# The Matter of the Cutting Edge

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*There may be neatness in carving when there is richness in feasting; but I have heard many a discourse, and seen many a church wall, in which it was all carving and no meat.*

John Ruskin, "All Carving and No Meat"[1]

In beginning my talk with these thirty-four words from Ruskin, I have presented a ground, a playing field, if you will, for a certain kind of game. Let's look at the quote again. In one sentence, you will find four interrelated binary pairs, three of them metaphorical: neatness and richness, carving and feasting, discourse and wall, carving and meat. I cannot imagine a ground more appropriate for entering a discussion of contemporary architectural discourse; even, perhaps of any discourse. For here we have tropes for the structural and ornamental, objective and subjective, making and interpreting, theory and practice, style and substance.

This is old ground on which many games have been played. For much of my writing and making life, I have investigated the question, "What would happen if the slope of this ground shifted?" I have never been so naive as to consider a simple reversal of slope, but have thought more about eccentric and disseminated mutations. In this paper, however, written by a me who is older and therefore believes herself wiser, I suspend disbelief in its immutability, and accept the ground as given, assembled of multitudes of neat pairs, the units of which may slip and slide, but within each of which is maintained a disequilibrium of value.

The paragraphs that follow rest on particular conventions of difference. I have written them with hands that are beringed, lotioned, perfumed, and polished, with direction from a mind that lives in the body onto which they are hooked. It is the kind of body that, in the sets of pairs body-mind, matter-form, and ornament-structure (just to recall a bit of the ground), traditionally relates to the left hand side. Also the one who stereotypically doesn't know 'which way to move the ball.' But look: the fact that it is playing on the same field does not mean it is playing the same game …

One lovely thing about the experience of raising children so far apart in age as mine is the gift of perspective and the respect for continuity and pattern that it offers. In life so far, I have enjoyed witnessing at close hand during three separate slices of time the remarkable games of young children. The amazing play of boys: the ever-in-motion parry and thrust, the smashing, clamorous battles with imaginary swords and guns and airships and bombs, the itchy quest to win, to be first, to be best. Three times lived, three times (almost) the same. The protruding nosecone and explosive cargo of the bomber drawn in pre-Bic leaky ballpoint scrawl on the blue fabric notebook of Billy Joe Mullins (whose name in hearts was featured on mine) are not so different, after all, from Joshua's Mighty-Morphin-super-power-sword with which he heroically gestures for the local gang of little girls collecting moss to make a canopy for their magic fairy treehouse in my garden. And the fabulous play of girls: the mixing of sawdust tea, redolent of its production in the clash of saw and tree; the patient, collective shelling of fallen purple locust pods to obtain a swishy bowlful of seeds; the secreting of milkweed fluff in a battered cookie tin deep in the caverns of the raspberry bramble. Their always fresh and marvelous, but also familiar, drawings of intricately rainbow coloured birds and butterflies and fish, often accompanied by groups of small clones - mamas and their babies - also mark an intriguing continuity.

My children and their friends keep me thinking about old and new a lot. They make me think, for example, about how the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns is based on an old, old agreement (or an old, old necessity) to quarrel that transcends the quarrel itself. I am thinking about how the desire to be the superlative is an old, old desire; and consequently, as we live in an era based on an always going forward, or out and away, from what has come before, how even (and perhaps

especially) the legitimation and substantiation of the desire to be New has become so old hat as to form a bizarre paradox sustained by the now rather rickety crutch that is called Progress.

Much of architecture, and architectural discourse, is ever in quest of the so-called leading, or cutting, edge. This edge, this leading line of molecules of the blade that cuts into unknown territory, that whacks through the tangled snaky darkness of the jungle, through the brush and briar of the wilderness, thrust out in front, going where no man has gone before, is a remarkable metaphor indeed.

The persistent metaphor of the cutting edge belongs partially to the heroic narratives of conquest of the unknown, i.e., the New and unexplored. And in the narratives of the exploration of a 'New World,' the protruding blade ever inscribing the frontier is the protagonist of a consistent allegory: the sexual conquest of a virginal female body of seductive, material richness.

*Sir Walter Raleigh swore that he could not be torn 'from the sweet embraces of … Virginia.' From the beginning of exploration, then, sailors' reports … became inextricably associated with investors' visions of 'a country that hath yet her maydenhead.' Encouraging Raleigh to make good on his promise to establish a permanent colony in Virginia, [the investor Richard] Hakluyt prophesied in 1587, 'If you preserve only a little longer in your constancy, your bride will shortly bring forth new and most abundant offspring, such as will delight you and yours.'*

*In 1609, one promoter of English immigration to Virginia promised there 'Valleyes and plaines streaming with sweete Springs, like veynes in a naturall bodie,' while just seven years later, Captain John Smith praised New England as yet another untouched garden, 'her treasures hauing net neuer beene opened, nor her originalls wasted, consumed, nor abused.' … In his 1725 verse history of Connecticut, Roger Wolcott depicted an ardent mariner 'press[ing] /upon the virgin stream who had as yet, /Never been violated with a ship.'*[2]

This body is nature, always female, with her primal wildness and material bounty. When, years later, the narrative tone shifts from the excitement of sweet maiden promise to the regret of rape and despoliation, the allegorical structure of a gendered female, material Nature and her aggressive male suitor, Man, remains in place. It is interesting to note the mixing of rhetorical figures within this relation: Nature is metaphorically female, while Man is metonymically male. As in all properly prescribed personal relationships, there is no Other, Woman.

In this example of the gender construction by which much of the world is imagined and understood, the bitter and intricate relation of children's games and adult patterns of behavior is revealed: the fantasy of this cutting edge is not disconnected from the fantasy of the invasive bomber or the power sword. The heroic visions of exploration, discovery, conquest, appropriation, and colonization that follow its revealing stroke have given rise to the historical realities and the interconnected cultures that practices of architecture and architectural discourse represent.

It is interesting to ponder how, in architecture, the metaphor of the leading edge, which by the twentieth century has become paradigmatic, was and is strangely present and relevant even in the moment of architecture's appropriation of discourses that have sought to dampen the fires in which such blades are forged. There is something beyond logic and reason at work here; I sense a fantasy, a child's game grown up.

*There's a theory, one I find persuasive, that the quest for knowledge is, at bottom, the search for the answer to the question: `Where was I before I was born?'*

*In the beginning was … what?*

*Perhaps, in the beginning, there was a curious room, a room like this one, crammed with wonders; and now the room and all it contains are forbidden* [to] *you, although it was made just for you, had been prepared for you since time began, and you will spend all your life trying to remember it.*[3]

Angela Carter's words pull a ravelling thread from the troubling perplexity of nostalgia (from the Greek, *nostos* - "return home," and *algos* - "pain"), the sickness or longing for home, a place made distant in space and/or time. Where were we before we were born? In the beginning for each of us was a wonderful and, once left, inaccessible room: the first home, that dark, warm, saltwatery, pulsing vessel, the matter of *mater*.

A conjecture: Every moment of significant twentieth century architectural discourse has at its generating core the needling itch, the troubling ache, of nostalgia: homesickness, that longing for something that one cannot ever have again. And the period of so-called Postmodern architecture, when a certain self-conscious nostalgia was embraced, is the least of it.

I am interested in teasing out the fibres of nostalgia in relation to the practice and discourse of architecture. In opening this subject, this word tinged with obloquy and often preceded by the qualifier 'mere,' I cringe with awareness of the minefield on which I tread. But I am profoundly curious about the polarized response to nostalgia in contemporary architectural discourse. On the one hand, it is placed on a pedestal and made a universal genius of new town planning and architectural style. On the other hand, the one I am considering in this essay, nostalgia is covered in refusal, like a bad zit or a body odour. In the manner of these analogues, nostalgia happens; and it comes with certain pleasures.

The repression of nostalgia, a nineteenth century disease ever threatening to erupt on the skin of the twentieth, is at the core of the project of modernity; and, I think, it especially has driven, and drives, the movements of the avant-garde. The figure of the avant-garde is another kind of leading edge, another invasive metaphor, also tied to the search for the New. For decades the architectural avant-garde has engaged in a time-honoured activity: the planting of one's flag upon intellectual territory ostensibly hitherto unexplored by other architects. But a peculiar phenomenon repeatedly occurs: the territory is then colonized under the unquestioned law of the architectural concept. Most recently this endeavour has taken the perplexing and paradoxical form of borrowing the metaphors, especially those that are spatial, of discourses that are deeply critical of this very epistemological tack, and conceptualizing them as New Form. The most outstanding examples of this concern the appropriation of the spatial or spatializable metaphors of Gilles Deleuze (with and without Felix Guattari) - smooth space, holey space, desiring machines, rhizomes, the fold, etc. - which he has used to tag complex and slippery theoretical apparatuses that work to undermine faith in the substantiality of epistemological structures that authorize such conceptualization as that in which the 'avant-garde' architects are engaged. When architectural enterprise is involved with making forms that are generated from such spatializing metaphors, architecture remains lodged in its nostalgia for form that embodies direct and specific meaning, even if here the reading of that embodiment is that meaning is slippery and illusive (like an object of nostalgia). And matter doesn't particularly matter (as it certainly does to Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux*). This is demonstrative of how the avant-garde, which endeavours to be new and original, fails to escape the sticky traps of tradition and convention. Furthermore, the ceaseless search for the New in architecture, of which making form follow philosophy's metaphors is an example, is a profoundly nostalgic project.

Design is the making of the always-in-progress New, which is always the becoming-old. The lust for the New, that telic carrot on a string, like nostalgia, is a longing for something one cannot have, for as soon as the New is formulated, it ceases to be new. And in order to stay on the cutting edge, the avant-garde architect must move on in search of the next formal frontier. This lust, driven by a necessary neglect of the weight of matter, is, in its persistent repressions, intensely nostalgic.

In its subjugation of matter by form, the modern concept of design necessarily is dominated by a nostalgia for matter, a fetishization of an imagined absence. At the close of the twentieth century, design is driven by the necessity of the New, and, often in architecture, the Big construed as the mega, the large object that makes gestures toward infinity.

Nowhere is this more marked than in the now New offering of electronic space: the new infinite, eternal design with no bounds, no walls, infinite frontiers, no stopping. This hyperspace is the legitimate heir to the modern project. A nexus of lines, whether drawn, virtual, simulated, or troped, is the mark of a longed-for object. Form sitting on the lid of its other, matter. Curiously, to enter electronic space is to leave home without leaving home. But in this space there is no matrix of domesticity; the cozy, sensual matter of home has no place here. There is no room for cyber-domesticity, for electro-sentimentality. Why? Because this apparent nostalgia-free zone is, in fact, nothing if not nostalgic, a repression of 'home-sickness' so extreme that something is not quite being covered up.

The urge to virtual realities of any kind relies on a constant domestic space, whether proximal or distant. The space of domesticity, configured as 'real' space, is still, always already, the spatial envelope of the cyberventuring subject who explores the public space of the net or the virtual space of simulation. Leaving his body, that hunk of pulsing meat, nestled in its warm, comfortable domestic space, he can project himself anywhere, into anything.

Here, the lines of nerves and the lines of communication form a continuum. Everything is transmission of information. Here is an apparent triumph of form over matter, of the rational over the corporeal. With the ostensible obviation of the body comes the repression of shame, sentiment, and

nostalgia. This space replicates in certain ways the space of the infant, or even that of the fetus: interactive intake, no responsibility to any body. A nostalgic and sentimental, if not shameful, project in the extreme: the return to the natal home. That dirty place, the matter of mater. The relentless drive toward the New is a strangely directed attempt to escape from Materia, the old, generative soil, the origin. The New is never dirty; it is always bright, spanking clean, light, full of promise, devoid of weight.

In the extravagant, blade-wielding gestures of the contemporary architectural avant garde, there is something touchingly Cervantian. Like Don Quixote, driven by serious intentions, but somehow rather endearingly misdirected. Living boldly, but fictionally-within-fiction, in deeply nostalgic visions. Existing in a world of matter, but fantasizing an escape into the space of imagination, a world of images. Like those little boys at play. I would like to return for a moment to swords and nosecones and magic houses of moss by means of one of my favourite peculiar passages of scholarship, from Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae*:

*Construction is a sublime male poetry. When I see a giant crane passing on a flatbed truck, I pause in awe and reverence, as one would for a church procession. What power of conception, what grandiosity: these cranes tie us to ancient Egypt, where monumental architecture was first imagined and achieved. If civilization had been left in female hands, we would still be living in grass huts. A contemporary woman clapping on a hard hat merely enters a conceptual system invented by men. Capitalism is an art form, an Apollonian fabrication to rival nature.*[4]

I am interested in this remark less for what it proposes about the role of women in the construction of civilization and the pursuit of new form, than for its positioning of the domicile, and its marked materiality, as the measuring stick of the progress of civilization. Even that the domicile is the place where architecture would have stopped on its line of progression toward the skyscraper, that is to say, the Big and the New. The grass hut stands in for anything undeveloped, unadvanced, not extruding itself along the exalted line of progress. Furthermore, it is not simply a hut, a notation that would imply function, size, and character, but a grass hut: the material of the object delineates its mereness. This picturesque grass hut suggests a notion of the primitive that the primitive hut, with its lofty theoretical accouterments, does not. The domestic vessel of rotting material, built and rebuilt, is nothing new. It is the old, the original home, the *mater*, the now useless husk cast off back there at the beginnings, whenever and wherever they might be.

The selective nostalgia in which Paglia indulges so intrigues me: On the one hand, the great, rigid, erect crane angled up against the sky is a tie to a glorious past: ancient Egypt, the site of the big and new, thousands of years ago. In the next sentence, we are assured that the alternative to this sublime masculine expression, civilization "left in female hands," is unacceptable. Why? The implication is because - "still" - the grass hut has undergone no forward-looking, progressive evolution. So here a tie to the past if evocative of progress is good; a tie to the past hitched to material and formal continuity is the object, and a weapon of, contempt.

Here we have a scheme: large and protruding and going progressively forward versus small and enveloping and eschewing progress, masquerading as male and female, and, in the building of Paglia's thesis, Apollonian and Dionysian. But what we are really talking about here is that even more basic, old, old scheme, and of course what the Apollonian and Dionysian represent, form and matter. If we go to the customary western origin of this scheme and from Aristotle traverse the line-space to Kant to contemporary architectural design, we can continue to gather a tedious collection of bifolded mantric inscriptions of the formula (a word that I choose carefully here): mind and body, exterior and interior, large and small, hard and soft, sublime and beautiful, abstract and concrete, public and private, objective and subjective, culture and nature …

At this point the reader has surely recognized the simple and familiar pattern of correspondences that structure so much of the tradition of philosophical, social, artistic and literary discourses: the pattern of the gendered pair. In *De generatione animalium*, Aristotle offered an instructive architectural analogy to demonstrate the relation of form and matter in procreation: the timber (material) with which the builder constructs is passive and receptive to the form idea that lies in the soul of the builder and is inscribed in the material by the activity of his tools in the same way that the material of a female body is inscribed by Nature with mammalian form via the active, moving tool of semen. And only male animals possess semen because, being connected to the two higher elements, air and fire, they are warm enough to make the form-giving elixir from their blood and to give it movement. Female animals, being of the lower elements water and earth, do not possess the heat required to produce semen, therefore mere blood trickles passively from their reproductive

systems. From Aristotle's influential model of male form and female matter to Otto Weininger's matching pair in the twentieth century *Sex and Character* to the gendered children's games with which I began, the overarching pattern of the valued and devalued term has informed the lineage. And the line is, in fact, a pair of more or less parallel lines defining the territory of epistemologically desirable entities - the rational, exterior, large, hard, sublime, objective, cultural, public, and masculine - by measurement against those on the other side of the tracks. And again, I am less interested here in pointing out the implications of this pairing for the status of women than in raising before it the question of the old and the new, the traditional and the avant-garde. Because things get a bit mixed up here.

To make a radical move, to push the edge, to make something new, one might propose to situate an architectural or philosophical endeavour, in the territory of the other side - the corporeal, the interior, the small, the concrete, the soft, the beautiful, the private, the subjective, and the 'natural' - and, of course, this has been done. But, not new now, it would be, always already never new, relying, as it must, on a move of switching the valued and devalued terms, while maintaining that tidy space in between.

Were we interested not necessarily, in the discovery of new form, but in the invention of an instructive set of relations within that familiar space, maintaining that space, we might find ourselves in the vicinity of the garden, the cultural artefact, that is grounded in the messy, dark, nurturing decay of its own production. In the garden, we are in the space of nature and culture, form and matter, concrete and abstract, exterior and interior. And significantly, we are in the space of the feminine and the masculine, in which assignments of value oscillate and flicker, in locales both esoteric and mundane. I mean, for example, the way in which femininity that is associated with flowers, is a positive value in the lofty world of eighteenth century philosophy, and furthermore terrene world of the garden club, but, in the same spaces, also carries negative value. This flickering of value also attends the problematic role of the matter of the garden in the discovery /exploration /appropriation /colonisation narrative, which I'll come back to here.

In the New World, after the wilderness had been cut and tamed, after the leading edge had moved to the halting brink, came the lovingly forced migration of seeds, scions, roots and corns. Today, on the remains of the vast prairie, where my children and their friends play, are the vestiges of these antidotes to homesickness: fifteen-decade-old elms and oaks, and feral outgrowths of lily-of-the-valley, brought west in apron pockets as seeds and pips, as tools for making unfamiliar places homes. Abiding residual documents of the westward expansion in North America, they are, almost literally, roots of present day American culture. They are evidence that pinafore pockets of moss and locust pod seeds and milkweed fluff become, in time, the bearers of roots: the keeping of holiday celebrations and cultural traditions, the passing on of love and spiritual warmth, the maintenance of human connection. And the making of gardens. Furthermore, and I'm quoting again from Kolodny:

*In the exchange of cuttings, seeds, and overripe fruit (for its seeds) and in the exchange of information about their garden activities, women shared with one another, both their right and their capacity, to put their personal stamp on landscapes otherwise owned, and appropriated by men.*[5]

Humans are not only territorial animals that imagine, make forms, and vie for dominance. We are also the animals that till the soil; we are the creatures of nature that invent language, defining culture in terms of digging in the dirt, cultivation. The founding of cities, is marked by a boys' game of inscribing the dirt: the *Ludus Troiae*, or the Trojan Game, the labyrinthine marking of crisscrossing horses leaving their hoofprint paths in the soil. Boustrophedon, an ancient method of writing alternate lines right to left and then left to right, is named by the pattern of an ox plowing the earth. Culture, is a bunch of animals digging in the dirt, marking their territory, hunkering down, holding onto life. The inscriptions of animals on the Caves at Lascaux, are necessarily tied to someone's discovering the staining power of ocher as she dug in the dirt. Here, as in the garden, cultivation and culture share a root that is more than etymological.

The garden is no more a natural thing than an electron microscope or the *Taj Mahal*. As an intersection of nature and culture, however, it is slightly more complex and involuted than most of the things we make. Gardens are complex constructions of form and matter in which, unlike in the instrument and in the building, matter - the residing substance of nature - is the present condition, dominant over function and form. Gardens are imaginative inventions with which we try to reconcile our warring animal/child desires - for rule and control, and for the experiences called beautiful and sublime - with what we find all around us in the world: other living creatures, the

order of what we call nature. Gardens are about making lovely, controlled constructions that sway and rustle, mutate, give forth exquisite and repulsive odours, and sometimes simply disappear. Gardens always threaten us with their easy potential to go utterly out of control. But this sinister potential is also their virtue.

Vast assemblages of matter, each bit of which has its own peculiarities and tendencies, garden constructions are dependent upon attention to a local and detailed materiality, in an always moving balance with conception of form. The garden is a "curious room, crammed with wonders:"[6] mutating matter; palpable space-time currents; shifting colour; intimate relations with the sun's light, with the breath of animals, and with the flow of liquid; notions of order; the substantiation of histories and theories. It provides a vehicle for opening up a serious consideration of the mining of nostalgia, the longing for home, that allows the exploration of the possibilities that lie in the conversation of old and new, and of matter and form. In the garden, the field and the game are indistinguishable, and the cutting edge is not a metaphor, but a material tool of the imagination.

To turn to the landscape or the garden, for thinking about architecture, is to make a significant and difficult turn. The landscape in modernity has been figured as a supplemental or accessorising feature of the design of the building. To look at the potential of this architectural accessory requires a 180 degree about-face on the line of progress, to look at the past, and to contemplate the riches of what came before the century of progress. I refer to the two centuries that, now that we have made our turn are receding down the line toward the vanishing point, in much the same way that the future does, when we peek back over our shoulders.

In the webby historico-cultural panoply that comes to rest at points upon this line, we can see a number of 'accessories before the fact' of modernism, including the eighteenth century landscape garden tradition, with its stunning, visual culture-affirming relation with the landscape painting tradition, and the writings of John Ruskin, the fellow who, in the nineteenth century, was one of those guys who wrote a lot about interesting relations he perceived between architecture and culture, but built nothing. If, in our slight near sightedness, we look at Ruskin's bulging pod of work way down the line, we see perhaps a quaint, but intriguing and historically important, supplement to nineteenth century architecture in all its properly natural materiality and its properly natural ornamentation all set about to make a pretty architectural picture redolent of the kitchiest nostalgia. But if we look with our handy two-way telescopes, zooming in, getting our noses right on the matter of the reading material, we can see something quite different, something that, for me, is astonishing.

At the place on the line where Le Corbusier's and Walter Gropius' great grandmothers and great grandfathers are children at play in the garden, 1837, a series of articles on villa and cottage architecture appeared in Loudon's *Architectural Magazine*. Here are a few excerpts. In presenting them I would like to note how nicely they might accessorise the forthcoming book by Mark Wigley, on modernism's white walls and fashion. I quote from this magazine:

*whiteness destroys a great deal of venerable character, and harmonises ill with the melancholy tones of surrounding landscape: and this requires detailed consideration. Paleness of colour destroys the majesty of a building; first, by hinting at a disguised and humble material; and, secondly, by taking away all appearance of age.*[7]

But further on following a note that the appearance of age in a villa is neither desirable nor necessary, he writes:

*We find, therefore, that white is not to be blamed in the villa for destroying its antiquity; neither is it reprehensible, as harmonising ill with the surrounding landscape; on the contrary, it adds to its brillancy, without taking away from its depth of tone.*[8]

And:

*If the colour is to be white, we can have no ornament, for the shadows would make it far too conspicuous, and we should get only tawdriness.*[9]

These seemingly prescient words, so marvellously ornamented with the language of taste, were written by an eighteen-year-old boy named John Ruskin who, engaged in the literary game of the *nom de plume*, wrote under the signature of Kata Phusin. Ah ha, you may be thinking, everybody knows about Ruskin and his psychosexual problems: about the frustrated love affair at seventeen which, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "seems to have been the effective cause of a permanent failure to obtain emotional maturity;"[10] about the fact that his mother rented a cottage to be near him when he went off to Oxford; about his unwillingness to consummate his marriage; about his ardent love at age 40 for a ten

year old girl. A child who never grew up; one messed up dude. Is it any wonder the boy assumed that girlish name to mark his fledgling authorship? But look again. While Kata may carry feminine connotation in its resemblance to Kate, *kata* is also the Greek word for "according to" and *phusin* is, of course, the word for "nature," from which comes the English word physics. *Kata phusin* - "according to nature," an early example of Ruskin's lifelong game-playing with words, is a rather authoritative persona indeed. Here is Mother Nature writing on the relation of domestic architecture, materiality, ornamental detail, and colour, in a manner that seems to make an impetuous leap from the grass hut to the white villa (where colour and form override materiality). Whether we see this author as *Mater Natura* or John Ruskin, she or he seems an unlikely source for the fathers of the white box, who will come along three generations later.

Let me tell you right now, that a relation of causality between Ruskin and high modernism is not what I am after here. That is not the game I want to play. I'm interested in something fleshier than such a simple line as that. Let me emphasise that although here Ruskin speaks to modernism, I do not suggest that, for example, Gropius or Le Corbusier had read his essays in Loudon's *Magazine*. I am making a suggestion, instead, of the possibility of looking at the past in a different way, in a way perhaps similar to the way that we look at the future: as a mineable field for inspired invention. In Kata Phusin's discourse, the building is not a machine in the garden, but a supplemental element of the landscape construed as a picture, a picture composed of hundreds of tiny details, in the mind of the taste-making author or viewer. These articles form the germ of Ruskin's later 1842 paean to J. M. W. Turner, the eighteenth century landscape painter praised by Ruskin for his truthful depiction of nature in all its proliferation of colour and detail.

With these thoughts of architectural theory, the garden, the landscape, proliferation, detail, and mutating material that our accessories before the fact give rise to, let us turn, or rather return, to that accessory after the fact, the computer, and what it gives rise to, electronic space. This is again a precipitous, however simple, turn, requiring us to move 180 degrees.

Again on our little pivot point (we are now of course five or ten minutes down the line) let us look at a teeny piece of the intricate panoply that now faces us, the tiny little piece that is connected to the construction of these words that I speak. We will call this piece the Hypertextual Picturesque. Remember that game I mentioned at the beginning? Well, this is it, and Kata Phusin will introduce it:

*That which we foolishly call vastness is, rightly considered, not more wonderful, not more impressive, than that which we insolently call littleness.*[11]

The Hypertextual Picturesque rests on the logic of the garden - the commingling of so many gendered games - exercised within electronic space. The materiality of electronic space is electronic image; here form and matter have a direct relation. Both are reductive versions of our conventional notions of form and matter, a situation that offers the possibility of architectures that, because obeisant to convention, perhaps escape it. In this space, representation and materiality are nearly in identity.

In the space of information, what is old and past - all the facts, images and documents of history - merges fluidly with what is new and now: information, images, electronic documents. In the space of information, there is a seamlessness of time and space which mirrors, reversed perhaps, the intensity of seamless time and space that is modernism. The Swiss mercenary soldiers away from home who were the original victims of nostalgia suffered also, of course, a condition in which time and space were connected by a smooth joint.

The relations of landscape, architecture, painting, the interweave of time and space, and old and new, and constructions assembled from plethora from plethora of detail, define the old and much maligned concept of the Picturesque. The Picturesque, a collection of aesthetic theories and ideas, that address the way we look at and make landscapes, was a phenomenon of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Because I don't have the time to digress into a discussion of it here, I'll simply list some characteristics of the Picturesque: an emphasis on detail over form; an emphasis on image; the manipulation of three dimensional matter, so that it conforms to a two dimensional image; the controlled use of the distant, geography and chronology; the use of the found object; passive matter; glorification of the ugly and ordinary; a foregrounding of matter and its physical phenonemon; a challenge to the idea of private property; an emphasis on variety and idiosyncrasy; the object of the tourist, as a collector, of pictures, of places; and finally, situated between the aesthetic characteristics of the Beautiful and the Sublime. Unlike either, the Picturesque appeals only to one sense - vision.

Perhaps I don't need to mention that all of these characteristics of the Picturesque, are also descriptive of the phenonomen we call hyperspace. And listen as I read the words of William Gilpin, written in 1794:

*The first source of amusement for the picturesque traveller, is the pursuit of his object - the expectation of new scenes continually opening, and arising to his view. We suppose the country to have been unexplored. Under this circumstance the mind is kept constantly in an agreeable suspense. The love of novelty is the foundation of this pleasure. Every distinct horizon promises something new; and with this pleasing expectation we follow nature through all her walks. We pursue her from hill to dale; and hunt after those various beauties with which she everywhere abounds.*[12]

The condition of electronic space may also be described by these words, these contemporary words of Raimonda Modiano on the Picturesque. She writes:

*In the Picturesque desire remains free and unattached, continuously disconnecting from specific objects, in order to return to the self or move on to another object.*[13]

Furthermore:

*When desire is barred from its object, vision itself becomes appetite. I would like to suggest that the Picturesque traffics heavily in the erotics of denied desire, relegating appetite to the exclusive realm of vision, which it at once limits and sustains it. The Picturesque abounds in 'wistful gazes toward untouchable objects,' and features perpetual brides and bridegrooms, who never consummate their 'affair with the landscape.'*[14]

Do you hear the succinct alignment of the space of the Picturesque with the space of the computer, glued together by the metaphor of the land as an object of sexual desire? But this landscape object, unlike that of Sir Walter Raleigh and others, is untouchable. Untouchable because its materiality and its desirability consist in infinite numbers of images.

To theorise a new game played on old ground by theorising an old game played in new space is logically appropriate within the necessary reflexivity of such a game. The constant pivoting and shuttling between the old and new, big and small, with its concomitant confusion of good and bad, of masculine and feminine, etc., is the mechanism of the garden and the landscape. It is also the mechanism that has structured this talk. The garden, as I have used it, is a metaphor of effect and event, not of formal causality. Everything is potentially on the move, coming and going, repeating patterns, but the effect of the repetition is always a little or a lot different. This construction, like the garden, is a phenonomen of cyclic consumption and production of its own materiality.

The Hypertextual Picturesque is an architecture of flickering text and images. It is an aggregation of detail. It is the making of structures within, with and in, the computer, that does not mine conventional architectural notions of space, and/or representation, but which does mine conventional architectural notions of construction. The Hypertextual Picturesque cannot, therefore, be reproduced in three dimensions, although it bears the potential to provide generative methodological impetus to three dimensional construction. The Hypertextual Picturesque could not be classified as hyperspace, but it is constructed in that space. It is a flickering hybrid (now you see it, now you don't) of something old and something new, and of the infinitely large and the infinitely small.

The Picturesque landscape and the Picturesque tour exist always in reference to the idea of home. No matter how far one ventures into the chronological or geographical distance, there is at every point, or moment, the possibility of a loop in the itinerary that returns to the starting point. This home base, this safe domestic space, is an implicit but necessary condition of the picturesque tour, that parallels that of the cyberventurer who can always loop back to SHUT DOWN. The garden play of my children, the games of any children, are also played in reference to home, in its material, its formal and its metaphorical possibilities. When the games stop, children - sometimes eagerly, sometimes reluctantly - return home, whether it be grass hut, white stucco villa or the arms of a sheltering parent. And now, this little game can stop for a while. You know where to go.

Thank you.

NOTES

1 John Ruskin, "All Carving and No Meat," *Precious Thoughts* (New York: John Wiley 1878) p. 78.

2 Annette Kolodny *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 3.

3 Angela Carter, "Alice in Prague, or The Curious Room," *American Ghosts and Old World Wonders* (London: Chatto and Windus 1993), p. 127.

4 Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990), p. 38.

5 Annette Kolodny *The Land Before Her* p. 48.

6 Carter, "Alice in Prague," p. 127.

7 Kata Phusin, "Art. I. The Poetry of Architecture: No.3. The Villa, I. The Mountain Villa - Lago di Como. (Continued.)," *The Architectural Magazine* (July 1838), v. 5, p. 292.

8 Phusin, "Art. I. The Poetry of Architecture," p. 293.

9 Kata Phusin "Art. II. The Poetry of Architecture: No.3. The Villa (Concluded), V. The British Villa, Hill, or Brown Country - Principles of Composition," *Architectural Magazine* (Dec 1838), v.5, p. 552.

10 "Ruskin, John," *Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropædia* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica 1992), v. 10, p. 248.

11 Phusin, "The Poetry of Architecture," *Architectural Magazine*

12 William Gilpin, *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel and on Sketching Landscape* (London: R. Blamire, 1794), p. 47-48.

13 Raimonda Modiano "The Legacy of the Picturesque," *The Politics of the Picturesque* eds. S. Copley and P. Garside, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 214, n. 3.

14 Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque," p. 197.