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**REGIONALISM IN THE FACE OF UNIVERSALITY: WEST COAST MODERNISM AS
ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE**

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1985

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
in the Department
of
Geography

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 1989

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ABSTRACT

The Modern movement in architecture did not significantly affect Canada's West Coast landscape until after World War II. The purpose of this thesis is to critically analyze the interpretations given to the West Coast Modern landscape, to investigate the cultural values influencing the interpretations, and to explore the use of deconstruction as a method of analysis of landscape meaning. The principal sources of interpretative texts were selected from architectural and art journals as well as from regional publications on West Coast architecture.

This thesis produced three major findings. Firstly, the West Coast Modern landscape expresses a diversified rather than unified meaning. This diversity encompasses architectural principles of Modernism as well as aesthetic qualities of Romanticism. Secondly, the interpretations of this cultural landscape changed through time. Journals of the 1940's and 1950's concentrated on Modern developments in structural innovation and economical resolution of building requirements. In the 1980's, regional characteristics such as sensitivity to site and surroundings, naturalistic landscaping and interior courtyards assume greater significance. Thirdly, the interpretations are influenced by certain cultural values prevalent at the time of writing. The purpose of architectural commentary in the post-war years was to promote the efficient and therefore economical aspects of Modern building practices. This writing emerged from a social environment informed by capitalist industrial production. The 1980's objective is to foster a regionally-conscious architectural form. This time period is more effected by the practices of consumer capitalism.

This thesis also uncovered the usefulness of deconstruction as a method of geographic investigation. Of particular value was its ability to address both objective evaluations and subjective experience of landscape formation. Deconstruction also offered a systematic means of analyzing changes in the meaning of that cultural landscape. Nevertheless, the extension of deconstructionist methodology into oral and visual realms of representation would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of landscape creation and interpretation.

DEDICATION

To Archie MacPherson for introducing me to Cultural Geography.

To Warren Gill for arousing my curiosity about the real world.

To Michael Eliot Hurst for burdening me with social conscience.

To Edward Gibson for always stimulating my imagination.

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CHAPTER I

THE ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPE OF WESTCOAST MODERNISM

"What happened to the "Westcoast Style" as epitomized by the rich output of wood houses that appeared after the Second World War and gained such recognition? Where did it go? Does it disappear as the scale of things gets bigger — is it not sustainable once one is dealing with more complex design problems? Or is its demise merely a product of the city's growing up — with more sophistication comes more homogenization, an irresistible product of broader horizons and better connections?" Andrew Gruft¹.

Introduction

This thesis is about textual interpretations of the West Coast Modern architectural landscape. It is also about a method of textual analysis called deconstruction which has been applied in other fields of the humanities but is new to geography. West Coast Modernism or the West Coast Style represents a place and time specific realization of the Modern movement in architecture. In Vancouver, a port city on Canada's West Coast, it created a distinct cultural landscape. The emergence of a West Coast Modernism was first noted by architectural and art journals after the Second World War, a time which acknowledged the importance of journals in disseminating information regarding technological innovations and their application in architecture² as well as new trends in design and aesthetics³. These journals described Modernism on the West Coast as an adaptation of Modern principles of design to landforms and climate resulting in a structurally-discernable regional style. Ten years later, the same journals depicted this regional development as an aesthetic modification of "International Style" Modernism. In the 1980's, architectural literature represents a West Coast Style as a local vernacular, a force of critical regionalism

¹Gruft, Andrew. "Vancouver Architecture: The Last Fifteen Years" in Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 - 1983. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983, p. 320.

²Lasserre, Fred. "Keeping Pace with Architecture in Vancouver" in Canadian Art, April 1958, pp. 86 - 87.

³Woodworth, John. "Where Modern Meets Traditional" in Western Homes and Living, August-September 1950, p. 33.

against what Jencks has termed, a Postmodern "radical eclecticism"⁴. In the fifty years since its first appearance, interpretations of West Coast Modernism have changed significantly. It is the purpose of this thesis to investigate the changing textual representations of this architectural landscape in order to challenge firstly, the arbitrary⁵ nature of their perspectives, and secondly, the Modernist linear conception of cultural progress. In order to achieve this objective, the thesis implements the methodology of deconstruction, a strategy of textual analysis developed by Jacques Derrida.

History acknowledges the Modern movement in architecture, as in the other arts, as nothing less than a revolution. Inspired by the processes of technological innovation and industrial production, Modernism sought to overcome the decadent and symbolically-irrelevant architecture of neo-classicism and historical eclecticism. The Modern approach to building emphasized new methods of construction using new synthetic materials of concrete, steel and glass. Ornamentation was deemed unnecessary and the ensuing Modern aesthetic, based on pure structural expression, assumed a universal quality⁶. Ideals of Modern art and design were first taught at the Bauhaus School in Germany in the 1920's. By the 1930's, these ideals had been appropriated by North American architects on the East Coast. But it was not until

⁴Jencks, Charles. The Language of Post-modern Architecture. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1981, p. 127.

⁵Derrida, Jacques. Of Grammatology. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974, pp. 32 - 33. Derrida describes his conception of "arbitrariness": he contends that if writing is "image" and exterior figuration, then as a media of representation it is not innocent. This is because the concept of the sign has never existed or functioned out the history of the philosophy of reality and remains systematically and genealogically determined by that history. This is the definition of "arbitrary" used in this thesis.

⁶This conceptualization of Modern architecture derives from the writings of Walter Gropius, le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright, architects and pioneers of the Modern movement. Peter Collins and Charles Jencks provide more extensive definitions of Modernism in architecture: "The fondness of late eighteenth century architects for historical allusions, for analogical justifications, for asymmetrical landscaping, for brutal detailing, for oriental prototypes, and for pictorial techniques does not simply cut them off from the tradition of earlier centuries; it relates them intimately to the architects of today, and it is this which gives unity to the period 1750 - 1950, and allows us to treat it as a single architectural age. (Collins, 1978, p. 15.) and ". . . recent (Modern) architecture (is comprised) of a series of discontinuous movements. . ." (Jencks, 1980, p. 13.) But because the latter concepts of Modern architecture were not available to the readers of the 1940's and 1950's, and the former constituted the standard reference for post-war architects, students and critics, the idealized, perhaps simplistic, understanding of Modern design is used in this thesis.

after the Second World War that Modernism significantly affected the architecture of Canada's West Coast. There, it encountered place and time specific circumstances which generated, in terms of architectural significance, a distinct West Coast articulation of Modern principles of design and, in terms of geographic significance, a distinct cultural landscape worthy of investigation.

The city of Vancouver, the place of origin of West Coast Modern architecture, is situated on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. Its geographic landscape comprises a richly-forested, mountainous terrain cut by the Fraser River and Burrard Inlet and surrounded by the peaks of Coast Mountain Range. After the Second World War, Vancouver experienced a complex socio-economic situation. Relevant to the building industry was an extreme increase in population due to the return of war veterans combined with the influx of migrants seeking opportunity in the province's booming resource industry, a housing shortage coupled with rising costs in building materials and labour, and an idealistic architectural and artistic community instilled with the belief that Modern design provided the means of improving social well-being. According to the architectural and art journals of the 1940's, experiments with Modern principles of design first occurred in the field of detached housing. There, the use of a regionally-developed method of construction called post-and-beam and an extensive employment of local building materials, specifically cedar and fir, generated a West Coast Modernism, a regional design idiom characterized by a functional and aesthetic integration between inside and outside environments, between architecture and nature. Journals of the 1950's reported that this regional sensitivity to the natural environment influenced the aesthetics of larger Modern structures built in concrete, steel and glass in the way of roof extensions, texturing of sterile surfaces and the addition of art. This evolution of a distinct West Coast Style during Vancouver's Modern movement has again captured the interest of the architectural community. It speaks of the West Coast Style as a local vernacular, It points to sensitive relationship with the environment, structural alignment to capture a view, extensive incorporation of naturalistic gardens and generous use of glazing as indicative of a current practice of critical regionalism.

The significance of West Coast Modernism as a feature of the cultural landscape has changed from the 1940's to the 1950's and again in the 1980's. At the time of its emergence, it represented the

application of Modern principles of structural design to particular geographic conditions. Ten years later, it referred to an aesthetic modification of "International Style" Modernism. Then for 1980's architects like Barry Downs, the West Coast Style signifies local vernacular⁷. This thesis investigates the changes in the meaning of the West Coast expression of Modern architecture. It uses Derridean deconstruction to disclose the difference between the conceptualization of West Coast Modernism and the experience of building individual Modern projects. This difference then reveals the cultural bias, hence the cultural values, operant in both the practice and textual representation of contemporary regional architecture. These disclosures, in turn, comment on the potential of West Coast Modern architecture as an idiom of critical regionalism, a force of resistance challenging the historically-eclectic Postmodern universalization of the Vancouver landscape.

The Architectural Landscape and Cultural Change

It was the Modern movement in the arts that generated the architectural landscape of West Coast Modernism. West Coast Modern architecture declined in importance in the 1960's and 1970's but in the 1980's, it has again assumed architectural significance, albeit for reasons different than those in the post-war years. The appearance, disappearance and reappearance of this regional design sensibility confounds the Modernist linear conception of progress. In order to systematically analyze the unpredictable developments and consequences of the Modern movement on the West Coast, this thesis consults the work of E.H. Gombrich⁸. The critical stance taken towards the interpretation and reinterpretation of the effects of the movement on the architectural landscape is based upon the architectural historian Manfredo Tafuri's contention that the present reinterprets the past in order to either maintain or rupture historical continuity. It is also founded on Jean-Francois Lyotard's and Jacques

⁷Downs, Barry. "Landscape and the Western House" in Building with Words: Canadian Architects on Architecture. Eds. William Bernstein and Ruth Cawker. Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1981, p. 41.

⁸Gombrich's thoughts were found to be more relevant to the objectives of this thesis than those of, for example, Erwin Panofsky. Panofsky explains all cultural phenomena, including deviant occurrences such as movements, in terms of cultural unity rather than diversity.

Derrida's theoretical perspectives regarding the specific intentions underlying systems of (textual) representation. Both the historians and theorists address the issue of continuity in historical progress. All are of the mind that cultural continuity does not necessarily follow a logical path towards perfection as suggested by historical record.

"Movements" as Catalysts of Cultural Change

Modernism in architecture, as well as in other spheres of art, began as a "movement". The cultural phenomena of movements, whether artistic or political, are detached from a dominant system of beliefs because they advocate alternative ways of thinking, a "better" direction of progress. In departing from the norms of an extant culture, movements expose that culture's deficiencies and contradictions and in this manner instigate reform and cultural change. In order to study the specific phenomenon of a movement, this thesis consults E.H. Gombrich's theories on cultural history. As a historian, Gombrich's primary concern is to search for continuity throughout the changing stages of civilization. Since the Enlightenment, he observes, these changes have been understood as progress. Gombrich opposes the Hegelian concept of the "supra-individual collective spirit" fulfilling its destiny of divine self-actualization. He contests the idea of cultural holism associated with historical periods by pointing to movements as proof that cultures are not unified wholes revolving around one central idea but rather, a complex field composed of varied realities and possibilities. Furthermore, the direction of progress is not predestined, but rather the consequence of the willful and interrelated actions of human agency. Movements — ideas and actions arising out of a dominant culture in a deviant manner — provide the momentum for not necessarily predictable cultural change. Therefore, for Gombrich, it is fruitful to investigate the reasons for the appearance of a movement, the individuals and specific social groups that initiate, support or suppress that movement, the change of social significance that occurs during the movement's progress, and finally, the degree of its acceptance or rejection.

"Modernism" as Advent to the New

"Modernism", known as a revolutionary artistic phenomenon, demanded a break with existing reality and the subsequent creation of a new one⁹. In the twentieth century, Modernism followed the principles of science and industry¹⁰. Its affect on artistic expression comprised a discarding of traditional Romantic aesthetics and the acquiring of techno-scientific sensibilities. In the architectural discipline, an emphasis on structure and function challenged the previous preoccupation with symbolic appearance. Architects such as Walter Gropius, le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright welcomed its arrival. Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus in Germany, the first school of Modern architecture, referred to the "New Architecture" as the logical response to the technical, social and intellectual conditions of the age¹¹. Wright, an American known for his respect for the natural landscape, recognized the new architectural ideals as being founded on the capabilities of the Machine as a tool, but maintained that the Machine must be mastered by the artist if it was to "emancipate human potential"; if driven by human greed, the Machine would become an engine of enslavement¹². The Swiss le Corbusier, visionary planner of the Radial City, believed that in architecture lay the responsibility for social equilibrium. His was the postulation, "Revolution, or architecture?"¹³ Although twentieth-century Modernism was born of industrial production,

⁹Williams, 1983, p. 208. The earliest sense of "modern" referred to "existing now" or "just now". While the usage of "modern" in an historical sense — ancient and modern — was common in the sixteenth century, the majority of pre-nineteenth century uses was unfavourable when the context was comparative. The nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries showed a strong movement in the other direction: "modern" became virtually equivalent to improved, satisfactory or efficient.

¹⁰Williams, 1983, pp. 279, 165 – 166. Since the early nineteenth century, "science" referred to physical and experimental science, apart from the theological and metaphysical. It was the hard objective character of material and method that defined phenomena, the consequences being that science became equated with fact, truth, reason and rationality. In the eighteenth century, "industry" began to refer to an institution or set of institutions organized for production and trade. In the 1830's, the word "Industrialism" was introduced by Carlyle to indicate a new order of society based on organized mechanical production.

¹¹Gropius, Walter. The New Architecture and the Bauhaus. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1965, p. 20.

¹²Wright, Frank Lloyd. "In the Cause of Architecture. The Third Dimension" (written in 1925) in The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright. USA: Bramhall House, 1965, p. 50.

¹³le Corbusier. Towards a New Architecture. London: Architectural Press, 1959.

the early Modernists did not accept industry as the new nature to be devotedly revered and emulated. They saw themselves as producers, not interpreters, of the new reality. To identify the new laws of the equipment, to make those laws their own — this was the way of solving the inherent irrationalities and contradictions of Modernity, of creating a higher standard of living for a greater number of people.

The Modern aspect of the new architecture appeared most evident in the use of new building materials — those of concrete, steel and glass — and in new building practices based on principles of rationalization and standardization¹⁴. Novel conceptions of building inspired novel conceptions of space. The increased load-bearing strength of reinforced concrete and steel framing eliminated the need for interior structural walls on the one hand, and reduced the size of exterior structural elements on the other. During this growing preponderance of voids over solids, glass assumed greater structural importance. The result was wide-spanned and all but transparent architecture. A flat, as opposed to pitched, roof typified the Modern architectural form. This flat roof facilitated a freer kind of planning in the interior. On the top, it created space for landscaping and recreational activities — for the acclimatization of nature and society to a dense urban environment. Modernists did not embellish the concrete, steel and glass surfaces: the new synthetic materials were meant to be appreciated for their own inherent beauty. Consequently, flat surfaces, clean lines, and a simply defined mass characterized the Modern aesthetic. Wright further noted that the elastic qualities of reinforced concrete and steel framing afforded boundless new expressions in architectural form, freer compared to post and lintel. For that reason, he called Modern architecture "architecture of the third dimension".

The seemingly limitless potential of Modern building was nevertheless grounded in rationalized planning and standardized construction. Because economy and function constituted the basic requirements of design, the new rationalized architecture followed a modular system of planning and utilized prefabricated standardized building components¹⁵. According to Gropius, prefabricated units rated superior to natural ones because of their accuracy and uniformity. In his mind, standardization — a fusion of the

¹⁴Gropius, 1965, pp. 23 - 34.

¹⁵Gropius, 1965, p. 39.

best anterior forms into "types" — constituted a prerequisite for a civilized society. In a new world order based upon technological innovation, standardized prefabrication succeeded due to methods of unprecedented industrial potential — methods of mass-production. The prudent limitation of variety to a few standard building types both decreased cost and increased quality. Additionally, because more and more of the building process occurred in factories, the seasonal and inefficient nature of construction was overcome. Building became an organized industry, approximating the successive stages in a manufacturing process. With regards to quality, Gropius wrote that standardization assured elimination of designers' personal content and other nongeneric and non-essential features. For Wright, standardization lent a rational continuity to the whole¹⁶.

Principles of rationalization and standardization were also to be applied to the planning of neighbourhoods and cities. The basic cellular unit composing an architectural structure would be multiplied to the unit of the street, which, in turn, would be multiplied to the scale of the metropolis¹⁷. As for Gropius, so for le Corbusier, the Plan constituted the critical element of successful Modern building practices. But the Swiss architect differed from Gropius in that he specified the unit of man as the unit of measure and the uninterrupted movement inherent in nature as the guideline for the Plan. Wright shared Gropius' faith in the potential of technology; he referred to the Machine as the "forerunner of Democracy". But his architectural sensibilities revolved around a respect for, rather than domination of, the natural environment. He wrote that while engineering dominated Modern building practice, the nature of the site should not be forgotten in architectural expression. A building should be integrated with and not alienated from its natural surroundings. According to all three architects, the products and the processes of technological innovation and industrial production offered boundless potentials for the future of Modern architecture. Only the significance of the human being and nature to Modern design remained to be resolved.

¹⁶Wright, 1925, p. 62. Wright also noted that the various parts, being of consistent scale, facilitated rhythm in design. He further speculated that with time, pattern would appear in the Modern aesthetic in response to the evolution of concerns of differentiation, explanation and qualification.

¹⁷Gropius, 1965, p. 37.

A Postmodern Perspective on the Consequences of the Modern Movement

This Modern movement, in architecture as well as in the other arts, successfully directed a cultural transition from a Romantic world-view established on religious, aesthetic and political central authority to a Modern consciousness founded on directives of ever-changing technology at the service of capital production. Along with a radical departure from the past came a reinterpretation of that past — this time according to the Modern system of values based on production and efficiency. Manfredo Tafuri writes that in the realm of art, "Modern" dictates of invalidating the quality and character of past artistic processes lead to a revolutionizing of historic meanings, and hence, a compromising of traditional values. In this way, it is not history that conditions human action, but rather the latter which reinterprets the functions of the former¹⁸. For example, Modernists degraded Romantic architecture as a "welter of ornament", a morphology of dead styles¹⁹, expressions of arbitrary and aloof individualism on the part of the designers, all engraved in oppressive masses of masonry. This kind of criticism was justified from a Modernist perspective. Modernists adhered to a rationalized and standardized purity of form based on productive functions and economic solutions and executed in the superior synthetic materials of concrete, steel and glass. They condemned the Romantic sensibility as decadent, and, in time, their judgement was accepted as "truth"²⁰.

Although values deriving from science and technology are presented as "objective" and therefore factual, Jean-Francois Lyotard points out that this Modern worldview is supported and perpetuated by a capitalist political economy. This worldview bespeaks a certain consensus among those in power, based on a certain knowledge and certain commitments. Therefore, he states, "the systems in the name of which, or with which, Modernism has been able to support or justify itself deserve the greatest attention"²¹. Jacques

¹⁸Tafuri, Manfredo. Theories and History of Architecture. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980, p. 45.

¹⁹Wright, 1925, p. 63. Even Wright states that with Modern architecture, it is the imagination, not memory, that is challenged.

²⁰Tafuri, 1980, p. 30.

²¹Lyotard, 1984, p. 78.

Derrida's perspective on writing, as recorded memory or history that is too often accepted as "truth", parallels Lyotard's insights. His concern with the arbitrariness of meaning in a "text" is based upon (his) premises that inscription is a mnemotechnic device for supplanting memory. Therefore the meaning expressed in any form of writing must necessarily be questioned in association with the meaning of technics such as the printed word in society, as well as the relationship between technics, history and "truth"²². This has led Derrida to pursue the idea that, although writing as representation exists in relationship with signification, that relationship is neither direct nor simple.

In the field of architecture, criticism dealing with truth in signification that is related to particular systems of social organization, encounters difficulty. Tafuri points to certain disadvantages incurred by eliminating past traditions and allowing technology to exert its affect in full force. He writes that if architecture, for example, were to be modelled on technological and industrial reality, its cultural significance could never be questioned and an effective critique could never be levelled. But history has resurfaced, albeit mediated by a Modern sensibility. The once-virtuous ideals of Modernism now suffer criticism from a "Postmodern" camp. Venturi, for example, denounces Modern principles of rationalization and standardization as elitist, excluding of popular art, devoid of symbolism. He uses the words "alienating" and "empty of meaning"²³ to describe the once respected universal quality of Modern classical form. Modernism's revolutionary ambitions are further berated for their attempts to change the environment as opposed to enhancing it. This criticism, too, is valid from a Postmodern perspective. Postmodernism draws ideas from historical memory as well as from local content and promotes expressions of the commercial vernacular as opposed to the production process. It idolizes mixed media eclecticism and accommodates this eclecticism to the reality of urban sprawl: it does not try to eliminate reality through

²²Derrida, 1974, pp. 8 - 10. Derrida states that for nearly three millennia, meaning or signification has been logocentric or metaphysical at its source; it has sought unity, rather than ambiguity, in explanation and interpretation. But in the twentieth century, with the use of theoretical mathematics in the innovation of computerized systems of information storage and retrieval, the assumptions of rationality governing "writing" have been widely questioned and can no longer be considered as issuing from a single logocentric source.

²³Frampton, 1983, p. 25. In the words of Hannah Arendt, "utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness".

rational planning. In the eyes of Postmodernism, Modernism represents the terrorism of "pure space". Postmodernists prefer to focus on aesthetic play on the plane of the superficial. In the 1980's an architecture of "persuasive heraldry"²⁴ has superseded an architecture oriented towards spatial/social organization. The differences in aesthetic preferences point to a change in the nature of cultural values. The values of Modernism invoked values of order, harmony and planning — all values imperative to production. Postmodernism, on the other hand, expresses plurality and play, critical to the practice of commercial art and, more generally, of consumer capitalism. In terms of cultural progress, the once permanent values expressed by art have been superseded by the constantly changing values accommodated by design. The principle of continuous innovation, of primary import to capitalist industrial production, has finally penetrated the field of architecture. The difference between the Modern and Postmodern inventiveness is that Postmodernism has broadened its sources of inspiration to include motifs from the past and, most important to place-specific analysis, from the ambient environment.

The recent Postmodern interest in local identity does not impress Kenneth Frampton. He calls this Postmodernism a regression into nostalgia and the glibly decorative. To counteract this tendency Frampton proposes a "critical regionalism". This regionalism upholds local architectonic features against more universal ones. Its strategy, oriented towards maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness, consists of confounding the impact of international civilization with tectonic elements derived from the physical characteristics of a particular place, such as the topography of a given site and the range and quality of local light. Frampton emphasizes that the primary principle of architectural autonomy resides in the tectonic rather than in the scenographic, in the interplay between material, craftwork and gravity and in the use of the tactile. These, he writes, are liberative because they can only be decoded in terms of experience. Given that western society is still dominated by the worldview of techno-science at the service

²⁴Venturi, R., D. Scott Brown and S. Izenour. Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1977, p. 6. "Persuasive heraldry" refers to the iconology in popular commercial art that pervades the built environment. It describes an architecture of styles and signs, an architecture of communication over space.

of capital, one must ask Frampton, "Critical regionalism is liberative to what end?"²⁵.

Nevertheless, in the 1980's, Vancouver's architectural critics such as Barry Downs and Edward Gibson view the West Coast Style as inspiring an architecture of resistance within a Postmodern environment of classical revival. While in the 1950's, the West Coast Style emerged as a regionalist interpretation of the Modern movement, an alternative approach to architectural design based on the principles of industrial production which departed radically from dominant traditional building practices, thirty years later, its once-radical attributes are considered "local vernacular"²⁶. The characteristics of West Coast Modernism fit Frampton's regionalist qualifications of sensitivity to site and use of local tectonics: post-and-beam framing was a regional structural innovation developed to accommodate the uneven topography particular to the West Coast. But in its new guise as an architecture of critical regionalism, the West Coast Style no longer acts as a venue of radical change. It stands as a force of opposition to the new idea of Postmodern historical eclecticism.

At each moment of its appearance — in the 1950's as in the 1980's — West Coast Modernism has justified its principles in conjunction with a critical reinterpretation of past architectural practices. Although couched in architectural and aesthetic terminology, these critiques were and are rooted in a larger system of social values, one that in both instances is guided not only by science and technology, but also by capital. The recent resurgence of West Coast Modernism, bespeaking a change of purpose within the (intellectual) architectural community, is in some way indicative of these larger processes of cultural change. Because it reappears as a movement, it signals a period of transition, when the path of progress could again take a radical shift in direction.

²⁵Gruft, Andrew. "Banff Session '84: Architecture in Search of a Direction" in section a, 1984, no. 3 - 4, p. 26. "Frampton made it clear that he had become much less happy with the topic (of Critical Regionalism). . . he explained that he was becoming more preoccupied with the problem of power. . ."

²⁶Downs, Barry. "Landscape and the Western House" in Building with Words: Canadian Architects on Architecture. Eds. William Bernstein and Ruth Cawker. Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1981, p. 41.

This thesis investigates the West Coast Modern landscape as a place-specific manifestation of the Modern movement, a cultural phenomenon offering radically diverse alternatives for architectural development. The manner and purpose of regional appropriation of Modern design in the 1940's and 1950's offer insight into both the architectural and cultural significance of the West Coast Style to Vancouver architects in the 1980's. The theoretical perspectives developed by Gombrich, Tafuri and Lyotard relating to cultural complexity and continuity in the formation and interpretation of the built environment provide the framework for this Postmodern investigation of a cultural landscape.

Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter One introduces, first of all, the theme and objective of the project — the deconstruction of the interpretations of the West Coast Modern architectural landscape. Secondly, it outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis that draws upon E.H. Gombrich's evaluation of cultural movements, Manfredo Tafuri's perspective on Modernism in architecture and Francois Lyotard's insights regarding the political-economic system fueling the Modern movement in architecture. Chapter Two situates this investigation of the West Coast Modern landscape in the geographic tradition of landscape study and justifies the Postmodern methodology of Derridean deconstruction as a means of analysis.

Chapters Three, Four and Five follow the strategy of Derridean deconstruction. The Third Chapter involves a deconstructionist reading of articles from architectural and art journals for the purpose of introducing the textual conceptualizations of the regionally-appropriated Modern movement and uncovering the ambiguous nature between its representation and attributed significance. The Fourth Chapter qualifies this ambiguity in meaning by relating the conceptualized West Coast Modernism to its most explicit context, descriptions of individual building projects. By identifying the particularities of regional expression on Vancouver's emergent Modern landscape, this chapter discloses the differences between experience and interpretation. Chapter Five describes the scope of possibilities open to the

Modern movement on the West Coast in light of architectural ideals and specific socio-economic circumstances. In this manner, it contextualizes the regionally-specific character of the West Coast Style.

Chapter Six relates 1980's reinterpretations of the West Coast Style as critical regionalism to the deconstructed 1940's and 1950's interpretations of West Coast Modernism as regional adaptation and associates the change in significance with a change in cultural values. The chapter concludes the thesis by evaluating the contribution of Derridean deconstruction to the geographic tradition of landscape study.

The study of "landscape" is one of many approaches operant in the field of geographic inquiry. Since its inclusion in the discipline of geography in the late nineteenth century, it has evolved in conjunction with social theory for the purpose of understanding not only the physical, but also the cultural forces affecting landscape formation through time. An outline of the changing role of landscape study throughout the development of the discipline identifies its increasing importance to cultural geographic inquiry and in this manner, situates this project within its tradition.

CHAPTER II

THE LANDSCAPE TRADITION IN GEOGRAPHY

The West Coast Modern landscape illustrates a regional, therefore place and time specific, adaptation of Modern principles of design and construction. Although characterized by references to nature — sensitivity to site and integration with the surrounding environment, the West Coast Style of building is nevertheless a product of architectural — man-made — endeavour. As such, it constitutes a cultural landscape. The cultural landscape has been defined by Wagner and Mikesell as "a concrete and characteristic product of the complicated interplay between a given human community, embodying certain cultural preferences and potentials, and a particular set of natural circumstances. It is a heritage of many eras of natural evolution and of many generations of human effort."¹ In this light, the West Coast Modern landscape represents a transitional period in the history of Vancouver architecture when traditional building practices encountered the radical forces of Modernism, when social groups such as the artistic community, the architectural profession, various cultural organizations and the construction industry acted to both encourage and confound the advent of Modern design. Because each group contributed to the development of the regionally-expressed Modernism in its own way, the resulting cultural landscape acquired a multiplicity of meaning. Its interpretation, therefore, should reveal equivocation rather than unity.

Fundamentally, a cultural landscape illustrates the engagement of a human subject with a material object, the physical environment. It is now understood in geography that an empirical investigation of the built environment does not provide an understanding of its constitution. Explanation can only be discovered in the relationships between those individuals and social bodies involved in forming the landscape as well as those involved in interpreting it in a meaningful way. These relationships are complex and often ambiguous. For example, by 1947, the Modern aesthetic had made an impact in residential architecture in Vancouver. Its capability of responding to regional requirements was praised by art and

¹Wagner, P.L. and Mikesell, M.W. ed. Readings in cultural geography. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

architectural journals of the time. By 1960, the regional aspect of Modernism was not that evident in the burgeoning field of domestic design and, according to the journalists, even less so in larger architectural projects. Despite its reported disappearance, a number of architects of the 1980's have identified a definite West Coast Style that was developed in the 1950's and have named it "local vernacular". This discrepancy in the interpretation of a cultural landscape from one time period to another cannot be accounted for by positivist science². Consequently, cultural geographers have turned to the humanities for more effective methodologies of inquiry.

Ironically, the rise of empirical science as a dominant epistemology coincided with the formalization of "landscape" as a concept of cultural expression. This occurred during the European Renaissance, a time when religious authority waned in influence and an industry-oriented capitalism displaced an agriculturally-based feudalism as a means of economic existence. As land value was decreasingly understood in terms of use and increasingly in terms of exchange, portrayal of land as landscape emerged in the field of painting. Its representation relied upon empirical observation and technical realization: in other words, upon the interpretation of the external viewer *cum* artist. Denis Cosgrove argues that, because of these specific historical origins, landscape painting, and hence, the idea of "landscape", embodies an ideology of human mastery of the environment³.

An ideology of external control is most obvious in the positivist practices in physical geography. Despite an equivalent presence in cultural geography, this ideology has remained unquestioned until the rise of realist critique in the 1970's. This philosophy of science challenged the objectives directing scientific explanation. It affected cultural geography by stimulating a humanistic awareness of the landscape. Humanism in geographic research acknowledges the insider's experience of the environment and draws upon social theory for a meaningful understanding of that relationship. Relevant social theories have included phenomenology for interpretation of the affective impact of landscape in symbolic terms,

²Cosgrove, Denis. Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape. London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1984, p. 13.

³Cosgrove, 1984, p. 26.

existentialism for an examination of intentionality in landscape formation, and structuralism as a means of relating the representation of landscape in art to the dominant social order. Structuralism, in particular, has strived to expose the ideological underpinnings inherent in the "landscape" concept.

The landscape of West Coast Modernism manifests a distinct expression of radical architectural form. Its associated cultural experience is that of a "movement", the introduction of cultural values different from, yet based on, the dominant worldview. The social theories employed in current geographic studies offer unified, logical explanations of landscape formation in accordance with objectively-projected parameters of social reality. They do not allow for the freedom of exploration necessary for understanding the unpredictable, subjectively-based nature of a movement that, because of its diverse potentials in place and time specific circumstances, is much more complex than its apparent realization. Recent Postmodern methodologies based on language theory do accommodate this requirement. Deconstruction is one such strategy of textual investigation developed by Jacques Derrida.

Origins of "Landscape"

The idea of "landscape" is said to have originated with landscape painting⁴. This onus on the environment in artistic expression emerged in Flanders and upper Italy, the most economically advanced, densely settled and highly urbanized areas in fifteenth century Europe. These were also the regions most accepting of secular, science-influenced, ways of thinking about the world. Ideas emergent at this time involved expectations of a human control of nature and novel conceptions of epistemological unity that favoured enclosed space. Landscape painting upheld this new world-view. Although the represented landscape appeared realistic, it was nevertheless, composed, ordered, by the artist within the framework of the canvas.

In Flemish Renaissance painting, empirical observation determined the portrayal of landscape. In upper Italy, "realistic" representation was achieved through the technique of perspective. The Italian

⁴Cosgrove, 1984, p. 21.

artists believed that linear perspective constituted an objective property of space, not just of vision, and for this reason, the reality so depicted was true. Renaissance cosmology justified this artistic innovation. It maintained that Creation followed fixed geometrical rules which imparted a harmonious and proportional order to the universe. Such, also, were the convictions underlying the "scientific" explorations of nature. The capitalist commodification of art additionally contributed to the ready acceptance of realistic perspectival representation. Purchasing appeal had to be sustained in different contexts and places and to this end, Renaissance landscape painting cultivated an aesthetic appreciation of technique rather than subject matter.

Scientific investigation, perspectival representation of the landscape and individual appreciation/appropriation of landscape painting all bespoke personal authority over the environment. All took place from the vantage point of the outsider, the one who controlled, but did not belong, to the landscape. Denied in this relationship was the experience of the insider, the individual or collective entity that constructed the landscape. If a painting happened to evoke a psychological affinity with the insider's world, it was due to illusion accomplished through technical expertise, not empathy. This outsider's authority was also portrayed as neverending. Although Renaissance artists could capture the flow of history, they chose to bend its factual appearance to fit the rules of linear perspective⁵. Consequently, their art represented that moment as a universal and unchanging reality. While empirically verifiable, landscape painting disregarded the aspect of subjective constitution and negated the dynamics of history. The nature of its representation was therefore not realistic, but ideological. But as long as methods of scientific inquiry were believed to be objectively factual, this arbitrary portrayal of reality was accepted as truth.

The Appropriation of "Landscape" by Geography

In the mid-nineteenth century a newly-discovered "relative" quality of visual perception contested perspectival conventions of realistic representation. Landscape, as a major subject of painting, also

⁵Cosgrove, 1984, p. 26.

declined in importance. These occurrences coincided with the emergence of landscape study as a distinct intellectual discipline within the newly established profession of geography⁶. The concept of an ordered, unified worldview, which had been formalized in landscape painting, was academically reinterpreted as a systematized body of empirical knowledge, similarly claiming scientific objectivity and validity. But the ideological values inherent in landscape painting — those of the outsider removed from personal and collective historical experience — remained, and in time, confounded scientific investigation of the cultural landscape. Strict empiricism could not explain landscape formation; it could not resolve the interrelationships between subject and object, insider and outsider, individual and collective. Nor could it incorporate a historical change.

In recent years the cultural landscape has been employed as a geographic concept by writers striving to challenge the orthodoxy of scientific method in geography. Motivated by the need to recover subjectivity or an essential human component in their object of study, these geographers view the Vidalian and Berkeley Schools of regional and historical geography as the predecessors of their cause. Regional geography, as developed by Paul Vidal de la Blache in France in the early 1900's, focussed on *genre de vie* or human livelihood as the generator of distinctive cultural landscapes⁷. Though successful at incorporating the constitutive subject of landscape, the Vidalian School did not address historical change. The Berkeley School in California did. Under the direction of Carl Sauer in the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's, Berkeley geographers examined particular landscapes according to the visual record of human agency through time⁸. Influenced by German "landschaftsgeographie", a landscape science concerned with the classification of landscape and its elements, Sauer's approach was one of genetic morphology — analysis of ensembles of artifacts within the humanized environment. Despite the morphological thematic, the development and change manifest on the landscape had to be arrested at some selected historical moment.

⁶James, Preston E. and Geoffrey J. Martin. All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981, p. 133. Geography as a field of advanced study taught by professionally qualified individuals first appeared in Germany in 1874.

⁷Vidal de la Blache, Paul. "Les genres de la vie dans la géographie humaine". Annales de Géographie 20. 1911, pp. 193 - 212.

⁸Sauer, C.O. The Morphology of Landscape. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1925.

The landscape then became a static object wherein forms were defined and integrated into a unified, therefore timeless, composition. While the Berkeley geographers did achieve a subjective empathy with the external forms, they were not able to include the meaning invested in those forms at the creative level, meaning which during times of cultural transition would be complex, contradictory and not explicitly manifest on the landscape. In addition, while claiming morphological analysis, the historical dimension of landscape was not successfully accounted for. For the cultural geographers of the late twentieth century, the Vidalian and Berkeley Schools identified that the subjective meaning of landscape and the consequent social account for historical change could not be discovered through empirical study, however empathetic the investigator. Other methods for explaining landscape formation had to be explored.

In landscape painting, the artist employed technical virtuosity to inspire a psychological affinity with the constitutive subject's experience of landscape. In geographic studies, the means of discovering personal meaning were sought in social theory. J.K. Wright, Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph turned to phenomenology to explore the individualistic perception, response and experience of landscape while Marwyn Samuels drew upon existentialism to address the question of intentionality in landscape creation. Wright looked for "geopiety" or the emotional bond between man and homeland⁹. Tuan studied "topophilia", the symbolic significance of the affective ties between human being and material environment¹⁰. Relph investigated the personal and profound human encounters which constituted, what he termed, a "place"¹¹. Though intensely subjective in nature, these phenomenological studies still privileged the experience of the observer, not the day-to-day participant. Like the landscape painters, these geographers remained removed from their landscape of study in a way that afforded them control over that external world — control through interpretation¹². Marwyn Samuels attempted to overcome the

⁹Wright, J.K. Human nature in geography: fourteen papers, 1925 - 1965. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966.

¹⁰Tuan, Yi-Fu. Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes and values. Englewood Cliffs and London: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

¹¹Relph, E. Place and placelessness. London: Pion; New York: Methuen, 1976.

¹²In the field of personal landscape evaluation (K.D. Fines and D.L. Linton) that element of control is further exercised in the form of planning recommendations.

exclusivity of external perspective through an existential — biographical — approach to the "authorship" of landscape¹³. Samuels was criticized, though, for not directly relating subjectively-motivated explanation with material reality. His existentialist approach disregarded the broader social dimensions and hence, the historical forces, operant in landscape formation.

To the geographic discipline, the social investment of meaning in places by those who make and keep them is of equal, if not greater, importance than understanding personal affinity. G.P. Marsh first addressed the role of human agency in landscape formation in 1864¹⁴. His work was revitalized in studies of the "phenomenal environment"¹⁵ and given a new technical edge through Systems application. The Systems analysis of the environment concentrated increasingly on "process" rather than material form — the flows (inputs and outputs) of material, information and motivation that produce, sustain and transform the cultural landscape. Although it succeeded in overcoming the static dimension of landscape study, it still remained within the confines of an externally-imposed framework of investigation.

Despite attempts on the part of regional and historical geographers, phenomenologists, existentialists and Systems analysts to incorporate the founding subject and the dimension of time into studies of landscape formation, a comprehensive synthesis of the individually creative, the socially influential, and their changing characteristics and interrelationships was not achieved. As in landscape painting of the Renaissance, these approaches privileged the outsider's perspective based on the outsider's purposes: explanation of a cultural landscape occurred through strictly deductive as opposed to inductive analysis. Since the 1970's, the nature of the authority directing methods of positivist science, such as Systems analysis, has been questioned by a "realist" perspective in geography. Realism is a philosophy of science

¹³Samuels, M. "Existentialism and human geography" in Ley, D. and Samuels, M. eds. Humanistic geography: prospects and problems. Chicago: Maaroufa; London: Croom Helm, chapter 2, 1978.

¹⁴Marsh, G.P. Man and nature: or physical geography as modified by human action. ed. David Lowenthal. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Oxford: Oxford University Press (first published in 1964), 1965.

¹⁵This concept places the physical environment in a "dynamic but non-equilibrating framework wherein the physical realm of resources and ecosystems is seen as undergoing ruthless exploitation".

that identifies the theoretical inferences made by positivist science that are based on strict empiricism, and criticizes them as ideological.

"Landscape" as Venue for Geographic Humanism

In criticizing the ideological assumptions underlying positivist approaches in geography, realism introduced the investigation of socially-causal forces operant, but not necessarily evident, in landscape formation. Although this dynamic quality can be said to be inimical to the concept of landscape, which is characterized by the visual and the static, the appropriation of realism by cultural geographers contesting the methodology of positivist science has generated the current "humanistic" approach in landscape studies.

Humanism represents the concern with subjective involvement in the creation of landscape at the levels of the social and the historical. In American geography it first emerged in the writings of J.B. Jackson. He was said to have "democratized the concept of landscape by writing from the inside and by revealing the symbolic meanings which arise from social life in particular geographic settings."¹⁶ But Jackson's work was as one-sided as previous studies. Although it successfully portrayed the internal political and cultural aspects affecting landscape formation as they changed through history, it neglected external theoretical analysis. The relationship between inside experience and outside evaluation was not resolved.

Realist directions in geography encouraged structuralist approaches to landscape study. For example, Denis Cosgrove employed and modified Marxist structuralism to address the social and historical dimensions of landscape art and architecture. His purpose was to integrate the portrayal of landscape in art with the material — economic — base of society in order to ascertain the role of cultural artifacts in justifying and idealizing the dominant social order. Although Cosgrove's methodology offered a comprehensive social contextualization of the artistic formation of landscape, it did not include the effect of

¹⁶Cosgrove, 1984, p. 34.

the artistic activity which strived to undermine existing authority. It attempted to understand the insider's perspective; but ultimately that perspective was deciphered according to theoretical analysis. Again, the outsider assumed control and the richness of meaning describing the diversity of ideals, motivations and appropriations was lost. A comprehensive understanding of landscape formation was not achieved.

A Postmodern Reading of "Landscape"

Humanist approaches have successfully pointed out the necessity for social theory in the understanding and explanation of landscape formation. Recent Postmodern theories focus on language and writing as sources of information regarding the creation of cultural environments. Geographers first recognized the emergence of a Postmodern way of thinking about society and culture in the 1970's. Although difficult to define, Postmodern theory exhibited and continues to exhibit one unmistakable trait: it disputes and revises agreed-upon notions of progress, modernity and reason. According to Charles Jencks, "this post-modern Movement is neither anti-Modernist nor reactionary. It accepts the discoveries of the twentieth century — those of Freud, Einstein and Henry Ford — and the fact that the two world wars and mass culture are now integral parts of our world picture, but doesn't make from this an entire ideology."¹⁷ Geographical awareness of this intellectual crisis brought about by Postmodern theory is entering the discipline via humanistic geography. As the theories of knowledge employed by humanist geographers do not represent established epistemologies but rather developing processes in thinking, they connect to Postmodern ways of investigating the world¹⁸.

Issues that have been addressed by Postmodern methodologies in geography include those of cultural change¹⁹, the ideology of progress²⁰, the media of visual

¹⁷Jencks, Charles. 1987, pp. 6 - 7.

¹⁸Folch-Serra, Mireya. 1989. p. 67.

¹⁹Smith, Susan. "Practising humanistic geography" in Annals of the Association of American Geographers 74, 1984, pp. 353 - 74.

²⁰Sack, Robert. Human Territoriality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

representation²¹, the "intellectual landscape"²², and erosion of regional identity²³. The methodologies used follow two major viewpoints: a post-structural or deconstructionist approach and a procedure of restoration. Deconstructionists examine the world as represented by textual description; for them, the written word provides simultaneously a reading and interpretation of that world. Restorationists, on the other hand, analyze the world through manifested speech and the ensuing criticism is therefore dialogical. It is deconstruction 'a la Jacques Derrida that is primarily responsible for the challenge to methods of logical explanation. Derrida insists that philosophy give up normative notions of progress and representation. Instead, studies of representation should involve the understanding of who is directing the processes of inscription and for what purposes. To this end, deconstruction attempts to eliminate the contrast between "contemplation and action" by uncovering the multiple and often conflicting dimensions of meaning underlying apparently coherent systems of social behaviour. The application of Postmodern methodology has been summed up by Stephen Daniels as a "dialectic of discovery and construction" that can involve complex and delicate adjudications between perspectives of participants and observers, between incidents and general themes and between competing theories of explanation²⁴.

Fundamentally, Postmodern social theory tries to overcome authoritative analysis: it seeks to destroy "metanarratives" by disclosing all possible interpretations of a cultural phenomenon. This type of strategy is particularly relevant to the study of a "movement", a cultural phenomenon also challenging dominant social beliefs by advocating values which are radically different and potent with possibilities for cultural change. The final result of a movement, such as its manifestation on a landscape, does not clearly express the conflict involved in its realization. The diversity in meanings and motivations associated with the

²¹Nash, Peter. "The making of a humanist geographer: a circuitous journey" in L. Guelke (ed). Geography and Humanistic Knowledge. Department of Geography Publication Series No. 25. Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo, 1986, pp. 10 - 13.

²²Rowntree, Lester. "Cultural/humanistic geography" in Progress in Human Geography 10, 1986, pp. 580 - 6.

²³Guelke, Leonard (editor), Geography and Humanistic Knowledge. Department of Geography Publication Series No. 25. Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo, 1986.

²⁴Daniels, Stephen. "Arguments for a humanistic geography" in R.J. Johnston, ed. The Future of Geography. London and New York: Methuen, 1985, p. 143 - 158.

acceptance, rejection and appropriation of movements can be assessed more comprehensively through the experience of the participants at the time of the movement's impact. One way of accessing this experience is through an investigation of its record in writing. Although the majority of architects do not evaluate their work in written form, they are influenced by those who do. On the West Coast, contributors to architectural and art journals included not only practicing architects (Simpson, Pratt) but also teachers in academic institutions (Binning, Lasserre). These authors provided both a documentary and an historical account of the experience of the Modern architectural movement on the West Coast. Deconstruction, as a Postmodern theory of cultural inquiry grounded in language theory, engages the written word as a primary source of information. According to its premises, the text embodies subjective experience and evaluation that also represent broader social influences. By integrating both individual and social perspectives, insiders' and outsiders' evaluations, Derridean deconstruction discloses the various forces affecting landscape formation and interpretation. For this reason, it appears capable of effectively investigating a cultural landscape created by a regionally-realized, Modern architectural movement and its cultural significance at the times of its emergence and rediscovery.

A Postmodern Method of Landscape Analysis: Deconstruction

In this thesis, the textual representations and interpretations of the West Coast Modern architectural landscape are investigated through Derridean deconstruction. Five terms are central to its strategy of investigation: "arche-writing", "temporal experience", "*differance*", the "trace" and the "hinge". "Arche-writing" refers to inscription of any kind composed according to particular methods of representation that themselves are determined by particular systems of signification or cultural meaning. It is the authority of this arche-writing that deconstruction strives to undermine. Comparison between arche-writing, or the conceptualization of a particular cultural phenomenon, and records of the "temporal, or day-to-day experience" of that phenomenon reveals an area of "*differance*" which describes the differences, similarities and complex interrelationships between concept and experience. Arche-writing, temporal experience and *differance* between the two emerge from the "trace" or the extant cultural reality

as affected by historical, actual and idealistic influences. More specifically, trace depicts the conditions — social, political, economic, etc. — which generate the potential, experience and conceptualization related to a particular cultural event. Within the "cradle of the trace", the movement of meaning between ideals, experience and interpretation, is situated the "hinge", a relatively flexible cultural mechanism serving to arbitrarily connect past, present and future. The direction of the hinge identifies the particular path of "progress" undertaken by a culture in a specific place at a specific time that determines the realization and significance of various cultural events. In this thesis, that path is critically analyzed through the study of the event of a movement and its expression on an architectural landscape.

Derridean deconstruction follows three phases of textual analyses. The purpose of its strategy is to disclose the ambiguity, complexity and contradiction of meaning extant in a cultural reality and, at the same time, to identify the dominant system of signification determining that culture's progress. In Phase One, selected texts or examples of arche-writing are deconstructed in order to reveal the vagueness of meaning associated with textual representation of a particular cultural phenomenon. In Phase Two, this ambiguity is qualified through a comparison between the arche-writing of that cultural phenomenon and records of temporal experience. The different-ness and deference that are disclosed constitute the area of *differance*. In Phase Three, cultural circumstances and imperatives are put into "play" with one another to create the cradle of the trace, the context of actualities and potentials generating both experience and arche-writing. Within the trace the direction established by the hinge is disclosed. By showing this direction to be one among many, deconstruction challenges the arbitrary nature of the authority guiding that particular path of cultural progress.

Phase One of Deconstruction

Derrida reminds us that as inscription has served to record history as an expression of metaphysical or logocentric "truth", it has done so at the hands of the particular social institutions in power. Hence, it must be considered that this inscription, this writing of the "sign", called arche-writing, is arbitrary in nature. Revealing this arbitrariness through the disclosure of ambiguity within a system of signification

that has been submitted to inscription is the purpose of deconstruction: a "text's" crucial terminology and its preferred mode of argument are put to work as part of its own critique. As the initial step towards this critique, the First Phase of the deconstruction process involves the detection or disclosure of the body of characteristics and their significance that comprise the concept of study. In the case of this project, the concept of West Coast Modernism is outlined according to its attributed qualities and the importance of its emergence and continued development. Articles from national architectural and art journals of the 1940's and 1950's constitute the source of information. In this manner, Phase One introduces the media describing the concept of West Coast Modernism, the (stated) relevant conditions generating its evolution, and its (ascribed) appearance on Vancouver's architectural landscape. In this manner, it constructs a multivaried definition which, on the one hand, constitutes the concept under study, and on the other hand, facilitates its further deconstruction.

Phase Two of Deconstruction

According to Derrida the Second Phase of Deconstruction relates a text to its most explicit context. The intent is to invert the classic hierarchical opposition of "world" and "work", of system of signification and account of experience, of the arche-writing of West Coast Modernism and specific descriptions of a regionally-distinct landscape. To this end, the terms of representation used in arche-writing are repetitioned in a deconstructionist reading of the depictions of temporal experience in order to identify their relevance and significance. In this project, temporal experience is represented by reviews of individual buildings portraying various categories of architecture, from housing to commercial and industrial to public. Derrida forewarns that this relationship between arche-writing and temporal experience is inherently complex, not necessarily predictable and never certain: conceptualized signification both draws from and affects the recorded experience of putting ideas into practice. He describes this relationship as revolving around *differance*.

Differance refers to the different-ness and deference reciprocally affecting writing which represents a temporal experience and an arche-writing which gives that experience meaning. Arche-writing is

constituted by the system of signification that encompasses a temporal entity within that system's transcendental or cultural origins: it is the pattern which gives form to substance, function to content. Derrida contends that the phenomenon of arche-writing is constant and self-referential. But in the process of continuously changing its expressive form, arche-writing is capable of concealing its origins of meaning, those origins being rooted in temporal experience. Representation of lived experience provides a perspective exterior to arche-writing. It expresses the familiar as opposed to the transcendental, or ideological, in society. It recounts the experiential origins of meaning in their multivariied and often contradictory state of existence. This familiar perspective, generating the *differance* between concept and practice, is also responsible for instilling ambiguity in arche-writing, the absence of order and unity disclosed by Phase One.

Phase Three of Deconstruction

Differance emerges from what Derrida calls "the cradle of the trace". The "trace" refers to the conditions embodying temporal lived experience as well as the continuous presentation and non or representation, or the arche-writing of that experience, all of which have followed a particular historical path. The trace can be defined as a constantly changing "origin of origins"²⁵. The disposition of temporal experience, arche-writing and *differance* "originate" in and continuously reconstitute the trace. Understanding the nature of the trace involves monitoring the movement of both representation and signification between arche-writing and experience, the movement which creates *differance*. Within the cradle of the trace, it is the area of different-ness or deferment created by the movement of meaning, that permits the deconstructionist breaching of a seemingly unified concept relating form and meaning, or building practice and evaluation. "Seemingly unified" because it is this spacing which provides the potential for disrupting the ideal linearity of movement. It allows for the functioning of what Derrida calls the "hinge" - a (cultural mechanism) conducting the direction of progress. Hence, in this cradle of the trace encompassing experience and its given signification lies the origin of the arbitrary constitution of the written sign.

²⁵Derrida, 1976, p. 61.

In Phase Three, deconstruction demands a "play" or rearrangement of the various constituents of the trace. This is because firstly, the field of a temporal entity is constituted of diverse possibilities – both structural and genetic – of the trace; and secondly, the possibility of signification in arche-writing presupposes some difference between the representation of a temporal experience of that entity and its attributed cultural meaning²⁶. According to Derrida, this search for the sources of signification through play involves undermining the widely-accepted concept of meaning as a structure of opposites, of experience vs. world-view. For him, the two are not antithetic but intimately interconnected, mutually, but perhaps asymmetrically, influential. Signification is formed by the movement between experience and arche-writing. In this process, discontinuity and discreteness, diversion and reserve assume influential roles. To think "play" of signification radically, the question of meaning in being must be addressed in accordance with the experience of a temporal entity in the world and an understanding of that world's transcendental origins of explanation.

The Third Phase of Deconstruction, therefore, is concerned with the concept of "play" as a means of further problematizing the idea of a dichotomous hierarchical thinking, of the conferring of unity and order to experiential reality. Its first step consists of attaining a certain "exteriority" or objective perspective in relation to a philosophico-cultural tradition by identifying the complex of predicates attending a specific historical situation. In the case of this project, this complex of predicates involves the relevant social, economic and political circumstances surrounding the appearance of West Coast Modern architecture of the Vancouver landscape. The second step involves a rigorous and extensive familiarization with the texts of that tradition to the point of being able to define the dominant imperatives expressed therein. Imperatives affecting the Modern movement on the West Coast were primarily those of the architectural profession and the artistic community. The third step requires a certain strategic arrangement of the circumstances and imperatives comprising the trace in order to describe the various possibilities open to the practice of Modern architecture on the West Coast. This would identify the particular nature of regional appropriation of the Modern architectural movement as well as the sources of

²⁶Derrida, 1974, p. 15.

ambiguous/arbitrary meaning embodied in its arche-writing.

According to Derrida, the trace subsumes successive occurrences of *differance* between lived experience and conceptualization. The self-referential quality of this process creates the conditions for the emergence of idealism. 1980's arche-writing of the West Coast Style as a force of critical regionalism serves as an example of such idealism. Because it represents regionally-adapted Modern architecture differently than the arche-writing of the 1940's and 1950's, it signifies both a change in architectural imperatives and a change in cultural values.

Sources of Data

In order to apply the Derridean method to a geographic question, research for this thesis focussed upon written records and interpretations of the geographically and historically specific landscape. Primary data sources comprised professional journals, popular magazines, books and reports which addressed the issue of the Modern architectural movement on the West Coast. Although other media such as photography or personal interviews could possibly offer a more direct representation of an architectural landscape, an historical cultural event such as the Modern architectural movement is most often studied academically through its textual interpretations. The total number of articles used in this deconstructionist analysis may appear small. But according to Derrida, an effective deconstruction can occur with as few as two different texts²⁷. Because Deconstruction is a method intended to disclose the ambiguity in meaning of a geographic-historical phenomenon — West Coast Modernism — and in this manner expose the dominant but arbitrary social values underlying both early and current assessments, the textual sources dated from two time periods — the (pre-Modern) years of development, 1945 to 1960, and the current (Postmodern) years of evaluation. The degree of influence during the time of its development was gauged by an investigation of selected buildings representative of Modern design in Vancouver between 1945 and 1960. The cut-off date was established as 1960 because that is the year that Modernism was finally

²⁷Norris, Christopher. "Deconstruction, Post-modernism and the Visual Arts" in What is Deconstruction? London: Academy Editions, 1988, pp. 20 - 25.

acknowledged as the dominant building aesthetic in the city²¹.

Examples of arche-writing or the conceptualization of British Columbia's expression of regionalism in contemporary design were located through the Canadian Periodicals Index, the Canadian Art Index and the Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index 1940 - 1980. Three items appeared in the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and three in Canadian Art. Individual building projects exemplifying the temporal experience of Modernism in West Coast architectural practice were selected on the basis of warranting at least two reviews or critiques. The Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index 1940 - 1980 identified articles in the Journal of the RAIC, the Canadian Builder, and The Canadian Architect and the Canadian Periodicals Index in Canadian Art and Western Homes and Living. The B.C. Newspaper Index was examined for items in The Sun and The Province, but the information presented in the items was minimal and only peripherally relevant to the thesis question. The Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index was also used for organizing buildings into categories (See Table 1.). The spectrum of selected building projects representing West Coast Modern architecture fell into the following categories: housing; commerce and industry; religious architecture; culture, leisure and sports; public buildings; teaching and research. The final selection was then cross-referenced with the B.C. Inventory of Award-Winning Buildings, the Vancouver City Archives selection of important building designs, and the architecture featured in Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 - 1983 and Exploring Vancouver 2.

The Vancouver Art Gallery publication of Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 to 1983 served to identify the associations and institutions pertinent to Vancouver's Modern movement in architecture and again the Canadian Periodicals Index, the Canadian Art Index and the Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index 1940 - 1980 were used to find articles expressing the perspectives of these social organizations. Items were found in the Journal of the RAIC and Canadian Art.

²¹ See "But we like to sprawl" in The Province, January 7, 1960, p.4; "Some just like to sprawl - others prefer Pompeii" in The Sun, January 19, 1960, p. 6; and "The curtain-wall jungle" in The Sun, January 23, 1960, p. 4.

Current literature on West Coast Modernism in the form of articles in journals and chapters in books included the following authors: Barry Downs, E.M. Gibson, A. Gruft, S. McKay, M. McMordie, S. Rossiter, and D. Shadbolt.

CHAPTER III

1940'S AND 1950'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A REGIONAL MODERN ARCHITECTURE:

ARCHE-WRITING

The deconstruction of "West Coast Modernism" begins with Phase One which implements a deconstructionist reading of texts describing the emergence of a regional architecture during Vancouver's Modern movement. 1940's and 1950's publications of the Journal of the RAIC and Canadian Art comprise the media of representation. The purpose of this phase is to identify the body of characteristics and their associated significance that constitute the arche-writing of the West Coast Modern landscape and in the process, to disclose the ambiguous nature of that association. Derrida states that writing as representation exists in relationship with signification but that relationship is neither direct nor simple. Deconstruction reveals that the representation of the Modern movement in architecture on the West Coast varied from journal to journal, from author to author. It attributes this lack of descriptive unity to the difference of opinion among individuals and social groups regarding the cultural significance of the regional design idiom.

Representation of a Regionally-interpreted Modern Architecture

Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada

In June, 1947, C.E. Pratt wrote that while domestic architecture in Vancouver showed a definite trend towards contemporary design, efforts had also been made to make the houses indigenous to British Columbia¹. The problems, or qualities, of the region affecting architectural form included abundant rainfall, limited sunshine, spectacular views, rapid weathering, and a moderate climate. To provide a shelter from the rain, Modern architects extended the roof four to five feet beyond the exterior elevations. For this purpose, flat roofs proved more economical than the traditionally pitched. To capture as much

¹Pratt, C.E. "Contemporary Domestic Architecture in B.C." in Journal of the RAIC, June 1947, p. 179.

sun as possible, exterior walls incorporated large areas of glass. The position and size of these windows were usually determined by the location of a view. A moderate climate encouraged both the extensive use of glazing and the employment of a radiant heating system. For the most practical application of this system, all unnecessary interior walls were eliminated thus creating the large, open and functionally flexible spaces characteristic of contemporary design. For Pratt, the economic dimension of architecture was important. He stated that the Modern architect on the West Coast welcomed the client who could only afford a \$3500 house. His or her financial limitations stimulated the development of regional solutions to design problems.

Three years later, H.H. Simmonds described how the accessibility and flexibility of local building materials, in conjunction with the absence of traditional form, contributed to a "freedom of design" in current architectural work in B.C.². He noted, though, that good grade lumber was no longer available at a reasonable cost while sand and gravel continued to be easily procurable. Consequently, B.C. architects were increasingly employing concrete and stucco in their designs.

In an article also published in 1950, W.H. Birmingham described how the rising costs of construction after the war instigated innovation in methods of construction in West Coast architecture³. In residential design, experimentation had led to a method of wood framing that generated an openness in interior space and a linking of house to garden. According to Birmingham, this "fresh approach", this trend towards the Modern, was aided by a changing population composition. Families of various backgrounds were migrating to the Coast in search of opportunity and change; they were willing to break with tradition and, consequently, were accepting of the contemporary design of houses.

²Simmonds, H.H. "Introduction of B.C. Architecture" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, p. 285.

³Birmingham, W.H. "Residential Work" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, p. 305.

In 1947, Fred Lasserre agreed with Pratt's assessment that geography and climate constituted the major influences on West Coast architecture⁴. He added that it was these particular physical and climatic conditions that impaired the transfer of traditions from other places. The new architecture on the West Coast was basically characterized by the flow of interior to exterior: the breath-taking views and the rich vegetation demanded the opening of interior space to the outside. This was accomplished by incorporating the utmost of window area into a structure. The moderate climate of the region created ideal conditions for the use of radiant panel heating which, in turn, required a freer, more open, interior. The rainy period, on the other hand, inspired an extending of the roof into a wide overhang. Expanding a flat, as opposed to pitched, roof proved more economical and hence, more socially acceptable. Cedar and fir were indigenous to British Columbia, abundant and of excellent quality. In residential design, fir was employed as the principal framing material and cedar, in a variety of finishes. According to Lasserre, West Coast architecture represented Modern design principles enunciated through local materials responding to local geographic and climatic circumstances. In this manner this architecture was native to British Columbia, but the regionalist approach was international and could be adapted in all parts of Canada.

In 1953, Douglas Simpson countered the priority given to geographic influence on West Coast building practices. Architecture, he wrote, was related as much to people as to geography: history revealed that the architect had always pursued new ways of building as a means of expressing new ways of living. It was for this reason that architecture was always contemporary or modern⁵. Current architectural articulation of social reality was dictated by reason and not artistic sensibility. In Canada, this attitude was applied to the justification of national pride rather than to the acknowledgement of regional differences. But regional distinction did emerge in Modern Canadian architectural development. British Columbia was a province that showed a greater enthusiasm for a contemporary approach to living than the rest of the

⁴Lasserre, Fred. "Regional Trends in West Coast Architecture" in Canadian Art, October/November 1947, p. 7.

⁵Simpson, Douglas. "Towards Regionalism in Canadian Architecture" in Canadian Art, Spring 1953, p. 111.

country, yet the fine arts played an integral role in building design. Murals and sculpture often contributed to structural appearance. Simpson pointed out that this regional differentiation derived from cultural values and not geographic character. But, he believed, regionalist sensibility accommodating both aspects would direct the future of Canadian architecture.

By 1958 Lasserre had modified his geographically biased perception of West Coast design. He wrote that in Vancouver, there was a desire to make of architecture a great humanistic experience⁶. Vancouver was a youthful city, free from tradition, full of reckless energy, open to various ideas from abroad, yet populated by cultures accustomed to quality and planning in architectural design. The city's architecture reflected this diversity in cultural values and influences. A structurally-emphasized roof made reference to the geographically-inspired regionalism developed in residential design. Local architects were increasingly appropriating International Modern methods of design and construction introduced through imported architectural journals. Lasserre observed a Japanese sensibility in the modesty of post-and-beam designs and the extension of that play of space to bigger projects. And a regional aesthetic founded on residential wood architecture affected a texturing or softening of the hard concrete and glass surfaces of large structures of commerce and industry. A final significant force directing West Coast building practice involved collaboration with artists in the design process. According to Lasserre, these influences, both local and foreign, had not yet been integrated in Vancouver's building design. He described the city's architecture as immature, placing a premium on originality at the expense of quality, and exhibiting a lack of awareness of its surrounding environment.

Diversity in Representation

Architectural and art journals represented a diversity of definitions of the regional expression of contemporary architecture on the West Coast. The first noted characteristics, described in 1947 by Pratt in the Journal of the RAIC and Lasserre in Canadian Art involved wide overhangs extending from a flat roof, expansive areas of glazing oriented to capture a view, a radiant heating system requiring an open interior

⁶Lasserre, Fred. "Keeping Pace with Architecture in Vancouver" in Canadian Art, April 1958, pp. 84-85.

space, and the use of local building materials for structural framing and interior/exterior finishing. These distinctly regional features derived from experiments with Modern principles of architecture in the design of detached housing. They evolved through a structural, mechanical and aesthetic accommodation of geography, climate and local resources.

In 1950, Simmonds and Birmingham, architects writing in an architectural journal, emphasized the flexibility, availability and changing economic accessibility of local building materials, in conjunction with the rising costs of construction instigating structural innovation, as the primary factors generating a regional architecture. In their minds, contemporary West Coast design was characterized by wood post-and-beam technique of framing which, in turn, created open interior spaces and structural connections between inside and outside environments. Simmonds and Birmingham brought to the fore Pratt's earlier perception that economic considerations would lead to the development of a regionally-specific Modern architecture.

In 1950's publications of Canadian Art, Simpson and Lasserre introduced the incorporation of fine art in contemporary West Coast design as an important characteristic of regional expression. Lasserre also observed how regional features developed through architectural response to geography, climate and natural resources affected the increasingly proliferating International Style Modernism on the West Coast. He noted specifically the continued structural extension of the roof and the texturing or softening of concrete surfaces. In comparison to the earlier conceptualizations of contemporary West Coast design, those of the later 1950's focussed on the aesthetic interpretation of a regional structural distinction founded on geographic and economic considerations.

According to the journals of architecture and art reviewing the emergence of a regional sensibility during the Modern movement, the West Coast idiom represented architectural accommodation of particular geographic circumstances, structural innovation instigated by economic changes, artistic expression of regional identity and aesthetic reference to regional design developments. This diversity in the representation of a West Coast Modern architecture pointed to a difference of opinion regarding the significance of its evolution as a distinct design idiom in residential design and its influence on larger

building projects.

Differing Opinions regarding the Significance of a West Coast Sensibility in Modern Design

As the representation of West Coast Modernism varied from journal to journal, from author to author, so did the associated significance. Pratt, a practising architect and promoter of regionalism, wrote that architects on the West Coast strove to mold elements of Modern design into an indigenous architectural form. The primary significance of such regional design lay in the economic resolution of regional building requirements. Lasserre, head of the School of Architecture at the University of British Columbia viewed West Coast architecture as the enunciation of Modern design principles through local materials in the solving of local geographic and climatic problems. According to Simmonds, regional expression attested to a "freedom of design" in British Columbia, a freedom from tradition. Birmingham, also a Modernist, emphasized the importance of structural innovation in the emergence of a West Coast Modernism. In contrast to the economic and structural significance attributed to Vancouver's contemporary design practice by the Journal of the RAIC, Canadian Art focussed on cultural importance. Simpson, a Modern architect instilled with the belief that architecture contributed directly to social well-being, wrote that while the province's architecture expressed a contemporary approach to living, it did not forego artistic sensibilities for those of reason. For Simpson, and later for Lasserre, West Coast Modern building design signified collaboration between the fields of architecture and art. Lasserre identified the regionalism evident on Vancouver's Modern architectural landscape as an endeavour to make of the city's building practices "a great humanistic experience". In his mind, the West Coast sensibility proved strong enough to modify the structural form and aesthetic appearance of the severe and abstract International Style Modernism. Hence its significance lay in the expression of regional identity on the face of universality.

The deconstructionist reading of architectural and art journals of the 1940's and 1950's did not reveal a unified or ordered body of meaning in the arche-writing of the Modern movement in architecture

on the West Coast. Additionally, an ambiguity emerged between representation of regional Modernism and its signification. It was not clear how an architecture adapted to climate and geography proved to be economically significant, why the use of local building materials signified a "freedom of design" or liberation from tradition, why post-and-beam construction was reported to be structurally innovative, how the collaboration between architects and artists expressed a contemporary approach to living, and why regional modification of International Style Modernism was described as a "humanistic experience". Although these relationships were inscribed in the arche-writing of West Coast Modern architecture, they were not fully explained. Derrida contends that this vague connection between representation and signification is related to the presence of *differance* between arche-writing and its origins — temporal experience.

CHAPTER IV

TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE ON THE WEST COAST VS.

ARCHE-WRITING: "DIFFERENCE"

Derrida describes *differance* as a movement of meaning from temporal experience to arche-writing and back to temporal experience. It has no definite beginning and, assumedly, no definite end. During that movement, the significance associated with the experience of a particular phenomenon is subjected to the effects of discontinuity, discreteness, diversion and reserve. Such is the process of arche-writing, the process which gives the substance of experience a form or representation and the content of that experience a function or significance. But arche-writing is never capable of comprehensively representing or signifying temporal experience. Phase Two reveals this inability through the disclosure of *differance*, through the deconstructionist reading of records of temporal experience according to the conceptualized definitions identified in Phase One. By inverting the hierarchical opposition between "world", or system of signification, and "work", or building experience, the strategy of Phase Two serves to expose the manner in which arche-writing subsumes temporal experience into a particular cultural reality and the way in which its constantly changing but nevertheless self-referential processes of representation conceal their experiential origins of meaning.

In this Fourth Chapter, the concept of West Coast Modern architecture is related to reviews of individual building projects representing a number of building types (see Figure 1.). The objective is to demonstrate how the conceptualization of West Coast Modernism evolved with its progressive appearance on Vancouver's landscape and how its representation in the Journal of the RAIC, The Canadian Architect, Canadian Builder and Western Homes and Living contributed to and was molded by the "arche-writing" describing West Coast Modernism presented in the previous chapter. Analysis of a full range of architectural projects was necessary not only to establish the influence of regional Modernism to Vancouver's overall architectural practice but also to validate the West Coast Style as an aesthetic expression of the city's cultural values. The projects were selected on the basis of warranting at least two

published reviews or critiques. These were located through the Canadian Periodicals Index, the Canadian Art Index and the Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index 1940 - 1980.

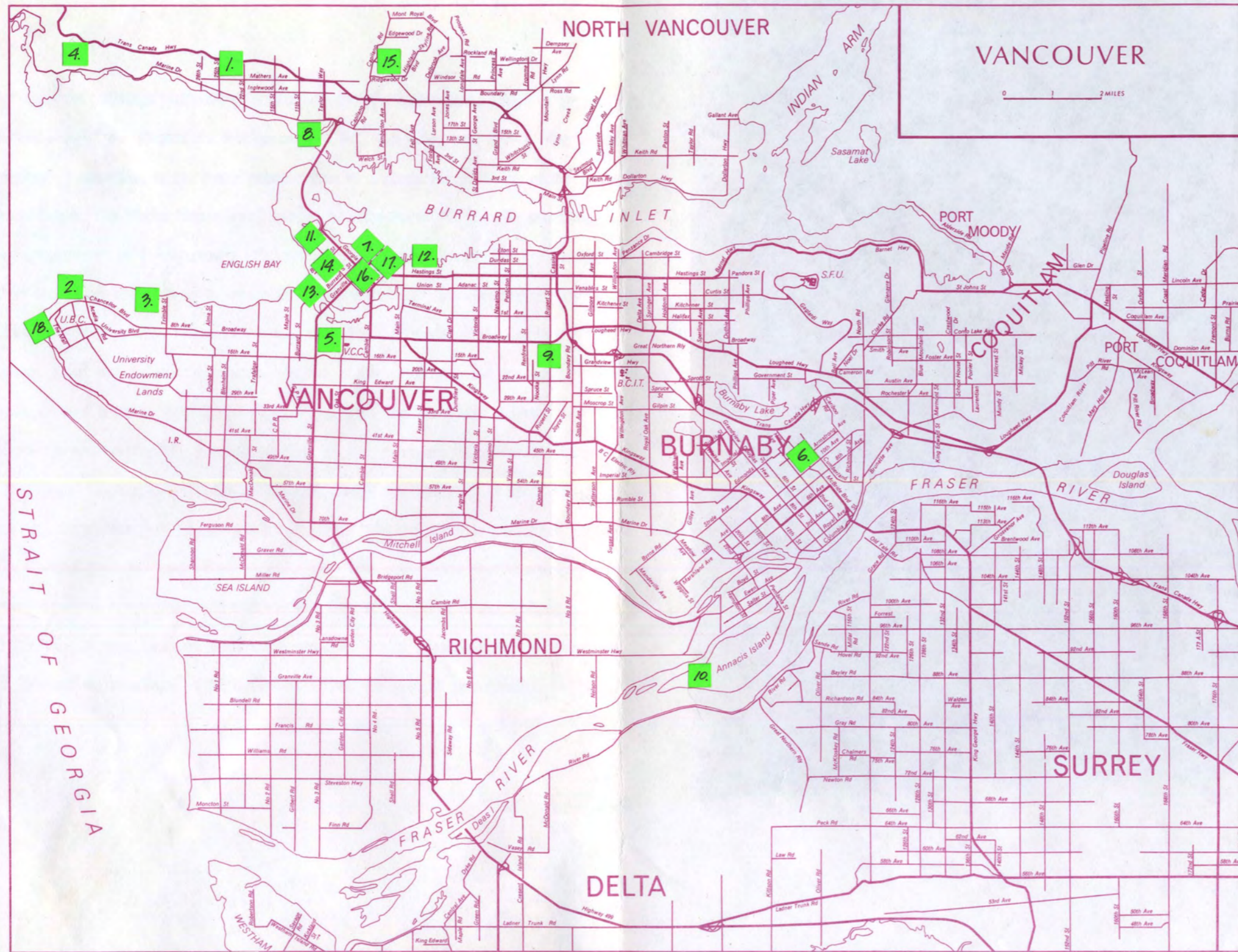
The first building type to be submitted to a deconstructionist analysis is Detached Housing, the category wherein Modern principles of architecture were initially practised and from which a distinct regional expression emerged. Following Detached Housing are Apartment Buildings, Banks, Shopping Centres, Factories, Office Buildings, Places of Worship, Libraries, Post Offices, and Professional Schools. They represent the categories of Housing; Commerce and Industry; Religious Architecture; Culture, Leisure and Sports; Public Buildings; and Teaching and Research. Their sequence of analysis parallels a loose chronological order based on time of construction.

FIGURE 1

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF WEST COAST MODERN ARCHITECTURE
EVIDENCE OF TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE

Architectural Category	Example
<u>Housing</u>	
Detached Houses	Porter House (1948) The President's House (1949) D.H. Copp Residence (1951) Gordon Smith Residence (1955)
Apartment Buildings	Hycroft Towers (1950) Parkwood Terrace (1960)
<u>Commerce and Industry</u>	
Banks	Imperial Bank of Canada (1949)
Shopping Centres	Park Royal Shopping Centre (1950)
Factories	British Ropes Canadian Factory Ltd. (1953) Annacis Island Industrial Estate (1956)
Office Buildings	Marwell Office Building (1950) B.C. Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. (1956) B.C. Electric Co. (1955 - 57) Burrard Building (1956 - 57)
<u>Religious Architecture</u>	
Places of Worship	Highlands United Church (1956)
<u>Culture, Leisure and Sports</u>	
Libraries	Vancouver Public Library (1956 - 57)
<u>Public Buildings</u>	
Post Offices	General Post Office (1953 - 58)
<u>Teaching and Research</u>	
Universities and Colleges	Fine Arts Centre, UBC (1960)

Source: Selected from Bergeron, Claude. Canadian Architectural Periodicals Index 1940 - 1980. Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986.



Location of Selected Examples of West Coast Modern Architecture

1. Porter House
1560 Ottawa Avenue
2. The President's House, UBC
6401 NW Marine Drive
3. D.H. Copp Residence
4755 Belmont Avenue
4. The first Gordon Smith Residence
4590 Keith Road
5. Hycroft Towers
1300 Granville Avenue
6. Parkwood Terrace Garden Apartments
8350 11th Avenue
7. Imperial Bank of Canada
Granville and West Pender
8. Park Royal Shopping Centre
Marine Drive
9. British Ropes Canadian Factory Limited
3185 Grandview Highway
10. Annacis Island Industrial Estate
11. Marwell Construction Office Building
1500 W. Georgia Street
12. B.C. Sugar Refining Co. Ltd.
123 Rogers Street
13. B.C. Electric Company Offices
970 Burrard Avenue
14. Burrard Building
Burrard and Georgia
15. Highlands United Church
3255 Edgemont Boulevard
16. Vancouver Public Library
Robson and Burrard
17. General Post Office
349 West Georgia Street
18. Fine Arts Centre
University of British Columbia

"Difference" in Distinct Architectural Categories

Housing

Detached houses. Four buildings represent the contemporary detached housing design of post-war Vancouver: the Porter House, the President's Residence at UBC, the Copp and Smith Residences. Although each was planned according to the living requirements of a single family, those requirements differed from home to home. The Porter House was designed by John Porter for his wife and children. Addressing the chief requirement of a functionally efficient living space that would afford leisure time, Porter employed post-and-beam construction to create an open, functionally flexible interior treated in wall and floor finishes that could be easily maintained. With regard to the President's House at UBC, the entertainment of guests, from one to several hundred, served as the primary guide for design. The architect, Bob Berwick, created a clean, simple, ranch house plan that combined both conventional and contemporary styles and the local artist, B.C. Binning, devised the colour scheme. Dr. Harold Copp, the new head of the Psychology Department at UBC, listed respect for the landscape, considerations of economy and an aesthetic reminiscent of the California Arts and Crafts bungalow as guidelines for the design of his home. Planned by artist-cum-architect Ron Thom was a residence that structurally and visually retreated into the natural environment and that cost less than \$15,000. For British Columbia artist Gordon Smith and his wife, Arthur Erickson designed a structure which preserved and reflected the natural state of its forested surroundings by being raised above the ground and spiralling up to a two-storey studio.



Porter House by John Porter, 1948.

Functional flexibility and ease of maintenance affording more time for leisure.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



President's Residence, UBC by R.A.D. Berwick, 1949.

Ranch Style Modern . . . with West Coast reference.

Source: UBC Archives.



D.H. Copp Residence by Ron Thom, 1951.

Retreat into nature.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



Gordon Smith Residenced by Arthur Erickson, 1955.

Raised above the forest floor in order to preserve the natural environment.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

In response to their design requirements, each of the four Modern houses developed architectural forms that were identified as regional. Arche-writing described the wide overhang extending from a flat roof as the most prominent feature of regionalism. Variations and elaborations of the overhanging roof

were reported by Western Homes and Living and the Journal of the RAIC in reviews of the President's House and the Smith Residence. The President's House displayed a steep overhang and exposed beams over the carport, but these extended from a pitched and not flat roof¹. In the Smith Residence, the joist extensions creating the overhang over the second storey were filled in with glass². Besides offering protection from the rain, the eaves admitted more light into the interior.

An extensive use of glass was the second feature typifying West Coast Modernism. Three of the homes were reported to incorporate expansive window area. Mrs. Porter stated that she found the large size of her windows to be practical because they could be cleaned with a mop as opposed to by hand³. In the President's Residence, certain windows protruded from the wall in an "eggcrate" style⁴. In this manner they created a ledge for indoor plants. Other windows were placed to capture the spectacular view available atop of Point Grey.

A third characteristic of regional Modernism was the functional and aesthetic employment of local building materials, wood in particular. The Journal of the RAIC reported that the Porter House was framed in wood using a post-and-beam method of construction⁵. Four-inch cedar shakes covered the roof of the house and twelve-foot tongue-and-groove siding enveloped the exterior elevations. In the interior, walls were treated with natural unpainted plywood and floors with waxed concrete. A review in Western Homes and Living emphasized the contrasting effect of vertically-laid beaded cedar siding with horizontal weatherboard on the exterior elevations of the President's House⁶. And the Journal of the RAIC noted that although the post-and-beam structure of the Smith Residence was executed in concrete, it was finished

¹"The President's House" in Western Homes and Living, March 1953, pp. 20 - 23.

²"House of Mr. Gordon Smith, West Vancouver, British Columbia" in Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, pp. 41 - 44.

³"My Ideal Home", in Western Homes and Living, October November 1950, pp. 11, 49.

⁴Western Homes and Living, March 1953, p. 20.

⁵"The Porter Home" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, pp. 308 - 309.

⁶Western Homes and Living, March 1953, p. 23.

with a characteristically-regional vertically-laid rough cedar siding⁷.

Arche-writing included the use of radiant heating coupled with open interiors as a fourth aspect of regional design. An open layout with moveable partitions that allowed functional flexibility was important to the Porter House⁸. A spacious layout was attributed to the Copp Residence⁹. And interior space acquired an ascending quality in the Smith Residence¹⁰. Reviews revealed that while open or spacious interiors characterized most of the residences, radiant heating did not.

Although not mentioned in arche-writing, descriptions of a sensitive approach to the site and an incorporation of landscaping appeared often in commentaries on Modern residences. For example, the Jury conferring a Massey Silver Medal to architect John Porter praised the Porter House as an "imaginative and poetic approach to a difficult site problem"¹¹. In the design, the natural qualities of the site were augmented by a rock garden extending from the terrace into the living room and landscaping was combined with the existing vegetation to show the building to advantage. This led The Canadian Architect to report in 1959 that the Porter House had all but disappeared into the natural surroundings¹². The role of landscaping was equally important to the President's Residence but its appearance was much more controlled. Western Homes and Living depicted a conventional lawn patterned with flower beds covering an area of far greater proportions than those required by the size of the house¹³. The Smith Residence was described by the Journal of the RAIC as a complete contrast in landscaping design: the natural state of the

⁷Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 41.

⁸Western Homes and Living, October November 1950, p. 11.

⁹"Residences Costing up to \$15,000" in Journal of the RAIC, January 1953, p. 12

¹⁰"Gordon Smith Residence" in Canadian Builder, June 1967, p. 69.

¹¹"Residences Costing over \$15,000. Silver Medal" in Journal of the RAIC, January 1953, p.14. Comment from the Jury upon the Porter House winning a Massey Award in 1952.

¹²"The Porter House" in The Canadian Architect, October 1959, p. 76.

¹³Western Homes and Living, March 1953, p. 21.

site and even the forest floor remained untouched due to the house being raised above the ground¹⁴.

Arche-writing did not include the presence of colour as an element of regionalist sensibility. Yet Western Homes and Living noted that a significant aspect of the President's House was the colour scheme composed by the West Coast artist, B.C. Binning¹⁵. Jonquil yellow over white divided the exterior elevation horizontally, while turquoise, moss green and rust red complemented areas of natural wood and slate. The additional aspect of colour would not have detracted from, but instead would have contributed to the "naturalistic" character identifying a regionally-expressed Modernism.

The accounts of building experience supported the arche-writing of a regional architectural form in that they depicted overhanging, but not always flat, roofs; extensive use of glass; functional and aesthetic employment of local building materials and open interiors. The significance of these features related to structural accommodation of climatic, geographic and resource particularities in the development of an economically-practical architecture¹⁶. Building experience revealed that the qualities of sensitivity to site and surroundings, incorporation of landscaping, and decorative embellishment through colour had been excluded in arche-writing. The significance of these deferred aspects related to respect and preservation of the natural environment and retreat from the city into nature. Therefore, in the category of detached housing, the area of *differance* between temporal experience and arche-writing described the presence/absence of awareness of the topography and vegetation of the site and an architectural appropriation and augmentation of their aesthetic qualities.

Apartment buildings. Hycroft Towers and Parkwood Terrace Garden Apartments exemplify a residential architecture that addresses requirements different from those of detached housing. The Royal Trust Company, owner of the luxury apartment building Hycroft Towers, requested that its interior be

¹⁴Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 41.

¹⁵Western Homes and Living, March 1953, p. 23.

¹⁶Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 41; and Journal of the RAIC, January 1953, p. 13. Both the Smith and Copp Residences won Massey Awards for excellence in design in the category of "Residences up to \$15,000".

planned to maintain a profitable revenue under varying economic conditions. Semmens and Simpson designed a 10-storey high-rise based upon five standard units which could be combined into 25 different suite arrangements. On the other hand, the three partners comprising Newcombe Holdings stipulated that their low rental apartment complex, Parkwood Terrace, be layed out to accommodate a possible division in partnership. In response, architect R.F. Harrison divided sequences of standardized three-bedroom suites into six separate two-storey units.



Hycroft Towers by Semmens and Simpson, 1950.

Advantageous use of site.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



Parkwood Terrace Garden Apartments by R.F Harrison, 1960.

Suburban quality of privacy in low rental housing.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

The design of both Modern apartment buildings modified the architectural elements of overhang, expansive glazing and wood construction developed through experimentation in detached housing projects and represented as regional by arche-writing. Reviews in Canadian Builder and The Canadian Architect did not mention the presence of a flat roof, extending to provide shelter from the rain, in either of the apartment buildings¹⁷ to either of the apartment buildings, but a variation of this structure, cantilevered walkways connected by outside stairways, was noted as providing the only access to the suites of Parkwood Terrace¹⁸. These were located not on the exterior elevations, but in the interior courtyards or recreational areas created by each of the U-shaped and L-shaped units. The architectural journals identified large

¹⁷Clendenan, E.F. "Odd Ground Contours Used in Building Apartment House" in Canadian Builder, May 1952, pp. 23 - 26.; "Parkwood Terrace" in Canadian Builder, December 1961, pp. 38 - 39, 45.; "Minimum rentals need not be drab!" in Canadian Builder, February 1962, pp. 30 - 32.; and "Parkwood Terrace, Burnaby, B.C." in The Canadian Architect, May 1961, pp. 65 - 66.

¹⁸The Canadian Architect, May 1961, p. 65.

areas of glass only in the entrance to Hycroft Towers¹⁹. By constituting the entire 24-foot height from floor to ceiling, they offered a visual gesture of invitation to incoming visitors and residents. Additionally, each suite of Hycroft Towers provided its tenants with a view²⁰. This was accomplished by designing the building as a three-wing structure and giving each wing a particular orientation. Only Parkwood Terrace employed wood as structural and finishing material. The Canadian Builder commented on the conventional, and not post-and-beam, method of wood framing and the Western Red Cedar grilles trimming the stucco-treated exterior elevations²¹.

While the architecture of Parkwood Terrace exhibited definite West Coast characteristics, that of Hycroft Towers demonstrated a more International Style of Modernism. According to the Canadian Builder, the interior space of Hycroft Towers was planned on the basis of five standard suites which could be combined or separated as economic conditions warranted, fenestration was standardized according to a 3'-6" module, and all millwork was designed for mass-production²². Furthermore, the apartment building was constructed in concrete utilizing an innovative method of successive pouring. This was deemed economical in terms of time and materials used. In comparison, the only "international" quality attributed by the Canadian Builder and The Canadian Architect to Parkwood Terrace was the standardization of its apartment units.

According to the architectural reviews, both Hycroft Towers and Parkwood Terrace demonstrated creativity in site interpretation. The triangular outline and varying levels constituting the site for Hycroft Towers inspired a three-wing design which at ground level, facilitated the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic²³. The gently sloping site of Parkwood Terrace determined the varying U-shaped and

¹⁹Canadian Builder, May 1952, p. 25.

²⁰Canadian Builder, May 1952, p. 24.

²¹Canadian Builder, December 1961, p. 38.

²²Canadian Builder, May 1952, pp. 23 - 26.

²³Canadian Builder, May 1952, p. 24.

L-shaped forms of the six separate apartment units²⁴. The architectural journals also noted the presence of landscaping and colour in the design of the apartment buildings. The existing natural vegetation was used to enhance both the interior courtyards and exterior landscaping of the Garden Apartments. The exterior elevations of Hycroft Towers were painted green.

Reviews of the building experience of apartment buildings represented arche-written regional Modernism in the form of cantilevered walkways, glassed-in entranceways and provision of views. The *differance* from an arche-writing evolved from the building experience of detached housing involved structural accommodation and functional appropriation of site particularities, aesthetic employment of existing vegetation, incorporation of interior courtyards, wood detailing on conventionally-framed architecture, and embellishment of concrete building shells with colour. Only the latter two features were included in the arche-writing of the late 1950's.

In the category of apartment buildings, disclosure of the *differance* between building experience and arche-writing underlined the ambiguous significance of West Coast Modernism's structural/cultural relationship with nature. The absence of considerations of site and aesthetic embellishment through landscaping in arche-writing pointed to the excluded importance of topography and vegetation to regional design. The capturing of views in the luxury apartment tower and the embodiment of landscaped interior courtyards in low rental apartment complexes, both relating to notions of privilege, privacy and recreation associated with the architectural appropriation of the natural environment, were also deferred in the arche-writing of regional Modernism.

Commerce and Industry

Banks and shopping centres. The Imperial Bank of Canada and Park Royal Shopping Centre represent Modern commercial architecture on the West Coast. Design requirements for the Imperial Bank building included suitable premises for its own public functions and additional space for revenue

²⁴Canadian Builder, February 1962, p. 30.

generating purposes. McCarter Nairne and Partners designed a six-storey building wherein the lower two storeys were occupied by the Bank and the upper four offered office space for rent. The purpose of Park Royal Shopping Centre, owned by British Pacific Properties, was to provide concentrated shopping facilities for the highest income population on the Lower Mainland. Architects C.B.K. van Norman and J.C. Page planned a structure that would accommodate 45 to 50 shops including a department store, supermarket and restaurant and allow parking space for 600 vehicles.



Imperial Bank of Canada by McCarter Nairne and Partners, 1949.

Modern construction with neo-classical appearance.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



Park Royal Shopping Centre by C.B.K. van Norman and J.C. Page, 1950.

Rational planning with baroque embellishments.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

A geographically inspired regionalism affected the architecture of commerce minimally, if at all. The Canadian Architect mentioned that the restaurant at Park Royal extended onto a covered sidewalk terrace²⁵. The Canadian Builder described the Imperial Bank as incorporating two-storey high windows on its street-side elevations²⁶. The intention, in both cases, was to open the interior to outside view in order to attract clientele.

The Imperial Bank and Park Royal Shopping Centre implemented an International Style of Modernism more strongly than a West Coast Style. The structure of the Imperial Bank was composed of a steel frame encased in reinforced concrete. The main banking area was described by Architecture, Batiment, Construction as being open and designed for maximum efficiency, and the offices as

²⁵"Canadian Shopping Centres: 2, 3, and 4" in The Canadian Architect, October 1958, p. 48.

²⁶"Effective use of glass, marble and concrete in Vancouver Bank" in Canadian Builder, June 1958, pp. 32 - 33.

acoustically treated and provided with year-round air-conditioning²⁷. Park Royal, on the other hand, exemplified the Modern approach of rationalized standardization. According to the Journal of the RAIC, it was planned according to a grid of 16'-8", deemed a reasonable measure for a single-front store²⁸.

Though predominantly International in style, the Imperial Bank and Park Royal Shopping Centre displayed an unexpected traditional dimension - a trace of the neo-classical and neo-baroque. The Canadian Builder reported the exterior elevations of the Imperial Bank to be covered in white Denby Vermont marble and crowned with a patterned railing. Within the banking room, columns were faced with black Swedish Pearl granite and counters with Boticelli and Dark Verte Antique marble²⁹. Acquired for the Park Royal Centre was a fountain created by a New York sculptor and modelled on the fountains of Versailles. The Canadian Architect depicted it as a central figure seated upon a huge rock, playing a guitar to four adoring "bambinos"³⁰.

Local art was incorporated into the overall design of the the Imperial Bank. A mozaic tile mural designed by B.C. Binning depicting the basic resources and industries of British Columbia complemented the feeling of productive efficiency characterizing the interior. Architecture, Batiment, Construction commended the mural as being significant not only for its originality as a Modern work of art but also for its quality of harmonizing with the marble-finished interior decor³¹.

Accounts of building experience disclosed that the architecture of banks and shopping centres exhibited the arche-written regional qualities of covered sidewalk terraces and two-storey-high windows. Although these qualities affected an openness between inside and outside environments, the environments themselves were located in urban and not natural surroundings. The intention in incorporating these

²⁷ Architecture, Batiment, Construction, October 1958, p. 60.

²⁸ "Park Royal Shopping Centre" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, p. 304.

²⁹ Canadian Builder, June 1958, p. 32.

³⁰ The Canadian Architect, October 1958, p. 48.

³¹ "Vancouver's finest bank building. Imperial Bank of Commerce" in Architecture, Batiment, Construction, October 1958, pp. 60 - 63.

regional features was to attract clientele inside and not to offer workers a (visual) retreat outside. On this basis, the *differance* between the arche-writing of a regional Modernism based on residential design and the building experience of banks and shopping centres related less to representation of West Coast characteristics and more to their significance.

Reviews of temporal experience also described the harmonious incorporation of local art into bank design, an aesthetic gesture identified as regionalist by the arche-writing of the late 1950's. The other aesthetic embellishments created the area of *differance*. Shopping centres featured sculpture of neo-baroque, and not local, expression and banks displayed marble finishing and not wood-inspired texturing or colour. These historical references to wealth suggested that contemporary design on the West Coast was not as free from tradition as arche-writing declared.

Factories. Representing industrial architecture are the British Ropes Canadian Factory Limited and the Annacis Island Industrial Estate. In both industrial projects, the major requirement for efficient production was resolved through an integration of associated production facilities. British Ropes required the incorporation of factory, warehouse and administration building in one structure. For them, architects McCarter Nairne and Partners designed a three-storey, steel-framed plant, which, in 1953, cost one million dollars. The Annacis Island Industrial Estate was both conceptualized and constructed by Grovenor Estates of London, England. For the purposes of economy and mutual benefit through proximity, the industrial estate provided its tenants with all necessary services — a plant complete with electricity, telephone, water and sewage; a community sales centre, warehousing and shipping facilities, medical services, banks, clubs, service stations and fire protection. The total cost of the project, begun in 1956, was estimated at \$250 million.



British Ropes Canadian Factory Limited by McCarter Nairne and Partners, 1953.

Structurally-advanced industrial design embellished by landscaping.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



Annacis Island Industrial Estate by Francis Donaldson, 1956.

Functionally-integrated Modern industrial complex embellished by formal landscaping.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

Industrial architecture on the West Coast could best be described as demonstrating a regionally-modified Modernism. For example, the Canadian Builder reported the incorporation of large areas of glass for purposes of providing uniform natural lighting in the factory and warehouse sections of British Ropes³². In the head office of the complex, double-glazed, sound-proof windows offered a view, but not of some distant forested mountain, but of the manufacturing plant. Canadian Art noted the buildings of Annacis Island to be light and transparent,³³ hence also incorporating large areas of glass. The fundamental building material of the region, wood, proved useful to the British Ropes warehouse. In order to make the concrete floor more comfortable for the workers, interlocking blocks of wood were placed

³²"Long Span Bays in Vancouver Plant" in Canadian Builder, December 1953, p. 15.

³³Lasserre, April 1958, p. 89.

overtop³⁴.

The high degree of rationalized and standardized unity in the designs of both industrial projects exemplified a pure International Modernism. The Canadian Builder wrote that the British Ropes plant incorporated factory, warehouse and office facilities into one structure³⁵. Steel framing facilitated 50' x 90' bays in the factory area and long, clear spans in the warehouse that afforded maximum flexibility in machine layouts. A railway spur served the plant and hard-surface parking accommodated vehicular traffic. Annacis Island Industrial Estate illustrated an even greater degree of comprehensive planning. The Canadian Architect outlined its design program as including factories and furniture, administration buildings and wharves, transportation networks and signage³⁶. A Master Plan located medium and heavy industry close to the sea docks and light industry and administration next to traffic arteries. Rail service, docks and road system were connected to main transportation routes.

Other design developments associated with the region's particular geographic characteristics included, in the case of the Annacis Island Industrial Estate, an advantageous use of site. The Canadian Architect depicted the Estate as situated on a deltaic island at the mouth of the Fraser River, both open to and protected from the Pacific Ocean³⁷. Its docks were constructed on the southeast shore of the island, where currents had most deeply eroded the river bed. The location of these shipping facilities determined the layout of the rest of the Estate. Landscaping, a feature contributing to regional expression in residential design, played a significant role in Modern industrial architecture. It was employed extensively in the Annacis Island Industrial Estate: drainage ditches were fringed with rows of weeping willows and the horizontal lines of the buildings were accentuated by areas of lawn. Landscaping in the form of flowers,

³⁴Canadian Builder, December 1953, p. 15.

³⁵Canadian Builder, December 1953, p. 15.

³⁶The Canadian Architect, July 1956, p. 14.

³⁷"An Industrial Estate" in The Canadian Architect, July 1956, pp. 14 - 18.

trees, shrubs and rockeries surrounded by British Ropes Complex³¹. What must be noted is that, in both cases, the landscaping was formally organized in near symmetrical arrangements, and not naturalistic: lawn, flowers and trees appeared as delineated and separated areas, not integrated with the indigenous vegetation.

In the category of industrial architecture, the *differance* between building experience and arche-writing involved the presence/absence of appropriation of site and incorporation of landscaping as well as the motivations determining the use of regional developments in predominantly International Style design. Accounts of temporal experience in industrial architecture disclosed the presence of two features determined regional by the arche-writing based on domestic design: large areas of glass and the use of wood. Despite the affinity in representation, *differance* occurred in the signification attributed to these West Coast characteristics. They were not employed to accommodate a geographic situation but to facilitate efficiency in industrial production. Building experience also revealed the deference, in arche-writing, of an advantageous use of site and aesthetic embellishment through landscaping in industrial West Coast architecture. Although related to regional developments, they, too, served industrial purposes. The site determined the location of transport systems and the landscaping, while fulfilling the regional function of providing (visual) relief, was formal, not naturalistic, and therefore not particularly expressive of West Coast identity.

Office buildings. Modern West Coast office architecture is represented by Marwell Construction Company, B.C. Sugar Refinery Limited, B.C. Electric Company and the Burrard Building. At the time of commissioning their offices, each of the firms was economically successful, in the process of expanding, and therefore, future-oriented. This was expressed in the architecture. Marwell Construction held the reputation of a "progressive" building firm. Its office building, designed by Semmens and Simpson, was structured in reinforced concrete and covered in large part by glass and aluminum curtain wall. B.C. Sugar Refinery, during a period of expansion, decided to add executive, engineering and purchasing offices next

³¹Canadian Builder, December 1953, p. 15.

to their manufacturing facilities. These were housed in an L-shaped concrete and curtain wall structure surrounding a landscaped courtyard which, in conjunction with a bordering brick wall, served to separate the offices from the neighbouring industrial environment. B.C. Electric, a provincial power authority, commissioned an office tower to house all its varied activities. Thomson, Berwick and Pratt designed a 25-storey structure, Vancouver's first "skyscraper", which was clad in curtain wall and enhanced by exterior finishes in regionally-inspired colours. The Burrard Building, owned by a New York business syndicate, was to express American investment in British Columbia. C.B.K. van Norman planned an International Style office tower to be completely covered in pre-fabricated curtain wall panels.



Marwell Construction Office Building by Semmens and Simpson, 1950.

Demolished in 1974.

Photo: John Mahler, 1974. Courtesy of The Vancouver Sun.



B.C. Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. by Semmens and Simpson, 1956.

Formal separation from industrial surroundings.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



B.C. Electric Company by Thompson, Berwick and Pratt, 1955 – 57.

Lozenge-shaped design "providing every employee with a view".

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.



Burrard Building by C.B.K. van Norman, 1956 – 57.

International Style Modernism.

Photo: H.W. Roozeboom, 1968.

Courtesy of the Vancouver Public Library.

The regional characteristics developed in residential design were variously but not extensively appropriated in office architecture. According to the architectural reviews, only the B.C. Sugar Refinery Building manifested architecturally–designed protection against the rain. The "weather shades" protruding from the front elevation and the square canopy covering the front entrance were noted in a review in The Canadian Architect³⁹. Although all the offices employed large areas of glass curtain walling, and the open plan typified the layout of the office interiors, only B.C. Electric achieved the openness between inside and

³⁹"On a Cramped Site" in The Canadian Architect, April 1956, pp. 45 – 47.

outside space characteristic of West Coast Modernism. The Canadian Builder reported that because of the lozenge shape of the building, every employee could appreciate a view⁴⁰. With regard to the use of local materials, only B.C. Sugar Refinery was described as using granite as an exterior and interior wall treatment⁴¹.

All the office buildings exhibited the International Modernist approach to construction. The Canadian Builder emphasized the novel nature of building technology employed by Marwell Construction: it involved a reinforced concrete frame in which the longest elevations were covered in glass and aluminum curtain wall⁴². The Journal of the RAIC commented on the combination of reinforced concrete framework and precast structural mullion system employed in the B.C. Sugar Refinery offices⁴³. The Canadian Architect used the words "daring" and "decisive" to describe the construction of the B.C. Electric Tower: twenty-one floors were cantilevered off a central reinforced concrete core and wrapped in curtain wall. Building of the Tower occurred at an unprecedented pace due to the system of steel I-beams and columns on the exterior being raised concurrently with the pouring of the floor slabs in the interior. According to the Canadian Builder, the Burrard Building also exemplified structural innovation⁴⁴. Prefabricated panels of curtain wall were fastened to a 17-storey steel frame by rivets drilled by power-driven tools. Again the pace of construction was increased.

A further International Modern principle of design evident in office buildings was that of modular planning. The Journal of the RAIC and The Canadian Architect reported that modular planning controlled the design of the B.C. Sugar and B.C. Electric offices⁴⁵. The overall plan of B.C. Sugar was

⁴⁰"Electronic age of heating" in Canadian Builder, September 1956, p. 32.

⁴¹"BC Sugar Refinery Limited. Vancouver, B.C." in Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 32.

⁴²Canadian Builder, January 1954, p. 20.

⁴³Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 52.

⁴⁴"Here's how blind-rivet method sped curtain wall erection" in Canadian Builder, April 1958, pp. 52 - 53.

⁴⁵Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 53; and The Canadian Architect, April 1957, p. 33.

based on a 4'-0" module; repetition was said to have generated economy. A module of 50 square feet, the attributed optimum area for one work space, was multiplied to compose the interior layout of B.C. Electric.

The Burrard Building illustrated the Modern approach to site coverage, that of following standard proportions. According to The Canadian Architect, the entire building envelope was filled by underground parking, 80% of the site by the lower block of the building and 33% by the 17-storey tower⁴⁶.

In office architecture, International influences were tempered by a texturing of exterior elevations and artistic input. Panels of granite contrasted with soft yellow English faience tile softened the curtain wall exterior of B.C. Sugar⁴⁷ while mozaic tile, in patterns of deep blues and greens, covered the base of B.C. Electric⁴⁸. The Canadian Architect commented on the contribution of artist B.C. Binning to the architecture of the B.C. Electric Building. The colours he chose were meant to harmonize with the grey, blue and green landscape of a rainy city. Their composition in lozenge patterns on the mozaic elevations and on the rooftop canopy echoed the plan of the building and in doing so, were said to impart a unity to the overall design.

The B.C. Sugar Refinery Offices also exemplified a regionalist sensitivity to site. Its location was depicted by The Canadian Architect as "cramped" — a small area amidst large industrial plants⁴⁹. As related by the Journal of the RAIC, Semmens and Simpson decided to architecturally remove the building from its industrial environment by planning an L-shaped building around an interior landscaped courtyard and by inserting an 8-foot high brick wall between manufacturing and office structures⁵⁰. Windows surrounding the courtyard opened the inside offices to the (designed) natural environment emulating the

⁴⁶"Burrard Building, Vancouver" in The Canadian Architect, March 1960, p. 49.

⁴⁷Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 52.

⁴⁸The Canadian Architect, April 1957, p. 34.

⁴⁹The Canadian Architect, April 1956, pp. 45 - 47.

⁵⁰Journal of the RAIC, February 1956, p. 52.

integration of structural and natural space developed in West Coast residential design.

The building experience of office buildings disclosed the presence of most of the architectural forms defined as regional by arche-writing: weather shades, canopied entranceways, glass curtain walls providing a view, and open plan interiors. The *differance* between temporal experience and an arche-writing derivative of regional expression in detached housing identified the occurrence of texturing or softening of concrete, steel and curtain wall surfaces as well as the contribution of art to architectural form. These features were described as regional modifications of International Style Modernism in the arche-writing of the late 1950's.

Differance also emerged with the exclusion, in arche-writing, of the representation of formal adaptation to site and surroundings and of incorporation of a landscaped courtyard. These aspects, constitutive of a West Coast sensibility in Modern design, signified the conformation of the suburban-developed relationship between architecture and nature to an urban environment.

Religious Architecture

Places of worship. Highlands United Church illustrates contemporary religious architecture on the West Coast. Its major requirement was to create a structure conducive to the practice of faith for a congregation of 350 people. Given the choice of five wooded sites, architect William Wilding selected one with a sharp fall to a creek. There he used the topography to heighten the drama of the ritual space and the traditional steep roof to reflect the surrounding forest and mountains.



Highlands United Church by William Wilding, 1956.

Creative use of site and formal reflection of natural surroundings.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

Highlands United Church achieved a regional Modern appearance primarily through the extensive use of wood. The Canadian Builder noted the glued and laminated beams and arches employed in the wood frame structure to create the steep pitch of the roof⁵¹. Finishes included rough Red Cedar board on the outside walls, 4" cedar decking on the roof, and cedar panelling in the interior.

The Canadian Architect related how the Highlands United Church took advantage of its site in a creative manner⁵². As the drop in grade necessitated the building of a bridge, it was planned to lead directly into the narthex of the church. In this manner, the bridge served to create a dramatic entry. The steep slope also allowed for the construction of meeting rooms below the building. This level was structurally extended to the outside to produce a patio which could overlook the adjacent creek.

⁵¹"Wood's playing increasingly important roles in Canadian church design . . ." in Canadian Builder, March 1962, p. 28.

⁵²"Highlands United Church" in The Canadian Architect, February 1961, pp. 42 - 43.

Reviews of religious architecture depicted structurally innovative construction based on the post-and-beam method of framing and cedar finishes on the roof and elevations. These regional features were exemplary of the arche-writing of the 1940's. Building experience also described a creative use of topography, the presence of a traditional steep roof and the absence of large areas of glazing. While the drama of ritual was enhanced through building orientation, and the traditional architectural form reflected the forested and mountainous surroundings, the quintessential regional quality of openness between inside and outside environments was absent. In religious architecture, the sanctity of inner ritual space was maintained. The *difference* between temporal experience and arche-writing signified that, in the category of places of worship, regionally-developed Modern features of design served to enhance, but not radically modify, traditional form.

Culture, Leisure and Sports

Libraries. The Vancouver Public Library represents the Modern architecture of culture, leisure and sports on the West Coast. The two most important design considerations for the Library involved the function of providing library services to the public and the prominent location at the corner of Robson and Burrard Streets in Vancouver's downtown. Architects Semmens and Simpson displayed ingenuity in structurally accommodating the combined weight of books and communications technology while at the same time creating a light and delicate structure in keeping with the commercial surroundings.



Vancouver Public Library by Semmens and Simpson, 1956 – 57.

Regional sensitivity to site adapted to urban environment.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

Dominating the Library's appearance was a 12-foot wide cantilever which wrapped around a 2-storey-high windowed corner facing Robson and Burrard. The Journal of the RAIC explained that while the overhang offered a generous shelter from the rain, the windows opened the interior bookstacks and study areas to street observation⁵³. In this manner, a relationship was created between inside and outside space; but the outside environment, in this case, was not natural, but urban. Further integration occurred between building and surroundings. According to the Journal of the RAIC, it was decided by the architects to contrast with the neighbouring historical Vancouver Hotel and relate instead, to the commercial environment⁵⁴.

⁵³"Public Library, Vancouver, B.C." in Journal of the RAIC, October 1956, pp. 368 – 369.

⁵⁴Semmens, H.N. "Design of the Vancouver Public Library" in Journal of the RAIC, April 1959.

The Vancouver Public Library exemplified, to a great extent, a universal Modern approach to design. The Journal of the RAIC depicted a structure overdesigned to accommodate earthquake stress, a full stack load of books on every floor, and the addition of a future storey, yet successfully reconciled with a desired "floating" appearance⁵⁵. A 3'-0" module, derived from the standard dimension for a book stack, determined the plan of the Library. This grid was repeated not only in floor layouts but also in building elevations. Mechanical innovations abounded. Most prominent were the vertical louvres located on the Robson Street elevation, the side facing the sun. They were controlled by a mechanism which operated on photo-electric cells activated by sun rays. Finally, the design of the Vancouver Public Library accommodated a large number of services. Besides the expected functions, the Library provided an auditorium, stage and film projection facilities for public use.

Local artistic input augmented these Internationalist influences. A 21-foot high by 18-foot wide mozaic mural depicting man's eternal quest for knowledge was located behind the left circulation desk. The Journal of the RAIC evaluated the mural as architecturally significant because its colours echoed and accentuated those found throughout the Library's interior⁵⁶.

Experiential accounts in the category of culture, leisure and sports emphasized the architectural features of enveloping cantilever/overhang and two-storey-high windows at street level, both defined by arche-writing as characteristically regional. But as in commercial design, the intention in incorporating these West Coast elements was to attract people into the building and not to provide a view to the outside. *Differance* also pointed to the exclusion, in arche-writing, of the West Coast predilection of integrating a structure with its surroundings and including art in its design (although the latter was included in the arche-writing of the late 1950's). It is important to note that the environment situating the Library was not natural, but urban, and the art did not express local content but did harmonize with the interior decor. Therefore, *differance* between the signification attributed to West Coast Modernism by early and later arche-writing and that revealed by temporal experience indicated that a strong presence of regional

⁵⁵Journal of the RAIC, April 1959.

⁵⁶Journal of the RAIC, October 1956, p. 368.

sensibility in design, as demonstrated by the architecture of culture, leisure and sports, did not necessarily generate a distinct expression of regional identity.

Public Buildings

Post offices. The Modern architecture of public buildings on the West Coast is exemplified by the General Post Office. The federal government allotted a \$13,000,000 budget for the project and according to The Canadian Architect, architects McCarter Nairne and Associates justified the expenditure with a high degree of mechanical sophistication: a welded steel frame structure supported a rooftop heliport, special elevators carried trucks onto various levels of the building, and a 2400-foot-long underground conveyor belt connected the Post Office to the Canadian Pacific Railway station⁵⁷.

The Canadian Architect stated that the Canada Post Office demonstrated an integration of International Style Modernism with banal art. Its Internationalism was said to have resulted in "a weak-kneed modernistic box punctured haphazardly by windows and doors"⁵⁸. Its art, the sculptured panel of a postman on an exterior corner replicating the mailman on the Saturday Evening Post cover, and the glazed tile mural over the stairwell in the main lobby depicting a pre-Raphaelite lady in a flowing Greek gown sending her fateful letter off by cupid into the blue, blue yonder, was criticized as a betrayal of the meaningful relationship cultivated between architects and artists on the West Coast.

⁵⁷"Art" in The Canadian Architect, June 1958, pp. 76 - 78.

⁵⁸Jack Shadbolt quoted in The Canadian Architect, June 1958, p. 76.



General Post Office by McCarter Nairne and Partners, 1953 – 58.

Betrayal of architect/artist collaboration.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

Reviews of the building experience associated with public buildings depicted only one feature of regional significance, that of the addition of art. But the commissioned art work neither related to the Modern design of the building nor expressed regional content. Therefore, the *differance* between temporal experience and arche-writing in the category of public buildings on the West Coast signified a betrayal of the collaboration between architects and artists⁵⁹.

⁵⁹It is important to note that the General Post Office represented a federal and not provincial or municipal government, and hence, its design would not necessarily typify the category of public buildings on the West Coast.

Teaching and Research

Universities and colleges. The Fine Arts Centre at the University of British Columbia provides an example of the Modern architecture of teaching and research. The purpose of the Centre's design was to combine the schools of architecture, the fine arts, theatre and music into one complex and to embody therein, a public space that would attract students from all corners of the campus. In response to these requirements, the architectural firm of Thompson, Berwick and Pratt, in association with the artist B.C. Binning, designed four separate buildings connected by two courtyard spaces. The axis of the complex was oriented towards two major areas of activity — the Main Mall to the east and the Faculty Club and Thea Koerner Graduate Student Centre to the north.



Fine Arts Building, UBC by Thompson, Berwick and Pratt, 1960.

Importance of site, situation and landscaping to Modern architecture on the West Coast.

Photo: Irena Zenewych, 1989.

The Fine Arts Building, the first structure to be erected, illustrated regional architecture through the use of extensive areas of glass and local building materials, particularly wood. The Canadian Architect

reported that the fenestration of the building provided most rooms with the maximum amount of natural light and the faculty accommodations on the fourth floor with an "unsurpassed view"⁶⁰. British Columbian fir was employed in all the millwork and interior detailing.

The Fine Arts Centre followed a universal Modern approach in its design. The Journal of the RAIC noted that the Centre's plan was based on a primary module of 20 feet and a secondary one of 10 feet⁶¹. The Canadian Architect described the structure of the Fine Arts Building as a reinforced concrete frame treated with porcelain-faced block and glazed brick infill⁶². Complying with International Modernist tendencies, colour was kept to a minimum.

Although not an aspect of the arche-writing of West Coast Modernism, site and situation were described as influential to the design of the Fine Arts Centre. The Journal of the RAIC wrote that a prominent site in the north-west corner of the campus was selected in order to facilitate the connection between the Main Mall, Faculty Club and Student Residence⁶³. According to The Canadian Architect, a gently sloping topography generated the stepping within the sculpture and theatre courts⁶⁴. These series of steps were covered with brightly coloured paving while the overall courtyard areas were furnished with lounge seating and surrounded by a generous amount of landscaping.

Building experience in the category of teaching and research revealed the presence of large areas of glass and the use of locally-milled fir in detailing and millwork, both defined as regional characteristics by the arche-writing of the 1940's. Temporal experience also involved collaboration with a local artist, noted as a regional quality by the arche-writing of the 1950's. The effect of site and situation on the design of

⁶⁰"Fine Arts Centre, UBC" in The Canadian Architect, June 1961, p. 57.

⁶¹Journal of the RAIC, May 1963, p. 39.

⁶²The Canadian Architect, November 1962.

⁶³"The Fine Arts Centre for UBC and in particular Stage 1 — the Fine Arts, Architecture and Planning Building. Notes by R. Jessiman, Partner, Thompson, Berwick and Pratt - Architects" in Journal of the RAIC, May 1963, pp. 38 - 39.

⁶⁴The Canadian Architect, June 1961, p. 57.

university buildings and the incorporation of courtyards into the plan constituted the area of *differance*. They signified the introduction of nature into Modern — urban — building design, a characteristically West Coast development which was excluded in arche-writing.

"Differance" between Arche-writing and Building Experience

Phase Two of deconstruction revealed the *differance* between the building experience of Modern architecture on the West Coast and its arche-writing. *Differance* disclosed how experiments in contemporary residential design were interpreted as a regional articulation of Modern design principles, how the identification of distinct regional features influenced the architecture of larger, more complex projects, and how those developments were represented as a regionally modified International Style Modernism. The movement of meaning from temporal experience to arche-writing and back again, or the inversion of the hierarchical opposition of "world" or conceptualization and "work" or building experience, justified the ambiguity in the relationship between the representation and signification of West Coast Modernism disclosed in Phase One.

The arche-writing of the 1940's emphasized the structural and economic importance of the regionally-adapted Modernism in detached housing. At the same time it excluded the influence of topography and vegetation on architectural form, the augmentation of their aesthetic qualities through landscaping and colour and the employment of conventional framing methods in wood generating a pitched, and not a flat, roof. Journals stated that contemporary West Coast architecture, characterized by a spatial flow between inside and outside environments, developed due to the absence of traditional form and the presence of a populace/clientele desirous of breaking away from past customs. Yet the *differance* in the significance of West Coast Modernism related to Romantic values of nature⁶⁵, especially those concerning beauty and retreat, and to traditional aesthetics of form and embellishment. The

⁶⁵Haggar, Reginald G. A Dictionary of Art Terms. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1962. The term "Romantic" is associated with the sensitivity to aspects of nature usually unconsidered or condemned, aspects that suggest power, struggle, frustration, anguish, horror, fear and other forms of intense emotional excitement.

deconstructionist disclosure of *differance* revealed how certain integral aspects of Modern residential design on the West Coast, Romantic sensitivity to surroundings and symbolic relevance of traditional form, were denied acknowledgement.

The arche-writing of the 1940's served to identify qualities of regionalism in architectural categories other than detached housing. In turn, building experience in a range of building types led to another arche-writing of West Coast Modernism in the late 1950's. This later arche-writing focussed on the complementary role played by regional developments in the practice of Modern architecture. It deferred the primary consideration given to site and surroundings in the design process. For example, topography and vegetation played an instrumental role in addressing requirements of traffic separation, provision of views, privacy and recreation in the category of apartment buildings. Topography served to heighten the drama of ritual in religious architecture. Certain office buildings manifested a conscious separation from their surroundings while libraries displayed an obvious visual relationship with their neighbouring structures. In the category of universities and colleges, site and situation determined the orientation of buildings for purposes of public attraction. And industry selected particular sites and locations in order to establish efficient transport linkage. A second exclusion in arche-writing related to the incorporation of a landscaped courtyard into building design. In apartment buildings, the existing vegetation was preserved for the central courtyards which provided recreational areas for all the tenants. Office buildings included landscaped courtyards in order to create a retreat from their urban surroundings. Landscaped courtyards in the design of universities and colleges were meant to stimulate public appreciation of the arts. The lingering presence of tradition was also omitted in the arche-written list of influences affecting West Coast Modern architecture. Though Modern in planning and construction, the architecture of banks and shopping centres was embellished with marble finishes and baroque sculpture. Large areas of formal landscaping augmented industrial design. Religious architecture still maintained its traditional form and sanctity of inner space. Therefore *differance* in the representation of West Coast Modern architecture pointed to the presence in building experience and the absence in arche-writing of an awareness of site and surroundings, the incorporation of landscaping and courtyards and the continued presence of traditional

form.

According to the arche-writing of the late 1950's, West Coast Modernism, represented as a mediation of the abstract International Style through regionally-developed structural forms, finishes and art, signified humanism in architectural practice and contemporary attitude in lifestyle. *Differance* revealed a deferment of the significance of traditional values which generated the West Coast sensibility of integrating a building with its surroundings. Notions of luxury, privilege, privacy and retreat associated with the appropriation of nature relate to a Romantic view of the world. These notions were variously expressed in the architecture of apartment buildings, industry, offices, churches, and universities and colleges. Building experience of Modern architecture on the West Coast also disclosed the attempt to adapt the Romantic relationship between architecture and nature to an urban environment, to incorporate nature into Modern building design. In emphasizing the aesthetic properties of regional expression, arche-writing excluded the more fundamental significance of West Coast sensibility to contemporary building design, that of advantageously accommodating the particularities of the surrounding environment. This sensibility stemmed from a Romantic, therefore traditional and not Modern, approach to architecture.

Disclosure of *differance* qualified the ambiguity between arche-written representations of West Coast Modern architecture and their attributed significance. Contemporary regional design was first described as an adaptation to climate and geography. While this did not signify a Modern approach to design, the possibility of economic practicality did. While the use of local building materials and post-and-beam construction did not typify Modern building practices, freedom of design and structural innovation did. Furthermore, the incorporation of art into architectural structure was a characteristic of traditional architecture, but if it signified a contemporary approach to living, it was Modern. And finally, regional expression was antithetical to the universalizing tendencies of Modernism, but given the significance of a "humanistic experience", its presence could be accommodated. Phase Two uncovered the reason for the ambiguous ties between arche-written representation and its associated meaning. Although arche-writing described the influences of Romanticism and tradition, it failed to acknowledge their significance to the evolution of Modern architecture on the West Coast.

Phase Two of deconstruction also revealed the movement or the changes in the meaning of regional developments to contemporary architectural practice on the West Coast. That movement occurred continuously between temporal experience and arche-writing. According to building experience, the Modern movement stimulated a structural, functional and aesthetic adaptation to the West Coast climate and geography in the field of detached housing. A distinct regional style emerged characterized by an openness between inside and outside spaces, between structure and environment. Drawing from temporal experience, arche-writing identified certain architectural features as constitutive of a regionally-enunciated Modern architecture. These defined qualities of regionalism were then found to have been appropriated by various architectural projects for various purposes. They were depicted, by a later arche-writing, as imparting a modifying effect on International Style Modernism. *Differance* disclosed that the meaning of a West Coast articulation of Modern design moved from an emphasis on economic and structural characteristics to a focus on aesthetic qualities. More importantly, this movement of meaning revealed the changing yet self-referential and exclusive nature of arche-writing. Characteristically regional structural forms and finishes represented in the arche-writing of the 1940's were repeated, with the addition of artistic collaboration in the arche-writing of the 1950's. In both instances, *differance* uncovered the absence of architecture's relationship with the natural or urban environment. This relationship derived from a Romantic, therefore traditional, affinity with nature. Due to Modernism's predilection towards rupture with tradition and domination of nature, the significance of integration with the landscape to Modern architecture on the West Coast was deferred.

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SOURCE OF TEMPORAL EXPERIENCE AND ARCHE-WRITING: THE CRADLE OF THE TRACE

Despite attempts on the part of the Modern movement to completely rupture ties to tradition, *différance* revealed that this was not accomplished in West Coast architecture. The presence of "the trace" could not be eliminated. It is the purpose of Phase Three to describe the trace, the "philosophico-cultural tradition" composed of both past effects, present experience and future aspirations: the place and time specific "conditions" conducive to the advent of Modern architecture on the West Coast. The Journal of the RAIC, Canadian Builder, Canadian Art and Western Homes and Living provide the sources of information. The first step in this last phase of deconstruction defines the "world", a specific complex of predicates based on the social, economic and political circumstances surrounding the Modern design movement in Vancouver. The second step outlines the "world-view", the dominant imperatives of the major participants in that movement, the architectural profession and the artistic community. In the third step, world and world-view are "strategically rearranged", are permitted to "play" with one another, in order to describe most completely the complex historical conditions and the diversity of opportunity, the "cradle of the trace", which generated a distinct regional expression of the Modern architectural movement on the Vancouver landscape.

¶

The "World": A Complex of Predicates Attending an Historical Situation

The absence of architectural traditions. In a 1947 edition of Canadian Art, Lasserre wrote that the Vancouver landscape manifested no style or even two or three styles that could be considered traditional, either in terms of native culture or indigenous art and architecture¹. He attributed the situation, on the one hand, to conditions unfamiliar to the settlers and migrants to the West Coast and hence not conducive to the transplanting of their traditions, and on the other, to the historical age of Vancouver, a city not old enough to have developed traditions of its own. Three years later, in the Journal of the RAIC,

¹Lasserre, 1947, p. 8.

Birmingham noted a gradual change affecting house design in British Columbia. Although most houses erected were conventional in character, each year saw an increase in the number of "modern" or "contemporary" designs². This trend he related to the changing composition of the population on the Coast. A tremendous growth had occurred in the fifteen years preceding and following the war, much greater than in the rest of the country. These migrants were families of widely different backgrounds who viewed British Columbia as a land of opportunity or as an ideal place to retire. Most importantly, Birmingham observed, this population demonstrated a liking for change, a willingness to break with tradition which resulted in the construction of many unusual homes. Because of the large population growth, West Coast cities and Vancouver in particular, opened up subdivisions rapidly. This, in turn, provided a good opportunity for many architects to try out new and better solutions to the age-old problem of designing a home.

A housing shortage. After the war, housing became critically scarce due to the return of the veterans. Vancouver's situation was even more acute due to an additional influx of migrants from the east. In 1946, Lasserre observed in the Journal of the RAIC that while builders knew that they could sell everything they built, they also realized that it was impossible to provide living accommodations within the means of low income groups³. Building costs were not expected to decline for a number of years due to an excessive demand for materials and a scarcity of semi-skilled and skilled tradespeople. Responsible for this situation were the seasonal character of construction and the uncertainty of the extent of building programs. In 1950, Jocelyn Davidson described the results of a survey that revealed that two-thirds of the households in Vancouver were either in search of rental housing or could not afford to buy a minimum home⁴. The major obstacle to the solution of the housing problem was cited as a much slower rise in wages or incomes in comparison to building costs.

²Birmingham, September 1950, p. 305.

³Lasserre, Fred. "The houses are not coming" in Journal of the RAIC, July 1946, p. 175.

⁴Davidson, Jocelyn. "Planning and housing in British Columbia" in Journal of the RAIC April 1950, p. 148.

Government assistance. Because private enterprise was not moving to solve the housing problem, even under the government-organized auspices of Housing Enterprises of Canada, the Federal Government set up its own Central Housing and Mortgage Corporation. According to Lasserre, its intention was to co-ordinate a building program on the basis of large scale planning, standardization and subsidization⁵. In 1950, Davidson reported that the Legislature of British Columbia was about to pass legislation to provide funds complementing those of the Government of Canada for the purposes of creating low cost housing and giving municipalities the power to proceed immediately with their design and construction⁶. In 1951, the municipality of Vancouver, contributing half of the provincial share of subsidized funds, began work on its first low rental housing project⁷. It was called "Little Mountain" and was designed by the architectural firm of Thompson, Berwick and Pratt. In his article, "Planning and Housing in British Columbia", Davidson also mentioned that while the various levels of government set subsidization programs in place, the Vancouver Town Planning Commission was pressing for the establishment of a permanent and independent planning department for City Hall⁸. Its imperatives would focus on the implementation of an already designed master plan in the light of studies conducted on the requirements of a rapidly growing city⁹.

Structural innovation. The post-war housing crisis instigated architects to experiment with structural techniques, to some extent for the purpose of lowering building costs. In 1947, Lasserre noted that architectural interest in prefabrication and factory-produced panels generated developments in plywood; its increasing use in exterior finishing provided the impetus to begin experiments in modular

⁵Lasserre, July 1946, p. 175.

⁶Davidson, April 1950, p. 148.

⁷Smith, A. Rhys and Chester S. Brown. "Student Teams Plan for City Housing Development" in Canadian Builder, I, 1 (March, 1951), pp. 27 - 33.

⁸Davidson, April 1950, p. 148.

⁹See Spence-Sales, Harold and John Bland. Report upon the Establishment of a Planning Department in the City of Vancouver. Vancouver: City of Vancouver, July 20, 1951.

construction¹⁰. Keith Davison reported in the Journal of the RAIC that because of the prime importance of the lumbering industry to British Columbia, most innovation occurred in the field of wood construction¹¹. He observed that building practices in Vancouver followed two distinct trends, that of solid plank bearing wall framing and that of post-and-beam. Economic reasons underlay the development of the first. In 1949, two structures featuring solid plank framing were demonstrated on the site of a Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation project. Although they employed a novel method of construction, their interior layout was that of a standard two-bedroom house. In comparison, post-and-beam framing created an open interior. The expansive areas of glass and considerable indoor-outdoor access were considered possible due to the region's relatively mild climate. Unlike solid plank bearing wall construction, post-and-beam framing addressed aesthetic more than economic concerns.

Loan companies and clients. Despite the progress made in architectural and engineering design, regulations and restrictions imposed by loan companies limited their implementation. This was especially true with regard to post-and-beam structures. According to Pratt, the flat roof was judged as impractical and subsequently, the elevations as not good looking¹². To overcome the restrictions enforced by the loan companies architects searched for clients who could put a substantial amount of cash up front. But to find such clients who also had a healthy contemporary viewpoint was an uphill battle. Clients contemplating large expensive houses seemed to prefer a traditional style. It was difficult to sell a contemporary plan to an average client: only the imaginative could appreciate the value of Modern design. For the architect, it would definitely have been easier and more lucrative to build exactly what the client wanted and most clients seemed interested in the ranch-style house¹³. Even though it was style developed in the United States, its plan could be shaped to fit the most mountainous B.C. lot, its characteristically wide eaves could

¹⁰Lasserre, 1947, p. 11.

¹¹Davison, Keith B. "Wood Framing Developments" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, p. 313.

¹²Pratt, 1947, p. 179.

¹³Woodworth, 1950, p. 33.

provide shelter from the rain as well as from the sun, and its typically wood shakes and siding could make use of local building materials. Adaptability coupled with popularity equalled high resale value. Therefore, mortgage companies were much more willing to support the building of ranch-style as opposed to post-and-beam residences.

The rising cost of timber products. The rising cost of local building materials, especially wood, also undermined architects' hopes of constructing affordable housing in the regional style of post-and-beam. Calling the situation an anathema, Simpson explained that despite the local production of great quantities of timber products, the economic aspect of local use was governed by international and national markets¹⁴. Consequently, architects and engineers had to turn to other materials for certain structures. Reinforced concrete was already competing with wood in moderate-sized buildings. Steel would compete to an ever greater extent once the New National Building Code was adopted. In Simpson's mind, architects should look forward to the progress from wood to the new materials; with a closer collaboration with engineers and builders, new three-dimensional conceptions of form could emerge from the use of concrete and steel. This shift in accessibility and attitude towards new building materials opened the way for the practice of a more International Style of architecture.

Opportunities and Limitations

For architects in post-war Vancouver, the "world" or "specific complex of predicates attending a historical situation" in Derridean terminology, described seemingly limitless opportunity and seemingly insurmountable barriers. According to the architectural and art journals, the city exhibited no clearly defined tradition of architecture. Modern designers could respond "objectively" to local geographic and social conditions¹⁵. Social circumstances in Vancouver after the war were affected primarily by the return of veterans and by a large migration from eastern Canada seeking employment in British Columbia's growing resource industry. This influx of population caused a critical housing shortage. At the same time

¹⁴Simpson, D.C. "Contemporary West Coast Construction" in Canadian Builder, January 1954, p. 17.

¹⁵Lasserre, 1947, p. 12.

building costs were rising rapidly. As builders were not willing to undertake, what they perceived as unprofitable, projects of low-cost housing, the Government of Canada attempted to relieve this housing problem through subsidization and co-ordination of a nation-wide housing program. For the architectural community, the rising costs of construction created a need or opportunity for economically-feasible structural innovation. Experiments were directed towards the standardization and prefabrication of building components and, due to the importance of the lumber industry to the province, primarily involved construction in wood. But by the mid-1950's, foreign markets caused timber products to become overpriced and not as easily accessible to local architectural practice. Consequently, architectural interest shifted to building in concrete and steel and to projects other than housing. Anticipated were a closer association with the engineering profession and new conceptions of building form. Loan companies and clients provided a further deterrent to architectural involvement in housing. They neither approved of nor accepted the contemporary appearance generated by structural innovation, in particular post-and-beam. The "world" influencing architecture on the West Coast of Canada both encouraged and limited the Modern movement. Conducive to its development were a housing shortage, the need for structural innovation, government subsidization and an absence of traditional form. Limitations were imposed primarily by loan companies and clients. And by raising the cost of local timber products, foreign markets were to prove most contributive to the proliferation of Modern architecture, albeit in the International, and not West Coast, Style.

World-view

Architectural and Artistic Imperatives

The architectural profession. In 1949, the Architectural Institute of British Columbia organized a public exhibition of locally-designed Modern architecture in which innovations in building technology were brought to the fore. In reporting on the accomplishments of the exhibit, Lasserre wrote that the media acknowledged that B.C. architects were as competent as those elsewhere on the continent: they demonstrated proficiency in handling multi-million dollar contracts not only for housing schemes, but also

for industrial plants and monumental structures. Most importantly, they implemented the principles of Modern architecture: structural members constituted the major element of building design. Although the exhibit did not particularly describe the "native" characteristics developed in West Coast housing, Lasserre noted that it did express a "healthy outcome of prevalent aesthetic agnosticism"¹⁶.

The emphasis on structure in architectural design was equally evident in the University of British Columbia's Department of Architecture's programs of education and public relations. The curriculum integrated theory with practice: the former was derivative of principles and structural innovations of industrial technology and the latter was oriented towards their functional implementation. In promoting this new architecture, connections were pursued not only with the public at large and the other arts, but more importantly, with the engineering profession and the construction industry.

With regard to the construction industry, architects encouraged rationalization of its methods according to Modern conceptions of efficiency. Efficiency could be achieved through centralized manufacturing — prefabrication based on modular design, year-round production and a resourceful use of materials. In architectural terms, this rationalized efficiency would be translated into flexibility in planning — the capability of adapting a basic design to any site or building program. Mass-production on a year-round basis would guarantee steady employment to the building trades and, hopefully, a lowering of labour costs. And in consideration of aesthetics, the mass-production of building components could also accommodate variety in size, colour, texture and shape. In order to achieve the best solutions to the prevailing building problems, especially those of housing, architects emphasized that it should be socially-conscious designers, and not utilities engineers or speculative builders who take advantage of these developments. Architects also advocated the need for cooperation with the government by way of city planning. This planning, they believed, should be based on progressive social organization wherein the architectural profession would be motivated by objectives higher than profit. According to Davidson, architects must work for an architecture geared for the current social reality. Otherwise, he forewarned,

¹⁶Lasserre, 1949, p. 167.

the profession would become obsolete¹⁷.

The artistic community. Also responding to the social needs of a post-war society was the Art in Living Group. This was a cultural organization working towards integrating the artist into the Modern architectural movement. In order to promote its cause, the Group organized four exhibits at the Vancouver Art Gallery. The themes included the fundamentals of architecture and town planning; school design; neighbourhood planning; and the place of architecture in everyday life. In co-operation with fourteen other local organizations, the Group was involved in bringing the influential Richard Neutra to speak to the architectural and artistic communities on the sociological aspects of Modern design. Many members of the Art in Living Group who were also practising artists, went beyond simply advocating the social merits of the Modernist aesthetic: they commissioned Modern architects to design their personal homes.

The preoccupation with structural achievements during Vancouver's Modern movement did not escape critical concern from the artistic community. In 1950, B.C. Binning lamented the unrelated effort between the two professions as typical of the West Coast as elsewhere in Canada¹⁸. Since the war, he explained, both artists and architects felt the need for new forms in order to express the new thoughts and feelings arising in a post-war situation. Why should the two not work together? The architect could see new structural possibilities through the artist's free play with form, colour and texture. The artist, on the other hand, could learn much from the more exacting discipline of the architect. In this manner, murals and sculpture could become an integral part of architectural design. In Binning's eyes, this intimate relationship between artist and architect would not be a new development. Much to the contrary, it would follow traditional patterns of co-operation.

¹⁷Davidson, 1950, p. 148.

¹⁸Binning, B.C. "The Artist and the Architect" in Journal of the RAIC, September 1950, p. 320.

Structural, Aesthetic and Social Imperatives

The architectural profession, represented by the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, emphasized imperatives of structural competence leading to virtuosity and the capability of planning large, high-budget projects. These objectives were supported by the Department of Architecture at the University of British Columbia, which directed its program towards a close collaboration with the engineering profession and the construction industry. On the other hand, the artistic community in Vancouver advocated co-operation between architecture and the visual arts. Artists were interested not only in the incorporation of murals and sculpture with architectural form, but also in participation in the design process itself. They felt that artistic sensitivity could introduce a social dimension into the rationale of architectural planning. Between the architectural profession and the artistic community stood individual architects such as Douglas Simpson and Jocelyn Davidson for whom social responsibility was also important. In their minds, a close association with a municipal planning department would ensure that structural efficiency followed the directives of social need.

The Cradle of the Trace

The cradle of the trace, the "philosophico-cultural tradition" generating the emergence of West Coast Modernism on Vancouver's architectural landscape, involved a complex relationship of social, economic and political circumstances and architectural and artistic imperatives. These conditions of the trace both generated and determined the nature of temporal experience and arche-writing. The *differance* between the latter two created an area of spacing, an area which permitted, in deconstructionist terms, the functioning of the "hinge". According to Derrida, the turning of the hinge in a particular direction involves discretion, reserve, diversion and incompleteness. The direction chosen by the hinge is expressed in arche-writing which itself is characterized by repetition of certain aspects of the trace in light of temporal experience. It was this arche-writing, constituted by the movement in meaning between itself and temporal experience, but fundamentally grounded in the trace, that produced the new conditions of the

trace from which a more current, idealized concept of West Coast Modern architecture was formed.

Conditions of the trace relevant to the progress of the Modern movement in West Coast architecture involved a housing shortage, innovations in construction and an absence of architectural tradition coupled with predominantly structural imperatives on the part of the architectural profession and social and aesthetic imperatives on the part of the artistic community. The housing shortage affected low-income groups in particular and was exacerbated by rising building costs. While various levels of government attempted to alleviate the problem through programs of subsidization, the architectural profession encouraged a rationalization of the construction industry in terms of standardization, prefabrication and year-round mass-production of building components for the purpose of practising Modern methods of construction. The artistic community, wanting to participate in the Modern movement, focussed on the social aspect of contemporary architecture. Through the Art in Living Group it promoted the value of Modern design to family and neighbourhood. On an individual basis, artists commissioned local Modernists to design their homes. Meanwhile, in the minds of the architectural profession, social considerations did not necessarily require artistic attention: they could be incorporated more democratically through co-operation with the municipal planning department.

Attempts to overcome the high cost of home building through structural innovation in wood construction were confounded in the early 1950's by the overpricing of timber products. Additionally, Modern design in housing, though proven economically practical¹⁹, was not supported by loan companies nor readily accepted by clients. Consequently, architects left residential design in favour of high-budget, large-scale projects which allowed them to practice Modern principles of design using new techniques of construction in concrete and steel.

An absence of architectural tradition in Vancouver was seen as advantageous by both the architectural and artistic communities. Architects saw the potential of successfully introducing a pure

¹⁹Journal of the RAIC, January, 1953, pp. 12 -13 and February, 1956, p. 41. Both the Copp and Smith Residences won Massey Silver Medals for excellence in architecture in the category of "Residences Costing up to \$15,000".

Modern design idiom which would express aesthetic quality through structural proficiency and eventually, virtuosity. Despite the architects' leaning towards collaboration with engineers and contractors, the artistic community pursued a perceived opportunity to comprehensively incorporate art into the new architectural form.

The cradle of the trace reveals a number of possible paths that Modern architecture on the West Coast could have followed. For example, housing, besides being standardized and constructed in prefabricated building components, could have manifested the efficiency-oriented aesthetics of Modern structural innovation, or the socially-conscious, nature-oriented aesthetics of artistic inspiration, or a combination of both. Large-scale projects, structured in concrete and steel, could have exhibited a purely International Style of Modernism, or, in conjunction with artistic consultation, could have developed freer, more imaginative forms of architecture, or, they could have generously integrated works of art into architectural structure. On the other hand, Modernism in architectural form could have been rejected completely in favour of the previous, haphazardly-eclectic, neo-classicism. But according to arche-writing and temporal experience, the Modern movement in Vancouver generated a West Coast Style.

In terms of temporal experience, the West Coast Style emerged in detached housing design but not in response to the housing crisis. Its regionally-developed post-and-beam method of framing exemplified the architectural imperatives of structural innovation while its functional and aesthetic integration with the surrounding natural vegetation and topography illustrated the socially-oriented artistic imperatives of the need to retreat from urban life into nature. This naturalistic dimension of Modern architecture on the West Coast affected the design of large-scale projects. Although constructed according to International, and not regional, Modern techniques, structures were modified by artistically-inspired regionalist elements such as overhanging eaves, a creative use of site, landscaping and colour. Despite the intention, artistic input did not generate freer structural form nor an abundant presence of art.

This temporal experience of West Coast Modern design was conceptualized in arche-writing. Initially, the concept described the regional style as a structural response to local climatic and geographic

conditions and an expression of a contemporary lifestyle. Ten years later, it was represented as a geographically-inspired influence on International Style Modernism contributing a humanistic dimension to Vancouver architecture. The *differance* between temporal experience and arche-writing revealed an absence or diversion of the importance of the outside environment to West Coast Modern design and, for the architectural profession, a preference for large-scale, high-budget projects over those of housing. The emphasis on structural achievements, especially in concrete and steel with only a complementary mention of their modification by regional qualities, points to primary significance given to the engineering rather than artistic aspect of Modern architecture in post-war Vancouver, to the greater cultural value was placed on an International, rather than a West Coast Style, of Modernism. That regional influence, one affecting an affinity with nature and an awareness of the surrounding environment, bespoke a Romantic and not Modern sensibility. Though not acknowledged in arche-writing, a traditional Romantic sensitivity played a definite role in the acceptance and appropriation of the Modern movement in architecture on the West Coast. The particular interpretation of the Modern movement by West Coast architects exemplifies Derrida's contention that the trace, embodiment of memory, experience and aspiration, is present in all forms of cultural expression, including that of an architectural landscape.

CHAPTER VI

1980'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF A WEST COAST STYLE

"What is happening now cancels out its own past: the new functions of art, of design, of architecture, cancel out the historical quality and character of the artistic processes, revolutionize their meanings and compromise their values, involve them in the dynamics of the continuous construction of the world . . . history does not condition activity, rather it will be the case of the latter transforming the functions of the former." Manfredo Tafuri¹.

In the 1980's, Vancouver's post-war appropriation of the Modern movement is interpreted by architectural commentators as the West Coast Style, an architecture of critical regionalism capable of exerting a force of resistance against Postmodernism's indifferent use of historical decoration. Whereas in the 1940's and 1950's arche-writing emphasized the Modern aspects of contemporary West Coast architecture, that of the 1980's focusses on its regional qualities. Drawing from a statement made by B.C. Binning, "If European architects were developing a new architecture with their local building materials, why shouldn't I design a new style of B.C. house with B.C. building materials?"², Sherry McKay represents the West Coast Style firstly, as a fusion of Modern tenets of abstract and regional design with a regionalist sensitivity to materials and secondly, as a design idiom accommodating of site and view. It is the second quality that is given most attention by Barry Downs, Douglas Shadbolt, Scott Watson, E.M. Gibson and Andrew Gruft. Downs writes that the evolution of West Coast residential architecture had most to do with the ambience of the site: its topography, textures and specific features³. In order to complement the surrounding environment, houses were structurally extended to incorporate terraces and gardens into their built form. Shadbolt describes how sloping and unusual sites were appropriated through the use of a West Coast-developed framing technique, post-and-beam, to create a series of spatial sequences punctuated

¹Tafuri, Manfredo. Theories and History of Architecture. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1980, p. 45.

²From McKay, Sherry. "Western Living, Western Homes: An Expression of a New Climate". A paper presented at the annual meeting of The Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada in Vancouver, May 27, 1988, p. 3.

³Downs, 1981, p. 41.

with views in and out of the site⁴. For Gruft, it was "the originality and appropriateness that was the principle strengths of the early houses which first drew attention to a westcoast style⁵. And Watson agrees that a regional architectural attitude, one characterized by the acceptance of abstract form and an awareness of the environment, arose from what he considers the most significant achievement of 1950's domestic architecture, the easy transition between interior and exterior space. In a more specific way, Downs relates how this response to particularities of site generating a number of level changes, variety in plan configuration, and plasticity of form served to integrate a building with its setting. Because this design idiom was different from all urban precedents, he feels justified in referring to it as "vernacular" West Coast architecture⁶. And Gibson confirms the practice of "critical regionalism" in 1980's Vancouver architecture by observing that the principle motifs of regionalism, post-and-beam, sanctimony of view and naturalistic decoration, have been monumentalized in civic and commercial design⁷.

But does the West Coast Style possess the potential of acting as a force of critical regionalism? According to Frampton's tectonic criteria, the answer would have to be "yes". The structural appropriation of site particularities, the awareness of surroundings and the incorporation of landscaped courtyards distinguish the West Coast Style from historically eclectic Postmodern design. The West Coast Style also manifests aesthetic distinction: its Romantic sensitivity to nature generates a generous use of vegetation in conjunction with structural form. But the cultural importance of this newly-discovered local vernacular remains ambiguous. What does an architecture signifying retreat from the city and recreation in nature mean to a Postmodern society directed by the values of consumption?

⁴Shadbolt, Douglas. "Postwar Architecture in Vancouver" in Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 - 1983. Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983. p. 108.

⁵Gruft, Andrew. "Vancouver Architecture: The Last Fifteen Years" in Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 - 1983, 1983. p. 330.

⁶Downs, 1983, p. 41.

⁷Gibson, Edward. "A City's Style" in Award-Winning Vancouver Architecture. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1986.

McKay states that the West Coast Style home symbolizes the British Columbian style of living. According to Gibson, the West Coast quality in post-war domestic design was founded on a local artistic tradition molded by naturalism, informality and symbolic spiritualism, a tradition that imparted a casual attitude towards universality. Because the 1980's arche-writing has brought the artistic as opposed to the engineering dimension of the West Coast Style architecture to the fore, Watson's insights regarding the activities of the artistic community in the 1950's warrant mention. Watson writes that while Vancouver often sees itself as vibrant, new and cosmopolitan, it was and remains a conservative community¹. The late acceptance of International Style Modernism in architectural practice serves as a primary example of this conservatism. While a deconstructionist disclosure of the trace revealed the Modern movement in Vancouver as a discourse involving architects and artists on the principles of good design with the objective of solving economic and social problems, Watson points out that in these discussions, particular attention was given to the organization of leisure time into creative activities. Artists participating in this discourse, who expressed their commitment to Modernity by building architect-designed homes on forested suburban slopes, manifested at the same time a dwindling interest in paintings reflecting social consciousness and a growing preoccupation with a personally-expressive art inspired by the landscape. Watson states that art in the 1950's turned from themes of social commentary to those of leisure and escape. Artists felt it was their role to offer refuge from society in the form of aesthetic expressions of personal freedom. These intentions offer insight into the changing nature of significance attributed to the West Coast Style. In the 1940's and 1950's, references to the inclusion of nature in design were increasingly suppressed, while in the 1980's, they become predominant. In a post-war time period, values of work determined cultural progress; in a post-industrial era, retreat and recreation assume greater import.

Derrida states that the process of arche-writing is constantly changing yet self-referential. Although 1980's arche-writing of West Coast Modernism refers to post-and-beam construction and sensitivity to local building materials, it adds and emphasizes awareness of site and surroundings and naturalistic landscaping. For architectural critics of the 1980's, excepting Andrew Gruft, the West Coast Style no

¹Watson, Scott. "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure and Painting in the Age of Anxiety" in Vancouver: Art and Artists 1933 - 1983, Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983, p. 100.

longer represents a movement of radical change, but one of reactionary resistance. This change in the direction of the hinge supports Tafuri's contention that "history does not condition activity, rather it will be the case of the latter transforming the functions of the former". Current arche-writing conceals the Modern origins of the West Coast Style. But deconstruction has also proven that arche-writing does not directly represent experience. Textual interpretations are determined by certain social values which, as Lyotard has forewarned, should not remain unquestioned. Although 1940's and 1950's arche-writing of West Coast Modernism concentrated on the importance of economic construction and structural innovation, and a Postmodern arche-writing of the West Coast Style centres on retreat and recreation in nature, they both emerged from a trace fundamentally influenced by a capitalist political economy. Therefore, it must be asked, "For what reason and to what end have cultural values based on production been replaced by those directed by consumption? And does an architecture of critical regionalism support or contest this change?"

CHAPTER VII

THE WEST COAST MODERN LANDSCAPE AND DECONSTRUCTION: CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been concerned with interpretations of the West Coast Modern landscape and with deconstruction, a methodology of textual analysis new to the field of geography. Analysis of the interpretations produced three conclusions. Firstly, that while deconstruction assumes discrepancy between arche-writing and temporal experience, these discrepancies are shown by this thesis to be of fundamental proportions. They demonstrate a marked plurality rather than singularity of meaning inherent in the cultural landscape. Secondly, as interpretations change through time, certain meanings are retained, others are forgotten. Thirdly, interpretations are influenced by particular cultural values prevalent at the time of writing. In this thesis, the methodology of deconstruction provided insights into the meanings embodied in a cultural landscape that other methods would not have offered. Nonetheless, limitations were uncovered. Their acknowledgement and/or overcoming are important to geographers choosing to apply deconstruction in the future.

The fundamental differences between arche-writing and temporal experience describe the rich diversity of meaning present in the West Coast Modern landscape. This diversity encompasses architectural principles of Modernism as well as aesthetic qualities of Romanticism. West Coast Modern architecture represents the use of modular systems of space planning as well as spatial design sensitive to the topography and vegetation of the site. It demonstrates structural innovation and virtuosity in the employment of synthetic materials such as concrete and steel and of natural, indigenous products of cedar and fir. The West Coast Style generates standardized designs typical of large scale projects as well as the customized architecture of detached housing. It is associated with pure, undecorated surfaces as well as with coloured, textured finishes and the addition of local art. Despite the marked plurality of meanings conveyed by the West Coast Modern landscape, arche-writing manifests a certain structure of interpretation.

Changing interpretations of West Coast Modernism demonstrate some similarities, but not in an absolute way. Two principles of Modern architecture, that of structural innovation and economical resolution of general building requirements, are common to both the arche-writing and temporal experience of the 1940's and 1950's. But by the 1980's, these principles lose importance as criteria of the West Coast Style. In their stead, regional qualities such as a sensitivity to site and surroundings, naturalistic landscaping, and interior courtyards, common to temporal experience of the 1940's and 1950's and arche-writing of the 1980's, assume greater significance in delineating West Coast Modern architecture.

Derrida's understanding of textual representation as expressive of philosophical and historical influence, prepares us for the association of changes in interpretation with changes in the cultural values guiding those interpretations. This thesis shows that cultural values can be deduced firstly, from the terminology and logic employed in textual representation, and secondly, from the social, political and economic context in which the text was created. Determining the context leads to an assessment of what is included and what is excluded in arche-writing. Arche-writing of the 1940's and 1950's describes West Coast Modern architecture in terms of rationalized planning and standardized construction. Its purpose was to promote the efficient and therefore economical aspects of Modern building practices. The context which generated this arche-writing was one influenced by capitalist industrial production. Arche-writing of the 1980's represents West Coast Modernism in terms of its sensitivity to site and surroundings and the incorporation of naturalistic landscaping and interior courtyards. Its objective is to foster a regionally-conscious architectural form. The context of this more recent arche-writing is one effected by the practices of consumer capitalism. Although cultural values are not explicitly stated in the written interpretations of the West Coast Modern landscape, deconstruction facilitates their deduction through the play of terminology, logic of argument and context. This deduction adds a critical dimension to the identification of cultural values particular to time-specific interpretations. It also demonstrates how the plurality of meanings and intentions involved in landscape formation complicates the predictability of cultural progress.

This thesis used deconstruction to identify dimensions of meaning embodied in a cultural landscape that methods such as phenomenology, existentialism or structuralism would not have revealed (see Chapter II). Through textual analysis deconstruction discloses not only the objective evaluation but also the subjective experience of landscape formation. In this study, a comparison between the (objective) arche-writing and (subjective) temporal experience served to uncover the plurality of meaning that comprised the landscape of West Coast Modernism. Furthermore, deconstruction provides a far more systematic analysis of the changes in meaning than other studies; for example, Sauer's morphology of landscape. The strategy is equally effective with only a minimum number of texts (two are sufficient).

The weaknesses of deconstruction must be acknowledged as well. The first weakness relates to deconstruction being a method of exclusively textual analysis. While written records constitute the best source of information about historical events, in contemporary time periods, other media may provide data more directly related to the object of study. For example, in this thesis, graphic or photographic representations of West Coast Modern architecture would have maintained the visual bias of communication. Additionally, a Japanese influence was noted in only one of the interpretations. Verification could only come from oral sources, which stood outside this analysis of texts. Finally, deconstruction does not offer a theory of explanation. The onus is on deconstructing, not reconstructing, on criticizing accepted ways of knowing. Therefore, cultural values such as those based on capitalist practices of production or consumption can only be deduced through the disclosure of terminology or a description of context: an explanation of the bias in the interpretations of the West Coast Modern landscape is not possible through deconstruction.

This thesis has uncovered both the strengths and the weaknesses of deconstruction as a method of geographic inquiry. For greater relevance to the discipline, its critical stance towards textual interpretation could be extended to include the "grammatology" — the structure and logic — of oral and visual media. A deconstructionist analysis of oral sources of information such as interviews and ambient sound could well offer valuable insight into the processes of landscape formation. Of greater pertinence to geography are visual sources of information. The deconstruction of maps, graphs, models, photography and empirical

observation could significantly contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings and intentions involved in both landscape creation and interpretation.

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