday life; it is categorised as ‘family life’, but left abstract and undefined. Le Corbusier’s sense of order permits him to visualise facilities for organised sport, and grouped kitchen garden allotments in the charge of a farmer and under intensive cultivated in ‘a standardized and scientific way’ by ‘the inhabitant ... back from his factory or office’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp205-206), but the intimacies and minutiae of life in the household are missing from his account.

---

middle class’, often without children. Meanwhile ‘normal’ suburbia continues to spread out beyond the fringe (see Sandercock 1975), despite some institutional attempts to curb the ‘sprawl’ with zoning and smaller allotments. As inner and middle urban councils at the end of the century encourage higher densities and apartment dwelling, inner urban dwellings are most popular with lone occupants and childless couples (often known as DINKs — ‘double income, no kids’); the
Unsurprisingly his imagined city is very different from the diverse and sociable city beloved of Jane Jacobs, and described in The Death and Life of Great American Cities (Jacobs 1961)\(^{59}\), and the differences are paradigmatically those between the masculine and the feminine. Le Corbusier's view of urban life can be seen in his comments in an 1961 interview on the Marseilles Unité d'Habitation.

> Do you want to raise your family in quiet? ... Do you want a totally private life, to meet no one, in complete intimacy? ... You will never meet anyone in the corridors that I call indoor streets. When you are in your apartment, ... you will be overlooking the sea or the mountains.'

(Peter 1994, p144)

Such a vision of the ideal dwelling has a monastic flavour, unsurprising given Le Corbusier's idiosyncratic attitude to home life, and his lack of experience with children. His view of 'home' as a refuge from the active life he led as prophet, visionary and 'solitary warrior' (Zaknic 1997a, p49) is reminiscent of the findings of Richards (Richards 1983), referred to in Chapter 2, that to men home is a 'haven', while to women it is more often seen as 'work'. Such a masculine perspective is not merely utilitarian but symbolic: Jencks explains that the Marseilles Unité represents the culmination of Le Corbusier's research into housing and communal living. It synthesizes ideas going back to his travels of 1907, particularly the relationship between the individual and the collective which he had admired in the monasteries of Ema and Mount Athos.\(^{60}\)

(Jencks 1973a, pp138-139)

This vision of the city consists in effect of a public sphere organised on militaristic principles of order and control, an urban infrastructure organised to promote speed and separation of functions, and private living spaces constructed according to his enthusiastic juvenile memories of a Carthusian monastery constructed on a hill outside fourteenth century Florence.\(^{61}\) To quote Le Corbusier literally, '[i]t is, in fact, a question of housing men' (Le Corbusier c1991 [1950], p86).

**Man, scale, order and civilisation**

The virtual absence of women in Le Corbusier's urban world is more than a mere reflection of the status of women in his time, and extends beyond their implicit relegation to the peripheral realm of the domestic ('the residential quarters'). Given such gender blindness it is not to be expected that he would consider the implications for women's likely life experience of his vision of the city. He ignores women as inhabitants and users of the built environment whose distinctive characteristics and cost of this housing requires a reasonably high income. Thus a small proportion of women now approximate the employment and living patterns of a small proportion of middle-class men.

\(^{59}\) See Chapter 4.

\(^{60}\) On Mount Athos, not even female animals or their produce are allowed.

\(^{61}\) Le Corbusier used the Certosa d'Ema as a model for the design of his multi-storeyed apartments, realised in particular in the Unités. In fact from the point of view of the individual dwellings the Certosa could serve rather as a model for a group of terrace houses, as each monk's cell is on the ground floor and has its own vegetable and herb garden. Le Corbusier evinced a curiously negative view of gardens: 'the worker and his wife ... Their garden? Extra housework duties, very serious, serious for the body they deform; the movements of gardening are poor movements; tasks of gardening, wear of the body.' (Le Corbusier c1991, p101) Versions of the communal cortile and the smaller cloisters of the Certosa d'Ema would be welcome additions to a neighbourhood of terrace houses.

119
needs should be taken into account in design for function, even in such simple aspects as height.

We must learn how to ... discover units of measurement to our own scale. The problem is essentially one of architecture. ... The vast buildings which the town planning of the future will bring about would crush us if there were no common measure between them and ourselves.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p237)

‘Ourselves’ are explicitly male. ‘Now all these considerations apply to functions which appertain to man and man’s height varies between, say, 5 feet 6 inches and 6 foot 2 inches.’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p237, italics in the original) It is striking, when considering descriptions and photographs of the famed roof ‘garden’ of the Unité d’Habitation at Marseilles that the parapet height required for safety would place the view of mountains and sea well above the eye level of most women and all children (unless they ran the risk of climbing on the parapet, a most unlikely thing for a bourgeois French child to do). Blake’s text on the subject is poetic: ‘the roof garden ... appears to be a strangely dreamlike piazza, located in space, suspended somewhere between the silhouettes of the Alpes Maritimes and the distant view of the Mediterranean and the Château d’If. It is in a way, a modern sort of Acropolis’ (Blake 1963, p124). The strength of the myth overrides observation. However, according to a caption to a photograph of the roof in Blake’s Le Corbusier: Architecture and Form, ‘The foothills of the Alps are just visible above the high roof parapets’ (p125, in italics in the original); visible, that is, to a living ‘Modulor Man’ (see below). (No-one would see the sea.)

Importantly for understanding Le Corbusier’s vision, the absence or insignificance of women is epistemological, while the presence of men (Man) is metaphysical. ‘[M]an is capable of perfection; theoretically there is nothing to prevent him reaching the sublime.’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p54)

[M]an, by reason of his very nature, practises order, ... his actions and his thoughts are dictated by the straight line and the right angle, ... the straight line is instinctive in him and his mind apprehends it as a lofty objective.

Man, created by the universe, is the sum of that universe, as far as he himself is concerned; he proceeds according to its laws and believes he can read them; he has formulated them and made of them a coherent scheme, a rational body of knowledge on which he can act, adapt and produce.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p23)

For Le Corbusier,

the various stages of civilization can be classified by forms; the straight line and the right angle cutting through the undergrowth of difficulty and ignorance are a clear manifestation of power and will. Where the orthogonal is supreme, there we can read the height of a civilization. ... Culture is an orthogonal state of mind.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], pp42-43)

Thus

the right angle is the essential and sufficient implement of action, because it enables us to determine space with an absolute exactness.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p19)
The straight road is a reaction, an action, a positive deed, the result of self-
mastery. It is sane and noble.
(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p18)

The Architecture of ‘Man’

Le Corbusier’s early ideas about urbanism as represented in both \textit{Towards a New Architecture} and \textit{The City of Tomorrow} are subtended by his utopian vision of Man. Corbusian ‘Man’ manifests the paradigmatic characteristics of the patriarchal dualist paradigm: a rational, intelligent, active and detached individual, potentially transcendent by dint of his noble self-mastery and his latent divinity. By the power of his will, his knowledge of science and mathematics, and the efficiency (and poetry\textsuperscript{62}) of his technology, he exercises (moral) authority and (actual) control, and imposes order upon nature. The unstated ‘other’ of the dualist dyad is the ‘feminine’, symbolically conflated with nature.

In his discussion of the architecture of the individual building, the same principles are evident: the ‘fixing of standards’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p10), the ‘lesson of Rome’ (p10), the ‘spirit of order’ (p11).

This is ... the axis on which man is organized in perfect accord with nature and probably with the universe. ... The laws of physics are ... a corollary to this axis, and if we recognize (and love) science and its works, it is because both one and the other force us to admit that they are prescribed by this primal will. If the results of mathematical calculations appear satisfying and harmonious to us, it is because they proceed from this axis.’

(Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], pp192-193)

‘Men — intelligent, cold and calm — are needed to build the house and lay out the town.’ (p119) ‘The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is the pure creation of the spirit.’ (p7) ‘The shapes are such that they are clearly revealed in light. The relationships between them ... are a mathematical creation of your mind. They are the language of Architecture.’ (p187)

‘All men have the same organism, the same functions. All men have the same needs.’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p126) But ‘Architecture goes beyond utilitarian needs. Architecture is a plastic thing. The spirit of order, a unity of intention’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p140). Here is an early hint of the shift which occurred gradually in Le Corbusier’s thinking, a ‘decisive break with the Purist-machine vision’ (Frampton 1987, p29), in Turner’s terms from the rationalist to the romantic (see Turner 1977).\textsuperscript{63} So in Le Corbusier’s later writing, and earlier in his autobiographical writing, we find manifestations of that other, Romantic, side of the coin of patriarchy, the archetype of the Hero, the lone creative individual struggling against all odds. ‘Phidias made the Parthenon ... Passion, generosity, and magnanimity are so many virtues written into the geometry of the handling of the contour.’ (p202-293) Late in his life Le Corbusier expressed these ideas in \textit{Mise au Point}\textsuperscript{64}.

Over the years a man gradually acquires, through his struggles, his work, his inner combat, a certain capital, his own individual and personal conquest. But

\textsuperscript{62} ‘See with what poetry progress has animated us, with what tools modern techniques have endowed us.’ (Le Corbusier c1991, p157)

\textsuperscript{63} See Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{64} Literally ‘in focus’.
all the passionate quests of the individual, all that capital, that experience so dearly paid for, will disappear.

(Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], 83)

His identification with masculinity (even machismo perhaps, in spite of his small stature and owlish glasses) never wavered. "'One must burrow into life again in order to put on flesh.' It is not I but Henry Miller who utters those timeless words, yet it seems to me that I had already thought them.' (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p85)

Many of his aphorisms appear in multiple versions. Le Corbusier was adept at recapitulating his ideas — sometimes in slightly modified phraseology — in the same book, and he often repeated them in later texts. In The City of Tomorrow, 'man's height varies between, say, 5 feet 6 inches and 6 foot 2 inches' (p237). In Towards a New Architecture, in a different context, '[m]an looks at the creation of architecture with his eyes, which are 5 feet 6 inches from the ground' (p11). The citizen of his cities, the inhabitant of his buildings, is unequivocally represented by that most masculine being, the Modulor.

The Modulor

The most striking symbolic image of Le Corbusier's architecture is the Modulor. Le Corbusier himself considered the Modulor and the principle of mathematical ordering it manifests to be inextricably involved with his architecture — one was not possible without the other. So the Modulor, in particular as explained, developed and illustrated in Modulor 2, represents for Le Corbusier not only the whole of humanity but the claim of modern architecture to a lineage which combines the cultural, the spiritual and the scientific. Modulor 2 combines a complex series of calculations and diagrams with a catalogue of comments from others and Le Corbusier's responses, strung together in characteristic Corbusian fashion with an almost conversational — and at times hubristic — stream of consciousness interleaved with memoir.

There is an interplay between the physical and the metaphysical in Le Corbusier's discussions of the Modulor. On the one page of Modulor 2 he claims, with feigned modesty,

the Modulor created, for the first time, a concert of harmonies — a harmonious scale — within the diapason of the human stature. That is curious indeed. The Renaissance had been a time of impassioned preoccupation with problems of proportion ... It had become intoxicated with mathematics, the geometrical and algebraic exploitation of numbers. ... And they forgot, in the midst of so many polyhedrons and star-shaped arrangements of axes, that the eyes are placed in the front of the head, at a height above ground variable according to the size of the person. ... In forgetting that, they were also able to forget one of the fundamental terms of the relationship which governs man and his environment.

Man occupies [space] by means of his members: his legs, his trunk, his arms, out-stretched or raised. He bends at the solar plexus, linch-pin of his movements. Strangely simple mechanism! And yet it is the only setting for our behaviour, our taking possession of space.

(Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p49)

65 "Il faut de nouveau creuser dans la vie afin de refaire de la chair." Zaknic gives the source as Miller (1945, p121), and the English translation as from Miller (1980, p98).
In spite of his acknowledgment that eye-level varies 'according to the size of the person’, ‘our’ and ‘we’ are clearly male.\(^6\)

Le Corbusier is aware that his ‘invention’ (patented!) derives from a lineage of similar formulations, the celebrated Renaissance figure of the male body inscribed in the Platonic figures of the circle and the square, based in the West’s anthropocentric world view, and deriving ultimately from the Pythagorean mathematical interpretation of the universe in the sixth century BCE. In Chapter 1 of *Modulor 2*, ‘Preliminaries’, Le Corbusier quotes approvingly 'a great mathematician': "‘To appeal simultaneously to geometry and numbers, that is the true purpose of our lives’" (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p15). With the development of the Modulor, he says, '[w]e have acquired certainty' (p15).

Guitten assigns a chapter to ‘describing[ing] the method [Le Corbusier] used to attain harmonious proportions: regulating diagrams, the Golden Section, and his own MODULOR' (Guitten 1981, p59, capitals in the original), and devotes seven pages to his mathematical and numerological ‘researches’ before describing the Modulor, ‘a measure by which mathematics and the domain of the human are brought together’ (Le Corbusier 1948, p23). Le Corbusier’s assumption of a connection between physical man and conceptual — even cosmic — Man, in terms of architecture, is clear. In *Journey to the East* he recounts that ‘an awareness of dimensions struck me ... From that time came what I called “the man with upraised arms,” the key to all architecture’ (Le Corbusier 1991 [1966], p23). His ‘lifelong quest’ (p59) was in search of the ‘consonances’ between the human and the mathematical. Guitten quotes Le Corbusier in *Modulor 2*: ‘And man, as constituted by the dimensions of the bodily members that determine his position in space as he goes about his everyday activities, proceeds from the ratio $\phi$.’ (Guitten 1981, p69)\(^7\)

Diana Agrest, in her articles ‘Architecture from Without: Body, Logic and Sex’ (Agrest 1988; Agrest 1991), discussed in Chapter 4, describes how Renaissance theorists privileged the male body, while excluding the female figure, in their discussions of the human form as architectural prototype. Thus the masculinity of the Modulor is no accident, or mere outcome of cultural habit or solipsism; it continues a long-established tradition. ‘Woman’ has no place in this system; Le Corbusier was aware of the discrepancy between the dimensions of his ‘model human being’ and those of the typical or representative woman. In a discussion of the relationship between the Modulor and ancient Egyptian systems of mensuration, he refers to an illustration of the Modulor drawn by the assistants in his office who had developed the diagrams. The figure’s legs are represented in multiple positions, and inscribed within a circle and squares and in the fashion of Leonardo’s Renaissance model, but is clearly female: the line bisecting the body neatly runs across the top of the triangle of her pubic hair.

\(^{6}\) Le Corbusier was apparently immune to direct or implied criticisms of the Modulor, and is capable of lofty amusement at them. In *Modulor 2*, reporting ‘dialogues with the users’, he reproduces an image from ‘Plan, journal of the Association of Architectural Students of Great Britain. These are charming young people, sincere and passionate friends. They respect the Modulor. What is more, they have wit. Like ducks shaking their feathers as they come out of the water, they have published ... this picture of a topsy-turvy Modulor man which is not without savour.’ (Le Corbusier 1968/1958, p24) ‘This picture’ is of a chimpanzee, whose solar plexus is very close to the ground, and whose upraised arm reaches twice its height.

\(^{7}\) Guitten’s translation from the French differs slightly from the version in the referenced edition, which reads: ‘And man, in his body, in the dimensioning of his members — in all that determines how he will occupy space during his daily activities — proceeds from the function $\phi$’ (Le Corbusier 1968/1958, p146).
Here is the drawing prepared by Serralta and Maisonnier: you take the square of the ‘Modulor man’ of 1.83 m. (but, since Serralta has a soft spot for the ladies, his man is a woman 1.83 metres tall: brrrh!).

(Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p52)

The model figure was not intended to ‘represent’ woman. A woman tall enough to look down on him (‘Oh, well, as for giants, I’m 1.75 meters tall ..., that’s not so bad ...’ (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p120)) is clearly a monster.68

In his writing he is (possibly intentionally) ambiguous about the role of the Modulor in design of built environments, whether as measure, as scale or as proportion. The changes made in the late 1940s to the ‘ideal’ height of the representative or symbolic human figure, from 1.75 metres to 1.83 metres add to the confusion.69 However whether the archetypal human figure is to be the standard Frenchman (1.75 metres tall), the Anglo-Saxon (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p120), or the mythical British policeman (six feet tall), the masculinity of both image and system is unquestionable, whether the effect is to be anthropometric, architectural or iconographic.70 The masculinity (and size) of the Modulor is a basic symbolic fact, regardless of the anthropometrics of the figure (Le Corbusier quotes a letter written to him by a Henri Guettard in 1950: ‘the choice for the Modulor of a man six feet tall is completely arbitrary.’ But the rest of the

68 In Modulor 2 Le Corbusier describes designing ‘as a birthday present for my wife — the plans for a small holiday house, or cabin. ... These plans (my own) were drawn up in three-quarters of an hour. ... Thanks to the Modulor, the venture was completely sure’ (Le Corbusier 1968/1958, p239). Yvonne Gallis was much shorter than her husband.

69 The original Modulor Man was developed in Paris during World War II. An English assistant, assigned the task in Le Corbusier’s office, produced a set of modular dimensions based on the ‘standard’ height of a man at 1.75m. Experimentation with the subdivisional system for the proportional grid, evolved into a pair of interrelated series, the red and the blue, based on the Fibonacci series, and eventually engaged Le Corbusier himself, the mathematician Elisa Maillard, and various members of his atelier.

Difficulties arose with reconciling the figures within the two series. In The Modulor, Le Corbusier describes the occasion for the decision to change the originating height. A member of the team said, “But isn’t that [1.75m] rather a French height? Have you never noticed that in English detective novels, the good-looking men, such as the policemen, are always six feet tall?” “To our delight, the graduations of the new ‘Modulor’, based on a man six feet tall, translated themselves before our eyes into round figures in feet and inches.” (Le Corbusier 1954, p56) So the Modulor was elongated to a height of 183 cm.

The mystique of the Modulor shares in the quality of myth. (See Chapter 7 for a discussion of its reception by writers on Le Corbusier.) Le Corbusier contributed, as usual, to its mythic status by recounting a meeting with Albert Einstein, and a letter from the famous scientist telling him, ‘It is a scale of proportions which makes the bad difficult and the good easy’ (Le Corbusier 1954, p58). The uncompromising, almost theological, use of the words ‘good’ and ‘bad’ must have pleased the fundamentalist in Le Corbusier. However, Paul Wiedlinger, who knew Le Corbusier personally, gives this version of the story. ‘He went to see Einstein to show him the Modulor, explained it to him, and Einstein, you know, he was a very nice person, said, “This is wonderful.” Le Corbusier said, “Write it down.”’ So, he wrote something to the effect that, “The Modulor is wonderful. It makes the beautiful easy, the ugly difficult.” Le Corbusier had it photostatted and he posted it on my wall and he said, “Look at it, this is what Einstein says.”’ (Peter 1994, p153)

Le Corbusier continued to muse over the significance or otherwise of the relationship between the numbers in metric and those in Imperial measure, but he explained his preference for the Imperial measures as being based on its direct connection with the human body and human experience (Le Corbusier 1954, p19); ironic, in the light of this discussion of the partial nature of a human seen only in masculine European guise.

70 In an interview published with Mise au Point (The Final Testament of Père Corbu) Le Corbusier says, ‘I had started the Modulor at 1.75 meters, which is the normal height of a Frenchman. Then all of a sudden I realized the Anglo-Saxon couldn’t pass through Modulor doors 1.75 meters high. So I took 1.83 meters, you see, which even turns out to be a sacred number ...’ (Le Corbusier 1996, p120). The ‘Anglo-Saxon’ is as evidently male — and symbolic — as the Frenchman.
discuss the related to the tradition and efficacy of systems of numbers, and Guettard concludes, 'Numbers themselves can correct, guide, organise [the Modulor’s] development along the path of perfection.' (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p83)

Le Corbusier records the disquiet of ‘M. Liegeois, an electrical engineer ... [who] is worried about the six-foot man. He thinks of the housewives in their kitchens who are only five feet tall (infants of course are still smaller).’ (p92) (It is not clear whether the characterisation of women as housewives in kitchens is M. Liegeois’s or Le Corbusier’s; the sarcastic reference to infants suggests it is Le Corbusier who speaks.) Le Corbusier’s response is that ‘on the universal scale there can only be one system of measures ... a single canon, a single height’, but that anthropometrics demands ‘several canons of different human heights, judiciously distributed’; as a synthesis of the contradictory requirements of unity and universality he claims that ‘the Modulor, by reason of its flexibility in combination, is capable of fulfilling this draconian condition of universality.’ (p93) It could be argued that the capacity of the system to produce by subdivision and combination any dimension effectively vitiates its usefulness for design.

Considered as anthropometrics the Modulor is unarguably problematic. Le Corbusier’s argument for the six-foot man is naïve: that as the Modulor was intended as a global system for the manufacture of objects ‘on a world-wide scale’ which would become ‘the property of users of all races and heights ... it is better that a measure should be too large than too small, so that an article made on the basis of that measure should be suitable to all.’ (Le Corbusier 1954 [1948], p63) 71 The expanded Modulor diagrams (p67), showing ‘Modulor Man’ sitting, leaning on a bench, resting his elbows on a bar, reaching up, expose the absurdity of such a claim. Women and children, generally shorter than the six-foot man, not to mention non-’Caucasians’ of different heights and proportions, may often find such an approach to the design of living environments less than satisfactory. Furthermore, the Modulor dimensions focus on the solar plexus (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p49), and thus have an internal proportional logic.

However women’s proportions generally differ from men’s — in particular the navel of a woman is on average located proportionately higher on the body than that of a man, and women have relatively longer legs than men; the ergonomics of work heights, for example, cannot be generalised. However Le Corbusier remained adamant. Asked in 1962 if he was ‘still in agreement with what [he] wrote on the Modulor’ he replied,

'It's part of the definition I gave of taking care of man. ... I linked the Modulor to the human scale. I took the proportions from the solar plexus of man to his head and raised arm. I found the Golden Section in that and created a dimensional system that answers all of the needs of man, seated, standing up, lying down, etc.

'AM without pretensions naturally, but it is very important and opens to industry unlimited possibilities, a toll of modern times.'

(Peter 1994, pp147-148)

In fact Le Corbusier did recognise the Modulor as having an intuitive/experiential dimension engaging with the realities of human scale, at least as related to himself. ‘I have felt at ease in a house or in front of a house governed by the dimensions of the Man-with-Arm-Upraised.’ (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p284) His nonchalance can perhaps be interpreted as signifying that he carried the patriarchal assumption that the masculine represents the human, and considered himself as completely representative

71 Such an argument applied to design for children would be problematic: but children figured in Le Corbusier’s view of the world even less than women.
of humanity: the extrapolation of his own experience was adequate to explain and predict the requirements, attitudes, and ideas of all people, everywhere. In a footnote in *The City of Tomorrow* he describes his intention for the house he designed for the Paris Exhibition in 1925: ‘I will do a house for everybody, or, if you prefer it, the apartment of any gentleman who would like to be comfortable in beautiful surroundings’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p231, note 2). In *Mise au Point*, published in the year of his death, he says, ‘[f]or fifty years now I have been studying “Everyman”, his wife and his children’ (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p91). His ‘Everyman’ is not only obviously male, but definitely a patrician — undeniably similar to Le Corbusier himself.

The principal significance of the Modulor for current architectural discourse is as a symbol; it now both represents Le Corbusier himself, and in effect maintains the generic masculine character of the architecture of which he is an icon. (The feminist critic Bronwyn Hanna finds ‘the huge clumsy figure with raised arm vaguely threatening’ (Hanna 1988, p36.).) The metaphysical nature of Le Corbusier’s proposal is clear. Le Corbusier describes a reproduction in a journal of the Modulor ‘horizontally at the head of the chapter’ as a ‘crime against the nature of things. For the Modulor comes from a man upright on his feet. ... Man has a stature, the order of his sensations is vertical in nature.’ (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p79)

The verticality of man is a manifestation of his masculinity, distinguishing him from the feminine ‘other’. That other extreme polemict of Modernism, Adolf Loos, is uncompromising (and anthropologically suspect). In ‘Ornament and Crime’ he states, ‘[t]he first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who created it felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same heaven in which Beethoven created the *Ninth Symphony.*’ (Conrads 1970, p19)

**The mystic mathematics of the Modulor**

Le Corbusier quotes a ‘message from Siegfried Giedion’:

‘The Modulor is based on the great systems of proportioning. It knows how to unite them. One of these systems is, more properly, mathematical in character: the Golden Section. It has certain relations with the Pythagorean triangle which is expressed in whole numbers. The theoreticians of the 19th and 20th centuries ... have shown how nature constructs plants, shells and the proportions of the human body on the basis of the Golden Section. It is found in the architecture of all ages. The Renaissance used it everywhere.

The other system was born of the Gothic spirit. Fibonacci, a professor in the 14th century, created it. By reducing his principle to its extreme conclusion, we found that it is geometrical in character, expressing itself not in whole numbers but in fractions.

The red and blue scale of the Modulor combine these two systems.

At the entrance to his *Unité d’Habitation* at Marseilles, Le Corbusier exemplifies his system by a man-with-arm-upraised. That is man walking across space. It is dynamic man, corresponding to a dynamic architecture.

Proportions are governed by laws which go beyond the ages. But the possibilities of combining those laws are innumerable ... Each generation may
integrate them in its own way. But the foundations remain as the great
constants of the world.'
(Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p74-75)

Both Giedion and Le Corbusier were proponents of an architecture which asserted the
claim to share in the transcendent and mystic traditions of mathematics and science.

Mathematics is the majestic structure conceived by man to grant him
comprehension of the universe. It holds both the absolute and the infinite, the
understandable and the forever elusive. It has walls before which one may pace
up and down without result; sometimes there is a door: one opens it — enters
— one is in another realm, the realm of the gods, a room which holds the key to
the great system.
(Le Corbusier 1954 [1948], p71)

The preoccupation of Le Corbusier with the esoteric mathematics of the Modulor is
evident. Throughout Modulor 2 he discusses the various mathematical and
numerological systems in which he or others have identified a relationship with the
Modulor, from Plato and Pythagoras to Pacioli and Fibonacci in the West, from the
Old Testament to the Hindu Vedas. '[A]ll our building is at the mercy of pure chance if
it is done outside a co-ordinated and harmonious scale. The engineers have covered
some ground in standardising for economic reasons.' (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955],
p102) He describes craft rules handed down from father to son 'stuffed full of
esotericism and miniature metaphysics to please the customers. Beneath all this a thin
spider's web of vulgarized 'applied' wisdom comes through to our own day... The
'spokesmen' tend to speak in high-falutin' terms, implying deep knowledge and
initiation' (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955], p103).

He distinguishes these traditional rules from his invention of the Modulor, which he
claims to be 'a tool guaranteeing absolute safety'. '... That which is true is true. We are
in the realm of numbers... The key here is the truth.' (Le Corbusier 1968 [1955],
p104) (italics in the original). '[N]ature is ruled by mathematics, and the masterpieces
of art are in consonance with nature; they express the laws of nature and themselves
proceed from these laws. Consequently, they too are governed by mathematics, and the
scholar's impecable reasoning and unerring formulae may be applied to art.' (Le
Corbusier 1954 [1948], p29-30)

Le Corbusier and women — in his city, in his office and in his life

Le Corbusier was representative of his age in disregarding the possibility that a woman
could actually be an architect, although he had a number of women working in his
studio, one of whom was his Director of Interior Design, Charlotte Perriand. Mary
McLeod recounts that when Charlotte Perriand applied for a position in his office he
replied, "We don’t embroider cushions in my studio" (McLeod 1987, p43).72

72 Embroidery appears to be symbolic to Le Corbusier of the effeminate decadence of decoration and
its irrelevance to true architecture. 'Proceeding dialectically Le Corbusier opposes to the
camouflaged dandy the 'ALL NAKED MAN'... The all naked man does not wear an embroidered
waistcoat; he wished to think.' (Quoted from L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui, p76 in Jencks 1973a,
p80)

73 Shapiro argues that this statement is not necessarily sexist, and 'may have been about Le
Corbusier's distaste for the interior decoration displayed at the 1925 Art Deco Exhibition'
(Shapiro 1995, p278), an unlikely interpretation. Le Corbusier 'did hire Perriand her after seeing
her work at the Salon d’Automne of 1927' (Carranza 1994, p80, n14), as a 'pupil for architecture
and a collaborator for furniture. Over the next couple of years the partnership would produce all
Cololina has documented Le Corbusier's physical and symbolic colonisation of the architect Eileen Gray's house at Cap Martin by painting murals on its walls (Cololina 1996b) (see Chapter 4). In Blake's Le Corbusier, Architecture and Form, the house becomes an anonymous 'vacation house at Cap Martin' (Blake 1963, p109). Green tells us that 'Badovici ... gave him ... [the] chance to 'destroy' walls by mural painting, when he let him loose ... on the walls of the house he shared with Eileen Gray at Cap Martin' (Green 1987, 125). Von Moos, in his book on Le Corbusier (von Moos 1985), says that the house was the property of Jean Badovici, Gray's (male, homosexual) companion: other historians have gone so far as to attribute its ownership and its design to Le Corbusier, the ultimate colonisation (Cololina 1996b). Le Corbusier himself either transfers ownership of the house to Badovici (in the caption to a photograph of the mural in Le Corbusier 1948, p98), or, some years later, misremember Gray's name; in My Work (Le Corbusier 1960, section 1919-1939) he calls the architect 'Helen Grey'.

Le Corbusier was clearly aware of the existence of actual women in his real life — in fact he depended intensely on his wife's presence in the home ('Guardian angel of the house, my home, for thirty-six years' (Jencks 1973a, p101)), while he 'an impenitent traveller, [was] born into all the corners of the earth' (Le Corbusier 1948, p18). However she was not apparently part of his creative life. Discussing his painting he says,

I have the good fortune to paint without selling. ... One remains the only judge of oneself, one lives alone (in painting only, for heaven knows I am in contact with men and their passions in architecture and city planning!)

(Le Corbusier 1948, p20)

He treated her with some neglect and almost certainly infidelity. Jencks quotes Tara Zinkin's account in a newspaper article (Zinkin 1965) of a corbusian attempt at 'seduction':

he asked me what I was doing that evening: “Catching a train, I'm afraid,” I said. “Pity. You are fat and I like my women fat. We could have spent a pleasant night together.” ... He was not being offensive ... he took ... a functional view of sex ...’

(Zinkin, 1965, quoted in Jencks 1973a, p104)

Jane Drew's reference to his affairs, quoted in part in another context in Chapter 4, is 'English' and oblique:

---

the 'classic' chair designs (Benton 1987f, p160). Jencks gratuitously tells us that Le Corbusier 'designed a series of chairs, tables and built-in cupboards' 'with the aid of a very young and attractive girl, Charlotte Perriand' (Jencks 1973a, p80). (See Chapter 4 for Carranza's interpretation of the photographs of Perriand reclining anonymously on the famous chaise longue.) According to Blake, 'Corbu has not designed any furniture worth speaking of since 1929' (Blake 1960, p70; Blake 1963, p63). Perriand left the studio in 1940; various conclusions are possible.

74 According to Charles Jencks in Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture, 'if he was the mythical French husband whenever he travelled, at least he was faithful and considerable to Yvonne in Paris' (Jencks 1973a, p102). In his later reworking of the book (Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture), he also recounts a 'female acquaintance' who 'described how he [Le Corbusier] said to her "women are good for bed" ... [b]ut my friend continued, ... "he was not unfaithful to his wife." ... [T]he implication was that morality was ... different among the creative elite' (Jencks 2000, p194-195). Jencks appears to assume that this creative elite is male. See Chapter 7 for further discussion of Jencks's gendered view of life, architecture and everything.
His reason for not having a family\textsuperscript{75} was that, like a monk, an artist could not spare the time. He did, however, value affection and women — not in an English way: ... although he recognized sex as the force it is and was not respectful of man-made laws [read marriage], he did respect the women [sic plural] he loved, and his love of his mother was a very great force in his life. (Drew 1977, p369)

Mary McLeod is more direct. According to McLeod '[t]he music of Josephine Baker, whom he met (and with whom he probably had an affair) on the boat sailing from South America\textsuperscript{76}, also moved him intensely’ (McLeod 1996, p90).

Jane Drew’s observation can presumably be trusted: but feminist theory has identified the duality, even the schizophrenia, of cultural stereotypes of the female — ‘the femme fatale, the whore, the angel in the house and the moral guardian of man’ (Payne 1997, p192). Love of the sanctified mother, and perhaps wife (and Virgin Mary), can in fact be a spur to contempt for all other women, who do not attain her (possibly imaginary) virtue.\textsuperscript{77} Drew’s apology for Le Corbusier’s behaviour and her Romantic view of Le Corbusier’s renunciation of family life in the interests of his art is part of a personal reminiscence — ‘Le Corbusier as I Knew Him’. However exploration of the nature of creativity and the creative life, and their relationship with character and human relations, often constitute an intrinsic part of architectural discourse, as does the search for ‘origins’, both personal and artistic\textsuperscript{78}, in spite of postmodernist claims of the ‘death of the author’\textsuperscript{79}. I discuss the gendered perspective writers on Le Corbusier often bring to these issues in Chapter 7.

The attitude to women in general — as distinct from ‘his women’ (whether as sexual partners or as nurturers of his general welfare) — that is reflected Le Corbusier’s texts appears to border on contempt. The few women who can be found in his city are marginal to the real business of living; they appear either as occasional ‘bit-players’ in his urban scenarios, or impediments to the creative activities of men — or symbolic figures. As always, his view of the urban scene is a class-based perspective. As is often the case, class intersects with gender. Le Corbusier’s world is populated with versions of himself, the patrician Frenchman.\textsuperscript{80} So, unsurprisingly, women appear generally to

\textsuperscript{75} For Drew it is apparently of little consequence that the decision not to have children was clearly his alone. For Le Corbusier’s approach to marriage, his response to Yvonne’s feelings on the subject, and various writers’ response to the matter, see Chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{76} Le Corbusier almost always travelled abroad without his wife. See Chapter 7 for more about the role of Josephine Baker in Le Corbusier’s oeuvre.

\textsuperscript{77} Anne Somers’s aphorism ‘Damned Whores and God’s Police’ puts the paradox succinctly.

\textsuperscript{78} Obvious examples are Baker’s \textit{Le Corbusier, the Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret} (1996), Brooks’s \textit{Le Corbusier’s Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds} (1997), and Jencks’s \textit{Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture} (1973a).

\textsuperscript{79} In ‘The Death of the Author’ Barthes (1977) questioned the cultural investment in the idea of the ‘author’ as the sole explanatory source of texts. Foucault (1984a) developed the idea of the ‘author-function’ in the circulation of texts, while Kristeva (1967) proposed the term ‘intertextuality’ to indicate the interrelations between texts; a work is never totally self-contained, but the transformation of other texts. The notion of architecture as ‘text’ has arrived with postmodernism, but the myths of the individual creator and the wholly original work die hard in architectural discourse.

\textsuperscript{80} Le Corbusier’s eurocentrism is almost as striking as his masculism. In his attitudes to the ‘other’ Le Corbusier is almost stereotypical of his time, gender and class. This thesis does not deal with race, but feminist theory acknowledges the similarities and differences in the forms and effects of oppression on the basis of race, ethnicity or class compared with gender-based subordination. In \textit{Precisions}, relating his experience of Rio de Janeiro, he describes with the enthusiasm of the tourist the ‘favellas’ (sic) above the city: ‘wood and wattle houses — the blacks are clean and
impinge on his vision of urban life in the capacity of servants: ‘a nursemaid or a governess’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p214), a concierge’s wife (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p213), a maid (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p220). The tone of his writing is at times overtly sexist: in a well-planned city

The river flows far away from the site. The river is a kind of liquid railway, a goods station and a sorting house. In a decent house the servants’ stairs do not do through the drawing room — even if the maid is charming.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p161)

The text clearly speaks to a male reader, and the image is vivid, including the hint of an illicit (male) view from below of the maid’s ankles as she ascends the stairs. Bellhouse has studied through an examination of French representations of ‘the female domestic servant ... how [she] was figured as an object of fear[, disapproval] and desire in the bourgeois imaginary’ (Bellhouse 1999, p963). Le Corbusier is a cultural descendant of Rousseau and his gendered codes of virtue (see Zerilli 1994).

So the maid may be ‘charming’, but it is more common to find such women characterised as trivialising life and disturbing men’s tranquillity. Le Corbusier describes the typical apartment dweller as ‘perpetually badgered by that harpy [the concierge’s] wife ... when your visitors call they can’t find her to direct them to you. Either she has gone out or she is cleaning the stairs’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p213). Meanwhile, ‘your maid goes to the local store and wastes a lot of time’ (p214). His plans for the modern city would dispense with such recalcitrant personal servants and replace them with professionalised (generally male) services; so ‘you would be spared the sulks of the maid when a little extra polishing has to be done’ (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p220).

Appearances in the texts of bourgeois women have a different tone. In Towards a New Architecture ‘the modern man is bored to tears in his home so he goes to his club. The modern woman is bored outside her boudoir; she goes to tea-parties ... [L]esser folk, ... have no clubs ...’ [neither did women] (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], pp112-113). (It is presumably no accident that the final photograph in Towards a New Architecture is the very masculine image of a briar pipe (p269).) ‘[H]e has been taught to wear a shiny white collar, and women love fine linen’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p257). ‘The styles ... are to architecture what a feather is on a woman’s head; it is sometimes pretty, though not always, and never anything else.’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p27)). The central place in his conception of the city of (paid) work in the public realm, and the absence of women in his imaginary city, are underlined by his appropriation for the male of the conventional domestic domain. He describes the ‘earlier ages [when] man ordered his life in conformity with ... a “natural” system’, and ‘the father watched over the children in the cradle and later on in the workshop’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p253).

In a series of footnotes grieving over the decline of vitality in cities (‘The adventurer, the constructor, the man of action and daring, disappears once his hour is come’ (Le

magnificently built, the women are dressed in white calico always freshly washed. ... [T]he black has his house almost always on the edge of the cliff ... the eye of the man who sees wide horizons is prouder, wide horizons confer dignity’ (Le Corbusier c1991, p235). This extract is striking in its combination of patronising tone (surprise at the cleanliness of blacks), the masculist assumption that the ‘black’ is male (proprietor of both the house and the dignity), and the implied rationale for Le Corbusier’s architectural principle of raising his buildings above ground level, separated from and transcending ‘nature’.

81 ‘Demand that the maid’s room should not be an attic. Do not park your servants under the roof.’ (Le Corbusier 1970, p115)
Corbusier 1971 [1925], p199), he recounts being on the jury of an international
townplanning competition.

On every plan submitted ... one could see ... the undulations of an English park
or the geometrical layout of a French garden ... for the use of this Alsatian town
and its nurserymaids!

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p199)

Le Corbusier’s preference in this case was for open space, an ‘immense gymnasium’,
fit for his men of action. As Jencks points out, for Le Corbusier ‘[s]port was a type of
Darwinian competition which sharpened the individual for his combat with life ... As in
ancient Greece, mental harmony and brilliance were to be supported by physical
training’ (Jencks 1973a, p18)

Worse, women can be destructive of the creative liberty of men, and impede serious
masculine activities. Discussing his proposals for the renewal of the city of Paris by
‘surgery’, he laments that

It may happen that the wife of one of these gentlemen [planners and
bureaucrats] has been doing a little “slumming” and has seen, and never
forgotten, some delightful piece of iron-work in an old house which has now
become a slum; climbing some tottering old staircase on her errand of mercy.

(Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p255).

Such contemptible feminine sentimentality then leads to the ‘perpetuation of these old
staircases and all the degradation and misery of the slums’ (p255). Le Corbusier’s
preoccupation with health and purity developed early. ‘Purification is a vital
necessity’ he exclaims in Journey to the East (Le Corbusier 1991 [1966], p171),
written when he was twenty four. On the same page we read that

I met in Bulgaria a Frenchman with his wife, returning from Constantinople,
who said to me in an enraptured voice:
— Oh, yes, we had a good time, but what a pity the streets are so filthy.
His wife quickly corrected him:
— But no, that’s precisely what I find so chic!

(Le Corbusier 1991 [1966], pp171-172)

Le Corbusier saw travel as research — all forming part of his development as artist and
architect: ‘Jeaneret always intended that the travel diaries and his other researches
[sic] should be published’ (Baker 1996, px). Baker contends that Le Corbusier’s two
most influential books, Vers une Architecture and Urbanisme, ‘draw on Jeaneret’s
experiences during his formative years, establishing the theoretical framework that

---

82 In ancient Greece this also applied only to men. Le Corbusier’s vision is similar to the
contemporary of Baron de Coubertin who admired the individualistic competitiveness of the
sporting regime of English public schools, which according to him produced ‘men in the true
sense of the word’ and explained the supremacy of the British Empire. He was influenced by social
Darwinism, the fashion of the turn of the century bourgeois classes, which applied ‘the survival
of the fittest’ to human beings. (According to le Coubertin, ‘the only role for women in sport is
to applaud men.’) (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice)

83 A similar contempt for women can be read in a comment about Tom Wolfe’s attack on the ivory
tower of architectural Modernism in From Bauhaus to Our House (1983) by Joseph Rykwert.
Unlike many other members of the ... ‘architectural ... establishment’ who, according to Stevens,
‘would have preferred to see it and its author burnt’ (Stevens 1998, p105), Rykwert declared
gratuitously that ‘[t]he wives of the developers who build the master skyscrapers can safely leave
it lying about their coffee tables’ (Rykwert 1982, p70).

84 Richard Rorty reminds us that ‘as Derrida has acutely noted, the logocentric is bound up in subtle
ways with the drive for purity — the drive to escape contamination by feminine messes’ (Rorty
1993, p101).
informed his architecture of the 1920s’ (px). In fact his theoretical writing is populated with memories of places, people, events and experiences from his past. Women figure in one memory, his disappointment over the United States of America. ‘U.S.A.: women, psychoanalysis everywhere, an act without resonance, without goal.’ (Le Corbusier 1997 [1965], p87)

The feminine ‘other’

The limited and stereotypical role of women / woman in the texts is not merely a reflection of Le Corbusier’s personal attitude to actual women. His writing is resonant with the dualisms which characterise the semiotic economy of western culture, in which ‘the feminine’ takes its conventional role as Other to ‘the masculine’. These dualisms are clearly visible in the following famous passage from The City of Tomorrow; here we have the conventional oppositions of reason to emotion, intelligence to instinct, the civilised to the primitive, the straight line and order to the meander and the experiential.

Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going; he has made up his mind to reach some particular place and he goes straight to it.85

The pack donkey meanders along, meditates a little in his scatter-brained and distracted fashion, he zigzags in order to avoid the larger stones, or to ease the climb, or to gain a little shade ...

But man governs his feelings by his reason; he keeps his feelings and his instinct in check, subordinating them to the aim he has in view. He rules the brute creation by his intelligence. His intelligence formulated laws which are the product of experience. His experience is born of work; man works in order that he may not perish. (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p11)

One does not need to be either a pack donkey or a feminist to perhaps wonder whether it is not a sensible application of common sense to meander a little in response to the environment rather than to emulate the marching Roman army up hill and down dale disregarding site and context. But then the ‘aims’ that the Romans ‘had in view’ were conquest and imperial control — masculine preoccupations par excellence. As Le Corbusier states in Towards a New Architecture, ‘Rome’s business was to conquer the world and govern it. Strategy, recruiting, legislation: the spirit of order’ (Le Corbusier 1970 [1923], p142). A chapter of The City of Tomorrow is entitled ‘Order’:

I repeat that man, by reason of his very nature, practises order; that his actions and his thoughts are dictated by the straight line and the right angle, that the straight line is instinctive in him and that his mind apprehends it as a lofty objective. (Le Corbusier 1971 [1925], p23)

It might be claimed that a reading of ‘scatter-brained’ as an intentional or subliminal reference to the triviality of women is a little conspiratorial.86 However there are

---

85 Ironically, in Journey to the East the young Jeanneret had commented that ‘it is only animals who always walk in a straight line and never take leave of their senses’. But at the time he was under the spell of the ‘ruby-red wine ... from Bordelais ...which ... causes us to wander and wobble a little’ (Le Corbusier 1991, p48).
86 Catherine Ingraham, in her article ‘The Burdens of Linearity: Donkey Urbanism’ points out that the pack-donkey serves many a metaphorical purposes in The City of Tomorrow. "The donkey makes the "ruinous, difficult, and dangerous curve of animality" and typifies the "looseness and
discomfiting echoes in the description of the scatter-brained pack donkey and the chapter entitled ‘She’s and He’s’ in Journey to the East.

With the same moist eyes with which I worship a cat, a Persian miniature and those bronze statuettes from Cambodia I worship the young women and the donkeys of Stamboul; I find between them certain affinities and resemblances. ... I believe that the back, belly and head of the little donkeys of Stamboul are the artwork of a Persian painter, and that those ladies — hidden treasures in burgundy, blue, and ebony silk, ... are just as exquisite as Persian cats. ...

And the young ladies ... are charming in their mysterious black veils, their disquieting anonymity of identical silks, their hidden treasures all alike. Now it seems to me they are ravishing despite and also because of that second skirt flung over their heads, that makes an impenetrable veil. You will find real coquettes underneath. ... I bet you ... that almost all of them are young, adorable, with ivory cheeks a little full and with the innocent eyes of gazelles — delicious! After all, these veils conceal a penetrable mystery. ... [T]hey have the will to appear pretty, and thereby they perform their first womanly duty. (Le Corbusier 1991 [1966], pp128-130)

After an arch passage describing the toil of the pack donkeys in the Stamboul streets, which for a page he describes as “he’s”, Jeanneret continues,

They know how to trot with poise and thoughtfulness, without ever raising their heads up high, even though the big glass beads of turquoise, carnelian, and white glass suspended on their foreheads could make them conceited ... and they carry out these difficult tasks with drawing room manners. Add a Persian robe and big black eyes — like “she’s”.

(Le Corbusier 1991 [1966], p132)

Even allowing for the ‘normal’ attitude to women of the time, this passage is striking in both its orientalism and its nonchalant assimilation of woman and animal (‘the young women and the donkeys of Stamboul’) — both viewed as existing for the delectation or the service of the man. The pack donkeys also appear to have remained in his store of imagery, their valiant laden journeys through the streets of Constantinople transformed into scatter-brained meanderings.

Le Corbusier, ‘Woman’ and nature

Le Corbusier’s declaration of architecture as the manifestation of ‘Man against nature’ is in sharp contrast with his drawings and paintings of women in, or in fact as, Nature. Woman is apparently not seen as worthy of the complex mathematical manipulations he undertook in his alchemical researches for an ‘essential’ dimensional and proportional system. Le Corbusier’s own writing places his Purist still-lifes at the base

lack of concentration” of human beings in distraction, that is, the primitive/non-modern human being. The donkey ... threatens the triumph of geometry, an urbanism and an architecture of geometry, of positive action, of overcoming and ascending to power,..., of sanity, nobility and self-mastery.” (Ingramah 2000, p646) Ingramah makes no comment on the match of these oppositions with the culturally inscribed duality masculine / feminine.

87 An adjective most commonly applied to women, at least in English.
88 The editor, Ivan Zaknic, tells us (pxii) that Le Corbusier had read Ernest Renan; Renan is an important figure in Orientalism, Edward Said’s examination of the Western urge to define, appropriate and control the ‘East’ (Said 1995). The assimilation of nature, the ‘Orient’ and the feminine is paradigmatic of the orientalising mode.
of his development as an artist: explorations of the world of objects from the viewpoint of Man, a ‘geometrical animal’, imposing a geometrical order on his environment.

In his work in this genre, Woman was but an objet-type to be located amongst other objects on the canvas, and exhaustively analysed in terms of volume and plane, light and shade. He describes his discovery of the beauty of the female nude in the Spring of 1931, ‘grâce à la structure plastique de certaines femmes de la Casbah sous la lumière intense mais nuancée d’Alger’ (quoted in von Moos 1987, p191). Exploration of the female form as volumetric, even neuter, object increasingly merges in his drawings and paintings with the traditional (male European) artist’s view of Woman as the naked and accessible Object of the (male) Gaze. In some cases she is seen as both, and/or interchangeable with a natural scene, or with (symbolic) natural objects, such as Lea (1931), a painting in which the women draping the doorway in a series of preparatory studies are replaced in the final canvas by the vulva-like form of an enormous oyster. At other times his drawings and paintings are voyeuristic: ‘[t]he theme of two [female] nudes soon become prevalent in his paintings, often as two lesbians making love’ (Brooks 1997, p375).  

For Le Corbusier the connection between his art (drawing and painting) and his architecture resided less in terms of forms than of process. Painting, and more particularly drawing, were primarily private activities, while architecture was his public art. He seldom writes explicitly of the metamorphosis of drawings of women and nature (and women as nature) into his designs for buildings — and cities. However given his view that travel and drawing were in fact personal ‘research’, it is clear that his drawings of naked women, generally fat, contributed to an archive of forms which informed his architecture and his urbanism. Curtis tells us that ‘[t]he urban scheme for Algiers, known as the ‘Plan Obus’, was adjusted to the topography as an enormous landscape sculpture, its sinuous curves resembling the architect’s sketches of Algerian women’ (Curtis 1987a, p18). In Chapter 7 I examine in more detail other writers’ interpretations of Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women, his ‘use’ of the female form in his art and architecture, and his conflation of the ‘female’ with the erotic, ‘nature’ and ‘the primitive’.

For Le Corbusier this clear distinction of the male from the female is self-conscious and full of significance. Man does, Woman is. In a letter dated 1913, he early makes his position clear. ‘L’homme est pour moi l’architecture. Quand je ne fais pas de l’architecture, je vois tout en femmes.’ (quoted in Brooks 1997, p375)

---


90 ‘Man is for me architecture. When I am not making architecture, I see everything in terms of women.’ (my translation)
Chapter 7

‘Le Corbusier’, Architect of the Century

When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly,
we reach Homeric depths.
Two clichés make us laugh. A hundred clichés move us.
[But only if we identify with the story.]
(Eco 1986, p38. on ‘Casablanca’)

Writing on Le Corbusier

In this chapter I read the mainstream literature on Le Corbusier, and trace the
circulation in the literature about Le Corbusier of the themes or tropes of masculinity
identified in feminist theory. The manifestations of the masculine to be found in these
texts are multiple. Writers may uncritically accept, repeat and even exaggerate the
masculine language of Le Corbusier’s own text; they may not see, or they may ignore
or even endorse, his masculist language and his gendered interpretations of the world.
They may indulge in their own prejudiced characterisations of women, ‘Woman’ and
the feminine.1 They may rehearse the stereotypical, even archetypal tropes of modern
patriarchal culture discussed in Chapter 5: the Classical Cartesian man of reason
(Lloyd 1984; Bordo 1986), grounding his authority in distance, vision (‘the gaze’),
order, truth, mathematics, science and technology — or his alter ego, the artist-genius
as Romantic epic hero, participating in his creativity in aspects of the divine, and thus
transcending the concerns of everyday life. In every case the fundamental organising
principle is hierarchical dualism (or in Frye’s terms ‘psuedodualistic monistic logic’
(Frye 1996, p997)), whose ground is the opposition between the masculine (positive)
and the feminine (negative), but which proliferates in less consistent dyads such as
culture / nature, reason / emotion, and, ironically, classic rationalism / romanticism2.

The chapter is generally organised in a chronological discussion of a number of texts.
However in the interests of coherence some aspects of critique of Le Corbusier have
been incorporated into the text of Chapter 6, in parallel with the discussion of Le
Corbusier’s own writing. The major texts I discuss in this chapter are Choay (1960);
Banham (1962); Blake (1963); Evenson (1970); Jencks (1973a) and Jencks (2000);
Allsopp (1974); Banham (1975); Brolin (1976); Walden (1977); Guiton (1981);
Raeburn and Wilson (1987); Baker (1996) and Vogt (1998). In the two last sections of
this chapter I discuss responses to the Modulor, and to Le Corbusier’s attitudes to
women and the feminine.

I have discussed in Chapter 4 specifically feminist work on Le Corbusier — for
In the mainstream architectural literature, critics of Le Corbusier are surprisingly few.

1 Women writers such as Choay, Evenson and Samuels appear to be equally likely to employ such
characterisations as male writers.

2 This last is particularly significant in the case of Le Corbusier, whose approach to his art
underwent a road to Damascus transformation from the rationalist-purist to the romantic-organic
(see Turner 1977).
Apologies, in particular for his effect on city planning, abound throughout the literature. Le Corbusier’s own writing, like his buildings, appears to have retained their power over the mainstream architectural imagination. In his Introduction to the 1971 edition of The City of Tomorrow JM Richards provided an apologia for the rigidities and simplistic generalities of the work, written just a year before the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe public housing development which Charles Jencks — and later conventional wisdom — identify as marking the Death of the Modern Movement. Richards declared that Le Corbusier ‘provided the solid platform on which subsequent generations have been able to build.’ Scruton is one of few writers to resist the rhetoric. He refers to ‘the naive and hysterical propaganda of Le Corbusier’ (Scruton 1981, p140). Few other architectural writers appear to notice either the over-simplification and lack of sophistication manifested in the ideas, or the sexism of both the concepts and the language.

The gender-blindness of mainstream architectural discourse also appears sufficiently impenetrable to resist the extreme gender bias in Le Corbusier’s work. Not even in the most recent mainstream texts on Le Corbusier can one find more than a peripheral or implicit sign of the issues surrounding women or gender. Certainly very few professional ‘corbusians’ seem to find it worthy of comment. Recent feminist work excepted, Le Corbusier now attracts little criticism, whether as mythical iconic figure, as source of archetypal and canonic forms for the postmodernist archive of precedent, or as historical figure, and so forgiven as representative of a past time. In the mainstream literature the heroic myth has prevailed, and the criticism his work attracted earlier in the century when it was central to the debate on urbanism and architecture has subsided.

---

3 The grounds of the apologies vary. Most refer to the consequences of modernist town planning. Blake, writing still under the influence of modernist ‘clean-sweep’ ideas, refers to Le Corbusier’s proposal for Stockholm. ‘Yet there is nothing in these proposals which would not seem entirely reasonable today to the city-planning commissions of Philadelphia, New Haven, Chicago, Los Angeles or Cleveland.’ (Blake 1960, p80; Blake 1963, p85) One can only agree. Sutcliffe is somewhat petulant. ‘Of course it was not Le Corbusier’s fault that his ideas were abused, nor was he the only modern movement architect to advocate tall buildings and high densities.’ (Sutcliffe 1977, p238) In 1977 Jencks’s point of view was that ‘[t]o criticize Le Corbusier ... may sound unfair ... He was working with bad theory, and anyone can be unfortunate enough to be born at the wrong time. He should not bear personal responsibility for questionable ideas that were widely held at the time. And yet he, more than the others, publicized these universalist and deterministic notions ... ‘ (Jencks 1977, p209). His view in 2000 is rather simplistic. ‘Apologists have said that blaming Le Corbusier for the vulgarized versions of his plans is like blaming Mozart for Muzak. This is not a very apt parallel, but it makes the point that no new city plan ever lived up to his utopian ideals of being in a park and being built entirely at a stroke ... [Le Corbusier’s] diagrams ... reveal what was lacking in Modern city planning: an understanding of the real geometry of the city.’ (Jencks 2000, p148) For Curtis, ‘it is being unduly simplistic to blame every travesty of Le Corbusier’s ideas on Le Corbusier himself’ (Curtis 1987, p20). Le Corbusier cannot of course be held responsible for all that befell High Modernism, whether in planning or architecture. However this does not protect his texts from scrutiny.

4 Many critics, within and outside architecture, now feel that like Modernism itself, postmodernism has shuffled off its original ethical and political rationale (resistance to and subversion of the autocratic and inflexible programs and canons of the International Style, and more importantly the effects of their unthinking application), and become a sort of ‘poet’s licence’ for conceptual, stylistic and representational appropriation, drawing for aesthetic and/or promotional effect from the styles of the past. Ironically the dominant style of this postmodern is now known as the New Modernism, re-producing the forms and images of High Modernism, with Le Corbusier’s ‘high style’ its talisman. It is thus a matter of interpretation whether ‘Modernism’ is in fact ‘dead’. (See for instance Jameson 1991; Ockman 1985; Nicholson 1990.)

5 Colomina describes it as ‘non-professional’ (Colomina 1987).
Early criticisms

Early trenchant criticisms such as those presented — and countered — by Norma Evenson in an Appendix, 'Le Corbusier's Critics', to her biography of Le Corbusier as a planner, *Le Corbusier: The Machine and the Grand Design* (Evenson 1970, pp120-122), dated from the late 1920s to the late 1960s, while the issues raised were central to contemporary debates. Ironically, now that grand schemes for urban redevelopment have been largely found wanting, at least in the West, these criticisms have given way to almost universal deference, even homage. This was particularly striking during the period preceding and following Le Corbusier centennial in 1987. In France, the Fondation Le Corbusier perpetuates and protects the legend.⁶

Evenson herself is generally uncritical, apart from the occasional gentle, perhaps feminine, irony ('His descriptions of the city rhapsodized the joys of rapid driving' (Evenson 1970, p17)), and even milder implied reproach ('In what may have been an overreaction, Le Corbusier set out in a determined glorification of the straight line and the right angle' (Evenson 1970, p12)). In apparent deference to Le Corbusier's authority, she generally ascribes critical comments on Le Corbusier to others. For instance her reservations at his oversimplification of urban life and function in his project for the City for Three Million are expressed vicariously by means of quotations from Mumford:

> He embraced every feature of the contemporary city except its essential social and civic character [and] ... wiped out the complex tissue of a thousand little and not so little urban activities that cannot be economically placed in tall structures or function efficiently except at points where they are encountered at street level and utilized by multitudes of people going about their business at all times of the day
> (Mumford 1962, quoted in Evenson 1970, pp18-19)

Mumford's text rehearses many of the issues raised by feminist theory in declaring his opposition to Le Corbusier,

> he with his Cartesian clarity and his Cartesian elegance but also — alas! — with his Baroque insensitiveness to time, change, organic adaptation, functional fitness, ecological complexity; and, not least, with his sociological naiveté, his economic ignorance, and his political indifference.
> (Mumford 1962, quoted in Evenson 1970, p107)

Evenson's commentary however is generally gender-blind, and, also writing in the late 1960s, she is apparently unaware of or unperturbed by Le Corbusier's gendered language. She makes no comment on the absence of women from his visionary city projects, although she does notice that 'there seems little place for the lame, the halt, the old or the poor' in the Radiant City (Evenson 1970, p22). While she credits Le Corbusier with 'an acute social observation' in having been aware of the problems of race in American cities (p30), she makes no claim for a place for women. And she reports without reaction Le Corbusier's description of Algiers, as he left by ship 'ruminating gloomily', as '"... like a magnificent body, supple-hipped and full-breasted, but covered by the sickening scabs of a skin disease."' Her concern is with Le Corbusier's reaction to the rejection of his vision by the Algerian authorities: '"I have been expelled, the doors have been shut in my face. I am leaving and deeply I feel: I am right, I am right, I am right.'" (Le Corbusier, *Precisions*, p260, cited in Evenson 1970, p28).

⁶ In the tradition of women acting as guardians of the masculine flame, the Director of the Fondation Le Corbusier is a woman, Evelyne Tréhin.
Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs

The early critiques quoted by Evenson were theoretical. More practical criticism arose while the versions of *tabula rasa* planning were being applied throughout the world. Such criticisms of Le Corbusier generally form part of generalised critiques of what is seen as the inhumanity of modern architecture and planning. In ‘Architecture as a Home for Man’ [sic], having described Le Corbusier’s ‘sociological naïveté, his economic ignorance and his political indifference’, Mumford concludes cynically that ‘these very deficiencies were, as it turned out, what made his city of the Future such a successful model for world-wide imitation.’ (Mumford 1968) In 1962, during Le Corbusier’s lifetime, Mumford had accused him of paying ‘no more attention to the nature of the city ... than did the real estate broker or the municipal engineer’, and of destroying ‘the complex tissue of a thousand little and not so little urban activities’ (Mumford 1962). In spite of Mumford’s own understandable use of conventional gendered language, here is an echo of the conventional Western gender split between the ‘feminine’ private realm of ‘little activities’ and the ‘masculine’ public sphere of important, visible, action.

Mumford had been preceded by Jane Jacobs (Jacobs 1961).7 Both were writing too early to have an overtly theorised feminist perspective, but both raise issues later raised by second-wave feminist theory. Diane Ghirardo implicitly makes reference to the proto-feminist orientation of Jacobs’s work (‘the personal is political’, attention to subjugated voices, emphasis on relationships and experience):

Jacobs challenged the planning ideas of Le Corbusier and other Modern Movement designers, as well as the Garden City program of Ebenezer Howard, ... as inappropriate for cities. Celebrating the heterogeneity of urban neighborhoods and old buildings, Jacobs used her own district in New York as a means of unearthing the diversity and liveliness possible on city streets, which she contrasted with the deadening regularity of low-income housing projects that killed the street. Unlike most architectural critics of the time, Jacobs acknowledged the connection between development money and urban change, financial practice and the decay of cities. ... Some of her emphases — on the lived network of human relationships that constitute our experiences of cities and which modern architecture and planning ignored — only slowly began to bear fruit.

(Ghirardo 1996a, p13)

Ghirardo herself is unusual among architectural critics in the mainstream in her emphasis on social and political issues, and she acknowledges the importance in recent epistemological and morphological changes in architecture and planning of ethnic and feminist studies (Ghirardo 1996a, p8).

**Devotees of Le Corbusier**

**Peter Blake ... first impressions**

Contemporary with Jane Jacobs, Peter Blake published his ingenuous biography of ‘Corbu’ in two versions, one as *The Master Builders* in conjunction with biographies of Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies van der Rohe (Blake 1970), the other, *Le Corbusier*:

---

7 Jane Jacobs’s 1961 text *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* stands in much the same pioneering relation to critiques of the built environment as Rachel Carson’s *The Silent Spring* (1960) to the cause of conservation in the natural environment. In both cases, women, speaking from a location marginal to the conventional discourses, provided a different view. Charles Jencks acknowledges Jacobs, but with a twist, a case of hedging his bets: see later in this chapter in the section ‘Jencks and the tragic hero of architecture’.

138
Architectural Construclion and Form, with the addition of further exploration of Le Corbusier's work and ideas (Blake 1963). Blake's narrative is punctuated with remonstrances against the 'world outside [which] continued to reject, denounce, and ridicule Corbu's ideas' (Blake 1963, p76), and spirited defences of the master. In his concluding sentence to a chapter recounting the rejection during the 1920s and 1930s of a series of Le Corbusier's competition entries and proposals for individual buildings and often unsolicited schemes for entire cities, Blake combines the carthesian opposites, the power of implacable reason and a distinctly Romantic view of intrinsic ethnic characteristics. 'To many of his contemporaries Corbu may have seemed to be whistling in the dark; but his faith was real enough — a Frenchman's passionate faith in the eventual triumph of reason.' (Blake 1970, p81)

In keeping with the ideas of his time, but in stark contrast with Jacobs, Blake is uncritically enthusiastic about Le Corbusier's tabula rasa approach to town planning. 'The Ville Contemporaine has been widely (and ignorantly) attacked ever since it was first publicized; and yet to city planner in Europe, the Americas or Asia has come up with a clearer, more rational, more 'human' or more beautiful proposal for a large metropolis in the thirty or forty years since Corb first developed his scheme.' (Blake 1963, p40) '[T]here is absolutely nothing in [Corbu's proposals for Antwerp and Stockholm] which would not seem entirely reasonable to the city-planning commissions of Philadelphia, New Haven, Chicago, Los Angeles, or Cleveland.' (p85) Even disregarding the imperialist assumption that what is good for the United States of America is good for the world, such a claim now has an ironic flavour.9

He defines the role and responsibilities of the architect and the purposes of architecture in terms consistent with Le Corbusier’s own view of the matter. His vocabulary reflects the themes which circulate throughout the texts of patriarchy: truth, reason, order, the abstract, geometry, the visual; and the role of the lone creative individual. For Blake, reason and order combine with passion in the heroic.

To Le Corbusier ... humanity's greatest achievement is the rule of law — in politics, as well as in art; and to him, also, the sole purpose of the rule of law is to make men free to act heroically, whether as statesmen, as poets, or as artists. (Blake 1963, p11)

He quotes Le Corbusier, "'An implacable mathematics and physics reign over the forms presented to the eye ... Their agreement, their repetition, their interdependence, and the spirit of unity ... which binds them together to form an architectural expression, is a phenomenon which is ... supple, subtle [sic], exact and implacable'" (Blake 1963, p138; Blake 1970, p137). 'Each of the great structures completed by him during those years seemed to be another brilliant sculptural achievement.' (Blake 1963, p135; Blake 1970, p136) 'Throughout his life Corbu has searched for a rule of law in art ... [The Modulor] represents to him a system of ultimate truths.' (Blake 1970, p139) 'This moral and poetic basis of the Modulor inspired Corbu to make the system ... the culmination of a life's work devoted to bringing a rule of law into art. Many critics,

8 'The Antwerp plan does not look very different today from such eminently sound proposals as those made by the architect Victor Gruen for Fort Worth: the creation of a largely pedestrian city core ringed by super-highways.' (pp84-85) 'Today's city planners in New York and elsewhere are trying ... to create zoning patterns that will eventually ... Le Corbusier realized ... turn Manhattan or downtown Chicago into open cities punctuated with glistening skyscrapers, spaced far apart and linked by ribbons of expressways. ... As so often happens, the poet has been vindicated ... .' (p98) See Chapter 2 for the implications, particularly for women and children, and those without access to a car, of such a 'poetic' vision of the city.

9 There is a further irony in the fact that Blake later reversed his position, in the way of extremist converts, and published the vitriolic Form Follow Fiasco: Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked (Blake 1977). I discuss this text in the next section, 'Blake 'born again'.'
who admire Corbu's individual buildings, have scoffed at ... the Modulor, not realizing that to this intensely moral man it was essential to develop a system that would "make the bad difficult and the good easy". (Blake 1963, p140; Blake 1970, pp140-141)\(^{10}\)

Blake is capable of seeing faults in Le Corbusier, but affords them little importance. "The fact is that few people in the past have been able to work with Corbu on any other terms than submissive adulation (which may, indeed, have been his due)." (Blake 1963, p129) His response to the Villa Savoye is characteristic. There is no discussion of the client's brief or the building's program, the experience of inhabiting it, or the conflict between client and designer. "The Villa Savoye ... was meant to be a man-made object, the product of one man's great distinguishing characteristic — pure reason." (Blake 1963, p64; Blake 1970, p59) He acknowledges the technical deficiencies which in effect made the building uninhabitable before its wartime vicissitudes ([u]nfortunately the weather started to take its toll before very long, and cracks and streaks appeared on the stucco surface. The harsh facts of practical building began to conflict with the intellectual concept" (Blake 1963 p67; Blake 1970, p62), but this does nothing to diminish Blake's admiration for the building. After the war "the Villa returned to its lovely, surreal existence. ... When the Villa Savoye was white against the blue sky, it ... was a 'joyful spectacle'. It is not that today. But its image remains in our hearts' (Blake 1963, p69; Blake 1970, p64).

Here we see almost in caricature the 'romantic rationalist' corbusian vision of architecture as pure platonic idea manifested in geometrical volume viewed in light. However, as Blake point out, '[i]f Corbu had built his [the pronoun is significant] Villa Savoye thirty years later, it would have been a 'rough' rather than a 'pure' prism' (Blake 1963, p68; Blake 1970, p63). So in describing the plastic qualities of the buildings of Le Corbusier's later 'organic' period, he uses the epithet 'virile' to praise the Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles ('[c]oncrete poured into the formwork to come out looking as rough and virile as rock' (Blake 1963, p119; Blake 1970, p120; Blake 1970, p119)), and the High Court building at Chandigarh as bringing 'back into architecture a magic world of plastic form and virile texture' (Blake 1963, p135; Blake 1970, p136).

His text abounds with epithets emphasising Le Corbusier's role as the 'creative artist, standing alone' (Blake 1963, p135; Blake 1970, p136), the (masculine) heroic qualities of his buildings, and the moral and poetic grandeur of his achievement. 'Corbu is a mixture of many things. He is an artist of incredible strength; a fighter of great passions; a pamphleteer of tremendous eloquence.' (Blake 1963, p124)

[The] moral and poetic basis of the Modulor inspired Corbu to make the system, in a sense, the culmination of a life's work devoted to bringing the rule of law into art. ... The rule of law by which civilized men\(^{11}\) live is the single most moving political and moral achievement of the West. The rule of law which Corbu has tried to bring into architecture may, someday, be considered the single most moving contribution he has made to our culture.

(Blake 1963, p140; Blake 1970, p141)

Borrowing Le Corbusier's rhetoric and taking the lead from Le Corbusier himself, Blake indulges in hyperbole, effectively equating him with the great artistic heroes of the past.

---

\(^{10}\) But see Chapter 6 footnote 71.

\(^{11}\) Blake's use of the term 'men' is probably intentional here — an overtly masculine view of civilisation. His use of the masculine nouns and pronouns is not entirely formulaic or generic. He tells us, for instance, that in Le Corbusier's atelier 'each draughtsman and designer has a list of related Modulor dimensions pinned up on the wall next to his or her drawing board' (Blake 1963, p139, my italics).

140
Many years earlier, in *Vers une architecture*, the young Le Corbusier had written about two men — Michelangelo and Phidias. ...

‘Phidias, Michelangelo, Le Corbusier. Intelligence and Passion; the Everlasting Yea; the Decisive Moment.’

(Blake 1963, p152; Blake 1970, p150)

The masculine gendering of a text may be seen in its mobilisation of such symbols and icons of the traditional masculine on the one hand, and on the other by the devaluation of women and the feminine. Both modes are in action in Blake’s text. Blake appears to share Le Corbusier’s view that women are extraneous to the serious affairs of men. He describes ‘Mme. Le Corbusier [as] a wonderfully simple French “peasant” with none of Corbu’s sophistication’ (Blake 1963, p114; Blake 1970, p113), and quotes Le Corbusier’s American acquaintance, the sculptor Nivola as saying ‘She was a wonderful and funny, primitive type, the only person who never took Corbu very seriously as a Great Figure’ (Blake 1963, p132; Blake 1970, p132). He characterises contemporary hostility to Le Corbusier’s architecture as ‘nowadays ... confined to mortgage bankers or editors of ladies’ magazines’ (Blake 1963, p51; Blake 1970, p45).

Perhaps surprisingly, and unusually in the literature, Blake does acknowledge the importance to Le Corbusier’s atelier of Charlotte Perriand, ‘one of the few great original furniture designers of recent times’ (Blake 1963, p70; Blake 1970, p65). However, later, in a eulogy to the complexity and elegance of the design of the famous *chaise longue*, the design of the chair becomes Le Corbusier’s alone (Blake 1963, p71; Blake 1970, p66). Furthermore, following his description of the chair as one of ‘just about the Wittiest, sexiest chairs designed in modern times’ (Blake 1963, pp72-73; Blake 1970, p67), he effectively declares his (and by implication, Le Corbusier’s) masculine point of view. Ridiculing an overly functionalist approach to furniture design (a rhetorical ‘man-of-straw’ necessary to his praise of Le Corbusier), he asserts,

>[M]uch modern steel furniture does tend to look a little grim; ... we think we *ought* to like it because it “makes sense”. To a Frenchman this is a perfectly silly argument; he would never think of making love to a ‘nice, sensible girl’ as an Englishman might, or to a potentially ‘good mother’ as a German would.

Corbu’s chairs are rather like expensive tarts: elegant, funny, sexy, and not particularly sensible.

(Blake 1970, p67)

---

12 Colin Rowe makes the same point, but his tone is ironic: ‘after all, the Modulor is an explicit descendant of David’. ‘[I]n *Vers une architecture* the writer’s preoccupation with Michelangelo is ... very well advertised. ‘Michelangelo is the man of the last thousand years, as Phidias was the man of the thousand years before. (With the millenary years so well articulated, the next slot can only be left open for we know whom.)’ (Rowe 1987, p24) David can be seen as a symbol of the valiant lone (male) warrior contending against apparently insuperable odds.

13 This appears to conflict with Jencks’s statement (see below) that before her marriage Yvonne Gallis was ‘an attractive fashion model’ (Jencks 1973a, p99). The ‘sophistication’ of Le Corbusier’s texts — and of his approach to women — is clearly in the eye of the beholder.

14 Perhaps acknowledging Perriand’s part in the design would have challenged such an interpretation.

15 A series of ironies, given Drew’s comment about Le Corbusier’s ‘un-English’ attitude to women (see Chapter 6), his self-declared attitude to children (see below), and the fact that his Frenchness was effectively a choice made on aesthetico-ideological grounds:

‘QUESTION: You have taken France as your adopted country.

LE CORBUSIER: Not my adopted country. I am of French origin, here for centuries. ... I am from the terrible persecutions of the thirteenth century,... those who were not massacred were able to escape. They climbed, and they established themselves there at all the high points.’

(Peter 1994, p138)
Blake 'born again'

By 1977 Blake had had a conversion — and even an incipient awareness of the discontents of feminism. He published his angry polemic *Form Follows Fiasco*, profusely illustrated with damning photographs demonstrating the visible failure of the modernist project of mass housing in high rise buildings, open planning and ‘high tech.’

[M]ost of the articles of faith that I once held most religiously, most devoutly, simply did not measure up to the test of time, or to the test of service to the human race and its condition. How would I know? Because, like any other architect, like any other writer, I have had my eyes, ears, nose and several other fairly perceptive organs (including my head) examined, and their perceptions sharpened at the various schools of architecture I attended, and since.

(Blake 1977, p165)

Among Blake’s targets were the ‘religion’ of technology, the open plan and Le Corbusier. His critique of the open plan, which he sees as having been largely influenced by the example of the Japanese traditional house with its ascetic layout and moving screens, shows both class-awareness and a pragmatic feminism — concern for the housewife. He says that what the architects promoting the open plan, still much in evidence in the West,

failed to realize was that the “open plan” as developed in Japan depended for its success *entirely* upon one or both of two factors: the availability of cheap servants and/or the availability of enslaved wives ... who kept the pristine space in immaculate order by stashing away all the messy appurtenances that might offend the eyes of her husband or his male children. ...

(Blake 1977, p32)

He says of Le Corbusier’s Unités d’Habitation that they ‘are, without doubt, masterpieces of volumetric virtuosity. Unhappily they are also destructive of all family life. (Le Corbusier and his wife had no children.)’ (Blake 1977, p33).

Reyner Banham

In 1962 Reyner Banham produced his *Guide to Modern Architecture* for potential ‘architecture fans’, to show them ‘when to applaud’ (Banham 1962, p9). Under chapter headings ‘Modern’, ‘Function’, ‘Form’, ‘Construction’ and ‘Space’, in an attempt to defend modern architecture from its misrepresentation by its apologists as merely an ‘unlovable and unlovely moral example’, he presents ‘monuments to the creative skill of men in a particular situation — our present situation’ (p10). Banham cites Le Corbusier and his buildings (the Villa Savoye, Ronchamp, the Unité at Marseilles, the Pavillon Suisse, Chandigarh) more often than any other architect, to demonstrate what he saw as the defining characteristics of Modernism — ‘skill’, ‘bravura’, ‘invention’, ‘power’, ‘authority’.

Banham acknowledges the existence of women, and implicitly their difference from men.

For the first time in two thousand, perhaps four thousand, years, the daily life of western man (and western woman even more so) was being revolutionised.

The symbolism is striking; Le Corbusier appeals to the classic archetypes of the patriarchy, its emphasis on origins, and the stereotype of the great artist as rejected outsider, engaged against all odds in an epic quest. This is the theme of Jencks’s *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* (Jencks, 1973a; see later in this chapter).
...a revolution ... [in] domestic life ... It became necessary for architects to reconsider and re-assess the basic theme of their art, the dwelling of Man. (Banham 1962, p22)

In the introductory paragraphs of his chapter on 'Function' in the design of 'the dwelling of Man', however, the 'western woman' remains effectively in brackets, and Banham's discussion of function remains at the level of the abstract, mirroring Le Corbusier's own. 'Le Corbusier always has some concept of man pencilled into the corner of his drawings — his Modulor system.' 'It may be the same old man, but seen in a new light.' (Banham 1962, p26) But the 'new light' was not sufficient to illuminate the presence of women, even as clients for particular buildings, and Banham is clearly using the term 'man' to stand generically for people.

His discussion of the Villa Savoye, which with Modernism's famous chairs makes up the major part of the 'Function' chapter, makes no mention of Mme. Savoye, or her battles with Le Corbusier (and Mies's Farnsworth House houses no Edith Farnsworth (Banham 1962, pp49-50)). The penguin inhabitants of Lubetkin and Tecton's Penguin Pool at London Zoo (p68) rate more of a mention in Banham's text than do Mme. Savoye and Edith Farnsworth. Beyond the 'western woman', the only women that appear in the book are illustrations of Picasso's 'Girl with mandolin' (p46) and of the caryatids supporting the porch of Lubetkin and Tecton's second high-rise apartment block in the Highpoint housing complex (p131), and photographs of women and children on the 'street decks' in Park Hill by Sheffield's City Architect, with a text reference to 'mums natter[ing]' (p134).16

It is not that Banham is completely unaware of masculine mythology. He comments ironically on the low-budget modernism of the twenties, where 'modernity ... was spread thinly over the surfaces to conceal the unmodern materials of which the structure was so often built' (Banham 1962, p43), and continues, '[b]y the early twenties Le Corbusier was giving engineers the full noble savage treatment, "healthy and virile, active and useful, balanced and happy in their work"' (p44). However the revised version of the book, published in 1975, is titled even more patriarchally The Age of the Masters (Banham 1975). Perhaps in acknowledgment of then incipient postmodernist anxieties about grands récits and universal virtues, and the hubris inherent in the notion of a Guide to ..., he subtitles the book A Personal View of Modern Architecture. He also adds the magic word 'Theory' as a meta-heading for the five conceptual chapters (shades of Vitruvius and Le Corbusier), contrasted with 'Practice', the heading for the examples illustrated (the same buildings as before with the addition of 13 new buildings).

In this edition the first paragraph of 'Function' is recast to reflect the passage of time (Banham 1975, p10), and new pages are added in spirited defence of modern architecture against claims of its lack of responsiveness to the specific needs and desires of clients. 'Breast-beating is now something of a growth industry within the architectural profession.' (Banham 1975, p10, pp26-27) He adds a discussion of the complexity of functional design for new contexts and new uses, and raises the issue of the disappearance of a 'community of terms of reference', the implicit agreement between architect and client which could generally be expected to exist in earlier days: 'w]here the clients happened to be men [sic] of similar backgrounds to the architects, discussion (at least) could proceed' (p26). This is not a context to encourage criticism of the inappropriateness of gentlemen's architecture to the needs of 'the western

16 According to Banham, in Highpoint I 'British architecture became man-size [sic] and internationally visible' (Banham 1962, p128), while the difficulties that beset Park Hill 'would have deterred lesser men than the boys of the project team responsible' (p134). As for Blake, for Banham 'virility' appears to be a prerequisite for good architecture.
woman'. Banham is not concerned with gender dissonance: what is in question here is class, not gender.

**Charles Jencks and the tragic hero of architecture**

Charles Jencks is one of the most prolific and influential writers in English on contemporary architecture; he has been following the developments in contemporary architecture since the late 1960s. Jencks has produced what he calls an ‘evolvotome’ (Jencks 2000, p13) on Le Corbusier — two editions of *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* (1973a and 1980) and a significantly revised version (*Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture*; Jencks 2000). According to Jencks in *Modern Movements in Architecture*, Le Corbusier’s prophetic, visionary approach to architecture, and to life, ‘has within it many of the elements of classical, Western tragedy, from the absolute commitment to an ideal (‘Logic, truth, honesty’) to the presentation of an internal struggle (‘in solitude’)’ (Jencks 1973b, p143). In Jencks’s thesis, fundamental to his luminary position as the archetypally heroic great (western) architect, the man of genius, is Le Corbusier’s stance of continual conflict with society, and within himself. Jencks states that many people have claimed him to be the most successful architect of the first half of the twentieth century, whereas ... he considered his life and work mostly a failure. The contradictions abound and ... their very existence is taken here [in Jencks’s text] as of fundamental importance. ... Charles Jeanneret, with a thoroughness that is obsessive, enumerates each insult that he has suffered - ‘lunatic, megalomaniac, criminal’, etc. — in such a way as to objectify struggle and evil in the world and, in an ultimate sense, present the martyrdom of Saint Corbusier.

(Jencks 1973b, p142)

In *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*, a Romantic, if at times ironic, text depicting Le Corbusier, ‘the greatest architect of the twentieth century’, Jencks describes Le Corbusier as the ultimate hero of ‘the ‘Heroic Period’ of Modern Architecture’ (Jencks 1973a, p58). Jencks explores in depth and detail Le Corbusier’s agonistic approach to life, to relationships and to architecture. Jencks’s account reflects the vocabulary of the stereotypes of the masculine genius examined by Battersby (Battersby 1989) (see Chapters 4 and 5). However Jencks manages to write an entire book on the notion of the tragic hero without remarking the centrality of his protagonist’s masculinity to his life and work.

According to Jencks, Le Corbusier ‘admired the courage and heroism of warriors’ (p180), and would attempt to alienate potential clients in order to ‘disqualify at an early stage all clients who were unwilling to accept his genius and, more importantly, allow him to present conflict as the essential quality to creative life’ (Jencks 1973a, pp178-179).

---

17 Banham is however capable of scepticism about aspects of Le Corbusier’s ideas. Given his interest in environmental responsibility he gives a negative assessment of many of Le Corbusier’s ‘scientific’ inventions for climatic control in his buildings (Banham 1975).

18 Commentators outside the domain of architecture are likely to be less convinced by the Nietzschean image. One sceptical response to the Le Corbusier myth appeared in *Punch* (May 20, 1987), ‘Le Corbusier and the Comic View of Architecture’ (p14). It recounts the views of a certain Professor Wilfred Fressbeutel, from ‘the Polytechnic of East Acton’, who ‘argues that critics and architects have been labouring under a misapprehension ... A critic called Charles Jencks has published *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*. The truth of the matter, according to Fressbeutel, is the opposite: ‘Le Corbusier was joking. ... How could anyone think that a remark like The right angle is the essential and sufficient implement of action* was intended to be taken seriously?’ (p14: bold in the original)
Why all this struggle? First because it was exhilarating, and second, because as with Nietzsche’s Superman, the creator had to master his opponents’ power, their ideas, before he could go on to destroy them in a new synthesis. This destructive-constructive pattern is perhaps as common to the creative temperament as it is to the tragic figure in western drama, and Nietzsche’s Superman is in part like the archetypal scientist as much as the tragic hero trying to restructure social values.

(Jencks 1973a, p181)

The intrinsic masculinity of the nietzschean view of human achievement, whether in art or science, is of course undeniable, but for Jencks this is either so obvious or so irrelevant that he makes no mention of it.

Jencks has a predilection for irony, even about his Tragic Hero.

It would be an exaggeration to claim that Le Corbusier was mostly responsible for the ‘Heroic Period’ of Modern Architecture. ... Yet if any one architect is to be singled out, and it would be awkward to have a heroic period without a hero, it would have to be Le Corbusier for his self-consciously moral19 position as much as his buildings. The classical hero in Western culture is an individual who sees major problems confronting society, sees them rationally and then acts to change them.20 ... Perhaps Le Corbusier got some of these ideas from Nietzsche; at any rate he had a highly developed view of his own destiny.21

(Jencks 1973a, pp58-59)

He catalogues a series of quotations which give an idea of the pleasure [Le Corbusier] got from dramatizing struggle (including even the pleasure of identifying himself with Hamlet)’ (Jencks 1973a, p179)). Furthermore,

One of his favourite books was Don Quixote, and no doubt he often saw himself and Pierre Jeanneret as this knight errant and Sancho Panza, tilting away at windmills in a comically pathetic rather than tragic life. Yet at other moments it was Nietzsche and a tragic struggle which were credible.

(Jencks 1973a, p178)

Jencks is aware of Le Corbusier’s shortcomings. He can see the absurdity of many of Le Corbusier’s more extreme pronouncements about both architecture and town planning. “Culture is an orthogonal state of mind” is one of the absurd epigrams which typifies much of the argument.’ (Jencks 1973a, p70) He criticises Le Corbusier for his inflexibility — ‘Le Corbusier had trouble breaking away from fundamental architectural concepts’ (p31) — and his ‘inability to compromise’ (p131).

Throughout his life Le Corbusier was searching for a type of universal symbolism that would be trans-historical and non-conventional. Like so many

---

19 The use of the epithet ‘moral’ to describe Le Corbusier is common. In the quotations from the early Blake (1960, 1963) in this chapter it occurs five times. Given Le Corbusier’s private life, the term has a specially architectural sense here, as has ‘honest’ in the canon of Modernism.

20 A rather puritan and over socially-conscious description; the Romantic hero is generally significantly more self-absorbed.

21 Brooks declares that ‘to claim ... that Le Corbusier’s personality and outlook were formulated by his youthful study of Nietzsche is quite absurd. ... [A]ll of [his] so-called Nietzschean characteristics were a basic part of Jeanneret’s personality long before he ever read Nietzsche’ (Brooks 1997, p174).
sons of the Enlightenment, he never came to terms with the idea that perhaps convention itself might be universal.
(Jencks 1973a, p54)

Jencks points out that Le Corbusier’s view of the machine ‘as evidence of a pure cosmic force uncontaminated by personal influence’ represented a ‘love for the impersonal’ which was ‘part of a broad international movement’ (Jencks 1973a, p54). Jenck’s ironic voice continues in his exegesis of Le Corbusier’s platonlic view of architecture. ‘Later on we find, as with Plato, that the language that is common both to us and to the universe is based on geometry, pure mathematical ratios and ultimate truths. ... If the mechanical and metaphysical ideas have been slightly Platonic, then the supporting social ideas are even more so. For Plato’s élite of philosopher kings we get a modern substitute of enlightened businessmen.’ (Jencks 1973a, p66) Finally, in the last chapter of Towards a New Architecture, ‘we see a synthesis of these élitist ideas as the enlightened businessman is equated with the great artist and the managerial élite’ (p67). ‘Fundamental’, ‘universal’, ‘objective’, ‘impersonal’, ‘geometry’, ‘mathematics’, ‘ultimate truths’; ‘he’, ‘our man’, ‘history for all men’, ‘élite’, ‘sons of the Enlightenment’, even an oblique allusion perhaps to a messiah: the elements are all here for a feminist exegesis, but from Jencks this is not forthcoming. For Jencks, as for Le Corbusier, such a vocabulary, manifesting a masculine conceptualisation of reality, is taken for granted as normal.

[C]ity planning theorists such as Jane Jacobs ... have faulted Le Corbusier for taking an over-simplistic view of the way the city functions. Partly this is a fair criticism ... Perhaps the Greenwich Village of Jane Jacobs and the ‘organic’ city of Christopher Alexander are better alternatives [than the Radiant City].
(Jencks 1973a, pp170-171)

Like many feminist writers on the built environment Jencks criticises Le Corbusier’s city plans for having ‘no forum or public realm’ beyond a few cultural institutes; the business centre still occupies the symbolic and functional place of importance’ (Jencks 1973a, p123). It is ironic that both the complexities of the domestic realm in its relations with the collective / community realm (so often the shared world of women and children), and the public realm of non-commercial activities, are both neglected in Le Corbusier’s vision of the city.

Jencks joins in the apologias for Le Corbusier’s collaboration with the Vichy régime, or as he puts it, for his having been ‘rather easy on fascism’ (p123). ‘Obviously Le Corbusier held to a certain type of cultural élitism which could be compromised, or at least confused, by the political élitism of Fascism.’ (Jencks 1973a, p130) ‘All Le Corbusier did in a reactionary sense was go to the Vichy government in 1941, try to work for them for a year, and write two books ... with his quasi-Fascist friends.’ (p131) Jencks ascribes his actions to his ‘peculiar inability to compromise on a single point in which he believed’ (p13), and reflects the conventional attitude to the intrinsic unaccountability of the (masculine) creative genius. ‘Perhaps the artist, who has by definition to go beyond everyday experience, is allowed ... political failings. ... What

22 Jencks has a curious, bet-hedging defence of Le Corbusier. ‘Perhaps the Greenwich Village of Jane Jacobs and the ‘organic’ city of Christopher Alexander are better alternatives, but neither Jacobs nor Alexander is a fully committed architect who has promulgated effectively her or his values toward actualization and tested their faults. More important, it is likely that given Le Corbusier’s creative flexibility, he would have come around to their view had he lived.’ (Jencks 1973a, p171) Jacobs is not in fact an architect; it is not clear what Jencks intends by his dismissive characterisation of Alexander, himself a successful masculine ‘rebel’.) Jencks’s implicit claim for the role of the Architect is questionable. In his later version (Jencks 2000) his argument becomes strangely both more critical of Le Corbusier and more simplistic (see below).
the artist is not allowed is the compromising of his art for political motives. This Le Corbusier never did.’ (Jencks 1973a, p133) Le Corbusier’s very fallibility can be used to confirm his heroic status. In The Language of Post-modern Architecture, Jencks implicates Le Corbusier in ‘the death of Modern Architecture’ on its opening page of Part One, accompanied by the well-known photograph of the implosion of the Pruitt-Igoe housing block (Jencks 1981, p9).

Precisely because we are living in the aftermath of Le Corbusier’s positive contributions, we are also living with their manifest failures which must be acknowledged. Happily he was honest and frank about other people’s shortcomings, just as he was frank about his own, so it is permissible to use his own words and honesty against him and yet remain true to his deeper intentions. Basically these consisted in an uniring search after truth - a metaphysical or lyrical truth if not always a scientific one23 — which ended in a tragic view of the human condition. The presentation of struggle, of his constant battles with the world, was generalized beyond his own personal experience to become the major theme of his life.

(Jencks 1973a, p12)

Le Corbusier’s capacity for strategic self-contradiction based on the apparent certainty provided by extreme commitment to ideals makes him a man for all seasons. In Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture Jencks describes Le Corbusier as ‘instrumental in changing the aesthetic direction of modern architecture twice: once in the twenties with his philosophy of ‘Purism’ and one in the fifties with his sculptural forms of ‘Brutalism’ (Jencks 1973a, p11).24 Jencks explores what he describes as the unstable bipolarity of his writing, also expressed in his projects, (science / emotion, universal laws / subjectivity, utility / beauty):

By adopting his dualist position, Le Corbusier managed to escape the futility of other extreme, but this led him naturally to ... the ultimately tragic position of trying to reconcile things which ordinarily remain opposed: beauty and utility, secondary and primary sensations, personal choice and impersonal science.

(Jencks 1973b, p154)25

23 Jencks’s scepticism, like Banham’s, is unusual. Criticism of Le Corbusier’s ideas about climatic design is surprisingly rare, given the doubtful value of his ‘science’. His heroic status appears to keep him immune from scrutiny. For instance, Curtis describes the Marseilles Unité with its ‘narrow ends ... pointed north-south to minimize the penetration of midday sun’ (Curtis 1987a, p19), demonstrating a similar misunderstanding of the implications of the solar path to Le Corbusier’s own: at the latitude of Marseille, the low east and west sun is much more of a problem than the midday sun from the south. Even Socrates knew that facing the equator offers the opportunity to shade windows from the high sun of the summer while exploiting the warmth of the lower sun in winter. In an interview Le Corbusier himself refers to ‘Old Socrates [who] used to say, when you build your house put a portico in front of it. In the summer it will keep you in the shade, but in the winter, when the sun is low on the horizon, it will enter in all the way. Well, I was told that after I finished [the Unité in] Marseilles, because I don’t respe Socrates every day. Actually, not at all, ... I don’t have the time’ (Peter 1994, p145). Perhaps Le Corbusier neglected to notice that this effect works only with façades facing the equator.

24 I discuss later in this chapter the dualism which characterises Le Corbusier’s work and ideas — between romanticism and rationalism, between purism and brutalism, and its relationship with the feminist exegesis of the cartesian dualism (the mind-body split) which characterises patriarchal western culture.

25 However the irreconcilable dualism, ‘male’ / ‘female’, so fundamental to western epistemology, remains intact.
Jencks generally resists the adulatory tone of writers such as Blake. But the vocabulary of his texts recapitulates the tropes of masculine culture discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, even in describing error and failure. Jencks’s enthusiastic response to Le Corbusier’s articles from L’Esprit Nouveau later published as Vers une architecture and Urbanisme (‘more persuasive than other architectural manifestoes published in the twentieth century’ (Jencks 1973a, p56)) shows that he accepts as natural the masculinity of the visionary architectural voice.

No doubt they owe something to biblical and political tracts, to Nietzsche’s aphorisms and Marx’s masculine reasonings, to the artistic manifestoes of Apollinaire and the Futurists. ... In form they consist of short chapters introduced by an ‘argument’ ... which is reiterated throughout the text so persuasively that one forgets to note both its dubiety and illogicality.

(Jencks 1973a, p56)

Jencks’s roll-call of influences is significant. Nietzsche’s name appears frequently in his text. All those specified represent generic and/or specific aspects of masculine thought; Jencks himself acknowledges the masculinity of Marx’s ‘reasonings’,26 But it is evident that the ‘one’ he addresses and assumes here is not a woman — or even someone of either gender who is alert to the ‘dubiety and illogicality’ of gender-distorted discourse.

Jencks tells us that

Le Corbusier (unlike other architects such as Gropius, Wright or Mies van der Rohe) always stayed in touch with and alert to the contemporary issues. When the issues happened to be a reactionary, rightist nationalism, he wrote a book, Croisade27, condemning it (while the other architects remained silent or indeed collaborated); when there was a reaction of the younger generation against the new establishment, including himself, he saw its point. Being always engagé with the present situation had its limitations, but it did serve to keep Le Corbusier creatively acute right up to his death.

(Jencks 1973a, p62)

Jencks’ reading of this political ‘engagement’ is partial, narrow and militarily masculist. The ‘contemporary issues’ he refers to are centred on and defined in terms of architecture (futurism, expressionism, constructivism, functionalism), and his characterisation of Le Corbusier’s role and stance is described in the vocabulary of masculine heroism.

He never stopped enjoying a good fight and the youthful vitality evinced in levelling all opposing contenders was as much a part of L’Esprit Nouveau, the new, heroic spirit, as anything else. What it brought about, naturally, was counter-attack, and a life lived more as a warrior than a gentleman. But this is what is asked of heroes and it would be unfair to expect from them images of domestic bliss and comfort.

(Jencks 1973a, p62)

Jencks’s characteristically ironic tone does not disguise the fact that both the options for the ‘heroic’ Architect presented here are masculine — the ‘hero’ / ‘warrior’ or the ‘gentleman’, while ‘domestic bliss and comfort’ are code for the rejected feminine.

26 Jencks does not elaborate on the characteristics of the masculinity of Marx’s reasonings: he could refers to Marx’s preoccupation with the material and measurable, and with manifested (male) economic and political power in the public realm.

27 Crusade — or the Twilight of the Academies, published in 1933.
Like Le Corbusier himself, Jencks appears not to have noticed that important among the political movements in the early decades of the twentieth century was the women’s movement, which was particularly active in the years between the World Wars, in the very years of *L’Esprit Nouveau*.

**Jencks on the triviality of women**

The target of Jencks’s irony is quite often women and the feminine. In fact Jencks demonstrates in his writing a surprising level of misogyny, in both his recording of events and his theoretical interpretations. Beneath the characteristically ironic casual tone appears to lie an implicit assumption that the important things of life are for men. Unexpected sexist remarks intrude in his writing even when the tone of his critique is otherwise serious, profound or even pretentious. In his outline of the argument of *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*, intended as a serious thesis exploring in the life and work of Le Corbusier, the relationship between the epic manifestations of genius and creativity, and the assumption of struggle, rejection, defeat and failure, Jencks inserts a gratuitous and explicitly non-academic remark, reminiscent of a ‘mother-in-law joke’.

The first chapter ... emphasiz[es] his tumultuous uncertainty which found confirmation and crystallization in the writings of Nietzsche. The second chapter shows where this restless anxiety led: to the formation of a single doctrine which would affect all of modern life. ... The third chapter concentrates on a change in this doctrine, brought about by a sudden interest in women and politics (perhaps the two greatest threats to all doctrines), and the last chapter presents his prolific contributions to new architectural languages. The theme of his Nietzschean, or tragic, view of the human condition runs throughout the book.

(Jencks 1973a, p13)

From such a writer a thoughtful feminist critique is unlikely.

In a section of *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture* significantly entitled ‘Worldly Pursuits and Friendship’, Jencks reflects a conventional masculine view of male/female relations perhaps surprising from an ‘intellectual’, but one which informs his writing throughout.

In December 1930, Le Corbusier married Yvonne Gallis, an attractive fashion model ... [when] pressure from his Protestant family, not to mention Yvonne herself, pushed him into a conventional, legal relationship that he might have wished to avoid.

‘When I was married, I said to my wife “no children” because I feared at that time that my life would be very hard as an architect.’

Yvonne, from all accounts, was the kind of woman Le Corbusier was continually attracted to: not an intellectual, a good cook and with an ‘earthy’ humour.

(Jencks 1973a, p99)

---

28 Curtis’s reading of the decision is that “[t]hey decided not to have children. Edouard’s monk-like devotion to art left no room for them: besides, Yvonne was in her late thirties when they married” (Curtis 1986, p108, my italics).
Jencks appears to share Le Corbusier’s opinion of the triviality of women, and particularly of wives.  

She had a sharp wit and, like Le Corbusier, loved to shock, even him. ‘All this light is killing me, driving me crazy,’ she said about the apartment Le Corbusier designed for her. For her the aesthetic qualities of the glass curtain wall and the attempt to bring light into every nook and cranny of the house were folly, and she never really appreciated what her husband was achieving in architecture. Le Corbusier placed a bidet, that beautifully sculptural ‘object type’, right next to their bed. She covered it with a tea cosy.’

(Jencks 1973a, p100)

It is clear from Jencks’s tone, even with its hint of irony (‘that beautifully sculptural ‘object type’”), and a later reinterpretation of the episode, that he is in basic agreement with Le Corbusier — that Yvonne’s concerns were absurd in the face of the power of the architectural concept. He describes as ‘cruel’ Le Corbusier’s contemptuous dismissal of Yvonne’s taste and attitudes to living (‘we brought upstairs ... a large homespun couch ... It’s like this one acquires .. the right to enter into bourgeois society’ (p100)), implying that Le Corbusier’s acid judgments were justified, merely thoughtlessly expressed, when an alternative reading might well have agreed with Yvonne. Benton’s account of the incident almost appears to take Yvonne’s part. ‘While Le Corbusier seemed to want to make his [sic] living-room and dining-room, at least [sic], representative of the ‘correct’ modern lifestyle, Yvonne held on to, and won, the comfortable sofa, ... for which she made a brightly coloured patchwork cover.’ (Benton 1987d, p68)

Jencks reports in matter-of-fact fashion Taya Zinkin’s account of a conversation with Le Corbusier in the 1950s.  

He spent the evening discussing women, prostitution, the importance of Indian males and his own wife. “I absolutely fail to understand her. Of course she is pretty stupid, mais quand même! I give her all the money she wants but that is not enough for her. Madame wants children. I hate children. She already has a dog, and that should be good enough.”

(Zinkin, 1965, no page given, quoted in Jencks 1973a, p100)

Jencks declares his complicity in this jaundiced male view of the world with his jocular aside: ‘As W. C. Fields said, ‘Anyone who hates children can’t be all bad.”’ (Jencks 1973a, p100).

---

29 For Jencks the generic (house)wife, like the maid for Le Corbusier, has her place. In his text we find her in bed listening to a husband’s philosophising (Jencks 1973a, p197), or minding the children on the roof of the Unité d’Habitation (p147); see also note 28.
30 Benton tells us, however, that ‘[t]he kitchen and the bedroom were decidedly seen as Yvonne’s’ (Benton 1987b).
31 See note 37.
32 Yvonne probably was required to keep the minimalist spaces and bare surfaces clean under the searching light of day.
33 Jencks naturally does not see things from the point of view of a ‘housewife’, who appears to share the same peripheral place in his world as the maid and the governess in Le Corbusier’s. He describes the ‘shopping street’ of the Marseilles Unité as ‘a calm, urban space, very close at hand, which the housewife can run to in her curlers and slippers without feeling ill at ease.’ (Jencks 1973a, p147)
34 Zinkin was Indian, and Le Corbusier was working on Chandigarh at the time.
35 Jencks appears to have forgotten that WC Fields’s aphorism also referred to dogs.

150
Like Le Corbusier's, Jencks's negative social, or socio-political disposition towards women is matched with a limited metaphysical and aesthetic view of 'the feminine'. 'The thing that sparked off this link between his interest in women and city organization was the aeroplane.' "[W]hen Le Corbusier is flying over the rolling landscape of Rio de Janeiro he can suddenly see the landscape as a female body and introduce curvilinear forms into his city planning." (Jencks 1973a, pp123-124) Jencks conflates 'women' either with the sexual, or with the abstracted representation of female bodies under the 'male gaze', and makes a direct and simplistic connection between 'real life' and graphic/architectural representation.

One finds in his drawings of Josephine Baker and of other women an interest in the nude form which is part sexual and part sculptural. What starts off as fairly representational, the thighs, shoulders and bottom, ends up by the late thirties as stylised and distorted shapes ... incorporated into paintings and city planning. If one looks hard enough at the plans for such buildings as Ronchamp and the Carpenter Centre at Harvard, one can also find the curves of buttock and shoulder arches. Quite a turn-about for the man who had been ... proclaiming that 'culture is an orthogonal state of mind'. No doubt a renewed contact with women changed his mind on that score. Most of the pencil sketches of the thirties are of elaborately distorted and heavy women. ... The priority of contour and profile over colour and shading remained from the Purist days even though the subject matter had changed from machinery to heavy women.

(Jencks 1973a, pp102-104)

Captioning an illustration of A Woman Lying with Curtains of 1930 'Strong, bold curves of plump women fascinated Le Corbusier at this time' (Jencks 1977, p194), Jencks suggests that Le Corbusier's introduction of 'curvilinear forms' into his painting at the time was in some way a psychic safety valve, a reaction to the asceticism of his architectural commitment to the straight line and the right angle (Jencks 1977, p195): woman as objet type, muse and source of inspiration for the actions of men.

Women as rational individuals capable of creative agency do not appear in Jencks's text. Given his conflation of women with the female body, for Jencks they may be potentially a source of inspiration (to men) for architectural forms and urban plans, but they are 'other' to reason and order. He is almost stereotypical in assuming a 'natural' connection between women, nature and the primitive. He ascribes what he calls Le Corbusier's 'move to Brutalism' (more often described as Le Corbusier's 'organic' period), to

a rediscovery of natural orders, primitive societies and a sexual relation with women unconstrained by conventional etiquette, sophistication or snobbism. Several formal innovations ... resulted from this change. Le Corbusier remarked to one of his designers in the atelier: 'The columns of a building should be like the strong curvaceous thighs of a woman'.

(Jencks 1973a, p110, no reference given for the quotation from Le Corbusier)

As Battersby has pointed out,

'male' is [not] to 'masculine' as 'female' is to feminine'. [In this culture] [t]o be a real woman is to be seen as having certain biological characteristics; to be a real man is not just to have body characteristics, but to have maturity, independence, courage, virility and the like.

(Battersby 1989, p158).
Like Le Corbusier’s, Jencks’s imaginary world of architectural creativity is constructed in accordance with a transcendental masculine perspective, and is populated with men of action — ‘princes of affairs, captains of industry and finance, political leaders, great scientists, teachers, thinkers, the mouthpieces of the human soul, painters, poets and musicians’ (Le Corbusier 1971, p102); but there are also warriors, knights, scholars, philosopher kings, Greek athletes of the classical period — and perhaps a monk or two.36

Revisiting the tragic hero: Liberty, asses and earth goddesses

Jencks’s rewriting in 2000 of The Tragic View, as Le Corbusier and the Continuing Revolution in Architecture, ‘adds to the evidence of the first edition’ (Jencks 2000, p14). ‘[S]piritualiety, women, Post-Modern symbolism, genius, and relevance of cosmic architecture are new to [the] book’ (p14). Jenck’s new insights derive both from his exploration of material in the corbusian archive and from his own changing interpretations.37

Jencks elaborates on ‘the Nietzschean struggle’ (p55), the influence on Le Corbusier of Nietzsche’s ideas about the ‘lonely position of the artist, the absolute necessity for solitude, introspection, meditation, and egoistical creation’ (Jencks 2000, p47) — ‘the hero in the cell alone, wrestling with his ego’ (p50).38 Jencks adds two Appendices, both illuminating his attitude to Le Corbusier and the role of the Genius. In ‘Nietzsche and Le Corbusier’ (p255-256), he investigates Le Corbusier’s reading of Thus Spake Zarathustra; in ‘Le Corbusier and the Normal Genius of the Twentieth Century’ (p356-361), he compares Le Corbusier to other ‘protean creators’ of Modernism in terms provided by the cognitive scientist and historian Howard Gardner in his study of seven people who to him represent the Exemplary Creator (Gardner 1993).39

But it is in his treatment of the subject of women in Le Corbusier’s life and work that Jencks’s masculist standpoint is most evident. Women — and ‘Woman’ — play a significant role in Jenck’s new readings of Le Corbusier, both as developing young genius, and as ‘Hero of the Heroic Period’. None of the references to women, Woman or ‘the feminine’ in the earlier version of the book has been significantly amended; in fact Jenck’s new interpretations of Le Corbusier further compound the evidence of his patriarchal attitudes to women. As Mary McLeod has pointed out,

Paradoxically, the poststructuralist rejection of masculine hierarchies has tended to essentialize all that is “feminine.” All women become subsumed into the category of Woman, which then embodies all that is mystical, dark, and

36 Jencks finds no irony in the fact that Le Corbusier’s designs for family dwellings, and in particular the Unités, were deeply influenced by ‘the relationship between the individual and the collective which Le Corbusier had admired in the monasteries of Ema and Mount Athos’ (Jencks 1973a, pp138-139), both exclusively masculine environments.

37 For instance his new judgment of Le Corbusier’s city planning has a slightly different slant from the 1973 version. ‘No doubt [my italics] the Greenwich Village of Jane Jacobs and the “organic” city of Christopher Alexander are [Jenck’s italics] better alternatives, but neither Jacobs nor Alexander is a fully committed architect, nor have they built their ideal cities [my italics] and tested their faults. Moreover it is possible that Le Corbusier would have come round to their views had he lived.’ (Jencks 2000, p326). Jencks misses the point, made by both Jacobs and Alexander, that real and livable cities cannot successfully be ‘built entirely at a stroke’.

38 Here Jencks adds an unconvincing touch of ‘political correctness’, asking ‘the question of whether ... Le Corbusier, conceived society as a collection of isolated individuals, heroic supermen and superwomen [sic] — or, as it would be put pejoratively in the United States today, lonesome cowboys’ (Jencks 2000, p50). (No cowgirls.)

39 Gardner’s seven include Martha Graham. The others are Freud, Einstein, Picasso, Stravinsky, Eliot and Gandhi. Jencks follows Gardner’s composite portrait of the Modern master, changing ‘the sex he uses to male, corresponding to Le Corbusier’s’ (Jencks 2000, p356).
otherworldly. For deconstructivist architects, if they recognize the issue of
Woman at all, to enter this "dark continent" is in itself transgressive. Whereas
modernism's universal subject excluded women, poststructuralism's celebration
of "otherness" presents another problem: Too often it consigns women to
being the means of constructing the identities of men.
(McLeod 1996a)

Jencks is an almost caricatured case of the poststructuralist essentialiser.
Throughout Le Voyage d'orient the attraction of women and the joys of seeing
landscapes through the painter's eye are mixed up. A real equation is made that
seems to remain throughout Le Corbusier's life, between his own painting,
sexuality, and the landscape.
(Jencks 2000, p79)

It appears that in Jencks's own life view 'spirituality, women, and Post-Modern
symbolism' are 'mixed up'. To his original discussion of Le Corbusier's early life,
education and travels, which in the first version culminated in Jeanneret's reaction to
the Parthenon, Jencks adds a section entitled 'Jeanneret Discovers Sex in a Pot'.
Jeanneret's later appropriation in his pictorial art and in his architecture of the female
as form is foreshadowed in a letter quoted by Jencks by "the generous belly of a vase,
... its slender neck, and ... the subtleties of its contours" (Jencks 2000, p79).

Jencks's text combines documentation of Jeanneret's adolescent imaginings of sexual
contact with women in his writing with the evidence of the themes of his paintings,
which often were 're-creations of his memories of the East (Jencks 2000, p85). Jencks
describes a watercolour Vin d'Athos, of 1913: 'A woman and a mule each seem to be
reaching a religious/sexual ecstasy, with mouth-opening to the sky as if in orgasm or a
death scream' (p83). Later, 'visiting brothels to study real women making love'
(p85). In captions to explicit drawings of naked lesbians engaged in cunnilingus in
various (emphatically non-Platonic) geometrical arrangements, Jencks comments 'The
body as spherical landscape, sex as wrestling, will emerge later', and 'This and other
sketches of the same subject incorporate elements of Josephine [see below] and the
hills of Rio and Santos' (p199).

Jencks comments that 'the buttocks and shoulders will become hills, and, it has to be
said, almost those spherical pots which inflamed Jeanneret's earlier passion' (p85).
For Jencks, as according to Jencks's evidence for Le Corbusier, the role of actual living
women appear to be merely sexual: 'when Le Corbusier again becomes interested in
women ... he takes both a mechanical and a spiritual view of sex.' (p86-87). Weaving
through the text is Jencks's casual sexism. Referring to Le Corbusier's sketchbook
notes on modernity: 'It's a strange argument for modernity that can be clinched by a
sophisticated tart41 with a riding crop and high black boots' (p86). Further,

Jeanneret loved big-bottomed women perhaps because he saw in them some
sign of the ancient earth-goddesses, those women who dominated prehistoric
culture by embodying rebirth and fecundity; or perhaps, like Boucher, he
fancied big bottoms?
(Jencks 2000, p85)

Woman and women serve many purposes in the interaction between the texts of
Le Corbusier and Jencks. There is a conflation (by both author and subject) of women

---

40 The connection between women and mules from another perspective.
41 Reminiscent of Peter Blake's simile for Le Corbusier's chairs — 'expensive tarts' (Blake 1970,
p67); see above.
with the earth and the landscape (‘a recurrent theme of his paintings ... is women on the beach ... breasts, buttocks, tummies, hair and pudenda, rising and falling like the background sea and mountains’ (p84)), and an unexamined appropriation of Woman as cosmic symbol of fecundity (‘Can it be that Jeaneret, in these sexual fantasies, is making love not only to a woman but also to the cosmos — the sea and stars?’ (p84)). At a less cosmic level, and appropriating in traditional fashion the feminine to symbolic purposes, he declares that ‘it was not just women, but the image of Liberty at the barricades which interested LC at this time’ (p189).

In Part III, renamed ‘Back to Nature 1920-45’ (Jencks 2000, p186-241) Jencks’s conflation of women and nature — and Nature — is made explicit. Jencks describes the shift in Le Corbusier’s mode of architectural expression:

> Instead of abstract grids and universal appliances based on ships, he produces curved cities based on the meander of rivers and the thick thighs of fat women. [...] Both the straight line and the pack donkey’s way are replaced by the curve of a buttock!

(Jencks 2000, p189)

Jencks loads onto Woman a heavy phenomenological burden; he ascribes Le Corbusier’s altered approach to the geometry of urban form to ‘the human and organic metaphor behind the female curves [which] has led to a new respect for what actually exists’ (p202). There is no discussion as to the relevance to urban space arrangements and the housing of lived experience of such metaphorical imaginings. However these ‘ready-made models’ (p85) [artist’s models, not scale models — this presumably means that the women did not charge him for these services] were also useful in a practical sense. Jencks comments that ‘[a]s Stanislaus von Moos has shown, these figures (of naked women) ... led to a shape grammar of rounded U-forms and broken ellipses that, when considered from an architectural viewpoint, are relatively inexpensive’ (p200).

In this version of the book Jencks elaborates further on the relationship between Le Corbusier and Josephine Baker. He says of a sketch by Le Corbusier of himself with Baker with a background of mountains, ‘[t]he curves of the landscape interest him as much as those of Josephine, and no doubt they are equated as signs of vitality, and spurs for a new urbanism’ (Jencks 2000, p197). Other sketches of Josephine ‘turn her into an animal goddess, a mythic figure that may ... relate to the prehistoric fertility figures of the Neolithic, perhaps a Moon Goddess. ... [P]erhaps in this way he builds up a collective archetype of the feminine symbol’ (p199).

**Le Corbusier as Lucifer**

By the mid 1970s there was increasing discomfiture with the outcomes of the application of functionalist rationality and the stripped aesthetic eventually seen as paradigmatically Modernist. Most criticism came from outside the architecture and planning professions, often arising out of activism and the lived experience in housing estates (see Chapter 2) (see for example Coleman 1985; Stretton 1985). A number of

42 The 1973 title was ‘At War with Reaction 1928-45’.
43 Jencks also seems to ‘fancy bottoms’, at least as a pretext for sexist irony. When describing the aesthetic ‘U-turn’ of ‘a man who had been damming the curve as “the pack-donkey’s way” and proclaiming that “culture is an orthogonal state of mind”’, he comments: ‘No doubt a renewed contact with women changed his mind on that score ... . “The lesson of the Ass must be retained,” he exclaimed, a demand that now becomes a nice [sic] double entendre in English [he means American], if not in French’ (Jencks 2000, p202).
44 ‘[H]is name has been used, sometimes as a talisman, sometimes in the place of Lucifer himself, in arguments about Modernist architecture and planning.’ (Forty 1987, p55)
texts were published which linked Le Corbusier with the often disastrous outcomes of large-scale *tabula rasa* development.

Bruce Allsopp’s *Towards a Humane Architecture* (Allsopp 1974) is a thoughtful, even passionate, critique of what he sees as the impoverishment of the contemporary state of architecture. ‘Le Corbusier brings the [modern] movement into sharp focus. He was not only an artist but also tried to be a social philosopher ... [and] his re-thinking of the social and human problems was experimental, often naive, and sometimes disastrous in its consequences.’ (p16) However for Allsopp, ‘[m]odern architecture ... is to a large extent his child but like most offspring, not entirely what he expected nor what he would have approved of’ (Allsopp 1974, p6). In the book he refers to Le Corbusier more often than to any other architect: as ‘a genius’ (p10), and as a ‘great’ artist (p16); as exerting influence over the multifarious and sometimes discordant voices of early modernism (‘the spell of Le Corbusier’, p31) — and as an elitist, deliberately choosing to design ‘for the chosen few’ (p4, p59, and p88, referring to Le Corbusier’s statements in *Vers une architecture*).

Allsopp’s criticisms have much in common with feminist and other socially motivated critiques of the contemporary profession. ‘What is now necessary is to humanize the modern movement. This would mean a fundamental change from elitist big-brotherliness.’ (Allsopp 1974, p77) He calls for an architecture responsive to people as individuals and as social groups, an understanding of the differences in scale between the ‘aedicular’ (at the scale of the dwelling) and the monumental (to be grounded in the meanings of social and communal life, rather than celebrating the power of hierarchies (p63-71). But for him as for Mumford, the androcentrism of Le Corbusier’s work and writing is invisible, as the sea is to the fish.

By contrast Brent Brolin holds Le Corbusier almost single-handedly responsible for ‘the failure of modern architecture’ (Brolin 1976). Brolin’s central example is Chandigarh, which ‘comes as close as possible to being a reasonable application of modern theories’ (p88). ‘The circumstances could hardly have been more auspicious for the modernist, anxious to prove the homogenization of the world’s peoples.’ (p89) He is aware of cultural difference (‘the architect was often unaware of the cultural differences between his own and his client’s perception of space — that is the different ways that he and his client would choose to behave in the same room’ (p62)), and he is even aware of gender-related cultural traditions which affect the use and interpretation of urban and domestic space (in particular in relation to privacy / decorousness and eating / cooking)45, but in general his analysis is class-based and not specifically related to women’s issues (p88-103). The term ‘women’ does not appear in the index. Rather, the impact of his argument lies in his examination of the inappropriateness of generic design ‘solutions’ imposed on ideological or theoretical grounds.

In fact Brolin’s point of view is declaredly and even gratuitously masculine. He uses the term ‘man’ generically (for example p70), and the generic singular is followed as usual by the masculine pronoun.46 His explanation for the dominance of ‘reason’ in Modernism is ahistorical and disregards the centuries-long rationalist tradition in Western thought. ‘The choice of reason as the determining factor in architectural design grew out of an idolization of the engineer and his use of the rational method.’

---

45 ‘This [the open plan] is acceptable in a middle-class family where the man and wife share their social life, but less so in working-class families where social life centres on separate men’s and women’s peer groups.’ (Brolin 1976, p66)

46 ‘In using the tenant’s participation, it may also make him feel that he has more at stake, and consequently he may take better care of the property’ (Brolin 1976, p83); ‘The modern architect viewed his own problems ...’ (p50); ‘There are few things the architect can actually affect through his craft’ (p121).
(p51) His explanation uses the imagery of masculine domination without irony or comment.

As the superman of the nineteenth century, the engineer and his machines produced one astonishing feat after another. Because he fought and subdued the forces of Nature, his calculations were elevated to the level of Natural law. It was understandable that the products of his calculations should become symbols of progress and the ultimate superiority of Western culture.’

(Brolin 1976, p46)

To illustrate his point he captions a pair of nineteenth century images, of a locomotive and of a naked woman standing vulnerable in a stream (September Morn by Paul Chabas) ‘In the late nineteenth century the fascination with machine forms was so great that some found the locomotive more sensual that the female body’ (p47).

He quotes without comment either on its excess, its sexism or its questionable irony a 1880 text:

Nature ... has had her day. ... After all, take what, among all her works, is considered to be the most exquisite, what among all her creations is deemed to possess the most perfect and original beauty — to wit, woman — has not man for his part, by his own efforts, produced an inanimate yet artificial creature that is every bit as good from the point of view of plastic beauty? Does there exist, anywhere on this earth, a being conceived in the joys of fornication and born in the throes of motherhood who is more dazzlingly, and more outstandingly beautiful than the two locomotives recently put into service on the Northern Railroad?

(Huysmans 1959, pp36-37, quoted in Brolin 1976, p47)

At times Brolin’s assumption of the masculine authority extends beyond the architectural to the domestic realm.

In many working-class families, the woman is more in charge of running the household than the man. ... Yet to try to express this symbolically, by subordinating all other spaces of the apartment to the kitchen, for example, could infringe on another requirement [sic], the respect for the man as breadwinner and titular head of the family.’

(Brolin 1976, p77)

**Anthologies on Le Corbusier**

**The Open Hand**

In the ‘Foreword’ to Russell Walden’s *The Open Hand. Essays on Le Corbusier* (Walden 1977) André Wogenscky states that the editor ‘set out to look for Le Corbusier with fifteen or so different personalities [the contributors], so that this search, and this discovery, may be contradictory in its findings’ (Wogenscky 1977). Le Corbusier’s aura appears to have protected him from much critique. As I have shown, true believers often claim that the inhumanity and sterility of many modern urban environments, in the West and increasingly in the ‘developing world’, are the result of his ideas being misrepresented and misapplied in the hands of lesser designers and insensitive bureaucrats. Anthony Sutcliffe is moderately critical; like Jencks he finds Le Corbusier not directly responsible for the failures of modernism, but points out the influence of his architectural evangelism. ‘Of course it is not Le Corbusier’s fault that his ideas were abused ... But ... he did more than his contemporaries to help gain
acceptance for ... his system.' Wogenscky, a former colleague / employee of Le Corbusier, is perhaps the most extreme in his defence. 'Those who claim that the high-rise or tower blocks, the scourge of our present age, are the result of Le Corbusier's ideas, are fools.' (Wogenscky 1977, px)

In his 'Introduction', Russell Walden is 'conscious of the fact that genius evades classification', and describes Le Corbusier as an 'enigmatic figure' ('Introduction', Walden 1977, p1). He quotes Solzhenitsyn:

One artist imagines himself to be the creator of an independent spiritual world, burdens himself with the act of creating and peopling this world, accepts responsibility for it. ... And if he is overwhelmed by failure he lays the blame on the external disharmony of the world ... or on the lack of comprehension of the public.

(Solzhenitsyn 1972, p4, quoted in Walden 1977, p11)

Walden describes Le Corbusier as finding himself in this very predicament, 'a spiritual son of Jean-Jacques Rousseau ... who made mistakes but who left the world richer by the products of his creative soul' (p10). Here we have the language of narrative of the tragic masculine hero, its iconic figure from the nineteenth century, Rousseau, and probably its most famous contemporary chronicler, Solzhenitsyn. Walden describes the revolutionary political fervour which in France followed the First World War. 'With visionary courage, Jeanneret felt bound to act. So, like the itinerant Don Quixote, he went out into Paris to battle against the suffocating cultural climate of the period.' (p131) Such hyperbole would surprise many readers not accustomed to the heroic voice of modern architectural discourse.

There is criticism of Le Corbusier in the book, notably of Le Corbusier's urbanism, (Sutcliffe 1977), of the living environment of Chandigarh (Sarin 1977), and of Le Corbusier's problematic relationships with technology (Winter 1977) and functionalism (Jencks 1977, see below). Robert Fishman discusses the 'quixotic grandeur' (Fishman 1977, p246) but ultimate unrealisability of Le Corbusier's belief in the rightness of 'centrally controlled, hierarchically organized ... [social system] administered from above', in 'an age of triumphant rationality'. He quotes Le Corbusier as proclaiming, "France needs a father. ... It doesn't matter who. It could be one man, two men, any number" (Fishman 1977, p265). But Fishman's criticism of Le Corbusier's concept of a rational, technically objective plan drawn up by experts ... implying the existence of an absolute authority ... [with] unobstructed power" (p266) does not take into account the fundamentally masculine nature of the idea — or of the social reality out of which it grew.48

None of the contributors appears to find in Le Corbusier's texts the lineaments of patriarchy, misogyny, sexism, gender bias, or even gender blindness.49 In 1960, during Le Corbusier's lifetime, Choay, in the ingenious gendered language of the time, had declared that 'Le Corbusier's greatest contribution to 20th century architecture is probably that of having rediscovered man, who had become lost in the frenetic development of technique' (Choay 1960, p24). In 1977, Wogenscky goes further and declares that '[t]he ultimate lesson of Le Corbusier to his followers lies beyond

---

47 Sutcliffe is also critical of Le Corbusier's 'uncritical respect for technology' and equally 'uncritical acceptance of the motor car' (p239). His reasons for criticism do not include any considerations of gender.
48 Fishman is not a mere hagiographer. His description of Le Corbusier's attempts to enlist the support — and Authority — of the Vichy régime is biting. 'There is something both comic and frightening in the spectacle of the greatest architect of his time currying favour with ... decaying notables.' (Fishman 1977, p272)
49 There are two female contributors, Mary Patricia May Sekler and Jane Drew.
architecture: to build oneself. To make a man of oneself’ (Wogenscky 1977, pxii, my italics). In 1977, in such a context, such gendered phraseology cannot be innocent.

Turner explores the dualism he sees in Le Corbusier’s thought, and suggests that its origins lie in the Calvinist tradition in his family which ‘emphasized the struggle between spirit and sin’ (Turner 1977, p16). Turner sees a fundamental dichotomy in Le Corbusier’s thinking as that between rationalism and romanticism,

two views of the essential nature of architecture. One view, which could be called rationalist, is concerned first and foremost with objective human needs — and is suggested by Le Corbusier’s famous definition of a house as a “machine for living”. The other conception (implied by another of Le Corbusier’s definitions, “Architecture, pure création de l’esprit”) could be in a general way called romantic; it sees architecture principally as a spiritual or personal activity — whether as the creation of abstract forms or in a Platonic, idealistic sense, as the embodiment of perfect spiritual ideas. (Turner 1977, p18)

Unsurprisingly for the time, Turner does not interrogate in terms of gender the notion of ‘objective human needs’ as interpreted by Le Corbusier. More surprising are his characterisations of romantic and rationalist, which can be traced throughout the essay. Turner places on both sides of the ‘dichotomy’ aspects of what is generally identified in feminist theory as the abstract rationalist masculine intelligence proposed by a cartesian epistemology. Romanticism for Turner involves ‘the abstract idealist and spiritual qualities of architecture’ (p30). Throughout the text we find the terminology of nineteenth century (German) idealism (‘the major purpose of art is to express the underlying spiritual force of the universe, to reveal “pure thought”, “perfect spirit”, “eternal harmony”’ (p20)) interspersed with the more traditional (English) Romantic masculine language (early in his life Jeanneret-Le Corbusier had begun ‘to think of himself as a kind of prophet .. [which] suggests a special conception of the role of the architect ... as someone intuiting universal truths, which he then reveals to the world’ (p20); ‘the mystical power of architecture to put us directly in touch with the forces of the universe’ (p30)). Turner evinces no understanding of the feminist theoretical position that the dualism he sees in Le Corbusier both subtends and depends on the discursively constructed opposition between the masculine and the feminine.

In ‘Le Corbusier’s Technological Dilemma’, John Winter ascribes Le Corbusier’s extreme ideological swings from sophisticated ‘machine-made’ building technology to the ‘peasant technology’ (Winter 1977, p334) and back partly to ‘an element of cussedness, of reacting against the view held by the rest of the world, so that he could fulfil his lonely heroic role’ (p335). Winter himself clearly shares a masculine empathy with Le Corbusier and his buildings; he describes his architectural experience on seeing the early houses after the war ‘derelict and abandoned’ (p337): ‘the emotion of hard geometry blighted with the nostalgia of mighty forms ruined within a generation. Le Corbusier was deeply hurt’ (p339).

In spite of the relatively uncritical and at times even ingenuous tone of Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture (see above), understandable given the basis of his thesis in the romantic myth of the travailed hero and genius (see above), in The Open Hand he presents a perceptive and illuminating — and amusing — exploration of the ontological and political conundrum Le Corbusier found himself in attempting to defend architecture against interpretations of his own early proclamations of the necessities of architecture as a reductive functionalism (Jencks 1977). His caprice in ‘Le Corbusier and the Tightrope of Functionalism’ is an imaginary ‘speculative soliloquy’ inserted as a ‘parallel text’ into the text of Le Corbusier’s ‘Défense de
I'architecture' (Le Corbusier 1933): the architect 'whisper[ing] to his wife in bed' (Jencks 1977, p197). However much Jencks may demonstrate a scepticism about Le Corbusier's consistency and logic as an architect and thinker, his identification with him as a man is clear.

Jencks provides a characteristically ironic yet penetrating exploration of some of the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Le Corbusier's 'functionalism', in which he maintains that

the pioneers and especially Le Corbusier never came to terms with the cultural nature of functions, the way they are always seen through a specific historical code and are never transparent, obvious or universal.

(Jencks 1977, p207).

In Jencks's view

The attempt to produce a single *homme type* with his universal needs should be seen as an unstated desire to increase productive efficiency and the repressed wish to lead civilization in a single direction, the dream of the prophet, not a sophisticated functionalist.

(Jencks 1977, p207)

More specifically, Jencks satirises the intrinsic solipsism of Le Corbusier's attempts to standardise the human to a single model. He has Le Corbusier 'thinking' in an imaginary soliloquy: 'I will invent my fiction, the universal man, who looks, acts, and feels, I am pleased to say, rather like me' (Jencks 1977, p203, italics in the original). It is Jenck's opinion that Le Corbusier 'never could generalize these notions [ideology and way of life] to include much beyond his own particular ideology and life style. Like so many architects of his generation, he thought his way of life was ... universal' (Jencks 1977, p193). Jencks however does not take the next step — he does not extend his critique of the 'universal man' to consider not just his presumptuous universality but his assumed masculinity.

Maxwell Fry makes a similar criticism. Referring to Le Corbusier's attitude to designing for Chandigarh, he states: 'I imagine that he peopled his buildings, where indeed they gave the appearance of being peopled, by figments of his own creation, unendowed with normal human attributes' (Fry 1977, p361). Fry describes Le Corbusier's interventions into the demographics of the planning of the residential quarters with 'the mosaic law of the matter' (p358). However in spite of the pertinence and sophistication of Jencks's analysis, and Fry's experience working with his wife Jane Drew in association with Le Corbusier on Chandigarh, they bring no gender awareness to their analysis. A capacity to see the general impact of Modernist planning and architecture on the least privileged — for instance the black inhabitants of the

50 The 'little woman' can evidently come in handy as a secondary (and mute) character. In the 'soliloquy', Jenck's version of the 'dualism' described by Turner is succinct: 'I oscillate back and forth between materialism and idealism like a yo-yo' (Jencks 1977, p203).

51 In 'Le Corbusier and the Tightrope of Functionalism' Jencks repeats the bidet anecdote (see above). Discussing what he calls Le Corbusier's 'spiritual functionalism' he points out that 'the poetry of mundane objects ... can lead to a sophisticated taste, an inverted snobbery, and, much against the wishes of Madame Le Corbusier, a bidet placed right next to the bed (which she covered with a tea cosy)' (Jencks 1977, p191). The tone and emphasis have slightly changed, but the sneer at Mme. Le Corbusier's lack of sophistication remains.

52 Jencks 'rehearses Le Corbusier's arguments' in 'Défense de l'Architecture' (1929), which he describes as a 'not altogether edifying document' (Jencks 1977, p187).

53 The reminiscences of his partner and wife Jane Drew, with whom he worked on Chandigarh, are discussed in Chapter 6 in relation to Le Corbusier's relations with his wife and other women.
Pruitt-Igoe estate — does not imply a sensitive ‘new age’ attitude to gender, even though it is widely recognised that women suffer the greatest poverty and deprivation in any marginalised social group.

In ‘Chandigarh as a Place to Live’, a significant title, given the formalist and architectonic preoccupations of most of the contributions to the book, and the many criticisms of Le Corbusier’s city planning schemes as overly abstract and inhumane, Madhu Sarin provides an enlightening account of the practicalities and cultural realities of the city of Chandigarh. He presents in devastating detail the result of an inflexible master plan for the housing at Chandigarh, conceived without taking into account Indian social, economic and technological realities. In defiance of the complexity of the interactions between the public, the private, the ritual and the commercial, characteristic of Indian life, the over-scaled neighbourhoods which make up the living quarters of the city are divided into single-use zones, with monumental axes and over-wide, straight, urban highways too exposed to the heat of the sun, and designed for speed and the car in a country where a bicycle is still beyond the financial reach of many (particularly striking given Gandhi’s refusal of industrialisation and machinery).

The Sector 17 chowk is discernible as a chowk only in plans. On the ground, the scale is so large and the width between meeting streets so great that one sees nothing but vast stretches of concrete paving with a few lone figures here and there. ... The small street trader, the hawkers or the rehri (barrows) have been banned from the city center.

(Sarin 1977, p386)

The abstraction and distance, the zoning and regulation, of ‘architecturally zoned, frame-controlled, and building-by-lawed [planned] Chandigarh’\textsuperscript{54} (Sarin 1977, p389), are part of the armory of patriarchal social organisation (see Chapters 2 and 5). There were thirteen categories of housing, based on socio-economic factors. However all thirteen were beyond the average Indian’s capacity to pay. It is significant that it was the efforts of Jane Drew, the only woman in the team, that ‘generated a fourteenth and the cheapest category of house’, but few were built and none has been added since (p402). The disregard in Le Corbusier’s vision of the new city of how the indigenous Indians might choose to live is parallel to the exclusion of women from the Radiant City\textsuperscript{55}, and similarly a result of Le Corbusier’s determination to operate from above: ‘He saw himself as the SOLE supplier of ideas for a city of 500,000 inhabitants’ (p399).

Feminist theory has for decades made the connection between feminism and colonialism. Subaltern groups experience similar pragmatic oppression and similar discursive definition by the dominant culture. The conflation of the feminine and the primitive, of the eastern ‘other’ and the female ‘other’, has been elaborated in general by Said (Said 1995), and in particular in architectural discourse by Çelik (Çelik 1992). However Sarin makes no mention of gender or women (except for his implicit acknowledgment of the masculinity of the presumed role and functions of the capital compared with the proportions of men and women in the neighbouring villages, which

\textsuperscript{54} As contrasted with non-planned Chandigarh, which has grown up beside it. Those who have had to devise solutions to their living needs in spite of the plan ‘do not have much to thank the architects and planners for, because the latter have only displayed an obsessive desire to fit them into the layout of the master plan, irrespective of their needs and priorities’ (Sarin 1977, p397).

\textsuperscript{55} Sarin mentions that ‘three Hindu architects would be permanently attached to our atelier on the Rue de Sèvres to carry out in turn studies as the work proceeds, in order to give them an education of university type which remains in full contact with the Hindu civilization’ (Sarin 1977, p399). This is perhaps symptomatic of the disregard of Le Corbusier to the people who would populate his buildings — Chandigarh as the capital of Indian Punjab is the home state of the Sikhs, to be clearly differentiated from Hindus.
effectively constituted the city’s suburbs (Sarin 1977, p.395). He certainly makes no connection between his criticism of Le Corbusier’s work in India and feminist theory.

Stanislaus von Moos adds to Sarin’s a European view of Le Corbusier in Chandigarh. Given the outcomes on the ground at Chandigarh, the tone of his text is sceptical about the ‘uncorruptible [sic] belief in universal salvation through modern technology’ (von Moos 1977, p.431), and the idea of the capital as ‘the monument to the machine age, [and] its supposedly universal values’ (p.433).66 As he says, ‘[i]t is easy enough to ridicule Le Corbusier’s enthusiasm for authority, this olympic determination to operate “par-dessus la mêlée” (p.441), but he claims historical context. However he does describe Le Corbusier’s attitude to (state) Authority as ‘a paternalistic, more, a patriarchal conception of state rule; he liked to compare it to the authority of the père de famille who knows what is best for his children’ (p.441). Von Moos refers to the mythology which was to grow up around Le Corbusier, ‘of an artist who conceives of himself as a magician and a prophet of a new myth; ... of an artist, indeed, who in his youth has read Nietzsche’ (p.445) but appears to finds its intrinsic masculinity ‘normal’, not worthy of comment.

A number of anecdotes demonstrates the orientalism of Le Corbusier’s attitude to the Punjab. ‘When [Le Corbusier] was asked to move to India he answered, “Your capital can be built right here; we, at 35 Rue de Sèvres, are perfectly capable of finding the solution to the problem.”’ (von Moos 1977, p.420) Le Corbusier did in fact spend some time in India. When asked why he had not stayed longer at Chandigarh, he answered, “... What is the meaning of Indian style [sic] in the world of today when you accept machines and trousers and democracy?”’ (p.42). Trousers for Le Corbusier are of course men’s attire — Le Corbusier appears not to have noticed that a standard form of feminine dress in the Punjab is in fact the shalwar-kamiz, a tunic over loose trousers, while men, other than the Europeanised middle class, were more likely to wear the dhoti. Von Moos comments in a footnote that Evenson (Evenson 1970) ‘although she realizes that many aspects of Chandigarh are determined by the political character of the campaign [to be given the commission to design the city], she is not particularly interested in the nature of the political ideas that (implicitly or explicitly) underlie the social and architectural choices of the administrators and the designers’ (von Moos 1977, note 3, p.450). Here von Moos assumes the conventional class-based (and in this case also caste-based) meaning of politics. Ironically von Moos himself demonstrates little awareness of the interrelated political economies of orientalism and masculism manifested in the story he tells.

The centenary: Raeburn et al.

A proliferation of exhibitions and publications marked the centenary of Le Corbusier’s birth in 1987.58 The essays in the Raeburn anthology (Raeburn and Wilson 1987), catalogue of the Arts Council of Great Britain exhibition in London, are an eclectic collection. Many of the essays discuss Le Corbusier’s commitment to the machine, to technology, and to tabula rasa planning, however as parts of an exhibition catalogue they tend to be more descriptive than critical.59

---

56 Curtis goes further, and describes the Capitol space as ‘almost cosmic in scale’ (Curtis 1986, p.224).
57 An ironic simile considering Le Corbusier’s stated hatred of children.
59 There is some criticism of Le Corbusier’s urbanism (‘his Olympian project of cultural renewal through the fusion of art and technology no longer seems tenable; in fact it looks like some final chapter of an idealist saga with its beginnings in the Enlightenment’ (Curtis 1987a, p.25).) Criticism is often accompanied by excubatory remarks (‘[t]he Ville Contemporaine, if taken
A surprising number of the contributors still unselfconsciously use the now archaic and often pretentious terms ‘man’ and ‘men’, at times apparently in the generic60 (‘a future in which men would be free to combine sophisticated and primitive techniques’ (Frampton 1987, p31)), at times paraphrasing Le Corbusier without any sign of discomfiture at the gendered voice (Urbanisme was a ‘savage attack on the way of the donkey’ compared to the higher sense of purpose and geometric clarity of modern man’ (Benton 1987e, p201); ‘[w]e must rediscover man’ (Benton 1987c, p249); ‘[t]hese dichotomies exist within men, since everyone has feelings controlled by reason’; ‘primitive man’ and ‘civilized man’ (Benton 1987e, p205) By contrast, reflecting the recent diffusion of ideas on non-sexist language, Benton, in his synopsis of the ideas Le Corbusier presents in Precisions, ‘The house was a machine for living in, to be analyzed in terms of structure and the universal needs of men and women’ (Benton 1987d, p69, my italics). However Benton is perhaps unconsciously re-writing Precisions itself, where in Le Corbusier’s text we read

All men [sic] have the same needs, at the same hours, every day, all their lives.

... Our needs are the needs of men. We have all the same limbs, in number, form, and size; if on this last point there are differences, an average dimension is easy to find.

Standard functions,
standard needs,
standard objects,
standard dimensions.

(Le Corbusier c1991, p108)

Frampton points out that ‘[t]he persona of the romantic artist-architect is one that Le Corbusier was fond of himself, and it received a good deal of support’ (Frampton 1987, p39). The terminology of the romantic, and according to Jencks, tragic role of the (masculine) architect is common: ‘[h]e saw architecture in lofty, even spiritual, terms ... as a reflection of a higher order’ (Curtis 1987a, p13). ‘Le Corbusier’s disillusionment ... can be seen as the ... course of a creative struggle’ (Frampton 1987, p29).

Jameson’s sceptical epigram ‘during the manhood [sic] of modern architecture beautiful was big’ (Jameson 1977), quoted by (Forty 1987, p40) seems apt.

Responses to Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women and ‘woman’, 1987

In contrast to the assumptions underlying much literary and art criticism, the psychological makeup and the private life of individual architects are seldom registered as crucial to an interpretation of their work. Writing on Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright provides exceptions to this attitude. And postmodernist theory questioning the ‘reality’ of ‘the author’ (see Chapter 5) has not dimmed architectural researchers’ interest in Le Corbusier’s life. To satisfy their curiosity they have the riches of the Fondation Le Corbusier archive, replete with the millions of items retained for posterity by Le Corbusier himself. ‘[S]cholars have worked closely with the evidence afforded by drawings, letters and sketchbooks, and have been able to penetrate individual themes with greater depth and accuracy.’ (Curtis 1986, ‘Preface’) I have discussed Charles

---

60 With the usual effect of leaving the reader unsure whether the noun is intended to be gendered male or not.
Jenck's work on the women in Le Corbusier's life — if that is in fact where they were.

So potent is the Le Corbusier myth that stories abound in the literature; scandal and gossip become part of the myth. Feminist historians of architecture are now giving new interpretations of events which already form part of a legend. Le Corbusier himself organised his life in such a way as to manifest his own attitude to the proper comportement of the great modern artist-architect. His clothes, his glasses, his habits, his domestic environment, all were part of the mise en scène. According to Green, 'the myth was an essential component in the entire structure of his thinking' (Green 1987, p.112). So, as with contemporary 'media personalities', the boundaries between the public and the private are blurred.

It is not the project of this thesis to uncover sexist or misogynist or unsavoury aspects of Le Corbusier's life, except insofar as the biography forms part of the literature, thus contributing to the 'image of the architect' which circulates in the architectural discourse. It is certainly difficult to imagine a corresponding female character being received as the persona 'Le Corbusier' is still received. Secondly, the response of those who write about him to the more egregious examples of masculism evidenced in his attitudes and behaviour is significant in the construction of an architectural discourse which speaks not only chiefly of men but to men. I generally restrict my discussion here to the texts in the Raeburn anthology, Le Corbusier. Architect of the Century (Raeburn and Wilson 1987).

Benton, discussing Le Corbusier's 'Six houses' 61, demonstrates a clearly partial masculine view when he writes that '[m]any of Le Corbusier's clients were women, and the roles he was forced [sic] to play were frequently those of courtier and aggrieved paramour' (Benton 1987d, p.47). To understand the relevant power relations — who was forcing whom — requires more than mere access to the archives. 62 The anecdote Benton relates about Le Corbusier's rapport with the long-suffering (a frequent state in Le Corbusier's clients, it would appear) Mme. de Mandrot, a long-standing supporter and even sponsor of his work, is enlightening. According to Benton,

the first winter after she moved in ... [t]he windows leaked, the walls were damp, the blinds didn't work. ... She wrote ... announcing that she had had to leave the house, since it was uninhabitable ... Le Corbusier [replied,]

'... You sent me ... a typewritten letter in which insolence vies with unscrupulousness . . . . The insolence of [your] proposals ... when your wits have deserted you is all the more regrettable when applied to a work of Architecture . . . . It seemed that Madame de Mandrot . . . . would have been ready to live in a modern house. You have told us that you cannot. What the hell, then!'

(Benton 1987d, p.47)

Benton remarks merely that '[t]he astonishing fact remains that most of Le Corbusier's clients remained faithful to him' (p.47).

Behaviour in the 'real world' is one thing, the metaphorical, even metaphysical presence of women and the feminine in the work of the artist-architect another. Whether an early and continuing preoccupation or a later development 63, Le Corbusier's approach as Artist to the female as Subject must of course be interpreted

61 Villas Fallet, Schwob, Stein-de Monzie, Savoye, Petite Maison de Weekend, Maisons Jaoul.
62 Friedman (1996; 1998) gives an alternative reading of the relationship between Le Corbusier and his women clients; see Chapter 4.
63 There is debate in the literature on this point.
as reflecting his time and place. More relevant to this thesis is the unreconstructed
masculism of critiques of his work as artist and architect, even those published as late
as 1987, the year of his centenary. In his essay in the book accompanying the
exhibition *Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée*, Von Moos suggests that Le Corbusier’s
‘official’ version, of a late coming to the female form, is due to a sort of ‘morphe
puriste’. He traces Le Corbusier’s preoccupation with the female nude back before
1918, and quotes Ozenfant describing Le Corbusier as ‘amusing himself making
humorous, extremely baroque caricatures [of fat women] in gouache’ (von Moos 1987,
p191, my translation from the French).

In ‘The architect as artist’ in the Raeburn anthology, Green tells us that

> Le Corbusier’s A3 sketchbook of 1918 and his letters to William Ritter [in
> 1917] reveal a strong sensualist side ... The Surrealists’ promotion of the erotic
was perhaps a factor, and certainly the prostitutes he drew in Rio and the
Casbah were, but so also were his summers at Le Piquet, where he indulged his
passion for drawing large women in every posture. ...

And indeed, the erotic is here in *Léa*, for early drawings show that the oyster
has taken the place of women, often in *deshabille*, emerging from that doorway,
and, so obviously vulva-like, it too plays a part in an easily read, if
unexplained, sexual drama.

(Green 1987, p116).

A characteristic of Green’s writing is a disingenuous conflation of women with the
irrational, nature, the primitive, and the erotic, which is almost a caricature of feminist
theoretical readings of patriarchal definitions of women and the female as ‘Other’ to
the rational, civilised human subjectivity of ‘Man’ (the masculine). *Léa*, then, reveals
the directness and intensity of his new commitment to nature and a new willingness to
explore irrational juxtapositions.’ (Green 1987, p116) Green sees in Le Corbusier’s art
by the end of the 1920s ‘a conjunction of notions ... — the irrational together with the
erotic and the primitive — all of which came into the foreground with the break-down
of the polarization of man against nature so central to Purism’ (Green 1987, p116).
Green follows what he sees is the ‘natural’ progression from drawings (the various
versions of *La Pêcheuse d’Arcachon*64) to architecture (the *Pavillon Suisse*). ‘His
rediscovery of nature and the erotic in drawing and painting came first, and opened the
way ... Le Corbusier’s new approach to his relationship with nature worked itself out
in his architecture ... The primitive and the natural [female] could be placed alongside
the modern and the mechanistic’ [male] (Green 1987, p116). Green can without irony
suggest as an example of Le Corbusier’s excursions into ‘metamorphic
transformation’ in his later architecture, the transference of ‘female thighs into pilotis’
(Green 1987, pp117).

The elision of woman, sex and nature is at times absurdly direct (with an almost
jencksian sexist remark included).

> Le Corbusier was always willing as a figure painter to acknowledge and exploit
his sexual responses. Jencks has made much of his liking for big women, and
indeed big women are the compulsive centre of interest in his French and South
American drawings of 1928-32. He even drew from naughty postcards ...
featuring an exceptional female heavyweight turned out as a bathing beauty. ...
[H]is sources range from the prostitutes and gaudy postcards of Algiers to
Delacroix’s *Femmes d’Alger* and the soft pornography of the illustrated

---

64 The Arcachon fisherwoman. (An aside: the word-processing ‘spelling checker’ used to write this
thesis could not find the word fisherwoman and ‘suggested’ fisherman.)
A surprising number of the contributors still unselfconsciously use the now archaic and often pretentious terms ‘man’ and ‘men’, at times apparently in the generic (‘a future in which men would be free to combine sophisticated and primitive techniques’ (Frampton 1987, p31)), at times paraphrasing Le Corbusier without any sign of discomfiture at the gendered voice (Urbanisme was a ‘savage attack on the way of the donkey’ compared to the higher sense of purpose and geometric clarity of modern man’ (Benton 1987e, p201); ‘[w]e must rediscover man’ (Benton 1987c, p249); ‘[t]hese dichotomies exist within men, since everyone has feelings controlled by reason’; ‘primitive man’ and ‘civilized man’ (Benton 1987e, p205)). By contrast, reflecting the recent diffusion of ideas on non-sexist language, Benton, in his synopsis of the ideas Le Corbusier presents in Precisions, ‘The house was a machine for living in, to be analyzed in terms of structure and the universal needs of men and women’ (Benton 1987d, p69, my italics). However, Benton is perhaps unconsciously re-writing Precisions itself, where in Le Corbusier’s text we read

All men [sic] have the same needs, at the same hours, every day, all their lives.

Our needs are the needs of men. We have all the same limbs, in number, form, and size; if on this last point there are differences, an average dimension is easy to find.

Standard functions,
standard needs,
standard objects,
standard dimensions.

(Le Corbusier c1991, p108)

Frampton points out that ‘[t]he persona of the romantic artist-architect is one that Le Corbusier was fond of himself, and it received a good deal of support’ (Frampton 1987, p39). The terminology of the romantic, and according to Jencks, tragic role of the (masculine) architect is common: ‘he saw architecture in lofty, even spiritual, terms ... as a reflection of a higher order’ (Curtis 1987a, p13). ‘Le Corbusier’s disillusionment ... can be seen as the ... course of a creative struggle’ (Frampton 1987, p29). Jameson’s sceptical epigram ‘during the manhood [sic] of modern architecture beautiful was big’ (Jameson 1977), quoted by (Fortsy 1987, p40) seems apt.

Responses to Le Corbusier’s attitudes to women and ‘woman’, 1987

In contrast to the assumptions underlying much literary and art criticism, the psychological makeup and the private life of individual architects are seldom registered as crucial to an interpretation of their work. Writing on Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright provides exceptions to this attitude. And postmodernist theory questioning the ‘reality’ of ‘the author’ (see Chapter 5) has not dimmed architectural researchers’ interest in Le Corbusier’s life. To satisfy their curiosity they have the riches of the Fondation Le Corbusier archive, replete with the millions of items retained for posterity by Le Corbusier himself. ‘[S]cholars have worked closely with the evidence afforded by drawings, letters and sketchbooks, and have been able to penetrate individual themes with greater depth and accuracy.’ (Curtis 1986, ‘Preface’) I have discussed Charles Jencks’s work on the women in Le Corbusier’s life — if that is in fact where they were.

60 With the usual effect of leaving the reader unsure whether the noun is intended to be gendered male or not.
So potent is the Le Corbusier myth that stories abound in the literature; scandal and gossip become part of the myth. Feminist historians of architecture are now giving new interpretations of events which already form part of a legend. Le Corbusier himself organised his life in such a way as to manifest his own attitude to the proper comportement of the great modern artist-architect. His clothes, his glasses, his habits, his domestic environment, all were part of the mise en scène. According to Green, ‘the myth was an essential component in the entire structure of his thinking’ (Green 1987, p112). So, as with contemporary ‘media personalities’, the boundaries between the public and the private are blurred.

It is not the project of this thesis to uncover sexist or misogynist or unsavoury aspects of Le Corbusier’s life, except insofar as the biography forms part of the literature, thus contributing to the ‘image of the architect’ which circulates in the architectural discourse. It is certainly difficult to imagine a corresponding female character being received as the persona ‘Le Corbusier’ is still received. Secondly, the response of those who write about him to the more egregious examples of masculism evidenced in his attitudes and behaviour is significant in the construction of an architectural discourse which speaks not only chiefly of men but to men. I generally restrict my discussion here to the texts in the Raeburn anthology, Le Corbusier. Architect of the Century (Raeburn and Wilson 1987).

Benton, discussing Le Corbusier’s ‘Six houses’61, demonstrates a clearly partial masculine view when he writes that ‘[m]any of Le Corbusier’s clients were women, and the roles he was forced [sic] to play were frequently those of courtier and aggrieved paramour’ (Benton 1987d, p47). To understand the relevant power relations — who was forcing whom — requires more than mere access to the archives.62 The anecdote Benton relates about Le Corbusier’s rapport with the long-suffering (a frequent state in Le Corbusier’s clients, it would appear) Mme. de Mandrot, a long-standing supporter and even sponsor of his work, is enlightening. According to Benton,

> the first winter after she moved in... [t]he windows leaked, the walls were damp, the blinds didn’t work... She wrote... announcing that she had had to leave the house, since it was uninhabitable... Le Corbusier [replied,]

> ‘... You sent me... a typewritten letter in which insolence vies with unscrupulousness... The insolence of [your] proposals... when your wits have deserted you is all the more regrettable when applied to a work of Architecture... It seemed that Madame de Mandrot... would have been ready to live in a modern house. You have told us that you cannot. What the hell, then!’

(Benton 1987d, p47)

Benton remarks merely that ‘[t]he astonishing fact remains that most of Le Corbusier’s clients remained faithful to him’ (p47).

Behaviour in the ‘real world’ is one thing, the metaphorical, even metaphysical presence of women and the feminine in the work of the artist-architect another. Whether an early and continuing preoccupation or a later development63, Le Corbusier’s approach as Artist to the female as Subject must of course be interpreted as reflecting his time and place. More relevant to this thesis is the unreconstructed masculism of critiques of his work as artist and architect, even those published as late

61 Villas Fallet, Schwob, Stein-de Monzie, Savoye, Petite Maison de Weekend, Maisons Jaoul.
62 Friedman (1996; 1998) gives an alternative reading of the relationship between Le Corbusier and his women clients; see Chapter 4.
63 There is debate in the literature on this point.
the Plan Obus is juxtaposed with a Corbu drawing of a woman on one page; while skilful picture editing offers the next page over 'Sketch of Two Nudes' (1931). The cross reference is left to the reader. I for one doubt its relevance. (Spens 1987, p105)

And according to Spens, Jencks's perverse ideas have had an unhealthy influence on other writers, such as William Curtis.

And sure enough (almost as if propelled into it by Jenck's [sic] risqué and beguiling references[]), we find Curtis following the same preconceptions concerning the Plan Obus for Algiers, concerning precise erotic drawings of two nude girls in the Casbah ... he seems to be in search of emblems to contain the sensual fecund magic of Algeria and the mystical calligraphy of his sketches ... were [sic] now compressed into the Plan Obus.

Amusing as this is, it passes not for historiography by speculation. (Spens 1987, p105)

Spens is uneasy at such interpretations of the sources of Le Corbusier's architectural language — although he praises the section of the book dealing with Corb's 'Repertoire of Invented Signs' (presumably safely gender-free) — but is not above a sexist joke reminiscent of Jencks's own:

arguably we may here be dealing with what are known in archaeological terminology as 'traces'. Indeed, three sketchbooks appear to have been lost from the period of Algiers, although individual sheets remain as do postcards of half-clad Kabul women that survived (the cards) Corbu's escapades into the Casbah.

(Spens 1987, p105)

Whether accepted or rejected as an appropriate source for masculine inspiration, 'the feminine' and its representations remain peripheral and metaphorical, even a subject for derision.

Reception of the Modulor, 1985-87

The man who 'loves mother nature' finds his own representation in the Modulor. However, the absence of mainstream critique on the grounds of gender is striking in the reception of the Modulor. The contrast is often striking between the writers' dismissive attitudes to women, and the place they allocate to the symbolic place of 'Woman', and the generally uncritical attitudes to the masculine symbolism of the Modulor, only partly explained by the fact that the writers are male. The mystique of the Modulor shares in the quality of myth. Writing in the centenary year 1987, Matteoni writes that we should understand the Modulor as 'intellectual research' into a 'metaphoric discourse' and describes without irony 'the certainties of the Modulor system ... substituting for the esoteric value of the proportional systems of Antiquity and the Middle Ages ..., an instrument capable of imposing order and harmony on reality' (Matteoni 1987, p89).67

Curtis is less reverent, but the implications for its value in the making of architecture of the extreme masculinity of the Modulor do not occur to him. 'The Modulor man was

---

67 Some years earlier, reflecting the hubris of the 1970s, Jordan had suggested that the Modulor might 'modify the architecture of the world for generations to come' (Jordan 1972, p118).
built like a Greek kouros statue with bulging thighs and a slender waist, but he had obviously just come from a few hours vigorous cycling around a rooftop gymnasium track.' (Curtis 1986, p164) However Curtis also participates in the construction of the heroic 'Corb' myth.

One of his major breakthroughs about the Modulor occurred in the thoroughly Nietzschean setting of a storm. He was on board the S.S. Vernon S. Hood in 1946 when the ship ran into a gale. ...[H]e decided to use the time to good purpose and came up with a little sketch ... of the Modulor man with his arm upraised.

(Curtis 1986, p164)

Von Moos’s account is more sophisticated. He describes Le Corbusier’s preference of the British system of measurements as ‘units of measurement derived from the human’; ‘the introduction of the decimal system ... seems to him to be almost sacrilege’, and interprets the Modulor as an attempt at a ‘synthesis of the Anglo-Saxon and the metric systems’ (von Moos 1985, p312). He is doubtful of its usefulness in design, in contrast with ‘its conceptual role’, and quotes Rudolf Arnheim’s characterisation of the Modulor “as a Romantic variation of the Pythagorean philosophy” (Arnheim 1967, quoted in von Moos 1985, p313). ‘With its undoubted mathematical and logical inconsistencies, the Modulor survives as a dream rather than a program ... whose purpose is to visualise a world’ (von Moos 1985, p313). Von Moos does not note that this world, ‘synthesis and utopia of an animated architecture’ (p313), is a masculine one.

Benton discusses the Modulor adventure in terms of the ‘search for universal truths of harmony and proportion’, although with some reserve (it ‘could be seen to fit current aesthetic theories, now largely discredited’) and states that it ‘offered a universal solution for all countries (a staple Le Corbusier ambition)’ (Benton 1987c, p241). He makes no acknowledgment of either the problematic Eurocentrism of a universal solution for all countries based on the mythic British policeman, or the exclusion of the female half of the world implicit in Modulor Man’s overtly masculine scale and stance. Benton provides a more complex explanation than Le Corbusier’s for the shift from the 1.75 metre ‘standard man’ to 1.83 cm in his footnote to a discussion of Le Corbusier and ‘The sacred and the search for myths’: 144 is a more malleable number and part of the Fibonacci series. ‘144 inches (twice 6 feet) is a Fibonacci number (in fact a special Fibonacci number as it is the first square in the series and the only one to be given by the square of its ordinal’ (Benton 1987c, p245). The discrepancy with Le Corbusier’s account is interesting, but the implicit conflation of masculine proportion with the ‘truth and harmony’ of numbers is inescapable. Benton does not note the irony that Le Corbusier was assisted in his esoteric mathematics by a woman mathematician, Elisa Maillard.

Later critiques

Geoffrey Baker 1996

Geoffrey H Baker has some thoughtful things to say about Le Corbusier’s failure to acknowledge of the complexities of design problems; he criticises Le Corbusier’s obsession with order, and his universalising diagnosis of the human psyche. He quotes Le Corbusier’s dictum in Towards a New Architecture (p126) that ‘[a]ll men have the same organism, the same functions’ and therefore ‘the same needs’ (Baker 1996,

---

68 See Chapter 6, note 60.
69 The illustrations of the Modulor in the text juxtapose without specific comment both versions of the Modulor, at 1.75 and 1.83 metres.
p272), and points out that ‘human behavioural characteristics’ vary, and ‘human behaviour is far from predictable’.

The flaw in his argument can be traced to the limited nature of his ‘evolutionary’ theory which failed to take account of the range of issues that impinge on the evolution of certain artefacts ... In fact the limitations of his theory become fully exposed when applied to the dwelling and, beyond that, the city.

(Baker 1996, p273)

Baker even points out that the function of a dwelling has to embrace both utilitarian and symbolic aspects, which include ‘such intangibles as status within the community and the differing needs of a family unit at different age levels’ (p273). Age is of course an important differentiating factor between people. Gender would appear to be rather less ‘intangible’ than status, but Baker does not make the obvious objection, that women differ generically in many ways from men, in ways that are also likely to affect the design of living environments, so does not mention gender as a vector of the diversity of humanity (Baker 1996, pp272-277).

His criticism of Le Corbusier’s theories is principally based on Le Corbusier’s extension of his abstract principles of design and standardisation ‘to embrace the way we live’ (p273). He cites ‘[s]ocial mores, personal independence, establishment of domain, privacy and recognition of societal position a[s] important considerations relating the individual to society’ (p274), and refers to ‘Heidegger, Binswanger’ 70, Bachelard and Norberg-Schulz and others’ as proponents of the phenomenological view of the dwelling, ‘where man [sic] gathers his memories of the world and related them to his daily life of eating sleeping, conversation and entertainment’ (quoted in Baker 1996, p274). The casual use of the terms ‘man’ in this context is surely significant. In a text published in 1996 the lack of awareness of gender in general would be remarkable were it not so characteristic of architectural writing.

For Baker the basic flaw in Le Corbusier’s approach is that it ‘applied an essentially personal and limited intellectual artistic critique to designed objects’, and proposed ‘fundamental changes [that were] to be imposed by a select elitist group of experts who ‘understood what was wanted’; ‘Men — intelligent, cold and calm — are needed to build the house and to lay out the town’ (Le Corbusier, The City of Tomorrow, p119, quoted in Baker 1996, p275). Baker’s objection here is to Le Corbusier’s distance from the concerns of ordinary people: ‘Le Corbusier had concerns not shared by the community, and like many twentieth century architects he was more isolated from his fellow men than he ever realized’ (p275). ‘[H]e was capable of providing brilliant design solutions for individual houses tailored to particular requirements, although many of his houses of the 1920s suffered from acute technological problems.’ (p275)

It escapes Baker’s notice that these experts are to be ‘Men’, that the distance of Le Corbusier from ‘the community’ is a distance related not only to class or profession, but to gender, and that the ‘particular requirements’ for instance of the Maison Savoye were often invented by the architect to extend his architectural vocabulary, rather than set out by the client.71

Adolf Max Vogt and the ‘noble savage’

The fascination of the Le Corbusier myth, and the availability of the archive in the Fondation Le Corbusier has led almost to an industry in psycho-historical and psycho-

---

70 An existentialist psychoanalyst.
71 ‘Her few specific observations about the character of the house were ignored ... [and she] never got the guest room with twin beds and bathroom she specified, nor the ‘comfortable corners’ in her living-room.’ (Benton 1987)
critical work on the influences on Le Corbusier's work. Researchers have written of his childhood, his mother, his father, his kindergarten experience with Froebel blocks, his reading, his trip to 'the East', and his mentors: the origins and lineage of his architecture. Vogt, in Le Corbusier, the Noble Savage, takes Le Corbusier as symbol of modernism, sub-titling his book Toward an Archaeology of Modernism. The book excavates in the archives of Le Corbusier's childhood and youth, to find 'what imprinted itself on the little boy ... while he was still defenceless?' (Vogt 1998, pxi), and then to discover other intellectual and aesthetic influences. His account of these is an almost obsessively detailed text, marked by traces of the tropes and historic figures of masculinity.

Vogt's text is a strange one. 'Understanding him [Le Corbusier] and loving him for me involved severe contestation, great irritation, and partial outright rejection.' (p334) But the implicit rationale behind the exhaustive and exhausting research into the intimate details of Le Corbusier's early intellectual and spiritual life is to produce a homage to 'the Master' (pxii). Vogt's major thesis is that Le Corbusier's use of pilotis, his preoccupation with raising both houses and cities above the ground on pilotis, derives from early lessons in primary school about the Neolithic stilt houses of which archaeologists had found evidence in a number of Swiss lakes. Vogt proceeds to explore other influences such as 'dreams of primary origin' (pp334-335), the fishermen's huts of Arcachon 72, and Rousseau (pp133-149, p157). Vogt sees 'those who have to build like the fishermen of Arcachon and have no chance for private property' as fulfilling the criteria for Rousseau's 'noble savage' (p157). Rousseau joins the list of Le Corbusier's literary 'mentors' which includes Ruskin (Sekler 1977), Nietzsche and Renan (Turner 1977), and according to Vogt is the most important (p339). 'Our thesis ... is that, being a serious connoisseur and admirer of Rousseau, LC [sic] aimed at nothing less than transposing Jean-Jacques's body of thought into the language of architecture.' 73 (p138)

Vogt discusses the influence on Le Corbusier's housing design of his visit to the Certosa d'Ema in Tuscany, and quotes Le Corbusier's note on a drawing of the building: 'This monk's cell in the Certosa d'Ema would serve wonderfully for workers' housing' (Vogt 1998, p22). Vogt's comment is:

The Certosa architecturally embodies the two medieval cardinal virtues of asceticism and meditative concentration in an impeccable and eloquent manner,... the frugal interior cubicles and the secluded privatised exterior areas. Commentary of the visitor LC: Je voudrais toute ma vie habiter ce qu'ils appelent [sic] leur cellules. That's how he would like to live. This double cell ... in truth occupied him all his life.

(Vogt 1998, p22)

Vogt has no comment to make on the suitability to housing for all of this ascetic, even anti-social, monastic — and masculine — approach to life.

It is clear from the tone of the text that for Vogt Le Corbusier's greatness as a formulator of architectural ideas and forms and transcends all other demands one might make of the architecture. He describes his reaction to Le Corbusier's second lecture in Brazil, published in Precisions (Le Corbusier c1991 [1950]). Le Corbusier has

---

72 The (fat) bodies of the fisherwomen of Arcachon were models for Le Corbusier's drawing: but for him the huts (maisons) belonged to the men.

73 Rousseau had come to live in 'LC's home region' following the banning of Emile. 'Hence it is no exaggeration on my part to point out the Rousseauean foundation in the pyramid of LC's convictions.' (Vogt 1998, p339) Is Vogt suggesting a form of geographically mediated cultural osmosis?
named the remedies for the ills of the city and of architecture. ‘They are called “standardization, industrialization, Taylorization.” Emerging fears are calmed: “these three phenomena are neither cruel of frightening ... , on the contrary they lead to order, perfection, purity and freedom.... LC knows this so precisely and can sum it up so quickly because he can speak in the name of truth.

(Vogt 1998, p86, Precisions, p38)

Vogt is not convinced by the arguments, but his response to Le Corbusier himself is remarkable.

What a dangerously talented teacher and also what a smooth blatherer who does not recoil from any platitude! But what an evocative power he has. He unabashedly takes us by the hand and leads us to a horizon of the Promised Land. Only read, only taken at the verbal level, this series of vague concepts and banal terms cannot be defended in the least. ... But when I remember who is speaking ... namely, the creator of the Villa Savoye ... my perceptions are changed. ... [Le Corbusier continues:] “The poetic vision of the True today which I will show to you, you yourselves will create for yourselves. What I speak will be ‘technique,’ what you reply, ‘poetry.’”

(Vogt 1998, pp89-90, Precisions, p40)

Vogt then quotes ‘LC’’s explanation of his scheme to raise his proposed city above the ground on pilotis, .

“I have altogether detached myself from the clusters of trees, I have moved away from the traffic noise, I am aloft, amid the azure sky, amid the sunlight and joy, amid the light everywhere.”...

... If in the twentieth century there exists a Song of Songs in praise of architecture, these lines belong in it! What a feeling of joy about the vision attained!

(Vogt 1998, p92, Precisions, p48)

In spite of his hindsight awareness of the consequences of such schemes, and his ironic assessment of Le Corbusier’s ‘blather’, Vogt is seduced by the illusory promises of ‘order, perfection, purity and freedom’, and the vision of the light, the poetic, the True. In his concluding chapter Vogt talks of ‘LC’ s dive into megalomania with the plan Obus for Algiers, and his self-debasement at ... Vichy’ (Vogt 1998, p335). However, in the body of the book he recounts without comment the necessary role of totalising power in Le Corbusier’s vision.

... in moments of wishful thinking LC frequently invoked Colbert, the powerful minister of finance of the Sun King. At times Colbert took the place of LC’s alter ego. He became the silhouette of LC’s projection into a figure equipped with unlimited power and capable of guiding humankind for its own good, especially when it does not comprehend this or does not want it realized yet.

(Vogt 1998, p107)

‘Cool Corb’: Le Corbusier as style

My first re-reading of Le Corbusier in 1987 (the basis of my 1988 paper (White 1988)) seemed almost an antiquarian enterprise. That women had been excluded from the production of the icons and canons of Modernism was undeniable, but Modernism
was 'officially' dead, and postmodernism's origins in activism and political dissent offered the hope of change. Postmodernism promised to produce an architecture of subversion and resistance, reflecting some of the concerns of critical feminism, and divested of the conceit of claiming for the architectural artefact a kind of exemption from the imperative of context, whether social, cultural or environmental. But environmental design, truly participatory practice and a contextual response beyond mere façadism, prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, do not appear to have retained their initial power. Architects often appear preoccupied with the most superficial aspects of design, and though their indulgence in a variety of stylistic languages pretends to heterodoxy, iconoclasm and perversity, it is often only the image which is at issue.

In the prevailing reactionary atmosphere (see Jameson 1984; Jameson 1985), and the reconciliation of much of the avant garde with the image-building imperatives of corporations and official culture, there is something of an irony that the 'Heroic Age' of Modernism can now provide a popular source of architectural forms and imagery, divested of the original naïve but passionate social and metaphysical idealism. The Hero is no longer a warrior, a revolutionary or an ascetic. But in Calvin Kleins under an Armani suit, and wearing 'Eternity' aftershave, he is still masculine.
Chapter 8  Wizards of Oz

‘And is there ... a Mrs Kangaroo?’
‘Alas no! Like the unicorn, the family
knows no female.’
(Lawrence 1954, p.133)

I am not, and will never be,
Crocodile Dundee.2
(Song lyric, Robyn Archer3)

Introduction

This Chapter explores the particular masculinity of Australian architectural discourse,
with a focus on one paradigmatic architect, Glenn Murcutt. The texts I examine include
historical-descriptive and critical4 writing about Glenn Murcutt5 and his architecture,
with some complementary references to writing on two other Australian architects,
Peter Corrigan and Greg Burgess. Between them these three men encapsulate aspects
of Australia’s ‘radical, dissident fraternity’ in architecture. Murcutt is now effectively
the patriarch of the Australian ‘vernacular’, while Corrigan remains the larrikin, with
Burgess perhaps providing a ‘New Age’ spiritual element — in effect a trinity of
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.6 The readings demonstrate that even in writing engaging
with architectural regionalism, a postmodernist concern, universalist tropes of
masculinity remain central.

1 The unicorn is a mythical animal whose symbolic significance was enigmatic even before its
employment by DH Lawrence. It was a medieval phallic symbol, but it has been employed as an
allegorical representation of ‘Christ, who raised up a horn of salvation for mankind and dwelt in
2 The stereotypical Australian male hero of the eponymous film.
3 Australian feminist singer / songwriter.
4 In fact I have found only one text dealing predominantly critically (in the conventional sense of
the word) with Murcutt’s work, Cambell [sic] Baird’s ‘Attitudes to Place: A Critique of the Work
of Glen [sic] Murcut’ (Baird 1997), referred to in detail below. A search of the Avery Index finds
no other articles by Baird; a young and courageous critic (in Sir Humphrey Appleby’s sense of the
word)?
5 The architect himself is not a ‘theorist’: ‘I don’t write, I make buildings’ he declared at the RAIA
Conference on ‘The Australian Dwelling’ in Hay NSW in 1990 (personal experience: I was there).
His talk at that conference is published in the Proceedings (Murcutt 1990); it is not theoretical.
Furthermore, Murcutt tells Philip Drew, ‘You see I am not a reader. I have read very little in my
life’ (Murcutt, quoted in Drew 1999, p.10). He proudly recounts an episode at a conference: ‘I said,
‘Christ, who’s Eisenman?’ The architect went to his library and took out a book. It’s the first
time I had ever heard of this bloke.’ (p.71) The mythological ‘Murcutt’ is written — and read —
by others.
6 In European and American architecture there is no equivalent phenomenon: in part because there
are so many more well-known European and American architects, so a ‘trinity’ does not stand out,
in part perhaps due to a more hierarchical social / professional system, but principally because Le
Corbusier is sui generis.
There is of course no Australian ‘equivalent’ to Le Corbusier. In fact, with the demise of the ideological / theoretical concept of an International Style, if not the reality of ‘corporate modernism’, it is unlikely that any architect — even from a metropolitan culture such as France — would dare to construct, or claim, or be afforded, the international status of Le Corbusier, or be the focus of such a ‘critical industry’. There are significant differences between Australian and ‘Old World’ versions of architectural patriarchy: while Le Corbusier is often called the ‘Father of Modernism’, a similar epithet applied to Murcutt, the ‘Father of Australian Architecture’, would ring false. Australia is too multi-cultural and pluralist, too aware of its regional specificities and its location marginal to the ‘main game’, too egalitarian at least in its self-image and mythology, to accept a single “totalitarian” ‘father’ (in the sense in which Nikolaus Pevsner uses the term, interchangeably with universal (see Jencks 2000 p232).

Like its geographical location, Australia’s cultural position is marginal. And ‘[f]ew contemporary Australian architects have books written about them’ (Day 1986, p40). At times publications are merely exercises in professional promotion, ‘extended professional brochures which suffer from an inadequate critique’ (p40). Day describes one such publication (Australian Architects 1985-1986. Melbourne: Images Australia, 1986) as ‘that extraordinarily silly book’, and asks ‘[w]hy were the architects prepared, as humour has it, to pay $1000 each to have themselves included in such a dreadfully glossy, down market version of the Yellow Pages?’ (p44).

Glenn Murcutt

Glenn Murcutt is therefore an exception, although three of the four books published on him and his work in English to date, by Fromonot (1995) and Drew (1996; 1999) are generally uncritically complimentary, even hagiographical. Neither these, the journal articles or the popular texts on Murcutt provide much analysis or evaluation of the relation of the theoretical bases of his designs with their socio-cultural context, or evaluation of the buildings in terms of brief / program or their climatic / environmental performance. Treatment of context is generally restricted to the landscape and the natural / physical environment, seen through a particularly romantic ‘east-coast’ lens (see Day 1986, p45). In a thoughtful analysis of three of Murcutt’s ‘iconic’ houses (Farrelly 1993) Elizabeth Farrelly is beguiled by the clarity and elegance of the buildings (‘those seductive, irresistible images’) (p19), but she does ‘test the myth against the buildings, and the buildings against the myth’ (p6).

However, generally writers appear to accept the claim that Murcutt and his principal ‘fame-makers’ Drew and Fromonot make that he is an architect of peculiar

---

7 The point has been made by many cultural critics that not only is Australia marginal to European cultural concerns and geographically marginal to Asia, but that Australians themselves generally inhabit the rim of the continent. Drew draws a metaphoric connection between the place of the verandah in Australian culture, and ‘life at the edge of things’ (Drew 1990, p38).

8 A book on eight of his houses has been published in Italian, illustrated by sketches and working drawings sent to the authors by Murcutt (Flora 1999). They seem to find the laconic colonial persona evidenced by his correspondence as exotic as his buildings.

9 In spite of the publisher’s claim on the back cover of the 1996 edition of Leaves of Iron that the book is ‘the study of one very significant Australian and ... the culture in which he works’.

10 They also rarely give us insights into the responses of specific clients, but in this they follow the usual mode of architectural critique.

11 As with Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, Murcutt’s ‘iconic’ houses have entered the architectural imaginary by means of still photographic images, as solitary pavilions, uninhabited and pristine.

12 Williamson’s term (Williamson 1991).
contextual expressiveness. Context envisioned, even personified (female), as ‘Nature’ is given a symbolic rather than a pragmatic / technical place in the critiques. Given the aura of environmental sensitivity symbolised by the catch-phrase ‘touch-the/this-earth-lightly’ which now adheres to his name (Fromonot 1995, p49; Drew 1996, p54; Drew 1999 (title)), it is significant that only very recently has serious research been done to evaluate the environmental performance of any of Murcutt’s buildings, for instance occupants’ comfort or life-cycle energy consumption (Soebarto 2000). The image of the buildings appears to be sufficiently powerful to disarm pragmatic or technical critique. For Farrelly ‘there is an appealing irony in the fact that Murcutt’s burgeoning reputation as a ‘green’ architect rests so heavily on the visual appeal of the buildings, but crucially on their refusal to participate, visually, in the landscape.’ (Farrelly 1993, p19)

Given the obsession with the visual evident in the entire history of Western architecture, and the epistemological distance of masculine Culture from feminine Nature, I see no irony at all.

**Critiques of Murcutt**

Farrelly investigates questions raised by Murcutt’s uncompromising stance on ‘the sanctity and purity of the design act’ and its problematic relationship with ‘environmental and client responsiveness’ (Farrelly 1993, p6), by the appropriateness of the individual Miesian pavilion to alternative family arrangements, by the contradictory place of Nature (harmony or Other-ness) in Murcutt’s designs, and by the paradox that his formal, Rationalist buildings have come to be regarded as quintessentially belonging to Australia, seen itself as ‘a rude, rural, honourable land’ (p13). ‘Perhaps the Australianness is in the perception, not the act ... what the audience has wanted to see’ (p13).

Cambell [sic] Baird’s critical piece (Baird 1997) is a more evident exception to the generally uncritical reception of Murcutt’s work. He challenges Drew’s claim that ‘[t]he Murcutt name is now synonymous with a recognisable and uniquely Australian architectural expression that non-Australians readily identify as belonging to the country’ (Drew 1999, pxii). (But ‘he has received substantially more recognition outside than inside Australia’ (pxiv)). Like Farrelly, Baird attributes the success of Murcutt’s architecture internationally, to the over-simplification of the notion of ‘Australia’ on which it depends, a ‘“universally” applicable regional image’ (Baird 1997, p205). ‘Many consider him the father of a “Australian architecture”’ (p202), ‘recognised as providing the “answer” to the search for an Australian architectural

---


14 There is an analogy with the rarity of serious criticism of technical aspects of Le Corbusier’s architecture such as the ‘respiration exacte’, the brise soleils or even Le Corbusier’s inaccurate statements about orientation in relation to the sun. Blake, after his disillusionment (Blake 1977), is an exception (see Chapter 7). Fromonot, for instance, describes overhangs of Murcutt’s houses as ‘cut[ting] off the vertical (sic) rays of the sun in summer while the height of the façade’s upper glazing allows the low winter sun to penetrate the heart of the interior’ (Fromonot 1995, p35). In NSW the sun is never conveniently vertical, and due to the time lag of the earth’s temperature the requirement for shading is not neatly symmetrical about the sun’s summer azimuth. Farrelly describes Murcutt’s ‘highly refined sun-screening systems that “work with the geometry of the planet”’ (Farrelly 1993, p10). Unfortunately, the geometry of the planet is not so conveniently in tune with climatic realities: only at Spring and Autumn equinoxes do the sun’s rays slide neatly between such louvres in the same plane throughout the day.

15 That the aesthetic or symbolic qualities of an object are not inherent in the object but require the observer is a commonplace of semiotics.
identity' (p203). According to Baird, ‘[t]he widespread acceptance of Murcutt’s architecture as the ultimate representation of contemporary Australian architecture is fundamentally due to its sophistication’ (p203).

The ‘its’ here is ambiguous; from the context and the tone of Baird’s piece it is clear that he means here the ‘sophistication’ of the architecture (a sophistication judged on purist modernist-cosmopolitan criteria), rather than any sophistication in the interpretation of ‘Australian identity’ it embodies. ‘Murcutt’s architecture draws this sophistication from its essentially re-as woman — good and evil 187through the influence of Mies van der Rohe.’ (p203) In fact, in spite of the dependence of the rhetoric surrounding Murcutt’s architecture and its response to ‘place’, a leitmotif of postmodernism, Murcutt declares himself a modernist. Baird declares that Murcutt’s allegiance to the modernist notion of the universal, and the dominant role of tectonics and clarity of structure in his work, helps ‘to explain why his architecture can never really be an architecture of place, but is primarily concerned with creating an image’ (Baird 1997, p204), and compares this subservience of reality to image with Le Corbusier’s image-creating ‘ideal villas’ of the late 1920s (pp204-205). (Like the early Le Corbusier, Murcutt’s work has to date been mainly domestic.)

Baird challenges the pragmatic and epistemological basis of Murcutt’s image as a regional, ‘place-sensitive’ architect. He criticises Murcutt’s ‘view of how nature and architecture are connected. ... in non-urban environments’ (Baird 1997, p204). ‘The use of the platform model automatically removes the occupant physically from the ground and therefore one element of the natural environment, creating a uniform plane on which to exist.’ (p208)

[T]he vast majority of Murcutt’s buildings that are built on the ground can only exist where a perfectly flat site exists or where such an area could easily be created. ... Formality ... is imposed on landscape immediately surrounding the buildings. The reinforcement of the building on the landscape in this rational manner shows a thinking that is more appropriate to an Italian urban17 context rather [sic] than an Australian rural context.

(Baird 1997, pp208-209)

Baird also criticises Murcutt’s ‘apparent lack of discretion’ (Baird 1997, p207) in applying his typological solutions to different climatic contexts, and his apparent ‘lack of concern for the client’ (p209). (Baird goes so far as to say that ‘the ‘client’ (both specific and general) is made subservient to the architecture rather than informing it with a sense of how the client interacts with the specific environment’ (p203).) Baird accuses Murcutt of a ‘lack of social concern’ (p206) and claims that the ‘Miesian and Murcutt philosophy ... stems from a concern with technology’ (p206). He contrasts Murcutt’s architecture with that of architects with an ‘interest in experiential architecture rather than purely visual architecture and the recognition that humanity is the focal point of architecture’ (p204). In fact, the attraction of the ‘Murcutt myth’ for architecture students may well be the promise that the apparent subservience of client and human experience to form and tectonics offers to the untrammelled creativity of the individual architect.

16 Murcutt himself has said, ‘I am not interested in finding an Australian architecture. That simply does not interest me. My great concern is to find an architecture of place.’ (Murcutt, quoted in Drew 1999)

17 In fact this is not specifically a ‘Italian urban’ configuration, but a generic European approach to the design of the individual house, most obviously represented in Mario Botta’s series of rural houses, with services on the piano terreno, daytime living spaces on the piano nobile and the upper level for bedrooms (camere). It formed the basis of Le Corbusier’s Dom-in-o house form, and is seen paradigmatically expressed in the Villa Savoye.
MASCULINE CONSTRUCTIONS: GENDER IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

Chapter 8

Baird's critique is a little simplistic. He decries 'Murcutt's refusal to infuse his architecture with cultural meaning' (Baird 1997, p203), as if 'cultural meaning' were avoidable. He makes the point that 'Murcutt's architecture relies on a romantic image of Australia. This image stems from an Australian bush mythology that permeates early Australian literature such as [is] found in the work of Henry Lawson'\(^{18}\) (p203), but proceeds '[i]t is, his 'architecture is based on a widespread perception of what is Australian rather than on the reality' (p203). The 'reality' of 'what is Australian' is a contested matter; and a particularly crucial vector of that contestation is gender; however the essay provides no specific gender analysis. Notwithstanding this, Baird's text provides a useful starting point for a discussion of the gendered nature of the discourse on Murcutt. Not only does he refer to the specifically masculine 'Australian' flavour of the imagery of Murcutt's architecture, but in his text there are frequent resonances with many of the themes identified in my critique of corbusian discourse in Chapters 6 and 7, and with feminist critiques of Western culture in general.

**MURCUIT AND LE CORBUSIER**

For Baird the international appeal of Murcutt's architecture lies in its 'sophistication' — due to the dominant role of tectonics and structure in the composition of the buildings. He interprets the seductiveness of Murcutt's architecture to the appeal of universal principles and simple answers. Murcutt's response to the demands of environmentally sensitive design is in terms of a euclidean, almost abstract, geometry, and an architecture more directed to the visual than to tactile / experiential qualities. Hanson and Radford have studied his pavilion house designs in terms of a formalised 'design grammar', elements of which are geometric (Hanson and Radford 1986). Like Le Corbusier, Murcutt demonstrates a paradoxical ambivalence between the rationalist and the romantic, proffering answers to questions of environmental response couched in the language of structural clarity and the purity of forms seen in light. It is not accidental that both Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and Murcutt's rural pavilions are exquisitely photogenic, inside and out.\(^{19}\)

Murcutt's treatment of the relationship between building and site, between architecture and nature, beyond the visual aspects of form and colour, light and shade, is effectively based on distance — the platforms on which he constructs his lightweight structures, with their evident debt to Mies\(^{20}\), can also be seen as an antipodean version of Le

---

18 The tradition producing 'Lawson' himself as a mythic figure representing Australia's 'national identity' was initiated by radical writers and the Bulletin in the 1920s.

19 Observing the formal purity of the photographs one wonders how any less than obsessively tidy inhabitants keep the kitchen so immaculate and the furniture so orthogonally exact, and where they put the garbage tin and the compost heap. Perhaps rather too stereotypically feminine questions?

20 The influence of Mies van der Rohe on Murcutt's architecture is well documented in Leaves of Iron (Drew 1996), discussed in more detail later in the chapter. However it is likely that major reasons for lifting the Marie Short house above the ground were the necessity to raise it above the predicted flood level on the marshy flood-plain (a 'house in Gumboots' is how he [Murcutt] describes it), and the snakes which 'head for high ground' during floods (Farrelly 1993, p20). The original working drawings of the Marie Short house show a perimeter pergola 'not in contract' (Flora 1999, p43), which would have resulted in a house of very much more familiar character — direct kin to the traditional rural homestead with encircling verandah. The reason for its omission from the house as built is not recorded in the text. Perhaps the impact on the architectural world of the pair of stark pavilions that resulted was at least in part the outcome of a lack of funds.

Farrelly says that the house 'had a pergola, not designed by Murcutt, ... which he has since removed' (Farrelly 1993, p12); a plan and a photograph in Taylor (1990, p169) show a single wing of the pergola along the north face of the house, significantly closer to the house in the plan than actually constructed as shown in the photograph). This pergola, with its rather conventional detailing, has evidently since been removed, and does not figure in recent illustrations and descriptions, which keep intact the purity and clarity of the iconic Murcutt house ('a landmark in
Corbusier’s ‘maison en l’air’, raised on pilotis above the pelouse beneath, in both cases allowing the design of the house a freedom from the exigencies of site. Philip Drew tells us that ‘Glenn Murcutt likes to lift the house above its surroundings in the country. This ... removes the house sufficiently from the raw nature without threatening to isolate it completely’ (Drew 1996, p32). ‘The house is up in the air, far from the ground, the garden extends under the house.’ (Le Corbusier, ‘Les 5 points’, Œuvre Complète, p128, quoted in Vogt 1998, p6)21 Ian McDougall describes a particular Murcutt house as ‘sit[ting] aloof from its sublime setting’ (McDougall 1980, p34).

Architecture, place and myth

The development of the character of the architecture of a place and its interpretation results from complex transactions between the work of individual architects, the place itself, and the public. It depends largely on the political economy of the circulation of images and theories, the production of received history and the generation of myths. In what follows I follow Barthes’s delineation of Myth as a discourse constructed from pre-existing semiotic associations between concept and image to provide a pre-fabricated signification which serves both as explanation and as imposition (Barthes 1983, p99), to naturalise a particular version of History, and to perpetuate the status quo (p138). Mythical signification is never arbitrary: it acts to simplify the message, to direct the attention, to deny alternative subversive readings. According to Barthes, myth not only deforms meaning (p108) and ‘transforms history into Nature’ (p116): it works to deprive us (both the included and excluded) of our factual / literal history by obliterating it, and restoring / replacing it with an a-historical reproduction, a counterfeit, yet covered with the varnish of the ‘natural’. Barthes’s point is that in myth, time is suspended and subverted. The historical richness of actions and meanings is lost, appropriated to the representation of an ideological idea.

Australian cultural history is full of myths. The role played by homogenising myth-making in the cultural representations which attempt to ‘fix’ standard notions of ‘Australian identity’ has long been recognised.22 Australian culture, both official and popular, appears to find no difficulty in combining claims to egalitarianism and commitment to democratic principles with a continuing dependence on foundational masculine myths for its national identity. The declension of patriarchy in ‘egalitarian’ Australia is fraternal; Australian masculinity is wary of overt patrician declarations of Authority or demands for deference. When white Australian ‘dreamings’23 are presented in a-historical form, for instance to serve the needs of populist culture, advertising or politics, complexities are ironed out

---

21 Murcutt has in common with Le Corbusier his preoccupation with the house. Architecture with a big A has only a marginal place in Australian popular culture, quite disproportionate to the central place occupied by the single-family house (or home). Australia is still at least in rhetoric the ‘home-owners’ paradise’, but only 5% of houses in Australia are designed by architects. Houses figure large in the discourse of architecture in Australian, where without a culture of public support for monumental architecture as in France, or a system of competitions as in Scandinavia, private house design is the usual starting point for a practice, offering architects the opportunity for creative experiment. Real estate agents’ and builders’ advertisements tend to prefer the term home (‘display home’, ‘home unit’), while at the other end of the spectrum the journals and monographs of architectural discourse are prone to discussing ‘the Dwelling’ in mystical Heideggerian terms. There is an irony in the preoccupation with the domestic realm in so male-dominated a profession.

22 For example, in rising order of sophistication of analysis (Fiske 1987, Horne 1987, White 1981).

23 With the recent increasing recognition of Australian Aboriginal culture the term ‘dreaming’ has gained currency to signify the constellation of memories, meanings, histories and visions which underpin the social and psychic life of a culture.
into myth, and Australian history is populated with masculine figures: the gallant bushranger, the sturdy pioneer, the valiant sea-captain, the intrepid explorer (of a land already millennially lived-in), the 'digger', the larrkin, the 'battler', the unassuming Everyman. This image is durable. David Saunders declared very prematurely in 1970 that Robin Boyd, 'as writer and cartoonist in _The Australian Ugliness_ (Boyd 1960) assisted so successfully in demolishing the lingering mythical model of 'the real Australian''. But Saunders continues, 'there is some paradox in the fact that the casualness which is at the core of Boyd's design has always been one of the strengths assumed in the legendary, banished heroic figure' (Saunders in 'Afterword' to Boyd 1970, p152).

Australian feminists have approached Australian history and myth-making from varied directions. For instance, in _The Real Matilda. Women and Identity in Australia 1788-1975_, Dixon explores the specific nuances of 'a past, a history unusually steeped in misogyny' (Dixon 1984, p13), and the 'profound unconscious contempt for women that pervades the Australian ethos' (p188), and investigates Australian images of women and femininity. In _Damned Whores and God's Police_, Anne Summers investigates the historical evolution in Australia of the 'particularly rigid dualistic notion of women's role ... embodied in the two stereotypes' of good and evil (Summers 1975, p21). Schaffer has investigated the myths of masculine identity constructed in relation to the land, established through displacement of women, and through conflation of the Land and the Female as signs, as sites / objects of alterity (Otherness), misunderstanding, alienation, hostility, control, domination, possession and debasement, all of which perforce exclude women as Subjects participating in the construction of 'national identity' (Schaffer 1988).

**Australian architecture and Aboriginality**

These powerful Australian myths are characterised not only by their masculinity but by their 'whiteness'. Architecture in Australia is an almost totally non-indigenous endeavour; the number of aboriginal architects in Australia is vanishingly small. However '[t]he representation of Aboriginality is [now] on the political agenda.' This is not a simple matter in architecture, as 'aboriginal cultures traditionally invested little

---

24 Apart from the 'Pioneer Women's Garden' in the Parklands of Adelaide, pioneer women have only recently been accorded some recognition, but the unmodified word 'pioneer' is always masculine. Of course until recently none of the major historical heroes has been black or of an acknowledged ethnicity other than Anglo-celtic. Sport and popular music now have begun to produce modern heroes who may be female or black or both, or 'ethnic' in the idiosyncratic Australian sense of non-Anglo-Celt.

25 Many of these terms need translation for a non-Australian audience. These are the definitions provided by the _Australian Oxford Dictionary_ (Moore, 1999):

'**battler**: 1 a person who strives long and hard and doggedly against the odds (little Aussie battler).

_2 Aust. hist._ a swagman or itinerant worker.' _[The Macquarie Essential Dictionary adds 'Aust. a conscientious worker, especially one living at subsistence level.']_

'**bushranger**: a person who engages in armed robbery, escaping into, or living in, the bush in the manner of an outlaw. n. the term was used in nineteenth century Australia to describe a rural criminal, usually someone who engaged in stock theft or armed robbery. The early bushrangers were escaped convicts ... later they often came from the ranks of the rural poor. A small number of the latter were seen as Robin Hood figures, among them Ben Hall from New South Wales and Ned Kelly from Victoria.' ...

'digger': _2 a miner, esp. a gold-digger._

_3 colloq._ an Australian or New Zealander, esp. a private soldier.

_**larrkin**: 1 a hist. a young urban rough, a hooligan. b a mischief-making youth, a trouble-maker._

_2 a person who acts with apparent disregard for social or political conventions._ (Moore, 1999)

There is a small number of indigenous design / building practitioners (Dovey 1996). Among architects I know of Denis McDonald (see below), Dillon Kombumberri, and the architectural design office Merrima. Registration and Institute records do not record ethnicity.
meaning in built form and rarely constructed fixed buildings. This was read ... as evidence of both 'rootlessness' and primitiveness'" (Dovey 1996, p99). Kim Dovey's account of Glenn Murcutt's Marika-Alderton house raises significant issues relating to the appropriation of 'aboriginality' in the discourses of Australian architecture which intersects strikingly with discursive uses and abuses of femininity. The house was designed for Marmbrura Banduk Marika and her non-indigenous husband Mark Alderton, at Yirrkala in the Northern Territory. A poignant 'conversation' from the promotional film 'Touch the Earth Lightly'\textsuperscript{27}, produced by BHP Steel, a sponsor of the project, between Murcutt and Marika herself, is quoted in the article. Murcutt describes his architectural intentions, 'speaking architecture', with Marika 'Mmm-ing' (perhaps) agreement. Marika raises the possibility of multiple or extended families inhabiting the house, Murcutt responds with the suggestion of two separate buildings, but 'the soundtrack fades to didgeridoo' (Dovey 1996, p101).

As Dovey points out,

Marika's relationship with the landscape is spoken for by Murcutt. The social relations of the larger community are introduced by Marika, who appears to be suggesting both some possibilities of difference and more than one "family" at the same time.\textsuperscript{28}

(Dovey 1996, p100)

He describes the house as 'enmeshed in a complex network of imagery' which represents it as a 'bridge of reconciliation' between cultures; but this bridge is grounded on the one side in the professional traditions of the pristine coastal house finely tuned to its landscape and on the other, in a complex Aboriginal community where 'family' has a different currency.\textsuperscript{29} (p100)

His argument is an ethnic / cultural one: gender is perhaps implicit, but in the paper Marika stands in for 'aboriginality', not for women/ femininity '/'Woman', and he does not mention her gender — perhaps as too obvious; but is she less obviously black? The dichotomy is not only between different cultures but perhaps that between a male architect's preoccupation with materials, form, geometries and symbolism and a

\textsuperscript{27} "[T]ouch the earth lightly" ... is a key phrase which links to work to both Aboriginality and ecological sustainability, although the "light touch" may be more effective in the metaphor than on the environment." (Dovey 1996, p100)

\textsuperscript{28} 'Appears to be suggesting' has a slightly patronising ring: both women and indigenous people are accustomed to such an attitude.

\textsuperscript{29} Dovey's interpretations are contested in two letters to a later issue of Architecture Australia. One is a hostile rejection by a member of the Yirrkala Community of the opinions of a person without first-hand knowledge of the project (Facer 1996). In the other letter, headed "Unfair to Us and Glenn", Banduk Marika and Mark Alderton object to the "thinly veiled criticism of Glenn Murcutt", and express their 'love and gratitude ... for Glenn Murcutt as a rare and fine architect' (Marika 1996, p84).

They point out the socio-structural and political difficulties in which both client and architect were constrained to work, and its intersection with gender; they talk of Murcutt's 'female client's vision', and describe themselves, the clients, as 'the white man [holding] a lowly paid job without influence and ... the Aboriginal woman, [who] although a traditional landowner, could not use her land value as collateral for finance' (p84). They tell movingly of the house as describing 'the frankness of the many hours of discussion [Murcutt] had with a woman who is as sure of what she doesn't want for her land and family as what she does want. ... It describes the movement of people between 'inside' and 'outside'. It describes the natural elements that shaped the site on which it stands. It describes a desire for humour and happiness in a world of pain and loss' (p84).

It is significant that the writers of this discerning letter are not architects. Good intentions, deep commitment and warm personal relations however do not vitiate alternative cultural interpretations. My point here is that although Dovey takes a courageous position on the issue in relation to ethnicity he is still apparently blind to gender.

180
female client's interest in the house as a place for herself and family. Marika responds to Murcutt's enthusiastic description of views and relationships to elements in the landscape with a doubtful "'It'll probably [sic] feel more at home having to be exposed to that ... environmental ... connection'" [my italics] \(^\text{30}\) (Dovey 1996, p100)

However in the same issue of *Architecture Australia* Denis McDonald\(^\text{31}\) takes an inclusive view of the potential for architecture in the context of aboriginal culture. 'I do not endorse any style, method or approach to designing buildings for Aboriginal people.' (McDonald 1996, p104) While recognising the cultural issues, he brings a distinctly architectural sensibility ('a keen admiration for precision, accuracy and technical expression' (p104)) to his critique of the house and of Murcutt's Kakadu Visitors' Centre\(^\text{32}\). McDonald sees the Marika building as 'beautifully crafted ... with excellent responses to environment and culture' (p104). It perhaps reinforces Dovey's interpretation of the cultural issues involved that McDonald continues 'what I think is most wonderful about this building is the positive recognition (award-winning) by non-aboriginal Australians.' (p105) However, like Dovey, McDonald is blind to the gender implications of the situation and its interpretations.

Dovey again raises the issue of dualism in ethnic / racial terms in relation to Gregory Burgess's Brambuk Living Cultural Centre. He paraphrases criticism which views the Centre as

> problematic because its use of natural materials and curvilinear forms meets white preconceptions of a 'primitive' culture. To white eyes, a set of conceptual oppositions are set up around the building; white/black, sophisticated/primitive, culture/nature, straight/irregular

(Dovey 1996, pp101-102),

conceptual oppositions which mirror the male/female dichotomy I discuss in Chapter 4.

### Leaves of Iron

Le Corbusier assiduously cultivated his own myth (then embellished and perpetuated by others); Murcutt on the whole leaves the task to others. However the 'Murcutt' constructed in the literature has another characteristic in common with the mythological 'Le Corbusier'.\(^\text{33}\) The world of architecture, like that of sport, is on a perpetual quest for heroes and legends. In the production of myths about Australian architecture,

---

\(^{30}\) The potential effect on the client of the Miesian openness and structural clarity of the building, are perhaps reminiscent of Edith Farnsworth's discomfort with the transparency of her iconic house. My experience when discussing housing in South Australia with the Koomba aboriginal community was that rather than wanting 'the whole spirit of being within the building and yet outside the building' (p100-101) many in the community stated clearly that they wanted actually to be outside, with a sheltered place for cooking and washing, and a secure storage area. However I must cede to the declarations in the Marika/Alderton letter and not impose my Western architectural interpretations.

\(^{31}\) In 1996 Denis McDonald was head of the Aboriginal Design Unit of the NSW Department of Public Works and Services.

\(^{32}\) Designed and constructed in collaboration with the architectural firm Troppo.

\(^{33}\) It should not need to be explained that the subject of my discussion is the 'second-order' Glenn Murcutt, 'Glenn Murcutt the Myth', not the 'real' one, whose work I admire for its formal coherence and clarity of detailing, and whose passion for and commitment to his work are evident. I find Le Corbusier more difficult to admire, in spite of the undoubted visual power of the images of some of his iconic buildings. I have been disappointed in the reality of Chandigarh, Ronchamp, the Villas La Roche-Jeanneret, the Unités in Marseille and Berlin, while his city plan for Stockholm with its high-rise slabs of uniform height imposed on an undulating city of sea and hills (see Winter, 1987) is even more totalitarian than his plans for Paris and Algiers.
Drew’s hagiographic study of Murcutt, *Leaves of Iron. Glenn Murcutt: Pioneer of an Australian Architectural Form* (Drew 1996), is the most overtly romantic text in recent Australian architectural writing, has become almost a standard text.\(^{34}\) Dovey describes Drew as Murcutt’s ‘key theorist’ (Dovey 1996, p100). *Leaves of Iron* is an ingenuous account of Glenn Murcutt’s life and work, and the search for an ‘essentially Australian’ architecture.\(^{35}\) Drew constructs a mythological ‘Glenn Murcutt’ who stands for the Hero architect working alone and manfully, in the quest for an architectural response to the landscape. But he also stands for the unassuming, apparently ordinary Australian (man), with undreamt-of heroic exploits in his own past and in the pasts of his ancestors, and for the Father of a regional architecture whose own father initiates him into the Law (lore) of the Fathers, both the cultural (physical and musical exercises, like the ancient Greeks) and the technological (carpentry and aeroplanes). All masculine territory in the conventional wisdom.

On the first page of the book Drew broaches the major themes of his text — heroic masculinity, origins and (patrilineage) both physical and metaphorical (with a hint of drama, violence and sex), and nature (and its mythic surrogate ‘Woman’). The first paragraph significantly commences ‘Glenn Murcutt’s father was a tough unconventional individual who, early in life, learned the art of survival in an often harsh unfriendly world’ (Drew 1996, p11). Murcutt’s father fits so well the image of the patriarch, combined with the stereotypes of the rural Australian ‘bloke’, that he appears made specially for the narrative. Drew describes him as tough, unconventional, independent, authoritarian (p11), and a loner (p24). His paradigmatically masculine occupations included rouseabout, shearer, well-sinker, saddler, gold prospector, sawmill and joiner (pp11-15).

**A patrilineage of architectural creativity**

According to Foucault, several processes combine in the production of history. The search for origins and essences couples with a tracing of descent or genealogies through the disordered discourses of history to construct coherences and to produce unities (Foucault 1979). In Drew’s account of Murcutt’s life and work, and the search for an ‘essentially Australian’ architecture in which Drew locates him, the preoccupation with origins and genealogies is always close to the surface. The history he explicates is almost completely patriarchal. The ingenuousness of the narrative only partially mitigates the complicity of his text with dominant, masculist discursive practices, inside and outside architecture. In Drew’s account, ‘[f]amily lore has it’ that female ancestors of the Murcutts were the objects of reciprocal bride-stealing, initiated by Chinghis Khan in a ‘land next to the territory of the Tartars’ (Drew 1996, p11). The text proceeds directly from this romantic fable of masculine desire among warlike but valiant horsemen on the steppes to the bald statement that ‘[t]here is an overwhelming feeling for the horizontal in Glenn Murcutt’s buildings’\(^{36}\) The yurts of steppe nomads are linked in the text with the rounded ridges of ‘the typical Murcutt house’. (p11).

‘[I]s it possible that the Merkitt\(^{37}\) instinct for open wild places has survived in Glenn Murcutt’s architecture ...?’ (p11)

\(^{34}\) Its popularity among architecture students is attested by its multiple copies in University libraries, ordered by architectural academic staff and frequently borrowed, and with a lay audience by its having been reprinted four times by HarperCollins (Angus & Robertson) since its original publication by the Law Book Company in 1985.

\(^{35}\) However Murcutt himself claims that he is ‘not interested in finding an Australian architecture’ (Murcutt, quoted in Drew, 1999, p69).

\(^{36}\) In spite of the conventional dualism male / female: vertical / horizontal (see Chapter 5), it is unlikely that Drew intends the reader to assume that the experience of the stolen brides is to be taken as a generating factor in Murcutt’s creative instinct. ‘The bride’ however does appear later in the story.

\(^{37}\) Drew proposes on flimsy evidence a connection between the name Murcutt (‘an uncommon surname: all that is known is that the family is of Irish-Russian descent’ (Drew 1996, p11)) and
The idea of a (masculine) genetics of architectural creativity reappears in relation to Murcutt’s childhood in New Guinea. Drew states that ‘[t]he striking combination of primitive and cultivated ... qualities in the same building is something, it could be argued, Glenn Murcutt inherited from his New Guinea childhood’ (Drew 1996, p13). In the caption to a photograph of a very white baby in a tin bath framed by the torso and arms of a very black ‘boy’, we are told that ‘Glenn Murcutt was cared for by a house boy. The primitive is seldom absent from his architecture’ (p133). Junker aircraft and long houses in New Guinea lead us directly to reflections on the use of corrugated iron and rounded roof profiles in Murcutt’s architecture (pp13-14). Later boyhood exploits in swimming and surfing in Australia appear to lead ‘naturally’ to wide box gutters and cylindrical downpipe (pp70-71).

Drew prepares us for an interpretation of the architect as Romantic Hero by emphasising Murcutt’s exotic Turkic and Celtic antecedents, and his childhood in contact with the exigencies of survival, ‘the primitive’ and the ‘“noble savages”’ of New Guinea (p44), describing in detail his almost Byronic boyhood and solitary mode of working (pp14-15), and cataloguing his heroic creative credentials, calling on the Abbot Sugar, originator of the Gothic (p132), Palladio (p32), Mies van der Rohe (Drew 1996, p32 et seq.), Philip Johnson (pp32-35), Le Corbusier (p38, p54, pp67-68), even the Renaissance genius Brunelleschi (pp72-73), as legitimating icons. (‘Brunelleschi and Murcutt are two architects of a kind.’ (p73)) To emphasise his interpretation of Murcutt as a ‘Romantic-Modern’ personality with ‘a commitment to both Classical and Romantic standards’ (p43), Drew also draws into his narrative, or employs in his exegesis, a number of literary sources — Thoreau (pp42-46 et seq.), Rousseau (pp43-47), Melville (p48), Lawrence (pp77, 101, 114, 121, 132-136, see below) — all engaged with epic narratives of Man as Voyager, Man as Hero, Man in search of the Phallic Self, Man as Lord of Nature-as-Woman or Woman-as-Nature (or both). ‘Through the agency of his father Murcutt absorbed the ideas of Henry Thoreau, who was himself a tributary of the main stream whose source is Jean Jacques Rousseau.’ (p43)

Drew again calls upon a ‘genetics of creativity’, referring to a distant family relationship with the west-country poet John Cowper Powys. ‘Murcutt inherited his mother’s Powysian temperament, something that reveals itself in a poetic sensibility and identification with nature.’ (Drew 1996, p12) Drew tells us that ‘Powys’s [sic] writing explored a mosaic of themes which are present in ... Glenn Murcutt’s architecture. These deal with the primitive and the relationship of man with the land. ... Powys’ writing, as exemplified in Wolf Solent, is the literary counterpart of Murcutt’s buildings.’ (pp54-55). The heroine of the tale, Gerda, ‘reveals her primitive identity when she sings like a black-bird’ (p55). ‘The genius of Gerda, her symbol or totem, is the blackbird, and her identity is spiritually linked to a specific site.’ (p55) Drew relates this idea rather tortuously to Murcutt’s architecture via Aboriginal concepts of mythic beings and people’s spiritual association with specific sites, but the fact that Gerda is female is no accident in Drew’s epistemology.

---

38 Drew’s text almost dissolves in its extreme intertextuality. Farrelly is more circumspect; she asks ‘Was Thoreau really as central to Murcutt’s intellectual development as has been suggested?’, then provides evidence of the ‘strongly patriarchal’ nature of Murcutt’s upbringing and his declared debt to Thoreau through his father. ‘Was Thoreau a role model for him? ’He was certainly quoted enough for me to believe it’, says Murcutt. (Farrelly 1993, p7) Farrelly declares that ‘[t]ry as one might, the childhood is unavoidable’, and provides a very brief account of the extraordinary life story of Murcutt’s father (pp6-7). ‘[E]ven now in Glenn’s conversational narrative his father is constantly, charismatically present. (His mother, by contrast, ... appears seldom ...)’ (p6) Farrelly’s text is significantly more sophisticated and thoughtful, even sceptical, than Drew’s; the masculine tenor of the story is perhaps more potent for this.
Male culture and ‘female’ nature

It is significant that to represent an attitude of sensitivity and response to nature in architecture, Drew chooses from among Powys’s work the explicitly gendered melodrama of his poetic fiction. There is other writing by Powys which Drew might usefully have referred to. Powys’s The Meaning of Culture (Powys 1974), first published in 1929, includes an insightful chapter entitled ‘Culture and Nature’, which commences

The most important aspect of all culture is the gathering together of the integral self in some habitual way of response to Nature, that shall become ultimately automatic by means of a fuller and fuller awareness. ... The great test of culture, even for those who have the use of all their powers and are free to go forth as they please, is always the conscious way in which they make use of memory. ... This particular grouping of things, this especial perspective, this patch of sky with floating clouds, this fragment of a hill-side, or a cliff, of a road, or a field, is added with so much more definiteness to our store-house of prevailing impressions because of vague or vivid memories of similar visions in the past.

(Powys 1974, p147)

There is a resonance here with Murcutt’s approach to design on the basis of personal experience rather than ‘theory’. In Drew’s edited collection of his interviews with Murcutt, Touch This Earth Lightly. Glenn Murcutt In his Own Words, Murcutt says,

---

39 Only a decade after the Great War, and during the Great Depression, Powys presents a thoughtful and even prophetic polemic on a more constructive ‘way-of-being’ in the world than appeared to prevail with ‘the mass destructive powers of possessiveness, cold rationality and the mass hypnosis of a consumer society. Academicism, specialism, the myth of objectivity: Powys replaces their hubrisitic infiltration with his vision of ‘... what is left over after you have forgotten all you have definitely set out to learn.’’ (Ronald Hall, publisher’s note on back cover of Powys 1974). The quotation is from the ‘Preface’, pix.

For his time, and with some lapses (‘sly, caressing feminine-feline logic’ (p21)), Powys’s writing is singularly free of gratuitously gendered language. ‘There can be no doubt that the primary satisfaction in regard to Nature is sensual. People ought to cultivate sensuality where scenery is concerned. One ought to touch it, to embrace it, to eat it, to drink it, to make love to it ... It is strange how few people make more that a casual cult of enjoying Nature. And yet the earth is actually and literally the mother of us all.’ (p150) ‘[T]he real Nature-lover does not think primarily about the beauty of Nature; he thinks about her life ... what attracts him ... is her self, her peculiar identity. ... And her lover ever desires to have her to himself.’ (p153) ‘A cultured person, therefore, regards Nature with what might be called a Goethean, rather than a Newtonian, eye. He trains himself to see and to feel, rather than to analyse or to explain. ... To take nothing in Nature for granted — that is the root of the matter.’ (pp165-166) The references to ‘sensuality’, to ‘making love’ and to ‘mother’, even the ‘desire of the lover’, given the mores of the time, do not project the overtly masculist perspective of Drew’s text. The ‘he’ was of course the linguistic mode of the time; see ‘A note on language’ in Chapter 2.

Powys was a progressive as well as a cultured man. Aware of ‘[t]he abysmal vanity and incurable pomposness of men’ (Powys 1974, p198), he declares that ‘[t]he supreme test of a highly sophisticated culture to be able to enjoy to the ultimate limits the companionship of the opposite sex’ (pp234-235). He had a sceptical view of his contemporary DH Lawrence — those savage premeditated shocks to the megalopolitan herd-conventions which writers like D. H. Lawrence ... find such zest in giving ... [In t]hat whole school of what might be called the cave-man cult ... there will be found something over-strained, over-violent, megalomaniacal’ (p190).

40 Here Powys is comparing the free person with those ‘in slums or hospitals, or asylums or prisons ... bereft of all glimpses of Nature’ (p147).
I feel at ease ... in a landscape that I’ve known myself, where I’ve actually seen myself so happy — not only felt, but I’ve seen it. I can see myself running down through the long grassed fields into the dam. (Murcutt quoted in Drew 1999, p170)

_Touch This Earth Lightly_ was published fifteen years after the first edition of _Leaves of Iron_, presumably as a response to Murcutt’s increasing renown, but the interviews with Murcutt used in the book were recorded while Drew was researching for _Leaves of Iron_. However the archetypally heroic figure constructed in the earlier text differs significantly from the engagingly ‘innocent’ Murcutt ‘in his own words’ who emerges from the extracts, in his lack of pretensions to individual ‘heroism’, and in his almost childlike response to ‘the magic of our landscape’ (Murcutt, ‘Foreword’ to Drew 1996, p7). ‘Our being here is really the most transitory aspect of the planet. It is trees, it is climate, it is the earth, the water, the rocks, and the landscape which is real. When we fail to see ourselves belonging to and part of that we become unreal.’ (Murcutt quoted in Drew 1999, p87) 41

**DH Lawrence and Australia**

Drew’s reading of the relationship between Murcutt’s architecture and its generally rural context often appears to run directly counter to the evidence of Murcutt’s own testimony; it is driven by a particular, gendered, view of ‘nature’. The fictional texts which Drew draws upon provide him with gendered metaphorical material, and assist him to elaborate the notion of Nature as Woman, and in particular the nature of Australia as woman, as distinct and Other to men, which is woven throughout his text. At times it becomes literal. ‘The veil is a cultural mediating device between men and women. The louvred screen performs an analogous function, which is to lessen the confrontation between an individual and raw nature.’ (Drew 1996, p33) This ‘individual’ is clearly male42, and the relationship is assumed to be conflictual.

To extend the ‘analogy’, the metaphorical conflation of women and the female with nature, in this conflictual relationship with ‘man’, Drew calls upon DH Lawrence. Quotations from Lawrence’s _Kangaroo_ are dispersed throughout Drew’s text, providing evocative descriptions of ‘the grey-treed bush’ ( _Kangaroo_, p93, quoted in Drew 1996, p121) he found along the coast around Thirroul, and the houses, ‘looking flimsy, made of wood with corrugated zinc roofs’ ( _Kangaroo_, p376, quoted in Drew 1996, p77). However Lawrence’s text is not for Drew merely a source of lyrical descriptions.

Lawrence is often given the role of omniscient spiritual biographer, not only of his characters and of the Australian rural setting in which he placed them, but of Australian nature and Australian life in general, and of Australian building in particular. _Kangaroo_ appears to have a special attraction to architectural writers. Ian McKay, Robin Boyd,

41 In his lecture to the 1996 Jerusalem Seminar in Architecture, Murcutt presents to the non-Australian audience a thoughtful and informative account of Australia’s environment, and his approach to design: care in siting for sun, winds and water, choice of materials and structural system, appropriateness of form to climate and context (Murcutt 1998). In subsequent discussion with Robert Oxman and the audience, he talks of intuition and discovery rather than invention in the design of buildings (Murcutt and Oxman 1998). There is no sign in his text of heroism or nature as female.

42 There is a continuing preoccupation in Australian architectural discourse with the land, and this implicitly orientalising image has been used elsewhere. Ross Gibson (writing in 1983) states that ‘the intractability of the Australian nature is essential to the national ethos. He quotes Charles Sturt ‘A veil hung over Central Australia that could neither be pierced nor raised’, and continues, ‘this seventh Salomiac veil still erotises the landscape, causing Australians (sic) to project their erotic desires on it’ (Gibson 1993, p220). The gender of these Australians is again clear.
Hugh Stretton, and John Mant in *Living and Partly Living*, an exploration of housing alternatives published in 1971, quote Lawrence’s impression of suburbia (McKay, Boyd et al. 1971). In the *Architectural Review* Special Issue, ‘Australia: Sydney/Melbourne’, co-editor Rory Spence, speaking to an international readership, quotes from *Kangaroo* in two articles. Discussing the question of regionalism in Australian architecture, he says, ‘[i]n *Kangaroo*, D. H. Lawrence referred repeatedly to the feeling of release from ‘over-upholstered Europe’ ... ‘ponderous with ancient authority and ancient dirt’ (Spence 1985a, p.24). Discussing Sydney as architectural setting he says [in ... *Kangaroo*, Somers muses about Sydney in terms that would never have done for Melbourne’ (Spence 1985b, p.27).44 Jennifer Taylor begins the ‘Preface’ to her book *Australian Architecture Since 1960* with a Lawrentian quotation about suburbia; Taylor’s intentions are clearly ironic (Taylor 1986, p.9).45 The cultural critic Stephen Murray-Smith wrote of *Kangaroo* that ‘[t]he significance of the book, and hence of the place where it was written, is going to grow’ (Murray-Smith 1988, p.29). These quotations are selective, chosen with an architectural eye; unlike Drew the writers avoid overtly gendered passages, and appear to adopt Lawrence simply as a sign of international legitimacy.46

Lawrence’s authority as a writer on Australia, in spite of his extremely brief stay in the country47, is analogous to Murcutt’s international reputation as the archetypal Australian architect, based on cultural simplification. On the back cover of Lawrence’s other book with an Australian setting, *The Boy in the Bush*, written in collaboration48

---

43 'Each little bungalow was set in its own breadth of ground, surrounded by a little wooden palisade fence. ... The street was wide, and strips of worn grass took the place of kerb-stones. The stretch of macadam in the middle seemed as forsaken as a desert, ...' (Lawrence 1974, p.15).

44 ‘Australian Sydney, with a magic like sleep ... a vast, endless, sun-hot, afternoon sleep with the world a mirage. He could taste it in the soft, sweet, creamy custard apple. A wonderful sweet place to drift in.’ (Lawrence 1974, p.338)

45 Taylor’s extract is:

‘Is this all men can do with a new country? Look at those tin cans!’

‘What do you expect them to do? Rome was not built in a day.’

‘Oh, but they might make it look nice. Look at the little backs: like chicken houses with chicken runs. They call this making a new country, do they?’

‘Well how would you start making a new country yourself?’ asked Somers, a little impatiently.

‘I wouldn’t have towns — and corrugated iron — and millions of little fences — and empty tins.’

‘No, you’d have old châteaux [sic] and Tudor mansors.’

(Lawrence 1954, p.17)

The gender undercurrents, never far from the surface in Lawrence, are visible in this exchange between the newly arrived Somerses — Somers the adventurer impatient with Harriet, the timid wife seeing respectability, and herself impatient with ‘men’. Taylor shares in the implied disdain of Harriet’s non-architectural taste, and comments that ‘[m]uch was built of which Mrs Somers would not approve and there were some old châteaux and Tudor mansions as well. But the sixties, seventies and eighties of this century were exciting decades of change and development for building and some of the country’s finest architecture was produced’ (Taylor 1986, p.9).

That such authority should still be granted to a book by an Englishman who spent such a short time in Australia, in the 1920s, most of it in one small region, is perhaps an interesting case of the Australian ‘cultural cringe’, and the fragility of the quest for a national identity.

46 ‘For over two months in 1922, Lawrence lived in a house overlooking the sea at Thirroul.’ (Davis 1989, p.21) On the ship from Fremantle to Sydney he wrote ‘Australia is liberty gone senile — gone almost imbecile. ... one could never make a novel out of these people’ (quoted in Davis 1989, p.65). In fact the novel, written in six weeks, ‘is not, primarily, a novel about people; it is more a novel about place and the response of a particular individual ... to that place’ (Davis 1989, p.65).

47 Sometimes characterised as an appropriation. The Penguin edition includes a biographical note on Lawrence, and adds, ‘Mollie Skinner ... was an amateur author. Lawrence met her during his stay in Australia, took over her manuscript, ... and offered to recast it.’ The edition has only Lawrence’ name on the cover.
nature and Australian life in general, and of Australian building in particular. Kangaroo appears to have a special attraction to architectural writers. Ian McKay, Robin Boyd, Hugh Stretton, and John Mant in Living and Partly Living, an exploration of housing alternatives published in 1971, quote Lawrence’s impression of suburbia (McKay, Boyd et al. 1971). In the Architectural Review Special Issue, ‘Australia: Sydney/Melbourne’, co-editor Rory Spence, speaking to an international readership, quotes from Kangaroo in two articles. Discussing the question of regionalism in Australian architecture, he says, ‘[i]n Kangaroo, D. H. Lawrence referred repeatedly to the feeling of release from “over-upholstered Europe” ... ponderous with ancient authority and ancient dirt’ (Spence 1985a, p24). Discussing Sydney as architectural setting he says ‘[in] ... Kangaroo, Somers muses about Sydney in terms that would never have done for Melbourne’ (Spence 1985b, p27). Jennifer Taylor begins the ‘Preface’ to her book Australian Architecture Since 1960 with a Lawrentian quotation about suburbia; Taylor’s intentions are clearly ironic (Taylor 1986, p9). The cultural critic Stephen Murray-Smith wrote of Kangaroo that ‘[t]he significance of the book, and hence of the place where it was written, is going to grow’ (Murray-Smith 1988, p29). These quotations are selective, chosen with an architectural eye; unlike Drew the writers avoid overtly gendered passages, and appear to adopt Lawrence simply as a sign of international legitimacy.

Lawrence’s authority as a writer on Australia, in spite of his extremely brief stay in the country, is analogous to Murcutt’s international reputation as the archetypal Australian architect, based on cultural simplification. On the back cover of Lawrence’s other book with an Australian setting, The Boy in the Bush, written in collaboration

44 ‘Each little bungalow was set in its own breadth of ground, surrounded by a little wooden palisade fence. ... The street was wide, and strips of worn grass took the place of kerb-stones. The stretch of madcam in the middle seemed as forsaken as a desert,’ (Lawrence 1974, p15).
45 ‘Australian Sydney, with a magic like sleep ... a vast, endless, sun-hot, afternoon sleep with the world a mirage. He could taste it in the soft, sweet, creamy custard apple. A wonderful sweet place to drift in.’ (Lawrence 1974, p338)
46 Taylor’s extract is:
‘Is this all men can do with a new country? Look at those tin cans!’
‘What do you expect them to do? Rome was not built in a day.’
‘Oh, but they might make it look nice. Look at the little back: like chicken houses with chicken runs. They call this making a new country, do they?’
‘Well how would you start making a new country yourself?’ asked Somers, a little impatiently.
‘I wouldn’t have towns — and corrugated iron — and millions of little fences — and empty tins.’
‘No, you’d have old châteaux [sic] and Tudor mansions.’ (Lawrence 1954, p17)
47 The gender undercurrents, never far from the surface in Lawrence, are visible in this exchange between the newly arrived Somers — Somers the adventurer impatient with Harriet, the timid wife seeking respectability, and herself impatient with ‘men’. Taylor shares in the implied disdain of Harriet’s non-architectural taste, and comments that ‘[m]uch was built of which Mrs Somers would not approve and there were some old châteaux and Tudor mansions as well. But the sixties, seventies and eighties of this century were exciting decades of change and development for building and some of the country’s finest architecture was produced’ (Taylor 1986, p9).
48 ‘For over two months in 1922, Lawrence lived in a house overlooking the sea at Thirroul.’ (Davis 1989, p21) On the ship from Fremantle to Sydney he wrote ‘Australia is liberty gone senile — gone almost imbecile ... one could never make a novel out of these people’ (quoted in Davis 1989, p65). In fact the novel, written in six weeks, ‘is not, primarily, a novel about people; it is more a novel about place and the response of a particular individual ... to that place’ (Davis 1989, p65).
49 Sometimes characterised as an appropriation. The Penguin edition includes a biographical note on Lawrence, and adds, ‘Mollie Skinner ... was an amateur author. Lawrence met her during his stay...
with the Australian writer Molly Skinner, the 'Australia' envisioned by non-Australians is represented almost in caricature, in the stereotypical 'macho' terms of the tourist brochure or the popular film (such as 'Crocodile Dundee').

Taming stallions, fighting kangaroos, competing blow-for-blow for the affections of women, mining, living rough — so Jack grows to manhood. The adult that emerges, shaped and toughened, from the mental, moral and physical hazards encountered in the bush is a true Lawrentian hero.

(Publisher's note on the back cover of Lawrence and Skinner 1984)

A quotation from Kangaroo is to be found on the frontispiece of Leaves of Iron, following Glenn Murcutt's 'Foreword'. 'It is said that man is the chief environment of man. That, thought Richard, was not true in Australia. Man was there, but unnoticeable.'\(^50\) (Drew 1996, p9, italics in the original) A flimsy device introduces Lawrence into the actual text. His sensitive appreciation of corrugated iron is contrasted with traditionalist architectural attitudes. He is introduced as 'another Englishman, but one who saw corrugated iron quite differently [from Ruskin and Hardy Wilson]'. Lawrence 'was alive to the character of vernacular building at Thirroul' (Drew 1996, p77), and his word-sketches of Thirroul establish him for Drew as an authoritative voice on the essence of the Australian vernacular.

Thus [sic], the use of corrugated iron by Glenn Murcutt is an important link ... between his architecture and vernacular buildings. ... The significance of vernacular buildings is twofold: in the first instance it ties his buildings to the commonest facts in the Australian experience, and in the second it ... illustrates a range of responses to the climate and the landscape.\(^51\)

(Drew 1996, p77)

Drew's use of Lawrence's text extends beyond a literary imprimatur for the use of corrugated iron, or the poetic expression of the way of the embattled hero. The last Chapter of Leaves of Iron, un-ironically entitled 'An Open Independent Architecture', attempts a direct mapping of selected passages from Kangaroo onto some of Drew's ideas about Australia and Murcutt. Drew appears first to have skimmed the surface of Lawrence's text searching for visual images to coincide with his personal dream-picture of the country, and then to have taken Lawrence's metaphysical explorations of human relationships, both between people themselves and with an unfamiliar Australia, and to have linked them literally and almost violently to his theme of the delicate relationship of Murcutt's buildings to their natural settings. The text so artificially constructed displays only marginal theoretical coherence, and at times depends on a misreading of the text, but Drew asserts that 'one might be forgiven for thinking on reading Kangaroo that the novel was written from preknowledge as a defence of [Murcutt's] ... architecture' (Drew 1996, p132).

Nature as woman — good and evil

The Imaginary 'subject' called 'Australia' that Drew produces by this accumulation of voices from Kangaroo is not surprisingly an amalgam of (European) masculine desires, fears and fantasies: dreams of control and subjugation, anxieties about female possession of the masculine psyche, and images of female degradation. Drew apparently reads these images directly at the level of myth, as if the interim signifier

in Australia, took over her manuscript, ... and offered to recast it. 'The edition has only Lawrence' name on the cover.

\(^50\) Baird takes Drew's use of this quotation as expressing Murcutt's view of the role of the client as subservient to his architectural, contextual and aesthetic aims (Baird 1997, p205).

\(^51\) But see Baird's comments reported above on both 'the facts' of Australian experience, and the appropriateness to specific climates of Murcutt's buildings.
Australia as woman — wanted and unwanted

Drew cannot be unaware of the agonistic maleness of Lawrence’s view of the world, or the masculine point of view of Kangaroo’s narrative voice, generally presenting Somers’s internal musings. Nevertheless he appears to have no hesitation in applying Lawrence’s similes and metaphors directly to Australian architecture in general and Murcutt’s oeuvre in particular, with no acknowledgment of their gender implications. ‘The bride country’ is the subtitle of the first section of this chapter, and the metaphor of the bride is clearly important to Drew’s argument. However he misunderstands Lawrence in a significant point. Drew states that Lawrence wants to argue that the treatment of the land and the lack of relatedness is a reflection of the quality of the relationships between men and women. Lawrence concluded that Australia was a bride country, unloved and lonely, an uncourted land whose chief characteristic was its uncreatedness.  

(Drew 1996, p132)

The implication that a bride is ‘unloved and lonely’ is puzzling. In fact the context for the use of the metaphor ‘bride’ for Australia is Harriet Somers’s comparison of Australia with other countries which have ‘... been loved so passionately. But Australia has never been loved ... As if man had never loved it’ and made it a happy country, a bride country — or a mother country’ (Lawrence 1954, p87, my italics). Drew actually quotes this passage in full later in his text (Drew 1996, p133), but does not notice the anomaly. On the next page he again betrays his negative view of the ‘bride woman’ (foreshadowed by Drew), quoting Jack Callcott’s cynical response to Harriet,

‘If you call the land a bride, she’s the sort of bride not many of us are willing to tackle. She drinks your sweat and your blood, and then often as not lets you down, does you in.’

(Drew 1996, p133, Kangaroo, p88)

Drew’s borrowings from Lawrence provide a diversity of manifestations of his gendered, even sexualised, view of Australia. He points out that Lawrence and Murcutt

like — aspects of nature. Thus the inwardness of the house and its retention of a separate man-oriented personality, is as important as the development of a field of contact between the house and nature.’ (Drew 1996, p135) The overt masculism of Drew’s text makes all the more unconvincing the insertion of two politically correct insertions on the final page. ‘The inner life of the house is founded on the contribution of the house to putting men and women in harmony with the universe and with themselves. ... The house establishes a point of reference for the individual so that he or she is no longer compelled to venture out in all directions on some great and unceasing whale hunt, but is content to lie with the whiteness of the land.’ (Drew 1996, p136) The reference here is to Moby Dick, particularly inappropriate in conjunction with ‘he or she’.)

53 The use of the neuter ‘it’ signifies that this is Somers’s wife Harriet speaking: she cannot so naturally confute Australia literally with a woman.

54 The implicit racism of this cultural version of terra nullius must be taken in the context of its time of writing.

55 Lawrence’s attitude to women and his view of the potential for their relations with men, although at times ambivalent, were significantly more positive than Drew’s image of the ‘unloved and lonely’ bride. Lawrence has Victoria Callcott remonstrating with Harriet, ‘But where would we poor Australian wives be?’ ... ‘Yes,’ said Harriet meditatively, as if they had to be considered, but were not as important as the other question.’ (Lawrence 1954, p87) Lawrence does give his female characters the capacity to raise such questions; Drew has no such reservations.

56 Ironically, the Australian poet AD Hope sees Australia at the other extreme of her female experience: ‘A woman beyond her change of life, a breast / Still tender, but within the womb is dry.’ (Hope 1972)
use the term ‘feathered’ ‘to describe the way the crown of native trees appears to merge with the sky’, and then gratuitously extends his interpretation of this descriptive language into gendered territory. In a move characteristic of his writing, he describes feathers employed by men in an aboriginal customary ritual ‘to signal their desire to have sexual congress with a ... woman. ... Thus, congress between man and woman, as between the land and the sky, is signalled by a “feather”.’57 From this point he finds it ‘remarkable’ that Lawrence and Murcott should have ‘selected the identical word to acknowledge their wish for communion with the land’ (Drew 1996, p132).

Immediately following a rather convoluted quasi-anthropological discussion of feathers, Drew quotes Lawrence: ‘“I want Australia”, Lawrence had Richard Somers say, “as a man wants a woman. I fairly tremble with wanting it.”’58 Australia is like a woman, a woman he is unable to give in to. In this desire and longing is the beginning of feeling.’ (Drew 1996, p132) In the next paragraph Drew explicitly excludes women from the creative, if ambivalent and even conflicted relationship with Australia which he sees a central to the making of architecture.

Not only does Drew represent Australia as ‘nature’ conflated almost literally with woman, but the interaction of ‘man’ and ‘land’ is represented as a manifestation of the archetypal masculine heroic quest — or conquest.

The presence of Australia plays a similar role in Kangaroo as [sic] the presence of the white whale in Moby Dick. It serves Lawrence as a tabula rasa which is yet to be written upon. Australia, the unwritten continent:

The soft, blue, humanless sky of Australia, the pale, white unwritten atmosphere of Australia. Tabula rasa. The world a new leaf. And on the new leaf, nothing. The white clarity of the Australian, fragile atmosphere.

(Drew 1996, p132, Kangaroo, p365)

Then follows what appears to be a non sequitur.

The perpetual refrain in Kangaroo is the soullessness and loneliness of the land — its estrangement from men. His marriage, Somers acknowledged, was the centre of his life, the core, and the root of his existence.59 The conclusion to be drawn is that as long as the land continues to be spurned it will drift empty and soulless ... [and] men cut off from a vital connection with the land, will lack inner strength.

(Drew 1996, p132)

A number of interrelated issues arise from this passage. ‘Nature’ (whether in the form of the white whale or of the ‘land’ of Australia) is here seen as existing only for the purposes of men, and only in so far as it is used, conquered, and ‘written’, by men. But those men are, by inference, not only male but white (like the whale). Australia, that country of ‘songlines’, rock art, and sand and bark paintings, evidence of millennial occupation, custodianship, knowledge and love by other-than-white women and men, is viewed as lonely, empty and soulless without the attention of white men. The intrusion into the text of the reference to marriage can be interpreted as a virtual metaphor; in Drew’s eyes, this is also the situation of the woman in a marriage; she is a tabula rasa.

---

57 In a typical confusion which does not lessen the gendered assumptions underlying his writing, here ‘man’ is the (solid) ground and ‘woman’ the (insubstantial) sky; see Chapter 5.
58 (Lawrence 1954, p382); no reference is given by Drew.
59 Here Drew does not acknowledge the quotation. ‘‘But then he would ... acknowledge that his marriage was the centre of his life, the core the root.’ (Lawrence, 1954, p113) For a further discussion of the significance of the metaphor of marriage to this reading of gendered architectural discourse, see below.
to be written on by her husband, but thereafter providing a source of strength and support. In a move which appears intended to be read more literally than allegorically, Drew continues

What kind of relationship does Richard Somers envisage? Is man to be submerged and lose his personality in the land? What kind of marriage does he seek between himself and Harriet, and by extension (my italics) between man and the Australian land.

(Drew 1996, p133)

Drew then makes a simplistic analogy that he claims is relevant to the discussion of the relationship of Murcutt’s architecture with nature. ... [A]s in Richard Somers’s ideal marriage, there is established between the buildings and the locale a field of contact where the two personalities of the architecture and the landscape are joined. 60

(Drew 1996, p133)

In the context of Drew’s insistence of the metaphorical connection between nature and the female / feminine, Drew’s characterisation of Australia as ‘a fragile land that is very vulnerable’ requiring ‘a lightweight delicate architecture ... bearing down [minimally] on the body of the land’, where the ‘primitive is close to the surface’ (Drew 1996, p134), resonates with conventional patriarchal characterisations of the feminine as weak and passive, and linked to the primitive. Like patriarchal stereotypes of the female as threatening and dangerous, he also describes the house (in general, and Murcutt’s houses in particular) as ‘a haven from the inhuman aspects of the land’. Here he quotes Lawrence again: ‘a heavy reptile hostility came off the sombre land, something gruesome and infinitely repulsive’ (Drew 1996, p135; Kangaroo, p386). 61

Like the writers mentioned above, Drew is selective in his choice of quotations from Lawrence. Only three are not overtly gendered; none gives a hint of ‘the external, female voice’ which Lawrence often allowed ‘to intrude into his work to challenge the voice he identified as himself’ (Siegel 1991, p7). In his use of quotations from Lawrence, as with Powys’s Wolf Solent, Drew allows his apparent preoccupation with negatively gendered metaphors in his chosen writer’s vision of the land to take him away from the Murcutt of whom he has voluminous evidence from his interviews. Drew emphasises the ‘monotony and emptiness of the land’ (Drew 1996, p135), its ‘soullessness and loneliness’ (p132). Such metaphorical generalisations are in marked contrast with the detailed and affectionate descriptions Murcutt himself gives of the country he knows.

‘Take ... Uluru. The trees close to a rock lean away from the rock, looking for light; the very same plant changes its form in open country. In other desert regions one can actually see a slightly yellower line in the landscape following

60 Kangaroo is transparently biographical fiction. In Kangaroo Lawrence explores his ideas about male / female relationships in an allegorical passage on Somers and Harriet’s marriage, which reflects Somers’s (Lawrence’s) ambivalence. ‘She was to submit to the mystic man and male in him, with reverence, and even a little awe, like a woman before the altar of the great Hermes.’ (Lawrence, 1954, p194) Some paragraphs later: ‘Him a lord and master! Why, he wasn’t really lord of his own bread and butter; next year they might both be starving. ... He wanted to be a male and unique, like a freak of a phoenix. And then go off into connections with men like Jack Callcott and Kangaroo, and saving the world. ... And she, she must be safely there, as a nest for him, when he came back with his feathers pecked.’ (p195)

61 The ‘internal narrative’ here is Harriet’s, towards the end of their time in Australia. ‘She loathed Australia, with a wet dark repulsion. ... She was sick with revulsion, wanting to get out.’ (Lawrence 1954, p386)
the line of trees — that is telling us about contours, moisture and water table level.’
(Murcutt quoted in Drew 1999, p48)

Lawrence and masculinity

Spence, Taylor and McKay, quoting from Lawrence, all appropriate his insights on the space, the cultural atmosphere, the physical environment of Australia — and corrugated iron: an outsider’s view can illuminate.62 Drew’s discussion, however, depends heavily on the metaphysics and interiority of Lawrence’s text. Given the importance to Drew of his collage of Lawrentian metaphor, it may be instructive to put some context to his selections from Lawrence’s representations of relationships, both between men and women, and between people (men?) and the land of Australia. Drew’s reading of Lawrence’s text is a naïve one, oblivious to the nuances of Lawrence’s explorations into the relations between men and women, and untroubled by the excesses of Lawrence’s at times over-Romantic masculism and its reflection in the novel.63 But it is difficult to imagine that even a naïve cultural critic such as Drew is not at least subliminally aware of the central importance of sex, sexuality, gender and gender roles, and in particular masculinity, to an overtly biographical text by the author of Lady Chatterley’s Lover.64 ‘In Lawrence’s post-war exploration of power relationships and ‘savage energies’, male dominance plays a crucial part.’ (Simpson c1982, 65) 65 And

62 In The Fantasia of the Unconscious, Lawrence also puts his view of architecture. ‘Was the building of the cathedrals a working up towards the act of coition? Was the dynamic impulse sexual? No. The sexual element was present, and important, but not predominant. ... But there was something else, of even higher importance, and greater dynamic power. And what is this other, greater impulse? It is the desire of the human male to build a world: not “to build a world for you, dear”; but to build up out of his own self and his own belief and his own effort something wonderful. Not merely something useful. Something wonderful.’ (Lawrence 1961, p14)

63 ‘Man is a thought-adventurer. Man is more, he is a life-adventurer. Which means he is a thought-adventurer, an emotion adventurer, and a discoverer of himself and of the outer universe. A discoverer. ... Now a novel is supposed to be a mere record of emotions-adventures, floundering in feelings, We insist that a novel is, or should be, also a thought-adventure, if it is to be anything at all complete.’ (Lawrence 1954, pp308-309)

64 ‘Lawrence’s literary career spanned one of the most crucial periods in ... [women’s] history. The years immediately preceding the First World War were characterised by intense feminist activity; the war itself was a watershed for women in virtually all aspects of life, precipitating change on an undreamt-o scale; the 1920s saw a consolidation of some of the freedoms that had been won, but also the beginnings of a fresh anti-feminist reaction, Lawrence’s work was informed by these developments at every point. ... While he appreciated the general aims of ... [feminism], he was uncomfortable with the forms it took.’ (Simpson c1982, pp14-15)

65 In Kangaroo and in his contemporary polemic work The Fantasia of the Unconscious, both published in 1923, the year of publication of Vers une Architecture, Lawrence dwells on the polarity between the male and the female, which the First World War had destabilised. In Kangaroo, Somers’s muses on his relationship with Harriet. ‘There is the dual polarity ... There is the ... downward pulse, ... the love that goes out to the weaker, to the poor, to the humble. The vast, prostrate mass now becomes the positive pole of attraction: woman, the working class.

...When the flow is ... love, then the weak, the woman, the masses, assume the positivity ... When the flow is power, might, majesty, glory, then it is a culminating flow towards one individual, through circles of aristocracy towards one grand centre, Emperor, Pope, Tyrant, King. ... It is the grand obeisance before a master.’ (Lawrence 1954, p333)

The Fantasia of the Unconscious is characterised by sexual determinism. Lawrence’s distaste for the changes in sex-roles precipitated by the War is clear. ‘A woman should stick to her own natural emotional positivity. But then man must stick to his own positivity of being, of action, disinterested, non-domestic, male action ... once man vacates this strong citadel of his own
For Lawrence everything is sexed; it is the fundamental division. The Hardy study is permeated with a sense of sex-designated opposites, Maleness comprises Knowledge, the Spirit, Motion, Love, the Hub, Doing, Separateness, Consciousness, Individuality, Timelessness, Thought ...; Femaleness is Nature, the Flesh, Stability, Law, the Axle, Being, Monism, Unconsciousness, Oneness, the Moment, Feeling ...
(Simpson c1982, p88)

Lawrence’s insights into the Australia of the period are often surprisingly convincing, and his lyrical descriptions of the sea coast and the bush of New South Wales are often powerful and evocative. In one aspect Lawrence’s text does seem to reflect accurately Drew’s view of the Australian rural landscape. The absence of actual aborigines in Drew’s vision of Australia, in spite of the appropriation of aboriginal ‘ideas’ in his interpretation of Murcutt’s architecture (pp55-56) is echoed in Kangaroo:

And then one night at the time of the full moon he walked alone into the bush ... the tree-trunks like naked pale aborigines among the dark-soaked foliage, in the moonlight. And not a sign of life — not a vestige.†
(Lawrence 1954, p19)

The questions to ask are, why does Drew choose the particular constellation of gender-laden quotations and concepts he includes in his text, and why has there been no feminist — or at least gender-aware — critique of the text? Both book and aphorism ‘Leaves of Iron’ have become popular currency, and have achieved something akin to the status of a third-order myth. However the explicit gendering of Drew’s text, what could be termed its aesthetic misogyny, is not remarked in reviews of the book.

The reception of Leaves of Iron

Rory Spence, reviewing the book in 1985, finds that ‘Drew has been unusually thorough. He has recorded 40 hours of interviews with Murcutt as source material for his study’ (Spence 1985e, p96). As mentioned above, Spence is familiar with Kangaroo, and comments that ‘[w]ith D. H. Lawrence [Drew] sees Australia as a primitive, wild land, an ‘unwritten continent’’ (p96).

The book concludes with a provocative hypothesis on the nature of the Australian continent and its relationship with Murcutt’s architecture, largely inspired by D. H. Lawrence’s novel Kangaroo (1923). Drew argues that it is possible for Australia ‘to construct a culture that is rooted in the land’. ... This is a courageous appeal.
(Spence 1985e, p98)

genuine, not spurious, divinity, then in comes woman, picks up the sceptre and begins to conduct a rag-time band. ...’ (Lawrence 1961, p90, italics in the original).

66 However, Somers at times found the beach an ‘inhospitable shore’: ‘It seemed to him female and vindictive.’ (Lawrence 1954, p388)

67 In fact Lawrence frequently used material written by female friends as sources for his evocations of nature (Simpson c1982, p160).

68 The Index entry states ‘Aborigines, relationship with the land. See land’ (Drew 1996, p145). Drew’s conflation of Blacks and ‘the primitive’ with nature parallels his assimilation of woman to nature.
Spence does question Drew’s lack of emphasis on the influence on Murcutt of contemporary Australian architects who use a similar language and repertoire of materials, and doubts the general relevance to architecture of Drew’s preoccupation with the bush environment and ‘man’s spiritual relationship to place’. ‘The natural landscape is a crucial factor in our lives and increasing intervention by man intensifies the need to care for it with sensitivity and respect ... however the facts about the continent have to be faced; Australia today is a predominantly urban society’ (pp96, 98). However Spence does not find Drew’s conflation of metaphor and concept often incoherent, as I do. And he makes no comment on the implications of the appropriation for expressing ideas about Australia of the work of a writer whom ‘some of the most virulently antifeminist writers of our time claim ... as an authority for their male supremacist position[; for example] ... Henry Miller and Norman Mailer’ (Siegel 1991, p5).69

*Leaves of Iron* is an important book for Australia. It is the first full length critical study of a modern Australian architect ... and above all, even if one does not always agree with Drew’s viewpoint, it has a clearly reasoned, provocative theoretical basis.

(Spence 1985e, p98)

Norman Day’s 1986 review is effectively his paraphrase of the content of the book, and he discusses Murcutt’s work rather than examining the text of the book in detail. ‘Drew has analysed [Murcutt’s] hankering [for a primitive architecture] and successfully isolated the general elements of composition Murcutt brings to his tough little extrusions.’ (Day 1986, p40) He comments that Drew is a removed and loving critic, who
doesn’t quite touch the ordinary nerve enough to fully explain Murcutt’s critical and popular success. ... What interests me ... in Drew’s investigation is the way he unfolds Murcutt’s architectural soul by considering Murcutt’s character which is the source (the ‘architecturalness’) of his buildings. ... Drew explains why Murcutt assembles his buildings in such a way, how they appear to emanate from him, and their special charm and atmosphere. ... Drew argues for Murcutt’s architectural integrity and morality in such a way that we are left with no doubt ... that Murcutt is important.

(Day 1986, p41)

Day evinces no doubts about a text which presents Murcutt as ‘consider[ing] the magic of our landscape’, ‘continually struck by the *genius* of the place’ (Murcutt, in ‘Foreword’ to Drew 1996, p8), and producing architecture ‘touching the earth lightly’, yet whose author quotes without irony a text comparing that landscape figuratively with ‘a bride ... [that] drinks your sweat and your blood, and ... does you in.’

Greg Missingham’s review in the same issue of *Transition* is a more thoughtful examination of the book than Day’s, and places the book in the context of the quest for an Australian architecture. ‘Clearly Drew has two major intentions: to interpret Murcutt’s work in terms of its wider significance for other and future Australian architects and to advocate similar architecture be (universally?) adopted in Australia.’ (Missingham 1986, p44) He sees Drew’s intention as ‘to promote the image of Murcutt as inventor-hero architect ... At the conceptual centre of Drew’s book is his succinct account of ‘the’ key to Murcutt’s own vision of what he is doing’ (Missingham 1986, p43). Missingham sets out a ‘metacritical frame’ for architectural

---

69 According to Siegel, feminist critics often use Lawrence as ‘the convenient masculine Other against whom the feminine can be defined’ (Siegel 1991, p5).
critique. However that ‘frame’ includes no space for interpretation at all; the axis ‘explain’ implies a simplistic view of the cultural basis of the construction of significances), while the axis ‘evaluate’ offers the criteria ‘standards, doctrines and theory / systems’ (p44). There is no space here for any analysis on the basis of cultural specificity or difference, such as gender.

Missingham is prepared to be sceptical about some of Drew’s wilder flights of fancy. (‘I remain quite unconvinced of even an indirect connection between May Gibbs’ drawings of stitched gum-leaf houses for Snugglepot and Cuddlespie and Murcutt’s constructions’ (Missingham 1986, p43).) However, he describes the final chapter as ‘Drew’s emotional plea that Australian architecture should learn from Murcutt and his concerns’ (p43).

The photographs, the literary texts (Lawrence’s Kangaroo, particularly) and Drew’s own impressions, the matters he chooses to point to in the work provide a surrogate experience of sorts which seeks to convince though its expression of his own conviction. Drew adopts, therefore, the commonest art historical intent: to advocate through evocative persuasion. (Missingham 1986, pp43-44)

Missingham has many reservations about the book. He points out that it contains no post-occupancy evaluations, no analysis of the economic or social context, no study of the pragmatics of the production of the buildings, no analytical discussion of Murcutt’s design process. He is also wary of any attempt to develop or proselytise a generic ‘Australian architecture’. Missingham attributes Murcutt’s ‘relatively universal esteem’ (p45) to general appeal of the natural environment as a source of architectural meaning. He considers that the quest for ‘Australianness’ in architecture in references to the land are taking a considerably easier path than those who seek it in Australians and their daily lives or in their history.

Does it refer to stereotypical, even mythical figures in Australian cultural history — the drover, the digger, the larrikin, the wharfie, the swagman, the man from Snowy River, or to its heroes — Bradman, Chappelli [sic] and Dame Joan, etc? (Missingham 1986, p45)

Here we brush against the potential for an acknowledgment of gender, but it goes no further. He also points out that, having set out to demonstrate that good architecture arises out of the response to a specific environment of ‘people with an established culture and a definite character’ (Drew 1996, p50), Drew then refers to early immigrant settlers. ‘But were he not so apparently disinterested [sic] in contemporary Australia he could have nominated contemporary Australians as the people in question.’ (Missingham 1986, p45) Missingham quotes from Richard White’s Inventing Australia: ‘When we look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve.’ (White 1981, pvi, quoted in Missingham 1986, p46) However Missingham does not question the cultural function of Drew’s gendered rhetoric. The misogynist conflation of ‘nature’ and ‘woman’ is now so ‘naturalised’ in the language and the culture that even perceptive critics such as Spence, Day and Missingham do not notice such a gendered formulation.

Fromonot on Murcutt

Françoise Fromonot’s book on Murcutt (Fromonot 1995) does not engage in the rhetorical excesses of Drew, and her use of the term ‘Man’ may be explained by her
French background. However many of the themes of ‘masculinity’ identified in this thesis appear in the text, in her representation of the architect and her analysis of his work: the origins and lineage of creativity, individualism, the heroic stance, the quest for a transcendental order of architectural form, the Man / Nature relationship. After a brief introduction to Australian architecture for an international readership, like Drew she commences her narrative with Murcutt’s father and his commitment to ‘Thoreau’s spartan and individualist philosophy’ (p12).70 ‘Murcutt works as much as possible on his own. The fundamental commitment of working on his own is reminiscent of the deep-rooted pioneer’s individualism, which he defends like an ethic ... Such a way of working may seem heroic, romantic, retrograde or avant-garde; it is in any event unusual. ... In every project Murcutt assumes responsibility for each decision taken, needing to justify it only to himself.’ 71 (Fromonot 1995, p38) 72

There are echoes of the hubris of Le Corbusier.73 ‘Returning to the classical ideal that a place should be revealed through its architecture, Murcutt makes his buildings — to paraphrase Le Corbusier in Journey to the East — the reason for the landscape.’ (p50) She describes Murcutt as ‘drawing a series of parallels between the immutable principles that govern nature and those that should rule architecture’ (p33). Like Drew she sees Murcutt as architect-inventor: ‘[e]ven when designed on ‘invariant’ principles ... each of his houses is a prototype without a successor’ (p21).74

Fromonot traces Murcutt’s debt to Mies, which she sees as ‘explain[ing] a central part of Murcutt’s design philosophy’, and its ‘reference to a universal model of architecture. ... Murcutt not only subscribes to Mies’s ideas; he also repeats some of his forms’ (Fromonot 1995, p19). The ‘seminal image [of the Farnsworth House] was to reassert itself periodically in his work with the persistent regularity of a childhood memory’ (p12). ‘Above all the Farnsworth house remains one of the enduring emblems of Murcutt’s basic design: the long glass pavilion mediating between Man and Nature.’ (p20) ‘[P]ure, transparent, isolated in an untouched nature, [it] ‘rewards contemplation before it fulfils a domestic necessity’75, a manifestation of classical thought aspiring to the timelessness of the temples.’ (pp17-19) The classical-Miesian metaphysics of nature permeates Fromonot’s attitude to the natural environment in Australia. ‘Above all the Farnsworth house remains one of the enduring emblems of

70 Thoreau is often taken as representative of ascetic sensitivity to nature. However his relevance to my tale of heroic nationalism is more complex: his concern was Man — in his case Man in America. As Joanne Griffiths points out, ‘Thoreau’s blend of pantheism and patriotism celebrates the vastness of the American landscape as ‘symbolical of the height to which the philosophy and poetry and religion of her inhabitants may one day soar’ (Griffiths 2001, p30).

71 Here we see a view of architecture as an individual creative act; but one might ask about justification to the client.

72 Giles Walkley’s incisive and exhaustive — and at times sardonically ironic — review of Fromonot’s book (and his perceptive and illuminating discussion of many of the buildings referred to) identifies many faults of language (and perhaps translation), expertise, interpretation and illustration. He points to the assumption of the lone individual creator and the lack of recognition in the book of ‘other parties: clients, consultants, contractors, colleagues’ (Walkley 1997, p136).

73 ‘His final thesis contained two revealing epigraphs: one from Neutra, urging the spirit of the place to cooperate with the architect, the other from Le Corbusier’s Concerning Town Planning — ‘only the architect can create a balance between man and his environment’.’ (Fromonot 1995, p14).

74 Giles Walkley’s review of Fromonot’s book provides a much more useful and architecturally informed account of the projects, clearly based on detailed understanding of both the buildings and the conceptual, functional and constructional principles underlying their design (Walkley 1997). Walkley is scathing in his criticism of Fromonot’s poor technical expertise, her ‘slipshod writing’ (p146), and inadequately informative, sometimes incorrect, graphics. Addressing himself in workmanlike fashion to the buildings and their design he avoids the mythologising of Drew, but equally the astute analysis of Farrelly or the ontological musings of Dovey and McDonald.

75 Fromonot here quotes from Schulze (1985, p256).
Murcutt's basic design: the long glass pavilion mediating between Man and Nature.' (p20) 'Murcutt has created a series of exemplary buildings, mediators between their owners and an implied cosmic ritual, an architecture of singular beauty that harks back to a Europe ever fascinated by the myth of the wild continent and the last frontier.' (p50) I am reminded of Baird's view that the reasons for the popularity both in Australia and internationally of Murcutt's work lies in the seductiveness of the myth of the bush and the [primitive] original inhabitants.

She describes the houses as 'appearing as if they had landed on sites to which they will seemingly never conform' (Fromonot 1995, p7). Ignorance of the environmental realities of the Australian bush is perhaps visible in her characterisation of Murcutt's rural buildings as being built 'on the untouched sites so highly prized for second homes' (p27), where 'his pavilions on stilts can be demounted and removed without leaving a trace or causing any irredeemable destruction to the environment' (p50); and in some of her interpretations of the Australian context, what she calls 'specific Antipodean conditions' (p26) — 'the Australian landscape' (p30) and 'characteristic Aboriginal concepts of land and culture' (p16), both, like 'Woman', assumed invariant.

**Murcutt in collaboration**

In later years Murcutt has worked in association, with Bates Smart and with Troppo Architects, and with Reg Lark and Wendy Lewin (now Murcutt's wife). However writing on this work gives central focus to Murcutt. In an Architectural Design issue entitled 'Architecture and Anthropology' Claire Melhuish, also the issue's guest editor, discusses in the same article the Marika-Alderton house and the Kakadu Visitors' Centre. The article concentrates on the Marika-Alderton house and on Murcutt, whose father is called upon in a way reminiscent of Drew's *Leaves of Iron*: 'Murcutt's father built houses and brought up his family in New Guinea and Clontarf; both places characterised by a great natural rawness which was to be immensely important to Glenn Murcutt later in life.' (Melhuish 1996, p41) Murcutt's association with Troppo Architects is acknowledged, but the cross-references in the description of the Kakadu Centre to the Marika-Alderton house, and the writer's return to it at the end of the piece — with the obligatory 'touch the earth lightly' (p45) — emphasise that Melhuish sees Murcutt as 'the Architect'.

Drew's review of the Arthur and Yvonne Boyd Education Centre in NSW (Drew 1999) is punctilious in acknowledging the collaborative nature of the project, referring to 'the architects', Murcutt, Lewin and Lark. There are echoes of his earlier writing on Murcutt's work in his reference to the verandahs of the dormitory block (in a comparison with Murcutt's Marika-Anderton house) and his calling on the *leitmotiv* of his writing on Murcutt — 'Tread lightly' (p43). (Ironically Drew's familiar ambivalent hostile image of the Australian bush appears in his description of the siting of the buildings 'encircled by a collar of European landscape that supplies a reassuring buffer against native bush uphill' (p42).) In Fromonot's review of the project (Fromonot 2000) the sub-title describes it as 'Glenn Murcutt's latest building'; although she at times refers to the architects in the plural, the first sentence makes clear that Fromonot views the collaboration in hierarchical terms. 'With two Sydney colleagues whom he taught as students and who have both worked with him on several occasions, Glenn

---

76 With Bates Smart on a large extension to Raheen for Ken Done (see Murray 1993), and with Troppo on the Kakadu Visitors Centre in the Northern Territory (Melhuish 1996).

77 There is something incongruous in two buildings by an architect who has been awarded the Aalto Medal being discussed under the rubric of 'anthropology', presumably on the grounds that one of the buildings has an aboriginal client, and the other is in an exotic location to which the Native Title of its indigenous owners has been legally acknowledged; anthropology (as opposed to sociology) as the study of 'the Other'.
Murcutt has just completed his first public building since the Kempsey Museum.
(p34) Murcutt’s image as the solitary creative genius is an enduring one.

Other texts on Australian architecture

Drew’s text may be extreme in its use of gendered conceptualisations, but similar themes circulate in all the texts I have explored. Architecture is generally seen almost as a self-contained creative activity, envisaged in paradigmatically masculine terms, the Architect — romantic hero, individualist rebel and/or pioneer — pursuing his professional odyssey. The context within which the buildings are placed, in the case of the individual dwelling in a rural setting, is characterised almost metaphysically as Nature-as-female.

Jennifer Taylor’s *Australian Architecture Since 1960* (1986 and 1990) is the standard text on the period 1960-1990. The language is strangely gender-unaware for its date. The singular pronoun form leads to such phrases as ‘[it] was not until the seventies that the Queensland architect consciously turned his attention back to relearn the lessons exhibited in the indigenous building types’ (p131; my italics). She uses the term ‘white man’ without irony of inverted commas (p11) and talks of the relationship between ‘man and nature’ (p13); and quotes Col Madigan as declaring ‘in man there is a purposeful tendency to become more complex, more free and man is at his best when he has a strong sense of purpose embracing more complexity’” (p97)

Taylor’s text is thematically structured, and although she presents the buildings in historical, social and economic context, on the whole the book deals with function and form, structure and materials. So such descriptions of ‘the Architect’ and the purposes of Architecture, in which the gendered vision can be clearly revealed, are few. However, ‘[Roy Grounds] had that rare sense of the heroic, and the nerve to see his schemes through to fruition despite all odds’ (p32). Furthermore, a close reading reveals a constellation of ‘signs’ of the masculine with a particular Australian flavour. In the ‘Preface’ to the first edition (Taylor 1986), prefaced in its turn by the almost obligatory quotation from DH Lawrence’s *Kangaroo* (see note 44) she hints at the ‘pioneer’ image with ‘Australia is still a new frontier’ (Taylor 1986, p2). The Preface to the second edition is reworked, but in the text of the book itself we find ‘the countryside posed a threat to security and a challenge to mastery’ (Taylor 1990, p35) and ‘[t]he unique land holds a foremost place in the psyche of Australians. It remains an alien place for which its architects are still learning how to build’ (p191).

This image merges with the ‘Australian heroic’. Kuring-gai College (p48); ‘the buildings [of the 1970s] had a certain heroic presence’ (p79).

Some entries in the competition for the Stockman’s Hall of Fame (p188) ‘celebrated the outback with heroic use of materials’, and the winning ‘Boman design is heroic in scale’. The ‘heroic’ can also be seen in an urban setting. Taylor describes ‘the

---

78 The work of only three women architects, Suzanne Dance (Taylor 1990, p178), Jennifer Hocking (p221-222) and Christine Vadasy (p167), and of one woman landscape designer, Edna Walling (p35), is discussed in the book. Phyllis Murphy (p13) and Jane Dillon (p135) are mentioned, while Kerry Clare is mentioned as the wife and partner of Lindsay but her name does not appear in the Index. (Another absence is described in the Prologue.)

79 Taylor cites ‘an unpublished address to the New South Wales Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 10 November 1980’.

80 ‘D. H. Lawrence.. gave words to the ageless mystery of the bushlands in a way that has rarely been equalled’ (Taylor 1990, p35).

81 By JW Thompson, New South Wales Government Architect.

82 Perhaps the paradigmatic expression of the power of the masculine myth in Australian rural history.
sculptural heroics of Utzon' (p33) in the Opera House, subject of a history that reads as 'part romantic, part tragic work of fiction' (Taylor 1986, p29), echoing Jencks's and Scully's notion of the tragic hero (Scully 1968a; Scully 1968b; Jencks 1973a). She refers to Roy Ground's 'sense of the heroic in the Victorian Arts Centre' (p32), to 'the raw and heroic use of concrete is clearly of Corbusian inspiration' (p81) in Daryl Jackson's YWCA Hostel in Suva, and to the 'gaunt and heroic character' of Forbes and Fitzhardinge's 1974 Music School (p180).

Other overtly masculine images circulate in the text: 'Allen Jack and Cottier's rugged romanticism' (p45), the 'rugged character' (p57) and 'robust ... fortress-like character' (p58) of John Andrews's AmEx Tower, and the 'rugged concrete' of his Scarborough College (p87). Clyde Cameron College 'is a memorial to the union movement is put together with gusto and directness [sic] that the Australian working man appreciates' (p85), while New Gordon House, a refuge for homeless men, 'designed ... in a rigorous Brutalist manner ... is a sociologically and physically tough work that stands at the extreme edge of concrete Brutalism' (p84).

**Variations on the theme of 'the hero' in Australian architecture**

The theme of the heroic in Taylor's text is transmuted in the case of the Melbourne 'Young Turks' into that of rebellion: Corrigan 'is a dedicated architect but in many respects a renegade' (p207); Norman Day's Pizzey House in Kew 'is a rebellious building — intentionally destructive to the norm' (p219) The surfer manifestoes of the utopian Modernists sound archaic now. But the notion of the (masculine) hero persists in the discourse as a variable Trinity — the Father (the patrician, the pioneer: Seidler is the obvious example), the Son (the bushman, the rebel, the larrikin and the 'ratbag': the early Murcutt, Corrigan and Day), and the Holy Ghost (the mystic, with his spiritual relationship to Nature and the land: Burgess and Leplastrier). In spite of the fraternal image of Australian patriarchy masculinity remains dominant. There is even a distinctively Australian flavour to the mystic: the awkward link between the heroic spirit in communion with the genius loci and the larrikin is another of the paradoxes disentangled in a close reading.

**'Australian spirituality' and an antipodean mystic**

David Tacey, exploring the sacred in the context of Australian culture, declares that

The new spirituality that arises from the Australian experience will ... be precisely the kind of spirituality that will set a timely example to the rest of the world. It will be non-heroic and will not go the way of the now exhausted heroism of Western Europe or North America. It will not be patriarchal, because the Earth Mother is far too strong here. ... The great Australian writers are all sons [sic] of the mother, in both the practical sense of being mother-dominated as children, and in the archetypal sense of being 'loved sons' of the chthonic earth as mature artists.

(Tacey 1995, p24)

---

83 Harry Seidler, an immigrant from Vienna via the USA in 1948, bringing the ideas of Gropius and the Bauhaus, remains faithful to High Modernism.

84 Richard Leplastrier designs lyrical houses with a close relationship to their natural settings. Influenced by the traditional Japanese philosophical approach to space and to craftsmanship, and with a boat-builder's feeling for material and form, his work is informed by a deep commitment to nature and to the potential of architecture for enhancing life.

85 For an enlightening exposition of the modern (post-Enlightenment) replacement of the myths of patriarchy, the 'Law of the Father', by the ideology of the 'Régime of the Brother', see MacCannell 1991.
In spite of Tacey's celebration of the 'eternal feminine', his rejection of patriarchy and the heroic, and of his mention elsewhere in the book of such writers as Barbara Baynton (pp42-45) and Judith Wright (p148), it is significant that here the cultural protagonists, the writers, are 'all sons'. The feminine is again assimilated with Nature rather than culture, either implicitly, or explicitly as later in the book, discussing the appropriation of aboriginal spirituality in the interests of 'European-Australian' psychic healing, he writes that '[w]e have not only stolen Aboriginal land, destroyed the tribal culture, raped the women and the environment, but we now ask for their spirituality as well' (pp131-132).

The architects recognised in the literature as working within a specifically Australian spirituality, notably Le Plastrier and Burgess, are also male. Greg Burgess approaches his work with something of the spirit of the mystic: Burgess 'is a gentle and mystical designer' (Taylor 1990, p185). Taylor quotes his explanation of the formal genesis of his entry in the Stockman's Hall of Fame competition, which he found 'a significant opportunity to explore ... my understanding of the Universal in an Australian context': '[t]he order of the building arose from 'the geometry of the spiral (the universal energy principle) and pentagonal harmonics (the geometry of ancient revelation)' (Burgess, quoted in Taylor 1986, p189). Explaining Burgess to the international readership of The Architectural Review, Spence says that Burgess 'attach[es] great importance to his intuitive understanding of a site' (Spence 1985f, p84). 'He is rightly concerned about Western man's [sic] over-reliance on the rational mind at the expense of intuition. ... Most of Burgess's buildings have a strong and complex formal basis derived from ancient sacred geometries, ... eroded or contradicted by other [Western] geometries. ... There is a strongly organic feeling about Burgess' buildings.' (Spence 1985f, p84)

Michael Tawa, in Contemporary Architects, also describes the organic quality of Burgess's architecture. 'Space is neither homogenous [sic] or static. It swells and unfolds. Compositional relationships are seldom orthogonal and never conform to uniformly subdivided space. Curvilinear gestures are in plan and section around significant foci or places.' (Tawa on Burgess in Emanuel c1994, p140)

Writing on Burgess tends itself to be almost mystic and 'aquarian'. The 'man of reason' is absent; Le Corbusier's right angle is nowhere to be seen. However, the presence of swelling curves and organic forms, earthy materials and intuitive design processes, assumed by essentialists to be the province of the female and/or the feminine, do not prevent Burgess's being claimed for the masculine. According to Tawa, 'space in Burgess's architecture is a reverberant setting actively responding to the inner nature and pulse of people and place. It exposes and voices the creative process as a Shivaite or Dionysian invitation to the dweller: "our lives and our architecture fuse as a continual metamorphosis of Being and Becoming — a journey of

---
86 Tacey, not surprisingly, also is convinced that DH 'Lawrence understood Australia ... from within' (p78)
87 Jahn, whose book Contemporary Australian Architecture is mainly concerned with buildings displaying the angular geometries and explicable precedents of post-modernist and late modernist architecture, has some epistemological difficulty with Burgess's work. Describing Burgess's Brambuk Living Cultural Centre, an interpretive centre for aboriginal culture in the Grampian ranges in Victoria, he says the 'tendency for the non-rectilinear in the designs of Burgess has developed without any formal influences such as the natural shapes of the landscape. His work has striking similarities with vernacular architects in other countries' (Jahn 1994). Quoting a Hungarian architect — 'the spirit of a place — its geological conditions, remnants of folk art, local materials, vegetation, and the indigenous' can be sources' he suggests that 'there might be common ground in the global quest for architecture appropriate to non-industrialised indigenous people' (p95). Jahn sets the physical context, non-rectilinear shapes, non-industrialised and indigenous people, and the vernacular, apart from 'modern Western architecture which has its own system of representation and tradition' (p91). The epistemological contiguity of the primitive, the non-industrial and the feminine is a sub-text to the entry.
destruction and creation — a joyful dance between polarities and paradoxes; a way of transformation and understanding’’ (Tawa on Burgess in Emanuel c1994, p140). Shiva and Dionysus are of course iconic symbols of the destructive sexual energies of the masculine, from Hindu and Greek mythologies, but Tawa also connects this quest for the universal with the everyday (male) Australian. ‘Gregory Burgess’s work explores a complex field in which the Mystic geometer, the Anthroposophist and the Aryan Romantic rub shoulders with the Dry and Dreamy Antipodean Larrakin.’ (p140)

The larrkin

The notion of the rebel, the outsider, is endemic in western myths of (male) artistic creativity. The urban Australian variation on the theme is the larrkin. In Towards an Australian Architecture, Gazzard sets the scene for the specifically Australian flavour of the hero as larrkin. ‘[I]n the short story of architecture in Australia ... each ... [epoch] was heralded by the arrival (and almost as quick departure) of Hero-Architects ... Like all heroes, conscious of their role, they were difficult people. ... The first Hero-Architect, Francis Greenway, arrived in Australia involuntarily.’ (Gazzard, ‘Introduction to Howden 1968, p11) Greenway with his convict origin and architectural prowess combines the patronian and the ratbag; he had a suitably heroic reputation as a moody and difficult person, eventually falling foul of his protector and disappearing into obscurity. ‘The second Hero-Architect, Walter Burley Griffin’, also a maverick, is here discussed with no mention of Marion Mahony (p13).88

Larrkin anti-authoritarian attitudes are celebrated in the myths of Australian culture. Spence describes the development, in reaction to the strong conservative establishment, of

a strong anti-establishment, historically an Irish-Catholic and Labour [sic] tradition, symbolised by two folk heroes; on the one hand, the nationalist, Irish-Catholic bushranger, Ned Kelly,90 and on the other, Peter Lalor, leader of the oppressed gold-diggers in their stand against the authorities at Eureka Stockade in 1854. ...

(Spence 1985d, p65)

Tacey considers that ‘[a]lthough the bushranger, and to a much lesser extent the local larrkin or prankster, was a menace to law and order, ‘the folk’ could not condemn him because he embodied significant qualities of the Australia psyche’ (Tacey 1995, pp43-44).

The archetypal larrkin in the myth-making of contemporary Australian architecture is Peter Corrigan. It is no coincidence that Corrigan is of Irish extraction and cultivates an ‘Irish’ persona. Spence locates him in the culture of Melbourne. ‘A product of this tradition ... is the cult of larrkinism, evident in the personalities of Peter Corrigan and Norman Day, and in the witty writings of Robin Boyd.91 (Spence 1985d, p65)

88 Gazzard’s ironic tone is explained by his interpretation of the Sydney Opera House affair, and ‘the third Hero-Architect’, this time a patronian: ‘Like the other hero-architects, Utzon was too demanding with his perfectionist attitudes for a still small and provincial society, where near enough is often good enough.’ (p15) Gazzard clearly awaits the time when Australia will both deserve and appreciate its Hero-Architects.

89 In Australia Labor, the political party, is spelt without a ‘u’: but The Architectural Review is published in the UK, and the editor must have intervened.

90 As the Jungian David Tacey points out, ‘It is significant that Kelly, his gang, his family ... were Irish, or Irish-descended, and that the troopers were English, English-descended or constructed as English ... Englishness in colonial Australia was equated with the repressive superego and the negative father to be overthrown, while Irishness then (and still today) represented the maligned and creative Oedipus or puer who would finally come into his own’ (Tacey 1997, p44).

91 But see above, Saunders’s reservations on this characterisation.
Corrigan works in partnership with his wife Maggie Edmond. Her existence is often forgotten in monographs on their work, which is generically attributed to Corrigan. Conrad Hamann is unusual in this regard. In his full-length account of their work (Hamann 1993, p41), he is punctilious in documenting their lives and work before the partnership, and in acknowledging Edmond’s contribution to the practice. 92 Taylor also acknowledges Edmond’s contribution to the partnership, while noting that the buildings which ‘have attracted the most attention’ are those designed by Corrigan himself (Taylor 1990, p207). Other texts on Corrigan generally assume or imply that he works alone, which of course few architects do.

Accounts of Corrigan’s life and work abound with epithets of rebellion and outrageousness, Corrigan’s student days in Australia and the USA were marked by a refusal to conform. ‘His enthusiasms were out of step’. He argued with, annoyed and discomfited Faculty, he missed lectures, and ‘seemed to trespass constantly across unspoken boundaries’ (Hamann 1993, p31). From his student days, ‘energetic disputation would ... pervade Corrigan’s career, and his brushes with Australia’s prevailing ideology in architecture’ (p9). In a chapter entitled ‘Pressing against Ideas’, discussing Corrigan’s career in theatre design, Michael Anderson says ‘his wilfully contrary reactions to institutionalised cultural formulae had been noted long before he left for the USA’ (Anderson 1993, p151). In the USA he worked for, alienated and was sacked by a series of architectural luminaries (Hamann 1993, p33). Spence says that Corrigan ‘returned from the United States armed with a personal interpretation of Venturi’s ideas about suburbia and the architecture of the ordinary. An angry agent provocateur of Irish Catholic descent, who allegedly sees himself as a latter-day Ned Kelly93, he had an immense impact on the Melbourne architectural scene, provoking intense controversy and acting as a catalyst—now anything was possible’ (Spence 1985d, p65). He thrives on confrontation and likes to think he has ‘a dash of the larrikin architect in him. Related to his left-wing attitudes is a decidedly urban orientation. He has no time for the mythology of the Australian bush with its ‘brave heroes of the soil’ — the ‘bush aristocracy’’ (Spence 1985c, p69).

Back in Australia he was given commissions in suburban Catholic parishes. ‘The context resembled that for most Edmond and Corrigan work later: not much money, a pub on the next corner that was a conspicuous part of parish life, ‘ordinary’ surroundings’, (p42) The ‘pub’94 is a sign of the sub-text to the imagery that surrounds Corrigan, his literal and symbolic ‘Irishness’, very much a factor, as Spence points out, in the construction of Australian folk ‘history’ (see White 1981). Pubs figure in the Corrigan narrative. During his student days, ‘[v]igorous discussion, mostly in inner-Melbourne pubs, ensured that Corrigan’s shirt was frequently shredded. ... a group of architectural students, who spent much of their time in pubs ... uneven relationship with teachers, his supplementary exams, and to a repeated fifth year’ (Hamann 1993, p9). Some months after a discussion about a possible job, ‘[Andrew] Reed called to Corrigan across a crowded pub bar to say ‘the job fell through’’ (p17).

92 ‘Specific designs seem to have almost always had a predominant author, ... and in questioning Peter Corrigan in particular I noted that a series of designs were ‘his’... In public presentation, and in dealings with builders, consultants and clients, or when a structural, legal, or planning assessment had to be made, generally Maggie Edmond had to be on hand. ... In the majority of cases the contribution of both partners was significant and varied. It therefore seems appropriate to write of Edmond and Corrigan collectively when discussing designs from the office.’ (Hamann 1993, p41)

93 Spence cites ‘a conversation with Norman Day’.

94 The ‘pub’ is the public house or hotel, traditional drinking place of the Australian man, where the public bar was closed to women until the 1970s. The residential portion of the pub is required by law to legitimate its primary function, serving beer.

202
Descriptions of the forms of Corrigan’s buildings accentuate his non-conformity. The overall form of the Athan house was... ‘startlingly ‘exploded’’; the house was shaped with radial wings arranged in staccato gestures outwards... frenetic faceting... madly steppes... window bays. (Hamann 1993, p.21). The Schmidt house ‘teetered on the brink of being a folly... veering crazily off into a swirl of monumental movement’ (p.23). The forms of the design for the Keysborough School Hamann describes as a ‘stab’—‘a neatly subversive gesture at schoolroom propriety and at any number of unnamed things’ (p.63). Designing the Sale Football Club House had Corrigan ‘in his element. His delight in football— the rain, the red and black mud, the cow-like yells and striped sweaters— was obvious, and this was his first chance to work on a football temple’ (p.85). Hamann asks of the Dandenong TAFE building, ‘[i]s it a burst of Dandenong defiance, shouting at the traffic... or the bush beyond?’ (p.122).

Maggie Edmond is invisible in Drew’s account of the work of Edmond and Corrigan, in which Corrigan is discussed alone. In Drew’s entry on Corrigan in Contemporary Architects we see the elision between the hero and the larrikin. Drew speaks of Corrigan’s ‘unique achievement’, ‘the intensity of that struggle to revivify the ugly’, his ‘adventurous theatrical approach’, and ‘dangerously skidding plans, that set out to shock and alienate’, and describes a building whose ‘a cucumber shape... playfully recalls a bent phallus’ (Drew on Peter Corrigan in Emanuel c.1994, p.201). ‘His buildings break all sorts of modern taboos... Corrigan will not satisfy those who demand an architecture of equilibrium, formal poise and harmony; he seeks something quite different, something which is a... reflection of life, more what people are like, that presents us to a drama of the ordinary’ (p.202).

The status quo

Graham Jahn’s Contemporary Australian Architecture (Jahn 1994) is the most recent general publication on Australian architecture. The dust jacket proclaims it ‘the most comprehensive study of its kind to date on ideas in Australian architectural practice.’ ‘The 45 projects have been chosen because they provide a map of architectural positions and ideas evolved during this period (1975-1991).’ (Jahn 1994, p.1) But Jahn’s ‘map’ is a partial one, with many unexplored regions omitted. The culture Jahn describes as context for the ‘emergence of Australian Architecture’ is almost exclusively ‘Anglo’, masculine and middle class, with no mention of issues of participation in design and production of the built environment, or the potential for activism in architecture and its discourse. Only about 4% of the designers included are women (not even pro rata of registered architects), and those mentioned are always in partnership with a man or men.95 The first ‘woman’ mentioned in the text is Edna Everage.96 Real women implicitly occupy a limited repertoire of roles — the obliging client, the supportive half of an architectural marriage. Postmodernism, multiculturalism and environmentalism rate only a minor mention, and the critical issues raised by

---

95 Four women architects are mentioned in the text. Annabel Lahz is among the project team for the Goetz House in Buderim (Clare / Gee / Lahz), Sarah Hamilton-Hill is Assistant Architect for the Harrison House (Murcutt / Tzannes), Maggie Edmond (architectural partner and wife of Peter Corrigan in the Edmond and Corrigan office) is named in passing, and Heather Bevis is cited as Design Architect for the Bevis-Corker House (Denton Corker Marshall), in the DCM minimalist ‘house style’.

96 ‘Edna Everage’ is an extreme caricature of a variety of the worst stereotypical characteristics of Australian womanhood (from the dowdy suburbanite to the vulgar celebrity) performed by the comedian Barry Humphries ‘in drag’: brilliant theatre, but hardly seriously representative of Australian womanhood.
feminism and cultural pluralism are not explored.\textsuperscript{97} As was characteristic of Modernism, buildings are considered as precious and/or monumental objects.\textsuperscript{98}

Jahn describes Murcutt's buildings as 'truly of the land, igniting smouldering but potent bush myths and outback values which Australians had learned to admire through the legends of poetry, writing and painting' (Jahn 1994, p3), and quotes an awards jury in Melbourne describing Corrigan's Keysborough School building as 'larrkin architecture, loud mouthed and brash and rough-edged, but at the same time intellectual architecture full of subtle illusions and allusions — interesting, joyful, annoying, exciting, impossible to ignore, and difficult to forget' (p5). So he continues the mythology of the \emph{grands récits} and the \emph{avant garde} with an Australian flavour, and the bipolar Murcutt-Corrigan myth — the Everyman-individualist building in the mythic Bush ('Murcutt's sensual fundamentalism' (p5)), contrasted with the rebel-larrkin in the taste-denying suburbs.\textsuperscript{99}

The themes which circulate in these narratives of Australian architecture participate in traditionally masculine national myths of identity — man the individualist and rebel against nature symbolised as female, claiming a lineage in the masculine history of outlaws, diggers, pioneers or city larrkins. As in Henry Lawson's stories, women are paradigmatically absent.

\textsuperscript{97} Jahn does regret that '[t]he noble [sic] myths of the land were commercialised and devalued by beer and car advertisements during the 1980s' (Jahn 1994, p5).

\textsuperscript{98} The major part of the book consists of description and interpretation of individual buildings. However understanding the experience of inhabiting the buildings is not assisted by photographs which are almost universally empty of people. There are few plans, and many are without north points and show different levels at different scales and unaligned on the page and at different scales (for instance pp155, 163).

\textsuperscript{99} These comments are based on my review of Jahn in "No Drop City" (White 1994b).
Chapter 9

Conclusions

[S]patial texts ... reveal the dynamics and incessant production of ideology, as do our readings of them, and as do our readings of our own readings.

(Gwin 1996, pp874-875)

Are we witnessing a change in relations between the technicians of space?

(Rabinow 1984, p244)

Introduction

I commenced this research project with a generic impression that many of the architectural texts I read spoke with a masculine voice. I had re-read Le Corbusier's classics Towards a New Architecture and The City of Tomorrow while preparing for a seminar to be presented to a non-architectural audience of academic feminists. My first reading of Leaves of Iron was in preparation for a seminar presentation on 'Reading Architecture', at which I was probably the only feminist. In both cases I found myself at a conjunction of paradigms not usually brought together. I was surprised, in reading Le Corbusier's work, at the combination of declarations couched in masculinist terms, the absence of women as presumed inhabitants in the formulation of his ideas for the city, and the expressions of gratuitous hostility to women interspersed throughout the text. Drew's text on Murcutt was striking in its use of now outdated language ('man'), its implicit and explicit masculism, and its simplistic and effectively phallocentric conflation of 'woman' and 'Australia' with nature.

'I set out in the thesis to put flesh on the skeleton of this impression, to trace the circulation of gendered ideas, assumptions and representations, within the conceptual fabric which informs the 'political economy' of the built environment, and the way people practice, experience, interpret and value architecture.' (Chapter 1, p5)

Feminist theory provides theoretical structure to these impressions. I examined the texts for evidence of the deployment of a paradigmatic phallogocentric conceptual schema, in particular the deployment of the dichotomies or oppositional dualisms, symbolically and often literally defined in gendered terms. This involves the assumption that the 'universal human' subject / protagonist is male, a subjectivity endowed with positive characteristics, in opposition to the 'other' — symbolically or literally construed and/or constructed as feminine and explicitly or implicitly valued as negative or deficient. I traced in the texts other manifestations of the 'masculine' thus construed by phallogocentric thought — the assumption that culture is characterised by mathematics, science, and technology and a narrowly defined rationality, and the privileging of the transcendent, the abstract, the 'objective', the detached and the distant. One of the most important versions of a constellation of dichotomies is the conflation of the feminine with nature, in a frequently sexualised relationship with (masculine) human culture which is at times conflictual, at times passionate, frequently ambivalent.
Discussion

The genesis of this thesis was political. I am concerned at the scarcity of women in architecture not only as a matter of social justice for women, but because I argue that restriction of the diversity in practitioners of architecture, whether on grounds of ethnicity, class or gender, restricts the potential for good architecture. My concern in the thesis is principally with the influence of contemporary forms of discourse on the practice of architecture into the future, and in particular on the education of prospective architects. My choice of Le Corbusier as subject, and consequently my reading of texts from many decades ago, was based on the evident continuing interest in his work, his writing and his life, and its echoes in current architectural discourse. Furthermore, at times his writing exposes gender issues in extreme form, so reading contemporary responses to his ideas and their expression in effect simulates a ‘survey of attitudes’ to matters seldom raised in mainstream architectural discussion. My choice of Murcutt as representative of Australian architecture was effectively automatic. Murcutt is the only Australian architect to have been the subject of three books by independent critics and a film. Furthermore his work is not only very well-known in Australia, it has reached international attention.

The thesis makes no claim to statistical validity, an impossibility, given the number, range and exponential growth of architectural texts. Having selected as ‘reading sites’ mainstream texts, with a chronological spread of almost a century\(^1\), and centred on individual architects, in both cases figures who have attracted considerable critical and historical attention, I have endeavoured to make my reading as comprehensive as possible. I have examined all major full-length books in English on each of the two architects\(^2\). In this way, my ‘sample’ of texts is ‘vertical’ rather than ‘horizontal’. Given the ‘public images’ of both Le Corbusier and Murcutt, the texts perhaps emphasise origins and lineage, individual character and the nature of creativity / genius than texts on the work of less prominent architects; ‘everyday’ discussion of buildings in professional journals is less likely to engage in metaphysical discussion of the nature of creativity in the architectural psyche, or the origin of architectural forms.

The texts studied can be divided into two types: those from within the work of the architect — ‘his own words’, and those from without — critical and historical writing by others. The relation of these two aspects of the literature were significantly different in the two cases, not only in terms of the size of the archive. In the case of Le Corbusier, the object of study was not only his own often idiosyncratic polemic writing and his comprehensive documentation of his own work, but their reception within the mainstream architectural literature. In the case of Murcutt, I was able to read or listen to (on radio and audio-tape) a large proportion of Murcutt’s own words; Murcutt’s non-intellectualising preoccupation with his response to the natural settings, and his descriptions of his search for simple, ‘classical’ architectural solutions to each design problem, provide little material for a feminist exegesis. The interpretations of his relationship with ‘the land’ and his architectural response to context and form are by others, and Murcutt himself has expressed surprise (Murcutt, ‘Foreword’ in Drew 1996).\(^3\)

---

1 Le Corbusier’s *Journey to the East*, although first published in 1966 was in effect a manuscript of 1911. The most recent text on Le Corbusier studied here was published in 2000.

2 In the case of Le Corbusier I have emphasised recent texts.

3 However, like the reviewers of *Leaves of Iron* discussed in Chapter 7, he apparently accepts and is even convinced by Drew’s gendered fantasies.

An interpretation of Murcutt’s building designs based on phallogocentric assumptions about the masculinity of abstraction, geometry, and straight lines might find material here. However my concern in this thesis is not with architecture and buildings *per se*, but the discourse which surrounds and influences their production and reception.
The force of Murcutt’s influence in the discourse(s) of architecture in Australia lies not in his own published words, but in those of others about him; a significantly smaller corpus of texts than those on Le Corbusier. To extend the spread of the Australian texts examined I included the two full-length books on recent Australian architecture, by Taylor (1986) and Jahn (1994), and an international dictionary of Contemporary Architects. (Emanuel c1994).4

Conclusions

Le Corbusier and ‘Le Corbusier’

From my reading of his writing, I found Le Corbusier’s approach to architecture paradigmatically androcentric (he assumes a world inhabited almost exclusively by (actual) men), phallicentric (he conceives of the world in terms of a masculine metaphysics and epistemology), even misogynist. I take as a touchstone to the gender-awareness of later writers on architecture, in particular since the advent of ‘second-wave’ feminism, their reaction to these attitudes.

Le Corbusier’s writing rehearses, at times in extreme form, tropes which western culture conflates with men, maleness and masculinity. For Le Corbusier urbanism was a ‘scientific’ project, utilising the technological means of mass production, repetition and standardisation, but seeking perfection in the formal layout and geometry. For Le Corbusier civilisation can be classified by forms; the straight line and the right angle, a clear manifestations of power and will, and the city — a ‘human operation directed against nature’ — was to be made for speed. His vision of the city consisted in effect of a public sphere organised on militaristic principles of order and control, organised to promote speed and the separation of functions, with obsessively private living spaces on the model of a monastery.

In the architecture of the individual building, the same principles are evident: the ‘fixing of standards’ and the ‘spirit of order’, in accordance with the laws of physics. “The Architect, by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is the pure creation of the spirit.” (Le Corbusier 1970, pp7-11) The inhabitants of his architecture are assumed to be male. For Le Corbusier ‘All men have the same organism, the same functions. All men have the same needs.’ (p126). Women are absent as (potential) inhabitants or as designers of architecture; they are either subsumed in ‘men’ or nonexistent. He — and his exegetes — appear to view women as peripheral, even inimical, to the important affairs of men; they are valued by Le Corbusier only as manifestations of ‘the physical’, aesthetic or sexual objects. This is in clear contrast with the transcendental character of ‘man’ he calls upon in his discussions of creativity and the role of architecture in the life of Man, symbolised by his Modulor. However mainstream writers on Le Corbusier find no irony or paradox in the contrast between the mathematical / metaphysical claims for the Modulor and Le Corbusier’s paintings and drawings of women. For these writers, as for Le Corbusier, the identity of culture with the masculine, and the elision of woman, sex and nature are taken for granted.

Over the course of his life a shift occurred gradually in Le Corbusier’s thinking, from the rationalist to the romantic. He rejected his early passionate allegiance to ‘reason’ and the mathematical, in favour of a more metaphysical, even Romantic view of Man. So we also find manifestations of that other, Romantic, side of the coin of patriarchy, the archetype of the tragic or embattled hero, the lone creative individual struggling against all odds, clearly based on his own perceived role as the tragic warrior.

4 Earlier texts, with the obvious exclusion of writing by Robin Boyd, tended to be descriptive rather than philosophical or theoretical.
Response to Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier’s texts are idiosyncratic, and his language and ‘voice’ are now dated, but his influence remains, and later mainstream critics and interpreters, including women, make no comment on the gender bias implicit in his ideas, or the explicitly masculine perspective of his writing. The masculinity of Le Corbusier’s world appears to be either invisible, or natural, or both. In the literature about Le Corbusier the themes or tropes of masculinity identified in feminist theory circulate in multiple manifestations. I found that mainstream writers uncritically accepted, repeated, and even exaggerated, the masculine language of Le Corbusier’s own text. One may conclude that they do not see, or they ignore, or they endorse, his masculinist language and his gendered interpretations of the world. Some indulge in their own prejudiced characterisations of women, ‘Woman’ and the feminine.

Some texts rehearse the stereotypical, even archetypal tropes of modern patriarchal culture discussed in Chapter 5: the ‘Classical’ Cartesian ‘man of reason’, grounding his authority in distance, vision (‘the gaze’), order, truth, mathematics, science and technology; or his alter ego, the artist-genius as Romantic epic hero, participating in his creativity in aspects of the divine, and thus transcending the concerns of everyday life. The fundamental organising principle is hierarchical dualism whose ground is the opposition between the masculine (positive) and the feminine (negative), but which proliferates in less consistent, more fluid dyads such as culture / nature, reason / emotion, and, ironically, classic rationalism / romanticism5.

Even in trenchant critiques of his ideas on urbanism and architecture I found little criticism of the masculism / misogyny manifest in his writing, nor even awareness of the gendered cast of his thought. In the many interpretations of his work, the implicit acceptance of his overt commitment to the world of the masculine remains consistent. In some cases this can be interpreted as gender blindness, in others it appears more like complicity; some writers display their own sexist, even misogynist attitudes. The idiosyncrasy of Le Corbusier’s voyeuristic and ‘functional’ attitudes to women, his casual sexism, even his misogyny, are not merely accidents of personality or reflective of his time. His writing has been, and continues to be, influential, and the lack of reaction to, even the celebration of, these attitudes on the part of his followers / critics signifies complicity.6

Writing on Murcutt

The manifestations of masculinity in my chosen Australian texts are less comprehensive and less complex than those circulating in the corbusian literature. The French Fromonot discovers in Murcutt’s designs ‘immutable principles’ reminiscent of Le Corbusier. However what the literature constructing ‘Glenn Murcutt’ has principally in common with the literature on the mythological ‘Le Corbusier’ is its participation in the quest for heroes. In my reading on Australian architecture I found that this quest has a distinctly regional flavour. Drew, and to a lesser extent Fromonot and the BHP film ‘Touch the Earth Lightly’, have contributed to the development of a heroic myth in the context of the national preoccupation with ‘Australian identity’, which depends still on foundational masculine myths. Drew also calls on the idea of a

---

5 This last is particularly significant in the case of Le Corbusier, whose approach to his art underwent a road to Damascus transformation from the rationalist-purist to the romantic-organic (see Turner 1977).

6 Jencks in particular adds his own gratuitous misogyny inappropriate to academic discourse. Jencks’s attitude to women is in contrast to his analysis of Le Corbusier’s life as a narrative of the travailed and tragic hero, struggling alone against a hostile world. Like Le Corbusier’s, Jenck’s’s imaginary world of architectural creativity is constructed in accordance with a transcendental masculine perspective.
(masculine) genetics of architectural creativity and a masculine lineage, and in a case of overt intertextuality, uses quotations from DH Lawrence, and calls on literary legitimation from writers such as Rousseau and Melville: ample evidence of the masculine perspective of his text.

Drew’s writing of ‘Murcutt’ does not only construct a ‘typical Australian’ masculine hero, his imagery draws on Australian stereotypes. Attempting to characterise Murcutt’s approach to the natural setting of his buildings, he employs almost gratuitously conventional dualist opposition between the masculine and the feminine. He appropriates the feminine as the symbolic figure of Nature, ‘the primitive’, ‘the exotic’, and draws, implicitly and explicitly, on notions of ‘Man’, ‘man’ and ‘masculinity’ as Subject — central and dominant — and ‘woman’ / ‘femininity’ as object — literal and symbolic ‘Other’. This dualist schema here serves to exclude and derogate women and the feminine. The feminine thus used is appropriated for symbolic purposes in a masculine economy of meanings, and is construed and/or construed as the necessary antithesis to (masculine) human culture.

Drew’s formulation appears to draw directly on attitudes to women arising from ‘the Australian past, ‘a history, unusually steeped in misogyny’ (Dixson 1984, p13), and the ‘profound unconscious contempt for women that pervades the Australian ethos’ (p188), and to share the ‘particularly rigid dualistic notion of women’s role ... embodied in ... stereotypes’ of good and evil (Summers 1975, p21). In particular Drew calls upon images of female degradation. Neither his nor reviewers of his book express any reservations about the use of the metaphors of woman as prostitute or deserted bride as mythic surrogate for Nature. The availability of ‘woman’ for use as metaphor is assumed, and the transference of meanings is ‘natural’, immediate — and pejorative: degradation, dependence, servility, perfidy. The misogynist conflation of ‘nature’ and ‘woman’, is now so ‘naturalised’ in the language and the culture that even perceptive critics such as Spence, Day and Missingham do not notice such a gendered formulation.

Unexpected findings

In spite of the hypothesis as to the gendered nature of architectural discourse with which I commenced this study, I was in fact surprised at the frequency and diversity of manifestations of masculinity, as metaphor, as political statement, as personal animus, as prejudice. The chief surprises from the research were

- the level of misogyny expressed in some of the texts, in sexist phrases, metaphors and anecdotes,
- the persistence over time of masculinist language and attitudes, and of negative, even strongly misogynist attitudes to women,
- the continued use of ‘phallocentric’ metaphor, appropriating the feminine for symbolic purposes.

General conclusions

My main conclusion from the mainstream architectural texts I have studied is that in terms of the place and role of women in architecture, and the meanings ascribed to femininity in the discourse of architecture, little appears to have changed over the course of the twentieth century. At the pragmatic level, women as protagonists are almost entirely invisible in most of the mainstream texts studied. They appear, if at all, as peripheral and marginal figures. Mainstream texts in architecture generally neglect or ignore the existence of actual women, whether as inhabitants of buildings and
precincts, or as architects. Where women are mentioned, they are often trivialised and
denigrated, in a way that is never applied to men and the masculine.

In tone, in voice, in language, in content and in detail, texts ranged from the neutral to
the overtly misogynist. I found little or no recognition of the role and importance of
gender in architecture and the production of built environments, and gender bias, overt
masculinity or even sexism and misogyny in texts are not recognised by theorists or
critics discussing them. Not only is the importance of gender to a full understanding of
architecture still not acknowledged in the discourse, even the absence of women in the
discourses of architecture appears to be still invisible to mainstream writers.

Texts make the assumption that ‘the architect’ is (always) male. The texts often display
patriarchal attitudes, as identified in feminist theory, committed to a limited notion of
reason, to abstraction, to order and control, in particular power over nature, often
identified as feminine. Structural gendered dualisms (male / female, masculine /
feminine, culture / nature, reason / emotion, dominant / muted ...) remain active in the
discourse. The ‘masculine’ is privileged over the ‘feminine’, as construed in
patriarchal culture. Writers on architecture, whether men or women, generally assume
that the human subject is masculine, a masculine subjectivity living in a male body.
Furthermore an implicit assumption underlying many texts is that human creativity is
paradigmatically masculine: texts employ patriarchally inflected conceptualisations of
genius, knowledge, reason, order, mastery, authority and hierarchy as masculine, and
masculine archetypes such as Father, Hero and Pioneer. They promote the idea of the
great architect, the creative individual working alone. They assume that the ‘normal’
human is male / masculine, that the human body which inhabits architecture is a male
body, and that human subjectivity itself is gendered masculine, in particular as it is
manifested in the creativity of the Architect.

Architectural discourse does call on ‘the feminine’, but employs it as metaphorical foil
to the ‘masculine’ as marker of culture; masculinity in the texts of architecture is often
defined in terms of distance / difference from and opposition / hostility to the
‘feminine’. This appropriation of the ‘archetypal’ symbolic meanings of the feminine
as ‘Other’, ‘Nature’ and the ‘primitive’ appears to be necessary for the construction of
the masculine architectural world and the identity of its masculine constructors.
Epilogue

The original impetus for this study was my concern at the minimal participation of women in the architecture profession. There would appear to be a lack of congruence between many women's views of themselves and their intentions for life and work experience, and their perception of the profession. Female architecture graduates, however successful they may have been in their architectural studies, may feel excluded in many ways from the habitus of architecture (Bourdieu 1990). A woman architect will probably be socialised at a professional level into the profession, but if she is at all familiar with feminist theoretical insights she cannot remain unaware of the modes of discourse and other mechanisms which tend to exclude her from its 'freemasonry'. Women may be making a sensible choice not to participate in the conventional profession based on their perceptions of the image of the profession, the nature of the work of the architect and the habitus of practice. Some may choose another profession altogether, some may choose to practise architecture differently, some may accept the situation and 'fit in'.

These ideas have their origins in the accumulation of impressions from the varied discourses, produced within and about the profession, which circulate in the culture — literature, education, the media, combined with the inevitably conservative influence of the 'conventional wisdom'. There are implications here for architectural pedagogy. Research could usefully be carried out into the image of architecture and the architect amongst architecture students and others, students' reasons for studying architecture, and any dissonances students and graduates find between their previous impressions and what they find in architecture school and later in practice.
Appendix A


**NOTE:**

This publication is included in the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.
Appendix B

White, Deborah (1988). "Half the Sky, but No Room of her Own."

NOTE:

This publication is included in the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.
Bibliography
Bibliography


Bibliography

Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse


236


Gordon, Linda (1979). The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three Stages of Feminism. in 
Capitalist Patriarchy and the case for Socialist Feminism. Z. R. Eisenstein (ed.). New York: 

Routledge.


London: Picador.

Griffiths, Dot (1985). The Exclusion of Women from Technology. in Smothered by Invention: 
51-71.


Education 49(3): 166-183.

Grosz, Elizabeth (1990a). Contemporary Theories of Power and Subjectivity. in Feminist Knowledge: 

Grosz, Elizabeth (1990b). Philosophy. in Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct. S. Gunew 

University Press.

York: G Braziller.

of Women in Culture and Society 21(4): 870-905.

Studies International Quarterly 4: 341-353.

Hacker, Sally (1989). Pleasure, Power and Technology: Some Tales of Gender, Engineering and the 

Hamann, Conrad (1993). Cities of Hope. Australian Architecture and Design by Edmond and 


Review 1: 20-29.


Metaphor in Philosophy. Honours Thesis, Department of Architecture. Adelaide: University of 
Adelaide.


Haraway, Donna (1990). A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 
1980s. in Feminism/Postmodernism. L. J. Nicholson (ed.). New York/London: Routledge: 190- 
233.


Harding, Sandra and Merrill B Hintikka (eds.) (c1983). Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on 
Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science. Dordrecht, Holland / 
Boston; D Reidel (Kluwer Boston).

Hargreaves, Kay (1975). This House is Not for Sale: Conflicts between the Housing Commission and 
Residents of Slum Reclamation Areas. Melbourne: Centre for Urban Research and Action, Fitzroy, Vic.


Bibliography

Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse


Le Corbusier (1948). New World of Space.


Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse


Sinclair, Anne (1985). Women Living on their Own. in On the Threshold — Housing Women. First National Women’s Housing Conference, University of Adelaide.


Bibliography


Bibliography

Masculine Constructions: Gender in twentieth-century architectural discourse


Sources of Illustrations

p xiv Modulor series (Le Corbusier 1954, p67)

p xvi Le Corbusier: ‘The Stele of the Measures’ at the Unité d’Habitation, Marseilles (Le Corbusier 1954, p143)

p xxiv Modulor chimpanzee (‘a topsy-turvy Modulor man’) (Le Corbusier 1958, p24)
Le Corbusier: *Femmes* (Raeburn and Wilson 1987, p126)
The Modulor (Le Corbusier 1954, p295)
Murcutt house concept drawing (Fromonot 1995, p10)

p 44 Le Corbusier: *Deux femmes avec turbans* (von Moos 1987, p194)

p 212 Le Corbusier: A Pharoah (Rameses II after Champollion) (Le Corbusier 1954, p211)