Affective disorder: architectural design for complex national identities

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Abstract: Underpinned by concepts drawn from postcolonial theory, this article speculates on the relationship between built form and the experience of difference. It critically examines cultural theorist Homi K. Bhabha's conceptualisation of nation - focusing on ideas of the 'performative' and 'pedagogical' - as applied to frame specific works of architecture in the writing of Felipe Hernández.   This analysis is then used as the foundation for two building reviews. Firstly, the National Museum of Australia, which reveals an emphasis on formal incoherence to reflect the plurality of national identity. This in-turn leads to a consideration of 'affect' as an alternative design hermeneutic in the pursuit of non-reductive methods to reflect the lived plurality of 'nation-space'. This consideration is extended to a second building study: the Institute du Monde Arabe, which is used to advance ideas on the relationship between form (representation) and affect (non-representation) and the relative merits these may bring to a re-thinking of design approaches in contexts of complex national identities.

Keywords: Architecture, postcolonial theory, national identity, Homi K. Bhabha, performative, pedagogic, affect

Introduction

'The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism', so long prophesised, is not remotely in sight. Indeed. Nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (Anderson, 1983, as cited in McLean, 2001, p. 21).

Drawing on Anderson, Ian McLean charts the persistence of the nation-state and the myth of national identity through the 'fugitive borderless spaces and fragile hybrid identities' (McLean, 2001, p. 23) of postmodernity. McLean maps the ongoing

relevance of nation, bound up as it is with an identity politics influenced by capitalism, multiculturalism and globalisation. Further, he reflects, rather than the endgames of the nation-state being brought about by the new socio-political and economic world order, 'ultra-nationalistic and ethnocentric ideologies suddenly erupted with unsuspecting vigor in places such as Yugoslavia, Rwanda and India' (McLean, 2002, p. 23).

In more recent years, Europe has seen a rise in far-right nationalism or aggressive anti-EU sentiment in countries such as Austria, Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. Irrespective of the unique motivations (political isolationist, anti-immigrant, islamophobic, xenophobic, etc.) of right-wing movements in particular nation-states, common to all is the belief that they are the 'reliable defenders of a national community' (Zúquete, 2015, p. 69) whose identity is at risk from a corrupting and dangerous Other. Key to the discourse of right-wing parties is a rhetoric of indigeneity – a belief in a common ethnic national origin – which supports the mainstreaming of particular right-wing ideologies, renewing and legitimising racist discourse in the name of national identity (Williams & Law, 2012). Nation as a site of identity persists, ever more contested, forcing a reconfiguration in global politics and marking cities characterized by tension, conflict and segregation.

In response and by definition, cities carry the question of how we could, or should, live together. In *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* (2018), Richard Sennett examines this question by highlighting two aspects of the city: *ville* (the built environment) and *cité* (modes of living and place attachment). His essential thesis is that these two aspects are in disjunction, with the *ville* overriding the *cité* and with the intentions of the (nineteenth-century) city to re-shape human behaviour not accounting for the unruliness of people. Central to this unruliness, was not simply the nature of

human beings, but their nature in response to difference in the modern city. Informed by Sociologist Georg Simmel's notion of cité, Sennett describes it as a place of 'subjective experience, full of emotional angst' (p. 61). Sennett's manifesto on the ethics of the city reaches relevant territory for this article in the chapter entitled 'The Weight of Others', where he examines how one measure of the ethics of the city is the way in which it deals with cultural difference, essentially concerned with definitions of the Other and the way in which difference 'weighs in on the city, confusing both its built forms and its ways of life' (p. 121).

The point of coupling the rise of far-right nationalism and Sennett's recent ideas about an open and tolerant twenty-first century city is not so much to identify a problem and potential solution, but rather the opposite – they are coupled to highlight their mutual exclusivity. On one hand, the resilient, socially embedded and historically persistent allure of the idea of a homogenous or ethnocentric national identity. On the other, the infancy of a discourse which aims to radically rethink the way in which cities may accommodate difference. The tolerant, inclusive city (which by definition must be open and responsive) is hindered not only by the ideological apparatus of the state, but also by the very material fact and form of the city. Bartmanski & Fuller (2018) explore the way in which architecture and cities exert causal power, and in particular how the scale and style of grand and civic architecture exhibit the power to 'consolidate and crystallize social meanings in order to authenticate different ideological systems' (p. 207). A non-doctrinaire counterpoint to the latter, more easily able to accommodate the *weight of Others*, may (ironically) find agency in the proven openness of national identities to alternative futures and self-conceptions. From state-sponsored multiculturalism to its intersection with neoliberalism and globalisation, the resilience of national identity is reliant on its openness to alterity.

Following-on, this article speculates on the potential relationship between built form and the experience of difference. It critically examines the theoretical potential of cultural theorist Homi Bhabha's conceptualisation of nation – focusing on ideas of the 'performative' and 'pedagogical' – as applied to frame specific works of architecture in the writing of Felipe Hernández. This analysis is then used as the foundation for two building reviews. Firstly, the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, which reveals an emphasis on formal incoherence as the design approach used to reflect the plurality of national identity. This in-turn leads to a consideration of 'affect' as a possible alternative design hermeneutic in the pursuit of non-reductive methods to reflect the lived plurality of 'nation-space'. This consideration is extended to a second building study: the Institute du Monde Arabe, Paris, which is used to advance ideas on the relationship between form (representation) and affect (non-representation) and the relative merits these may bring to re-thinking design in contexts of complex national identities. The term 'national identity' is retained here in favour over other more explicitly complex forms of identity (transnational, diasporic, intercultural, etc.) so that its potential agency for equitable living – both political and aesthetic – is not abandoned or else given over for definition through the exclusionary politics of far-right forms of nationalism. In this sense, the retention of the term is also inspired by philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's linguistic analogy in reference to the role of speculative art. Gadamer refers to 'the living virtuality of meaning contained in each word, an inner dimension of multiplicity. Accordingly, language is not the representation (mimesis) of a set of pre-given meanings but a "coming to language" of a constant reserve of meaning' (Gadamer, 1986, as cited in Davey, 2013, p. 46). In this sense, any counter narrative based on this understanding of the term, constitutes within itself an inclusionary potential which must always remain open.

Postcolonial theory, architecture and national identity

Discourse on how national identity is expressed through architecture has tended to fall into two camps. Firstly, insights into the way architecture has been *designed* to reflect national identity, whether related to the state, architectural modernism or romantic regionalism (see MacKechnie & Glendinning; 2019; Quek et al., 2012; Lane, 2000). Whilst clearly grounded in changing socio-political and cultural contexts which inform the way architecture represents ideas of nationhood or trans-national influence, this discourse has as its primary focus the question of style. Civic forms of architectural nationalism – globalised through the mobilisation of various architectural treatise and resulting in a recognisable trans-national style (columna orders, pediments, entablatures, etc.) – can be traced back to De architectura, written in the 20s B.C. by Roman architect and engineer Vitruvious. The classicist ideas prescribed in De architectura coalesced around pythagoran notions of symmetry, harmony and proportion used (eventually) to reflect and promote the idea of a unified national community. In the second camp are insights into the way architecture has been *instrumentalised* to reflect national ideology, pressing unity onto diverse publics, or else supporting oppressive national regimes. The latter – particularly from the last decade of the twentieth-century onwards – has benefitted greatly from analytic methods and conceptual frameworks drawn from postcolonial theory (see AlSayyad, 1992; Bozdogan, 2001; Holsten, 1989, 1999; Vale, 1992). Although ill-defined as a coherent theoretical school of thought, postcolonial theory has since its emergence in the 1950s (with literature, history and philosophy as foundational disciplines) sought to reveal the oppressive tactics of colonisers and their aggressive assertion of universal modernism, giving voice to subaltern subjects and unacknowledged histories.

One consequence of the critical edge brought by postcolonial theory to architectural nationalism is the conflation of the terms *design* and *instrumentalisation*. The focus on architectural nationalism's complicity with networks of power (Foucault, 1979), dominance and exclusion has meant that less attention has been paid to the potential of its formal structures of representation through design. The architectural object of nationalism has generally been considered within broader (usually oppressive) infrastructures of coercion, resituating it as one amongst many mediating artefacts involved in the construction and maintenance of national identity. Along with the negative associations of architectural nationalism, the demand to examine how architecture has or could respond – in theory and in practice – to an increasingly complex globalised world has created a focus on the notion of borderless space and practice, encouraging architectural discourse away from and beyond the perceived anachronism of nationhood. Consequently, at a moment when the understanding of complex forms of citizenship, sovereignty and (not)belonging – across interested disciplines and in public life – is high and intensely contested, the difficult question of how this knowledge might be brought to bear upon the idea of a designed architectural nationalism remains relatively underexplored.

Bhabha's pedagogical and performative applied

Described in the chapter DissemiNation in his seminal work The Location of Culture (1994), Homi K. Bhabha's conceptualisation of nation is essentially split between two temporalities: the pedagogical (the pre-given) and the performative (contemporaneity). His critique of nation shifts the emphasis onto the people of a nation as its signifiers and foregrounds the fact that pedagogical temporality (the practices used to homogenise the imagined community of a nation) is disrupted and rendered impossible by the

performative temporality of all individuals and groups which, through their actions in everyday life, antagonise the nation-space with its 'irredeemably plural modern space' (Bhabha, p. 194). Bhabha's ideas of the pedagogical and the performative are put to work by Felipe Hernández in *Bhabha for Architects* (2010), part of the ground-breaking Routledge series *Thinkers for Architects*, conceived to provide access to theorists and philosophers who have impacted critical frameworks for 'architectural modes of understanding' (Sharr, p.vii, in Hernández, 2010). Its publication marked a seminal interdisciplinary moment within architecture discourse, acknowledging the value of postcolonial theory to architectural considerations of identity and cultural interaction. Hernández applies Bhabha's framing of nation to two works: the writing of Indian architect Rahul Mehotra dealing with contemporary cities in India, and the social housing projects of the Chilean architectural practice Elemental.

Hernández draws a parallel between Bhabha's conception of two national temporalities and Mehotra's writing on contemporary Indian cities. More specifically, he identifies 'the apparent antagonism between the space of the city designed by architects [pedagogic] and the space of the city as used by the people [performative]' (2010, p. 120). Hernández highlights Mehotra's characterisation of an informal Mumbai bazaar as an example of a 'kinetic' counterpart to the 'static' (architect-designed) parts of the city. The bazaar sits within a Victorian arcade, which is referred to as an example of the pedagogic city and a seeming metaphor for the planned city as a whole. The bazaar is described as spontaneous, creative and culturally exuberant, effectively appropriating, contradicting and re-signifying the static pedagogic city. He asserts that Mehotra's discussion of the bazaar and the city is an example of the performativity of the people and 'their participation in the continued construction of national cultures and identities' (p. 121).

Leaving aside significant work on both the semantic fragility and dependency of architect-designed buildings on the user and other physical and non-physical objects or processes (Hill, 1998; Rendell & Borden, 2000; Till, 2009), the use of Mehotra's Mumbai bazaar assumes that it, as a representation of performative spontaneity, does not contain aspects of the discipline and order evident in the so-called pedagogic (static) city. As both Jane Jacobs (1993) and Rem Koolhaas (2007) recognised, informal street markets are disciplined and ordered systems, based on intelligence both local and beyond, and sustained by routines. They are not, in this sense, automatically emblematic of a counter cultural, economic and political moment, in opposition to the kind of uniformity associated with state planning or other perceived forms of order. As Massey (2005), asks: 'What of the systematic and powerful ordering of mechanisms of market and discrimination interlocked?' (p. 112). She goes on to cite Lyotard (1998) arguing that 'much postmodern capitalism coincides quite well with indeterminacy and the avant-garde sublime', confirming that 'the language of order and chance has become loose and problematical' (p.112). This interdependency is, ironically, something that Mehotra himself concedes. While lauding the dynamic innovation and transformative potential of informal urbanism, he states the need for a more expansive definition which describes informal urbanism in relation to and within the wider urban condition. He points out both the strategic primacy of informal urbanism in some economies and the difficulties in mapping its extent or limits, highlighting the need to shift the attention towards a more accurate understanding of simultaneity and coexistence (Mehotra, as cited in Hernández et al, 2010, p. xiii). Perhaps as a consequence of Hernández's separation of the performative and pedagogic, the *antagonism* between the pedagogic and the performative is precisely what is not revealed. The absence of any detailed or site-specific accounts of antagonistic actions, leave only generalised descriptions that

evoke a sense of the performative, presented as self-evident. The performativity of the bazaar is pitched against the pedagogy of the Victorian arcade, the function of which (seemingly contradicted by the bazaar traders) was to 'protect pedestrians from the elements and to smooth their transit as they shopped' (p. 121) which given the figure of the bazaar provided, it still does. The claim that the bazaar, and Mehotra's wider discussion reflects Bhaba's interest in the peoples' performative '…participation in the continued construction of national cultures and identities' (p.121) is difficult to comprehend; the performative here is working against a pedagogy of nation which is given rather than seen and thus is not open to scrutiny.

Hernández goes on to describe Elemental's approach to low-budget social housing as involving a (self-consciously) pedagogical dimension (architect-designed but intentionally incomplete living units initially provided with basic spaces, structure and services) and the performative (space within the constraints of the basic structure for residents to expand through extension or additional floors at low cost). Hernández claims that once all the houses in a particular scheme have fully developed all vacant space, this 'results in vibrant urban landscapes that reveal the *great heterogeneity of Chilean peoples'* (emphasis added) (p. 126). He goes on to say that Elemental's projects 'are an outlet for the expression of cultural difference' (p. 126) which avoid national associations as they do not fit within Chilean vernacular, colonial or modernism categorisations. Fenández asserts that diverse groups 'can perform their differences and negotiate them with other dwellers on a continuous basis' (p. 126), resulting in 'cultural' rather than 'architectural' hybrids (p.128). Aside from the intellectually and ethically problematic claim that the visual expression of the completed blocks reflect the heterogeneity of Chilean peoples, it is unclear whether the resultant collective expressions are simply based on individual and discrete choices

rather than the claim to a negotiated hybridity. The concept of hybridity, so crucial within postcolonial theory as the condition which undermines essentialised forms of identity, is described by Bhabha as a form of continuous productive cultural interaction, the margins of which are 'where cultural differences "contingently" and conflictually touch, becom[ing] the moment of panic which reveals the borderline experience' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 207). Where, how and to what extent do the contingent choices to iteratively extend or expand in a defined area result in authentically hybrid forms of expression? Aside from the qualitative and conceptual distinctions to be made in response to this question, it could be argued (in any case) that the clearly delineated and prescribed structure provided by the architect renders the claimed relinquishing of authority and authorship questionable. Abstracting further, the uniform orthogonal forms delineating the space within which the residents are *permitted* to express themselves, corresponds well to the kind of political containment of Others permitted by the nation-state through, for example, its various policies on assimilation or integration.

The absence of detail concerning both the negotiation that the residents of Elemental's part-self-build project underwent/undergo, and a more precise account of the forms of expression which arise, not only weakens the claim to hybridity, but potentially reveals a jarring inadequacy in the choice of project as one which relates to Bhabha's conception of nation and – more fundamentally – one that exhibits any postcoloniality at all.

Bhabha's pedagogical and performative *mis*applied
Hernández characterises both projects and related processes using particular terms (spontaneous, expressive, difference, identity, appropriating, contradicting, re-signifying, heterogeneity) which indicate engagement with practices of empowerment.

Hernández suggests these practices arise through the aforementioned antagonism between the designed city (pedagogic) and the city as used/appropriated by the people (performative). The process of self-determination, resistance or hybridity claimed – even if fully evidenced and articulated – may belong to an entirely different socio-political economy to the one Bhabha has sought to deconstruct. As Radhakrishnan states, 'The crucial difference that one discerns between metropolitan versions of [resistance and] hybridity and "postcolonial" versions is that, whereas the former are characterised by an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*, the latter are expressions of extreme and agonising dislocations' (2003, p. 314). When Radhakrishan's version of 'metropolitan hybridity' supplants postcolonial hybridity, it 'inevitably depoliticises the latter and renders its rebellion virtually causeless' (p. 314). The interpretive frame seems compromised by both the effective absence of people (and their performative practices), and the unquestioned 'given-ness' of nation. The imagery of both the Mumbai bazaar and Elemental's housing are presented as emblematic acts of resistance against the state, claiming more plural and dynamic voices of the nation. In failing to make any oppressive operation of the nation-state (and its resistance) visible in order to 'bring it into a domain where its legitimacy can be tested' (Dovey, 2001, p. 13), the representations of these projects are involved in a kind of disciplinary self-deceit, grossly exaggerating the saliency of form and visual primacy.

Hernández's reading of Bhabha's ideas of the pedagogical and performative in relation to nation binarises their relationship, losing in this interpretation the fact that Bhabha identifies the 'people' as comprised of a double narrative. In Bhabha's formulation:

> 'the nation's people must be thought of in double-time; the people are the
> historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority

that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin *in the past*; the

people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any

prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious,

living principles of the people as contemporaneity' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 145)

Rather than the 'people' being associated with the performative (in opposition to the

pedagogy of nation) the tension Bhabha identifies between the pedagogical and the

performative represents a splitting which resides *within* the national subject. Potentially

instructive to considerations of architectural nationalism is the aspect of 'splitting' as a

form of narrative address of the nation, one which 'haunts the symbolic formation of

modern social authority' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 146). Bhabha asks: 'How do we conceive of

the 'splitting' of the national subject? How do we articulate cultural differences within

this vacillation of ideology in which the national discourse also participates, sliding

ambivalently from one enunciatory position to the other' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 147). With

his interpretation, Hernández severs the delicate rhetorical strategy of 'the people' set-

up by Bhabha, creating a deadening effect which obscures the play between the

pedagogical and the performative, between certainty and anxiety, between fact and

becoming (one way or the other).

For Representation: National Museum of Australia

Hernández's recasting of Bhabha's conception of nation from one which is open to

shifts in power relations, to one which is a confined and structured binary of cultural

analysis which masks operations of power, misses the opportunity to conceive a

different relationship between the split national subject, architecture and the city. In

addition to the framing, this may be due in-part to the fact that the projects cited were

not originally conceived to reflect or resist oppressive or exclusionary pedagogies and thus perhaps not the best objects of study when attempting to gain insight into the relationship between architecture, the city and national identity.

A useful example of a building self-consciously conceived with the intention to engage complex questions of nationhood, and which raises provocative (and problematic) questions concerning the role of form, is the National Museum of Australia (NMA) in Canberra, designed by Ashton Raggatt McDougall and opened in 2001. The form of the museum has been described as an 'extensive deconstructivist sculpture' (Firth, 2001), expressive of 'the resistant "not" of Derridean deconstruction' (McGaw & Pieris, 2014, p. 170), and incorporating a 'deconstructivist lightning bolt' (Weiser, 2017). The curatorial programme of the building is based on the theme of 'tangled histories' and is supported by interactive approaches. This strategy is reinforced by the non-linear and non-chronological sequence in which the exhibits are presented. The building itself translates the curatorial theme 'literally into looping structural elements following a Boolean Knot, the bended, stretched and knotted geometries that twist and form into folded surfaces' (McGaw & Pieris, 2014, p. 170), a language that is used as a strategy to reflect, map, and trace the complex intersectionality of Australia's history.

As Naomi Stead (2004) has convincingly highlighted, the NMA could be appreciated as a building which undoes 'the totalising expectations carried by national institutions' and is 'determinedly pluralist, offering many individual stories and narratives rather than an overriding authoritative metanarrative of "nationhood" [using] its messy vitality [to work] against false notions of completion, unity, and wholeness' (p. 386). Stead suggests that the building's anti-monumentality leads to a building which is 'incoherent' and open to interpretation (p. 390). Her analysis foregrounds how

anti-monumental museums shift away from the museum conceived and designed as one which has 'borne witness to the passing of time and mortal finitude in a solid, durable, relatively unchanging form' and towards one which is conceived as 'a "lively" museum model which shifts emphasis from the inanimate museum object to the highly animated human subject, the museum visitor' (p. 391).

Perhaps symptomatically, the article does not examine or explain *how* the emphasis is shifted. Rather, it focuses on a particular aspect of the museum (its use of colour) to suggest ways in which it subverts a particular but unspoken 'chromophobia' within architectural history. For Stead, this represents an abandonment of the objectivity normally conveyed by the neutral use of colour, utilised to signify the transcendent and 'unmediated presentation of historical fact' (p. 393) in more traditional national museums. Stead goes on to suggest that this is a courageous abandonment of cultural authority, an argument which is both convincing and compelling. However, one aspect which is deserving of more attention – given the argument and attendant claims – is the experience of the visitor and more specifically how the visitor's experiential understanding of multiple narratives is supported by the building. The experience of multiplicity and tangled history is dealt with here simply through the fact that the building is 'incoherent and open to interpretation' (p. 390).

Although the categorisation of the design as deconstructivist could be contested, it holds to the extent that the building in its typological context, works against the closure of meaning and opposes ideas of unity, stability, authority and (ultimately) identity. In this way, the museum stands in opposition to classical notions of balance, proportion and harmony. However, the parallel claim that the building de-emphasises its '…object character in favour of practice: both in the design process and in the actual experience of the museum visitor' (p. 391) is betrayed. The absence of experience here

results in a reliance (as is also evident in various accounts of the building in sources cited in the text) on 'object character' to express notions of multiplicity and this in-turn harbours a deep negativity which delimits the potential of the building to experientially address questions of complex and plural national identity. The incoherence Stead and others identify (characterized by fragmentation and non-orthogonality) 'conceives of a heterogeneity in relation to internal disruption and incoherence rather than as a positive multiplicity'(Massey, 2005, p. 51). This kind of deconstruction, Massey argues, is based on the co-constitution of identity/difference and the process of expulsion with the aim of constructing a self-identity; 'what gets lost is coeval existence' (Massey, 2005, p. 52). It is the 'expulsion' exemplified by the NMA, which reflects deconstruction's origins in literary analysis. Applied to a text, deconstruction's 'horizontal' focus is on the discursive in order to decenter a text by revealing its hidden bias. However, this does not translate adequately to the coeval nature of space and its multiplicity, nor against the resistant materiality of buildings which results from 'architecture's consistency…durability, hardness, the monumental, mineral or ligneous subsistence, the hyletics of tradition' (Derrida, 1986, p.69).

The analysis of Fenández's and Stead's work here acknowledges their worthwhile intention to give voice or expression to marginalised communities or unacknowledged and complex histories within narratives of nation. The intention is not so much to deconstruct their accounts per se, but to identify those conventional and extraneous representations of architecture upon which they depend. Stead's NMA remains faithful to form and canon, privileging these over the qualitative nature of experience. The denaturalisation of identity that the NMA's theme of tangled history suggests, is asserted but not examined. Hernández's account depends on a kind of 'fixity', a key feature in the ideological construction of otherness in colonial discourse

and the key discursive strategy used in stereotyping. In a bid to articulate marginal

practices as resistant (the performative Mumbai bazaar), he fixes in opposition the

unchanging pedagogic (architect-designed) city of the nation. This expedient fixing and

separation reverses but ultimately repeats the hierarchy, resulting in the denial of

coexistence and (spatial, cultural and economic) interdependency. In this sense it is

complicit as 'no discourse is ever monologue; nor could it ever be analysed

intrinsically...everything that constitutes it always presupposes a horizon of competing,

contrary utterances against which it asserts its own energies' (Terdiman, 1985, p. 36).

Paradoxically, this denies the articulation and testing of counter-hegemonic practices

which may have effective agency. In addition to unintentionally revealing the reliance

on architecture's conventional modes of interpretation and privileging, the accounts also

imply the complexity involved in translating or applying concepts from postcolonial

theory (as a form of social criticism of unequal practices of representation) or wider

theorisations of identity to architecture without a radical reworking or expansion of

what we mean by the term architecture in this context. That architecture resists the kind

of profound displacement offered by postcolonial theory, speaks of its own internal

mechanisms of legitimacy (an exclusionary reliance on form and vision) at the expense

of spatiality, subject formation and agency.

For non-representation: Affect and the critical debate

When dealing with questions of the plurality of national identity, the limits of

conventional architectural representation and related modes of understanding are

apparent here for projects interpreted from a distance as subversive (Mumbai bazaar),

hybrid (Elemental's self-build housing) or pluralist (National Museum of Australia).

They surface a number of unconsciously adopted disciplinary impositions which could

be considered symptomatic of 'those architectural constructions that parade under a universalist guise and either exclude or repress differential spatialities' (Nalbantoglu & Wong, 1997, p. 7). The limits of representation here are those grounded in mimesis: a concept of a representation which presumes a knowable reality external to its own representational practices. This presumption is particularly problematic – if not dangerous – when made through the superficial rigidity of form which 'speaks' on behalf of the always fluid, contested and constitutive identitarian contexts of collective culture. As such, a potentially transgressive reorientation towards ideas of 'non-representational theory' (and its focus on human and non-human practices of interaction) may encourage further formal and epistemological reflection. Non-representational theory's emphasis on the interrelation of embodiment, movement, encounter and materiality – examined here to raise questions of 'affect' – may resonate with Bhabha's movement of political power between performance and pedagogy: a contemporaneity more compatible with the way in which national identity unfolds (or is complexified) in space.

Douglas Spencer's *The Architecture of Neoliberalism* includes an interrogation of recent discourse on the relationship between architecture and affect. The potential of affect in architecture to support an inquiry into the possibility of an open and tolerant architectural nationalism may lie in its 'renunciation of interpretation, representation and mediation' (Spencer, 2016, p. 149). Spencer outlines the schema of various texts which assert the value of the affective turn in architecture, analysing the writing of architects Alejandro Zaera-Polo, Farshid Moussavi and Lars Spuybroek. He highlights their key ideas in the case for affective architecture, including towards 'the production of affects, an uncoded, pre-linguistic form of identity that transcends the propositional logic of political rhetorics' (Zaero-Polo, 2008, as cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 140).

Spencer also critically reflects upon the ideas of artist and theorist Simon O'Sullivan and the philosopher and social theorist, Brian Massumi, considered by many to have written the seminal text on affect, Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation (2002). Spencer emphasises O'Sullivan's argument – presented in his essay The Aesthetics of Affect (2001) – and in particular its assertion that Marxism and deconstruction have led to a misunderstanding of art as an object of knowledge, and that art is not open to interpretation as it is 'extra-discursive and extra-textual' (p. 126). Lars Spuyboek, Spencer points out, thinks meaning is a 'horrible word which lets us believe that the mind can trade aesthetics for textual interpretation' (Spuybroek, 2011, as cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 147) and summarising his reading of Spuybroek's essential point: 'If matter does not require us to think on its behalf, or act upon it from without, then we can relinquish our compulsion to master the world, surrender ourselves over to a feeling for things' (p. 149). Spencer objects to the claims made by these advocates of affect, and more specifically refutes the claim that an affective approach to architecture could could exist 'apart from, and above, the nature of things' (p. 149), i.e. unrelated to and detached from criticism and other meaning-making practices.

Spencer points to the catastrophic implications of assuming that the apparently 'detached' ontological logic driving theories of affect operates 'apart from' things, implications which in-part relate to the alignment between the surrender to immediate experience demanded by both the affective turn and the neoliberal truth game. This alignment engenders a subjectivity based on an ignorance of the social order and therefore without the knowledge and tools to critique or 'make conscious plans for society on the basis of our necessary ignorance'(p. 149). While some of the proponents of affect cited by Spencer argue aggressively for a disavowal of critique (i.e. interpretation and the possibility of representation and mediation) in favour of affect,

not all propose its complete negation. In his analysis of Farshid Moussavi's essay *The Function of Form* (2009), Spencer cites Moussavi as identifying capitalism as key to the development of architectural forms capable of addressing plurality, contributing 'to the production of difference and novelty' (Moussavi, 2009, cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 142). From this discrete citation (and mentioning capitalist methods of product differentiation and mass customisation just prior), Spencer suggests that Moussavi implies 'architecture…should pursue the same path, developing its own novel forms and thereby contribute 'to an environment that connects individuals to multitude [sic] of choices' (Moussavi, 2009, as cited by Spencer, 2016, p. 142). A corollary is insinuated between Moussavi's version of choice and that manufactured by neoliberalism. In fact, in her essay, Moussavi goes on to state (in agreement with Spencer) that the kind of novelty produced by the market limits freedom, individual purpose and expression, as its goal is purely market-driven. She argues, through a discussion on the work of Rem Koolhaas and Mies van der Rohe, that architects should produce forms with a diversity of goals and causes which are not solely market-driven', implying that connection to agency via particular kinds of choice would resist the structured and overdetermined forms of choice related to neoliberal personhood.

The foundation of Moussavi's text is that the contemporary city is a space where 'a multiplicity of cultures and cultural forms cohabit and interconnect, where novel subcultures and identities are constantly emerging (Moussavi, 2009, p. 7)' and that 'architecture can no longer afford to structure itself as an instrument that either reaffirms or resists a single, static idea of culture' (Moussavi, 2009, p. 7). This inflects the term 'individual' (from its radical postmodern form) towards one which, through the introduction of the social, undercuts the new cosmopolitan and neoliberal ideal of the subject who is at once individual and universal. The dynamism of such a space, where

cultural forms are emergent, begins to correlate with Bhabha's notion of vacillation between the performative and pedagogic within his concept of nation. Through her evocation of social relations, Moussavi – perhaps unwittingly – undoes the utopian notion of a purely affective space devoid of meaning. Her description of multiple cultures interconnecting, one where novel forms constantly emerge, indicates an interstitial space 'in-between the designations of identity' and 'between fixed identifications [opening] up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Such a space would necessarily work against the conception of the individual as undivided and self-controlling – key to the citizenisation of the national subject in its orthodox form – referred to by Bhabha as 'the "individual" that is the support for [the] universalist aspiration'(Bhabha, 1994, p.10) of civil society. The conception of such a space can therefore be seen as not only resisting homogenous notions of national identity, but also elevates ontological 'being between' in spaces of complex and emergent identities as the primary epistemological source. Such a space could be seen as working against or alongside those novel forms of difference manufactured by neoliberalism. Here, Bhabha's performative *is* pedagogic, conjuring a prefigurative space which undermines both the totalised national subject and the 'degraded subject' of neoliberalism (Chandler & Reid, 2016, p. 1). However, the question of how such a pre-figurative space could be positively 'structured' or accommodated by built form remains.

One clue is perhaps contained in Spencer's account of philosopher and Marxist political theorist Fredric Jameson's experience of the Bonaventura Hotel, Los Angeles. The account provides insight into how an architecture performs a pedagogical function towards the subjectification of the individual towards neoliberal ends (an outcome which, while not reflecting the ethical and strategic impulse of this article, is

nonetheless instructive). Spencer quotes Jameson stating the hotel 'is exemplary of "something like a mutation in built space itself", an evolution with which the human subject "has not kept pace"' (Jameson, 1991, as cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 150). Concerning the interior, Jameson writes of the 'suppression of depth', a 'bewildering immersion' and the 'milling confusion' of the interior caused by, amongst other things, escalators, streamers, repeated features, lack of distance and perspective, its busyness giving the feeling that 'emptiness here is absolutely packed' (Jameson, 1991, as cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 152), causing visitors to lose their bearings. Rather than a reading which frames the experience and the interior as symptomatic of capitalism, Spencer (drawing upon David Cunningham) states that it 'calls upon the subject to develop the means to accommodate itself to these new conditions – that the mutation in space demands the equivalent mutation in the subject' (p. 151). The Bonaventura is read by Jameson as a 'more or less crucial part of…capitalism's own spatial production and reproduction, and the production of subjectivity appropriate to it: a kind of education or training, so to speak, on how "to live" in an emergent world constituted by ever-more-transitory and fugitive flows of capital and commodities' (Cunningham, 1991, as cited in Spencer, 2016, p. 151).

For vague affect: within the Institute du Monde Arabe

If the Bonaventura hotel is an example of an architecture appropriated towards neoliberal ends, atomising identity through disorientation brought about through the loss of distance and depth, the Institute du Monde Arabe (IMA), Paris, offers an alternative and perhaps more ethical experiential disorientation, complexifying questions of subjectification and national identity. The IMA was won through competition in 1982 by French architect Jean Nouvel and opened five years later. It was conceived as a

showcase for Arab culture, partly funded by the French Government and partly by the Arab League. As a cultural institute it houses spaces for exhibitions, events, performances, conferences, and lectures and is meant to facilitate exchange between the West and the Arab world.

In his reading of IMA, John Biln (in Nalbantoglu & Wong (Eds), 1997) astutely highlights a series of design tactics, explaining Nouvel's use of what he calls 'self-distancing effects' (p. 26) to broadly address the Self-Other relationship.

> Curatorial narratives are everywhere displaced or disrupted. Every sighting is compromised, every view haunted by the unexpected and disruptive presence of other views, alternative images, additional representations. The 'Arab' is never given by itself. And neither is the building; neither the gallery, the architecture, the site, the city context (p. 32).

(Fig. 1)

Describing the extreme transparency of the display cases and surrounding walls, Biln observes that they work 'against any visually definitive separation of contained object from containing architecture, related artefact and unrelated one, central space from peripheral space.' (p. 31). This clearly works against museum spaces traditionally thought of as environments which support objects on display, giving them primary importance and facilitating focused yet passive contemplation. This also, therefore, disrupts the display of objects as perceived 'property' or possessions through techniques of representation which signify the ability to gather, to master, to know and to govern. Affect at the IMA induces a confusion which differs experientially from the Buena Ventura hotel. Rather than demanding a mutation of the subject, brought about by an atomising disorientation, perspective and distance in the IMA is not negated but offered then quietly disrupted in a manner which brings peripheral objects into play through the

dynamic enmeshing of light, material, object, space, and subject. Key here, is the introduction of novel subject-object relations, and the agency of the individual in her own spatial experience. As Juhani Pallasmaa has highlighted, 'It is evident that focused vision necessarily implies outsideness in relation to what is seen. Thus, the fundamental experience of being embraced by space necessarily calls for diffuse and peripheral vision in motion' (Pallasmaa, p. 129, in Del Campo, 2016). Pallasmaa argues against focused vision and static gaze (which, he states, has been historically linked with truth and knowledge), and for omnidirectionality and multisensory embodied tacit knowledge. This form of knowledge (which perceives an atmospheric entity before elementary detail) supports the kind of contextual interaction Nouvel pursues in the IMA. By privileging an affective, 'body-centred' approach, Nouvel presents a building that engages but does not resolve the always already simultaneous, bewilderingly complex and agonistic reality of national social space. (Fig. 2) (Fig. 3)

The performativity of the subject, in concert with others, negotiating the manner in and extent to which they *feel* (in) the space undercuts any totalising project – evoking instead, one that reflects Bhabha's emphasis on the temporal dimension of nationness, where, 'the inscription of…political entities [the people] – that are also potent symbolic and affective sources of cultural identity – serves to displace the historicism that has dominated discussions of the nation as a cultural force' (Bhabha, 1994, p.140). Through this displacement, the inevitability of nation and its pedagogy is overcome through the performativity of the 'subject in process' (Kristeva, 1977). This kind of performativity takes place within a contemporary space detached from the logics of causality, one which is 'not a return previous sentimentalities, architectures of sensation or association' and which is reliant 'on the notion that design effects could induce subliminal moods precisely because of the operations of the unconscious' (Lavin, 2004, p. 4). The ambiguity of

IMA's affective causality, contingent as it is on movement and light, further undermines those ideas of architectural nationalism which are dependent on experiential coherence and objecthood. (Fig. 4)

Vague affect at the IMA causes object and subject to lose their sharp edges, and clarity is contingent upon moments of clarity afforded by precise yet fleeting framings. Rather than Massami's autonomous affective space, the vague affect crafted here is simply indeterminate, with the movement of the subject – which Biln calls 'physical and conceptual' movement (p. 36) – resulting in an experiential deprivileging of ideology. Vagueness in this building, is presented not as a condition which arises as a result of our inability to represent something, but as a condition which is occupied, reflecting the necessity of intersubjectivity in the world to allow for the common sense 'spatial practice' (Lefebvre, 1991) of the everyday. (Fig. 5)

The IMA offers an example of a prefigurative space, where Bhabha's performative collapses into the pedagogic and evokes Edward Said's idea of 'worldliness', where 'sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency…exist at the same level of surface particularity as the…object itself' (Said, 1983, p. 39). Through its avoidance of representation and with the participatory mode of occupying space this sets up, the IMA challenges the reflexive capacity and cognition of the subject. The lack of spatial or affective prescription in the experience of the building means that Bhabha's performative and pedagogic enmesh to (at most) blur one's sense of identity and belonging. Its spatial pedagogy is designed to make one less certain of one's certainties. Contrast this to the pedagogy of Le Corbusier's 'architectural promenade', a key concept in modern architecture, referring to the experience of walking through a building and underpinned by Le Corbusier's belief in architecture as a form of initiation into *savoir habiter* (knowing how to live) (Le Corbusier & Etchells, 1978). The architectural promenade left

nothing to chance, nothing was arbitrary in the movement through and experience of the building: 'nothing exists or has the right to exist, with no explanation' (Le Corbusier, 1987, p. 163). (Fig. 6)

Dis-embodiment: beyond the Institute du Monde Arabe

The potential of vague architectural affect, relies not on the idea that its immediate experience is all there is (as staunch proponents of affect theory might claim) but rather, relies on the fact that it is not. The experience of a vague space resonates beyond the immediate and into wider related social structures.

One way in which the IMA does this is through its subversion of the clearly delineated programmatic agenda of its client (the French Government) and its status as a Parisian ethnological museum tasked to project and reinforce ideas about France's colonial history. The museum, in common with other ethnological museums dedicated to the art and culture of non-French ethnic groups, foregrounds the notion of difference but does not acknowledge either their entangled histories or the way in which traces of that history are manifested in contemporary French society. What is missing is 'the dialogue between the cultures of the territories represented by these museums, and that – indeed, those – of the territory in which they are displayed' (King, 2019, p. 164). The words 'colonialism', 'postcolonialism' or 'multiculturalism' do not appear in any physical or virtual sites of the Paris museums which focus on national or cultural identity (King, 2019, p. 160) and their reluctance to engage these terms can be linked to the embedded definition of nation and the republican principle of égalité. The emphasis of these terms on difference rather than unity would work against the constitution and the maintenance of 'Frenchness' based on assimilationist polices. Nouvel's approach deals with this national pedagogy through his design, quietly subverting, disrupting and

displacing the singular narrative of nation being presented, and through this action, creates an opening to Otherness and more critically to Otherness as co-constitutive to one's own identity. This relating of unmappable (vague) experience to precise descriptions of the same within discursive meaning-making sites external to it, would allow for more incisive contest between the irreducible actuality of social space we all simultaneously inhabit, and the violent intellectual precision – located *elsewhere* – used to impose certain kinds of order upon it. Embodied vague experience would thus be understood as part of the wider 'affective field of the discipline itself, a disembodied collective of various bodies' (McMorrow, 2016).

Conclusion

The specificity of the IMA is found in its address to typology (which introduces and then subverts familiar structures of interpretation), to its programme (which, through its subversion, becomes bound into a relation of vivid contrast with broader socio-political agendas) and to its objecthood (not simply presented or experienced as 'the container of brute facts' (Rosaldo, 1980, as cited in Cruikshank, 1992). Beyond simply being complicated by affect, 'architecture' here is simultaneously estranged *and* supportive of the sensations of the body-in-relation. Such estrangement loosens the relationship between form and its connotation, allowing for novel and dynamic subject-object relations to be acknowledged. Therefore, the question of *how* to design for affect in complex national space must, by extension, be accompanied by the question of *where*. The cité, in its messy vitality contains a myriad of performative intercultural zones, temporalities and objects of study, in which identities are continuously emerging, constructed, affirmed, contested and undone. The extent to which architecture is or could be involved in such sites in its deprivileged affective mode, would rely (to a

significant extent) on a renewed figure of the architect less desiring of authorial validation and more ethnographic in endeavour. A shift of this nature would recast the architect as an ethical cultural elite, interested in understanding complex identitarian subject/object relations. The IMA hints at the possibility of doing this, and if extended fully could contribute towards an alternative understanding of the relationship between architecture, the city and our collective belonging. Its affective response to the French constitution's refusal of difference, enlarges our potential for critically engaging architecture in questions of identity, representation and power.

However, a cautionary note against the idea that architecture can structure the experience of a more inclusive version of nation. Bhabha's performative narration of/against nation must remain processual to retain its potential for temporal disjunction. If Bhabha's schema is put to work in the name of any strategic political project of inclusion which aspires to an 'enlarged version of the nation, then marks it off as final, and settles down to enjoy its newly inclusive version of national identity, it too will have failed the test set by the performative's introduction of temporal disjunction' (Huddart, 2006, p.120). The most architecture can do is to raise doubt in the cultural political economy of nationhood. What remains to be seen, is whether the affective consequence of this has any aesthetic implication towards an understanding of belonging based not on an entrenched essentialism, but on an experiential site of struggle for difference, negotiation and becoming.

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Figure 1. 48°50'56.5"N 2°21'26.2"E

Figure 2. 48°50'56.4"N 2°21'26.8"E

Figure 3. 48°50'56.3"N 2°21'26.8"E

Figure 4. 48°50'56.1"N 2°21'27.3"E

Figure 5. 48°50'56.8"N 2°21'25.7"E

Figure 6. 48°50'56.8"N 2°21'25.5"E