

CL 9696B

Literature and Architecture

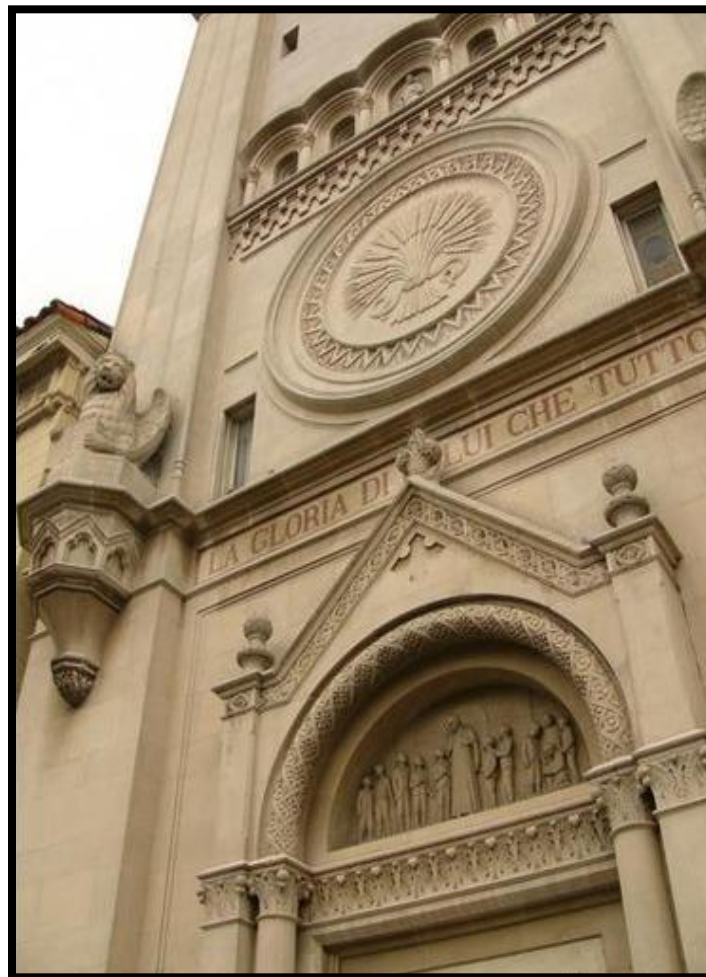
J. Miller

9/1/16

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

CL 9696B: Writing on the Wall: Literature and Architecture

Spring (2nd semester) 2016



Instructor: Professor James Miller (jmiller@uwo.ca) **Office hours:** by appt (Pride Library)
Time / Location: Tuesdays 9:30am-12:20pm in The Pride Library (Weldon main floor, rm 107)



Quid, qui emissitios nusquam non iactat ocellos?
Hoc agit, vt pandas mors inuolet atra fenestras.

Wat doet hy, die syn oogh' int sien niet en bewaert?
Hy heft die venster' hoogh', al waer de doot inbaert.

Qui laisse s'esbatre / Sa veue folatre / Quel malheur l'attend?
La mort æternelle / Par ces trous eschelle / L'ame, et la surprind.

Course Description

Architectural theory has recently converged with literary and cultural theory in spaces well beyond the pages of obscure design-school journals. Where famous buildings of the ancient world (e.g. the Colosseum and the Pantheon in Rome) once generated the designs in influential theoretical texts such as Palladio's *I quattro libri dell'architettura*, now we find that theoretical texts such as Bachelard's *La Poétique de l'Espace* and Baudrillard's *Simulacres et Simulation* are deeply influencing the design of contemporary buildings such as Libeskind's Jewish Museum and Foster's Reichstag in Berlin. Texts in cultural theory are now being produced by practising architects (e.g. Rem Koolhaas's *S,M,L,XL*) while cultural theorists are practising what they preach by realizing their ideas of structure and signification in built space (e.g. Charles Jencks's *Garden of Cosmic Speculation*).

What lies behind this striking trend in modern and postmodern culture? What impact is it having on the “construction” of literature in our era? How is the once stable concept of literary form affected by the ever-shifting and much contested notion of form in architecture? Has the deconstructive collapse of metaphysically stabilized meanings affected the cultural significance of planned demolitions and collapsing structures in the postmodern mega-city?

In this course we shall seek answers to these questions by first tracing the convergence of architecture and literature at a theoretical level to the emergence of semiotics within postwar structuralist thought. Reading semiotics as a modernist response to traditional allegorical hermeneutics, we shall then look back to the convergence of verbal and visual sign systems in a series of imaginary buildings and symbolic cityscapes from the Western literary tradition: the Cretan Labyrinth in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the Tower of Babel in Genesis, the City of Concord in Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*, the City of Dis in Dante’s *Inferno*, the Palace of Liberty in Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia*, the House of Alma in Spenser’s *Faerie Queen*, the Temple of Solomon in Du Bartas’s *La Sepmaine*, the Theatre of Knowledge in Campanella’s *La Città del Sole*, Pandemonium in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and the Wynand Building in Rand’s *The Fountainhead*. Particular attention will be paid to the complex interplay between articulated meanings in allegory and articulated spaces in architecture (including the transference of descriptive terminology between poetics and architectonics) in the wake of the Modernist “paragone” ushered in by Le Corbusier and Antonio Sant’Elia, who triumphantly asserted the primacy of modern architecture over all the other arts in the early twentieth century.

The course will conclude by considering the symbolic prominence and problematic interpretation of architectural signifiers in contemporary fiction influenced by poststructuralist thought: for instance, the monastic library in Eco’s *Il nome della rosa* (1980); the Scrovegni chapel and the Casa Anatta in Dessaix’s *Night Letters* (1996); the chawls and highrises of Bombay in Rushdie’s *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999); the train stations and fortresses in Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001); and the Chicago World’s Fair Complex in Larson’s *The Devil in the White City* (2004). The course will include a special guest lecture by Toronto architect Paul Couillard.



Literature and Architecture: Schedule of Topics and Readings

JANUARY

10 → Prisoners of Architecture

- Readings: 1. Homer, "The Shield of Achilles," *Iliad* Book 18, lines 490 ff.
2. Rem Koolhaas, "Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture," *S, M, L, XL [Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large]*, pp. 2-21
3. Denis Hollier, "The Architectural Metaphor" from *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, pp. 14-56
4. Michel Foucault. *Discipline & Punish* (1975), "Panopticism" [online PDF]

17 → **Guest Lecture #1: Paul Couillard, Architect**

Reading: 1. John Summerson, *The Classical Language of Architecture*

24 → Architexts: Metaphoric Buildings in Ancient Literature

- Readings: 1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablets I-II, pp. 1-22
2. Virgil, *The Aeneid*, Book 6, pp. 115-134
3. Procopius, *Buildings* I.i. 27ff, *Procopius*, Vol. 7, pp. 12-33.

31 → Architexts B: Metaphoric Buildings in Biblical and Early Christian Literature

- Readings: 1. Old Testament: Genesis 11 (pp. 11-12); 1 Kings 6-10 (pp. 414-423); Daniel 5 (pp. 975-977)
2. New Testament: Revelation 21-22 (pp. 317-319)
3. Prudentius, *Psychomachia*. Lines 709 ff. *Prudentius*, 1. (pp. 328-343)

FEBRUARY

7 → Architexts C: Metaphoric Buildings in Medieval Literature

- Readings: 1. Dante, *Inferno* canto 3 (pp. 46-47); canto 8-9 (pp. 151-175); canto 31 (pp. 566-575)
2. Gaston Bachelard, "The Dialectics of Outside and Inside" and "The Phenomenology of Roundness" from *The Poetics of Space* [online PDF]

14 → Architexts D: Metaphoric Buildings in Early Modern Literature

- Readings: 1. Francesco Colonna. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Temple of Venus (pp. 189-224)
2. Edmund Spenser. *Faerie Queene* II.ix. House of Alma (pp. 330-346).
3. Tommaso Campanella. *The City of the Sun* (pp. 15-20, 28-32)
4. John Milton. *Paradise Lost*, Book I. Pandaemonium (pp. 24-29)

21 → Spring Break Study Period

28 → From Classicism to Modernism: Constructions and Explosions

- Readings: 1. Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead* [novel and film]
2. Beatriz Colomin. "Battle Lines: E.1027." *The Sex of Architecture* pp. 167-182.

MARCH

7 → **Guest Lecture #2: Paul Couillard, Architect**

Readings: 1. Robert Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*
pp.16-22

2. Charles Moore. "Scale" from *Dimensions : Space, Shape & Scale in Architecture*, pp. 17-40.

3. Charles Jencks. "The Modes of Architectural Communication," *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. pp. 39-63.

14 → Textual Labyrinths / Labyrinthine Texts

Readings: 1. Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel" [online PDF]

2. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* [novel]

21 → Classical Foundations / Postmodern Collapse

Reading: 1. Salman Rushdie, *The Ground beneath Her Feet* [novel]

28 → Breakdown: Architectural History as Traumatic Mirror

Reading: 1. W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* [novel]

Apr 4 → Writing on the Wall: Architectural History as Cultural Prophecy

Reading: 1. Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City* [novel]

Reading List

a. Fiction → Required Reading

Ayn Rand, *The Fountainhead*
Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*
Salman Rushdie, *The Ground beneath Her Feet*
W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*
Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

b. Theory → Required Reading

1. John Summerson, *The Language of Classical Architecture* (1963; 1980)
2. Colin Davies, *Thinking about Architecture: An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (2011)
3. Denis Hollier, “The Architectural Metaphor” from *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, pp. 14-56 [xeroxed handout]
4. Foucault, Michel, “Panopticism” in *Discipline and Punish* (trans. 1977) [online PDF]

b. Coursepack → Required Readings

Table of Contents

PART ONE: Sacred Spaces and Symbolic Structures

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* : the Babylonian epic poem and other texts in Akkadian and Sumerian / translated and with an introduction by Andrew George. Rev. ed. London ; New York : Penguin Books, 2003.
Excerpt: Tablets I-II, pp. 1-22
2. *The Bible* : Authorized King James Version / with an introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1998.
Excerpts: Genesis 11 (pp.11-12); 1 Kings 6-10 (pp. 414-423); Daniel 5 (pp. 975-977); Revelation 21-22 (pp.317-319)
3. *The Iliad of Homer* / translated by Richmond Lattimore ; introduction and notes by Richard Martin. Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2011.
Excerpt: Book 18, lines 490 ff. (pp. 409-413)
4. Virgil, *The Aeneid*. Trans. David West. London: Penguin Classics, 1990, 2003.
Excerpt: Book 6 (pp.115-134)

5. Prudentius, *Psychomachia. Prudentius*, Vol 1.: With an English translation by H. J. Thompson. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949-53.
Excerpt: Lines 709 ff. (pp. 328-343)
6. Procopius, *Buildings. Procopius*, Vol. 7 / with an English translation by H.B. Dewing. London : W. Heinemann, 1954.
Excerpt: *Buildings* I. i. 27 ff (pp. 12-33)
7. Dante, *Inferno*. Trans. Robert and Jean Hollander. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.
Excerpts: canto 3 (p.p. 46-47); canto 8-9 (pp. 151-175); canto 31 (pp.566-575)
8. Francesco Colonna. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* : the strife of love in a dream / the entire text translated by Joscelyn Godwin. New York : Thames & Hudson, 1999.
Excerpt: Temple of Venus (pp. 189-224)
9. Edmund Spenser. *Books I and II of The Faerie Queene ; The mutability cantos, and selections from the minor poetry* / newly edited by Robert Kellogg and Oliver Steele. New York: Odyssey Press, c1965.
Excerpt: *Faerie Queene* II.ix (pp. 330-346)
10. Tommaso Campanella. *The City of the Sun : a poetic dialog ...* / newly translated by A.M. Elliott and R. Millner ; introduction by A.L. Morton. London : Journeyman Press, 1981.
Excerpt: pp. 15-20, 28-32
11. John Milton. *Paradise Lost* / edited with an introduction and notes by Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg. Oxford [England] : Oxford University Press, 2004.
Excerpt: Book I (pp. 24-29)

PART TWO: Architects on Architecture

12. Robert Venturi. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* / with an introduction by Vincent Scully. 2d ed. New York : Museum of Modern Art, 1977.
Excerpt: pp.16-22
13. Rem Koolhaas, et al. *S, M, L, XL [Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large]* : Office for Metropolitan Architecture, Rem Koolhaas, and Bruce Mau / edited by Jennifer Sigler ; photography by Hans Werlemann. New York, N.Y. : Monacelli Press, 1995.
Excerpt: "Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture" (pp. 2-21)
14. Beatriz Colomin. "Battle Lines: E.1027." *The Sex of Architecture* / editors, Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, Leslie Kanés Weisman. New York : Harry N. Abrams, 1996.
Excerpt: pp. 167-182
15. Charles Moore, with Gerald Allen. *Dimensions : Space, Shape & Scale in Architecture*. New York : Architectural Record Books, [1976].
Excerpt: "Scale" (pp. 17-40)

16. Charles Jencks. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. London: Academy Eds, 1977.
Excerpt: "The Modes of Architectural Communication" (pp. 39-63).

History and Theory → Recommended Reading

Alberti, Leon Battista

The Ten Books of Architecture (1755 edition, rpt 1986)

Anstey, T. With K. Grillner and R. Hughes (eds)

Architecture and Authorship (2007)

Alexander, Christopher

Notes on the Synthesis of Form (1964)

A Pattern Language: Towns, Building, Construction (1977)

A Timeless Way of Building (1979)

Bachelard, Gaston

The Poetics of Space (1964)

Baudrillard, Jean

Simulacra and Simulation (trans. 1994)

Mass, Identity, Architecture: Architectural Writings of Jean Baudrillard (2003)

Deleuze, Gilles

Difference and Repetition (1994)

Hawkes, T.

Structuralism and Semiotics (1977)

Hays, K. M.

Architecture Theory Since 1968 (1998)

Hollier, Denis. *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille* (1989, 1992)

Jencks, Charles

The Language of Post-Modern Architecture (1991)

Meaning in Architecture (1969)

Johnson, Philip and Mark Wigley

Deconstructivist Architecture (1988)

Koolhaas, Rem, et al.

Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large [S,M,L,XL] (1995)

Kruft, H-W.

A History of Architectural Theory from Vitruvius to the Present (1994)

Laugier, Marc-Antoine

An Essay on Architecture (trans. 1977)

Leach, Neil (ed.)

Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory

[essays on architecture by Adorno, Bataille, Baudrillard, Eco, Derrida, Barthes, Foucault]

Le Corbusier

Towards a New Architecture (rpt. 1986)

Modulor I and II (trans. 1980)

The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning (rpt. 1971)

Ruskin, John

The Seven Lamps of Architecture (rpt 1989)

Semper, Gottfried

The Four Elements of Architecture (trans. 1989)

Summerson, John

The Classical Language of Architecture (1980)

Heavenly Mansions and other Essays (1949, 1963)

Venturi, R.

Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1977, rpt 1998)

Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form (1977)

Wigley, M.

The Architecture of Deconstruction: Derrida's Haunt (1993)

Wright, Frank Lloyd

The Essential Frank Lloyd Wright: Critical Writings on Architecture (2008)



Grade Breakdown

Short Assignment: Semiotic analysis of a building.....	15%
Class Presentation.....	25%
20-page Essay.....	60%

Contact

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Statement on Academic Offences

“Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf