

and tells me that the current trend —less dogmatic and rationalist than modernism— might be called Late Modernism, or Romantic Modernism, or even (for those who like oxymorons) Romantic Pragmatism.

These terms have more of what deconstructionists call *jouissance* than the other candidates for architect-designer nomenclature like New Romanticism or New Historicism (terms also used by literary critics and historians). My vote is for Romantic Modernism because it can be shortened in headlines as Ro-Mo, on the analogy of lit-crit for “literary criticism”.

Whether it's the catchy Ro-Mo or some dreary monicker like double-post-modernism, the new label will be featured in those timetable-of-history books in the years running up to the third millennium alongside Cold War II.

Leap from “decorative arts” over to the politic arts: for a few weeks, the corresponding political era was called post-Cold-War, a posting that turned out to be premature. The Second Cold War, or Cold War II, was coined by Richard J. Whalen as a chapter title in his 1974 book, *Taking Sides*. This parallel to World Wars I and II did not take hold until recently, when a chinpull of pundits began to use it. Now it bids fair to challenge the New World Order, which could be the name of an era to come if the Second Cold War turns out to be the brief interlude between Gorbachev and Yeltsin.

Now leap from politics to the humanities, where modernism has also been posted. This world of linguistics, semiotics and literature likes to quote Ludwig Wittgenstein sighing, “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”. The high life of the mind in this world was roiled in the '70s and '80s by the rise of deconstructionism, which we will henceforth call decon because it is the existentialist philosopher Martin Heidegger's use of the word *Destruktion*, it does not mean “destruction” so much as “detailed disassembly”.

This is the philosophy that makes the reader more important than the author, placing the interpretation higher than the text. That word text is central; in the old days, a flesh-and-blood author created a work nowadays, a critic studies a stand-alone text.

Decon is a way of analyzing literature by denying the traditional meanings of words, breaking their link with real things and insisting that they have significance only in relation to other words or signs. Author's intent, agreed-upon meanings of words, historic or cultural settings all go by the board. (I

started to write by the boards, but that mistakenly points to the plural boards of a theater. The singular board has been used for the past millennium as a nautical term meaning “the side of a ship”, as in the right-sided starboard.)

In decon, only the interaction between the text and the critical reader counts. This delights the regimented legions of professional iconoclasts, but upsets communicators who like to fix meanings with some precision; it also infuriates academics who don't want to join a club with no clubhouse. Some decon, particularly in biblical exegesis, has revealed meanings in scripture heretofore unknown, and the questioning of long-held interpretation is refreshing, but the kick in the philosophy is more in taking apart than in putting back together. Annihilate and nihilism have the same root.

Today's heavy lifting is occasioned by the reading of the most lucid and controversial lit-crit book of the year, *Signs of the Times* by David Lehman.

Lehman derides Jacques Derrida, French founder of the movement; he zaps Roland Barthes, author of *The Death of the Author*, and really gives a hard time of the late Paul de Man, high priest of the decon school in the United States, a temperate and beloved Yale professor who, it was recently discovered, happened to have embraced the tenets of Nazism in his youth in Belgium.

Everybody in this dodge doubleplays around; for both decons and their opponents, the pun is mightier than the word. Professor Geoffrey Hartman calls his hard-squeezing colleagues “boa-deconstructors” and the surreal philosophy “Derridadaism”; Lehman subtitles his book *Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man*, playing on the fall of Man, and labels the past-forgetfulness of his subject “Waldheimer's disease”. The name of the decon game is that the game's name means something different every time. That language philosophy is provocative, but it goes nowhere and cries out for a more satisfying theory to refute it.

That's why we are certain to see the rise of post-deconstructionism. That word assumes that decon will be remembered as important enough to rate a post, as modernism was. I think it will; some of its terminology resonates. (You cannot write anything on this subject without using the vogue verbs *roil* and *resonate*, and citing Wittgenstein and Ferdinand de Saussure.)

Take *jouissance*, for example: the common meaning is “sexual ecstasy”, but Roland Barthes uses it to mean “the pleasure of the text”. That sure beats a good read.

[Sobre Gaudí]

[On Gaudí]

JUAN JOSE LAHUERTA

Del libro *Antoni Gaudí. Architettura, ideologia e politica*, actualmente en prensa en la Editorial Electa, Milán. Juan José Lahuerta es profesor de Historia del Arte y la Arquitectura de la Escuela de Arquitectura de Barcelona y autor de *1927. La abstracción necesaria en el arte y la arquitectura europeas de entreguerras* (Barcelona, 1989) y, *Gaudí i el seu temps* [Gaudí y su tiempo] (Barcelona, 1990).

From the book *Antoni Gaudí. Architettura, ideologia e politica* to be published by Electa Editorial. Juan José Lahuerta is professor of Art and Architectural History at the School of Architecture of Barcelona and the author of *1927. La abstracción necesaria en el arte y la arquitectura europea de entreguerras* [The Necessary Abstraction in Art and Architecture in Europe Between Wars] (Barcelona, 1989), *Gaudí i el seu temps* [Gaudí and his time], (Barcelona 1990). Translated by David Mac Murray.

(...) Ya hemos visto en otros lugares el carácter paratático, de sumatorio de citas *traspasadas*, que la arquitectura de Gaudí tiene: es, justamente, su voluntad de interpretar la verdad lo que las traspasa. No deberá extrañarnos, pues, la superposición vertical que en el esquema general del templo se produce, ni tampoco que la obsesión del arquitecto por enmendarla se convierta en el principal tema de proyecto: ¿qué otra cosa podría esperarse de una obra atravesada por tantas solicitudes? La ausencia de síntesis engendra, en efecto, su prejuicio, el prejuicio de la unidad, del centro. Así, siguiendo el mismo mecanismo que le hemos visto aplicar en el proyecto del palacio Güell, en el de Astorga, y, en fin, en la propia cripta de la Sagrada Familia, Gaudí rodeará el templo de un claustro procesional exterior, que se convertirá en el límite del recinto sagrado. La imagen resultante es absolutamente espectacular: la ceremonia misma. Las procesiones se realizarían girando alrededor del templo, centro inmóvil cuya complejidad parece



La Sagrada Familia, Portal del Nacimiento. Detalles de la decoración naturalista del exterior

La Sagrada Familia, Portal del Nacimiento. Details of the naturalistic decoration of the exterior

contraerse así en una inmediatez puntual, totémica. Pero por otro lado, esa concentricidad, convertida por las procesiones en resplandor ritual, dejará también en la materialidad de la planta profundas huellas. La masa muraria de las fachadas, en efecto, aparece en ella partida longitudinalmente: entre el interior y el exterior se ha creado un vacío que hace insalvable su diferencia, tanto más cuanto que sólo es comprensible como camino *opuesto* al de la propia fachada, al de su identificación como tal. El claustro, al atravesar las fachadas, se convierte en foso que, de nuevo, separa del centro, ese centro que, aquí más que en ninguna otra obra de Gaudí, se deja ver al mismo tiempo que se muestra inalcanzable: rodearlo es, literalmente, una condena.

En la fachada del Nacimiento, la única construida, esa *división* se muestra en sus aspectos más terribles, en cuanto que más físicos. En su parte exterior, llena de figuras, de animales, de aves, de plantas, de árboles, la piedra, como quería Maragall, parece brotar. Podríamos escarbar en ella y encontraríamos, debajo de las plantas, raíces. No es, sin embargo, demasiado *profundo* tal efecto. En la parte interior todo parece haberse contraído en una esquemática cristalización geométrica. Si esas son las dos facetas del mismo mundo, son también la imagen de la imposibilidad de que ese mundo sea *uno* en el sentido trascendente, *creador*, de la palabra.

Aquí, en efecto, como negando el orden que Folch i Torres quería, no hay polifonía, ni siquiera variedad, sino, simplemente, paralelismo, duplicidad. Un mundo doble, de dos caras: ¿podría darse más inmediata imagen de la ausencia de síntesis? Su inmediatez, sin embargo, se une a su *exceso*, a la cantidad de piedra que la representa: la irreconciliable doblez deja de ser, así, lo que habría podido —terrible— para mostrarse como algo sencillamente elemental, o, aún más, tópico. El gran pesebre no puede ser, por mucho que se empeñen sus hagiógrafos, *biblia pauperum*: en un extraño círculo vicioso, su propia cantidad, crecida como remedo de su insignificancia, se lo impide. Es, simplemente, un inverosímil amontonamiento de símbolos vacíos, cuya vacuidad debe ser exorcizada por las letras, las palabras y los fragmentos de textos sagrados que recorren toda la fachada. La inmensa lámina de la fachada del Nacimiento, alzándose en la ausencia del resto del templo, en medio de un todavía semidesierto Ensanche, levanta sus dos caras, como un inesperado emblema del silencio, pero, ya lo estamos viendo, de un silencio banal. ¿Y no hemos ya insinuado que es esa *inmensa* banalidad lo que hace, más allá de todos sus dramas, *utilizable* al Templo?

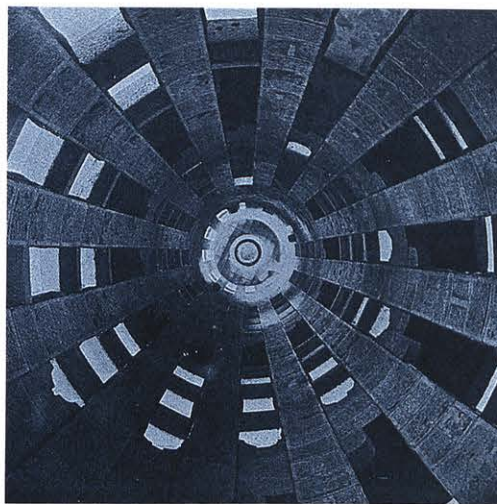
En el interior, sin embargo, esas huellas adquieren otra tonalidad: la del dolor, tan privado, de las heridas. Es sólo el arquitecto quien en ellas se ve a través de su propia arquitectura, siempre *desaparecida*: el *oculus* que se abre sobre la ventana del crucero, tan sólo entrevisto, pero presente, entre tanta abundancia, como la más paradójica imagen de *lo que falta*; la escalera de caracol que sube a las torres, sin eje, girando en una obsesiva espiral alrededor del vacío por ella misma creado; la descarnificación de las partes altas de los campanarios, en la que todo parece haber sido expulsado del centro al cerramiento, el cual, convertido en nervios y escamas, no ha podido retener tampoco la materia; y, en fin, el parteluz, en el que la columna que sostiene la cinta con la genealogía de Cristo *ha tenido que ser rodeada* por una espesa reja de forja. El más profundo de los orígenes, aunque simplemente escrito, tampoco puede ser alcanzado por las manos: ¿podría haber mejor imagen de toda la arquitectura de Gaudí?

Siempre se ha dicho que la Sagrada Familia era el objetivo de la obra entera de Gaudí, que todo lo que hacía era un experimento dirigido a dar

soluciones a los problemas del templo, que en él, esas soluciones encontraban su propia trascendencia. Sin embargo, lo que en su obra tiene sentido —o sea, razón de ser en el drama concreto de su propia terribilidad— en la cantidad desmesurada de la Sagrada Familia parece perderlo; y, al revés, a medida que la materia se lineface y las *cosas del mundo* —de este y del otro— desaparecen de su obra dejando vacíos aterradores, en la Sagrada Familia el líquido se contiene con *moldes* de la realidad y los vacíos se rellenan con símbolos, vacuos también, pero *presentes*. No es extraño que Gaudí acabase ocupándose tan sólo de ese inmenso pesebre, que le dedicase una voluntad que el tiempo iría transformando poco a poco en algo siniestramente ingenuo: en el “compromiso edificante” de la fachada del Nacimiento el arte representa ceremoniosamente su propia renuncia. No es la materia lo que ahí se pierde —al contrario, a pesar de las *heridas* que ya hemos comentado, *afloza* y se manifiesta con incontinencia— sino su sustancia: eso es la banalización. Pero, en la paradoja de esa anodina trascendencia, ¿no debió Gaudí sentirse libre, por fin, de sus fantasmas?

De la interpretación mítica maragalliana a los compromisos políticos, ideológicos y urbanísticos de la *Lliga*, a la restablecida representación de la Iglesia, al orden normalizador de Folch i Torres, a la *continua* interpretación de su desmesurada presencia en una ciudad *nueva*: en medio de todo ello, la arquitectura de la Sagrada Familia tiene que ser, necesariamente, irrelevante, insignificante en sí misma. Su tamaño no es en este caso grandeza sino, repito, necesidad. Por eso, la materia autobiográfica, tan presente en toda la obra de Gaudí, parece aquí haberse detenido justo antes de dar forma a la piedra, o, más propiamente, de disolverla. Tan sólo en los lugares que hemos mencionado —el *oculus* sobre el ventanal, el eje inexistente de la escalera de caracol, la descarnificación de la parte alta de las torres, la columna de la genealogía de Cristo— se manifiesta la mano del arquitecto, que ve levantarse barreras entre ella y lo que pretende alcanzar o que, cuando lo alcanza, hace desaparecer lo que toca. Gaudí, sin embargo, parece haber querido sustituir esa ausencia autobiográfica que el templo, objeto político, impone a su arquitectura, con su propia presencia, con la presencia del arquitecto. A partir de 1944 Gaudí

empieza a interpretar radicalmente el camino que Maragall le había predicho —y que había predicado—. Renunciará a cualquier encargo privado para, poco a poco, incluso físicamente, ir encerrándose en el templo. Las imágenes de su taller, con las paredes forradas de papeles de planos y estampas, con esos modelos de los detalles de la fachada desperdigados por el suelo, con las grandes maquetas sobre las mesas, con los yesos de las pruebas de escultura —cabezas, piernas, brazos, cuerpos enteros— colgados de los techos, esas imágenes son, simplemente, aterradoras. Como lo son sus métodos, unos métodos que se inician con la fotografía de un hombre, de un animal, de una planta, de un esqueleto, rodeado de espejos —convertido en centro impotente de sus propias imágenes y atravesado por el más terrible de los ojos, el ojo mecánicamente inquisitivo de la cámara— y que prosiguen en una carnificación —telas bañadas en yeso sobre alambres— que, deteniéndose en su propio molde, ha renunciado a ser también encarnación. Como lo es, en fin, la visión de su propia cama, fotografiada después de su muerte, aún con la sensación de las huellas de su cuerpo, en medio de ese estudio, en medio de todo ello. Pero, ¿qué es lo que aterra de tales imágenes? Sin duda, la representación que en ellas se nos ofrece de una vida mortificada. ¿Qué



La Sagrada Família, Portal del Nacimiento. Interior de las torres
La Sagrada Família, Portal del Nacimiento. Interior of the towers

otra salida le quedaba a Gaudí? Si la Sagrada Família era un símbolo, él también lo era. El simbolizaba al *arquitecto* del templo, y por eso vivía y moría en la pequeña cabaña, bajo la gran catedral. Como guardián del templo y de sus secretos Gaudí enmendaba la cantidad banal y la desaparición —finalmente tan real— de su propia arquitectura. Eso es lo que hasta su muerte, el 10 de junio de 1926, dos días después de haber sido atropellado por un tranvía, representó su pobreza (...)

We have already seen elsewhere the paratactic character, the summary air of data gone beyond, which Gaudí's architecture has. It is precisely his will to interpret truth which goes beyond them. We should not be surprised, then, by the vertical superposition emerging from the general scheme of El Templo, nor by the fact that the architect's obsession to compensate for this becomes the central theme of the project. What else could one ask of a work which in itself demands so much? The absence of synthesis engenders, in effect, its bias: a bias against unity, against a centre. And so—in line with the same procedures which we saw in the plans for the Palacio Güell, Astorga and finally in the very crypt of the Sagrada Família— Gaudí will afford El Templo an exterior processional cloister which becomes the limit of the holy place. The resulting image is absolutely spectacular: it is ceremony in and of itself. The

La Sagrada Família, Portal del Nacimiento. Detalles de la decoración geométrica
La Sagrada Família, Portal del Nacimiento. Details of the geometric decoration

processions would take place all around the Templo, an stationary centre whose complexity seems to contract into an exact and totemic immediacy. But on the other hand this concentricity—transformed by the processions into ritual splendor—will deeply mark the materiality of the site. The wall mass of the façades in effect appears split longitudinally. Between the exterior and the interior there a vacuum has been created which makes the difference insurmountable, even more so in as much as it is only understandable as a route opposed to that of the façade itself, to that of its identification as such. The cloister, moving beyond the façade, becomes a sort of pit which once again is apart from the centre: that centre which, here more than in any other work of Gaudí, at once reveals itself and is impossible to grasp: attempting to encompass it is literally a penance.

Regarding the façade of El Nacimiento—the only one constructed—this division emerges in its most terrible aspects, in that they are the most physical. In its exterior part—filled with figures, animals, birds, plants, trees, stones—it seems, as Maragall would wish, to spring forth. We could investigate this, and we would find the roots beneath the plants. The effect is not, however, so profound. In the interior everything seems diminished to a schematic geometric crystalization. If these are two facets of the same world, they are as well an image of the impossibility of this world being one in the transcendent and creative sense of the word. Here, in effect—as a negation of the order desired by Folch i Torres—there is no polyphony or even variety, but simply parallelism, duplication. A double world, one with two faces. Could there be any more immediate image of the absence of synthesis? Its immediacy, nonetheless, uniles with its excess, with the quantity of stone representing it: Thus the irreconcilable doubleness leaves off being what it might have been—terrible—to emerge as something simply elemental or, what is more, topical. The great manger is impossible, despite the efforts of its hagiographers: biblia pauperum. In a strange vicious circle—its very quality, grown as a mockery of its non-significance—blocks it. It is simply an improbable piling up of empty symbols, the vacuity of which must be exorcized by the letters and the words and the fragments of the sacred texts which appear all over the façade. The immense surface of the façade of the Nacimiento rising amid the mass of the rest of the Templo, amid a still semi-deserted Ensanche, shows its two faces... like an unexpected emblem of silence, but—and we are witnessing this—a banal silence. And have we not insinuated that it is that immense banality which makes the Templo—beyond all of its drama—usable? In the interior, nonetheless, these characteristics take on another tonality: that of the pain—so private—of wounds. It is only the architect who is seen in them via



his own architecture, always vanished: the oculus opening on the window of the transept —merely glimpsed but present amid so much abundance— like the most paradoxical image of what is lacking this is similarly seen in the circular staircase rising to the towers, without an axis, turning on an obsessive spiral around an emptiness created by its very self; and the washing away of the upper parts of the bell towers where everything seems to have been cast out from the centre to what surrounds it which —transformed into nerves and scales— has not been able to retain the material either. And finally the arched window where the column supporting the strip depicting the life of Christ has had to be surrounded by a heavy forged grating. The most profound origins, even simply written, cannot be attained. Could a better image exist in all Gaudi's architecture?

It has always been said that the Sagrada Familia was the objective of Gaudi's whole work, that everything he did was an experiment leading toward solutions of problems presented by the Templo, that here the solutions would find their own transcendence. However, the meaning of his work —that is, the reason for being in the concrete drama of his very "terribleness"— in the outlandish quantity of the Sagrada Familia, seems to be lost. And to the contrary, to the extent to which the material liquifies and the things of this world —of this and the other— disappear from the work leaving demolished empty spaces, in the Sagrada Familia shows a liquid containing the patterns of reality. The empty spaces are filled with symbols —vacuous as well— but present. It is not odd, then, that in the end Gaudi would be concerned only with this immense manger, that he would will to something which time would transform little by little into something perversely ingenuous: into the "building commitment" which the façade of the Nacimiento represents ceremonially in its own renunciation.



Taller de La Sagrada Familia
Studio of La Sagrada Familia

It is not the material that is lost here. On the contrary. Despite the wounds which we have commented upon, there flowers and there is a show of its overflowing substance: this is banalization. But within the paradox of this anodyne transcendence, must not Gaudi have felt himself free at last from his ghosts?

From the mythic interpretation a là Maragall of political, ideological and urbanistic commitments of the Lliga to the re-established representation of the Iglesia, to the normalizing order of Folch i Torres, to the continuous interpretation of its disproportionate presence in a new city: amid all of this the architecture of the Sagrada Familia must be of necessity irrelevant and in-significant in and of itself. Its size is not in this case grandeur, but —I repeat— a necessity. In this way the autobiographical material —so present in all the work of Gaudi— seems to have stopped here just before giving form to the stone; or, better said, just before dissolving it. Merely in the instances we have mentioned —the oculus opening on the window of the transept, the non-existent axis of the circular staircase, the washing away of the upper parts of the bell-towers, the strip depicting the life of Christ— the hand of the architect is clear. It raises barricades between itself and what it strives to achieve, or —when it achieves it— it causes what it touches to

disappear. Gaudi, however, seems to have wanted to substitute this autobiographical absence which the Templo —a political object— imposes on his architecture with his own presence, the presence of the architect. As of 1944 Gaudi begins to interpret radically the path which Maragall had predicted for and preached to him. He will renounce any private contract and little by little —even physically— involve himself totally with the Templo. There are the images of his studio: the wall covered with papers and drafts and first sketches; models of the details of the façade strewn about the floor; large mock-ups on the tables; the plasters of the sculpture proofs (heads, legs, arms, whole bodies) hanging from the ceiling... these images are simply terrifying. And so are his methods: methods which begin with a photo of a man, an animal, a plant a skeleton, surrounded by mirrors, all this becoming the impotent centre of his own images and passing through the most terrible of the eyes, the mechanically inquisitive eye of the camera. They become an embodiment —cloths smeared with plaster upon wires— which, frozen in their own form, also refuse to be an embodiment. But there is embodiment, finally, in the vision of his own bed appearing in a photograph taken after his death. One can sense the traces of his body amid the studio, amid all this.

But what is it in these images that frightens? Without a doubt the representation they offer of a mortified life. What other way out did Gaudi have? If the Sagrada Familia was a symbol, he was one himself. He symbolizes the architect of the Templo; and so he lived and died in a hut in the shadow of the grand Cathedral. As the guardian of the Templo and its secrets, Gaudi made amends for the banal nature and —finally, in fact— the disappearance of his own architecture. This is what up until his death on 10 June 1926 —two days after having been run over by a tram— was represented in his poverty...