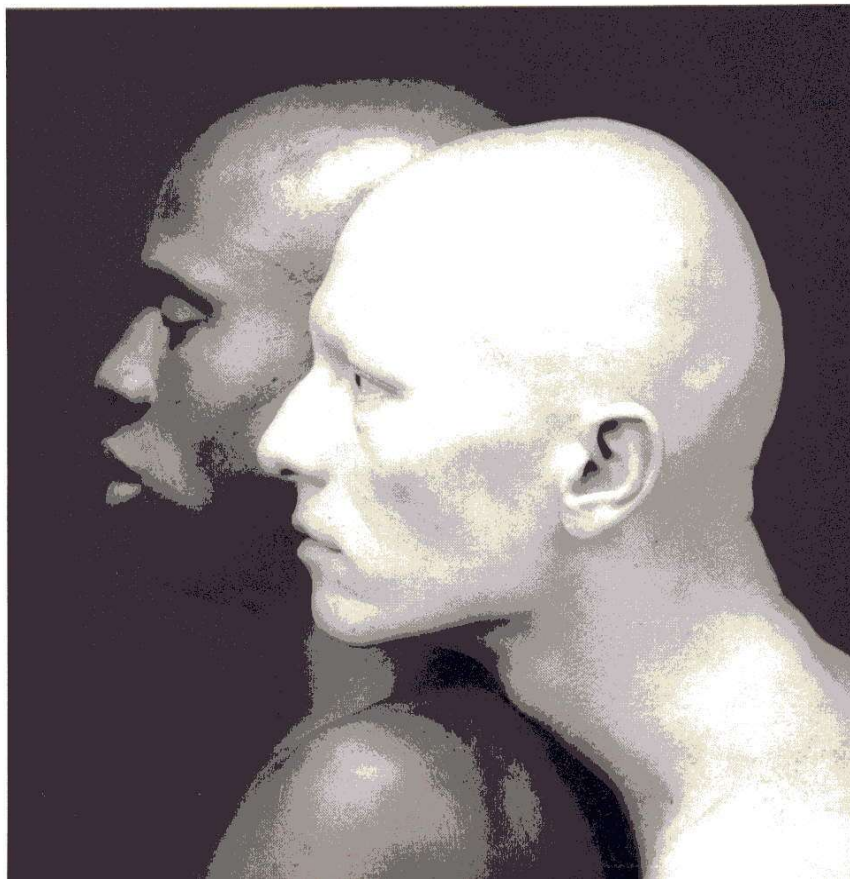


- THE MAKING OF THE MALE OBJECT** EWAN MORRISON
ARCHITECTURE, GENDER AND GENIUS CHRISTINE BATTERSBY
CHARTER FOR THE ARTS IAN BELL
ARTIST'S PAGE IAN McCULLOCH
THE REMAKING OF 'KAPITAL' MURRAY BUCHAN
ARTISTS OF A DIASPORA SALEEM ARIF
VIDEO POSITIVE BOB LAST
PAT DOUTHWAITE SALLY RICE



Contents

EDITORIAL 2

POLEMICS 3

Particular people at a particular time
RICHARD DEMARCO

FEATURES

The making of the male object 4
EWAN MORRISON

The architect as genius: feminism and
the aesthetics of exclusion 9

CHRISTINE BATTERSBY

A 'battle for the soul of art' 18

PAVEL BÜCHLER

Blatant textuality 25

MURRAY BUCHAN

Pat Douthwaite 32

SALLY RICE

Colin Johnstone 34

INTERVIEWED BY ERLEND BROWN

ARTIST'S PAGE

Ian McCulloch 20



TONY OURSLER: 'Kepone Drum'

ARTISTS OF A DIASPORA

Saleem Arif 28

INTERVIEWED BY HILARY ROBINSON

THE SCOTTISH ART INSTITUTIONS

Charter flights 30

IAN BELL

EXHIBITIONS

Vigour, reticence and resistance:
Video Positive '91 22

BOB LAST

Rainer Fetting 36

FIONA BYRNE SUTTON

Helen Flockhart 37

ALAN WOODS

Susan Hiller: 'An Entertainment' 38

FIONA BYRNE SUTTON

CONFERENCES

A new Irish reality? 39

JAMES O'BRIEN

Frameworks 40

HILARY ROBINSON

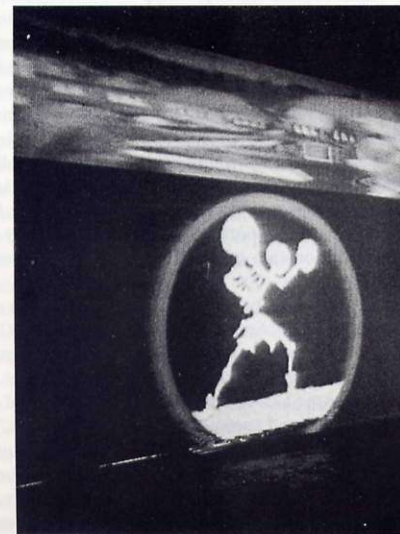
BOOK

Robert Mapplethorpe 41

EMMANUEL COOPER

LETTER FROM BELFAST 43

TARA BABEL



Susan Hiller: 'An Entertainment'

The architect as genius: feminism and the aesthetics of exclusion

Christine Battersby

ARCHITECTURAL THEORY has traditionally drawn in very immediate ways on philosophy. But that theory – and philosophy itself – has not been subjected to the kind of analysis that would expose the implicit gendering of such key terms as ‘universal’, ‘rational’, ‘abstract’, ‘form’, ‘structural’, ‘material’, ‘organic’, ‘natural’, ‘functional’, ‘imaginative’, ‘sublime’, ‘monumental’ – and even the word ‘architect’ itself. The aim of this paper is to begin to explore some of the historical and philosophical background of architectural vocabulary so as to open up the question of the relationship between aesthetic value judgements and a feminist standpoint in architecture.

In *Gender and Genius*¹ I re-told the history of a single word ‘genius’ from a feminist perspective. But in relating this history to that of architecture I need, first, to say something about my use of the terms ‘feminine’/‘masculine’ and ‘female’/‘male’ – otherwise my argument is likely to be misunderstood as a form of essentialism. During the early ’70s, at what has been called ‘first stage second-wave feminism’, it was argued that feminists should concern themselves not with the male/female dichotomy (biological sex difference), but with the masculine/feminine dichotomy (the gender attributes that are culturally inculcated). It was also claimed that in our society the masculine is what is valued highly and is associated with such characteristics as rationality, objectivity, the logical, analytic and abstract; and that the emotional, intuitive, subjective, imaginative (‘feminine’ gender-attributes) have been consistently downgraded. Feminists disagreed about what strategies to adopt in the light of this divide – whether women should be educated into becoming more ‘masculine’ or whether the way forward lay in re-valuing the ‘feminine’ – but the move from biological sex-difference to gender difference was taken as basic. My historical story undermines this orthodoxy, however. I argue that about two centuries ago there were radical breakdowns in ways of theorising sex difference, and that many characteristics of mind

In this revised version of a lecture given in Glasgow in September 1990, Christine Battersby applies the arguments of her book *Gender and Genius* to architecture.

previously thought of as female were re-valued; but only when housed in male bodies.

This historical account leads me to argue that we need to return to thinking about the male/female dichotomy as the foundation

for a feminist aesthetics – not the masculine/feminine dichotomy. It is worth pointing out that such an argument places me at odds with many recent theoreticians who have looked to the notion of an *écriture féminine* (feminine writing) to provide a grounding for a ‘woman-centred’ perspective on art, literature and cultural history. By contrast, I claim that post-structuralist discourse that searches out a kind of inscription that is ‘feminine’ in the way it breaks down the order and identity of a patriarchal society favours *males* in our culture. For ‘femininity’ is expected of women, and therefore perceived and valued differently in women. ‘Feminine’ women tend to disappear from the history of culture. And it is notable, in this respect, that the examples given of *l’écriture féminine* are generally examples of male authors (James Joyce, Nietzsche etc.) who are psychically *féminin*.

In this country *l’écriture féminine* is usually associated with the writings of Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva; but my own position is closer to (though by no means identical with) that of Luce Irigaray who also theorises the *féminin*, but who means something rather different by that term than do Cixous and Kristeva. Since the French word *féminelle* is reserved for the sexuality of animals, *féminin* can mean both our ‘feminine’ and our ‘female’. Cixous and Kristeva concern themselves explicitly with psychic femininity; not with biological sex. Irigaray focuses on female subjects, although in ways that have led to frequent accusations of essentialism.² Irigaray also differs from me in that she works from within the psychoanalytic framework (despite her hostility to it); whereas I believe that the theories of Freud (and Jung and Lacan) on creativity and aesthetics are too contaminated by a history that takes male bodies and psyches as the norm.

I argue that we should focus back on what it is to be ‘female’ in our culture – although I do not mean that in a straightforwardly essentialist or biological way. The category ‘female’ is itself a social construct, as the writings of Michel Foucault would also suggest. Prior to the nineteenth century, he claims, there were a number of individuals who existed as sexually indeterminate beings (hermaphrodites), and who did not have to fit themselves into the exclusive divide either male or female. Our society insists on fitting all human beings – including transsexuals – onto the binary category male/female. Using Foucault’s insight I would want to define ‘female’ not as ‘possessing a womb, female hormones or chromosomes’, but as being ‘allocated a non-privileged position in a social nexus of power on the basis of the way one’s body is perceived’. Such an allocation involves, of course, a number of complex equations (self-image versus other-image) and difficult borderline cases (e.g. transsexuals). But however blurred the boundaries between the two sexes might be, I would nevertheless argue that valuing psychic femininity is not enough for a feminist aesthetic, because what we think of as ‘feminine’ characteristics of mind were long ago appropriated for an élite group of males – the ‘geniuses’ – whose deviation from the norms of masculine behaviour were condoned.

There are five separate strands in our modern usage of the term ‘genius’, all of which have been important in architectural theory. The first comes from romanticism and represents ‘genius’ as a psychological type: an outsider who is unlike other men, however talented – or even extraordinarily talented – they might be. Living on the borders of sanity and madness, the genius sacrifices his own ego, desires and will to that of his Art or the Epoch, which uses him as a kind of shamanistic mouth-piece or puppet. Van Gogh is the paradigm of the romantic genius. But in terms of modernist architecture, Le Corbusier – and biographies and comments on Le Corbusier – frequently seem to feed on this romantic ideology. However, since Le Corbusier saw himself as belonging to ‘The Machine Age’ – and theorised machines as tools for self-conscious, individualised egos – other, competing paradigms of genius are also in play in positioning this ‘hero of the heroic period’.³

The second of these paradigms is related, but slightly different. It comes from the pre-romantic writers of the closing decades of the eighteenth century, and centres on the idea that genius requires a specific mode of consciousness – variously (and conflictingly) described as involving inspiration, passion, imagination, instinct, intuition or the unconscious. When the American modernist architect Ralph Rapson says ‘The creative act must always govern’ and ‘Creativity is neither consistent nor predictable. The magic which the individual architect brings to architecture will vary, but is nonetheless his grave responsibility to society’, he is placing himself in the tradition that makes architectural genius a matter of intuition and inspiration (more like magic than design). Rapson thus instructs potential architects: ‘Develop an infallible technique and then place yourself at the mercy of inspiration’.⁴

The third idea of genius is again related, and again slightly different. ‘Genius’ is described in terms of energy-types (usually sublimated – male – sexual energy). When Charles Jencks praises James Stirling with the claim that here at last is a British architect who ‘could handle glass with virility’,⁵ he is joining this tradition. This is a very common way of talking about architecture which has been supposed a profession somehow bound up with masculinity itself. Hence Harry Weese’s comments on his own architectural practice:

Buildings are masculine and aggressive. You have to take the long view and assume they will last; therefore they cannot be pretty – the adjective I least like applied to architecture.... A building should be handsome, elegant, strong, lean – beauty is too vague an attribute. A building comes from the inside out and has to be gutsy.... Structure is the thing.⁶

The fourth way of thinking about genius comes from a more ancient way of theorising artistic excellence. Genius in this sense is a (qualitatively great) talent: not a personality-type, consciousness-type or energy-type that is akin to madness. This genius is sane – with supranormal sanity. This notion survives primarily in modern scientific (and pseudo-scientific) literature where it is often merged in quite contradictory ways with more romantic notions of genius as alien to talent. See, for example, the studies that were carried out in the ’60s at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at Berkeley, University of California in which Donald MacKinnon and his team questioned three groups of architects in an attempt to quantify, grade and measure the talents and personality-coordinates of ‘creative persons’. On the basis of a battery of tests MacKinnon concluded that ‘the more creative a person is’ the more ‘feminine’ he is.⁷ MacKinnon’s results contrast interestingly with Weese’s view about the essential masculinity of architecture – although the *maleness* of architecture remains a hidden assumption of MacKinnon’s work, since he appears to have used criteria of selection that generated an all-male group of architects as representative of the ‘most creative’ subjects. Moreover, his eventual conclusions conflict with his methodological assumptions and revert to a form of romanticism in which the genius is a male outsider who transcends (via his femininity) the norms for masculine behaviour.

The fifth notion of genius still employed today is a much more pragmatic notion, and the only one that I defend (in a limited sense) as useful for a feminist aesthetics. A person’s cultural achievement is evaluated and assessed against an appropriate background of artistic genres and traditions. The genius is the person whose work both marks the boundary between the old way and the new way within the tradition, and which also has lasting value and significance. Such a formulation of genius as the one ‘who gives the rule to art’ has its origins also in late eighteenth-century formulations, and derives from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Clearly, in terms of the way that the history of modern architecture has been narrated, this notion of ‘traditions’ has been of

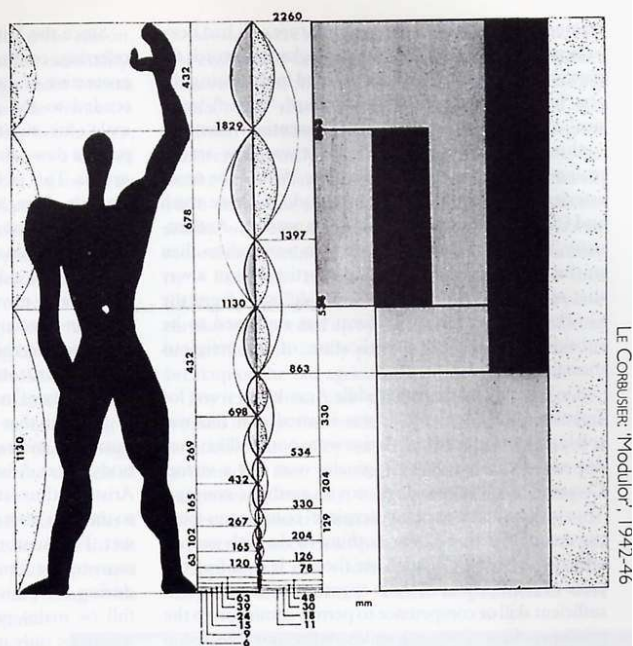
greatest importance. It is of significance that in terms of the way that the past has been parcelled up and divided into traditions within architecture, the genius-figures who are labelled as the originators of 'functionalism', 'brutalism', 'expressionism' and so on have all been male. In recent years this model of architectural history has been shattered with the postmodernist fracturing of the monolith of modernism. But as Arthur Drexler remarked – without a trace of irony – in his *Transformations in Modern Architecture*: 'Now that imitation is no longer focused on the work of three or four great pioneering figures, the movement of ideas is less from father to son and more from brother to brother'.⁸ The postmodernist 'families' remain linkings of males.

I will return to this question towards the end of this paper, and suggest that a feminist aesthetic will concern itself (in part) with detecting matrilineal traditions: to discover what and how women have created and can create in a discipline that has been resistant to – hostile to – female practitioners and theorists. A feminist architecture will also concern itself with what women need as users of buildings. This is by no means the same, however, as a concern with the 'feminine' qualities of buildings or architects. Indeed, from the point of view of the masculine/feminine divide, architecture is especially interesting as an area. For the personality of the architect is taken as key in theories of architectural creativity; but some theorists insist that architecture is paradigmatically rational and 'masculine', whereas others emphasise intuition, sensitivity, imagination and other so-called 'feminine' qualities of mind. Both sets of theorists nevertheless assume that it is amongst (mature) males that the relevant personality-types are most likely to be found. To find the origin of this apparent paradox, it is necessary to go back to the closing decades of the eighteenth century.

At this time 'genius' was theorised in ways that allied creativity to the 'natural', to the body and the 'organic', but in ways that set up a sharp contrast between the genius and the architect. Thus, for example, in his influential *Conjectures on Original Composition* Edward Young wrote:

A genius differs from a good understanding, as a magician from a good architect: that raises his structure by means invisible; this by the skilful use of common tools. Hence genius has ever been supposed to partake of something divine.⁹

For Young genius is 'the stranger within': a primitive god or force, which works below the level of consciousness, and is allied to instinct, feeling and imagination, rather than to reason, judgement or skill.¹⁰ The work of genius is 'of a vegetable nature'; 'it grows, it is not



made'. Its spontaneous growth from a deep and 'vital root' is thus contrasted with the 'sort of manufacture wrought up by those mechanics, art and labour'.¹¹

In Young's formulation 'genius' is a kind of inner god: that which makes man godlike. But the architect is contrasted with the genius and hence with the godlike. The situation will be strikingly different, however, by the end of the next century. Then Otto Wagner (proclaimed by some as the 'father' of modernism) could confidently assert that architecture was the most godlike of all the arts:

Among the fine arts... architecture alone is truly creative and productive: in fact, it alone is able to make forms that have no model in nature yet appear beautiful to man. Even if these forms have their source in natural structures and their origin in the material, the result is so far removed from the starting point that it must be considered a completely new creation.

It therefore cannot be surprising to hear that we should see in architecture the highest expression of man's ability, bordering on the divine.

Wagner says openly what other modernist architects often merely imply – and something completely at odds with Young's remarks. To understand this double tension (feminine/masculine; godlike/ungodlike) in the theorising of the powers and status of the architect, it is necessary to go still further back into the past history of the concept of genius.

European conceptions of the artist's task were inherited from the ancient Greeks; but the Greeks did not even have a term that meant 'creation out of nothing'. The Greek gods shaped pre-existent matter in the manner of an architect (Plato), or by the processes of giving birth. The ancient Greek artist did not aspire to

create; his only task was to imitate nature as it had been patterned by the gods. The Greeks lacked the words for concepts that we now take for granted in discussing the arts: 'originality', 'inspiration', 'genius', 'create', 'creative'. Art on this model was then essentially mimetic: nothing more than imitation. That was how art remained throughout the Middle Ages. Within the monasteries the artist's task was to reproduce divine truth and Christian teaching as faithfully as possible. Authenticity, individuality or self-expression were values alien to the didacticism of the medieval artist. But in a way that made the medieval artists very different from the Greeks, even perfection of form was supposed to be subsidiary to the exact replication of the religious message.

Unlike the Greeks, the Middle Ages had a word for creation out of nothing. It was insisted that this was solely an attribute of God. Artists were not godlike; they did not create the new. Originality was not a virtue. Creativity was a theological, not an aesthetic concept. Thus although the term 'masterpiece' comes to us from the arts of that time, it has nothing to do with genius, creativity or early Christian art theory. It signified the piece of work produced by an apprentice which showed sufficient skill or competence to permit admission to the privileges of one of the craft-guilds. As feminist scholarship shows, women were active in these guilds – despite the need to prove their merit with a 'masterpiece'. Hostility towards women in the arts only increased when the status of the artist began to be distinguished from that of the artisan, and the arts in general represented as activities suitable for only the most perfect (male) specimens of humanity. This happened during the Renaissance. Painting and sculpture began to be occupations for well-born men, instead of manual crafts. And, as this happened, theorists emerged who tried to explain the rôle of the artist by invoking Plato's account of the relationship between humans and the gods, and in ways that mixed Greek ideas of art and the gods with Christian notions of creation (out of nothing). The artist mirrored Nature: improved, and made more perfect, as God Himself had created it.

Despite the undoubted changes that occurred during the Renaissance, it is a mistake to suppose that the modern concept of genius first came into existence at that time. Such a claim is often made, buttressed by an appeal to Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550 and 1568). However, although it is true that Vasari was the first to celebrate the lives and powers of individual artists in ways reminiscent of our modern notions of a genius-personality, and although the term 'genius' is sprinkled liberally through modern English translations of Vasari's text, the Italian term *genio* is not to be found in the corresponding passages in the original. In Vasari the English 'genius' translates a number of Italian phrases, most commonly including the Italian word *ingegno* – perhaps best rendered as 'ingeniousness', 'ingenuity' or as 'wit' in its old-fashioned sense. It was the equivalent of the Latin word *ingenium* and, as such, it does not carry the connotations of great creativity (or great originality) that are part and parcel of our post-romantic aesthetic.

Since the Latin term 'genius' started out as a word referring to the divine forces associated with, and protective of, male procreativity and later became extended to the guardian spirits that watched over a male's life, virility, lands and the inheritance that would pass on down the male line, Renaissance women lacked *genius*. This lack was registered in associated terms in English, French, Spanish and German, as well as in Italian and Latin. But it was not this, as such, which was supposed to make women artistic inferiors. This was put down to a deficiency in *ingenium*: those inherited mental and physical talents that helped an artist conceive and execute his projects. Through to the eighteenth century this lack was theorised in terms of modified forms of Aristotelianism. Aristotle had argued that the superiority of males can be seen in their larger size and in the fact that the reproductive organs have grown outwards, instead of remaining undeveloped inside the body. Heat, Aristotle supposed, is necessary for growth. Aristotle thus rationalised male superiority by reference to the 'fact' that males are hot and dry; females cold and wet. For Aristotle a woman is a lesser man: a kind of monster or abnormality who, through lack of heat during the period of conception, fails to develop her full (= male) potential. In perfect conditions there would be only male children.

According to Aristotle women can't even be said to procreate: they are the sterile sex. Only the male seed contains the formative principle that allows the parent to be reproduced in the next generation. Woman provides the matter and the container in which the seed (semen) grows. The male provides the form: his seed is active, and has the power to form the matter or material provided by the female into a human. The woman reveals her lack of formative force through the unshaped matter which is expelled each month as blood. Since she has insufficient heat to allow her own semen to develop, this 'unconcocted' blood means that she is wet, as well as cold. Wetness, however, is also supposed to affect the proper operation of her mind. The rôle of the woman within the society was made analogous to that of her womb: as the provider of a suitable environment within which the best individuals (males of certain privileged racial types and families) could advance human civilisation.

The great *ingenium* of the Renaissance artist was primarily associated with 'masculine' sanity: with judgement, reason, wit and the like. But the Renaissance writers on the arts turned to the Greek and Latin sources for information about what it is that gives some human beings access to the ideas in the mind of God. And what they found was Plato's shamanistic view of the poet: not an artist at all (Plato didn't think much of artists) but a kind of medium. In *Phaedrus* Plato claimed:

if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to naught by the poetry of madness...³

The neoplatonist art theorists of the Renaissance extended this view to all artistic activity, whilst

(paradoxically) retaining their admiration for reason, universal truths, judgement and masculine rationality. What was suggested was that although most human beings cannot transcend these reasonable virtues, a man of truly great *ingenium* (who is very hot and dry, and hence necessarily male) could be led to a kind of vision of the truth by a form of madness. Again via an appeal to Aristotle it was suggested that the madness which afflicted the gifted man was melancholy.

According to the medical theories prevalent in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, melancholy was a dangerous and vicious disease which interfered with virility and fertility, as well producing a large range of dramatic mental aberrations (including becoming, literally, slow-witted and suffering hallucinations and fits). It was, however, claimed that the man with a great *ingenium* benefited from melancholic vapours rising to his brain. The man of great *ingenium* had enough natural heat to counteract the coldness and dryness of the residue bile.

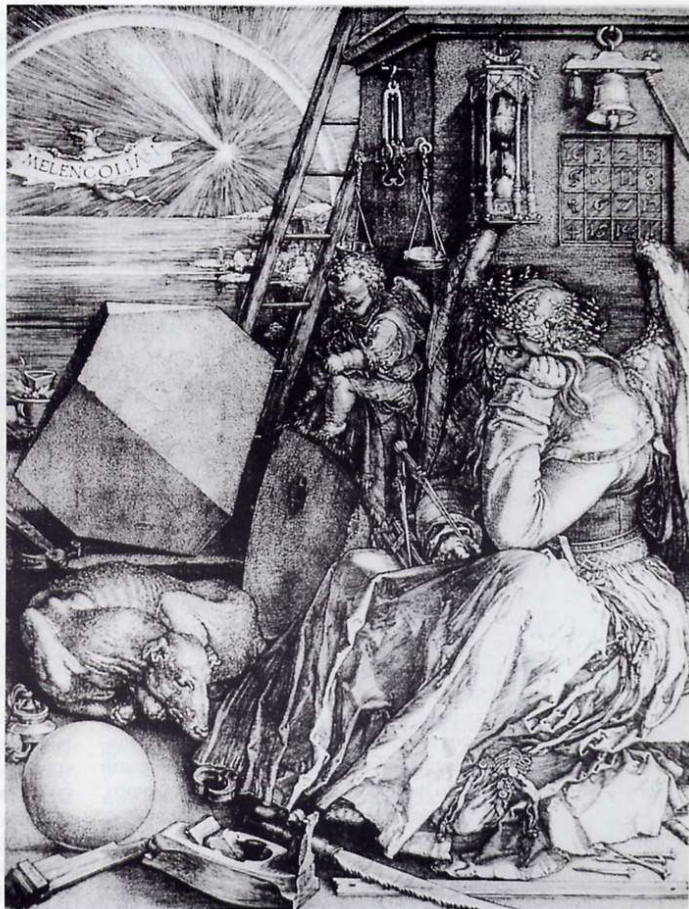
Melancholy was not a gender-specific illness. But if a person's *ingenium* was suitably great, he could use his melancholy to produce great art, great philosophy and the like. The visions caused by the vapours rising to his brain were not then delusions, but inspired ideas that helped him access the universal ideas (or 'forms') in the mind of God. The man of great *ingenium* was ennobled by his fate. His madness was a gift of the gods. However, since women were supposed to be cold and wet, they were unlikely to experience the more glorious side-effects of melancholy – even though they could suffer it as a pathological disease. Although *Dame Melancholy* was a common allegorical figure, the benign form of melancholic madness that was associated with great *ingenium* was always a problem for flesh and blood women. The wits of a sane woman were decreed sluggish (because of her womb); but, *out of her wits*, a female fared no better. In most cases female madness was put down not to melancholy, but to 'hysteria' – *'hysteria'* means womb in Greek. The hysterical woman was a shadowy (cold, wet and vaporous) imitation of the fiery melancholic male. Woman was confined to the accidental and subjective; males granted access to the objective, the universal and the eternal.

Although this misogynistic view of female capacities was in place during the Renaissance, it did not play a special place in terms of the philosophy of art until the second half of the eighteenth century. At this time our modern notions of genius were forged as the two modes of misogyny met – the creative and the procreative – as the two notions of *genius* and *ingenium* merged into each other. The Renaissance male had taken his superiority for granted, since great ability went together with great powers of reason, judgement and vision,

and women were seen as deficient in all these capacities. The eighteenth-century male could not be so confident, however. Aristotle had defined man as 'a rational animal', and that view had been incorporated into Christian teaching. But contact with non-European cultures eventually led European man to question what makes man other than/better than the animals. By 1800 there was a general agreement that it was not reason – at least not reason alone – that made a man more than an animal. The highest specimens of humanity – European males – were now praised for their feelings, imagination, sensibility, and 'genius': a process that was speeded up by the breakdown in traditional hierarchies and family patterns consequent upon the breakup of the old agriculturally-based societies.

For centuries male philosophers had described women in ways that made them inferior: as emotional, instinctive, moved by nature rather than by reason, as governed by their procreative functions rather than by judgement. Gradually, with the fundamental change in values that industrialisation brought about, males began to covet the stock descriptions of femininity, and began to appropriate that vocabulary to refer to themselves. 'Organic' and 'natural' means of production were

ALBRECHT
DÜRER:
'Melancholia',
1514



contrasted favourably with the alienating and 'mechanical' labour of the towns. Hence Young's claim that the work of genius is of a 'vegetable nature' that 'grows, it is not made'. By the end of the eighteenth century the English term 'genius' had come to be closely linked to human creativity: with those powers within the self that made a man a pseudo-god, able to create something out of nothing. Genius was no longer linked with rationality; but to superior forms of irrationality, frenzy, emotion, imagination, passion, sensibility and the like.

For a time the stock descriptions of the genius and woman were so close as to suggest that women would be likely to be the greatest geniuses, if only they could be released from domestic duties. This situation was only temporary, however. To explain what made human beings superior to the animals, or European man superior to the 'savages', the category of genius had to work by a process of exclusion. The non-genius was always described as lacking some quality or qualities: a lack that made his or her output valueless. The descriptions of these deficiencies contradicted each other, but were used to explain the differences between civilised European man and animals, 'primitives', children and women. The genius was *like* an animal, a 'primitive', a child or a woman; but, of course, this likeness was deceptive. For as qualities previously despised as feminine were re-valued in the late eighteenth century period and were re-ascribed to the 'geniuses', so the stereotype of woman also changed – away from ecstasy, passion and sexual greed of classical and neoclassical times and towards the thoroughly domesticated, nurturing and tame 'Angel in the House'. Women – once the sexually greedy, over-emotional, over-imaginative and frenzied sex – now found themselves portrayed as naturally sexless, gentle, domestic, nurturative.

The old connections between the female sex and irrationality did not die out entirely, however. This is where the old Renaissance discourse of 'melancholy', 'the universal' and 'divine madness' comes back in. To explain what differentiates ordinary madness from the madness of the genius, the old Renaissance traditions of grading – and gendering – madnasses became more significant in terms of the philosophy of art – with 'melancholy' once again the privileged poetic and artistic madness. How often do we meet the figure of the melancholy poet or artist in nineteenth and twentieth-century texts? How little do we realise how this figure draws on a tradition that makes melancholy a kind of madness that benefits male artists and harms female pretenders to artistic excellence?

The dominant tradition of theorising genius in nineteenth century poetry and music made genius a kind of madness. In these arts the paradigmatic genius was an 'androgynous', with a male body and male sexual energies, but with psychic qualities of sensitivity, emotion and imagination that had, prior to the eighteenth century, been more normally associated with women. Architecture itself was not immune from this rhetoric; but 'genius' was also contrasted with 'architect' and 'design', since it was only in the nineteenth century that architecture became generally accepted as one of the

creative arts. But once this transition occurred, the profession of architecture was particularly prone to mixing the Platonic language of 'universals', 'rationality' and 'harmony' with the Christian language of 'divine inspiration' and 'creation'. Plato's god had been the *architect* and *designer* of the universe; the Aristotelian father had also imposed *form* on the pre-existent matter provided by the mother. The misogynistic languages of production and reproduction merged; but, even so, it was easier for romantic and post-romantic theorists of architecture to position the architect closer to the rational (and hence to the traditional notions of what made males superior to females) than was the case in music, poetry or drama.

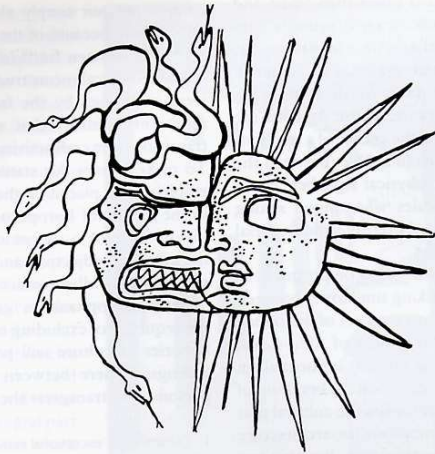
The old classical associations between supreme reason and the supreme (divine, male) architect of the universe also meant that the very activity of architecture was presented as paradigmatically male and as hostile to every element of femininity. I quoted Weese writing to this effect in the 1960s; the critic Léon Legrange expressed similar sentiments in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* of 1860:

Male genius has nothing to fear from female taste. Let men of genius conceive of great architectural projects, monumental sculpture, and elevated forms of painting. In a word, let men busy themselves with all that has to do with great art. Let women occupy themselves with those types of art they have always preferred, such as pastels, portraits or miniatures. Or the painting of flowers, those prodigies of grace and freshness which alone can compete with the grace and freshness of women themselves.

Thus a kind of territorial apartheid remained in place in the fine arts (with architecture amongst the 'masculine' areas and water-colours amongst the 'feminine' areas), despite the fact that some theorists had re-valued attributes of mind that were once considered 'feminine' and re-assigned them to the 'geniuses'. Since women were deemed 'unsexed' by skill in these exclusively male territories of art, there could be no temptations to the truly 'feminine' psyche – at least when housed in a female body. It is worth noting in this respect that the terms 'androgynous' and 'hermaphrodite' were employed in gender-discriminatory ways. An androgyne had clearly defined sexual organs and a counteractive psyche of the opposite gender; a hermaphrodite had ambiguously defined sexual organs. Women architects counted as hermaphrodites, as did those males whose virility was suspect. Note how Otto Wagner's *Modern Architecture* includes an attack on inferior personalities who enter architecture and become 'hermaphrodites of art and vampires of practice'.¹⁴ A woman who created faced a debilitating psychological dilemma: either to surrender her sexuality (becoming not *masculine*, but a surrogate *male*), or to be feminine and female, and hence to fail to count as a genius. This is the logic behind the phrase that became a nineteenth-century cliché: 'there are no women of genius; the women of genius are men'.¹⁵

By the late nineteenth century there were thus two conflicting models for architecture, neither of which helped females with architectural ambitions. The latter

would either hear architecture described as the province of the fully masculine male; or hear feminine qualities praised, but only when combined with great creativity. This was a double-bind for women, since creativity was conceptualised in ways that made it a displacement of male procreativity. From the late eighteenth century on, in a model that we recognise now primarily from Freud, the work of genius was made the sublimated product of male sexual drives. Furthermore, in a model that we associate mostly with Jung, it was claimed that a male can use his inner



LE CORBUSIER: 'Self Portrait as Apollo and Dionysius', 1945

'feminine' nature to produce great art whilst a woman's inner 'masculine' was denied a role in cultural production – except in so far as it served to inspire *males* to art.

The paradigmatic 'feminine' creator was not a female creator, but a male who transcended normal patterns of masculinity. Similar language was used by Nietzsche in his alignment of the great artist and the 'superman'. For Nietzsche, the sublime was generated by the tension between two opposing forces, symbolised by the two Greek gods: Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo was representative of form, masculine reason and sculpture; Dionysus of frenzy, orgy and music. All 'supermen' were Dionysian; but Dionysus was a Greek god who was both *feminine* and *male*. Thus, not only in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but throughout his writings, Nietzsche described the greatest creators via the metaphors of male motherhood.

Such ideas have also had their place in architectural theory and commentary. Jencks' chapter on Le Corbusier in *Modern Movements in Architecture* is headed by a sketch made by Le Corbusier in 1945, at the time he was struggling with the authorities over the plans for the modernist *Unité d'Habitation* block of flats in Marseilles. This image also concludes Jencks' book on Le Corbusier which explores in more detail the impact of Nietzschean ideas on him. Jencks comments:

It is a double portrait, perhaps of himself: part Apollo, part Medusa, part the smiling sun god of reason, part the Dionysian, sensual figure of the underworld...¹⁶

It is worth remembering, however, that this apparently 'feminine' aspect of Le Corbusier is still, very assertively male. Thus, the figure of 'The Modulor' (see p11) cast in concrete for the Marseilles block – and later obsessively theorised by Le Corbusier as the new universal, 'humanised' standard for architectural proportion – meant that all Le Corbusier's future output would be

based on an idealisation of a muscular, six-foot male.

Le Corbusier might have pitied woman as 'victim of the disorder that has been handed down to us' by the impact of machinery and the disappearance of slaves and servants; but did not seek to change the new status quo. Rather, his attempts to re-establish a rational social order and resuscitate 'the age-old traditions of civilisation' rested on the premise that 'from now on all the housework will fall on the mother of the family'. His utopian Marseilles project was an attempt to provide a more rational

and comfortable domestic space; but women were to be the (happy) prisoners of this modernist sphere. Thus, 'the fire' and 'the hearth' are made the focus of his book *The Marseilles Block* – and a Victorian print of the family gathered round the hearth is selected as the frontispiece to the book setting out his design principles (see p16). Le Corbusier's modernist housewife-robot is the twentieth-century daughter of the Victorian 'Angel in the House'. He might have seen himself as a Dionysian figure who transcends rationality; but his women are positioned at the opposite pole to that of the 'superman'/genius. They are nearer the *infra*-rational than the *supra*-rational. An architect such as Le Corbusier might be eulogised as a male mother; but for Le Corbusier the paradigm architect – like the paradigm human – is male.

It is only necessary to look at the writings of the so-called 'Metaphysical Painters' to realise how important in modernist art were Renaissance notions of melancholy and associated romantic ideas of a rational male who transcends rationality. As Carlo Carrà put it in 1918, 'Women, children and primitive natures are subject to puerile criteria of value, and can ask nothing of "ordinary things" apart from a certain immediate utility'. Women are amongst those who can only feel 'boredom and monotony' and 'diatonic indifference towards everything appertaining to pure taste'. Thus, when Carrà affirms that 'the spectral vision of reality is reserved for rare and completely rational individuals', he limits the capacity for transcending functionalism in ways that do not produce mere 'phantasmagorical illusions' to *supra*-rational males.¹⁷

The paintings of his co-worker, Giorgio de Chirico, were haunted by architectural visions of a futuristic city – and were obsessively titled and theorised as 'Melancholy', a type of spectral vision open only to elite (male) personalities. In 1919 he excluded 'the imbecilic man, that is, the a-metaphysical man' from the ability to

appreciate architectural details other than 'mass and height'. '[U]nacquainted with the terrible lines and angles,' imbecilic males 'reveal their limited psyche enclosed as it is within the same sphere as the feminine and infantile psyche. But we who know the signs of the metaphysical alphabet are aware of the joy and the solitude enclosed by a portico, the corner of a street, or even in a room, on the surface of a table, between the sides of a box'.¹⁸ This 'metaphysical alphabet' could only be read by males – males who united strong feelings and reason via access to the terrible, the universal and the melancholy.

More than one recent commentator on postmodern architecture has noted the striking similarities between theoretical statements made by members of the Italian school of *pittura metafisica* and those of Aldo Rossi, the Italian rationalist who has been so influential on architectural practice consequent upon the break-up of the modernist tradition. Rossi revisits the cultural past to ground a 'contextual' symbolism for architecture that can transcend simple functionalism. But that 'return to the fathers' of modernism to find a way past modernist decline is literally that: a return to a past resonant with male mythologies.¹⁹ Feminist architects also need a return to history to understand the 'spectral' ghosts that are likely to arise via this double appeal to reason and a 'poetic' condition of which Arata Isozaki has said 'only silence could speak'.²⁰ For we need to be aware of the misogynistic mythologies and biologies that are likely to be (deliberately or accidentally) invoked by architects' calls for a return to the 'purity' of early modernism or of neoclassicism. Pure – unsullied by questions of sexual ideology – the past was not. There are thus dangers in so-called rationalism, or even in postmodernist pastiche or in ironic quotation of those past traditions. These dangers will have to be exposed via a feminist re-telling of cultural history.

In the first place, this feminist return to history needs to show how gendered is the vocabulary in which art is described and evaluated. We need to recognise that even such an apparently gender-neutral term as 'architect' brings with it a history of female denigration. For

Frontispiece to
LE CORBUSIER:
*The Marseilles
Block*, Harvill
Press, 1951



women are not simply absences in the histories of architecture because of the (many) material disadvantages that women faced in this field. There have also been ideological reconstructions of that history. These were intensified by the fact that it was only in the nineteenth century that architecture made the full transition from craft activity to 'Art' (with a capital 'A'). To make its new Art status more secure, a particular emphasis was placed on the role of individual creators in the history of European architecture. Architectural history became a succession of 'geniuses' who were described via adjectives and metaphors that made the genius *male* – albeit sometimes a *feminine* male.

Why an emphasis on 'genius' should have had the consequence of excluding remarkable women from the histories of culture will perhaps become clearer if I distinguish here between two ways of positioning persons who transgress the norm:

- 1 *Outsiders*: the exceptional individuals who are seen as fully human but not-quite-normal. Their deviation from tradition is seen as a form of *transcendence* or *escape* or *excess*.
- 2 *Others*: those who, because of our racist and sexist paradigms of humanity, get viewed as not-quite-human. Their deviation from tradition is seen as a form of *struggle* to be *normal* or *failure* or *lack*.

Women creators (like so-called 'ethnic craftsmen') have a particular difficulty as they are seen as 'Outsiders', and not as 'Others'. But the position of the 'genius' is the position of the Outsider. As Kant said, 'The genius gives the rule to art': his departure from the norm is put down to exuberance, not to deficiency. Women artists and architects tend to disappear from the history books since their works are seen as either 'typical' of a norm (an age, a style, a genre) and hence simply as craft, or as deviations from (failures to meet) the craft-norms.

Since women cannot stand in the same relation to cultural traditions as do men, the achievements of women artists need to be understood in terms of matrilineal, as well as patrilineal, patterns of productive work. The past is not a fiction: we have to respect 'the facts' (of who did, and did not, produce influential work, for example). But neither is the past closed in a way that will not permit feminist reconstruction. If Rossi can look back into the past and seek to regenerate contemporary architecture by an appeal to his 'fathers', so can feminists look to the past for a future that will be changed by its 'mothers'. Thus, a feminist aesthetics will need to pick out individual women artists and architects who have been active in the past (and present). But, of course, by itself this can never be enough. A feminist aesthetic will also have to re-think the craft/art divide and re-assess the importance of work denied the status of 'Art'. We need, for example, research that will show what role women played in the constructing of houses and other spaces in the (lengthy) period when the styles of buildings were dictated by inherited tradition and by collective need, rather than by individual 'designers'.

In those fields that have already been opened up by

feminist scholarship – nineteenth and twentieth-century literature and painting – it emerges that (despite the historical variability of the female predicament), the fact that women were brought up in a society in which they were conditioned to see themselves as Others generated distinctive patterns of female response. It would be remarkable if this were not also true in architecture, particularly because women in our society are conditioned into having a different relationship with their bodies (and hence with place and space) from that of the men. Thus, focussing on the strategies adopted by female producers – and assessing their strengths and their weaknesses – is for me an integral part of the revaluing of artistic values which is required by the feminist project for social change.



GIORGIO DE CHIRICO: 'The Mystery and Melancholy', 1914

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Battersby, Christine, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*, The Women's Press, 1989
- 2 Margaret Whitford's important recent book, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (Routledge, 1991), positions Irigaray much closer to me than I supposed when I wrote *Gender and Genius* or even when I delivered this paper. However, Whitford's book is an attempt to understand Irigaray in order to 'go beyond' her and I suspect that a certain amount of 'thinking beyond' has also transformed Whitford's reading of Irigaray's formidably difficult texts.
- 3 Jencks, Charles, *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*, Allen Lane, 1973
- 4 Rapson, Ralph in Paul Heyer (ed), *Architects on Architecture*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1967, pp58,59
- 5 Jencks, Charles, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, Penguin, 2nd ed 1985, p261
- 6 Weese, Harry in Paul Heyer (ed), *Architects on Architecture*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1967 p44
- 7 See MacKinnon, DW, 'Nature and Nurture of Creative Talent', in *American Psychologist* xvii, 1962, pp. 484-95 and 'The Personality Correlates of Creativity: A Study of American Architects' in PE Vernon (ed), *Creativity*, Penguin, 1970, pp. 289-311; also Battersby (op.cit.) pp. 129-32
- 8 Drexler, Arthur, *Transformations in Modern Architecture: Museum of Modern Art, New York*, Secker and Warburg, 1980, p9
- 9 Young, Edward, 'Conjectures on Original Composition' in Edmund D. Jones (ed), *English Critical Essays (16th-18th Centuries)*, Oxford University Press, 1947, p9
- 10 *ibid*, p289
- 11 *ibid*, p274
- 12 Wagner, Otto, *Modern Architecture*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave, Getty Center, 1988, p62
- 13 Plato, *Phaedrus*, trans. R Hackforth, Cambridge University Press, 1952, §245A
- 14 Wagner, Otto, *op.cit.* p63
- 15 Lombroso, Cesare, *The Man of Genius*, trans. London, Scott, 1891, p138
- 16 Jencks, *op.cit.*, p182
- 17 Carrà, Carlo, in Carrà, Massimo, *Metaphysical Painters*, trans. Caroline Tisdall, Thames and Hudson 1971, p48
- 18 De Chirico, Giorgio, in Carrà *ibid.* p90
- 19 Klotz, Heinrich, *The History of Postmodern Architecture* trans. R Donnell, MIT Press, 1984, p. 213. Some of the work of Rossi's students was deliberately designed to evoke *pittura metafisica*. (Klotz, p. 211 and figure 276.) But Klotz's own commentary also makes analogues between Rossi himself and de Chirico. (pp. 238 ff., see p. 247, for example)
- 20 Klotz, *ibid.* p213

OTHER REFERENCES

- Jencks, Charles, *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*, Allen Lane, 1973
- Le Corbusier, *The Marseilles Block*, trans. G Sainsbury, Harvill Press, 1953